The Ellul Forum

For the Critique of Technological Civilization

The Politics of Jacques Ellul

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"We must try to create positions in which we reject and struggle with the state, not in order to modify some element of the regime or force it to make some decision but, much more fundamentally, in order to permit the emergence of social, political, intellectual, or artistic bodies, associations, interest groups, . . . totally independent of the state, yet capable of opposing it, able to reject its pressures as well as its controls, and even its gifts. These organizations must be completely independent, not only materially but also intellectually and morally, i.e., able to deny that the nation is the supreme value and that the state is the incarnation of the nation."

-Jacques Ellul

The Political Illusion **(1965; ET 1967), p. 222**

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From the Editors

In this issue of the *Ellul Forum* we barely scratch the surface of a large arena for study: Jacques Ellul on politics and the state. While Ellul is rightly known best for his work on technique/technology, the topic of politics and the state is never far from sight.

The Political Illusion is his best known analysis of modern politics and its illusions. *The Technological Society* had a major section on "Technique and the State," of course. The volumes on propaganda, revolution, violence, and the sociology of religion all address politics and the state at length from one angle or another. The untranslated, multi-volume *Histoire des Institutions* demonstrated Ellul's profound grasp of the history of political ideas and institutions.

The Politics of God, the Politics of Man was Ellul's primary biblical study of politics, focusing on II Kings in the Hebrew Bible. But *Apocalypse*, *Meaning of the City*, and other theological-biblical writings often addressed political topics as well.

Ellul's ethical and other writings emphasize the threat of a growing, technicized state and political milieu. The first task is to understand this reality and dispense with rhetoric and illusions. What is at stake is nothing less than our humanity, individuality, and freedom. For a Christian, the challenge is to recover one's identity as prophetic ambassador of another way of life and truth---and reject all forms of this-worldly political illusion, nationalisms, etc.. And for everyone, it is to recover a life outside the state, outside ordinary politics. Anarchism is the only sufficiently radical strategic position to take, Ellul argues.

We remember Ellul's oft-repeated point that his purpose was to provide his readers with some assistance in figuring out the meaning and direction of their own existence in the world; there is no "Ellulian" orthodoxy in politics. Ellul also loved the Christian theme of "incarnation"---that God comes into a given historical milieu, "appropriates" aspects of the situation, then creates a dialectical contradiction, and finally "expropriates" aspects of the old into a greater new reality.

We are grateful to AIJE President (and IJES Board member), University of Poitiers Professor of Political Science, Patrick Chastenet for his masterful lead article in this issue. Four colleagues offer their personal reflections on how Ellul has affected their politics; and we re-view four of Ellul's important political books.

Next issue (Spring 2007) our focus will be on Ellul's ethics. And we will return to the political topic by 2008.

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The Political Thought of Jacques Ellul
A 20th Century Man

by Patrick Troude-Chastenet

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We'll start with the banal suggestion that political thought cannot be understood without considering the context which gave rise to it. In the case of Jacques Ellul, this context was at once rich and tragic. The fact that he was born in Bordeaux, on January 6, 1912, might be of interest only to historians. Still, it is tempting to point out that the author of *The Technological Society* was born six months prior to the sinking of the largest ship in the world, considered unsinkable! In its effect on public opinion, the *Titanic* catastrophe, which claimed 2,196 lives, could be easily likened to a kind of aquatic 9/11. The shipwreck occurred at a time when blind faith in technological progress prevailed and was soon to experience its first gory disillusions. As for the rest, Ellul would be witness to two World Wars, the 1929 economic crisis, the Paris riots of February 6, 1934, the Spanish Civil War, the Popular Front, the German Occupation, the Holocaust, the French Resistance, Liberation and purge trials, the Cold War, the French Fourth Republic, the crisis of May 13, 1958, Gaullism in French government, May 1968, the list goes on.

What else should we note, as we probe deeper for elements that may have defined his relationship to political thought, which for now we will temporarily refer to as "detachment through action" (1)?

Since his high-school days, Ellul retained a strong aversion to xenophobic nationalism, the brutal effects of which he saw first-hand. His "cosmopolitan" roots – son of a French-Portuguese mother (*ne* Mendès) and an Italian-Serbian father born in Vienna – made him immune to the virus of nationalism which reigned in those days. At the Law Faculty, where the great majority of his fellow students sympathized with the far right and demanded "France for the French!," his individualism let his disagreement show. Jacques Ellul had been involved with minority movements since the early 1930s, since by that time he was already engaged in the personalist movement (more on that later). He found himself on a search for a middle path between American-style liberal individualism and mass-produced "political soldiers," branded Fascist or Communist, resulting in his well-known decision to never join the ranks of the French Communist Party.

The great economic crisis plunged his family into poverty. In fact, the first time Ellul heard about Marx was at the university in 1929. For young Ellul, Marx's work, which he read voraciously, provided a theoretical explanation for his father's unemployment: capitalism as a factor in crises, a condemnable regime condemned by history. With great enthusiasm, he read *The German Ideology* and established contacts with communist workers which, to his great disappointment, turned out to be more preoccupied with the party line than with Marxist hermeneutics. Thus, Ellul became "Marxian," not "Marxist," in his thinking method. Moreover, he always insisted that Marx was the one who asked the good questions and that he owed a great part of his intellectual development to him (along with Kierkegaard and Barth).

Despite never having joined the Communist Party, he often joined militant socialists and voted for the Popular Front during the 1936 legislative elections (the one and only time in his life he voted). Together with his spouse Yvette and like-minded Bordeaux natives, he helped the Spanish republicans procure weapons, even though he disapproved of the "internal" strife, which pitted the Anarchists against the Communists.

Under the Occupation, when the Strasburg Faculty was moved to Clermont-Ferrand, Ellul criticized Pétain. He was denounced to the French police by one of his students, but was ultimately dismissed by the Vichy government because of his father's status as a foreigner under a law that sought to "Frenchify" the French civil service (2). On his return to Gironde in the summer of 1940, he settled in a small village to do subsistence farming and prepare for university instructor examinations in Roman law. He also aided the Resistance efforts. He hid escaped prisoners and Jewish families in his house, supplied false documents, served as a mailbox for Gironde resistance fighters, and as a guide to the demarcation line located nearby. He maintained contact with the *Combat* movement, whose motto he liked: "From Resistance to the Revolution."

With the Liberation, he presided over several trials of collaborators and worked to keep the purges from leading to any excesses. He was a member of the Bordeaux city council, presided over by the socialist Fernand Audeguil. This experience lasted just six months, from October 1944 to April 1945, but it is essential for understanding his perception of politics. His brief involvement with the Bordeaux city hall permanently left him with the belief that elected officials were at the mercy of "committees," and that political professionals were powerless in the face of technocrats, the influence of the civil service, and the experts. This conclusion explains his frequent absences from public city council meetings (the important decisions were being made elsewhere and earlier!) and his militant abstentionism (what was the point of voting in a system where elected officials did not govern and in which citizens could not exert any control over the decision-making system ?).

Although he refused to be on the list of socialist candidates in municipal elections in the spring of 1945, Ellul actively participated in the October 1945 general elections. That was the one and only time when he participated in "politician" politics! He was third on the list of candidates from the Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (3). He was completely committed to this electoral campaign. The results were not commensurate with the effort he expended. The UDSR won less than 5% of the cast votes and not a single deputy seat. At 33 years of age, he watched helplessly as the old parties of the Third Republic returned to power. This experience left him with a profound sense of defiance vis-à-vis politics, and would later lead him to refuse to be a running mate of Jacques Chaban-Delmas during the Bordeaux city elections of 1947. However, in reality, his distrust targeted (political) power in general, leading him to decline the post of prefect in the Nord department of France. Ultimately, Ellul would choose an oblique path, one he had already picked during his personalist years.

Personalism of the 1930s

Ellul's political thought was deeply influenced by two movements/reviews: *Ordre Nouveau* and *Esprit*. Far from being simple provincial clones of the non-conformist intellectuals in Paris, Ellul and his friend Charbonneau would lead a third trend within the personalism movement. This "Gascon" approach was resolutely half-way between the *Ordre Nouveau* and *Esprit* approaches. When Alexandre Marc writes that Christianity is "the source of all revolutions," Ellul can only acquiesce, which does not mean that the "Bordeaux group" would not make its own voice heard over the personalist hubbub of the 1930s.

This third kind of personalism sought a path between liberal individualism and collective tyranny, between capitalism and totalitarianism. These young bourgeois revolting against the "established disorder" were keenly aware of their position as a "minority within an aged society." Ellul and Charbonneau seemed to be marginal in a movement that in itself was very much a minority. They met Mounier in Paris in 1933 and decided to

merge their little group with *Esprit*. With time, they moved closer to the leaders of *Ordre Nouveau* and had a falling out with Mounier in 1937, caused by the latter's centralist authoritarianism and uncompromising Catholicism.

What distinguished them was their belief that the political process is rendered powerless by science and technology: what Bernard Charbonneau called the "Great Shedding" ["la Grande Mue"] and Ellul "Technique." At twenty years of age, they already had that fundamental intuition that would tie together their entire body of work. The two friends would come to represent the most individualist, libertarian, regionalist, federalist, and above all, the most environmentalist faction of the personalist movement. They sought to develop an appreciation of nature in the most concrete sense of the word, to protect diversity, to create households that can lead autonomous lives but remain connected to others through networks.

How? By organizing camps in the Pyrenees. By encouraging regional encounters and building horizontal connections between these small self-managed groups. These camps, placed in the natural environment, demonstrated defiance towards Parisian centralism and were the first practical implementation of that winning slogan: "Think globally, act locally." They stressed the "carnal" aspect of the revolution. They condemned contrived escapes, individual judgment yielding to that of the "crowd" conditioned by propaganda. The authentic revolution must start "inside each individual," revolution of oneself and together with others, a permanent revolution. To change the political regime, first "start by changing people's lives." The true struggle is spiritual in nature, and the political dimension is secondary.

Therefore, the "necessary revolution" does not happen by taking power at the helm of the State, but through the creation—at the local level—of small, self-managed groups, federated amongst themselves. Functioning like counter-societies, within a global society, these exemplary small groups would embody the new social order that needs to be built and would serve as a testament, here and now, to the immediate revolution. Bit by bit, like a contagion, a beneficial virus or a universal *patch*, this from-the-ground-up network would be capable of extending itself beyond national borders destined to disappear off the face of the earth.

Utopian? Nonetheless, from here on Ellul would advocate "down to earth" political realism and daily resistance to the fatalities of modern society. "It is when revolution becomes impossible that it becomes necessary," affirmed Denis de Rougement. This vision is summarized in a 1935 text cosigned by Ellul and Charbonneau: "Directives for a Personalist Manifesto." This manifesto expounds the thesis that made Ellul famous in the United States thirty years later: the powerlessness of politics in the face of the supremacy of technology.

The Primacy of Technique

Differences between political regimes are secondary to the universality of technique. Fourteen years before Heidegger's first lectures on the subject, Ellul already thought that technique and not politics was now at the "heart of things." The ends intersect, even while the means diverge! Heidegger's work included metaphysical questioning of the essence of modern technique, the *Gestell*, the framework, while Ellul proposed a sociological description of the traits of the technical system based on the construction of a Weber-style ideal type.

Technique gives rise to a society characterized by its "fatalities" and its "gigantism" (4). The fatality of war: technology renders death banal! The fatality of Fascism: the fruit of the marriage of economic liberalism and technology. The fatality of inequality between different levels of production caused by technological progress and urbanization. Gigantism, signifying the concentration of production, capital, the State, and the population. In the modern city, nature's primary needs are replaced with even more oppressive (in-)human constraints. "When man resigns to living in a world not built on a human scale, he is dispossessed of all sense of measure." Put the economy at the service of mankind, not vice versa! Starting from the mid-1930s, Ellul thinks of technology as a general process and not simply an

industrial tool symbolized by the use of mechanization. The Ellulian concept of technology had already gone beyond a simple critique of mechanization as found in Duhamel's *Scènes de la vie future* (1930) and in less grotesque form in Aron and Dandieu, *Le cancer américain* (1931). According to Ellul, technological progress brings about widespread proletarianization, which goes beyond the one-dimensional economic analysis offered by Marx, and affects *all* people as well as *all* aspects of their life. As he will show later in *The echnological Society* (1954; ET 1964), technological progress is characterized by its ambivalence, not by its ambiguity. Technique is ambivalent because it frees as much as it alienates. It creates problems as soon as it resolves them and it feeds off itself through the solutions that it brings. What autonomous growth means is that in the context of a technical society, all human problems are transformed into technical problems and technique creates new problems for which humans try to systematically find technical solutions.

Gradually, Ellul would refine his own definition of technique but *The Manifesto* can be used to not only verify the prophetic aspect of Ellulian theses but also to show that, from the beginning, he was opposed not to technique itself, but to its autonomy. He recommended "reorienting technique" so that difficult tasks could be carried out by the "collective sector" in the form of "civil service." His definition of technique—"the search for methods having absolute efficiency in every field of human activity" —belongs to a historian doubling as a sociologist, not a philosopher. This also means that Ellul is not Heidegger and that he was not opposed to Technique for ontological reasons.

Not only would it be belittling to just call him a "technophobe," but it would also mean refusing to take into consideration the diachronic aspect of his work. In the mid-1930s, was it not Ellul who maintained that technique, which contributed to the rise of Fascism, could also work in the opposite direction and become an instrument of liberation?(5) This point of view was reaffirmed in 1982: "I kept showing that technique was autonomous; I never said that it could not be mastered."(6) Ellul explained how micro-computing provides self-management and council theories with the material means they seek. This new technique could be used to freely coordinate the free work of small self-managed groups which could lead to the creation of alternative networks and the institution of an authentic local democracy.

From the 1930s to the 1980s, reaffirming the primacy of technique over politics remained a constant: "Purely political movements are outdated" (1935). "Politics in its current form has no effect on technique and is perfectly predetermined" (1982). Ellul's thought remained faithful to itself while continuing to perpetually evolve. The adversaries of *Changer de révolution* (technophobes that were more Ellulian than Ellul himself) and those who looked at his work piece-meal, to make it easier to fossilize and to caricature its author as a reactionary writer, did not admit or understand this aspect of him. Which is why the historical element is so important!

From Hitler's Victory to Newfound Hope?

Historically, the combination of totalitarianism and technological power gave rise to the Moloch State. We should never overlook the fact that Ellul was the direct witness of the advent of the Italian Fascist state and of Nazism (before the war he had even attended a Nationalist Socialist meeting in Germany) and was a contemporary of the Communist dictatorships. With regard to technique and the State, Ellul adopted a comparable point of view: "Technique does not enslave us; rather, it is the sacred that is transferred to the technique" (1973). Without the sacred, without this process of divinization that paralyses our critical sense, technique could be made to serve human development. "The State does not enslave us, nor does the police state or the centralized state; rather, it is its sacramental transformation that makes us worship this amalgam of bureaucracy."

For better or for worse, just thirty years later, in 1973, mankind would adore the State, but this assertion should be reinterpreted in light of the paradoxical proposition according to which, ultimately, "Hitler won the war." This statement, at least mildly troubling, coming from a direct

witness doubling as a historian, should not be taken lightly. This is not a statement out of context or a misprint! This observation was first formulated in 1945, then repeated in two successive editions of *The Political Illusion*, and reaffirmed once more in 1987, in *What I Believe*: "Far from disappearing following the victory over Hitler, the Nazi model has spread across the entire world." To say that, is to say that the defeated had literally corrupted the victors. By choosing power, by opting for total war, to fight evil with evil, democracies perverted themselves by betraying their vital principles. Is it irreversible?

"The law of politics is efficiency. The one who wins is not the best, it is the stronges. In a technical world, efficiency becomes the only criterion for government legitimacy." Ellul concludes that in order to resist competition, "one must adopt the adversarial system….Hitler won the war after all!" Hitler showed the way to sacrifice man to the Moloch State, "this was his Satanic mission in the world." (7) To defeat him, the Allies used his own methods. His military undoing masked his political and moral victory. We are inexorably moving toward dictatorship (absolute power of the State, the primacy of the technicians) and toward universal totalitarianism.

In 1945, Ellul saw no political or technical means to stem this movement, which does not mean he advocated apolitism, "the telltale sign of a pre-fascist mentality." On the contrary, according to him, "what democracy begins in provoking a distaste for politics, a dictatorship brings to completion by eliminating this preoccupation altogether." This somber, if not desperate, vision should be put in perspective by juxtaposing it with another from 1982, found in the last chapter of *Changer de révolution*: "Toward an end of the proletariat?" Undeniably, here he gives the impression of opening a door, when his entire life he was reproached for being the prophet of misfortune, a pessimist puritan contemptuous of technological progress and modernity in all its forms. A puritan who, by the way, insisted that it was possible to work just two hours per day for thirty years! After having shown how the technical society produced new forms of proletarianization – in addition to Marx's proletariat there was an "impoverished proletariat" (unemployed, immigrants, fringe elements) and a "cultural proletariat" (the whole population with the exception of the technical aristocracy) – Ellul maintained that not all was lost.

The essence of socialism, that is to say the abolition of the proletariat and the end of alienation, remains the permanent objective, despite the adulterated means used to achieve it until now. Despite the mockeries of it in existence around the world, "socialism is the only possible political direction." But not just any kind! Not that of the regimes, not that of the socialist parties. He wants an ascetic socialism, founded on want and the refusal of the power of technique; socialism of freedom, which is revolutionary at the same time. Ellul is aware that here he is using concepts emptied of their meaning, having devoted two of his works to them, and this chapter provoked rancor and disappointment among many of his readers! Despite it all, he observes the transformations within the technical system and within socialism. In particular, what can politics still do to counter technique?

Politics in Technical Societies

What are the consequences, in the political arena, of the search for efficiency at all costs, of the primacy of the means over the ends? What outcome is provoked by the combination of the existing political system and technical power? In the technical society, people believe technique is serving them and are serving it instead. Modern people have become the instruments of their instruments. The means has been transformed into the end; necessity has been elevated to a virtue! We live not in a "post-modern" society, but in a "technical society," a society where a technical system has established itself. This living society tends to increasingly blend in with the "technical system": the product of the union between technical phenomenon and technical progress. But it should be noted that for Ellul, the technical society cannot be reduced to a technical system and there are tensions between the two. The technical "system" is to the technical society what cancer is to the human organism. The existence of these tensions is what keeps hope alive that change

is possible... change that is radical but which would not take the ways of political illusion, meaning, those of traditional politics! He concludes with an anarchist-inspired: “To commit oneself is to indenture oneself”(8). Partisan political activism has deeper roots in sociological coagulation than in personal liberty.

In the technical society, politics is based on the Necessary and the Ephemeral. Those governing bustle about to preserve the appearance of initiative, which in reality is left to the experts. With marked Weberian undertones, Ellul condemns the rendering useless of politics through the use of bureaucracy. He observes the inversion of the democratic model where the administration was subject to the authority of elected officials, and where efficiency is now the only criterion for legitimacy. The technical society also confuses the political and social. Everything is political but politics are only an illusion! Politics has supplanted religion; the modern State has taken the place of God! “Everything is politics” expresses both “the ideology and this reality” where the entire social body is absorbed by politics. This politicization of society necessarily leads to State totalitarianism.

The State is totalitarian by its essence, no matter what its form! “The State regulates all aspects of people’s lives and decides what is true; it assumes all the functions. It penetrates to the most profound aspects of our consciousness... and it defines what Good is....” (9) State power is made more absolute by the fact that it refuses all constraints, whether legal or moral. In fact, not only is the State not subject to Law but it manipulates law as it sees fit.

This systematic defiance towards the State is one of the principal constants of Ellulian discourse. In a technical society, popular sovereignty is but a myth and universal suffrage becomes incapable of selecting good governments and keeping control over their actions. It is also an illusion to believe that people have control over their representatives, just as it is an illusion to believe that elected figures can exert control over the administration and the experts. The technical State is totalitarian by nature, independent of its legal or institutional form and its ideological or political outer skin. At night, it all looks the same! This has been a recurring theme in Ellul’s work since the 1930s... This explains his (relative) indifference to the East/West conflict, his refusal to pick one form of dictatorship over another, because *all* regimes pursue identical ends: efficiency and power. In other words, the combination of the modern State and the technical ideology makes politics illusory and also dangerous. Still, far from making a plea in favor of apolitism—just as illusory—which would only reinforce the grip of the State, Ellul’s message seeks to rehabilitate the virtues of a personal resistance to Leviathan. For mankind, existing is resisting! Therefore, we should build up the “tensions”—one of the key words in the personalist discourses—and encourage tensions against all attempts at social integration. He concedes that he is reinventing democracy which “has disappeared a long time ago.” And this is where we come to one of the most problematic aspects of his relationship with politics.

We can only agree when he insists on the intrinsic fragility of democracy: it is a formidable perpetual conquest, not a “normal, natural, spontaneous regime.” But then, although he had always called for a down-to-earth political realism, he repeats the same error as all idealists since Rousseau: due to his exceedingly demanding vision of democracy, he abandons the idea of distinguishing between its empirical manifestations—admittedly imperfect—and perfectly totalitarian regimes. Instead of admitting with R. Dahl that democratic doctrine has a potentially—because never fully realized—revolutionary dimension, or instead of stressing like C. Lefort its essentially indeterminate character, its permanent invention, its structural incompleteness, Ellul seems to believe that polyarchies, or pluralist democracies, are masked dictatorships. Even modern democracy itself is found lacking in his eyes!

In reality, what Ellul is very deeply opposed to is violence contained in all forms of political power, including when this violence claims to be legitimate, like that of the modern State according to Weber’s realist definition. He would have none of it from either the great German sociologist or from Léon Duguit, the Dean of the Law Faculty in

Bordeaux. Ellul refused violence as a specific means, as *ultima ratio*, not only of the State but of politics in general. Politics which, as Weber reminds us once again, has power as its only stake; politics which obeys merciless laws that are dangerous to ignore as an actor and naive to deny as an observer.

Ellul insisted on the catalytic role of the Christians, on this unique role of a sheep among the wolves. Ellul advocated not only non-violence, but also non-power, and he could have never shared Weber's admiration for the character in the *Florentine Tales* that declared that those who preferred the grandeur of their City to the salvation of their souls, should be congratulated. In reality, having turned his back on Weber, Ellul is even further from another illustrious realist: Machiavelli.

For Ellul, it is absolutely impossible to create a just society with unjust means. Evil shall not beget Good, and same goes for politics. Why? Simply because he had placed his faith, once and for all, in the Wholly Other, in the Unknowable, in the revelation of God in Jesus-Christ. For those who find it convenient to ignore the theological side of his work, let us remember that Ellul himself referred to his Christian beliefs in some of his sociology books (10). Thus, we need to look further in his system of values if we wish to shed light on his relationship with politics. As the authors of *Mélanges* justly observed: "The concept of totalitarianism as applied to all States has no meaning for Ellul except in relation to a religious belief." (11)

The Theological Explanation

The metaphysical backdrop to Ellul's political thought takes us in two contradictory directions. We can focus equally on the hostile and pejorative description of this aspect of social activity or on the opposite, the positive role played by Christians in the modern world. This caricature-like vision of politics reduced to all that is underhanded and vain, was put into words during two colloquia and in Ellul's *A Meditation on Ecclesiastes*. "In the Western world of today, politics is the incarnation of the most profound evil." It is "the place of demons, the place of lies, and place of power" (1979). These statements echo others from a year earlier: "the essence of politics remains the same, and I say that in today's world, in these times, it is demonic."(12)

The modern man finds himself caught in-between. To take refuge in apoliticism, is to accept the State as one's destiny; by losing interest in politics, one plays the game of "the demonic divination of the State." Plunged into militant activism, he is surrounded by rivaling ideologies, that of the "diabolos" of the New Testament or the "divisor", and accentuates "diabolical politics."

Terrorism and Politics

In the same way that the works of Marx could be re-read with the knowledge of the Gulag, Ellul tries to interpret the nature of modern politics through the prism of terrorism in Europe of the 1970s. The terrorists and their methods were not diabolical, by themselves, but politics brought it out of them. Terrorism unveiled what politics had become, here and now. Terrorism expresses absolute hatred of absolute power. Because State power tends toward absolutism the means to fight it cannot remain relative. The political enemy is considered to be like the religious incarnation of Evil. The refusal to discriminate among potential victims is the consequence of identifying the social body with the political body. Everyone is guilty! Collective responsibility, of the class, the race, or the nation! "Over time the indiscriminate moral or theoretical accusation of all necessarily turns into the execution of anyone, for lack of means to kill everyone." Any means are good as long as they are efficient! Terrorism is but a somewhat more brutal expression of the collective credo. "If we recoil in horror before terrorism, we should recoil in horror before our entire politics."

With *La raison d'être*, we leave the limited scope of the colloquia for what appears to be, to all appearances, the general conclusion of his work (13). After having spent 50 years of his life examining texts that were rich in meaning, but all too often laconically simple, he picked his words for a final bouquet. And so, what does Qohelet say of political power? That power is always absolute,

power is always power, whatever the constitutional form might be, power brings nothing new, and the adage "*vox populi, vox dei*" is not a lie. Power is nothing but malice, injustice, and oppression! The further one goes up the power hierarchy, the worse the people are. Chapter V starts with a long chain of tyranny described by La Boétie in the *Discours de la servitude volontaire*. Power of one man over another makes him unhappy. "The foolishness was placed at the highest summits." Vanity, oppression, foolishness! "*All power* is thus qualified—without reserve and without nuance!"(14)

But, though Ellul had fully integrated the radical pessimism of the Ecclesiastes, he draws no conclusions with respect to human power to invite his readers to turn back from the political path. He only considers it as absolute and relative and stresses that this is not the path to freedom! This is the thesis that he defends in *The Politics of God, the Politics of Man* (15). The Church is not a spiritual affair and the politics is not devoid of interest for the Christian or for the modern man. Politics is even where the greatest affirmation of man's desire for autonomy manifests itself. The Christian, therefore, should neither become disinterested in it nor make it his chief preoccupation.

The position of Christians in the modern world is necessarily revolutionary. According to Ellul, the despair of modern man arises primarily from the fact that he no longer hears the promise of salvation and recapitulation; the purpose of Christians is precisely to announce the "good news." Thus, Christians are irreplaceable in this world. On one hand, they cannot make this world less sinful; on the other hand, they also cannot accept it as it is. They must permanently live with this tension! Salt of this earth, light of this world, the sheep among the wolves, Christians are the living sign of God's "politics." They must be God's ambassador and be the prophet of the return of Christ (16). Christians are revolutionary for saving the world whose logical course leads inexorably towards suicide. They belong to two Cities that can never coincide. They are active in this world and at the same time are citizens of another kingdom. All the human solutions are temporary and marked with sin; Christians find themselves in a permanent revolutionary state, because they must tirelessly renew the divine demand, which is to try to bring a bit of freedom into the society in which they live. They are like leaven: a substance that determines the fermentation of another substance without being changed by the process.

With respect to politics, the role of Christians is that of a catalyst. They also play the roles of watchmen, sentries, as Ezekiel shows (17). They are tasked with warning people, and they will be condemned if they do not fulfill this mission. The sentry is called to look for signs where the natural man only sees events. The Church is there to light the way and give direction to the human adventure, not to reproduce the divides found in traditional politics, nor to allow itself to be absorbed into the social body. Instead of behaving like a reactionary force faced with a progressive government or like a revolutionary force faced with a conservative regime, the Church must stand out by insisting on the decisive, but uncontested, point: the universal worship of power.

The Christian relationship with politics is characterized by a dialectical contradiction between taking politics seriously and also acknowledging its absolute and relative nature; between respecting the authorities and taking revolutionary action at the same time. From the Christian point of view, Ellul condemns liberal capitalism the same way he does apolitism, just as he had done in his secular writings.

What is really at stake is the ability to exercise choice, since no political Christian doctrine founded on the Revelation exists! The Christian does not need to look for theological legitimacy for his partisan engagement. The key is that he serves as witness to the word of Christ by being present among people, without forgetting that one cannot serve two masters at once. During periods of intense politicization, he must contribute by putting politics in perspective, not to devalue it, but to cleanse it. The Christian's role is that of reconciliation and resolution, which he fulfills by refusing passion, hate, and exclusion. Ellul thus calls for a demystification and de-ideolization of politics, for finding an adversary behind the enemy,

and a neighbor behind the political adversary. *If* democracy is the recognition that politics are relative, that competing viewpoints are valid, that power should be limited, minorities respected, *then* this regime offers a Christian a greater possibility for expressing his liberty in Christ.

But, as we have already noticed in his sociological writings, Ellul calls for revolution because he does not consider polyarchies as authentic democracies. This call seems to be a leitmotiv: "In order to save the world, an authentic revolution is now necessary" (1948), "the Christian attitude in the face of History is necessarily revolutionary" (1950), "the duty of every Christian is to be revolutionary" (1969). Although, to be sure, the meaning of this word as penned by Ellul does not refer to either the theology of freedom or any communist or conservative revolution.

"Necessary" Revolution & Ascetic Socialism

A close evaluation shows that for Ellul, the actor and the observer, the Christian and the scientist, become one! Faced with the "established disorder" the revolution is urgently needed (18). Since their "Directives for a Personalist Manifesto" in 1935, Ellul and Charbonneau proposed the creation of a personalist society within the global society. In light of the impending self-destruction of the current society, this counter-society will prepare the leaders of tomorrow. Its members, who must maximally limit their participation in the technical society, will be guided by a new mentality inspired by a different life style.

This daily behavior, a true incarnation of the doctrine, will be the only external sign of this engagement. A revolution without uniforms, banners, or flags! Elective communities would replace large urban centers. Within these small groups of volunteers, the individual could feel he is rooted somewhere, and in this "city on a human scale," authentic politics, founded on direct communication between those who govern and those who are governed, would exist in full transparency. Federalism alone can be used to fight against "gigantism" and "universalism," or the triumph of a single model of society. The "large countries" will be divided into sovereign, "autonomous regions," to the detriment of the central State, which would only carry out the simple functions of providing council and arbitration. The federal structure will enable both greater internal participation of the citizens and, by reducing the power of the states, it will reduce the risk of armed conflicts. Technique would be used to reduce time spent on work and the race for growth.

This text precedes essays on political ecology of the 1970s (Illich, Castoriadis, Schumacher) centered around the principle of "voluntary austerity," and the more recent writings from the supporters of *décroissance*, or "de-growth/reverse growth." While the idea of reducing time spent working is a topic that is already relevant to the left's ideological universe, here the ecological aspect dominates the view of the whole.

For example, Directive 61 provides for control of technique intended to hamper certain types of production "the growth of which would be useless from the human point of view." This text very openly affirms that economic growth is not synonymous with personal development and closes with a call in favor of building an "Ascetic city where people could live…" Here, a "free vital minimum" is available to all and a "minimum of balanced life" for everyone, both material and spiritual. In addition to the idea of "universal allocation", this text contains two classic elements which will later constitute the ecological argument: defense of the quality of life and the principle of social solidarity. "Man is consumed by the intense desire for material pleasure, and for certain others to not have this pleasure."

Isn't it hard not to think of theories that would later examine the concepts of the consumer society and the dual economy? One should also note the process of productivism in a period of global crisis where France's industrial production was still much lower than its 1928 levels. Their idea of the "ascetic city" focuses on the qualitative and anticipates the notion of "voluntary austerity" currently developed by supporters of "degrowth." Consume less to live better! This text cannot be disqualified for being the product of youthful thinking, because the same ideas inspire works

written later in life, like *Changer de révolution*. In this major work, Ellul, conscious of using tired terminology, nonetheless advocates for a "revolutionary socialism of freedom" and pins his hopes on small self-managed groups. "Various fringe elements, apolitical ecologists, separatists, feminist movements, Christians seeking to restore themselves, new hippies, spontaneous communities" to which he adds certain intellectuals, "would permit" us to leave behind the two socialisms that have failed.(19)

Ellul explicitly inscribes his revolutionary project in the affiliation of non-violent anarchism, revolutionary socialism, and the word of Christ. He simultaneously castigates the vacuity of political activism in any form and also condemns mystical withdrawal. On one hand, he affirms that awareness is a necessary stage but not sufficient for effective change (he laughs at those who claim "internal freedom"), on the other hand, he elevates contemplation to the position of the only authentic revolutionary attitude. On one hand, he exhorts Christians to become involved in the revolutionary enterprise, and on the other, he condemns movements rooted in the theology of freedom by reminding us that the Second Coming should not be confused with the proletarian revolution and that the biblical condemnation of Mammon cannot be reduced to the anti-capitalist struggle.

Ellul puts the person at the center of his thought, in conformance with his anarchist convictions and secular view, and with his Christological perspective and theological view. In conclusion, it matters less whether Ellul should be labeled a Christian anarchist or an anarchist Christian, but to understand that his way of being both Christian *and* anarchist at once perfectly illustrates the permanent tension that drives his work and his life. Perpetually doing a balancing act, ever the eternal foreigner, the incarnation of otherness, an anarchist among the Reformed and a Christian among situationists, on the fringes of his own church, and alone among the minorities.... Politics should be taken seriously and, at the same time, be kept in perspective. Political illusion is reprehensible in the same way as blissful apolitism. Politics must be desacralized. Ellul invites us to make our detachment visible in action, which is to say, do not stay away from the struggles of the City, just keep your distance!

Notes

(1) Patrick Troude-Chastenet, *Lire Ellul. Introduction à l'oeuvre socio-politique de Jacques Ellul*, 1992, p. 185.
(2) Jacques Ellul's paternal grandfather was born in Malta and Joseph, Jacques' father, held a British passport.
(3) The UDSR was created in June 1945 to unite non-communist elements of the Resistance. François Mitterrand is one notable member.
(4) P. Troude-Chastenet, « Jaques Ellul : une jeunesse personnaliste », *Revue Française d'Histoire des Idées Politiques*, n° 9, 1st semester 1999.
(5) J. Ellul, « Le fascisme, fils du libéralisme », *Esprit*, n°53, 1er février 1937.
(6) J. Ellul, *Changer de révolution*, 1982, p. 224.
(7) J. Ellul, "Victoire d'Hitler ?", *Réforme*, June 23, 1945, N°14.
(8) "L'engagement, c'est la mise en gage", J. Ellul, *L'illusion politique*, 1977, p.239.
(9) J. Ellul, *Exégèse des nouveaux lieux communs*, 1966, p.110.
(10) Cf. for example the last pages of *Changer de révolution*. Op. Cit.
(11) E. Dravasa, C. Emeri, J- L. Seurin, *Religion, société et politique, Mélanges en hommage à Jacques Ellul*, 1983, p.XIII.
(12) J-L. Seurin notes that in a democracy politics is not reduced to a desire for power but it is also searching for an equitable order in P. Troude-Chastenet, *Sur Jacques Ellul*, 1994.
(13) J. Ellul, *La raison d'être, Méditation sur l'Ecclésiaste*, 1987.
(14) Op. Cit. p. 84. Italics from Ellul.
(15) J. Ellul, *Politique de Dieu, politiques de l'homme*, 1966.
(16) P. Troude-Chastenet, *Lire Ellul.* Op. Cit. p.160.
(17) J. Ellul, *Les combats de la liberté*, 1984.
(18) The term "the necessary revolution" already appeared in the work of Aron and Dandieu, *Décadence de la nation française* (1931) before being used as the title of their crowning work published in 1933.
(19) J. Ellul, Op. Cit. p.245

Jacques Ellul on Politics & the State

From the political, social, and human points of view, this conjunction of state and technique is by far the most important phenomenon of history. It is astonishing to note that no one, to the best of my knowledge, has emphasized this fact. It is likewise astonishing that we still apply ourselves to the study of political theories or parties which no longer possess anything but episodic importance, yet we bypass the technical fact which explains the totality of modern political events, and which indicates the general line which our society has taken . . .

Technological Society (1954; ET 1964), p. 233.

The transformation of the state and the consequent predominance of technicians involves two elements: First, the technician considers the nation very differently from the politician. For the technician, the nation is essentially an affair to be managed . . . All that the technician can take into account is the application of his instruments---whether in the service of the state or something else is of small importance. For him the state is not the expression of popular will, or a creation of God, or the essence of humanity, or a modality of the class war. It is an enterprise with certain services which ought to function properly. It is an enterprise which ought to be profitable, yield a maximum of efficiency, and have the nation for its working capital. . .

The second element . . . is the progressive suppression of ideological and moral barriers to technical progress. The old techniques of the state were a compound of purely technical elements and moral elements such as justice. . . It therefore imposes limits on the pure technique of private persons. . . But when technique became state technique, when technical instrumentalities passed into the hands of the state, did the state adhere to its old wisdom? Experience must answer in the negative. The techniques, to which the state opposed checks when they were in the hands of private persons, became unchecked for the state itself. There is no self-limitation in this respect.

Technological Society (1954; ET 1964), pp. 263-6.

Finally, technique causes the state to become totalitarian, to absorb the citizens' life completely. We have noted that this occurs as a result of the accumulation of techniques in the hands of the state. Techniques are mutually engendered and hence interconnected, forming a system that tightly encloses all our activities. When the state takes hold of a single thread of this network of techniques, little by little it draws to itself all the matter and the method, whether or not it consciously wills to do so.

Technological Society (1954; ET 1964), p. 284.

The modern western technical and scientific world is a sacral world. . . . the modern sacred is ordered entirely around two axes, each involving two poles, one pole being respect and order, the other transgression. The first axis is that of "technique/sex," the second is the "nation-state/revolution" axis. . . .

The nation-state is the second ordering phenomenon of our society. That and technology are the only two. . .

That the state is one of the sacred phenomena of this age seems hard to dispute. . . The state is the ultimate value which gives everything its meaning. It is a providence of which everything is expected, a supreme power which pronounces truth and justice and has the power of life and death over its members. It is an arbiter which is neither arbitrary nor arbitrated, which declares the law, the supreme objective code on which the whole game of society depends. . .

Finally, this sacral status will be carried to the summit, to the point of incandescence, through the fusion of the state with the nation to form the nation-state. . . . the state is taking the nation in hand. . . . It resolves all national problems. Conversely the nation finds its expression only in a powerful state, which is the coordinator if not the centralizer and the orderer. The fusion is complete. Nothing national exists outside the state, and the latter has force and meaning only if it is national.

The New Demons (1973; ET 1975), pp. 70-71, 80-83.

It is a stereotype in our day to say that everything is political. . . Politization is represented by the importance and growing frequency of ideological debates; and it is manifested by the tendency to treat all social problems in the world according to patterns and procedures found in the political world. . .

The essential element that must be taken into consideration if we want to understand the *total* phenomenon of politization is a fact that is, if not the cause, at least the moving force of this phenomenon. The fact is the growth of the state itself. . . . The nation-state is the most important reality in our day.

The Political Illusion (1965; ET 1967), pp. 8-9.

In fact, values no longer serve us as criteria of judgment to determine good or evil: political considerations are now the pre-eminent value and all others must adjust to them. . . For example, women finally become human beings because they receive "political rights." . . . A person without the right (in reality magical) to place a paper ballot in a box is nothing, not even a person. To progress is to receive this power, this mythical share in a theoretical sovereignty that consists in surrendering one's decisions for the benefit of someone else who will make them in one's place.

The Political Illusion (1965; ET 1967), pp. 16-17.

The idea that the citizen should control the state rests on the assumption that, within the state, parliament effectively directs the political body, the administrative organs, and the technicians. But this is pure illusion. . .

When we talk of a president, ministers, or an assembly, we have not yet said anything, for the state has become a vast body, dealing with everything, possessing a multitude of centers, bureaus, services, and establishments. . . .

A modern state is *not* primarily a centralized organ of decision, a set of political organs. It is primarily an enormous machinery of bureaus. It is composed of two contradictory elements---on the one hand, political personnel, assemblies, and councils, and, on the other, administrative personnel in the bureaus---whose distinction, incidentally, is becoming less and less clear.

The Political Illusion (1965; ET 1967), pp. 138-41.

We are therefore in the presence of the following dilemma: either we must continue to believe that the road to solving our problems is the traditional road of politics, with all sorts of constitutional reforms and "revolutions" of the Right and the Left---and I have already demonstrated that all that no longer has any significance, but merely represents shadow-boxing---or we turn away from the illusory debate and admit, for example, that public liberties are but "resistances," admit that for man "to exist is to resist," and that, far from committing oneself to calculating the course of history it is important above all never to permit oneself to ask the state to help us.

The Political Illusion (1965; ET 1967), pp. 221-22.

I have long affirmed the anarchist position as the only acceptable stance in the modern world. This in no way means that I believe in the possibility of the realization and existence of an anarchist society. All my position means is that the present center of conflict is the state, so that we must adopt a radical position with respect to this unfeeling monster.

Jesus and Marx (1979; ET 1988), p. 156n.

Christians allow themselves to be taken in by the prevailing vogue. They see everybody expressing their own ideas, so why shouldn't they do the same? That's all right, as far as I am concerned, only let them be less pretentious about it, less authoritative, less inclined to expect everyone to follow in their wake. And let them not claim to be representing Jesus Christ! . . .

[I]ncompetence, evident in writings and proclamations, is even more apparent in encounters with the Christian who is actively involved in a party or union. His beginner's training is usually very deficient, both from the point of view of biblical theology and from the point of view of politics and economics. But once he is involved the situation becomes worse, for participation in politics is very fascinating and absorbing.

False Presence of the Kingdom (1963; ET 1972), pp. 155-7.

Naturally it is better to run a city well than badly. If a Christian has a hand in this and is a good administrator, that is all to the good. But any person can be a good administrator. Being a Christian is no absolute guarantee that one will be a better politician or administrator. Seeking the good of a city is not a specifically Christian thing. . . .

Christians are needed in all parties and movements. All opinions should have Christian representatives. . . If . . . Christians take up different positions knowing that these are only human, and having it as their primary goal to bear witness to Jesus Christ wherever they are, their splitting up into various movements, far from manifesting the incompetence of Christian thought or the inconsistency of faith, will be a striking expression of Christian freedom.

Ethics of Freedom (1973; ET 1976), p. 379.

How Ellul Influenced My Political Thought and Behavior

Four Personal Reflections

Mark Mayhle

Mark Mayhle is a physician and former Boeing engineer in Seattle, who thanks another Boeing engineer, Arek Shakarian, for introducing him to Jacques Ellul.

The year was 1980. I was 22, a newlywed and finishing up graduate school. The Carter "malaise" was under assault from the Reagan "optimism." My father, nothing if not a patriotic American, was an administrator in a nearby school district and for a number of years it had been his responsibility to run the annual campaign for the district's tax levy request. Under Washington law this required a supermajority of 60% to pass, and failure could be devastating to the afflicted district. Some years earlier, his district had passed their levy with *exactly* 60% of the vote—a single "yes" vote fewer would have doomed them to larger class sizes, loss of music and athletic programs, God knows what. So when he asked if I was planning to vote in the upcoming presidential election, it was mutually understood to be fraught with his passionate belief in the import of every individual vote. I replied to the effect that there was not a candidate I felt I could in clear conscience support. His somewhat sarcastic and largely rhetorical rejoinder was, "So, do you think *nobody* should vote?"

I thought for a moment and then answered, "Well, I don't think it's *necessarily* a sin to vote." Needless to say, Dad was not amused. Regrettably, he passed away two years later, and we never had occasion to revisit the issue in any depth. But 26 years on, largely thanks to Jacques Ellul, I am inclined to stand by this offhanded and somewhat flippant remark of my more callow self. It was a few years after this episode that a friend loaned me *Jesus and Marx*, launching what I anticipate to be a lifelong engagement with Ellul's thought. Intrigued as I was by that work, it was a few passing references to anarchism, even the seemingly-oxymoronic "Christian anarchism," that especially piqued my interest.

When *Anarchy and Christianity* appeared in translation at the local bookstore a few years later, I was not disappointed. Ellul had given substantive articulation to my inchoate political philosophy. Here was (to me) a convincing argument that *choosing* not to vote could be, if not "responsible" in the Niebuhrian sense, certainly a faithful response to the incredulity toward worldly power structures so evident in the teaching and example of Jesus (and, for that matter, of the apostle Paul.) This was reinforced by an encounter around the same time with the work of John Howard Yoder, and the combination resulted in a quiet conversion from the conservative evangelicalism of my youth to an Anabaptist orientation. That urban Mennonites too often these days seem to fall captive to what passes for the liberal wing of the current American political mainstream perhaps serves as a prudent reminder that no "ism" is ever truly our home, but that's a story for another place and time.

Randal Marlin

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Ellul has certainly had an important and continuing influence on my political views, but it is hard to characterize this influence in definite terms. When I first encountered Ellul's ideas in the 1970s I had already been deeply immersed in civic activism. Our project had been to tame traffic in an older central residential area of Ottawa in order to reverse the decline of the neighbourhood. I had also been teaching existentialism and the debate between Sartre and Camus on violence was very much on my mind, inasmuch as the FLQ (Front de Libération du Québec) crisis involving a kidnapping of the British Trade Commissioner and murder of a Quebec Liberal cabinet minister in 1970 was part of recent Canadian history.

On just about any of the politically-oriented topics Ellul has dealt with, I find strong congeniality with my own views, but I frequently find some sticking point that stops me from wholeheartedly accepting the position he appears to be supporting. So, for example, I think I have more optimism than he has shown about the ability of democratic processes to deliver acceptable solutions to societal problems. I do not consider myself an anarcho-syndicalist. But I do agree (as mentioned in my re-view of *The Political Illusion*) that the process alone is not sufficent and must be supplemented by an alert and organized citizenry. I also support whole-heartedly the need to respect political opponents and to try to understand their points of view in a spirit of co-operation rather than hostility.

I have always been critical of some aspects of Sartre's political philosophy, even while approving of his struggle against discrimination and colonial oppression. But I was taken aback somewhat by the vehemence of Ellul's attack on Sartre in one of his lectures at the EUP (Institut d'Études politiques) in 1979-80. Likewise, in "FLN Propaganda in France during the Algerian War," he wrote about Sartre: "Knowledge of these matters was of particular importance in an affair of this kind: the Algerian question was extraordinarily difficult, and it was a person unqualified in this area who decided on a whole orientation of essential propaganda." This assessment of Sartre's lack of historical awareness was confirmed in my own mind when I read an article in which Sartre gave his support for the FLQ. I thank Ellul for reinforcing in my mind the need for careful assessment of factual realities before supporting a political cause, however attractively worded the cause may be.

Post-independence developments in Algeria have amply vindicated Ellul's position, and Sartre later conceded that Camus had been right on the issue of violence and Algerian independence.

I have found in Ellul a useful counterpoise to Sartre on other points as well. Both have freedom as central components of their ethical philosophy. But Sartre's vision of the human is egocentric, while Ellul's is other- and God-oriented. While Ellul guards against complacency, over-optimism, and disguised self-seeking, in the end his vision is hopeful and encouraging for those bent on making a political contribution to their community, in whatever form they choose to make it. I take from Ellul a very human-oriented political attitude, distrustful not only of myth-supported enslaving institutions, but also of threats to freedom that supposed liberators may bring along with their alternate set of myths.

Sharon Gallagher

Sharon Gallagher is editor of Radix Magazine (Berkeley CA). She interviewed Jacques Ellul at his Bordeaux home in 1988.

Jacques Ellul's *The Meaning of the City* changed the way I view politics. The Christian subculture I grew up in was apolitical--as part of a general stance of suspicion and separation from "the secular culture," years before Evangelicals began wielding political power.

By the time I was living in Berkeley in the 1970s I'd become politicized and was passionately opposed to the Vietnam war. But reading *Meaning of the City* transformed my understanding of citizenship. My political stance at that time was mostly "anti"--anti-war, anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-nuke, etc. *The City* gave me a sense of duel citizenship that that called for a positive response--working for the "welfare of the city."

One of Ellul's main texts for *Meaning of the City* was Jeremiah 29, which contains an exhortation to Israelite exiles living in Babylon. It concludes: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

Here's part of Ellul's commentary on the text: "We are clearly told to participate materially in the life of the city and to foster its welfare. The *welfare*, not the destruction. And the welfare of the *city*, not our own. Yes, we are to share in the prosperity of the city, do business in it, and increase its population . . . We must make it beautiful, because it is a work of man. And because it is such, God looks down even on it with love." (p.74)

In a city like Berkeley with its own foreign and domestic policies (the city council recently voted to impeach George W. Bush) the distinction between local and national issues isn't always clear. But it's often on a local level where we can actually make a difference--making sure that the poor can find places to live, that trees are planted, that all the old, beautiful buildings aren't torn down and replaced by strip malls.

Ellul's exposition of Jeremiah's text is rich. It addresses the individualism that marks American political and religious life--we're to seek the *common* good. We're to care about quality of life and to work toward it. This is a welcome antidote to the dispensationalist view of a doomed world that doesn't really matter. The question is not whether or not we'll be "left behind" but what good we're going to do while we're here.

John Gwin

John Gwin lives in Beloit, Wisconsin, where he does some building security and maintenance work while pursuing his interests in language and culture.

Jacques Ellul is for me a witness of the Truth and of the power the love of God in Christ. All of his many works, both the theological and the scientific or sociological served as profound testimony of God's faithfulness and remind me that faith in Christ is a solid foundation for life today. In a sterile age of science and technology, here was a writer who courageously explored every aspect of this world and our frantic life in it. He saw, and explored the darkest, most terrifying realities and seductive falsehoods of modern life in his sociological writings, and through his many studies of the Hebrew Scriptures elaborated many instances in which God breaks into our world precisely where we have bricked up the doors and windows to keep God out. Ellul credited faith in God with permitting him to rigorously explore and question humanity's commonplace assumptions and to consider fearful realities.

In reading the work of Wm Stringfellow, I came across the forward that he had written to Ellul's English edition of *The Presence of the Kingdom*. I took to heart his recommendation to read Ellul and am thankful that I did.

In *Presence of the Kingdom*, he emphasizes the vital but neglected work of the Christian layman in preserving the world by resisting the temptations to simply follow the world's agenda of action, action and more action. When we neglect wisdom, study of Scripture, discernment and prayer guided by the Holy Spirit we fail to fulfill our God-given calling. In reference to the "terrible triumph of the Nazi spirit that we see everywhere in the world today," Ellul writes, "We have conquered (in WWII) on the material level, but we have been spiritually defeated. Christians alone could wage the spiritual conflict: They did not do so. They did not play their part in the preservation of the world." (p. 25) Quoting Paul in Colossians 4:5-6 and Ephesians 5:15-17, he finds "…an astonishingly living suggestion for the study of the situation of the Christian in the world …placed, as we might say, at the vital point, as a link between conduct and preaching (or one's witness), between good works, the fruit of wisdom, and the knowledge of the will of God (p. 26), (which confronts us both as judgment and as pardon, as law and as grace, as commandment and as promise, (and) is revealed to us in the Scriptures, illuminated by the Spirit of God. P. 27)

Ellul saw the will of the world as "…a will to death, a will to suicide," which we must not accept and which we must act to prevent. We are "…obliged to understand the depth and the spiritual reality of the mortal tendency of this world; it is to this that we ought to direct all our efforts, and not to the false problems which the world raises, or to an unfortunate application of an 'order of God' which has become abstract; if we act thus we understand that the work of preaching necessarily accompanies all the work of changing material conditions.

"Thus it is always by placing himself at this point of contact (between the will of the Lord and the will of the world), that the Christian can be truly 'present' in the world, and can carry on effective social or political work, by the grace of God." (p. 28,29)

Early on, I read Ellul's *Violence*. My miserable cynicism concerning war and violence and the nation was turned on its head, and I was left to rethink my and my generation's capture by the multiple layers of propaganda flooding our world.

His *Violence* deals with the issues of war and peace and faith and illusion, and the church's tendency to conform to the ideologies of the time, whether they be the royalist, nationalist, leftist anti-war, or rightist pro-war ideology. Ellul also exposes various misunderstandings of the gospel such as the identification of the publicans and harlots with the "poor" and the Pharisees with the "rich." The assumption that the politically correct "poor" are the only poor, forgetting the misery of those who are scorned for their position in society. Also one of the most remarkable lessons I learned from this work in regard to violence is that "whatever its milieu, its motif, its basis or orientation, idealism always leads to the adoption of a false and dangerous position… The first duty of a Christian is to reject idealism." (p. 125)

If I had to personally sum up the impact of Ellul's work, it would be "Relief of Misery." His works, both sociological and scriptural in focus, resulted for me in a renewed comprehension of Biblical Faith and Hope in the midst of the world. Ellul's *Presence of the Kingdom* delineated a coherent and sensible explication of the call of a believer in this world so confusing to me. His *Violence* helped me see more clearly in the fog of the over-simplifications born of the various propagandas obscuring the complex issues of the Vietnam War. His as yet untranslated *Jeunesse Delinquant* describing the work of a club for "unadapted" street youth in Bordeaux gave a respectful portrayal of their lives and outlined the methods used to enable them, without patronizing them, to find their own way forward in a life that had been one of genuine misery.

Re-Viewing Ellul

Jacques Ellul
The Political Illusion

New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1967 and Random House, Vintage Books, 1972.
Original edition *l'Illusion politique* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1965).

Re-viewed by Randal Marlin
Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada

Forty years ago Konrad Kellen gave the American public a fine translation of *The Political Illusion*, along with an insightful introduction. This work builds upon Ellul's earlier *Technological Society* and *Propaganda*. A central quesiton here is: How can a conscientious citizen in a modern democracy contribute to good government? Those with technical expertise can be expected to look out for their own special interests, not necessarily the public good. Withstanding corruption requires proper checks and balances. But this requires the appropriate knowledge, and who will supply that?

Ellul commonly devotes the bulk of his energies, in his social and political writings, to trenchant diagnosis of social problems. He points the way to solutions, but is careful above all not to encourage complacency. He sounds the alarm, saying in effect: beware the fancy imagery of democracy, behind which the mechanisms of tyranny may be crafted.

Passage of time has shown Ellul to be prescient. Certainly in the United States the Watergate debacle, the Iran-Contra dealings, and the current deceptions of the administration of President George W. Bush to bring his country and a coalition into war with Iraq, followed by use of torture and rights violations of detainees, surveillance of U.S. citizens without court authority, and the like, all reinforce the main claims in this book.

Central among these claims is the idea that uncritical faith in democratic processes, such as the party system and elections, to provide us with good government, is misplaced. The idea that such processes will guarantee democracy is undermined by awareness that votes are valuable only to the extent voters are informed. Once it becomes clear that government, technocrats and co-operative media shape the information and imagery reaching the public, the idea that the ordinary voters are the real determinants of political becomes very dubious.

Upton Sinclair and, more recently, Noam Chomsky have presented us with similar insights, but Ellul goes further in locating the problems as having their source in popular attitudes and in the dominance of myths concerning progress, happiness, and the ability of the right technique to solve our problems.

The true source of democracy, for Ellul, lies in the attitudes of the people. "A personal conscience," he writes, ". . . is the only thing that can save both democracy and what is real in political affairs." (204) Enemies of democracy can be found even among those who profess to favour it. These enemies are fanaticism on one side, and inertia, leading to opting out of politics, on the other. You can't have genuine democracy without a deep-set respect for the opinions and aspirations of others, including minorities within the larger society.

The idea that happiness will be guaranteed if only we can get people to adjust and adapt to majority views, and if we can maximize material comforts, is one of those myths than emboldens political powers to intrude in the private sphere to encourage uniformity. Ellul refers here to Bernard Charbonneau (to whom he dedicates this book) and what Charbonneau calls the "lie of liberty," namely, liberty conceived as offered to the individual on a platter by a benevolent society. By contrast, "There is no liberty except liberty achieved in the face of some constraint or rule." (211) The aptness of the Saint-Just quotation at the front of the book makes itself felt here: "The people will fancy an appearance of freedom; illusion will be their native land."

Among the many wry observations about Bush's failed (as is currently acknowledged even by original supporters) Iraq war is that the supposed exporters of democracy were simultaneously undermining it at home. The recent November election switched the congressional power from Republicans to Democrats, but it remains to be seen whether much can now be done to reverse the beginnings of civil war there. What good is an election when the die, in the form of a quagmire, has already been cast?

Ellul thinks that unity in a political system means that life has gone out of it. Tension and conflict form personality, "not only on the loftiest, most personal plane, but also on the collective plane." I see a resemblance to Emmanuel Levinas and the latter's perception that the goal of ataraxy conflicts with the obligation to respect the otherness of the other. To avoid disturbances to our tranquillity we would like to make others the same as ourselves. But one only has to look at Canadian history and the effect of Lord Durham's goal of assimilating the French Canadians to see what enduring resentments this attitude can cause.

Ellul is conscious of writing largely from the experience of France since Louis XIV, but he need not apologize for thinking his ideas might have larger application. Centralizing forces exist the world over, and they need to be kept in check. He thinks it important to permit the emergence of social, political, intellectual, artistic, religious and other groups, totally independent of the state, "yet capable of opposing it, able to reject its pressures as well as its controls and even its gifts." (222)

He thinks these organizations and associations should be able to deny that "the nation is the supreme value and that the state is the incarnation of the nation." He allows that there is a risk in reducing the central power but sees this as "the condition of life."

Ellul wrote before the arrival of the Internet. We have seen that the ability of the centralized powers in the United States to shape opinion by false imagery failed spectacularly in the attempts to make war heroes out of Jessica Lynch and Pat Tillman - the latter former professional football star having been in fact a victim of "friendly fire." Contrary credible evidence circulating through Web sites such as Truthout, Common Dreams, PRWatch and the like was sufficient to force the image-makers to backtrack.

But there is no guarantee that the freedom exercized by those Web site operators will continue indefinitely, and we can expect battles in this area as well as on other fronts, such as the attempts to force television stations that show government video news releases to acknowledge their provenance in a way that will minimize their deceptive propensities.

The trouble with illusions is that they are comforting, and if our vision of life is to maximize comfort, why bother attacking them? One reason is that illusions can lead to political mistakes which can have most uncomfortable outcomes. Another reason, though, is that other goals and conditions of a good life include such things as such as honesty, freedom, integrity, and respect for the Other, and these are incompatible with the pertinent illusions.

We have to be willing to engage in political life and work for our desired goals, but always in such a way as to preserve our respect for the freedom and dignity of others, even when our goals collide. "We should forever be concerned with the means used by the state, the politicians, our group, ourselves." (238) We also have to track down those stereotypes and myths in our own thinking so as to free ourselves from them, for as long as they exist "no freedom or democratic creativity is possible." (240) Coming from Ellul, the message is not new, but time and events (including dire environmental forecasts) have merely reinforced its urgency.

Jacques Ellul
Autopsy of Revolution

New York: Knopf, 1971
Original edition *Autopsie de la Révolution* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1969)

Re-viewed by Andy Alexis-Baker
Associated Menonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart IN

In this book Ellul delves into history arguing that until the 18th century revolt had been conservative and opposed to political and social change. These upheavals revolted against unbearable situations resulting from increased state functions. As such, revolution (or revolt) reacted *against* the expected course of history and usually wanted to restore a previous situation.

Then came the French Revolution which changed traditional revolt in two ways: a future oriented outlook and belief in the state as the bearer of freedom. The aristocratic leaders envisioned a utopian society which a scientific outlook would bring about. Inspired by the French Revolution, Karl Marx made revolution part of history's evolution. Thus revolution became normalized and predictable. All that was needed were the right techniques to predict the conditions under which the masses would explode and to direct the explosions into seizing control of the state, which under the direction of new management would take on a totally new character: communist.

Ellul argues that in reality the state has its own internal logic and structure so that those who think they can control the state are under an illusion, instead that logic and structure controls the revolutionary. Revolution, rather than decreasing state power, has increased the state's reach. The dehumanizing, rationalized gaze of the state has penetrated into every area of life. It is state power, more than colonialism or

class conflict, that truly threatens human freedom. Here Ellul becomes relentless in his attack on every aspect of the nation-state.

Ellul suggest that the alternative to state fetishism is a revolution invoking "direct personal responsibility" (282). Much contemporary discourse is still based upon the notion that where real "politics" or action occurs is in the impersonal machinery in Paris or Washington D.C. Ellul, however, insists that the only real thing is the person—spiritual, physical and mental. Call it anarchism, personalism or situationism (Ellul uses all these terms while recognizing differences), the idea is the same. Real change happens where people begin to take responsibility. For Ellul modern electoral democracy attempts to tame the inherent anarchy and unruliness contained in democracy.

Ellul does not call for traditional individualism. He makes clear how statism and the technological society *create* individuals who are incapable of making decisions that run against nationalist or technological ends. Yet because of his polemic against a herd mentality, he fails to make clear that rootedeness and loyalty to a certain type of community helps individuals become whole persons, without which the lures of the technological society quickly overwhelm. For me—a Mennonite—Ellul's failure to place individuals in community is inexcusable. The state is primarily about creating individuals without attachment to healthy community and loyalties that make it possibile to fight the technological society. At times Ellul seems to forget that while the great Fascist and Communist regimes depended upon massive public support, our own democracies depend upon mass apathy and individualization.

Despite his failure to name types of community that resist state expansion and the technological society, this book is valuable for *Ellul Forum* readers to re-read. The dominant emphasis from the *Ellul Forum* has been the pitfalls of the technological society. Yet Ellul insists, "Any revolution against the perils and the bondage of technological society implies an attempt to disassemble the state" (268).

Ellul's claim that the state is the object of revolution is also true for advocates of nonviolent techniques. Gene Sharp and others tout the great "nonviolent revolutions," but using Ellul's outlines it is best to point out that this is just another vulgarization of the word. No revolution has occurred in any Western nation since Ellul's book. What happened were in-house regime changes. No Western "revolution" has successfully dismantled the state and the technological apparatus (the Zapatistas in Chiapas, however, come closer to Ellul's vision).

Finally, if a future edition of this book were printed, it would benefit from a critical apparatus and an index. Ellul mentions and discusses numerous names, places and movements that North American readers cannot understand without editorial footnotes. Despite these flaws in the apparatus of the book, the content remains relevant for those of us concerned about the expected course of history. Ellul's call is for revolt against this dark future looming over us. And it remains as dark as Ellul ever predicted it would be.

Jacques Ellul
False Presence of the Kingdom

New York: Seabury, 1972
Original edition, *Fausse présence au monde moderne* (Paris: Les Bergers et les Mages, 1963)

Re-viewed by Virginia W. Landgraf
American Theological Library Association, Chicago IL

False Presence of the Kingdom is a critique of certain kinds of Christian political activity as failing to live up to Christians' true calling. This failure has theological and sociological dimensions. Ellul goes into both aspects in more depth elsewhere. He admits that the book is best understood in the context of *The Political Illusion* and his work on Christian ethics (later published as *To Will and To Do* and *The Ethics of Freedom*). Also, the distinction between truth and reality, not fully elaborated until *The Humiliation of the Word*, is helpful for understanding this book, as is the image from *Apocalypse* of the Word of God (the white horse) providing counterpoint to the forces of history (the other three horses) in Rev. 6:2-7.

At this period in his thought, as developed in the essay "Rappels et réflexions sur une théologie de l'État," Ellul allows a legitimate role for political authority (not necessarily the abstract state) as administrator of common patrimony. Thus its responsibilities are within the realm of reality (visible, measurable results, accomplished by power); it goes beyond its bounds if it arrogates to itself the realm of truth (values and ultimate human destiny, communicated by personal words, the precondition for which is freedom). How far one agrees with Ellul's arguments depends largely on how far one agrees with his opposition between freedom and power. Legitimate political authority is in an awkward position: it needs to have a modicum of power over

reality (in terms of administrative results), but it should not become possessed by that power, lest it give that power ultimate status, shut out freedom, and claim that reality is truth. Such legitimacy may be a chimera, since, as he states in *The Humiliation of the Word*, when we see reality we want to have power over it.

Once those presuppositions are clear, *False Presence* is the story of Christians grasping at reality instead of listening for truth. Ellul uses examples from the French Reformed Church in 1962. Although the "hot issue" was Algeria, the scenarios are familiar. Polarizing issues seem urgent, and a political solution is demanded. Christians on either side claim that their faith demands these reforms. Ellul thinks that such moralization is irrelevant to the actual world faced by political actors. Because politics is based on power, which is opposed to freedom, political action cannot make decisions based on values. And when Christians plunge fully into politics, they fail to speak a transcendent word because they are co-opted into the world's assumptions: that increased technical power is an improvement; that the state can cure social ills; etc. Co-optation fails to provide the tension which Ellul thinks is necessary for a society to avoid entropy and have the resilience to meet challenges (an argument from secular information theory used in *The Political Illusion*). Therefore, Ellul thinks that this kind of Christian social action functions as the opiate of the people (Marx), "provid[ing] ideological and moral satisfactions to those who are in fact *incapable* of changing the situation" (49, ET 51). Theologically, identification of Christian living with political action betrays the biblical witness about the perils of political power and loses the dialectic between the "already" and the "not yet" of Christ's lordship. Christ is by rights Lord over creation, and his resurrection is the first fruits of his triumph over death, but the prince of death is still the evident ruler of this world.

However, Ellul denies that withdrawal from the world is a Christian option. As in *The Ethics of Freedom*, he identifies specific tasks for Christians in the political realm. Among them are long-term thought about likely future problems; dialogue with political actors on their own terms, showing them the consequences of their positions; and involvement in political organizations on all sides, as people *relatively* committed to causes, ready to risk reconciliation and dialogue. Such practices do not require being convinced of the total opposition between freedom and power. Their presupposition is that legitimate administration of the reality we all face should be capable of long-term, self-critical, reconciling thought and action.

Jacques Ellul
Anarchy and Christianity

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
Original edition *Anarchie et christianisme* (Lyon: Atelier de creation libertaire, 1988)

Re-viewed by Don Surrency

University of South Florida

Anarchy and Christianity, in title alone, is undoubtedly controversial and contentious. However, in this book, as is common in all of Ellul's work, we find a theological analysis of society and religion that still warrants evaluation nearly 20 years after publication. This retrospective critique of *Anarchy and Christianity* will offer a brief summary of Ellul's argument, followed by a critique, and then concluded with some general remarks regarding the usefulness and importance of Ellul's theory in light of contemporary culture.

Ellul believed that the attacks on religion commonly launched by anarchists, which accuse all religions of leading to violence, are accurate. However, he makes the curious assertion that "the revelation of Christ ought not to give rise to a religion. . .the Word of God is not a religion. . ." (26). Ellul argues that the true Christian faith is not adhering to dogmas or doctrines, but trusting in Christ. Thus the Christianity that is present in the world is merely the "sociological and institutional aspect of the church. . .not the church." (10).

It is this position, fully articulated in his earlier work, *The Subversion of Christianity*, which serves as the premise for Ellul's critique of society and the Church, and his belief that the true political spirit of the Christian Bible, is a spirit of anarchy. This argument is based on the exegesis of various narratives found in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that demonstrate the anarchist sentiment found at the core of Christianity. While this is not the proper place, nor is there adequate space, to engage in a hermeneutical critique of Ellul's idiosyncratic exegesis, it is important to note that his interpretation of Jesus as the silent anarchist who portrays "irony, scorn, noncooperation, indifference, and sometimes accusation" (71) in regard to political authority, probably would not be met with agreement in mainline Christianity.

It is in the distinction between "the true Christian faith" and the socio-historical Christian faith where Ellul's methodology is the most problematic. One can go to the sacred text of any religion that has sacred texts, and find differences between the values

and teachings within the text and the present state of that religion, but this is not sufficient grounds to argue that the present manifestation of the religion is false. While this approach is common to religionists of many traditions, it is neither helpful nor particularly novel, even in the deployment of Jacques Ellul. The more significant critique might be whether Christian ideals are any more prone to failed embodiment, or, if any historical embodiments of those ideals have been more accurate than others.

Anarchy and Christianity is, indeed, a provocative and compelling analysis of society, politics, and Christianity that is as relevant now, if not more so, than it was when Ellul wrote it. In the post-9/11 world that we find ourselves in, the relationship between religion and political power is both problematic and pervasive. In this work, as well as his others, Ellul does a masterful job of analyzing this relationship, and forcing individuals to evaluate the contemporary cultural situation. In trying to establish a common ground between anarchists and Christians, Ellul illustrates the pivotal role religion has played, and can play within society.

What can be gathered from Ellul's thought is in line with the following observation made by Graham Ward in his critique of culture, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory*, "Religion is, once more, haunting the imagination of the West" (vi). This observation is given further analysis by Vincent Pecora in his recent work *Secularization and Cultural Criticism* when he suggests that "there may be broader and deeper links then we generally acknowledge between the Western intellectual's struggle with the semantic resonances of religious thought (as in Habermas) and the avowedly oppositional perspectives of various intellectuals (from Dipesh Chakrabarty and Asad to Nandy) struggling with the problem of secularization in the postcolonial world" (24). Both the function and the form of religion in postmodernity that is articulated in the aforementioned work, as well as various other current works, can, perhaps, be better understood when Ellul's thought, particularly his idea of the proliferating sacred, is applied.

Anarchy and Christianity is an excellent example of Ellul's attempt to understand the relationship between religion and society. His astute observations and insightful critiques of the Christian church and politics are important and applicable for any cultural critic. Thus, *Anarchy and Christianity* serves as evidence that Ellul's thought can be applied as well today, as when Ellul applied it himself.

International Jacques Ellul Society

www.ellul.org

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The IJES (with its francophone sister-society, L'Association Internationale Jacques Ellul) links together scholars and friends of various specializations, vocations, backgrounds, and nations, who share a common interest in the legacy of Jacques Ellul (1912-94), long time professor at the University of Bordeaux. Our objectives are (1) to preserve and disseminate his literary and intellectual heritage, (2) to extend his social critique, especially concerning technology, and (3) to extend his theological and ethical research with its special emphases on hope and freedom.

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Suspicion, Accusation, Fragmentation

by David W. Gill
President, International Jacques Ellul Society

One of my favorite Ellul books is *Hope in Time of Abandonment* (1972; ET 1973). I love the reflections on hope, of course. But a section of the book on "the age of suspicion" has always struck me as especially insightful.

Ellul writes: "Nothing is any longer itself. We have learned to look behind and beyond for the nameless, the elusive, the wriggly depths, the hidden forces, the secrets. Such is the supreme lucidity to which we are condemned. It is a strange evolution whereby, beginning with the thinking of a few, suspicion has spread through all the intellectuals, and from there is taking hold of everyone" (*Hope,* p. 48).

The three great "malefactors" here, according to Ellul, are Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Marx taught us to look beneath the surface and discern the economic class interests which are the true reality and agenda behind our surface words and acts. Nietzsche taught us to see a manipulative quest for power behind everything. And Freud urged us to see unconscious sexual and psychological forces beneath the surface.

"School of suspicion---that, in fact, is what it all comes back to. We have learned no longer to place our confidence in anything, no longer to have faith in anyone, no longer to believe a person's word, nor in a sentiment, no longer to accept the lasting quality of a relationship, no longer to believe that it could be authentic or truly representative of the person. We have learned that every good feeling merely expresses some self-satisfaction or some hypocrisy, that all virtue is a lie, that all morality is false, that all devotion is vain or a sham, that all speech hides the truth" (p. 50).

"The era of a chance to hope is gone, for there is no hope where suspicion is king. Every time a possibility, a breakthrough, or a meaning takes shape, immediately the question bursts in on us, 'From what social class, from what complex, from what ideology, from what myth, from what interest does this hope spring, since it is nothing but the falsification of a situation one has refused to face?'" (p. 52).

Alas, the loss of hope is not yet the end of suspicion's trail. When one does not keep one's suspicion to oneself but voices it as an *accusation*, the consequences are still more dire.

In *Apocalypse*, Ellul comments on the important text about the cosmic war between the angelic and demonic forces: "The Satan, the accuser, completes the work of the Devil in launching accusation, either before God to accuse men, or between men. *Every accusation is the work of Satan*" (*Apocalypse* (1975; ET 1977), p. 87; italics added).

Martin Luther is reported to have said that the Christian thing to do is always to "put the best possible construction" on other people's words and deeds.

"People look on the outward appearance---the Lord looks on the heart," God said to the prophet Samuel when he visited Jesse's family looking for a future king to annoint. Of course, the heart, the feelings, intentions, and internal side, are critically important. But only God knows this reality. We human beings are pathetically off base in making judgments about people's motives and intentions.

If we care about someone's motivations, we should *ask them* about it—not just speculate and project our paranoid thinking on them---and then make it worse by spouting off our libelous accusations to those around us.

We don't want to be gullible and naïve but when there really is no *concrete* evidence of another's bad faith, it is wrong and bad to go this route. It is incredibly destructive to go through life as a paranoid, suspicious accuser of others. It is anti-Ellulian and anti-Christian, if either of those matter. It is destructive of families, friendships, projects, churches, organizations, and important causes. It is withering and destructive of the paranoid self per se, which lives in darkness and bitterness.

Suspicion and accusation have poisoned and paralyzed political discourse. Example: Because former Clinton V-P Al Gore was the narrator, paranoid, suspicious American neo-cons reject without a hearing the photos, temperature readings, etc., regarding global warming in the recent documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* (as though Gore himself faked the photos of receding glaciers and polar ice caps!).

But it's not just a disease of big time politics: family members, colleagues who could be working together, people who should be on the same side, same team, sometimes allow their suspicion, paranoia, and accusation to fragment relationships. Whenever it's up to us, let's choose grace, hope, and community.

Resources for Ellul Studies

www.ellul.org & www.jacques-ellul.org

The IJES web site at www.ellul.org contains (1) news about IJES and AIJE activities and plans, (2) a brief and accurate biography of Jacques Ellul, (3) a complete bibliography of Ellul's books in French and English, (4) a complete index of the contents of all *Ellul Forum* back issues; and (5) links and information on other resources for students of Jacques Ellul. The new French AIJE web site at www.jacques-ellul.org is also a superb resource.

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Cahiers Jacques Ellul

Pour Une Critique de la Societe Technicienne

An essential annual journal for students of Ellul is *Cahiers Jacques Ellul*, edited by Patrick Chastenet, published by Editions L'Esprit du Temps, and distributed by Presses Universitaires de France Send orders to Editions L'Esprit du Temps, BP 107, 33491 Le Bouscat Cedex, France. Postage and shipping is 5 euros for the first volume ordered; add 2 euros for each additional volume ordered.
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Jacques Ellul: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary Works

by Joyce Main Hanks. Research in Philosophy and Technology. Supplement 5. Stamford, CT: JAI Press, 2000. xiii., 206 pages. $87. ISBN: 076230619X.

This is the essential guide for anyone doing research in Jacques Ellul's writings. An excellent brief biography is followed by a 140-page annotated bibliography of Ellul's fifty books and thousand-plus articles and a thirty-page subject index. Hank's work is comprehensive, accurate, and invariably helpful. This may be one of the more expensive books you buy for your library; it will surely be one of the most valuable. Visit www.elsevier.com for ordering information.

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The Alibris web site (www.alibris.com) lists thirty titles of used and out-of-print Jacques Ellul books in English translation available to order at reasonable prices.

Used books in French: two web resources

Two web sites that will be of help in finding used books in French by Jacques Ellul (and others) are www.chapitre.com and www.livre-rare-book.com.

Reprints of Nine Ellul Books

By arrangement with Ingram and Spring Arbor, individual reprint copies of several Ellul books originally published by William B. Eerdmans can now be purchased. The books and prices listed at the Eerdmans web site are as follows: *The Ethics of Freedom* ($40), *The Humiliation of the Word* ($26), *The Judgment of Jonah* ($13), *The Meaning of the City* ($20), *The Politics of God and the Politics of Man* ($19), *Reason for Being: A Meditation on Ecclesiastes* ($28), *The Subversion of Christianity* ($20), and *The Technological Bluff* ($35). *Sources and Trajectories: Eight Early Articles by Jacques Ellul* translated by Marva Dawn is also available (price unknown).

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Ellul on Video

French film maker Serge Steyer's film "Jacques Ellul: L'homme entier" (52 minutes) is available for 25 euros at the web site www.meromedia.com. Ellul is himself interviewed as are several commentators on Ellul's ideas.

Another hour-length film/video that is focused entirely on Ellul's commentary on technique in our society, "The Treachery of Technology," was produced by Dutch film maker Jan van Boekel for ReRun Produkties (mail to: Postbox 93021, 1090 BA Amsterdam).

If you try to purchase either of these excellent films, be sure to check on compatibility with your video system and on whether English subtitles are provided, if that is desired