

THE TWILIGHT OF HISTORY:
THE STANDPOINT OF CURNOT

In 1790 Melchior Grimm wrote to Catherine II: "Two empires will share all the benefits of civilization, power, genius, letters, the arts, weaponry and industry: Russia in the East and America, which has recently become independent, in the West." Eighty years later Bachofen made public the same strongly held conviction: "I am beginning to believe that the twentieth-century historian will have only to speak of America and Russia."¹ In the intervening period Tocqueville concluded the first volume of his work *Democracy in America* thus: "There are at the present time two great nations in the world, which started from different points, but seem to tend towards the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. ...The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting-point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each of them

Translated by R. Blohm.

¹ Quoted by François Bondy at the Berlin Colloquium. See *La démocratie à l'épreuve du XX^{ème} siècle*, Paris: Calman-Lévy, pp. 207-208.

seems marked out by the will of heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.”²

Grimm, Bachofen and Tocqueville thus prophesy a redistribution of centres of political decision-making during an era when there is nothing to suggest that Europe is on the decline. She has much surplus capital at her disposal; she is carrying out the conquest of Africa; her science and technology have gained universal acceptance. Yet certain of their contemporaries, while witnessing the rise of new powers, are becoming aware that Europe is, through her influence, supplying the nerve-energy to extremely compact and massive governmental structures on her periphery. When Tocqueville himself attempts to predict the powers of the future, his perception remains clouded by the very tangible aspects of government—a centralization of power and authority, evident spatial limitations, and considerable size.

In 1861 a much-ignored and long-forgotten³ philosopher and economist, Augustin Cournot, foresaw a very different partition of the world. He does not perform a juridical analysis of political institutions, nor does he give a strategic or economic evaluation of forces; rather, he examines the history of civilization. He shows with lucidity and clairvoyance, especially in his *Traité de l'enchaînement des idées fondamentales dans les sciences et dans l'histoire*,⁴ that his analyses are ahead of their time and shed light on our own.

We shall reveal, in two particular instances, a disturbing coincidence between the conjectures outlined by Cournot and the historical setting in which we are living. Our task will consist not so much in revealing the insight of an author as in attending to the conjectures themselves. The intuition of the man whom

² A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. H. Reeve, New York: Vintage, Vol. I, p. 452.

³ L. Slonimsky, “Les économistes oubliés, Cournot et Thünen,” *Messenger de l'Europe*, October 1878—cf. also V. K. Dmitriev, *Essais économiques (Ricardo, Cournot, Walras)*, Paris: CNRS, 1968.

⁴ Augustin Cournot, *Traité de l'enchaînement des Idées fondamentales dans les sciences et dans l'histoire*, Rome: Edizioni Bizzari, 1968.

We draw your attention to this reprint of Cournot's work by Edizioni Bizzari, who have published three other works by the same author on political economy in their series “Anastatic Reprints of Old and Rare Works.” The series also includes works by Condillac, Vauban, J. B. Say, Julgar, etc.

The extracts from Cournot's works quoted in this exposition are translations from the French text.

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Leroy would call "a social prophet"⁵ will serve to bring out the lines along which development might proceed in a newly partitioned world dominated by China and the United States and one menaced by an overflowing technocracy.

The reflection upon history and civilization brings into relief some deep lines of flux in humanity's development. For the author of the *Traité*, the process of civilization consists in increasingly further removing humanity from the state of nature; indeed, the imprint of nature will not entirely disappear, but it tends to be obscured "in proportion as man lives more artificial a life, so to speak, and as this life is removed from the conditions in which he found himself at the beginning of historical time."⁶ The distance which human societies place between themselves and their original states increases indefinitely; this capability of unlimited progression characterizes civilization, firstly, by bringing out its dynamics, and secondly, by defining its field of application. Civilization affects only what admits of continual progress.⁷ Now, when Cournot surveys "the historical landscape of civilization in its entirety and with regard to its most evident features"⁸ he uncovers two extraordinarily persistent facts—bipolarization and the collision of civilizing forces.

Bipolarization appears in the parallel drawn between European civilization and that of the Far East. "The map of the world could have been traced in a variety of different ways" says Cournot, but favourable conditions, chance, or perhaps some divine intervention have it that in two regions of the globe are permanently concentrated those strong evolutionary forces which transform societies. This dichotomic vision encompasses at once a qualitative differentiation and a localization, but the meanings

⁵ M. Leroy, *Histoire des Idées sociales en France*, T. 3, cp. V, pp. 122-123.

⁶ *Traité*, II, p. 327.

⁷ *Ibid.*, "... in human societies there are certain things capable of continuing while always expanding and improving so long as the conditions necessary to maintaining the health of the social body endure. The totality of things of this kind, which admit of a continual progress, this progress if not unlimited in itself being such that a limit cannot be determined, is what in the present day is included (whether it be realized or not) under the term 'civilization'..." p. 329.

"Societies, more than individuals, admit in certain things of indefinite progress and, provided favourable conditions obtain, unlimited duration." p. 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

of these two components need to be made precise. The recognition of the two main cultural entities does not suggest the beginning of a typology in which the classification of civilizations would depend upon a normative conception; even if one form is found to be infinitely superior to another,⁹ the estimation rests not upon an *a priori* definition of an ideal type of humanity but upon the examination of complexes of ways and means of living found throughout history. In fact, the opposition of East and West implies neither denial nor ignorance of other forms of civilization; indeed, it is supposed that there is a natural and fundamental multiplicity of "local civilizations which, like oases in a desert, are self-contained and isolated from one another, and whose sporadic distribution brings to mind those disjoint species studied in plant geography."¹⁰ No human grouping is a stranger to the metamorphic process;¹¹ it is much less the absence of culture which characterizes primitive societies than the disposition to retire within themselves, to constitute closed worlds resistant to external influences. Cournot does not intend to conduct an anthropological exploration of known peoples. Between the exclusive consideration of particular events and an ideological vision of historical evolution lies the approach of the philosophy of history.¹² The latter may be compared to comparative anatomy

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 380. "But we shall find the parallel more striking and instructive if, instead of taking things in their present states, we wait until modern European civilization has finally achieved so decided a superiority that it makes all rivalry impossible..."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

¹² Which Cournot prefers to call "the aetiology of history." The first chapter of *Considérations sur la marche des idées et des événements dans les temps modernes* treats "of the aetiology of history and the philosophy of history" neatly distinguished from the history of civilization, the general history of mankind or an historical teleology. Cournot writes in the preface: "This requires us... to state in what respects our philosophy of history essentially differs from that of many others whose pretensions were to have discovered laws in history. Whether or not there be laws in history, it is enough that there be *events* and that these events be sometimes interdependent, and sometimes independent of one another, in order that there take place a critique whose goal is to unravel, in some cases the interdependence, and in others the independence. And as this critique cannot lay claim to incontrovertible demonstrations... so let its role be limited to making best use of analogy and induction of the kind with which philosophy must be content... it follows that it is proper that we should give to the critique in question, which despite its uncertainties remains so enticing, the name 'philosophy of history'."

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which presupposes a knowledge of descriptive anatomy but whose objective is to bring out some general facts (for example: all mammals, with one or two slight exceptions, have seven cervical vertebrae) and occasionally to raise them to the status of laws when theoretically warranted.¹³

The philosophy of history has the same prerequisites and the same objective—one must be completely familiar with the facts and events furnished by narrative history; as for the objective, philosophy of history “happens upon laws for which a theoretical justification can be given... But it also and more often finds general, dominant facts which point to a few beginning, perhaps fortuitous, circumstances of which we are unaware, and whose consequences, far from neutralizing each other or wearing away with time as in the case of those things from the realm of statistics where chance is eliminated by the multiplicity of tests, exert a permanent influence on all historical developments to come.”¹⁴ The opposition of fact and event provides the basis for a method; events, or “facts of detail”¹⁵ are not to be studied in their concrete singularity or in their appearance *hic et nunc*, nor are certain aspects to be abstracted from historical reality to be subsumed under a single concept. There must be a structuring of a totality in the course of its becoming, a totalizing in process as Sartre might say. The “general facts” owe their generality only to the place that they occupy in the whole, and this place corresponds to no temporal position whatever; rather, it is a measure of the consistency and abundance of the relations obtaining between the part and the whole. The scale creates general facts: characteristics, elements and phenomena assume the status of “general facts” when they can be integrated into the system being considered, and the assimilating ability of the whole accordingly determines the generality of facts. It follows that the active role of each element depends upon the size and importance of the

¹³ *Traité*, II, pp. 350-351.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 351-352.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 352. “The philosophy of history has as its essential object the selection from the entire set of historical events of general dominant facts which compose its frame or skeleton, and the explanation of how other facts, including facts of detail which may still be of dramatic interest and arouse our curiosity, although not philosophically, are subordinate to the general ones of the first order.”

constituted whole, for it suffices to mark off a more restricted area in order to reveal the active presence of facts which in a larger perspective would be taken for details.¹⁶ Facts are like words in structuralist linguistics which has, since Saussure, discovered that “language is a form and not a substance”¹⁷ and displays “the strange and striking characteristic of not having entities that are perceptible at the outset and yet of not permitting us to doubt that they exist and that their functioning constitutes it.”¹⁸ The philosophy of history places before itself the task of grasping a meaning structure—for “no one today would want to abandon the search for meanings in history”¹⁹—having as its starting point the notion that the meaning of elements, like that of words at a given moment in its evolution, derives much more from the system as a whole taken in its synchronic balance, than from its history. It is clear that history can be related “only by placing events one after the other, in temporal succession,” but in order to “grasp the subordination of the minor historical landmarks, or fortuitous incidents of detail, to the major ones, one must necessarily embrace in a single glance the train of events following one another for centuries, by a procedure completely contrary to that employed by narrative history.”²⁰ The spirit of the method prescribed by Cournot is not violated by having the whole of world civilization conform to a linguistic structure: in the one as in the other “there are only differences without positive terms.”²¹

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 422. “After having examined the historical picture in its most significant aspects, we are naturally led to detach from this view of the whole what interests us most, namely, the history of our Western civilization, in order to examine within more restricted a space and on a smaller scale facts which a moment ago might have been considered details but which, from this point of view, have now become facts of the first order.”

¹⁷ F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. W. Baskin, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966, p. 122.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107, cf. also p. 122. “In a language-state, everything is based on relations.”

¹⁹ *Traité*, II, p. 353.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ F. de Saussure, *op. cit.*, “... in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonetic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonetic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than

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The grasping of a meaningful aggregate requires the forgetting about particular facts and the recognition of the fundamental antinomies to which it owes its existence and its structure. The methodological approach which consists in placing the emphasis on the well-knit structure of the system and the interdependence of its component parts and on their purely relative and opposite character leads one to extricate the notion of a duality in world civilization expressed in the parallel drawn between the European and Far-Eastern civilizations.

This 'de-substantiation' of the historical fact has repercussions on the notion of localization. It would be fruitless to attempt to place the two civilizations into a neatly defined space according to the geographical connotation of the qualifiers. Extreme East and extreme West²² do not describe a territorial region, nor the ground containing roots, at least as far as European civilization is concerned. They are "theatres of civilization,"²³ and, as R. Aron writes, "considered as theater, space is no longer concrete but, so to speak, abstract; it is simplified, stylized, schematized by the observer's attention."²⁴ The regions of civilization do not coincide with the continental partitions nor is the presence of two cultural types on the world scene the culmination of a simplification process. This duality has always existed. "It can be said that the contrast between the western and eastern halves of the Ancient Continent, as theatres of civilization, was manifest from

the other signs that surround it. Proof of this is that the value of a term may be modified without either its meaning or its sound being affected, solely because a neighboring term has been modified." p. 120.

"In language, as in any semiological system, whatever distinguishes one sign from others constitutes it. Difference makes character just as it makes value and the unit." p. 121.

"Language, in a manner of speaking, is a type of algebra consisting solely of complex terms. Some of its oppositions are more significant than others; but units and grammatical facts are only different names for designating diverse aspects of the same general fact: the functioning of linguistic oppositions." p. 122.

²² *Traité*, II, p. 380. "It is interesting to see how the contrast between China and Europe, between the Far East and extreme West...".

²³ The expression is used by Cournot, pp. 361-374. He likewise speaks of the "theatre of history" (*Traité*, II, p. 324 and *Considérations...*, I, p. 83).

²⁴ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War, A Theory of International Relations*, trans. R. Howard & A. B. Fox, Garden City (NY): Doubleday 1966, pp. 182-183. Aron considers space as environment, theatre, and stake in his examination of it as a factor in international relations.

the very beginning”²⁵ in the historical reality of pharaonic Egypt and China. Two millennia later Lao-Tse and Confucius, in China, and Thales and Pythagoras, in Greece, symbolize the advent of a superior form of intellectual culture embodied in philosophy, history properly so-called, and true literature. Five or six centuries later two immense empires and absolute monarchies unfold “at the western and eastern extremities of the ancient world”—the Roman and the Chinese, which “bore on their shoulders, so to speak, the destinies of two systems of civilization.”²⁶ Historically the territorial permanence of the eastern pole has formed a sharp contrast to the displacement of the centres of Western civilization which radiates successively from Egypt, Greece and Rome, but this drifting about Mediterranean shores manifests the perennality of a Western habitat which has been called upon to accept a certain way of being, of living, and of conceiving and transforming the world. Everything happens as if two specific regions of the world had been privileged to shape human existence and the destiny of societies differently. Without expressly claiming credit for such an assertion, Cournot cites a passage from Leibnitz in which the latter explains that the highest manifestations of the human spirit have been concentrated by divine will so to speak at the two extremities of our Continent—China and Europe.²⁷ The geographic world is thus not eclipsed to the benefit of a homogeneous geometric space; a kind of natural theory of place, applied to the phenomenon of civilization, gives rise to a differentiated planetary *milieu* in which two portions of space are endowed with different qualities, embodied by “two systems of civilization which are antipodal to each other figuratively as well as actually.”²⁸ Upon the geographical space is superimposed a cosmic space whose division into extremes of east and west expresses the fundamental heterogeneity of the places where, according to a curious law of symmetry, two civilizations have at once their ascendancy and an indication of the direction of future expansion; for “while Chinese civilization is propagated from south-west to north-east, reaching Korea, Japan and other

²⁵ *Traité*, II, p. 361.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

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archipelagos of the Great Ocean, that other great and nobler civilization, whose most ancient traditions place its cradle in its mountains of Central Asia, steadily and forever vigorously proceeds from south-east to north-west, and there at last comes the moment when it crosses the Atlantic to continue on another continent its rotational movement in that direction.”²⁹ The universe of the philosophy of history is lastly a ‘vectorial’ universe, a kind of mythical space in which directions and positions are determined by the location of the great civilizing entities.

The theme of antinomy permits the unmasking of the characteristic traits of the global system of civilizations. Without a doubt there exist “remarkable analogies.” The first enterprises, Eastern and Western, destined permanently to steer a human group toward the realization of an ordered set of conditions of collective life, namely the Chinese and Egyptian civilizations, had a number of aspects in common: both ancient civilizations brought to bear in a like manner the instruments of communication, such as language and writing, directed wills toward the first artificial creations of industry, developed institutional power, and implanted cultural traditions through the agency of learned associations.³⁰ Later on, when the cultural diffusion had brought with it the spread of knowledge, technology, and beliefs throughout the whole Mediterranean basin, one could “travel from Gaul to Syria and find everywhere the same monuments, the same spectacles, the same cults, and the same institutions.”³¹ This process of homogenization, which creates a family likeness, finds its equivalent in China, and this equivalence gives an extraordinary unity to the age. Moreover, a community of destiny emerges: the scribes of the Middle Kingdom were awarded the first governmental commissions and remind one of “those Chinese scholars whose success in a competitive examination would bring a prefecture or ministerial portfolio,”³² the similarity continues “down to the details of costume, ceremony, and custom.” The similarities occur on two levels—that of component parts and that of the constituting activity; there is on the one hand a

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 386.

sometimes identical stock of materials, and on the other a power of arrangement and organization without which the two creative centres could not extend themselves beyond one clearly distinguishable material environment. The explanation therefore of differences in civilization is not to be made on the basis of an initial choice or an existential *a priori*: in reducing the power of unification and integration to a formal condition of existence, Cournot divests it of all metaphysical prerogative.

However, it is in considering the constituted whole that the differences between the two civilizations come out, or, more precisely still, their antinomy. The successive localizations of Western cultural centres furnish an immediate indication. The ancient Egyptian civilization fell long ago, but, as a result of its influence on the Hellenic and Semitic races, it prepared the way of European civilization; it forms "the first link in the chain of Western civilizations,"³³ and it cannot be omitted without eliminating elements which are essential to all subsequent developments. From its very early stages Egyptian civilization was diametrically opposed to the Chinese inasmuch as it was not "an isolated fact destined to remain so for centuries to come."³⁴ Throughout the Mediterranean effectively, multifarious Asiatic and European influence were for centuries at work, whether in the wake of subjugation by the Achaemenids, the Arab conquests, the Turkish or Mongolian irruptions, or following the encroachments of Alexander, the Romans or the Crusaders. This mixing of races and cultures had the result of creating an intellectual universe common to a multitude of ethnic groups and Cournot notes that it was a great discovery of that century to have established the kingship "of Hindu, Persian, Pelasgian, Hellene, German, Scandinavian, Lithuanian and Slav by having found in their roots and in the construction of their languages, and, when required, against a certain background of ideas and common traditions, the proof of the primordial affinity of peoples who have long been separated by enormous distances."³⁵ This Indo-European community did not remain closed upon itself since it welcomed Semitic influences which brought to it the notions of

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

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the divine unity and personality. The openness to important values was not a momentary disposition corresponding to the period of development of a cultural system, but a permanent datum; thus in the modern period the spirit of revival pervading the English religious sects and largely explaining the colonization movement was due to a return to Hebraic antiquity. "There is elsewhere no example of a like proximity effect; a cult born in India could spread to China without affecting the character of Chinese civilization."³⁶ This civilization remained impenetrable to outside influences; it could not prevent the dogmas and rites of the West from penetrating the frontiers, but it "did not permit them access to the official quarters of knowledge and power".³⁷ East and West react differently: the latter accepts institutions from Asia while, however, modifying them according to its own tendencies;³⁸ its civilization is conceived as an ever developing open system where the mechanisms of assimilation and accommodations naturalize as it were any foreign elements; the former rejects any buying of influence, and confers on the insularity of its culture the status of a condition of existence; Chinese civilization emerges a totality, a structure without genesis.

A second opposition is to be found in the direction of goals pursued or discernible motivations which give to each civilization a unique character. Now, Greek and Roman antiquity and the empire to the extreme East centred their efforts in very different areas. All the institutions developed and left by Athens or Rome cared little for man as man: "the citizen alone is of value,"³⁹ he is subordinate to the government which expresses and proclaims the needs of the city, and attaches to them the utmost importance. In this dissociation of society from government, the state subordinates "all social institutions to political institutions, as if human societies existed for the sake of their governments, and not the governments for the societies which they have been called

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 376. "Europe has repeatedly received the religious institutions of the Orient and made them her own, while always, however, modifying them according to her politics and philosophy, or Europeanizing them so to speak; on the other side of the world China has likewise welcomed dogmas and rites which have come to her from the West, but she has never permitted them access to the official quarters of knowledge and power."

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

upon to administer.”⁴⁰ In pursuit of their objectives, princes and dynasties neglected the immediate interest of men as individuals. This distance between the subject and the state is expressed in the diametrical opposition between utilitarian values, and ideals of grandeur and heroism: the citizen delighted in festivals and spectacles so much that the most ordinary everyday life was restructured in a glowing account of imposing power of monumental proportions and elegant and excessive luxury.⁴¹ On the other hand the institutions of China “derived their value from facilitating life’s performance;” they sought the moral and physical betterment of individuals and the institution had “only that merit which is derived from its application to the service of men.” The search for well-being or, at least, the desire to render the daily existence of men less burdensome replaces a politics of prestige. Moreover China was, well before Europe, familiar with the products of an advanced technology—the compass, gun powder, paper, and printing—which Western civilization would much later import or discover, and integrate into the organized forms of an industrial system which would assist the birth and development of prosperity.

Europe was slow to adopt these useful inventions. The great explorers, before and after Columbus, and the governments which assisted them were in part “urged on by a genuine missionary zeal.”⁴² This type of motivation is significant: it explains the apparent transcendence of the goals pursued by the Western nations, who sought in every kind of passion, and in enthusiasm and fanaticism the force to realize them. The direction and intensity of individual or collective activity is determined through the consideration of abstract entities and the summoning of emotional forces. A life-style emerges in which sudden glory, the spirit of sacrifice, and the loftiness of the objectives give to existence the theatrical flavour of an heroic performance in which immediate insight and sudden inspiration, in a word, genius, lead one out of difficult situations and climax the episodes with glorious and unforgettable incidents. These very passions, which appear against the common background of humanity, are by no

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 394.

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means non-existent in China, but wisdom and its institutions, in feeling repugnance toward the manufacture of ideologies, have no need to summon passion and instinct in support of glorifications which run contrary to the realism of their aspirations. Twenty years before, Alexis de Tocqueville put forth a similar alternative. "We must first understand what is wanted of society and its government. Do you wish to give a certain elevation to the human mind and teach it to regard the things of this world with generous feelings, to inspire men with a scorn of mere temporal advantages, to form and nourish strong convictions and keep alive the spirit of honorable devotedness? Is it your object to refine the habits, embellish the manners, and cultivate the arts, to promote the love of poetry, beauty, and glory? Would you constitute a people fitted to act powerfully upon all other nations, and prepared for those high enterprises which, whatever their results, will leave a name forever famous in history? If you believe such to be the principal object of society, avoid the government of the democracy, for it would not lead you with certainty to the goal.

"But if you hold it expedient to divert the moral and intellectual activity of man to the production of comfort and the promotion of general well-being; if a clear understanding be more profitable to man than genius; if your object is not to stimulate the virtues of heroism, but the habits of peace; if you had rather witness vices than crimes, and are content to meet with fewer noble deeds, provided offences be diminished in the same proportion; if, instead of living in the midst of a brilliant society, you are contented to have prosperity around you; if, in short, you are of the opinion that the principal object of government is not to confer the greatest possible power and glory upon the body of the nation, but to ensure the greatest enjoyment and to avoid the most misery to each of the individuals who compose it—if such is your desire, then equalize the conditions of men and establish democratic institutions."⁴³

We have quoted this text at length because it transforms into purposive terms the opposition between two forms of civilization described by Cournot. Both authors examine the adequacy of institutions to the attainment of the objectives sought by society. The analyses given are different. Tocqueville, in emphasizing

⁴³ A. de Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, vol. I, cp. XIV, p. 262.

the marriage of convenience between the plan of a human collectivity and the form of government most fit to carry it out, lies in the school of thought of Montesquieu. Cournot breaks with this tradition: the theory of government no longer offers a solution to the problems of social organization; human reason is in no condition to devise a definition of sovereignty.⁴⁴ For the author of the *Traité* a commonwealth whose *raison d'être* is the assurance of well-being finds the road to the fulfilment of its mandate in the development of administration, a consideration which should outweigh that of governing. "They govern more than they administer" writes Cournot, in reference to the Greeks and the Romans who were smitten with power and glory.⁴⁵ By substituting "duties for powers, Administration for Government"⁴⁶ we restore pre-eminence to the basic structures of the organization and the mechanisms of the body politic.

A new problem-situation begins to emerge, in which questions and answers revolve about the opposition between politics and administration. Cournot moreover sanctioned the creation in 1848 of a School of Administration.⁴⁷ The changes brought about by recent civilization—the extreme division of labour, the growth in population, the increase in the size and scope of government, and the progressive equalizing of living standards—give rise to a set of increasingly complex functional interrelations between all of the elements composing the whole of social reality. Experimentation and statistical analysis suitably directed should prevent the job of administration from being the object of controversy. "Although it was proposed only recently to give thus to legislation a scientific and practical basis, enough fruitful attempts have already been made in this direction, and they are

⁴⁴ *Traité*, II, p. 233. "The question of sovereignty is one of those with which reason cannot deal without confronting insoluble contradictions." P. 235: "In whatever way therefore that one wishes rationally to construct a theory of public powers, he encounters insoluble difficulties and is left only with negations."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁴⁷ Cournot, *Souvenirs*, p. 210-211. In the year 1848, or shortly thereafter, Cournot was made a member of a "commission for advanced studies" charged with organizing "the School of Administration which is destined to be for administrative careers what law faculties are for the legal profession and polytechnical institutes for professions concerned with public works."

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too well in agreement with the general laws of the human spirit... so that one need not anticipate the era when legislation will be based, for the most part at least, upon the scientific observation of social facts and upon a system of experimental enquiry with as much rigour as these matters permit.⁴⁸ The mark of abstract rigour or logical perfection no longer suffices to confer authority upon the law, which is derived from experiment which is deciphered and studied by a factual science—a “social physics.” The field of administration severely restricts the scope of politics, not by expanding or generalizing the regulatory system—Cournot criticizes socialism while predicting the triumph of economic liberalism—but by replacing the whimsical practices of government by a scientific management of social interests. The development of administration proceeds on an equal footing with the unveiling of the rational mechanism conditioning social organization and action. The irrational nature of the forces taken into account by politics—instincts, passions, prejudices—removes any hope of its acceding to the rank of a science,⁴⁹ and, as Cournot points out, if peoples acquire increasingly complex and sophisticated military, financial, and administrative institutions, politics properly so-called reverts to rudimentary simplicity.⁵⁰ The development of administration to the detriment of politics proceeds on an equal footing with the scientific improvement of administrative techniques which stands in sharp contrast to the stagnation and deterioration in the political institution and its role. However we should not deprive ourselves of government altogether, for it maintains national unity and integrity; it relishes the prospect of applying, as circumstances require, a salutary measure or of replacing it with another which may not be scientifically justified; it also enacts measures which in one stroke rouse an entire population or a large class of citizens, and finally, in struggling against unrealistic utopianisms and subduing anger,

⁴⁸ *Traité*, II, p. 190. See also pp. 238-239.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 229. “The administrative system of Diocletian was more knowledgeably if not more skilfully devised than that of Augustus, while King Servius, to whom the Romans in large part gave credit for their political organization, probably did not even possess the notion of what we call administration; yet, the political right of sacerdotal and patrician Rome was more complicated than that of Rome the mistress of the world under Augustus and Diocletian.”

jealousy, and base instincts which slow down any evolution, it furthers the instatement of new forms of social stratification which abolish old and outmoded cleavages within the population.⁵¹ Finally, in this battle between rational and irrational, the political power takes on the countenance and methods of the latter in order better to assure the triumph of the former; like a Trojan horse introduced by the forces of organization into the citadel of the forces of instinct to deceive and to disarm them, the political power manoeuvres in order to avoid violent reaction which would retard the process whereby society shapes its structures in conformity with the laws of "social physics." In assuming the role of a stratagem of reasoning, the persistence of politics in fact translates the decline of politics into a gain for administration.

Now this form of society, in which the elimination of passions would permit the functioning of the rationality of laws, was anticipated by Chinese civilization. "The Chinese in their wisdom and with their keen practical sense came at once upon certain basic notions, or general principles, on account not of superior intelligence or an accuracy of method, but of the absence of prejudice or passion which obstruct the way to their recognition, and these principles were to prevail not otherwise than through the slow working of centuries and a kind of tiring campaign, nor before the subsiding of all enthusiasm and the exhaustion of all conceptions generated by a stronger and more energetic imagination;"⁵² neither fortune, nor election, nor heredity, nor wealth would decide the holder of public office. The mandarin, in relieving the latter term of its then current pejorative sense, guaranteed the competence and the technical ability of the official and raised administration to the status of a technology based upon research into social laws. Chinese civilization constructed a model, rather selected and interpreted basic propositions, from which a set of conclusions would necessarily be drawn.

The meaning of history is clear. Both contradictory civilizations seek an encounter, or, as we have seen, a simple reconciliation of form and content. Yet the apparent or real osmosis never results in fusion, in the realizing of a common model, or in an identical axiomatization of the social and cultural universe. More

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 391.

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importantly, the kinds of experiment carried out by China and Europe do not fit into the framework of a method of trial and error on a global scale for the working out of an ideal society; none of the realizations constitutes a chronological step in the movement of humanity toward an ultimate condition. "The sun rises in the East... world history moves from East to West, for Europe is truly the end, and Asia—the beginning, of this history," wrote Hegel.⁵³ For him world history begins with the great empires of China, India, and Persia, continues with the formation of the Greek and Roman States, and has its culmination in the German Empire. The infinite spirit assumes concrete form and unfolds in the great moments of Oriental civilization, Hellenism, and the German spirit; the historical concretizations mark the stages of an adventure which finds its ending and its significance in the fullness of a dated and embedded form. For Cournot cultural incongruities still exist and history assigns to each civilization an area of fulfilment, where, as we have already said, the vectors of development and expansion point in opposite directions. The Hegelian space is a directed space in which are ordered the various places along a route followed by the Spirit in search of the fullness of its freedom. As Hegel says, "although the earth forms a sphere, history does not describe a circle around it."⁵⁴ For this imagery of a rectilinear motion and a linear continuity Cournot substitutes that of a curved space with a two-fold directedness, in which there occur two circular movements in opposite directions beginning from a common origin. In their movement away from one another the two civilizations encircle the planet, and their intersection is concretized in the fact that "in the present day the European and Chinese emigrations meet each other on the western coast of North America, at an angular distance of a semi-circle from the point of departure. The revolution is complete; one of the most important features of the general history of humanity is completely sketched: the future will unfold its curious consequences."⁵⁵

Nevertheless, Cournot foresees a final state which will mark the end of history. What we call civilization tends to "substitute

⁵³ Hegel, G. W. F., *La Raison dans l'Histoire*, Paris, Plon, 1965, pp. 279-280.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 280.

⁵⁵ *Traité*, II, p. 395.

the calculated or calculable mechanism for the living organism, reason for instinct, the permanence of arithmetical and logical systems for the movement of life.”⁵⁶ In other words, progress consists in eliminating or reducing instincts and passions in order to construct a universe in which everything is ruled on the basis of experiment, and by logical and mathematical laws. Through struggle and experiment the historical phase of humanity prepares the way for the eventual triumph of reason; the feats of great men, the account of incidents, the struggle of dynasties, the whims of chance, and senseless fanaticism are no longer conceivable in a society in which “pen in hand, one weighs and reckons the masses, in which one may calculate exactly the outcome of occurrences in a regulated mechanism.”⁵⁷ Facts and events would be removed in favour of a complex structure equipped with mechanisms whose functioning would assure the maintenance of its equilibrium. The conclusion of the historical phase would bring with it the end of history as an account of a temporal unfolding. At most “history would be reduced to an official gazette in which a record would be kept of regulations, statistical abstracts, the accession of chiefs of state, and the appointment of civil-servants, and would cease to be history, in the customary sense of the word.”⁵⁸ Between the initial period and a somewhat distant future, the historical phase appears both as a saturnalia of passion, desperation and madness and as preparatory period of delay during which firm mechanisms are set in place. Humanity releases itself and fulfils its life of youthful reverie through spectacular events, great men, thrilling exaltations, and impulsive hostility, circumstances under which the fate of everything hinges on a roll of the die. The contrast between the historical and the final phases epitomizes the contrast between the vital and the rational,⁵⁹ the organic and the mechanical, the life-cycle and immortality, and history and theory.⁶⁰ The civilizing tide carries

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* !

⁵⁹ R. Buyer, *L'humanité de l'avenir d'après Cournot*, Paris, Felix Alcan, 1930, cp. I.

⁶⁰ The domain of theory being here characterized by the “predominance of the rational, theoretical, or properly scientific element.” *Traité*, I, p. 362; cf. also p. 322; vol. II, pp. 320-321.

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humanity toward the realization of a great unified and unchanging whole which is held together and governed by rational laws, the discovery, the study and the utilization of which would be the business of the various sciences. The technological age is approaching, and Cournot has been reckoned, together with Saint-Simon and Rathenau, among its precursors.⁶¹

* * *

Are we today on the threshold of a new era during which the prophecies of Cournot will be fulfilled?

There is reason to doubt that the influence of the two great global forces, as well as the course of their development, should be so clearly defined on so territorial a basis: yet, following the meeting between Nixon and Mao Tse Tung, it would not be inaccurate to say that the global stage was, at that moment, filled by two actors whose dialogue entailed both sufficient agreement to make it possible and sufficient disagreement to make it necessary.

This bipolarization of active global forces does not formally contradict our usual conception of the world; the oppositions between the old continent and the new world, liberty and servitude, America and Europe, democracy and totalitarianism, the Free World and the communist world, or capitalism and socialism have established a duality in the global stage plan; the use of historical, political, economic, or indeed military categories results in the distinction between two different regions and in the assignment to each of them of a pattern of life and a centre for decision-making. The cold war which followed the Second World War seemed to confirm these views by assigning to Soviet Russia and to the United States the uncontested roles of global protagonists. In reality, the balance of power, which accounts for the maintenance of peace, and which is measured in terms of a nation's military and industrial potential, its diplomatic role, and the effect of its prestige upon the masses, determines the "foci of civilization"; paradoxically, quantitative identity brings out qualitative differences in views of existence, ways of

⁶¹ G. Duveau, *Sociologie de l'Utopie*, Paris: PUF, pp. 62-63: "Let us call to mind three precursors of technocracy—Saint-Simon, Cournot, and Rathenau."

thinking, and beliefs. This dualism of common sense and politics is subject too much to circumstances to correspond to what Cournot reveals through his method of analysis.

Nevertheless two categories of present-day facts hint at conclusions akin to those drawn by Cournot. The first is the transformation of China under communism; the communist government has changed the traditional handicaps of space and number into a source of power through the re-establishment of governmental authority over the entire territory and the creation of an industrial society. "Authoritarian, industrial and mass-based, the Communist state makes China a giant."⁶² To ignore it becomes impossible, while to take its existence into account leads to the abandonment of the process of contracting the universe, of reducing it to the point where it fits entirely into the Western mould; the Chinese phenomenon raises thought to a height from which it has a global perspective.

The second category comprises those facts resulting from the universalization of industrial society; the latter becomes, in the words of Raymond Aron, "a goal for all human collectivities."⁶³ The generalization of a social model in whose foreground stand the material means of production provides matter for reflection. The politician is tempted to view the ideological adornment of revolutionary regimes as a rational device designed to harness the resources of organization and development to give semi-colonial economies access to modern methods of production; the installation of the communist apparatus is part of a successful strategy in a campaign in which the objective is to industrialize a backward country and to put to work a vast proletarian reserve.⁶⁴ When viewed in this perspective, capitalist institutions no longer appear as the only vehicles of development. "The rivalry on the part of the United States and the USSR is not that of free-enterprise and Marxism."⁶⁵ While proceeding along different paths and adapting to different historical and geographical conditions, both systems lead essentially to "one genera-

⁶² Raymond Aron, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

⁶³ Raymond Aron, *Dimensions de la conscience historique*, Paris, Plon, p. 281.

⁶⁴ Raymond Aron, *Progress and Disillusion; The Dialectics of Modern Society*, New York, Praeger, 1968, p. 36.

⁶⁵ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique*, p. 302.

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lized economy of which they are particular cases.”⁶⁶ This attitude, which has been adopted for the most part by the non-communist left, squares with the analysis of certain economists for whom there is no essential difference between the Soviet and American systems. In *The New Industrial State*, J. K. Galbraith maintains this thesis.⁶⁷ Highly industrialized economies require heavy equipment whose purchase extends over long periods of time and a qualified work force whose training is long and costly; at each stage of their development they require systematic and long-term adjustments which provide adequate protection from the hazards and whims of the market. Planning, or the maintenance, over a fixed span of time, of a certain stability in supply and demand and in labour relations becomes indispensable. Moreover decisions are no longer made by one man alone; the *entrepreneur* is replaced by the “management” and a more inclusive collective composed of groups and individuals, who contribute their own knowledge and information to the decision-making process. This organization, which Galbraith calls the technostructure, consummates the divorce between the ownership of capital and the actual administration of the enterprise. The replacement of the market economy by the planned economy, and *de facto* or *de jure* socialization of the means of production make apparent “the convergent tendencies of industrial societies, however different their popular or ideological billing.”⁶⁸ Thus the attention given to socio-economic realities causes the assumed difference in nature between the liberal and socialist versions of industrial society to be blurred; the political superstructures conceal the identical mechanisms and designs of the socio-economic infrastructure. We recall Cournot’s assessment that the vast Russian Empire, despite “a confused mixture of Asiatic and European traits,” is inclining “decidedly toward the European model.”⁶⁹

A study published in 1970, authored by H el ene Carr ere d’Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, director of the Contemporary

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁶⁷ J. K. Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁶⁹ *Trait e*, II, p. 376.

China Institute in London, indirectly confirms the prophetic intuition of Cournot.⁷⁰ Having both, in their revolutions, availed themselves of Marxism, the Chinese and the Soviets accuse each other of having betrayed the teachings of Marx. Their ideological differences, which were at one time hidden, are today proclaimed and becoming stronger. Is this merely part of their Machiavellian schemes to maximize their respective influences on the Third World? Yet aside from conflicts resulting from political opportunism should attention not be given to a deeper opposition rooted in a difference in the basic natures of two civilizations? Indeed the theoretical outlook cannot but reflect the interests of the two states which translate it into action, under the weight of their historical past and perhaps what Cournot calls the "ethnological elements," that is to say, certain natural but accidental dispositions "occasioned by the grouping of men into distinct societies."⁷¹

The desire for the radical transformation of man, society, and nature which is the fundamental objective of Marxism is proclaimed with equal sincerity by both the Soviet Union and Mao's China. However, the means used to realize it differ profoundly; historical circumstances, the agents, the methods and the sociological and technological contexts have required that the seizure of power take a specific form and that specific mechanisms of social and political action be used. The Bolshevik Revolution took the form of a general uprising in which there were two diametrically opposed tendencies—worker collectivism and peasant individualism; agitation was inspired by an urban workers party with practically no contact with the countryside

⁷⁰ H. Carrère d'Encausse and S. R. Schram, *L'URSS et la Chine devant les révolutions dans les sociétés préindustrielles*, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris, Colin, 1970.

⁷¹ *Traité*, II, p. 44. Cournot distinguishes between anthropology and ethnology. Anthropology is concerned "with all that, in the constitution of the human species and its various subspecies, is attributable to the spontaneous activity of natural forces, acting on man in the same manner as on other living species." Ethnology "will be concerned with all incidental facts occasioned by the grouping of men into distinct societies in accordance with the instincts of sociability, which come under the jurisdiction of anthropology inasmuch as they are part of the common fund of human nature or assume special forms characteristic of each of the primitive human subspecies." The ethnological element is thus not a racial one supposing a biological origin.

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and a certain amount of distrust of it; and confined to the cities which were surrounded by a peasant mass attached to individual property and whose manner of viewing things was thus at variance with the socialist vision of the world. The insurrection leading to the seizure of power was of relatively short duration. The Chinese Revolution on the other hand was carried out in a protracted war in which the revolutionary forces relied upon the peasantry, there having been little significant participation in the cities; led by a disciplined party proclaiming the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, the masses were mobilized under the two-fold theme of social revolution and national liberation. The struggle for power which in Russia was of short duration was in China an almost endlessly prolonged war.

Such dissimilar conditions affected the Marxist programme differently. The industrial backwardness of Russia and the rapid accession to governmental responsibilities forced upon Lenin the conviction that only by developing and applying technology could the nation cope with a dramatic economic situation, and this conviction was so strong that he found in the writings of Marx an analysis and glorification of technological progress. Doctrine and circumstances were to give birth to a technological interpretation of socialism as a method for changing societies; from the time of Lenin to that of Brezhnev and Kosygin this dimension would predominate and the phenomenon of bureaucratization as the substitution of rule by the competent for proletarian dictatorship would be the most significant consequence. In China, the twenty years of war spared revolutionary leaders the necessity of improvising an administration; the war itself provided a training school for cadres who underwent difficult trials costly in human lives, and an occasion for the peasants in captured zones to familiarize themselves with the communists and their ideals of social justice and national independence. The army assumed the administrative role played in the Soviet Union by the bureaucracy, without cutting off the masses; meeting the exigencies of armed conflict conditioned them to give priority to moral condition rather than to technical competence. Thus the Long March inclined the communists to adopt a moralist and individualist attitude; while the importance of economic transformation is not denied—the Chinese party recognizes the need for rapid industrialization—emphasis is placed

on man rather than on technology, and on the capacity of people, mobilized around a political faith, to compensate for material inadequacies. The Cultural Revolution, which was an attempt at solving the problem of the transformation of human nature, having as one of its objectives the rooting out of egoism and individualism, is an extension of the "subjectivist" interpretation of Marxism. In a work describing how the inhabitants of a small Chinese commune have lived through revolution in the countryside and applied its principles the author uses the expression 'fanshen' to signify the overthrow of feudalism and the rise to the new status of middle peasant; as the term 'fanshen' can be applied to an individual as well as to a community, so it can be applied to the whole Chinese nation to characterize the radical transformation on an immense scale which the revolution on a continental level represents.⁷²

The Chinese and the Soviets, in attaching a special value to their own revolutionary experiences, have split the programme of Marxism into its two component parts: the transformation of man as justice requires, and the transformation of the world through industry and technology. As a result of their historic participation in the life of the West and their subscription to the European ideal of "man the lord and master of nature," the Russians have been inclined to give priority to economic matters; for their rivals in Asia revolutionary purity takes precedence over all other considerations, and their insistence on adherence to a correct "line" determined by a quasi-divinity, mediator between men and their historical destiny, is in keeping with the Chinese tradition of viewing this as a condition indispensable to the order of the Empire.⁷³ In this sense, says Etienne, "the bridges are no longer cut; young China seems here to be

⁷² William H. Hinton, *Fanshen, A Documentary of a Revolution in a Chinese Village*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1966. Literally, 'fanshen' means 'to turn the body' or 'to turn over.'

⁷³ "To establish with the most undiminishing vigour the absolute authority of our great commander-in-chief, Chairman Mao, and his thought commits us to defending at the cost of our lives his position as supreme helmsman" (cf. *Peking information*, February 13, 1967). "Whoever opposes Chairman Mao, whoever opposes Mao Tse Tung Thought, at any time or under any circumstances, will be condemned and punished by the whole Party and the whole nation." (Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China by Lin Piao, April 1, 1969, *Peking Review* No. 18, p. 29, April 30, 1969).

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making a conciliatory gesture to her ancient predecessor.”⁷⁴ The Sino-Soviet divergences express the dissociation between two great impulses which left their traces in Marx’s work; these divergences also correspond to differences in attitudes and traditions between a Western civilization preoccupied with the objective conditions of development and an Eastern civilization more concerned with the subjective conditions of existence. In fact, does the ideological conflict not disguise the older conflict between East and West? It is clear, inasmuch as the Soviet world places before itself an increasing number of objectives similar to those of Western society, that underlying the doctrinal disputes and struggles is what Cournot calls “the contrast between China and Europe, or between the Far East and the far West.”

Do Cournot’s distinctions, made more than one hundred years ago, still accurately characterize the relation between isolated prototypes of civilization? The implementation of scientific and technological programmes by the Chinese government with a view toward augmenting their military strength and developing industry could indicate a conformity to the Western model. Now such an interpretation, however reasonable objectively at close range from the present, is rejected by observers, particularly journalists, who base their assertions on personal experience.⁷⁵ As a result of inability, according to some, or by deliberate choice, according to others, China is not endeavouring to build a society of consumption. In 1899 a Chinese scholar could behold the marvellous inventions of the eastern countries and ask himself the question whether “all these near miracles bring man greater happiness... [and] whether speed is a good thing”; he maintained his ignorance, or perhaps his indifference, but he realized that only if they accept these technological innovations could peoples acquire power and escape humiliation. “If a nation is to be able to defend itself, it must simply be in possession of this practical science.”⁷⁶ At the turn of a century

⁷⁴ Etienne, *Connaissons-nous la Chine?*, p. 172.

⁷⁵ See the articles published after the visit of the French parliamentary delegation to China, in particular the one by A. Peyrefitte in *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (August 27 and September 3, 1971) and the one by Robert Guillain in *Le Monde* (September 21 and 22, 1971).

⁷⁶ Quoted by B. de Jouvenel, *Arcadie, essais sur le mieux-vivre*, pp. 229-230.

when European powers had taken advantage of the weakness of the Manchu emperors, China borrowed elements of Western technology as a means of safeguarding her national identity, following predictions by certain alarmists and longers-for-the-past that "in a few years all of China will be forced to barbarize."⁷⁷ Yet the desire for power need not be tied to the technological mentality as it is in those countries in which the mentality originates, and thus the image of a China impervious to external influences, as sketched by Montesquieu⁷⁸ and later by Cournot, is left unaltered. All revolutions currently carried out under the banner of Marxism take place in backward and underdeveloped countries badly in need of accelerated development. They are followed by a phase of rapid construction during which priorities are established and full use is made of technology. This construction, however, begins to assume the form of capitalist industrial development, and its architects begin to exhibit its preoccupations, to demand efficiency, and finally to lose sight of revolutionary objectives. Is it not the case that in Mao's China the mechanization and development of productive forces in the West is regarded as an objective development, devoid of any historicity, or, in a word, an historical accident, and thus a model of relative and contingent character? In a recent article Marthe Engelborghs-Bertels⁷⁹ characterizes the Cultural Revolution as a reaction by those who wish the approach to problems to be guided by moral principles, in opposition to those who place complete confidence in the ability of technology and science alone successfully to guide their quest for greater efficiency in production and a higher standard of living. Civilization does not throw its lot with its material accomplishments, and this is the sense of the expression given by Mao Tse Tung to "the conscious desire or instinct which

This passage is taken from André Chih, *L'Occident "chrétien" vu par les Chinois vers la fin du 19^{ème} siècle (1879-1900)*, Paris, PUF 1962.

⁷⁷ Statement by Wo Jen (1867) quoted by de Jouvenel, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁷⁸ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. J. Nugent, New York, Hafner 1949, Book XIX, cp. 18. "... the laws of China are not destroyed by conquest... and as it will happen that either the conqueror or the conquered must change, in China it has always been the conqueror."

⁷⁹ Marthe Engelborghs-Bertels "Tradition et mutation dans la révolution culturelle en Chine," in Balandier (ed.), *Sociologie des Mutations*, Ed. Anthropos 1970, pp. 463-479.

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is the very essence of Chinese culture—to assure the continuity of a spiritual vision of humanity throughout the transformation of the infrastructure.” The future alone will confirm or refute the interpretations and judgements offered by journalists, sociologists, political scientists and sinologists. The view of Cournot, however, remains prophetic in so far as the opposition between two types of civilization which he describes poses the problem of the heterogeneity of possible modes of existence and outlines a geopolitics which specific historical facts have, one-hundred years later, rendered especially appropriate to the present.

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Cournot predicts a convergence in human evolutions which would put an end to the qualitative differentiation of cultures and mark the end of history; such a point will be reached when administration takes priority over politics.

On first examination contemporary China appears to provide an example of a state of affairs contrary to that predicted by Cournot, and thus grounds for questioning the accuracy of the prediction. Here the politician replaces the expert, and competence takes second place to ideological correctness. *The Constitution of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company* which was established in 1960 by Mao Tse Tung condemns the administration of factories by experts, and states five fundamental principles, the first of which is to “keep politics firmly in command.”⁸⁰ In truth the primacy of politics in the context of the Cultural Revolution signifies above all the predominance of revolutionary imperatives over the objective laws of economic development such as they appear in the context of production in the capitalist world. Socialist society and capitalist society should be regarded as two axiomatic structures in each of which ‘politics’ takes on a different meaning. According to Rossana Rossanda,⁸¹ to give first place to politics “is to move to the foreground the fact of knowing what the social and political consequences of a

⁸⁰ “Constitution of Anshan Iron and Steel Company Spurs Revolution and Production,” *Peking Review* No. 16, p. 3 (April 17, 1970).

⁸¹ Rossana Rossanda, “La révolution culturelle et la structure sociale de la Chine communiste,” *L’Homme et la Société* No. 21 (July-September, 1971) (*Colloque de Cabris, Sociologie et Révolution*).

certain type of organizational choice for society will be. It is the refusal to objectify the mode of production in the form which it has assumed as a result of industrial mechanization. It is to give priority not to the political organization but to the social instant; first place is no longer given to politics, in the current sense of the term, but to society and the social instant." This interpretation does not describe a state of affairs contrary to that predicted by Cournot in which social mechanisms will render political activity useless, or at least progressively limit its scope.

Facts today illustrate Cournot's firmly held conviction: in industrial society, managerial, administrative and governmental decisions on economic or social questions affecting individuals, whether they be producers or consumers, no longer appear to be determined by caprice or individual self-interest; they are felt to be the unavoidable output of the technological apparatus. Technological civilization reinforces social controls by modifying their form.⁸² They thus appear more reasonable and impersonal inasmuch as they are put into effect by the technological apparatus whose rationality does not seem to be in question. The 'de-politicization' of the masses denotes their belief that the competence of experts and the conscientiousness of administrators suffice to ensure control of the various physical, psychological or social forces. It may moreover designate, as David Riesman has pointed out, the inability to participate in an enlarged world of new dimensions: the inhabitants of the new suburbs delight in resolving minor problems and in fulfilling the demands of local life; the interest in being in command of the concrete situations of a smaller community hides a disinterest in the grander objectives of national life; realization of the values of generosity and solidarity is sought in the family and then beyond, in the circle of friends and neighbours.⁸³ The difficulty which political parties in democratic systems have in radically distinguishing themselves from one another, the cleavages in each of them over pressing questions, and the apparent continuity in the alternation of these parties in power serve to support the

⁸² An observation which provides a theme and a starting point for Marcuse's analysis: cf. *Soviet Marxism* and *One-Dimensional Man*.

⁸³ D. Riesman, *Abundance for What? And Other Essays*, Garden City (N.Y.), Doubleday 1961. See the articles entitled "The Suburban Dislocation" and "Flight and Search in the New Suburbs."

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claim that objective elements impose their laws on the will of men. In his *Traité de science politique* Georges Burdeau devotes an entire chapter to describing the evolution from struggle to administration.⁸⁴ The disaffection of the governed toward political struggles indicates an indifference not to all politics, but merely to that form of politics which leads to a rivalry between factions and, consequently, to the kind of involvement that calls for adherence to an abstract doctrine whose imposition is important enough to justify a struggle. Political activity is kept at a distance from ideologies and acts of faith only to be confused with rational activity in which the sole concern is for efficiency. Anxiety over the possible and the will to achieve result in the promotion of managerial activities, evidenced by the increasing number of managerial positions held by persons with no visible political bent. In the same vein Allen Schick, a research associate at the Brookings Institution, distinguishes four stages in the history of the United States⁸⁵: it was conceived at the outset as a political state, the major concern being with rules for representation, eligibility, prerogatives, and the distribution of powers; the growth of industry and the introduction of complexity into economic mechanisms in the nineteenth century occasioned its transformation into an administrative state whose function was to restrict the amount of wealth and power which private enterprises could accumulate; New Deal activism cleared the way to the bureaucratic state which would not hesitate to take charge of the management of a particular sector of economic or social activity; today we are on the threshold of the cybernetic state in which the government, having in view definite objectives, undertakes to programme its machinery to apply continuously measures defined by a number of variables—the unemployment rate, the poverty level, educational standards, etc. The state operates as a servo-mechanism: the machinery of administration is automatically set in motion by variations in the economic condition of the individual. For example, social legislation ceases to be assistance to the poor

⁸⁴ G. Burdeau, *Traité de science politique*, T. III: *La dynamique politique*, Titre II, cp. 3: "De la lutte à la gestion."

⁸⁵ Allen Schick, "The Cybernetic State," *Trans-Action* 7, 14-26 (February 1970).

and becomes a measure aimed at the maintenance of a certain level of income. The scope of politics is narrowed in favour of a vast and complex system dependent exclusively on programming and self-regulation.

On the other side of the interpretative coin—and here we have a counterexample—we find that in a world allegedly possessed of a total rationality, there is a kind of counter-current of sentiment consisting both of a nostalgia for the past and a nausea with an intense dehumanizing monotony. For example, in breaking with the nineteenth century which was dominated by the fear of Caesarism, the twentieth century has seen the phenomenon of the personalization of power, as if planning and decision-making by teams of an ever increasing number of technicians created a need for reassurance by the sight of a familiar face. The world in which we live appears as a model of material and social organization: the ascendancy of the bureaucracy has transformed society into a ‘command state’ comparable to a military establishment where the distinction between the law as a general rule and a particular order given to an individual tends to disappear; the citizen has ceased merely to be subject to the law, having become in addition an ‘administratee’ obeying orders.⁸⁶ In a world reduced to an ordering of structures there is no longer room for the unforeseeable, or the accidental. The hero is banished and the event—banned. Is this not the reason why opinion makers search out the sensational, and seek to capture the limelight, and why the mass-media manufacture, through press conferences, interviews, and televised debates, organized “flights,” or what Boorstin calls “pseudo-events,” namely, artificial happenings designed to fill what are considered to be gaps in the universe?⁸⁷ The advertising slogan, repeated daily, that “there is always something happening at the Galeries Lafayette” is symptomatic of a society and a period. This concern for denying the apparent structural immobility of the present nourishes anticipatory thinking. Georges Balandier points specifically to “the renaissance

⁸⁶ See Raymond Aron, *18 Lectures on Industrial Society*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1961; and Raymond Ruyé, *Éloge de la Société de consommation*, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 1969.

⁸⁷ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: a Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, New York, Harper & Row, 1964.

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of utopias and political systems experienced on the imaginary plane”: a messianic imagination projects into eschatological time a pattern of harmonious change while the technocrats, in their “futurological” studies, calculate the probability-of-occurrence of potential configurations. Between speculative anticipation and revolutionary concretization is there not an intermediate stage such as that described by Edgar Morin in his interpretation of the events of May, 1968?⁸⁸ The crisis in 1968 was a simulated revolution in both senses of the term, which has a psychiatric reference on the one hand and an informational one on the other. It was both an ‘auto-comedy’ which was taken seriously and quasi-experimentation wherein all the revolutionary processes were simulated. In a society in which social interdependence and economic mechanisms closely bind the members of the community, and in which the rationalization of standards, consumption and production creates the impression that one is enclosed in an immense and constricting system, the imaginary processes of compensation, refuge and consolation cannot but take place.

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Does the counter-society which unfolds in fantasies, neuroses, protests or the actions of marginal groups resist the forces which order human societies according to the rationality of the planners and the organizers? Is it a battle fought by the rear-guard, which finds in new forms the same inflexibility as that found in those of the nineteenth century prior to the industrial revolution? The time is recalled when, in the country most affected by these transformations, Melville’s criticisms with regard to industrial enterprises, and Thoreau’s satires upon the machine were on an equal footing with the glorification of nature, and when Emerson’s transcendentalism with its ideal of renewing the human soul through contact with nature carried to the philosophical or metaphysical level the rejection of industrialism which had theretofore been grounded in the passions. Is it the anticipation of another model of civilization whose

⁸⁸ G. Balandier (ed.) *Sociologie des mutations*, p. 37.

obscured forms are tending to emerge, but whose revolutionary content is lessened in a forced partnership with technology? This expected trend could not, in any case, be anti-rational. "Progressive civilization," writes Cournot, "is not, as it is often claimed, the triumph of spirit over matter (which we concede would have only good consequences, although this smacks slightly of its gnosticism) but rather the triumph of the rational and general principles of things over the energy and qualities belonging to the living organism, which has many advantages together with many disadvantages."⁸⁹ The substitution of the rational for the vital is unavoidable, but 'rational' is here not unequivocal, nor is its use totally reassuring. Does the bipolarization glimpsed by Cournot represent a tool of analysis chosen by humanity to bring to light the various aspects of rationality in a confrontation which becomes progressively simpler, on the planetary scale as well as within each society? This analytic strategy would thus convert itself into two programmes of research and development, each one pursuing the construction of a reproducible prototype which ideological propagandists attempt to commercialize. The current evolution of international politics can cause this division-into-two of civilizing forces to be masked. "As the bipolar universe yields to a multipolar one, Washington and Moscow lose control over world affairs" writes Alain Peyrefitte.⁹⁰ His article throws into relief the specific features of developments in China while special significance is attached to the enthusiasm with which the Albanian resolution in the General Assembly of the United Nations was accepted. In a similar vein Robert Guillaïn states "that to see China once again is to realize that her blueprints for development differentiate the Chinese model from the Western one, and that this country is more involved than ever before in the creation of a new world."⁹¹ Will the close of the twentieth century see the establishment of the thesis of the duality of patterns of civilization, and thus the negation of Soviet originality? Only the future will tell. Let us only hope that the tide of

⁸⁹ *Traité*, II, p. 17.

⁹⁰ "Le modèle chinois à l'honneur," *Le Monde* (November 3, 1971).

⁹¹ Robert Guillaïn, "La Chine après la Révolution culturelle, I: Un autre monde," *Le Monde* (September 21, 1971).

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rationalization which is moving across the world will not lead the human community to a degree of integration such that the human subject, deprived of all his prerogatives, will be washed away “like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the shore.”⁹²

⁹² Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 398.