

I also have difficulty with such Freudian concepts as "adolescents who become overheated by unexpressed sexual feelings are likely to have some skin problems" (p. 34), or "middle-aged parents are likely to find themselves not as sexually attractive as before and certainly unable to compete with an adolescent. . . this kind of competition often breaks up marriages. . ." (p. 119). Or that girls react to sensual stress by becoming bashful and silent while boys react with hyperactivity (p. 67). This might appear reasonable to some professional clinicians, but it is not a reasonable explanation to a sociologist or the general public.

Palmer has mentioned almost every topic that might be stressful for parental interaction with children. These range from feelings about pregnancy and its eventual consequences to separation anxiety, handicapped children, trust, schooling, sex, drugs, grandparents, divorce, and step-parents, just to name a few. However, the discussions appear to be simplistic, short, and perfunctory.

Overall, the book does not retain the attention that the title attracts, nor does it live up to the promise on the book jacket of telling how to correct, or even prevent, the problems of raising children.

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Arnold Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, 185 pp.

This translation of the 1957 revised edition of *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter* is the first work of Arnold Gehlen's to be translated into English. For this reason, Gehlen's work is unfamiliar to most American sociologists, although he was one of the leading conservative social theorists in post-World War II German sociology. Despite his relative obscurity, Gehlen has had an indirect influence on American sociology, primarily through the works of Peter L. Berger, the author of the Forward to this volume. One can only hope that this translation will be followed by translations of Gehlen's other major works, since his other works elaborate ideas that are not fully developed in the current work, and his message has not lost its relevance for contemporary Western culture.

Gehlen's conservatism should be of special interest to an American audience since the conservative tradition of which he was a part bears little resemblance to what is called "conservatism" in the United States. As a representative of German conservatism Gehlen was not an apologist for capitalism and the changes it had wrought. His work shows the influence of a number of intellectual traditions including those associated with both conservatism and radicalism. The influence of Hegel, Max Weber, Max Scheler, and Oswald Spengler is evident but so is that of Marx, Werner Sombart, and Ferdinand Tönnies, as well as Henri Bergson, Pitirim Sorokin, David Riesman and Jose Ortega y Gasset. Gehlen synthesized the contributions of these divergent intellectual traditions in this analysis of modern society. The theme of this work is the loss of individual autonomy that is the consequence of modern social formations, a theme that American "conservatives" rarely address outside of a narrow political-economic context. Gehlen's critique of industrial culture is comprehensive and suggests an affinity between the concerns of conservatism and those commonly associated with a radical critique of modern society, although his conservative universe of discourse is distinctive from that of the radicals.

The original German title reveals the subject of the book with greater fidelity than the denatured title chosen for the English translation. Correctly translated, *The Soul in the Age of Technology* preserves Gehlen's intention to explain the predicament of modern man without ignoring the metaphysical element generally considered beyond the grasp of social science. Working within the philosophical tradition that maintains the existence of a *Zeitgeist*, Gehlen (p. 54) believed that "technique and economic arrangements, the arts and sciences, morality and the content of consciousness of a given age all hang together." For Gehlen, the problem of the modern industrial era was that the relationships between the different aspects of culture were highly complex and opaque to the average person. Gehlen (p. 48) considered it the task of sociology to investigate social existence, identify characteristic principles of an age, and thereby render life intelligible.

Gehlen's starting point, common among continental social theorists, is a characterization of man's philosophical anthropology. According to Gehlen, compared to other animals, man is born with an unfinished character. This means that man's "fit" with the environment is incomplete because humans are instinctually deprived. Man and his creations constitute "nature artificielle" (p. 5) for Gehlen. Therefore, it is necessary for man to engage in "facilitation" (p. 3), by which Gehlen meant that it is necessary for humans to provide for their survival through artifice. Man is assisted in "facilitation" by an "essential characteristic," which Gehlen (p. 17) called the "circle of action." The "circle of action," or the ability to monitor the effects of our actions and change our actions in order to achieve desired results, compensates for the lack of an immediate harmonious relationship with the environment. Because human existence is characterized by this "open-endedness of arrangements" (p. 33) humans seek to achieve a stable, ordered existence. A measure of stability is secured through the three "great 'integrative' forces of human existence;" labor, language and religion (p. 135).

Gehlen does not explicitly identify any one of these integrative forces as most important, and none of them are immune to the ravages of the technological age. Although Gehlen (p. 135)

stated that only religion can come to grips with man's ontological status, most attention was directed toward the issue of labor, Gehlen maintained that human culture was characterized foremost by the progressive objectification of human labor. The constant human need for "facilitation" and the progressive objectification of human labor has produced three distinct relationships between man and technique, and therefore, between man and nature. The following passage, which Gehlen quoted from Hermann Schmidt, defined each of the three stages of human culture, and their implications for human existence.

In the first, that the *tool*, the physical energy necessary for labor and the required intellectual input still depend on the subject. In the second, that of the *machine*, physical energy becomes objectified by means of technique. Finally, in the third stage, that of *automata*, technical means make dispensible input from the subject (p. 19).

That is to say, the process of objectifying human labor aimed at "facilitation" culminates in the elimination of the need for humans to engage in the "circle of action" since automata can now perform this without human intervention and guidance. Neo-Marxists are sensitive to this problem also, but call it the "reversal of the subject and the object." Gehlen's conservative critique converges with the neo-Marxist position; man has lost his subjectivity to automata.

For Gehlen, automata deprive humans of part of their nature, and relegate them to meaningless activities such as work in industrial societies or the "formal and empty notion of 'leisure'" (p. 153). In the age of automata man's relationship to technique forces the renegotiation of man's relationship to all other aspects of culture, and transforms human consciousness as well. "Social existence. . . revolves largely around sets of machines. This makes it necessary for people . . . to operate at the points of intersection between the various machines" (p. 151-152), which forces them to adopt the rationalized, bounded, depersonalized, specialized

ethos typical of the modal personality in industrial society; the *functionary* (p. 147). Gehlen (p. 73ff) believed that this modal personality signaled a "new subjectivism" that combined the contradictory tendencies of modern consciousness; an affinity for "abstract conceptualization," as seen in modern science and art, and "primitivism," by which Gehlen meant hedonism. Despite the harsh criticism of hedonism evident in the following passage—

We live in an external world constructed industrially, thoroughly technicalized, harboring millions of ego-centered, self-conscious individuals, all seeking to enrich their own psychic existence. None of these individuals questions . . . a momentary, irresponsible quickening of . . . existence by means of any stimuli and experiences whatever (p. 83).

Gehlen maintained that ego-centered individualism is a *rational* response to existence in the technical age where external institutions are constantly changing.

To greatly simplify Gehlen's argument, the modern industrial era presents man with a new challenge that he has been unable to resolve. Man does not understand or find meaning in the external world in which he operates, and this painful experience has led each of us to turn inward to seek stability and meaning in our psyche. In the technological era man's relationship with nature has changed and this change transforms man's understanding of himself. Man has severed his direct relation with material nature and, as a consequence, nature no longer supplies interpretations of human existence. To offset this loss, man increasingly seeks explanations of his essence by recourse to interpretations drawn from his own creations. In other words, man now interrogates automata in an effort to answer questions about himself. This, however, has proven inadequate.

Man has not been able to find meaning in either his own psyche or automata, and continues to be beset by the enigma of his own existence. Since there is nothing solid upon which to anchor existence in the industrial era, people experience both the external world and internal being as continuous flux and

contradiction. Gehlen explained this by characterizing the cultural tendencies of the technological age as a combination of extreme opposites. The technological age combines hubris with deep seated personal insecurity and anxiety, rationality with irrationality, the domination of nature with increasing estrangement from the world, hectic activity with passivity, and greater complexity with the shrinking capacity of man to adapt. These tendencies afflict both external and internal experience, and the prospect for reconciling these tendencies is actually becoming more remote because modern man attempts to remain culturally conservative while in practice he is a thoroughgoing pragmatic radical.

To extrapolate Gehlen's point, on one level humans seek stability and attach importance to those structures and institutions that help maintain a stable social existence. This is clearly seen in man's attachment to the family and a professed desire to guarantee its survival. Despite this desire to maintain stable social relations man has embraced the pragmatic radicalism that is the result of "the functional connection between natural science, technique, and the industrial system. . . (that now) presuppose one another" (p. 10). This amalgamation of the three establishments into a single monolith has resulted in the displacement of an ethical orientation to nature and social relations, and has resulted in the promotion of "a purely objective, rational, and technical concern with effectiveness" (p. 101). Under this onslaught everything else, including the family, must adapt or give way.

Gehlen believed that man's limited capacity to adapt, based on limitations imposed by our philosophical anthropology, has gone unrecognized. In fact, man's capacity to adapt has been taken for granted, especially by modern psychology. Pragmatic radicals mistakenly assume that human adaptive capacity is infinite. Into this breach created by the abiding need for stability and the incessant change intrinsic to the advance of science-industry-technique are the two stabilizing devices characteristic of the technological era; stereotypes and ideologies. Man's confusing experience and need for stability and order lead to the

adoption of these stabilizing devices that overstate the orderliness of reality, and are therefore a threat to man's ability to overcome the problems generated by the age of technology.

Confronted by a complex, ever-changing world in which tradition and custom no longer exist and institutions themselves are made or unmade at will, people seek refuge in ready-made value sets that simplify reality, but cloud understanding in the process. Both stereotypes and ideologies provide templates by which reality is given familiar form, which saves man the painful experience of trying to solve the riddle of existence on his own. Both of these devices provide a measure of stability but at the expense of solving the contradictions that are the source of man's ongoing problems in the technological age. The adoption of stereotypes and ideologies permit us to continue to function in the technological age but only if we do not probe beyond the answers these devices provide.

Despite this dreary portrait, Gehlen (p. 146) did believe that all ages, including our own, manage to produce a few "superior" individuals who can avoid the mistakes inherent in stereotypical or ideological thinking. These people are important because it is the superior individual who manages to achieve a new interpretation of existence. Unfortunately, the superior individual frequently is reviled or worse, and the massification of culture in the technological era tends to preclude the existence of superior individuals. As mass media become more intrusive, cover larger geographical areas, as well as penetrate into areas previously considered private, the homogenization of consciousness continues apace. Gehlen was concerned that the technological age failed to preserve a sphere in which superior individuals could be nurtured.

Given Gehlen's belief that superior individuals were becoming more rare, it is understandable that he also maintained that the Enlightenment and its premises were at an end. In several passages Gehlen claimed that the predominant world-view of the age of technology, the world-view of the Enlightenment, had broken down. Gehlen's assessment of the age of technology suggests that the violation of man's philosophical anthropology is at the root of the end of the Enlightenment world-view. Gehlen

believed that social-psychological problems would lead man to replace the world-view of the Enlightenment with dogmatism rather than a new, more adequate interpretation of existence. In asserting this Gehlen did not foresee the rise of what has been called the "therapeutic state," the goal of which is to deal with people who exhibit the worst symptoms of maladaptation to life in the technological age, and are not assuaged by stereotypes and ideologies. Despite the oversight Gehlen concluded that very little stood in the way of this new order of things.

Because of his focus on social-psychology Gehlen offered only feeble solutions to the problems he identified. Quoting from Alfred Weber, Gehlen (p. 154) stated that "we must seek to preserve ourselves from the mechanism." Despite this appeal to individual autonomy, Gehlen was pessimistic that anything could be done to save mankind from the emerging post-Enlightenment neo-dogmatism. Gehlen mentioned only four influences that could have a positive effect on man's future; "overdetermined" institutions, asceticism, ideals, and jural order. Gehlen believed that "overdetermined" institutions were necessary because they are "not only . . . functional in a . . . practical sense, but . . . allow the most demanding and noblest motivations to express themselves" (p. 162). The family and education were the most important of these overdetermined institutions that remain since they exist to fulfill both material and spiritual needs, and provide an arena for ideals and asceticism. Likewise, jural order, because it is oriented toward reciprocity, is designed to guard against the triumph of selfish interests that Gehlen believes erode the basis of society. Gehlen did not identify the means by which these sanctuaries could be secured from further deterioration much less how their influence could be extended. In fact, Gehlen (p. 32) stated that it was no longer possible to start a *movement* that could change the spirit of the times because of the "disappearance of stable themes around which mass opinion might aggregate."

Today, after a quarter century, this argument is worth further consideration. Although Gehlen was aware that man no longer had an ethical relationship with external nature, and considered it wrong because it failed to recognize a limit or "boundary to the permissible" (p. 100), he did not perceive the

importance that this insight would have for the future. For someone writing in the 1950s, Gehlen came as close as one could come to the source of challenge to the Enlightenment world-view. Since 1957 the challenge to the technological age has come from people who have developed an ecological consciousness in response to external events that have revealed the vulnerability of nature. Perhaps had Gehlen chosen to pursue the breakdown of the environment rather than the breakdown of the individual as the central problem of the technological age he would have also been able to offer more adequate solutions to the problems he identified.

Gehlen was not a reactionary and did not suggest that mankind could simply turn back the clock. Something new was necessary although Gehlen feared the new existence that was emerging as an unintended consequence of human activity. Unlike naive conservatives who maintain that whatever exists is good and should be preserved, Gehlen sought to alert mankind to the debased condition of modern existence. Gehlen believed that a new understanding of existence based on historical verities was necessary and possible, but only if social life conformed to man's philosophical anthropology. The essence of his critique of life in the age of technology was that man had lost touch with external nature as well as human nature. Any adequate solution to the problems of the soul in the age of technology would seek to restore a conscious, harmonious relationship to both.

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Joseph Julian. *Social Problems* (Third Edition). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1980, 572 pp., \$13.50 cloth.

Joseph Julian's *Social Problems* discusses most issues usually dealt with in general textbooks in a very systematic and highly structured fashion. The overall layout of the book follows a progression from micro-level to macro-level phenomena. The author begins by discussing problems concerning individual behavior (e.g., drug abuse and crime), then discusses problems of general concern to society (e.g., discrimination, family work relations, and human sexuality), and concludes by describing issues of global significance (e.g., pollution and over population). Each social problem is assigned an entire chapter, and each chapter follows a similar pattern. To capture the readers attention, chapters open with bold, sometimes shocking facts. The author next provides in-depth definitions and, if applicable, short histories of the problems. The main part of each chapter consists of extensive, lucid discussions of the relevant sociological facts.

There are essentially only four shortcomings to Julian's book. First, the author introduces various statistical tables, yet sometimes make no reference to these in the text and seldom offers a detailed explanation. In many cases, only the advanced student will be able to understand the significance of these statistics. Second, in the beginning of the book, Julian introduces social problems theories; however, he inadequately integrates these with specific social problems. The third problem is the absence of a chapter dealing with education. Although some aspects of problems associated with education are dealt with in the chapters on "Sex Roles and Inequality" and "Prejudice and Discrimination," an overall discussion of education is missing. A fourth criticism concerns the sections of each chapter entitled "Prospects." Here Julian suggests possible solutions to social problems from a structural functionalist point of view. The author makes no effort to integrate other sociological theories in these sections.

Despite these shortcomings, Joseph Julian's *Social Problems* is an up-to-date, easy to follow textbook appropriate for most social problems courses.

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