Domination and the Flight from Being

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The contention of this chapter is that Australian society is ruled in a vastly different way from that asserted by either the simple Marxist approach which sees owners manipulating workers in suble and not so subtle ways, or the technocratic approach which views capitalism as having been superseded by advanced industrial societies ruled by everybody's interest by scientists and managers through technocracies. I wish to sketch this society as one where technology itself has become an ideology which extends domination over individuals further than ever before, so far indeed that the system itself is no longer necessarily consciously oriented towards simple exploitation of workers by capitalists - the goal being profit - but rather towards the preservation and extension of the ongoing system. Development is now an end in itself irrespective of whether it brings about a greater individual realization. The use of technology has pervaded the system to such a degree that in recent decades the system itself has tended to become self-regulating. Major stresses within the system are dealt with internally; this has the net effect of advancing the system as a whole. (I do not want to say that contradictions

1. For many of the ideas in this chapter I am indebted to the work of Marcuse and Habermas. See especially Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964; and Jurgen Habermas, Toward a Rational Society, Heinemann, London, 1971, ch. 6.


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within the system, such as economic and ecological crises may not be causes of instability; however, I am focusing attention on an area which I believe is particularly significant.) Domination over the individual exists exter
durally as well as formally institutions, in cultural as well as narrowly 'political' ways, and interest groups through intersociety forces which are conditioned by the society through its agencies in the service of domina
tion.

How is Australian society to be characterized? There is no golden path through the enormous number of facts which will lead to an adequate characterization. What is not adequate will of course depend on the task at hand, but it is obvious from a survey of the literature that, at any account, nothing nearly complete has been produced, so far as an understanding of our society is concerned.

There is little reliance on a sound theoretical framework that might ground the empirical. Sometimes, narrow scientific criteria implicitly exclude much that is significant in the selection of facts; frequently, the empirical evidence is presented as complete in itself, as though there is no valid framework beyond what is presented. These approaches both tend to give an aura of pure objectivity to facts which, at least in part, are subjectively selected. Further, a multi
tude of indiscriminated facts can obscure a real hierarchy. A positivistic approach, which takes the facts chosen (as chosen) they must be, given the infinite number of facts, in the validation of their own significance and importance does not go past the first step.

There are people at the other extreme who do not bother about empirical facts except when these happen to fit their own preconceptions. Such people think they see in perspec
tion of an ultimate truth which does not need to be examined. They believe that Australia is a lucky country, an egalitarian community where everybody can do basically what he likes; or else they think that Australia is under the absolute domination of U.S. imperialism through its helpers, the Australian bourgeoisie, and that the worker would be seething with discontent and full of revolutionary
arrangement, but as a natural or given one; the situation only becomes political for them when, for example, a fac-
tory goes on strike and the government or court intervenes.
Conforming to the norm or the way of life of society is not
regarded as political; only when there is some transgression
of the norms is the situation seen as political — whereas, in
fact, these two states are merely differing political stances.
Intrapersonally and interpersonally, the fact that people
are socialized by others does not seem to rank as political,
although this is perhaps the most political of areas.
A general recognition of the omnipresence of politics in
beginning to exist in Australia, and the ‘cultural’ approach
to politics is gaining ground among left theorists. It
recognizes that what is wrong with society has to do with
the domination of people — their living in prescribed ways
and their lack of communication. Society is not ruled
through simple institutional violence but through all sorts
of legitimating agencies, from the family and school to the
mass media: the culture is their way of life and their way
of life is an unfree one. Undoubtedly, there is a group of
people — those who own and control the means of produc-
tion — who benefit financially from controlling workers,
but this does not entail that institutions are consciously
run by them: all that is implied is that the system works in
their interests. The system works in the service of the per-
formance principle, a principle devoted to the fulfillment
of the end of achievement, irrespective of its nature, of
whether it serves human or inhuman ends. Our society is geared to
what has motivated profit since the inception of capitalism
— the slavish quest for more. Development for the pro-
vision of ‘more’ is viewed as value-free, an end in itself,
while the entire societal framework lends achievement for
the sake of achievement. With the institutionalization of
rapid technological change there occurred the elevation of
means to ends, or rather the entire dehumanisation of ends.2

3. The Melbourne-based journal *Arena* in particular has recently
moved markedly in this direction.
4. Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, Oxford University Press,
New York, 1967; see especially ch. 1.

Technology seemed an independent power, one which
favoured not one section of the human community but all
sections. This was the dream: no longer would some suffer
so that others could thrive.

The coincidence of the development of capitalism with
that of technology tended to ally the two. Capitalism — or a
reformed version of it — was legitimated as the system which
would allow the greatest and freest development of tech-
ology, and technology could be used as a solution to some
of the problems encountered by capitalism. Technology
could provide the appearance of rapid change and improve-
ment — and, indeed, a feature of capitalism in advanced
societies is its relatively rapid ameliorations, the continued
promise of slight better conditions and slightly different
goods. This is what is behind the success of the capitalist
use of technology, and is psychologically addictive. The
search for a better reality is translated into terms which are
comprehensible to the person who appreciates only concrete
reality, that to which his senses (particularly that of vision)
can immediately respond. That is to say, the search for a
beter life takes the form of a search for greater material
satisfaction. Where this should be learnt is in the area of
sexual relationships, but even here the great emphasis on the
mechanical aspects of sex, and the relatively minor empha-
sis on the communicative aspect of love, testifies to the
ubiquity of a quantitative attitude which aims at smooth
running without hitches. Emotions are not allowed to inter-
face. The very emphasis on social conformity exemplified by
agonistic public reaction to non-conformity (e.g., dem-
ontisations, homosexuals) is evidence of the evaluation of
function over freedom.

Most people in modern society suffer some form of psy-
chological disturbance. This may be treated either as a
symptom of a wider disease of society, or — what is far less
threatening to the individual psyche — as indicating a con-
ditioner which can probably be treated by sedatives or alco-

5. See for example J. Wilson Conway, *The Great Australian Stupor*,
boll to bring the person concerned to an 'adjustment' with his environment. By providing the latter sort of relief, the individual may mobilize his defences against any painful and threatening changes, and the 'efficacy' of symptomatic treatment of this type itself legitimates the state of affairs in which the neuroses appear. Adjustment is effected and all is well since this is seen as a supremely valuable condition. The axiom that a man should lead his life to the full is doc-
tored to mean not that there should be realization of the individual's being, but relatively frictionless interpersonal relations and a conformist style of living. This is the ideal of 'the good block'.

Very much related to this is the widespread authoritarian-
ism to be found in Australia, even on such political issues as demonstrations, conscientious objection, and censorship. From the beginning of white settlement, the state has played a par-
ticularly important role, and the population's reliance on the state to make many decisions and to overcome problems has contributed to this factor.

Authoritarianism is the interest in crushing individuality, in imbuing people with the 'right' attitudes and concepts so that they will function well in the system and not challenge it. Authoritarianism denies the validity of the individual's experience and power, and takes the responsibility for a man's actions from him, projecting it on to society, the experts, the law, religion and so on. The individual is not in charge of his own activity, and may seem being under the control of a sometimes blind and irresistible alien force, Opp

6 See for example Professor Basil Hatfield, cited in the Aus-
tralian, 15 October 1971.
7 See R. D. Laing, 'The Obvious', in David Cooper (ed.), The
8 See J. W. Berry, 'Preliminary Evidence for Personal Authori-
tarianism and Ethnocentrism in Australia', Politica, vol. V, no. 5,
November 1970; Douglas McCallum, 'The State of Liberty', in
Peter Calman (ed.), Australian Civilization, Cheshire, Melbourne,
1962; Craig McGregor, Profile of Australia, Penguin Books, 1964,
PP 77-92.

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The concept of democracy is thus created for the ideology of continuous in-
stitutionalized technological development to take charge and legitimize the established order. If the individual does not manage his own power and the validity of his experience, then the reification of technology as omnipotent and by defauon will benefit less his anxiety by providing a prettyst potency. Attempting to surrender one's responsibility to an external structure is typical of the authoritarian per-
sonality, exemplified by the paradigm civil servant, the com-
pany man, and the upwardly mobile 'middle-class' worker. The emue for more and more gadgets, the passivity implied by continual television viewing and the myriad manipulations of the fashion industry - these all mark the placing of the structure of decision-making beyond the individual, as well as indicating a blinding faith in the value and pre-eminence of the present social order together with a complete impotence to change it in any significant way.

When one's life is pre-structured, so are goals, and there-
fore also the criteria of success. Such inertness is relative to the requirements of capitalist technological society, e.g., the socially derived need for increasing numbers of goods, the social definition of attractive personal appearance as the nearest possible approximation to models seen in the latest fashion magazines and beauty contests, or the ability to do uninteresting work for long periods.

It may be objected that Australians are anti-authoritarian because there is a general distrust and antipathy towards parliamentarians but, unless it can be demonstrated that this distrust applies to other areas of decision-making, it would fail to prove the point. Apart from the fact that parliamentarians are for the most part far from the image of those well-educated and efficient experts who are sup-
posed to reign in most areas of power (e.g. top company directors and public servants), it is generally accepted among social scientists at least that parliament has little to do with major decisions and running the country. Even when decisions are ratified by parliament, they are not initiated by it: parliament acts merely as a rubber stamp.
My view obviously assumes the value judgement that this society is lacking in the requisites of individual freedom and indeed mobilizes against it. It is, necessarily, an anti-authoritarian view to approach this society from a standpoint which is in a sense external to it. This externality need not imply a complete otherness, an approach from the clouds, merely that the validation of norms, the selection of facts and their interpretation are not bound to the peculiar prevailing political organization and ideology. My standpoint is external in that it does not assume conventional appraisals as a final validating context, yet it is internal to the individual and his associations and products. In modern times, as Marcuse points out, the possibilities of a utopia on earth are real from a technological standpoint, but what is preventing this utopia from being realized is an anachronistic social organization – capitalism, with all its implications. This approach is grounded firmly within the tradition of Western civilisation, in its hopes, its philosophy, its achievements and, in general, its history, as representing a process of man’s recognition and sometimes realizing some of his possibilities for good and evil. The possibilities are determinate, coming from man’s past, his discoveries and his ability to choose and act.

The greater the potential for emancipation and the greater the contingency of the present state of affairs, the greater is the necessity for control over people at the deepest level to keep the present society going. Paradoxically, the more the alternative becomes possible, the more impossible it becomes. The modern discoveries of man (in technology, psychology, etc.) are used in the cause of domination and succeed in dehumanizing and restructuring the personality. What may be a magnificent vehicle of progress – technology – may be the very means of impeding it and reinforcing the present. Instead of producing food for starving millions.


if his relations with other people become property relations, his world becomes an alienated one. Production relations define human relations. Work and worth are evaluated in terms of the market-place. Even in the family, the economic aspect becomes dominant—the woman in the homogenous middle-class family makes it possible for the man to pursue economic activity. This alienated existence means that the definition of reality, of what is real and what is not, is a complete function of the alienation of men from themselves. In these circumstances, that which a man defines as real will be generally that which is unreal, and vice versa. His experience will be alien to him, his hopes and fantasies will seem utopian and unrealizable. In the given world, which is regarded as natural and one of necessity, where the self is lost in activities which are not its own, where the activities do not constitute an expression of a man's whole self, but conform to a pattern of imposed wraiths (first externally imposed on the self, then emanating from within), these wraiths will be characterized as real. Our type of society has been characterized as a 'society of the spectacle'. The bread and circuses of ancient Imperial Rome exist today on a far greater scale. Under the reign of the spectacle, the entire environment becomes a pseudo-world. The image becomes reality. The total social reality becomes a spectacle.11

The transition from the inner-directed to the other-directed man marks a change which represents an acceptance of the system and its goals, and involves the co-operation of the people in furthering it. The alienated world is the only world that people know—this world is so alienated, so other, that people do not recognize it as split off from them, and they do not recognize their aims and goals in false ones because

11. The themes of the above paragraph are explored particularly well in Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle, Black and Red, Detroit, 1979. See also Jean Hyppolite, Studies on Marx and Hegel, Basic Books, New York, 1969. Hyppolite argues that Marx held to a firm distinction between essence and appearance. Related are the writings of R.D. Laing and David Cooper who argue against conventional definitions of sanity and insanity.
geared to a definition of development which favours acqui-
siveness, the foundation of capitalist values. Indeed, if the
system functions smoothly, there is no need for conscious
control by the capitalists; the 'rules of the game', while being
neutral as regards individuals, are themselves weighted. The
system has become self-regulating.

However, there are inequalities arising from those that are
structured into the system. The subordination of drafted residence
and others connected with demobilization are cases where
the system comes down hard on certain people instead of
leaving them alone. Other instances might exist where white-
collar crime is often not punished or where sentences are
lenient in comparison with the brutality meted out to many
working-class people by the police and the courts. I am not
however, suggesting that these types of discrimination are
what keeps the system going.

The self-regulating model allows a seemingly independent role
for the state and other institutions. These agencies are
not necessarily manipulated by capitalists, though some may
be in fact. The law may be administered fairly or equally,
recalling Anatole France's famous remark that the law pro-
hibits both rich and poor alike from sleeping under bridges,
since the rich have no need to sleep under bridges. 'Fair
administration of the law in an unequal situation discrimi-
nates against some and favours others.

The courts may even override a legislative decision aimed
at limiting the freedom of those interested in undermining
the system, e.g. the Communist Party Dissociation Act was
declared invalid in 1951 by the High Court. On occasion,
the legal system may act against established interests, but
this is offset by generalised benefits, e.g. terminating the
elasticity of the system for reform, demonstrating the 'equality'
of the system. But even without these advantages, the
system functions through the generally shared values
and assumptions of its members. This must allow for vari-
bility within the independently functioning components parts
which are linked mediate, not immediately. Similarly, the
government may introduce anti-inflationary 'credit squeeze'
is to engage in a similar reification. I am not suggesting that there are no links. Indeed, there are strong ones, particularly between the Libertas and some sections of the capitalist class, as demonstrated (for example with the surging of Gorton. Nor am I suggesting that there would be no intersection if a government were to spurn the will of a significant number of businessmen to a great degree. What I am suggesting is that a positive correlation between the needs of the 'economy' and the needs of business is usual but that an occasional governments may act against the needs of business as seen by most businessmen, particularly those interested in short-term benefits. Only in a situation where the government acts in a revolutionary direction, by legislating against private enterprise as a whole and initiating measures such as workers' control, could such a danger exist. In a situation where there is much discontent among the people, the government may serve the system by diverting attention from its real basis and not interfering with it. In any case, the interest of the economy as a whole — and thus of capitalists in the long run — may well be served by the government nationalizing certain industries and legislating so that the workers obtain a slightly better share of the cake.

The welfare state, in the present circumstances, serves big business extremely well, even where individual employers are tired. A Labor government without interest in a total revolutionary transformation may help keep the system stable in a way no Liberal government could. The concentration on the issue of state control by some members of the Left may, by ignoring the effect on the system as a whole, help the system itself by reifying certain parts of it as transformative in themselves, whereas these may actually serve the system through more adequate planning.

The nature of domination by capitalism has changed radically to the extent that knowledge in the form of techniques...
We may conventionally divide the modes of domination into the categories of technical, social, institutional and institutional domination. Viewed in this way, it may be seen that domination is not only overt, external oppression, but that people are willing participants in their own oppression. Conditioned by an authoritarian socialization, people assimilate in its prescribed goals, adapting its values and finding it difficult and agonizing to overcome this domination. It is often easier to conform with one’s past—the views, perceptions and actions of others—and one’s conditioned urge—than to challenge them, even where they are recognized as oppressive. In brief, people find fundamental change painful.

The question of how most Australians live their lives ought to be the subject of intense investigation. It is here, in their everyday lives, that most domination exists. The human structure of domination does not consist merely in the extraordinary activities and events (the mishaps, accidents and particular circumstances of some people), nor in the effective prescription of certain activities (e.g., staging demonstrations, or reading what one wants to read). When the system is functioning normally, we can look to ordinary life to provide us with prevalent forms.

We may ask what is significant inside and outside people’s homes. Is there any real distinction between public and private affairs? Television provides an example of the unification of public and private worlds. During a significant part of their waking time at home, people are imbued with the societal values and messages: the individual is conditioned to react rather than act by the form and content of this ‘unilateral communication’. Even the domestic comedies provide a normal style to which home life may be catered.

The world is now in the loungeroom, and there is nothing the viewer can do to change it. The world is also mediated. Reality becomes an extent a function of the programme.

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conveniences for administrative purposes, but indicates a lack of integration of the self. People are 'ontologically insecure', their lives not being experienced as continuous or whole. People have little awareness of, or contact with, their roots in the past, and have no concept of the future. They live a day-to-day existence in which they 'get by'. No sense of individual growth is felt. Instead, there is a stunted existence where the 'is' is not the positive one of some active engagement but the negative one of avoiding misfortune. Being has been degraded to survival. The main contention of this chapter is with the flight from being that is manifested in a lose of self, resulting from the violent encroachments of the capitalist system on the individual. 

May says that we live in a 'schizoid world' where we are immersed in achieving, yet removed from our feelings, where undeniably a lot is happening, but where this hides apathy, withdrawal of feeling, and a detached lack of involvement in what is happening. In this way, the claim of many people to be 'happy', apart from the obvious denial involved, is incompatible with a continuing withdrawn state where feelings have been all but eliminated.

This schizoid state of affairs has, as I have argued above, its own rewards. The subject as object enjoys many material satisfactions which, while the yearning for wholeness is systematically anaesthetised and perverted into the wish for more and more goods, ensure the people's loyalty to the system. Employees become more and more adapted to their state of existence. Their conditions have improved.


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markedly in most areas, and the quantitative demands of the trade unions for higher wages and the like are being slowly accepted. With the development of automation, difficult manual labour and the most tedious mental jobs are gradually being eliminated. Employees increasingly satisfy themselves that better prospects are ahead. Typically, they classify themselves as 'middle class'. There is no identity here to conform with the established order; even when they characterise themselves as 'working class', this is by no means implied a dissatisfaction with the system as such.

One of the major characteristics of Australian capitalism is that it is inextricably linked with other advanced capitalist societies. Economic ties with the U.S., Britain and Japan are documented not only by other contributors to this volume, but also by the financial pages of any daily newspaper. Economically, Australia is a colony for foreign investment. Significant areas of economic life are increasingly beyond governmental control because the headquarters of the multinational corporations are overseas. The advent of these organisations reflects the powerful economic forces leading to a significant acceleration in the concentration of economic resources, fewer self-employed people and a hierarchically structured company structure whose head is in another country. Politically, Australia has no independent foreign policy and its domestic policies are certainly not basically different from those to be found in the U.S. Culturally, Britain and the U.S. have had strong influence. We have only to switch on our television sets to view American programmes interspersed with American-style commercials. The influence of outside forces should not be underestimated in view of the fact that, so far as communications are concerned, the world has shrunk to a 'global village', and the multinational corporations are taking over many key sectors of the world.
Italian economy. These corporations bring with them the latest in technology, the use of which has great repercussions on our culture. Further, Australia is not only "colonized" by other countries, but is itself a "mini-imperialist" powerhouse.

If late capitalism may be characterized by its central use of technology as a means of domination, it is within this area that the negation of capitalism may lie. The ever-expanding technological production, which provides a mainstay of the system by buying the adherence of the underlying population, requires at its heart a knowledge industry which continuously produces innovations. In order for this system to be stable, there must be constant change. As White argues in his chapter in this volume, there is a growing intellectually-trained proletariat which is responsible for the functioning of advanced capitalism. Education is less and less concerned with rote learning of facts, and the authoritarian manipulation of curriculum content is decreasing. This is not because the authorities have become more benign, rather, innovation requires intelligence, and constant change requires adaptability. If students are trained in techniques assuming presently known facts as final, the chances are that, by the time they finish their studies and go into industry, their training will be outdated. Flexibility, in White points out, is becoming the hallmark of modern education.

This flexibility presupposes a form of rationality, a way of seeing beyond the narrow problem into new areas. Successful research and innovation normally requires imagination, cooperation, and a broad approach. Thus the needs of the intellectual culture emerge with a glimmer of a transcending rationality which may call the system itself into question. It is no coincidence that the student revolt has become so important of late. This society, in which the

23. See Evans' chapter in this volume.
24. See Good Sharp and Doug White, 'Features of the Intellec-

militates against this possibility by its violation and nonrecognition of the self, so that radicals must achieve some personal autonomy in order to really stand against the system. They must initiate actions rather than just react. Freedom must be sensed as possibility, and the intellectual culture may provide a base for this.

Revolution may be achieved by people with needs which cannot be satisfied within the present structure. They would be aware that right from birth violent incursions are launched upon all in this society, destroying much sensibility and freedom. Radicals must face the consequences of these violations in themselves and, perhaps painfully, personally regain what has been trained out of them—their experiencing and feeling. This new dimension would mean an end to their relatively comfortable existence; it would in some ways impose, as Voltaire unhappiness because they would be fully aware of the terror inherent in everyday life and its obstruction of the fulfillment of human needs. It is easier to allow incursions than to resist them. The new individual would, however, begin within the present structure, he would lead a more exciting and real life than those who lead comfortable, detached lives where feeling scarcely exists; he would begin to structure some of his own life.

The new individual would need fellows with whom to communicate (in a manner which would contrast with the praxiolog/pseudo-communication). Such communication would bring new values, and interpersonal relations would bring new awareness and new possibilities, if only because vulnerability would no longer be punished and silenced. Trust, co-operativeness and openness would be attributes of a relatively non-threatening environment where love would be possible. These values are values of the intellectual culture. Communication requires association, and this must that new sub-cultures and counter-institutions.of freedom must arise. Free schools and universities, workers’ control, communes, alternative media, existential psychiatry, community work and the like would provide an alternative cul
d any so far as is possible in the present society. This would provide some alternative to a society which defines its particular culture as the necessary and final one.

What would be the link between such a counter-culture and the intellectually trained? The people of the counter-culture would be ‘drop-outs,’ primarily in the sense that they would not serve the prevailing system and its values. However, this need not imply that they would be inactive—the contrary, these people would be involved in the sense that they would not be swallowed up by their own and others’ actions. Their lives would not be routine or ‘secure.’ Their goal would be open. The intellectual culture is what, in a sense, the counter-culture is about. The intellectually trained would be that stratum of society most affected by the values of the intellectual culture. The counter-culture would be peopled mostly by those who have been and are being intellectually trained. Although the counter-culture would be outside the system in that it would refuse the present, it would be right at the heart of the system of knowledge. Those in the centre of production would be intellectually trained and perhaps imbued with some of the values of the intellectual culture. The counter-culture would provide a counter-example which would make the historical alternative more real.

Those in the counter-culture thus may spearhead a movement which will help bring about a society in which being and communication are possible.

27 Nietzsche is perhaps the thinker who has best understood the role of modern man in terms of a contrast between a society in which the “last man” lead comfortable, happy lives and one where life is continuous transience towards new realizations by “overmen.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, Penguin Books, 1961, and George Santayana, Time and History, Canadian Metaphysics Corp, Toronto, 1969.