Solzhenitsyn, Skinner and freedom of the will: these are the people and the problem with which William Barrett begins and ends The Illusion of Technique. It might seem that Solzhenitsyn and Skinner are a rather odd pair upon whom to base a discussion of the problem of freedom of the will. For Barrett, however, there are no two better contemporaries around whom to develop his primary thesis that freedom can and in fact must be made real in a society of extreme technology. While Skinner is a writer in the relatively free United States, he nonetheless expounds the virtues of total social control and conditioning; whereas Solzhenitsyn, a writer from the totalitarian Soviet Union, argues for the absolute spiritual freedom of human beings. "Clearly," notes Barrett, "we live in a strange time." Now it might seem that an equivocation has taken place on the word "freedom," for clearly Skinner speaks of a political freedom while Solzhenitsyn has in mind philosophical freedom. But this is just the point that Barrett wishes to make, namely that the two types of freedom must finally collapse into one notion. Our views of political freedom, he claims, directly influence our views of philosophical freedom and vice versa. It is with that belief that Barrett proceeds to investigate the nature of technique and the importance of human freedom for our contemporary world. The great danger in our century, according to Barrett, is that whereas "[f]ormerly determinists argued for a metaphysical reality that remained invisible behind the scenes; in our century they have not only brought it onto the scene, but also made it dominate the action, as they seek to shape society by its light."

While this book has faults, which I discuss below, it still is to be applauded for one key aspect. It, like Carl Sagan's The Dragons of Eden, attempts to return our thoughts concerning the nature of science and intellectual endeavors away from the technological side, which has predominated our thought for the last fifty years, and place it more in accord with theology and
the search for final ends, which has been emphasized historically. Like Sagan, Barrett sees much of the contemporary view of science as overemphasizing technology and often directly identifying science with technology, in so doing forgetting the important role that the search for final rather than immediate ends plays in the advancement of science and intellectual thought in general.

Barrett's approach to the problem of technology and freedom is first to investigate what he takes to be the ideal par excellence of technique in this century, namely symbolic logic, and to show the limitations and failure of that ideal. He accomplishes this by contrasting the ideal language approach exemplified in Russell's and Whitehead's Principia Mathematica and Wittgenstein's Tractatus with the latter Wittgenstein and his attempt to open up the restrictions that have traditionally been placed on the nature and role of language. From there Barrett moves to Heidegger and his improvement on the later Wittgenstein; an improvement, he claims, in the sense that language only confronts us within "Being" and thus "Being" is more fundamental and important for intellectual investigation than language. However, as Heidegger stresses, "Being" just is and nothing more can be expected of it. Thus while it may encompass all, it is only understood or exemplified through action. This latter emphasis leads Barrett to the pragmatism of William James where he concludes that the problem of freedom is one which ultimately is dialectically inconclusive and that—because determinism lacks a rigorous logical demonstration and proves to be non-falsifiable—humans have the right to believe that they are free. To paraphrase James "my first act of freedom is to believe in freedom."

The problems with Barrett's book are numerous. His extreme dislike for Russell and Sartre make his comments on these two philosophers often useless. For instance, on Russell's continual shifting of positions on the nature of the external world, Barrett holds "Here philosophy has become a playful exercise. This is the higher frivolousness carried out with aristocratic panache. Lord Russell indeed!" Of Sartre on freedom he says, "I cannot read Sartre on freedom without sensing the ghost of Buridan's donkey hovering in the wings." But then again similar comments made of others are not only amusing but somehow enlightening. When discussing Skinner's ardent campaigning for his ideal community, Barrett remarks, "One feels that Professor Skinner might have made a great career for himself in advertising or public relations."
Other problems are more disturbing. His strange branding of the later Wittgenstein as a behaviorist stands in direct contrast to his wish to show how the latter tries to release us from a narrow picture of how words and world relate, to say nothing of Wittgenstein's own proclamations. "'Are you not really a behaviourist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human behaviour is a fiction?'--If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a grammatical fiction." Even stranger is his treatment of Heidegger's Nazism. After having criticized Descartes and Husserl for ignoring the concrete aspects of existence he claims we can "look past such accidents of personality and history" as Heidegger's adhesion to Nazism. But then only four pages later he attempts to explain these "accidents of personality and history" by Heidegger's love for his homeland and the "strong appeal to regional feelings" made by the nationalist party. Such explanations merely leave one wondering why he bothers to mention the relationship at all.

Another minor problem I see with the book is Barrett's inability to put into words a desire he expresses implicitly throughout the book. That desire is the wish to find some common aspect in contemporary intellectual fields that will explain their natures and tie them more closely together. Numerous references to this can be found. "We live in our own atonal world." On "science-technology": "what is the force of the hyphen here? Is it only an accidental coupling, or does it signify some more essential bond between the two terms it unites?" "The belief in the decisive role of technique has not vanished; it has passed from the philosophers into the culture at large." What is it that underlies the contemporary movements in the arts and sciences and culture at large? Is it a belief in the value of technique or is it such that certain areas of study, such as quantum mechanics, positivism, and atonal music have different conceptions of rationality than many of their counterparts? Barrett provides little help here.

The major problem with this book, however, is Barrett's misunderstanding of the linguistic turn as initiated by Wittgenstein. This is exemplified in his claim that language is only to be found within "Being" and "that language itself is not understandable apart from Being." Language is seen by Barrett as a communicative set of conventions that are adopted to help us understand nature. "[W]e might, for example, decide to change our mathematical conventions and drop the notion of irrational numbers altogether. After all, they have been a troublesome part of mathematics, and no alto-
gether satisfactory theory of them has yet been worked out. But the diameter of the square would still be there to be measured. And it is this need to deal with nature that ultimately takes the measure of our various con-
ventions--mathematical and others." What is missed here is Wittgenstein's later conception of language. Barrett presupposes the very model of language that Wittgenstein argued was too narrow. Language, for the later Wittgen-
stein, was not to be conceived as something which is subsequently added to pre-existing objects. It is not as though language and the world were independent enti-
ties, but that we come to the world through language itself. We are to unite linguistic signs, objects and human activities into one notion and treat them as de-
pendent rather than independent entities.

Simply to look upon Wittgenstein as introducing in the "linguistic turn" as another choice of how one might choose to proceed intellectually, is as superficial as simply saying that Kant introduces a "Copernican turn." For it is not that Kant simply moves from an emphasis on "being" to an emphasis on consciousness--as if we had an option--but that what is involved for Kant is a whole new philosophical orientation. That is, he stressed a radically different notion of objectivity than that which had preceded him. Similarly Wittgenstein exemplifies, indeed, a linguistic turn. But it is much more than simply beginning with language rather than being or consciousness. It is not as if we have a choice. We begin where we are and where we find ourselves, and that for Wittgenstein is in the milieu of the "forms of life," modes of activity which involve intentional actions, in accord with rules or norms, directed to purposeful ends. These activities are divisible into language-games which are, for Wittgenstein, the most general way to characterize the relationship of word and world. Language-games are to be thought of as fluid, dynamic and evolutionary, where the constitutive rules of a particular activity are the key to interpre-
tation, meaning and objectivity. That is, in order to engage in any rational activity, the constitutive rules of the language-game are importantly involved. It is this radical shift in viewing the relationship of words and world that Barrett misses in the later Wittgenstein.

Thus very much like his previous book Irrational Man, Barrett's The Illusion of Technique is most en-
lightening when he puts forward his own views and much less so when he is interpreting the positions of others. Fortunately much of his new book consists of the former and is therefore well worth the difficulties encountered with the latter.