

Man, Machines, and Modernity
Inventing 'Industrial Society' in French Sociology
1930-1981

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This dissertation explores the paradigm of “industrial society” in French and sociology in the middle decades of the twentieth century. It argues that the term “industrial society” was not a concept, but a series of hypotheses and debates connected to the rise of sociology as a form of public intellectualism and the remaking of European social-democratic thought in the shadow of American hegemony and the Cold War. It shows that while sociologists attributed the concept of “industrial society” to nineteenth-century precursors like Saint-Simon, Comte, and Marx, it was in fact a thoroughly twentieth-century reworking of the sociological tradition and social-democratic social theory. “Industrial society” was the way that sociologists transposed their radical commitments into social science, embracing a supposedly “realist,” anti-ideological analysis of the social world as the best intellectual path for a modernized reformism that could either embrace the Cold War status quo or push it toward new forms of radicalism.

As a conceptual history, the dissertation explores the industrial-society paradigm in four component parts. These included, first, the “logic of industrialization”: debates about nature and future of social development across capitalist and Communist societies, where sociologists often saw family resemblances rather ideologically opposed systems, and replaced a Marxist teleology of class struggle with more ambiguous evolutionary schemas centered on culture, institutions, and technology. Second, the “managerial revolution,” or the expansion since the early twentieth century, of white-collar social strata and the growing importance of bureaucracy and scientific expertise in most domains of society, especially industry and public administration. Third, the

“integration of social conflict,” or the idea that the so-called “industrial society” emerging after World War II would or should be able to manage its conflicts—especially labor conflict—by containing them within a set of rules, institutions, and social contracts that advanced social justice but prevented them from threatening the social order itself. Fourth and finally, the “end of ideology,” which suggested that the result of these other social developments would be a society in which passions cooled, grand ideological visions faded, and politics shifted toward expert management.

Stated this way the industrial-society paradigm can appear as merely the sociological expression of a centrist and technocratic postwar consensus. The sociological story told here suggests, however, that it was a major modulation of left-wing social thought in Western Europe and the United States in the middle of the twentieth century. This dissertation follows a cast of characters as they transposed the radical commitments of the 1930s into social science in the 1940s and 1950s, gradually embracing modernist ideals of value-neutral science and pragmatic social reform. In particular, it shows how the sociology they built remade the political left, providing an alternative public sphere and social vision that helped unite the fractious anti- and post-Communist left in countries like France. Beginning in the 1950s, sociology gradually crept into the public consciousness, filling newspapers and popular magazines, left intellectual journals, think-tanks for technocrats, and state-funded research institutes. The overlapping positions of sociologists in the university, the media, and politics enabled them to evangelize a vision of industrial society to people of influence and even in popular culture. By hovering in an ambiguous space between a moderate reformism and radical social thought, between technocrats and militants, industrial-society sociologists created a distinctive form of twentieth-century social-democratic thought that optimistically saw an automated, socialized, and at least partially planned society emerging, almost

of its own accord, from the structural forces driving modern social evolution themselves.

Temporally, this vision originated in the 1930s in left critiques of the Soviet Union and Stalinism, crystallized in the mid-1950s, and began to fracture amid the social upheaval of the late 1960s. It would be severely shaken by the social conflict and crisis of the 1970s, but in highly ambivalent ways that often led to industrial-society ideas being transmuted into new forms and mobilized by new social actors. The 1968 generation appeared to mount a critique of the industrial-society paradigm and of its sociological advocates, but they often did so by radicalizing its core notions and, and recovering the romantic and utopian impulses that had gradually disappeared from older sociologists' thinking. While on balance this dissertation tells a story of the acclimation of French and European social science to American norms, the 1970s fracture of the industrial-society paradigm had effects in France that contrasted with the Anglo-American world, most notably the success of new sociological ideas in politics. Unlike in the United States and United Kingdom, which entered the 1980s under aggressive neoliberal leaders, the French Parti Socialiste won the presidency in 1981 with a brand of modernized socialism that borrowed heavily—at least in the party's rhetoric—from the radicalized industrial-society vision of the 1970s, precisely the sort of ideological rebranding for the left that sociologists had envisioned decades earlier

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEAR = Association des artistes et écrivains révolutionnaires
AFAP = Association française à la productivité
BASR = Bureau of Applied Social Research (Columbia University)
CCF = Congress for Cultural Freedom
CDS = Centre de documentation sociale (École Normale Supérieure)
CES = Centre d'études sociologiques
CFDT = Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail
CGT = Confédération Générale du Travail
CNAM = Conservatoire national des arts et métiers
CNOF = Comité national de l'organisation française
CNRS = Centre national de recherches scientifiques
CRN = Cercle de la Russie Neuve
DSR = Department of Social Relations (Harvard University)
ENS = École Normale Supérieure
EPHE = École Pratique des Hautes Études
ESI = Éditions Sociales Internationales
FO = Force Ouvrière
HR = Human Relations
IBM = International Business Machines
IFOP = Institut française d'opinion publique
INSEE = Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques
ISA = International Sociological Association
ISST = Institut des sciences sociales du travail
MRP = Mouvement républicain populaire
OCM = Organisation civile et militaire
OECD =
OS = Ouvrier spécialisé
OST = Organisation scientifique du travail (scientific management)
PCF = Parti Communiste Français
PR = Parti Radical
PS = Parti Socialiste (1972-Present)
PSU = Parti Socialiste Unifié
RDR = Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire
SFIO = Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
TVA = Tennessee Valley Authority
UNESCO =
USSR = Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOKS = All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries

In memory of J.R. “Sonny” Sessions (1926-2010), the first historian in the family

For Alisa, for everything

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MAN, MACHINES, AND MODERNITY

La constitution actuelle des sociétés, infiniment plus compliquée dans ses rouages que les sociétés antiques, a eu pour effet de subdiviser les facultés chez l'homme. Autrefois, les gens éminents, forcés d'être universels, apparaissent en petit nombre et comme des flambeaux au milieu des nations antiques. Plus tard, si les facultés se spécialisèrent, la qualité s'adressait encore à l'ensemble des choses. Ainsi un homme riche en cautèle, comme on l'a dit de Louis XI, pouvait appliquer sa ruse à tout ; mais aujourd'hui, la qualité s'est elle-même subdivisée.

BALZAC

Our point of departure is that no society can reach itself through its own operations. Society has no address. Nor it is it an organization with which one can communicate.

NIKLAS LUHMANN

PART I

Origins

Introduction: Inventing Industrial Society

Between the late 1930s and the early 1960s, social scientists in Western Europe and the United States decided that they lived in something called “industrial societies.” The term “industrial society”—or *société industrielle* or *Industriegesellschaft*—was not new; social thinkers had used it sporadically since the early nineteenth century. Nor was the consideration of “industrial revolution” or “industrialization” as a major, disruptive historical force; indeed, the social upheaval provoked by Western Europe’s successive waves of industrialization had been a key catalyst in the rise of the modern social sciences, and constituted the very object of sociology as it was institutionalized in the late nineteenth century. But never before the mid-twentieth century was the term “industrial society” used systematically across the social sciences and public sphere in connection with a specific type of society, a social model, an evolutionary trend. This dissertation shows how that seemingly small terminological shift—the transformation of an old term into an operational social-scientific paradigm—contained a revolution in how social scientists viewed twentieth-century society, a summation of its contradictions and an index of its political possibilities.

The events of the first half of the twentieth century—the spread of mass production, economic depression, world war, and the spectacular rise of large corporations and productivist administrative states—forced social scientists to question their images of Europe and the United States as liberal entities that invested sovereignty in autonomous, spontaneously organized civil societies. The First World War shattered the myth of progressive historical evolution. The Great Depression discredited the capitalist economic system and opened the door to radical alternatives. When two of these alternatives, German fascism and Soviet Communism, finished battling to the death on the killing fields of eastern Europe, social scientists were remarkably unanimous in

assuming the next phase of their societies would be unprecedented. Western Europeans, especially, often imagined their societies as starting from zero, blank slates of radical uncertainty and radical possibility. But social scientists did not begin thinking *ex nihilo*; they picked up threads from the interwar period, when radical thinkers had been especially prolific in applying new names to a supposed type of society in the making, from “state capitalism” to “bureaucratic collectivism.” Increasingly, they incorporated the types of applied social research and “behavioral science” that had begun to develop in the interwar period into the mainstream of social-scientific thinking, giving them new resources with which to undertake the project of locating themselves in the sweep of world-historical evolution.

The industrial-society paradigm was made of these conceptual borrowings and research innovations, but it grew out of the shifting geopolitics and political economy of the midcentury decades. It tried to make sense of a seemingly new moment of social evolution that was foreshadowed by but not fully visible in the 1930s. This moment is now referred to by a variety of names, from “Fordism” to social democracy to the “politics of productivity.”¹ It was a moment defined, to its observers, by a powerful managerial state overseeing an economic “takeoff,” in the terms of the modernization theorist W.W. Rostow, and constructing integrative structures—most notably the welfare state and apparatuses of collective bargaining—to put an end to the crisis-ridden, economics-dominated liberalism of the nineteenth century. Its global model was the American New Deal.² To many social scientists, whose understanding of the liberal nineteenth

¹ Charles S. Maier, “The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy after World War II,” *International Organization* 31, no. 4 (1977): 607–33.

² Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016); Philip G. Nord, *France’s New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

century was defined by its representation in classical political economy and sociology as *laissez-faire*, this was a dramatic shift that entailed the abrogation of private interests and the assertion of public control and social planning to the point that it might no longer be considered “capitalism.” But neither was it necessarily—or yet—socialism, at least as traditionally defined. This new phase was often understood to be a body blow to the Marxist predictions of the global Communist movement, defined as it was by a rising, more broadly-based affluence, occupational diversification, and a slackening of social conflict. And the fact many social scientists found most remarkable, is that, in the era of decolonization and new states seeking to control their own development, the new era appeared planetary, driven by universal forces that had no respect for the ideologies that still defined domestic politics on both sides of the Atlantic.

The cognizance of this new “moment” produced many different types of reaction, some of which battled for primacy within the disposition of the same individual thinker: dystopianism, pessimism, resignation, hope, optimism, utopianism. But regardless of the reaction, the industrial-society paradigm was how many sociologists and political activists attempted to interpret, represent, and control it. I envision the paradigm as a structuring backdrop, an sometimes-invisible logic, that connected disparate zones of inquiry and questioning. Or, as the sociologist Norman Birnbaum presciently described it in the early 1960s, a set of “loosely-organized complexes of analysis, description, and prediction.”³ Many sociologists did intensive empirical research into one particular theme, while some self-consciously attempted to integrate them all into a macrosociological theory. But all recognized the relevance of, and at least touched upon, the other

³ Norman Birnbaum, “The Idea of Industrial Society,” in *The Development of Industrial Societies*, ed. Paul Halmos, The Sociological Review Monographs, No. 8 (Keele: University of Keele, 1964), 6.

all of the themes. Together, these interwoven themes gave shape to every attempt to answer a fundamental question: how did this phase of historical evolution arise and where is it going?

This dissertation examines the industrial paradigm by breaking it into four themes or poles of sociological research and analysis, and political debate and conflict:

- **Logic of industrialization.** A *longue-durée* process of social change associated with the evolution of technology or “rationalization,” now seen as a more fundamental historical process than “capitalism” because it manifested equally in the Communist world. This theme in particular drove the rise of what I call *organizational determinism*, the idea that inherent laws of “organization,” at certain scale or level of complexity, imposed their own requirements that did not correspond to “traditional” ideologies (i.e., liberalism or socialism, capitalism or Communism).⁴
- **Managerial revolution.** The unfolding of this evolutionary logic entailed a growing complexity of economic production and public administration, giving rise to new layers of bureaucracy and a new strata of expert “managers” and white-collar workers who complicated the traditional social structure—and in some visions, most notably in James Burnham’s controversial *The Managerial Revolution*, constituted a new ruling class.⁵
- **Integration, or transformation, of class conflict.** The idea that the assertion of new forms of socialized “control” over production and administration, especially through state intervention, welfare provision, and collective bargaining, would integrate the working masses into a social totality previously fractured by economic individualism and its resulting contradictions. This idea was one of the most potent weapons deployed against orthodox Marxism, especially by social-democratic thinkers calling for reformism. It was also a subtle reassertion of a classic disciplinary trope of sociology: a normative commitment to asserting the predominance of the “social” over the “economic.”
- **End of ideology.** Coined jointly by Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell in the mid-1950s, the notion of the “end of ideology” was the element of the industrial-society paradigm most closely associated with the Cold War. It was both a polemical weapon of “Cold War liberalism” and social democracy against Communism, and a sociological argument that

⁴ On the rise of the organization concept and organizational thinking, see Hunter Heyck, “The Organizational Revolution and the Human Sciences,” *Isis* 105, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 1–31. I use the term “logic of industrialization” rather than “convergence theory” to make clear that most industrial-society theorists embraced the idea of common laws of motion or developmental tendencies without positing an actual future convergence of capitalist and Communist systems. On convergence theory, see David C. Engerman, “To Moscow and Back: American Social Scientists and the Concept of Convergence,” in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Penn Press, 2006), 47–68.

⁵ James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What Is Happening in the World* (New York: John Day Co., 1941); Lawrence Peter King and Iván Szelényi, *Theories of the New Class: Intellectuals and Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates Since 1917*, trans. Jurriaan Bendien (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2007).

the other developments like the logic of industrialization and the managerial revolution had shifted momentum from “social philosophies” and collective ideological blueprints to post-ideological technical expertise.⁶

The idea of industrial society amounted to a *perception* or *prediction* that the society of the near future would be more socialized, planned, and “organized” regardless of its precise political or economic character. In other words, that it would be a form of what Howard Brick has called “post-capitalism.”⁷ Over time, the paradigm involved widely shared background assumptions that rarely rose to the level of conceptualization or argument, but were simply taken for granted. The most important of these was that the economic growth and affluence that began to be felt in the 1950s would persist, decreasing the influence and importance of property and economic relations as determining features of society. “Society” and “the social” were increasingly defined autonomously from politics and economics, as aggregates of individuals who were connected by quasi-mathematical functional “relations.”⁸ Somewhat paradoxically for a vision that saw an era of heightened collective organization, the state as an organizing and dominating entity with a specific character all but disappeared from view, replaced by vague substitutes for an organizing

⁶ Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York and London: Free Press, 1960); Iain Stewart, “The Origins of the ‘End of Ideology’? Raymond Aron and Industrial Civilization,” in *The Companion to Raymond Aron*, ed. José Colen and Elisabeth Dutartre-Michaut (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 177–90; Giles Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference: ‘Defining the Parameters of Discourse,’” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 3 (2002): 437–55; Job L. Dittberner, *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought, 1930-1960* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979).

⁷ Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁸ On the ways that postwar anti-totalitarianism drove the disassembly of the “social” in American social science in favor an ideology of individualism and pluralism, see Dorothy Ross, “Whatever Happened to the Social in American Social Thought? An Answer in Two Parts,” *Modern Intellectual History*, January 2021, 1–23; Andrew Abbott and James T. Sparrow, “Hot War, Cold War: The Structures of Sociological Action, 1940-1955,” in *Sociology in America: A History*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 281–313. On political science specifically, see Ira Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment: Political Knowledge after Total War, Totalitarianism, and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

meta-mechanism, including “pluralism,” “bureaucracy,” and “policy processes.”⁹ Industrial societies were highly organized, quasi-planned, and yet somehow also stateless.¹⁰ As the concrete features of politics, parties, government, and the social world faded into more abstract conceptions of organizations, social categories, and interest groups, industrial-society theorists frequently worried about the decline of the social that they themselves were enacting in theory, suggesting that while their fellow citizens no longer suffered clear and identifiable class exploitation, they would increasingly experience *alienation* from the large-scale, depersonalized, rationalized structures of “industrial society.”

Presented in this way, the industrial-society paradigm may sound like simply an expression of elite consensus, the centrist and technocratic orthodoxy of the postwar period. It was indeed that, but I argue that it was also much more. As the product of a transatlantic intellectual field, it was simultaneously coherent across contexts and unevenly distributed in time and space. Different aspects of the paradigm were accentuated and debated differently in France and the United States, and combined with domestic politics in particular ways. Industrial-society sociology was, despite the participation of a number of center-right thinkers, in the main a modulation of the political left, a form of socialist and social-democratic thought that drew its starting points and questions from Marxism. From one angle, it was the middle phase of a debate on the intellectual left that stretched from the interwar period to the New Lefts of the 1960s and 1970s. In a manner analogous to how philosophical “Western Marxism” integrated non-Marxist sources like psychoanalysis and

⁹ Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ The state as a constituting absence of industrial-society sociology is highlighted by the fact that the increasingly self-conscious Marxist attack on the concept of industrial society in the late 1960s involved a reassertion of the capitalist state as a theoretical object. See Rafael Khachaturian, “Discipline, Knowledge, and Critique: Marxist Theory and the Revival of the State in American Political Science, 1968-1989” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 2017); David Sessions, “Nicos Poulantzas: Philosopher of Democratic Socialism,” *Dissent*, Spring 2019, 83–93.

phenomenology into the tradition, industrial society acculturated the left to empirical social research, the behavioral turn, and a new “canon” of non-Marxist sociological theory.¹¹ Interwar and postwar sociologists attempted to provide answers to the crises of the left that had begun to surface in the early twentieth century and transmitted them to the generation of 1968 via the paradigm of industrial society. Even when the latter rejected this inheritance, they inherited it anyway: from technocracy to alienation to the political agency of white-collar knowledge workers and the similarity between the “bureaucratic” West and the Soviet Union, the themes of the international New Lefts were almost all prefigured in postwar sociology. Because of the shared filiation, industrial-society ideas could easily, if not always coherently, be retrofitted with neo-Marxism and attached to more radical and revolutionary political strategies than those countenanced by their progenitors—as they increasingly were in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Roughly between 1950 and 1975, the industrial-society paradigm came to form a loose, agonistic consensus in social science and politics in Western Europe and the United States. By the mid-1960s, with a crescendo in 1968, it was radicalized by a new generation of social actors, a process which simultaneously weakened the coherence of the industrial-society vision and transmuted its arguments into new forms. One of these forms was the notion of “post-industrial society,” which had a brief effervescence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but as discussed below, represented more of a sociological “rebranding” of industrial society than a new paradigmatic vision. But the vision of industrial society would meet global headwinds in the 1970s that rent the fabric of assumptions that had made it plausible. The energy, economic, and ecological crises of

¹¹ Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (New York and London: Verso, 1979); Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). More recent research has begun to complicate the story of Western Marxism as a primarily philosophical undertaking by uncovering its long-ignored involvement with empirical social research. See, for example, Charles H. Clavey, “Experiments in Theory: The Transatlantic Development of Social Science and Critical Theory, 1930-1950” (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2019).

the decade challenged the assumption of endless growth and full employment, and tarnished the desirability of uncontrolled industrial development. The “collapse” of the industrial-society paradigm happened differently in the United States and France: while Americans were more likely to debate “post-industrial” utopia even as social optimism cratered early in the decade, the 1970s were a decade of radical ascendancy in France as neo-Marxism charged the intellectual scene and the socialist-Communist alliance inched closer to power. The French 1970s climaxed quite differently than the American decade, with the historic victory of François Mitterand in 1981. Still, and despite the persistence of statist, modernizing ideas in the ideology of the political left, similar factors had begun to unravel the industrial-society vision: not only did historical forces suggest that “industrial society” was shifting dramatically, but intellectual reaction to technocratic modernization had made anti-statist and anti-institutional ideas so popular across the political spectrum that the stage was set for an intellectual romance with liberal political philosophy and neoliberal economics as the Mitterand government disappointed in the 1980s.

During its relatively brief heyday, the industrial-society paradigm gave a remarkable coherence to social thought in both the U.S. and France. There was no agreement on particulars or answers, but a decided regularity to the poles around which the questions gathered. Virtually every form of intellectual, artistic, and technical thinking engaged it and was shaped by it in some way, from philosophy to film, literature to engineering, management theory to computer programming. This remarkable reach—and its close chronological parallel with the postwar economic miracle—suggests that it was a logic that emerged from particular historical conditions, which I argue was the political economy of postwar Fordism.¹² I take the language in which this logic was expressed

¹² Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The U.S. Experience*, trans. David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso, 2001).

seriously, and the name that was given to it—often, if not always, “industrial society”—as indicative of something deeper. Industrial-society thinking was an attempt to interpret, to represent, and thus to stake a political claim upon, the historical conditions of the mid-twentieth century. It was a “fighting word” or, in some cases, a word used to indicate that fighting was no longer necessary.¹³ For a broad range of social actors, the industrial-society paradigm became an example of what the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann called *Selbstbeschreibungen* or “self-descriptions”: “imaginary constructions of the unity of the system that make it possible to communicate *in* society, if not *with* society, at least *about* society.”¹⁴ The dramatic social, political, and economic changes of the mid-twentieth century were real, but “industrial society” as a language to describe them had to be invented.

“Industrial Society” as a Twentieth-Century Paradigm

This dissertation provides the first intellectual history of the notion of “industrial society.” Since the fading of debates about “industrial” and “post-industrial” societies in the early 1980s, few sociologists—and even fewer historians—have bothered revisiting the concepts. At best, “industrial society” merits a basic overview in social-science encyclopedias.¹⁵ Its contemporary usage in sociology pares down and depoliticizes its original meaning by defining it simply as societies with advanced industrial capacity. As opposed to a utopian twist on “industrial society” that briefly surfaced around 1970, “post-industrialism” is now used to refer to economies where

¹³ Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 1.

¹⁴ Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, trans. Rhodes Barrett, vol. 2 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 169. One need not subscribe to the full sweep of Luhmann’s “systems theory” approach to society to recognize the insights of his account of social self-descriptions.

¹⁵ C. Crouch, “Industrial Society/Post-Industrial Society: History of the Concept,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Oxford: Pergamon, 2001), 7347–51.

the non-industrial (i.e., service) sector is predominant, and often in popular discourse connotes *deindustrialization*, which was not on the mind of any sociologist of “post-industrial society” in the 1970s. As a result, rather than challenge or reframe a contemporary literature, I have had to pick up the trail where it originally went cold: with sociologists’ own accounts of their ideas and intentions in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the standard sociological narration, “industrial society” remains a stable conceptual object from the nineteenth century to the present. That a new type of society would be produced by the eighteenth-century “industrial revolution,” whose principal feature was the centrality of *industry*, was suggested by Saint-Simon, Comte, Spencer, and Marx; scientifically developed in the “classical sociology” of Durkheim, Weber, and their contemporaries; then synthesized with modern scientific techniques by twentieth-century sociologists. On this account, “industrial society” had always been the central object of sociology, and its twentieth-century theoreticians merely elaborated upon older conceptual schemes in light of recent events, trends, and data. This is how the actors in this dissertation themselves would tell the story. According to Raymond Aron, who re-introduced the term “industrial society” in the mid-1950s and became its most renowned theorist, the idea of “industrial society” as a post-capitalist-but-non-socialist form of society based on the scientific organization of production was lifted almost unaltered from the pages of Auguste Comte’s *Cours de philosophie positive*.¹⁶ Daniel Bell defined the concept of industrial society by cutting a grand swath through the history of sociological thought, including the standard progression of Saint-Simon, Comte, Marx, and Weber.¹⁷ Sociological commentators from the 1970s to the present have largely regurgitated the notion that virtually every past sociologist has

¹⁶ Raymond Aron, *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 89–93.

¹⁷ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (Basic Books, 1973), 50–80.

been concerned with the same object, that of “industrial society.”¹⁸ In this type of conceptual history, “ideas, like privileged passengers on a high-speed train, simply travel through history while taking only the most superficial notice of their surroundings.”¹⁹

This standard narrative is correct in the sense that European sociology *did* arise as a response to the social rupture produced by industrial capitalism, and the nature and evolution of “Western” society was one of its central preoccupations well into the twentieth century. But even as sociologists began to remark self-consciously on the rise of industrial society as a concept in the 1960s, they sometimes suggested more was at work than the elaboration of nineteenth-century ideas. Norman Birnbaum remarked in 1964 that “much of the literature about industrial society is at least implicitly polemical, the result of a fusion (often unacknowledged) of firm political convictions with rather more ambiguous realities.” The British sociologist John Goldthorpe commented that industrial society had arisen “to attack the notion of a unilinear course of societal evolution following on changes in the economic infrastructure”; however, “within a remarkably short period of time, the idea of industrial society...became itself the basis of theories designed, it would seem, to *rival* that of the Marxists.”²⁰ Krishan Kumar’s 1978 *Prophecy and Progress*, which examined debates over industrial and post-industrial society in what were arguably their final hours, hinted at the ways these debates had been part of broader postwar political battles.²¹ While not contesting the standard narrative that rendered something called “industrial society” as the

¹⁸ Krishan Kumar, *Prophecy and Progress: The Sociology of Industrial and Post-Industrial Society* (London and New York: Penguin, 1978); Devereaux Kennedy, “Industrial Society: Requiem for a Concept,” *The American Sociologist* 42, no. 4 (2011): 368–83; Crouch, “Industrial Society/Post-Industrial Society.”

¹⁹ Peter E. Gordon, “Context and Criticism in the History of Ideas,” in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Darrin M. McMahon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 32–55.

²⁰ John H. Goldthorpe, “Theories of Industrial Society: Reflections on the Recrudescence of Historicism and the Future of Futurology,” *European Journal of Sociology* 12, no. 2 (1971): 265.

²¹ Kumar, *Prophecy and Progress*, 185–200.

object of sociology, Kumar perceptively suggested that industrial- and post-industrial society theorists “aspired to...create a powerful vision or ‘image’ of a society in the making.”²² The British sociologist Anthony Giddens accurately identified “industrial society” as a conceptual rival to “capitalism,” and drew a line from Saint-Simon to twentieth-century industrial-society theorists, bypassing Marx; Marxism, for the early Giddens, constituted a counter-tradition Saint-Simonianism.²³ Giddens noted that the notion of industrial society became “something of an orthodoxy” in the 1950s and 1960s, and pointed out its links to the Cold War and to modernization theory.

I am indebted to these suggestive traces left in the heyday of industrial-society sociology, and build on them by treating the idea of industrial society as a structuring element of the twentieth-century context in which it was revived. Why was usage of the term “industrial society” in European languages negligible until the 1950s? Why did it begin to rise in that decade, spike sharply in the 1960s, and peak before an equally dramatic plunge in the 1970s?²⁴ To answer these questions, we must understand industrial society as something more than a concept—something whose significance went beyond its technical definitions. For this reason, I refer to it primarily as *paradigm*: a way of seeing the world, a code or a logic that held together disparate and unformed topics, problems, questions, and anxieties.²⁵ Emphasizing not merely how “industrial society” and its sub-concepts were explicitly defined, but how they were *used*, how they functioned, how they

²² Kumar, 8.

²³ Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (London: Hutchison & Company, 1973), 23, 25–26; *Sociology: A Short But Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Houndmills and London: Macmillan Education, 1986), 29–42.

²⁴ Google N-Gram search for “industrial society,” “société industrielle” and “Industriegesellschaft,” February 2021.

²⁵ Stefanos Geroulanos, *Transparency in Postwar France: A Critical History of the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 20–25.

were woven into a web of background assumptions, helps us to escape the endless rehearsals of the chain of canonical arguments that tend to mark sociologists' histories of their own concepts.²⁶ It enables to see both the continuities and the ruptures between historical moments of a concept's usage: why, for example, when Saint-Simon spoke of an emerging *société industrielle* in the 1820s, he did not mean, as did almost all sociologists who spoke of "industrial societies" in the 1960s, that these societies were *post-capitalist*. Or how, on the contrary, when American sociologists picked up the term "bureaucracy" from Max Weber in the 1940s, they *did* both define and use the concept in a similar way, even if they added important inflections to make sense of the rise of so-called "totalitarianism."

The twentieth-century revival of "industrial society" was thus only in the broadest—and least historically revealing—sense a continuation of an century-old sociological discourse on the consequences of "industrial revolution." It was, rather an attempt to weave, out of the conceptual threads of sociological tradition, an image or self-description of a new society in the making. The search for a new image was driven by temporally specific sociological and political questions that arose in the first half of the twentieth century and received intensive focus after World War II. These included, but were not limited to the proliferation of private and public bureaucracy and "white-collar" employment; the fate of the socialist or social-democratic party in parliamentary democracy; the rise of the productivist, managerial state; and the appropriate sociological understandings of fascism and Soviet Communism; the developmental course that new or post-colonial states were likely to follow. On their way to becoming "industrial society," they were powerfully altered by the postwar reconstruction, the Cold War, and decolonization. Raymond

²⁶ It also enables a greater awareness of the fact that such conceptual genealogies are often post-hoc stylizations or even fabrications of actual history.

Aron himself acknowledged this by claiming that his visit to Asia in the early 1950s had convinced him that industrial society was “the major concept of our time,” because “Europe, from Asia, does not consist of two fundamentally different worlds, the Soviet World and the Western World. ... Soviet and capitalist societies are merely two species of the same genus, or two versions of the same social type: progressive industrial society.”²⁷ As Aron’s career shows, industrial society had many “uses”: it was a way for liberal anti-Communists to defend postwar society against its radical critics; it would also become a way for those same radical critics to come to terms with the constraints and opportunities that society afforded them.

While this dissertation is the first to examine the impact of industrial-society thinking in France, I am indebted to the scholars who have facilitated that project by mapping the adjoining terrain in the history of transatlantic social science. Intellectual historians and historians of social science, especially those focused on the United States, have increasingly emphasized the role of social science in mid-century foreign policy, domestic politics, and public debate. Nils Gilman’s history of modernization theory touches on the core questions of social evolution and modernity that animated industrial-society sociology even though he largely focuses on the ways these informed the thinking of American social scientists and policymakers about the post-colonial world.²⁸ So does Ethan Schrum’s work on the postwar American university, which, as I do, draws attention to the unsung role of American “industrial relations” in the making of postwar social science and its growing overlap with the worlds of politics and public policy.²⁹ Schrum’s illumination of the “instrumental university” and its concerns with modernization, “manpower,”

²⁷ Raymond Aron, *Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle*, Folio essais (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 50.

²⁸ Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

²⁹ Ethan Schrum, *The Instrumental University: Education in Service of the National Agenda after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

and the like draws attention to the rise of what he calls “macrothought” in postwar social science—zones of large-scale social inquiry with potential policy application. Jenny Andersson’s book on “futurology” examines yet another form of macrothought, some of whose participants, like Daniel Bell, were notable industrial-society theorists.³⁰ Hunter Heyck’s work on the “organizational revolution” in American social science, defined by the rise of the vocabulary of order, system, function, and process, not only converges with themes of industrial-society theory but exemplifies the type of broad, paradigmatic mapping of social thought that I try to do here.³¹

It is notable that all of this literature focuses on the United States, as what is arguably the only work of contemporary intellectual history address the core problematics of industrial society directly: Howard Brick’s *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in American Thought*.³² With a broad synoptic scope that often looks beyond its immediate American context, Brick demonstrates that an optimistic, reformist belief in the near-term obsolescence of capitalism—a notion at the core of the industrial-society paradigm—was a major feature of American “social liberal” thought between the 1930s and the 1970s. Many emphases of *Transcending Capitalism* have shaped this project, including its account of the disappearance of economics from postwar American social thought, its analysis of theories of “post-industrialism,” and its awareness of continuities between interwar and postwar, and well as between postwar sociology and the New Left. Brick’s work on American “post-industrialism” also might be

³⁰ Jenny Andersson, *The Future of the World: Futurology, Futurists, and the Struggle for the Post-Cold War Imagination* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³¹ Hunter Crowther-Heyck, *Age of System: Understanding the Development of Modern Social Science*, 2015; Heyck, “The Organizational Revolution and the Human Sciences.”

³² Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*.

considered the only truly historicized work on the concepts at the center of this project.³³ My focus on Franco-American transmission illuminates how Europeans and Americans invented “industrial society” in collaboration and competition with one another, with inevitable linguistic, scientific, and political *décalages*.

The history of sociological concepts with a broad public reach has been relatively absent from the intellectual history of postwar France which has focused its attention, on the one hand, on philosophers and literary intellectuals and, on the other, on social scientific institutions, research methods, and schools. Even so, the theme of “industrial society” has recently emerged in connection to France in a flowering (and predominantly Anglophone) reconsideration of the thought of Raymond Aron, the principle revivalist of the term *société industrielle* in the 1950s.³⁴ While this literature explores many aspects of Aron’s thought, and not only his theory of industrial society, it has laid the groundwork for my work by rigorously—and less hagiographically than past waves of post-Cold War scholarship—evaluating Aron’s thought in its French and international context. In particular, it brings out the centrality of the Cold War, anti-Communism, and geopolitics as central to Aron’s development of his theory of industrial society and his inspiration for the theme of the “end of ideology.” My dissertation adds a larger international cast of characters to the world of Aron and his American collaborators, and shows that, as influential as he was, Aron was one among many who theorized industrial society, and the themes of his

³³ Howard Brick, “Optimism of the Mind: Imagining Postindustrial Society in the 1960s and 1970s,” *American Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1992): 348–80; Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 54–57.

³⁴ Alexandre Chirat, “La société industrielle d’Aron et Galbraith : des regards croisés pour une vision convergente ?,” *Cahiers d’économie politique* n° 76, no. 1 (July 10, 2019): 47–87; Iain Stewart, *Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Hugo Drochon, “Raymond Aron’s ‘Machiavellian’ Liberalism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 80, no. 4 (2019): 621–42; Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, “The Other Intellectuals: Raymond Aron and the United States” (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York, Columbia University, 2016); José Colen and Elisabeth Dutartre-Michaut, eds., *The Companion to Raymond Aron* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

thought were one of many possible variations seen in France and the United States in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Between Socialism and Technocracy: Sociology as Transatlantic Political Knowledge

The industrial-society paradigm was enabled by and integral to two important midcentury developments: the formation of a transatlantic intellectual field that connected social scientists in Western Europe and the United States, and the rise of social science as producer and mediator of political knowledge. Indeed, sociologists who theorized industrial society stood at the intersection of these two trends, *combining* their positions in transnational networks and their growing influence as political mediators to champion a new transatlantic social-democratic disposition that drew upon the prestige and objective image of social science for its legitimacy.

For at least the past decade, intellectual historians have paid increasing attention to the transatlantic dimensions of European and American thinking, ideology, and social science in the postwar period.³⁵ The influence of the United States had already begun to make a mark on Europe in the first half of the twentieth century; French social science in particular, due to its weak institutionalization, came to rely on American philanthropic funding. Interwar connections laid the groundwork for a much closer relationship after World War as the two countries were woven more

³⁵ Johan Heilbron, Nicolas Guilhot, and Laurent Jeanpierre, "Toward a Transnational History of the Social Sciences," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 44, no. 2 (March 1, 2008): 146–60; Gisèle Sapiro, *L'espace intellectuel en Europe : de la formation des États-nations à la mondialisation XIXe-XXIe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009); François Chaubet, "Faire l'histoire des sciences sociales : le cas de la sociologie française," *Histoire@Politique* n° 22, no. 1 (October 22, 2014): 251–68; Christian Fleck, *A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences: Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); Daniel Bessner, *Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018); James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Making of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Emigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Laurent Jeanpierre, "Les structures d'une pensée d'exilé: La formation du structuralisme de Claude Lévi-Strauss," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 28, no. 1 (2010): 58–76; Emmanuelle Loyer, *Paris à New York : Intellectuels et artistes français en exil, 1940-1947* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 2005).

tightly together by European reconstruction and then by the Cold War. While France maintained its world-leading role in literature and the arts for several decades after 1945, the center of gravity in the social sciences shifted almost immediately to the United States.³⁶ American philanthropic support was crucial for France's marquee postwar social-science institutions, including the Centre national de recherche scientifique (CNRS) and the Sixth Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE).³⁷ State-sponsored voyages, "productivity missions," and Fulbright scholarships sent thousands of French men and women to the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s, including Georges Friedmann and the first generation of postwar French sociologists.³⁸ Bilateral connections between American and French university institutions, often based on personal contacts and friendships, flourished. International organizations like the International Sociological Association, UNESCO, and the anti-Communist Congress for Cultural Freedom brought Europeans and Americans together to debate the sociological issues of contemporary society.³⁹ While the new transnational intellectual field was marked by the gravitational pull of American

³⁶ Jean-Christophe Marcel, *Reconstruire la sociologie française avec les Américains? La réception de la sociologie américaine en France (1945-1959)* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2017); Marie Scot, "L'impérialisme des idées et de la culture française," in *La vie intellectuelle en France*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 2016), 355–80.

³⁷ Ludovic Tournès, *Sciences de l'homme et politique: les fondations philanthropiques américaines en France au XXe siècle* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011); John Krige, *American Hegemony and the Postwar Reconstruction of Science in Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006); Brigitte Mazon, *Aux origines de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales: le rôle du mécénat américain (1920-1960)* (Paris: Cerf, 1988).

³⁸ Johan Heilbron, *French Sociology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Lucie Tanguy, *La sociologie du travail en France: enquête sur le travail des sociologues, 1950-1990* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011); Régis Boulat, *Jean Fourastié, un expert en productivité: la modernisation de la France, années trente-années cinquante* (Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2008); Dominique Barjot, John Gillingham, and Terushi Hara, eds., *Catching Up with America: Productivity Missions and the Diffusion of American Economic and Technological Influence After the Second World War* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002); Jean-Michel Chapoulie, "La seconde fondation de la sociologie française, les États-Unis et la classe ouvrière," *Revue française de sociologie* 32, no. 3 (1991): 321–64; Richard F. Kuisel, "L'américan way of life et les missions françaises de productivité," *Vingtième Siècle* 17, no. 1 (1988): 21–38.

³⁹ Jennifer Platt, *History of ISA, 1948-1997* (Paris: International Sociological Association, 1998); Pierre Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme: le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris (1950-1975)* (Paris: Fayard, 1995); Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Political Economy of American Hegemony 1945-1955* (London: Routledge, 2002).

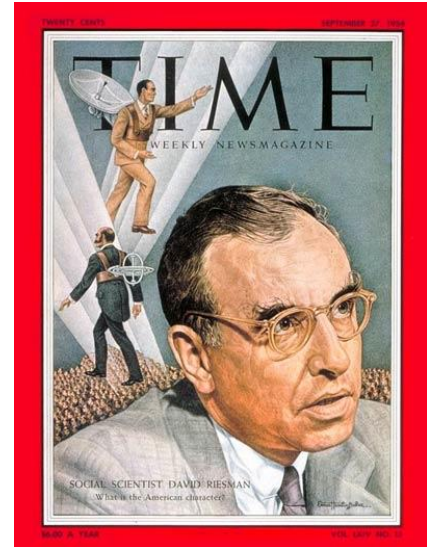
geopolitical hegemony, it had reciprocal effects on U.S. intellectual life. American industrial-society theorists drew deeply on the European sociological tradition, sometimes in contradistinction to more typically American approaches. Major postwar sociologists and public intellectuals like Daniel Bell and David Riesman spent time in Paris in the 1950s, and their thinking about the new type of society in the making was shaped by their experience of Europe as well as of their own country.

The rise of the industrial-society paradigm was part of a second social phenomenon: the rise of the social scientist as public expert and mediator of political knowledge. While historians have begun to explore this phenomenon, it remains underdeveloped, and is rarely connected, as it should be, to the major figures, publications, and debates that marked postwar intellectual history.

⁴⁰ The postwar period was still marked by the strong influence of literary intellectuals on public life, but sociology had already begun to work itself into the public consciousness in the 1950s. Sociologists like Friedmann, Riesman, and C. Wright Mills published public-oriented bestsellers,

⁴⁰ Some of these authors focus on figures who overlapped the worlds of sociology and social-democratic politics. See Charles Petersen, “Meritocracy in America, 1885-2007” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2020); Lise Butler, *Michael Young, Social Science, and the British Left, 1945-1970* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Marius Strubenhoff, “Ideas, Interests, and Institutions in Ralf Dahrendorf’s Materialist Liberalism” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2019); Mathieu Fulla, “Michel Rocard et l’économie : itinéraire d’un social-démocrate français,” *L’Économie politique* 73, no. 1 (February 20, 2017): 21–36; Daniel Geary, “Children of the Lonely Crowd: David Riesman, the Young Radicals, and the Splitting of Liberalism in the 1960s,” *Modern Intellectual History* 10, no. 3 (November 2013): 603–33; Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition: C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). For histories of social scientists whose influence was in state and state-adjacent institutions, see Bessner, *Democracy in Exile*; Delphine Dulong, *Moderniser la politique: aux origines de la Ve République* (Paris: Harmattan, 1997).

and Riesman appeared on the cover of *Time* in 1954. France's major general-interest intellectual journals, *Les Temps Modernes* and *Esprit*, increasingly called upon social scientists to diagnose the social world and the prognosis for left politics. The two largest French publishing houses, Gallimard and Le Seuil, devoted increasing attention to social science, giving sociologists a platform to reach the general public.⁴¹ French sociologists became participants in think-tank style “clubs” on the reformist left which brought together social-scientific experts and “men of action” (technocrats) like the Club Jean



Cover of *Time* magazine, September 27, 1954: "Social Scientist David Riesman: What is the American Character?"

Moulin and the “Futuribles” group, management organizations like *Entreprise et Personnel*, and advisers to left formations like the *Parti Socialiste Unifié*.⁴² Increasingly, Western European political parties themselves turned to social science to make their ideological arguments and to develop policy—with sociologists prominent among them. By the time sociologists like Alain Touraine and Michel Crozier defended their dissertations in the mid-1960s, these were intellectual events in Paris attended by wide circles of political, business, and intellectual elites and covered in the mainstream press.

⁴¹ François Chaubet, “Gallimard et les sciences humaines : le tournant des années 1940,” *Histoire@Politique*, no. 17 (July 4, 2012): 112–29. An exhibition on the history of Le Seuil in 2007 boasted that the publisher had been one of the first to devote extensive attention to “the takeoff of industrial society.” Hervé Serry, *Les Éditions du Seuil : 70 ans d'histoires* (Paris: Seuil/IMEC Éditeur, 2008), 88.

⁴² Claire Andrieu, *Pour l'amour de la République : le Club Jean Moulin, 1958-1970* (Paris: Fayard, 2002); Benoit Gautier, “D’un laboratoire sociale à l’autre : l’influence des industries automobiles et pétrochimiques dans la constitution des savoirs professionnels en gestion du personnel (1969-1979)” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.); Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (New York and London: Verso, 2005).

These two developments combined in a dimension of postwar social science to which dissertation aims draws attention to for the first time: the role of the sociologists in forging a transatlantic, post-Communist left that shared a political vision rooted in social-scientific notions like “industrial society.” In particular, I draw attention to intellectual journals that were closer to the margins of the intellectual field, but exerted outsized influence on the intellectual left as it searched for an orientation in the era of Cold War retrenchment, the onset of postwar affluence and so-called “mass society,” and the rise of the Third World. Journals like *Arguments* in France and *Dissent* in the U.S. were dominated by sociologists who used them as platforms to develop the political implications of their scientific work. In the increasingly post-Communist and post-ideological atmosphere of the later 1950s, sociology seemed to provide an alternative to the esoteric philosophical squabbles that had marked the immediate postwar years, when the Parti communiste français (PCF) exerted its most powerful influence over French intellectual life, and, in the U.S., to size up the balance sheet of McCarthyism and the 1950s era of “conformity.” *Arguments* and *Dissent*—among many others in other countries—were thoroughly transnational affairs, with trans-European and trans-Atlantic casts of contributors, and regular translations of thinkers like Daniel Bell and C. Wright Mills.

It was in fora such as these that sociologists, often armed with industrial-society ideas, helped to forge a new transatlantic consensus for the social-democratic left that moved decidedly away from revolutionary rhetoric, de-emphasized the centrality of property ownership and redistribution, pushed to expand the left’s horizons beyond the working class, particularly toward white-collar workers, and first suggested that “industrial societies” would be characterized by

widespread alienation that could perhaps be catalyzed into new types of politics.⁴³ The rise of “industrial society,” for figures in the French Socialist Party, the British Labour Party, and the American Democratic Party heralded a “reversion, after a brief abnormal spell of laissez-faire, to the normal historical pattern...of conscious control over social and economic life.”⁴⁴ If this development clearly represented a resignation to the American-organized political economy of the Cold War era, it was not a mere acculturation of the European left to the norms of a non-socialist American “liberalism.”⁴⁵ American industrial-society theorists were overwhelmingly ex-radicals with residual conformist commitments, and they elaborated the vision of industrial society *in collaboration* with European colleagues in a collective renegotiation of commitments for the postwar era. As the 1960s advanced, this vision was increasingly appropriated and modified by more radical political actors. If both French and American sociologists threw off the trappings of the “old left,” it was in part because they believed, optimistically, that the emergence of “industrial society” necessitated a large-scale rethinking of the old radical project and its theories.

It was in this confrontation with the old left and marked shift toward reformism that the postwar generation of sociologists were precursors to the transatlantic New Lefts, many of whose participants were their students, and at the same time ensured their own oedipal rejection. The material structures of sociology in the immediate postwar periods—its methods, language, and funding arrangements—had brought it close to the managerial impulses of the postwar state and private industry. Some French sociologists openly embraced technocratic networks and visions of

⁴³ Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 241.

⁴⁴ Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 160.

⁴⁵ On the ideological ambiguity of American liberalism, see David Sessions, “Cold War Liberalism or Socialist Revisionism? Transatlantic Sociology, ‘Industrial Society,’ and the Antitotalitarian Style Between France and America,” in Daniel Bessner and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Liberalism: Politics and Ideology in the American Century*, under review with Penn Press.

Fabian- or Saint-Simonian political change, while others *seemed* to do so through what a younger generation would see as tepid reformism. Sociologists' influence was associated with their scientific presentation of the world, at some remove from political militancy. The 1968 generation would not only insist on more radical political strategies, but also sharply politicize the production of knowledge. Like the Communist Party before them, the young sociologists in the French New Left also politicized their transnational connections, denouncing the previous generation's "*importation des doctrines made in U.S.A.*"⁴⁶ The supposed conservative capitulation of the postwar generation of sociologists would become conventional wisdom among the radical sociologists of the 1970s in both the United States and France, the latter often colored with a renewed anti-Americanism, as in Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski's description of postwar sociology as imported American technocracy.⁴⁷ Such descriptions touched on the political ambiguity of postwar sociology and the industrial-society paradigm alike: while its American associations and proximity to powerful "patrons" did not by any means predetermine its intellectual content, it did in some cases adapt to the modes and shibboleths of postwar technocratic governance. The rise of sociological expertise was part of a shift toward extra-parliamentary executive power bolstered by technocratic experts, a shift to which left parties adapted with the help of social scientists.⁴⁸ At the same time, what younger critics like Bourdieu and Daniel Cohn-Bendit missed was that the older sociologists had not only prepared the intellectual ground for many characteristic New Left ideas and arguments, they had also pioneered the criticism of

⁴⁶ Pierre Fougeyrollas, "De la psychotechnique à la sociologie policière," *La nouvelle critique* 3, no. 28 (August 1951): 25–46; Daniel Cohn-Bendit et al., "Pourquoi des sociologues ?," *Esprit*, no. 371 (1968): 877–82.

⁴⁷ Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski, "La production de l'idéologie dominante," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 2 (1976): 3–73.

⁴⁸ Mathieu Fulla, *Les socialistes français et l'économie : une histoire économique du politique (1944-1981)* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2016).

American sociology, often for exactly the same reasons.⁴⁹ Even so, 1968 not only crashed the industrial-society paradigm, but drove an ideological sorting, pushing some professors to the right as students radicalized, and retrenching divisions between “mainstream” and “radical” sociology.⁵⁰

Centering and Decentering France: Americanization, Modernization, Decolonization

The rise of the industrial-society paradigm is inseparable from a mid-century trend toward the homogenization of international social science around American norms, which this dissertation examines through the lens of Franco-American interactions. Already before World War II, French social scientists, like other Europeans, had begun to look across the Atlantic at the New Deal, the American labor movement, American industrial relations, and the Keynesian revolution in American economics as the keys to resolving the crises of the interwar period.⁵¹ After 1945, a combination of American imposition and French thirst for modernization instigated a massive importation of American methods, styles, ideas, and concepts into French institutions, especially the state and university apparatuses. French sociologists like Georges Friedmann worked tirelessly to reconstruct social science in France on the model of what would become the American “instrumental university” even before it was firmly established in the United States: of social science as an interventionist partner of government and industry in social problem-solving. Dozens of young French social scientists flocked to American universities on Fulbright scholarships,

⁴⁹ On the same dynamic between American sociological generations, see Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 207; Paul Berman, “Left Behind: Daniel Bell and the Class of ’68,” *Bookforum*, May 2005.

⁵⁰ Pierre Grémion, “Les sociologues et 68: notes de recherche,” in *Mai 68, Le Débat*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), 33–65; Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Culture of Sociology in Disarray: The Impact of 1968 on U.S. Sociologists,” in *Sociology in America: A History*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 427–37.

⁵¹ Stefan J. Link, *Forging Global Fordism: Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and the Contest Over the Industrial Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020); Jackie Clarke, *France in the Age of Organization: Factory, Home and Nation from the 1920s to Vichy* (New York: Berghahn, 2014); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

productivity missions, and study-abroad arrangements. “I long held onto the feeling,” Alain Touraine wrote of his stay at Harvard in the early 1950s, “that we were...badly-initiated but energetic young barbarians, while New England was the Old World.”⁵² The nascent French social sciences of the 1950s were so strongly associated with the United States that they were repeatedly attacked in the Communist press as a front for the CIA.

These political conflicts point to a fact that appears paradoxical for any account of intellectual “Americanization” in France: that French intellectuals were so famous for their anti-Americanism that even many non-scholars have encountered the term “Coca-Colonization.”⁵³ Even the most stalwart social-scientific Americanizers voiced the standard tropes of anti-American French exceptionalism: the superiority of French high culture over America’s mass entertainment, French individualism versus American status-seeking and conformism, and the French social conscience versus rapacious American capitalism. Americans, the leading French sociologist Georges Friedmann wrote in 1947, were “‘robots’ deprived of living fibers and interior life,” living in a country marked by the “deterioration of the individual.”⁵⁴ He was hardly more positive after his first voyage to the U.S. in 1948. In the narrower world of social science, French holism, attention to social and historical context, and respect for science were constantly vaunted in opposition to America’s supposed know-nothing positivism and managerial social engineering.⁵⁵ But while I examine such critiques closely and consider how they conditioned the transatlantic

⁵² Alain Touraine, *Un désir d'histoire* (Paris: Stock, 1977), 64.

⁵³ Marie Scot, “L’anti-américanisme dans la vie intellectuelle française,” in *La vie intellectuelle en France*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 2016), 381–86; Richard F. Kuisel, *The French Way: How France Embraced and Rejected American Values and Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012); Sophie Meunier, “Anti-Americanisms in France,” *French Politics, Culture and Society* 23, no. 2 (2005): 126–41; Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁵⁴ Georges Friedmann, “Forces morales et valeurs permanentes,” in *L’Heure du choix* (Paris: Minuit, 1947), 93.

⁵⁵ Marcel, *Reconstruire la sociologie française avec les Américains*.

transmission of social science, I conclude that we should look at least as closely at what French actors *did* as at what they said. In fact, many championed the appropriation of American tools in bold, enterprising, and path-breaking ways even as they denounced America's pathologies and blindnesses. Notwithstanding a now-clichéd critique of their provincialism from both sides of the Atlantic, postwar French intellectuals could be clear-eyed about their diminished place in the world.⁵⁶ Like those of their counterparts in government, politics, and business, their actions indicate they saw no alternative to becoming more like America in order to remain French. As a result, French social scientists joined an international debate about industrial society, simultaneously eager to modernize their profession and their country, and hoping to do so in their own way.

I thus conceive of Americanization as an asymmetric, coercive process that nonetheless required the consensual and even engaged participation of Western Europeans. Repeatedly, I emphasize increasing Franco-American convergence rather than French uniqueness and difference.⁵⁷ Putting France at the center of this project thus also serves to *decenter* it in the history of the postwar conjuncture: by showing that *even* the country that mounted the most vigorous defense of its exceptionalism ended up, much like its European counterparts, becoming in some ways a lot more like America. However, the notion of co-production reminds us that even so,

⁵⁶ Michel Crozier, "Les intellectuels et la stagnation française," *Esprit*, no. 209 (12) (1953): 771–82; Raymond Aron, *L'Opium des intellectuels* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1955); Julian Bourg, "Blame It on Paris," *French Historical Studies* 35, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 181–97. For a fictionalized account of postwar French intellectuals wrestling with the rise of the superpowers and the Cold War blocs, see Simone de Beauvoir, *Les mandarins* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954).

⁵⁷ Richard Kuisel has recently proposed a pertinent reframing of the concept of "Americanization" in response to its many critics, calling for renewed focus on the asymmetrical and coercive economic relations between the two nations. "The End of Americanization? Or Reinventing a Research Field for Historians of Europe," *The Journal of Modern History* 92, no. 3 (August 2020): 602–34; See also Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Ludovic Tournès, "Américanisation," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire culturelle de la France contemporaine* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010), 18–22.

Americanization did not mean the unilateral imposition of American designs on Europeans; American “soft power” was exerted in accidental and contradictory ways, guided only by the broadest of ideological strokes.⁵⁸ The invention of “industrial society,” in particular, was a collaborative, transnational project. French social scientists played an important role alongside their American colleagues in producing a popular sociological “image” of a postwar, American-coded modernity, and in translating its supposed consequences into French political debate.

French social scientists were often unaware of how much they were acculturating to America; to them, their society remained remarkably *unlike* America, sometimes to their frustration. This was in part because of the way industrial-society thinking itself reconfigured the national and the global in what was believed to be an era of universal modernization. Industrial-society theorists did not, as I do, see their nation as part of a capitalist world-system temporarily organized under the military and economic hegemony of the United States. While they certainly recognized the existence of Cold War blocs, they came to see France as an “industrial society” that was, like all other enclosed national society-units, on its own vector of modernization or “industrialization.” Though industrial-society sociology was predominantly concerned with domestic development and politics, it borrowed its global dimensions from modernization theory. “Industrial society” enabled the reconciliation of two contradictory emphases: on the planetary, where modernization was imagined to be universal and unidirectional, and on the provincial, where the particularity and uniqueness of the nation-state was reaffirmed. Industrial-society sociology was thus modernization theory turned explicitly inward toward the domestic and metropolitan. We might call an intellectual Fordism or Keynesianism, englobing the productive nation-state within

⁵⁸ Krige, *American Hegemony and the Postwar Reconstruction of Science in Europe*.

its borders and rendering the rest of the world a mirror in which France regarded its own image as it undertook a project of national consolidation and redefinition.⁵⁹

This points to a crucial dimension of postwar French history that is treated only in passing in this dissertation, for the borders of the French nation-state were in fact in profound and violent contention for an important part of the period under consideration.⁶⁰ Most of the French social-scientists in this story opposed French colonialism, and the bloody colonial war in Algeria in the 1950s and early 1960s played a major role in galvanizing the non-Communist left formations in which they played a role. At the same time, the rise of “industrial society” thinking in France paralleled the broader substitution of modernization for empire.⁶¹ The notion of France “catching up with America,” becoming an “industrial society,” blended with a collective project of redefining France along its metropolitan European borders and jettisoning the empire down the memory hole. Industrial-society sociology in part made this possible by breaking the world into bounded, semi-autonomous and self-directed society-units, thus disappearing the power relationships that organized them into an international hierarchy. As incredible as it may seem in retrospect, it was in this way that social scientists could reframe the most economically advanced nations in the world like France and even the United States as “developing” countries just crossing the threshold of modernity.⁶²

⁵⁹ Compare to Adam Tooze’s reflections on how European historiography shifted from an interwar global frame to a postwar nation-state one. Adam Tooze, “Provincializing Europe?,” *Adam Tooze* (blog), January 6, 2019, <https://adamtooze.com/2019/01/06/framing-crashed-8-provincializing-europe/>.

⁶⁰ Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁶¹ Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

⁶² Seymour M. Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Global and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

The story of industrial-society sociology thus casts new light on some of the most important developments in postwar European history, including Americanization, modernization, and decolonization. The reinvention of France as an “industrial society” played a central role in how French social scientists, politicians, and citizens alike imagined their place in the world, their relationship to industry and technology, and navigated the “loss” of the colonies. It reveals one dimension of how a new conception of France as advanced, modern, and high-tech marked the country’s politics and popular imagination in the second half of the twentieth-century.⁶³ Placing France at the center of this story shows both how it was typical and how it was unique. It Americanized along with everyone else, but not *like* everyone else: what distinguished it was the unusual clamor and intensity with which it confronted the inevitable.

An Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 examines the early career of Georges Friedmann, who would become one of the chief institutional entrepreneurs of postwar French sociology and whose career embodied the tensions and ambivalences of the industrial-society paradigm in miniature. Following Friedmann’s Communist fellow-traveling and early attraction to social science in the 1930s, it shows how the central questions of the paradigm arose in the interwar period, and how Friedmann, like other sociologists, would transpose his radicalism into social science and establish an uneasy fusion of his modernist and romantic tendencies.

⁶³ On the French romance with high technology, see Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). The novelist Aurélien Bellanger has perhaps captured this sensibility in fiction better than any historian. *La théorie de l’information* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012); *L’aménagement du territoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014); *Le Grand Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017).

Chapter 2 shows how another interwar problematic—the question of bureaucracy, or as it was later called, the “managerial revolution”—moved from left radicalism into sociology in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Looking at the bureaucracy sociology that developed under Robert Merton at Columbia University, it shows how young sociologists exiting radicalism field-tested the theories of Max Weber and Robert Michels. They developed a uniquely American interpretation of bureaucracy that warned of its potential “totalitarian” dangers, but also came to admire its real-world flexibility and utility for social reform. American bureaucracy sociology was important not only in how it influenced French sociologists like Michel Crozier, but also in how it enacted one of the central moves of industrial-society thinking: to subdue a romantic critique of modern capitalist society, in this case an opposition to hierarchy and administration, in a modernist commitment to value-free science and expert-led social reform.

Chapter 3 follows the “managerial revolution” across the Atlantic to Paris, where it arrived in the late 1940s as the question of French reconstruction and the Cold War took center stage. It examines two “locations” in which James Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution* (1941) was debated in France, where we find independent Marxist intellectuals and academic sociologists participating together in an emerging sociological public. Not only does this moment of the late 1940s show how early the themes of the “modernist,” “independent,” or “non-Communist” left of the 1950s emerged in postwar France, but also the relatively greater proximity of French radicals and “establishment” sociologists—a feature that would figure in the greater sympathy of French sociology professors for their radical students in 1968 than that evinced by their American counterparts. It also helps to explain the unique radicalization of French industrial-society sociology in the 1970s and its ultimate role in transforming the political left in a manner that contrasted with the Anglo-American world of the same period.

Chapter 4 returns to the United States, following Georges Friedmann as he toured American universities and laid the groundwork of his industrial-society thinking through an encounter with the postwar U.S. Drawing on American archives, it shows how Friedmann created an American network that included both figures who supported his establishment of the “instrumental university” model of social science in France, but also humanist critics of that project like the University of Chicago historian John U. Nef. Through a reading of Friedmann’s paradoxical and highly ambivalent 1950 travelogue *Où va le travail humain ?*, this chapter shows how he sketched a new theory of technological evolution—a version of the industrial-society paradigm’s “logic of industrialization”—that served as a model for thinking about technological evolution in postwar French sociology.

Chapter 5 explores the infrastructure of postwar French sociology, especially *sociologie du travail* (sociology of work) and its imbrication in the politics of postwar reconstruction, the Cold War, and the modernization of France. The new institutional beginnings for French sociology were centered around the technical study of industrial labor, but also produced wide-ranging reflections on the evolution of work and social conflict, most notably in Alain Touraine’s “ABC” theory of automation. Chapter 5 concludes by briefly examining other transatlantic strands of evolutionary thinking that about the “logic of industrialization” and the “end of ideology.”

Chapter 6 covers the high moment of crystallization of the industrial-society paradigm in France from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. It does so by following sociological analysis of social class, of the French working class in particular, and the question of the working class’ role in left politics during the turbulent moment of decolonization and the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic. During this moment, sociologists gradually began to achieve recognition as public intellectuals who could speak to the true state of contemporary French society, and gained

influence in an overlapping set of institutions that included academic sociology, general-interest intellectual journals, and political groups on the “modernist” left outside the Communist Party. This chapter shows how a nexus of sociology and the modernist left in France, closely connected to American analogues, embraced industrial-society thinking about the future of the working class and of class politics. In particular, this nexus began to look beyond the industrial working class as social agent, beyond economics as the horizon of socialism, and beyond “revolution” as the means for achieving it.

Chapter 7 argues that the industrial-society paradigm fractured during the late 1960s and 1970s as it came under pressure from new forms of radical critique and activism. Students of postwar sociologists like Alain Touraine and Michel Crozier in France, Daniel Bell in the U.S., and Ralf Dahrendorf in Germany criticized industrial-society thinking as a complacent embrace of the status quo. The French Communist Party directly attacked the theory of industrial society as anti-Marxist and unscientific. This chapter, however, shows that matters were more complex than a generational divide or a break between establishment and radical critics. Students and radicals picked up on recessive and ambivalent notes that were already part of the tension-riddled industrial-society paradigm, and developed them into new styles of thinking that radicalized and pushed them forward—or, in some cases, backward. Where the postwar generation had subdued romantic critique with a turn to modernist values, the 1968 generation tipped the scales in the other direction. The final chapter explores the consequences of this shift for the concepts that made up industrial-society sociology, but also for the discipline of sociology and for French politics.

Chapter One

The *Romancier Sociologue*: Georges Friedmann and the Origins of Industrial-Society Sociology in France

« *Nous vivons une période de la préhistoire humaine.* »

—Georges Friedmann, 1939

No single figure played a larger role in establishing industrial-society sociology in France after the Second World War than the sociologist Georges Friedmann. But like those of so many mid-twentieth century social scientists, the crucible of Friedmann's perspective was the interwar period, in which the aftermath of the Great War shook the economic and cultural foundations of Europe and instigated a dramatic search for new ideas and political projects. The destruction of the war, the penetration of American technology and ideas, and the Russian Revolution formed the basic backdrop in which European intellectuals confronted what was widely perceived to be a crisis of civilization, a collapse of humanism and progress. Economic crisis and unemployment centered, more intensely than ever, the problems of labor, industry, and mass society, which many intellectuals greeted with laments about European decadence and the dehumanizing effects of technology. As the 1930s dawned, Western Europeans seemed to face a choice between models: crisis-ridden, consumerist American capitalism, productivist Soviet socialism, or fascism's hyper-modern anti-modernism. In such an environment, industry, production, and technology took on polarizing civilizational charges, becoming symbols for understandings of the human, of social order, and of modernity itself.¹

These questions would undergird the rise of the industrial-society paradigm in postwar France. But like his American counterparts, Friedmann's understanding of the emerging

¹ Jackie Clarke, "Imagined Productive Communities: Industrial Rationalisation and Cultural Crisis in 1930s France," *Modern & Contemporary France* 8, no. 3 (June 1, 2000): 345–57.

“industrial society” were part of a temporal trajectory from interwar to postwar, and a personal one from hopes for radical social change, steeped in romanticism, to a chastened social-scientific modernism that turned to the tools of science, public policy, and sometimes networks of elite influence as the best avenue to more gradual progressive change. This chapter uses Friedmann’s early career as a philosoviet advocate, sociological entrepreneur, and burgeoning Marxist public intellectual as a window into the interwar formation of the two main subjects of this dissertation: the ideas that made up the industrial-society paradigm as a sociological image of postwar society, and the social role of the sociologist as public intellectual to which that paradigm was inextricably linked.

As a pioneer in both dimensions, Friedmann’s career in the 1920s and 1930s is an especially rich demonstration of the broader character of industrial-society ideas. Sociologically, Friedmann exemplified the industrial-society theorist’s typical passage from radical political engagement in the 1930s to disenchantment with Stalinist Communism at the end of the decade to a more cautious and pessimistic social-democratic reformism after the Second World War. Already in the interwar period, he began to develop an enterprising role as a social-scientific public intellectual, bringing sociology and Marxism into the French intellectual milieu dominated by philosophy and literature. He would extend this project further after the war by simultaneously helping to bring American-style “industrial relations” and empirical sociology to France while also advancing sociology as a tool of public policy and public intellectualism. Intellectually, as well, Friedmann’s path through the 1930s illustrates the industrial-society paradigm’s constitutive tensions between romantic and modernist values: on the one hand, a critique of alienation and rationalization inspired in part by the early Marx and a concomitant attachment to civilizational moralizing; on the other, a future-oriented embrace of emerging “forces of production,” from the

Fordist assembly line to automated industrial technology, and a corresponding belief in the superiority of modern social-scientific techniques over literary punditry.¹ Following the young Friedmann enables to see up close how these two were pressed into an uneasy fusion in postwar sociology until they were fractured again by the social contestation of the late 1960s.

Georges Friedmann in the 1930s: An Overview

Born in 1902 into a German-Jewish banking family that had emigrated to Paris in the 1880s, Georges Philippe Friedmann abandoned his initial studies in engineering and entered the École Normale Supérieure in 1923 alongside Georges Canguilhem, Jean Cavaillès, and Jean-Paul Sartre, ranking fourth on the entrance *concours*.² During the 1920s, his concerns were predominantly philosophical and literary, as testified to the three short-lived journals he launched with *normalien* comrades and funded with his personal wealth: *Philosophies* (1924-1925), *L'Esprit* (1926-27) and the *Revue Marxiste* (1929).³ After passing the *agrégation* in philosophy in 1926 and completing a year of military service in 1928-29, Friedmann became a *lycée* philosophy professor in Bourges.

¹ For a pioneering analysis of the tension between modernism and romanticism in Friedmann's thought, see François Vatin, "Machinisme, marxisme, humanisme : Georges Friedmann avant et après-guerre," *Sociologie du Travail* 46, no. 2 (April 2004): 205–23. There are remarkable parallels in the 1930s as experienced by Friedmann and, for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose social-scientific work would operate in a quite distant empirical domain. Emmanuelle Loyer, *Lévi-Strauss: A Biography*, trans. Ninon Vinsonneau and Jonathan Magidoff (London: Polity, 2018).

² "Notice individuelle," May 31, 1963, Georges Friedmann dossier de carrière, Ministry of National Education, Archives Nationales.

³ Bud Burkhard, *French Marxism Between the Wars: Henri Lefebvre and the "Philosophies"* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2000); Daniel Lindenberg, "Georges Friedmann et la « Revue marxiste »,» in *Georges Friedmann : Un sociologue dans le siècle, 1902-1977*, ed. Pierre Grémion and Françoise Piotet (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013), 15–19. For Friedmann's account of his involvement in these projects, see Georges Friedmann, *La Puissance et la Sagesse* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 379–80.

Already taking an interest in industrial psychology and scientific management, he in 1931 began a part-time apprenticeship in machine tools at the École Didérot beginning in 1931.⁴ But his main associations and activities came in a whirlwind in 1932, as he firmly installed himself in three overlapping milieux: those of the university social science, of philosoviet science linked to Communist political engagement, and of the general literary intelligentsia in which he had moved since the 1920s. In 1932, Friedmann was appointed as an assistant-archivist to the Durkheimian sociologist Célestin Bouglé at the Centre de documentation sociale (CDS), a center affiliated with the École Normale Supérieure. Friedmann almost simultaneously became involved with the new Scientific Commission of the Cercle de la Russie Neuve (CRN), a Soviet-supported cultural diplomacy organization that aimed to spread Soviet scientific views and attracted a considerable following among French academic psychologists and natural scientists seeking to articulate a new “holistic” scientific vision against the French literary intelligentsia’s attacks on reason, science, and modernity. Finally, he actively participated in a number of literary associations designed to draw intellectuals to Communism and to create anti-fascist fronts of writers; these included the Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires (AEAR) and the 1935 Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture. In addition to writing in social-scientific journals like *Annales* and Communist publications like *L’Humanité* and Henri Barbusse’s *Monde*, Friedmann maintained a steady presence in literary journals: in both Romain Rolland’s *Europe* and AEAR’s literature-oriented journal *Commune*, he explained basic concepts of contemporary social science and defended the incorporation of economic and technical knowledge into the intelligentsia’s understanding of politics.

⁴ Friedmann, *La Puissance et la Sagesse*, 113.

As other historians have noted, Friedmann's unique position at the crossroads of these zones of engagement allowed him to become an intellectual "entrepreneur," establishing himself as, for example, an interpreter of the Soviet Union in French public life and an innovator of the role of the university-affiliated proponent of Marxism.⁵ But as this chapter will show, Friedmann's hybridization of roles and zones of expertise went even further, allowing him to advocate for social-scientific knowledge in the realm of the literary intelligentsia, and to mobilize his knowledge of the U.S.S.R. in defense of a planned socialist economy against technocratic, corporatist, and fascist alternatives. Friedmann's effort to synthesize philosophy and empirical social science, and to speak across academic, political, and literary domains, produced some of his most suggestive work, and participated in the elaboration of a new vision of "dialectical materialism" that would transcend the gulf between knowledge and action, between science and letters—in short, would resolve some of the deepest problems of modernity.

Friedmann's writing in the 1930s, including his two major books, *La Crise du progrès* (1936) and *De la Sainte Russie à l'U.R.S.S.* (1938), both of which will be examined in more detail below, negotiated between these three zones of action; they combined a classical French philosophical education with a burgeoning social-scientific expertise and an expansive command of contemporary world literature. But Friedmann's hybridization of roles broke down quickly in 1938-39, beginning with the Communist Party's hostile reception of *De la Sainte Russie*, which it used as an opportunity to signal its broader unwillingness to tolerate even mild criticisms of the Soviet Union from its network of fellow-traveling scientists and intellectuals. Friedmann was pushed away from the Parti Communiste (PCF) against his will, and the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop

⁵ Isabelle Gouarné, "Engagement philosoïétique et posture sociologique dans l'entre-deux-guerres : le rôle politico-intellectuel de Georges Friedmann," *Sociologie du Travail* 54, no. 3 (July 2012): 356–74.

Pact send his hope in the U.S.S.R., if not his commitment to socialism, spiraling into crisis. When the Liberation of France from Nazi occupation in 1945 remade the landscape of political and institutional activity, he had to seek new ways of pursuing the concerns of the 1930s, which he would increasingly find in American-style sociology.

Marxism as Dialectical Method: Friedmann's Philosophy

Friedmann was already involved in left-wing political activities by age eighteen, when he was an active enough participant in the Henri Barbusse's pacifist *Clarté* group to ask Barbusse personally for time off to prepare for his entrance exams to the École Normale Supérieure.⁶ Like many young socialists before him, Friedmann would be initiated into Hegel, Marx, and Lenin by Lucien Herr, the influential librarian of the ENS. But his overwhelming philosophical identity in the 1920s was imparted to him by the philosopher Alain's *khâgne* at the Lycée Henri-IV: anti-Bergsonism. Alain, exercising a similarly mesmerizing effect on his students as Bergson did in his lectures at the Collège de France, denounced Bergsonism "as incoherent psychology, as sophistry, as pragmatism, as amoral doctrine and as political opportunism."⁷ Anti-Bergsonism was still central to the group of Sorbonne students that Friedmann joined in the mid-1920s to launch a series of short-lived journals, including Norbert Guterman, Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Morhange, Paul Nizan, and Georges Politzer. The group saw itself as responding to the detachment and decadence of establishment philosophy in the ruins of the Great War, as mounting a rebellion in search of a new *mystique*—a ground of ethics and guide to action—to the interwar "*crise de l'esprit*" famously declared by Paul Valéry. The critique of the supposed interiority and solipsism of

⁶ Georges Friedmann, "Barbusse et les jeunes," *Monde*, September 12, 1935.

⁷ Giuseppe Bianco, *Après Bergson: portrait de groupe avec philosophe* (Paris: PUF, 2015), 52.

Bergsonism increasingly gave way to reflection on “action,” a reconstructed philosophical project that was based first of all on contact with the “real.”⁸ While the group had divergent emphases and interests, their core evolved through the late 1920s from German idealism (Schelling, Hegel) toward Marx and Lenin.

Friedmann’s early radicalism was strongly romantic in character, combining spiritualist attacks on the “artificiality” of modern life with the utopian hope that a future socialist society would restore a sundered holism to self and society. Already in the 1920s, Friedmann combined romanticism and modernism in complex and contradictory ways. His only contribution to the journal *L’Esprit*, which published a total of two issues in 1926-27, reveals both some fundamental features of Friedmann’s lifelong concerns, as well as the ambiguity—or complexity—that allowed him to combine a sensitivity toward the ways that capitalism and industrial civilization engendered a “loss of the soul” with an optimism that technology, properly enframed in a “humanist” socialist society, would overcome human alienation. Friedmann’s account of the interwar civilizational crisis drew on language highly similar to those of the literary figures he denounced as reactionary, arguing that capitalism introduced “artificiality,” eviscerated the “soul” and “sense of being”; as he would often do in later works, confounding some of his interpreters, he suggested that manual work offered a closer connection to the real, “at least the privilege of a certain rudimentary freshness” as opposed to the solipsistic bourgeois intelligentsia. But his intent was not to embrace an organic spiritualism, but to develop an alternate, more holistic understanding of “Reason” that developed through action, through reciprocal interaction with the world. Contemporary French literature, as well as the ideology of “objectivity” in science, he argued, were predicated on a

⁸ For accounts of the interwar intellectual atmosphere and the general project of the Philosophies group, see Burkhard, *French Marxism Between the Wars*, introduction, and the chapter “La mort de l’Esprit” in Bianco, *Après Bergson*, 109-131.

separation between observer and object that hardened into an alienation from the world. The “artificiality” that Friedmann denounced in the intelligentsia was a turning away from the world into the inner self; the return to “reality” would be simultaneously corporeal and mental, political and intellectual: “Today, the work that must truly be undertaken...will serve a cause in which we find a concrete and indivisible expression of truth: where, in *total Wisdom* [*Sagesse*], the material liberation of men and the organization of a society of free workers combines with the rehabilitation of Spirit under all its expressions, as in man the body is blended with the soul.”⁹

Friedmann was already a reader of Marx, but his references in the 1920s were overwhelmingly to other philosophers (Spinoza) and literary figures (Goethe, Paul Valéry) and his intervention was aimed at a literary audience. Nevertheless, the article in *L'Esprit* appeared alongside a translation of Hegel, and toward the end of the decade Friedmann followed his young comrades in a rapid move toward a Hegelian Marxism. Friedmann's most definitive statement of his own conception of Marxism came almost a decade later, in 1935, at the height of his participation in philosoviet institutions and the Popular Front, when he used the writings of Marx and Lenin to develop further his emphasis on human agency, and the mutual conditioning of man and world, that would strongly foreshadow the voluntarist character of French industrial-society sociology and its rejection of Marxist “economic determinism.” Marxism was anything but a “metaphysics of economic determinism”; it was, rather, a “new conception of causality in the sciences and in the nature of man.”¹⁰ Friedmann also drew on Lenin's notebooks on Hegel and the term *Wechselwirkung* (*action réciproque*) to elaborate how humans participate in a contradictory,

⁹ Georges-Philippe Friedmann, “Ils ont perdu la partie éternelle d’eux-mêmes,” *L'Esprit* 1, no. 1 (1926): 122.

¹⁰ Georges Friedmann, “Matérialisme dialectique et action réciproque,” in *À la lumière du marxisme: sciences physico-mathématiques, sciences naturelles, sciences humaines*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Sociales Internationales, 1935), 263.

ever-moving totality that they can never entirely master. Work [*travail*] is man's entry in to the complex web of natural and technical conditioning, which never cease to act on man's efforts to transform them. The relationship between science and *technique* was an illustration of this relationship: science and its application to production develop reciprocally but unevenly; one can get ahead of the other, and "determinate moments" may converge in which there are massive "leaps" in "all development of biological and social life."¹¹ The overarching point was to emphasize interactive mutual condition that moved in a "spiral," in Lenin's terms, as opposed to linear causality, a conception of historical evolution that affirmed human agency while recognizing its inherent limitations by its context.

Friedmann's explication of dialectical materialism could be seen as the basis of his emphasis on human plasticity and the interrelationship of the human with its natural and technical "*milieu*," as well as his focus on technology and the labor process as the site of social integration and individual well-being. Its emphasis human interrelation into a contradictory yet historically progressive *totality* was the methodological blueprint for the expansive socioeconomic and cultural *fresco* painted in *La Crise du progrès*, a work Friedmann referred to as a "total history of ideas."

Toward Social Science: Sociology, History, and Psychology

Like many students from Alain's *khâgne*, including Raymond Aron, Friedmann skirted the two major options in philosophy, Bergsonian vitalism and Léon Brunschvicg's neo-Kantian rationalism, moving instead toward Durkheimian social science.¹² After briefly studying engineering before his entry to the ENS, Friedmann had always wanted to bring engineering and applied science into the field of philosophical inquiry. He had begun writing on "the machine" in

¹¹ Friedmann, 280.

¹² Bianco, *Après Bergson*, 81.

literature and, in 1931, began a part-time apprenticeship in machine tools.¹³ The following year, Friedmann moved rapidly into a constellation of several overlapping sites of social science that brought together the remainders of Durkheimian sociology, the “total history” of *Annales*, and academic psychology around the themes of *technique* and labor in what Isabelle Gouarné has called “a Marxist path for the renewal of Durkheimian rationalism.”¹⁴ These institutions, which included the Centre de documentation sociale (CDS), *Annales*, and the Cercle de la Russie Neuve (CRN), allowed Friedmann to establish himself simultaneously as a social scientist and a Communist fellow-traveler, and to participate in a collective social-scientific and communist response to “*l’anti-modernisme lettré*.”¹⁵

The official beginning of his career as a social scientist came the following year when he was appointed as the archivist-assistant to Célestin Bouglé at the Centre de documentation sociale.¹⁶ The CDS, founded in 1920, was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation after its original patron, Albert Kahn, lost his fortune in the financial crash of 1929. As an annex of the ENS library, its mission was to collect international literature on “contemporary social problems” and to promote an empirical approach to sociology, which suited both Bouglé and the center’s American benefactors.¹⁷ The CDS became the center of interwar academic sociology, a laboratory of

¹³ Friedmann’s earliest article on industry in literature was “L’Amérique et la machine,” *Bifur* 9, no. 1045 (November 1930).

¹⁴ Isabelle Gouarné, “Marxisme et rationalisme dans les sciences sociales françaises (1930-1960),” in *Marx, une passion française*, ed. Jean-Numa Ducange and Anthony Burlaud (Paris: La Découverte, 2018), 155–67.

¹⁵ Gouarné, *L’Introduction du marxisme en France*, 196.

¹⁶ The Rockefeller Foundation approved a grant of \$3,000 the salaries for two assistants “to permit them to devote full time to inductive sociological research.” (Letter from Tracy Kitteredge to Célestin Bouglé, May 20, 1932). Bouglé appointed Friedmann and Philippe Schwob for an annual salary of 26,000 francs beginning in October 1932 (Letter from Célestin Bouglé to Sébastien Charléty, rector of the Académie de Paris, June 16, 1932). Célestin Bouglé Papers, Fonds École Normale Supérieure, Archives Nationales (61AJ/91), henceforth AN 61AJ/box number.

¹⁷ The relationship between Bouglé and the Rockefeller Foundation began with Bouglé’s trip to the University of Chicago for the inauguration of the Society for Social Research, the institution home of the “Chicago

experiment that crossed boundaries between disciplines and between the university and the public. While its initial project was to produce thematic bibliographies on contemporary issues, its sphere of activities expanded to include public seminars given by the CDS's assistants, including Friedmann and Raymond Aron, but also by international officials and social scientists.¹⁸ The center became a resource appreciated by researchers across disciplines, and a site for the "convergence of the social sciences," including psychology and history. The impact of its collections on Friedmann was decisive; the CDS library procured the latest works on labor history, psychology, industrial relations, and "rationalization," including a number of authors, such as the British industrial psychologist C.S. Myers, whose work he would engage extensively.¹⁹

Friedmann's time at the CDS coincided with a convergence around industry and technology of the remaining Durkheimians, like Bouglé and Maurice Halbwachs, and the *Annales* historians Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. "*La technique est l'ordre du jour*," Bouglé wrote in a draft article on new school textbooks emphasizing the history of technological inventions. "Tools, apparatuses, machines of all sorts attract more and more attention from those who reflect on the causes and efforts of human progress."²⁰ Both Bloch and Febvre wrote on need for a "history of techniques," and devoted a special issue of *Annales* in 1935 to "*Technique and History*."²¹ Friedmann played a role in this "turn," and, and was simultaneously pursued by Bloch and Febvre as a contributor to *Annales* and by Durkheimian sociologists like Halbwachs for various editorial

School" of American sociology. These details and others in this paragraph are drawn from Jean-Christophe Marcel, *Le durkheimisme dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), chapter five.

¹⁸ Marcel, 223–57.

¹⁹ CDS, "Achats et dons des livres, Octobre 1930-Novembre 1931," AN 61 AJ/97.

²⁰ Célestin Bouglé, "Pour l'histoire du travail," undated typescript from mid-1930s, AN 61 AJ/97.

²¹ Pamela O. Long, "The *Annales* and the History of Technology," *Technology and Culture* 46, no. 1 (March 7, 2005): 177–86.

projects related to industrial technology.²² Friedmann, in turn, was particularly influenced by Febvre's program for a history that that would incorporate diverse scientific knowledges and thus overcome the separation between them.

A third and final dimension to Friedmann's influence in the direction of empirical social science were the interests of the academic psychologists Jean-Maurice Lahy and Henri Wallon, both of whom were Communist-adjacent and active along with Friedmann in the Cercle de la Russie Neuve. From Lahy, in particular, Friedmann encountered "psychotechnics," a descendent of the European "sciences of work" that was primarily concerned with aptitude testing for industrial jobs and other professional positions.²³ While psychotechnics emerged in World War I and had already begun to wane in Germany by the mid-1920s, in the hands of Lahy, its most prominent French promoter, it took on humanist and socialist character that made it appear as a "scientific" alternative to American programs of scientific management.²⁴ In his work in the 1930s, Friedmann adopted more or less wholesale Lahy's pioneering critique of Taylorism as a dangerous ideology that falsely claimed the mantle of science while disregarding workers' safety and well-being.²⁵ But this affinity went beyond the intellectual: Lahy, who had joined the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) at its founding in 1920, and had in some ways pioneered the scientific relations with the Soviet Union that Friedmann himself would model in the 1930s. The hosting of the

²² See correspondences between Friedmann and Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Maurice Halbwachs, Lucien Levy-Bruhl, and Marcel Mauss, Archives Georges Friedmann.

²³ On psychotechnics, see Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 278–80; Helio Carpintero and Fania Herrero, "Early Applied Psychology: The Early Days of the IAAP," *European Psychologist* 7, no. 1 (March 2002): 39–52; For a definition contemporary to Friedmann, see Henri Piéron, "La psychotechnique," in *La vie mentale*, vol. VIII, Encyclopédie Française (Paris, 1938), 8.06-15-8.08-5.

²⁴ Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 249–53; Gouarné, *L'Introduction du marxisme en France*, 68–78.

²⁵ J.-M. Lahy, *Le système Taylor et la physiologie du travail professionnel* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars & Cie, 1916).

Seventh International Congress of Psychotechnics in Moscow in 1931, at which the Soviet psychologist Isaak Spielrein delivered a withering critique of capitalist psychotechnics, contributed to Friedmann's sense that the Soviet application of social science to labor were a cutting-edge alternative to the "technicist" Western ideologies of scientific management.²⁶

Amid the rise of the Popular Front in the mid-1930s, participants in the CDS, *Annales*, and the CRN drew closer together, in some cases through Friedmann's mediation, as the CRN became a rallying point for the defense of science, reason, and industry in what was felt to be an increasingly spiritualist, biologicistic, and anti-modernist intellectual atmosphere. As Friedmann moved between the three milieux, he absorbed and helped to elaborate a "holistic" rationalism that would *incorporate* empirical science into a humanist philosophy rather than hold them as mutually exclusive, that saw science as a process of dialectical unification opposed to academic specialism—a style of thought that emerged from the CRN and social scientists in its orbit as a response to the "crisis of reason" and the rise of fascism, and would continue to inform his advocacy of social science after the war.

The evolution of Friedmann's theses

Friedmann's attempts to define his thesis project at the CDS during these years show the varied influences of these milieu and the shifting priorities imposed by the surrounding ideological contexts. The first archival version of his thesis project dates from 1933, and provides a revealing

²⁶ Isaak N. Spielrein, "De la théorie psychotechnique," *Bulletin de psychologie* Numéro 519, no. 3 (July 18, 2012): 283–95; Isabelle Gouarné, "Isaak N. Spielrein. VIIe Conférence internationale de psychotechnique. Moscou, 8-13 septembre 1931. Présentation," *Bulletin de psychologie* Numéro 519, no. 3 (July 18, 2012): 277–81; Marcel Turbiaux, "Sous le drapeau rouge : la conférence internationale de psychotechnique de Moscou de 1931. 2e partie : Le soleil se couche à l'Est," *Bulletin de psychologie* Numéro 528, no. 6 (2013): 513–26.

summary of the concerns that drove his research across the decade.²⁷ The project was based on both “readings, as well as investigations and personal experiences,” which likely meant both his machinist apprenticeship and his trips to the Soviet Union. Friedmann envisioned studying the doctrines of scientific management as avatars of the “progressive ideologies of machinery” from the nineteenth century, that is, as expressions of larger conceptions of science and progress. Taylorism and Fordism amounted to a “purely empirical rationalization” that ignored the “different sciences competent to analyze human labor and activity.”²⁸ Friedmann counterposed these “different” sciences—“physiology of work and industrial psychology” [*physiologie du travail et de la psychotechnique*]²⁹—as the basis of a holistic elaboration of a “new conception of the practical relations between the worker and the machine.” While these “sciences” were derived from “English, French, German, and American” industrial psychology, they were also “intimately linked” to Marx’s famous chapter on machinery in *Capital* and Lenin’s writings on electrification of the U.S.S.R.²⁹ The project’s overarching normative aim—which encapsulates quite well Friedmann’s central concern for the rest of his career—was to “seek the path on which can be found the solutions to the difficult problems of machinery [*machinisme*] for a civilization that

²⁷ Georges Friedmann, “L’homme et la machine dans les grandes nations industrielles,” December 14, 1933, AN 61AJ/97.

²⁸ « La critique du machinisme industriel, en tant que rationalisation purement empirique, menée sans le concours des différentes sciences qui ont à connaître le travail humain et l’activité humaine. »

²⁹ « Ces travaux sont intimement liés à la conception marxiste de la technique et des machines, exposée par Marx dans un chapitre célèbre du *Capital*. Lénine lui a apporté une contribution importante par ses articles et discours sur l’électrification et l’industrialisation de l’U.R.S.S. Nous nous proposons de dégager tout d’abord les lignes essentielles de cette doctrine de la technique et de la construction socialiste, fondée sur le Progrès industriel. Puis d’exposer les rapports de l’individu et de la machine dans les ateliers de l’école polytechnique, dans ceux de la grande industrie et même dans les loisirs productifs et sociaux dont l’habitude s’est répandue en U.R.S.S. depuis quelques années. »

would accept the indefinite progress of technique, but placed at the service of man and under his control.”³⁰

Two years later, during the height of his travels to the Soviet Union and the first years of the Popular Front, Friedmann’s analysis of Taylorism and Fordism had gone beyond Lahy’s critique of the scientific management as pseudoscience into a more expansive intellectual history that aimed to explain their genesis and position in the history of ideologies of progress.³¹ In a progress report for the CDS, he noted that, “we have recognized the necessity, to truly situate the principal doctrines of rationalization, Taylorism and Fordism, of placing them back in their historical milieu and, above all, of specifying the economic conditions, both in the United States and Europe, in which they were born; of indication, also, the diverse currents concerning the ideology of Progress by science and industry that they prolong or contradict.”³² The more technical critique of scientific management through readings of international applied psychology would now be relegated to a complementary thesis, to be titled *Psychotechnique et machinisme*, which would

³⁰ « Il sera intéressant dans une dernière partie de confronter la critique de la rationalisation empirique faite par les psychotechniciens des différents pays et de chercher dans quelle voie peuvent se trouver les solutions des difficiles problèmes du machinisme pour une civilisation qui accepterait le progrès indéfini de la technique, mais mise au service de l’homme et sous son contrôle. »

³¹ Georges Friedmann, “L’homme et la machine dans les grandes nations industrielles,” January 1935, 61 AJ 97, Fonds École Normale Supérieure, Archives Nationales.

³² « Depuis [*l’an dernier*], nous avons commencé la rédaction de la thèse principale. Au cours de ce travail, l’économie première de notre plan a été quelque peu modifiée. En particulier, nous avons reconnu la nécessité, pour bien situer les principales doctrines de rationalisation, taylorisme et fordisme, de les replacer dans leur milieu historique et avant tout, de préciser dans quelles conditions économiques, à la fois aux États-Unis et en Europe, elles avaient pris naissance ; d’indiquer aussi les courants divers, concernant l’idéologie du Progrès par la science et l’industrie, qu’elles venaient prolonger ou contredire. ... D’autre part, il nous est apparu que notre enquête détaillée dans la littérature allemande, anglo-saxonne ou française, sur les relations de la physiologie du travail et de la psychotechnique aux principaux problèmes humains du machinisme formait un tout distinct, qui constituera la matière de notre thèse complémentaire (‘Psychotechnique et machinisme.’) De cette étude ressort, à travers toute la série de ces problèmes, par nous énumérés l’an dernier, à la fois la bienfaisant influence exercée par les sciences de l’homme sur le cours de la rationalisation industrielle (réintroduction du ‘facteur humain’), - et aussi les obstacles auxquels pratiquement elles se heurtent. »

explore both the contributions of applied industrial sciences and “the practical obstacles they run up against.”³³

If Friedmann had begun by working to master the technical disciplines of psychotechnics with the aim of elaborating a Marxist engagement with them, by the mid-1930s, in the atmosphere of the Popular Front, he had expanded his focus in order to make a more wide-ranging philosophical and literary intervention in the debate over civilizational decadence and progress. To do so, he would draw on both the conception of dialectical materialism he was elaborating with Lucien Febvre’s vision of “total history,” which Friedmann modified to “a *total* history of ideas, in which one would use not only the pure history of doctrines, but also those of techniques, of economics, of sociology, and of anthropogeography.”³⁴ In this conception, which Friedmann mobilized in his interactions with the literary intelligentsia, social science was not *opposed* to the philosophical perspective that dominated there, but completed it by bringing it into contact with empirical reality, enabling the articulation of a more complex and dialectical perspective. By trying to complement what might loosely be called a literary romanticism with social-scientific modernism, Friedmann prefigured the way that the industrial-society paradigm would subsume normative moral presuppositions, often with a romantic flavor, in a larger whole that attempted to realize them within a modernist” package.

³³ This plan would be interrupted by the war: while the project Friedmann in 1935 called his *thèse principale* would appear the following year as *La Crise du progrès*, it ended up being neither of the two theses he belatedly submitted for his *doctorat d'état* in 1946. What he here called his *thèse complémentaire* would become his major thesis and the book which did the most to establish his sociological reputation after World War II, *Problèmes humains du machinisme industriel*.

³⁴ Union pour la vérité, “La Crise du Progrès et l’Humanisme nouveau: entretien tenu au siège de l’Union le 13 juin 1936,” *Bulletin* 44, no. 3–4 (December 1936): 21.

The Popular Front: speaking social science and materialist philosophy in the world of letters

In the middle of the 1930s, both the scientific and literary worlds were impacted by the polarization of the intellectual world between the far right and far left. Under the Third International's popular front policy, which allowed for considerably more openness to intellectuals, organizations linked to the Parti Communiste increasingly attracted non-communist intellectuals. Friedmann was actively engaged not only the CRN, but also in Communist-linked literary organizations that aimed to organize intellectuals against Nazism. The Association des Artistes et des Écrivains Révolutionnaires (AEAR) was founded in 1932 as a French affiliate of the Soviet-directed International Union of Revolutionary Writers, tried to open the communist cause more widely to non-affiliated intellectuals and maintain an appearance of distance from organized communism.³⁵ AEAR's founders, who included Paul Vaillant-Couturier, the editor of *L'Humanité*, and *Monde* publisher Henri Barbusse, were integral members of the Communist media world. As well as already established party members fellow-travelers like Louis Aragon, Paul Nizan, Georges Politzer, and Romain Rolland, they worked to attract unaffiliated writers like André Gide and André Malraux. Friedmann was a member of AEAR from the beginning, an active participant in its events, and a regular contributor to its journal, *Commune*, which advertised itself as a "*revue de combat*" and advocate of proletarian revolution against fascism.

While Friedmann had long written about literature and philosophy for literary journals, his production in such spaces in the 1930s took a decidedly social-scientific turn, with the mission of legitimating social science—in particular, the economic and technical dimensions of society—in the general intelligentsia's analysis of world politics. This was an explicitly anti-fascist strategy,

³⁵ Nicole Racine, "L'Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (A.E.A.R.). La revue 'Commune' et la lutte idéologique contre le fascisme (1932-1936)," *Le Mouvement social*, no. 54 (1966): 29–47.

directed against the “the cenacles of intellectuals where the ‘theory’ of French national socialism simmers under the cover of the primacy of the Spiritual and the Human.”³⁶ Opposition to fascism led Friedmann to temporary accentuate his modernism, emphasizing his embrace of science, technology, and modern mass production and his rejection of “bourgeois” romantic denunciations of machines and the artificiality of industrial civilization.³⁷ His contributions to *Commune*, for example, focused almost entirely on contemporary social-scientific methodology, including lengthy articles on the work of the ethnologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Raymond Aron’s introduction to German sociology.³⁸ His essay on Marxist methodology discussed above, “Matérialisme dialectique et action réciproque,” was reprinted in *Commune* in 1935, as were excerpts from the most economics-heavy sections of *La Crise du progrès*; Friedmann also reviewed books on steel production and the geography of Siberia.

A similar trend occurred in his contributions to Romain Rolland’s journal *Europe*, whose editorial project followed the *communisant* turn of its founder in the 1930s. *Europe*, founded in 1923 to articulate Rolland’s vision of a Europe-wide humanist elite, frequently published Friedmann on literary topics throughout the 1920s. His 1930s articles, however, were exclusively on social-scientific and political topics, though they were frequently framed explicitly as interventions in a *literary* conversation and often defended the role of social science as an essential dimension to such discussions. Such was the case with Friedmann’s essay “Machine et humanisme,” originally presented at the 1935 International Congress of Writers for the Defense of

³⁶ Georges Friedmann, *Problèmes du machinisme en U.R.S.S. et dans les pays capitalistes* (Paris: Éditions Sociales Internationales, 1934), 11.

³⁷ Gwenaële Rot and François Vatin, “Les avatars du «travail à la chaîne» dans l’œuvre de Georges Friedmann (1931-1966),” *Genèses* 57, no. 4 (2004): 23–40.

³⁸ “À propos de la sociologie allemande contemporaine,” *Commune* 3, no. 34 (1936): 1249–54; “L’œuvre de Lucien Lévy-Bruhl,” *Commune* 5, no. 51 (November 1937): 300–305.

Culture and published in *Europe*. The essay took scathing aim at the literary intelligentsia's tendency to blame the crisis of capitalism and bourgeois society on "the machine," to make "sentimental apologies for artisan labor" or call for a "new feudalism." In one of his most bracing defenses of technology, Friedmann wrote, "Contrary to what is claimed by writers too little familiar with the life of the workshop, automation of machines must be fully developed."³⁹

In the context of the Popular Front, Friedmann's interventions against anti-technological literary discourse were also political interventions in the "planning" debates that saw the proliferation of competing visions of a re-organized post-capitalist society across the political spectrum. Friedmann was scathingly critical of "non-conformist" groups and journals like Emmanuel Mounier's *Esprit* and Alexandre Marc's *Ordre Nouveau*, of the socialists around the Belgian socialist planning advocate (and future Nazi collaborator) Henri de Man, and even certain officials in the CGT such as Léon Juhaux. Often reviewing economists' analysis of the Mussolini and Hitler regimes, Friedmann argued that non-communist promises of overcoming class conflict were illusions that claimed to protect workers from the ravages of the liberal economy but in fact subjecting them to equally or even more authoritarian forms of social organization.⁴⁰ Similarly, he argued that the anti-technological, "artisanal" rhetoric with which German National Socialists attacked industrial society was an instrumental fiction belied by their true economic priorities.⁴¹ In Friedmann's presentations of the USSR, he was at pains to emphasize that the Soviets were not "idolaters of the machine," but their emphasis on technology and production was a particular moment in the development of Soviet history produced by inevitable technical and economic

³⁹ Georges Friedmann, "Machine et humanisme," *Europe* 38, no. 151 (July 15, 1935): 439.

⁴⁰ Georges Friedmann, "Démasquons la corporation," *Europe* 35, no. 140 (August 15, 1934): 584–95. Friedmann later came to deeply respect Mounier and publicly retracted his earlier criticisms.

⁴¹ Georges Friedmann, *La Crise du progrès: esquisse d'histoire des idées, 1895-1935* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), 175–200.

conditions, and was necessary to building a truly “humanist” society.⁴² Friedmann thus projected his always-strong romantic attraction to holism, both in science and society, onto the Soviet Union and its future realization of a socialist society that would overcome the artificial binaries and contradictions of capitalism.

Friedmann’s intervention in the literary atmosphere of the Popular Front was, however, not limited to his promotion of social science in literary milieux. He was also entrusted with creating a philosophical collection at the Parti Communiste’s publishing house Éditions Sociales Internationales, which he used—in another foreshadowing of industrial-society thinking—to emphasize that socialism was not merely an economic, but also a cultural and civilizational vision. The collections titles, which included works on eighteenth-century Enlightenment materialists (Helvetius, Diderot) and figures of the “romantic socialist” tradition (Proudhon, Pierre Leroux), was focused on creating a literary canon of “precursors” to true socialist materialism populated with figures who would resonate in the broader French intellectual sphere. The publicity *fiche* of the “Socialism and Culture” collection expressed a vision that reflected Friedmann’s personal view of the Western philosophical inheritance: “We cannot recall too often how much Marx and Engels insisted on there is that is fertile and of value in the cultural heritage of past centuries, of all that socialism should take up and prolong.”⁴³ It also reflected the PCF’s Popular Front policy of opening intellectual affiliation with Communism to an even wider range of non-Communist intellectuals, a project for which Friedmann’s multiple zones of engagement served perfectly.⁴⁴

⁴² Georges Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 80–82.

⁴³ Georges Friedmann, “Collection Socialisme et Culture,” Fonds Alexandre Kojève, Bibliothèque Nationale de France,

⁴⁴ Marie-Cécile Bouju, *Lire en communiste: les maisons d’édition du Parti communiste français (1920-1968)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 113.

La Crise du Progrès: The “Total History of Ideas” of a Romancier Sociologue

No work better exemplifies Friedmann’s hybridization of science and letters, his simultaneous interventions as a philosopher, social scientist, and Communist, and his vision of a dialectical materialist methodology than *La Crise du progrès*. A sweeping narrative of the history of philosophy and literature in the context of the scientific, technological, and economic changes from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, the book attempted a historical account of the decadence of the idea of progress in the twentieth century and an alternative vision of a future-oriented progressivism beyond positivism and anti-modernist reaction. It also was a first attempt at integrating Friedmann’s knowledge of the applied sciences of industry and scientific management into the general intellectual history of the present. Ideas about human improvement had enormous diversity in every context, which made them impossible to understand them without “penetrating the historical milieu” in which they were produced.⁴⁵ In the contemporary period, Friedmann argued, where the principle progressive ideologies were those of engineers and concerned the organization of production, such contextualization concerned “special problems of workshops and machines.”⁴⁶ But the book’s intention as an intervention in the concerns of the literary intelligentsia was unmistakable; as Célestin Bouglé put it in his review, Friedmann had “in becoming a sociological scholar, remained something of a novelist [*romancier*].”⁴⁷

In his introduction, Friedmann reflected on his own position between epochs in the history of knowledge, between a dying humanistic culture and—hopefully—a reborn scientific holism that overcame the old specializations of knowledge just as he hoped automation would overcome

⁴⁵ Friedmann, *La Crise du progrès*, 11.

⁴⁶ Friedmann, 12.

⁴⁷ Célestin Bouglé, “Crise du progrès : un romancier sociologue,” non-identifiable publication clipping, Archives Georges Friedmann.

the degrading division of industrial labor. Renaissance humanists had been “great artisans” whose style of work had progressively been divided by the specialization of modern knowledge, a division denounced both by Marx and, in 1930s France, by the historian Lucien Febvre. Friedmann quotes Febvre’s 1934 lecture at the Collège de France in which the latter declared that “the times of the artisan, whether we wish it or not, are falling slowly over our horizon,” including that of the “*petit artisan scientifique* who makes, all by himself, his tools, his field of experience, his programs of investigation.”⁴⁸ Febvre and the *Annales* historians promoted interdisciplinary collaboration and collective research as the preconditions of a newly reconstituted, holistic modern science of man, “a new beauty taking shape on the earth.” As Friedmann elaborated,

the negation of these isolated specializations, of their contradictions, into a new synthesis, accomplished thanks to the collaboration of specialists and *the appearance of a new scientific spirit*...a synthesis whose image is offered us in the domain of industrial technology, where machines of fifty years ago, capable of only a single, monovalent operation, have begun to fade in thousands of factories in the face of polyvalent machines such as automatic lathes, which assemble on each of their sections a whole range of tools and operations. Would not science be capable of achieving this collaboration of which technique, sometimes submitted to less constraint, already offers examples?⁴⁹

Despite the grand vision of scientific collaboration he shared, *La Crise du progrès*, Friedmann acknowledged, was “still the work of an artisan.” This was regrettable, but he could only “hope that the day will soon come when the subject of this study will be taken up and examined by *a team*.” This *équipe* of interdisciplinary researchers would overcome the scientific division of labor just as nefarious effects of the capitalist division of labor in production had been overcome through the collaboration of “researchers, doctors, psychologists, physiologists, engineers, statisticians,” each attached to an aspect of the whole. What the Soviet Union aimed to

⁴⁸ Lucien Febvre, “De 1892 à 1933: examen de conscience d’une histoire et d’un historien,” *Revue de Synthèse* 7, no. 2 (June 1934): 93–106.

⁴⁹ Friedmann, *La Crise du progrès*, 14.

accomplish in the factory, “the materialist dialectic”—which, to Friedmann, above all meant holistic unity—would accomplish in science. In these methodological reflections, then, we see how what later came to appear to a younger generation as postwar sociology’s complacent capitulation to a technocratic modernization project was, as originally articulated by the young Friedmann, an almost utopian vision for overcoming the alienating effects of scientific specialization and the fragmentation of knowledge. After slipping into obscurity during the heyday of the industrial-society paradigm, these themes would reappear in the educational thinking of the 1968 generation.

The historical narrative outlined in *La Crise du progrès* followed the rise of the specific “bourgeois” idea of progress coinciding with that Friedmann called the “second industrial revolution” in the late nineteenth century, which deployed electricity, steam engines and petrochemicals as the engines of a capitalist economy moving from the petty bourgeoisie to mammoth corporations and heavy industry.⁵⁰ The bourgeois idea of progress was a “mechanistic materialism, very easily satisfied with simplistic formulas” and foreseeing “the rapid development of science, conquering all the fields of the real one after another, capable of creating life, of bringing with it health, peace, and civilization to the entire globe.”⁵¹ Friedmann stressed, however, that every era contained multiple, competing ideas of progress as well as counter-discourses that questioned their value. For example, the same period of “mechanistic materialism” that was the ideological handmaiden of the rising bourgeoisie, nourished progressive social science in the form of sociological positivism, which had an alliance with the expansion of democracy, particularly in the French Third Republic.

⁵⁰ Friedmann, 17–22.

⁵¹ Friedmann, 32.

The nineteenth-century development was prelude to the paradox of the interwar period, in which “technicist” thinking was at a fever pitch among engineers and industrialists at the same time “bourgeois” literature and philosophy seemed to be consumed with a radical critique of modernity and rationality, a horror at machines and mechanization, and lament for the lost spiritual values of European civilization. Friedmann argued that European imperialism had ultimately severed the progress of technology from moral and political progress: the *grande bourgeoisie* had gradually become convinced that imperial conflict would lead to war and of “the necessity of conflict to open new markets, redistribute old ones, and dump stocks.” The resulting war had brought a traumatic end to the mechanistic faith in progress, instigating the sweeping literary and philosophical backlash to modernity that much of *La Crise du progrès* outlined. But at the same time, the bourgeoisie doubled down on technology, combining cultural nihilism with a techno-economic will to power:

Once hopes for peace and democracy were compromised, the bourgeoisie turned more and more toward another horizon. They would not have peace, they did not wish for it, and they even abandoned the liberties conquered little by little for a hundred and fifty years, and the illusion of seeing them blossom in a political organization founded on principles transparent to reason; but they conserved the technology that each day furnished man with new means. The application of science to all his activities, first of all to his industry, remained a still-solid value.⁵²

For Friedmann, the ultimate expression of the reduction of progress to technological will to power was represented by the interwar vogue of scientific management, in which engineer-philosophers like Frederick W. Taylor and Henry Ford became the avatars of what “progress” meant. *La Crise du progrès* devoted a lengthy chapter to this “two great visionaries of progress,” and considered their ideas in detail as a preview of what Friedmann then assumed would be his

⁵² Friedmann, 208.

more technical secondary thesis, a critique of scientific management through the lens of the applied sciences that real-world rationalizers ignored.

Friedmann's early work placed so much emphasis on Taylor, in particular, precisely because he thought they illuminated a historical epoch of imperialist capitalism that drove the bourgeoisie to "part ways" with its historic support for democracy and cling to technology as its salvation. This could produce both "technocratic" political programs, which as we have seen flourished in both the U.S. and France in the 1930s, as well as theories of the organization of production that hid capitalist objectives of rationalizing production under the veneer of science, where "the engineer alone speaks to a problem that is also the field of the physiologist, psychologist, and hygienist."⁵³ Taylor set himself up as a psychologist, claiming a fundamental "law" that workers' interest and motivation for newly parcellized tasks would be stimulated by a bonus system, basing his ideas on an individualistic psychology and a mechanistic ergonomics.⁵⁴ Taylor's "isolated technicist spirit, cut off from the human sciences" aimed at harmony by imposing on an early twentieth-century America, riven by labor unrest and political conflict, "a brutal effort by engineers to apply physico-mathematical methods to industrial life, with a stupefying ignorance of the complex problems of man at work, of man in society."⁵⁵

⁵³ Friedmann, 71; This criticism was not directed only at Taylor himself, whose religious fanaticism and lack of scientific qualifications Friedmann noted with disdain; it was primarily response to the promotion of Taylorism as a science in France by the chemist-engineer Henri Le Châtelier. See *Le système Taylor : science expérimentale et psychologie ouvrière* (Paris: Dunod, 1914); See Judith Merkle Riley, *Management and Ideology: The Legacy of the International Scientific Management Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); and Clarke, *France in the Age of Organization* chapter one.

⁵⁴ Friedmann, *La Crise du progrès*, 76–77; An earlier version of Friedmann's analysis of Taylor appeared in a 1935 issue of *Annales* on the history of techniques. "Frédéric Winslow Taylor: l'optimisme d'un ingénieur," *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* 7, no. 36 (1935): 584–602.

⁵⁵ Friedmann, *La Crise du progrès*, 86.

The Soviet Union as Sociological Terrain

From the early 1930s almost to the end of the decade, Friedmann, while never a member of the Parti Communiste, was an integral part of the thicket of French philosoviet institutions that increasingly attracted the intelligentsia as they mobilized against fascism. He was involved in the *Clarté* group, led by Henri Barbusse, as early as 1920, but by all accounts remained on the fringes of militant activity until the early 1930s.⁵⁶ Throughout that decade, Friedmann was personally close with the literary party members and fellow-travelers who dominated the Communist media world, including its major stars Barbusse and Rolland, and was also well-connected in the Soviet literary elite.⁵⁷ He corresponded with Sergei Dinamov, the editor of *International Literature*, to whom he sent copies of the E.S.I.'s publications, and responded to Soviet reviews of his work.⁵⁸ Friedmann answered one such review, a negative assessment of *La Crise du progrès* in the Soviet philosophy journal *Pod znamenem marksizma*, sending a response directly to its editor.⁵⁹

But his own relationship with the U.S.S.R. took on an a quite different character than those of Barbusse and Rolland: rather than the lengthy audiences with Stalin that so impressed his literary comrades, Friedmann spent extended time with the middle and lower ranks of Soviet society—scientists, technicians, managers, but also workers themselves. The Soviet Union became

⁵⁶ Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l'U.R.S.S.*, 15–16. On the Clarté group, see Guessler Normand, “Henri Barbusse and His Monde (1928-35): Progeny of the Clarté Movement and the Review Clarté,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 2/3 (1976): 173–97; Nicole Racine-Furlaud, “Une revue d’intellectuels communistes dans les années vingt : « Clarté » (1921-1928),” *Revue française de science politique* 17, no. 3 (1967): 484–519. On Friedmann’s activities during the 1920s and the date of his engagement with organized communism, see Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle: khâgneux et normaliens dans l’entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 664–67.

⁵⁷ David-Fox, “The ‘Heroic Life’ of a Friend of Stalinism”; Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), chapter six.

⁵⁸ Several of Friedmann’s letters to Soviet intellectuals are published in T.B. Balachova, ed., *Dialog pisatelei: iz istorii russko-frantsuzskikh kul’turnykh svyazei XX veka, 1920-1970* (Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2002).

⁵⁹ Georges Friedmann (Жорж Фридман), “Pis’mo v redaktsiiu zhurnala «Pod znamenem marksizma»,” *Pod znamenem marksizma*, no. 11–12 (1937): 227–29. See also the letter from editor M.B. Mitin to Friedmann, undated, Archives Georges Friedmann.

a terrain for fieldwork as Friedmann not only assembled documentation and extensively interviewed Soviet bureaucrats and industry personnel, but also observed conditions on the ground and, whenever possible, asked workers directly for their opinions. The resulting publications, like the figure of the Communist-aligned academic sociologist that Friedmann was innovating, were all but unprecedented for France in the 1930s, a universe away from the much more numerous literary *témoignages* like André Gide's best-selling *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* (1937).⁶⁰ The Soviet Union became, for Friedmann, simultaneously a proving ground for his socialist convictions, a social-scientific opportunity, and a source of empirical facts that could serve in his interventions in France against both literary dilettantism and fascisant visions of a new society.

Friedmann visited the Soviet Union three times in the 1930s, in August 1932, September-October 1933, and August-October 1936. The first two trips were made on behalf of the CRN under the auspices of VOKS, who arranged and supervised Friedmann's itinerary; the third was made with the competing foreign-visitors agency Intourist, though Friedmann still had extensive contact with VOKS officials during his stay.⁶¹ Friedmann's visits—and his later writings—focused primarily on schools and factories, and he openly sought firsthand experience of *representative* examples of these institutions in different parts of the country in addition to the newly-built and “exemplary” ones that the Soviets tended to show to foreign visitors. With his interest in the sciences of work and his knowledge of Russian, Friedmann was an atypical French visitor, a fact which seems to have afforded him some independence of movement and allowed him to experience features of Soviet life that would not have been included in the typical tour for

⁶⁰ Georges Ribeill, “Approches critiques du travail industriel entre les deux guerres: la place de Georges Friedmann,” *Sociologie du Travail* 41, no. 1 (January 1999): 23–39.

⁶¹ Rachel Mazuy, “Des voyages aux doutes : Georges Friedmann en U.R.S.S.,” in *Georges Friedmann : Un sociologue dans le siècle, 1902-1977*, ed. Pierre Grémion and Françoise Piotet (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013), 21–28.

intellectuals.⁶² In their reports on the visits, VOKS officials were occasionally perplexed by his resistance to their presence, and noted his critical comments about the purge of “Trotskyists” in 1936.⁶³

As we have seen, Friedmann looked toward the Soviet Union as an experiment in which the division that haunted his generation between thinking and action, ideas and practice, “brains and hands,” could potentially be overcome. His encounters with the U.S.S.R. were, above all, framed by the question of whether eliminating capitalist relations of production would resolve the problems of modernity that so many French writers linked to industry, machines, and mass production. “If it is more important than ever for the thinking man consult the great ‘book of the world’ of which Descartes spoke, Soviet Russia is, for our contemporaries, among its most essential pages.” This was how “a sociologist, interested above all by the psychological and moral problems linked to the social evolution of our time, could be brought to study a difficult language, to undertake pedagogical, statistical, industrial, and technological surveys that his preoccupations and personal tastes would not seem to lead him directly.” Conquering the sociological terrain of the Soviet Union, Friedmann explained, was to move from the “sentimental” communism of his youth and his theoretical knowledge of Hegel, Marx, Engels, and Lenin, to ideas “in which one must oneself actively participate in order to grasp and judge ... because they concern immediately every aspect of the destiny of men and are inscribed in their flesh.”⁶⁴

⁶² Friedmann, for example, illustrated the authority of foreign technicians in 1932 with an anecdote in which he convinced the driver of a packed bus in Gorky (Nizhny Novgorod) to allow him to board by pretending to be a foreign *spet* (specialist) who didn’t speak Russian. *De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S.*, 79.

⁶³ Sophie Cœuré and Rachel Mazuy, eds., *Cousu de fil rouge : Voyages des intellectuels français en Union soviétique* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012).

⁶⁴ Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S.*, 16–17.

Friedmann's on-the-ground encounters with Soviet reality combined an enthusiasm for the intentions of Bolshevik intellectuals, particularly of educational theorists and work scientists, with a measured and provisional assessment of their accomplishments in practice. Soviet theories of "polytechnicalism," drawn from Marx and Engels' writings on overcoming the deadening effects of specialization and the division of labor, strongly resonated with the emphases of Friedmann's own Marxism.⁶⁵ Writing after his first two visits, Friedmann was strongly impressed by the sight of children operating machine tools in the training school attached to the Krasny Bogatyr rubber factory in Moscow, and how such training overlapped with theoretical education in mathematics, physics, and natural science. "So much joy, naturalness, simple force in these faces born with the revolution. Childhood that teaches that what labor is, the dignity and social value of labor, in these big, bright workshops. ... These children are no longer beings 'divided against themselves' (Marx)."⁶⁶ Even Friedmann's writing about the technology and public policy of the USSR was infused with a romantic holism inspired by the early Marx that looked toward the resolution of modernity's internal divisions and contradictions.

Such effusive passages were juxtaposed, however, with acknowledgements that most schools were "older and less well equipped," and that Soviet education, like so many other aspects, was caught between idealism and bitter material realities: "In the U.S.S.R, institution must forge new paths, without precedent. They, thus, bring together two aspects: at the same time social functions, immediately active, plunged into daily necessities; and laboratories of new ideas, experiments, and improvements imposed by the constant test of the facts."⁶⁷ Friedmann later gave

⁶⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁶⁶ Friedmann, *Problèmes du machinisme en U.R.S.S.*, 24.

⁶⁷ Friedmann, 27.

a fully researched account of the theoretical debates in Soviet education, as well as the multiple rearrangements of the curriculum and network of factory training centers and schools. He noted extensively the difficulties caused by the lack of teachers and materials, as well as the counter-productive effects of the “zigzagging” policy inevitable in Soviet conditions: “The history of the school is only a particular case of this complex evolution, often, alas, a voracious consumer of energy. It is likely that certain exhausting loops could have been avoided.”⁶⁸ Soviet education was one example of the massive struggle against the Russian past that had really only begun. Nonetheless, Friedmann remained impressed by the efforts to overcome abstract theoretical education, by the inculcation of a social vision of labor, and of Soviet workers’ outpouring of enthusiasm for adult education.

Friedmann’s VOKS contact was correct to list “psychotechnique” as his primary interest: he would devote the majority of his time in the U.S.S.R. to on-site investigations of factories across the Soviet Union. Soviet industry, its organization and labor practices, were perhaps the most obvious test of Friedmann’s conviction that a transformation in social regime would transform the relationship between man and machines. As with education, Friedmann embraced Soviet intellectuals’ optimistic ideological intentions for various labor-related initiatives while observing their contradictions and practical difficulties. He interpreted such labor-productivity initiatives as “socialist emulation” (*sotsialisticheskoye sorevnovanie*), shock workers (*udarniki*), counter-plans (*vstrechny*) and Stakhanovism as genuine mass movements and early signs of “socialist values” taking hold in the Soviet working class.⁶⁹ At the same time, Friedmann worked to obtain empirical verification of the propaganda claims about productivity that had spread through the Soviet and

⁶⁸ Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S.*, 51.

⁶⁹ Georges Friedmann, “Quelques traits de l’esprit nouveau en U.R.S.S.,” in *La crise sociale et les idéologies nationales*, vol. 1, 3 vols., *Inventaires* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1936), 83–126.

Western press. For Stakhanovism, for example, his fieldwork revealed that teams, rather than the celebrated individuals, were responsible for astonishing production records being set, and that such records were possible in the first place because of the low productivity and poor organization of most Soviet production. Stakhanovism, he explained, was not primarily about voluntaristic effort to overproduce, but about motivating workers to come up with clever reorganizations of the labor process that improved efficiency. The designation of Stakhanovites and their respective salary bonuses were highly variable and subject to local, on-the-ground decisions by managers, as Friedmann's statistical analysis showed.⁷⁰ Thus, as Friedmann assured a concerned French labor movement, Stakhanovism was not, as Gide and many other observers claimed, Taylorism in disguise, but was precisely the sort of "socialist rationalization" whose necessity Lenin had proclaimed after the revolution.⁷¹

In spite of Friedmann's hopeful account of the spread of "socialist values" and his praise for measures that included workers in the organization of labor and inculcated a general atmosphere of work toward collective ends, his portrait of Soviet labor was far from idealized. He constantly applied the caveat that whatever encouraging signs he described were only the beginning of a long and difficult "war against the Russian Middle Ages." He frequently noted the filth and poverty in which most Soviet workers lived, and the bleak visual aspect of cities "under construction" like Gorky. He criticized the Stakhanovite movement for excluding workers whose

⁷⁰ Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l'U.R.S.S.*, 101–19.

⁷¹ Friedmann's analysis of Stakhanovism is roughly similar to that of the "revisionist" interpretations in contemporary Soviet history, which focus on the unevenness of state power and the considerable negotiation and improvisation that took place on the ground. Stakhanovism was both a state-induced effort *and* a mass movement, and while its meaning varied across the industrial topography of the U.S.S.R., it was not Taylorism and did invite genuine organizational contributions from workers. One of the central factors Friedmann missed however, was its function as a disciplinary mechanism to keep mid-level managers and technicians in line with the wishes of the central authorities. Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the U.S.S.R., 1935-1941* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

jobs could not be rationalized, and for overlooking underpaid classifications of labor like those of women employed in domestic services. Most anything was understandable as a part of a temporary, chaotic and experimental phase of Soviet development, but “if prolonged, the current period of the ‘bonus for productive and qualified work’ would appear a truly too-severe utilitarianism.”⁷² Unlike Trotsky, who painted Stakhanovism as a cynical ploy by Stalin to drive a wedge in the working class and create a “labor aristocracy,” Friedmann was more concerned by the massive gap between the salaries of workers and those of intellectuals and other participants in the flourishing Soviet culture industry—on which he also presented substantial statistical data.⁷³ “Is this policy—certainly correct in substance—always and everywhere carried out with the necessary prudence? Does it not lead to excessive differentiations, material and psychological, pregnant with certain dangers for socialism itself?”⁷⁴

The final pages of *De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S.* deserve special attention, as they encapsulated the competing imperatives at work in Friedmann’s writing on the Soviet Union and his position in the Communist world. They also revealed that his commitment to social science would win out over his role as activist and Soviet advocate. Already, Friedmann showed hints of the values that he and other industrial-society sociologists would brandish against doctrinaire Marxism in the postwar period, most notably a commitment to social-scientific realism and a rejection of “ideology.” Friedmann stated in the book’s introduction that he believed the U.S.S.R. was poorly served by superficial “alleluias,” and that his contribution to the Soviet project was to analyze it with serious documentation. Throughout, criticisms were moderated with understanding

⁷² Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S.*, 119.

⁷³ Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?*, trans. Max Eastman (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1937), 128.

⁷⁴ Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S.*, 123.

of the country's challenges and assurance that it would correct its course in the future. Even in the conclusion, there was no inclination that Friedmann's commitment to the U.S.S.R. had wavered.⁷⁵ But he laid out a summary of frank criticisms: workers' purchasing power was still lower than the West, the newer generation of Bolsheviks had crude and ignorant notions about the outside world, Soviet Marxism was a disappointment. Friedmann denounced the "severity of the purges and the inflexible dictatorship of the Stalinist party line," to which "no political opposition is tolerated." He had "great admiration for Stalin as a man of state" but saw "no reason to transform him today into a philosopher, tomorrow into a theorist of architecture, mathematics, dance or theater." All of these defaults were "necessities" of the present moment, explained clearly by the pressure on all sides from a dark past and a dark present, but the Soviet Union was now strong enough to hear "friendly critiques" and could benefit from dialog with the West.⁷⁶

The End of a Fellow-Traveler's Road: From Philosovietism to Sociology

De la Sainte Russie à l'U.R.S.S. cemented Friedmann's status as a social scientist, being reviewed effusively by Celestin Bouglé, Lucien Febvre, and Maurice Halbwachs; at the same time, it sparked an "affair" in the Communist world that ended in Friedmann's marginalization, against his will, from the Communist media and institutions.⁷⁷ The book was reviewed critically by several members of the inner circle of PCF leader Maurice Thorez: Jean Bruhat, Fernand Grenier, and

⁷⁵ In a 1976 letter to Raymond Aron, a year before his death, Friedmann wrote that his third visit, in which he witnessed the first of the Moscow Trials, marked "the end of his fellow-traveling and his Marxism" a claim that his other writings and correspondences nuance, if not contradict: "Durant se séjour de plus de trois mois (été 1936) eut lieu à Moscou le premier des « Grands Procès » : ce fut pour moi le coup de poing qui dessillât mes yeux et mit définitivement fin à mon « compagnonnage de route » (fellow-traveling) et à mon marxisme, déjà très nuancé (voir *La Crise du progrès*, 1936)." Friedmann to R. Aron, December 27, 1976, Fonds Raymond Aron, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Box 207.

⁷⁶ Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie à l'U.R.S.S.*, 231–36.

⁷⁷ Gouarné, "Engagement philosoviétique et posture sociologique."

Paul Nizan. But the *coup d'envoi* of the affair was a sensationally virulent review by Georges Politzer in the *Cahiers du Bolchévisme* which, among other things, accused Friedmann of “apologizing for Trotsky.” Friedmann protested the “hateful” attack directly to Thorez, and other party-affiliated intellectuals, including Francis Jourdain, Paul Langevin, and Rolland, rushed to support him. It was agreed in late 1938 that Friedmann would be allowed to respond to Politzer’s review, followed by a final comment from Thorez himself. But Friedmann’s thirty-three page response never appeared in the *Cahiers du Bolchévisme*, and the clouds of war in early 1939 sidelined the issue, leaving Friedmann marginalized in the party’s intellectual milieu.⁷⁸ As Friedmann wrote to Rolland, “I had believed (and still believe) that objectivity, based on a fundamental attachment, conjugated to an effort to situate facts and men *historically*—I believe that this objectivity is the best option and absolutely necessary to serve the U.S.S.R. in the West.”⁷⁹

The signing of the Brest-Livotsk pact in 1939, caused a tortured re-evaluation of the Soviet Union and his Communist engagement, which Friedmann recorded in a now-published journal from 1939-1940.⁸⁰ After 1939, the U.S.S.R. essentially disappeared from Friedmann’s work, and he did not return to the country until the 1950s, long after it had ceased to constitute the center of his political vision. But though politics faded from Friedmann’s intellectual production, he remained committed to socialism and economic planning, as he often reminded Raymond Aron in their correspondence: “I cannot follow you in certain positions, being among those—at whom you

⁷⁸ The response, entitled “A propos d’un livre sur l’U.R.S.S.,” was included as an annex in Catherine Melnik-Duhamel, “L’affaire Georges Friedmann : à propos de la publication de « De la Sainte Russie à l’U.R.S.S. »” (Mémoire de DEA, Paris, Institute d’Études Politiques, 1985), Archive Georges Friedmann.

⁷⁹ Friedmann to Romain Rolland, August 22, 1938, in Melnik-Duhamel.

⁸⁰ Georges Friedmann, *Journal de Guerre (1939-1940)*, ed. Christian Bachelier and Marie-Thérèse Basse (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

somewhere let arrows fly—who are “in mourning for a myth,” all the while conserving, in our own manner, a “faith without illusions.”⁸¹

The window that opened between 1932 and 1939 for intellectuals to maintain close relations with the Parti Communiste had closed, and the Liberation in 1945 would find an unrecognizable political topography. Immediately after the war, Friedmann became active in reorganizing the French university and obtained a professorship at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM), from which he would take the early steps of building a new branch of sociology. But even though they took new forms, the questions of the 1930s persisted: could a humane society be reconciled with mass production? What kind of social science could reconcile humans with monotonous labor and pervasive technology? How to negotiate between the international models on offer—or in some cases, increasingly imposed? Was “humanism” the domain of social science at all? Answering those questions would take him, like others, on the path from Marxism to industrial society, from socialism to sociology.

⁸¹ Georges Friedmann to Raymond Aron, July 3, 1951, Fonds Raymond Aron, BNF, Box 207.

Chapter Two

Iron Cages, Iron Laws: The American Sociology of Bureaucracy

Every generation embodies its hopes and fears in idols and monsters which assume giant size by projection on the dark screen of the future. Bureaucracy is one of the most prominent monsters of our time. Its shadow hovers over all organized efforts of modern man.

—Eric Strauss (1960)

In the mid-twentieth century, bureaucracy has become the central problem for all societies, socialist as well as capitalist.

—Daniel Bell (1973)

The concept of bureaucracy, in brief, works as a Jack-of-all-trades, and today it works overtime.

—Eugene Kamenka (1979)

Between the 1930s and the 1970s, bureaucracy became one of the major themes of Western social science and an integral part of the industrial-society paradigm. Throughout the postwar period, the interwar question of what type of social system would either replace or transform capitalism continued to pulsate through social theory. At the heart of that question was the recent increase in state management and coordination of the national economy, a phenomenon that in the 1930s began to seem universal, a feature common to state regimes regardless of their official ideology. Closely related was the question of the technical expertise needed to accomplish such feats of organization, and the “new middle classes” or *neue Mittelstand* that would provide it, at least in liberal-democratic societies. Whether the term was “bureaucracy,” “technocracy,” or “white-collar,” the cluster of problems were the same one that the philosopher James Burnham would eventually call the “managerial revolution” in his controversial but influential 1941 book by the same title.

As the social-scientific salience of the so-called “managerial revolution” grew in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the sociological literature on bureaucracy swelled without appearing to resolve its fundamental questions or even define its central object. Throughout this

period, sociologists lamented bureaucracy's polysemy, its politicization, and, as the French philosopher Claude Lefort put it, its "strange resistance to conceptualization." The confusion was such that the historian and media theorist Ben Kafka was written that instead of a "critical theory of bureaucracy," modern political thought has left behind a "comic-paranoid style of political thought," "a myth, or collection of myths, about bureaucracy and bureaucrats."

¹ But this is perhaps no accident. Instead of taking "bureaucracy" for granted as a social-scientific object, as most sociologists have done, I consider how bureaucracy became a problem within the larger complex or network of problems that made up the industrial-society paradigm. Bureaucracy remained an elusive quarry because social scientists were ultimately asking existential questions about the future direction of social evolution. Understanding the social and political role that the problems of the "managerial revolution," which commonly went by the shorthand "bureaucracy," enables us to see how the apparently technical, empirical sociology of bureaucracy could be connected to such sweeping political and historical questions.

As it emerged from the wartime and early Cold War moment to become a core part of industrial-society thinking, bureaucracy was never about offices and paperwork. Its mid-century salience and metaphysical pathos came from the fact that it became the principal stand-in for the question of power in "industrial societies," and whether the large administrative apparatuses characteristic of those societies were compatible with democracy and the bourgeois European conception of the individual as self-fashioning agent. As both "capitalism" and "the state" faded from social science after World War II, they were replaced with "bureaucracy," which ambiguously indicated both the concrete, "microsociological" environment of existing

¹ Ben Kafka, *The Demon of Writing: Powers and Failures of Paperwork* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 10.

organizations *and* served as a causal meta-mechanism powering the development of “industrial society” itself, often as a synonym of Weber’s notion of “rationalization.” Bureaucracy introduced new and ambiguous strata into the sociological picture: functionaries, advisers, experts, managers, and other “white collar” workers who were neither capital owners nor proletarians. In short, between the 1940s and the 1970s, bureaucracy was central to the political question of whether a non-totalitarian form of socialism—or, more dramatically, if democracy period—was practicable under the conditions of modern “industrial society.” It was the terrain on which the mainstream of American social science and liberal thought reconciled itself with a constrained, technocratic vision of democracy, and the one on which radical thinkers in the United States, France, and elsewhere—on the far right as well as the left—incited rebellion against the managerial state. Alvin Gouldner was thus correct to observe at the time that the question of bureaucracy was a “displacement of the controversy over socialism.”²

This chapter and the next explore the problematic of the “managerial revolution” as it emerged from the interwar period to become a pillar of the postwar industrial-society paradigm in the United States and France, respectively. In both cases, many of the principal actors were radicals who looked to the Soviet Union in the 1930s as a beacon of world socialism, but by the end of the decade had grown disenchanted with Stalinism. In both the United States and France, these thinkers concluded that their hopes of socialist revolution would quasi-automatically introduce an egalitarian social system had been naïve, and that the structural forces of the type of society emerging across the world instead demanded some type of hierarchy and elite rule. The industrial-society vision would emerge in part from their own ambivalent confrontation with this problem: a

² Alvin W. Gouldner, “Metaphysical Pathos and the Theory of Bureaucracy,” *The American Political Science Review* 49, no. 2 (1955): 497.

“modernist” acceptance of the limits imposed by the structural, organizational forces of science, technology, and rational administration, modified by a residual “romantic” belief in unmediated egalitarian community. As they moved from radical activism to university social science, industrial-society sociologists tried to balance their youthful romanticism with a new “modernist” disposition that embraced the tools of science, expertise, and administration for the gradual movement of society toward more egalitarian social ideals without the risk of bureaucratic dictatorship or “totalitarianism.”

This chapter focuses on the American sociology of bureaucracy, which largely established a blueprint for postwar French sociology. It shows how American sociologists created a distinctive analysis of bureaucracy in the 1940s by blending together questions provoked by a reconsideration of revolutionary socialism, the sociological ideas of Max Weber and Robert Michels, and empirical fieldwork. Robert Merton, the academic father-figure of this form of sociology at Columbia University, presciently described it at the time as a “product of Morningside Heights.” Translating the questions of their radical activism into the idiom of academic social science, the Merton school increasingly made peace with the bureaucratic nature of American society by demonstrating its uniqueness in relation to European nations’ totalitarian tendencies. They “Americanized” the ideas of the German sociologists Max Weber and Robert Michels, questioning whether these sociologists’ understandings of bureaucracy as an “iron cage” (Weber) or “iron law of oligarchy” (Michels) were too rigid and pessimistic. They used empirical fieldwork to question such totalizing claims about bureaucracy, and encouraged a more nuanced view that could dissociate bureaucracy from “totalitarianism” and render it compatible with American democracy. In the exceptional case of C. Wright Mills, the connection between bureaucracy and authoritarian rule was turned into a sweeping of critique of American society as a whole. Overall, this chapter argues that the

sociological encounter with bureaucracy in the 1940s and 1950s was crucial to the political thought of the following decades because it established a pattern that Cold War liberals, industrial-society theorists, and social democrats would draw upon: one that simultaneously regarded the growth of bureaucratic structures as a developmental inevitability *and* maintained a durable skepticism of them as associated with centralized authoritarian power.

Americanizing Max Weber: Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton

By the mid-1950s, virtually every American sociologist would declare that Max Weber had produced the “classical” analysis of bureaucracy. But such a claim would have been impossible to make in the 1930s. Bureaucracy was virtually unheard of as a subject of university sociology in America, and Weber’s writings, not yet translated into English, were not widely known in the United States. By the end of the decade that had begun to change, thanks to the gradual influx of German scholarly refugees from Nazism, but primarily due to the work of Weber’s greatest American translator and champion, Talcott Parsons, and his star student Robert Merton.

Weber’s fragmentary writings on bureaucracy, most notably in the posthumously published *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1921), addressed it from numerous angles and different levels of sociological specificity, ranging from the micro (the internal functioning of administrative organizations) to the macro (the sweeping historical force of *Bürokratisierung*). The preponderance of his emphasis suggests Weber was most interested in “bureaucratization” as a macrosociological historical development, a type of regime or form of “rule” that could be compared with past historical cases of bureaucratic rule (Ancient Egypt, the late Roman republic, China) and with pre-bureaucratic stages of Western history. Weber portrayed bureaucratization as a historical force by which social organization was rationalized into professional hierarchies based

on formal rules and technical qualifications, grounding authority in impersonal structure rather than in “traditional” rule by personal relationships between ruler and ruled. Weber frequently analogized bureaucracy to mechanisms, machines, and assembly lines, suggesting he saw it as the administrative equivalent of mass production: “The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production.”³

The modern West and its capitalist economic system represented, for Weber, the bleeding edge of bureaucratization. Indeed, the gradual erosion of traditional and personal authority in favor of rules and expertise accompanied the rise of democracy. Mass democracy, because of its egalitarian ideology and rejection of the hierarchies and privileges of traditional authority, would be the *most* bureaucratic form of rule yet seen.⁴ Here we perhaps find the first inklings of the tensions that would haunt American social science in the middle of the twentieth century: “Democracy inevitably comes into conflict with the bureaucratic tendencies which have been produced by its very fight against the notables,” Weber argued. Democracy was in fact misnomer, because in no sense did the “shapeless mass” of the *demos* govern. “What changes is only the way in which the executive leaders are selected, and the measure of influence which the *demos*, or better, which social circles from its midst are able to exert upon the content and the direction of administration by means of ‘public opinion.’”⁵ Bureaucratic rule, once established, was an indestructible force that granted much greater power to the ruler who controlled it, and against

³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Gunther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 3 (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 972. See also pp. 987-988.

⁴ Weber, 3:984.

⁵ Weber, 3:985.

which all resistance was futile and no revolution was thinkable.⁶ In his political writings, Weber portrayed socialism, which he imagined through the lens of the young Soviet state, as bureaucratic democracy taken to its logical conclusion—a regime that would be an unprecedentedly top-down form of rule even as it claimed the ideals of equality.⁷

In the 1940s and 1950s, Americans would pick up the notes of alarm in Weber’s account of the rise of bureaucracy, and look for ways to reconcile the rule of a credentialed elite implied by bureaucratization with America’s decentralized democratic ideals. The association of bureaucracy with centralized, rationalized rule, social leveling, and “totalitarianism,” would turn American social scientists against further steps towards planning in the United States send them searching for inherently unique aspects of the American character that could give bureaucratic rule by institutions such as the politically unaccountable national security state, for example, at least a varnish of democracy.⁸ But in the late 1930s, these developments were only just appearing on the horizon. Parsons introduced the concept of bureaucracy in his presentation of Weber in his landmark work of social theory, *The Structure of Social Action*, noting that it was a synonym for the rationalizing force of modern capitalism. “Roughly, for Weber,” Parsons observed, “bureaucracy plays the part that the class struggle played for Marx and competition for Sombart.”⁹ Turning Weber into a theorist of systematic social rationality, Parsons ignored his latent critical

⁶ Weber, 3:987, 989.

⁷ Matt Dawson, “‘An Army of Civil Servants’: Max Weber and Émile Durkheim on Socialism,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29, no. 4 (2016): 525–49; Volker Heins, “Max Webers Sozialismuskritik,” *Zeitschrift für Politik* 39, no. 4 (1992): 377–93.

⁸ Ross, “Whatever Happened to the Social in American Social Thought?”

⁹ Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937), 509.

perspective, most notably his deep ambivalence about bureaucratization and modernity in general. In Parsons' hands, Weber became the consummate anti-Marx.¹⁰

Robert Merton, Parsons' student at Harvard, is sometimes regarded as the heir of the functionalist theoretical program due to the fact that Merton rarely criticized his mentor directly. In fact, Merton's version of functionalism significantly retooled Parsons' theory, notably by restoring some of the critical dimensions of Weber's thought.¹¹ (Merton also claimed that, unlike Parsons, the inspiration his own theory had taken from Marx was "considerable.") Whereas Parsons would be routinely criticized for his static, ahistorical vision of society, Merton attempted to theorize how social "dysfunctions" created tensions and potentially generated social change from within the system. They were not mere "deviance" to be resolved, but potentially generative of needed change.¹²

Bureaucracy was always the playing field on which Merton developed his theoretical ideas. In an essay titled "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," Merton fired the first shot of in what would become a common American pushback against the formalism and implicit determinism of Weber's account of rationalization. Merton criticized Weber for failing to note the unintended consequences generated by the forces of bureaucratization, consequences that undermined its claim to absolute formal rationality. Weber, Merton argued, "is almost exclusively focused on what the bureaucratic structure attains," and failed to account for how bureaucratic pressures for discipline, formality, impersonality generated problematic socialization into bureaucratic roles that

¹⁰ Irving Louis Horowitz, "Max Weber and the Spirit of American Sociology," *The Sociological Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1964): 344–54.

¹¹ On the difference between Parsons' and Merton's Webers, see Horowitz.

¹² Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure: Toward the Codification of Theory and Research* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949), 116.

undermined their efficiency and rationality, for example, in the emphasis on rule-following and process over the organization's ostensible mission.¹³

This was a crucial step for the bureaucracy sociology of the 1940s, much of which would press to see just how hard Weber's *stahlhartes Gehäuse* and Robert Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" (discussed below) really were. Merton's article contained a further clue to the work of his students: though he noted "the trend toward increasing bureaucratization in Western society," the focus was squarely on bureaucracy as a "formal organization," as an institutionally compartmentalized unit within which social relations—norms, roles, personalities, dysfunctions—were to be diagnosed. Bureaucracy was thus, for Merton, the example of the "middle-range" social institution where the connection between individual and collectivity could be examined, ideally through empirical studies of actual organizations. "The range of theoretically significant and practically important questions [related to bureaucracy] would seem to be limited only by the accessibility of concrete data," Merton wrote. Were such data to be obtained, it might "build a Solomon's House for sociologists."¹⁴

'The Products of Morningside Heights': Bureaucracy Sociology at Columbia

Parsons would later write a series of articles on the "theory of organization," which were a contribution to the bureaucracy debate as it morphed into what is today known as "organizational sociology" or, in business schools, "organizational behavior." But in the 1940s, Merton's modification of functionalism, which attempted to connect it with empirical research, would drive the emergent sociology of bureaucracy. In contrast to the technocratic modernization theory that

¹³ Robert K. Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," *Social Forces* 18, no. 4 (1940): 562.

¹⁴ Merton, 568.

would characterize the work in Parsons' new Department of Social Relations at Harvard, Columbia sociology would pioneer the integration of theory and empirical research under the leadership of a trio: Robert S. Lynd, the radical reformer of the 1930s who had co-authored famous studies of American social class with his wife, Helen Lynd; Paul Lazarsfeld, the Austrian-born impresario of American statistical social research who sublimated his early socialism into the pursuit of sociological scientism; and Merton, who reoriented functionalism toward empirical research and reformist-liberal social change while acculturating a generation of young Jewish radicals like himself into elite WASP academia.

The proximity of Columbia to the political ferment of New York in the late 1930s was an important factor in the rise of bureaucracy sociology, as was the growing disenchantment of that radical generation in the early 1940s. Many of Merton's students arrived with a different language and conceptual lineage for bureaucracy: the Marxist debates among European social democrats over the previous several decades and, most notably, the roiling Trotskyist debates over the nature of the Soviet Union. Most were part of the Trotskyist movement as teenagers from Jewish immigrant families and as undergraduates at City College, where they experienced the famed "Alcove 1" that was home to the anti-Stalinist left. In the Marxist tradition, "bureaucracy"—or, more commonly, the adjective *bureaucratic*—was a term of abuse, often for a style of secretive, entitled, authoritarian, and self-important behavior that derived from Marx's acerbic attacks on Prussian bureaucracy.¹⁵ This usage became especially pronounced in Soviet Marxism, as Lenin, Trotsky, and other Bolshevik leaders confronted the overwhelming administrative difficulties of

¹⁵ André Liebich, "On the Origins of a Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy in the *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'*" *Political Theory* 10, no. 1 (1982): 77–93; Pierre Naville, "Critique de la bureaucratie," *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 15 (1953): 94–114.

establishing a socialist state.¹⁶ Outside the USSR, it was directed not just at the affairs of state but at the internal functioning of the socialist movement itself. Accusations of bureaucratic abuse were, as Alan Wald writes, “a constant part of the Marxist movement all the way back to Marx himself,” and were a central feature of the factional debates between Trotskyists in New York.¹⁷ Trotsky had, for the first time, made “bureaucracy” into a Marxist sociological concept to designate the parasitic stratum of counter-revolutionary Soviet administrators who had “betrayed” the Russian revolution.¹⁸ Though scarcely out of their teens, several future sociologists followed the public debate over the bureaucratic stratum in the USSR between Trotsky and New Yorkers like James Burnham even as they organized their own factions and accused one another of bureaucratic derivation. These tumultuous activities would soon inspire Columbia sociology’s nascent bureaucracy boom.

Fig 2. The Columbia Bureaucracy Sociologists

Name	Origin	Born	Start at Columbia	Fieldwork	Method
Philip Selznick	Newark, NJ	1919	1938	1942-43	Functionalism
Seymour Martin Lipset	Bronx, NY	1922	1943	1945-48	Functionalism, History
Alvin Gouldner	New York, NY	1920	1943	1947-1949	Functionalism
Peter Blau	Vienna, Austria	1920	1945-46?	1948-1949	Functionalism, Interactionism

Philip Selznick in Tennessee: From Trotskyism to ‘Anti-Utopian Critique’

Philip Selznick was the first of the young radicals to enter Columbia and soon one of its most prolific sociologists of bureaucracy. His early work is thus worth considering at some length

¹⁶ Eugene Kamenka and Martin Krygier, *Bureaucracy: The Career of a Concept* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 72–85.

¹⁷ Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 183.

¹⁸ Kamenka and Krygier, *Bureaucracy*, 91–93.

because it presented the most radically “Michelsian” view of bureaucracy as inherently oligarchic and anti-democratic, and was the first to embrace “pluralism” as a potential check on bureaucratization. Though some of Selznick’s Columbia colleagues disagreed with the extent to the amount he conceded to Michels’ “iron law of oligarchy,” they would similarly use their empirical fieldwork to test the ideas of Michels and Weber, and to reconcile the undeniably bureaucratic nature of American society with their ideological anti-totalitarianism.

Born to Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe in Newark in 1919, Selznick attended City College before arriving at to study sociology in 1938, where he predated Merton’s arrival on the faculty by three years.¹⁹ During those three years, Selznick was a member of the Socialist Worker’s Party, where he participated in the famous schism between the supporters of James Cannon and Max Shactman. Initially on the side of the Shactmanites, who held heterodox conceptions of Marxism or were beginning to reject it altogether, Selznick would join in attempting to cancel Shactman, in turn, on the charge of “bureaucratic” methods.²⁰ After leaving the Trotskyist movement disenchanted, Selznick joined the youth wing of the Socialist Party of America, where he founded a short-lived journal, *Enquiry*, with the future neoconservatives Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb. Selznick published extensively in *Enquiry* on bureaucracy as a style of organization.²¹ In 1938-1939, the young Trotskyists had acquired and passed around a translation of *Political Parties*, an out-of-print work by the German-born sociologist Robert Michels, which had argued based on the German SPD that the laws of “organization” dictated that socialist parties, like all democratic movements, were destined to become hierarchical structures

¹⁹ Roger Cotterrell, “An Oral History With Philip Selznick” (Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, January 2010).

²⁰ Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 185.

²¹ Martin Krygier, *Philip Selznick: Ideals in the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 33–39.

when they acquired political power.²² This “iron law of oligarchy” dictated that the stability of the organization itself would replace the ideological mission as the oligarchs’ central concern. Michels drew the dark conclusion that not only was socialism impossible but democracy as well, and ended his life in Italy a committed fascist and supporter of Mussolini. Nevertheless, the young Selznick, along with other future sociologists like Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset, read Michels as what Selznick would later describe as a “warning to the left,” a call away from the siren song of utopianism toward realism. As they shifted from socialism to sociology, the Columbia group and their comrades in New York would help to establish Michels in the canon of postwar American social science.²³

Selznick soon brought his search for the organizational origins of bureaucratic degeneration into his graduate study in sociology at Columbia. In 1941, he proposed writing a paper for Merton’s course on the organizational dynamics of his short-lived faction of the Socialist Worker’s Party.²⁴ Merton suggested that he instead submit what Selznick had referred to in a previous letter as “the paper I wrote on bureaucracy,” likely one of his *Enquiry* articles.²⁵ Already in late 1941, Selznick wrote to Merton that he hoped to undertake “the intensive observation of smallish groups over a period of time to the end that one may watch the *process* of

²² Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (New York: Hearst’s International Library Co., 1915); Seymour Martin Lipset, “Robert Michels and the ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy,’” in *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Change and Persistence in Social Structures* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 412–; Hugo Drochon, “Robert Michels, the Iron Law of Oligarchy and Dynamic Democracy,” *Constellations* 27, no. 2 (2020): 185–98.

²³ The fact that Americans created a composite of Weberian and Michelsian ideas with regard to the inherently elitist tendencies of democracy is no accident. On the close personal relationship between Weber and Michels and the former’s formative influence on the latter, see Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “Max Weber and Roberto Michels: An Asymmetrical Partnership,” *European Journal of Sociology* 22, no. 1 (1981): 100–116.

²⁴ Philip Selznick to Robert Merton, November 17, 1941, Robert K. Merton Papers, University Archives, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University, Box 78, Folder 9. (This collection is hereafter referred to as RKM.)

²⁵ Merton to Selznick, undated [late 1941], RKM, Box 78, Folder 9.

bureaucratization,” by which he meant the formation of a permanent and insular leadership class within a political movement.²⁶ He informed Merton that he was considering two possibilities: union shop stewards in Detroit and the Tennessee Valley Authority, an innovative New Deal program to that aimed to lead large-scale planning for the use of the natural resources of the Tennessee River across a seven-state region. Merton steered him toward the latter and assisted him in obtaining a grant from the Social Science Research Council, which would fund the fieldwork of all of Merton’s bureaucracy students.²⁷ Merton also reminded Selznick that his object was an “empirically derived concept of bureaucracy,” and cautioned against his overly loose use of the adjectival designation “bureaucratic” before he had defined “bureaucracy” itself.

Selznick was initially drawn to the TVA project by the flattering international press coverage of the TVA’s “grassroots” policy, and claims by its director, David Lilienthal, that the TVA represented a unique synthesis of democracy and planning by combining federal direction with local institutions and organizations. Coming down from the high of his socialist engagement and with a “head full of Michels,” Selznick had it out for high-minded claims of egalitarianism. As he later recalled, “You know, to just some smart ass kid, from where I was sitting, I mean, this [Lilienthal’s notion of grassroots democracy] was clearly an ideological statement that probably needed to be punctured.”²⁸ In fact, Selznick had fallen for a propaganda effort by Lilienthal to “rebrand” the TVA as a grand idealistic crusade rather than a merely ambitious economic development project, and to defend regional autonomy against New Deal centralizers in

²⁶ Selznick to Merton, undated [November 1941], RKM, Box 78, Folder 9.

²⁷ Merton to Selznick, December 5, 1941, RKM, Box 78, Folder 9.

²⁸ Cotterrell, “An Oral History With Philip Selznick.”

Washington.²⁹ As part of his publicity tour selling the TVA to American intellectuals in the early 1940s, Lilienthal had even reviewed James Burnham's *Managerial Revolution*, presenting his agency as a refutation of the notion of inevitable centralization of power in the hands of Burnham's "managerial class."

Still, Selznick imagined the TVA as an analogue to a social-democratic party of the sort Michels had analyzed, and Lilienthal's public vision for "democratic planning" as a parallel of his own youthful, idealistic socialism. The TVA would reveal how an organization that began with high-minded social ideals crashed into the brick wall of organizational imperatives and resorted to "bureaucracy" to restore its balance. Selznick arrived on the ground in Knoxville, Tennessee in the summer of 1942 to conduct fieldwork, and sent Merton and Robert Lynd a steady stream of updates, memos, and summaries he had provided to his financial benefactors. These documents make immediately clear Selznick's intention to use the TVA as a case study to prove Michels' ideas about the inevitability of elite rule in organizations with officially democratic ideology, as well as what Merton had called the "displacement of goals," or the shift from ideological mission to maintenance of organizational stability and prerogatives. Selznick's research plan explained that he intended to focus on the "*unintended consequences* of administrative behavior; by that I mean simply that the very action which is necessary for the achievement of any given goal may involve results which were not desired and which may tend to deflect or modify the stated goals."³⁰

The potted narrative of misguided hypothesis disproved by empirical research that Selznick would often repeat took shape early in the research phase. In Lilienthal's idealized gloss, the TVA

²⁹ Steven M. Neuse, *David E. Lilienthal: The Journey of an American Liberal* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 124–46.

³⁰ Philip Selznick, "Memo to George F. Gant and Others: Hypothesis and Plans for Research," August 7, 1942, RKM, Box 78, Folder 9.

synthesized planning and democracy by empowering local civil society to participate in formulating its projects. Selznick had initially supposed that this was an idealistic narrative that, in reality, put a democratic varnish on the expansion of federal power. But his fieldwork modified that conclusion when he discovered that the local officials to which the TVA delegated its projects—notably, agricultural extension agents from local land-grant colleges—had in fact been able to create a bloc within the Authority that forcefully championed the interests of local elites, for example, by protesting public ownership of land and encouraging the TVA to overlook the local racial hierarchy. Several months into his fieldwork, Selznick wrote to Merton and Lynd that his initial hypothesis had been disproved:

When I came down here I had the dual and apparently contradictory hypothesis that (1) the Authority would have to adjust to the status quo of the Valley; and (2) it would tend to dominate the organizations with which it cooperated. ... But I was completely mistaken. The facts are, *and they are very plain*, that the contrary is true.³¹

Where Selznick had initially intended to place the blame for the practical drift from ideals in federal, that is centralized and bureaucratic, domination, he discovered on the ground that it in fact derived from the TVA's compromise with local interests. The TVA paradoxically sided with conservative interests in Tennessee against other branches of the federal government that shared its New Deal mission, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Selznick thus rightfully abandoned his misguided hypothesis that the TVA incarnated the straightforward advance of federal managerial power in the name of democracy. On the contrary, the empirical contents of *TVA and the Grass Roots* amply documented the struggle between competing factions and interest groups within the Authority, struggles that put to rest any notion that federal power had won an uncomplicated victory.

³¹ Philip Selznick, "Note to Lynd and Merton," October 7, 1942, RKM, Box 78, Folder 9.

This empirical account, however, fit oddly into the methodological framework and political takeaways that Selznick imposed upon it, which was where his real interest lay and which would made *TVA and the Grass Roots* a pioneering work for the subfield of “organizational sociology.” Analytically, the TVA was stripped from its place in the drama of the New Deal and the shift in American political economy and transformed into simply an “organization.” For functionalists, organizations were microsociological units that manifested general laws of “organizational behavior,” that is, how humans behave in organized settings. Organizations were analogized to biological systems with “presumptively stable needs and mechanisms,” as Selznick put it—systems which spontaneously maintained an internal equilibrium, adjusting and reordering themselves to absorb changes in environment.³² Though the depth of Selznick’s commitment to functionalism is questionable, even a superficial embrace of its concepts was bound to have implications for his conclusions. It was through the abstract language of organizations and their laws that Selznick was able to render the TVA a case study of “formal organization” in general and to turn its historically-situated confrontations with the political economy and racial caste system of the Southern United States into examples of the constraints destined to impose themselves upon any “organization.”

The political conclusions that Selznick drew from the TVA had little to do with his empirical research and everything to do with preoccupation with Michels and the political problem of bureaucracy. On the political level, the TVA became a cautionary tale of how clinging to grand social ideals in defiance of the laws of “organization” as a recipe for “unintended consequences.” Explicit social ideals, like the TVA’s grassroots democracy, were always protective coverings for

³² Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 252.

bureaucratic maneuvering and pragmatic adaptation by—often unaccountable—leadership classes. Taking his cues from Michels and Weber and blowing this conclusion up to a world-historical scale, Selznick opined that it significantly cast doubt on the common—overly idealistic—understanding of democracy. “If democracy as a method of social action has any single problem, it is that of enforcing the responsibility of leadership or bureaucracy. ... The phenomenon of abdication to bureaucratic directorates in corporations, in trade unions, in parties, and in cooperatives is so widespread that it indicates a fundamental weakness of democracy.”³³ This in spite of the fact that *TVA and the Grass Roots* thoroughly documented the *failure* of “bureaucratic directorates” to impose their will on the civil society and private interests of the Tennessee Valley. The lesson was that bureaucracy and organizational laws were much stronger forces than egalitarian ideals, and that those who hoped to enact their ideals would have to adapt to them.

Selznick thus embodied, at a crucial moment in American political history, a turn that liberals and socialists would make, and that would eventually redefine the U.S. and European lefts over the next several decades. Channeling the ambient anti-totalitarianism of the early Cold War into a sociological analysis of bureaucracy was central to its success. To prevent the “indispensable instruments of action” from “turning into things alien and unclean,” one had to reject the idea that socialism could truly change the nature of human behavior, things that were “not time-bound and which may persist in a society despite revolutionary changes in the economic and political status quo.”³⁴ Michels’ “iron law of oligarchy” was one of these, a universal force that could not be ignored without peril. But, Selznick and others would suggest, there was a way to counteract, if not entirely avoid it: the “development of counter-forces...new centers of strength, competing with

³³ Selznick, 9.

³⁴ Philip Selznick, “The Iron Law of Bureaucracy: Michels’ Challenge to the Left,” *Modern Review*, January 1950, 157–58.

existing leadership.” “Freedom,” Selznick concluded, “requires the competition of groups, and this is just as true for a specific organization as it is for society as a whole.”³⁵ At the beginning of the Cold War, an American left that had recently embraced the use of federal power for social reform began to pull back, fearing the similarity to the New Deal state and “totalitarian” systems that James Burnham had pointed out. Instead, they embraced checks and balances and “competing groups,” and private actors—sometimes in language that strongly resembled the simultaneously emerging neoliberal critique of state planning.

Field-Testing Weber and Michels: Lipset, Gouldner, Blau

Merton’s following three students, Seymour Martin Lipset, Alvin Gouldner, and Peter Blau would follow in Selznick’s footsteps of choosing empirical case studies for the theory of bureaucracy. Merton clearly viewed them as working on common research program that would, he hoped, enable Columbia to make a strong imprint on the emerging sociological problematic of bureaucracy. As he wrote to Gouldner in 1948, the latter’s dissertation would ideally

become one of the *empirical* building blocks for the sociological analysis of bureaucracy: Selznick’s book on the TVA being another, and a study by Peter Blau of public and a private bureaucracy being a third. If these three products of Morningside Heights—note the academic chauvinism—appear within the next two or three years, we will have moved from programmatic to viable knowledge of bureaucracy for inevitably, these will set a pattern which will be followed elsewhere.³⁶

Lipset, Gouldner, and Blau came from similar backgrounds; Blau, as an Austrian refugee from Nazism who arrived in the U.S. to under quasi-miraculous circumstances, was the only one of the three not from a Jewish enclave in the New York metropolitan area. All three were politicized as undergraduate students, Lipset and Gouldner in New York, and Blau as an

³⁵ Selznick, 159.

³⁶ Robert K. Merton, “Alvin W. Gouldner: Genesis & Growth of a Friendship,” *Theory and Society* 11, no. 6 (1982): 915–38.

underground member of the German anti-fascist group Neu Beginnen in the 1930s. Because the slightly younger Lipset had been initiated into Trotskyism and the work of Michels by Selznick, his sociological questions would mostly closely resemble Selznick's emphasis on the "iron law of oligarchy," though his subjects and methods were different. Gouldner and Blau, meanwhile, would conduct more clearly "Mertonian" research projects that approached concrete bureaucracies as case studies of organizational behavior, using the same techniques as the "factory studies" of Elton Mayo and the Harvard Business School cohort of industrial relations theorists of the late 1930s (see Chapter 3). Despite their differences, however, all three of the Merton students would echo their teacher's earlier analysis of Weber, arguing that empirical research showed bureaucracy to be less rigid and more dynamic than the master had allowed. Selznick, too, would agree that his TVA study had taken the argument for organizational oligarchy too far, and that, in the pluralistic conditions of the United States, there was much less cause for concern.

Seymour Martin Lipset and the limits of "iron laws"

"In large measure, my interests as a prospective graduate student flowed from my political concerns," Lipset later recalled. "In addition to wanting to find out whether there was a realistic 'socialist' alternative to Stalinism—socialism simply developing a new, perhaps worse, form of class rule—I wanted to know why all efforts to build any kind of socialist party in the United States had failed miserably."³⁷ Lipset pursued these two questions in empirical research projects on two radically different institutions that, in his hands, came to manifest similar characteristics. The first, published in 1950 as *Agrarian Socialism*, was a study of the Cooperative Commonwealth

³⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Biography of a Research Project: *Union Democracy*," in *Sociologists at Work: Essays on the Craft of Social Research*, ed. Phillip E. Hammond (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 96–120; Seymour Martin Lipset, "Steady Work: An Academic Memoir," *Annual Review of Sociology* 22, no. 1 (1996): 1–27.

Federation (CCF), which was elected to head the provincial government of Saskatchewan in 1944, becoming the first socialist party to govern at such a level in North America. Lipset posed the question of whether the CCF would be able to implement a socialist ideological program within existing bureaucratic structures, or whether the “iron law of oligarchy” would corrupt their egalitarianism.³⁸ The second, *Union Democracy*, was a study of the International Typographers’ Union (ITU) of which Lipset’s father had been a member, and which he considered a counter-example to the trend of union bureaucratization: the ITU had two internal “parties,” contested leadership elections, and a high level of member participation—all of which Lipset considered a healthy “organizational democracy.”³⁹

Lipset interpreted both the CCF and the ITU as “deviant-case analyses” that contradicted Michels’ “iron law of oligarchy” by showing that the “‘iron law’ is not made of iron.” The CCF was partially successful in imposing a socialist program against the entrenched forces of the provincial bureaucracy, while the ITU had resisted organized labor’s trend toward bureaucracy and maintained a robustly democratic union. The two organizations shared something in common: they had roots in a relatively small, homogenous professional groups—farmers in Saskatchewan, and typographers in New York—who largely worked independently and were equal in “status.” Lipset would thus conclude that the North American penchant for independent associations, rooted in autonomous local professional groups, was a powerful “counter-power” to the trend of bureaucratization. He would increasingly turn to Tocqueville as he celebrated the U.S. as the best of both worlds—a highly organized society that excelled in administration, yet a localized and

³⁸ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Coöperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan, a Study in Political Sociology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1950).

³⁹ Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin Trow, and James S. Coleman, *Union Democracy* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956).

decentralized one jealous of local associational prerogatives. In addition to influencing Raymond Aron and the “Tocqueville revival” in France, Lipset would become one of the most prominent defenders of the notion that the U.S. had “plural elites” that C. Wright Mills would attack in *The Power Elite*, i.e., that American elites competed for control and that there was thus no true ruling class in the U.S.

Alvin Gouldner and the social conflict of bureaucracy

Alvin Gouldner, born to Jewish immigrant parents in Harlem, was not a member of the famed political groups while as an undergraduate at City College. Similar to Mills, however, he would undergo a progressive *intellectual* radicalization over the course of his career, moving from the influence of Merton toward what Martin Jay called an “outlaw Marxism.”⁴⁰ More noticeably influenced by Merton’s version of functionalism than Selznick or Lipset, Gouldner conducted his fieldwork on bureaucracy at a gypsum plant in upstate New York, where he studied the plant’s organizational operations before and after a management change intended to speed up production and increase productivity.⁴¹ Gouldner divided his doctoral thesis into two books: *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*, which analyzed the level of bureaucratic management and personnel tensions at the plant during the management shift; and *Wildcat Strike*, which gave a sociological explanation for a 1950 protest by the plant’s miners against the new bureaucratic regime.⁴² In both of these works, Gouldner developed Merton’s critique of Weber’s assumption that bureaucracy

⁴⁰ Martin Jay, “For Gouldner: Reflections on an Outlaw Marxist,” *Theory and Society* 11, no. 6 (1982): 759–78.

⁴¹ James J. Chriss, *Alvin W. Gouldner: Sociologist and Outlaw Marxist* (Aldershot, UK and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 46–56; Michael Burawoy, “The Written and the Repressed in Gouldner’s Industrial Sociology,” *Theory and Society* 11, no. 6 (1982): 831–51.

⁴² Alvin Ward Gouldner, *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954); *Wildcat Strike* (Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press, 1954).

was the most effective and rational form of organization—itself an implicit critique of Parsons’ reading of Weber. Drawing on Merton’s terminology of “manifest” and “latent” functions, which gave attention to how social tensions can lead to conflict and social change, Gouldner argued that, empirically, there were different types and levels of bureaucratic organization; their appearance and persistence required sociological explanation, not simply an assumption that the world was everywhere moving toward greater bureaucratization. Weber was mistaken to assume that bureaucracy was the highest level of organizational rationality; in fact, certain kinds of bureaucracy could be profoundly dysfunctional and inefficient. While *some* bureaucracy could be an “iron cage”—for example, the highly surveilled, punishment-centered bureaucracy imposed at the gypsum plant to increase productivity—bureaucracy could also be championed by workers to promote their own safety and autonomy, as it was during the wildcat strike. Gouldner thus emphasized that bureaucracy was a means of social struggle and conflict that registered the social tensions of the workplace. Contra the Parsonian Weber, “organizations” did not pursue a common normative goal, but parts of them pursued competing and irreconcilable goals, meaning that bureaucracies were always internally divided and social conflict was the norm, not the exception.

After his work in industrial sociology in the 1950s, Gouldner would increasingly shift to sociological theory and Marxism. But already, his interests in the sociology of knowledge and his later reputation as a radical gadfly of the sociological discipline—he would play a central role in the dissolution of the sociology department at Washington University in St. Louis in 1968—was visible in the bureaucracy debates. His 1955 article on bureaucracy in American social science remains a trenchant critique of the field. Borrowing the term from the historian of ideas Arthur Lovejoy, Gouldner analyzed how a “metaphysical pathos” had attached to the concept of bureaucracy that reflected his colleagues’ political mood more than any truly sociological

finding.⁴³ He denounced Parsons' social theory as an "atavistic recurrence of technological determinism," and attacked Selznick's *TVA and the Grass Roots* as an excessive concession to Michels' anti-democratic worldview. "It is the pathos of pessimism, rather than the compulsions of rigorous analysis, that lead to the assumption that organizational constraints have stacked the deck against democracy," Gouldner wrote. Gouldner called upon fellow sociologists to reject the determinism of Weber and Michels and the accompanying pessimism that had arisen about bureaucratization, and instead to consider bureaucracy empirically—as Merton had encouraged them all to do.

Peter Blau and the mutability of bureaucracy

Like Gouldner, Peter Blau picked up his interest in bureaucracy from Merton and the environment at Columbia as opposed to from prior political engagement, though as an undergraduate he claimed to have hung photos of Marx and Freud in his dorm room. After a harrowing sequence of captures and torture by the Nazis across central Europe, Blau had a chance encounter with an American missionary couple in France who offered him a scholarship to study in the United States.⁴⁴

Of all of the Columbia sociologists, Blau was the most influenced by Paul Lazarsfeld's quantitative techniques, and wandered much further into the highly technical methods pioneered by the industrial relations theorists and social psychologists of the "human relations" (HR) school at Columbia and Harvard Business School (see Chapter 3). Some of these social scientists had developed the technique known as "interactionism," in which every interaction between agents—

⁴³ Gouldner, "Metaphysical Pathos and the Theory of Bureaucracy."

⁴⁴ Peter Michael Blau et al., *Structures of Power and Constraint: Papers in Honor of Peter M. Blau* (Cambridge [England] ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

usually workers in a factory setting—was minutely recorded and statistically coded to reveal the quantitative structure of “human relations” within the “organization.” As opposed to industrial factories, where most HR research had been pioneered, Blau intended to apply the same methods to “bureaucratic work groups.”⁴⁵

While rich with laborious quantitative analysis, Blau’s research was not dryly statistical; like his cohort, he was eager to avoid falling into “positivism” and used a variety of techniques including interviewing and participant observation to insert himself into the daily activities of his “organizations.” His *Dynamics of Bureaucracy* presented an ambitious comparative study of a federal and a state government agency that arrived at a conclusion similar to the others: that Weber’s vision of bureaucracy as an “iron cage,” and Parsons’ notion of organizations as governed by “rigid equilibrium,” were wrong. “The central thesis of this study,” Blau argued, “is that bureaucratic structures continually create conditions that modify these structures.” Societies were always evolving and changing, and bureaucracies changed with them. Like other social structures, bureaucracy “contains the seeds, not necessarily of its own destruction, but of its own transformation.”⁴⁶

In spite of his modification of Weber and his relatively benign view of bureaucracy as dynamic and sociologically determined, Blau was not immune from the *air du temps* of the 1950s. Following Merton’s *Reader in Bureaucracy* (1952), which published selections from Weber and Michels and from members of the HR school, Blau authored the first sociological textbook on bureaucracy.⁴⁷ In this context, Blau presented bureaucracy in the standard political package of the

⁴⁵ Peter M. Blau, “The Research Process in the Study of The Dynamics of Bureaucracy,” in *Sociologists at Work: Essays on the Craft of Social Research*, ed. Phillip E. Hammond (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 16–49.

⁴⁶ Peter M. Blau, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy: A Study of Interpersonal Relations in Two Government Agencies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 9.

⁴⁷ Robert K. Merton et al., eds., *Reader in Bureaucracy* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952).

moment. Bureaucracy had become “the institution that epitomizes the modern era” and raised deep anxiety about its power over society. “Totalitarianism is the polar case of such bureaucratic concentration of power that destroys democratic processes, but not the only one.”⁴⁸ Blau’s textbook, as the last major text of the Columbia bureaucracy school before their work spiraled in other directions, was a fitting summation: it recounted the empirical work of Selznick, Lipset, and Gouldner as part evidence against the pessimistic Weberian view of bureaucratization, arguing instead for a more nuanced middle way that recognized some aspects of bureaucracy as beneficial and treated others with concern. It considered the Merton group as the entirety of the field of modern sociological research, all but ignoring a major work that came from Columbia, though not from the Merton school.

The Radical Weberian: C. Wright Mills and *White Collar*

*The white-collar people slipped quietly into modern society. Whatever history they have had is a history without events; whatever common interests they have do not lead to unity; whatever future they have will not be of their own making. ... Yet it is to this white-collar world that one must look for much that is characteristic of twentieth-century existence. ... They carry, in a most revealing way, many of those psychological themes which characterize our epoch, and, in one way or another, every general theory of the main drift has had to take account of them.*⁴⁹

Had an inhabitant of the early 1950s turned to C. Wright Mills’ *White Collar* after reading the work of the Columbia bureaucracy sociologists, the latter book’s opening lines would have signaled that it was a very different beast. Bracing and sometimes almost lyrical, Mills’ prose—purposely cultivated to appeal to a general audience—painted American society in evocative rhetorical color. Mills’ invocation of “general theory” indicated one of his most dramatic differences from the students of his Columbia colleagues. He had no interest whatsoever in the

⁴⁸ Peter M. Blau, *Bureaucracy in Modern Society* (New York: Random House, 1956), 20, 22.

⁴⁹ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), ix.

microsociology of “organizations”; though ostensibly a book about new categories of professional work, *White Collar* was in fact a macroscopic historical sociology of American society as a whole, populated with vivid ideal types. “White collars” were only relevant to the extent they represented a historical shift in class structure and that their political psychology would determine the fate of the nation.

Mills would thus be unique on the sociological scene of the 1950s for his treatment of white-collar work as *labor* and his concern for the political consciousness of the “middle classes” within the total social structure. As the Cold War set in in the late 1940s, American sociology as a whole backed away from open political engagement and, flush with government cash, increasingly seized an advantageous moment to try to demonstrate its status as a hard science.⁵⁰ But Mills moved the opposite direction, growing increasingly alienated from his Columbia colleagues and determined to produce, as his biographer describes it, “a total picture of modern society from an unflinchingly radical point of view.”⁵¹ Composed in a literary style Mills called “sociological poetry,” *White Collar* sold out its first print run in a month. It joined the play *Death of a Salesman* (1949), the novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955), the journalistic book *The Organization Man* (1956) and the film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) as a key text of the 1950s discourse on middle-class alienation in America.⁵²

Mills was born in Waco, Texas, in 1916, a half-decade earlier than the Merton students. After graduating from the University of Texas, he received in Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin Madison, where he studied with the German émigré sociologist Hans

⁵⁰ Abbott and Sparrow, “Hot War, Cold War.”

⁵¹ Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 107.

⁵² David Paul Haney, *The Americanization of Social Science: Intellectuals and Public Responsibility in the Postwar United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 68–87.

Gerth. Though Mills cultivated “outsider” status—his Southwestern origins, his Midwestern graduate degree, and his escalating distaste for postwar academic sociology—his distance from the sociological mainstream has often been exaggerated. But his relationship with Gerth did introduce him to a different reading of Weber than the Parsonian interpretation that dominated in the Northeast. In part through their translations of and introductions to Weber, Gerth and Mills developed a style of contextualized historical sociology as opposed to Parsons’ universalist theoretical abstraction.⁵³ Mills was primarily interested in Weber as a theorist of power and social domination; as Geary puts it, he “developed a neo-Marxist interpretation of Weber’s work that combined Marx’s materialist interpretation of history, shorn of dialectical hopes for an immanent historical goal, with Weber’s respect for the complexity of social structure and appreciation for the significance of noneconomic social spheres.”⁵⁴ Mills would be particularly influenced by Franz Neumann, another German émigré whose analysis of Nazism in *Behemoth* provided him with a methodological blueprint for *White Collar* and especially for its sequel, *The Power Elite*.⁵⁵ As a result, Mills would frequently chafe at the Weber of the functionalists and direct his own translations and introduction against “the son of a bitch” who had taken the “radical guts” out of Weber, namely Talcott Parsons.⁵⁶

White Collar was primarily a book about social class set in the frame of a book about bureaucracy. Like Weber in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Mills considered bureaucracy both as a world-historical force, an epochal shift in property ownership and class structure, and as a more

⁵³ Lawrence A. Scaff, *Max Weber in America* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 238–43; Horowitz, “Max Weber and the Spirit of American Sociology.”

⁵⁴ Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 48.

⁵⁵ Geary, 59.

⁵⁶ Geary, 72.

microsociological force that shapes the character and personality of the individuals populating concrete bureaucracies, namely white-collar workers. Mills argued that the United States, from roughly the 1920s, experienced a dramatic shift in political economy and social life from the decentralized, individualist capitalism of the nineteenth century to the concentrated, highly organized, and technologically advanced economy. Increasingly, this economy's mobilizing force was not only or primarily economically exploited industrial laborers, but psychologically alienated and manipulated white-collar workers. Driving this shift, coursing through it almost like a spiritual force—Mills called it the “managerial demiurge”—was the subsumption of all of social organization into a centralized, bureaucratic rationality. If Marx and Freud had once identified rationality with freedom, “now,” Mills declared, “rationality seems to have taken on a new form, to have its seat not in individual men but in social institutions which by their bureaucratic planning and mathematical foresight usurp both freedom and rationality from the little individual men caught up in them.”⁵⁷

Mills grounded the “managerial demiurge” in the transformation of American capitalism, most notably in the shift from widely distributed property ownership in the nineteenth century to the concentration of property in the twentieth. Just as mass production organized and rationalized industry, bureaucratization does the same for the administrative organs of industry and government. “The loose-jointed integration of liberal society is being replaced, especially in its war phases, by the more managed integration of corporate-like society,” Mills wrote.⁵⁸ Orthodox functionalists tended to treat laws of social organization as if they were an evolutionary code written in the DNA of the social organism; thus, as societies became more “complex,” they manifested the higher laws

⁵⁷ Mills, *White Collar*, xvii.

⁵⁸ Mills, 78.

of “organization,” such as more pronounced bureaucracy. Mills, by contrast, left no doubt that bureaucratization was a byproduct of capitalist concentration, which he documented with extensive historical statistics on the U.S. occupational structure and property ownership. He described the growth of corporate size and complexity as generating a dialectal relationship with the government bodies, which in turn increased in size and complexity to control private enterprise. In a formulation that would form the core argument of *The Power Elite* and inspire the New Left notion of “corporate liberalism,” Mills argued that big business, big government, and, increasingly, big labor, tended to blur together at the highest levels. “The managerial demiurge...means that, at the top, society becomes an uneasy interlocking of private and public hierarchies, and at the bottom, more and more areas become objects of management and manipulation.”⁵⁹

The claim that American society as a whole was dominated from the top down was a major difference between Mills and the mainstream of American social science. Functionalists like Parsons and American industrial-society theorists like Daniel Bell would all soon accept the notion, pioneered by the Columbia sociologists, that the United States’ democratic genes had made it into a congenitally pluralistic society that could resist or at least modify Weberian bureaucratization.⁶⁰ Mills disagreed with escalating force across *White Collar* and *The Power Elite*, arguing that while America had *once* been decentralized and pluralistic, the very nature of bureaucratization was to concentrate power at the top and intensify class domination. Bureaucratization, as a byproduct of the concentration of capitalist property ownership, stripped autonomy from more and more of the economic actors who had been “free” in the nineteenth century, forcing them to become wage

⁵⁹ Mills, 77.

⁶⁰ Both went to great lengths to rebut Mills’ theory of a unitary American elite, and were major figures in the backlash to *The Power Elite*, in particular. Talcott Parsons, “The Distribution of Power in American Society,” *World Politics* 10, no. 1 (1957): 123–43; Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York and London: Free Press, 1960), 47–74.

laborers not only in factories but, increasingly, in offices, where they were equally surveilled, controlled, and manipulated. In one of the passages of *White Collar* where Mills seemed to embrace the Marxism he officially disavowed, he declared, “Bureaucracies not only rest upon classes, they organize the power struggle of classes.”⁶¹

Mills was also unique among his contemporaries in addressing bureaucracy not merely as an abstract question of social evolution, but as a key to the concrete question of what type of political consciousness was being created by modern working conditions. The bulk of *White Collar* analyzed the consequences of bureaucratization as an organizing historical force on both the working conditions and the “personalities” and emotional lives of clerks, salesmen, and department-store saleswomen. Social psychology was in vogue in 1950s social science, most notably in the influential work of the anthropologist Margaret Mead and the “culture and personality” school. Much of this literature, including David Riesman’s best-selling *The Lonely Crowd*, which drew on Mills’ interview data, trafficked in psychologizing generalizations about “the American character.” Mills, however, wanted his analysis of white-collar psychology to answer a class question: were “white collars” inclined to develop a labor consciousness, or were they so anxious about their “status” that they would side with conservatism or even fascism?

While the sociological sections of the book were careful to distinguish between points on a “pyramid” of white-collar work with different privileges and status pressures, the composition of *White Collar* caught Mills at a moment of overarching pessimism. After working closely with the labor movement in the late 1940s, he had grown pessimistic about its leaders’ willingness to compromise their radicalism for narrow pecuniary gain. He had also fallen under the influence of the notion of “mass society” gaining traction among literary intellectuals in New York, which

⁶¹ Mills, *White Collar*, 111.

shared a totalizing vision of a manipulated, engineered society with the Frankfurt School.⁶² The position of armchair ultra-left critic that Mills took up as he wrote *White Collar* often translated into a black pessimism. Throughout the book, Mills indulged in extreme rhetorical flights that painted white-collar workers as mind-controlled automatons manipulated and exploited by the machine of bureaucracy. At moments, *White Collar* anticipated Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and especially Hebert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1961). "In modern society," Mills declared,

coercion, monopolized by the democratic state, is rarely needed in any continuous way. But those who hold power have often come to exercise it in hidden ways: they have moved and they are moving from authority to manipulation. Not only the great bureaucratic structures of modern society, themselves means of manipulation as well as authority, but also the means of mass communication are involved in the shift. The managerial demiurge extends to opinion and emotion and even the mood and atmosphere of given acts.⁶³

If bureaucracy perfected the total alienation of man by rationalizing workers even in ways that even the industrial assembly line could not, then one should not hold out much hope for white-collar workers who were "dominated by a vast system of abstractions." This was through no fault of their own, as white-collar workers were controlled by forces that often remained so "structural" that they were difficult to locate and oppose with a coherent political consciousness. As a result, white-collar workers were primarily defined by political apathy and indifference; they would never be a political vanguard, but always a "rearguard." "The political question of the new middle classes," Mills concluded, "is, of what bloc or movement will they be most likely to stay at the tail? And the answer is, the bloc or movement that most obviously seems to be winning."⁶⁴

⁶² Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 115.

⁶³ Mills, *White Collar*, 110.

⁶⁴ Mills, 353.

Mills' sociology was, like that of the Merton students, driven by his left political commitments. But because he did not come from organized socialist politics like Selznick and Lipset, Mills' interest in bureaucracy was not focused on leftist organizational dynamics or the possibility of a pure, democratic revolution under the shadow of Stalinism. Mills took for granted that any American socialism would be democratic and anti-totalitarian, and as a result, his sociology pursued questions that were more immediate—more historical and political. As his peers shifted the microsociological and focused on “groups” and “organizations,” Mills relentlessly kept in view a total social structure based on class domination. As they warmed to America's supposed innate pluralism as a check on bureaucracy, he argued that American work and politics were becoming more homogenized, hierarchical, and subsumed under the control of an unaccountable ruling elite. Where they treated the institutions they studied on the ground as case studies of universal social dynamics, Mills viewed institutions as radically historical. Thus, as the Merton students increasingly pronounced verdicts on whether non-totalitarian socialism was possible *at all* for “organizational” reasons, Mills would have considered such a question inherently unanswerable. Instead, he was concerned with whether socialism was possible *right now in the United States*.

Anti-Bureaucratic Romanticism and the Long Shadow of Anti-Totalitarianism

In spite of these dramatic differences, however, Mills and the Merton students were not far apart in every respect. Mills often proved to be the mere mirror image of his liberal colleagues, agreeing on the diagnosis but not the cure. Because of its importance to the subsequent history of bureaucracy, its reception in France, and the transatlantic politics of the 1960s and 1970s, it is worth briefly exploring the major commonality American bureaucracy sociologists shared across

apparent methodological and political differences: the association of bureaucracy with totalitarianism and the reflexive opposition to the organized, the centralized, and the large-scale. In spite of the reputation of mid-century American social science for “high modernism,” romantic backlash—cultural and aesthetic protest against modernity—was always a major contrapuntal theme.⁶⁵ Even those who politically rationalized mid-century technocracy could sometimes be caught romanticizing nineteenth-century America or vaunting the supposed virtues of organic community or spontaneous human sociality. It was those notes of romantic protest in American liberalism, in Mills’ radicalism, and in industrial-society theory that would bridge the interwar generation and the 1968 generation. It was also the reason that, as the 1970s advanced, the young left in Western Europe and the United States would deploy language and ideas in protest against “organized” or “bureaucratic” society that could be difficult to distinguish from those of the neoliberal critics of the welfare state.

Philip Selznick was the consummate teenage Trotskyist who transformed into an “anti-utopian” liberal via a combination of anti-Stalinist political engagement and introduction to sociology. As a result, Selznick’s work on bureaucracy and “organization” would express the common view of those who took a similar political path that “the democratic idea of self-government” was itself utopian, and that some compromise with the forces of “organization” had to be made. Yet, despite this sober message, Selznick’s thinking still bore the traces of his youthful intransigence in the face of leadership, representation, or hierarchy of any kind, all of which he had learned to associate with Stalin and dictatorship. The assumption that organizational structures of any kind were *inherently* authoritarian and perhaps even proto-totalitarian revealed ultra-left

⁶⁵ Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001). On the “persistence of the romantic tradition” in American social thought, see Brick, *Age of Contradiction*.

premises that were often masked by the explicitly liberal, anti-utopian cast of Selznick's rhetoric. Even in Selznick's rejection of his youthful radicalism, his aim was to channel his earlier opposition to "bureaucratic directorates" into a new, more realistic vessel, which turned out to be the embrace of "counter-powers" and "competition." Thus, somewhat paradoxically, even as Selznick counseled realism toward the immovable laws of "organization," he remained preoccupied with the central anti-totalitarian question of avoiding domination by bureaucratic dictatorship. As the next several decades would show, this only appears to be a paradox: in reality, Trotskyists in the U.S. and across Western Europe would frequently prove to be allies of the American Cold War agenda, and their contribution to the anti-totalitarian consensus would have considerable influence over the radical left of the 1960s and 1970s.

As different as his methods and politics were, a strong current of anti-bureaucratic romanticism ran through Mills' work as well. *White Collar* opened with almost jarringly conservative paean to the property-holders' democracy of nineteenth-century America, the "self-balancing society" that lacked an "authoritarian center, but [was] held together by countless free, shrewd transactions."⁶⁶ While himself recognizing that he was reiterating a myth, Mills ventriloquized the romantic image of decentralized America because it appealed to his own anti-authoritarian impulses. Indeed, a central structural conceit of the book was to contrast the "amorphous twentieth century" unfavorably with the "round, solid nineteenth century."⁶⁷ At times Mills' language suggested a *liberal* critique of bureaucratization, complaining about a society in which "offices replace free markets."⁶⁸ At times it was also colored with the aesthetic protest

⁶⁶ Mills, *White Collar*, 9.

⁶⁷ Mills, 110.

⁶⁸ Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 189.

against modernity central to romanticism, as Mills protested against the “coldness” and “abstraction” of bureaucracy, and celebrated the supposed autonomy of pre-industrial labor. Because *White Collar* was a complex, self-contradictory book, romantic protest was only one of its voices, more than balanced out by Mills’ relentless emphasis on the structural roots of domination. Mills rejected any attempt to reinstate the democracy of small property, and his subsequent political engagement suggests he hoped for a forward-looking solution powered by popular radicalism. But the bleak, totalizing depiction of bureaucratic society suggested a certain kinship with the other bureaucracy sociologists: a view that unchecked bureaucratization was the definition of totalitarian control, and had to be checked either by an elite-guided liberal pluralism or by leftist rebellion.

Selznick and Mills thus, despite their different backgrounds, methods, and politics, presented a similarly negative verdict on the new “bureaucratic” era of Western society, based on similar tendencies to view large organizations as inherently authoritarian and proto-totalitarian. They paid little attention to the empirical fact that state bureaucracies like those created by the New Deal often in fact worked in tandem with popular radicalism, granting average citizens new rights and powers that they turned into demands for more. The dual emphasis that Selznick and Mills expressed—the absolute inevitability of bureaucratic organization and, simultaneously, its negative and authoritarian character—was fully absorbed into subsequent social theory, especially industrial-society theory. As a result, sociologists would continually ponder how to reconcile the necessities of bureaucratic administration with their ideological belief in unmediated popular democracy. As we will see in the final chapter, the twin responses incarnated by Selznick and Mills—technocracy or rebellion—would be mirrored in the 1960s by the two major French industrial society theorists, Michel Crozier and Alain Touraine. But on the whole, industrial-

society theory would try to reconcile the opposites, resulting in its ambivalent embrace of the postwar state and its perpetual agitation against Communist modernism, that is, the full use of state powers for social change. In the 1950s and early 1960s, sociologists of this persuasion would successfully remake the politics of Western European social democrats, embracing expansion of the state but pulling back from planning and expropriation. But in the environment late 1960s and 1970s, the anti-bureaucratic theme of the immediate postwar years caught fire with a new generation and put the state directly in the crosshairs for both the radical left and the energized right. The explosion of French anti-totalitarianism in the 1970s, in particular, with its assault even on moderate, reformist uses of the state, would reprise an American critique of bureaucracy and totalitarianism already two decades old.

Chapter Three

‘The Mystery of the Technocrats’: Managers, Marxism and Social Science at the Liberation Crossroads (1945-1950)

“Russia has without a doubt been the chief political enigma of the past generation; and on no other enigma have so many attempts at explanation been spent. ... What kind of society is it?”

—James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution*, 1941

“These are clearly times of change, of metamorphosis. But, in contrast to our forebears, we are aware that change is taking place. We are troubled, however, because we cannot grasp its nature.”

—André Malraux to James Burnham, 1948

« Managers, organisateurs, directeurs, technocrates, techniciens, bureaucrates, tous ces termes servaient de façon presque interchangeable à caractériser une nouvelle classe dirigeante, ou quasi-dirigeante, de la société. Mais qu’est-ce au juste que cette classe dirigeante, ou soi-disant telle ? Et d’abord, *existe-t-elle vraiment ?* »

—Pierre Naville, 1950

When the Nazi occupation of France ended in 1944, social science had a marginal position in the French university. Neither sociology nor economics had its own system of degrees and professorships; both disciplines were practiced under more traditional categories such as philosophy or law. This would change in the next two decades, as the French state underwent an intense process of reconstruction and modernization to manage a partially-nationalized and quasi-planned postwar economy. Social research dramatically expanded, often receiving its funding and research directives from state planning and statistical agencies; they received funding from the United States government via the Marshall Plan, and through American foundations’ donations to rebuilt and newly-established research institutions like the CNRS and the sixth section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études. Both postwar French economics and *sociologie du travail*, or sociology of work, were products of this reconstruction period.

The story of the postwar path of French social science is often told in terms of “Americanization”: French academic disciplines were reconstituted on the basis of American support and through the “reception” of American emphases and methods that supposedly

emphasized problem-oriented empirical research and looked with suspicion on the theoretical and historical traditions of European social theory.¹ In French intellectual culture, they were caught seeking a foothold between the politically-engaged philosophical and literary culture that dominated French intellectual life and the practical demands of postwar technocracy-in-construction.² As a result, interpreting French postwar social science, particularly postwar sociology, has centered the question of its overlap and “complicity” with the aims of the modernizing state, which is seen as having more or less consequences on its theories and research outcomes.³ In particular, the French reception of American “industrial relations,” often criticized for depoliticizing labor relations and acting as a support for managerial ideology under the cover of paternalist progressivism, have led figures from the 1968 generation to contemporary historians to dismiss postwar social science as an essentially technocratic enterprise.

Returning to the initial crossroads of French social science after World War II, this chapter nuances the story of postwar Americanization by showing elements of the French intellectual field that distinguished from its U.S. counterpart despite the overall process of homogenization in the direction of American norms. It shows, namely, how the immediate postwar debate in France about the so-called “managerial revolution” took place within a network that featured both members of the future sociological “establishment” like Georges Friedmann and Georges Gurvitch and independent Marxist intellectuals like Pierre Naville and Charles Bettelheim. While “mainstream”

¹ Marcel, *Reconstruire la sociologie française avec les Américains*; Chapoulie, “La seconde fondation de la sociologie française, les États-Unis et la classe ouvrière”; Mazon, *Aux origines de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales*; Luc Boltanski, “America, America: Le Plan Marshall et l'importation du ‘management,’” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 38, no. 1 (1981): 19–41; Brigitte Mazon, “La Fondation Rockefeller et les sciences sociales en France, 1925-1940,” *Revue française de sociologie* 26, no. 2 (1985): 311–42.

² Heilbron, *French Sociology*, chapter five.

³ Tanguy, *La sociologie du travail en France*; Michael Rose, *Servants of Post-Industrial Power?: Sociologie Du Travail in Modern France* (London: Macmillan, 1979); Klaus Düll, *Industriesozilogie in Frankreich: eine historische Analyse zu den Themen Technik, Industriearbeit, Arbeiterklasse* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1975).

and “radical” sociologists were also in closer proximity and dialogue in the U.S. than is sometimes believed, the center of gravity in the French intellectual field was further to the left and more explicitly concerned with Marxism and revolutionary politics. This combination of sociological and intellectual factors demonstrates the slightly different path that industrial-society ideas would take in France: though similar in content to the American counterparts, in France they were elaborated jointly by sociologists and radicals in a left public sphere, and thus were more open to appropriation in left politics. This helps to explain how “establishment” French sociologists like Friedmann and Alain Touraine shared highly similar perspectives with American “radicals” like C. Wright Mills and David Riesman, and rather than turn to the right in the late 1960s, would polarize to the left and side with their students. At the crossroads of the Liberation, both future establishment sociologists and radicals alike took a keen interest in the “managerial revolution,” and jointly began to elaborate the bases of the industrial-society paradigm.

In 1945, the problem of the managerial revolution appeared almost coterminous with the future of reconstructed France. This chapter thus explores two moments in which social scientists and Marxist intellectuals debated James Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution*. While not the first book to do so, *The Managerial Revolution* was the first widely read theory that conflated diverse political systems into instantiations of a new political-economic form dominated by expert managers. This question had not only been central to interwar social democrats and “social liberals” in Germany and the United States, but above all to the international Trotskyist diaspora that was attempting to define the rise of the “bureaucratic” Stalinist regime in the USSR. It was doubly relevant in postwar France, where liberal capitalism’s discredit was almost total, where economic planning was a common rallying cry across the diverse ideologies that made up the French resistance, and where the battle between a *dirigiste* socialism and an elite Keynesian

technocracy reached its apogee around 1947. The question of “managers” was existential because it involved both the nature of the reconstructed France and the direction of global political economy as a whole: would postwar planning be along the lines of the Nazi regime and its close partners in Vichy—monopoly capitalism coordinated by authoritarian engineers—or could it also be socialist and democratic? And what light did the Soviet experiment cast on the matter?

After reviewing the global proliferation of “new society” theories in the 1930s to which the postwar moment owed its greatest debt, this chapter reconstruct two moments in the Burnham reception that took place in France in 1947-1948. The first is the debate over Burnham and the “Russian question” in the newly-founded “open” Marxist journal *La Revue Internationale*, edited by a group that had direct links to the nascent social-science institutions, to the postwar planning apparatus, and to a number of American academic institutions and journals. The second is the “Industrialization and Technocracy” conference held in 1948 at the newly-opened heart of postwar sociology, the Centre d’études sociologiques (CES). The conference was organized by Georges Gurvitch on his return from exile at the New School for Social Research in the United States, and was populated by prominent postwar intellectual figures including the personalist philosopher and *Esprit* founder Emmanuel Mounier, the Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre, the sociologist Georges Friedmann, and *Revue Internationale* editors such as the Marxist economist Charles Bettelheim. Though these two locations were different in nature and tone—one a project of independent Marxist thinkers, the other hosted by the CES—they jointly showed how the questions of managers, experts, bureaucrats, and technocrats simultaneously interests sociologists and radicals in the postwar period, and led them both to contribute to the French incarnation of the industrial-society paradigm.

Origins of the Revolution: Managers and New Societies Between the Wars

The period between roughly 1914 and 1940 was a golden age of the “new society” in global social theory: analyses of the supposed next phase or the evolutionary direction of contemporary political economy. New society theories flourished as analyses of capitalism, communism, and fascism: in the 1920s, social democrats in Weimar Germany and social liberals in the United States were optimistic that the structures of the *laissez-faire* economy were being modified to such an extent that “organized capitalism” was moving toward a transition to socialism.⁴ Throughout the 1930s, as Stalin consolidated a bureaucratic dictatorship in the Soviet Union, a wide array of opposition movements within Russia and in fractions of the global communist movement attempted to explain the supposed “degeneration” of the Bolshevik revolution. Far-flung Trotskyist militants were particularly prolific in naming the new phases of Stalinist degeneration; while Trotsky himself held that the U.S.S.R. was a “degenerated workers’ state,” his followers pushed to go further and label it “state capitalism,” “bureaucratic collectivism,” or under the control of a new ruling class.⁵ For left-wing German theorists like the members of the soon-to-be-exiled Frankfurt School, primarily focused on analyzing the rising Nazi regime, theories of “state capitalism” sometimes led to structural comparisons to the Soviet Union if never a simplistic conflation of the two.⁶

⁴ Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, chapter 2.

⁵ For the best extant attempt at a systematic overview, see van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union*, chapter three. On the 1930s variants of “state capitalism” theory and the different registers (scientific, ethical, etc) in which it was mobilized, see Michael S. Fox, “Ante Ciliga, Trotskii, and State Capitalism: Theory, Tactics, and Reevaluation during the Purge Era, 1935-1939,” *Slavic Review* 50, no. 1 (ed 1991): 127–43; Christopher Phelps, “C. L. R. James and the Theory of State Capitalism,” in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nelson Lichtenstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 157–74.

⁶ Friedrich Pollock’s writings on “state capitalism” were influenced by the earlier debate among social-democratic theorists like Rudolf Hilferding, and was controversial within the Frankfurt School; the group generally recognized the Nazi regime as capitalist. Manfred Gangl, “The Controversy over Friedrich Pollock’s State Capitalism,” *History of the Human Sciences* 29, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 23–41; Tobias ten Brink, “Economic Analysis in Critical Theory: The Impact of Friedrich Pollock’s State Capitalism Concept,” *Constellations* 22, no. 3 (September 2015):

Across their enormous geographical distribution, strategic contexts, and theoretical variety, new society theories reflected the basic reality that political-economic regimes in much of Eurasia and the United States were in flux, and that World War I had everywhere led to the crossing of new thresholds in state organization of production, setting of prices and wages, and establishing basic frameworks for union recognition. The spread of scientific management and mass production techniques from the United States to Europe and the Soviet Union, the growing role of engineers and other technical experts in both the personnel of the factory and state administration seemed to bring unprecedented levels of “organization” as European elites, along with the Roosevelt administration in the United States, recognized that they would have to reorganize capitalism in order to save it.⁷

Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution* would eventually provide the first synthetic account of these macrosocial changes to reach a wide global audience. It would thus give voice to the theoretical challenges that faced French social scientists after the end of World War II, and express—though mostly in the negative—a *zeitgeist* that sought new categories, sources of empirical evidence, and historical schemas for making sense of twentieth-century society, and which would culminate in the industrial-society paradigm. The salience of Burnham’s book had to do not only with the fact that it was widely read reviewed in the elite press in France the way it had been in the United States. It also had to do with the fact that strategically-placed French social scientists—through participation in global Marxist networks and through exile to the United States—had in fact been present at the birth of Burnham’s ideas long before they were specifically

333–40; Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1942).

⁷ Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

attributed to Burnham himself. To understand why *The Managerial Revolution* resonated with their own concerns and aims for a reconstructed social science requires understanding the theoretical context from which it emerged. For French communists and Trotskyists, like American ones, and for social theorists in both countries, the so-called “Russian question” was never only about the fate of the Soviet Union.⁸

“Bureaucracy” is the inevitable starting point for understanding the Trotskyist theories of Soviet Union in the 1930s. The term had always had pejorative connotations in Marxist theory, and even more so in the Bolshevik party and the writings of Lenin, its premier theorist. Bureaucracy was understood not only as the repressive superstructure of the capitalist state, but also a mentality and a style of behavior. Despite its slippery and under-theorized status in Bolshevik analysis, it aimed at serious sociological content: Lenin understood bureaucracies as part of the laundry-list of configurations generated by the capitalist state, and tended to analyze the Soviet bureaucracy—not entirely incorrectly—as holdover functionaries from the Tsarist regime.⁹ “Bureaucratic” tactics were central to Lenin and Trotsky’s distrust of Stalin, and would become a central plank of the Trotskyist mythos, particularly after the exile of Trotsky’s “Left Opposition” in 1928.¹⁰

Already at the end of the 1920s, Trotsky’s supporters and other revolutionaries in Western Europe described the Stalin regime as the “Soviet Thermidor”—a bourgeois restoration analogous to the reactionary period of the French Revolution that began with the execution of Robespierre in

⁸ Nelson Lichtenstein, “Introduction: Social Theory and Capitalist Reality in the American Century,” in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nelson Lichtenstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 12.

⁹ V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, trans. Robert Service (London and New York: Penguin, 1992), chapter six; Moshe Lewin, *Lenin’s Last Struggle*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 124–28; Lars T. Lih, *Lenin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 155, 181–82.

¹⁰ Robert H. McNeal, “Trotsky’s Interpretation of Stalin,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 5 (1961): 87–97.

1794.¹¹ Across the 1930s, inspired by the dramatic and violent upheavals precipitated by the implementation of the Five-Year Plan (1928-1932) and the Great Purge (1936-1938), Trotskyists clamored for theoretical denunciations of the regime as having fully returned to forms of bureaucratic authoritarianism or “state capitalism.” These debates, which took places at the congresses of Trotskyist parties, in journals and newspapers, and in letters to Trotsky to which he often responded publicly, provoked the latter’s major theoretical intervention on the subject, *The Revolution Betrayed*, which would become the basis of further disagreement and the direct precursor of Burnham’s *Managerial Revolution*.¹²

The famous argument of *The Revolution Betrayed* was that, while the October Revolution had socialized the means of production in Russia, the specific problems the country faced—underdevelopment and isolation—had generated a parasitic bureaucracy that was now corrupting the political life of the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy originated in the socioeconomic problems that faced the U.S.S.R. after the end of the Civil War: a shattered country with vastly underdeveloped productive resources that essentially had to be rationed. This job often fell to the five million demobilized members of the Red Army: “The victorious commanders assumed leading post in the local Soviets, in economy, in education, and they persistently introduced everywhere that regime which had ensured success in the civil war.”¹³ Thus, workers’ democracy was pushed aside both by the practical demands of running the economy, but also by hierarchical

¹¹ Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929-1940* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 53–55.

¹² For the most accessible synthetic overview of these controversies, see Deutscher, 462–77. The American split between the Cannon and Shachtman factions from which Burnham emerged is covered in Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 184–89; For the first-person perspective of a major French participant, see Yvan Craipeau, *Le mouvement trotskyste en France : des origines aux enseignements de mai 68* (Paris: Éditions Syros, 1971), 208–11; and *Mémoires d’un dinosaure trotskyste: secrétaire de Trotsky en 1933* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 145–48.

¹³ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 89–90.

and repressive military habits. In such conditions of scarcity, “bureaucracy,” which included various functionaries and experts from the previous regime, would become primarily concerned with pursuing its own access to goods and privileges of which the masses were deprived. But Trotsky held to a Marxist view in which classes were determined “by their position in the social system of the economy, and primarily by their relation to the means of production.”¹⁴ The bureaucrats had no relation to production; they were merely a superstructural “growth” in the social system—a parasitical caste, but not a class. The October Revolution had instituted a “system of social relations” that the bureaucracy had betrayed, but this did not mean they had established a new class rule or reinstituted capitalism; the means of production were still socialized. “To betray it is not enough. You have to overthrow it.”¹⁵

Trotsky himself raised the matter of whether there was any resemblance between the Stalinist and fascist bureaucracies, concluding that, due to the abolition of private property and the liquidation of the bourgeoisie in the U.S.S.R., the Soviet bureaucracy had an unprecedented “independence” from a ruling class. In fascist regimes, where the state still coordinated the economy on the basis of capitalist production and private profit, bureaucracies played their more traditional role as ruling-class managers. The question of bureaucratic and managerial “independence” had been a central one in the new society theories of the 1930s, particularly for Burnham’s most important theoretical source: Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means’ *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1932).¹⁶ Berle, a lawyer-diplomat, and Means, an economist, were on the left end of American liberalism and associated with the American “socioeconomics”

¹⁴ Trotsky, 248.

¹⁵ Trotsky, 252.

¹⁶ Adolph A. Berle, Jr. and Gardiner C. Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933).

that Howard Brick sees as the parallel of Rudolph Hilferding's theory of "organized capitalism": an optimistic view that the large organizational structures of contemporary capitalism were making capitalist ownership increasingly anachronistic and evolving toward a socialized economy.¹⁷ The delegation of corporate control to a small number of managerial executives who supervised layers of administrators and answered to dispersed stockholders had made actual ownership "passive" and essentially eliminated the classical basis for private property in which the owner's active involvement and entrepreneurial activity justified their appropriation of profits.

Burnham's was among the first "new society" theories to include Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and the New Deal United States.¹⁸ It prefigured industrial-society theory in several ways, including by proposing a new "logic of industrialization" that contrasted with Marxist predictions and would become commonplace in postwar social science. Burnham generalized the Trotskyist analysis of Soviet bureaucracy to claim that the October Revolution had turned from its aims of radical socialist democracy and workers' control not because of the policies of Lenin or Stalin, but because of inexorable global socio-economic forces that were consolidating control by a new managerial class.¹⁹ Marxists were correct about the decadence and immanent overthrow of capitalism, Burnham argued, but wrong that the revolution would be socialist. It also presaged, and did much to shape, the industrial-society paradigm's analysis of white-collar workers, technicians, and technocrats. Drawing on Berle and Means' conclusions about the dispensability of much of the non-technical upper echelons of corporate management, Burnham concluded that

¹⁷ Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 73–82.

¹⁸ Burnham was predated by the publication of Bruno Rizzi's *La bureaucratisation du monde* in 1939, which many Trotskyists had heard of but few had read. The convoluted history of this book is explained thoroughly in Adam Westoby, "Introduction," in *The Bureaucratization of the World*, by Bruno Rizzi (New York: Free Press, 1985), 1–34.

¹⁹ Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What Is Happening in the World*, 207–17.

the real power lay in the hands of those who combined technical expertise in production and organization with sufficient organizational authority, who were now gradually taking power across Europe. The present was “a period of transition from one type of society—that type which has prevailed from, roughly, the fifteenth century to the early part of the twentieth—to a new and different type of society.”²⁰

Burnham in Paris: The French Reception of *The Managerial Revolution*

The publication of *The Managerial Revolution* in France coincided with the onset of the Cold War, which saw the expulsion of Communist Party ministers from the provisional government in 1947 and partially influenced the triumph of Jean Monnet’s “technocorporatist” vision of planning over the socialist *dirigisme* advocated by Pierre Mendès France and André Philip.²¹ The balance was tipped toward Monnet both by Charles de Gaulle and the United States, and the version of planning that emerged mainly involved five-year production targets for different sectors of the economy. As elsewhere in Europe, nationalizations swept the banking, electric power, gas, coal, and insurance sectors during 1945-46, but went no further. The new École Nationale d’Administration (ENA), conceived by the left as an alternative to Science Po’s right-leaning grip on political training, would end up endowing a huge majority of French political elites up to the present day into an engineering-above-politics, *ni droite ni gauche* ideology. Burnham’s *L’Ère des organisateurs* appeared just as the struggle for the shape postwar France was being won by the precise stratum Gilles Martinet would describe in 1945: the engineering elite,

²⁰ Burnham, 6–7.

²¹ The details in the following paragraph are drawn from Nord, *France’s New Deal*, chapter three; Richard F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France: Renovation and Economic Management in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

many of whom were devout Catholics and had briefly served in the Vichy regime before repudiating it, devotees of a spiritualist conception of public-spirited elitism, Keynesians who sought order and productivity without touching the structure of property and production—in short, a sanitized and democratized update of the technocracy that had defined Vichy.

The translation of *The Managerial Revolution* appeared in May 1947 in Raymond Aron's series at the publisher Calmann-Lévy. Though the two would become close through the anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom, Aron was not uncritical of Burnham's ideas: while he admitted a general tendency toward the development of highly rationalized state administration, he criticized the pessimism of Burnham's deterministic narrative and rejected the idea that political authoritarianism was an inescapable outcome of the growth in technical administration.²² *L'Ère des organisateurs* came with a preface by Léon Blum, the leader of the SFIO and perhaps the most respected French socialist, contributed a preface to the translation heralding the book as "troubling" reading for those who expected the end of capitalism to bring socialist revolution.²³ Blum gave *L'Ère des organisateurs* a left-wing imprimatur and associated it with the urgency of the times: "The intellectual imagination of Mr. James Burnham is so rich, his judgment so original, that the dialogue one could engage in with him seems inexhaustible."²⁴ Blum slightly misinterpreted Burnham's analysis of the Soviet Union as a new kind of class society that proved

²² Raymond Aron, *L'Homme contre les tyrans* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944); For more context, see Robert Colquhoun, *Raymond Aron: The Philosopher in History, 1905-1955*, vol. 1 (London: SAGE Publications, 1986), 271–73.

²³ Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière, the main French social-democratic party and the predecessor of the contemporary Parti Socialiste.

²⁴ Léon Blum, "Préface," in *L'ère des organisateurs*, by James Burnham, trans. Hélène Claireau (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947), xxi.

that “it is possible to destroy capitalist property without having destroyed capitalism.”²⁵ The Blum preface was frequently cited in the French press, which also stressed the strictly objective, scientific nature of Burnham’s arguments and the hard truths they laid out for socialists.²⁶ Burnham’s theories even appear to have achieved a kind of media currency: a journalist from *Le Monde*, reporting on the convention of De Gaulle’s Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF) noted that its national council’s labor plan “seems to be inspired by ... the famous theses of James Burnham on the ‘managerial revolution.’”²⁷

Burnham’s reception in France was not based exclusively on *The Managerial Revolution*, but on his multiple interventions in French public life during 1947-48. The translation of his third book, *The Struggle for the World*, appeared later in 1947, published in the same collection at Calmann-Lévy. *Pour la domination mondiale*, which announced his full turn to the right and advocacy of pre-emptive American military aggression against the Soviet Union, was excerpted at length in *Le Monde* and was the subject of numerous articles in the press.²⁸ Two more books in French followed in 1949 and another in 1953. In 1948, Burnham published an interview with André Malraux, a former left-wing literary celebrity who had taken a similarly sharp anti-communist turn and become the “voice of Gaullism.” Burnham declared dramatically that he had come to France because “What happens in France during the next six months, or the next year, may well be decisive, not for the final outcome perhaps, but for this present period in Europe and

²⁵ Though other Trotskyists and Marxists interpreted the U.S.S.R. as a “state capitalist” regime, Burnham was explicit that the “managerial revolution” involved the decadence and surpassing of capitalism, and considered the Soviet Union to have socialized property in spite of its unequal distribution.

²⁶ Pierre Reuter, “L’ère des organisateurs,” *Le Monde*, June 5, 1947.

²⁷ Jacques Fauvet, “‘Ceux qui prétendent lutter sur deux fronts sont plus ou moins consciemment les complices du parti communiste’ déclare M. Soustelle,” *Le Monde*, October 5, 1948.

²⁸ James Burnham, “L’empire mondial et l’équilibre du pouvoir,” *Le Monde*, August 23, 1947.

even in the world as a whole.”²⁹ Burnham and Malraux waxed eloquent on De Gaulle, who Burnham described as “the first genuinely *new* political reality since Hitler,” and lamented his movement’s unfair portrayal as right-wing.

***La Revue Internationale* and the Class Nature of the Soviet Bureaucracy**

The Burnham debate in France was kicked off in 1947 by a little-known journal called *La Revue Internationale*, which has received virtually no attention from intellectual historians. In addition to publishing many well-known French and American intellectuals, from Maurice Merleau-Ponty to John Dos Passos, the Revue would be one of the first on the scene to propose an open-ended approach to Marxism that considered the relationship of Marxist theory to new developments in philosophy, social science, and the natural sciences, as well as debating the nature of the USSR and the direction of world socialism. It thus prefigured, well before its traditional coming-out date of 1956, the presence of an independent “modernist” left that chafed against the PCF’s hegemony over Marxist ideas and argued for their adaption to the times—sometimes in a tone that were not far from the generally more politically moderate theorists of industrial society.

The editorial committee of the *Revue Internationale* submitted its first request to publish a journal in January 1945. The editors included Pierre Bessaignet, an economic anthropologist who had studied with Marcel Mauss in France and Joseph Schumpeter in the United States; Charles Bettelheim, a communist economist who was already advising the Ministry of Labor on economic planning; Gilles Martinet, the editor of the Agence France-Presse; Maurice Nadeau, a literature professor and the future publisher of *La Quinzaine littéraire*; and Pierre Naville, a psychology

²⁹ James Burnham and André Malraux, “The Double Crisis,” *Partisan Review* 15, no. 4 (April 1948): 407–38.

researcher at the Centre national de recherche scientifique (CNRS) and future *sociologue du travail*, who was soon invited by Gurvitch to join the CES. All five had been involved in communist activities, whether in the PCF or in Trotskyist groups; for the most part their political activism predated their participation in the resistance (see Figure 2). Documents submitted to the French administration described *La Revue Internationale* as a “synthetic” review covering the contemporary natural and social sciences from an international perspective, based on “rationalism and materialism.”³⁰ The legal constitution of the society added the name of David Rousset, a cofounder of the Trotskyist Parti Ouvrier Internationalist, a correspondent for *Time* and *Fortune* who spent much of the war in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Each of the six editors contributed 10,000 francs toward the initial capital of 60,000 francs.³¹

³⁰ See the questionnaire submitted to the Ministry of Information, “Note,” and the signed agreement creating the journal dated March 21, 1945, Archives Pierre Naville (henceforth APN), Dossier 37, Musée Social, Paris.

³¹ “Projet,” APN Dossier 37.

Fig 3. Editors of <i>La Revue Internationale</i>, activities c. 1925-1950					
<i>Name</i>	<i>Born</i>	<i>Political</i>	<i>Academic/Professional</i>	<i>Discipline/Activity</i>	<i>Travels</i>
Bessaiguet, Pierre ³²	1914	GCF	Yale, Harvard, CNRS, Hobart University (NY)	Anthropology, Economics	USA (1940s)
Bettelheim, Charles ³³	1913	PCF (1930-1937); POI (1940-43)	Ministère du Travail (1944-1948); École Pratique des Hautes Études, VIe section	Economics	USSR (1936), USA (1940s)
Martinet, Gilles	1916	PCF, PSU	Agence France-Presse, <i>L'Observateur</i>	Journalism	
Naville, Pierre	1904	PCF, LC, POI	<i>Clarté</i> ; <i>La Vérité</i> ; Centre d'études sociologiques (CNRS)	Philosophy, Sociology, Economics	USSR (1927), ³⁴ Turkey (1929)
Nadeau, Maurice	1911	PCF (1930-32), LC (1932-34), SFIO	<i>Combat</i> , <i>France-Observateur</i> , <i>L'Express</i> ,	Literature	
Rousset, David	1912	SFIO, POI, RDR (1947-48)	<i>Fortune</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Le Figaro littéraire</i>	Author, Politician	
CNRS = Centre national de recherches scientifiques ; GRF = Gauche communiste de France (ultra-left) ; LC = Ligue Communiste (Trotskyist) ; PCF = Parti communiste français (Stalinist) ; POI = Parti ouvrier internationaliste (Trotskyist) ; PSU = Parti socialiste unitaire (anti-Stalinist far left) ; RDR = Rassemblement démocratique révolutionnaire (Sartre) ; SFIO = Section française de l'internationale ouvrière (Social-democratic)					

While the following discussion is limited to the *Revue*'s debate over the Soviet Union in 1947-48, the journal was remarkably eclectic, and immediately embodied its founders' beliefs that a renovated Marxist theory would encompass philosophy, social science, and natural science. Topics in the first few issues included atomic energy, music, and econometrics. The *Revue* closely followed the postwar French philosophical scene, and its contributors often overlapped with the existentialists around *Les Temps modernes*; a debate on Marxism and existentialism, similar in scope and ambition to the Burnham debate we will discuss below, drew contributions from

³² Gerald Gaillard, *The Routledge Dictionary of Anthropologists* (Routledge, 2004), 188.

³³ François Denord and Xavier Zunigo, "« Révolutionnairement vôtre » : économie marxiste, militantisme intellectuel et expertise politique chez Charles Bettelheim," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* no 158, no. 3 (2005): 8–29.

³⁴ Rachel Mazuy, *Croire plutôt que voir ? Voyages en Russie soviétique (1919-1939)* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002), 28.

Ferdinand Alquié, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Tran-Duc Thao.³⁵ The *Revue* also lived up to the global scope promised in its name: the editors' correspondence had an astonishingly global reach.³⁶ It translated and republished articles on American literature from *The Sewanee Review* and Dwight Macdonald's *politics*, as well as articles on economic theory from the *American Economic Review*. Multiple issues featured long excerpts from Pierre Naville's translation of C.L.R. James' history of the Haitian revolution, *The Black Jacobins*.

The editors of the review shared the aim of providing a renovated, non-dogmatic Marxism capable of practical intervention in the questions of the post-Liberation reconstruction. While waiting six months for the authorization to publish in 1945, they published *La Crise française*, a co-authored pamphlet addressing the French economic, political, and educational situation.³⁷ Gilles Martinet's contribution prefigured the journal's emphasis on the problem of bureaucrats in the emerging socio-economic order. A critique of the "revolutionism" of the French resistance, Martinet argued that revolution, socialism, and economic planning had becoming buzzwords behind which had gathered all sorts of technocratic designs.³⁸ In particular, the post-Liberation programs of the Organisation civile et militaire (OCM), one of the largest resistance networks, represented a "technocratic revolutionism" under the name of socialism. "The development of modern economic forces under the sign of financial concentration implies a remarkable extension of the role of *cadres* in industry, banking, and commerce, that is to say the role of high technicians

³⁵ It is interesting to speculate about where the *Revue Internationale* would fall on Anna Boschetti's schematization of the postwar intellectual scene, as it enjoyed an overlap with *Les Temps Modernes* and *Critique* that belied its prominence and budget. *Sartre et « les Temps modernes » : une entreprise intellectuelle* (Paris: Minuit, 1985).

³⁶ This conclusion is based on perusal of the hundreds of letters sent and received by the editors kept in Pierre Naville's archives, APN Dossier 37.

³⁷ Charles Bettelheim et al., eds., *La Crise française : essais et documents* (Paris: Éditions du Pavois, 1945).

³⁸ Gilles Martinet, "Le « révolutionnarisme », maladie sénile du capitalisme," in *La Crise française : essais et documents* (Paris: Éditions du Pavois, 1945), 64–65.

[*grands techniciens*],” Martinet wrote. Thanks to their elite training, often at the École Polytechnique, French “technicians” tended to view themselves as more rational and enlightened than the owners of capital, dismayed by the wasteful anarchy of the market and amenable to *dirigiste* programs. Yet, their overlapping education, social milieu, and habituation to the dictates of capitalist commerce gave them a “particular optic that is hard for them to throw off.” When the talk of socialism and planning “enters the domain of the concrete, they go back behind their managers’ desks, adjust their bourgeois spectacles, and rediscover as if by enchantment the sacrosanct formulas about the ‘role of private initiative’ and the ‘inability of the state to organize a good and healthy management.’”³⁹ What the technocrats associated with OCM called socialism and planning, then, was really capitalism reorganized under corporatist coordination by elite engineers.

If Martinet opened the discussion by addressing the nature of capitalist technocrats in France, the *Revue Internationale*’s series focused on the American and especially the Soviet dimensions of what Pierre Naville would later call “contemporary social evolution.”⁴⁰ The debate around *The Managerial Revolution* debuted in the June 1947 issue, and was introduced with a question: “L’avenir est-il à la ‘classe directoriale’ ?”⁴¹ (Does the future belong to the managerial class?) Burnham was immediately denounced as unoriginal, the latest avatar of an old type that included Saint-Simon and the Howard Scott’s “technocrats” at Columbia University in the 1930s: “Periodically, certain capitalist milieux circulate theories destined to mask their crises and their

³⁹ Martinet, 72.

⁴⁰ Pierre Naville, “Deux ans de la *Revue Internationale*,” *La Revue internationale* 5, no. 20 (February 1948): 2.

⁴¹ The editors complained that Burnham’s French publisher had “not respected the American title” (which they translated as *révolution directoriale*) and thus given the book “a more banal meaning.” “L’avenir est-il à la ‘classe directoriale’ ?,” *La Revue internationale* 3, no. 16 (June 1947): 385–87.

anti-worker struggles and seek, in enormous verbal mystifications, a way out of their troubles: these are always appeals to the virtue of ‘managers,’ of technical *cadres*, of ‘administrators, organizers,’ the only ones capable, it would appear, of promoting a revolution that would guarantee the rights of the ‘person.’”⁴² If Burnham “cannot be taken seriously,” the problems of which he speaks could be subjected to a more rigorous analysis:

Indeed, these problems can be grouped around a central interrogation: what are the forms currently being taken by the decomposition of imperialist capitalism? It is a question that poses itself to every reflective man and has a particular importance to workers’ parties. And this develops into a whole series of other questions. Does the mortal crisis of capitalism open the way to socialism or to other forms of society? Does capitalism no longer exist? What are the classes that currently dominate society? Is the State still essentially the instrument of the dominant classes, etc? On the other hand, how to define Soviet society after thirty years of its life?⁴³

Fig 4. Articles on <i>The Managerial Revolution</i> in <i>La Revue Internationale</i>, 1947-48			
No.	Date	Author	Title
16	June 1947	Charles Bettelheim	Une mystification : la « révolution directoriale »
16	June 1947	Pierre Bessaignet	La conception américaine du plan
17	Summer 1947	Gilles Martinet	Le socialisme et les sociétés de transition (de Trotsky à Burnham)
18	October 1947	Aimé Patri	Une nouvelle classe dirigeante peut-elle exister ?
18	October 1947	Pierre Bessaignet	Réponse à une théorie de la bureaucratie nouvelle
18	October 1947	Rudolph Hilferding*	Capitalisme d’état ou économie d’état totalitaire (1940)
19	November 1947	Paul Sweezy*	Les illusions de la révolution directoriale (1942)
20	Jan-Feb 1948	Bettelheim/Martinet	Marxisme et démocratie
20	Jan-Feb 1948	J. Marcoux	De Burnham à Burnham
*Articles translated and reprinted.			

While the question of the U.S.S.R. had not been addressed in the first issues of the *Revue Internationale*, it was a central concern for the editorial board and the subject of considerable internal debate. In the spring of 1946, a few months first issue appeared in December 1945, Charles

⁴² “L’avenir est-il à la ‘classe directoriale’ ?,” 385.

⁴³ “L’avenir est-il à la ‘classe directoriale’ ?,” 386.

Bettelheim circulated a manuscript “to serve as the basis of a later discussion.”⁴⁴ The thirty-page essay was a critique of Trotsky’s notion of the “degenerated worker’s state” and a defense of the current formation of the Soviet Union as part of a “normal” and “necessary” step in the “construction of the worker’s state.” Bettelheim pointed out that Trotsky himself had argued that the proletariat would cease to exist as such upon taking power, and that the various strata (*couches*) of the working class would come into sharper relief during a period of “bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie” necessary for developing the “productive forces” (technical capacities) of a socialist economy. Thus, Bettelheim’s explanation of the new bureaucracy in the Soviet Union was that it was a splitting of the working class Trotsky had himself predicted, and the workers’ “aristocracy” now exercised the functions of political rule in the name of the proletariat. This was not a regression to true class division nor a form of capitalism; for Bettelheim, the execution of these technical roles was a “historical necessity” for the Soviet Union to develop a productive infrastructure adequate for the execution of a planned economy.⁴⁵ From this, Bettelheim concluded that the Left Opposition had lost its influence in the post-Lenin U.S.S.R. because of the growing distance between its theories and Soviet reality on the ground. Trotsky’s dogmatic attachment to the democracy of the Soviets as the only acceptable political form the dictatorship of the proletariat could take—when he admitted bourgeois dictatorship could take any number of political forms—was “utopian” and “reactionary.”⁴⁶

As the author of the first article in the *Revue*’s series on Burnham, Bettelheim reprised some of these arguments against Burnham’s claims that the Soviet Union had betrayed socialism

⁴⁴ Charles Bettelheim, “Le texte qui suit est destiné à servir de base à une discussion ultérieure...,” Spring 1946, APN, Dossier 37, Musée social.

⁴⁵ The appearance of this “historical necessity” is dated explicitly to 1928-29, the years in which Stalin cemented his dictatorship and launched the first Five Year Plan. Bettelheim, 14.

⁴⁶ Bettelheim, 8.

and established “managerial” rule. Like American authors before him, Bettelheim pointed out that Burnham’s “ethical” rather than “historical” definition of socialism was nowhere to be found in the Marxist tradition.⁴⁷ His definition of class division as inequality of salary evinced no understanding of a social class as “defined essentially by its role *in production* and by its relation to the means of production,” and thus was incapable of “serious sociological analysis.”⁴⁸ The temporary necessity Bettelheim had described for the “advanced” strata of the pre-Soviet proletariat to take on the role of “organizing the new society” was “decisive,” even if one could expect that, after a certain level of accomplishment, “the role and importance of organizers will find itself once again restrained.” That the complexity of taking power and establishing a state on the grounds of a barely-industrialized territory constantly threatened by war would seem a “regression” compared to the egalitarian ideals that prevailed in the streets during the October revolution, but as Marx had written, “war is always in advance of peace.”⁴⁹

Martinet pointed to the same contradiction in Trotsky’s analysis: an insistence that the development of an elite and a continuation of bourgeois law were an inexorable result of the state of Soviet economic forces, and at the same time that there could or should be a return to the political forms of the insurrectionary period.⁵⁰ Giving a brief overview of the previous decade of Trotskyist evolution on the question of bureaucracy, Martinet noted that it had overflowed its traditional meaning to encompass technicians, intellectuals, and specialized workers. Like Trotskyism in general, Burnham confused the functions these groups played—all in the end

⁴⁷ Charles Bettelheim, “Une mystification : la « révolution directoriale »,” *La Revue Internationale* 3, no. 16 (June 1947): 392.

⁴⁸ Bettelheim, 392–93.

⁴⁹ Bettelheim, 396.

⁵⁰ Gilles Martinet, “Le socialisme et les sociétés de transition (de Trotsky à Burnham),” *La Revue Internationale* 4, no. 17 (Summer 1947): 23–24.

subjected to the political power of the Communist Party—with a new “class” that had actually *usurped* state power. The Trotskyist idea that the proletarian mass needed to struggle against those who conducted technical affairs of state was in fact a regression to anarchism, a “vain and confused protest against the incapacity of contemporary Communism to resolve a certain number of the problems it poses.”⁵¹

A number of divides traversed the editorial board of the *Revue*, including differences over philosophy and psychology and over organizational questions.⁵² On the question of the U.S.S.R., Bettelheim and Martinet became a bloc that, while agreeing that the Soviet Union was still a worker’s state, rejected claims of degeneration and return to capitalism and worked to elaborate a new conception of socialist “transition.”⁵³ Without endorsing Stalinism as an acceptable definition of socialism, they argued that the Soviet Union’s political form was as natural an evolution as its economic form, one at least partially understood by Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky themselves. The Trotskyist critique of Stalinism thus became a kind of ultra-leftism, a utopianism that failed to take account of the historical necessity of industrialization.⁵⁴

The *trotskyisant* wing of the *Revue*, which included Naville, Bessaignet and articles by the *gauchiste* Aimé Patri, was much warmer toward Burnham’s explanation of the turn in the Soviet

⁵¹ Martinet, 14.

⁵² Bessaignet, who spent the early years of the journal’s existence in the United States, seems to have been the most unhappy with it, writing to Naville that it was “oriented from the beginning toward philosophical conceptions to which I am in absolute opposition.” “Pierre Bessaignet to Pierre Naville,” January 5, 1947, APN Dossier 37; Pierre Bessaignet, “Note pour La Revue Internationale,” undated, APN Dossier 37.

⁵³ The two signed a joint letter to the rest of the editorial committee complaining that Bettelheim’s text on the U.S.S.R had not inspired enough discussion about fundamental questions. “Charles Bettelheim and Gilles Martinet to Comité de rédaction,” December 15, 1946, APN Dossier 37.

⁵⁴ Bettelheim and Martinet were saluted for their rebuttal of Burnham in a generally hostile review of the debate by the PCF’s journal *La Pensée*, which ridiculed the *Revue Internationale*’s lack of literary content and described it as a “review of technicians.” Jean Auget-Duvignaud, “*Revue Internationale*, numéros 16, 17, 18,” *La Pensée*, no. 18 (June 1948): 129–30.

Union if not to his “managerial revolution” thesis in general. Bessaignet dismissed Bettelheim and Martinet’s articles as a “disguised justification of Stalinism ... at the moment where everything leads to the admission that it no longer has anything to do with the working class.”⁵⁵ It was a clear break with Marx, he argued, to define socialism as a mere property relation—nationalized ownership—as opposed to the democratization of the relations of production themselves. Equally heretical was the notion that the state apparatus could be made to serve one fraction of the proletariat against another.⁵⁶ “For Marx and Engels, the State can only exist in a society divided into classes, that is to say resting on the exploitation of the labor of one part of society.” The state organized the interests of the different fractions of the exploiting classes even as these fractions pursued their individual interests, and as such could not continue to exist in the absence of an exploiting class.⁵⁷ Bettelheim’s argument about the strata of the working class was a sleight of hand intended to “de-bureaucratize” the economic bureaucracy of the U.S.S.R. and dissimulate its class nature.

In response to the charge that they were “neo-Stalinists”—leveled by Bessaignet and Patri in the *Revue*, but also by Trotskyist and ultra-leftist writers in *Quatrième Internationale* and *Masses*—Bettelheim and Martinet labeled their critics “neo-libertarians.” Critics who wanted to claim the Soviet Union had devolved into a new class society or reverted to capitalism failed to understand that aspects of capitalist organization had never disappeared in the first place, as indeed they should not be expected to do during the U.S.S.R.’s current transitional phase. The hierarchical division of labor, between management and execution, or between intellectual and manual work,

⁵⁵ Pierre Bessaignet, “Réponse à une théorie de la bureaucratie nouvelle,” *La Revue Internationale* 4, no. 18 (October 1947): 103–11.

⁵⁶ Bessaignet, 104.

⁵⁷ Bessaignet, 105.

was not a new Soviet degeneration but an old capitalist one. Burnham, indeed, had mistaken an evolution within capitalist organization—the increasingly complex organization of monopolistic firms that required the delegation of managerial functions to non-owning functionaries—for a fundamental change in social structure. On the contrary, “salaried employees charged with managerial tasks remain no less salaried employees—whatever their rank in the hierarchy—as they must obey the orders of capital.”⁵⁸ (This argument recalled Paul Sweezy’s review of Burnham from several years earlier, translated and republished in the *Revue*, which insisted that “Managers are the best-kept salaried workers under capitalism.”⁵⁹) Already within capitalism, the multiplication of wage-earning managers had unsettled the old superposition of the division of labor onto the more general division of society into classes, which in no way meant that the fundamental power of the owners of capital was challenged or even modified.

The upshot of this argument was that the “neo-libertarians” were using superficial Marxist maxims against the Soviet Union rather than following how organizational structures within world capitalism had evolved, making their inevitable imprint on the transitional U.S.S.R. For Bettelheim and Martinet, such organizational evolutions were a part of theorizing how the “transition” to socialism—the long period of the “withering away” of the capitalist state—would play out in practice. The revolutionary Bolshevik state had in fact taken a major step in eliminating capitalist ownership, in transformation *property relations*. This transformation was an essential precondition of building a future socialist society in which the “productive forces”—technology—would be developed to the point that work-time would be diminished, all of society could have a similar

⁵⁸ Charles Bettelheim and Gilles Martinet, “Marxisme et démocratie,” *La Revue Internationale* 5, no. 20 (February 1948): 34–35.

⁵⁹ Paul M. Sweezy, “The Illusion of the ‘Managerial Revolution,’” *Science & Society* 6, no. 1 (1942): 1–23; “Les illusions de la révolution directoriale,” *La Revue Internationale* 3, no. 19 (December 1947): 179–82.

level of education and expertise, and true egalitarianism would arrive. In its first decades, however, the Soviet Union had been dealt the impossible hand of under-developed production and near-constant external assault. In this transitional period, then, it was no surprise to see a division of labor that resembled that of capitalist societies—except that, due to the Soviet transformation of property relations, the division of labor now took place *within the proletariat* rather than between a class of exploiting owners and exploited workers.

Naville, whose work we will follow in considerable detail in later chapters, wrote a lengthy critique of the Bettelheim-Martinet thesis that was probably circulated between the editors at the time, but did not appear in the *Revue*.⁶⁰ He considered Bettelheim's analysis a post-hoc justification of Soviet development since the revolution; as he later put it to Isaac Deutscher, it was the "*mis en forme* of the practice of Stalinism, nothing more."⁶¹ Naville, however, did not share Bessaignet's conviction that the failure of the U.S.S.R. to match an a priori moral definition of socialism required that Western revolutionaries dissociate themselves from it. He argued that the whole debate—the litigation of the recent Soviet past within the framework of Burnham's claims of a "managerial revolution"—lacked fundamental methodological clarification, and ended up opposing "definitions to definitions, figures to figures, and affirmations to affirmations."⁶² Naville began by noting that both sides of the debate had a confused understanding of the relationship between realities and norms, by which he meant empirical facts and theoretical schemas/normative principles. The Soviet Union's evolution undoubtedly presented an empirical challenge to the

⁶⁰ Pierre Naville, "Les critères de l'évolution politique et sociale en U.R.S.S.," in *Le salaire socialiste: les rapports de production*, vol. 1, 2 vols., Le Nouveau Léviathan (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1970), 374–414.

⁶¹ "Pierre Naville to Isaac Deutscher," September 30, 1956, Isaac Deutscher Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, ARCH00462, Box 39-41. Naville also titled the dossier of Bettelheim's early manuscripts in his personal archives, "Les erreurs théoriques et pratiques du camarade Bettelheim."

⁶² Naville, "Les critères de l'évolution politique et sociale en U.R.S.S.," 374.

theoretical expectations of Marx and Lenin. Bettelheim's response, which Naville alternately labeled "empiricist" and "realist," was to argue that facts won out over preconceptions; in Hegel's terms, "the rational is the real." In practice, however, particularly because Bettelheim only focused on analyzing the Soviet *past*, this meant turning bare empirical events into a new "norm"—that is, Bettelheim's argument that the Soviet development of a privileged fraction of the proletariat as technical managers should be understood as an inevitable, "normative" stage in the transition to socialism. This was, as Naville put it, a reversion to pre-Marxist Hegelianism that reworked the past as justification of a causally necessary present. It also had a curious resonance with Burnham in the sense that it identified the rise of a managerial fraction as a necessary feature of Soviet socioeconomic evolution.⁶³

The answer was not Bessaignet's maxims, which we could identify as an example of what Naville dismissed as "all sorts of people who only attach the principles of socialism to moral considerations...who say, in essence, that socialism goes back to ideas of justice, of reason, etc."⁶⁴ (Martinet had dismissed the same sorts of arguments against the Soviet Union as moral problems posed "classically," that is, as if they were not relative to material realities.) Naville wanted *neither* an analysis that constructed the norms of socialism out of the empirical past *nor* an abstract and ahistorical rubric for socialism. His definition of dialectical materialism included a combination of an empirical study of the present with a normative theoretical framework that looked toward the *future*, making synthetic predictions that could direct political action in the present. For the question at hand—that of the new "bureaucratic" class in the U.S.S.R.—such an approach avoided Bettelheim's schematic dismissal of any potential contradictions or dangers in the Soviet present

⁶³ Naville, 399.

⁶⁴ Naville, 402.

on the basis that the new proletarian bureaucrats could never be a class in the capitalist sense. “We must, then, study with precision the forms of separation of managerial strata [*couches dirigeantes*] in relation to the mass; the guise that these forms take at the present hour does not have a necessary movement [*allure*]. They are not universally inevitable. They can and should be modified.”⁶⁵ In other words, empirical analysis that sought socioeconomic laws of motion in the present and future would recognize *contingency*, the possibility that the Soviet experiment could be improved and—crucially for Western revolutionaries—adapted to different conditions.

Bettelheim and Naville approached the Russian question from different methodological angles, but their responses pointed in a similar direction: toward analysis that adapted Marxist sociohistorical theory to world economic conditions. For both, it involved a critical analysis of the Soviet Union that had both political and scientific import: it sought not only to understand the laws of development that might be expected in a socialist state, and thus serve as models or counter-models elsewhere, but also the *global economic conditions* in which the Soviet Union was embedded. Naville leaned toward the former, combining equally formidable powers in philosophy and economics to elaborate a philosophical-empirical study of the U.S.S.R. that would be a *political* guide. Bettelheim, as an economist, was less concerned with judging the political dangers of Soviet authoritarianism and more interested in studying the mechanics of the imperative for a socialist state to carry out desperately-needed industrialization.

⁶⁵ Naville, 400.

« *Enquêtes, enquêtes, enquêtes* » : Industrialization, Technocracy and the Rebirth of French Sociology

The second moment that expressed the transitional challenges facing sociological knowledge in the first years following 1945 was the “Industrialization and Technocracy” conference held at the Centre d’études sociologiques in 1948. It brought together scholars of diverse academic backgrounds, most commonly philosophy, economics, and law, around the problems raised by *The Managerial Revolution*. As Naville summarized afterward in the *Revue Internationale*, “Professors dominated, but some were communists, others socialists, others social-Christians, and still others eclectics.”⁶⁶ In examining this second moment, we will see how both Marxism and American “industrial relations” were defining the direction of postwar social science, and how the two increasingly looked toward empirical social research as a way of grasping the present.

The Centre d’études sociologiques (CES) was founded at the CNRS in 1946, probably at the initiative of Georges Gurvitch after his return from the United States.⁶⁷ In its first two years, under the direction of Gurvitch, the CES mainly provided a library and seminars to researchers; after Gurvitch’s appointment to the Sorbonne, when the directorship passed to Georges Friedmann, it moved toward a laboratory model and began to carry out team-based empirical research projects. In 1948, when the “Première Semaine Sociologique” was held, the CES was on the cusp of this transition; no major empirical projects had yet been carried out. By all accounts, both the CES and the CNRS were institutional homes for individuals who had not followed the narrow path of elite academia, particularly those whose interest in social science stemmed from their background in

⁶⁶ Georges Suder (Pierre Naville), “Le mystère des technocrates,” *La Revue Internationale* 6, no. 22 (June 1950): 137–42.

⁶⁷ Heilbron, *French Sociology*, chapter 5; Jean-René Tréanton, “Les premières années du Centre d’études sociologiques (1946-1955),” *Revue française de sociologie* 32, no. 3 (1991): 381–404.

left-wing political organizing. Virtually none had any formal education in sociology, which in any case was difficult to obtain given the discipline's ambiguous status in the French academic structure. All of the French participants in the Industrialization and Technocracy conference, like the editors of the *Revue Internationale*, were trained in either philosophy, law, or economics.

The conference was organized by Georges Gurvitch, a Russian-born sociologist who fled in 1917 after participating in the February revolution. He was exiled a second time during the Nazi occupation of France, arriving in New York in 1940, where he became a leading figure in the École Libre des Hautes Études, a university in exile at the New School for Social Research.⁶⁸ Gurvitch lectured on French philosophy at Columbia and Harvard, and in 1942, launched the *Journal of Legal and Political Sociology* in collaboration with American legal scholars and sociologists. The journal published figures like Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, and David Riesman, and organized a special issue on economic planning. Gurvitch reviewed the original American edition of *The Managerial Revolution* in the first issue of the *Journal*, delivering a scathing assessment of its methodology and political implications.⁶⁹ He denounced Burnham's "mechanistic, deterministic absolutism" in claiming that a totalitarian society controlled by experts was inevitable, countering that "there are always different tendencies of change in every type of human society, many conflicting issues of development, many alternatives in struggle." If a tendency toward technocracy and totalitarianism was obviously one of these, so was the possibility of economic planning balanced by political democracy.

⁶⁸ Laurent Jeanpierre, "Une opposition structurante pour l'anthropologie structurale : Lévi-Strauss contre Gurvitch, la guerre de deux exilés français aux États-Unis," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* no 11, no. 2 (2004): 13–44; Loyer, *Paris à New York*, chapter four.

⁶⁹ Georges Gurvitch, review of *The Managerial Revolution*, by James Burnham, *Journal of Legal and Political Sociology* 1, no. 1 (October 1942): 163–65.

Before proceeding to a reading of specific contributions, it is worth making a few general comments on the overarching agreement between presenters. The derisory quality of Burnham's contribution to the sociology of the new society was axiomatic; all dismissed *The Managerial Revolution* as methodologically crude and hopelessly ideological. More specifically, almost all dismissed Burnham's provocative claim that managers had emerged as the rising revolutionary *class* of the new socio-economic order. With the exception of Gurvitch, whose alarm toward technocracy will be addressed below, it was rejected as simply impossible that managers were or could become a class in the Marxian sense of the term (itself in dispute at the conference as it was in the *Revue Internationale* debate). There was also, however, widespread agreement that Burnham raised questions highly relevant to the current historic juncture, that potentially revolutionary forces were at work, and that a new society—a *civilisation technicienne*, an *ère atomique*—was in the making.

The presentations read like a freeze-frame of the theoretical, political, and geographical cross-currents that constituted postwar French social science: the macrotheoretical legacy of the Durkheim school, the intertwined erudition in economics and philosophy of Marxist militants, the “political economy” taught in French law faculties, all imprinted with the “intellectual-historical” tendency endowed by the philosophical education that many of the participants shared. The newest element was American industrial relations theory, represented by the Chicago School sociologist Everett C. Hughes and by Georges Friedmann, who had just published the first major French monograph on industrial relations.⁷⁰ Friedmann is worth considering in detail because he represents perhaps the best argument for the “Americanization” interpretation of postwar French social science, and yet even his path and relationship to American social science were extremely

⁷⁰ Georges Friedmann, *Problèmes humains du machinisme industriel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

complex. As discussed in Chapter One, as student and young academic in the 1930s, Friedmann was a leading “philosoviet” Marxist, and his turn to industrial technology was explicitly related to his search for a “holist” Marxism that united empirical social science with philosophy of history.⁷¹ The one-two punch of the Communist Party’s hostile reception of his largely positive study of the Soviet Union in 1938 and the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939 deeply shook his faith in the U.S.S.R., if not necessarily his socialism.

Friedmann’s presentation at the 1948 conference placed Burnham in an impressive intellectual history of technocratic ideologies that recalled his earlier “social history of ideas” that attempted to explain the “bourgeois” turn against technology in the philosophy and literature of the 1930s.⁷² His analysis of *The Managerial Revolution* was as dismissive as that of most of his colleagues, but his turn to what might be read as a defense of technocrats is worth noting. “It is incontestable that growing number of technicians tend no longer to be of the ‘technicist’ or ‘technocratic’ sort, but to understand the necessity of observing industrial realities in the light of the sciences of man.”⁷³ Friedmann listed a series of names and institutions that represented an encouraging *dépassement* of Taylorism, which he had devoted so much time to criticizing: Elton Mayo’s research at Western Electric in the United States, the multiplication of university industrial relations departments, the Tavistock Institute in England, and even the more recent efforts of the Comité National de l’Organisation Française (CNOF), the original disseminator of Taylorist ideology in France.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Gouarné, “Engagement philosoviétique et posture sociologique.”

⁷² Friedmann, *La Crise du progrès*.

⁷³ Georges Friedmann, “Les technocrates et la civilisation technicienne,” in *Industrialisation et technocratie*, ed. Georges Gurvitch (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), 58.

⁷⁴ Most of these figures and movements can be characterized as practicing social science as consultants to industrial and corporate management. While many had progressive intentions, virtually all considered class struggle a social pathology it was their task to prevent, and some did so using social science as a tool of manipulation and

Friedmann's apparent optimism toward such figures and institutions, for which "managerial" would be the most benign description, would seem to be fairly strong evidence for an emerging French adaptation of America's technocratic industrial social science that collaborated with industry and the state with the aim of "integrating" the working class. But taking into account his trajectory through the 1930s and the larger international circulations that it embodied complicates the story: Friedmann's warming (never uncritical) toward industrial relations was just as much the product of his own idiosyncratic intellectual background. It is also worth noting that Friedmann's emphasis on psychology and his "anthropological" approach to technology had natural affinities with American industrial relations because of their common root in Durkheimian ideas, which treated *anomie* and social conflict as pathological and saw social theory as a project of social integration.⁷⁵ Even so, the French *rapprochement* with industrial relations only went so far: Friedmann and his first generation of students remained persistently critical of what they considered its various methodological and political blindnesses.⁷⁶ It is also suggestive to note that the young Michel Crozier, a Friedmann student and a major postwar sociologist, studied American labor relations in the U.S. as late as 1947 not under the auspices of a "productivity mission," but through his Trotskyist contacts like Daniel Guérin.⁷⁷

control. Friedmann, who had been unable to follow American literature during the war, saw "human relations" in relation to his primary subject, Taylorism, and their common view of the latter as a dehumanizing pseudoscience led him to view more recent American theorists as progressive. For an overview, see Michael Rose, *Industrial Behavior: Research and Control*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Penguin, 1988).

⁷⁵ Hughes explicitly drew out the Durkheimian roots of some American approaches to "pathological" individualism in industrial workers. Everett C. Hughes, "Les recherches américaines sur les relations industrielles," in *Industrialisation et technocratie*, ed. Georges Gurvitch (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), 23–36; The presence of Durkheim in American sociology is reinforced by the fact that many young French sociologists encountered his work for the first time in their travels to the U.S. Heilbron, *French Sociology*, 147.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Alain Touraine, "Ambiguïté de la sociologie industrielle américaine," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 12 (1952): 131–46; Jean-Christophe Marcel, "La réception de la sociologie américaine en France: 1945-1960," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales* 49, no. 2 (2011): 197–230.

⁷⁷ Michel Crozier, *Ma belle époque: Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

If Friedmann indicated one potential direction of postwar social science in relation to the question of technical experts, in which the labor process and the factory played a greater role than economic and macro-social analysis, the latter was more prominent among the presenters and attendees who posed questions. Here, “managers” or “technocrats” were understood more as part of executive administration than industrial technicians at the factory level, and their ideology amounted to a capitalist effort to overcome the contradictions of capitalism. Henri Lefebvre, for example, attacked technocratic ideology through a close reading of the place of technology in Marx’s philosophy. The development of the “productive forces” was an essential dimension of Marxism, Lefebvre argued, but technology was only one of the elements in *man’s larger transformation of nature* that constituted a means of production. But technological development always took place as part of a larger system of fulfilling human needs—that is, spurred on by economic and political concerns. Contemporary French industrialization had social and political conditions in that “can only be accomplished through the intervention of a State that would devote itself to progressive tasks.”⁷⁸ Technocracy was the myth that such tasks could be managed apolitically, that, within the status quo of the capitalist state, technocrats could create, “beyond the old capitalism of free competition a sort of super-capitalism whose coherence and conservation they hope (illusorily) they can assure.”⁷⁹

Charles Bettelheim, as well, argued that managers were part of a general socio-economic evolution. He argued that Burnham lacked a plausible definition of class on which to base his claim. It simply made no sense to use differences in revenue or even the *origin* of salarial revenue to determine classes; classes, on the contrary were, “historical categories having economic roots

⁷⁸ Henri Lefebvre, “Les conditions sociales de l’industrialisation,” in *Industrialisation et technocratie*, ed. Georges Gurvitch (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), 139.

⁷⁹ Lefebvre, 137.

and whose existence supposes and implies a certain social division of labor that is expressed exactly in the opposition and in the relations between social classes.”⁸⁰ No matter how one defined “technicians”—and one should at the very least distinguish between technicians who applied science to industry and specific ways and more traditional administrative bureaucrats—they could not be a social class in this sense. So why did the question seem so pertinent to the postwar moment? First, because of the fact that in the Soviet Union, the end of the division of society between exploiters and producers does not “coincide with the suppression of all social differentiations and all differentiations of income.”⁸¹ And second, because within capitalism itself, the role of technicians was growing alongside the application of science to industry and because of the fact that economic concentration required “organisms of coordination.”

Looking at the 1948 conference as a whole, one can conclude that the socio-economic approach, usually but not exclusively posed in Marxist terms, was more dominant than the industrial-relations approach toward which Friedmann was moving. But all of the participants seemed to agree that the questions raised by *The Managerial Revolution* could only be solved through an empirical sociology of the present. Georges Gurvitch and Pierre Naville, though politically and theoretically distant, shared a concern that the problem of technocracy was a real tendency within postwar capitalist governance. Throughout the conference, Gurvitch criticized other presenters for their unwarranted optimism that technocrats could not become a class. There were “incontestable similarities” between the rise of technical governance in the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union.⁸² If technocracy was not inevitable, it was reasonable

⁸⁰ Charles Bettelheim, “Les techniciens constituent-ils une classe sociale?,” in *Industrialisation et technocratie*, ed. Georges Gurvitch (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), 84–100.

⁸¹ Bettelheim, 93.

⁸² Georges Gurvitch, “La technocratie est-elle un effet inévitable de l’industrialisation?,” in *Industrialisation et technocratie*, ed. Georges Gurvitch (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), 183.

to be concerned that limitations on “arbitrary state power” designed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century were strong enough to contain it. Gurvitch, however, focused more on psychological group dynamics of technocrats—even if others saw them as a highly fractured group that lacked common interests, it was obvious that they were “becoming more and more conscious of their own existence” and their ideology was “becoming more and more visible and combative.”

In a summary of the conference published under a pseudonym, Naville highlighted Gurvitch’s paper and his own comments in the discussion as the only two to have “signaled the danger.”⁸³ As he had already written, it was obvious that technocrats were not a class in the capitalist sense, and their class status was secondary concern. But it was not reassuring that most of the presenters had taken refuge in the historical analysis of ideologies rather than “daring to be sociologists of the *present*”; the debate showed that “sociology, if it wishes to respond to a necessity, should address itself to the present, and even to the future, as much as the past.” Simply declaring that technocracy was not a threat ignored the global conditions which saw “the displacement of employment toward ‘managerial’ professions, generalized in industrialized countries,” “encouraged by the development of private state monopolies, by the policies of long-term programs or ‘plans,’ by the production of equipment and projects more and more vast and complex.”⁸⁴ If it was wrong to worry that technocrats carrying out a revolution on their own class interests, but they were a signal of how capitalist powers were straining to solve their contradictions. “It is precisely this crisis that gives [the development of techno-bureaucracy] a threatening character.” Just as for Gurvitch, capitalism attempting to overcome crisis through authoritarian reorganization was, for Naville, the first step to fascism. Naville quoted at length

⁸³ Suder (Pierre Naville), “Le mystère des technocrates,” 138.

⁸⁴ Suder (Pierre Naville), 140.

from Burnham's two books written after *The Managerial Revolution*, which were released almost simultaneously with the French translation and in which Burnham completed his turn to far-right advocate of American nuclear destruction of the Soviet Union. "The mystery of the technocrats dissipates itself. We see clearly, then, that their ulterior function is the defense of imperialist capitalism and not the promotion of whatever 'progressive' regime that would be situated *beyond* capitalism and socialism."⁸⁵

Second, it is worth noting the prevalence of remarks on the divide between the "official sociology" and its concern with historical analysis and the demands of the present. An American reviewer, reviewing the conference proceedings in the *American Sociological Review*, painted a surprisingly incisive picture of what was on French minds: "The recent work of French sociologists indicates a growing interest in field research, in immediate social problems, and in the France of today. However, the present articles exhibit a historical perspective and a general social-scientific breadth that is not frequent in the U.S."⁸⁶ In admonishing the conferences presenters for focusing on historical debates rather than the present and future, Naville noted that there had been "few facts, few figures, hardly any analysis, much commentary."⁸⁷ The conference proceedings were introduced by Lucien Febvre, the *Annales* historian and the president of the new Sixth Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, which together with the CNRS would lead the postwar renaissance of French social science. Febvre also remarked on the lack of empirical data brought into the discussion, which he acknowledged was "not yet in our French blood." The question of

⁸⁵ Suder (Pierre Naville), 142.

⁸⁶ William J. Goode, review of *Review of Industrialisation et Technocratie*, by Georges Gurvitch, *American Sociological Review* 15, no. 3 (1950): 444–45.

⁸⁷ Suder (Pierre Naville), "Le mystère des technocrates," 137.

technocracy could only be answered empirically, he concluded, and sociologists should make an empirical turn that was up to the challenges of the moment: “*Enquêtes, enquêtes, enquêtes!*”

Conclusion

At the close of the 1940s, the question of techno-bureaucracy was far from resolved. The literature would swell to a peak in the late 1950s, as France’s postwar form as a highly technocratic, *dirigiste* state became clear⁸⁸; it would see intensified traffic between American, French, and German social science, and a relative decline in the centrality of the Soviet Union to the debate. American sociologists like Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Philip Selznick, all of whom were former Trotskyists, elaborated a new “Weberian” sociology of bureaucracy in the 1940s and 1950s, which would then become major reference points for ongoing debates about bureaucracy and technocrats among French Marxists and *sociologues du travail* in the 1950s.

Returning to the moment of flux before these later exchanges developed, however, illustrates the degree to which the participants in French postwar social science were already engaged in globe-spanning debates about the nature of what would come to be called “industrial society.” Some of these figures’ initiation into such concerns and their continued motivation for pursuing of them after 1945 came from their political engagement and adherence, however idiosyncratically, to Marxism or to the ideal of a “dialectical materialism” that integrated empirical social analysis with a longer-term historical perspective. They had already begun to see certain limitations in the abstract theoretical products that remained of the Durkheim school and the

⁸⁸ For an overview of the spreading consciousness of technocrats, see Hecht, *The Radiance of France*, chapter one.

schematic analyses that often dominated Marxist debates, and seek new kinds of empirical information about the present in order to remake those paradigms.

Postwar sociology would continue to evolve rapidly and the institutional and financial conditions of postwar social research in France would unquestionably make a certain imprint on the nature of its work. But these realities discussed in this chapter should lead us to expand the frame to include other international intellectual histories and global political networks that are often left out of one-sided accounts of American intellectual dominance and judgments that French sociology was merely the applied research arm of the technocratic state. The “double binds” on postwar social science may have been real, and individuals may have indeed felt torn between what Johan Heilbron calls “Sartre and statistics”—that is, French philosophical culture and the research agendas of the budding state technocracy. But we should also consider that many of these participants saw their postwar situation as a field of potential resources for reconstructing France, for advancing the cause of international socialism, and for understanding the global forces that shaped the middle of the twentieth century.

PART II

Crystallization

Chapter Four

Friedmann in America: Industrial Relations, Technological Evolution, and the Making of a New French Sociology

In the comparative examination of civilizations evolving from the natural milieu to the technical milieu, the recent observation of that of the United States confirms that we are indeed on the threshold of a new phase in the era of industrial revolutions in which Western humanity has engaged itself for a hundred and fifty years.

—Georges Friedmann, 1950¹

In short, it might be asked whether industrial sociology is not at present striving, with all the circuitousness and hesitation inherent in all research, to give a strict sense to the concept of industrial society.

—Jean-Daniel Reynaud, 1961²

Productivism, the American Model, and the Early Cold War in France

The liberation of France from Nazi occupation in 1944 instigated a nearly two decades-long process of rebuilding and modernization that Herrick Chapman calls the country's "long reconstruction."³ France emerged from the Second World War humiliated, defeated, and economically devastated; the movements that made up the French resistance to the occupation, across the political spectrum, all expected the country to be rebuilt on radically different foundations, a process often given the term "revolution."⁴ As elites in the postwar provisional government scrambled to secure economic aid from the United States and institute plans for reconstruction and economic planning, the French Communist Party (PCF), which played a celebrated role in the resistance, constituted the country's largest political force and attracted

¹ Georges Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950).

² Jean-Daniel Reynaud, "Introduction," in *The University Teaching of the Social Sciences: Industrial Sociology*, by J.H. Smith (Paris: UNESCO, 1961), 21.

³ Herrick Chapman, *France's Long Reconstruction: In Search of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

⁴ Jean Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).

widespread support from intellectuals. Though the upheaval of the reconstruction period would continue, the prospects for revolutionary change as seen by the political left darkened in 1947 with the onset of the Cold War, which deeply polarized French politics and public opinion and led to the exclusion of the PCF's ministers from government. Until the mid-1950s, the politics of reconstruction would be inextricable from France's position on the geopolitical stage and, in particular, its relationship with the United States.

Charles Maier has described postwar American foreign policy toward Europe as a “politics of productivity”: in a simultaneously idealistic and self-interested outward projection of the methods by which the United States had supposedly solved its domestic conflicts during the New Deal, American policymakers “sought to transform political issues into problems of output, to adjourn class conflict for a consensus on growth.”⁵ The initial vehicle for the politics of productivity was the package of reconstruction funds known as the Marshall Plan, administered through the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC, later OECD). Throughout Europe, American representatives evangelized for “modernizations” they hoped would stabilize the continent in preparation for trade liberalization, which included the pacification of labor relations on the emerging American model of institutionalized, depoliticized collective bargaining. American productivity advocates found themselves in opposition both to the “feudal” mentality of French business—a supposed attachment to the undelegated authority and trade secrets of the individual entrepreneur as opposed to American-style managerial bureaucracy based on “scientific” management and marketing techniques—as well as to the combative, “socialist” character of French labor politics. As productivity took on the burden of being a vehicle of anti-Communism in the minds of American policymakers, it encompassed both an insistence that

⁵ Maier, “The Politics of Productivity.”

French workers receive some of the benefits of economic modernization, as they had not in the first years of postwar reconstruction, and an uncompromising refusal to involve the most powerful French union, the Confédération Général du Travail (CGT), because of its close connection to the Communist Party.

French reactions to the politics of productivity were complex and often ambivalent.⁶ Increased productivity and technological modernization were central priorities of French policymakers, and the Fourth Republic participated in the American productivity agenda by creating a national branch of the European Productivity Agency, a sub-organization of the OEEC, which sent thousands of French representatives on “productivity missions” to the United States.⁷ But they remained skeptical about what they perceived as the imperious attitude of Americans and deeply concerned about the domestic political consequences of appearing too close to projects associated with American anti-Communism. The Communist Party bitterly attacked the Marshall Plan as a stalking horse for American imperialism and aggression against the Soviet Union, and many of France’s most well-known literary intellectuals joined the chorus, denouncing not only America’s reactionary politics, but especially its superficial mass entertainment and generally inferior culture. The communist-adjacent CGT refused to send representatives to the French productivity agency, and the non-Communist unions only did so conditionally and, as it turned out, briefly. French business had its own objections to the productivity agenda, including bitterness toward arrogant American critiques of its methods and above all, opposition to anything that hinted at more state involvement in industrial affairs. Productivity, thus, remained a political minefield at home in the first half of the 1950s.

⁶ Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, chapter four.

⁷ Kuisel, “L’américain way of life et les missions françaises de productivité.”

Productivity in France was caught up not only the geopolitical choice between “models” of society—American Fordism vs. Soviet Communism—but also in the widespread international alarm about the consequences of technology that resurfaced at the end of the war.⁸ “Technology”—a catch-all term that subsumed not only Fordist assembly lines, mass media, and consumer society, but now also concentration camps and atomic weapons—was often defined in opposition to “man,” whose spiritual properties and “civilization” it potentially threatened. Such themes had been commonplace in the interwar period, which was marked by economic crisis and social unrest in both the United States and Europe.⁹ The so called “problems of industrial civilization” had figured both in literary denunciations of technology and social-scientific projects for reform—most notably, as we will see below, the emerging field of American industrial relations. They returned with a vengeance to international intellectual discourse after 1945, and the “social consequences of technology” would be a staple of international conferences and social science publications through the early 1950s. In France, such sweeping concerns about the nature of modernity were imbricated in debates about the “American model” among political and intellectual elites across the political spectrum, including among advocates of productivity and modernization. One such advocate, the sociologist Georges Friedmann, wrote in 1950 that the “uncontrolled development of technology” had become “the number-one problem” among Western intellectuals.¹⁰

Friedmann’s stance toward the American model and the so-called problems of technology represented a variegated group of intellectuals and political elites who in the early 1950s were “neutralists” in the Cold War, simultaneously open to and critical of American “civilization.” As

⁸ Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933-1973* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

⁹ François Jarrige, *Technocritiques: du refus des machines à la contestation des technosciences* (Paris: La Découverte, 2014), chapter eight.

¹⁰ Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?*, 9.

discussed in Chapter One, Friedmann had in the 1930s been a Communist fellow-traveler who turned to sociology in order to salvage an emancipatory vision of technology and industrialization from the literary intelligentsia's *fascisant* attacks on modernity. In writings infused with Marxism, he looked to the Soviet Union as a model for overcoming the alienating features of rationalized industrial labor and thus reconciling "man" with "technology." At the end of the 1930s, when his faith in the U.S.S.R. fell into crisis, Friedmann began to see the problem of technology as one of a universal sociohistorical transition into a new *milieu technique* (technical milieu), a transformation that went deeper than the contrast between capitalism and socialist economics.

In the postwar conjuncture, when France's geopolitical position in the Cold War and the "model" its rebuilt society should follow pervaded intellectual debate, Friedmann's concerns shifted further toward a reformist intellectual mission. The loss of the Soviet Union as an absolute model and the fraternal, cross-class experience of the French resistance softened his Communist sectarianism. If the moral problems of industrial civilization were universal and could not automatically be solved by the Soviet model of "economic revolution," then, he wrote, "France alone can achieve the original synthesis of what is the best, on the one hand, of the humanist heritage of the West and, on the other, of the collectivist institutions of which the U.S.S.R. has, in difficult conditions, made an admirable experiment."¹¹ American industrial civilization, while an inevitable reference point for any society hoping to join the ranks of the modern, had revealed the risks of a highly technological society: a nation that produced so many "'robots' deprived of living fibers and interior life," was "the most worrying example of the deterioration of the individual in his new technical milieu." While Friedmann still mounted a qualified defense of the Soviet Union and took the necessity of socialist "economic revolution" for granted, his comments on the spirit

¹¹ Friedmann, "Forces morales et valeurs permanentes," 93.

of the Resistance signaled the path he would soon take as an academic institution-builder and impresario of industrial sociology: the challenges of industrial civilization were not for revolutionaries alone, but for enlightened members of all social groups—Communists, union leaders, industrialists, and politicians—that the Resistance had thrown together in a common project.

Facing the problems of technological modernity and the choice between civilizational models, representatives of a French “third way” desired both to embrace modernity and to “humanize” it—perhaps by giving it a uniquely “French” character. Such thinking, which came in a variety of political flavors, was widespread in the French modernizing elite and on the non-Communist left, which encompassed a number of influential and strategically-placed Catholic intellectuals like Emmanuel Mounier, the editor of the left-Catholic journal *Esprit* and Hubert Beuve-Méry, the editor of *Le Monde*. Though often couched in skepticism of the American “model” that could take the form of a virulent critique of American materialism and conformism, this position embraced a French transition to “industrial civilization” and had little patience for “reactionary” literary denunciations of, as Friedmann put it, “the entire modern world.”¹² The problems of technology were simply those of a new era that required rigorous moral and scientific understanding. Friedmann took aim at authors like Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and Albert Camus, while Mounier used Friedmann’s writings on industrial labor as a model of scientific understanding against the anti-technological fulminations of Catholic authors like Georges Bernanos. “Let us leave behind the prophets,” he wrote, “for those who investigate more patiently our familiarity with things.”¹³

¹² Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?*, 5–6.

¹³ Emmanuel Mounier, “La pensée engagée: l’homme et la technique,” *Esprit*, no. 142 (2) (1948): 344–48.

This reformist middle way created a motley coalition in favor of social action to manage the “human” dimensions of modernization, including through the “scientific” study of social problems and dialogue between social scientists, labor leaders, and management. This spirit of social collaboration had several sources, above all the shared participation of its advocates in the Resistance and nostalgia for its ideals of fraternal collective enterprise. Former *résistants* played a major role both in postwar social science and in labor policy in state agencies. Social dialogue and labor humanism was also strongly appealing both to leftist “social Catholics” and other Catholics whose previous adherence to traditional Catholic “corporatism” had been discredited by the religion-infused labor policies of the Vichy regime. And, increasingly, it drew energy from the humanist discourse of American industrial relations, which had already pioneered models of social-scientific problem-solving in industry and advocated a cooperative approach to labor-management relations that was being evangelized by the American politics of productivity.

Due to Georges Friedmann’s prominence in the institutionalization of postwar French sociology and the confluence of his views with the modernizing elite, this reformist position would exert significant influence on the character of French sociology in the first half of the 1950s. French sociology thus began its interactions with the United States from a position both of openness and critique, seeking models of a modern social science of “industrial civilization,” but modified by doubts about the American model intensified by the context of the early Cold War. This state of play conditioned what French social scientists took from the American context and how they incorporated it into their own approaches—maintaining a conflicted distance despite a gradually increasing acculturation.

The “Human” Beyond the Economic: Friedmann and American Industrial Relations

Georges Friedmann undertook his first tour of the United States in 1948, just before the launch of the “productivity missions,” on behalf of the French ministry of labor. The voyage, which took him to a number of American universities and factories on the East Coast and in the Midwest, was modeled after a list of industrial relations department provided by the University of Chicago sociologist Everett Hughes.¹⁴ Friedmann’s visit to the U.S. laid the groundwork for relationships between French and American social scientists focusing on industrial labor and helped to define a “model” of intervention-oriented social research, simultaneously empirical and normative, that would attract support from French political elites and industrialists and define the early years of French industrial sociology. The two most important American reference points for this “model” would be the “human relations” (HR) branch of industrial relations, represented by Elton Mayo, and the statistical survey research of the Austrian-born Columbia sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld. Friedmann was impressed by both of these as examples of the “modern” American style of social research, conducted by grant-funded research teams, often on behalf of external clients. And despite his criticisms of Mayo’s work, discussed below, Friedmann was attracted to the HR school because it sought an “omnidisciplinary”¹⁵ picture of the human worker in all its psychological and social complexity, as against the crude economic reductionism he attributed to Taylorism and, increasingly, to Marxist orthodoxy.¹⁶

¹⁴ Hughes to Friedmann, June 26, 1948, Everett C. Hughes Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, Box 26, Folder 12.

¹⁵ In what follows, the term “omnidisciplinary” will be used in the sense given it in Nils Gilman’s description of Talcott Parsons’ social theory, which originated from the same groups and projects at Harvard as “human relations”: “One should not mistake this omnidisciplinarity for inter- or multi-disciplinarity, however, for by its nature it rejected the legitimacy of currently existing disciplinary boundaries.” *Mandarins of the Future*, 73.

¹⁶ Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915) was an American engineer widely considered to be the father of “scientific management.” His famous and controversial management system involved radically breaking down tasks and establishing, through physiological experiment and “time-study,” the “one best way” to perform the task in the amount of time pre-determined by management. Taylor assumed workers were motivated by money and that a system

“Human relations,” omnidisciplinarity, and the normative foundations of industrial social science

Friedmann’s trip to the U.S. in 1948 took place in a moment of rapid expansion and institutionalization of industrial relations in the American universities. Industrial relations had gradually taken shape in the early twentieth century as a heterodox collection of projects dedicated to empirical research in industrial settings, based in university “centers” or “institutes” but in close conversation with government and industry.¹⁷ It received added financial and institutional impetus in the wake of the labor conflict that followed World War I, but achieved its most expansive institutionalization at the end of World War II, as policymakers and academics foresaw the massive labor unrest that struck the United States in 1946-47, when the eight million workers participating in strikes represented the largest strike wave in American history. The exemplary industrial relations departments that would exert the strongest postwar influence, including those at Cornell University and the University of California at Berkeley, were each founded in 1945. Though American sociologists often clashed with industrial relations over methodological questions, the two worked in close dialogue and saw themselves as producing a common corpus of empirical work on industry and workers.

Industrial relations in 1945 was roughly divided between two “camps” with distinct trajectories and approaches, though both were internally heterodox and interdisciplinary, and both

of bonuses would motivate them to meet and exceed the targets set by the factory’s “methods bureau.” Taylor’s scientific management doctrines were an international sensation in the early decades of the twentieth century, and Friedmann’s work in the 1930s devoted considerable attention to demonstrating that his assumptions about human psychology and physiology were pseudoscientific. Mayo’s HR school likewise represented an effort to transcend the bitter conflict sparked by implementation of the Taylor system.

¹⁷ Bruce E. Kaufman, *The Origins and Evolution of the Field of Industrial Relations in the United States*, Cornell Studies in Industrial and Labor Relations 25 (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1993). For a wider view of industrial relations in the context of the increasing intervention of American scholars in extra-university problem-solving, see Schrum, *The Instrumental University: Education in Service of the National Agenda after World War II*.

were devoted in different ways to the normative project of resolving industrial conflict. The first approach tended to be advocated by economists, in particular what became known in the 1920s as “institutional economics”—an socially-embedded and historicist approach to economics that drew on the works of Thorstein Veblen and John R. Commons and challenged neoclassical economics for status within the discipline.¹⁸ The economics approach emphasized the economic and legal study of the American collective bargaining regime that followed the rise of the creation of the first U.S. industrial unions and the New Deal’s legal institutionalization of labor relations in the 1930s. It considered “management” and “labor” as competing organizations with separate structures, hierarchies, and ideologies, as well as larger connections to the world of both corporate governance and the labor movement, all situated in labor and commodity markets. The collective bargaining process was the point at which the two met and were “accommodated” to one another. As described by the Harvard economist John Dunlop, it was concerned with comparative differences between sectors and industries, the types of union contracts agreed to, and the different levels of conflict they produced. Such matters could only be explained in reference to their “environment,” or “the total context in which the two organizations accommodate each other.”¹⁹ In addition to Dunlop, prominent representatives of the economic approach included the Berkeley labor economist Clark Kerr; its representative journal was the *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, founded in 1947 in conjunction with the new industrial relations school at Cornell.

Kerr’s postwar prominence as an industrial relations theorist and academic institution-builder has tended to obscure the other wing of industrial relations, the “human relations” (HR)

¹⁸ Yuval P. Yonay, *The Struggle Over the Soul of Economics: Institutional and Neoclassical Economists in America Between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, chapter two.

¹⁹ John T. Dunlop and William Foote Whyte, “Framework for the Analysis of Industrial Relations: Two Views,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 3, no. 3 (1950): 386, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2518535>.

approach, which despite their criticisms almost completely defined French sociologists' view of American industrial sociology. The HR approach grew out of the "interstitial academies" at several elite American universities in the 1920s and 1930s—groups of like-minded anthropologists, sociologists, and management theorists who came together to undertake omnidisciplinary projects in the study of "human relations" or "human behavior," almost all funded by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation.²⁰ HR scholars were fascinated by early twentieth-century theories of the subterranean forces determining human behavior and social relations and casting doubt on the rationality of the individual actor, particularly those of Freud and the Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto. Harvard's interstitial academy was particularly influential on the early formation of HR research, with a number of its most prominent representatives, alongside social theorists like Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton, participating in the "Pareto circle" organized by the physicist Lawrence J. Henderson. For HR, the industrial factory was only one potential setting for the study of human relations, but funding for several massive experiments in industrial settings drew an increasing number of researchers to industrial research.

The HR school's most prominent figure was Elton Mayo, an eclectically-trained Australian psychologist who became a professor at Harvard Business School in 1926.²¹ Despite his own wide reading in European psychology, philosophy, and social theory, Mayo encouraged his students to reject theoretical erudition in favor of firsthand observation of "phenomena" as the starting point

²⁰ The term "interstitial academy" is taken from Joel Isaac, *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2012). See chapter two for an analysis of the Harvard Pareto circle. An earlier perspective is Barbara S. Heyl, "The Harvard 'Pareto Circle,'" *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 4, no. 4 (1968): 316–34. On Yale, see J. G. Morawski, "Organizing Knowledge and Behavior at Yale's Institute of Human Relations," *Isis* 77, no. 2 (1986): 219–42.

²¹ For a capsule overview of Mayo's life and influence, see Rose, *Industrial Behavior*, chapters 12 and 13. For his relationships with American philanthropists and subsequent influence, see David O'Donald Cullen, "A New Way of Statecraft: The Career of Elton Mayo and the Development of the Social Sciences in America, 1920-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Dallas, University of North Texas, 1992).

for scientific investigation. Mayo became the organizing force behind the two massive HR research projects: one a study of the “social relations” in the Hawthorne works factory near Chicago, and the other a multi-volume study of the social structure of a “typical” American small town.²² The projects formed a crucible of HR researchers associated with Harvard Business School and Harvard’s department of anthropology, some of whom would later to move to the University of Chicago.

The “Hawthorne experiments” were a partnership between Harvard and Western Electric, the hardware branch of AT&T, that turned into a years-long, multi-phase study of factory “human relations” that incorporated psychology, anthropology, and sociology.²³ Lasting approximately a decade, the Hawthorne research produced a mass of data and became a landmark of American social science, debated, criticized, and re-interpreted to this day.²⁴ The phases of the investigation included isolating groups of workers in a “test room” to study the effect of different incentives and working conditions on their morale and productivity; a campaign of tens of thousands of interviews with workers and supervisors; observation by anthropologists of the social relations in a work-group; and a program of therapeutic interviewing designed to allow workers to unburden themselves of their social tensions. In an arrangement typical of the human relations school, the study was done on behalf of management for internal corporate use, and its data taken to be raw material to be combed over and analyzed by social scientists for more scientific purposes.

²² On the role of social scientists in establishing a normative vision of “typical” America through empirical research, see Sarah E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

²³ The definitive history of the Hawthorne experiments is Richard Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge: A History of the Hawthorne Experiments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For a succinct and accessible account of the research, see Rose, *Industrial Behavior*, 106–12.

²⁴ Henry A Landsberger, *Hawthorne Revisited. Management and the Worker: Its Critics, and Developments in Human Relations in Industry*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1968); John S Hassard, “Rethinking the Hawthorne Studies: The Western Electric Research in Its Social, Political and Historical Context,” *Human Relations* 65, no. 11 (November 1, 2012): 1431–61.

The marquee “finding” of the Hawthorne experiments, whose influence on subsequent industrial research can hardly be overstated, was that there were “informal” social groups in the factory that operated at cross-purposes with the “formal” organization established by management. Human relations researchers presented this as a finding that workers were “social” beings who were more concerned about their place in the social system than they were with economic incentives, as most scientific-management theories had long assumed. While this was presented as the product of scientific investigation, it actually reflected Mayo’s pre-existing understanding of “social man,” influenced by Pareto, Durkheim, and the French psychologist Pierre Janet. Subsequent analyses of the data by participating researchers worked to establish a post-hoc scientificity for the project, elaborating formal research procedures that had not actually been planned in advance or followed on the ground. The study’s lesson for management—human relations theorists unambiguously considered themselves scientific aides to management—was that problems with productivity and morale had more to do with the social relations of the factory than with discontent over economic issues. In this psycho-sociological “micropolitics of the workplace,” the “social” was defined as the relations within the factory, abstracted from its exterior environment; human relations researchers drew the lesson that understanding how individuals interpreted their social experience, through observation and interviews, could unlock the general rules of—and in some cases even lead to the quantification of—social or “organizational” behavior.

The “Yankee City” series, a second landmark project of the human relations school, requires a brief overview due to its impact on the French view of American HR research.²⁵ W.

²⁵ Friedmann and younger French sociologists were deeply impressed by the “Yankee City” series and seem to have considered it a more comprehensive evolution of American social science beyond Mayo, paying less attention to the filiation between Mayo and Warner and the similarity of their methodological and political assumptions. Later French narratives of “industrial sociology” would reproduce the idea of a progression from Mayo to Warner, leaving

Lloyd Warner, an anthropologist who had done fieldwork on indigenous tribes in Australia before being hired as an assistant on the Hawthorne investigation, set up what aimed to be a total anthropological study of Newburyport, Massachusetts, that could be put in a comparative framework with “primitive” societies. With funding secured by Mayo at Harvard, Warner employed thirty researchers to conduct ethnographic observation of Newburyport and to interview nearly all of its 17,000 inhabitants. From the testimony of the town’s residents, Warner constructed a system of six social classes based on individuals’ perception of the markers of “status.” The most famous volume of the series, on a 1933 strike in the town’s shoemaking industry, described how the movement of the industry’s management to New York, corporatization of the firm, and the finance-driven process of de-skilling drove the previously union-resistant workforce to unite across racial lines to unionize and strike. The lesson Warner drew from this fairly standard story of the movement from family to corporate capitalism was that workers had been driven to collective action by the loss of the craft system, whose hierarchical progression had provided a framework for psychological incorporation into a community and achievement of the “American dream.”²⁶ Warner thus exemplified the HR school’s definition of its concepts according to a normative vision of social integration, expressed in its psychologization of social conflict and definition of social class along markers of status and consumption.²⁷

completely to the side the “labor economics” side of industrial relations, which was increasingly dominant after World War II. See, for example, Bernard Mottez, *La sociologie industrielle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971); Pierre Desmarez, *La sociologie industrielle aux États-Unis* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986).

²⁶ W. Lloyd Warner and J. O. Low, *The Social System of the Modern Factory: The Strike, a Social Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), 89.

²⁷ For criticisms of Warner’s ethnographic conception of sociology, see John S. Gilkeson, “American Social Scientists and the Domestication of ‘Class,’ 1929–1955,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 31, no. 4 (1995): 331–46; Rose, *Industrial Behavior*, 149–53. A central methodological component of Warner’s ahistorical functionalism was a refusal to consult documentary sources for fear of being “prejudiced” by them; as a result, he reconstructed much of the history of Newburyport, as well as the history of the decline of the craft system and the strike, from oral-history style interviews that were strongly influenced by the town’s upper-class residents, and which

The writings of HR's founding father, Elton Mayo, are extremely revealing as to the imbrication of such massive projects of empirical research with the moral and political concerns about "industrial civilization" that continued from the interwar to the postwar years. For Mayo and other HR researchers, the study of "human relations" was a response to the sense of social crisis in the United States in the 1930s, and an attempt to elucidate the "social man" they believed had been misunderstood by Taylor's obsessive focus on individual self-interest as a stimulant for industrial productivity. Though Mayo's first book on the Hawthorne studies was devoted to relatively technical industrial problems such as fatigue and monotony in the factory, he explicitly framed it in "civilizational" terms, interpreting labor conflict as psychological maladjustment that threatened the integration of society as a whole. Mayo drew on Durkheim's concept of *anomie* as the pathological product of the socially disruptive division of labor, and saw HR research, with its focus on workers as social beings rather than economic actors, as a way to engineer a new *morale* for industrial civilization.²⁸ In the HR school's resolutely anti-populist conception of such a project, industrial managers were the primary audience for their work and the primary figures expected to take a leading role in the creation of a "new *morale*." Fritz Roethlisberger, a Mayo student and one of the lead researchers on the Hawthorne studies, retrospectively described their orientation as trying to convince managers of their importance as social engineers, that they "have a higher function to perform than just making money and profits."²⁹

reflected mythologizations contradicted by abundantly available historical sources. Stephan Thernstrom, "'Yankee City' Revisited: The Perils of Historical Naïveté," *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 2 (1965): 234–42.

²⁸ Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 148–49.

²⁹ Fritz J. Roethlisberger, *The Elusive Phenomena: An Autobiographical Account of My Work in the Field of Organizational Behavior at the Harvard Business School* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

Though Friedmann was always critical of Mayo's narrow focus on the factory, there was actually significant overlap between their concerns despite their radically different politics. They shared an opposition to Taylorism's narrow conceptions of human motivations, physiology, and psychology, as well as the conviction that a holistic form of social science could produce a more nuanced, multi-faceted understanding of the human at work. Likewise, they both saw contemporary industrial civilization, exemplified by the growing rationalization of industrial labor, as exercising disruptive, chaotic effects on the individual that had somehow to be "humanized" through social science. If Friedmann held out hope that the division of labor would be counteracted by a new "synthesis" of technological forces that automated degrading tasks and gave workers a new responsibility for the "whole" of the productive process, he considered Mayo and the HR school's attention to the "human" as a complex, embodied being as an important scientific step beyond Taylorism.

As we will see, before his arrival in the United States, Friedmann's perception of American industrial relations was already shaped by the HR school, all but completely excluding the economics wing and its methodological and political critiques of HR. Friedmann repeatedly identified the HR bastions of Harvard and Chicago, rather than the economics-oriented industrial relations departments at Cornell and Berkeley, as the pioneers of a new form of "humanist"—that is, not purely technical and Taylorist—study of industry, and expressed hope that "technicians" were evolving toward a more cooperative and social approach to industrial problems that would provide a model for social-scientific intervention in postwar France.³⁰ Yet this openness to Mayo-style research and American industrial relations in general would continued to be modified by critique, at least on the rhetorical level, of the shortcomings of American society and its

³⁰ Friedmann, "Les technocrates et la civilisation technicienne," 55–58.

conceptions of social science. This tension, which deeply shaped the origins of French industrial sociology, will become even more clear as we follow Friedmann on his path through the United States in the late 1940s.

Friedmann in America: the model voyage for a new French sociology

Friedmann's American tour was crucial to future Franco-American relationships between sociologists, and aimed at both finding resources for the development of French social science (models, publications, contacts, fellowships for students) and preparing opportunities for the dissemination of French work in the U.S. The archives of American universities enable us to develop a more detailed outline of Friedmann's activities and relationships than was previously known, showing both how he presented himself and how he was perceived by his American hosts. The use of letters of introduction from G.L. Assié, the cultural counselor at the French embassy in New York, suggests that Friedmann created a program of potential contacts with whom he had little prior acquaintance. In letters to professors at Harvard and Chicago, Assié explained that Friedmann had been "sent on a mission to this country by the Cultural Division of the French Foreign Ministry and intends to visit the most important American institutions having departments of sociology dealing especially with the problems of industrial relations."³¹ Massié also generally included the same list of topics on which Friedmann could give lectures.

While the contacts Friedmann pursued included representatives of many disciplines, he explicitly sought out figures associated with the HR school of American industrial relations. In a 1948 letter to the sociologist Everett Hughes, seeking recommendations for his American itinerary,

³¹ G.L. Massié to Gordon Allport, October 15, 1948, Allport Papers, Harvard University Archives 4118, Box 10. For a similar letter, see G.L. Massié to Ernest Burgess, October 6, 1948, Burgess Papers, University of Chicago Archives, Box 8, Folder 2.

Friedmann explicitly asked for “which American universities possess institutes of ‘human relations’ of the type functioning at Yale and Harvard.”³² The HR school was considerably over-represented on Friedmann’s actual itinerary (see Figure 1), including the psychologists at Columbia University associated with “applied anthropology,” professors from Harvard Business School and the new Harvard Department of Social Relations (DSR) who were close to Mayo and the Hawthorne research, and the “Chicago school” of anthropologists at the University of Chicago, many of whom had also been mentored by Mayo and his major experiments. The factories Friedmann visited and later described to his French audience, including the Western Electric plant outside Chicago, where the Hawthorne research was conducted, and the Kaiser-Frazer auto plant in Willow Run, Michigan, were known as showcases of “progressive” management techniques based on social science and had close relations with HR scholars.

Fig. 5 – Georges Friedmann’s tour of American universities, 1948

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Principal contact</u>	<u>Other contacts</u>	<u>Lectures</u>
Columbia	Early Oct	Conrad Arensberg	Otto Klineberg, Paul Lazarsfeld, Robert Merton	
Yale	Oct 25-28	E. Wight Bakke		
Harvard	Oct 28-Nov 30	Samuel Stouffer	Gordon Allport, F.J. Roethlisberger, Parsons?	Yes
Cornell	Nov 1-5	William F. Whyte		
Wayne State	Nov 5-10	Alfred M. Lee		
Michigan	Nov 10-13	Theodore Newcomb		
Chicago	Nov 13-30	John Nef, Everett Hughes	Ernest Burgess, William Ogburn	Yes

In addition to HR scholars, Friedmann’s itinerary included representatives of statistical social research whose methods would strongly influence French industrial sociologists in the second half of the 1950s as the discipline received financial support for larger-scale research

³² Friedmann to Hughes, June 11, 1948, Everett C. Hughes Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, Box 26, Folder 12.

projects.³³ These included Paul Lazarsfeld of Columbia and Samuel Stouffer from Harvard's new Department of Social Relations, who had collaborated on a landmark wartime quantitative study of American soldiers' attitudes about the military.³⁴ Lazarsfeld, a lifelong Francophile and a skilled promoter of his methods abroad, became a frequent visitor in Paris and a close acquaintance of Friedmann.³⁵ Lazarsfeld and Stouffer's work, which resembled Gallup-style public opinion research, relied on attitudinal surveys that were translated into statistical measures that could be analyzed to show the interrelations of different social variables. Combined with some of the HR school's notions in France, these would contribute to a strong French emphasis on the "attitudes" of workers, especially in regard to technological and organizational changes. The result was a conception of sociological empiricism that aggregated the subjective response of the individual worker, and an identification of the "social" as a complex domain of interpersonal relations irreducible to the labor process or the economic system. Lazarsfeld's model of funding research projects through contracts without outside businesses and organizations would also provide inspiration for state and philanthropic funding of French research projects in the 1950s.

Friedmann's early sojourn to the United States established a basic framework for the French reception of American industrial relations and sociology. Following his lead and sources, students Friedmann supervised, especially Alain Touraine, reviewed dozens of American books and articles for the two major French sociology journals, *L'Année sociologique* and the *Cahiers*

³³ Chapoulie, "La seconde fondation de la sociologie française, les États-Unis et la classe ouvrière"; Philippe Masson, *Les enquêtes sociologiques en France depuis 1945*, 2nd ed., Grands Repères (Paris: La Découverte, 2017), 47–56.

³⁴ Libby Schweber, "Wartime research and the quantification of American sociology. The view from « the American Soldier », " *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* no 6, no. 1 (2002): 65–94.

³⁵ Michael Pollak, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld, fondateur d'une multinationale scientifique," *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 25, no. 1 (1979): 45–59, <https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1979.2622>; Violette Morin, "A Georges Friedmann," *Communications* 28, no. 1 (1978): 1–4.

internationaux de sociologie.³⁶ Friedmann encouraged all of his students to go to the United States for training, and worked with the American academics he met on his trip to organize long stays at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and the University of Chicago (see fig 2). A preponderance of Friedmann's students visited the U.S. in 1951-52, during the height of McCarthyism—a fact that would initially shape the register in which they spoke of American social science. These visits coincided with, and later were part of, the program of productivity missions to America, which took French industrialists, labor leaders, and academics to industrial relations departments across the country and brought home the gospel of America's prodigious application of social science to industrial conflict.

³⁶ This massive project of reception through *comptes-rendus* (reviews) of American works is described in detail in Jean-Christophe Marcel, *Reconstruire la sociologie française avec les Américains? La réception de la sociologie américaine en France (1945-1959)* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2017).

Fig. 6 – Centre d'études sociologiques (CES) researchers in the United States, 1950s

<u>Name</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Principal institution</u>	<u>Funding Source</u>
Michel Crozier	1947-48	UAW	Ministère des Affaires Étrangères
Georges Friedmann	1948	University of Chicago	Ministère des Affaires Étrangères
Jean-René Tréanton	1950-51	Yale University	Fulbright
Henri Mendras	1950-51	University of Chicago	University of Chicago
Éric de Dampierre	1950-52	University of Chicago	University of Chicago
Alain Touraine	1952-53	Harvard University	Fulbright
Jean-Daniel Reynaud	1953	(Productivity Mission)	Commissariat général à la productivité
Michel Crozier	1956	(Productivity Mission)	Commissariat général à la productivité
Jacques Dofny	1956	(Productivity Mission)	Commissariat général à la productivité

The Tensions of Technological Evolution: Friedmann's *Milieu Technique*

Friedmann's 1950 book *Où va le travail humain* (henceforth *OVTH*)³⁷, a travelogue of his trip to the United States interspersed with analyses both of American society and the work of its industrial relations theorists, enables us to see how he began to map “modern” American social research techniques onto his philosophical concerns with the humanization of a new era in society's relationship to technology, specifically as it concerned the conditions of the division of labor in industrial settings. It reveals, in particularly striking form, the tensions that would structure the early years of industrial sociology in France. In the first place, Friedmann's loosely-sketched framework of technological evolution—a supposed passage of Western society from a “natural” to a “technical” environment—placed the question of technology and the technical features of the division of labor at the center of his understanding of modern society. Second, his attraction to the “psycho-social” research techniques of industrial relations scholars associated with the HR school,

³⁷ The title translates roughly to *Where is Human Labor Going*. It remains one of approximately half of Friedmann's books that have never been translated into English.

which focused on the “human relations” within a workplace, was paired awkwardly with an insistence on the need to take a broader view of the economic and social relations in which factories were situated. Finally, Friedmann’s conception of sociology’s social role remained ambiguous: while openly admiring of the practical intervention of American social scientists in addressing social problems and the spirit of collective deliberation they supposedly facilitated in industry, he also criticized their unreflective social engineering and even the normative vision of a cooperative society that drove it. Over the next decade under Friedmann’s leadership and the demands of the French productivity agenda, French industrial sociology would evince all of these tensions, pushing younger sociologists to resolve them in different ways. In the process, they created a new form of sociology in France that combined Friedmann’s emphasis on technological evolution with American social scientists’ focus on individual psychology or “attitudes,” all aiming toward a broader understanding of “society as a whole”—that is, of “industrial society.”

Technological evolution: from ‘milieu naturel’ to ‘milieu technique’

The long-term evolution of technology was at the center of Friedmann’s work from the 1930s until his death in 1977. Just before the outbreak of the war in 1940, Friedmann began to describe the evolutionary direction of contemporary society in terms of a transition toward a “new milieu,” which he later termed the *milieu technique*, or “technical milieu.” This terminology was influenced by French social history and anthropology in the 1930s. Friedmann drew heavily on the research of *Annales* historians, which included his primary mentor, Lucien Febvre, who described the technologies of the Middle Ages as the basis of a *mentalité*, or a particular, historically-conditioned subjective experience of time, space, and rhythm. He also frequently cited the anthropologist Marcel Mauss’ notion of a “total civilizational fact”—an element of social relations that was intimately entangled with a total societal self-conception. From here, Friedmann

constructed his sense, never systematically elaborated, that the proliferation of new technologies conditioned a new kind of human subject and society, and thus a “total” view of technological change was the principal pursuit of social science. From very early on, then, Friedmann’s project married attention to technologies themselves with a concern for humans’ subjective experience of them—particularly, the experience of industrial workers with the assembly line and other forms of automated technology that upended older traditions of craft labor and the social relations that came with them.

At the most general level, Friedmann saw the society of 1950 as in the middle of a *longue-durée* civilizational transformation punctuated by “industrial revolutions.” The first of these revolutions occurred in the late eighteenth century and the second in the late nineteenth, and each were characterized by a new form of motive power—steam and electricity, respectively. By the middle of the twentieth century, he argued, the products of these “industrial revolutions” had accumulated to such a quantitative degree that they engendered a *qualitative* shift in human experience and the nature of society, the move from a “natural” to “technical” milieu. In the new technical milieu, technologies conditioned humans both inside and outside the factory—assembly lines reorganized the division of labor at the same time the explosion of new forms of communication and transport wove a new web of technologically-conditioned experience. Friedmann spoke of the mission of social science as an effort to understand and “dominate” the technical milieu, to harness the powers of technology to “make them serve the well-being of the masses, but also the dignity and culture of the individual.”³⁸ Just as the *Annales* historians had combined the histories of technologies and social practices to present a “total” picture of the *mentalité* of the Middle Ages, Friedmann hoped that the contemporary human sciences could be

³⁸ Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?*, 375.

developed into a program for the analysis of “total man” in industrial civilization: “One can, from now on, foresee all that the sciences of man would be gain through a systematic study of the relations between mentality and conditions of life, placing sensibilities and mentalities back into their total milieu, where techniques would reveal themselves particularly influential.”³⁹

In the 1930s, Friedmann had superimposed onto this technological evolution a Marxist interpretation of the history of capitalism and a dialectical conception of history, in which technological evolution drove the division of labor that would produce the conditions for social revolution. The goal of revolution was to overcome the anarchic and socially disruptive deployment of technology in capitalist society for a socialism that would place these means at the service of human emancipation, freeing workers from technological subjugation for active participation in the organization of their work and in society as a whole. In *OVTH*, Friedmann continued to highlight the fact that technologies were inscribed in social and economic history. After 1945, however, his already tenuous integration of economic history gradually receded in favor of an increasing isolation of technological change as a quasi-autonomous causal force. Friedmann’s last visit to the Soviet Union in 1936-37 convinced him that many of the same “problems of technology” persisted in the U.S.S.R. and thus would not automatically be overcome by revolution and socialism. Hence, after 1945, his growing interest in the United States, both as a way of seeing both the potentially universal consequences of technology and the ways that American industrial relations theorists proposed to address them.

While American industrial relations rarely echoed Friedmann’s emphasis on technology and machines as such, HR scholars’ attention to the “human relations” within the factory and their

³⁹ Friedmann, 39. « On peut, dès aujourd’hui, pressentir tout ce que gagnerait les sciences de l’homme à une étude systématique des relations entre la mentalité et les esprits dans leur milieu total, où les techniques s’avèrent particulièrement influentes. ».

insistence that workers were social rather than economic beings, provided an alternative model to what Friedmann saw as the economism of Marxist theory that he had opposed even in the 1930s. HR's "omnidisciplinarity," emerging from the 1930s search for a unified social science of human behavior, harmonized at least superficially with the very different French context of the 1930s in which social scientists had seen Marxism not as an economism but as a holistic unification of social science. Experiencing American industrial relations up close in the late 1940s, Friedmann had come to see Americans as pursuing questions that harmonized with his own and possessing a much more scientifically advanced and institutionalized omnidisciplinary project of social problem-solving. Even as he retained skepticism of their vision of society—namely, of Fordist class compromise—the work of American industrial relations seemed to suggest a promising model for a complex approach to the problems of industrial civilization missing from the philosophical Marxism of French intellectuals.

Levels of analysis: psycho-social structure or socio-economic structure?

While Friedmann's concept of the *milieu technique* described a long-term, large-scale evolution in the history of technology, it was centrally concerned with the effects of twentieth-century society's tightening "web" of technologies on individual subjects. As Friedmann engaged with American HR research, the tensions between these two levels of analysis sharpened: was sociology concerned with large-scale structural change, as classical sociology and social history generally purported to be, or with the subjective experience of the human individuals who lived through it? On the one hand, the American HR school provided what Friedmann considered important insights into the behavior and reactions of individuals in their work settings or labor processes, reactions that reveal their "conditioning" by technology. At the same time, Friedmann recognized that technologies are deployed in the context of socio-economic relations, which led

him to doubt that the American approaches, with their emphasis on intervention to restore “harmony” within a tightly delimited sphere of production, were adequate to the totality of the problems raised by technical civilization. Thus, in his analysis of American industrial relations, Friedmann shifted back and forth between the possible amelioration of the individual’s “psycho-social” environment at the micro level of the workplace and doubts that such techniques could address larger socio-economic problems that exerted powerful influence on that environment.

Already in his doctoral thesis, Friedmann had criticized the HR school that descended from Mayo and the Hawthorne investigation, specifically in the work of Roethlisberger and the Harvard management theorist Chester Barnard, as too narrowly focused on the factory and too oriented toward management. “exclusively oriented toward the *patronat*.”⁴⁰ However, Friedmann seemed to embrace some of Mayo’s central ideas as they had been developed by other scholars, particularly the anthropologist contingent of the HR school. The most detailed analysis of American research in *OVTH* came in a chapter-by-chapter analysis of *Industry and Society*, a 1946 volume, edited by William F. Whyte, that summarized the principle views and research of the HR school. In the book’s introduction, Whyte deployed civilizational rhetoric that strongly echoed Friedmann’s preoccupations: “Today we stand in one of the most crucial periods in the history of man. We have seen a steadily accelerating tempo of scientific and technological development. ... It is clear that while we were building the machines of production we failed to develop the social organization that could use them to create a better world.”⁴¹ Moving on to the HR school’s actual research, Whyte revealed many of its fundamental premises: “We see what should be well-integrated and cooperative units split into warring factions. We see all too clearly that, while management is able

⁴⁰ Friedmann, 124.

⁴¹ William Foote Whyte, *Industry and Society* (New York and London: McGraw Hill, 1946), 1.

to organize machines and processes in well-integrated and efficient systems for production, it has much to learn about developing effective human organization.”⁴² Human relations research was aimed at “understanding of the social structure and the way it controls and molds the individual”; arising from empirical observation and interviews, its conclusions “grow out of an intimate knowledge of the way people actually act, think, and feel.”⁴³

Many of the essays in *Industry and Society* center around the central notion of the HR school, the idea of “informal organizations”—human groups and patterns of relationships that arise from the nature of human behavior, which always diverge significantly from the “formal” organization established by management and often arise in response to it. The concept of informal organization was produced by management theorists during the Hawthorne investigations and popularized by Mayo. (All of the Chicago anthropologists featured in Whyte volume had been involved in the Hawthorne research and had their other projects patronized by Mayo.) A few comments about this theory are relevant to further discussion of Friedmann: first, though it made much of the fact that its object was “social structures” and that such structures largely determined individual behavior, it was a very particular definition of “structure.” The “structures” of informal organizations were taken to be a series of cultural symbols and status-markers ranging from age and gender to whether or not a job involved sitting and writing as opposed to working on a machine. The formal hierarchy of authority, job classifications, and pay rates was not so much denied as downgraded in importance. The more important and determinative symbolic-psychological-cultural “social structure” was derived through methodological individualism: it was understood as the aggregate of the self-reported subjective motivations and feelings of the

⁴² Whyte, 2. Note the emphasis on *management* developing “effective” organizations.

⁴³ Whyte, 3.

participants, obtained through interviews and participant observation—structure as seen through the eyes of subjects.

Friedmann noted that the “informal organization” theory had already been announced by Mayo, in whose writings he had considered it an important progressive step away from scientific management strictly focused on production and technical organization. “The systematic study of social and affective bonds woven between workers and employees of the same enterprise—and which cannot in any way be juxtaposed to the official or ‘formal’ organization—is one of the most original aspects of the sociology of work in the United States,” Friedmann wrote of the Chicago anthropologists.⁴⁴ He was particularly impressed with their claims of causal complexity, which he saw as a “scientific” alternative to dogmatic economic determinism. On this point, he highlighted Whyte’s chapter on the problem of “crying waitresses” in the restaurant industry, extracted from a larger study of the “social system” of the restaurant. While much of Whyte’s analysis was a common-sense diagnostic of flaws in restaurant organization, he drew on his interviews with the waitresses to draw larger social conclusions. For example, even though the waitresses complained systematically about “not making any money” because they were tipped inadequately or had tips stolen off their tables, Whyte explained that their reactions were about social status and recognition, not economic interest, because in interviews the waitresses said being “stiffed” made them feel like they had personally failed at their job. In a line that Friedmann judged “too close to my own preoccupations not to underline,” Whyte concluded that, “We must always deal with a

⁴⁴ Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?*, 168. « L’étude systématique des liens sociaux et affectifs tissés entre travailleurs et employés d’une même entreprise—et non juxtaposables, tant s’en faut, à l’organisation officielle ou ‘formelle’—est l’un des aspects le plus originaux de la sociologie du travail aux États-Unis. ».

number of interdependent variables, and we never see one of them operating quite isolated from the others.”⁴⁵

Friedmann thus seemed positively disposed toward the methods of the human-relations school, and impressed with its omnidisciplinarity, which he welcomed as a sign of the “the growing solidarity of disciplines, still young, affirming that only their conjunction can allow the understanding of man, of *men*, their social groups, their mentality, their sentiments, their activities, their conflicts.”⁴⁶ Yet, this praise was often expressed in the same breath as misgivings about the long-term stability of the American Fordism as a social model and even its fundamental justice and desirability, for which he relied on economic statistics and historical treatments of collective bargaining. In giving voice to these reserves, Friedmann shifted from the psycho-sociological level of his American colleagues and their “organizational” analyses of the American labor process to a more structural socio-economic critique of American society. Taking a systemic view, Friedmann noted that the postwar consensus—involving the American state, labor unions, and the progressive parts of industry that accepted collective bargaining—was built around the palliatives of class cooperation, short-term consumption and full employment. While American industrial relations scholars accepted this situation as a historic achievement and a universal model, to Friedmann its future seemed questionable, and even its own conception of success raised moral and political problems that hung as question marks over his analysis.

⁴⁵ Whyte, *Industry and Society*, 143.

⁴⁶ Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?*, 165. « L’avance de ce mouvement peut se mesurer à la solidarité croissante des disciplines, toutes jeunes encore, affirmant que seule leur conjunction peut permettre de comprendre l’homme, les hommes, leurs groupes sociaux, leur mentalité, leurs sentiments, leurs activités, leurs conflits. ... Il apparaît de plus en plus clair à beaucoup de savants que les fait humains ne peuvent être approchés, avec quelque chance de succès, que par ce faisceau de disciplines conjuguées. ».

Models of intervention: practical problem-solving or critical science?

The juxtaposition and *mélange* of two analytical levels described in the previous section—the psychosocial relations of the workplace and the structural socioeconomic relations of American society—maps onto a final ambiguity in *OVTH*: the tension between social science as practical intervention in social problems and as production of a critical analysis of society. While American industrial relations, particularly among members of the HR school, had largely collapsed the former into the latter or assumed the eminent compatibility of the two, Friedmann seemed to remain suspended between them. He hoped to extract the technical and social-scientific value out of American approaches aimed at practical intervention, while also carrying on a holistic critique of society that suggested their inadequacies and limits. As a result, Friedmann’s approach left open a major uncertainty: should social scientists conduct microsociological studies of discrete workplaces and intervene in practical matters of productivity, or should they be scientific theorists of society with a critical distance from its actors?

As mentioned above, the overwhelming part of Friedmann’s analysis of social-scientific literature focused on the work of anthropologists of the HR school, who used interviews, questionnaires, and participant observation to understand the “social system” of the workplace, to outline its informal groups, and to locate points of tension and bottlenecks that created “problems.” Problems were understood as either emotional or social maladjustment of the worker to their job, or organizational flaws that produced conflict by virtue of management’s insufficient reflection or mistaken premises about “human behavior.” A European example was the work of Léon Walther, an expatriate Russian psychologist in Switzerland, whose work on “technopsychology” Friedmann examined at length.⁴⁷ Walther’s fundamental approach was to adapt the work post within the

⁴⁷ Friedmann, 208–24.

factory to the worker to reduce physical and mental stress as much as possible, and create various “humanizations” of the labor process (such as radio programs to be listened to on the job). Friedmann praised the “immediacy and importance” of Walther’s work, as well as “the simplicity of his methods, the efficiency of his results, and, last but not least, the confidence he knows how to obtain from workers, so often (and legitimately) inclined to see in the psychotechnician only the adroit auxiliary of the boss seeking more refined forms of exploitation.”⁴⁸ Here, as elsewhere, Friedmann after 1945 appeared to see the promise in a kind of “humanist” managerialism that brought together enlightened industrialists and open-minded workers to agree on practical improvements to the labor process.

At the same time, his critique of the American Fordist model was part of a broader socio-economic critique that looked toward “the organization, beyond capitalist disorder, of a rational system of production and distribution.”⁴⁹ In two appendices on Marx and technology, Friedmann argued that the more narrow questions of psychological and cultural adjustment to technology was a necessary part of even a socialist perspective, because all evidence suggested that the *milieu technique* was universal—thus, not automatically overcome by a transformation of the relations of production. Thus, Friedmann tried to unite social techniques and social critique into one overarching perspective required by the failure of the “dogmatic” Marxist claim that the Soviet Union had resolved all human problems to do with industry and work.

The tensions outlined above in Friedmann’s analysis of American society and its social science had significant implications for French industrial sociology’s early conception of

⁴⁸ Friedmann, 209. « C’est là, au reste, que nous avons eu l’occasion de le voir récemment à l’œuvre et de constater la simplicité de ses méthodes, l’efficacité des résultats et, *last but not least*, la confiance qu’il sait obtenir des travailleurs, si souvent (et légitimement) enclins à ne voir dans le psychotechnicien qu’un adroit auxiliaire du patronat, à la recherche de formes d’exploitation plus raffinées. ».

⁴⁹ Friedmann, 11.

technology as well as for its methodological practice. Friedmann's ambiguous notion of the *milieu technique* did not specify a clear level of analysis (individual and microsocial, or societal and macrosocial) for understanding technology as a process or motor of social change; the simplest takeaway was that technology—the technological aspects of the division of labor—was of central importance. The second ambiguity was methodological: what sort of data and sociological practice was appropriate for the study of “industrial civilization”? Were workers' attitudes and subjective perception of their social relationships of central importance, or the socio-economic organization of production, including the use or not of particular technologies? And were sociologists supposed to intervene in social dialogue about the “humanization” of technology in industry, or were they supposed to produce a scientific analysis of technological evolution? While Friedmann was critical of some of the assumptions and approaches behind American social-scientific intervention, his institution-building in France suggest he viewed it as a general model to be replicated at home. Thus, in its early years, industrial sociologists in France, like in the United States, would play a dual role of social-scientific intervention for the practical illumination of industrial problems even as they aspired to carry out their own scientific projects and careers.

Generation Modernization: the Friedmann Circle of the 1950s and the New Logic of Industrialization

Social science in postwar France was marked by a rapid reorganization that significantly, if tentatively at first, bolstered the status of social and economic research that were seen by state economic planners as crucial to increasing productivity and modernizing France.¹ With the support of American philanthropy, especially the Rockefeller Foundation, a series of institutions were established in the late 1940s, including the Centre d'études sociologiques (CES) at the Centre national de recherche scientifique (CNRS) in 1946 and the sixth section, on economics and social science, of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE). *Annales* historians played an important role in this process, especially in creating the sixth section (social sciences) of the EPHE: *Annales* editorial board member Charles Morazé brokered relations with the Rockefeller Foundation and the editor and senior figure of the school, Lucien Febvre, became the first director of the sixth section. The mentality of these institutions reflected a sense of civilizational change and reconstruction; Febvre announced in 1946 that the agenda of social science was to understand “what civilization will establish itself tomorrow in this new world.”²

In the immediate postwar topography of institutions, history, sociology, and economics lived in close proximity to each other and to state research institutions like INSEE (economic and social statistics), INED (demographic studies), IFOP (public opinion research), and the state planning and productivity agencies. All of these, in the broadest sense, took up the agenda of

¹ On the relationship between modernization and the postwar configuration of social science, see Michael Pollak, “La planification des sciences sociales,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2, no. 2 (1976): 105–21; Dulong, *Moderniser la politique*. On the case of sociology, see Heilbron, *French Sociology* chapter four.

² Tournès, *Sciences de l'homme et politique*, 321.

developing concepts and research programs that could make sense of a society in the making, and many imitated American models of statistical research. Historians like Febvre, Ferdinand Braudel, and Morazé, economists like Charles Bettelheim and Jean Fourastié, and sociologists like Georges Friedmann and Jean Stoetzel all emphasized the failures of the social sciences to produce adequate empirical research and to make themselves relevant to concrete social problems.³

Holding positions across a number of Paris university and research institutions, Friedmann became the primary academic “patron” of the new industrial sociology, the subfield of sociology that was the largest and “best endowed with academic and social capital and dominated the activities at the CES.”⁴ From the late 1940s, recruited a number of younger researchers, most born between 1922 and 1925, who were interested in doing sociological research on the working class. They included four of his best-known students, including Michel Crozier, Jean-Daniel Reynaud, Henri Mendras, Alain Touraine, and Jean-René Tréanton. Lacking serious sociological training and resources in the early postwar years, these younger researchers initially undertook “artisanal” research projects that Friedmann organized using his contacts in industry and the state.

Sociology, social dialogue, and the politics of productivity

The first empirical research projects under Friedmann emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s as a coalition of state officials, business organizations, and industrial firms came together around the idea of carrying out social research into the “human” aspects of industry and conducting dialogue between social scientists and practitioners on the American model of industrial relations.

³ On Annales and history, see François Jarrige and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, “L’Histoire et l’idéologie productiviste: les récits de la « révolution industrielle » après 1945,” in *Une autre histoire des « Trentes Glorieuses »: modernisations, contestations, et pollutions d’après-guerre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 61–79. On the “crisis of economics,” see Alexander Lee Arnold, “Rethinking Economics in Modern France” (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York, New York University, 2017), 199–213. On sociology, see Heilbron, *French Sociology* chapter four.

⁴ Heilbron, *French Sociology*, 145–46.

The spirit of cross-class cooperation during the Resistance reinforced Friedmann's determination to produce dialogue among enlightened members of the different parties to industrial questions. In 1948, he presided over a conference of the Centre national de l'organisation française (CNOF), an industrialists' organization that had originally promoted Taylorism in France. The conference was devoted to "social problems of labor organization," and speakers from French industrialist, engineering, and scientific-management organizations, as well as a number of guests from American industrial relations departments, expounded on the latest American industrial research.⁵ Jean Moreau, the French under-secretary of state for industry and commerce, introduced the gathering in terms derived straight from the writings of Elton Mayo: "Thanks to the work and efforts of the organizers, the conviction is spreading more and more today that the human elements of the problems of production are as important as the technical elements and that, in the worker, the man must be taken into consideration as much as the factor of production."⁶ In fact, Mayo himself attended the conference, enabling Friedmann to make his acquaintance.

Friedmann's seminars across research institutions in Paris were the earliest site of this "social dialogue." They were attended by his young sociology students, but also by state policymakers and representatives from French corporations, who sometimes presented their own internal research on personnel-management issues.⁷ Henri Mendras later recalled personnel directors attending the seminar to "relieve their problems of conscience," and described the mentality of sociologists like themselves as aiming to be "advisers to the Prince," to participate in

⁵ "Conférence internationale des problèmes sociaux de l'organisation du travail," *CNOF: Revue mensuelle de l'organisation*, no. 8-9, September 1948.

⁶ Jean Moreau, "Discours d'ouverture," *CNOF: Revue mensuelle de l'organisation* 22, no. 8-9 (September 1948): 5-6.

⁷ Anne-Sophie Perriaux, "« Vers nous, ni forteresse ni tour » : l'entrée de la recherche en sciences sociales à la Régie Renault (1948-1968)," *Entreprises et histoire* n° 7, no. 3 (1994): 77-103.

the modernization of society by influencing its *dirigeants* (leaders) in a more humanist and socially-conscious direction on behalf of the working class.⁸ Other advocates of the modernization agenda, including the business organization AFAP (Association française pour l'accroissement de la productivité), which organized the productivity missions to America on behalf of the state. AFAP's productivity reports, which waxed rhapsodic about American industry's attention to its "human" problems, were filled with the expositions of the "social" doctrines of Henry Ford, accounts of American HR research, and summaries of Friedmann's books.⁹

The major breakthrough for this project of social dialogue and for French industrial sociology, which brought it into closer relationship with the modernization agenda, was the creation of a new research division at the Institut des Sciences Sociales du Travail (ISST) in 1954.¹⁰ The ISST, a joint project of the Ministry of Labor and the Académie de Paris, was initially founded in 1951 to train *conseillers du travail*, or labor experts to serve as advisers in the ultimately abortive "work councils" that were organized in French industry after the war.¹¹ The political and academic patrons behind the ISST had all been active in the French resistance and shared the goal of creating collaborative social dialogue in industry, most from an either vaguely left or Catholic perspective. It was widely presented to state institutions as a project for "modernizing" labor relations on the American model, to expose industry and labor representatives to the latest social science and replace confrontation with compromise. The institute's founding statement articulated the dual

⁸ Henri Mendras, *Comment devenir sociologue: mémoires d'un vieux mandarin* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1995), 66–67.

⁹ Pierre Badin, *Aux sources de la productivité américaine: premier bilan des missions françaises de productivité* (Paris: AFAP, 1953).

¹⁰ Michael Rose, *Servants of Post-Industrial Power?: Sociologie du Travail in Modern France* (London: Macmillan, 1979), chapter four; Lucie Tanguy, *La sociologie du travail en France: enquête sur le travail des sociologues, 1950-1990* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011), chapter one.

¹¹ Adam Steinhouse, *Workers' Participation in Post-Liberation France* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001).

role practiced by American industrial relations of producing “counselors of labor (or industrial relations, as it is called in some foreign countries) and, possibly, researchers in the matter of industrial sociology.”¹² The ISST, which received funding from the labor ministry and the state planning agency, would become the primary funding source for the Friedmann circle’s research, articulating the “demand” that their work was to supply—shaping both what was studied and how.

The politics of postwar sociology: the Cold War, Communism, and Catholicism

All histories of postwar industrial sociology testify to the overwhelming desire to study the working class as a factor in attracting young researchers to sociology.¹³ In interviews and memoirs, many early researchers invoke the political atmosphere of the immediate postwar years, particularly the moral and political standing of the Communist Party, seen as the representative of the working class, due to its role in the Resistance. Some researchers were members of the party, while others had worked alongside workers in the Resistance, and still others were fascinated by workers from a certain social distance.¹⁴ The choice to undertake a career in sociology was unquestionably, as Mendras put it, “a substitute for politics.” A sentiment that seemed to be shared across political tendencies was the sense of transformative change underway in postwar France, and the desire to participate in it by studying its idealized subject, the *classe ouvrière*. “To relieve

¹² I.S.S.T., “Note à l’attention de MM. les membres du conseil d’administration sur les problèmes que pose la mise en route de l’Institut,” Archives Nationales, Fonds ISST (20010498), box 194.

¹³ Chapoulie, “La seconde fondation de la sociologie française, les États-Unis et la classe ouvrière.”

¹⁴ Patricia Vannier identifies three political tendencies linked to social groups within the CES, all with a particular approach to the working class: social-Catholic, revolutionary, and “social,” meaning, workerists whose common denominator was their travels in the United States, and who were “workerist” without being Communist or even Marxist. “Les caractéristiques dominantes de la production du Centre d’Études Sociologiques (1946-1968) : entre perpétuation durkheimienne et affiliation marxiste,” *Revue d’Histoire des Sciences Humaines* no 2, no. 1 (2000): 125–45. For a more exhaustive portrait of the political currents in the CES, see her “Un laboratoire pour la sociologie? Le Centre d’Études Sociologiques (1945-1968)” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Paris, Université Paris V, 1999) chapter six.

the misery of the people and create a more just city, such were, I believe, the short-term preoccupations and the long-term ambitions of each one of us, whatever our political and ideological orientation.”¹⁵ Touraine, the son of a bourgeois Parisian family who had grown disenchanted with his studies in history at the elite École Normale Supérieure and worked in a mine in northern France before taking up sociology, wrote that, “For me, the working-class world was the spark. ... That spark shattered the bubble of air or paper in which I was enclosed, and symbolized the ‘reconstruction’ of the country and of myself. I felt an industrial ecstasy.”¹⁶

Though the majority of young sociologists were on the left and some were members of the Communist Party, the new sociology became entangled in the politics of the Cold War due to its association, both real and imagined, with the United States. Contrary to some accounts, what would become the “mainstream” of industrial sociology under Friedmann, had an ambivalent relationship to Marxism, and in fact followed Friedmann’s view of empirical social science as a more complex, multi-faceted and “modern” alternative to the mechanistic reductionism of both the Stalinism of the Communist Party and the Hegelian philosophy of history articulated by philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.¹⁷ During the height of the Cold war in French domestic politics in the early 1950s, Communist publications frequently raised the specter of imperialism behind American philanthropic funding for “bourgeois” social science, and the Communist philosopher Henri Lefebvre, though a researcher at the CES and a longtime

¹⁵ Mendras noted that left-wing “social Christians,” of which he was one, were the “far right” of the spectrum that included Trotskyists and “Stalinists.” Mendras, *Comment devenir sociologue*, 64.

¹⁶ Touraine, *Un désir d’histoire*, 45.

¹⁷ Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); George Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), chapter three.

acquaintance of Friedmann, attacked Friedmann's work as *sociologie policière* ("police sociology").

The domestic fallout of the Cold War impacted sociologists in much the way it impacted the Fourth Republic's relationship with the United States and the hesitant participation of French political elites in the U.S. productivity agenda. As much as politicians were committed to modernizing France and sociologists committed to pioneering a correspondingly "modern" social science, both were chastened by the anti-American atmosphere and the proximity of the French intelligentsia to the Communist Party. In the case of left-wing but non-Communist sociologists, this hesitance toward the United States and American social science perhaps reflected a good deal more political conviction than did that of the political elite. Waves of French scientists and intellectuals were prevented from traveling to the United States due to McCarthyist policies in the early 1950s; Friedmann himself was denied a visa in 1951 to attend an industrial relations conference due to his previous association with Communist organizations. The younger sociologists, most of whom traveled to the U.S. as visiting students on Fulbright scholarships or productivity missions between 1951 and 1956, were appalled by McCarthyism and, as Alain Touraine put it during a stay at Harvard, the smug refusal of elite academia to confront the realities of American society that so contrasted with their rosy portrayal of it. In 1951, Michel Crozier published a scathing attack on American industrial relations in the elite intellectual journal *Les Temps modernes*, decrying its service to management and manipulation of workers.¹⁸

The sociologists' unformed but passionate devotion to empirical research as a new mode of intellectual engagement, as well, contrasted with the French intellectual atmosphere and

¹⁸ Michel Crozier, "Human Engineering : les nouvelles techniques du Big Business américain," *Les Temps Modernes* 7, no. 69 (July 1951): 44–75.

contributed to their initial sense of marginalization. The two dominant intellectual journals, Sartre's *Les Temps modernes* and Emmanuel Mounier's *Esprit*, were strongly literary and philosophical in orientation and neutralist—more precisely, anti-American leaning toward pro-Soviet—in the Cold War. The existentialism of the former and the Christian personalism of the latter, as well as the philosophical Marxism of the Communist Party, each contrasted with industrial sociology's empirical orientation and its interest in American social research. In response, sociologists came to see themselves as pioneering a new model of intellectual engagement that rejected philosophical punditry and insisted on attention to the facts of French society “on the ground.” Just two years after his barn-burning essay on American industrial relations, Crozier shifted his approach with a follow-up critique of lettrist abstractions and Franco-centrism of French intellectuals, which he argued were stuck in the past and evidence of “French stagnation.”¹⁹ Mendras, who spent his voyage to the United States as a guest of the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought, found a context that mirrored the French intelligentsia's *érudition livresque* (bookish erudition), and described a lecture by T.S. Eliot on contemporary society that “everyone struggled to find ingenious, but which to me appeared completely platitudinous.”²⁰

The domestic political and intellectual field of the early 1950s thus largely explains younger French sociologists' initial rhetorical opposition to the United States and to “American sociology,” which can appear paradoxical given their deep, even decisive, debt to the framings and approaches of some of the most managerial currents of American industrial relations. Sociologists' retrospective self-perception as intellectually and politically marginal in France should not,

¹⁹ Crozier, “Les intellectuels et la stagnation française.”

²⁰ Mendras, *Comment devenir sociologue*, 46.

however, be taken entirely at face value. Friedmann and some of his students found an intellectual and political public even in the early 1950s, especially in the Catholic world and on the moderate left.²¹ As Friedmann's archives indicate, he received warm correspondence in response to the publications of his books in the 1950s from a wide range of political and intellectual elites, and especially from editors of Catholic publications and members of the Christian-democratic political party, the Mouvement républicain populaire (MRP). Not only did *Esprit*, the lodestar of social Catholic intellectuals, favorably review Friedmann's works, but Friedmann, Crozier, Touraine, and Mendras all contributed to the journal with varying degrees of frequency in the 1950s. The early openness of *Esprit* to industrial sociology prefigured the situation of the 1960s, when the journal's closely associated publisher, Le Seuil, would published not only the discipline's central journal, *Sociologie du Travail*, launched in 1959, but also all of the major monographs produced by the original Friedmann circle.

The phases of industrial technology: Alain Touraine at Renault

In the late 1940s, Friedmann organized a handful of his early students in the late 1940s to study the evolution of professional categories in industries undergoing postwar technological modernization. The most central and well-known of these, as well as the most influential on French sociology's conception of technological evolution, would be Alain Touraine's study, begun in 1948 at the Billancourt factories of the automobile manufacturer Renault, a company that was nationalized after the war in 1945 and had long been seen by the French political class as a "showcase" of national industry. The choice of Renault reflected the interaction of sociologists

²¹ On the postwar Catholic left and its attraction to sociology, see Denis Pelletier, "Une gauche sans domicile fixe," in *À la gauche du Christ : les chrétiens de gauche en France de 1945 à nos jours*, ed. Denis Pelletier and Jean-Louis Schlegel (Paris: Seuil, 2012), 17–51.

with the politics of modernization: the company's postwar PDG (*président directeur général*), Pierre Lefauchaux, was an ex-resistant and acquaintance of Friedmann, and Renault officials, who themselves were experimenting with internal sociological research, were a regular presence in Friedmann's seminars.²² The use of Renault as a "laboratory" for sociology would also significantly shape the idea of "industrial society" constructed from empirical research like Touraine's study: transformations observed at Renault, one of the largest French industrial firms and the only one to attempt a Fordist labor relations model in the 1950s, nonetheless came to stand in for the general direction of French industry.²³

Touraine's study, officially published in 1955 but conducted and publicized earlier, became famous for its stadial theory of automation and its optimistic suggestion that technological development in industrial enterprise relativized the importance of professional classification, making the division of labor a matter of social debate rather than technical necessity.²⁴ Though departing from Friedmann's mounting pessimism about the fragmentation of work in the era of the assembly line, Touraine reprised his ideas about a dialectical historical development of technology and society and, later, made them the basis of a sweeping theory of "industrial civilization" and, later, "post-industrial society."²⁵ As one of the most systematic expositors of technological evolutionism coming out of Friedmann's approach, Touraine would become a synecdoche of the dominant stream of French industrial sociology: a socialist but not a Communist,

²² Perriaux, "« Vers nous, ni forteresse ni tour »."

²³ On Renault's 1950s reforms and the general inapplicability of Fordism to France in the 1950s, see Chris Howell, *Regulating Labor: The State and Industrial Relations Reform in Postwar France* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), 42–44.

²⁴ Alain Touraine, *L'Évolution du travail ouvrier aux usines Renault* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1955). The Renault study is still presented in introductory guides for French sociology students. See Masson, *Les enquêtes sociologiques en France depuis 1945*, chapter two.

²⁵ Alain Touraine, *La société post-industrielle* (Paris: Denoël, 1969).

skeptical both of Marxism and the managerial intentions of American HR, he was both interested in the practical problems of industry and aspired to grand social theory. While often sharply critical of American currents of optimistic teleology, such as the “end of ideology” consensus of the late fifties, he nevertheless echoed American theories of “post-capitalism” in announcing a highly complex scientific and technological society that rendered obsolete the classic forms of class-based social conflict on which Marxism and the practice of the French labor movement were based.²⁶

The Renault study and its complements in other industries were carried out in a vacuum of sociological methodology, before the advent of the ISST institutionalized the quantitative study of workers’ “attitudes” on the Lazarsfeld model.²⁷ In the as-yet absence of such models and resources to put them to use, Touraine and his young colleagues deployed makeshift combinations of historical research, sometimes drawing on the firm’s internal archives, and on-the-ground observation, synthesized into comprehensive research reports.²⁸ While the young sociologists were well-read in American industrial-relations research, their most direct influence was Friedmann’s *Problèmes humains du machinisme industriel*, and their studies were conceived to follow their *patron*’s focus on the breakdown of traditional professional classifications in the face of Taylorized tasks on assembly lines or, simply put, the impact of machines on work posts.

Touraine’s study was divided into two parts, one focused on the evolution of the use of machines in the plant and the other on the corresponding evolution in professional classifications—the job categories and the training required to fulfill them—in the Renault plants at Billancourt, on

²⁶ Unlike many of his American analogues, however, the upheaval of the late 1960s did not engender a turn to the right, but marked the reorientation of Touraine’s entire research paradigm around “social movements.” For a description of this turn in the context of Touraine’s career, see David Sessions, “Mai 68, mouvement populiste?,” *Tocqueville 21*, May 24, 2018, <https://tocqueville21.com/le-club/mai-68-mouvement-populiste/>.

²⁷ Masson, *Les enquêtes sociologiques en France depuis 1945*, 47–56.

²⁸ Chapoulie, “La seconde fondation de la sociologie française, les États-Unis et la classe ouvrière,” 352–55.

the outskirts of Paris. It stood out from those of his compatriots in its theoretical ambitions; Touraine argued that each empirical study, however partial its scope necessarily rendered it, should “formulate general hypotheses touching not only on the meaning and the phases of professional evolution, but on the relations between the technical and the social, the place and meaning of machinery in industrial societies.”²⁹ His attempt to fulfill this ambition remains the most famous and influential aspect of the book: his “ABC” theory of technological evolution. Touraine argued that “phase A” was that of essentially artisanal labor, when work organization and the tools used—even when grouped inside a factory—were at the discretion of the *compagnon*, or highly-skilled, experienced laborer. “Phase B” brought the introduction of “universal machines,” such as multi-functional lathes, and the skill and decision-making of the skilled laborer was increasingly sidelined for more specialized tasks that could be performed with a minimum of training. Phase B was the era of Taylorism with which Friedmann was obsessed, of *production en série* that was more tightly controlled by management to increase the speed and standardization of production. But the novelty of Touraine’s argument lay in what he saw as a next step, “Phase C,” which brought the *machine-transfert*, or transfer machine, that technologically connected the disparate operations into the continuous flow of the fully mechanized, mass-producing assembly line. In Phase C, workers’ task would be primarily to feed and regulate the automated machinery that was planned and overseen by the factory’s Methods Bureau, with their intellectual and technical knowledge all but replacing the former expenditure of muscular energy. Renault’s most technically advanced plant was only just moving toward Phase C, and the phases obviously coexisted in different branches of its production, but it nevertheless heralded the future for industry as a whole.

²⁹ Touraine, *L’Évolution du travail ouvrier aux usines Renault*, 173.

The ABC evolution in Renault's machinery had a social complement in the corresponding evolution of job classifications. If Phase A corresponded with the craft labor whose fiercely guarded skills and prerogatives were the basis of the nineteenth-century labor movement, Phase B ushered in an explosive conflict between craft skill and de-skilling rationalization, which continued to coexist side-by-side in industrial factories until the middle of the twentieth century, and in smaller ones even longer. In the language of 1930s Friedmann or the American HR school, this was the phase of the "problems of machinery" or the "problems of an industrial civilization" that elicited so much anxiety and civilizational reflection on the part of political and social-scientific elites. But Touraine added a dialectical flourish by arguing that the degradation of skilled labor and its attendant conflict in Phase B was part of a "transition" from one labor system to another, from a "professional" to a "technical" one.³⁰ The extension of industrial machinery shattered the old craft labor system, but in the final phase, the emergent Phase C, it would do away altogether with professional classifications based on specific skills. Rather, the matter of job classifications would be "socialized" in the sense that it was no longer determined by the technical necessities of production, but by social relations. Workers might continue to be reduced to merely feeding and supervising machines, or they might be allowed to become technicians more involved in the whole of the production process—but that was now a question for "social conditions," not technical ones. "Perhaps," Touraine concluded in an early summary of his research, "there is actually, in the very dialectic of machinery, a solution to the human conflicts that have garnered it so many adversaries during its intermediate phase, wrongly considered to be definitive."³¹

³⁰ Touraine, 176.

³¹ Étienne Verley and Alain Touraine, "Enquête française de sociologie industrielle," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 7 (1949): 100.

A good deal of this analysis was prefigured by Friedmann, who himself spoke of the “dialectic of the division of labor” and argued that “technical progress, through its internal dialectic, tends to reconstitute, in polyvalent automatic machines, a new form of the unity of labor on a new level.”³² But, Friedmann had noted, the deployment of technology always lagged behind its capacities due to economic concerns, and criticized optimistic automation predictions on the basis that they were also determined by “economic, social, and moral” conditions.³³ His visit to the United States in 1948, after the belated publication of *Problèmes humains du machinisme industriel*, seemed to have sparked a profound doubt that automated tasks could or would be turned to positive ends by “social relations.”³⁴ In his preface, he criticized Touraine for “getting ahead of himself” with his theory of automation, and warned against “attributing to the social system any mysterious faculty of revalorization, capable of transforming whatever type of task, even the most parcellary, the most devoid, in itself, of meaning and interest.”³⁵ Friedmann’s turn to full-throated pessimism about the meaninglessness of fragmented industrial labor and the unlikely prospect for “revalorizing” it would be announced the following year in his influential best-seller, *Le Travail en miettes*.³⁶

Touraine’s ABC theory attempted to take a complex sociological view of technological evolution, arguing that it produced new social conditions where the “forces of production” no

³² Friedmann, *Problèmes humains du machinisme industriel*, 172.

³³ Friedmann, 175, 380.

³⁴ For this apparent shift in perspective in Friedmann’s work, see Vatin, “Machinisme, marxisme, humanisme”; Rot and Vatin, “Les avatars du « travail à la chaîne » dans l’œuvre de Georges Friedmann (1931-1966).”

³⁵ Georges Friedmann, “Préface,” in *L’Évolution du travail ouvrier aux usines Renault*, by Alain Touraine (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1955), 5.

³⁶ Georges Friedmann, *Le travail en miettes: spécialisation et loisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956). Published in English as Georges Friedmann, *The Anatomy of Work: Labor, Leisure, and the Implications of Automation*, trans. Wyatt Rawson (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961). Friedmann thus prefigured the 1960s and 1970s resurgence of radical critiques of Taylorism that perpetuated a dubious notion of progressive de-skilling. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

longer determined social conflict over work as rigidly as they had in the past. Yet in positing a developmental but ahistorical model of technological change, based on the highly unrepresentative example of automobile production at Renault, it risked replacing economic or class determinism with technological determinism.³⁷ Adding further studies of the influence of technological change on workers' attitudes and "consciousness" in the process of developing his more holistic social theory, Touraine's work would continue to suggest that technology itself, following some type of internal dialectic, was the causal motor of historical change and the central criterion for the definition of society as a whole.³⁸ While certainly rendering it more empirically concrete and certainly more sociological, Touraine developed the evolutionary schema contained in Friedmann's analyses of the *milieu technique*, in which technologies defined "eras" or "periods" of social history with minimal attention to economic, legal, and political formations.

By the mid-1950s, Touraine was already drawing political conclusions from his sociological work that prefigured the larger rethinking of socialism and the working class in the 1960s and 1970s, much of which took place on the non-Communist left put off by the supposed theoretical and political backwardness of the Communist Party and the labor movement.³⁹ In a 1956 article in *Esprit*, he expanded his claims from the Renault study that mechanization engendered the disappearance of the professions on which the labor movement was based, and with it the meaning of its attendant forms of struggle, which had always been divided between an

³⁷ A number of analysts of the ABC theory present it as falling prey to technological determinism despite its best intentions. Rose, *Servants of Post-Industrial Power?*, 101; Marc Maurice, *11. La question du changement technique et la sociologie du travail*, vol. 2e éd. (De Boeck Supérieur, 1998), <http://www.cairn.info/traite-de-sociologie-du-travail--9782804127558-page-247.htm>.

³⁸ For an analysis of this theme in Touraine's work through the 1960s, see Peter Kivisto, "Touraine's Post-Industrial Society," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 8, no. 1 (1980): 25–43.

³⁹ Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970's* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 44–48.

inward-looking protectionism and bouts of utopian opposition to capitalism as a whole. In the new technological era, the worker's opposition to capitalist society based on his status as a producer was undermined, since labor and productive activity no longer directly corresponded in automated work. The broader social consequences of technological modernization—urbanization, mass communications—simultaneously broke down the old working-class separation from society and heightened the awareness of markers of social status and consumption. Thus, “the working class is no longer a universally valid frame of reference for analyzing the attitudes and behaviors of salaried industrial workers.”⁴⁰ For workers in conditions of technological modernization and visible “social progress,” socialism meant the demand for a “general organization of social life.”⁴¹

Touraine's analysis of the technical transformation of work and the consequent change in workers' political consciousness toward participation in mass consumer society both reflected and differed from the American sociologist Daniel Bell's analysis of the U.S. labor movement, which he first presented in 1957 in Friedmann's seminar at the EPHE before it became a chapter of his well-known book, *The End of Ideology*.⁴² Like Touraine, Bell pointed to the contradictory situation of the labor movement in a market economy, torn between limited economic gain (“market unionism”) and class-based political contestation (“social movement”). As the American industrial workforce reached a plateau in the 1950s, the labor movement was confronted with the growth of “white-collar” professional categories within industry, which “do not speak the language of labor”

⁴⁰ Alain Touraine, “L'évolution de la conscience ouvrière et l'idée socialiste,” *Esprit* 24, no. 238 (May 1956): 692–705.

⁴¹ By the end of the 1950s, the supposed decline of working-class radicalism would be widely discussed in the debate over the “new working class” of engineers and managers, in some cases, like that of Serge Mallet, explicitly based on a radical twist on Touraine's ABC theory. These ideas are discussed in the following chapter.

⁴² Daniel Bell, “The Past and Future of American Unionism,” 1957, Box 153, EHESS, Fonds CADIS.

and “cannot be appealed to in the old class-conscious terms.”⁴³ Mass media having changed the political landscape, it was likely that to succeed in the future, the labor movement, like other “symbol groups,” would be “forced to assume some corporate identity and clothe their aims in national or general interest terms.”⁴⁴

Touraine and Bell, focused on the movement of industrial labor politics in a single national context, thus both saw contemporary conditions that challenged the labor movement at the same time they pointed to the possibilities of labor redefining itself as a *political* movement contending for influence in the management of industrial society. The key difference in their analyses was that Bell’s more closely resembled the economist wing of American industrial relations, with its focus on the larger picture of the economy and the situation of the labor movement in a system of collective bargaining. Touraine, by contrast, addressed the very different French situation with an argument based on the technological evolution of the labor process: the transformation of “class struggle” into something else was engendered, first of all, in the factory itself.

By 1960, French industrial sociologists had produced a spate of on-the-ground factory studies of technological change and workers’ attitudes, manifesting a growing statistical sophistication and convergence toward the Lazarsfeld model of survey research. The problematics of these studies, initially determined according to Friedmann’s personal interests, were gradually determined by state and European-level funding sources focused on technological modernization of industry. While the productivity politics embodied by these funding sources by no means closely controlled the work sociologists did or the conclusions they came to, they did serve to determine their scientific objects and the style in which the research was presented. Much as with industrial-

⁴³ Bell, 21.

⁴⁴ Bell, 23.

relations research in the United States, French industrial sociology simultaneously aimed to establish its credentials as a science and intervened in normative projects designed to facilitate the social acceptance of elite-determined social and technological objectives. The data produced, as it was in America, was taken to be value-free empirical work despite its imbrication in such normative agendas.

The “End of Ideology” and Industrial Society: International Sociological Evolutionism and the Obsolescence of the Economy

In the context of euphoric economic growth in Western Europe and the United States from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s and the growing number of postcolonial states, “modernization” and “development” became dominant themes in international social science, spurred by American foreign policy, private philanthropy, and international institutions like UNESCO and the International Labor Organization. American “modernization theory”—an omnidisciplinary discourse built from disparate work in economics, sociology, political science, and industrial relations—posited a universal teleology of sociohistorical development that encompassed all aspects of society undergoing a transition from “traditional” to “modern.”⁴⁵ In some cases, modernization theory became an explicit instrument of American foreign policy in the Cold War, a narrative of evolutionary development to offer the so-called Third World as an alternative to Soviet-style Marxism. Related ideas became common among sociologists who were not modernization theorists in a strict sense, but were concerned with describing the sociohistorical evolution of their own societies in the United States and Western Europe. Within this more restricted domain, which overlapped both institutionally and intellectually with modernization

⁴⁵ Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*; David C. Engerman, ed., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

theory and drew from a common corpus of empirical data and theoretical notions, a succession of notions arose to describe a progressive (but non-Marxist) path of social change in the “West”: the “end of ideology” and, shortly on its heels, the idea of “industrial society.”

The international institution that most clearly expressed the confluence of social science and geopolitics was the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an American-funded series of conferences held across Western Europe in the postwar years with the aim of promoting a “soft” liberal anti-Communism among European intellectuals. Organized by the American sociologist Daniel Bell, the CCF cultivated an empirical, “non-ideological” view of contemporary social evolution, and was a site at which disparate notions in international sociology and other disciplines crystallized into a generally left-liberal rejoinder to Marxism. After the death of Stalin in 1953, the CCF shifted from straightforward anti-Communism to “a sophisticated transatlantic debate, predominantly American-led, on modernization, democracy, and technological developments in industrial society.”⁴⁶ As we will see, this debate, and the broader social-science literature on which it drew, would form the ambient backdrop even for French sociologists who never participated in the CCF as they attempted to build from their own research toward a theory of contemporary society as a whole.

The first paradigm of the CCF, emerging at the Milan conference in 1954, was the “the end of ideology”—the idea that radical intellectual contestation over the nature of society either should or already had become obsolete, giving way to narrower and more “responsible” debates about the management of societies that had settled their deepest sources of social conflict through economic growth, social welfare, and the institutionalization of labor relations. Its two most prominent American exponents, the sociologists Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset, had been on the

⁴⁶ Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference.”

radical left in the 1930s, but had since infused their thinking with the ideas of Max Weber and Robert Michels, de-radicalizing as they saw the declining possibility of class-based socialist politics in a highly rationalized society governed by large organizations and the increasing state management of the economy. In the context of the Cold War, the end of ideology also reflected their growing reconciliation with American society. As narrated by Lipset, the end of ideology among intellectuals like himself

reflects the fact that the fundamental problems of the industrial revolution have been solved: the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in overall state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems.⁴⁷

Daniel Bell added, on a similar note, that “In the Western world, therefore, there is today a rough consensus among intellectuals on political issues: the acceptance of the Welfare State; the desirability of decentralized power; a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism.”⁴⁸

Bell and Lipset were both deeply familiar with the history of American labor politics, and their vision of American society experiencing an “end of ideology” was based on a common literature elaborated by industrial relations theorists and sociologists in the late 1940s and 1950s, including a number of the same ones who influenced early French industrial sociology. The empirical findings of this literature perhaps unsurprisingly reflected the normative project of a stable, apolitical Fordist social compromise advocated by American policymakers and industrial relations theorists, to the point that George Steinmetz refers to the whole of postwar American

⁴⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1960), 406.

⁴⁸ Bell, *The End of Ideology*, 402–3.

sociology as reflecting a “spontaneous Fordist epistemology.”⁴⁹ Even before social scientists began to speak of “industrial society,” many of its basic components were contained in this literature and thus synthesized into a broader analysis by the end of ideology thesis: the rise of the bureaucratic welfare state not only reduced the power of private industry over politics, but integrated an increasingly bureaucratic and non-revolutionary labor movement into a “pluralistic” system of representation. Industrial-relations literature and the sociological analyses of “social stratification”—often of a heavily psychologizing bent focused on individual personality and motivations—showed the splintering of the working class into diverse layers that often lacked class consciousness. Class politics based on anti-capitalist ideology were thus giving way to the competition between competing, evenly-balanced interest groups over the general direction of society, guided by technocratic elites. The general salience of economics in politics was declining along with the relevance of defining society based on fundamental economic conflict. While intended as an analysis of the United States or “the West,” this image of contemporary society would serve for many modernization theorists as a general, universal model of the “industrial society” toward which the world as a whole was ultimately evolving.

Modernization theory, technology, and the rise of “industrial society”

The constellation of social-scientific discourses known as “modernization theory” coalesced in American social-science departments and philanthropic organizations in the mid-1950s and dominated through the 1960s. As Nils Gilman puts it: “Rooted in the contrast between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies, modernization theory posited the existence of a common and

⁴⁹ George Steinmetz, “American Sociology Before and After World War II: The (Temporary) Setting of a Disciplinary Field,” in *Sociology in America: A History*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 314–66.

essential pattern of ‘development,’ defined by progress in technology, military and bureaucratic institutions, and the political and social structure. ... Modernization was a comprehensive and cohesive process that entailed what Max Weber had called ‘rationalization.’”⁵⁰ While some American social scientists optimistically saw such developments as the signs of a possible evolution toward a more “social” society, modernization theorists explicitly aimed for a holistic, developmental social theory to harness a growing mass of empirical social-science literature as an alternative to Marxism. The economist Walt Rostow, for example, subtitled his highly influential theory of the “stages of economic growth” a “a non-Communist manifesto.”⁵¹ Modernization theorists often tried, in Gilman’s terms, to “use Weber to trump Marx,” but, in the effort to challenge Marxist economic developmentalism, defaulted to a vague technological determinism that they attributed to Weber’s notion of “rationalization.” As even a few contemporary observers noted, what began as a *challenge* to Marxist economic teleology quickly became, in spite of itself, a technological mirror image of it.⁵²

This technological teleology is evident in any number of modernization texts from the 1950s, but the work of the industrial relations theorist Clark Kerr is exemplary of the way modernization theory deployed the concept of “industrial society.” By the late 1950s, industrial society had become the favorite alternative to “capitalism” and “socialism” among modernization theorists and liberal social scientists. According to these thinkers, the latter two terms, to the extent they were relevant at all, were mere species of the same genus. Kerr and his co-authors argued, based on a massive research project comparing the development of countries across the world, that

⁵⁰ Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 3–5.

⁵¹ W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

⁵² Goldthorpe, “Theories of Industrial Society.”

a universal “logic of industrialism” had emerged across the planet despite the diversity of its possible incarnations. In keeping with other modernization theorists, the authors of *Industrialism and Industrial Man* presented “industrialization” as a sweeping, top-to-bottom social transformation that would bring up-to-date industrial technology, an increasingly educated, mobile, and “open” society, and a highly scientific, technocratic form of government that coordinated between pluralistic interests. While they fully included the Soviet Union and post-colonial Communist states as examples of current or future “industrial societies,” the clear model for Kerr et al was the contemporary United States. Contra Marx, they argued, workers’ skills were increasing and differentiating, shattering the whole notion of opposing social classes. Echoing a widespread but in retrospect fantastical view of postwar American labor relations⁵³, they wrote: “In the highly industrialized society, enterprise managers, workers, and government tend to share in the establishment and administration of the rule. The industrial relations system of the industrial society is genuinely tripartite.”⁵⁴ *Industrialism and Industrial Man*, thus, represented an idealized version of the contemporary United States erected as the terminus of a universal process of development, propelled by a “logic of industrialism” whose motive forces remained ambiguous.

Modernization and development became a major theme of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the mid-1950s, reflecting the role of many of its central participants in modernization theory and its general mission of elaborating both theoretical and practical alternatives to Marxism. Raymond Aron’s theory of industrial society emerged from debates on modernization theory within the CCF, and was—somewhat paradoxically—intended as a *critique* of the teleological

⁵³ Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), chapter three.

⁵⁴ Clark Kerr et al., *Industrialism and Industrial Man: The Problems of Labor Management in Economic Growth* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 25.

notions emerging in American social science.⁵⁵ From his early work in the 1930s, strongly influenced by German phenomenology, Aron had been a convinced historical relativist and a critic of all evolutionary philosophies of history.⁵⁶ He opposed the stadial theories of American modernizers, like Rostow's "stages of economic growth," and perceptively criticized Daniel Bell's notion of "post-industrial society" as "open to objection from the Marxists, who accuse us of defining types of society by technology alone."⁵⁷ In accordance with his central intellectual concern, Aron asserted the "primacy of the political" and the enduring significance of differences between political regimes whatever their technical-economic similarities. As a matter of foreign policy, he was skeptical of American modernizers' optimism that a neat package of American-style industrial society could be transferred unproblematically to post-colonial states with strongly different cultures and histories. At the same time, the differences should not be overdrawn: Aron's embrace of "industrial society" as a universal horizon for the contemporary world, with its central problems of economic growth and the scientific-technical management of society, was substantially similar to those of other modernization theorists despite his skepticism of historical teleology.

The evolutionary discourse of modernization ramified well beyond the world of modernization theory into sociological analysis of contemporary society. Virtually all theorists of industrial society departed from a critique of Marxism, and drew on what they saw as empirical evidence to contest predictions of economic polarization and class conflict leading to a revolutionary situation. This empirical evidence was, to a large extent, produced by the same group

⁵⁵ Steinmetz-Jenkins, "The Other Intellectuals," chapter two.

⁵⁶ Stewart, *Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought*.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Steinmetz-Jenkins, "The Other Intellectuals," 99.

of American sociologists, industrial relations theorists, and political scientists, and added up to form their vision of “industrial society”: state-led industrialization leading to expanded productivity and affluence, the rise of skilled managers and increasing differentiation of the old “working class,” and the shift from class-based social conflict to a pluralistic play of “interest groups” in society. This evidence, as the German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf put it, required explanation of “the patterns of social development that justify speaking of Marx’s theory of class as being falsified by empirical observations” and proposing an alternative “theory of social conflict and change that claims to be applicable not merely to capitalist societies but to industrial societies in general.”⁵⁸ Like Aron, Bell, and a number of others, Dahrendorf claimed that the traditional definitions of capitalism were increasingly irrelevant to the high-tech, managerial postwar economies.⁵⁹ “Industrial society” was more relevant due to the fact that contemporary regimes confront similar problems of “industrial production as such, independent of its social, legal, or economic context.”⁶⁰ Like Kerr and his co-authors, and like Aron in different way, Dahrendorf appealed to a “logic of industrialism” that somehow simultaneously encompassed all aspects of society and, ultimately, centered on technological matters of “industrial production as such” to determine the nature of society.

The industrial society theories circulating by the late 1950s were riven with a number of paradoxes. They relied on a wide variety of fragmentary data and concepts produced in a series of

⁵⁸ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 36.

⁵⁹ A centerpiece of Dahrendorf’s rejection of the concept of capitalism was Berle and Means’ theory of the “separation of ownership and control” in the modern corporation, which dated from the 1930s, and is discussed at length in chapter two of this project. Despite the widespread extrapolation from this notion in mid-century social science, it was strongly contested even at the time of its appearance, and there remains no empirical evidence that the rise of bureaucratic corporations answering to shareholders rather than individual entrepreneurs disempowered capitalist owners or in any way altered the fundamental power relations of the market economy.

⁶⁰ Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, 39.

overlapping social-science disciplines with their own distinctive concerns, but shared a skepticism of Marxism and a commitment to an “anti-ideological” explanation of contemporary social development. The empirical corpus on which they drew was deeply shaped by normative visions of attenuating social conflict and, in any case, was too narrow in scope to add up to any comprehensive, macrosociological explanation of social evolution. The task of integration was performed with a combination of political *a priori*, historical conjecture, and a healthy dose of normative projection. “Industrial society” filled a conceptual void for social scientists, including a significant number with left-liberal political convictions, who wished to replace the Marxist analysis of capitalist society with a “modernized” alternative but lacked a holistic framework to rival it. As the sociologist Norman Birnbaum argued in 1964, the new industrial-society concepts were “constituted by loosely-organized complexes of analysis, description, and prediction. ... Much of the literature about industrial society is at least implicitly polemical, the result of a fusion (often unacknowledged) of firm political convictions with rather more ambiguous realities.”⁶¹ Seeking to replace the dynamics of capitalism as a motor of sociohistorical change, they defaulted to technology, often under the label of “industrialization.”

The Contradictions of the 1960s

This chapter has described the international rise of mid-twentieth century theories of “industrial society” which, aiming to provide an alternative theory of sociohistorical evolution to that of Marxism, emphasized the empirical study of diverse aspects of society, particularly the evolution of industrial labor. Comparing the American and Soviet “models,” and increasingly looking toward the “modernization” of post-colonial states, they posited universal logics of

⁶¹ Birnbaum, “The Idea of Industrial Society,” 6.

development that transcended the binary between capitalism and socialism and de-centered economics in the general sociological definition of society. In France, the path toward the theory of industrial society passed through the national imperatives of postwar modernization and productivity, for which American models of industrial relations and sociology provided tools with which to grasp what was widely perceived to be an epochal social transition. French engagement with American and international social science was inevitably conditioned by domestic intellectual politics and, increasingly, by the international problematics of modernization and development. While always maintaining distinctive traits in their own theory and practice, French industrial sociology by the early 1960s was one of many tributaries to an international vision of a new form of society whose most fundamental characteristic was the evolution of its technology toward the “industrial.”

In both its proximity to and differences from the international norm, the French case illustrates the political convictions and scientific presuppositions that guided the rise of industrial-society theories in general. First and foremost was a skepticism of the relevance of Marxist economic teleology to mid-twentieth century conditions, driven in different cases by the desire to reject previous adherence to Marxism or to “modernize” it against its mechanical or “vulgar” forms. Marxism and the geopolitics of the Cold War were thus among the foremost determining conditions for the theory of industrial society. Associating Marxism with “ideology” unresponsive to contemporary conditions on the ground, industrial-society theorists sought non-ideological scientificity in empirical social research. The available models for such research were extremely varied, but the most important came from the field of American “industrial relations.” Such approaches, particularly those that most influenced French sociologists, were saturated with normative assumptions about social integration and the psychological motivations of workers, and

explicitly oriented toward the practical maintenance of social stability through dialogue and compromise. Thus, when integrated into industrial-society theories, it is no wonder that they supported the “empirical” conclusion that society in general was becoming less class-identified and conflictual. Like some of their American counterparts, French sociologists could be critical of such assumptions even as they made use of their findings and partially appropriated the American model of practical sociological intervention from which they originated.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, industrial society theories provided the answer to the absence of a general non-Marxist sociological theory of social change that could encompass the full complexity of postwar society. They took cues from the classical social theories of Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, and especially Max Weber, and counterposed their emphasis on the psychological and cultural features of society to Marxist “economism.” But the “anti-ideological” posture of mid-century social theory prized empirical research as a corrective to outdated theory. But when historical conditions—specifically, the postwar geopolitics of the Cold War and the dilemma of third-world modernization—called for explanation of sociohistorical change, some kind of theoretical approach to social evolution, some kind of dynamic cause, was necessary. For both ideological and empirical reasons, the cause could not be, as for Marxism, the contradictory global development of capitalism, because American and European evolution in the 1950s seemed to disprove Marx’s fundamental predictions. The idea of “industrial society” provided an alternative that accorded with sociologists’ perceptions of their historical moment, in which universal logics of development seemed to be transforming the entire planet and downgrading the importance of socio-economic systems and of economics in general. The missing motor of sociohistorical change was thus increasingly attributed to different aspects of these logics, each of which encompassed all the others: “economic growth,” “industrialization,” and “rationalization”

as the deep trend of “modernity” in general. But given the generality and persistent vagueness of these terms, sociologists who used these terms tended to default to technology as the ultimate replacement for economics—technology understood as unfolding from an internal, teleological logic and ramifying through every aspect of society.

As we will see in the next two chapters, the redescription of society as a whole in terms of technological evolution had a deep and lasting influence not only on sociologists, but on a wide variety of intellectuals in the United States and Western Europe. The attribution of social transformation to technology inspired those less optimistic with the nature of postwar society to rebel against the supposedly oppressive domination of “technical” or “instrumental” rationality. Georges Friedmann’s description of the breakdown of skilled labor in the mechanized factory directly influenced Hannah Arendt’s famous analysis of “labor” and, in a different way, Jürgen Habermas’ early writings on “advanced industrial society.”⁶² The emerging technological evolutionism of the 1950s also conditioned the response of major theorists of the New Left who appropriated its account of the transformative impact of technology on society in their overlapping visions of emerging “new working classes” or new revolutionary subjects among knowledge-workers or university students.⁶³

The most paradoxical consequence of the vision of industrial society was that, while attempting to account for sociohistorical developments that were real and significant, it displaced the economy from sociological analysis just as the postwar period of growth and affluence was

⁶² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 127, 141–49; Jürgen Habermas, “Die Dialektik der Rationalisierung: von Pauperismus in Produktion und Konsum,” *Merkur* 8, no. 78 (August 1954): 701–24. Other German sociologists engaged the debate on instrumental rationality with more critical interrogation of the concept of “industrial society.” See, for example, Theodor W. Adorno, ed., *Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?: Verhandlungen des 16. deutschen Soziologentages* (Vaduz: Topos, 1979).

⁶³ Serge Mallet, *La nouvelle classe ouvrière* (Paris: Seuil, 1963); André Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964); Alain Touraine, *Le mouvement de mai ou le communisme utopique* (Paris: Seuil, 1968).

about to give way to a new era of global economic crisis and intensified social conflict. By the late 1970s, the sociological predictions for “industrial society” were fading, and the concept itself, with its internal poles of political complacency and forward-looking hope for equal and “social” society, was swept away in the tumult. The final chapters of this explore this shift from optimism to crisis in all of its forgotten possibilities and historical oversights.

Chapter Five

The Remaking of the French Working Class: Sociology, Revisionist Politics, and the French Road to Industrial Society (1954-1965)

« Les schémas marxistes sont de plus en plus utilisés dans la pratique courante, même par les non-marxistes ... la sociologie de Marx est en train de tomber dans le domaine public. »

—Maurice Duverger, 1955

“We have started our investigation with an examination of the work of Marx, because his formulation of class theory is both the first and, as we know now, the only one of its kind. Today this theory is refuted, but it has not been superseded. Now we have to draw from Marx what is still useful, or, more precisely, we have to separate the problem of class theory from Marx’s class theory itself.”

—Ralf Dahrendorf, 1959

“The end of ideology closes the book, intellectually speaking, on an era, the one of easy ‘left’ formulae for social change. But to close the book is not to turn one’s back upon it.”

—Daniel Bell, 1960

This chapter examines what was arguably the central pillar of the industrial-society paradigm: the question of the postwar “integration” of the working class. Attempts to define, measure, and theorize social class were the vehicle by which sociologists came to believe they needed a new name for society as a whole. Working in the context of a vast international expansion of social-scientific research aimed at measuring and resolving the tensions in American and European societies, sociologists isolated the working class as a scientific object and applied new techniques—statistics, public opinion research, interviews, and ethnographic observation—to its study. Workers were approached from myriad angles ideally susceptible to quantification: their placement in the technical division of labor, their socioprofessional classifications, their level of job skills and education, their family budgets, their voting patterns, their responses to opinion surveys. Based the mass of data they produced, but also their own theoretical preoccupations, sociologists found themselves in search of generalization, and in the process elaborated a new

account of their present as “industrial society.” The dramatic changes wrought by postwar economic growth, they surmised, brought a previous era of class society—that exemplified by nineteenth-century capitalism—to a close, replacing it with a new form of integration marked by the political or “social” control of the economy. This new form displaced the questions of property and economic exploitation that were at the core of the Marxist account of capitalist society, shifting emphasis toward new types of “alienations” that individuals and social groups would encounter in “industrial society.” Sociologists’ postwar encounter with the question of social class would precipitate a series of displacements: from the economic to the “social,” from classes to interest groups, from exploited workers to individuals alienated in techno-bureaucratic organizational structures, from parties to social movements, from “old” to “new” social actors.

The second argument traced here is that industrial society, even at its most scientifically detached, was inescapably a form of political prognostication. The priorities, questions, and funding sources that shaped social-scientific research were firmly oriented toward the resolution of contemporary “social problems” through scientific expertise; the political elites and the intellectual and general public that consumed social-scientific ideas was even more explicitly attuned to ideological and political concerns. Sociologists’ commitment anti-ideological empiricism was itself a *parti pris* on sociopolitical questions. In the United States, the politics of industrial society would often take the form of accepting, sometimes even justifying, the basic parameters of postwar American society as the incarnation of progressive modernity in the context of its global struggle against Communism. In France, the influx of social-scientific ideas associated with America and its “model” were measured against a domestic context marked by a Herculean task of postwar reconstruction, unstable political institutions, colonial wars, and a political left profoundly divided over Communism. There especially, sociologists became one node of engaged

intellectuals attempting to steer France through turbulent historical waters. In particular, this chapter shows that they were influential participants in the thinking of the “independent” or, later, “modernist” left seeking a position outside the two major left political parties, the Parti communiste français (PCF) and the socialist Section française de l’international ouvrier (SFIO). Reframing the heritage of Marx and providing an updated, “realist” account of the French working class, industrial society thinking found an eager audience among modernizing technocrats, progressive Catholics, dissident Communists, and young militants. As in the United States, it would become a current of social thought that simultaneously litigated the heritage of the left and sought the progressive possibilities in germ in the postwar present, constructing a bridge between the “old” left of the early twentieth century and the “new” lefts that would emerge in the 1960s.

Third and finally, this chapter examines the link between the scientific, “realist” and anti-ideological posture of industrial society thinking and the embrace of reformist politics. This posture set itself principally against Communism—in France, more specifically against the PCF—and took Communist Marxism to be the main contemporary avatar of “ideology.” Few American or French industrial-society theorists were crude anti-Marxists, but were all to some degree anti-Communist, and tended to interpret Marxism narrowly as an economically determinist philosophy of history prophesying the accelerating impoverishment of the working class and the overthrow of capitalist society in a final revolutionary crisis. The project of an objective sociological analysis of the working class implied a confrontation between “ideology” and “science” that was generally judged to disprove Marxism while perhaps allowing the retention of insights that could be integrated into a truly “scientific” sociology. But conceptions of science are shaped by their material, social, and institutional setting. In practice industrial society thinking partially absorbed and even co-produced the conventional wisdom of the political and social elites engaged in the *creation* of the postwar

Fordist model, with its promises of social and economic regulation through rationalization and productivity.¹ Seeking to escape time and place and to describe a sweeping historical logic, industrial-society theory naturalized Fordist regulation as a new stage in an evolutionary process unleashed by the original “industrial revolution.” In doing so, it absorbed some of the ideological prophecies that had always been integral to Fordism as an “answer” to social conflict.

Everywhere, industrial society thinking about social class—and its possible disappearance—interpreted the postwar conjuncture as a collectively planned, perhaps even proto-socialist form of society no longer ruled by the exigencies of private accumulation. Such a conclusion required that “realistic” political action reformulate its conception of society and of the basis on which political contestation should take place. For thinkers who had once subscribed to the revolutionary project of the left, this implied a certain degree of mourning and melancholy, but industrial society was not primarily a negative vision. On the contrary, it was an optimistic modernism that saw sweeping historical forces accomplishing much of the old left’s project of their own accord, demanding a reformist politics with the realistic prospect of finishing the job. It was in this sense that industrial society thinking would provide the intellectual infrastructure for the “radical reformisms” of the 1960s and 1970s. But by situating the French left’s engagement with industrial society in the international context of reformist politics, this chapter suggests that such visions were closer to the conventional wisdom of the period than they often appeared—and thus, despite their distinctively “French” variations, part of a continuum of reformism that united European social democrats and some American “Cold War liberals.”

¹ For the theory of Fordism used in this chapter, see Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*. On the connections between sociological epistemology and Fordism, see Steinmetz, “American Sociology Before and After World War II”. Lucie Tanguy’s history of French industrial sociology, in a different key, explores the connections between sociological practice and epistemological expectations of state actors. Tanguy, *La sociologie du travail en France*.

Objectifying class in international sociology: from America to Europe

The attention of academic sociology to social class in the twentieth century tracked closely with the rise and fall of labor militancy. Almost immediately following the end of World War II, political elites in the United States and Europe were concerned enough about restive working classes to invest significant resources in research in industrial relations, psychology, and sociology (see Chapter 3). This brief opening section will explore how social class became an object of transnational scientific discourse amid the project of European reconstruction, creating channels through which efforts to understand and measure problems believed to be related to class and “social mobility” passed from the United States to Europe, where they would increasingly become a fixture of political discourse over the next two decades. For almost all future theorists of industrial society, participation in this transnational sociological network served as a starting point that directed their own empirical research and shaped their approach to contemporary social questions.

Between the appearance of Talcott Parsons’ 1940 article on “social stratification” and the 1953 publication of a reader on the subject edited by Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset, American sociological research on stratification mushroomed.² The interest in social class ignited by the ethnographic “community studies” by Robert and Helen Lynd and the anthropologist Lloyd Warner, begun in the 1930s, mounted through the 1940s until, in the 1950s, as the sociologist Milton Gordon put it, “the torrent became a flood.”³ Social stratification research, like industrial relations, was given a jolt of urgency by the massive strike wave in the United States during 1946-

² Talcott Parsons, “An Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification,” *American Journal of Sociology* 45, no. 6 (1940): 841–62; Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Class, Status, and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Free Press, 1966).

³ Milton M. Gordon, *Social Class in American Sociology* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958), 10.

47. Something of the texture of that moment is suggested by the introduction to Richard Centers' *The Psychology of Social Classes* (1949), which cited the strike wave and the dominant position of Communist parties in the first postwar elections in France and Italy as part of what would become an almost incantatory lament in the stratification literature that American social science had ignored social divisions at its peril: "Of all this, what could psychologists and social scientists say? ... As yet woefully little could be said with any certainty because perhaps no area of social and psychological research has been so neglected by American scientists as that of class conflict and class consciousness."⁴

A short few years later, the complaints had shifted to the fact that the now voluminous stratification research was so conceptually and methodologically fragmented, and so riven with debates and criticisms, that it risked further obscuring matters. In an influential survey of the landscape in 1953, Harold W. Pfautz noted the lack of consensus on concepts like "status" and "class" and the highly varied criteria by which American social scientists assessed social stratification.⁵ While some used "objective" criteria like occupational status to divide society into strata, others relied on "subjective" assessments of individuals or communities about what groups or classes existed and how individuals should be assigned to them. The more ambitious had attempted to elaborate weighted statistical measures of different "status" or "class" attributes, most famously Lloyd Warner's "Index of Status Characteristics."⁶ Partly due to his lavish foundation funding and the number of students deploying them, Warner's methods became the most

⁴ Richard Centers, *The Psychology of Social Classes: A Study of Class Consciousness* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), 7–8.

⁵ Harold W. Pfautz, "The Current Literature on Social Stratification: Critique and Bibliography," *American Journal of Sociology* 58, no. 4 (1953): 391–418.

⁶ W. Lloyd Warner, *Social Class in America: The Evaluation of Status* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949). This methodological "manual" elaborates Warner's principle research techniques, the "Index of Status Characteristics" and "Evaluated Participation." See especially chapter two.

commonly emulated despite the fact that they had been vigorously criticized for their alleged subjectivism and their reliance on discrete “communities” rather than representative samples, as well as for Warner’s anthropological assumption that the “community” was an integrative, functional totality.⁷ Pfautz, a critic of the Warner system of classes derived from the subjective “prestige” that community members attributed to them in interviews, suggested that the stratification research risked becoming “a species of operationalism”—meaning, a positivistic obsession with empirical technique over theory. Pfautz went so far as to attribute this trend to the attempt to divorce stratification from “the Marxist theory of class structure,” and argued that “the unprofitableness of this ostrich-like policy is rapidly becoming apparent.”⁸

The explosion of American stratification research between the late 1940s and the early 1950s was internationalized through new transnational institutions established in the aftermath of the Second World War, particularly the International Sociological Association, created under the auspices of the UNESCO Social Sciences Division. Initially conceived as an international community to promote scientific knowledge and, implicitly, to eradicate the conditions that had allowed the rise of fascism, the ISA quickly became an agent in pushing the development of national-level sociological associations and, to some extent, coordinating research agendas.⁹ Its second and third “world congresses” in Liège (1953) and Amsterdam (1956) focused on social stratification and social change, respectively, with papers on stratification and class occupying the bulk of both conferences. While the ISA never succeeded in establishing a large international

⁷ Here, Warner was in agreement with the only American general theory of stratification, the functionalism of Parsons and his first cohort of doctoral students at Harvard, which understood stratification as an inherent feature of all human societies and essential to distributing individuals into the “correct” functional social position. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, “Some Principles of Stratification,” *American Sociological Review* 10, no. 2 (1945): 242–49.

⁸ Pfautz, “The Current Literature on Social Stratification,” 406.

⁹ Platt, *History of ISA, 1948-1997*.

research project devoted to social stratification, it did, in the words of the ISA's British president, D.V. Glass, a major figure in nexus of American foundation funding and European social-science institutions, "ISA interest in this central area of sociology was itself a factor in encouraging individual sociologists to examine the problems from a fresh point of view."¹⁰

UNESCO social science institutions were a field of apprenticeship for French social scientists who saw themselves as constructing empirical disciplines for the first time after 1945. French sociologists were major participants in the ISA conferences and its research programs; virtually all members of George Friedmann's circle at the Centre d'études sociologiques presented at least one of the conferences, and often served as *rapporteurs* for the discussions. France sent the most representatives to the 1956 congress after the host country, the Netherlands, well ahead of the United States.¹¹ Alain Touraine's massive study of worker consciousness, not published until the 1960s, was originally conceived in the framework of the ISA stratification program, and financed by the Ford Foundation.¹² Papers presented at the ISA would have an unusually direct path into French intellectual-political discourse, often being reworked for general-interest intellectual journals, especially the flagship of the left-Catholic intelligentsia, *Esprit*. A similar "pipeline" from international social science to the French domestic intellectual sphere was notable in political science: UNESCO's International Political Science Association also held a congress

¹⁰ D.V. Glass, "Social Stratification and Social Mobility: Introduction and Report on the Discussions," in *Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology*, vol. 2, 8 vols. (London: International Sociological Association, 1957), xiii–xxix.

¹¹ *Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology*, vol. 8 (London: International Sociological Association, 1957), 315.

¹² Alain Touraine, *La conscience ouvrière* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 367–68.

on social class in 1955, which led to a local French conference on social class in political science later the same year, one that would become a major reference across the social sciences in Paris.¹³

ISA participants were sufficiently numerous and diverse that it is impossible to characterize their production as a whole. But the stratification research that dominated the conferences was generally positivistic, privileging the production of statistical measures as the model of scientificity. Qualitative research was all but unheard of and theory that went beyond the matters of finding the appropriate variables and criteria for statistical depictions of “stratification” or “social mobility” were rare. The use of statistical measures tended to look for the “working class” as a static entity and to ask whether its “mobility” was improving or its “consciousness” was changing. There is little doubt that this context created strong impression of the nature of scientific sociology for young French scholars new to sociological research, an impression that was reinforced by the type of research in which the French state and its new research institutes would invest. Reviewing the mass of literature by foreign authors, particularly Americans, on industrial relations, social psychology, and class, formed part of the early “groundwork” of the new industrial sociology in France.¹⁴ Interviews codified on IBM punch cards, processed at the French statistical agency INSEE, would become the mark of sociological seriousness and orient French sociological research in the following decades. Though the ISA congresses were ideologically diverse, its projects and programs often borrowed the managerial language of American social science, for example in the “Tensions Project” or a conference on “Intergroup Conflicts and Their Mediation.”

French sociologists in their first postwar decade defined themselves both with and against the ideas that circulated in the international networks established through the ISA and their

¹³ Maurice Duverger, ed., *Partis politiques et classes sociales en France* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1955).

¹⁴ Marcel, *Reconstruire la sociologie française avec les Américains*.

individual contacts in the United States. Especially among the more established professorate, trained in philosophy, the empirical sociology that dominated transatlantic institutions was the subject of frequent complaints about its lack of theory and generality, critiques that even young empirical sociologists would take to heart. Communist intellectuals and trade-unionists were hostile to empirical sociology, which they associated with techniques of managerial manipulation and American imperialism.¹⁵ But throughout this chapter, it is worth keeping in mind that despite their reservations, it was in this international context in which French sociologists conceived of the scientificity of their work and its claim to empirical realism as against the “ideology” of the political context in which it was inevitably to become entangled.

The working class, sociology, and the independent left of the 1950s

Sociology in the independent left archipelago

“As an active political force, the left today does not exist,” *Les Temps Modernes* editorialized in a 400-page special issue on the state of the French left in 1955. “Today, the left is more fragmented (*morcelée*) than ever.”¹⁶ Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, a minority of dissident left militants and a larger fraction of the intelligentsia had sought an “independent” left to break the hostile Cold War stalemate between the two largest left parties, the PCF and the SFIO, and their equally unsatisfactory ideology and practice. Many rejected both the Soviet-aligned Stalinism and doctrinaire ideology of the communists and the Atlanticism and empty reformism of the socialists. This search for a third position had given rise to abortive projects in the late 1940s, and, by the early 1950s, continued in an archipelago of small political groups both on the margins of the major parties and around “independent” left publications like the magazine

¹⁵ Fougereyrollas, “De la psychotechnique à la sociologie policière.”

¹⁶ “Vers un front populaire?,” *Les Temps Modernes* 10, no. 112–113 (May 1955): 2005.

L'Express and the newspaper *L'Observateur*.¹⁷ The sense of blockage was acute, and criticisms of both the tactical failures and intellectual staleness of the two major parties constant. It was for this reason that many on the “independent” left lent critical support to the reformist movement of Pierre Mendès France, a member of the old republican Parti Radical who held the *présidence du conseil* for eight months in 1954-55, despite the ambiguity of his *ni droite ni gauche* emphasis on modernization and his Keynesian liberalism.¹⁸ The problems of a “modernized” left ideology and the social bases of potential “new left” movements were prominent in the endless debates that swirled around these formations, giving a particular prominence to a realistic analysis of the French social structure and the balance of political forces.

The upstart world of academic sociology can be seen as one *îlot* of this variegated archipelago that ranged from left Catholics to social democrats to dissident Communists. Sociology provided the space for a less ideologically overdetermined, more “academic” reading of Marx, and connected its participants to an international network preoccupied with the concrete study of class formations, social structures, industrial relations, and forms of union action. The international nature of sociology in the 1950s was a natural forum for comparison with the United States, the rest of Western Europe, Latin America, and, increasingly after 1956, countries in the Soviet bloc. At the same time, the French independent left’s search for a renewal of ideology and practice provided an opening for sociologists whose fieldwork bore directly on the evolution of work and the contemporary state of the French working class. This opening would widen dramatically after 1956, when international events—especially Nikita Khrushchev’s denunciation

¹⁷ Gilles Martinet, “Possibilités et limites d’une « nouvelle gauche »,” *Les Temps Modernes* 10, no. 112–113 (May 1955): 1922–34.

¹⁸ Touchard, *La gauche en France depuis 1900*, 277–90; Vincent Duclerc, “Les mendésistes,” in *Histoire des gauches en France*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 159–74.

of Stalin and the subsequent Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolution—precipitated a turn of the French intelligentsia against the PCF and opened the door for an intensified project of ideological “reformism.” But already before 1956, sociologists had increasingly been called upon to offer their diagnoses of the French class struggle and the prognosis for social change. This provided the opportunity for sociologists both to demarcate themselves from the carefully depoliticized atmosphere of “international”—especially American, sociology—and to introduce some of its techniques and conceptions into the French political context.

The new generation of sociologists fell politically all over the map of the “independent left,” but shared an isolation from the two major left parties. Some were even attracted to sociology *because of* this isolation, believing a better acquaintance with the “facts on the ground” of French society could contribute to a better form of politics. Henri Mendras described young researchers gravitating to sociology as a vocation as “for each one of us, a substitute for politics.”¹⁹ Alain Touraine described, even more explicitly, the political positioning of his own turn to sociology:

We were crushed between the thinking of the PCF, which rejected any study of society, which imposed dogmas in flagrant contradiction with reality—like that of absolute pauperization—and a reactionary Atlanticist wave that carried away an SFIO that was in full degeneration. Must one choose between the Stalinists and what I willingly called the social traitors of the SFIO...? The decomposition of the left destroyed the capacity for transformation of society, and placed intellectuals in a difficult position.²⁰

Sociology also held more prosaic attractions, which perhaps contributed to the particularly high number of PCF members and dissent-left figures employed by the Centre d’études sociologiques in the 1950s. With its lack of academic integration and informal mechanisms of recruitment, sociology provided an income to figures who lacked the connections or the academic record for success in more traditional French academic paths. Both Edgar Morin, the future editor of

¹⁹ Mendras, *Comment devenir sociologue*, 63.

²⁰ Touraine, *Un désir d’histoire*, 68.

Arguments, and Claude Lefort of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, both major figures of the post-1956 reformist debates, worked as sociological assistants at the CES despite their relative indifference to the empirical emphasis of the new sociology. Pierre Naville, who carried out empirical sociological research under Georges Friedmann at the CES while continuing his political activities in the dissident-left political groups of the 1950s, explained to his fellow Trotskyist Isaac Deutscher that he was “obligated to slow myself down with sociological studies I could well do without, but which represent my salary.”²¹

Sociology contra philosophy of history: toward a sociological Marx

Prior to the explosion of “revisionism” after 1956, the small world of academic sociology provided one forum for an “open” or critical reading of Marx that divorced Marxism, to some extent, from its highly polemical status among the intelligentsia of the Cold War 1950s and from the intense factional debates on the dissident left. Sociologists were more likely to side with what *Esprit* had in 1948 called *marxisme ouvert* against the *marxisme scolastique* of Communist obedience, though some line-toeing PCF intellectuals at the CES like Henri Lefebvre were also critical of the “dogmatic slumber” of French Marxism.²² As this chapter will show, this was particularly the case with the concept of class and debates over class structure; through their international connections and reference points, French sociologists were gradually assimilated into sociological discourses, particularly those emanating from the United States, which treated Marx

²¹ Pierre Naville to Isaac Deutscher, September 30, 1956, Isaac Deutscher Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, ARCH00462, Box 39-41.

²² Crozier later described the general orientation of the Friedmann circle as a “marxisme ouvert” and an “opening to reformism.” Gwenaële Rot and Anni Borzeix, *Genèse d’une discipline, naissance d’une revue: Sociologie du travail* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2010), 32; The debate between on class between Georges Gurvitch and Henri Lefebvre, a philosopher by training and still a member of the PCF, captures the distance between this “open Marxism” and PCF doctrine. Georges Gurvitch and Henri Lefebvre, “Le concept de classe sociale,” *Critique*, no. 97 (June 1955): 558–69.

as a sociological theorist from the past whose ideas deserved no particular esteem and should be confronted with contemporary empirical findings. A similarly “open” relationship to Marx and the question of social class was modeled by the two most prominent professors of sociology in France in the 1950s, Georges Gurvitch and Raymond Aron, both of whom kept their distance from the empirical sociology underway at the CES and in the state research institutes, but who were the official advisers of most theses in sociology and whose Sorbonne courses provided younger sociologists their only examples of a “French” macrosociological perspective. Despite their differences, and despite younger sociologists’ often critical view of their ideas, Gurvitch and Aron were inevitable reference points for sociologists’ understandings of Marx and each modeled the “academicization” of class theory.

Gurvitch and Aron approached Marx from different—and in the eyes of many contemporary observers, opposed—theoretical and political perspectives.²³ Gurvitch, an émigré from revolutionary Russia who studied philosophy in Germany before coming to France and spent the war in exile in the United States, increasingly returned to his youthful adherence to Marxism in the 1950s as he sought to counter what he saw as the atheoretical positivism of “American sociology,” now being imported to France by figures like Georges Friedmann and Jean Stoetzel.²⁴ Gurvitch’s macrosociological theory involved a complex classification of social groups and classes into a social totality (*société globale*), and he lauded Marx as a theorist of the integrated social totality rather than the restricted, merely “nominalist” social groupings supposedly “discovered”

²³ On the differences and conflicts between Gurvitch and Aron, see Stewart, *Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought*, 175–78.

²⁴ Richard Swedberg, *Sociology as Disenchantment: The Evolution of the Work of Georges Gurvitch* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1982), chapter seven; Georges Gurvitch, “Mon itinéraire intellectuel ou l’exclu de la horde,” *L’Homme et la société* 1, no. 1 (1966): 3–12. For a recent account of Gurvitch in the climate of sociology in the 1950s, particularly his fraught relationship with Friedmann, see Edgar Morin, *Les souvenirs viennent à ma rencontre* (Paris: Fayard, 2019), 776–80.

by American empirical sociologists. Gurvitch still, however, emphasized the unsettled and contradictory nature of Marx's class theory, which made it impossible for contemporary sociology to accept unproblematically.²⁵ Aron was no less impressed with American positivism, but was known primarily for his liberal anticommunism, his Atlanticist position on the Cold War, and his polemical castigations of the philosophical Marxism of the French intelligentsia. Aron's Sorbonne lectures in the 1950s were driven by Cold War concerns toward a systematic, macrosociological comparison of Western capitalism and Soviet communism, which he increasingly conceptualized as distinct genres of a common epoch of "industrial society." His analysis of Marxian class theory was more dismissive, focusing on refuting predictions increasingly bitter, revolutionary class struggle as irrelevant to the emerging state-managed capitalist economies focused on growth and consumption.²⁶

In spite of their real differences from each other and from what they considered "American" sociology, there were similarities in Gurvitch and Aron's treatment of Marx that echoed widely across international academic sociology in the 1950s and would become characteristic of virtually all industrial-society theorists. Most importantly, both distinguished the sociological content of Marx's thought from its philosophy of history, considering the former more useful to modern sociology than the latter. Gurvitch followed the tension between the two through all phases of Marx's thought, as well as what he called the traces of "German mysticism" in later thinkers like Lukács and Sartre. "Certainly I recognize the historicity of social classes, that is to say their role in the transformation of contemporary societies, but I deny the possibility of a philosophy of

²⁵ Georges Gurvitch, *Le concept de classe sociale de Marx à nos jours* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1954), 5–6.

²⁶ Raymond Aron, *La lutte des classes : nouvelles leçons sur les sociétés industrielles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

history.”²⁷ Aron emphasized the same tension, but found it more difficult to separate them, concluding that their peculiar mixture in Marx’s thought accounted for “the force of Marx the prophet and the weakness of Marx the sociologist.”²⁸

This critique of Marx as a philosopher of history was made in the context of the raging debates over the philosophy of history among fellow-traveling existentialist philosophers about the PCF as the incarnation of the working class as the subject of history, which raised “history” to a Hegelian abstraction virtually devoid of sociological content.²⁹ However the students in Gurvitch’s and Aron’s lectures may have responded to such arguments, they would become typical of the anti-philosophical posture of most postwar sociologists. This posture, which transcended differences in political ideology and was particularly critical of Hegelianism, was often trained upon the person and reputation of Sartre.³⁰ The ideological heterogeneity of the critique of philosophy of history is apparent in the fact that it figured not only in the works of an anticommunist liberal like Aron, but also in the interventions of a self-described Marxist like Pierre Naville who was associated with *L’Observateur* (renamed *France Observateur* in 1954) and various political formations of the independent left. Naville’s defense of his two theses in 1956, one on the empirical measurement of workers’ qualifications supervised by Friedmann and another on the philosophy of Hegel and Marx supervised by Gurvitch, exemplified the liminal position of

²⁷ Gurvitch, *Le concept de classe sociale*, 9.

²⁸ Aron, *La lutte des classes*, 49. On Aron’s interpretation of Marxism primarily as a philosophy of history, see Sophie Mesure, “Aron and Marxism: The Aronian Interpretation of Marx,” in *The Companion to Raymond Aron*, ed. José Colen and Elisabeth Dutartre-Michaut (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 217–30.

²⁹ Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, chapters three and five; Michael Kelly, *Modern French Marxism* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), chapters three and four.

³⁰ Crozier, “Les intellectuels et la stagnation française”; Aron, *L’Opium des intellectuels*, chapter five (“Le sens de l’histoire”); Jean-Daniel Reynaud, “Sociologie et « raison dialectique »,” *Revue française de sociologie* 2, no. 1 (1961): 50–66; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), chapter nine (“Histoire et dialectique”); Touraine, *Un désir d’histoire*, 89; Pierre Naville, *La révolution et les intellectuels* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

sociology between the worlds of state technical knowledge and the general political intelligentsia. Naville's reading of Marx as a "scientific" thinker who broke with the legacy of German idealism, which prefigured Louis Althusser's periodization of Marx's thought in the early 1960s, itself appeared as an "independent left" position that distanced Naville from the Communist conceptions of the "laws of history" that increasingly appeared to be in crisis.³¹ Naville's public thesis defense, packed with left intellectuals, merited coverage from *Le Monde*, whose columnist described Naville's thesis as a defense of "*un Marx savant contre un Marx philosophe*" and a "war machine against the received ideas of the [Marxist] household."³²

Sociological intervention before the revisionist turn: the independent left and the *classe ouvrière*

The year 1956 figures prominently in periodizations of the French postwar left, often described as the *année terrible* of French communism and the strengthening of the position of "revisionists" on the independent left and even within the PCF. But the centrality of 1956 in intellectual histories of the left can obscure the degree to which the overlapping worlds of the newly internationalized social sciences, the independent left, and the intelligentsia had already, well before the black month of November 1956, been engaged in debates about the changes afoot in the modernizing French economy—particularly with regard to social classes. Already by the mid-1950s, the new work in empirical sociology began to have a footprint in the broader French public debate and draw the attention of the independent left. Polling conducted by the Institut

³¹ Pierre Naville, *De l'aliénation à la jouissance : la genèse de la sociologie du travail chez Marx et Engels* (Paris: Librairie M. Rivière, 1957). On the similarities to Althusser, see the chapters by François Vatin and Pierre Rolle in Françoise Blum, ed., *Les vies de Pierre Naville* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2012); and Morin, *Les souvenirs viennent à ma rencontre*, 447.

³² J. Piatier, "M. Pierre Naville a soutenu six heures durant un Karl Marx savant contre un Karl Marx philosophe," *Le Monde*, January 18, 1956. See also Raymond Aron, *Mémoires: édition intégrale* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2010), 455–57.

français de l'opinion publique (IFOP), the new state public opinion research agency directed by the sociologist Jean Stoetzel, posed questions about the class structure and political ideology of the French electorate, and its findings figured heavily in the interventions of sociologists and political scientists, and even in predominantly “literary” intellectual journals like *Les Temps Modernes*. The years between 1954 and 1956 brought the publication of the first *comptes rendu d'enquête* (research reports) of the field studies directed by Friedmann, almost all of which bore directly on the question of the working class and served as the basis for less specialized public interventions.³³ Both the *mendésiste* journal *Cahiers de la République* and the independent-left *France Observateur* opened their pages to sociologists. *Les Temps Modernes* published its much-discussed special issue on the state of the “fractured” left in 1955; *Esprit* followed with a special issue on socialism that featured articles by Alain Touraine and Michel Crozier, connecting their fieldwork to the strategy of the political left.³⁴ Crozier's research on white-collar workers was also covered in *Le Monde*, reflecting the growing attention of the general public to the still ambiguous “middle classes.”³⁵

This entry of sociologists onto at least the fringes of political debate was facilitated by the independent left's search for ideas and strategy in the mid-1950s, which opened space for debate outside the influence of the PCF, then in the throes of its defense of the implausible theory of the *paupérisation absolue* of the working class even at a moment when the effects of economic growth were becoming visible. It also reflected the hopes for a “modernized” politics raised by the brief Mendès France experiment, whose mobilization of scientific research and vaunting of expertise

³³ Including Alain Touraine and Viviane Isambert-Jamati on industrial workers, Michel Crozier on white-collar workers, and Henri Mendras on peasants.

³⁴ *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 112-113 (“La Gauche”), May 1955; *Esprit*, no. 238 (“Socialisme”), May 1956.

³⁵ G.M., “Qui sont et que pensent les petits fonctionnaires?,” *Le Monde*, February 16, 1956.

for a “modern” left politics excited many in the university world.³⁶ Though of differing opinion about *mendésisme*, the diverse groups that sympathized with a union of the independent left and were increasingly willing to sacrifice an outmoded “revolutionary phraseology” for the strategic concerns of winning power.³⁷ The outlook of these groups harmonized with the anti-ideological style—“realist” and *chiffré*—in which sociologists presented French society and its classes and industrial relations.

The imbrication of French sociology with the moment of independent-left searching of 1954-56 was staged in particularly concrete fashion in the May 1956 issue of *Esprit*. Jean-Marie Domenach explained the motivations for the special issue as the “paralysis” of social-democratic parties in Britain, Sweden, and France, which had tended toward “an unstable combination of a technocracy of the initiated with a humanitarian or religious mystique, thus losing its vigor and its mass dynamism.”³⁸ Domenach admitted that the “deep cause” of this paralysis was that socialist theories were conceived in historical conditions that had radically changed—that “capitalism today claims to be capable of integrating several of the major demands of socialism.”³⁹ The author of an article on Marx’s *Capital* criticized the interpretations of both the PCF and the SFIO, concluding that “the slogans of a socialism little rejuvenated since Marx has no grasp on such a modified reality.”⁴⁰ Yet, *Esprit* was anxious not to fall to the same “reformist” fate of other European

³⁶ Alain Chatriot and Vincent Duclerc, eds., *Le gouvernement de la recherche : histoire d’un engagement politique, de Pierre Mendès France au général de Gaulle (1953-1969)* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006).

³⁷ Philippe Tétart, *Histoire politique et culturelle de France Observateur, 1950-1964 : aux origines du Nouvel Observateur*, vol. 1 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001), 143.

³⁸ Jean-Marie Domenach, “Paralysie des social-démocraties,” *Esprit*, no. 238 (May 1956): 646. On Western European social-democratic parties’ turn to the discourse of “ethics” and rapprochement with religion as they abandoned their previous economic doctrines, see Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 242.

³⁹ Jean-Marie Domenach, “Socialisme,” *Esprit* 24, no. 238 (May 1956): 642.

⁴⁰ Alphonse Daix, “Faut-il récrire ‘le Capital’?,” *Esprit*, no. 238 (May 1956): 690.

socialists: the issue opened with a slate of critiques of social-democratic parties in other countries along the lines of Domenach's introduction, criticizing their slide into mere parliamentary parties of capitalist management. Like *Les Temps Modernes* and *France Observateur*, while increasingly defiant of Communist doctrine and seeking an independent "new left," *Esprit* assumed that a modernized socialism should still have a mass, sociologically working-class base, a fact reflected in its recourse to industrial sociologists and their research on the working class.

Touraine's and Crozier's analyses in *Esprit* focused less on the structure of French social classes than on the *consciousness* of workers, which gave it a more directly strategic and political character. This emphasis had arisen in the new French sociology through its transposition of the research techniques of American industrial relations into the French context, where they added a broader "social" frame of analysis. Their research paid careful attention to the "objective" conditions of work: the organization of the labor process, the use of certain techniques and machinery, types of work-groups and how they interacted with management. They used interviewing and questionnaires to get inside the minds of workers and understand their subjective and social reactions to these objective situations. But while the American industrial relations theorists who had pioneered these "ethnographic" techniques—notably Elton Mayo and Lloyd Warner—had primary been interested in interpersonal relationships or social groups' views of one another, the French sociologists wanted to push them toward answering broader political and social questions. How did the objective features of the labor process give rise to certain kinds of "class" or political consciousness, if they did? How did the competing "organizational" forces in the workplace, notably management and unions, affect these reactions? Were they limited to the workers' specific job, to the factory itself, or did it go as far as politics and society as a whole? The early *sociologues du travail* thus gravitated toward a combination of a certain technical

objectivism—the facts of the labor process, including its physical machinery and “organization”—with a subjectivism of *la conscience ouvrière*, the worker’s individual response and its potential—or not—to lead to collective action. This fusion of objective factors and subjective responses, they argued, produced a richer, fully sociological picture of the “worker’s mind” than either mere opinion polling or abstract theories of class structure and social conflict—above all ones overly focused on economics and the ownership of the means of production.

Crozier’s research on the white-collar workers in public administration and private-sector offices, part of what growth economists were calling the “tertiary” sector, led him to the conclusion that their class consciousness was “ambiguous,” meaning it was divided by their integration into a “bourgeois” workplace and personal contact with their superiors, and the reality that they remained dominated, low-paid employees.⁴¹ This “contradiction” was a feature of the objective situation of their work, which took places in urban offices and required the standards of dress and behavior of the *classes dirigeantes* at the same time it was being “proletarianized” by new technologies and office rationalization that reduced office workers’ professional autonomy and gave their tasks a resemblance to those of the O.S. (*ouvrier spécialisé*, or unskilled worker) in mechanized industrial assembly lines. Crozier argued that this was tending toward a *convergence* between the situations of white- and blue-collar workers, as both were increasingly integrated into new job classifications and training programs that offered some measure of social mobility, that, especially in public administration and state-owned industries, included the whole ladder of the *salariat*, from entry-

⁴¹ Crozier’s *Esprit* article drew on the more academic presentations he was making at the time of its appearance, including at the ISA, and reproduced parts of them unaltered. “L’ambiguïté de la conscience de classe chez les employés et les petits fonctionnaires,” *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 18 (1955): 78–97; “Le rôle des employés et des petits fonctionnaires dans la structure sociale française contemporaine,” in *Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology*, vol. 3, 8 vols. (London: International Sociological Association, 1957), 311–19.

level employees to top management.⁴² As a result, workers of all sorts were losing their isolation into separate worlds that inculcated a specifically subaltern social identity, and their emphasis was turning toward the democratic functioning of the workplace—in short, “bureaucracy” rather than exclusion from ownership of the means of production. “Modern man, and in particularly the ‘tertiary’...suffers much more from the alienation and fetishism of the organization than the alienation and fetishism of the market. His problem is once again more social than economic. It is a question of struggling for democracy against bureaucratism, for open forms of organization against oppression and manipulations.”⁴³ In terms of attracting white-collar workers to socialism, the nationalizations that featured in most socialist and Communist programs—and which Crozier suggested were linked to the old Marxist emphasis on ownership of the means of production—were “only a partial solution.”

Crozier’s arguments echoed those of Touraine in his study of automobile workers at Renault, where he, too, had emphasized a possible transition, in increasingly automated factories, from an “economic” form of class struggle to a “social” one, a *nouvelle conscience ouvrière* focused on the organization of the workplace.⁴⁴ In his *Esprit* intervention, Touraine sketched the technical and organizational transformation behind this shift.⁴⁵ The nineteenth and early twentieth-century labor movement, dominated by skilled workers, had centered on the defense of the producer’s contribution to society, the right to receive fair compensation for the exercise of his productive profession or *métier*. As rationalization and mass production eradicated both skill and

⁴² This was, Crozier argued, especially the case in newly nationalized sectors, which turned even industrial workers (*ouvriers*) into lower-level state employees (*petits fonctionnaires*) with more standardized systems of promotion that placed them on a scale of professional mobility that went all the way up to senior managers.

⁴³ Michel Crozier, “Les tertiaires et le socialisme,” *Esprit* 24, no. 238 (May 1956): 713.

⁴⁴ Touraine, *L’Évolution du travail ouvrier aux usines Renault*.

⁴⁵ Touraine, “L’évolution de la conscience ouvrière et l’idée socialiste.”

autonomy, most of the new masses of unskilled workers (O.S.) had no experience of this form of labor, and their position was thus “socialized” in the sense that it reduced them equally to dominated appendage of productive machinery with none of the personal satisfaction and communitarian ethos intertwined with skilled work. Especially as they were transplanted from rural areas to urban agglomerations where their living conditions were strongly marked from those of higher classes, it became possible to think of themselves as a social class distinct from the others. Thus far, Touraine more or less followed a recognizably Marxist account of class-formation. He added, however, important caveats: at the same time, workers now lived in a society undergoing a national project of rejuvenation, with rising standards of living and expanding consumption: as a result, their demands shifted from their identity as workers championing an alternative vision of society to *participation* in the development of industrial society. The evolution of work may have “socialized” their position in production, but it also fragmented the cultural basis of old working-class militancy. The content they now gave to socialism was not the implacable opposition to the state as the expression of bourgeois class power, but toward “the general organization of social life.”

These arguments pointed toward what would become one of the central hypotheses of the industrial-society paradigm: that contemporary workers experienced new forms of “integration” into society and thus transitioned from revolutionary to institutional, democratic conflict. While Crozier and Touraine’s conceptions of class struggle were sociologically richer in that they considered how a broad range of social phenomena shaped the “class consciousness” and the potential political action of workers, they bore some resemblance to Aron’s argument that class struggle was from now merely an institutionalized “quarrel” over distribution. They also demonstrated how the hypothesis of working-class “integration” did not automatically produce a

single type of political interpretation; it did not preclude mass collective action aimed at structural transformation of the political regime, and certainly did not lead to the Cold War politics of liberals like Aron. It did, however, universally question the “vulgar Marxist” notion of the working-class consciousness as automatically generated by the contradictions of capitalism. Instead, the sociologists suggested that postwar developments, especially the extension of “scientifically” organized production with automated machinery, made workplace-oriented conflict and a struggle for democratized participation in the fruits of economic growth the more plausible—and, they not-so-subtly suggested, more “modern” and truly progressive—horizon of working-class militancy than the revolutionary anticapitalist associated with the “old” skilled laborers and their (supposedly) hermetic communities.

Crozier and Touraine’s sociological research inevitably detached fragments of the working classes from the general social structure in order to study them more precisely, but even with regard to these limited groups, their analysis was highly predictive and speculative. Though the “new middle classes” working in the expanded service and administration had started to increase in the mid-1950s, the skilled, industrial working class remained the dominant group in the active population, and through the 1960s remained at the forefront of militant labor activity in the largest union, the Communist Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and overwhelmingly supported the PCF electorally.⁴⁶ Throughout the 1950s, France did not have a “Fordist” model of high wages linked to productivity gains, solidified through regularized collective bargaining. Both the insufficiency of French industrial capacity and the structural weakness of its labor movement made it unnecessary; the growth and capital accumulation of the 1950s were largely based on “industrial

⁴⁶ Gérard Noiriel, *Les ouvriers dans la société française : XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 208–9; Michel Margairaz, “Les transformations structurelles des années 1960,” in *La France ouvrière*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions de l’Atelier, 1994), 318; Thierry Pillon and François Vatin, *Traité de sociologie du travail* (Toulouse: Octares Éditions, 2003), 317.

catch-up” and achieved through “authoritarian management and work intensification rather than technical modernization.”⁴⁷ Standards of living did improve, but unevenly, as purchasing power fluctuated wildly, the minimum wage lagged behind prices, and wage increases were only achieved through sporadic explosions of labor militancy. Increased state intervention, including through France’s celebrated “plans,” signified less a “New Deal” or a new era of corporatist bargaining than the use of the state to suppress wages and facilitate accumulation by extending credit for modernization of key sectors. In this context of slow technological modernization, irregular improvement in wages, and intensification and extension of work, it is little surprise that the majority of the working class did not see itself as integrated into a new “consumer society,” moving on from economic demands, or acclimating to capitalism. As Gérard Noiriel writes, workers were less likely to change their opinion of capitalism than to see any improvements as the result of their militancy, and opinion polling repeatedly confirmed that they generally considered themselves excluded from the material transformation of the French economy that was beginning to spark such enthusiasm elsewhere.⁴⁸

Class and the crystallization of the industrial-society paradigm in sociology (1958-1965)

The end of the 1950s, however, announced changes that would accelerate the transformation of the French economy and coincide with the crystallization of “industrial society” as a form of sociological macrothought in France. France signed the Treaty of Rome creating the European Economic Community (EC) in 1957, which would rapidly lead to the end of its protectionist policies and the reorientation of French capital toward exports and international

⁴⁷ Howell, *Regulating Labor*, 56.

⁴⁸ Noiriel, *Les ouvriers dans la société française*, 214.

competition as a replacement for its privileged trade with overseas colonies that were rapidly slipping away. After his return to power in 1958, Charles de Gaulle's economic policies worked to facilitate the creation of a French "monopoly capitalism" centered on large, modern firms capable of withstanding external competition. Corporate mergers soared during De Gaulle's ten years in office, and corporate profits soared to double in the late 1960s what they had been in the early 1950s.⁴⁹ The Fourth Plan (1962-1965) broke with its predecessors in shifting from basic, heavy industry toward more diversified and advanced sectors, and with a focus on developing a demand-driven consumer economy. If economic policy under the Fourth Republic had mostly stabilized the existing occupational structure, Gaullism began to overturn it: not only did it accelerate the expansion of managerial and technical layers of the economy, but began to cut into the traditional working class, now threatened by unemployment as corporate concentration hit old *bassins industriels* like those of the Île-de-France region and the Lorraine. Most dramatically, the 1960s would bring the *fin des paysans*, replacing France's remaining smallholding agricultural producers with concentrated capitalist agriculture, sending millions from the countryside the low-skilled factory work exploding in newly industrialized provincial cities. France was at last moving toward a Fordist-style consumer economy, but as yet with nothing of the "grand bargain" that characterized American Fordism: organized labor remained excluded from economic decisionmaking, with the state using more rudimentary economic instruments to regulate the labor market. The disruptive elements of Gaullist policy quickly provoked a resurgence of labor militancy, such that the early years of the 1960s could already be seen as the opening of the labor disruptions of the *années 68*.

⁴⁹ For corporate merger data, see Howell, *Regulating Labor*, 63; for corporate profits, see Margairaz, "Les transformations structurelles des années 1960," 306.

By the middle of the 1960s, the term *société industrielle* was pervasive in France, deployed by a wide range of intellectual, political, and artistic actors. The vast majority of its uses referred vaguely to the visible material transformation of the country and the idea, dramatized in popular films like Jacques Tati's *Mon Oncle* (1958), that France was becoming a “modern,” American-style consumer society. Even the greater number of social scientists used it in a similarly ambient fashion simply to indicate a society that had undergone a nineteenth-century-style “industrial revolution”—in some cases, like France, only belatedly completed in the middle of the twentieth. But roughly between the moment of De Gaulle's return to power in January 1959 and 1962, it also crystallized as a loosely holistic paradigm for the ensemble of socioeconomic changes wrought by the preceding decade. For sociologists, industrial society was the theoretical summation of the non-ideological scientific encounter with reality toward which they had worked since the early 1950s though, as we will see, these were never far from the field of political debate and activism.

Atlantic crossings: unionism, class conflict, and the end of ideology

The crystallization of the industrial-society paradigm in France took place in debate with a similar effervescence, around 1960, of synthetic statements on the sociopolitical developments of the previous decade within the network of U.S.-centric “international” or “Atlantic” sociology. French sociologists advanced to their interpretations of the transformation of the French class structure in dialogue with these international models, both imitating their synthetic sweep and air of “social forecasting,” but sometimes also attempting to demarcate themselves both theoretically and politically. In the broadest outlines, French sociologists accepted the views of American and German industrial-society theorists that the technological and economic conditions of “industrial societies” necessarily entrained the eclipse of revolution as the goal of socialism and working-

class militancy in favor of a conflictual participation in society, especially as the “old” working-class identity was diluted by new socioprofessional groups less beholden to its traditions and attracted by the promise of upward mobility. Divergences involved less the general outline of such arguments than the details of the causes and nature of the social conflict that would remain in or emerge from this new sociological landscape. Within this more restricted domain, French sociologists sought to demarcate their position as one that embraced the eclipse of revolutionary class struggle, and perhaps even the “end of ideology” in some sense, without succumbing to naïve predictions of social harmony or surrendering the promise of social conflicts as potential generators of social transformation. Thus, the reception of international theories of industrial society would continue to be measured against and integrated with the French political context, as will be explored in the following section.

The most important of these international “models” included three sociological texts in particular: Ralf Dahrendorf’s *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (1959), a substantially revised English version of an earlier German edition⁵⁰; Seymour Martin Lipset’s *Political Man* (1959); and Daniel Bell’s *The End of Ideology* (1960).⁵¹ All three appeared as summary statements of the sociological debates of the 1950s. In both the U.S. and France, Bell and Lipset were often reviewed together as if they represented a “school,” and Lipset explicitly linked himself to Bell and Dahrendorf.⁵² All three were referendums on Marxism and the “Marxist”—or more precisely,

⁵⁰ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Soziale Klassen und Klassenkonflikt in der industriellen Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Fernand Enke Verlag, 1957); *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Dahrendorf was a student of Theodor Geiger, the German sociologist known for his empirical study of class structure and who played a major role in launching the ISA’s program on social stratification. Marius Strubenhoff, “Materialist Method, Agonistic Liberalism: Revisiting Ralf Dahrendorf’s Political Thought,” *History of Political Thought* 39, no. 3 (2018): 541–67.

⁵¹ Lipset, *Political Man*, 1960; Bell, *The End of Ideology*.

⁵² Christian Bay, “The End of Politics?,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 5, no. 3 (1961): 326–35; Alain Touraine, “Contribution à la sociologie du mouvement ouvrier: le syndicalisme de contrôle,” *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 28 (1960): 57–88. Many reviews also paired one or both of the books with William Kornhauser’s *The Politics of Mass Society* (1959).

Communist—vision of class conflict. They emphasized the declining prospects for and relevance of revolutionary politics in “postcapitalist” societies (Dahrendorf) where economic growth and technological complexity, coupled with the political constraining of private interests and the expansion of the welfare state, were rendering the type of capitalist society Marx had criticized obsolete. Social and industrial conflict—even class conflict—was still a feature of Western societies, but they now took place within an institutional framework that was stabilizing into a set of widely-accepted “rules of the game” (Lipset), a democratic conflict-within-consensus that no longer questioned the ownership of the economy. Especially for Lipset and Bell, who each framed their books with reflections on the “end of ideology,” such analysis had a prescriptive character linked to the Cold War, namely a disposition that radical ideologies of the left and right were now outside the bounds of responsible discourse.⁵³ Dahrendorf, a typical “Atlantic” figure who moved seamlessly between the British, American, and continental European contexts, resembled other European social scientists in that, even while advancing similar ideas to his American counterparts, he took a less polemical stance toward Marx and remained suspicious of “American orthodoxy.”

Dahrendorf, Bell, and Lipset were each part of what Howard Brick has called the “postcapitalist vision” in American social thought, which would rapidly be contested as a *de facto* capitulation to conservatism by their more radical colleagues and especially by the New Left of the 1960s. This characterization, however, can overshadow how they figured in the debates of the time, including in their French reception. American sociology around 1960 was more conflictual than often portrayed, with debates over “consensus” vs. “conflict” in depicting the contemporary United States serving as one major fault line.⁵⁴ Talcott Parsons’ social theory, which emphasized

⁵³ Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference.”

⁵⁴ Irving Louis Horowitz, “Consensus, Conflict and Cooperation: A Sociological Inventory,” *Social Forces* 41, no. 2 (1962): 177–88.

the integrating consensus of shared social values, was often represented by industrial-society theorists as a static, idealist enterprise that overlooked socioeconomic structures and treated social conflict as pathological rather than as generative of social change. Bell, Lipset, and Dahrendorf had always been skeptical of the Parsonian enterprise and defended the more socially grounded, conflictual tradition of Weber and Marx against Parsons' neo-Durkheimian emphasis on integrative symbolic superstructures. All three had backgrounds as analysts of socialist politics, the labor movement, and/or industrial factory settings. Against at least the *emphasis* of the Parsonian *oeuvre*, they still considered the contemporary United States to have socioeconomically grounded social classes with conflicting interests bound together in power relationships, even if they suggested such power relationships were being attenuated by social welfare, pluralistic institutions or basic democratic consensus.⁵⁵ Dahrendorf was a particularly energetic critic of Parsons and the supposed American fetishization of "consensus," arguing for a more dynamic, socioeconomic, and conflict-centered conception of industrial society against the latter's "Platonic" and "utopian" social theory.⁵⁶ He also criticized Parsons and his allies for trying to construct a hegemonic theoretical program in the United States and marginalizing other perspectives.⁵⁷ Lipset, along with his Berkeley colleague Reinhard Bendix, defended a socioeconomic basis for class analysis against the psychological and anthropological tendencies in the American "social

⁵⁵ The view that Parsons saw no conflict or social strains in American society, widely held in the 1960s and ever since, is clearly reductive. However, more careful analysts were correct that Parsons generally neglected to give such conflicts sustained attention or any place in his theoretical edifice, leading him to seriously misread the balance of power in American society. Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, chapter four; Andrew Hacker, "Sociology and Ideology," in *The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons: A Critical Examination*, ed. Max Black (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 289–310.

⁵⁶ Ralf Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 2 (1958): 115–27.

⁵⁷ Ralf Dahrendorf, "Amerikanische Orthodoxie," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 1, no. 2 (1960): 283–88; "European Sociology and the American Self-Image," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 2, no. 2 (1961): 324–66.

stratification” debates of the 1950s—tendencies that had harmonized strongly with Parson’s anthropology-influenced functionalism. Reviewing Lipset’s *Political Man*, Parsons described it as starting from an “undogmatic Marxist frame of reference,” which he opposed to his own “general theory of action”—a characterization Lipset embraced.⁵⁸

Such differences should not be overemphasized; after all, Parsons’ version of “industrial society” may have bypassed Marx and de-emphasized social class and economic interests, but its political implications amounted to a similar form of progressive liberalism.⁵⁹ Bell and especially Lipset were susceptible to the psychology-based pathologization of popular radicalism current in 1950s American social science, which tended to conflate left- and right-wing populism into a generic opposition to “modernity” that expressed itself in authoritarian neuroses and potential support for “totalitarianism.” Such notions had more than a little overlap with Parsons and with the “consensus” school across other social sciences.⁶⁰ Attention to the differences does, however, help to explain the positive reception of Bell and Lipset among French sociologists, who tended to see them as allies of their own skepticism of certain features of “American sociology”—including both narrow, descriptive positivism or, conversely, Parsonian functionalism. Though perhaps too sanguine about American society’s potential to overcome its contradictions and presumptuous as to the applicability of its “lessons” elsewhere, their realistic, anti-ideological

⁵⁸ Talcott Parsons, “Social Structure and Political Orientation,” *World Politics* 13, no. 1 (1960): 112–28. Lipset, in later editions, agreed that his work reflected “the study of industrial society by an apolitical Marxist analysis.” *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 459.

⁵⁹ Parsons’ general agreement with the American version of the industrial-society paradigm appears strikingly in his critical review of C. Wright Mills’ *The Power Elite*. “The Distribution of Power in American Society,” *World Politics* 10, no. 1 (1957): 123–43.

⁶⁰ Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950); Richard J. Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryant to F.D.R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955); Daniel Bell, ed., *The New American Right* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955); Lipset, *Political Man*, 1960, chapter four; Bell, *The End of Ideology*, chapter six.

effort to understand contemporary “industrial society” rendered them at least important partners in dialogue.

The importance of these non-French industrial-society theorists was widely announced in French social-scientific journals and in the general intellectual press. Reviewing *Political Man*, Touraine wrote that “this book is one of the richest and most important of modern sociological production, and one should hope that it will be rapidly translated into French.”⁶¹ (It was in 1963, and the French prefaces by Lipset and Jean-Marie Domenach were published separately in *Esprit*.⁶²) Even if Touraine had doubts about Lipset’s “functionalist” approach to politics, it nonetheless “did not deny lead him to reject the positive contribution of Marxist thought” and answered the demand French sociologists had often repeated since the late 1940s to consider social phenomena in the context of a social totality: “Lipset foregrounds political conduct considered within the entire social system, the society as a whole (*société globale*).” Jean-Daniel Reynaud argued that the “originality” of *The End of Ideology* lay in Bell’s self-definition as “anti-ideological but not conservative,” and praised Bell’s account of American socialism as collapsing in the face of the inability of its ideology to confront the social transformations of the mid-twentieth century. Reynaud, however, questioned Bell’s emphasis on the United States’ divergence from Europe, wondering if they were not simply at “different stages of development.” Would it not be more accurate, Reynaud wondered, to “put American and European problems in a common perspective, that of the development of industrial society”?⁶³

⁶¹ Alain Touraine, review of *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, by Seymour Martin Lipset, *Revue française de sociologie* 1, no. 2 (1960): 229–32.

⁶² Seymour Martin Lipset, “Égaliser les chances,” *Esprit*, no. 313 (January 1963): 54–66; Jean-Marie Domenach, “Une démocratie qui reste veuve,” *Esprit*, no. 313 (January 1963): 67–75.

⁶³ J. D. Reynaud, review of *The End of Ideology, on the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, by Daniel Bell, *Revue française de sociologie* 2, no. 1 (1961): 85–87.

Bell's analysis of the American labor movement in *The End of Ideology*, first presented in Friedmann's seminar in 1957, would also echo in French sociology in the early 1960s. Bell pointed to the contradictory situation of the labor movement in a market economy, torn between limited defense of economic interests ("market unionism") and class-based political contestation ("social movement"). As the American industrial workforce reached a plateau in the 1950s, the labor movement was confronted with the growth of "white-collar" professional categories within industry, which "do not speak the language of labor" and "cannot be appealed to in the old class-conscious terms."⁶⁴ Mass media having changed the political landscape, it was likely that to succeed in the future, the labor movement, like other "symbol groups," would be "forced to assume some corporate identity and clothe their aims in national or general interest terms."⁶⁵

While giving their own spin to these developments, French sociologists also drew attention to the contradictory role of unions in a situation where they had been made central negotiating partners of the state, drawing them into the political system and calling into question their revolutionary doctrines, especially the revolutionary syndicalism expressed in the founding document of French labor, the Charte d'Amiens (1905). The charter, with its mistrust of political parties and the state, still heavily influenced the oppositional combativity of French unions like Force Ouvrière and the CGT despite their links to the SFIO and PCF, respectively.⁶⁶ Friedmann and Reynaud reproduced Bell's binary, arguing that contemporary unionism had two possible paths: maintaining its "*caractère privé et revendicatif*"—that is, its hostility to bourgeois politics,

⁶⁴ Daniel Bell, "The Past and Future of American Unionism," 1957, 21, EHESS, Fonds CADIS, Box 153 and "The Capitalism of the Proletariat," in *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York and London: Free Press, 1960), 211–26.

⁶⁵ Bell, "The Past and Future of American Unionism," 23.

⁶⁶ As the foregoing analysis has illustrated, it is highly debatable how much this was actually the case in France during most of the 1960s. While the postwar years had multiplied *institutions* for such "negotiation," they were in practice toothless and did nothing to prevent the state and employers from all but unilaterally setting labor policy.

now inevitably shorn of its revolutionary character—or, on the other hand, “maintaining the ambition to act within the state and to take on economic responsibilities.”⁶⁷ Touraine, always the most hesitant of the French sociologists to accept unionism as a mere appendage of a bureaucratic, statist order, rejected the binary, arguing that both of these “paths” were fundamental to the nature of the labor movement; the challenge was to leverage both in a specific situation of economic and political power interests.⁶⁸ Touraine’s analyses increasingly aimed to best American sociologists like Lipset and Parsons in the analysis of the social system as a functional whole, which would lead him to categories “types” of industrial societies according to the path of their institutional and economic development, which in turn “produced” certain types of unionism.⁶⁹ Even for Touraine, however, the ideal-typical form of unionism and working-class action that would correspond to the most advanced form of “industrial society” was some form of *syndicalisme de contrôle*, whose starting point would be the passage from revolutionary ideology to contestation for the control of economic development and its social consequences.

French theories: a certain idea of “industrial society”

Sociologie du travail and the rise of industrial society

The year 1960 commonly serves as a marker of the entry of French industrial sociology into disciplinary maturity: the Friedmann circle established its own journal, *Sociologie du Travail*, in 1959, and in 1961-62 published a two-volume *Traité de sociologie du travail*, a treatise to mark

⁶⁷ Georges Friedmann and Jean-Daniel Reynaud, “La société industrielle et son avenir,” in *Histoire générale du travail : la civilisation industrielle (de 1914 à nos jours)*, ed. Alain Touraine, vol. 4 (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1962), 349.

⁶⁸ Touraine, “Contribution à la sociologie du mouvement ouvrier: le syndicalisme de contrôle.”

⁶⁹ Alain Touraine, “Management and the Working Class in Western Europe,” *Daedalus* 93, no. 1 (1964): 304–34. Here, Touraine counterposes his own analysis to those of Bell and Lipset.

its arrival as a scientific discipline and serve as a reference point for the field. Touraine, with the assistance of Friedmann and many of the younger *sociologues du travail*, produced another synthetic summary in the form of the volume on “industrial civilization” in the *Histoire générale du travail*, an expensively-produced encyclopedic history of labor and civilization from the ancient world to the present.⁷⁰ The publication of the major theoretical statements of Friedmann’s most influential students, Crozier’s *Le phénomène bureaucratique* (1963) and Touraine’s *Sociologie de l’action* (1965), further mark the early 1960s as the moment of French industrial sociology’s shift from empirical research to theoretical synthesis. This shift was concurrent with the expression of a generalized, macrosociological conception of industrial society that was, simultaneously, a summation of the research of the 1950s and an intervention in independent-left politics. While this moment of theoretical crystallization involved all four of the foundational hypotheses of the industrial-society paradigm (the managerial revolution, the institutionalization of class conflict, the end of ideology, and the convergence of social systems), what follows will examine the central role played by analyses of social class and forecasts of class conflict in the emergent French conception of industrial society. It was this domain more than any other that, as we will see below, remained closely integrated with French domestic politics and gave sociology a prominent role in elaborating the strategies behind the political contestation of the 1960s.

In their general outline, these statements of the early 1960s followed Friedmann in conceiving labor—*travail*—as the fundamental anthropological activity, the link between man and nature and thus the building-block of “civilization.” This anthropology, however summarily elaborated, enabled the sociology of labor or work (*sociologie du travail*) to be conceived as a

⁷⁰ Louis-Henri Parias, ed., *Histoire générale du travail : la civilisation industrielle (de 1914 à nos jours)*, vol. 4, 4 vols. (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1962).

general sociology of society as a whole—specifically, of the new phase of social history known as “industrial society.” Both the new journal and the treatise bore the name *sociologie du travail* rather than *sociologie industrielle* (industrial sociology), the term generally used in France until around 1960 to designate what, in the United States, consisted of both industrial relations and sociology proper. The shift in disciplinary terminology was thus linked to the ambition to claim industrial sociology as a general sociology, and perhaps also to demarcate a French conception of industrial society.⁷¹ “The term ‘industrial sociology’ is too restricted for this expanding young discipline,” Friedmann wrote in the first issue of *Sociologie du Travail*. “In the current state of research, it takes as its object global realities [*réalités globales*] examined from diverse angles, and only artificially entails well-defined sectors.”⁷² Whatever elision of the term “industrial,” however, there was no doubt that the “global realities” of which Friedmann spoke involved the total situation of planetary sociohistorical evolution that lay behind the conception of industrial society. As Friedmann and Pierre Naville put it in the introduction to the *Traité*, “Industrialization is not, as was long believed, a trait particular to the societies of Western Europe or North America. It is a movement that carries along, turn by turn, at an accelerated pace, the entire surface of the planet, all countries, whatever their economic or social structures.” The diversity of the topics covered in the treatise had “as a common denominator, that they constitute aspects of industrial society or of the society on the path of industrialization.”⁷³

Aside from these general indications, both the *Traité* and the volume on *La civilisation industrielle* lacked much overall coherence, featuring articles by many contributors on relatively

⁷¹ Rot and Borzeix, *Genèse d’une discipline, naissance d’une revue*, 261–62.

⁷² Georges Friedmann, “Quelques problèmes de définition et de limites,” *Sociologie du Travail* 1, no. 1 (December 1959): 1–11.

⁷³ Georges Friedmann and Pierre Naville, eds., *Traité de sociologie du travail*, vol. 1 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1961), 5.

delimited and technical questions to which empirical sociologists had addressed themselves in the previous decade: job classification, social mobility, the technical division of labor, the functioning of organizations, leisure and mass society, etc. In the remainder of this section, many of these topics will be left to the side in favor of the traces of macrosociological thinking and social forecasting that framed them.

Friedmann's conclusion to the *Traité* was an expansive synthesis of the industrial paradigm notable for its sharply pessimistic gloss on the state of work and the possibilities for working-class action, circumscribed by a nearly all-encompassing (if vaguely described) apparatuses of subordination and alienation. Its ringing notes of catastrophic *pathos* could easily be compared to Theodor Adorno's analysis of the "administered world" or Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, though Friedmann rooted the domination of workers less in a generalized instrumental rationality than in the concrete exclusion of the mass of manual workers from any "integrating" form of participation either in their work itself or in its conditions and decisions. As discussed in the previous chapter, Friedmann had long dismissed alienation from *property* through private ownership of the means of production as a central concern, focusing instead on the universal technological transformation driving the rise of "technical civilization" and its specific forms of social life. It was primarily technological developments—industrialization and automation—that broke down working-class community and identity that had been centered around the productive *métier*, making workers appendages of machines or, in the best of cases, mere overseers of automated equipment.

Friedmann had frequently insisted that while some such developments might be inherent in the process of industrialization, they were not fated to take a particular social character; there was no reason that industrial democracy, worker participation in decisionmaking, and

“humanizations” of the labor process could not be achieved. Their absence, he insisted, was a *political* failure—in particular, a failure of enlightened leadership to install a “rational” organization of society. Friedmann’s diagnosis was of the consequences of this failure was radical and pessimistic: it produced a “dichotomous” organization of labor between thinking and execution, with the mass of salaried workers reduced to alienated *exécutants* who had not only lost the previous solidarity of the working-class community but were now also manipulated by mass communications and reduced to finding solace in private consumption. Friedmann rejected the possibility that would shortly become a focal point in new radical theories: that the new masses of *salariés*, either unskilled workers or the white-collar “tertiaries,” would be driven to rise up against such degraded conditions. “The condition of *exécutants* in our system of organization today leads many of them into apathy, acculturation [*accoutumance*], and renders them little apt for struggle,” he concluded.⁷⁴ Others have noted the striking resonance of New Left themes of de-skilling, alienation, administrative domination in Friedmann’s thinking, but Friedmann, by contrast, displayed little hope for renewed grassroots militancy around such themes. Instead, his pleas for democratic planning and industrial democracy were always pitched to the *classes dirigeantes*, with the implication that political solutions required a type of public-spirited Saint-Simonian leadership.⁷⁵

If many of these themes were expressed in different ways by other French sociologists—virtually everyone agreed that contemporary alienation and social conflict had little to do with

⁷⁴ Georges Friedmann, “Tendances d’aujourd’hui, perspectives de demain,” in *Traité de sociologie du travail*, ed. Georges Friedmann and Pierre Naville, vol. 2 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962), 391.

⁷⁵ Remarkably, Friedmann in 1956 had already prefigured much of the content of the “second left” discussed in the following section, calling for a decentralized “communitarian socialism” against technocratic “state socialism.” He also embodied the paradoxical technocratic streak in the *deuxième gauche* vision of decentralized democratic socialism, suggesting that France needed the intervention of technical elites exercising a *despotisme éclairé* (enlightened despotism). *Le travail en miettes: spécialisation et loisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 274–78.

property or economics, much less that it was an endemic feature of capitalism—none went as far as Friedmann, nor focused as intently on the supposed eclipse of skilled labor as the heart of a social disaster. Friedmann uniquely refused to move beyond mourning for the industrial working class and the possibility of a work-centered humanist socialism that had driven his work from its earliest years of his Communist engagement in the 1930s. After 1960, his work turned definitively toward research on mass communications that expressed a similar *mélange* of fascination and repulsion that had initially attracted him to industrial sociology and scientific management. His two highest-profile students, Touraine and Crozier, were similarly on the cusp of abandoning their emphasis on workers, but in different ways looked optimistically toward future possibilities of democratization in the new administered world of industrial society. While analysis of Crozier's theoretical work on bureaucracy will be held for the following chapter, Touraine's requires special attention for its expansive account of "industrial society" and its reformulation of the meaning of social action.

Alain Touraine and the sociology of industrial civilization

Touraine's first major theoretical work, *Sociologie de l'action*, is rivaled perhaps only by Raymond Aron's lecture courses as the most systematic statement of the industrial-society paradigm in any language. As a work of macrosociological theory, its arguments were idiosyncratic and to some extent *sui generis*; as an assemblage of the conventional wisdom and underlying politics of the industrial-society paradigm in the early 1960s, it is an unmatched historical source. Thus, despite the book's famously elusive conceptual language and dubious coherence, it is worth at least an attempt to reconstruct it as an expressive totality—a simultaneously sociological and political act. To fully understand the vision of industrial society

propounded in *Sociologie de l'action* requires a grasp of its theoretical ambitions and conceptual framework.

Touraine's central methodological aim was to defend the role of human "action" or creative agency in the "production" of society, a project that can be mapped onto the theoretical terrain of the early 1960s in a number of ways. *Sociologie de l'action* can be described, following Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, as an attempted sociological resuscitation of the "philosophy of the subject" in a French academic context increasingly dominated by anti-subjective, structuralist paradigms.⁷⁶ From this angle, the book has certain affinities with other contemporaneous theoretical defenses of "men making their own history," including Sartre's *Critique de la raison dialectique* (1960) and E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).⁷⁷ It could even be inscribed in a pan-European, intra-left conflict between agency and structure exemplified in the famous "debate" between Thompson and Louis Althusser. However, Touraine should be understood as a partisan of "scientific" sociology who naturally did not share the anti-sociological rancor of Sartre (in favor of philosophy) or of Thompson (in favor of empirical history). *Sociologie de l'action* mustered hundreds of pages of territorial criticism both of philosophy and of every form of empirical investigation, especially that of history. The longest shadow hanging over the book, rather, was that of Talcott Parsons, whose functionalist theoretical project Touraine viewed as the most advanced and ambitious effort at

⁷⁶ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, "Sociology and Philosophy in France Since 1945: Death and Resurrection of a Philosophy Without Subject," *Social Research* 34, no. 1 (1967): 162–212.

⁷⁷ As Touraine put it in a later preface to the book: « Le plus important pour moi, après les années d'enfermement dans la préparation des concours et dans une vie intellectuelle très introspective, l'explosion de la période qui avait suivi la Libération. Depuis lors, je n'ai jamais conçu l'action comme située dans la société, mais comme face à elle, la transformant et la produisant. ... Si j'ai trouvé en Sartre, au cours de mes années de formation, une inspiration intellectuelle, c'est parce que je trouvais en lui une conception de l'engagement-dégagement qui me convenait. » *Sociologie de l'action : essai sur la société industrielle*, Biblio Essais (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2000).

macrosociological theory and thus the “model” to be both emulated and challenged.⁷⁸ If his theoretical aim could be reduced to a single one, it was to stand functionalism on its head, to follow the *production* of social values by collective human agency rather than to track their institutionalization and inculturation from a starting point of a presumed “social system”—that is, to escape social determination via a voluntarist prolegomena to any future social movement.

The centrality of the problematic of “action” in Touraine’s work was, no doubt, dictated by a one-sided rivalry with Parsons. Unlike Weber and Parsons, who elaborated typologies of “action,” Touraine theorized one kind: historical, social action engaged in the production of society. Labor (*travail*) is, for Touraine, as for the early Marx, the paradigmatic example, the fundamental social activity by which humans negotiate their relationship with nature and from which they construct social organization. Labor gives rise to two fundamental social orientations: to *create* or *produce*, and to *participate in* or *control* (*contrôler*) the fruits of creative activity. All historical forms of social organization—social groups, firms, “organizations,” political regimes—amount to different systems, of varying levels of complexity, through which this double-sided aim for *creation* and *control* are expressed. Individual actors are situated at once in many different “systems of historical action,” each of which may have its own internal logics, conflicts, and potential collective goals. However, action even within these more limited systems is conditioned by the “project” of the social totality. The aim of sociology is to outline, beyond the interplay of actors with often competing projects, the nature or meaning of a *unified* collective “project,” the normative value-orientation that emerged as a totality of actors’ “historical action” at different levels of the social system.

⁷⁸ « D’autant plus nettement que j’étais animé d’un fort sentiment antifonctionnaliste et que je m’opposais nettement à la pensée de Parsons, alors dominante. (...) Tout en moi se révoltait contre cette sociologie qui m’apparaissait comme une sociologie de l’ordre--d’ailleurs plus libérale que conservatrice ». *Sociologie de l’action* (2000).

The total social value-orientation that is the object of Touraine's sociology is called, in the most ambiguous and controversial piece of his theoretical edifice, the *historical subject* (*sujet historique*). The historical subject is "the emerging structure of a totalizing activity, the unity of dialectical movements of historical action."⁷⁹ As many critics have observed, *Sociologie de l'action* contains no explanation for how a sociologist is to determine what constitutes the unified "historical subject" of a particular society.⁸⁰ Touraine rejects, intransigently and at great length, any recourse to empirical history or concrete processes within a given social context, which he considers a "naturalistic fallacy" that would improperly take empirical social reality as a given to which social actors can only "react." At the same time, he rejects as "idealist" any conception of the social totality's meaning located outside social relations themselves. Thus, we are left with what appears to be an ungrounded and transhistorical assumption that "historical action" within a given social totality adds up to a unified "meaning" or "project" that is its particular expression of the fundamental "dialectic of creation and control" at the heart of all social activity.⁸¹ Touraine further complicates matters by slipping incessantly from this formal, philosophical account of society to a more concrete level which *is* in fact, despite his denials, derived from a specific historical and social context: that of the Western European transition from "traditional society" to the "industrial civilization" emerging in the twentieth century.

While Touraine maintains that his principles of sociological analysis apply to all societies in all times, he openly posits a privileged link between his "actionalist sociology" and industrial civilization: "The privilege of social movements linked to an industrial society comes only from

⁷⁹ Alain Touraine, *Sociologie de l'action* (Paris: Seuil, 1965), 121.

⁸⁰ Jean-Daniel Reynaud and Pierre Bourdieu, "Une sociologie de l'action est-elle possible?," *Revue française de sociologie* 7, no. 4 (1966): 508–17.

⁸¹ Touraine, *Sociologie de l'action*, 144.

what their orientation manifests of the principles which are that of actionalist analysis, that is to say wishing to be rationalizing, organizing, founded on material development and human liberty.”⁸² This claim is important to explaining the fact that the historical evolution described in *Sociologie de l'action* is deduced backward from a normative and political conception of “industrial civilisation.” The notion of the “historical subject” in Touraine’s theory comes into better focus as it becomes apparent that Touraine conceives of industrial societies as “historical subjects” par excellence, the first social model in history that truly conforms to his notion of “society” as a self-producing, self-directing entity. Touraine makes this explicit when describing the “nature” of industrial civilization: “Social progress ceases to rest on violence, conquest, class contradictions. Historicity and development become values, social goals, in an explicit manner. Societies cease being historical and become historicizing: they are no longer *in* history, they *make* history.”⁸³ The notion of *la civilisation industrielle* as an end of history recurs frequently: it “corresponds to a new situation of the historical subject arrived at the end of its prehistory, to follow Marx, or, to follow Cournot, at the end of the historical epoch.”⁸⁴ Touraine even ventures that industrial society brings about the “withering away of the state.”⁸⁵ His frequent denunciations of “philosophy of history”—for “placing all social facts into the flux of a historical evolution whose totality would be the bearer of meaning” and assuming that “history would be finished and

⁸² Touraine, 126. « Le privilège des mouvements sociaux liés à une société industrielle vient seulement de ce que leur orientation manifeste des principes qui sont ceux de l’analyse actionnaliste, c’est-à-dire se veulent rationalisateurs, organisateurs, fondés sur le développement matériel et la liberté humaine ; ils ne se présentent plus comme serviteurs des dieux, de principes philosophiques ou de lois économiques, mais comme étant leur propre fin : travail au service du travail, libération de la liberté. ».

⁸³ Touraine, 253-254 (emphasis added). « Le progrès social cesse de reposer sur la violence, la conquête, la contradiction des classes. L’historicité, le développement deviennent des valeurs, des buts sociaux, d’une manière explicite. Les sociétés cessent d’être historiques pour devenir historisantes ; elles ne sont pas dans l’histoire, elles font l’histoire. ».

⁸⁴ Touraine, 143.

⁸⁵ Touraine, 305.

its meaning revealed at the moment where the observer was placed”—perhaps uncomfortably describe his own analysis of the passage from traditional to industrial society.⁸⁶

Clues as to Touraine’s understanding of this historical evolution appear both in the theoretical half of the book and in the more concrete chapters on the “birth of industrial civilization.” Though Touraine insisted his conception of social totalities should not be understood as a unilinear progression of social forms, the book clearly considers “industrial civilization” to be the latest and perhaps final phase of a broader historical evolution (see Fig. 1). As his object was the *values* of social totalities expressed by their “historical subject,” Touraine considered the causal dimension of historical change to be outside the bounds of actionalist sociology. Still, he gestured toward an explanation for historical motion: the progress of *technique* that emerged from man’s fundamental activity of labor (*travail*), understood in the broad sense of all human powers of organization of human activity and control over nature.⁸⁷ “From the moment where man lives and works in a dense environment of human creations, in a *milieu technique*, his constituent consciousness [*conscience constituante*]⁸⁸ disappears and he no longer recognizes the domination of masters, or at least of superior classes, that is to say, a transmitted and personal domination.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Touraine, 28–29.

⁸⁷ This expansive and ambiguous definition of “technique” explains why Touraine’s work is, despite his frequent disavowals and clear intentions, often taken to be rooted in technological determinism. Marc Maurice, “Le déterminisme technologique dans la sociologie du travail (1955–1980). Un changement de paradigme ?,” *Sociologie du travail* 22, no. 1 (1980): 22–37; Kivisto, “Touraine’s Post-Industrial Society.”

⁸⁸ Touraine understands all social *conscience*, perhaps best translated as “self-consciousness,” as a dialectic composed of two fundamental elements: the *conscience constituante*, or “submitted” consciousness, which is awareness of natural and social limits, and the *conscience fière*, or proud consciousness, which understands human agency and control over its conditions. Though Touraine’s explanation and use of these concepts are extremely ambiguous, he suggests that one term of the dialectic becomes dominant in certain historical conditions: the *conscience constituante* dominates in traditional societies, while the *conscience fière* becomes primary in industrial society.

⁸⁹ Touraine, *Sociologie de l’action*, 132. « À partir du moment où l’homme vit et travaille dans un environnement dense de créations humaines, dans un milieu technique, sa conscience constituante disparaît et il ne reconnaît plus la domination des maîtres, ou du moins des classes supérieures, c’est-à-dire une domination transmise et personnelle. ».

Readers will perhaps recognize the evolutionary diptych *milieu naturel / milieu technique* from Georges Friedmann's account of techno-anthropological change described in the previous chapter. Like Friedmann, Touraine rejected the notion that man passes between neatly demarcated epochs with corresponding "mentalities," aligning himself with Lévi-Strauss's critique of a supposed passage from "nature" to "culture." As in Friedmann's thought, Touraine suggests that the progress of technique is a mere *quantitative* measure of social evolution that, at an unspecified point, accumulates to the point of engendering a *qualitative* change.⁹⁰ "As the domination of human labor over nature progress, the proud consciousness [*conscience fière*] acquires a proper content, becomes social demand and principle of evolution."⁹¹ Stated more straightforwardly, the historical claim would be something like the following: "Humans have always mastered nature through labor and technique, but at some point in recent history they came to do so to a degree that made them self-conscious about their own powers to control their own path of development, which implied a fundamental change of paradigm: they no longer needed extra-social conceptions of social order and meaning, but understood—and increasingly contested—the meaning of society on the grounds of its ability to deploy its rationalizing power in a historically-oriented mission." In a certain sense such a description is uncontestable, at least applied to Western European societies beginning in the eighteenth century. But Touraine's theoretical principles preclude any move from this high level of abstraction toward the actual aim of his sociology: understanding how social values are created through "historical action." What kinds of actors and "action"—in what kind of conditions—were able to bring about such a radical change in social self-understanding? How did *certain* actors manage to involve entire societies in their project? At best, one is left to say that

⁹⁰ Touraine, 485. Touraine explicitly borrows this reasoning from Friedmann.

⁹¹ Touraine, 133. « À mesure que progresse l'emprise du travail humain sur la nature, la conscience fière acquiert un contenu propre, devient revendication sociale et principe d'évolution. ».

local expressions of certain transhistorical properties of human social action were rearranged or rebalanced across different historical periods—though not how, why, or by whom.

Fig. 7: Sociohistorical evolution in Alain Touraine’s *Sociologie de l’action*

	Traditional Society (Phase A)	Industrialization/Capitalism (Phase B)	Industrial Society (Phase C)
	Mastery of nature through organized activity (<i>technique/travail</i>) →		
Legitimizing level	Religious (metasocial)	Economic	Political/Social
“Historical subject”	Submission to extra-social power	Economic development, development of historical consciousness	Creation (development) + Control (liberty)
Social structure	Orders/estates	Social classes	Status positions/interest groups
Technical level	Milieu naturel (subject to natural constraints)	Transition to technical	Milieu technique (no natural constraints)
Nature of economic and social activity	Organized	Disorganized/Decomposed	Organized
Labor system	Professional	Contradictory combination of professional and technical	Technical
Principle conflict	Scarcity	Property/class struggle	Alienation
Social thought	Theology	Social doctrines/philosophy of history	Scientific sociology

Touraine’s concrete analysis of “industrial civilization” in the book’s final four chapters is intended to “demonstrate on examples...the concrete character of actionalist analysis, that the rapidity of change, the acceleration of progress makes easier to see in our type of society than in any other.”⁹² On the contrary, these chapters—which analyze the division of labor, the labor movement, the political system, and mass culture—demonstrate the *abstract* character of his foregoing theoretical

⁹² Touraine, 249.

scheme by revealing how extensively it is modeled on an ideal-typical account of the present. Touraine uses the term “industrial civilization” (*civilisation industrielle*) to characterize the value-orientation, or the “historic subject,” of developed societies, whose diverse concrete manifestations he refers to as “industrial societies” (*sociétés industrielles*). He seems to have chosen this terminology to distinguish himself from Raymond Aron’s merely empirical-historical conception of “industrial societies,” to which his own nevertheless bears strong resemblance.⁹³ Actually-existing “industrial societies” of the type Aron and most industrial-society theorists described, did not fully conform to Touraine’s model of “industrial civilization,” to the extent that they still featured residual capitalist relations of production and class conflicts, or had degenerated into “totalitarianism.” Touraine suggested that they were, thus, part of a transitional, contradictory phase—analogue to the intermediate, disorderly “phase B” in his earlier account of the evolution of the labor system—pointing toward an as-yet future society that might be fully post-capitalist and democratic, with labor systems rationalized on the model of a cybernetic system or computer.⁹⁴ (Four years later, in the wake of 1968, Touraine would argue that this society had finally arrived, and simultaneously named it both *société post-industrielle* and *société programmée*.⁹⁵) In the meantime, current industrial societies were intermediate hodgepodes of contradictory forms, simultaneously living the death throes of nineteenth-century capitalism and the birth of its replacement. The general direction, however, was already in evidence: through the advanced application of the “rationalizing model,” industrial societies were reconstituting the total “organization” of traditional society after passing through the disruptive, uncontrolled phase of

⁹³ Touraine, 253.

⁹⁴ Touraine, 265.

⁹⁵ Touraine, *La société post-industrielle*.

laissez-faire capitalism. Only this time, organization rested not on “metasocial guarantees,” but upon society’s self-conscious assumption of its own development, the realization of the fundamental human dialectic of creation and control and a leap into post-history.

The principle example of the new level of “organization” in industrial society was most apparent in the re-subjugation of economic development to social and political objectives. As the importance of the state grew and its power became “total,” it was simultaneously socialized, becoming no longer an independent actor but an “ensemble of means for action,” a “multilateral game of power.”⁹⁶ (Elsewhere, Touraine described the state as an “influence market, a system of exchange.”⁹⁷) The new “societal state” ended the disorderly reign of private interests by expression the projects of competing social actors for the direction of economic development and social control over its products. “The historic subject, no longer being torn between workers and the dominant classes, is engaged in history under the form of a collective subject: its alienations, one says, and the struggle against them, ideologies or utopias, are defined as functional elements of a system unified in its principle.”⁹⁸ The full rationalization of society entailed, in principle, the end of social formations based on vestiges of traditional society—class parties and professional labor unions—by integrating all actors into a common project of socioeconomic development, though the precise nature of this project would always be sharply contested.⁹⁹ In principle, then, industrial

⁹⁶ Touraine, *Sociologie de l’action*, 305–7; Touraine here exemplified the absence of any real theory of the state in mid-twentieth century social science, a particularly remarkable feature of the industrial-society paradigm despite the fact that it tended to place heavy emphasis on the triumph of the “political” over the “economic.” This absence is explored in Rafael Khachaturian, “Discipline, Knowledge, and Critique: Marxist Theory and the Revival of the State in American Political Science, 1968–1989” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 2017).

⁹⁷ Alain Touraine, “La société française: croissance et crise,” in *Tendances et volontés de la société française*, ed. Jean-Daniel Reynaud, *Futuribles* 5 (Paris: S.É.D.É.I.S., 1965), 480.

⁹⁸ Touraine, *Sociologie de l’action*, 299.

⁹⁹ Touraine, 302–3.

society implied the end of capitalism and of class struggle, to be replaced by the play of “interest groups” and social movements.

This analysis of contemporary democracy in “industrial society” was hardly original to Touraine; in fact, it was nearly identical to the portrayal of contemporary politics by all industrial-society theorists. It manifested the same over-interpretation of postwar economic management as the transcendence, rather than the reorganization, of capitalism, and the same overestimation of organized labor as a “countervailing power” to private interests in the state.¹⁰⁰ But Touraine insisted that he was simply describing the collective *values* behind all competing positions in industrial society, not an empirical social situation. In practice, industrial societies, reflecting their different paths of development, might retain all manner of pre-historic social forms, and Touraine catalogued a vast number of potential “deformations” of the political systems of industrial societies. Differentiating himself from American sociologists who increasingly suggested that such rosy prospects had already been achieved in the United States, Touraine cautioned against “Panglossian chatter about the natural and rational beauties of rationalized power in a classless society within industrial civilization.”¹⁰¹ If industrial civilization rendered obsolete the basis for an older form of class conflict and revolutionary projects, it nonetheless was susceptible to new forms of alienation: technical, bureaucratic, and political. In each case, alienation would be the result of an unbalanced concern for “control” for its own sake, most likely at the hands of technocrats and industrial managers imposing their own view of the “rationalizing model” without adequate recognition of

¹⁰⁰ The term “countervailing powers,” which expressed a widespread view of a pluralistic play of interests, was coined by the economist John Kenneth Galbraith in *American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952); For more recent historical studies of the balance of power in the postwar relations between state, management, and labor, see, for the United States, Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, chapter three, and for France, Howell, *Regulating Labor*, chapters two and three. Howell writes, “the political and industrial representatives of the working class were essentially excluded from the political and economic structures that emerged from World War II” (p. 37).

¹⁰¹ Touraine, *Sociologie de l'action*, 299.

other visions of “control” expressed by workers’ basic desire to participate in deciding the uses of their “creation.”

This, finally, brings us to the political intervention of *Sociologie de l'action* and its relationship to the socialist reformism of the 1960s. Touraine intended his characterization of industrial society to put paid to Marxism by demonstrating the obsolescence of old class formations, and of economics and economic *property relations* as the relevant object of social struggle. His depiction of “organizations,” as well, could be read as a statement of the “complexity” thesis of bureaucracy that will be explored in the following chapter—that a simplistic vision of a change in ownership under the leadership of the working class would run into inevitable complexities of organizational dynamics, in which hierarchy, power, and alienation would remain. At the same time, Touraine did not posit a general “end of ideology” or believe that industrial society tended toward passivity and depoliticization. When or if it did, as he suggested it did in the contemporary United States, this represented a *deformation* of the true model of industrial society. In fact, the risk of such deformations was acute, alienations of actually-existing industrial society were likely to inspire new “ideologies” and “utopias,” which should be understood as potentially playing a positive role in the collective struggle for the optimal balance between creation and control. Rather than declaring “the end of politics,” as many had taken to be the upshot of the work of Bell and Lipset, *Sociologie de l'action* provided something like a normative account of the conditions under which a “social movement” could arise in the hope that one would do so. “One of the goals of this book,” Touraine concluded, “is to aid at least in reflection on this great problem: what type of social movement will play in industrial civilization the role that the labor movement played during the full development of the capitalist economy and in nationalism at the beginnings

of industrialization?”¹⁰² The most important criterion, for Touraine, was that such a social movement be in phase with the “historic subject” of industrial society, that is, that it understand and embrace the “rationalizing model” and struggle against its potential deformations.

Industrial Society and the Modernist Left: The Political Crystallization of the Paradigm (1958-1965)

Just months after the 1956 *Esprit* special issue declaring that “capitalism had changed” came the events that deeply shook the reputation of the PCF among the intelligentsia and sounded the opening bell for an explosion of Marxist revisionism among intellectual exiles from the party.¹⁰³ Intellectual antipathy to the PCF grew all the more forceful given that it allegedly refused to “destalinize” even after Khrushchev’s “secret speech” of 1956, giving it the image of being “more royalist than the king,” more incapable of reform than the Soviet Union itself. Disaffection with the PCF, often lived by outgoing members as traumatic social disruption and an experience of worldview-collapse, swelled the ranks of intellectuals and militants seeking to formulate reformist projects.¹⁰⁴

At the same time, the Algerian war moved to the center of French politics, and served as cement between dispersed independent-left groups who mobilized against the war. The violence of the conflict and the horror at French atrocities in North Africa went at least part of the way toward overcoming their differences and providing a basis for united action, uniting them against the SFIO’s brutal management of the war under Guy Mollet and the PCF’s initial ambivalence to decolonization despite its official anti-imperialism. In the midst of the tumult, the end of the widely

¹⁰² Touraine, 489.

¹⁰³ Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 37–51.

¹⁰⁴ The classic account of this experience is Edgar Morin, *Autocritique* (Paris: René Julliard, 1959).

detested Fourth Republic arrived in the figure of De Gaulle, who returned to power on the threat of military insurrection and the condition of a vastly strengthened French presidency.¹⁰⁵ De Gaulle's retrospectively legalized *coup d'état* in 1958, and especially his resoundingly successful referendum establishing direct election of the president in 1962, scrambled and weakened the left. Among all of the parties, unions, and intellectual groupings that made up the left, the triumph of Gaullism led to soul-searching and efforts at rejuvenation. This was especially the cause among the intellectuals of the "independent left," who would coalesce into a variegated current later known as the "second left" (*deuxième gauche*), and called for a "modern," "realistic," and reformist conception of socialism—often based on a new reading of the conjuncture as "industrial society." It is thus difficult to dispute historians who see the *avènement* of Gaullism in 1958 as a much more decisive turning point for subsequent French history than 1968, above all in its durable impact on the thinking of the political left, which would remain relatively consistent across the interruption of the May events.¹⁰⁶

The modernist left is widely understood as an intellectual movement, a dynamic source of *ideas* for a left searching for a path out of the political desert despite its repeated failure to achieve electoral success in the twin shadows of the PCF and SFIO. Michel Rocard, one of its most influential ideologues, famously rooted it in a long history of French "moral, humanist" democratic socialism—emphasizing decentralization, the autonomy of civil society against the state, and an ethical-religious conception of politics—that had been suppressed by the dominant Jacobin

¹⁰⁵ Grey Anderson, *La guerre civile en France : du coup d'état gaulliste à la fin de l'OAS* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2018).

¹⁰⁶ Anderson, 11–17; Laurence Bell, "May '68: Parenthesis or Staging Post in the Development of the Socialist Left?," in *May '68: Coming of Age* (Hampstead and London: MacMillan, 1989); Michael Rose, *Servants of Post-Industrial Power?: Sociologie du Travail in Modern France* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 82.

tradition of the French left, joined after 1920 in an unholy marriage with Marxism.¹⁰⁷ But the parochial nature of French intellectual and political historiography tends to elide the fact that the modernist left's understanding of "industrial society" was elaborated in an international context of which it was highly aware, often through direct international connections. Its central emphasis practical action and "realism" was powerfully shaped by an understanding of the "real" elaborated by state administrators, political elites, social scientists, and journalists—social groups of which many modernist left figures were a part. The international networks in which these actors were situated were a means by which the French situation was measured against an international conventional wisdom that sketched the realistic goals in the context of the Fordist economy, Cold War *détente*, and European integration.

Within this larger context, sociologists were one set of political and intellectual actors who contributed to the elaboration of a reformist vision of political action in "industrial society" within the nebulous of the modernist left. From their early days in the 1950s, the sociologists of the Friedmann circle had embraced an engaged conception of sociology as an applied science of action partially attuned to their relationship with state administrators and imitation of their American counterparts. The political-intellectual crises of 1956, 1958, and 1962 each enlarged their hearing among political actors seeking to reform or "modernize" the political left. Raymond Aron attributed the surprising runaway sales of the roneotyped version of his lecture courses on industrial society to the Communist crisis of 1956. The founding of *Sociologie du Travail* in 1959 had more than coincidental relationship to its moment: the journal's four editors from the Friedmann circle conceived it as a way to put their research in the hands of a wide range of

¹⁰⁷ This bifurcation, proposed by Michel Rocard, was the origin of the term "second left," which defined against the dominant Jacobin-Communist left. Vincent Duclerc, "La « deuxième gauche »,» in *Histoire des gauches en France*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 175–89.

administrative and political actors seeking “realist” solutions. The shattering of political parties in the wake of De Gaulle, Michel Crozier recalled, “facilitated our influence. Because people were looking for something to attach themselves to, and we had ‘something’ to give them.”¹⁰⁸ That “something” accorded now, in the era of Gaullism, even better with the political moment: in Jean-Daniel Reynaud’s terms, “a ‘scientific’ analysis of society” that sociologists had developed to “pierce the curtain of literary and political conventions.”¹⁰⁹

Sociologie du Travail was arguably the least direct means by which sociologists participated in the modernist left of the early 1960s. Crozier and Reynaud became members of the Club Jean Moulin, an association of left-leaning technocrats organized in 1958 as a democratic bulwark against what they viewed as De Gaulle’s authoritarian statism. Previously kept at a distance by the Cold War, Friedmann and Crozier were now admitted to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, participating in its 1960 Berlin conference alongside modernist left figures like André Philip, from the SFIO’s minority tendency that had broken away to join the new Second Left party, the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU), and intellectual equivalents like Anthony Crosland from the right wing of the British Labour Party. Between 1959 and the mid-1960s, sociologists were omnipresent voices in the intellectual archipelago of the modernist left—again, especially *Esprit*, the Mendesist-cum-Second Left *Cahiers de la République*, and the post-Marxist *Arguments*. They were also regularly included as expert contributors to gatherings of politicians, engineers, and high state functionaries—most notably at a 1965 conference on the “trends and desires of French society.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Rot and Borzeix, *Genèse d’une discipline, naissance d’une revue*, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Rot and Borzeix, 40.

¹¹⁰ Jean-Daniel Reynaud, ed., *Tendances et volontés de la société française*, Futuribles 5 (Paris: S.É.D.É.I.S., 1965).

The modernist left was fragmented to the point of atomism, making generalizations difficult: it included such sometimes contradictory tendencies as Keynesian social-liberalism, Christian personalism, dissident Communism, and ultra-left libertarianism. As a whole, it would polarize sharply to the left in the late 1960s and 1970s, partially in effort to capture the energy of May 1968 but above all as the new Parti Socialiste tried to mount a credibly left-wing alternative to Communism after its formation in 1971. By and large, sociologists represented its moderate pole, which emphasized modernity and science over ideology, replaced “capitalism” with “industrial society,” dispensed with the concept of revolution for reform within a market economy, and argued that left-wing politics should focus not on the ownership of property and economic exploitation, but of democratic “control” over the *organization* of institutions and ultimately of society.¹¹¹ The alienations of statism, technocracy, and the archaic bureaucracies of unions and political parties, out of step with the progress of technology and its potentialities for a more “social” and participative society, became the central object of political opposition.¹¹² But the sociologists’ distance in terminology and rhetorical militancy from a “radical” modernist left figure like the ex-Communist Serge Mallet can mask a broad overlap in basic ideas—rooted, as we will see, in a conception of “industrial society” and the passage from the “old” working class to new agents of political contestation, especially more educated and “technical” ones.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Bell, “May ’68: Parenthesis or Staging Post?” Bell here summarizes the political crystallization of the industrial-society paradigm with exceptional clarity. He also argues, correctly, that it should be seen as a coherent vision entirely independent of May 1968; however, what he sees as discordant elements introduced by the student movement, especially anti-productivism and a critique of consumer society, were in fact major contrapuntal themes in the discourse of pre-1968 industrial society.

¹¹² There are strong resonances in the modernist left’s analysis of society with what Howard Brick calls the “post-industrial vision” in the United States, similarly shared across an older generation of temperamentally more “moderate” sociologists and younger radicals. There are even cases of direct influence, as in the case of international fame of Mallet’s “new working class” thesis. “Optimism of the Mind: Imagining Postindustrial Society in the 1960s and 1970s,” *American Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1992): 348–80.

¹¹³ Rocard’s 1959 working paper within the PSA, the SFIO splinter group that became the PSU, was titled *Socialisme et civilisation industrielle*. See also André Philip, *Pour un socialisme humaniste* (Paris: Plon, 1960).

Social-Democratic Reformism: The European Context

The history of the French modernist left often remains strangely isolated from the international context in which it appeared, which can lead to misperceptions of the originality and radicalism of its ideas. It is surely not irrelevant that at the precise moment the industrial-society paradigm crystallized and the modernist left gathered its forces, European social democrats were codifying their own revisions of the left tradition, similarly justified on the basis of adaptation to modernity and the new turn in the laws of history. The French modernist left *was* unique, but more in its style and rhetoric—and political isolation—than in its fundamental ideas.

In the 1950s, all European social democrats confronted the astounding fact of economic growth. As Donald Sassoon writes, “The growth of working-class affluence, the consumer society, the apparent levelling off of social groups, the undoubted prosperity which capitalism had brought about, the ostensible failure of nationalizations, even the successes of the welfare state were used to explain why the ideological armory of socialist ideas needed a profound overhaul.” Socialist revisionism attacked “the view that socialism had as its goal the abolition of the private ownership of the fundamental means of production—in other words, of capitalism itself.”¹¹⁴ Revisionism had saw its fullest expression in Western European nations without significant Communist parties, that is to say, most of them besides France and Italy, but especially in Great Britain and Germany. The German Social Democratic Party’s 1959 Bad Godesberg program, which officially ended the party’s reference to Marxism and the labor movement, and accepted the legitimacy of private

¹¹⁴ Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 241.

property, was symbolic of the practice not only of the SPD, but most Western European social democrats.¹¹⁵

Social-democratic revisionists used arguments that will by now be familiar: that the postwar state had effectively brought private property to end already by asserting social control over the economy, and the question should now be centered on the redistribution of profit and democratization of consumption. Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* borrowed arguments from sociologists, particularly from American stratification research, to question the existence of social classes and argue that the ownership of production no longer bore any relation to contemporary problems.¹¹⁶ Intellectuals from the French SFIO like Jules Moch and André Philip expressed similar ideas, though rhetorically held onto Marxism as a defense against the PCF, which, despite its isolation from coalition governments, was generally in a much stronger electoral position than the SFIO and maintained a near monopoly on the working-class vote.¹¹⁷ SFIO intellectuals were part of the transatlantic networks that incubated industrial society thinking, particularly the Congress for Cultural Freedom, where Philip and Crosland were major participants alongside sociologists like Aron, Bell, and Lipset. SFIO publications liberally cited industrial-society theorists like Ralf Dahrendorf on the evolution of contemporary society and the shift toward a liberal conception institutionalized social conflict.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ For a recent reading that downplays the ideological significance of Bad Godesberg, see Karim Fertikh, "Trois petits tours et puis s'en va : Marxisme et programme de Bad Godesberg du Parti social-démocrate allemand," *Sociétés contemporaines* 81, no. 1 (2011): 61–79.

¹¹⁶ C.A.R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (New York: MacMillan, 1957), 170–71.

¹¹⁷ Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 256.

¹¹⁸ Daniel Blume et al., *Histoire du réformisme en France depuis 1920*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1977), 85.

With the party in electoral free fall after the return of De Gaulle, SFIO revisionism evolved simultaneously with that of the modernizing left. The SFIO program of 1962 rejected the “Communist” definition of capitalism as private ownership of the means of production, describing it instead, as the unequal distribution of profit. In the terms of the party’s leader, Guy Mollet, “What is important in the definition of the capitalist regime is not really appropriation, but rather the abusive use made of surplus-value.”¹¹⁹ The role of the state was to “harmoniously develop the economy in the collective interest”; economic planning, if a goal at all, was to concern “a limited part of the economy over which the state can exercise its influence.”¹²⁰

The more radical elements of the French modernist left defined themselves stridently against the reformism of the SFIO while embracing their own definition of “revolutionary” reform. Some of these did, indeed, have a deeper analysis of the functioning of Gaullist “neocapitalism” or “technocracy” and a less fanciful view of the French state as the harmonious guarantor of the collective interest. Some took creative approaches to new questions, like the position of socialists toward the Common Market.¹²¹ But they shared a fundamental base of ideas with industrial-society theorists and social-democratic revisionists, most notably in their belief that political struggle should be reoriented toward the *organizational* dimension of contemporary society, a struggle best served not by political alliances but by a grassroots combat for participation in the workplace against the alienating features of bureaucracy and the technical division of labor. The French modernist left was unique in the sense that it considered a reinvigorated rank-and-file democracy the basis of a socialist challenge to the Gaullist state—and often did so in Marxisant rhetoric. But

¹¹⁹ Blume et al., 2:177.

¹²⁰ Blume et al., 2:177–79.

¹²¹ Serge Mallet, “Continental Capitalism and the Common Market,” *New Left Review*, 1, no. 19 (April 1963): 15–22; Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme*, part two.

because, like industrial-society theorists, it considered the political organization and technology of Fordist capitalism to already contain the infrastructure of socialism, it devoted less attention to the matter that industrial democracy itself had long been a feature of reformist unionism that had, as yet, never posed a significant challenge to capitalism itself.

Farewell to the Proletariat? *Arguments* Between Marxism and Industrial Society

Despite its brief existence, *Arguments* (1956-1962) would become one of the most retrospectively celebrated products of the post-1956 tumult on the intellectual left and the “opening” to reformism.¹²² Though for present purposes *Arguments* is most important for its questioning of the relationship of the left to the working class, it is worth giving a brief sketch of its overall orientation better to place it in an international context, particularly in its resonances with the American liberal left. Edited by a small collective of exiles from the PCF, several of whom worked as researchers at the Centre d’études sociologiques under Friedmann and Gurvitch, *Arguments* became a transitional space for the fusion of sociology and political intervention, notably questioning the Communist “vulgate” about the working class. Operating from a loosely Marxist, but above all “open” and anti-dogmatic orientation, the journal’s editors worked out their oedipal relationship with the PCF through a spate of new theoretical references, including the Frankfurt School, Freud, Korsch, Marcuse, and, above all, Heidegger and Lukács. The spirit of mounting a challenge to ideological conformity resembled that of the almost simultaneously founded American journal *Dissent*, whose articles were cited and occasionally translated in *Arguments*; the journal also published a number of American intellectuals, including Daniel Bell, Norman Mailer, and C. Wright Mills. *Arguments* and *Dissent* also shared markedly similar notes of pessimism about the effects of automation, bureaucracy, the role of intellectuals in “mass society,” and the consumer culture created by economic growth and imposed by technocratic governance.

¹²² Gil Delannoi, “*Arguments*, 1956-1962, ou la parenthèse de l’ouverture,” *Revue française de science politique* 34, no. 1 (1984): 127–45; Stuart Elden, “Kostas Axelos and the World of the ‘Arguments’ Circle,” in *After the Deluge: New Perspectives in the Intellectual and Cultural History of Postwar France*, ed. Julian Bourg (New York: Lexington Books, 2004), 125–48; Georgiana Perlea, “Quarante-huitards du XXe siècle : le marxisme dissident de *Socialisme ou Barbarie* et *Arguments*” (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York, New York University, 2012).

Like the modernist left as a whole, *Arguments* was a pluralist institution that opened its pages to competing interpretations of the left's intellectual and political heritage, and thus provided an ideal staging ground for confrontation between the industrial-society paradigm and intellectuals who still saw themselves as Marxists. The 27-28th number (Fig 7) gave full voice to industrial society thinking, particularly its vision of

ARGUMENTS	
SOMMAIRE	
LA QUESTION POLITIQUE (II)	
P. 1.	Eloge de l'inconséquence (Leszek KOLAKOWSKI).
7.	Rousseau et le problème politique (Georges LAPASSADE).
11.	La signification de la Commune (Henri LEFEBVRE).
20.	De la politique populaire à la politique pure pratique (François CHATELET).
27.	Remarques sur l'article de F. Châtelet (Raphaël PIVIDAL).
29.	La crise contemporaine de la politique (Pierre FOUGEYROLLAS).
34.	Les équivoques de la « dépolitisation » (Jean TOUCHARD).
36.	Apprentissage de l'autogestion (Romain DENIS et Georges LAPASSADE).
42.	Réflexions en marge de l'actualité (François FETÔ).
LA CIVILISATION TECHNICIENNE	
46.	La civilisation technicienne (Georges FRIEDMANN).
53.	Naissance des sociétés industrielles (Alain TOURAINE).
58.	Doctrines et réalité (Jean FOURASTIÉ).
61.	Civilisation technicienne et crise politique (André PHILIP).
67.	L'éclipse de la distance (Daniel BELL).
70.	Les U.S.A. et la civilisation technicienne (Harold SHEPPARD).
72.	Pourquoi et pour quoi ce processus... (Théodore CAPLOW).
75.	Lettre sur la civilisation technicienne (Jacques BERQUE).

Figure 8. *Arguments* no. 27-28 (1960), featuring industrial-society arguments

contemporary society as a newly organized, socialized model that subordinated economics to social control and brought the old form of class society to an end. “The concept of industrial society,” Georges Friedmann wrote, “forged by August Comte and readapted to our epoch through the theory of growth, is well elaborated for the comparison and comprehension of complex societies with progressive economies.” Industrial society transformed workers from producers to consumers, individualized social behaviors, and led to the dissolution of social groups that made up “pre-industrial societies.” Writing as a militant in the nineteenth century, Marx could hardly have done otherwise than to identify these deep trends with the development of capitalism. But, “contrary to Marxist postulates, the *milieu technique* is not specifically linked to the relations of production of capitalist society as Marx analyzed it; the constitutive elements of the *milieu technique* go beyond the area of capitalist societies, and their transformations do not obey the dialectical evolution according to the classical Marxist schemas, in particular that of class

struggle.”¹²³ “An industrial society exists,” Touraine added, “to the extent that, on the one hand, it considers the development of production, based on technical rationalization and economic organization, as a principle of legitimacy and, on the other, when its economic functioning is submitted to certain forms of social control.” Touraine, too, argued that the conception of social classes arising from economic relationships was a product of the transitional period of the nineteenth century; the integration of the working class into contemporary society meant it was “impossible to speak of social classes in the traditional sense.” Industrial society had made both the old capitalist classes’ pursuit of profit and the working classes’ search for autonomy obsolete by joining them together in a common project of “creation and control.” Classes now had to be defined according to the alienations that industrial society subjected them to, and it made no sense to do so in the old forms of the left, including the class-based political party. “Only a *rassemblement*, a composite coalition that is thus not ideological, can lead political action in industrial society.”¹²⁴

The 1959 issue of *Arguments* on the French working class (no. 12-13) provides the clearest picture of the unexpected zones of overlap and divergence between this “moderate,” sociological version of industrial society and the militant, Marxified one that would be operationalized in the action of the Parti Socialiste Unifié against *néocapitalisme*. The issue opened with sociological analyses from two *sociologues du travail*, Bernard Mottez and Touraine, followed by reactions from syndicalists (including reformers from the CGT and CFTC, as well as the militant analysts Daniel Mothé and Michel Collinet), and concluding with a final reaction from Michel Crozier. At issue were the political implications of attempts to understand the “reality” of the contemporary

¹²³ Georges Friedmann, “La civilisation technicienne,” *Arguments*, no. 27–28 (trimester 1962): 46–52.

¹²⁴ Alain Touraine, “Naissance des sociétés industrielles,” *Arguments*, no. 27–28 (4th trimester 1962): 53–57.

working class—in short, by which theoretical means to interpret the belated arrival of Fordism in France and the appropriate political reaction to it.

Touraine's and Mallet's contributions provide useful avatars for this confrontations in that they revealed a great deal of overlap—essentially, a belief in reformist adaptation to the realities of Fordism—packaged in contrasting styles of sociological analysis and drawing political conclusions with different tenors. Touraine's analysis rested on an economics-blind sociology that told the history of the working class in terms of the evolution of the technical division of labor and corresponding phases of “consciousness” (*conscience ouvrière*); the historical turning point was the rise of scientific management after the First World War, which broke up the “professional autonomy” of workers and marked the beginning of the end of the working class as a homogenous sociological entity, a “lived experience.”¹²⁵ According to Touraine, the end of skilled labor and producer communitarianism spelled the end of anything resembling Marxist class consciousness, which now gave way to integration into technical apparatuses and “industrial society” and that, while still “alienated,” had only reformist implications. By contrast, Mallet argued that even in the nineteenth century, capitalist development had already shattered “professional autonomy,” and that the development of the division of labor had perpetually created new fractions and fragments of the working class. In short, “there has never been a ‘global’ or ‘unified’ working class” that Touraine suggested had once existed among skilled laborers, and workers had never formed a kind of unified “sociological community” from which class consciousness emerged. Class antagonism did not arise from “sociological communities,” but from “the fundamental economico-social fact”

¹²⁵ Alain Touraine, “Situation du mouvement ouvrier,” *Arguments* 3, no. 12–13 (March 1959): 8.

that Touraine wished to relegate to a past phase of industrial development: “the natural antagonism of the productive class and the class that owns and manages the means of production.”¹²⁶

The theoretical difference here—Touraine’s psycho-sociology vs. Mallet’s socio-economics—had important consequences for their contrasting conceptions of contemporary society, Touraine’s “industrial society” versus Mallet’s “neocapitalism.” As we saw above, Touraine’s work tended to reproduce the under-theorized commonplaces of mid-century liberal political science, which simultaneously saw state intervention in the economy as a defining feature of industrial society and gave the state no particular theoretical content. As a result, the economic transformations of the 1950s and early 1960s, for Touraine and his American counterparts, represented a vaguely-defined subjugation of economics to politics or to “social control.” Mallet, however, more plausibly understood Fordism as form of economic regulation in which the state intervened to stabilize the accumulation of capital, and correctly perceived Gaullism as the arrival in power of a modernizing force, allied with the advanced elements of French capital, aiming belatedly to stabilize a French Fordism in the context of the transition from colonial protectionism to liberal European integration.¹²⁷ Fordism’s fundamental wager—stable accumulation through ‘regularization’ of the labor force—was the source of its economic interest in ending the “proletarian” condition of workers, with its accompanying hostile industrial relations and explosions of insurrectionary militancy. In spite of the republican ideology of certain technocrats, the state was not installing a form of quasi-socialism for the common good as much as using its *dirigiste* powers to stabilize an updated form of capitalism in close concert with the “advanced” interests of the French ruling classes.

¹²⁶ Serge Mallet, “Une classe ouvrière en devenir,” *Arguments*, no. 12–13 (March 1959): 16.

¹²⁷ Serge Mallet, *Le gaullisme et la gauche* (Paris: Seuil, 1965), 141–42.

Despite these fundamental differences, Touraine and Mallet arrived at the similar conclusion that the old avant-garde of the working class, the skilled worker, was today unlikely to be anything but a reformist concerned with consolidating his favorable position in the Fordist economy. Both Touraine and Mallet described such workers as culturally blending into their modern new neighborhoods, rubbing shoulders with the new middle classes, and enjoying vacations in Sicily or Greece—notions that drastically overestimated the prosperity of skilled workers and the persistence of their working-class identity. Both concluded that a left reformism that would be socially transformative, and not merely an embrace of liberal bargaining, required a form of political engagement aimed at *control* of production—industrial democracy, in Anglo-American terms—and not merely economic bargaining. But their differences on this question prefigured a debate that was shortly to divide the PSU, over who, exactly, was the *agent* of such engagement. Touraine often spoke of a *nouvelle conscience ouvrière* that emphasized control rather than *revendication* (economic demands), but stopped short of identifying it with any particular group of workers. Mallet, on the other hand, thought that his analysis of the evolving forces of production pointed to a new avant-garde: the “new working class.”

The *Nouvelle Classe Ouvrière* as a Political Category of the Modernist Left

The *Arguments* number on the working class is widely considered the *coup d’envoi* of the “new working class” debate that roiled the entire French left in the opening years of the 1960s. The debate branched widely, encompassing all dimensions of theory and political and syndical strategy, and resonated internationally.¹²⁸ It represented a near-complete fusion of sociology and political intervention, playing out, on the one hand, in *Sociologie du Travail* and the *Cahiers*

¹²⁸ “Données et problèmes de la lutte ouvrière,” *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 196-197, September-October 1962.

internationaux de sociologie, and on the other, *Arguments*, *Esprit*, the *Cahiers de la République*, and *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. But the concept of the “new working class” was most concretely associated with the upstart Parti Socialiste Unifié. As the labor historian Frank Georgi has written, the *nouvelle classe ouvrière* was “a sociologico-political construction, or better, a sociological weapon in the service of a political combat.”¹²⁹

The debate over a theory and strategy for a modern democratic socialism appropriate for an advanced capitalist country surfaced in the PSU as the Algerian war, which had provided its initial source of unity and mobilization, drew to a close. Absorbing to a large extent the diverse energies on the “independent left” of the previous decade, PSU members understood themselves as reckoning not only with the reality of De Gaulle, but also a country that had been economically and socially transformed since 1945. They faced a new international conjuncture in which figured Cold War *détente*, and France’s new “autonomy” from the two Cold War blocs as a nuclear power, as well as the beginnings of the European Common Market, which was already beginning to reorient the French economy. As it counted a large number of intellectuals and sociologists in its ranks—including, in addition to Mallet and Touraine, François Châtelet, François Furet, Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Naville, and Jean-Marie Vincent—the PSU milieu would produce an outpouring of theoretical reflection on the components of its vision of socialism, including on the economic and social structure of France, the nature of Gaullism, “democratic planning,” decentralization, and self-management, or *autogestion*.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Frank Georgi, “La Nouvelle classe ouvrière : la construction politique d’une catégorie sociale dans la France des Trente Glorieuses,” in *Sociologues et sociologies: La France des années 60*, ed. Jean-Michel Chapoulie et al. (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005), 227–38.

¹³⁰ Bertrand Ravenel, *Quand la gauche se réinventait: Le PSU, histoire d’un parti visionnaire, 1950-1989* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), 15–30.

As a numerically tiny formation without a working-class base, the PSU naturally had to define its relationship to the broader *mouvement ouvrier*, understood as the PCF, the SFIO, and the trade unions. According to many in the PSU orbit, the French left had largely been sclerotic and powerless to adapt to these developments, with the SFIO abandoning all interest in socialism and the PCF frozen in *attentisme révolutionnaire*, waiting for capitalism to bury itself. The PSU rejected the wishful discourse of the dominant classes about the peaceful end of class struggle and the “integration” of the working class, but was also contemptuous of the PCF’s refusal of any “realist” analysis of the working class, which, in Mallet’s terms, it reduced to a “magical category.” Thus, the whole program and strategy of the PSU hung on an updated picture of the social forces in contemporary France. But in a party that was an amalgamation of different “socialist cultures,” agreement on this picture proved difficult to come by.

Along with Michel Rocard and Gilles Martinet, Serge Mallet became one of the principal theorists of what would become the “Orientation B” within the PSU, and provided its analysis of the *nouvelles couches* (“new strata”) or the *forces vivantes* (“living forces”) of French civil society who would be the primary audience of the party’s organizing. As we have already seen, Mallet held “the evolution of the forces of production”—he meant something like Fordism—had diminished the revolutionary potential of skilled workers, previously at the forefront of French labor militancy but now enjoying upward mobility through professional advancement and a rising standard of living.¹³¹ Numerically, of course, the real “new working class” was the growing mass of unskilled workers, increasingly of immigrant and peasant origins and often women, who had

¹³¹ The labor historian Xavier Vigna associates this fanciful conception of the “old” working class, which would remain at the forefront of labor militancy and Communism until well into the 1970s, with a ‘class ethnocentrism’ among younger radicals of the 1960s, often directed against miners and metalworkers. *L’espoir et l’effroi: luttes d’écritures et luttes de classes en France au XXe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), 116; *L’insubordination ouvrière dans les années 68: essai d’histoire politique des usines* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007).

powered the French boom of the 1950s, working long hours for low wages in extremely demanding conditions. But like Friedmann, Mallet argued that these *ouvriers spécialisés* (O.S.), while pitifully exploited, were *too* alienated to be revolutionary; their Taylorized work gave them no awareness of a “role in production,” and condemned them to experiencing exploitation as mere “frustration.”¹³² The necessary producerist consciousness could only come from workers at the technological forefront of modern capitalism, who by nature of their relatively integrated and “privileged” position in automated production could see the productive role they played and would become alienated by their exclusion from decisionmaking within the firm.

Mallet based his analysis on three case studies of technicians in automated industries that he had observed on the ground in the late 1950s and early 1960s as they became politicized and formulated union demands not around wages, but around control of decisionmaking.¹³³ This experience became the basis for his position against trade unions’ dependence on sectoral bargaining and in favor of a new *syndicalisme d’entreprise*, or firm-level bargaining, which if staged in the correct, advanced sectors would be the key to a larger challenge to capitalism.¹³⁴ But, as the many critics of his thesis have pointed out, it was a voluntaristic leap to claim that a position at the technological forefront of capitalism necessarily led to a politicized labor consciousness, to say nothing of an interest in a revolutionary socialism. Despite his criticisms of Touraine, Mallet borrowed the latter’s implicit techno-organizational determinism, which associated a particular *organization* of labor with a particular kind of labor consciousness. His economic analysis thus

¹³² Mallet, *Le gaullisme et la gauche*, 146.

¹³³ Mallet, *La nouvelle classe ouvrière*.

¹³⁴ This was an odd notion considering that firm-level bargaining is generally seen as a “weaker” alternative to branch-level or sectoral bargaining, typical of American “liberal” unionism. As Mallet’s PSU comrade Pierre Naville argued: « Il faut envisager quelque chose à l’échelle des branches. Ne faisons pas le ‘poujadisme usinier’...même si c’est sous l’étiquette progressiste. » Pierre Naville to Jean Poperen, July 15, 1961, Musée Sociale, Fonds Pierre Naville, Box 44.

ended up mostly as a cover for *technological* analysis that assumed a unilinear evolution by which all labor would follow the path of the numerically insignificant automated sector, which supposedly justified emphasis on advanced sectors in a broader socialist strategy. While French white-collar workers would indeed grow militant during the *années 68*, there remained little evidence that they were more likely to do so, or to do so in a more “revolutionary” way than other kinds of workers.¹³⁵ Mallet’s strategic analysis thus took a leap that swept most of the actual working classes to the side. Michael Rose captures the curious alloy of Mallet’s new working class thesis by describing it as “an elitist message phrased in an *ouvriériste* rhetoric... A ‘Marxism’ which largely accepted the propositions of recent capitalist political economy; a ‘modernism’ whose optimistic faith in progress would be more at home in the nineteenth century.”¹³⁶ Touraine, for his part, referred to it as “workerist Saint-Simonianism.”¹³⁷ Most importantly for our purposes, Mallet drew on the logic of the industrial-society paradigm—an implicit story of technology-driven social evolution—to naturalize Fordism as an inherently progressive, “modern,” and latently “social” form whose organization could be commandeered for socialist transformation. The second book that, alongside Mallet, created the “event” of the *nouvelle classe ouvrière* in 1963 was also written by a PSU member from the same “orientation” within the party: Pierre Belleville. A veteran of left Catholic militant organizations, Belleville was a journalist and contributor to *Les Temps Modernes*. Unlike Mallet, Belleville did not propose a new working-class avant-garde or a new theory of socialist strategy, but rather aimed to provide an updated picture of the working

¹³⁵ Rose, *Servants of Post-Industrial Power?*, chapter six; Maurice, “Le déterminisme technologique dans la sociologie du travail”; Pillon and Vatin, *Traité de sociologie du travail*, 319–22; Sami Dassa, “Relecture de Serge Mallet,” in *Sociologues et sociologies: La France des années 60*, ed. Jean-Michel Chapoulie et al. (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005), 265–72.

¹³⁶ Rose, *Servants of Post-Industrial Power?*, 96–97.

¹³⁷ Alain Touraine, “Nouvelle classe ouvrière,” *Sociologie du Travail* 6, no. 1 (1964): 80–84.

class in general as a guide to union action. He explicitly aimed his argument against the “economists, sociologists, and politicians” who claim that “the old problem of the working class is resolving itself by the simple effect of technological and economic progress.”¹³⁸ Belleville concluded that despite its real and significant changes, and the considerable variation across sectors, an exploited and combative working class still existed, but required new syndical strategies to organize it. His advice for union strategy had little explicitly to do with a broader vision of socialist transformation, and thus would have been at home in other Western European social-democratic or American trade union circles.

Though Belleville’s book also sold thousands of copies, Mallet’s much more theoretically ambitious and controversial version of the new working class tended to consume the oxygen and the international fame, as well as to dominate the debates in the PSU. The programmatic conflict over the party’s vision of the working class came to a head at its 1963 congress in Alfortville, where the numerous tendencies in the party coalesced around two.¹³⁹ “Orientation B,” with which both Mallet and Belleville were associated, wished to assert more radical independence from the other left parties, and to call for a thoroughgoing reimagination of French union and political practice, recentering it toward grassroots, democratic agitation. This drew on the anti-statist, workerist tendencies of the French syndicalist tradition, but with a twist given it by Mallet’s theories: the central actors would be from the “new working class” or the *couches nouvelles*—namely, salaried technicians and white-collar workers at the “nodal points” of the Fordist economy. It was this last piece that earned Orientation B criticism as “social-technocracy,” and provided a link between classic French workerism and the Keynesian, technocratic elements of the *deuxième*

¹³⁸ Pierre Belleville, *Une nouvelle classe ouvrière*, Les Temps Modernes (Paris: Julliard, 1962), 7.

¹³⁹ Ravenel, *Quand la gauche se réinventait*, 65–68.

gauche in the Club Jean Moulin. “Orientation C,” argued, more modestly, for a “Popular Front” strategy that had long been the key to left political power in France, as it would indeed prove to be in 1981. The PSU should hasten this alliance into being by providing it ideas and energy and by proposing itself as a “party of all workers and not the *couches nouvelles*”—a strategy the Orientation C group identified with a hasty and premature abandonment of the still overwhelmingly predominant “traditional” working class.¹⁴⁰

As is clear from this divide, “modernist” left thinking was diverse, conflictual, and creative. The point of emphasizing these theoretical-political arguments is to illustrate the degree to which parts of the French militant left absorbed an international current of reformist thinking that received its first elaborations in sociological circles concerned to confront Marxist notions of class struggle with “reality”—namely, the reality of a historical conjuncture in which Western European nations worked to implement their own version of Fordist economic regulation. In dialogue with their international peers, French sociologists theorists tended to root these not in a specific historical situation defined by American economic hegemony, but in the universal evolution of technology and “industrial society.” The militants of the modernist left borrowed elements of this thinking for their own attempt to steer a path between the abandonment of socialism manifest in Western European social-democratic parties and what they saw as the sterile, frozen Communist vision of revolution on the Soviet model. Elements of industrial-society thinking, especially its suggestion that industrial society was an inherently more “socialized” form, enabled them to dispense with the problem of revolution and re-envision socialism on a more reformist and liberal ground that harmonized with older French currents of workerist anti-statism, decentralization, and

¹⁴⁰ Orientation C, PSU, 2^e Congrès National, “Pour le contrat d’unité, faire le parti de l’unification socialiste,” 1963, Centre d’histoire Sciences Po, Fonds Gilles Martinet, Box 6.

Christian socialism, as well newer ones like Anglo-American industrial democracy or Yugoslav self-management.¹⁴¹ Through these sociological-political exercises, parts of the French left moved much closer a left-liberal international consensus than their Marxist rhetoric would suggest—or than they themselves might have recognized.

Conclusion

In the early years of the 1960s, “industrial society” emerged as a form of sociological macrothought, nourished in transatlantic dialogue between European and American social scientists and filtered through the lenses of geopolitics and domestic political conjunctures. Through its encounter with the working class, sociology situated the rise of postwar Fordism in an expansive historical logic, presenting the mid-twentieth century as a new step in sociohistorical evolution. In this new phase of transformative growth, old social classes—and perhaps capitalism itself—dissolved into a new, socialized model of society. Social conflict should evolve from contestation of the ownership of the means of production to more limited struggles over distribution or, more radically, the alienating dimensions of social organization. From different angles, this form of thinking could appear as an absorption of Fordist ideology, or as a progressive modernism that sought new emancipatory potential on the basis of transformative changes that came into being in the aftermath of the Second World War. Because industrial-society theorists universalized their specific moment by placing it in the lineage of the European “industrial revolution,” their thinking was open to interpretation in different keys—including ones pushed its framework into more radical and constestatory directions than social scientists imagined

¹⁴¹ Frank Georgi, *L'autogestion en chantier: les gauches françaises et le « modèle » yougoslave (1948-1981)* (Paris: Arbre Bleu, 2018).

themselves. In this way, industrial society thinkers bridged the divide between the interwar and postwar periods, and packaged the sociological thinking of the 1950s for the explosive moment of the late 1960s and 1970s.

In France, the development of industrial society thinking was formed in a perpetual negotiation between transatlantic dialogue between social scientists and a domestic context riven by the politics of modernization and the reality of a divided political left. Across the 1950s and 1960s, it became a means for escaping the shadow of Communism and perpetual immobility of the political forces that desired a greater role in socializing France's economic and social renovation. Industrial society thinking provided an analysis of contemporary social evolution that, though it resonated strongly with international liberal and social-democratic reformism, was in France radicalized by the gravitational presence of the Communist Party. It suggested an alternative philosophy of history to that of Marxist class struggle, one in which historical forces themselves had reorganized society into a configuration with new possibilities for socialization. French sociologists and militants could thus embark on creative variations of reformist ideas, imagining them as radical challenges that addressed a new generation's rebellion against alienation, counterposing democracy to bureaucracy, participation to commandment, and social control of modernity to its technocratic imposition from above.

PART III

Fracture

Chapter Seven

The Paradigm Transformed: Fracture in Sociology and Society in the Long 1968

« Ce n'est pas un système qui s'écroule, c'est l'illusion d'un système qui s'évapore, et l'illusion d'une rationalité accomplie. »

(It is not a system that is collapsing, it is the illusion of a system that is evaporating, and the illusion of an accomplished rationality.)

—Henri Lefebvre, *L'irruption de Nanterre au sommet*, 1968

In the mid-1960s, the industrial society paradigm in sociology and social thought began to fracture. It did so after a relatively brief period of crystallization, which had made it seem more solid and coherent than it perhaps had ever been. In the late 1950s, it appeared to hang together in three dimensions: as a *sociological* formation, a set of institutional and social arrangement that constituted transatlantic sociology as an academic discipline and intellectual field; as a *conceptual* formation, a constellation of sociological themes and debates that had defined the political-intellectual culture of Western Europe and the United States since the 1930s; and as a *political* formation, a loose network of intellectual and political groups who saw the postwar world as the crossing of a threshold, the *end* of something—of ideology, of the old left, perhaps of social conflict altogether—and the beginning of a new society that sociologists were called to unveil. By around 1960, sociologists had described this new society by focusing on four themes that this dissertation has called the “pillars” of the industrial society paradigm: the logic of industrialization, the managerial revolution, the institutionalization of social conflict, and the end of ideology. According to this narrative, “industrial society” arrived at the peak of the industrialization process, the highest “stage of economic growth.” It was marked by a shifting occupational structure that saw the relative decline of the industrial working class and their absorption into a consumer society guided by large representative “organizations” and overseen by technical experts. Although

compared to Eastern “totalitarianism,” Western industrial societies were pluralistic and structured by “countervailing powers,” life in them was still increasingly planned, organized, and integrated.

The generation that came of age in the late 1960s often saw the sociologists of industrial society as its ideologues and promoters, but in fact the previous generation had always retained some degree of ambivalence. The mature industrial society paradigm of the late 1950s and early 1960s attempted to balance two competing moods: a *modernist* mood, a forward-looking perspective optimistic about the possibilities of science, technology, and other modern tools of social organization; and a *romantic* mood that focused on the intangible, spiritual dimensions of self and society that were potentially threatened by those same tools. The modernist mood gravitated toward the large-scale, standardized, and technical, while the romantic mood defended the small-scale, the irreducibly individual, and the realm of values and spirit. The implicit normative project of much industrial-society sociology was to reconcile the two moods in theory, to demonstrate that “romantic” values could still be achieved within the framework of a standardized, technical, bureaucratic society. The overwhelming emphasis in American liberal social science on pluralism, the robustness of American democracy, and the lack of a ruling class in the U.S. were direct expressions of this impulse. So was the emphasis of French *sociologie du travail* on the possibilities of “job recomposition,” automation, and leisure over and against the alienation of the Taylorized assembly line. Confidence in this possibility of achieving romantic values in a modernist package varied among individual thinkers and fluctuated over the course of their careers; even before the eruption of social contestation in the 1960s, sociologists in France and the United States with very similar conceptual frameworks had conflicting prognostics for “industrial society.” Almost all, however, held the two moods in tension in some way.

The most visceral aspect of the “fracture” endangered by the “long 1968” in social thought was the upsetting of this balance of moods. Student protest, revived labor militancy, and the apparent ascendancy of the left across Western Europe, cut against the notion of an “end of ideology” and seemed to vindicate those who had theorized industrial society as a humming machine of manipulation and complacency. A new generation mounted a critique of industrial society strongly colored by the romantic mood, one that reversed the previous generation’s tilt toward modernist optimism. But the 1968 generation did not straightforwardly exchange modernism for romanticism; it merely reshuffled the cards. As Alain Touraine would correctly emphasize, their critique of industrial society was *not* a wholesale romantic rejection; after all, the Port Huron Statement, the manifesto of the American new left, called for the “industrialization of the world” and the global extension of automation to close the gap between the First and Third worlds. Like their forbears, the French and American student lefts remained optimistic about the possibility of social change and the potential mastery of society by human agency. They were less optimistic, however, that these things were possible without thoroughgoing or even revolutionary social transformation; they rejected their elders’ apparent conviction that the status quo was near the best that could be achieved. In the process, they blamed certain modernist tools and values for the apparent stasis and championed romantic alternatives as antidotes.

This concluding chapter provides a brief survey of this reversal of moods in the 1960s and 1970s—what I will call “the long 1968”—and how it fragmented the industrial society paradigm.¹ The previous chapters have described the assembly of that paradigm between the 1930s and the 1960s almost as the teleological completion of an ideal type, one that contained many internal

¹ Daniel J. Sherman et al., eds., *The Long 1968: Revisions and New Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

tensions and ambivalences. Here, I instead emphasize shifts, recombinations, and transformations. This emphasis is intended to unsettle appearances of stability and to show that the industrial society paradigm achieved the hegemony it did precisely because it was so tractable, so open to adaptation. During the long 1968, certain industrial-society ideas—notably the “end of ideology”—seemed to be rendered obsolete by history and all but disappeared from the discourse. But most of them survived, subsumed into new debates and notions and charged with new and different “metaphysical pathos.”² For example, the mid-century discourse of the “managerial revolution” tracked in this dissertation gave way that of white-collar workers as a “new class” or as central actors in a “post-industrial society.” The fundamental sociological claims did not change as much as the types of actors who mobilized them and the social uses to which they were put.

In what follows, we will consider three types of fracture that marked the industrial society paradigm in the long 1968:

First, a *sociological* fracture that divided the 1968 generation from the sociologists who were their teachers and public intellectuals. In particular, I focus on the ways that social science and its relationship with society were politicized in new directions, with the 1968 generation reasserting older ideals of the humanistic integration of knowledge, the autonomy of knowledge free from “outside” distorting influence, and, simultaneously, the necessary submission of knowledge to moral and political values. These views precipitated a clash with older social scientists who had negotiated the same dilemmas but leaned toward embracing the “instrumentalization” of social science for social reform and public policy. Finally, I analyze how theories of industrial society themselves impacted the sociological or generational fracture, with

² Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 11.

students using them as counter-models or hijacking them for their own purposes, while their professors raced to interpret the events of the 1960s in terms of their own pre-existing descriptions of “industrial society.”

Second, a *conceptual* fracture saw the pillars of the industrial society paradigm twisted, recomposed, and subsumed in new debates. Here, I emphasize that these ideas remained passed from one form of ambivalence to another. In spite of their often bitter conflict, the 1968 generation shared many fundamental premises with their elders, such as the need to long beyond the Cold War ideological divide and the search for new agents of social change. The theory of “post-industrial society,” which appeared in the early 1970s, primarily in the United States, reflected this ambivalent continuity: although it seemed to announce a new stage of development, or a transition from industrial to “post-industrial,” it in fact rebranded many of the ideas that had been born under the flag of “industrial society.” I also note where true differences between postwar sociologists and the 1968 generation were visible. For example, whereas postwar industrial-society sociologists had split the world into the national society-units proposed by modernization theory, younger intellectuals and activists, often under the influence of Marxism and anti-imperialist thought, reconnected the world intellectually and re-emphasized geopolitical relations of domination.

Finally, a *political* fracture involved the assertion of a new style of anti-institutional, populist “participatory” politics as part of a radical critique of technocratic governance, bureaucratic administration, and the pretensions of scientific expertise. This political fracture above all revealed the true cleavages between postwar sociologists and their students, as some welcomed it as the arrival of a new “social movement” and proof that “industrial society” did not stifle all popular agency, while others rejected it as an atavistic resuscitation of “ideology” and the specter of totalitarianism. Political fractures of the 1970s would profoundly impact the course of Western

democratic politics, embedding an anti-statist bent and an emphasis on empowering the individual and civil society against the state, on the left as well as the right. Drawing out threads from previous chapters, I argue that many of these phenomena were not inventions of the 1970s, but rather marginal or recessive discourses of the postwar industrial society paradigm that received new emphasis. Finally, I briefly explore how the goals of the participatory politics of the 1970s—renewed grassroots democracy—remained unfulfilled. Technocratic governance only intensified, even as the statist forms of social welfare 1970s that activists had targeted were weakened, creating a toxic relation of ruler and ruled that some mid-century sociologists had even foreseen.

Conceptual Fracture

The logic of industrialization

I have used “the logic of industrialization,” originally coined by Clark Kerr, as an umbrella term for fundamental conceptual underpinnings of the various theories of social evolution that had become a fixture of Western social science by the 1960s.³ The logic of industrialization flowed from interwar discourse in social science and literature about the arrival of an “industrial civilization,” but took more concrete form amid the immediate postwar proliferation of growth economics, the sociological dissection of Marxism and turn to Weber, and the rise of modernization theory. Industrial society sociologists tended to borrow evolutionary schemas from neighboring social sciences. It was thus that the British-Australian economist Colin Clark’s work, especially *The Conditions of Economic Progress* (1940), was frequently grafted onto otherwise economically rudimentary studies by sociologists. Work by the French economist Jean Fourastié, also on “economic progress,” was put to similar use in France, as were, later, W.W. Rostow’s

³ The term appears as the title of the Kerr-authored opening chapter in Kerr et al., *Industrialism and Industrial Man*.

“stages of economic growth.”⁴ Growth theories, sampled and blended with sociological preoccupations, provided an alternative to the Marxist philosophy of history as a process of class struggle, which even social-democratic sociologists increasingly attacked in the 1950s. The German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf, for example, wrote that the Marxist theory of social change had been “falsified by empirical observations” and argued that it should be replaced by a theory of social evolution “applicable to...industrial societies in general.”⁵

The notion of a “logic of industrialization” followed a long-running normative commitment of academic sociology since the nineteenth century: the attempt to assert the primacy of the “social” over the economic, thus wresting society’s definition from the domain of political economy. Its major contribution to the industrial society paradigm was to provide a mean of discussing large-scale social forces while avoiding—or pushing beyond—Marxist thought. The amorphousness of the “logic of industrialization” enabled an expansion of the motive forces of social evolution beyond the merely economic, which most sociologists, following both Durkheim and Weber, saw as characteristic of both laissez-faire political economy and Marxism. In industrial-society sociology, the logic of industrialization ended up looking something like an updated version of Weber’s notion of “rationalization”: the whole of modern society’s rational forces, whether economic, technological, administrative, or theoretical. The very expansiveness of such a notion, its adaptability to sociologists’ different ideological and political shadings, enabled its success. A stadial, holistic logic of industrialization provided a vehicle for anti-Communist modernization policy, but paradoxically could also sometimes serve as a tool to update Marxism and render it

⁴ Régis Boulat, “Jean Fourastié, apôtre de la productivité: dire et administrer le « progrès »,” in *Une autre histoire des « Trente Glorieuses »: modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d’après-guerre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 81–98.

⁵ Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, 39.

more subtle, complex, or empirical. For most industrial society sociologists, however, it enabled a move beyond Marx that undergirded a new faith in incremental policy, especially “modernization,” as an avenue of social reform. In keeping with sociology’s traditional disciplinary aims, it also enabled the assertion of “industrial society” as a new era in which the social was restored to its rightful place as the master of the economic. That, as some social scientists suggested, such restoration would be *final* gave the logic of industrialization a Hegelian ring of arrival at the end of history—thus inviting charges that it was simply a deradicalized version of the Marxist teleology it aimed to supplant.⁶

The logic of industrialization was never a consistent or stable notion, but by the 1970s, it had fractured along several fault lines as it was criticized and remixed it into new social theories, including “post-industrialism” and neo-Marxism. While the notion of “post-industrial society” would eventually appear to represent a stadial progression beyond “industrial society,” the two names in fact arose alongside one another as terms for highly similar analyses of society in American and European sociology. American sociologists like David Riesman and Daniel Bell began using the term “post-industrial society” at the end of the 1950s, at the same moment that “industrial society” was crystallizing in European sociology.⁷ The notions that came to define the American version of “post-industrial society”—especially the eclipse of industrial production by knowledge work—were already implicit in mid-1950s transatlantic industrial society debates on the rise of the “tertiary sector,” the relative decline of the industrial proletariat, and the expansion of automation. This fact reveals that not only did American theories of post-industrialism arise prior to and alongside the social movements of the early sixties rather than in reaction to the late

⁶ Touraine, *Sociologie de l'action*, 143; Goldthorpe, “Theories of Industrial Society.”

⁷ Brick, “Optimism of the Mind,” 351.

sixties, they were largely contemporaneous and coterminous with European theories of industrial society that held the same ambiguous status of connecting reformist sociologists with an emerging radical generation. Only later did the notion of “post-industrial society” as a phase succeeding “industrial society” settle in sociology; through the 1970s, *both* stood, in different contexts, for societies that succeeded the classical understanding of capitalism.

Untangling the precise relation of industrial and post-industrial society concepts is further complicated by the fact that the authors of the first two books on the “post-industrial,” Daniel Bell and Alain Touraine, were both thinking in forward-looking, predictive ways about a near-future society throughout the 1960s. Additionally, they were in both theoretical dialogue and something of a terminological arms race with one another. As early as 1962, Touraine, possibly commenting on the recent adoption of “post-industrial” in the United States, pointed out the overlap between the two terms: “What we consider the beginning of a post-industrial era is in reality nothing but the advanced, and perhaps extreme, stage of the disappearance of the pre-industrial elements that have been until now mixed with industrial civilization.”⁸ Touraine’s portrait in *Sociologie de l’action* (1965) of a near-future, high-tech, post-capitalist phase of social evolution that he called “industrial civilization” strongly resembled Bell’s later *Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973), which itself was largely based on essays drafted throughout the 1960s and an early draft statement published in 1967.⁹ Touraine’s sociological essay on May 1968 more fully adopted Bell’s emphasis on the emerging centrality of knowledge work and the university, though it still presented the student movement as part of a new class coalition fit for agitation in “industrial society.”¹⁰

⁸ Touraine, “Naissance des sociétés industrielles,” 57.

⁹ Daniel Bell, “Notes on the Post-Industrial Society (I),” *The Public Interest; New York* 6 (Winter 1967): 24–35; “Notes on the Post-Industrial Society (II),” *The Public Interest; New York* 7 (Spring 1967): 102–18.

¹⁰ Touraine, *La société post-industrielle*.

It was surely in part the dialogue with Bell that led Touraine to adopt “post-industrial” for a 1969 essay that simplified and restated the arguments of *Sociologie de l’action* in light of the explosion of social conflict the previous year. As in the earlier work, Touraine emphasized the eclipse of the centrality of the economic in capitalist society by centers of decision-making that produced and controlled knowledge, turning what he now called post-industrial society into a “society of apparatuses.”¹¹ Yet, despite a seventeen-page introduction that announced in passing his new use of “post-industrial,” Touraine’s analysis remained identical to his earlier theory of “industrial society”; the chapters of *La société post-industrielle* were largely adapted from older articles. Archival evidence suggests that Bell asked Touraine not to use the term for the English translation of the book, likely considering it a competitor to his own. Touraine replied that he would refrain from using the “term that you launched,” adding that he would have no objection to Bell using “post-industrial” in a hypothetical French translation of his own book.¹² Despite Touraine’s adoption of the term, “post-industrial society” was not destined for success in France; Raymond Aron’s term “industrial society” had stuck for describing the ambiguous, potentially post-capitalist phase of society that sociologists and radicals confronted in the 1970s.

The point of untangling the simultaneous origins of “industrial” and “post-industrial” society in the 1960s is to demonstrate the protean nature of industrial-society ideas, and their increasing fragmentation in both sociology and radical social thought. Social theorists never agreed on a precise definition of “industrial society” or trajectory of its social evolution except as a step beyond competitive capitalism; as a result, it could be spun forward in evolutionary time as “post-

¹¹ Touraine, 9–13.

¹² Alain Touraine to Daniel Bell, June 2, 1969, Archives de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Fonds CADIS, Box 14. I have not been able to locate Bell’s original letter, so have inferred its contents from Touraine’s reply.

industrial” or newly re-Marxified to capture the transformations of capitalism. In broad terms, these two types of transformation took places in the United States and France, respectively. In the U.S., “post-industrialism” became a form of thought that bridged liberalism and radicalism, utopianism and technocracy. In France, similar arguments were retrofitted with Marxist concepts and language to create the distinctive social theory of the *deuxième gauche*, a hybridization of Marxism and “modern” sociological ideas that added up to a similarly contradictory assemblage of workerist utopianism and technocracy. With their different emphases, Bell and Touraine stood for slightly different roads from “industrial society”: Touraine for a French branch that focused on class and the composition of a new socialist coalition and blended into neo-Marxism, and Bell for one that placed more emphasis on the stadial evolution of industrial society’s “forces of production” and took an indifferent view of the future of class conflict. Sociologists in the 1970s thus sometimes argued that while American post-industrialism was a continuation of the complacent “end of ideology” ideas, the European variant was more politically radical.¹³ While such interpretations undersold the ways American post-industrial theory could be mobilized by radicals, in some cases, the American New Left would look to French radicalizations of industrial-society ideas, like the theory of the “new working class,” as opposed to the versions sociologists like Bell were advancing at home.

In both France and the United States, reformist sociologists’ initial vision of “industrial society” in the 1950s was radicalized in the late 1960s as new forms of social critique drew out its implicit optimism and even utopianism on the one hand and, on the other, pointed out the social forces that prevented their realization. In the U.S., the New Left notion of “corporate liberalism”

¹³ Krishan Kumar, “Industrialism and Post-Industrialism: Reflections on a Putative Transition,” *The Sociological Review* 24, no. 3 (August 1976): 439–78.

challenged the industrial society paradigm's relatively benign view of the state as *maestro* of an increasingly post-capitalist economy by deploying old American radical opposition to large, monopolistic corporate forces.¹⁴ In France, the 1960s and 1970s brought an effervescence of Marxist theory, a period of ferment that brought attempts to broaden and reinvigorate Marxist thought both inside and outside the French Communist Party.¹⁵ In particular, Marxist thinkers challenged the IS paradigm's claims of a post-capitalist "logic of industrialization" by charting a transition of their own: from laissez-faire capitalism or *capitalisme libéral* to a state-managed *capitalisme organisé*, *néocapitalisme*, *capitalisme des monopoles*, or *capitalisme monopoliste d'État*.¹⁶ The mid-1960s effervescence of Marxism contained an implicit concession that Marxist thought had not adapted to the postwar conditions of which "bourgeois" social science had attempted to provide an account. The renaissance of Marxist sociology not only recognized the value of their colleagues' empirical research, but also conceded something to industrial society ideas in recognizing the need to analyze and compare Western and Communist societies. At a 1968 conference of Marxist sociologists in France, the British sociologist Thomas Bottomore echoed the critiques of industrial society sociologists: "Very few Marxists indeed have seriously occupied themselves with empirical research on modern societies, whether capitalist or socialist, or have tried to present Marxism as something other than a critical philosophy or a philosophical anthropology."¹⁷ Pierre Naville, a Marxist who had worked in French *sociologie du travail*

¹⁴ Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 206.

¹⁵ Jean-Numa Ducange and Anthony Burlaud, eds., *Marx, une passion française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018), 86–108.

¹⁶ Catherine Mills, "Paul Boccara et la mise en mouvement du Capital," *La Pensée* 394, no. 2 (2018): 133–44; Anthony Crézégut, "Le Marx des communistes (2): une référence devenue problématique, 1956-2017," in *Marx, une passion française*, ed. Jean-Numa Ducange and Anthony Burlaud (Paris: La Découverte, 2018), 86–98; Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 298–99.

¹⁷ T. H. Bottomore, "Marxisme et sociologie," *L'Homme et la société* 10, no. 1 (1968): 7.

alongside but in tension with Georges Friedmann, argued strenuously for the extension of Marxist scientific method to the empirical study of all “industrial societies,” including Communist ones. “The field on which one can test the truth of Marxist conceptions has ceased to be limited to Europe,” he wrote.¹⁸

Marxist thinkers both recalibrated their work to the evolution of contemporary academic sociology and the industrial society paradigm even as they continued to target it as insufficient and ridden with mistaken premises about contemporary society. The first of the PCF’s “Semaines de la pensée marxiste,” which aimed to accelerate the party’s de-Stalinization and recover the intellectual prestige it had lost since 1956, was a frontal attack on the theory of industrial society. The answer to its own question—myth or reality?—was supposed to be clear.¹⁹ Louis Althusser, whose structuralist reworking of the Marxist concept of “mode of production” was widely influential, attacked “industrial society” as a concept that was both “anti-scientific and anti-Marxist.”²⁰ In addition to reasserting the relevance of “capitalism” against the post-capitalist optimism of sociology, Marxist thinkers also located a true vulnerability in their contemporaries’ thinking: their weak theorization of the state and its role in managing both domestic and international capitalism.²¹ Neo-Marxist insistence on the concrete functioning of the state, and the sociological nature of its role in social domination as opposed to vague claims of “pluralism” or

¹⁸ Pierre Naville, *De l’aliénation à la jouissance : la genèse de la sociologie du travail chez Marx et Engels* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1967), iv.

¹⁹ “La société industrielle, mythe ou réalité ?,” *Le Monde*, January 17, 1964.

²⁰ Louis Althusser, “La philosophie comme arme de la révolution : réponses à huit questions,” *La Pensée*, no. 138 (April 1968): 26–34.

²¹ Nicos Poulantzas, *Pouvoir politique et classes sociales* (Paris: Maspero, 1968); Ralph Milliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); Sessions, “Nicos Poulantzas: Philosopher of Democratic Socialism.”

“countervailing powers,” provided a powerful rejoinder to mid-century political sociology and helped to throw into question its prognosis for the inevitable transcendence of capitalism.

The managerial revolution

As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, the problematic of the “managerial revolution” originated as debate within socialism in the 1930s, and was a continuation of a problem that remained unresolved in Marxist theory throughout the first half of the twentieth century: the class status of white-collar and technical workers who had a different relationship to their working conditions and employers than the industrial proletariat. It was thus not surprising that, with the revival of the radical left and of Marxism in the 1960s, this question would return to the fore. Of all the pillars of the industrial society paradigm, the managerial revolution and the question of “new classes” was where the fractures and resulting recombinations were most densely concentrated. Industrial society sociologists and the radicals of the 1960s and 1970s had profoundly different attitudes toward the so-called “managers,” but their sociological theories were often taken from similar sources. In France, especially, as previously reformist sociologists like Alain Touraine moved to the left in the late 1960s, industrial society ideas *combined* with Marxism to produce new hybrid neo-Marxist theories, like Serge Mallet’s “new working class,” that blurred the distinction between reformist and revolutionary thought, between sociology and Marxism, and between romanticism and modernism. Much of the new flavor of these neo-Marxisms circled around the problem of the managerial revolution.

The “managerial revolution” problematic had originally emerged from the critique of bureaucracy on the international anti-Stalinist left, and elements of that critique persisted even as the problematic was transmuted into sociology. This critique can be called “romantic” in the sense that it derived from a utopian desire for spontaneous, egalitarian community uncontaminated by

institutional structures, leadership, or representation. In the U.S., the radical version of that critique was shepherded through the 1940s and 1950s by figures like C. Wright Mills, but also persisted even in the elements of the anti-Stalinist left who moved away from radicalism and embraced dimensions of American liberalism. In France, the critique was embodied by the remnants of the syndicalist left hostile to Communism, including the union Force Ouvrière and independent far-left groups like *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. It is thus no accident that writers in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* frequently cited Mills and, in a journal whose hostility to academic sociology was visceral, referred to him as “sociologist without scare quotes” (*sociologue sans guillemets*).²²

The moderate, sociological version of the industrial society paradigm, however, had attempted to modulate the critique of bureaucracy, to “modernize” it by stripping it of its utopian assumptions and hostility to modern forms of organization that sociologists increasingly came to see as inescapable. The Columbia sociologists working under Robert Merton did so by testing the theories of Max Weber and Robert Michels, who insisted on the rigid and oligarchic nature of bureaucracy, through sociological fieldwork, which suggested that pluralism and democratic agency could be reconciled with modern “organization.” Critics of utopian ideology like Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell, though they focused on Communism and Marxism as a whole, contributed to modernizing the critique of bureaucracy by insisting on sociological realism, emphasizing the technical demands of industrial society, and attacking the tendency of romantic-radical thought to postpone the resolution of practical matters to an idealized future. French reformist sociologists like Friedmann, Touraine, and Crozier, too, cut against the revolutionary tenor of their country’s intellectuals, by theorizing bureaucracy as a structural tendency of industrial society that had to be

²² Jean Delvaux, “Les classes sociales et M. Touraine,” *Socialisme ou Barbarie* 11, no. 27 (May 1959): 40n7. On Mills’ influence on *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, see Philippe Gottraux, « *Socialisme ou Barbarie* » : *Un engagement politique et intellectuel dans la France d’après-guerre* (Lausanne: Éditions Payot Lausanne, 1997), 299.

negotiated with and *mastered* in practical in terms rather than merely rebelled against.²³ In terms of the left tradition in which they originated, such arguments for mastery as opposed to rebellion swung the pendulum from revolution to reform, from radical contestation to “responsible” politics. The industrial society paradigm thus represented a modernist reformism that started from what it took to be the inevitable features of its epoch rather than assuming those could be challenged and reconstructed in a voluntarist and wholesale fashion. It was, inevitably, a product of the optimistic moment in which it took shape.

Industrial society sociologists, however, never entirely relinquished the romantic critique of bureaucracy, which remained a recessive trait of the paradigm. It was detectable in the Columbia sociologists’ insistence on bureaucratic plasticity and adaptability, and their association of only rigid or *pathological* bureaucracy with “totalitarianism.” Crozier’s paradigm-shifting *Le phénomène bureaucratique* (1963) treated bureaucracy as a pathological feature of French institutions rooted in a deep cultural fear of “face to face” interaction and negotiation.²⁴ Touraine, too, treated bureaucracy as one of the possible deformations of industrial society, the most extreme of which was totalitarian dictatorship.²⁵ Most evocatively, Friedmann echoed his American counterparts Riesman and Mills in emphasizing the alienation engendered by the rationalization of work, including white-collar and office work, and longed for policy solutions that could reintegrate romantic values—holism, craft, personal fulfillment—into a society of cubicles and assembly lines.²⁶ If bureaucracy and organization were inevitable, they were still a danger and a

²³ François Chaubet, *Michel Crozier: reformer la société française* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014), 72.

²⁴ Michel Crozier, *Le phénomène bureaucratique* (Seuil, 1963).

²⁵ Alain Touraine, “Entreprise et bureaucratie,” *Sociologie du Travail* 1, no. 1 (December 1959): 58–71; Touraine, *Sociologie de l’action*, 205–7, 208–10.

²⁶ Friedmann, “Tendances d’aujourd’hui, perspectives de demain.”

threat, one that the more radically inclined industrial-society sociologists, especially in France, hoped would be countered by a modernized left that rejected authoritarian tendencies and bureaucratic organization in favor of grassroots participation and decentralized designs.

The industrial society paradigm had scarcely settled in the early 1960s when signs emerged of a resurgence of the romantic critique of bureaucracy that would inspire a reinvigorated stance of rebellion against the “managerial revolution” over and against sociologists’ attempt to master and direct it. The acceleration of modernization under Charles de Gaulle after 1958 and the unapologetically technocratic nature of his presidency drew French public attention to the social category of engineers, economists, and other unelected experts, often referred to in the press as *les technocrates* or *la technocratie*, who were driving public policy.²⁷ Georges Friedmann, who had always written disparagingly of technocracy even while promoting an enlightened version of it, collected an extensive personal file of sources on technocracy, and gave a seminar on bureaucracy at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 1961-1962.²⁸ As it had with class debates, the journal *Arguments* became a forum that brought together ex-Communists, libertarian socialist critics of bureaucracy, and reformist sociologists to debate the problem of the managerial revolution. It contained both the industrial society paradigm’s modernist-but-ambivalent stance toward bureaucracy and the radical critiques of Mills and the left-libertarian writers of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. “Everything in the modern world shows us the development of bureaucratic organization and administration,” Edgar Morin wrote in the former vein. “We cannot isolate bureaucracy and bureaucratization from a total human and social phenomenon that we have still not yet given a

²⁷ Georges Suffert, “Un technocrate qu’est-ce que c’est ?,” *France Observateur*, February 20, 1960; Alain Murcier, “À quoi servent les technocrates ?,” *Le Monde*, August 22, 1966; Pierre Denamur, “L’invasion des technocrates,” *Le Monde*, April 24, 1967.

²⁸ Archives Georges Friedmann, personal archive, folder “Technocratie.”

name.”²⁹ Claude Lefort, on the opposite end of the spectrum, reiterated a radical version of the critique American Trotskyists had made of Weber in the 1940s: that while industrial society might have inherent technical demands for organization, this did not *require* that society be organized in a hierarchical and authoritarian fashion. Bureaucracy was not just a form of organization, but a form of *behavior*, the secret desire of bureaucrats for hierarchical distinction, “a status that differentiates their position from those of the executants.”³⁰

The romantic critique of bureaucracy and technocracy, inspired by both the social analysis of former Trotskyists like Lefort and critics of alienation like Mills, became a central part of the student left movements in the 1960s. The Port Huron Statement denounced the “bureaucracy, materialism, and business ethics” as the source of the American labor movement’s loss of “social idealism,” criticized the welfare state as dominated by a “ruling bureaucracy,” and a general “depersonalization that reduces human beings to the status of things.”³¹ Alain Geismar, the French student union leader and prominent activist in the events of May 1968, declared that, “For me, socialism can be defined negatively, with respect to existing structures, by a rejection of all bureaucracy, of all centralized direction, by granting power to the producers at their point of production.”³² Following the events of May 1968, French bookstores swelled with republications of the Marxist texts on bureaucracy, especially works by Trotsky and his older followers who had

²⁹ Edgar Morin, “Ce que n’est pas la bureaucratie,” *Arguments* 4, no. 17 (1960): 7.

³⁰ Claude Lefort, “Qu’est-ce que la bureaucratie ?,” *Arguments* 4, no. 17 (1960): 74.

³¹ Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement* (New York: Students for a Democratic Society, 1964), 6.

³² Daniel Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 43.

toiled in relative obscurity until they suddenly received the spotlight of a radical new conjuncture.³³ The critique of bureaucracy was soon turned on sociology itself, also drawing on currents from the previous generation of sociology. “Abstracted empiricism,” Mills had written in 1959, “represents a ‘bureaucratic’ development. ... Those who promote and practice this style of research readily assume the political perspective of their bureaucratic clients and chieftains.”³⁴ A decade later, Daniel Cohn-Bendit and other students of Alain Touraine would echo Mills: “The study of society has succeeded in this tour de force of depoliticizing all teaching, that is to say to legalize existing policy. And all of this is joined in a fruitful collaboration with ministers and technocrats.”³⁵

The student left’s critique of bureaucracy fractured the industrial society paradigm by rejecting the latter’s modernist aim to *master* the tools of industrial society in favor of a broadly romantic political posture of *rebellion* against them. But precisely because the student left drew on the recessive tendencies of industrial society sociology itself, the fracture was not a clean break; instead, it resulted in new theoretical combinations, and even pushed some older sociologists to radicalize the ambivalent notes in their own stance toward postwar society. This was especially the case in France, where sociologists like Friedmann and Touraine, who had retained the greatest ambivalence about their American colleagues and been frustrated by the apparent postwar “end of ideology,” welcomed 1968 as a rebellion against alienation that expressed their own critiques. Friedmann, who had written pessimistically about the “dichotomous organization” that divided

³³ Léon Trotsky, *De la bureaucratie* (Paris: François Maspero, 1971); Claude Lefort, *Éléments d’une critique de la bureaucratie* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1971); Pierre Naville, *La bureaucratie et la révolution* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1972).

³⁴ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 40th ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 101.

³⁵ Cohn-Bendit et al., “Pourquoi des sociologues ?,” 881.

manual from intellectual labor, declared May '68 an explosion of the tensions he had long diagnosed.³⁶

The institutionalization of conflict and the end of ideology

The fracture of the final two conceptual pillars of the industrial society paradigm can be helpfully examined together as intertwined consequences of the first two. If society had evolved into a new phase of social control over the economy, one guided by managers wielding scientific expertise, its aim ultimately was to manage the labor conflicts that had roiled industrial societies in their previous, fully “capitalist” phase. Though conflicts would persist through what Seymour Lipset called “democratic class struggle,” radicals had to accept that, as Irving Howe put it, “the high drama...of earlier Marxist or ‘revolutionary’ politics has been lost.”³⁷ “Few serious minds believe any longer,” Daniel Bell wrote, “that one can set down ‘blueprints’ and through ‘social engineering’ bring about a new utopia of social harmony.”³⁸

For social scientists, the institutionalization of conflict and the end of ideology could be either a *prescription*, an explicit normative aim, or a *diagnosis*, a more value-neutral observation of what appeared to be taking place in the 1950s. Given the ambiguity of the data and the inherently political nature of the problem, the two positions were often combined. By the early 1960s, most industrial society sociologists subscribed to some version of the hypothesis that the postwar welfare state and collective bargaining regime, even in countries like France where it had yet to be fully developed, had already or would soon contain social conflict within prescribed limits. Already in the 1950s, thinkers like Mills, Touraine, and Crozier had considered the industrial

³⁶ Georges Friedmann, “Fin d’une étape,” *Le Monde*, June 21, 1968.

³⁷ Irving Howe, “Radical Criticism,” 1965, p. 1, Daniel Bell Papers, Box 97, Folder 8, Harvard University Archives.

³⁸ Bell, *The End of Ideology*, 402–3.

working class essentially finished in its old revolutionary form and began looking to the next “phase” in the evolution of work, namely technical and white-collar workers. As for the “old” working class, Seymour Martin Lipset summarized the situation in a manner that was succinct if perhaps atypically flippant. The “end of ideology,” Lipset argued,

reflects the fact that the fundamental problems of the industrial revolution have been solved: the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in overall state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems.³⁹

Such claims were riddled with problematic assumptions about the permanence of the welfare state, ignored the American right’s emerging assault on the New Deal, assumed a great deal about the views and values of workers, and overlooked the ways that social conflicts were just as linked as ever to the workings of global capitalism. In France, they projected American conditions on the French near future, often without fully accounting for historical differences in their patterns of industrialization and economic development. Overlooking the economic dimensions of social conflict, in particular, blinded sociology to the revival of labor militancy that would strike with force across the Western world beginning in the 1960s.⁴⁰ The social upheaval that began in the 1960s challenged the depoliticization narrative of the institutionalization of conflict and the end of ideology, but it did not dispatch them as social interpretations. Rather, it opened a new era of debate and reinterpretation that saw these notions transfigured in different ways. The causes and nature of the transatlantic student protest movements became particularly important to this debate and served as a fault line between sociologists who interpreted the upheaval as a manifestation of the contradictions they themselves had seen as inherent in industrial

³⁹ Lipset, *Political Man*, 1960, 406.

⁴⁰ Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 358–61.

societies, and those who rejected them as outbursts of puerile behavior and atavistic fantasies. In particular, the student movements provided fuel for debates about the future of social conflict in industrial/post-industrial society and what social groups or classes would drive it.

Student leftists on both sides of the Atlantic both tended to describe themselves as playing a catalytic role in the birth of “a new left,” in the words of the Port Huron Statement, by mounting a radical critique of the sociologists’ excessively complacent vision of industrial society. Student leftists in France were distinct from their American analogues in that, though similarly inspired by the alienating dimensions of postwar growth, rejection of the Cold War, and solidarity with third-world freedom struggles, they spoke in a straightforwardly Marxist accent. In spite of their sweeping rejection of Communist institutions like the PCF and the CGT, the terms in which French student left presented themselves could be strikingly traditional. They painted students as the mere bourgeois adjuncts of the true proletariat and denied that they belonged to an avant-garde social category—a version of the Communist organizations’ dim view of intellectuals. In a 1968 interview, Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Jean-Pierre Duteuil argued that many of their own comrades were merely fighting to preserve their bourgeois privileges, and that the fact that students had no objective common interests with workers meant only those who had “broken with their class”—i.e., the educated bourgeoisie—were politically reliable.⁴¹ Yet even in France, student-left social analysis contained, as Howard Brick has detected in the United States, a fractious combination of radical critique and embrace of an existing current of sociological ideas about an emerging new society.⁴² Despite their unsparing analyses of their own class position, French student leaders could not help according students and the university a central place in their social vision. As Hervé

⁴¹ Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 50.

⁴² Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 206–7.

Bourgès put it, “the truth of today and tomorrow is to be found in joint action in the factory and the university, in the establishment of workers’ power and student power, in the complementary promises of a new, decentralized socialist society.”⁴³

Student interpretations of the conflict they were engaged in represented a provocation to sociology, but did not necessarily carry the day in public opinion, in university sociology, or in politics. Representing their newly achieved status as social experts in the public sphere, sociologists were called upon to render verdicts on the student movements, which afforded them the opportunity to restate and transform their theories of industrial society.⁴⁴ Generally speaking, sociologists questioned students’ vision of themselves as self-appointed catalysts of proletarian revolution, interpreting student politics instead in the framework of their own sociological thinking. But these reactions themselves illustrated the tensions inherent in the industrial society vision, how it had established an uneasy fusion of pessimistic realism and forward-looking optimism. In France, industrial society sociologists polarized along different lines: a moderate advocacy of mastering the tools of industrial society, and a more radical embrace of rebellion against those tools that placed older sociologists closer to their students. Given the geopolitical overtones of the conjuncture, and the anti-American tenor of the rejection of the Cold War binary, this fault line was overlaid by a resurgence of French-American boundary-drawing. The former, more “moderate” group redoubled its critique of French politics and intellectuals, which it now extended to the atavistic and “totalitarian” student movement, and asserted its allegiance with American-style pragmatism and reformism.⁴⁵ The latter, more “radical” group shifted back to an earlier posture of

⁴³ Cohn-Bendit et al., *The French Student Revolt*, 8.

⁴⁴ Pierre Grémion, “Les sociologues et 68 : notes de recherche,” *Le Débat* n° 149, no. 2 (2008): 20–36.

⁴⁵ Serge Audier, *La pensée anti-68: Essai sur une restauration intellectuelle* (Paris: Découverte, 2008).

anti-American critique, once again seeing France as containing possibilities that political conformism and deradicalization had eroded in the United States. At the same time, these two “sides” shared a well of sociological analysis that they elaborated and spun in new directions.

Though their interpretations of 1968 were different, Raymond Aron and Michel Crozier best incarnated the “moderate” sociological reaction to May 1968 in France and the identification with American Cold War thinking and pragmatic reformism, respectively. Aron’s now-famous interpretation of 1968 cast it as a “psychodrama” and a “non-event,” which he blamed in part on the irresponsibility of leftist professors and intellectuals.⁴⁶ Blaming humanities professors for the student chaos was not infrequent among American sociologists; Lipset, for example, interpreted it as an explosion of “intellectual *poujadisme*” against the inescapable realities of industrial society. “Many intellectuals react to the emphasis on social science and the concomitant belief in gradualism, expertise, and planning with a populist stress on the virtues of direct action against evil institutions and practices.”⁴⁷ Both Aron and American sociologists like Bell and Lipset raised the specter of totalitarianism, viewing the student movement as a resurgence of “authoritarian leftism.” Though more circumspect in his statements as he worked alongside Alain Touraine to negotiate with students at Nanterre, Crozier was also driven to speak out against the student movement by witnessing professors’ loss of authority. As French intellectuals made increasingly overheated declarations after 1968, Crozier embraced a public role as a gadfly defender of sociological professionalism and pragmatic reformism against students’ calls for a radical, politically engaged sociology.⁴⁸ While sympathetic to students’ frustration with the bureaucratic

⁴⁶ Raymond Aron, *La révolution introuvable: réflexions sur la révolution de mai* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), 172–73.

⁴⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Possible Political Effects of Student Activism,” *Social Science Information* 8, no. 2 (April 1, 1969): 16.

⁴⁸ Chaubet, *Michel Crozier*, 153–56.

society whose pathologies his own work had chronicled, Crozier pleaded with them to accept concrete, realistic social analysis and not to fall prey to utopian visions of what he would later call “reforming society by decree.”⁴⁹ It was no accident that Aron and Crozier were among American social scientists’ favored interpreters of post-1968 France.⁵⁰

Though they had equally complex and ambivalent reactions to 1968, Georges Friedmann and Alain Touraine can be taken to represent the more “radical” faction of French sociologists. Both had only accepted certain tenets of the industrial society paradigm with resignation, considering them to be sociologically undeniable yet deeply regrettable. Both had subscribed to the institutionalization of class conflict and the end of ideology with manifest reluctance and disappointment. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Friedmann and Touraine embraced what might be called a “Millsian” perspective that featured a normative critique of industrial society coupled with a pessimism about the available social agency for resisting it. Though hesitant about some of students’ tactics and reluctant to accept the latter’s interpretation of their own action, both Friedmann and Touraine were energized by 1968 and saw the new era of contestation as an expression of the very contradictions and tensions of industrial society that they had diagnosed. Friedmann wrote elatedly of the “*réveil*” (reawakening) of French society after a period of depoliticized slumber, which he interpreted as a new generation rebelling against the utilitarian depersonalization of work and the separation of mental and manual labor against which his sociological writing had been one long clarion call.⁵¹ Emerging as a widely recognized public intellectual for the first time as an on-the-ground interpreter of the student movement, Touraine

⁴⁹ Michel Crozier, *La société bloquée* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015010333493>.

⁵⁰ Michel Crozier, “French Students: A Letter from Nanterre-La Folie,” *The Public Interest* 13 (Fall 1968): 151–59.

⁵¹ Friedmann, “Fin d’une étape.”

radicalized the tone of his analysis and attempted to cast May 1968 as the first social struggle of the mature industrial society whose arrival his own sociology had announced.

Touraine's interpretation of 1968 illustrates how the fractured industrial society paradigm met the thinking of "Second Left" thinkers like Serge Mallet, André Gorz, and Pierre Ronsanvallon, who as François Dosse writes, were "concerned to 'dialecticize' reform and revolution in function of social mutations."⁵² Touraine himself attempted to historicize elements of the industrial society paradigm by arguing that its developmental tendencies were now springing forth, moving beyond the institutionalization of conflict and the end of ideology. These had been real evolutionary moments, but were now dialectically being surpassed by the new forces of industrial society. The May movement confirmed his own previous arguments against the static, functionalist view of industrial society and revealed that industrial societies, "like others, but in new and still poorly-understood forms, rest on the conflict between those who confuse social progress with their private power and those who, against them, demand, according to their own interests, the democratic management of economic and social change."⁵³ It was a "new form of class struggle" that revealed the true fault line of the new industrial society, whose "nature and social actors" were, as Touraine had previously argued, "not the same as in the previous society, in properly capitalist society."⁵⁴ The following year, in *La société post-industrielle*, Touraine would recapitulate this interpretation, arguing that social struggle in this new, post-capitalist society was a battle between two competing visions for the management of social change: one centralized and technocratic that subjected the rest of society to "dependent participation," opposed to another that was decentralized, democratic,

⁵² François Dosse, *La saga des intellectuels français, 1944-1989 : à l'épreuve de l'histoire, 1944-1968*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), 530.

⁵³ Alain Touraine, *Le mouvement de Mai ou le communisme utopique*, 4th ed. (Paris: Le Seuil, 2018), 10.

⁵⁴ Touraine, 14.

and participatory.⁵⁵ In Touraine's view, the actors of May themselves were often unable to see their true historic role as an "industrial society" social movement, as the May events were merely a first step in the "return of social conflict."

Touraine was politically close to the Second Left, which included the upstart Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU) and the Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT), the formerly Catholic labor federation that at least superficially absorbed the rhetoric and activist energies of May 1968 in order to distinguish itself from the statist, bureaucratic, and Communist CGT. Touraine's post-Marxist but conflict-oriented sociological view of the present harmonized with the views of neo-Marxist thinkers like Mallet and Gorz, who also emphasized the mutation of social categories and the rise of alienated white-collar workers as potential agents of system-breaking radicalism.⁵⁶ The sharpened anti-technocratic notes of Touraine's thinking also harmonized with the Second Left's explorations in the 1970s of decentralized, libertarian visions of socialism, which were directed against Communist *social-étatisme* and blurred distinctions between radicalism and liberalism.⁵⁷ These visions called for a "new political culture" rooted in civil society, in which militants were "social entrepreneurs" and worked to establish autonomous social units that would be loosely linked a spontaneous sociality outside and against the state.⁵⁸ In some cases, particularly in that of Pierre Rosanvallon, these flirted openly with classical liberal

⁵⁵ Touraine, *La société post-industrielle*.

⁵⁶ Though recognizing the similarities with his own post-industrial theory, Daniel Bell nonetheless criticized the French thinkers mentioned here as "tediously theological" in their focus on social categories and classes, which he dismissed as merely an attempt to "save" the Marxist concept of social change and the Leninist idea of the agency of social change." *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (Basic Books, 1973), 40. For a similar recent critique of the French neo-Marxist analysis of post-industrial society, see Thierry Pillon and François Vatin, *Traité de sociologie du travail* (Toulouse: Octares Éditions, 2003), 320–21.

⁵⁷ Frank Georgi, "L'autogestion, utopie libertaire ou utopie libérale ?," in 1968, *entre libération et libéralisation : La grande bifurcation*, ed. Michel Margairaz and Danielle Tartakowsky, Histoire (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 303–18; Bell, "May '68: Parenthesis or Staging Post?"

⁵⁸ Pierre Rosanvallon and Patrick Viveret, *Pour une nouvelle culture politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).

thinkers and even neoliberals like Hayek, but in the service of a long French history of autonomist socialism that cannot be reduced to Anglo-American liberalism or neoliberalism despite the occasional echoes.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, it is not difficult to see how this strain of 1970s French radicalism harmonized with recessive tendencies of earlier industrial society sociology, particularly its fear of bureaucracy and centralization and association of those two with “totalitarianism,” and how the neoliberal era of the 1980s drew on strains that were present in left thinking as well as on the right. It also demonstrates the extent to which even as French social theorists experimented with anti-statist “liberal” or *libertaire* visions, at least through the 1970s they did so in the grip of the industrial-society conviction that economic liberalism was completely defunct, and that the new society was more “collective” by default.⁶⁰ In the Second Left, the “post-capitalist” assumptions of industrial-society sociology could be transmuted into a *marxisant* libertarian radicalism that assumed certain economic battles against capitalism had been won, and that the next frontier of social contestation were primarily organizational and technological.

The explosion of Marxism and new forms of political radicalism in post-1968 France sidelined the notion of the “end of ideology,” which French thinkers, with the exception of Aron, had always viewed with some suspicion, especially in its more prescriptive forms. Even non-radical French scholars, like the political scientist Jean Meynaud, heaped scorn on the notion as yet another product of the American celebration of the status quo.⁶¹ Its relatively greater prevalence in the United States made it a central target of the radicals of the 1960s and 1970s, who were guided by the broadsides of thinkers like C. Wright Mills and Michael Harrington against

⁵⁹ Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought* (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 32–42, 303.

⁶⁰ For Pierre Rosanvallon’s recent retrospective view of his engagement with liberalism in the 1970s, see *Notre histoire intellectuelle et politique: 1968-2018* (Paris: Seuil, 2018), 106–19.

⁶¹ Jean Meynaud, *Déstin des idéologies* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1961).

what Mills had called the “weary discourse” of “smug conservatives, tired liberals, and disillusioned radicals.”⁶² Yet, as Howard Brick argues, the end of ideology nonetheless covertly shaped how radicals approached the revival of ideology, even in France.⁶³ Industrial-society sociology often provided the template. Even as they revived forms of Marxist theory that could be extremely schematic, French students attacked the country’s Communist organizations, as had the sociologists, for “refusing all analysis of society” and thus failing to understand its mutations. Few of the radical intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s disagreed that that socialism required a profound theoretical overhaul. The *deuxième gauche*, in particular, which radicalized some of the core ideas of the industrial society paradigm, rejected the distinction between reform and revolution and placed a great emphasis on the “realist” analysis of society and concrete social reforms. Their emphasis on white-collar workers and on the importance of technical expertise, though radical in tone, could also blend into an embrace of technocracy as an inevitable byproduct of a complex industrial society. Even as it appeared immediately refuted by history and thus splintered apart from other aspects of industrial-society thinking, even the “end of ideology” was sometimes sublated in new moods and arguments.

Sociological Fracture: Generations, Knowledge, and Nationalities

1968 and the clash of sociological generations

The explosion of student movements across the world in 1968 polarized academic sociology almost overnight.⁶⁴ A number of industrial-society theorists would have almost comically direct interactions with student protesters. The instigators of the French student

⁶² C. Wright Mills, “Letter to the New Left,” *New Left Review*, no. 5 (1960): 18.

⁶³ Howard Brick, “Bell, Daniel (1919–2011),” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. James D. Wright, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 499–502; Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 207.

⁶⁴ Grémion, “Les sociologues et 68 : notes de recherche.”

movement, most notably Daniel Cohn-Bendit, were sociology students of Alain Touraine at Nanterre, and Touraine conducted an on-the-ground, real-time sociological study of the movement and served as a negotiator with the authorities. Ralf Dahrendorf famously debated the German student revolutionary Rudi Dutschke on the roof of a van in Freiburg, while the American protesters made Daniel Bell one of their ideological targets, precipitating his flight from Columbia to Harvard.⁶⁵ Student radicals lashed out against the ideas of their professors, often unaware of how much their own leftism drew on industrial society theory's critique of the old left. Among the countless examples, a group of Touraine's students denounced the French sociological professoriate for the "*importation des doctrines made in U.S.A*" and called for the "*dissipation des mots d'ordre stalino-tourainiens*"—despite the fact that Touraine had pioneered an identical critique of American sociology.⁶⁶ With perhaps more justice, different chapters of the Students for a Democratic Society in the U.S. published pamphlets rebutting two key industrial-society texts, Lipset's *Political Man* and Bell's *The End of Ideology*.⁶⁷

Contesting value-free science and modernization

One of the central generational divides between students and professors in the long 1968 was their stance toward the ideal of science and its complicity with technocratic public policy. For the generation born circa 1920, the ideal of value-free science had become attractive both as a way to achieve disciplinary legitimacy for sociology and, increasingly, as a way to distinguish sociology from "ideology," to grant it a different kind of authority in the public sphere. Funding

⁶⁵ Berman, "Left Behind: Daniel Bell and the Class of '68."

⁶⁶ Cohn-Bendit et al., "Pourquoi des sociologues?"

⁶⁷ Robert Alan Haber, *The End of Ideology as Ideology* (San Francisco: Students for a Democratic Society, 1960); Jim Jacobs, *S.M. Lipset: Social Scientist of the Smooth Society* (Ann Arbor, M.I.: Radical Education Project, 1969).

from the state and private philanthropy offered sociology both financial and intellectual standing, especially in France, where sociologists felt themselves to be rebuilding a discipline from scratch. The 1968 generation, however, experienced sociology as already firmly lodged in a state-philanthropy-public policy infrastructure that, especially when combined with notions like the “end of ideology” or paradigms like structural functionalism, gave off an air of establishment complacency and stasis, especially in an era when social-scientific complicity with the American Cold War agenda was widespread and often explicit.⁶⁸ Even a cursory reader of 1950s and 1960s sociology texts can validate Mill’s argument in *The Sociological Imagination* that sociology had fully absorbed the bureaucratic ethos and language of the postwar large organization. The abundance of discourse about “industrial society” itself, and the prevalence of discussions of national “manpower” in relation to higher education, likely contributed to the 1968 generation’s impression that sociology was nothing but a handmaiden of the productivist public agenda and the “instrumental university.”⁶⁹ All of these factors contributed both to older sociologists’ distance from and complacency about mass politics and their students’ overdramatic but not unfounded critique of that complacency.

During the long 1968, the critique of value-free science was deeply intertwined with the critique of technocracy, and the critique of the productivist agenda of so-called “industrial societies.” Students correctly perceived that they were coming of age amid a revolution in higher education: a transition from a bourgeois university based on transmitting an elite culture to a select few to a mass-democratic education based that (supposedly) selected on merit and was oriented

⁶⁸ Mark Solovey, “Project Camelot and the 1960s Epistemological Revolution: Rethinking the Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus,” *Social Studies of Science* 31, no. 2 (2001): 171–206; Joel Isaac, “The Human Sciences in Cold War America,” *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 3 (September 2007): 725–46.

⁶⁹ Schrum, *The Instrumental University: Education in Service of the National Agenda after World War II*.

toward powering the engines of “industrial society.”⁷⁰ Gaullist higher education reforms in the 1960s attempted to engineer this shift explicitly, as did Clark Kerr and other innovative higher education administrators in the United States.⁷¹ It was no accident that Kerr and his notion of the “multiversity” was such a prominent target of the American student left.⁷² The 1968 generation rejected the “technicity” of this industrial-society vision, deploying that most reliable of romantic metaphors for deadening standardization, the assembly line. Paradoxically, students sometimes embraced a vision of liberal arts education that progressive liberals like Kerr might have, with some justice, considered aristocratic and conservative. As Andrew Jewett has argued, students repurposed the ideal of academic neutrality and the non-instrumentality of knowledge; the Berkeley protest leader Mario Savio was thus “far more attached to a vision of the university as ivory tower than was Kerr.”⁷³ But students gave this older vision of education a romantic and utopian charge by packaging it as resistance to a type of knowledge that was the stuff of, as SDS president Paul Potter put it, “faceless and terrible bureaucracies.”⁷⁴

The deeply divisive way the conflict over the purpose of knowledge in higher education played out in sociology departments points to a major generational divide in the stance toward the relationship between politics and technology, the latter term understood in a broader sense of all of the available tools for the rational administration of society. Industrial-society sociologists, disenchanted with the question marks that their youthful socialist utopianism left hanging over the

⁷⁰ Bourq, *From Revolution to Ethics*, 25.

⁷¹ Ethan Schrum, “To ‘Administer the Present’: Clark Kerr and the Purpose of the Postwar American Research University,” *Social Science History* 36, no. 4 (2012): 499–523.

⁷² Andrew Jewett, “The Politics of Knowledge in 1960s America,” *Social Science History* 36, no. 4 (December 22, 2012): 551–81.

⁷³ Doug Rossinow, quoted in Jewett.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Jewett, 556.

future in an era of so-called “totalitarianism,” had attempted to come to terms with the institutional forms and technical demands of “industrial society.” They were often critical of how French and American power-holders used those tools, but believed that sociology could steer those uses toward better ends. Their conversion to the ideal of value-free science and opposition to “ideology” was in some cases a check on their *own* hopes and utopian tendencies, an attempt to look in the face the reality they believed their own youthful socialism had glossed too simply. The Americans, in particular, were also traumatized by McCarthyism, which they often interpreted as a radical right-wing populism, and which nudged them toward a *de facto* embrace of benevolent technocracy over popular political agency. While industrial-society sociologists also had serious reservations about technocracy and its abuses, they shifted the balance toward modernism and reformism, turning a pessimism about blueprints for radical change into an optimistic confidence in the possibility of using scientific tools for progressive but gradual change.

The New Lefts in America and France, however, recovered their reservations and amplified them into critiques of bureaucracy, alienation, consumer pacification, and the repression of sexuality, often without noticing how such critiques had been interwoven into postwar sociology even if they were sometimes subdued by modernist reformism. These renewed critiques fractured sociology by attacking the modernism and reformism of the establishment and demanding a rebalancing toward romanticism and revolution. Thus, while many establishment sociologists turned hostile critics of their students, others, like Herbert Marcuse in the United States and Henri Lefebvre in France, could greet 1968 as a vindication of their refusal of the modernization paradigm and focus on the revolutionary power of desire, as Lefebvre had done, for example, in his 1960s courses at Nanterre on sociology and sexuality. The post-1968 fracture of sociology damaged sociology’s gradually acquired reputation as objective scientific knowledge and policy

expertise as it absorbed the political activism of the 1970s and was infused with the “philosophy of desire” that broke out simultaneously.⁷⁵ While the 1960s and 1970s represented a heyday of sociology in France, the moment also represented a peak: sociology would carve a durable intellectual niche in the French public sphere alongside philosophy and literature, but would never regain the authority it had briefly enjoyed during the heyday of the industrial-society paradigm.⁷⁶

Reviving the critique of American sociology

The centrality of the Cold War to the social contestation of the long 1968 made conditions ripe for a revival of intellectual anti-Americanism in France, with university students as the tip of the spear. Whereas American students criticized U.S. imperialism and anti-Communism from within, French students and other Europeans could imagine their own country, as some French intellectuals had in the early Cold War, as a potential vehicle for pushing *beyond* the Cold War. But such a project required a dissociation from France’s own previous role in the Cold War and, thus, its association with the United States. From French sociology’s complicity in the technocratic management of society, itself a feature of the Cold War and the influence of American sociology, the leap was not difficult to make.

In the same way that American students associated establishment sociology with the generation of “‘human relations’ or ‘morale-producing’ techniques for the corporate economy,” French students connected the sociology of their professors with American imperialism.⁷⁷ This was a straightforward revival of the Communist line of attack from the 1950s, which industrial-society sociologists had worked carefully to rebut by mounting their own critiques of American

⁷⁵ Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics*, 105–11.

⁷⁶ Heilbron, *French Sociology*, chapter six.

⁷⁷ Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement*, 10.

sociology and theoretical programs designed to counter it, such as Touraine's anti-functionalist "actionnalism." Pierre Bourdieu, a major figure in the 1970s revival of anti-Americanism in French sociology, delivered a taste of things to come in 1967 when he attacked Michel Crozier's work as "ultimately nothing but a neo-positivism that seeks its guarantee in American sociology and civilization."⁷⁸ French students' attacks on value-free science and its subservience to capitalism were intertwined at every turn with anti-Americanism. In a barn-burning text against establishment sociology distributed at Nanterre in 1968, French sociology students fingered Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Experiments of the late 1920s and 1930s (see Chapter 3) as the "capital date" in the recent history of the discipline. The Nanterre students voiced Alain Touraine's words from the 1960s, but in a snarling rather than a celebratory tone: Mayo "closed the epoch of social philosophy and speculative systems on society as a whole and opened the glorious era of empiricism and the 'scientific' collection of data."⁷⁹ He rented his services to private industry in the wake of a financial crisis, illustrating how "the passage from an academic sociology subjugated to philosophy to an independent sociology with scientific pretensions corresponds to the passage from competitive to organized capitalism."⁸⁰ American sociologists ignored social classes and replaced them with "strata," and above all sought "the adaptation of the worker to his labor." In criticizing American sociology, the students drew almost word for word on the writings of Friedmann and Touraine from the 1950s, though they only acknowledged Mills and Riesman. At the same time, they attacked as "Stalinist-Tourainian slogans" Touraine's emerging "post-industrial" twist on his sociology and its denial of capitalist property and profit as the driving force

⁷⁸ Bourdieu and Passeron, "SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCE SINCE 1945," 164.

⁷⁹ Cohn-Bendit et al., "Pourquoi des sociologues ?," 878.

⁸⁰ Cohn-Bendit et al., 878–79.

of social conflict. The '68 generation's attack on their teachers was thus shot through with ambivalences.

Political Fracture: French Socialism as the Triumph of “Industrial Society”?

During the 1970s, industrial-society ideas transformed left-wing intellectual politics in France. While politics appeared to swing sharply to the left, matters were in fact more ambiguous. From a radical posture and even while still deploying the twentieth-century French left's non-negotiable veneer of Marxism, the post-1968 left buried the traditional distinction between reform and revolution; left behind the traditional Marxist emphasis on economic relations; and dismissed the old, industrial working class as a conservative force consigned to history. They often did so in direct opposition to the two largest institutional representatives of the working class, the PCF and the CGT.⁸¹ As we have seen, French industrial-society sociologists helped build a public for such ideas in the 1950s and early 1960s, often translating them, if somewhat “radicalizing” them, from American sources. Their paradoxical crescendo after 1968 was thus a paradoxical form of continuity: postwar sociological ideas that, as we have seen, were proximate to American liberalism, now became, without shifting much in substance, a libertarian leftism often that attempted to reclaim the aura of pre-Marxist French syndicalism and socialism. Because this current was primarily rooted in the “public sphere” sociologists had helped create—in media, “clubs,” and small political organizations—it was always politically weak despite its outsize presence in public discourse. It ultimately had little concrete leverage over the dominant centralizing “social-statist” side of French socialism, including when François Mitterrand won the presidency in 1981. At the same time, the *deuxième gauche* generated an *intellectual*

⁸¹ Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 53.

transformation that mainstreamed a French form of industrial-society thinking on the French intellectual left and provided the Mitterand project with the dynamic, modernized ideological cover it needed—a perfect rebalancing of romanticism and modernism—to shed the previously stagnant image of the electoral left. The impact of these ideas was such that even when France had its “liberal moment” in the late 1970s and 1980s, it could not be explained in terms of Anglo-American liberalism, echoes notwithstanding.

Participatory democracy against or along with technocracy? The romantic-technocratic politics of the deuxième gauche

The term *deuxième gauche*, or “second left,” was coined by its most famous and ambiguous representative, Michel Rocard, in 1977. According to Rocard, the “first left” against which the second defined itself was Jacobin, centralizing, statist, nationalist, and protectionist. Throughout the postwar period, it was strongly associated with the Parti Communiste and Marxism. The second left, meanwhile, was decentralizing, regionalist, and favorable to the “autonomy of collectivities at the base.”⁸² While innumerable figures have attempted to root the *deuxième gauche* in the longer sweep of French history, it is best understood as a postwar phenomenon: a modernizing constellation of intellectuals, academics, men of state, and other *hommes d’action* frustrated with the sclerotic operation of French politics and with Marxist pieties. Generally on the left, it was anti-Communist, or at least committed to keeping *French Communism* away from political power. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this current developed around intellectual journals like *Esprit*, periodicals like *France Observateur* and *L’Express*, and “clubs” like the Club Jean-Moulin.⁸³ While making room for radicals, the cast of these institutions was overwhelmingly modernist and

⁸² Duclerc, “La « deuxième gauche »,” 175.

⁸³ Frank L. Wilson, “The Club Phenomenon in France,” *Comparative Politics* 3, no. 4 (1971): 517–28, <https://doi.org/10.2307/421261>.

technocratic: men who attended business schools or had training in economics and experience in state ministries. When they sometimes grumbled about technocracy, they generally meant *Gaullist* or right-wing technocracy, not the sort of enlightened, participatory sort they hoped to install themselves.⁸⁴ This version of the *deuxième gauche*, and its notions like *planification démocratique* (“democratic planning”), harmonized perfectly with and was even inspired by the industrial-society sociology of the same moment with its emphasis on reformist modernism and science-driven social realism.

The Algerian War and Gaullist authoritarianism further radicalized the *deuxième gauche* and isolated it from possible left electoral coalitions, leading to the creation of very small start-up electoral projects like the Parti Socialiste Unifié, founded in 1960.⁸⁵ In the wake of 1968, radical energy on the left was such that the influence of intellectuals associated with the *deuxième gauche* mounted in the media to an unprecedented degree.⁸⁶ Only now, the continuity between many of their ideas and the modernist reformers of the two previous decades was blurred by the intermixing in *deuxième gauche* spaces of reformists and revolutionaries and the dramatic shift in tone from modernism to romanticism. The rise of the concept of *autogestion* is a case in point.⁸⁷ Ostensibly a radical, anti-bureaucratic program for worker and student self-management and a decentralized socialism, *autogestion* also resonated with the anti-centralist and anti-statist ideas of some center-

⁸⁴ This is clearly illustrated in Herrick Chapman’s comparison of the opposed technocratic styles of Michel Debré and Pierre Mendès-France, the latter of whom frequently railed against technocracy. *France’s Long Reconstruction*, 209–59.

⁸⁵ Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 42–43.

⁸⁶ Christofferson, 43–44. Tamara Chaplin, *Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁸⁷ Georgi, *L’autogestion en chantier*.

left technocratic types, and even with elements of the French *patronat*.⁸⁸ Thus the ambiguity of a figure like Pierre Rosanvallon, who worked as a researcher at the CFDT, becoming the intellectual voice of *autogestion* as anti-authoritarian political project at the same time he pitched it to HR thinktanks in French business who had other reasons to be interested.⁸⁹ And autogestion could be discussed simultaneously at barn-burning Marxist conferences, where thinkers like Henri Lefebvre and Georges Gurvitch held forth on anti-bureaucracy and council socialism, and in spaces like the CFDT leadership and the Assises du socialisme, which had much more moderate and expert-controlled ideas of what *autogestion* would look like.

What emerges in this movement of paradoxical continuity is how industrial-society ideas took on new political charges in the new conjuncture of the 1960s without fundamentally changing shape. They could be radicalized in *style* without being changed much in substance, though this very radicalization process exposed their inherent tensions and contradictions. The post-1968 radicalization of the critique of bureaucracy and alienation, the intensification of left anti-statism and anti-institutionalism, drew on existing notes that had always been contained within industrial-society paradigm. But by emphasizing them so dramatically in a shifting political-economic conjuncture, it revealed their fundamental incompatibility of these romantic defenses of spontaneity, decentralization, and smallness with the modernist, statist managerialism of social democracy that industrial-society sociology had generally viewed with optimism.

Bureaucracy, anti-totalitarianism, and liberalism

⁸⁸ For how French management responded to the “artistic critique” of 1968, which was carried by the romanticism of certain *deuxième gauche* thinkers, see Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 184–95.

⁸⁹ Gautier, “D’un laboratoire sociale à l’autre : l’influence des industries automobiles et pétrochimiques dans la constitution des savoirs professionnels en gestion du personnel (1969-1979),” 12.

Anti-totalitarianism was another recessive dimension of the industrial-society paradigm that was inflated into a “moment” of its own in 1970s France, and thus another expression of paradoxical continuity. While some argue that 1970s anti-totalitarianism represented a rupture, shifting from the critique of bureaucracy to the problematization of democracy, this can only be maintained by overlooking how the earlier critique of bureaucracy was already overdetermined by fears about the viability of democracy and the relation between state and civil society (see Chapter 2).⁹⁰ There were not separate “French” and “American” anti-totalitarianisms in the 1940s and 1950s; the two were part of the same transnational public sphere. *Both* the 1940s and the 1970s anti-totalitarian moments were a form of romanticism centrally concerned with, as Kevin Duong writes, “the modern disregard for concrete human personalities by bureaucratic rationality, its impersonal ‘ideology.’”⁹¹ In both cases, the totalitarian deformation of a bureaucratic society was one possibility of liberal democracy, a possibility that had to be struggled against either through mastery of the tools of “industrial society” (technocracy) or rebellion against them (social contestation). In the industrial-society paradigm, modernism had subdued the romantic critique and emphasized the possibility of avoiding totalitarianism through *mastery*; in the *deuxième gauche*, the romantic critique gained the upper hand, insisting that only a permanent and robust social contestation based in civil society could counter totalitarianism, whose avatar was the possible capture of the state by “social-statist” forces like the PCF.

Anti-totalitarianism helps make clearer how the industrial-society paradigm, ostensibly a social-democratic outlook comfortable with the use of state power and managerial tools, already contained the seeds of the next “era” in Western intellectual life and politics, whether neoliberalism

⁹⁰ Kevin Duong, “‘Does Democracy End in Terror?’ Transformations of Antitotalitarianism in Postwar France,” *Modern Intellectual History* 14, no. 2 (August 2017): 551.

⁹¹ Duong, 548.

in the United States or the “liberal moment” in 1980s France. The critique of bureaucracy, driven as it was by the fear of “totalitarianism,” whether in the Soviet Union or the United States, could quickly lead to anti-statism, a defense of smallness and decentralization, and a lionization of “counter-powers” and “competition”—all rhetoric that might be read today as “neoliberal.” Ludwig von Mises himself contributed a brief screed to the 1940s panic about bureaucracy.⁹² It is worth juxtaposing the rhetoric of 1940s bureaucracy sociologist like Philip Selznick and a 1970s thinker like Pierre Rosanvallon. In his sociology of bureaucracy in the 1940s, Philip Selznick worried about the tendency of democracy to lead to “abdication” to “bureaucratic directorates” and suggested liberalism as the antidote. “Freedom,” he wrote, “requires the competition of groups... the development of counter-forces...new centers of strength, competing with existing leadership.”⁹³ Similarly, when Rosanvallon suggested the embrace of a *néo-libéralisme* in the 1970s, he was thinking primarily in terms of the topographical *organization* of a society in which at least the beginnings of economic democracy had been achieved. The “liberalism” of Selznick and Rosanvallon was an *organizational* liberalism, one that, following the industrial-society paradigm, considered the question of fundamental conflict over economics to have been solved. Rosanvallon’s embrace of the “political” followed directly from Touraine’s arguments that industrial society shifted the arena of conflict from the economic to the political, a battle over *the organization of power*, not of the distribution of property and profit.

Once this is appreciated, one can understand how defenses of decentralization, competition, and hostility to the state can fit within 1940s anti-totalitarianism, the industrial-society paradigm of the 1950s and 1960s, and the *deuxième gauche* of the 1970s. Industrial-society thinking made

⁹² Ludwig von Mises, *Bureaucracy* (Glasgow: William Hodge & Company, 1945).

⁹³ Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots; a Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 159.

it possible to shift from a Marxist view of fundamental class conflict over the production and appropriation of value, to one in which the problem was a less violent one of organizing social life in a more egalitarian fashion. Visions of the latter project could be either moderate or radical, but they shared a common root in optimism that the potentiality for socialism was already contained in the present. But the continuity of a romantic critique of bureaucracy, which merged with anti-totalitarianism and a defense of a certain form of “liberalism” in both the American and French contexts, also drew on a deep current within world socialism, and within French socialism in particular. If the *deuxième gauche* had a blinkered and occasional hysterical view of the “first left,” whether the state, parties like the PCF and SFIO, or unions like the CGT, its *intentions* were continuous with a populist posture of rebellion against the center that had deep roots in France, and its vision of the future based on a misreading of the political-economic context as durable rather than fleeting.

Mitterand 1981: the triumph or burial of “industrial society”?

The *deuxième gauche* made lots of noise in French politics, but ultimately did not command a strong enough social base to dislodge the *social-étatisme* it opposed so virulently. The rise of François Mitterand as the unity candidate of the Communist and non-Communist left demonstrated this fact perfectly. Though Mitterand needed the intellectual dynamism of the *deuxième gauche* to transform the new Parti Socialiste (PS) into a force that could outstrip the PCF, he was mostly indifferent to ideology and, generally speaking, firmly in the group of the dominant parties’ commitment to the Jacobin tradition. Thus, throughout the 1970s, Mitterand would expertly play the factions of the PS against one another, shamelessly adopting the Marxism of the PCF at one moment and the technocratic reformism of a figure like Michel Rocard the next as the political

winds shifted. Most *deuxième gauche* figures would consider his eventual presidency a disappointment and a betrayal of their ideas.

There is little question that, as a symbolic carrier of the legacy of May 1968, the Mitterand presidency disappointed hopes for a profoundly transformed society.⁹⁴ But it is less clear that it betrayed industrial-society thinking, which was always patient with gradual social change and tolerant of technocracy. As the *gauchiste* energies of 1968 dissipated in the mid-1970s, the *dirigeants* of the PS found themselves looking back to the independent-left thinking of the 1960s, at the high noon of the industrial-society paradigm.⁹⁵ As Mathieu Fulla argues in relation to the PS's economic policy, the *tournant* of the Mitterand government against expansionist state intervention in the economy, long decried as a betrayal, was presaged by nearly a century of French socialist pragmatism and experimentation under the cover of Marxist ideology.⁹⁶ At the same time, while France was impacted by many of the same structural trends as other advanced industrial economies, French public policy in the 1980s was in marked contrast to Anglo-American neoliberalism.⁹⁷ The PS's route to power, relying on a socially-conscious but pragmatic ideology, vaunting the prestige of social-scientific experts, and shifting its social base toward white-collar professionals, can be read as the successful pursual of an "industrial-society" or "post-industrial" political strategy that proved unavailable to the Democratic Party in the United States and the Labour Party in the United Kingdom until the 1990s.

⁹⁴ Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics*, 302–6.

⁹⁵ Bell, "May '68: Parenthesis or Staging Post?"

⁹⁶ Fulla, *Les socialistes français et l'économie*.

⁹⁷ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 305–6.

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