# THE SOCIETY OF SELF:

# CONTEMPORARY INSPIRATIONAL LITERATURE

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# AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY POPULAR INSPIRATIONAL SELF-HELP LITERATURE IN A SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

By

HELEN ANNE DOUGLAS, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Helen Anne Douglas, B.A. (McMaster University)

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis analyzes current popular "inspirational" self-help literature as it is situated in a socio-historical context. The findings suggest a contemporary value orientation toward "selfism," a view that individuals should strive towards total independence of others. A commitment to self, an individual morality, a concern with present day living, self-sufficiency and self-love are some of the values expressed in the current literature. Compared with previous inspirational literature, this suggests an almost radical shift in values and ideology. The trends of the previous literature are reviewed in a socio-historical perspective.

It is argued that inspirational literature is a product of the middle class and that the values articulated are symptomatic of broader changes occurring in the culture and social structure. The current value shift reflects a crisis in middle class ideology. This class is currently perceiving a loss of its traditional sense of order and place in the world and is searching for a new ideology that will still contain the central elements of individualism and free will that have been the fundamental ethos of the American consciousness.

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This thesis is dedicated to my son, Jamie, whose love and good nature both permitted and gave me the courage to go on. His being in the world has proved to me in a very fundamental way that without others life would hold no meaning - a vital aspect ignored by the popular literature analyzed in this thesis. Jamie's father, Tom, also deserves to be recognized for his contribution to our lives.

And to my good friends who never doubted my ability through times when my confidence failed, I thank you very much.

# FOREWORD

This thesis was originally intended to be a relatively straightforward examination of current North American values as represented through an analysis of popular "inspirational" self-help literature. My interest involved from reading Wayne Dyer's *Your Erroneous Zones*, which promised to put the reader "in firm and effective control of who and what" one was. The book advocated a commitment to oneself and the freedom to be all that one chose to be without regard for the thoughts of others. My response to the book was two-fold. As an individual who more than occasionally suffered from guilt feelings and "free floating" anxiety attacks, the book told me everything I wanted to hear about how to let go of thinking I had to be responsible to others for my feelings and actions. Conversations with others provided evidence that I was not alone in feeling the need to be free of interpersonal constraints and in wanting to confirm I was "OK" the way I was.

As a sociologist, however, the book vehemently contradicted the assumption that what holds society together and what makes us human beings is our "moral" (in Durkheim's term) connection to others, our sociability. Dyer was advocating an individual value system and a responsibility only to oneself. Was this an indication of a new "crisis" in contemporary society - the articulation of anti-social values?

Shortly after my analysis was completed, which concretized some of my assumptions, Christopher Lasch published *The Culture of Narcissism* wherein he concluded that contemporary society had produced a narcissistic personality intent on the destruction of both self and others. The "war of all against all" was in motion. This book fused together all the concerns of the "mass society" theorists, seeing the individual as lacking identity, individuality, and becoming more and more manipulatable and manipulating.

Thomas Luckmann, on the other hand, argued that the new goals of individual autonomy, self-expression and self-realization represented the emergence of a new social form of religion, determined by a radical transformation in the relation of the individual to the social order.

It became increasingly apparent that I could not offer any conclusions regarding the findings of my analysis unless I situated the material in a much broader socio-historical context. Widening the scope of the research led to other cultural analyses which also recognized and discussed the growing subjectivity of contemporary life. Attempting to arrive at any definite conclusions proved difficult, and, hence, while the researcher was much enlightened on the road to "knowledge," the reader might find the same route rather bumpy.

# INTRODUCTION

This is a study of cultural values. The focus is on an analysis of current popular inspirational self-help literature. In this decade hundreds of these books have appeared on the market, and a dozen have consistently made their appearance on best seller lists throughout the country. It was tentatively assumed that the recent influx was simply an addendum to the human potential movement which was quickly gathering adherents and had just begun to raise the interest of sociologists interested in social movements.

It became apparent, however, that self-help literature itself constitutes a distinctive "cultural" product; that is, it develops out of itself. The current literature comes from previous literature and many of the same themes are maintained throughout the years. An analysis of the current literature, therefore, must take both sources into account.

The analysis provides the grounds for concluding that the values articulated in the current literature are symptomatic of broader changes occurring in the culture and social structure. It is argued that these changes are having their major effect on the middle class, who, perceiving a loss of their traditional sense of order and place in the world, are searching for a new ideology that will still contain the central elements

of individualism and free will that have been the fundamental ethos of the American consciousness. Indeed, it is the values of the middle class that have primarily defined the American consciousness. As Burton Bledstein points out:

> Being middle class in America has referred to a state of mind any person can adopt and make his own. It has not referred to a persons' confined position in the social structure, a position delimited by common chances in the market and by preferred occupations. The popular imagination has so closely identified being middle class with pursuing the so-called American dream that "middle class" has come to be equated with a good chance for advancement, an expanding income, education, good citizenship - indeed, with democracy. (1976:6)

A question concerning many today is, what happens when this prevailing belief is gradually undermined, what vision arises to take its place?

Many observers believe a change in consciousness is occurring throughout North America. One of the events leading to this observation was the rapid and continuous growth of the human potential, or self-awareness movement. Chapter I provides a brief history and description of this movement, noting its inception as an adjunct to industrial management to its growth in the sixties and seventies under the auspices of humanistic psychology.

Chapter II establishes self-help literature as part and parcel of American middle class culture, noting the impact of urbanization, the search for differentiation and status, and the need for guidance in a rapidly changing society. Reflected in the literature is the increasing

secularization of the world, the impact of science, particularly in the form of psychology, and technology, as well as the new skills required for the growing middle class occupations. The basic themes of the early literature are examined in light of previous studies. Chapters I and II are intended to set the scene for the analysis of the current self-help literature.

Chapter III outlines the findings of the current literature. The methodology and coding details for the content analysis are to be found in the Appendices. Chapter IV compares these findings with the value orientations in the previous literature and discusses the similarities and differences as they apply to the broader cultural context. Possible explanations for the observed changes are proferred in Chapter V, which locates the analysis in the continuing debate on culture and individualism. A possible alternative, or addition, to these explanations is offered, which situates the current "crisis" within the context of the middle class.

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Chapter I

*The human potential movement.*

> A seductively appealing, but distorted and socially harmful, ideology of awareness is rapidly gaining acceptance. If we allow this to go on, unquestioned and unchecked, we will do so at our considerable peril.
> (Edwin Schur, *The Awareness Trap*, 1976)

> Psychology as religion has for years been destroying individuals, families, and communities.
> (Paul Vitz, *Psychology as Religion*, 1977)

> ...decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self.
> (Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 1979)

Since the early 1960s more than seven million Americans have been exposed to some sort of encounter group, body discipline, or personal growth program which offers methods for "putting people in touch with themselves," making them more "self-actualized," "self-directed," "self-assertive," "self-fulfilled," and "self-realized."[1]

The movement is a broad one, incorporating encounter groups, Gestalt Awareness Training, Transactional Analysis, sensory awareness, Primal Therapy, Bioenergetics, massage, Psychosynthesis, humanistic psychology, *est*, Arica Training, Transcendental Meditation, psychic healing, biofeedback, mind-control training, and yoga.

Although sociologists have generally argued that the human potential movement is a product of the affluent middle class, servicing Americans who are bored and dissatisfied with their lives, the movement has spread to broad segments of society. The groups have operated in industries, in universities, in church settings, in government agencies, educational institutions, and penitentiaries. Groups have been formed for presidents of large corporations, and for delinquent and predelinquent adolescents. There have been groups composed of college students and faculty members, of counsellors and psychotherapists; of school dropouts, of married couples, of families, including both parents and children; of confirmed drug addicts, of criminals serving sentence; of nurses, educators, teachers, school administrators, industrial managers, State Department ambassadors, even, according to Carl Rogers, members of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. The movement has spread from its original locations in Bethel, Maine, and San Diego, California, throughout North America, and groups have also been conducted in a number of other countries.[2]

With all its diversification, the movement has common themes. Its adherents believe that an individual does not have to be 'sick' to

get better, that one does not need to stop 'growing' just because one is chronologically an adult. They believe that if society is to realize its potential, individuals must first realize their own potential. This potential includes giving life a "whole new dimension" of intimacy, greater insight, body awareness, and better communication with others. The focus of the groups in on the "here and now," and "change" is the ultimate aim.[3]

By the beginning of the seventies it became apparent that the movement had penetrated the mass consciousness of North America. Kurt Back explored the history of the movement as a social phenomenon from its inception at Bethel to its transformation into an almost religious exercise "based on the scientific ethos."[4] Jane Howard travelled across the country, attempting to tap the source of each group's claim to the "ultimate experience." She found the total experience, at the very least, unsettling:

> The human potential movement, however, has made me think that if the churches really wanted to they could lure us back, at least for a second look. A massive mutual transfusion is now in progress between organized religion and sensitivity training. In groups I have felt salvation, and in church congregations I have felt connection. This is as the human potential people meant it to be. 5

The movement quite definitely has it roots in psychology. As such, it starts from the regeneration of the individual, which is the way most religions start:

> In this context, its main claim is the fact that a reconstructed individual, an individual who can express his own feelings, has a chance through sensitivity training to create his own society. According to this view, there is no distinction between social needs and needs of the individual. 6

"We're taking religion back from the priests," says Abraham Maslow, one of the founders of the movement, "or rather turning them into social scientists." "If psychology pushed to its deepest truths," says Rollo May, "it could not stop short or arriving at spiritual questions. We need a new mythology and a new set of symbols to express modern man's inchoate yearning for meanings which can unite his experiences on all levels."[7]

In fact, the "new mythology" is a production of industrial, or perhaps one should say post-industrial, American society. The first "sensitivity" groups were organized by liberal industrial sociologists and human relations experts on behalf of industry. The purpose was to train managers and executives in human relations and also to enable them to become effective leaders in social change. Individuals were taught to observe the nature of the interactions with others and of the group process in order to become more competent in dealing with "difficult interpersonal situations."[8] That this type of training was utilized in a relatively conservative way is not surprising, given the early crystallization of East coast social conditions into hierarchical forms of power. Social skills are a means of handling this power more adeptly. The National Training Laboratories Institute for Applied Behavioral Science was first organized in 1947, having developed out of the ideas of Dr. Kurt Lewin, a psychologist who came to the United States from Nazi Germany intent on testing theories whereby self-help groups might learn to avoid the totalitarianism he had barely escaped. His theories

were concerned with the social restraints imposed on groups by technology, economics, law and politics. Behavior could be changed, he thought, if people could identify which forces restrained them from desirable action and which ones drove them on toward it, and that "no amount of telling people what do do could compare with having them 'discover' the same information for themselves." Thus began the tendency toward humanistic, as opposed to authoritarian, management.[9]

"Growth" centers began as a West coast phenomenon. Esalen, in California, began as one of the first growth centers and attracts at least 25,000 people a year. Jane Howard describes it as the "spiritual vortex of the radical end of the continuum" its right-wing counterpart being Bethel. Between Bethel and Esalen, geographically and otherwise, the human potential movement has hundreds of other establishments. The goals of these centers were in part gathered from Tonnies' *Gesselschaft/ Gemeinshaft* differentiation, which sensitized professionals to the need for community. Two early organizers were Drs. Jacob Moreno and Frederick Perls, both of whom felt that groups provided the right "*gemeinschaft* for the *angsts* of our *zeitgeist*."[10] The groups are small (under 20 members), relatively unstructured, and provide a psychological climate of safety in which freedom of expression and reduction of defensiveness gradually occur. Each member is therefore encouraged to move toward greater acceptance of her or his total being - emotional, intellectual, and physical - as it is, including its potential.[11]

That the West coast groups originated as a response to the need for community (rather than control as in the Eastern groups) is not

surprising given the migratory nature of Californian life. California has retained some of the last vestiges of the American frontier, with its emphasis on individual freedom and democracy, rather than, say, status.[12] Hence one article recently points out that the search for meaning in life in California centers on personal consciousness and human potential:

> In California people often do not ask what do you do, meaning occupation, but what are you into, meaning what human potential group you are currently attending. 13

The groups offer a sense of community and support not readily available in the otherwise dispersed life-styles of Californians. Hence one participant asked Jane Howard: "How can you get along without a group? You must be very lonely."[14]

Over the years, however, this orientation toward personal and therapeutic growth has become merged with the focus of training in human relations skills, and the two combined form the core of the trend which is spreading rapidly throughout the country today. When Jane Howard made her tour in 1969/70, she noted that growth centers were springing up at the rate of one a month. One of the first professional manifestations of the movement was the organization of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (totalling 5,000 members), founded in 1962 under the auspices of people like Ambraham Maslow, Eric Fromm, Carl Rogers, Vicktor Frankl, and Rollo May. The most remarkable entrepreneurial success has been Erhard Seminars Training (*est*), which in the last few years has grossed its "guru" over ten million dollars. *Est* graduates spend sixty hours and $250 to learn how to "transform their life."

Recently both the success and claims of the human potential movement have been subjected to intellectual scrutiny. The psychiatric establishment was the first to critize awareness training and humanistic psychology, citing its lack of scientific vigor and clinical professionalism.[15] Paul Vitz, a psychologist turned Christian, condemns the movement as a distorted and dangerous religion, a "cult of self-worship."[16] Within the ranks of sociology, what was hailed as a liberating psychology is now critized as conservative, unscientific, and narcissistic.[17] All are concerned that the movement invites preoccupation with self and sensation, and dilutes already weak feelings of social responsibility.

The tenets of the movement have had far-reaching implications, particularly because of its ready acceptance and incorporation of Eastern mysticism as a counteraction to Western technology and the rationalist mode of thinking. (The influence of Eastern mysticism would not, of course, have been so great without the concurrent disallusionment with rationalism and technology as a source for successful living.) Hence, speaking for many social scientists, the anthropologist Marvin Harris decries this influence:

> What now passes for wisdom among my own colleagues is that science is a Western disease; that alternative ways of knowing should never be compared; that Carlos Casteneda's hundred-foot gnats are as real as anything else; that all descriptions of social life are fabrications; that it is useless to seek for objective truth; and that empirical research is nothing but a dirty bourgeois trick.
>
> It is no accident that California is the world center of all these doctrines as well as the home of dozens of cults like the People's Temple.

> Nor is it an accident that the American Anthropological Association met in Los Angeles recently and voted to reject a proposal that would have condemned the theory that culture was created by astronaut gods, barred scientific papers based on empirical studies of behavior from the program, and gave top priority to symposiums on witchcraft, shamanism, abnormal phenomena and extrasensory perception. It is no accident because California has led the way in the creation of a natural and human wasteland peopled by bewildered souls roaming the freeways in search of clean air, the American dream, and some explanation - any kind of explanation - for what went wrong. 18

"What went wrong," particularly from the standpoint of the intellectual community, is the realization of the loss of a heretofore assumed sense of control. When it became apparent that many of the values of the counterculture and the activities of the New Left in the sixties had been so easily subsumed into the decidedly non-political activities of the human potential movement, the attack on the movement was as much a cry of despair. At the same time, the counterculture reacted to its political failure by shifting the emphasis from the transformation of society to the transformation of the self.

The most extended analysis of human potential ideology and its predicted social consequences is Edwin Schur's *The Awareness Trap: Self-Absorption Instead of Social Change*, wherein he argues that while the movement provides middle-class consumers with an attractive new product, attention is diverted from the more serious problems that plague society such as poverty, racism, pollution, and crime.[19]

A major problem with the aforementioned criticisms is that they tend to regard the human potential movement as causing certain kinds

of behavior and activity, rather than seeing the movement as a manifestation of changes that have occurred in the culture and social structure. At the same time, much of this criticism is based on moral rather than objective analysis. To date no systematic evidence has been presented to document the social consciousness of participants in the movement.

One of the offshoots of the human potential movement has been a profusion of "self-help" books offering advice on how to achieve growth and self-fulfillment, as well as improved communication with others. In general, these books assert that they have the formula for successful living. Several of these books have become best sellers and have remained so for months at a time. They do so because they have codified the most successful themes of the human potential movement, and have accommodated these themes into a pragmatic assessment of everyday life. Part of this study is concerned with how the authors of these books do in fact assess everyday life. At the same time, marketing alone does not ensure a best seller; rather books become popular because they respond to the reader's sensibilities. Self-help literature, like the self-help groups of the human potential movement, functions perhaps more as a reflection of social conditions rather than as the vanguard of social consciousness. As one reviewer put it:

> When you come right down to it, the best that self-help guides can do is to confirm or maybe crystalize what we already know.

It is one of the intentions of this thesis to formulate the conditions that provide for "what we already know," using self-help literature as the emperical expression of this knowledge.

*Notes to Chapter 1:*

[1] Donald Stone, "The Human Potential Movement," *Transaction*, May/June 1978, 15:4, 66-68.

[2] Carl Rogers, *On Encounter Groups*, New York: Perennial Library, 1973.

[3] Jane Howard, *Please Touch: A Guided Tour of the Human Potential Movement*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970.

[4] Kurt W. Back, *Beyond Words, the Story of Sensitivity Training and the Encounter Movement*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972.

[5] Howard, 213.

[6] Back, 234.

[7] As quoted in Howard, 213.

[8] Rogers.

[9] Detailed histories, albeit with different emphasis, can be found in Back, Howard, and Rogers.

[10] Dr. Moreno was the founder of Sociometry, Dr. Perls of Gestalt Therapy. Both, like Freud, came from Vienna.

[11] Rogers.

[12] It has been pointed out that "frontier individualism" has from the beginning promoted democracy in that, on the frontier, power was often uniquely concentrated in scarce, manual labour, thereby compelling those who needed assistance to treat both their labourers and co-operating neighbours with equal respect, whereas in the East social conditions had begun to crystallize and that meant to be moulded in hierarchical forms of unequal power. See, for example, Hans Mol, "Marginality and commitment as hidden variables in the Jellinck/Weber/Merton theses on the Calvinist Ethic," *Current Sociology*, 1974, 22:1-3, 279-297.

[13] Maclean's Magazine, July 23, 1979, 10.

[14] Howard, 48.

[15] See, for example, Martin L. Gross, *The Psychological Society*, New York: Random House, 1978, and David Gutmann, "Psychology as Theology," *Social Research*, Autumn 1978, 45:3, 452-465.

[16]Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship*, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977.

[17]Jim Hougan, *Decadence. Radical Nostalgia, Narcissism, and Decline in the Seventies*, New York: Wm. Morrow and Co., Inc., 1975; Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia. A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1975; Philip Marchand, "The Age of the Unstrung Ego," in *Saturday Night*, September 1977, 33-35; Peter Marin, "The New Narcissism," in *Harper's*, October 1975, 45-56; Tom Wolfe, "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening," in *New West*, August 30, 1976, 26-40.

[18]Marvin Harris, "No End of Messiahs," *The New York Times*, Sunday, November 26, 1978.

[19]Edwin Schur, *The Awareness Trap. Self-Absorption Instead of Social Change*, New York: New York Times Book Co., 1976.

Chapter II

*The socio-historical context of American self-help literature.*

> Would-be middle class Americans were seeking mental guidance on how to upgrade their condition. And they listened to practical ideas with spiritual consequences that fired their interest in moral self-improvement. Lecturers spoke about the relationships among habits of self-discipline, physical fitness, dietary control, temperance, and sexual restraint. They spoke about faith in one's talents, faith in God, faith in the American way, and faith in positive thoughts about worldly prospects. (Burton Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, 1976)

> Two years ago I came across a formula for success which has revolutionized my life. It was so simple, and so obvious once I had seen it, that I could hardly believe it was responsible for the magical results which followed my putting it into practice. (Dorothea Brande, *Wake Up & Live*, 1936)

In the first chapter the influx of the current self-help literature was linked to the growth of the human potential movement and its orientation towards self-fulfillment and personal growth. It should be recognized, however, that "self-helpism" has been a traditional part of American life. In particular, the "inspirational" self-help literature forms a

tradition of its own, that is, it develops out of itself, and hence constitutes a distinctive "cultural" product. The current literature is in part derived from the previous literature, and many of the same themes are maintained throughout the years.

This chapter situates the literature in its socio-historical context and summarizes the basic themes and trends as they have appeared until this decade. The first section deals with self-help as a general phenomenon. The remaining sections focus on the appeal for "inspirational" literature, self-help literature that tends to espouse a particular world view and "inspire" the reader with the best way to accommodate oneself within this definition of the world.

Within the context of his own analysis of inspirational non-religious books, Sanford Dornbusch has stated:

> It is clear that analysis of inspirational works can provide a foundation for the study of societal assumptions about the individual's relation to himself and his world. 1

In an earlier analysis of inspirational religious literature, Schneider and Dornbusch clarify the class membership of the recipients of this literature:

> None of the available studies of readership in the United States bears directly upon the point. However, the books touch on nerves - of "peace of mind," "success," "getting along with people" - that one hardly needs to prove to be sensitive for the broad membership of the middle class. Moreover, the readership studies do make it clear that *book* readers are people of education and income above minimal level. Internal evidence reinforces the view the the readers have middle-class backgrounds or aspirations. 2

It can, however, be argued that the world view maintained by the middle class has traditionally become the assumptions of American society as a whole. For example, one of the reasons why the United States has never experienced a class revolution is that the majority of the public shares, or has shared, a common set of values:

> People by and large were in agreement, whether or not they had succeeded economically, in a belief in individual hard work, self-reliance, and the promise of success. (Among workers, this non-class orientation had greatly impeded the establishment of trade unions, for example.) 3

The emphasis on individualism has been enhanced by the notion that America stands for the promise of the "good" life; new immigrants in the past have consistently regarded America as the promised land. Hence the United States has never accepted the need for a third political party which stands for a total upheaval in the social structure. The student revolution in the sixties, occasioned by the increased college enrolments which permitted large numbers of youth to gather together, could not be maintained on a long term basis because there was no national political party to which individuals could orient for prolonged political activity. What has been witnessed, therefore, is the dispersion of the student revolutionaries into small, powerless groups, and a general retreat to the traditional ideology of self-improvement versus social improvement. But the history of self-improvement, as the following points out, is a history of the middle class, firstly as it regarded its relationship with God, and then as it attempted to assert its relationship to society.

*Self-help as best sellers.*

Self-help in the form of instruction manuals has been an integral part of American life. With regard to this century, Alice Payne Hackett notes that, of the best sellers,

> ..."how-to" or "self-help" books have comprised almost half the nonfiction lists from the beginning. ...The demand for self-development and self-improvement books whether by means of religion, philosophy, diet, exercise, game-playing, or cookery never flags. 4

Apparently the first American best seller was the Reverand Michael Wigglesworth's "extraordinary exposition" of Calvinist theology. Published in 1662 and entitled *The Day of Doom*, children were required to study its contents. Frank Luther Mott points out that:

> This phase of New England education is horrible to contemplate, for the sickly parson of Malden spared no ultimate cruelty in his sulphurous picture of the hatefulness of an angry God. 5

The earliest guidance books were, therefore, devoted to telling readers how to live the religious life and how to find salvation in God. Gradually, however, these books began to take on a more worldly significance, although they retained the emphasis on self-improvement so consistent with the Calvinist theology. With regard to their popularity, Mott notes that:

> ...the self-improvement books devoted to personal precept and guidance made an impressive catalogue by themselves. They include most of the religious books, to begin with, and then there are ten or a dozen behavior books which emphasize rules of living; many novels, from Pamela to Pollyanna, which teach somewhat less by precept than by example; and books of advice from Chesterfield to Dale Carnegie. Nearly half the books on our list contain a large element of didacticism. Scores of guides in the Little Blue Books series told their readers *How to Improve Your Conversation, How to Play Golf, How to Write Advertising*, and so on; and each sold in the hundreds of thousands. 6

Given Max Weber's well-known thesis on the Protestant ethic,[7] it is not surprising to note that by the eighteenth century the popular self-help literature reflected the increasing concern with establishing oneself in this world rather than in the one to come. Benjamin Franklin, for example, knew what practical men needed and wanted when he issued *Every Man His Own Doctor* and *Every Man His Own Lawyer*. These books offered more than self-help - they explicitly implied that a man could make of himself whatever he wanted.[8]

By the nineteenth century the *Biblioteca Americana* showed a high proportion of handbooks and "how-to" manuals, and Carl Bode notes that "there are probably more how-to-do-it titles than any other kind. They vary from advice on saving an immortal soul to recipes for bird food."[9] The mid-nineteenth century was a time when the "people and the printed word came together." The advent of the industrial revolution in the publishing business occurred simultaneously with the advent of popular literacy.[10]

However, the rise of inexpensive publishing, as much as it might explain the profusion of books, does not account for public taste. It was the life-style of the American reading public, synonomous with the rise of the American middle class, that created the demand. In fact, the rise of the very concept of "life-style" is quintessentially middle class inasmuch as it connotes a purposive, almost continued attempt to live in a particular fashion. James Hart, for example, designates the mid-nineteenth century as the "age of the etiquette book," wherein the

middle class, particularly the middle class lady, only newly arrived at her responsible position, needed guidance as to how to use her new-found wealth and leisure.[11] As will be explicated later, status consciousness played an important role in the demand for self-improvement.

Also in the realm of self-help, as Bode points out, "if we are to give a proper picture of the American that thumbed through hundreds of thousands of manuals of every sort, we must not forget the ones that explained how to make a specific thing or to learn a specific skill."[12] An expanding America called for a "myraid of material things" but it did not have large enough factories to satisfy its desires. Apprenticeship has never got a foothold in America, and the need for skilled work, both on the job and in the home, turned the individual toward technical instruction books. This type of knowledge was imperative if one wished to rise up in the world.

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, however, two basic types of self-help books remained consistently on best seller lists: those concerned with behavior and success. The distinction itself was often vague, as both were intertwined to constitute a formula for living. These books were part and parcel of the phenomenon which embraced urbanization and the expansion of the middle class. The behavioral manuals emphasized the skills needed both to become successful and to prove that one was a success. The success books emphasized a world order wherein the only goal was to be successful. The following will briefly outline some of the factors that gave rise to both.

*The impact of urbanization.*

Lyn Lofland reflects on the behavioral changes that were required to accommodate the emergence of the industrial city, which brought forth a new social situation where dealing the strangers became the rule rather than the exception.[13] The scarcity of strangers in pre-industrial spheres permitted the individual to either transform the stranger into a personally-known other or to dispose of him as a non-person. Within the gathering of strangers in the city, however, new "coding" devices had to be instituted to enable the individual to identify the other's place in relation to the individual's world.

What is "going on" in the public space, argues Lofland, has undergone a historical change which is intimately linked to the matter of what clues are most reliable in the crucial task of identifying strangers. Public spaces in the pre-industrial city contained such a conglomeration of personas and activities that locational clues, for example, were of little value. Rather, appearances were fairly reliably hooked to identity. As a matter of fact, pre-industrial dress regulations were often instituted by law. This differentiation was to enable the observer to immediately know those who "had" and those who "had not," the difference between respectable and non-respectable persons. However, with the emergence of the petit bourgeois and industrialization, this form of distinquishing between individuals began to break down.

> These shopkeepers and tradesmen and clerks and their families shared in the riches that industrialization was making possible. As their numbers increased, they also began to collect a share of the power that industrialization has torn from the landed artistocracy. They too were concerned with status, and helped

> along by technological innovations..., they saw less and less reason for expressing their "proper place" through dress. With this group, we see the beginning on a massive scale of what is by now a common characteristic of modern life: the appropriation by one group of the dress style of another. 14

This, as well as the massive influx into the cities during the mid-nineteenth century, upset the ability to differentiate oneself through appearance alone. Costuming became a matter of fashion or fad, rather than a code of systematizing order. Moreover, many of the new middle class, from shopkeepers to professionals, performed the kind of work in which contact with strangers (as clients and customers) was part and parcel of that work. New social codes had to be established for dealing with these non-personal relationships.

The behavioral books therefore served two purposes. One was to teach the rural newcomers how to act like city dwellers. The other was to offer observations on the subtle ways the city dwellers could distinquish themselves from this mass of newcomers. For, as Cuddihy observes, modernity itself implies differentiation: "The long and continuing revolution on differentiation is what we mean today by being civilized."[15] Modernization refers to refinement, of separating and distinquishing. Hence roles, structure, functions, topics and personalities are "distinquished" into their elements, allowing individual to live and deal on a routine basis with a multitude of strangers in the public shere differently from the relations in the private sphere. What modern society requires most of all, Cuddihy argues, is "niceness". Too much of anything - intensity, fanaticism, inwardness - is a threat to the fragile

solidarity of the surface. The advent of politeness, manners, concern about appearance, provides at least the resemblance of order in a rapidly changing world, as well as predictability in the behavior of strangers.

Nevertheless, the main emphasis on differentiation involved the struggle between the growing non-elite middle classes and those persons "forever immortalized as 'the dangerous classes'," that "floating" population of workers who did not respect property because they had none.[16] When appearances began to be unreliable devices for differentiating, spatial ordering became the predominant mode of arranging society. The not-so-rich middle class, growing in numbers and power, were crucial to the emergence of the spatial order:

> Many of the instruments which created and which now maintain that order - the police, zone, "humanitarian" organizations - were and continue to be the instruments of this group. ... "humanitarian" concerns and zoning regulations were nineteenth and early twentieth century phenomena, and ... this is the same period during which the middle class was struggling to differentiate and protect itself from the "dangerous classes." 17

Hence, as Lofland argues, the instruments for the creation and maintenance of the segregation of persons and activities in urban public space is largely under the control of the middle class: zoning regulations, housing developments, municipal ordinances, laws and practices inspired by humanitarian and reform groups, as well as "those maintenance men *par excellence*," the modern police:

> Behind the police, of course, stands the middle class. It is they who control the means to keep the spatial order intact in the face of repeated assault. It is they - however unwitting they may be of the full consequences - who perform or have performed at their direction the "dirty work" of sustaining

> predictability in a world continually threatened with unpredictability. But all urbanites, including those against whom the instruments of segregation are used, rely on this order, on this predictability, in making their way among strangers. 18

As Lofland points out, the city's populace does more than simply "buy" bourgeois-produced order; through their beliefs and understandings, and through their actions, they reinforce and sustain it.

In America, it was the middle class Victorians in the middle of the nineteenth century who made the formal division between public and private spheres. And this was not so much an outcome of alienation at work, a retreat to privatism, as some would argue; rather privacy was a status symbol. It was no longer a matter of power over men, as power over space. As Burton Bledstein points out:

> Natural functions accompanied every structured space; the more spaces an individual inhabited, the more power and knowledge the person needed to command, the more complex and successful an American he or she might become. 19

Middle class Americans were concerned with ordering their world, and this was not confined to private spaces, but public space was also defined and regulated for specific purposes. Attempts were also made to teach the poor about space, in the form of planned tenement houses, which was a "spatial way-station" for the immigrant on her or his way to self-reliance, respectability and responsible citizenship. Once private space was established, it had to be protected, hence its enclosure was more defined than public space.

The foregoing, then, serves as an introduction to the need for instruction manuals and explains their early profusion inasmuch as they

focussed on the needs of the new urban dweller and the emerging non-elite bourgeois. City dwellers "on the move" must utilize apparential, locational and behavioral clues to make identification; one must learn to code these clues and acquire personal know-how regarding dress, where to go and how to act. Hence self-appointed experts arose to the occasion: the authors of etiquette books. During the latter half of the nineteenth century these books were mainly concerned with giving explicit instructions for public behavior. As the modern city came into its own, such single-minded concern with public behavior had somewhat debated, and by the 1962 edition of Amy Vanderbilt's *New Complete Book of Etiquette*, not a single reference to proper behavior in the "world of strangers" is made. For, as Lofland points out:

> Once the individual has learned to code urban locations, once he knows who and what to expect in them, he does not require any further instruction on this topic to make his way through the world of strangers. What he requires, rather, is knowledge of himself. 20

*The rise of the middle class.*

Integral to the behavioral manuals was the book that stressed a certain kind of morality. In American, this morality was initially expressed in the form of religious values, but increasingly an ethical rather than religious tone was adopted. That the majority of these manual were directed towards young men and women showed to some extent the decline in the traditional authority of the family as increasing numbers of youth made their way to the city seeking employment. The

advice given consistently implied that social and moral improvement were synonomous: manners should be the fruit of character:

> For this was a time of growing faith in the power of human nature to shape itself - with of course some assistance. The bitter puritan doctrine of election and reprobation was largely discredited. ...They agreed with the old Calvinists that human nature was depraved. But they denied that anyone could not conquer that depravity, through faith and good works, and thus find his way to heaven. Eternal life could be his if a man would believe in God - and if he would behave. 21

The emphasis on behavior mounted. Practically speaking, people were considered, through their souls, the masters of their own bodies, which they could manipulate and control accordingly. The morality manuals justified much of the reformist attitudes against drinking, prostitution and slavery. The emphasis of these manuals was on shaping character, as well as improving and educating the mind. Tips about proper business practices supplemented the counsel on good conduct. *Success*, physical and spiritual, mental and moral, *was the prime motivation behind the messages contained in these books.*

> The literature of success was immense. In its overt form, as the manual of personal improvement, it appeared in many guises and in a multitude of copies. The gospel it preached was one of free will and industry. If the reader wished, he could almost certainly gain success through hard work. 22

The first major strand of the ideal of success lay in the conservative tradition of the middle class Protestant ethic, which stressed the values of piety, frugality, and diligence in one's worldly calling. Success was the attainment of respectable competence in this world and eternal salvation in the next. As attention turned to more worldly

pursuits, the success literature maintained an ethical priority. Much of the early nineteenth century religious inspirational literature was the production of Protestant clergymen fearful of losing their positions of power in a changing world.[23] This, and much of the secular literature as well, was a response to what appeared as the chaotic conditions of urbanization and the immoral behavior of the industrial "robber barons." Respectability was therefore equated with spiritual grace.

The Horatio Alger era, begun in 1866 with the publication of *Ragged Dick, or, Street Life in New York*, was the prime example of this version of success: respectability as a happy state only partially defined by economic repute. However:

> With "Ragged Dick" Alger founded a new school of American literature, the Work & Win, Upward & Onward story. ... Alger was a man of destiny. At exactly the right moment he put into simple words and a standard plot the hopes and belief of a nation, and by the sheer power of reiteration caused them to congeal into a national character, the Horatio Alger Hero. 24

The Alger hero becomes, throughout the stories, a master of the traditional virtues of industry, economy, integrity, and piety. At the same time, however, argues John Cawelti, and far more important, are those qualities of character and intellect which make the hero a good employee and a reputable member of middle class society:

> The hero has to learn how to dress neatly and modestly, to eliminate slang and colloquialisms from his speech, and to develop a facility with the stilted and pretentious language that Alger took to be the proper medium among respectable Americans. In addition, the hero has to educate himself. 25

The inner attainments of the hero are marked by characteristic external signs. The most crucial event in the hero's life is the acquisition of a good suit; the second, a watch. Hence the Alger hero embodied:

> ...the values that middle class Americans have been taught to revere: honesty, hard work, familial loyalty; good manners, cleanliness, and neatness of appearance; kindness and generousity to the less fortunate; loyality and deference on the part of employees, and consideration and personal interest on the part of employers. 26

Cawelti argues that the Alger hero was a reincarnation of the ideal of the eighteenth century merchant and his noble young apprentice, but it can also be argued that one of the reasons Alger's books remained popular well into the twentieth century was that the character also embodies the sentiments of the growing professionals of the new middle class.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, the image of society in which every man was able to improve himself by diligence, no matter what his calling, gave way to a conception of a dynamic, changing society in which individuals competed for a limited number of prizes. Hard work no longer meant success, as laborers worked long and hard and were not successful. Energy, initiative and confidence were valued characteristics in the new self-made man. The idea of personality development became a central focus of the philosophy of success; causes of failure were seen as weakness in individual character, a failure of nerve, self-confidence and initiative. Success became an act of will.

> New insitutions, spokesmen, and forms of self-help literature expressed a new philosophy of success. Responding to industrialism, to a generation of criticism, and to the impact of new ideas, the philosophers of success transformed the traditional Protestant synthesis of religious and secular values into an ideology of individual material achievement. 27

The ethical conduct and hard work value orientation of rural America won over to accommodation to the needs of business enterprise and the large corporation, to the direction of an overriding emphasis on the pursuit and use of wealth.

The "sanctity of wealth" championed by educators, preachers and public leaders was given classic formulation in Andrew Carnegie's *Gospel of Wealth* (1889) about the rise of an immigrant bobbin boy to a multimillionaire. The sanctification of business prepared the way for even more success stories and formulas. By the end of the century there emerged "success specialists." One of these was Orison Swett Marden, whose *Pushing to the Front* was the most popular book of its type and went through twelve printings in 1895, the year of publication. By the end of the century men and women had read three million copies of Marden's books and many subscribed to his magazine, simply entitled *Success*, in the hope that it would make Andrew Carnegies of them, or at least of their children.

Russell Conwell's *Acres of Diamonds* was perhaps, however, the most successful of all adult success books, as well as perhaps the simplest and most striking statement of the doctrine of the divine right of property. Conwell was a Philadelphia minister who preached just what businessmen wanted to hear: "Money is power," he proclaimed, "and

for a man to say, 'I do not want money' is to say, 'I do not wish to do any good to my fellow-men.'"[28] This curious combination of money and morality had been sanctified earlier in the century by Ralph Waldo Emerson, a spokesman who once declared that all great men come from the middle classes:

> Man was born to be rich, or inevitably grows rich by the use of his faculties; by the union of thought with nature. Property is an intellectual production. The game requires coolness, right reasoning, promptness and patience in the players. ...A dollar is not value, but representative of value, and, at last, of moral values. 29

Hence advice on self-discipline, physical fitness, dietary control, temperance and sexual restraint were all offered in the name of a morality that ultimately led to success. For by this time, the entrepreneurial success story of risk and quick thinking had given way to individual advancement in a career. Careers meant long-term planning, delayed gratification, and calculation. The cultivation of strictly wealth was replaced by the cultivation of energy, enterprise, skill and service. Success increasingly depended upon providing a service based on a skill, of elevating the status of one's occupation by referring to it as a profession. In a country that had no defined class boundaries, one's occupation became the proving grounds for identity. The chief distinction which popular sentiment can lay hold of as raising one set of persons above another is the character of their occupation, the degree of culture it implies, the extent to which it gives them an honourable prominance. For the middle class in America, and by the turn of the century this

represented perhaps one-third of the American population, careers became the new status symbol of success, and professionalism became the moral order.[30]

> In part, the success of the culture of professionalism could be attributed to the fact that American Mid-Victorians constructed a secular theodicy. Despite its flux, madness, and seeming irrationality, the world was a rational place, and every person could discover his "real me" within the material confines of space and time. Such firm notions as career and character, for instance, organized a human life totally, from beginning to end. In the normal schedule of developments, Mid-Victorians came to anticipate such events as an individual's vocational crisis, and to a lesser degree his religious crisis. To know that every occurrence had a reason, a justification, both emboldened and inspired a Mid-Victorian. The scientific assurance that the most despised weakness - human failure - was rooted within the nature of the fallen victim resolved the thorny question of responsibility. Success was a personal triumph for the middle-class individual, as failure was a personal disaster. ...worldly reversals were tests of will, commitment, and endurance. A fall now and then would eventually prove to have been "fortunate," when one looked back from the heights after the long race upward. 31

"Evil" in mid-Victorian theodicy, suggests Bledstein, stemmed from the inability to realize one's potential, the inability to commit onself to place and time, to subjugate carnal desires and their distrations, and to approach life professionally ... the "flaw" was internal.

*The popularization of psychology.*

The new priest of the middle class became, therefore, the psychologist. Psychology not only explained why so many people were "flawed," it also preached ways to perfection. Psychology also fit 'neatly' into the new occupational life of the middle class: selling, advertising, management, social services, not to mention the growth of

the therapeutic profession itself. It also offered explanations for the increasing crises experienced in the middle class family life.[32] Hence its professional closure was maintained, the psychiatric expert not only created the problem by diagnosing it, but also, conveniently, provided the cure.

Psychology was being incorporated into the self-improvement thematic since the turn of the century. The author of *Power of Will* (1907), Frank Maddock, was a lawyer and a lecturer on popular psychology, and the sales of this book surpassed those of all the other turn-of-the century success books. Business quickly discovered the applicability of psychology: Hugo Munsterberg's *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency* was a best seller in 1913. The pressures of the new century were becoming apparent when Arnold Bennett wrote the best seller *How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day* (1912), and Jackson and Salisbury published the best seller *Outwitting Our Nerves* in 1922.

Despite the early depression and the First World War, both of which had served to expose the vulnerability of the middle class, America prospered. Profiting by the reconstruction abroad, at home, during the middle twenties, sales promotion became a science, the science of applied psychology, which was enormously aided by the instituting of instalment buying. The middle of the 1920s was the peak of American middle class prosperity.[33] The old themes of success became more firmly entrenched; bonds and material goods took the place of property to define success.

Psychology and behaviorism were now terms freely used, as the theories of Sigmund Freud and John B. Watson became popularized. Freud's vocabulary "descended from the clinical sphere to the world of chit-chat as people learned to pepper and salt their conversation with reference to 'libido,' 'neurosis,' and 'Oedipus complex'." According to Hart, in the opinion of many young people, Freud seemed to make sexual freedom almost essential, for did he not show repressions to be unhealthy and inhibitions evil? "With the blessings of psychology, the sense of sin was washed clean."[34] It was no doubt assisted by the increasing dissemination of birth control literature, and the extension of instant credit, which eased the necessity to delay marriage.

Middle class women were deemed responsible for much of the popular book buying, and in 1923 Emile Coué's *Self-Mastery Through Conscious Auto-Suggestion* became a "feminine fad" as ladies throughout the nation solemnly reiterrated, "Every day in every way I am getting better and better."

> The next year they had got well enough to forget Coué, but the fad for diluted Freud still continued. The Lynds in Middletown in 1924 found 250 women thronging lectures on 'How We Reach our Sub-Conscious Minds,' thirty of them willing to pay twenty-five cents extra for a course of 'definite psychological instruction for gaining and maintaining bodily fitness and mental poise and for building personality.' It is not surprising that in 1926 a good many readers, including men, were making a best seller of George A. Dorsey's *Why We Behave Like Human Beings*. 35

Among the many books offered on how to utilize psychology in everyday life were H.A. Overstreet's *Influencing Human Behavior* (1925) and

*About Ourselves: Psychology for Normal People* (1928), showing "how to harness psychology to the task of achieving success," and to cure faults and limitations.

The impact of Freud in America demands comment. It has been argued that no contemporary body of thought, with the possible exception of pragmatism, has played a more important part or exerted a more pervasive influence in the shaping of the twentieth century American mind than has psychoanalysis.[36] For the most part, Freud was an outcast in the rest of the world, and particularly in Vienna. Only in America did psychoanalysis succeed in permeating not only the psychiatric profession but the entire national culture as well. This is partially due to the fact that in America professionalism was unbounded. Unlike England and most of Europe, which employed stringent limitations on the numbers entering the elite professions, America did not impose such restrictions. One simply sought to cultivate a new clientele or offer a new service. Nevertheless, the demand for these services was apparent. As Peter Berger points out:

> Psychoanalysis has become a cultural phenomenon, a way of understanding the nature of man and an ordering of human experience on the basis of this understanding. Psychoanalysis has given birth to a psychological model that has influenced society far beyond its own institutional core and the latter's fringe. 37

It was previously suggested that urbanization leads to a need for self-awareness. Also, Georg Simmel has argued that the complexities of metropolitan existence requires certain kinds of personality accommodations. The external forces of urban life, as well as the impersonalities of a money economy, promote a highly personal subjectivity which, aided by

an external reserve and indifference (one might read "civility" here), protects the individual against the "threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him."[38] Berger argues in a similar way that the need for psychoanalysis arises from the dichotomizing forces of industrialization which leads to an identity crisis.[39] Certainly the forces of modernization and industrialization account in part for the success of psychoanalysis, but not the particular success of Freud in America.

As Bledstein has pointed out, the competition of life in America relentlessly chipped away at the confidence of individuals, degrading their intelligence and demoralizing their self-esteem:

> Beneath public proclamations of trust in American society and its competence, personal expressions of self-doubt by Americans were everywhere. The distrust of self was more than a passing phase of a rapidly industrializing society; it was intrinsic to the culture of professionalism with its vertical angle of vision. Personal self-doubt and insecurity caused an individual to slump into inertia, confusion, indecision, and submission. ... "American nervousness is the product of American civilization," psychiatrist George Beard emphasized. 40

Hence the rise of books to promote the ego, to help overcome anxiety, to build self-confidence. The building of personality became intrinsically linked to success because the skills required by the new middle class were relatively invisible to those of the working class. As well, these skills replaced traditional property ownership as a middle class commodity. One aspect of professionalization is the attempt to translate one order of scarce resources - special knowledge and skills - into another - social and economic rewards.[41] Part of these skills

entailed a mastering of one's own personality and the maintenance of a confident, assured front that implied both knowledge and success. In essence, middle class work relied heavily on personality as well as skills, and these skills themselves increasingly became ones of human relations. Human relations became important not only because one was an employer or manager, but because one was also an employee. With the expansion of the corporation, the middle class has been subsumed into the corporate hierarchy. By 1935 over eighty per cent of the middle class were salaried employees.[42] Success within the hierarchy depended to a large extent on personality management, and on the opinion of others. Hence the emphasis in the self-help books on presentation of self, and, for example, H.A. Overstreet's statement that "at the center of life is the process of getting ourselves believed in and accepted."

By 1936, the formula that mixed personality and success culminated in one of the most popular success books of all. Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* sold over three million copies in a period of ten years and was then replaced on the best seller list by his *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* (1948). This was the same year that Norman Vincent Peale's *A Guide to Confident Living* became a best seller, followed by *The Power of Positive Thinking* in 1952, which topped the best seller list for at least three years and sold over five million copies.

One of the observable trends in the literature, therefore, has been changes in goal orientation, reflecting in large part the middle class's structural relationship to society. A few previous studies of inspirational literature clarifies some of the important themes and trends, and further emphasizes points of contact with other cultural phenomena.

*Previous studies.*

In their analysis of popular religious inspirational literature published between 1875 and 1955, Schneider and Dornbusch were mainly concerned with the increasing secularization of the literature, reflecting the value orientation of the public.[43] They found several consistent themes, such as the emphasis on religion bringing happiness, prestige, power, and emotional security. Religion, according to the literature, eased the "pain of decision-making," as well as helped to promote "success" or "successful living."

There was a definite trend away from religion bringing rewards in the "other world" toward religion bringing success and happiness in this world. The theme that "you can change yourself by religious means" pervaded the whole literature, but the thesis that one can effect change by a combination of religious and psychological or psychiatric means became popular from the mid-thirties on. The authors found that basic economic, political, and cultural forms were <u>not</u> evoked as having a bearing upon the fortunes of the "self," either in themselves or in combination with other agencies:

> In effect, the world of society has no influence upon the individual and is not to be reckoned as important in any sense in the question of his religious destiny. ...Man, in the literature, scarcely lives in a society or culture at all. 44

The literature, of course, could not totally void the realities of interpersonal relationships, but it avoided stress upon, or even intimations of, the large frameworks within which these interpersonal relationships occur.

The lack of concern with the "afterlife" was consistent with the stress in the literature on salvation in this life rather than in the next. Even the meaning of "salvation" took on an increasingly despiritualized tone. Also, there was a definite trend toward the secularization of suffering, i.e., that suffering should be avoided and fought, rather than the traditional Christian perspective that one must suffer to reach utopia. Man's nature was represented throughout the literature as essentially good.

The traditional association of poverty with virtue was nearly absent, much more stress was on the association of wealth with virtue. The theme that religion brings wealth, however, declined after the depression, and health, physical and emotional, began receiving increased attention. There was a declining emphasis on the stressing of love of Christ during the thirties, and a very significant strain toward the instrumentalization of God and religion, i.e. using God to carry out one's own purpose. The books also stressed:

> Controlling thoughts, affirming positive thoughts, denying negative thoughts, denying the negative by affirming the positive - this entire "technology" comprises a set of rather constant features characterizing the whole literature. 45

The entrance of psychology into the taken-for-granted world, previously of small significance, has already been noted. Around this same time there became apparent an identification of religion and science, and a trend toward subjectivism and humanism, heavily influenced by William James.[46] The emphasis on positive thinking as a way to influence one's thinking is "clearly following lines laid out by William James."

It is certainly no accident that this popular literature should be so much influenced by a member of the pragmatist school, and by William James in particular. Pragmatism was the central philosophy to the whole of American social thought, and has been described as "the emphasis upon the power of man's intelligence to control his destiny," entailing the notion that rationality is formally located in the individual, and not, for example, in the rationality of class or group:

> The force of personalities is important to the pragmatic mind. This is diametrically opposed to the impersonal force of history that is important for the dialetical mind. It is the difference between a philosophy which begins with personal *experience* and another which has its starting point in objective *existence*. 47

It was through James in particular that "flowed urgently the individualism that has been a very central current in American life and thought."[48] For James, individuality is *the* central point. His philosophical formulation has been described as "a blend of pluralism in

ontology and radical empiricism and pragmatism in epistemology."

> James's spirit seems remarkably contemporary. Secularism, pluralism, existentialism, confrontation, involvement, search for authenticity, the struggle of the individual against the establishment - these are the characteristics of James's spirit. 49

This brief excursion into pragmatism is necessary because of its centrality to the orientation of "self-help" which has been made explicit in the self-help books of the seventies. Pragmatism is, after all, the notion that knowledge is validated by its practical consequences. "Something is true to the degree that it works, rather than something works to the degree that it is true." This denies, then, the validity of any external truth, which is in direct contradiction to Christianity, or, for that matter, any other doctrine. And yet, James's "humanist" approach to religion is commensurate with that of Puritanism: the divine is within the soul or the experiences of individual man. In effect, then, Puritanism creates the contradiction that vented its own demise.

The popular inspirational literature that emphasized "thought control" took from James the notion that feelings can be controlled by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will. James said, "We feel sorry because we cry." To control crying is to control the feeling. Hence books admonished young men not to look at dirty pictures or think "bad" thoughts in order to control their sexual urges. As will be pointed out in the following chapter, the current self-help literature also regards the will as capable of controlling feelings.

Dornbusch takes up the question of methods of self-control in a later study of contemporary non-religious inspirational books, wherein he found positive thinking to be the most popular method of self control, and happiness to be the most popular goal.[50] Concern with the social environment was not apparent in these books either.

As would be expected, an earlier analysis of self-help books by Samuel Klausner noted that the literature generally aimed for mastery of the self as a stepping stone to mastery of the environment, arguing that control of self would eventuate in shaping the world to the will of man.[51] He noted the literature was particularly concerned with drive control. Written in the tradition of ascetic Protestantism, the popular interpretation suggested that uncontrolled drives may interfere with the accomplishment of higher tasks. Dornbusch's analysis of the 1962 literature, however, showed the concern was no longer with drive control, but rather stressed the control of emotions or "affects."

Klausner argues that the method of control advocated reflects an attitude toward personal and social change, and that the literature analyzed consistently advocated an "effort to conquest" although consistently absent was the "effort to transcendence" which requires that pain as well as pleasure be affirmed:

> The efforts toward synergy and toward harmony tend to be associated with adaptation and adjustment to the present reality of the self. ...The efforts toward conquest and toward transcendence, on the other hand, seemed allied with change. 52

The link between self-mastery and technical control is obvious. And, in contradiction to Daniel Bell's argument that the cultural and technical spheres of life have become distinct and antagonistic,[53] a study by Lionel Lewis and Dennis Brissett described how popular marriage manuals published prior to 1966 characterized marital sex as work.[54] They noted that similar to many other forms of leisure, marital sex as a "play form" was justified by incorporating many principles and procedures of work.

All of the literature, in fact, orients toward technological application: the notion that success will follow the institution of a correct procedure. One can be taught how to pray to achieve success, how to enjoy sex, how to live the good life. Eventually, as Weber was wont to point out, the means become ends in themselves, so that one seeks transcendence, sex, happiness, for no other purpose than the immediacy of the situation, or, alternatively, because the goals are no longer relevant to the present situation.

*Summary.*

Although the foregoing is by no means an exhaustive account of the history and trends of "self-helpism" in American, it does point out aspects of importance to the current study. The trend toward an increasing concentration on the self is apparent, as is the abstraction of the individual from external forces. Individualism has remained the "guiding light" throughout, and has become more intensified as social forces

create the need for new kinds of differentiation and diversification in human relationships, skills, and labor. The self-help literature has consistently played the role of referee in helping the reader to formulate the new game and set the rules of playing it. In no way has this literature attempted to change the game itself, and for this reason it has been criticized for up-holding the status quo, and for maintaining the mythology rather than the reality of the world. Alternatively, one could use the same argument to justify the consolidating tendancies of the literature.[55] Plato argued for the importance of the "noble lie" as a means of social cohesion and individual contentment. Certainly the bible has been the "best seller of them all."

This chapter has explored the history of self-help, leading up to this decade. The following chapter provides a detailed analysis of the current literature.

*Notes to Chapter II:*

[1] Sanford M. Dornbusch, "Popular Psychology: A Content Analysis of Contemporary Inspirational Nonreligious Books," in *The Quest for Self-Control*, edited by Samul Z. Klausner, New York: The Free Press, 1973, 126-140, 134.

[2] Louis Schneider and Sanford Dornbusch, *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 10-11.

[3] James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," in *Studies in Social Movements*, edited by Barry McLaughlin, Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Canada Limited, 1969, 85-108, 103-4.

[4] Alice Payne Hackett and Henry James Burke, *80 Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1975*, New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1977, 4.

[5] Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1974, 12.

[6] *Ibid.*, 285.

[7] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

[8] James D. Hart, *The Popular Book, A History of America's Literary Taste*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1950.

[9] Carl Bode, *The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840-1861*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Hart.

[12] Bode, 130.

[13] Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers. Order and Action in Urban Public Space*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.

[14] *Ibid.*, 58.

[15] John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility*, New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1974.

[16] Lofland.

[17]*Ibid.*, 65.

[18]*Ibid.*, 92.

[19]Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1976, 63.

[20]Lofland, 111.

[21]Bode, 128. For example, William Alcott's *Young Man's Guide*, first published in 1833 and continually revised, reaching its twenty-first edition by 1858, exemplified the combination of good character (warning specifically against laziness, untidiness and intemperance), good manners, good business management (calculate, advised Alcott, and he underlined the word, avoid debt, work hard, be honest, do not be too trustful, do not speculate, put everything in writing), good morals, and improvement of the mind, as the components that went together to make up the ideal person.

[22]*Ibid.*, 275.

[23]John G. Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965.

[24]Stewart Holbrook, "Horatio Alger Jr. and Ragged Dick," *The New York Times Book Review*, July 2, 1944, 9, 12. Mott suggests Alger wrote 135 books, placing aggregate sales at 16 or 17 million. Alger books remained popular for sixty years.

[25]Cawelti, 117.

[26]*Ibid.*, 121.

[27]*Ibid.*, 168.

[28]Hart, 230. Conwell's sermon was first published in 1887.

[29]"Wealth," Emerson Works, 6, The Conduct of Life, 99, 103, as quoted in Bledstein, 21.

[30]Bledstein.

[31]*Ibid.*, 113.

[32]It must be remembered that psychology itself could not have arisen apart from the individualizing forces that permitted the individual to be seen apart from the group. Given the history of America and individualism, it is certainly no accident that psychology was adopted as a way of looking at the world in lieu, say, of class consciousness, which involves seeing oneself as part of a group.

[33]Franklin Charles Palm, *The Middle Classes, Then and Now*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936.

[34]Hart, 231.

[35]*Ibid.*, 240.

[36]Harry K. Wells, *The Failure of Psychoanalysis*, New York: International Publishers, 1963.

[37]Peter Berger, "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis," *Social Research*, Spring 1965, 32:1, 26-41, 27.

[38]Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited by Kurt Wolff, New York: The Free Press, 1964, 409-424.

[39]Berger.

[40]Bledstein, 115.

[41]Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, Berkeley: University of California, 1977.

[42]Palm, 377.

[43]Schneider and Dornbusch.

[44]*Ibid.*, 24.

[45]*Ibid.*, 34.

[46]Note, for example, the difference between James and Durkheim in their view on religion. James defined religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the devine," whereas Durkheim said, "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them."

[47]C. Wright Mills, *Sociology and Pragmatism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, 26.

[48]*Ibid.*, 271.

[49]James E. Dittes, "Beyond William James," in *Beyond the Classics? Essays in the Scientific Study of Religion*, edited by Charles Glock and Phillip Hammond, New York: Harper & Row, 1973, 295.

[50]Dornbusch.

[51]Samuel Z. Klausner, "A Collocation of Concepts of Self-Control," in *The Quest for Self-Control, op. cit.*

[52]*Ibid.*

[53]Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976. This issue is discussed in Chapter V.

[54]Lionel Lewis and Dennis Brissett, "Sex as Work," *Social Problems*, Summer 1967, 15, 8-18.

[55]See, for example, Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1976, for a discussion of the functions of consolidating and differentiating aspects of culture.

Chapter III

*A textual analysis of current popular "inspirational" self-help literature.*

> I rarely trouble myself with reading a best seller: it being such is a sufficient evidence of its commonplace character.
> (P.A. Sorokin, 1937)

> In my opinion, the fact that they exist and are bought in large quantities is sufficient justification for treating them as a "quick and dirty" method for learning about the psychology of Everyman.
> (S.A. Dornbusch, 1963)

> Yet these works deserve attention as our popular religions and philosophies. They are the places to look if you wish to find expression, however crude, of prevalent attitudes to classical questions of ethics and human conduct.
> (J. Lieberson, 1979)

Following the advent of *The Power of Positive Thinking* in the fifties, relatively few inspirational self-help books appeared on the best seller lists. Perhaps people were too busy being active in the sixties to write, as that decade was notably absent of "how-to" books *per se*. Eric Berne's *Games People Play* was the only sign of the influx

of self-help literature appearing in the seventies. Berne's examination of the roles people play to conceal the real facts about themselves from others paralleled at the face-to-face level what the political activists were attempting at the structural level. Exposing the heretofore hidden self was also consistent with what was taking placing in encounter groups all across the country. Contributing to these concerns was a new emphasis on sexual freedom, and books on sexuality were best sellers throughout the decade.[1]

The seventies brought forth a renewed interest in psychological self-help literature. Publishers' lists included literally hundreds of titles in this category. Thomas Harris's *I'm OK, You're OK* had, by 1975, sold over six million copies, and Mildred Newman's *How to Be Your Own Best Friend* sold over two million, which put them both in Alice Payne Hackett's list of top sellers for the past eighty years.[2]

Secular inspirational self-help literature remained consistent best sellers throughout this decade, and comprised 20 percent of the non-fiction best seller market. A breakdown of the other non-fiction best sellers provides an even further clue to a "sign of the times:" books on sexuality made up 12 percent; books on identity, death and divorce, including Gail Sheehy's *Passages, Predictable Crises of Adult Life*, 12 percent; books on fitness, 9½ percent; dieting, 9½ percent; beauty, appearance, 8 percent; religious inspirational books, 7½ percent; cookbooks, 7½ percent; books on money, memory and the occult, and other miscellaneous, 14 percent. Under the occult category, Carlos Castaneda's

books provide the most illustrating example of the search for alternative life-styles and world views.[3]

This chapter examines the content of the best selling secular "inspirational" self-help literature, focussing on the value orientations of the books. The methodological approach and selection procedures are discussed in Appendix A, and Appendix B lists the coding categories used. The following books, therefore, are being analyzed for content:

Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK, You're OK*
Mildred Newman, *How to Be Your Own Best Friend*
Harry Browne, *How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World*
Manual J. Smith, *When I say no, I feel guilty*
Harold H. Bloomfield *et al*, *T.M. Discovering Inner Energy and Overcoming Stress*
Thomas Gordon, *Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.)*
Michael Korda, *Power! How to Get It, How to Use It*
Wayne W. Dyer, *Your Erroneous Zones*
Robert J. Ringer, *Looking Out for #1*
George Sheehan, *Running & Being, The Total Experience*

A note on the authors of these books is given in Appendix C. It should be pointed out at this time, however, that all the authors are professional psychologists and psychiatrists, with the following exceptions: Dr. Sheehan is a cardiologist, and Messrs. Dyer, Ringer and Korda describe themselves as "self-made" business men.

The following is a summary of the findings of the content analysis. These findings will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

*The functions of contemporary self-help.*

All the books are explicit in stating that their function is to show the reader how to gain control over one's everyday life. It is said

that it is a lack of control that causes unhappiness, powerlessness, stress, anxiety, and the feeling that one cannot cope with life. To these authors personal freedom can only follow once one takes control of one's life. Sheehan, on running, is the only author who advocates escaping from everyday life in order to find personal freedom.

The *P.E.T.* manual, for example, advises ways to teach children how to gain control over their own lives and thus become responsible for their own decision-making. For all the authors, except Sheehan, gaining control over one's life means that the individual can then assume <u>total</u> responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and, therefore, happiness. This emphasis on decision-making implies a world where making decisions has become problematic, possibly because of the unlimited selection available at the level of everyday choices. It also suggests that the strain of responsibilities toward others has either become overbearing, or, alternatively, that it has now become possible to reject these responsibilities. Dissatisfaction with these responsibilities is evident: with running Dr. Sheehan learned to "get outside the world," a world

> ...controlled by the people who hold us upside down by the heels to prove how strong they are. It is a world primarily of money. A world of mortgages and life insurance and down payments and grocery bills. A world that is easy pickings for those who learn how to move around it it; and torture for those who don't. (45)

The other authors are primarily concerned with showing people how to "move around" in the world, rather than outside it. This means learning how to reduce or eliminate "learned responses" and emotions

such as anxiety, guilt and the feeling of ignorance in coping with other people in the ordinary experiences of life. This, they argue, is achieved by gaining the strength to believe in oneself as the only "expert" in one's life. Hence self-understanding leads to self-fulfillment, which necessarily leads to the desire to "grow" and change in order to "realize one's potential" more fully. The authors take it for granted that the readers do not have to have these words defined, that they have become a part of our commonsense vocabulary. At the same time, the authors are aware that previous connotations of anything implying a fulfillment of self were negative, i.e. selfishness has been seen as a negative value. Most of the authors define this connotation as a "trap set by others or society" in order to control the individual's life. They argue that in order to achieve happiness, "You have to decide how you're going to live." (Browne:9)

Indecision is directly related to low self-esteem, hence the books all emphasize the need for self-love as the "first" love. The psychologists regard their method of achieving results as rectifying the failure of psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis the analyst was the hero, the new approaches make the "patient" the hero. And Sheehan agrees:

> Learn self-esteem, self-acceptance. Know that you can be a hero. ...See yourself as normal and loveable no matter how odd you appear. (99)

The three "self-made men" are more adamant in equating self-control and "feeling good" with power. Korda, for example, wants to show people:

> ...how to use, recognize and live with power, and to convince you that the world you live in is a challenge and a game, and that a sense of power - your power - is at the core it it. (4)

*The "ideal" person.*

It is interesting that within a few short years, the books retreat from seeing the reader as a patient (Harris) to regarding the reader as one of many who are experiencing common problems with living.

The authors place a heavy stress on having a flexible personality, one that not only accommodates to change but actively seeks it. Self-sufficiency and autonomy are valued, as are self-acceptance, self-esteem, being in control, being responsible for one's own behavior. One must utilize everything one has - feelings, intuition, intelligence, and will power - in order to become more fulfilled, creative, and energetic.

Dyer adequately sums up the opinion of all the authors. In insisting that "you are the sum total of all your choices," he states that a healthy, fulfilled person is one who likes everything about life - is free from guilt and anxiety, a non-worrier, particularly about the past and future, lives for the present, seeks new and unfamiliar experiences, loves ambiguity, is "strikingly" independent, treasures freedom from expectations, puts a high premium on privacy, is selective but deeply and sensitively loving, is unconcerned about others' evaluations of their behavior, does not need applause and approval, lacks "enculturation" but is not a rebel, knows how to laugh, accepts oneself without

complaint, appreciates the natural world, has insight into the behavior of others, and has a sense of self-worth located within. "Ideal" people are not sickly, do not fight uselessly, do not blame, have little concern with order, organization, or systems in their lives, are self-disciplined, creative, and have no need to consult manuals or ask experts (!). They have high energy levels, require less sleep, are aggressively curious, learners not teachers, are not afraid to fail, do not play games or try to impress others, do not have "local" values, have no heros or idols, have a desire to grow, and, "most significantly," are individuals who love themselves.

> I want to travel as far as I can go,
> I want to reach the joy that's in my soul,
> And change the limitations that I know,
> And feel my mind and spirit grow;
>
> I want to live, exist, "to be,"
> And hear the truths inside of me. (Dyer:16)

*The "unhealthy" individual.*

Obversely, the unhealthy individual, those to whom these books are ostensibly directed, has feelings of self-hatred, is unable to cope or make decisions, fears failure and loneliness, is depressed, anxious, insecure, fearful of change, resistant to growth, irrational, a spectator to life, and is bounded by the past without understanding it and therefore cannot take responsibility for one's own actions.

According to the authors, these problems originate in "the difficulties that surround decision-making" (Harris); the inability to properly communicate with others (Smith); being out of control and not

basing actions on rational choices (Ringer, Dyer); not learning "how to use the world, instead of being used by it" (Korda); combatting our "true" nature, trying to become someone we are not (Sheehan). One should therefore attempt to raise "strong, separate people," capable of making their own decisions (Gordon).

*The most important goal in life.*

The most important goal in life is to be happy. Happiness, for these authors, is "anything you want it to be." It is the decision of the individual how much of anything one needs to be happy. Freedom, however, is seen to be integral to happiness, and this means freedom from the infringement of others. Communication is seen to be an important aspect of actualizing this freedom, for it all depends on whether or not one can communicate one's desires to others. "Discovering who you are" is a necessary prelude to knowing what you want out of life.

Happiness is seen as "not outside us but within," "feeling good about ourselves," "whenever you feel that your self-respect is not in question." (Smith) Happiness is also seen as a state of being available to all who want it. The most basic task in life, in order to become happy, is therefore a love of, or commitment to, the self. Change follows self-love: "Don't judge yourself at all; accept yourself and move on from there." (Newman) The movement is not, therefore, toward perfection (with the exception of Sheehan), but toward self-fulfillment. As an individual, one is already perfect the way one is, and:

> You have the assertive right...to say that you don't care to be perfect according to anyone's definition including your own, since one man's perfection is likely to be another's perversion. (Smith:68)

The psychologists stress the importance of "internal" success, but most assume a change in self will "bring its own rewards." The only limits to success are the ones the individual places on oneself. Ringer is the only author that acknowledges "government limitations." Personal creativity, an assumed outcome of self-fulfillment, helps promote success. Most importantly, for these authors, "you have to decide how you're going to live:"

> More than for any other reason, I'm free because I've chosen to live that way. I've concentrated upon the things I control, and used that control to remove the restrictions and complications from my life. ...Every day of my life is mine to use as I see fit. My time isn't committed to the state, to society, to a treadmill, or to fruitless relationships with people with whom I have nothing in common. (Browne:8)

*Attitudes toward relationships.*

With regard to personal relationships, the authors generally agree that you have to love yourself before you can love others. All the authors stress independence and autonomy in relationships. Harris, for example, points out that one must be able "to give ourselves comfort and sustenance in the times when there is no one else." The reader is advised to reject relationships that involve dependency:

> The hallmark of effective marriage is minimal fusion and optimal autonomy and self-reliance. (Dyer)

Self-denial is generally regarded as unhealthy and unnecessary, or at best one's own choice if it makes one happy. Then, for example, Ringer argues it is "rational" selfishness. For Ringer there is "no such thing as altruism in the so-called unselfish sense. There is only rational and irrational selfishness." Dependency relationships are seen as an irrational choice.

The stress in the child-raising literature is on cooperation in teaching children to be responsible and self-disciplined, without using fear of punishment or withdrawal of privileges. The credo is thus:

> You and I are in a relationship that I value and want to keep. Yet each of us is a separate person with his own unique needs and the right to try to meet those needs. I will try to be genuinely accepting of your behavior when you are trying to meet your needs or when you are having problems meeting your needs. ...However, when you behavior interferes with my meeting my own needs, thus causing me to feel unaccepting of you, I will share my problem with you and tell you as openly and honestly as I can exactly how I am feeling, trusting that you respect my needs enough to listen and then try to modify your behavior. ...let us strive always to search for solutions to our inevitable conflicts that will be acceptable to both of us. In this way, your needs will be met, but so will mine - no one will lose, both will win. (Gordon:305)

Obligations to others are considered "enslaving," and Dyer cautions one to "keep in mind that you have no responsibility to make others happy. Others make themselves happy. ...The business of effective living and parenting is independence."

The three "self-made men" agree that the business world is a game of players, but with friends "always advertise your true self... the real you...there's only one you." Ringer believes in what he refers to as "the Free-Enterprise Friendship Market," noting that:

> The most rationally selfish individual is also the most "giving" person, since he best understands the soundness of value-for-value relationships. (46)

However, in the public sphere, as well as the private, the emphasis is on realizing that "you don't need the goodwill of others to deal with them effectively and assertively." (Smith)

Love is described as "the ability and willingness to allow those that you care for to be what they choose for themselves, without any insistance that they satisfy you." (Dyer) Sheehan, however, forever running away from the world, defines love as "abnormal attention" that obstructs the flow of consciousness, ideas and growth:

> I am fearful of not being loved, but even more frightened of having to love.

*Attitudes toward problems.*

The psychologists see the individual's problems as residing in one's first encounters with others: "As soon as you could understand what your parents told you, you were trained to feel anxious, ignorant and guilty." (Smith) Hence the individual is advised to break away from the past and the emotional imprisonment of the parents, an imprisonment that is often transferred to other relationships. It is the feeling of being powerless as a child that creates low self-esteem.

Bloomfield is the only author who sees the problem in terms of stress caused by rapid technology: but the point is not to abolish stress but to master it. The three businessmen see problems caused by individual feelings of powerlessness, the inability to change, and an interfering government.

*Attitudes toward emotions.*

The current attitude toward emotions is a notable switch from the 1960s, when self-help books and the encounter groups encouraged people to express whatever they happened to feel. Now the advice is to choose one's emotions. If a person loses a job or a loved one dies, he or she can decide to be upset or simply get on with the business of life. Emotions are therefore considered reactions one chooses to have and can be controlled accordingly. This does not, however, mean suppressed: emotions should be understood and then dealt with on that basis. Will power can control emotions according to what the individual wants to feel. The emphasis on controlling emotions is partially in order to put a stop to other people manipulating the individual through emotional appeal. To comply with such emotional appeal means that the individual has made the choice to allow others to dominate his or her life.

*Attitudes toward change.*

Congruent with traditional American attitudes, the authors see change as taking place at the level of the individual: society cannot change until individuals change. There is no attempt made to advise changing the system. "Slums and ghettos and put-downs," says Harris, "are not going to disappear in society unless slums and games disappear from the hearts of people."

Instead of changing the system, the authors point to ways to control and manipulate it. The emphasis is on being flexible in order

to accommodate outside change however. There are no limits imposed on internal change unless they are limits imposed by the self. There is little, if any, reference to social or economic limitations, although the "businessmen" relate to governmental restrictions in a very derogatory manner.

The emphasis is on "you can be anything you choose." Hence, says Dyer:

> Dependency is not something that just happens because of association with domineering people. It is, like all erroneous zone behavior, a choice. You teach people to dominate you, and to treat you the way you've always been treated. (210)

*Views of human nature.*

Human nature is seen as naturally creative, assertive, and essentially good. The "flaws" occur during initial interactions with others. Rousseau's noble savage becomes the noble infant. Human beings are are also judged to be rational animals, naturally striving for happiness and pleasure and avoiding pain. The only exception to this view is put forth by Sheehan, who insists that "one must suffer to reach euphoria." Rational self-interest is regarded as the appropriate behavior most natural to humans.

*Attitudes toward morality.*

Morality, for these writers, is a relative and individual problem:

> You have the right to be the ultimate judge of yourself - to judge your own behavior, thoughts, and emotions, and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequences upon yourself. (Smith:43)

There is no absolute "right" or "wrong" way to behave, "there isn't even any technically correct way to behave." The only rule is that one must not impinge "knowingly" on anyone else's freedom and rights.

Value flexibility is also seen as positive. Hence parents are advised that:

> ...the more certain parents are that their own values and beliefs are right, the more they tend to impose them on their children (and usually on others, too). It also follows that such parents are apt to be unaccepting of behaviors that appear to deviate from their own values and beliefs.
>
> Parents whose system of values and beliefs are more flexible, more permeable, more amenable to change, less black-or-white, are inclined to be far more accepting of behavior that would appear to deviate from their values and beliefs. (Gordon:289)

Hence the emphasis is on tolerance and the ability "to change once we have understood ourselves. That is morality." (Harris)

*Attitudes toward systems of meaning and rules.*

Systems of meaning and rules are seen to be man-made and therefore subject to change, or, at least, they can be ignored. To "be responsible" one must always question culturally imposed systems of meanings and their applicability to today's situation (Harris); and remember that meanings are often self-imposed as our way of coping with the world (Newman):

> Legal systems are arbitrary rules society has adopted to provide negative consequences for behavior that society wishes to suppress. Just as with moral systems, laws have nothing to do with absolute "right" and "wrong". Systems of right and wrong are used to psychologically manipulate people's feeling and behavior...you always have the assertive judgement to break a law and face the consequences. (Smith:43)

Alternatively, "when we truly doubt that we are the ultimate judge of our own behavior, we are powerless to control our own destiny without all sorts of rules about how each of us 'should behave." (Smith:29) Therefore, "one must find a source of inner stability independent of institutions and relationships that are subject to change." (Bloomfield:187)

*Summary.*

It becomes apparent that the contemporary self-help literature is situated in both an immediate and a historical context. To the sociologist, the above data translate quite easily into "a sign of the times." *How to Be Your Own Best Friend* is indicative of the high rate of instability in personal relationships. The reader is told to be strong and independent, to prepare for the "times when there is no one else." Therefore Newman stresses:

> An adult, when he loves, does not risk his whole identity, that he already has, and will have however the other responds. If he loses his lover, he will still have himself. But if you look to someone else to establish your identity for you in some way, losing that person can make you feel really destroyed. (74)

Similarly, the *Parent Effectiveness Training* manual implicitly cautions against investing too much in one's children. "Effective parents" feel that the children have their own lives to live and should be given more freedom to shape themselves. Over-protectiveness endangers the child's ability to be self-sufficient and independent, and therefore does not properly socialize the child in the character requirements for today's culture. Likewise it endangers the parents' ability to cope with being alone after the children leave home.

The insistence of the "flexibility" of character and morals reflects the "openness" that is necessary to enable one to cope with the tremendous change in social values taking place over the last few years: values in sexuality, changing sex roles, attitudes toward traditional deviance such as homosexuality, the conflicting attitudes toward nationalism. Following Vietnam and the impeachment of Nixon the issue of questionning values was forced into the open, where the public had to acknowledge the tenuousness of the moral order in the public sphere. Hence the authors of the self-help literature are adament in their assertion that institutional life, particularly government and business, no longer demands respect as legitimate forces. In no way do the books portray individuals as part of society, rather as individuals acting more or less in defiance of society. The disenchantment with the Keynesian economic policy, taxes and the welfare state as ways to solve economic difficulties and regulate for the common economic good, is particularly evident in the moral individualism expressed by the three "self-made men."

Michael Korda's *Power!* (followed by *Success!*) and Ringer's *Looking Out for #1* (as well as his *Winning Through Intimidation*) are more about destroying the legitimation of the businessman and expert than about learning how to be successful. The reader is told that the main things that separates one from the $250,000-a-year executive is knowing how to dress, how to talk, how to write memos, how to get attention at meetings, and how to decorate one's office. "It takes very little talent to succeed in most cases," Korda notes reassuringly. Hence people are not "at the top" because they work harder than other people, because they are talented, leaders, or heros, but because they have learned how to manipulate appearances and mannerisms.

These books reflect an age when everything is being questioned. With the help of the counterculture, the Statue of Liberty has been disrobed and all her flaws have been publicly exposed. As yet a new wardrobe is nowhere in sight. The self-help literature's emphasis on building up the self partially reflects the need to put something in place of lost social values. Another side of the same concern is the rejuvenation of fundamentalist religions across the country. The pendulum swings from Browne saying, "No one can decide for you what is moral. So no matter what it may be, you are living by a personal morality," to fundamentalist religions that prescribe very specific rules for living. This implies a lack of common values somewhere in between. The attempt to account for behavior in the absense of a common value system has led to a concern with life cycles and well as

life-styles. This is no more apparent than in Gail Sheehy's best seller *Passages, Predictable Crises of Adult Life*, which she wrote after encountering her own "crisis" - seeing a young boy in Northern Ireland get his face blown off right in front of her. Her attempt to explain her inability to get over the incident resulted in the theory that "an awesome life accident has coincided with a critical turning point in my own life cycle." Few readers failed to see how the incident itself could create similar symptoms regardless of one's particular stage in the life cycle, or why one would question the emotional effects of the incident rather than, say, the incident itself. The story simply reflects the orientations of the self-help literature - the changes, the ability to cope, must come from within, as a reflection of the feeling of powerlessness to actuate any real change in the external world.

The incident also makes explicit, albeit in a very negative way, the tremendous changes that are going on in the lives of many women today, as Sheehy remembers thinking to herself:

> No one is with me. No one can keep me safe. There is no one who won't ever leave me alone. 4

As a group women have seldom had to experience this relationship with life before. The social phenomena of the abandoned mother, for example, did eventuate in individual psychological symptoms.[5] Hence much of the content of the self-help literature is directed toward the contemporary woman. Certainly the emphasis on assertiveness training comes at a time when newly "liberated" women need to learn new techniques for dealing with their newly established roles. Childhood socialization

in passivity and social subordination are not the required formulas for becoming successful in the public spheres, nor are altruistic attributes valuable in a life of competition.

At the same time, more women and minority groups have been able to maintain a certain standard of economic independence and therefore choices of many kinds have become available that did not exist before. This is also true for the increasing numbers entering higher education, as well as the diversity of life-style available to the credit card carrying public. Within a certain sphere and segment of society there is an almost unlimited choice of career opportunities and life styles. that, more importantly, are capable of being changed within the life span of the individual. More and more people in the middle class have had the opportunity to change career paths and even identities mid-way through their lives.[6] Hence the emphasis on decision-making and being responsible for one's decision-making comes to the fore, and the demand for a flexible personality to cope with one's changing life.

The emphasis on the "here and now" is indicative of a generation whose future has not worked out "according to plan." The marriage-for-keeps, the home and two-car garage have failed to materialize. When, for example, Edwin Schur criticizes the awareness movement for avoiding the satisfaction or the "pleasure of fulfillment of long-maintained and fondly held hopes," he is failing to recognize the changes the post-war generation has had to cope with, a generation brought up with traditional values and high expectations, both of which have been violated. These

changes have had both positive and negative consequences. The increased freedom of choice, as Durkheim was wont to point out, does contain the tendency to detach the individual from society.[7] Simmel also pointed to society's complicity in the matter:

> If freedom swings to extremes; if the large group...affords greater play to extreme formations and malformations of individualism, to misanthropic detachment, to baroque and moody life style, to crass egoism - then all this is merely the consequence of the wider group's requiring less of us, of its being less concerned with us, and thus of its lesser hindering the full development even of perverse impulses. 8

Hence the recent developments in the political, economic and cultural spheres appear to have condensed within a few short years the apparent actualization of a long term trend, so eloquently pointed to by Phillip Rieff:

> It marks the archaism of the classical legacy of political man, for the new man must live beyond reason - reason having proved no adequate guide to his safe conduct through the meaningless experience of life. It marks the repudiation of the Christian legacy of the religious man, for the new man is taught to live a little beyond conscience - conscience having proved no adequate guide to his safe conduct through life, and furthermore to have added absurd burdens of meaning to the experience of life. Finally, psychoanalysis marks the exhaustion of the liberal legacy represented historically in economic man, for now men must live with the knowledge that their dreams are by function optimistic and cannot be fulfilled. 9

The following chapter compares the current values as reflected in the self-help literature with previous values, in an attempt to ascertain what changes have in fact occurred and the historical precedents that have influenced the contemporary trends.

*Notes to Chapter III:*

1 Eric Berne, M.D., *Games People Play*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1964. A current study on the sex manuals has been done by Denniss Brissett and Lionel Lewis, "The Big Toe, Armpits, and Natural Perfume: Notes on the Production of Sexual Ecstasy," *Transaction*, January/February 1979, 63-72.

2 Alice Payne Hacket and Henry James Burke, *80 Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1975*, New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1977.

3 Gail Sheehy, *Passages, Predictable Crises of Adult Life*, New York: Bantam Book, 1977. Carlos Castenada's books include *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan*, *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan*, and *Tales of Power*, all of which became best sellers.

4 Sheehy, 5.

5 See, for example, Pauline B. Bart, "Depression in Middle-Aged Women," in *Woman in Sexist Society*, edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran, New York: New American Library, 1972, 163-186.

6 Sheehy's book indicates this freedom.

7 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, translated by George Simpson, New York: The Free Press, 1964 ed.

8 Georg Simmel, "Group Expansion and Development of Individuality," in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, edited by Donald N. Levine, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, 251-293, 271.

9 Philip Rieff, *Freud, The Mind of the Moralist*, New York: The Viking Press, 1959, 357.

Chapter IV

*The current literature in socio-historical perspective: a contextual analysis.*

> Ideas do not succeed in history by virtue of their truth but by virtue of their relationships to specific social processes. (Peter Berger, 1965)

> A man's social relations with his fellows are permeated with his ideas about reality. Indeed, 'permeated' is hardly a strong enough word: social relations are expressions of ideas about reality. (Peter Winch, 1958)

The preceding chapter isolated the main themes of the current self-help literature. Some of these themes have notable similarities to the previous literature. The concern with individual autonomy and freedom, equality, the commitment to actualizing change, a voluntarism consisting of free will and choice, the tendency toward technical or functional rationality, the belief in the free enterprise system - all these have come to be thought of as "standard" American values.

It becomes increasingly obvious, however, that although the vocabulary remains to some extent the same, the words themselves have

acquired new meanings, or at least the emphasis has changed considerably. These changes are necessarily interpretative, as one must have access to a knowledge of the general milieu and context within which they arose. In fact, the general pattern of change in the words themselves can be used as a kind of map by which it is possible to look at the wider changes in life and thought to which the changes in language evidently refer.[1]

For example, the metaphors of change, growth, progress, freedom, and equality are still utilized, but the connotations have changed considerably. Up until and including the early part of this century, "success" implied economic success, "change" implied technological change, and "growth" implied both economic and technical progress. With the increasing influence of science, technology, and the "science" of psychology, these metaphors began to be applied to the individual's subjective being. Being successful, according to the current self-help literature, now means living a life one is satisfied with, a meaning that could also be interpreted as tacit accommodation as opposed to the traditional emphasis on striving. Change and growth are now seen as synonomous with the ability to cope and adapt to the apparent never-ending identity crises of contemporary personal life. Whereas in previous generations it was generally acknowledged that one "grew" until one reached maturity, the external appearance of which was marriage and parenthood, now, as well displayed in Gail Sheehy's *Passages*, one cannot ideally conceive of limits to personal growth. Earlier, the inability to conceive of limits to growth was endemic in American economic patterns.

While these metaphors have consistently been applied to the whole of Western thought,[2] they have become epitomized in North America. As Max Weber pointed out, the influence of Calvinist Protestants had its effects more in the United States than any European country, and even in this secularized era its spirit still implicitly forms North American activity.[3] As George Grant points out:

> To understand our modern moral language, it is necessary to see it therefore as the end product of a secularized Calvinism, or if you want it the other way, a secularism with Calvinist undertones. 4

As is well-known, the "worldly ascetism" of the Calvinists was an immense force in shaping the United States both as democratic reformers and as capitalists. As Grant puts it so succinctly:

> Paradoxically, the rage to be confident of their election was what gave the Puritans such a sense of their own authentic freedom. Whatever may be said about the Puritan tradition, it has produced people who have known themselves as possessors of practical freedom. Also the Calvinist doctrine of the Hidden God meant that they did not believe, as have the Catholics, that one could see God's footprints in the world, and that one could discover natural law. One could only contemplate God in Jesus Christ, and go out and act as best one could. It is this tradition of acting for the best in the world which has been of such influence in creating our modern North American practicality. When freed from all theological context, it becomes pragmatism.

Also,

> Because of these theological presuppositions, Calvinism was a determining force for egalitarianism. In Puritanism, more than in any other influence, lies the source of our greatest spiritual achievement in North America, social equality. 5

Hence, the legacy that contributed so much to the Horatio Alger era was not only one of economic acquisition, but also one of activism,

a belief in activity as an instrument of progress. The Protestant self-made man believed his activity was contributing to the highest social good - the dynamic, expanding society. Under early Protestantism this activism was seen as serving the will of God, which in the nineteenth century becomes intertwined with personal gain. In the twentieth century personal power, combined with social engineering, become ends in themselves, but always the control of the world is seen as essentially moral.

In Chapter II, the direction in which this "moral" control was taking place was tentatively mapped out. The successful Puritan entrepreneur was gradually giving way to the successful professional, who retained the aspect of a "calling" as an important and fundamental differentiation from other kinds of work. The delayed gratification and investment in the future so necessary to the financial success of the self-made man remained an important requirement for the man embarked on a career, although the "investment in the future" became increasingly an investment in education rather than property. The investment in a career is not only a life-time proposition which makes the choice of a career an exacting one, but also the notion that the professional enters a career by calling, or at least by choice, intimately binds the career or profession to a sense of self. Whereas industrialism alienated the worker from his labor, and robbed him of the need to commit his entire self to the job, in this sense the professional remained a "privileged" worker.

The commitment to career was occasioned by the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism which put obvious limits on entrepreneurial activity. Those entering the career-oriented middle class (technicians, salaried professionals, clerical workers, public-service workers, salespeople) were the sons and daughters of business men, independent professionals and prosperous farmers, all groups which feared their own extinction in the struggle between capital and labor.[6] This group had risen from 33 percent of the entire middle class in 1870 to 63 percent in 1910.[7] These groups were intent on restructuring society so as to solidify their own place in the order of things. The chaos of laissez-faire capitalism was to be resolved by social engineering organized by experts and professionals. Hence:

> ...scientific management became something of a "movement." In an age of growing achievement in the physical sciences, it offered the hope of resolving industrial problems also through the use of objective principles. For young and imaginative engineers it provided an *ethos* and a mission in life. ...After the initial periods of resistance, it conquered the citadels of old-fashioned industrial management in the United States, and had a tremendous effect on the practice. It had a major influence on the growing reform and economy movements in public administration. 8

This was an order more or less imposed on the capitalist class, and, of course, the working class, by the rising class of experts. The ideology of objectivity infiltrated not only the public, but also the private world of the middle class. The demand for self-objectivity, for learning techniques to "engineer" the self, in order to become a successful expert, was the topic of the popular self-help manuals.

The predilection toward social engineering had been set by the Puritans:

> With intense interest Mid-Victorians in the latter half of the nineteenth century sought to describe in meticulous detail the everyday physical world surrounding them. Every subject was made into a natural "science," from calisthenics to the architecture of the home to religious worship. What strikes the historian is the totality of the Mid-Victorian impulse to contain the life experiences of the individual from birth to death by isolating them as science. Describing the outer structure of the visible universe, Mid-Victorians believed that they also described the inner structure of the invisible one. Control of the physical movements of a person in his course of life meant control of the confines of his spiritual attitudes. Though this cultural response was not peculiarly American, its frequency and intensity did set American life apart. 9

The sense of order had, therefore, been maintained throughout the structural changes that were taking place in the lives of the middle class. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century the life of the American bourgeois was ordered by God. Risks were taken in the economic sphere as proof of one's faith in God, and monetary success was proof of God's favour. One was defined by godliness and wealth and freed of social rank, region and community obligation. As this wealth became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, modes of identity and achievement were found in the "cult of professionalism." Reflecting more recent structural changes and the effects on the middle class, the current trend appears to be an attempt to situate the loss of an externalized order into the realm of a totally autonomous individual.

The foregoing remarks will be further elaborated in the next section. They are made at this point in order to offer some cohesiveness

to the patterns observed in the self-help literature. It is to be argued that these patterns are intimately connected to the changes affecting the nature of the middle class and the work they do. Because education essentially "belongs" to the middle class, the self-help literature reflects educated guesses about the nature of the problems of the world and the solutions as they pertain to the individual. The following outlines the changing nature of these problems and the proposed solutions, as reflected in the self-help literature. The changing criteria of time, personality and individualism will be discussed, as well as the consistency of "positive thinking." The summary will point to the constant and variable elements of the literature.

*Time Orientation.*

Throughout the self-help literature of this century, one can observe a change in the concept of time, which is intimately connected to the concept of self-control. Various character traits are also emphasized as positive and negative according to the conception of time. Early Americans were necessarily future-oriented. For the most part, they had no history, having cut themselves off from an oppressive past, Americans denied tradition any legitimacy. Initially the future was seen in terms of an afterlife, although the Protestant ethic quickly showed how successful living in this life proved the outcome of the afterlife. The ends gradually changed from heavenly

rewards to earthly ones, but the means remained the same: hard work, self-restraint, and will power were the necessary components for successful living. As it became increasingly necessary to make more and more decisions regarding the path one would take through life, self-understanding was emphasized.

Hence, at the turn of the century, one very popular and profuse writer, Dr. O.S. Marden, was advising "how to train one's own temperament and character so as to get more pleasure out of living and more success out of effort," claiming that "men should know themselves, have faith in themselves, based upon their self-knowledge." (*He Can Who Thinks He Can*, 1908) In *The Making of a Man* (1909), Dr. Marden preached self-control, determination, rectitude, industry, thoroughness and courage. Young people were being advised on how one's mental power could be developed, trained and used for individual and social benefit and progress. James Gordon Gilkey's *Secrets of Effective Living* (1927) answered "perplexing questions to be found in attitudes toward life, or methods of living, or goals to be sought: getting along with others, increasing chances of achievement, keeping life simple, reshaping one's own personality, taking criticism, finding happiness in an ordinary career, learning to forget and staying young." Lessons in patience, controlling impulse activities such as anger, sexual feelings; the necessity of "controlling the activities of the mind," hard work, virtue, morality, will power, efficiency and self-discipline, were offered as ways to be successful. Many of these books maintained a

religious orientation, but in 1913 Dr. Marden was saying, "people are apt to conduct themselves as though they were en route for some destination in beyond...a mere temporary stay...one should see joy in this world." (*The Joys of Living*)

Joy in this world invariably meant wealth, and even the religious authors viewed faith as likely to bring monetary gain. With the transition from laissez-faire to monopoly capitalism it became increasingly evident that wealth in terms of property was no longer a viable achievement. Investment in the future therefore became more immediate in the sense that no real property was expected to be left to the next generation. What the middle class was prepared to work for was education, because education became the road to success, success now re-formed in the shape of a career. The rise of monopoly capitalism paralleled the rise of the bureaucratic organization, both of which affirmed science and technology as the predominant system of cognitive and ideological validation. As scientific management and efficiency replaced the ideology of competitive capitalism, the status of the expert became elevated.[10]

Psychology, containing the "expert" knowledge of human management and efficiency, was utilized within the organization and without, by showing people how they could become members of that organization, because it was within the organization that one could find a career and become successful. As one reviewer asserted in 1926:

> No other non-mechanical science was ever brought quite so immediately into man's practical service as modern psychology ...in the attempt to render human life happier and more efficient...there is a steady stream of books setting forth the various ways in which psychology can be of use in everyday life.

The reviewer went on to name H. Dearden's *Understanding Ourselves. The Fine Art of Happiness*, as one of the best, as it offered advice on:

> ...how to manage and control his mind and body so efficiently as to protect him from the formation of undesirable habits or cure him if they are already fastened upon him, to control and modify his instincts, to build up his courage and his strength of character, to overcome excess of suggestibility, to abolish those direful attendents, fear and worry, to train the attention, memory, will, reasoning power, to understand and bring under control impulses and obsessions.

In 1932 Erdman Harris (*Twenty-one*) summarized the situation that was to last until the middle of the century: "The greatest thing that anyone can give to the world is a disciplined personality." And this disciplined personality was in order to bring achievement and success in the business world. Hence the majority of these books were directed towards men. Women were given lessons in "patient, self-reliance, obedience...the making of the ideal women."

Books offered to help the individual "shape and control" his journal throught life, advising on how to "chart your course, shape your personality, gain success and security." Positive thinking was utilized as a means to enable the reader to achieve future success. External goal attainment remained throughout these books a primary concern, although happiness as an end in itself makes tentative headway.

In contrast to this literature, the secularized self-help books of this decade show a decided emphasis away from deferred gratification and long-term planning. Instead, the contemporary writers are concerned with the immediacy of the situation. All the writers analyzed consider the "here and now" to be of primary importance. "Only by existing

purely in the present will I find truth" declares Sheehan. The "past" is concretized in the form of parents who have repressed the natural spontaneity and assertiveness of the child.[11] Liberation from traditional authority constructs and externally determined roles and self-images becomes the goal.

Future-oriented external goals are not seen as important, rather the most important thing in life is self-fulfillment and self-gratification, goals which allude to the immediacy of attainment. Happiness is still seen to be the important goal, but happiness is now defined as "anything you want it to be," not an externally defined success criteria. Success and money are not primary goals in themselves but will be a "natural outcome" of being successful with yourself. The value of money, however, is not seen as security as implied in the early literature, but as being useful in buying freedom from external constraints. Quite obviously the benefits of a "welfare state" has reduced the concern with security.

Whereas the previous authors saw it necessary to shape one's character toward an ideal of perfection, the present goal of self-fulfillment involves only understanding, not perfection. An individual is judged to be perfect just they way she or he is. Change is valued without an idealized conception of direction: "a desire to be all that you choose to at this moment."

*The "ideal" personality.*

It is only in this decade of self-help manuals that one "ideal" personality typology could be theoretically applied to both sexes. It has already been noted that the previous success literature was not generally directed toward women. Nevertheless, the concepts of "mental hygiene" and "mental efficiency" - having a disciplined personality - were also necessary requirements for managing a household. For women, however, the stress was rather consistently on patience and "forgetting self in service to others."

During the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, when the United States was undergoing rapid economic expansion, the careers and personalities of successful businessmen were consistantly celebrated by writers of self-help books. Manhood was characterized by vitality, energy, concentration, skill in combining numerous forces for an end, and great foresight into the consequences of social events. Self-help, thrift, character and duty were important attributes for success. Weaknesses in character were responsible for failure, in the same way that strengths in character were responsible for success. Gradually, however, these character strengths began to undergo subtle transformations. As the bureaucratization of industry made it increasingly difficult to see the relevance of traits which had been fashioned after the independent entrepreneur who had had to prove himself in competing with others in an impersonal market, the "striving ambition" tendencies were muted into "taking the initiative." [12]

Advancement in business was now dependent on promotion, which involved more personal interaction to become successful. Self-help literature began to stress co-operation, determination and loyalty. In the thirties Alfred Adler replaced Freud in popular psychology. In his *What Life Should Mean to You* (1931), Adler stressed that failure is not finding or accepting the right meanings of life: fellow-feeling, social interest and co-operation. Adler was also the "discoverer" of the inferiority complex, wherein he revealed the "beginnings and growth of anti-social feelings and unwillingness to co-operate." A book entitled *Strategy in Handling People* (John Morgan and Ewing Webb) made its appearance around the same time. In 1933 J.C. Roberts (*Personal Achievement, Principles and Methods*) offered ten principals of personal achievement: mental attitude, investigation, direction, planning, adequate knowledge, mental capacity, economy of time and effort, application, the will to win, and personal salesmanship.

Success was becoming systematized, and so was the successful personality. The manager or executive was being transformed from a person whose success made his superiority self-evident into one whose success was due to managerial abilities which required analysis and specialized training, and, of course, the skills of how to get along with people. As Reinhard Bendix points out:

> ...the conception of "the manager" which emerged during the 1920's was that of a man who did his work extremely well, but "half" of whose work consisted in the skillful handling of others. Fairness and enthusiasm were qualities of special importance in interpersonal relations, and other terms such as intelligence and ability were used increasingly to refer to human organization rather than to work performance. 13

Much of the stress on co-operation was an attempt on the part of industrial efficiency experts to avoid worker/management clashes and strikes.

Dales Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* was the popularized version of *Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business* (1926) which was used as the "official text" of many large organizations to train their businessmen in effective leadership:

> This ideology of "personality salesmanship" appeared to put within reach of the average person the means by which to climb the ladder to success; yet its widespread public acceptance implied a prior disallusion with the more old-fashioned methods of achieving success such as "industry, arrangement, calculation, prudence, punctuality, and perseverance." The bureaucratization of economic enterprises had obviously increased the number of steps from the bottom to the top at the same time that it had made the Puritan virtues more or less obsolete. 14

As Bendix points out, by elaborating upon the skills of "personality salesmanship," Carnegie helped to replace the independent entrepreneurs who would achieve success in the competitive struggle with the image of a man whose success depended upon the art of "winning friends and influencing people" in a career consisting of promotions from lower to higher positions. It becomes apparent that the "power of personality" was not a technique needed or sought for in the industrial worker. Indeed, by mid-century, the creed of the "individual enterprise" had become by and large a working class preoccupation. People in the middle class aspired to become professionals and, as a second choice, upper-while-collar workers.[15]

What has been described, of course, is the transition from entrepreneur to "organization man," the personality type depicted by

William H. Whyte as one who espouses the "social ethic" - the belief that personal and corporate success are synonymous, and that personal fulfillment results from the collaborative, cooperative efforts of a team of workers. Whyte described the organization man as one committed to guiding his entire personal and family life by bureaucratic precepts, his value system derived entirely from a secular deity - the corporate enterprise.[16]

David Riesman also incorporated this character transition into his total characterization of the "other-directed" personality,[17] and Erich Fromm identified it as a "marketing-orientation" in the personality of modern man, man considering himself a commodity to be "sold" to others.[18] It should be pointed out that all three descriptions were fairly well-known to the middle class reader. *The Organization Man* was on the best seller list for at least six months in 1957, and *The Lonely Crowd* was also popularized. Indeed, Riesman paves the way for what is to follow. *The Lonely Crowd* concludes:

> If the other-directed people should discover how much needless work they do, discover that their own thoughts and their own lives are quite as interesting as other people's, that, indeed, they no more assuage their loneliness in a crowd of peers than one can assuage one's thirst by drinking sea water, then we might expect them to become more attentive to their own feelings and aspirations. 19

One's "own feelings and aspirations" have become in this decade the central focus of self-help. The emphasis is on commitment to oneself, a desire to be all that one chooses, and "you don't need their approval" becomes one of the main tenets. Self-sufficiency and autonomy are valued,

as are self-acceptance, self-esteem, being in control, and being responsible for one's own behavior.

In describing the nature of the "ideal" character, the current authors offer a mixture of the Rousseauian "noble savage," an individual born free and creative, unhindered by society, who must mature into a Kantian individual, one who ceases being a mere product and crosspoint of external forces and becomes a being that develops out of his own ego. Only then can humans be responsible.

A "responsible" person, for example, does not need dependency relationships, they become "irrational" choices. Whereas in the fifties Norman Vincent Peale was advocating "be glad people want and need you," and was suggesting techniques for developing love of others in place of self-love, the contemporary books are showing the folly of commitment to others:

> One must find a source of inner stability independent of institutions and relationships that are subject to change. Having a solid base separate from the life around him, one becomes free to adapt to circumstances without threatening his integrity. (Bloomfield:187)

For most of the current authors, the rejection of the past is a rational act, relying on tradition for present day living is irrational. Similarly, committing oneself to roles, people, to anything other than the self is also irrational. The tenuousness of relationships today is certainly reflected in this concern, but also is the recognition that there is little else to turn to except the self. Durkheim predicted many years ago that the family would gradually lose it consolidating

tendencies. He suggested then it might be up to professional groups to develop a moral continuity and to integrate the individual into the community.[20] For some, it seemed as though the professionals, with their code of ethics, and the organization men, with their commitment to the company, were a privileged group in modern society whose labor was not alienated and whose individuals were not anomic. The majority of current self-help books, however, do not talk about work as a viable alternative.

One of the other important character traits that has become emphasized in the current literature is flexibility. One must not only be open to change, one must actively seek it: "We must desire to change once we have understood ourselves. That is morality," says Harris. The search for security that was evident in the early success books has radically changed:

> Security means knowing what is going to happen. Security means no excitement, no risks, no challenge. Security means no growth and no growth means death. Besides security is a myth. You are your only security - you can be a rock of self-esteem. (Dyer:132)

To these authors, the future is seen as very threatening to the individual who is not flexible and adaptable. As well, the future can be ignored because once one masters the "ideal" qualities, one will be able to handle any difficulty or unforeseen circumstance with relative ease.

Robert Jay Lifton foresaw the emergence of what he terms the "protean man," the description of which closely resembles the "ideal" type typified in the current self-help literature. Protean man refers

to a new style of self-process which Lifton sees as emerging everywhere and which is characterized by an interminable series of experiments and explorations, each of which may be readily abandoned in favor of still new psychological quests:

> The pattern in many ways resembles what Erik Erikson has called "identity diffusion" or "identity confusion," and the impaired psychological functioning which those terms suggest can be very much present. But I would stress that the protean style is by no means pathological as such, and in fact, may well be one of the functional patterns of our day. It extends to all areas of human experience -- to political as well as sexual behavior, to the holding and promulgating of ideas and to the general organization of lives. 21

Lifton locates the creation of protean man in the "historical (or psychohistorical) dislocation," that is, the break in the sense of connection with cultural tradition (similar to Peter Berger's analysis in *The Homeless Mind*[22]), and in the "flooding of imagery" produced by the extraordinary flow of post-modern cultural influences over mass communication networks which permit the individual to be touched by everything. Similar to the foregoing analysis, Lifton surmises that a major theme of contemporary life is the equation of nurturance with a threat to autonomy:

> The increased dependency needs resulting from the breakdown of traditional institutions lead protean man to seek out replacements wherever he can find them. The large organization (government, business, academic, etc.) to which he turns, and which contemporary society more and more holds out as a substitute for traditional institutions, present an ambivalent threat to his autonomy in one way; and the intense individual relationships in which he seeks to anchor himself in another. 23

The current self-help literature seeks to anchor the individual in her/himself. Philip Rieff foresaw this development in *The Triumph of The Therapeutic*, wherein he argues that a new moral order is making its appearance:

> ...from the classical repressive-sublimative organization of motive, our culture has veered toward an expressive-impulsive organization. The way in which the inherited culture was structured by internalized love and externalized hatred describes the ambivalence in its therapies of commitment. Opposing commitments depend upon the same dual therapeutic modes.
>
> Paralleling those commitments that are the symbolic structure of community is the social structure. No therapy before the analytic has produced salvations or cures except through a social system penetrated by organizational commitments - these commitments legitimizing the order of vocation and personal relations from which the sense of community is derived. We are privileged to be participant observers of another great experiment by Western humanity upon itself: an attempt to build upon the obsolescence of both love and hatred as organizing modes of personality. 24

Rieff points out the fact that Freud's doctrine was anti-communal and could be used as a theoretical basis for elaborating a strategy of self-realization for the therapeutic:

> Americans, in particular, have managed to use the Freudian doctrine in ways more remissive than he intended, as a counter-authority against any fresh access of communal purpose. 25

The nature of activity in America has always rested on the assumption of the power of individual will.

*The power of positive thinking.*

Self-help books have been formulated to assist the individual in preserving control in the face of ever changing situations. It is because of this preserving function that such literature tends to have a conservative bias. The Horatio Alger stories, for example, showed the reader how success was available within the system; books on etiquette, dress, body language, and personality show the reader how to manipulate and bring the system under one's own control.

Samuel Klausner provided a study on how our intellectual predecessors formulated the question of self-control, suggesting that the method of control advocated reflects an attitude toward personal and social change.[26] Self-control premises a conscious grasping and directing of the self: the subject ("I") directing its object ("me"). Klausner observed that the self-control literature relates consciousness and its world of objects in three ways:

1. The external world, including self, is a creature of consciousness. For example, Kant and Hegel gave priority to an innate power which constructs the world, including the self, for the individual. A popular example would be mind-cure movements.

2. Consciousness and its primary object, the self, are both products of the external world; they are created through the impact of the world, in the form of experience, on the organism. Klausner gives Freud and Mead as an example of interpretations of control which involve selecting the right environment.

3. Consciousness is an emergent from the interaction between self and the world and involves recognizing the conflict between the two. Examples are Marx, Darwin and Tillich.

Literature, therefore, that advocates selecting the right environment, or harmony with the environment, tends to be associated with adaptation and adjustment to the present reality of the self. Efforts advocated toward conquest and transcendence of the self are allied with change, i.e. through these efforts the self emerges as something other than what it was before or assumes a new relation with its environment.

The early popular self-help literature, in its "active ascetic Protestant" form, involved mastery of self to enable environmental mastery. Hence Klausner found that this literature was particularly concerned with drive (need) control, suggesting that uncontrolled drives would interfere with the accomplishment of higher tasks. On the other hand, the personality, psychoanalytic and social psychological literature was concerned with "affects" or emotions. The self-help literature aimed for mastery of the self as a stepping stone to mastery of the environment - the control of the self would eventuate in shaping the world to the will of man. The image, however, in the stress, psychoanalytic and hypnosis literature is of man hoping to cope and survive while being almost overwhelmed by his environment.

Dornbusch's analysis of self-help books written in the forties and fifties, utilizing Klausner's model, showed a stress on the control

of emotions rather than drive control, and the most common method of self-control to be "positive thinking."[27] Imagining the end result will move events in the desired direction, denying the negative by affirming the positive - Dornbusch suggests that these are elements peculiarly consonant with American values of optimism and progress. Positive thinking alone was seldom employed, but the other categories of method were closely related to emphasis of contemporary American values:

> Engaging the threat is analogous to activism, positive-thinking to optimism, and cognitive mediation and control of subconscious represent a new attention to psychological and psychiatric conceptions of internal dynamics. Concern with the social environment, despite the efforts of social psychologists and sociologists, has not yet affected the naive psychology of the layman. 28

In fact, this "naive psychology of the layman" did not begin or end with the likes of Norman Vincent Peale. Reinhard Bendix points out the existence of a "New Thought" movement at the turn of the century which rose to account for "the problem of success." Success was not a problem to those who had made it, i.e. the business tycoons, or to the workers who, with the popularization of Social Darwinism by Herbert Spencer, were judged incapable of having any of the qualities of the "fittest." For those in between, however, the fashionable answer was that "the problem of success comes back now as it always has come to individual qualities," a theme that originated in the Puritan credo and whose secularization reached its climax in the "New Thought" movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The movement was inspired by the belief that certain thoughts in themselves were sufficient

to lead to wealth and success:

> The "New Thought" movement had its greatest popularity in the United States from 1895 to 1915. It did not lack religious overtones, for it deified the individual, made his mental capacities an emanation of God, and conceived of the universe as a manifestation of a vague, spiritualistic and omnipresent essence. Yet in a thriving business civilization which celebrated the businessman as hero, the movement rapidly gained a large following by virtue of a secular belief in "mental power." With their banishment of the devil and of luck from the roster of forces governing human life, the spokesmen of this movement fused their belief in "mind is power" with the standard interpretation of economic success as the outcome of energy, ambition, determination, perseverance, patience, prudence, and the rest. "Business success is due to certain qualities of mind," declared one of them. "Anything is yours if you only want it hard enough. Just think of that. Anything! Try it. Try it in earnest and you will succeed. It is the operation of a mighty law." 29

Hence the profusion of books on will power: Orison Swett Marden's *Every Man a King; Or, Might in Mind-Mastery* (1906), *He Can Who Thinks He Can* (1908), *Architects of Fate, The Secret of Achievement, The Victorious Attitude,* and at least a dozen other similar titles had, by 1925, sold some three million copies. And, of course, Emile Coué's *Self-Mastery Through Conscious Auto-Suggestion,* a best seller in 1923, popularized this technique for use in everyday life, as did Peale in the forties and fifies. Two of these books, Maxwell Maltz's *Five Minutes to Happiness,* and Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich,* greatly influenced Werner Erhard, the founder of *est* (who really did grow rich).[30] William James was also an advocate of positive thinking, inasmuch as thought becomes the servant of will.

The heavy technological influence is apparent, and throughout the century self-help writers compare the workings of man to a machine.

In 1933 Walter Pitkin applies the "technique of the power plant, the technique of the transmission lines and the technique of the terminal workshops" to suggestions for making the most of human energy. In 1937 Dick Carlson advises that a powerful personality can be built up through systematic programming. Maxwell Maltz was, in fact, the founder of Psycho-Cybernetics. Cybernetics began as the science of control and communication in animals and machines.

The rationale of positive thinking emerges along with the conception of science as a method and a world view, and ideology which Jürgen Habermas has described as the emerging technocratic consciousness:

> It is a singular achievement of this ideology to detach society's self-understanding from the frame of reference of communicative action and from the concepts of symbolic interaction and replace it with a scientific model. Accordingly the culturally defined self-understanding of a social life-world is replaced by the self-reification of men under categories of purposive-rational action and adaptive behavior. 31

Magali Larson points to the connection between the rise of this new ideology and bureaucracy: the scientific authority of "experts" merely justified new forms of legitimation of power.[32]

William Bartley points out that Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, two of the founders of the human potential movement, are basically the intellectual counterparts of the positive thinking populists.[33] Both of these psychologists were strongly influenced by Gestalt psychology, which was, in its turn, shaped by the ideas of Immanuel Kant, wherein, as Georg Simmel points out, individualism found its "highest intellectual expression."[34] Simmel also argues that Kantian idealism - the notion

that one can be responsible only when one is rooted in absolute freedom, when one ceases to be a mere product and crosspoint of external forces and becomes a being that develops out of one's own ego - is the metaphysical counterpart of laissez-faire capitalism.

Hence, not surprisingly, the roots of both the human potential movement and the self-help literature can be traced to a common source. The American success literature found its mentor in Samuel Smiles, the Englishman who formulated the new creed of the entrepreneurial class: that the successful man of business had worked hard and had done well, and that the means by which he had become successful were within reach of everyone.[35] One of the main tenets of the human potential movement is that self-fulfillment is possible for everyone.

At first, the ideas of Maslow and Rogers were resisted by the American intellectual community, who argued that the notion of "human potential" was physically and psychologically impossible, and perhaps even a "meaningless notion."[36] The strongest ally of the movement was the American business community, as suggested in the first chapter. The link between the changing structure of work for the American middle class and the rise of the human potential movement cannot be ignored.

The contemporary self-help literature places, in perhaps a more subtle way, the same stress on "positive thinking" and self-control. In contrast to the emotional spontaneity heralded by the counterculture in the sixties, the emphasis is on controlling and choosing emotions:

> "Spontaneity" usually means grabbing the first thing that floats to mind and taking it as if it were a message from our depths. But there's a lot of pollution in those depths. People say they want to "let go." What they really need to do is to take hold. Only when you're really in charge of yourself can you afford to let go, to be spontaneous and expect good to come of it. (Newman:85)

The stress on controlling emotions is not the "deferred gratification" technique of laissez-faire man, but rather control is utilized to enable the reader to make better emotional choices, redolent of man the consumer:

> Personal freedom is choosing your emotions and learning to think differently. ...Destroy the thought that causes unhappiness, not the experience itself - there is no external reality. ...Some people choose to go insane rather than take control. ...You are free to choose happiness and unhappiness. ...Anger does not need to be expressed - it is a choice and can be controlled - not having any anger at all is better than expressing it. (Dyer:27)

It is assumed that one has freedom. It is also a vote for rational man: controlling emotions puts a stop to other people manipulating one through emotional appeal, because some emotions are simply traditional and/or irrational responses that can be changed at will:

> You have to realize that no one can manipulate your emotions or behavior if you do not allow it to happen. (Smith:47)

In the current literature, learning the techniques involved in controlling the external world generally involves improving communication, whether by improving one's own "natural" assertiveness, or by being aware of the "games people play," or by being more aware of the games one plays with oneself; or, as a parent, by learning techniques of cooperation in lieu of power. The three "self-made men," however, openly declare that control of the external world is a game of power. Korda wants to con-

vince the reader "that the world you live in is a challenge and a game, and that a sense of power - your power - is at the core of it. Learn how to use the world, instead of being used by it."

These authors suggest ways of manipulating the environment or of selecting appropriate environments in order to maintain control. Instead of attempting to change society, one can simply take another job, choose another mate, avoid paying taxes by firing one's employees and contracting the work out. There is no recognition that such choices may not be available to all. According to the authors, everyone and anyone can change one's responses to events and/or learn how to manipulate the system. At the same time, one is advised not to worry about what one cannot change. Change can only occur at the level of individuals; the authors deny the validity of group action because it subjugates individuality. Besides,

> ...the person with the problem has the responsibility to solve it himself. Your own actions may even have been directly or indirectly the cause of their problems. Nevertheless, other people have the ultimate responsibility to solve their own problems, no matter who or what the cause may be. (Smith:50)

Hence self-control to enable mastery of the environment has become self-control to enable mastery of decision-making. In a consumer-oriented society decisions at every level are problematic, and the environment itself tends to become irrelevant. Schneider and Dornbusch also found that one highly characteristic trait of the religious literature was that:

> Religious faith eases the pain of decision-making: God will provide the right decision. The literature emphatically and consistently stress "power to live by." Only somewhat less important are success (or successful living or mastery of the art of life) and emotional security. 37

The trend toward the utilization of functional rationality is also apparent in the religious literature: God or religion is used to achieve earthly desires. The current books further this "rational pursuit of non-rational goals," by pursuing only self-happiness. Decision-making is eased considerably by the rational investigation into the benefits for onself. Perhaps, then, it is true that:

> Three character ideals have successively dominated Western civilization: first, the ideal of the political man, formed and handed down to us from classical antiquity; second, the ideal of the religious man, formed and handed down to us from Judaism through Christianity, and dominant in the civilization of authority that preceded the Enlightenment; third the ideal of the economic man, the very model of our liberal civilization, formed and handed down to us in the Enlightenment. This last has turned out to be a transitional type, with the shortest life-expectancy of all; out of his tenure has emerged the psychological man of the twentieth century, a child not of nature but of technology. He is not the pagan ideal, political man, for he is not committed to the public life. He is most unlike the religious man. We will recognize in the case history of psychological man the nervous habits of his father, economic man: he is anti-heroic, shrewd, studying unprofitable commitments as the sins most to be avoided. From this immediate ancestor, psychological man has constituted his own careful economy of the inner life. 38

*From economic individualism to moral individualism.*

The early self-help literature tended to equate morality with health, wealth and mental hygiene ("cleaning up the mind"). Intimately connected with gratification deferral, one was counselled to invest in

God, the economy, and relationships: "virtue and unselfishness pay a present dividend of happiness," said the Rev. Dr. T.R. Slicer in 1907 (*The Way to Happiness*). Moralists were telling people to "live for others." Social adjustment, getting along with others, reshaping one's personality to fit the social mould, forgetting one's own problems by doing service to others - the "ideal" good was altruism.

Dale Carnegie made functional use of this "other-directed" tendency when he showed how it was possible to build up the ego of others in order to further one's own self-interest: smile and be friendly, do not argue or find fault, get the other person's point of view, encourage and praise him, let him talk all he want to and persuade him that all the good ideas are his, never tell him he's wrong, but be quick to admit self wrong. (*How to Win Friends and Influence People*, 1937) And in the fifties, Norman Vincent Peale is advising "how to get people to like you," using the same method as Carnegie:

> Spend the rest of your life perfecting your great capacities for friendliness, for personal relations are vitally important to successful living... If I elevate your self-respect and contribute to your feeling of personal worth, I am showing high esteem for your ego. I have helped you to be your best self and therefore you appreciate what I have done. You are grateful to me. You like me for it.

With the exception of the *Parent Effectiveness Training* manual, all the contemporary books show a definite shift away from building up the ego of others. They are singularly involved in showing the reader how to build up his or her own ego:

> When we compliment ourselves, the glow stays with us. It is still good to hear it from others, but it doesn't matter so much if we have already heard it from ourselves. (Neuman:28)

The books stress an almost total independence of others. Whereas the previous literature contained the notion of investing in others in order to receive dividends for the self, the current literature stresses the burden of such interdependency relationships. The child-raising manual advocates the importance of building the child's ego in order to raise "a strong separate person."

All the contemporary literature blames previous notions of child-rearing for raising a nation of egoless, dependent individuals, and one of the stated functions is to destroy the myths and traps of the previous morality. The main focus is that one should never let the world be defined externally:

> Let it all come from within you. Don't try to identify with an ideal person, a label, or a code that others think is best for you. They aren't you; they can't make your decisions for you. (Browne:22)

And, also:

> No one can decide for you what is moral. So no matter what it may be, you are living by a personal morality. (Browne:43)
>
> You are free when you accept the responsibility for your choices. And when you choose your own best interests. (Newman:37)

The contemporary authors judge morality as a "very personal and private matter," and "no other living person has the right to decide what is moral (right or wrong) for you." This author further suggests:

> ...that you make a prompt and thorough effort to eliminate from your life all individuals who claim - by words or actions, directly or by inference, to possess to claim such a right. You should concern yourself only with whether looking out for Number One is moral from your own rational, aware viewpoint... so long as you do not forcibly interfere with the rights of others. (Ringer:20)

These authors make no attempt to ascertain where one's "rational, aware viewpoint" is coming from.[40] Because they see socialization patterns in negative terms, they are silent on how the external world is a necessary and vital aspect of becoming a human being. They tend to view the individual as capable of living in a vacuum.

This notion of extreme individualism was also identified by Schneider and Dornbusch in their analysis of popular religious books:

> In this literature, then, we can say with very minor qualifications that basic economic, political, and cultural forms are <u>not</u> invoked as having a bearing upon the fortunes of the "self," either in themselves or in combination with other agencies. In effect, the world of society has no influence upon the individual and is not to be reckoned as important in any sense in the question of his religious destiny. 41

This religious destiny has turned from the quest for personal salvation to the quest for personal fulfillment. Happiness is equated with the freedom to be and do whatever one wants, as long as one does not infringe on the freedom of others to do the same. Morality has been clearly relativized. There is no absolute "right" or "wrong" way to behave:

> The child collecting sea-shells is not doing something more right or wrong than the President of General Motors making a major corporate decision. (Dyer:154)

The goal is to "assess oneself objectively, to make emotional choices freely, and to realize one's potential more fully." (Newman) With regard to relationships, the self must come first, for one must be in control of oneself before one can deal effectively with others. Self-denial, far from being seen as a personal investment, is regarded as unhealthy and unnecessary, or at best one's own choice as long as it is done out of self-regard, not self-hatred. "Sacrifice," says Ringer, "is a perversion of the law of Nature." Benevolence is regarded as a trap set by others, and obligations are generally seen to be enslaving.

> Keep in mind that you have no responsibility to make others happy. Others make themselves happy. ...The business of effective living and parenting is independence. (Dyer:99)

Hence, although there has been a gradual trend toward moral hedonism throughout this century, the self-help books written in this decade are the first to explicitly condemn the morality of ultruism, and give positive recognition to the self as coming before others. A notion of the "good" is given a relative and personalized/individualized stance which stresses a responsibility for one's own actions. Rather than a sense of social responsibility contributing to social cohesiveness, there is the perception that the key to maintaining social relationships lies in improving communication. In this way, as Habermas has pointed out, some of the traditional forms of legitimation have been called into question.[42]

Initially the legitimating authority was science and technology, but in the current literature it becomes apparent that these ideologies are losing ground. Although the metaphors and methodology are still in

use when applied subjectively, their external validity, that is, the belief in progress, is non-existent. In its place, life has become analogous to a "game." Transactional analysis, exemplified by Eric Berne's *Games People Play*, describes how interpersonal transactions can be conceived of as games. Assertiveness training can be seen as a "one-upmanship" game plan. The three "self-made men" describe the need to be "master players" in the game of life: "all life is a game of power," but the winning and losing are internal, and "only we can know whether or not we've won our game."

The books insist they are giving forth ways in which we can all become winners in the game of life. The *Parent Effectiveness Training* manual shows how the "win-lose" approach toward parent/child relationships is not beneficial, and describes a "no-lose" method for resolving conflicts. In the personal/private realm, therefore, the object is to expose "games" and then not play them any more. New rules for relating must be established. In the public realm, however, games are permitted:

> In our age work is a less absorbing experience. ...The power game makes work a board on which the game is played, a fascinating world of infinite possibilities. (Korda)

Expressing life as a game parallels the assertion that meaning systems and rules are man-made and therefore subject to change - a part of an overall demystification process. The expression is also consistent with the findings in the analysis of sex manuals, wherein the authors observed that:

> The emergent, spontaneous quality of human sexual interaction is lost in the linear exposition of the interesting sexual game. 43

The authors of the sex manual analysis also suggest that "unlike the era when persons had to justify their play as work, we now seem to be entering an age where work itself has to be justified as play." Hence, they conclude that many people, recognizing the arbitrary nature of a society primarily concerned with style, have come to search for "reality" or an "absolute" within their own personal life space.

The "game" analogy is consistent with the intellectual mode. As Albritton argues:

> One of the most popular concepts in recent liberal-bourgeois thought is the concept 'game.' The game analogy is not new, but its widespread currency amongst diverse intellectual disciplines in recent years is noteworthy. Analogies have been made between social systems and games. The game analogy has been used to further the study of rational decision-making. Concepts such as 'justice,' 'obligation,' 'law,' and 'social contract' have been explicated using the game analogy. Game theory has been used in the study of conflict and political strategy. In the philosophy of language the analogy between a language and a game has generated new thinking on the nature of language. 44

Albritton submits that the game analogy is an attempt to solve issues created by the bourgeois thinkers' response to the problems of individualism, that is, the basic problem of apparent neutral connections with the external world. How can individuals form connections with other individuals that will bring them together into a mutually beneficial society?

> Can a political order be constructed on the basis of self-interest? What sort of ties can bind possessive individuals into a political society? The basic problem of liberal political theory is obligation. The game analogy is very suggestive of solutions to this problem. The problem is how to get individuals to move from a state of perfect freedom

> to a state where their interactions are ordered by rules. Just as the game is defined by man-made rules and the play is governed by rules, so is a political society. The rules are not externally imposed constraints on freedom, but self-imposed rules that are mutually agreed on and are mutually beneficial in the sense that they co-ordinate and make possible the playing of the game. The game analogy appears as a god-send solution to the libertarian dream of well-ordered anarchy. 45

In this light, one can surmise that the changeover from laissez-faire to monopoly capitalism involved establishing new rules. Larson points out how "scientific management" became one of the new game plans:

> For a time, the more simplistic and moralistic versions of the gospel of efficiency captured the popular imagination. In the early part of the twentieth century, the language of efficiency appeared to unify the various reform campaigns into a "reform syncretism" centered on the new concept of the state: "Conservation, scientific management, and Americanization expressed cognate sentiments...the leaders of all three suggested measures which involved a rejection of laissez-faire and the acceptance of social guidance and control.
>
> The impact of the ideology of efficiency was profound. The most general and abstract dimension which it incorporates is the appeal to science - or, broadly speaking, to rational and systematized knowledge: science appears not only as the chief instrument for mastery and control over the physical and even the social environment, but also as the ultimate legitimation for practical choices and everyday courses of actions. 46

Eventually, however, for the workers, unions arose, if not to question the laws of science, at least to question those aspects of management to which the laws did not as yet apply. The growing numbers of middle class workers, however, were, as it has been pointed out earlier, *convinced that their labour was freely chosen and therefore the rules self-imposed.* This concept exists to the present, although the actuality of alternative rules (increased cultural contact as well

as education diminishes the possibility that one set of rules exists by benefit of "truth" rather than simply power) provide the impetus for the self-help authors to point out that if one does not like the game, one can go play some other one. The rules are neither just or unjust, they are simply the rules that define that particular game. But the problem with games, of course, is that someone does win them, regardless of the means. The contemporary self-help books attempt to relieve this problem by suggesting that everyone can simply invent their own rules (morality) and play solitaire.

*Summary of themes and trends.*

Although the following is by no means an exhaustive summary, it points out some of the significant elements in the literature.

1. *Constant elements.*

"Inspirational" self-help literature has concentrated on assisting the reader to live within the world as it is. The emphasis has been on changing the individual, not society. The books are therefore mainly concerned with self-control, self-mastery, and self-improvement, in order to assist the individual to gain control of the immediate environment and live "successfully." Successful living has, for the most part, been paralleled with happiness, and the books take it for granted that happiness can be expected by all.

The literature consistently sees humans as inherently good, and possessors of free will. Unsuccessful living, and the resultant feelings of stress, anxiety and worry, are outcomes of irrational decision-making. The literature therefore stresses rational decision-making but relies on a "leap of faith" as the basic ingredient.

The books have tended to define human beings as remarkably unaffected by insitutional realities in a world where one's destiny is largely remote from social, political or economic circumstance. Individualism has always been stressed, as has "positive thinking."

2. *Variable elements.*

The definition of success has, over the years, changed from "other-worldly" aspirations to more worldly concerns. Most recently, the notion of success has taken on almost purely subjective attributes, supposedly lacking in external definitions. Likewise, the early books viewed progress in terms of "getting ahead" in the world, which involved hard work and deferred gratification. Gradually hard work gave way to improving one's personality in order to get people to like you. The contemporary literature equates progress solely in terms of "inner growth" at the same time insisting that one is "all right just the way one is."

Until recently, relationships have been viewed as good investments. The contemporary literature shows a decided emphasis on freeing the individual from "oppressive" relationships. There is a notable lack

of emphasis on needing others, the stress is on independence from others. In a sense, the 'other' has become just one more consumer commodity - if one is disappointed with the performance (as with the game), then one switches to another product.

Whereas the mid-century literature stressed building up the ego of others, the contemporary literature insists on an autonomous ego: one should build up one's own ego, others can tend to their own.

External rules, customs, tradition, role-playing, any type of assumed power authority, is now denied any validity. Parents are shown how to reflect the thoughts of the child rather than act as an authority figure. In this way the child is left to her or his own "natural" problem-solving abilities. In a sense this represents the decline of the superego, or at least a change in the stability of the superego, for morality can no longer assume to be taken-for-granted rules of behavior. Rather, morality is defined as a matter of personal judgement and hence assumes a highly relative status.

Although Americans have never had much use for the past, the future was always held in esteem. Early self-help books encouraged the reader to learn methods of self-control in order to plan for the future. The current literature is concerned with the present. Self-fulfillment and self-gratification take the place of external goals. The needs of the self must be taken care of before relationships with others can be "healthy."

The metaphors of technical control have been consistently applied as a means to self-manipulation. Recently the "game analogy" has made its appearance, putting an intensified emphasis on the fact that one must become responsible for one's own game (life) plan. A protean personality is regarded as the best player. The rock of Gibraltar has given way to elusive fluidity. The new self-made person is a self-actualized individual, confronting a self and world where nothing final has happened yet, where all is still possible, the future still a screen on which infinite potentials are projected.

*Notes to Chapter IV:*

[1] Raymond Williams makes this point with reference to the words industry, democracy, class, art and culture in *Culture and Society*, Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1971.

[2] See, for example, Robert Nisbet, *Social Change and History, Aspects of the Western Theory of Development*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

[3] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958 ed.

[4] George P. Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, Copp Clark Publishing, 1966, 83.

[5] *Ibid.*, 84.

[6] Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," in *Between Labor and Capital*, edited by Pat Walker, Boston: South End Press, 1979, 5-48.

[7] Cf. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, Knopf, 1955, as quoted in Ehrenreich, *op. cit.*, 18-19.

[8] Bertram Gross, *The Managing Organizations*, London, 1964, as quoted in Ehrenreich, 21.

[9] Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1976, 55.

[10] Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

[11] Norman Vincent Peale, for example, allows for other possibilities: "Such are some of the sources of the inferiority complex which erect power barriers in our personalities. It is some emotional violence done to us in childhood, or to consequences of certain circumstances or something we did to ourselves. The malady arises out of the misty past in the dim recesses of our personalities." *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965, 17.

[12] Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

[13] *Ibid.*, 301.

[14] *Ibid.*, 303.

[15]A study by Reinhard Bendix and S.M. Lipset as reported in Daniel Bell, "Work and Its Discontents," in *The End of Ideology*, New York: The Free Press, 1962, 227-274. Bell gives no reference.

[16]W.H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956.

[17]David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.

[18]Eric Fromm, *Man for Himself*, New York: Holt, 1947.

[19]Riesman, 373.

[20]Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, New York: The Free Press, 1964 ed.

[21]Robert Jay Lifton, "Protean Man," *Partisan Review*, Winter 1968, XXXV:1, 13-27, 17.

[22]Peter Berger, *The Homeless Mind*, New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

[23]Lifton, 24.

[24]Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1968, 245-6.

[25]*Ibid.*, 238.

[26]Samuel Z. Klausner, "A Collocation of Concepts of Self-Control," in *The Quest for Self-Control*, edited by Samuel Klausner, New York: The Free Press, 1973.

[27]Sanford Dornbusch, "Popular Psychology: A Content Analysis of Contemporary Inspirational Nonreligious Books," in *A Quest for Self-Control, op. cit.*, 126-140.

[28]*Ibid.*, 131.

[29]Bendix, 260; quotation from Atkinson, *Thought Force in Business*, 1901.

[30]William Warren Bartley, *Werner Erhard. The transformation of a man: The founding of est*, New York: C.N. Potter, Inc., 1978.

[31]Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, London: Heinemann, 1971, 105-6.

[32]Larson.

[33]Bartley.

[34]Georg Simmel, "Individual and Society in Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century Views of Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translated and edited by Kurt H. Wolff, New York: The Free Press, 1964, 58-78.

[35]Bendix, 109.

[36]Bartley.

[37]Louis Schneider and Sanford Dornbusch, *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 17.

[38]Philip Rieff, *Freud, The Mind of the Moralist*, New York: The Viking Press, 1959.

[39]Peale, 198.

[40]This, of course, is a major difference between a sociological perspective and that of the human potential advocates, who believe in a "true" self, which is sometimes described as what remains after the social selves have been peeled away, or as a universal context in which social selves and ego processes occur, rather than an isolated thing in itself.

[41]Schneider and Dornbusch, 23.

[42]Habermas.

[43]Dennis Brissett and Lionel Lewis, "The Big Toe, Armpits, and Natural Perfume: Notes on the Production of Sexual Ecstasy," *Transaction*, January/February 1979, 63-72. Note that their original study depicted sex as work.

[44]Robert Albritton, "The Game Analogy and Bourgeois Ideology," *Social Praxis*, 1975, 3, 231.

[45]*Ibid.*, 237.

[46]Larson, 141.

Chapter V

*The critics and the crisis.*

> The culture of the western world has for some time been under diagnosis as though it were a patient sick with an unknown disease. The doctors are agreed only on this : the illness is acute. They differ on when it began, and how long the patient may be expected to live; they differ on how radical the cure must be. But, for a long time, no one has been very happy with it.
> (William Earle, "Notes on the Death of Culture," 1958)

The foregoing has taken note of the "cultural" character of self-help literature itself, wherein writers of the literature draw upon earlier writers of the literature. It has also, however, been noted that the literature itself is situated within larger cultural sources: it appears to be distinctively "American" and reflects American values. Changes in trends within the literature have been associated with the broader socio-historical changes in American society. This chapter is particularly concerned with the most recent changes in the literature and how these changes are indicators of recent developments in modern culture. It is argued that the current literature is, for the most part, a symptom of developments precipitating a crisis in middle class ideology.

*The decline of the hero.*

In the early fifties, Robin Williams listed what appeared to be dominant American value orientations. He found a marked stress on the values of achievement and success, activity and work, moral orientation, humanitarian mores, efficiency and practicality, progress, material comfort, equality, freedom, external conformity, science and secular rationality, nationalism-patriotism, democracy, individual personality, racism and group superiority.[1] Schneider and Dornbusch's analysis of the religious inspirational literature of that era pointed to the reflection and/or reinforcement of these values in the literature, as did Dornbusch's analysis of the secular inspirational literature.[2]

The previous chapter discussed how the contemporary literature utilizes much of the same vocabulary, but the connotative aspects of the language differs considerably. There are also some very obvious changes in value orientation: an expressed lack of external conformity, humanitarian mores, nationalism-patriotism, and concern with material comfort. The recent political occurrences, mainly the Vietnam war and the Watergate episode, have done much to inhibit attitudes of nationalism and patriotism. Material comfort has, until quite recently, been a taken-for-granted aspect of living for most of society. American cultural critics have done much to discourage the "external conformity" orientation. Few educated Americans would overtly display signs of racism and group superiority, or for that matter, sexism, as equality is the name of the game, particularly since minority groups are making some political

impact. For if the sixties was the decade of the poor and the underclass, the seventies seems to have been that of "minorities."

The demise of the belief in science and progress has occurred with the growing awareness that science and technology destroys as much as it creates, and that there are, or should be, limits to growth. Efficiency and practicality therefore seem to have lost their contextual substance. Hard work is no longer even mentioned as a viable source of achievement. Success is equated with self-fulfillment. Freedom and individual personality values are intensified.

A major and perhaps most significant difference is that there appears to be no moral orientation, or at least no apparent moral consensus, whether expressed through humanitarian mores, external conformity, hard work, or economic success. A moral pluralism is now celebrated. It is quite possible, however, and should not be left unsaid, that this is an *appearance* only, and that it could be argued that a consensus of silence still exists. The trend toward self-fulfillment itself presupposes a consensus of self-improvement.

Nevertheless, a direction toward self-love is explicit, as is the lack of external moral orientation. Implicitly this lack of external direction is apparent in that the contemporary authors do not use "ideal" people as examples of their methods. The Horatio Alger stories, for example, involve Heroes, and most of the self-help literature which followed used examples of famous people and successful self-made men to back up the notion of the ideal citizen. Gradually the hero has been

reduced to "ordinary folk." As Daniel Boorstin points out:

> We no longer have heroes, whose lives were instructive, rather we have popular biographies which can offer very little in the way of solid information. ...These men and women are the proved specimens of the average. We no longer have external sources which fill us with purpose, these new-model "heroes" are receptacles into which we pour our own purposelessness. They are nothing but ourselves seen in a magnifying mirror. 3

Hence we no longer have Woodrow Wilson advising how to live the good life, but Margret Trudeau talking about her "senseless" life.[4] One of the most recent biographical inspirational manuals is by Justin Thomas called *How I Overcame My Fear of Whores, Royality, Gays, Teachers, Hippies, Psychiatrists, Athletes, Transvestites, Clergymen, Police, Children, Bullies, Politicians, Nuns, Grandparents, Doctors, Celebrities, Gurus, Judges, Artists, Critics, Mothers, Fathers, Publishers and Myself.*[5] This book is intended as a serious statement of one man's path to self-discovery. Compare this with Henry Ford's *The Power that Wins*, where he talks about the "inner things, the things of the mind and spirit, and the inner power and forces that makes for achievement." The methods are no doubt similar, but the messages have changed drastically.

The absence of the hero implies the absence of the ideal, or the external role model. This suggests a radical individualism, unbounded and undirected by society. Lulled by the acceptance of "mass man" in the form of Riesman's "other-directed" typology, and then by the community-oriented tenets of the counterculture, some intellectuals have reacted sharply to this resurgent form of individualism as confirming their suspicions regarding the growing decadence of American society, if not Western culture as a whole.

In fact, the current popular self-help literature is in a large sense simply a reformulation of eighteenth century utilitarianism, as explicated by Jeremy Bentham and qualified by John Stuart Mill, which, among other things, views man as a rationally calculating maximizer of pleasure and minimizer of pain. According to "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" principle, society must never interfere with an individual's private life. Mill defended the right of each individual to live as he wishes so long as he does not infringe upon the lives of others.[6]

As such, the current critics' response to this resurgence of liberalism and laissez-faire individualism closely resembles the conservative reaction to the eighteenth century depiction of the individual, inasmuch as they both assume the form of moral criticism, and which, as Nisbet has pointed out, was *a response to the fear of loss of status* in the changing order of things.[7] The conservatives of the early period, men like Burke, Bonald and de Maistre, criticized the liberal's "progressive" conception of man and society as expressions of the economic and political forces which were seen as destroying community and organic order and creating a mass of atomized individuals.[8]

Two of the contemporary critics, Edwin Schur and Paul Vitz, have applied similar criticisms to the tenets of the human potential movement. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Schur, as a sociologist, proffers a remarkably similar critique to Vitz, a psychologist-turned-Christian. They both view the ideology of the awareness movement as

actively destroying individuals, families and communities. Schur warns that this ideology's preoccupation with the individual and its emphasis on personal growth could "dilute our already weak feelings of social responsibility," and "push our society in highly undesirable directions:"

> While the movement provides the middle class consumers with an attractive new product, attention is diverted from the more serious problems that plague our society - poverty, racism, environmental decay, crime, widespread corporate and governmental fraud. 9

Schur also argues that the movement will convert public issues into private failure by suggesting that the "self-responsibility" themes promote compacency for those who have succeeded and resignation and self-blame for those who have not, and that the attitude of value relativity would encourage amoral activity.

Vitz declares that "humanist psychology has become a secular religion based on the worship of the self and has for years been destroying individuals, families and communities by denying that life has any intrinsic significance or meaning."[10]

Both Schur and Vitz perceive the human potential movement as a disease rather than as symptoms of wider issues. As such they fail to explain why the movement has gained such wide-spread appeal. Schur assumes the involvement in the "awareness craze" is simply a recreational pursuit of the affluent, the participants of which would return to the "serious task of organizing for social change" if they gave up their human potential activities. This assumption in itself is highly questionnable, and, in trivializing this appeal as a pastime which takes

away from "real" issues, Schur sets up a dichotomy between public and private experience. His criticism certainly does not explain why, for example, the messages contained in the current self-help literature immediately "make sense" to the reader in that they concretize the feelings that touch the reader's personal experience.

More importantly, however, is the absence in these critiques of a historical continuity. Individualism and subjectivism, even in its extreme form, did not begin with humanist psychology or the awareness movement. Schur and Vitz are, of course, aware of this, but attempt to bracket out the historical problematic. There is, however, much in the content of the self-help literature that brings to mind a sense of *déjà écrit*, and this cannot be ignored. It is quite possible that within the early formulations of individualism one can find the clues to the present situation. Simmel, for example, points out two aspects of the meaning and growth of individualism:

> On the whole, the eighteenth century sought individuality in the form of freedom, the lack of every kind of restraint on personal powers, regardless whether this restraint came from the estates or from the church, whether it was political or economic. But at the same time, the assumption prevailed that once men had been freed from all sociohistorical fetters, they would show themselves to be essentially equal; that "man in general," along with all the goodness and perfection of his nature, was inherent in every personality, needing only to be emancipated from those distorting and diverting bonds. That once men had freedom, they would use it to differentiate themselves; to rule or to become enslaved; to be better or worse than others; in short, to unfold the full diversity of their individual powers. 11

This development of individualism paralleled the rise of laissez-faire capitalism. The division of labour found its metaphysical counter-

part in the nineteenth century creation of the individual as unique: that the individual assumes and should assume a position that he and no one else can fill:

> ...that this position awaits him, as it were, in the organization of the whole, and that he should search until he finds it; that the personal and social, the psychological and metaphysical meaning of human existence is realized in this immutability of being, this intensified differentiation of performance. 12

It was with Rousseau that many of these concepts found their most clear and personal expressions.[13] As Daniel Bell points out:

> It is not just Rousseau's claim to uniqueness that is central; that is merely a matter of psychology. It is a deeper change in the nature of culture and character structure. In the polity, the claim of individualism was for liberty, to be free of all ascriptive ties. But in the culture, the claim was for liberation; to be free of all constraints, moral and psychological, to reach out for any experience that would enhance the self. 14

Moral individualism as such has its roots in economic and political individualism. The question is, why here and now? Why has this subjective form of individualism become at this particular time, a "legitimate" way of viewing the world?

Recently, three major attempts have been made to frame this new movement in a historical perspective. As with the conservative reaction to eighteenth and nineteenth century individualism, these frameworks have blended moral judgement with sociological analysis. Nevertheless, together they add a great deal of understanding to the current situation.

*Daniel Bell's "cultural contradictions of capitalism."*

Deniel Bell argues that the holistic approach to society is no longer applicable. Rather there has been an historical bifurcation resulting in three distinct realms of activity whose norms and structures are "radically antagonistic" to each other: the techno-economic realm (whose axial principle is functional rationality and efficiency, and whose structure is bureaucratic); the polity (whose axial principle, in Western democratic societies, is equality, and whose structures are those of representation or participation); and the culture (whose ruling principle is that of self-realization, and in its extremes, self-gratification). It is the tensions between the norms of these three realms - efficiency and bureaucracy, equality and rights, self-fulfillment and the desire for novelty - that forms the contradictions of the modern world, a contradiction that is enhanced under capitalism, since the techno-economic realm is geared to promote not economic necessities but the cultural wants of a hedonistic world.

What has happened in society in the last fifty years, argues Bell, is that, as a result of the erosion of the religious ethic and the increase in discretionary income, the culture has taken the initiative in promoting change, and the economy has been geared to meeting these new wants:

> Modern culture is defined by...extraordinary freedom to ransack the world storehouse and to engorge any and every style that it comes upon. Such freedom comes from the fact that the axial principle of modern culture is the expression and remaking of the "self" in order to achieve self-realization and self-fulfillment. And in its search, there is a denial of any limits or boundaries to experiences. 15

There is, therefore, a direct contradiction between a social structure which is organized fundamentally in terms of roles and specialization, and a culture which is concerned with the enhancement and fulfillment of the self and the "whole" personal. But today, argues Bell, culture has become the most dynamic component of our civilization.

For Bell, the real problem of modernity is the problem of belief - it is a "spiritual" crisis, since the new anchorages have proved illusory and the old ones have become submerged. "It is a situation which brings us back to nihilism, lacking a past or a future there is only a void." Culture has historically been fused with religion, and in Western society religions have been ones of restraint. Hence, although the Protestant ethic permitted a total lack of restraint in the economic sphere, it held a tight rein on the cultural. With the breaking of religious authority in the mid-nineteenth century, the secular culture developed the idea that experience in and of itself was the supreme value, that everything was to be explored, anything was to be permitted; all things become ends in themselves and no more. It was a release from restraint, and in its extreme form it contained the idea of the "untrammeled self."

The Protestant ethic was undermined by capitalism itself, the "greatest single engine of destruction" being the invention of the installment plan, or instant credit, which permitted instant gratification. Mass production and mass consumption transformed the system, by the creation and gratification of new wants:

> When the Protestant ethic was sundered from bourgeois society, only the hedonism remained, and the capitalist system lost its transcendental ethic. 16

Therefore, the cultural, if not moral, justification of capitalism has become hedonism, the idea of pleasure as a way of life. "Society is now seen as a composite of atomistic individuals who pursue only their own gratification."

Bell argues that the new "class struggle" is less a matter of conflict between management and worker in the economic enterprise than the "pull and tug" of various organized segments to influence the state budget. At the same time, there has arisen a "cultural class" which dominates the cultural order and the audiences, and which has passed over into the "arena of life." As political ideas became exhausted in the fifties, the cultural intelligensia took over, disseminating themes of despair, anomie and alienation, themes which were to receive a political incarnation in the sixties.[17] Hence, the "rage against the social order," the rise of new therapies gained to free the individual from inhibition and restraints to enable the expression of impulses and feelings, is, argues Bell, simply an extension and manifestation of the contradictions raised since the turn of the century which began to transform the life of the middle class from producers and savers to consumers of life-styles.

We have witnessed, therefore, the demise of bourgeois culture and the rise of a "new sensibility" - the counterculture, the ideology of which is an attack on reason:

> Cultural modernism, though it still calls itself subversive, finds a home largely in bourgeois, capitalist society. That society, lacking a culture derived from its empty beliefs and desicated religions, in turn, adopts as its norm the life-style of a cultural mass that want to be "emancipated" or "liberated," yet lacks any sure moral guide as to what worthwhile experiences may be. 18

Hence, like Durkheim before him, Daniel Bell sees the crisis as primarily a moral one rather than an economic problem; a lack of cultural regulation rather than economic regulation.

*Richard Sennett's "destructive Gemeinschaft."*

Richard Sennett focuses on the distorted sense of community that has arisen in the twentieth century:

> The reigning belief today is that closeness between persons is a moral good. The reigning aspiration today is to develop individual personality through experiences of closeness and warmth with others. The reigning myth today is that the evils of society can all be understood as evils of impersonality, alienation, and coldness. The sum of these three is an ideology of intimacy: social relationships of all kinds are real, believable, and authentic the closer they approach the inner psychological concerns of each person. This ideology transmutes political categories into psychological categories. This ideology of intimacy defines the humanitarian spirit of a society without gods: warmth is our god. The history of the rise and fall of public culture at the very least calls this humanitarian spirit into question. 19

Sennett attributes the rise of the cult of intimacy to both capitalism and secularization, both of which have led to an inability to establish meaning and order in the public realm. The escape from "the traumas" of nineteenth century capitalism and secularization has evolved into a total emphasis on the private as the real, moral, order, as an end in itself. Some principle of order was sought in the perception

of personality, and with the emphasis on personality, self-distance was lost, objectivity has diminished, and "there results today a weakened sense of human will." Apppearances and masks were the essence of civility: they were at the same time protective distancing devices and a means of social bonding. Now that the mask has become the face, and appearance an indices of personality, social distance and sociability has been lost. "The more intimate...the less sociable." The contemporary personality is incapable of self-distancing and self-objectivity.

This situation, argues Sennett, leads to a total concern with feelings, and how one "feels" about another makes for a total reliance on personality instead of objective action. The decline of public rules (sociability, manners), the inability to "play," to be impersonal - the withdrawal from surface sociability into a "deeper" life of "inner reasons and authentic impulses," mobilizes the forces of narcissism, which result in character disorders of disconnection and a sense of emptiness - a sense of meaningless in the midst of activity:

> As a character disorder, narcissism is the very opposite of strong self-love. Self-absorption does not produce gratification, it produces injury to the self; erasing the lines between self and other means that nothing new, nothing "other," ever enters the self; it is devoured and transformed until one thinks one can see oneself in the other - and then it becomes meaningless. 20

The mobilization of narcissism has occurred at the same time as the appearance of a new class in the twentieth century. The expansion of white-collar workers in the bureaucratic sphere is composed of people who do quasi-technical, quasi-routine work who are semi-specialized

and not in control of the use of their own skills:

> Boundaries between the self and work are first of all erased by the patterns of mobility in the corporation. The expansion and proliferation of these white-collar jobs has very little to do with functional necessity, and quite a lot to do with providing new avenues of promotion, demotion, or make-work for the white-collar bureacracy as an ongoing organism. 21

Hence, bureaucratic enlargement for the sake of growth rather than functional necessity has led to the emphasis in "protean" work experience - the worker is not judged on performance but on the ability to perform, as well as his interpersonal skills of cooperation, empathy, and give-and-take as a human being:

> "Flexibility" is the positive name for this value. It covers the fact that the man at work has lost any distance, functionally, from his material conditions. He is being judged upon his nature as a human being - his "potential." 22

This, for the most part, is the most useful area of Sennett's massive analysis which in its entirety concentrates on the meaning and consequences of civility, the manners of public interaction. In the long run, Sennett argues that the main source of anxiety "about what one feels" lies in broad changes in capitalism and religious beliefs, a problem endemic to most industrialized countries.

### *Christopher Lasch and "the culture of narcissism."*

With Lasch, the "loss of community" critique makes it dramatic reappearance. It is, however, not only community life that is at stake now, but the individual himself. It is not privatism but rather the absence of privatism, the "devastation of personal life," that needs to

be critized and condemned. The invasion of private life by the forces of organized domination has become so pervasive that personal life has almost ceased to exist. The consciousness movement, although providing self-defeating solutions, addresses real issues: the cult of intimacy originates not in the assertion of personality, but in its collapse.

Utilizing psychiatric records of contemporary character disorders, Lasch identifies narcissism as a metaphor for the human condition, its clinical symptoms being the dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, unsatisfied oral cravings, fascination with fame and celebrity, the fear of competition, the inability to suspend disbelief, the shallowness and transitory quality of personal relations, and the horror of death.

Lasch longs for what has been lost: "The prison life of the past looks in our own time like liberation itself." In reviving the fears of the past, he reverts to the Hobbesian problem of order:

> The collapse of personal life originates not in the spiritual torments of the affluent but in the war of all against all, which is now spreading from the lower class, where it has long raged without interruption, to the rest of society. 23

Accordingly, the cultural devaluation of the past reflects not only the poverty of the prevailing ideologies, which have lost their grip on reality and abandoned the attempt to master it, but the poverty of the narcissist's inner life as well.

> A denial of the past, superficially progressive and optimistic, proves on closer analysis to embody the despair of a society that cannot face the future. 24

In an age of rapidly diminishing expectations in America, "growth" has become a euphemism for survival. Decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, and a warlike society produces people who are at heart anti-social. Hence the pursuit of pleasure disguises a struggle for power, "the real object of doing others in."

The transition from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism has turned the citizen into a client, the worker into a consumer, and has emancipated women and children from patriarchal authority only to subject them to the "new paternalism" of the advertising industry, the industrial corporation, and the state.

While relying on the data of the psychiatric profession, Lasch at the same time regards the "therapeutic ideal" of medicine and the social sciences as the major reason behind the collapse of morality. The "rigid self-sensorship" of economic man has given way to the lack of self-restraint of psychological man. The therapeutic ideologies, in turning sin into sickness, guilt into anxiety, have destroyed the very sense of moral responsibiltiy. The cult of authenticity reflects the collapse of parental guidance, and supplies it with a moral justification. Fatherless families and narcissistic mothers reflect the fear of the future: "a society that fears it has no future is not likely to give much attention to the needs of the next generation."

Structural changes that have contributed to this overall dis-atrous situation are: the cult of consumption; media and advertising

proliferation of images which given "substance to and thus intensify narcissistic dreams of fame and glory, encouraging the common man to identify himself with the stars and to hate 'the herd' and make it more difficult for him to accept the banality of everyday existence;" the growth of large organizations and bureaucracies which have put a premium on social skills, replacing task orientation and task mastery with control of other players. Bureaucratic dependence has also reduced the layman to incompetence. Private life as well as the conditions of work are now regulated by the organized apparatus of social control. Industrial sociology, personnel management, child psychology, the techniques of American progressivism, all now regulate private life, organizing leisure time on scientific principles of social and personal hygiene. It is the result of the rise of a new kind of paternalism:

> Capitalism has severed the ties of personal dependence only to revive dependence under cover of bureaucratic rationality. ...capitalism has evolved a new political ideology, welfare liberalism, which absolves individuals of moral responsibility and treats them as victims of social circumstance. It has evolved new modes of social control, which deal with the deviant as a patient and substitutes medical rehabilitation for punishment. 25

Lasch argues that a new ruling class has appeared: administrators, bureaucrats, technicians, and experts who are confused about the values that they should be transmitting to their children, and hence have replaced character building with permissiveness, the cure of souls with the cure of the psyche, blind justice with therapeutic justice, philosophy with social science, and personal authority with an equally irrational authority of professional experts. This new ruling class, while admin-

istering to the interests of corporate property, in fact creates many of the needs they claim to satisfy:

> Modern capitalist society not only elevates narcissists to prominence, it elicits and reinforces narcissistic traits in everyone. It does this in many ways: by displaying narcissism so prominently and in such attractive forms; by undermining parental authority and thus making it hard for children to grow up; but above all by creating so many varieties of bureaucratic dependence. This dependence, increasingly widespread in a society that is not merely paternalistic but maternalistic as well, makes it increasingly difficult for people to lay to rest the terrors of infancy or to enjoy the consolations of adulthood. 26

*The problem of order.*

While focussing on slightly different aspects of the contemporary situation, these three critics nevertheless have much in common. They are in general agreement that Western society, and particularly America, has reached a crisis situation. The loss of an external order has left the modern individual weak, undisciplined, lacking in will and fortitude and unprepared for disaster. Economic man looks strong and even moral compared to psychological man. Psychological man is empty, lacks content and lives through appearances. No longer capable of objectifying reality, the contemporary individual can only relate to his immediate, personal interests, which are based mainly on emotional gratification. Guilt, a traditional moral control, has been replaced by anxiety, the fear of nihilism.

The critics are concerned with what has been lost, which can be summed up in the word order. For Bell, order was traditionally supplied

by religion; for Sennett the public realm furnished the objectivity necessary to "get things done." Both of these imply a loss of tradition and ritual. Lasch decries the loss of the work ethic - the personal, subjective self is now devoid of order - the individual has given himself up to the external demands of the market place, resulting in a truly competitive, anti-social individual.

Although each of these critics point to changing facets of culture that must be acknowledged and dealt with, it should be pointed out that the assumptions and concerns of these authors are not particularly new, although they have risen in response to a new phenomenon. Their concerns are in large part the concerns of the traditional "mass society" theorists who have long been concerned with the destruction of community and the rise of the atomistic individual, an individual who is quite frequently described as childish, emotional, irrational, lacking an inner self, and powerless in the face of overwhelming social forces. The difference, for example, between the concerns of Lasch and Sennett bring to mind Dennis Wrong's criticism of the "identity" theorists of the late fifties:

> That the accusations leveled at modern society are inconsistent with each other is overlooked. Thus our society is charged with destroying the primordial bonds of community among men, while at the same time it is pillored for promoting conformity and "togetherness"; man is said to be alienated, rootless, and drifting in contemporary America; but simultaneously he is too tightly controlled by giant bureaucracies and manipulated by the mass media. Our consumption-centered economy encourages Americans to retreat into a "privatized" life of affluence in which they are apathetic about public affairs, yet modern society is also seen as the seedbed of fanatical mass movements whose followers willingly submerge their private lives in dedication to a collective goal. 27

None of these criticisms are, however, totally devoid of reality, and, putting aside for the moment the moral critiques expressed, it is important to acknowledge what these authors are saying about the changes that have taken place in the lives of contemporary individuals that has led to the recent emphasis on self-fulfillment. Daniel Bell points to the heart of the situation when he suggests that "a crisis of middle class values is at hand." Using American society as the exemplar of the bourgeois mode, he traces the breakup of traditional bourgeois values:

> The United States was probably the first large-scale society in history to build cultural change into the society, and many status problems arose simply because of the bewildering rapidity of such change. Few societies, in fact, can absorb quick change. The major social institutions - family, church, education system - were set up to transmit established habits of the society. A society in rapid change inevitably produces confusions about appropriate modes of behavior, taste, and dress. A socially mobile person has no ready guide for acquiring new knowledge on how to live "better" than before, and his guides become the movies, television, and advertising. In this respect, advertising begins to play a more subtle role in changing habits than merely stimulating wants. ...to teach people how to dress, furnish a home, buy the right wines - in short, the style of life appropriate to the new statuses. 28

As reflected in the history of self-help, at first the changes were primarily in manners, dress, taste, and food habits, but gradually they began to affect more basic patterns: the structure of authority in the family, the role of children and young adults as independent consumers in the society, the pattern of morals, and the different meanings of achievement in society. "All of this came about by gearing the society to change and the acceptance of cultural change, once mass consumption and a high standard of living were seen as the legitimate purpose of economic organization."

It is at this point, Bell argues, that the "culture" begins to take over and remains in primary control of the other aspects of the social system. Individuals are no longer concerned with how to work and achieve, but with how to spend and enjoy. Here Bell presupposes a division of roles between culture producers and culture consumers, a point that must be contested. Culture has not become opposed to economy but simply, dialectically incorporated into it. Culture is now just another commodity.

Bell does, however, point to an important aspect of change in the work people do. He argues that life in pre-industrial societies is primarily a "game against nature," whereas industrial societies, producing goods, play a "game against fabricated nature." It is a world of technology, rationalization, organization - of hierarchy and bureaucracy - in which men are treated as things because one can more easily coordinate things than men. Now we have reached a third stage:

> A post-industrial society, because it centers on services - human services, professional and technical services - is a game between persons. 29

Work involves cooperation and reciprocity rather than coordination and hierarchy.[30] In their work experience, therefore, men live more and more outside nature, and less and less with machinery and things; they live with, and encounter only one another. The notion of an external reality has been reduced to the consciousness of others. It should be obvious that what Bell is describing is middle class work and that he is *taking for granted that the nature of this work has ideological influences on the rest of society.*

What Bell fails to do, however, is show the connection between the demand for different skills at work and the personal motivation toward self-fulfillment. By insisting on the "cultural" primacy and its antagonism to the techno-economic sphere, Bell places far too much emphasis on the separation rather than the mediation between the two.

Lasch, on the other hand, argues that the private sphere is totally dominated by the new ruling elite of experts and professionals, a theory that also fails to recognize the dialetical imperative. Apart from coming very close to resorting to a conspiracy theory of society, Lasch, in portraying the individual as a helpless, manipulated, anti-social being on the verge of destroying his neighbour, fails to acknowledge that the individual selects from her or his environment the kind of information that most adequately fits into or expresses one's own unarticulated position in the world. This is, for the most part, an active process on the part of the individual. Even if the information available is controlled "from the top" it can be processed by the individual in such a way as to validate her or his own experiences. The Bible and the multitude of interpretations that exist to justify wide ranges of behavior in groups and individuals is an obvious example of this ability.

Lasch does, however, point to a very important aspect of why the self-help trend is so popular at this particular time: this decade provides the realization of "diminishing expectations." The future that was projected in the post-war generation has not materialized: there are no longer any "solid" careers for the majority of the middle class, university

education no longer assures professional employment, much less any employment at all. The anticipated future of a wife, children and a house with a two-car garage is less and less certain for a growing number of the population. Many of those who married in the sixties and thought it was forever are now divorced. Inflation has given rise to talk about the increasing impossibilities of ever owning a house.

Lasch asserts, however, that:

> Our society...has made deep and lasting friendships, love affairs, and marriages increasingly difficult to achieve. As social life becomes more and more warlike and barbaric, personal relations, which ostensibly provide relief from these conditions, take on the character of combat. Some of the new therapies dignify this combat as "assertiveness" and "fighting fair in love and marriage."

This sense of moral outrage fails to take into consideration that many "stable" relationships in the past were organized around dependency needs that are no longer present today. The decline of paternalism in the family, occasioned by the increasing self-sufficiency of women, leads to changes in personal relationships. Women have a need for "assertiveness training" because their previous role requiring passivity and "other-directedness" is no longer functional. At the same time, the "ideal" husband is no longer someone who can demand respect simply because he brings home a paycheque. Rather he must now supplement money with other attributes, primarily requiring communication techniques. As financial and moral obligations cease to play a major function in holding relationships together, new means of reciprocity must be generated. A deeper, or at least different, understanding of the self is

necessary in order to make decisions about what the new needs and wants are. These changes in personal life may generate tension, particularly for couples who started out with traditional values, but there is nothing to suggest that personal relations are taking on the "character of combat." There were doubtless many more marriages in the past that had this character simply because people were forced to stay together.

One could go on and on about Lasch's portrayal of the world, only to conclude that viewing psychiatric records as a reflection of society leaves one with the impression of a sick world. Like the schizophrenic who touches on reality only to enlarge or distort its implications, the world Lasch describes is not the world most of us live in.

Likewise Sennett's emphasis on intimacy as the overwhelming force behind the "fall of public man" does not prove consistent with the values expressed in the self-help literature. Rather the literature shows a trend toward a much greater emotional distancing from both self and others in order to control emotional responses. Moreover, by insisting that intimacy, having invaded and destroyed public life, is in turn stripped of its supporting functions ("the closer people come, the less sociable, the more painful, the more fratricidal their relations"), Sennett is resorting to the same view of society as that proffered by Lasch. As one reviewer put it, apart from the inconclusive and arbitrary (albeit interesting) evidence Sennett supplies, the thesis is "essentially another variation of the familiar mass society-atomization -decline of community-alienation themes presented by many others."[32]

In fact, the similarites of the critics to the early concerns regarding individualism and secularization revives Nisbet's comment that:

> ...present day problems and hypotheses of social order, group integration and disintegration, and the nature of personality are rooted much more deeply in the conservative tradition in modern European thought than in the liberal-radical systems of the nineteenth century... 33

Cloaked in the liberal-radical terminology, these critics are essentially providing the reader with a world that has been lost: the decline of religion, the work ethic, community and family life. Like Durkheim, they attempt to "determine the new conditions of the state of health only in the functions of the old."[34] But Durkheim was not primarily concerned with "the problem of order," but rather with the problem of "the changing nature of order."[35] As old moral forms disappear with changing social conditions, he argued, new forms will arise. For Durkheim, the "science of moral phenomena" sets out to analyze how changing forms of society effect transformation in the character of moral norms. Also, as Durkheim pointed out, the moral diversity of individualism continues to presuppose some degree of consensus, for example, that people are willing to tolerate the diversities of others. The critics of narcissism are notably silent with regard to the possible values of such concepts as individual responsibility and moral relativity.

The only systematic evidence presented on the actual social consciousness of participants of the human potential movement (there has been nothing done on readership of self-help books) has not substantiated the predictions of social irresponsibility:

> The use of responsibility is quite different from the usual meaning of individual responsibility. That people are responsible for their own success does not mean they are not responsible for the situation of others. ...Another difference is that there is no sense of judgement or blame implied in the word. Because a person is poor or rich does not mean he deserves it. 36

One aspect of the new meaning of responsibility, argues Stone, is the sense of control it gives. One *est* graduate noted:

> "If we consider ourselves responsible for everything that happens, then at least there is the possibility that we can change things... If it turns out in fact, we aren't responsible, it doesn't make any difference. 37

Individual responsibility can, therefore, be seen as much as a motivation toward social change as toward solipsism.

Similarly, the trend toward moral individualism is expressed with much emphasis on tolerance toward others, which, with the continuous broadening of international boundaries and the current influx of refugees, combined with high unemployment, will be a necessary aspect of order. As well, the distrust of experts as articulated by the self-help books (who tend to disregard their own role in offering expertise) may help to diminish the dependence on experts that undermines the confidence of many people.

These are, however, hypothetical suppositions. For the moment it is simply wise to remember Durkheim's comment that:

> ...there are cases where, to distinguish the healthy state from the sick, it is not enough to refer to the normal type. This is so when all of its traits have not been formed; when, disturbed in certain particulars by a passing crisis, it is itself in process of becoming. That is what happens when the moral conscience of nations is not yet adapted to the changes which have been produced in the milieu, changes

> which, partaking of the past which holds it from behind and the necessities of the present, keep it from becoming fixed. Then there appear rules of conduct whose moral character is indecisive, because they are in the midst of acquiring or losing it without having definitely either acquired or lost it. 38

Together the above-mentioned critics have supplied a broad, historical outline of these changes as endemic to the whole of society. In doing so, they have for the most part ignored an essential aspect of the current value changes: the aspect of class structure. The following therefore both supports and/or clarifies some of the previous discussion but at the same time points to the essential problematic of the current "crisis."

*The crisis of the middle class.*

The main theme of American self-help literature has been that of individualism. The ideology of individualism, expressed in the form of the "self-made man," has been the ideological backbone of American society. It has, it can be argued, been a major part of the value system that has contributed to the relative stability of the society. As one author concludes:

> Individualism supplied the nation with a rationalization of its characteristic attitudes, behavior patterns and aspirations. It endowed the past, the present and the future with the perspectives of unity and progress. It explained the peculiar social and political organization of the nation - unity in spite of heterogeneity - and it pointed towards an ideal of social organization in harmony with American experience. Above all, individualism expressed the universalism and idealism most characteristic of the national consciousness. This concept evolved in contradistinction to socialism, the universal and messianic character of which it shared. 39

But the critics of individualism often fail to remember that individualism has a history of its own, it has not simply been a phenomenon of history. For Schur to argue that the awareness movement simply "reflects our culture's long-standing emphasis on individualism," fails to acknowledge that individualism has, throughout the history of North America, taken different forms. While the statement is true, it does not assist one in ascertaining what is distinct about current "self-helpism."

Within the context of self-help, it is possible to periodize the career of individualism, in its relationship to the history of American values and social structure, into three broad states: rugged individualism, progressive individualism, and, most recently, a stage that might be categorized as "selfism."

## 1. *Rugged individualism.*

It has been pointed out that the Puritan ethic played a major role in particularizing individualism in America. This was the ethic of the entrepreneurs who assumed their risk-taking was conducted under the auspices of an external order, an order given by God. Weber pointed out how the very tenets of Protestantism led to its own negation. For the first time in the history of religion, conscience was conceived as originating in and belonging to the individual. By the nineteenth century the American frontier individual had interpreted this as a condition in which a person is self-sufficient, complete in himself,

and absolute master of his destiny in isolation from others members of society.[40] This interpretation was, of course, the philosophical counterpart to laissez-faire capitalism. The Puritan values of piety, frugality and diligence in one's worldly calling, were the necessary ingredients for the industrialization of America. As it became clear that in the land of equal opportunity, some were quickly becoming more equal than others, the tenets of Social Darwinism (as espoused by Herbert Spenser) secularized the concept of the chosen and endorsed the qualities of aggressiveness, forcefulness and competitiveness; hence those who failed deserved to do so.

Social change and enthusiasm about the progress of industrialism did not waver even after it became apparent that, with the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism, fewer and fewer people were able to become self-made millionaires. By this time, however, the belief in progress and the methods of science had gradually secularized the order previously thought to be God-given and achieved by prayer. This transition, as reflected in the self-help literature, has already been explicated.

### 2. *Progressive individualism.*

Industrialization had expanded both the numbers and the potentialities of the middle class. The impact of this expansion is pointed out by Bledstein:

> From the 1840s until the present, the idea of the middle class has been central in the history of American social attitudes. No other national history has been so essentially concerned with this one idea. Indeed, one can conclude that the middle class has been the only class in America conscious of itself. 41

In fact, argues Bledstein, the very looseness of the concept "middle class," its lack of structure in sociological terms, and its lack of exclusiveness in financial terms, commends it to Americans, for it cultivates the image that any prudent, average man may belong to this social state of being.

That this "social state of being" was often an illusion did not matter. To be sure, social mobility did increase with industrialization, but not more so in America than in other industrialized countries. But, as Cawelti points out:

> Although mobility rates in different countries seem to be similar, cultural attitudes toward the self-made man vary greatly. If you tell an American that he has no more chance to get ahead than a Frenchman, he will probably not believe you, for Americans are fiercely proud of the opportunities which they believe their uniquely open society offers the average man. Every American boy has the chance to become President of the United States, or at least a wealthy businessman. This theme is, or at least used to be, a commonplace in newspaper, sermon, political speech, and fiction. When he becomes successful, the American self-made man likes to boast of his achievement, to exaggerate the obscurity of his origin, and to point out the "Horatio Alger" quality of his career. In Europe, where class traditions are stronger, the successful man often prefers to forget his origins if they are in a lower class. Even the words which different countries have created to describe the "mobile man" indicate significant differences in attitude. Americans coined the term "self-made man." The French expressions *parvenu* and *nouveau riche* point to the newness of the individual's rise and not to the fact that he has succeeded by his own exertions; in addition they carry a tone of condescension which is absent from the American term. 42

Gradually, however, as the reality of corporate capitalism began to challenge the myth of the self-made entrepreneur, new avenues for advancement were simultaneously open up in the form of careers. "Self-styled originators and producers, middle class persons pushed ahead on the basis of energy, enterprise, skill, and service rather than strictly on the basis of wealth."[43] Status in the occupational world became the important source of differentiation for the middle class, and, conversely, the pattern of a professional career represented for the middle class a novel possibility of *gaining status through work.*[44]

Careerism and professionalism rose hand in hand:

> In the United States, in particular, the model of profession has acquired a singular social import. It shapes, for one thing, the collective ambitions of occupational categories which in other countries could never hope to reach the status of profession. The extension of professionalization reflects, among other things, the particular openness of the American university to new fields of learning and the widespread access to higher education in American society. Basing occupational entry on university credentials does not lead, in other words, to excessive social exclusiveness. Furthermore, professions are typical occupations of the middle class, and the vision of American society and culture as being essentially "middle class" is not challenged as strongly as it is in Europe by the alternative and autonomous vision of a politicized working class. 45

In part, says Bledstein, the success of the culture of professionalism could be attributed to the fact that American mid-Victorians constructed a secular theodicy:

> Despite its flux, madness, and seeming irrationality, the world was a rational place, and every person could discover his "real me" within the natural confines of space and time. Such firm notions as career and character, for instance, organized a human life totally, from beginning to end. 46

Work, therefore, was the person: a statement to the world of his internal resources, confidence, and discipline; his active control over the intrinsic relationships of a life; his steadfast character. One's life crisis came in the form of career choices. The American university was basic to the struggle of an aspiring middle class to define new career patterns, establish new institutions, pursue new occupations, and forge a new self-identity:

> It became a central institution in the competitive, status-conscious political economy of America. It held before the society the image of the modern professional person, who committed himself to an ethic of service, was trained in scientific knowledge, and moved his career relentlessly upward. 47

Professions came of age in America after the Civil War, a period in which economic, administrative, and political power were consolidated and centralized. In the period between 1870 and 1920 the establishment of national organizational nuclei served by vast bureaucracies was so distinctive that it has been referred to as the "organizational revolution."[48] Politically, the national reorganization culminated in the Progressive movement, at the heart of which, according to one observer, "was the ambition of the new middle class to fulfill its destiny by bureaucratic means."[49] The ideology of laissez-faire was replaced by the ideology of efficiency and scientific management, which submitted both workers and employers to the "objective" laws of science. Appeals to science and to limitless growth merged as the mainstay of the new ideology:

> In the Progressive Era, sectors of the intermediate class whose self-definition and self-esteem were increasingly based on occupation, and increasingly oriented toward national frames of reference, acquired something akin to class consciousness. Professionalism was one expression of this consciousness. 50

One of the major goals of the professionalizing occupations was to secure the supports for individual dignity and individual careers. Income and other indicators of status were important not only in themselves but also in comparison to the status indicators possessed by other social groups and individuals. Also coveted was the autonomy over the conditions of work. An essential element of professionalism, atypical of the general work force, was and perhaps still is, the notion of calling: professionalism maintains alive the idea that work may have an intrinsic value. Free choice of occupation is also essential to the fit between individual talents and choice of vocation. As Larson points out:

> Professional socialization aims, in fact, at the internalization of special social controls: it takes, that is, standards defined by the profession's elites and makes them part of each individual's subjectivity. Insofar as this socialization is successful, the elites will be in control not only of material reward but also of the kind of esteem that counts - the esteem granted by a reference group of major import to the individual. While esteem is, ultimately, easier and cheaper to dispense than power or income, it holds for the recipient something more than the promise of influence; it is intimately bound up with a sense of self, precisely because professions are ideologically constructed as occupations that one enters by calling, or at least by choice. As such, they appear to express an essential dimension of self. 51

Hence, as previously discussed, sociologists like Whyte and Riesman equated this commitment to role with loss of individuality. The character traits enhanced by the bureaucratic and professional mode

involved "other-directedness." Riesman's book in itself was a plea for the return of the inner-directed entrepreneur.[52] The expectation of career is a powerful factor of conformity within the existing social order and therefore a source of basic conservatism: careerism depends on the stability of institutions. Moreover, as Larson emphasizes, orderly careers may well be one of the most significant expressions of inequality between different individuals and different categories of workers.

Stability and orderly progression through a work-life were the goals of the professionalization movement. As Larson points out:

> Career expectations are an essential component of profession, to such an extent that asking what is happening to professionals today is almost equivalent to asking what is happening to their modal patterns of career. 53

And this, it is argued, is an essential element of the rejuvenation of "self-helpism."

### 3. *Selfism.*

One of the ironical things about the professionalization of the middle class is that it appears to have sown the seeds of its own destruction. The middle class arose essentially out of the negation of laissez-faire capitalism, and yet in doing so made an important contribution to the ideological denial of structural inequality. The quest for professional status spread as a typical concern of educated middle class occupations, promising individual advancement through collective

efforts. Bureaucratization and educational mobility extended this individualistic promise to the middle class as a whole and even beyond it to the working class.[54] The emphasis on education ideologically denies the effect of class, ethnic and sex barriers: access to education, or rather the hope of individual mobility through education, appears as a common characteristic shared by large sectors of the "intermediate" class.

Class reproduction for the middle class has always been problematic because achievement has been on the basis of individual effort rather than on the basis of heredity. Traditionally much of the motivating effort has come from the women of the class:

> Since, according to psychologists, a child's future achievement is determined by the usances of its early upbringing, women of the class have been expected to stay home and "specialize" in child-raising. Both sexes, however, are expected to perform well in school and attend good colleges, for it is at college that young men acquire the credentials for full class membership and young women acquire, in addition to their own degrees, credentialed husbands. 55

As a result, as the Enrenrichs argue, anxiety about class reproduction, all of the ordinary experiences of life - growing up, giving birth, child-raising - are freighted with an external significance unknown in other classes:

> Private life thus becomes too arduous to be lived in private; the inner life of the PMC [Professional Middle Class] must be continuously shaped, updated and revised by - of course - ever mounting numbers of experts: experts in child-raising, family living, sexual fulfillment, self-realization, etc., etc. The very insecurity of the class, then, provides new ground for class expansion. By mid-century the PMC was successful enough to provide a new mass market for many of its own services - and unsuccessful enough to need them. 56

Increasing expertise on the outside left the middle class wife fewer opportunities to view her job as a profession. Coupled with this was perhaps the unarticulated anxiety that dependence on another is particularly unsettling when the other's occupational and monetary advances are not proceeding according to expectation. And, of course, particularly acute was and is the rising number of divorces which throw women of all classes back on their own resources. All of these factors have contributed not only to each other but to the increasing demand by women for entrance into the paid labor force at a time when jobs are becoming scarce.

One important off-shoot of the growing independence of middle class women[57] and their entrance into the public realm may well be that the traditional support function previously supplied by women is diminishing. This could include both emotional support and the socializing of the next generation into the achievement motif.[58] Hence men are having to adjust to the failure of both marriage and career expectations and at the same time take more of a responsibility for their own emotional life as well. Women, on the other hand, must learn techniques to overcome their traditional emotive and compliant attitudes and hence the majority of manuals geared to assertiveness training are a response to these needs.

The loss of the traditional support function within the family affects the methods of child-raising. Children must be taught at a very early age to accept responsibility and independence. Also, because

of the increasing uncertainty about future requirements for success, parents are hesitant to impose what might prove to be an outmoded sense of order on their children. Certainly the obvious antagonism the writers of self-help manuals have toward previous child-rearing practices are an attempt to show its inapplicability to present day concerns. The current regard appears to be geared toward the more immediate adjustments to social change rather than for future concerns. Hence child-rearing, for one thing, can become a much more relaxed endeavour because hopes for the most part are not being projected beyond the self. This also, of course, contributes to the growing concern toward permissiveness. Ideologically, the problem is portrayed through the notion that the child must have the right to control his or her own actions and future.

The growing uncertainty regarding the status of the middle class is reflected in the theoretical concerns of intellectuals, as well as the relatively sudden limitations put on middle class expectations. The last fifties and early sixties saw a rapid expansion of professional occupations and rising salaries. Between 1950 and 1970 the proportion of professional workers in the male labour force almost trebled.[59] At the same time, the white collar sector became increasingly atomatized, increasing the need for more highly-educated and qualified personnel. Recruitment from the working class was necessary to fill the job openings. College enrolments also more than doubled in this period, also recruiting from the working class. These elements have resulted in the United States being hailed as the first "middle class society."[60]

It has also been asserted that rising levels of income in the working class has not only narrowed the economic difference between working and middle class, but also that the resultant consumption and leisure patterns make it apparent that the workers are becoming middle class.[61] At the same time, however, it has become increasingly apparent that middle class occupations are losing even the slightest signs of autonomy and creativity traditionally accorded the professional occupations. Self-employed professionals alone had by 1962 represented less than 1.3 percent of the labor force, and entry into same now tends toward occupational inheritance and self-recruitment. Hence, the most significant difference among the majority of professionals is not whether they are self-employed or salaried workers, but for whom they work and in what conditions.[62] The loss of control over work tasks that are being increasingly subjected to bureaucratic exigencies have occasioned the rise of several theories regarding the "new working class" or the "proletarianization" of the middle class.[63]

Regardless of the actualities of these theoretical concerns, the debates serve to heighten the confusion around the current status of the middle class, and middle class ideology. Hence the ideological mainstay pointed out by Larson is rapidly diminishing:

> The prestige accorded year after year to the professions in occupational prestige scales reflects the ideological function which they perform simply by being visible: in our society, they keep "open" the road to freedom through more formal education, through more individual effort; they appear to be our last ideological frontier. The link they visibly establish between education and the labor market reinforces the ideological notion that there is such a link, and that rewards - both material and psychological - are, after all, rationally distributed to the ablest and the hard-striving. 64

With growing unemployment now affecting the middle class, this link between education and the labor market is disappearing, and the material and psychological rewards are being seriously questioned by the public. Within the professions themselves there exists a "crisis of careerism." The state of the economy no longer permits career stability, or even the promise of a career at all, and yet the expectations of a career still exists and is demanded by a higher percentage of the population than ever before.

There is, however, a growing realization that one cannot rationally commit oneself to a career. In 1960 Stein and Vidich pointed out that:

> In a period like the present, political identies have for the most part become meaningless, but work identities have been invested with profound meaning - at least by the middle class. The job becomes the main basis for self-justification. Occupational ideology is almost compulsively affirmed, despite the existence of threatening evidence of its inadequacy. Career failure becomes the major disaster to those who commit their total selves to a job. Ideological differences within occupations are made the basis for bitter struggles for self-affirmation, especially among intellectuals. ...A major problem in modern mass societies is the possibility that widespread economic dislocations will activate work anxieties, to the point of leaving the persons affected vulnerable to "totalitarian" solutions. 65

Interestingly, the authors' proposal to combat this dilemma sounds suspiciously similar to the contemporary self-help dictates, and for this reason bears repeating in its entirety:

> Evolving a personal style within a mass society can only be seen as a challenge. It is the kind of challenge which permits us to take little for granted, including our own motives. One must find his way into historical, interpersonal, and aesthetic worlds ordinarily inaccessible within the conventional limits of our sensibilities. To do this, we must be

> prepared to loosen the boundaries of our identities and to confront the anxiety that this exposure inevitably evokes without immediately foreclosing. This involves arranging life circumstances so that exposure to new materials and experiences becomes part of ongoing work and leisure routines. Regulating the circumstances of exposure to expand the boundaries of identity, without at the same time allowing them to become diffuse, is a most delicate task. ...At the level of interpersonal relations, achieving a personal style involves a high degree of self-insight, especially into the limiting effects of one's habitual responses. Autonomy, with respect to the influence of the standards and opinion of intimates, must be maintained without sacrificing the capacity to establish close relationships. This means being able to choose close friends without being dominated by unconscious needs and identifications. 66

Stein and Vidich are responding not to the crisis of the "traditional" worker but to the crisis of their own position in the world. As Harold Rosenberg pointed out then, the critiques of Whyte, Riesman and Packard, and to these one might add the mass society theorists in general, are none other than the "new intellectuals talking about themselves," and as such are inspired not by a passion for social correction by by nostalgia - nostalgia for themselves as independent individuals.[67] For one thing, the intellectual employee accepts a more total identification with one's role than most other workers, hence "the division between work and leisure, discipline and freedom, has truly been erased...today's intellectual unbuilds his life in order to live his job."[68] When Christopher Lasch foretells the "war of all against all," he is really concerned that a crisis is striking that very group who had traditionally thought they were free, and whose identity had been in large part dependent upon their profession. With

the increasing scarcity of professional employment for the intellectual, competition is arising in a sphere that has heretofore been ideologically permitted to stay outside the range of such "mundane" and "uncivilized" activities.

On a grander scale, as C. Wright Mills has pointed out:

> Back of all this - and much more of traditional and current worrying and thinking among serious and sensible students of man - there lies the simple and decisive fact that the alienated man is the antithesis of the Western image of the free man. ...the larger meanings of Freud's 'id,' Marx's 'Freiheit,' George Mead's 'I,' Karen Harney's 'spontaneity,' lie in the use of such conceptions against the triumph of alienated man. 69

It remains one of the ironies of American culture that its very structure can incorporate these two opposing themes and package them into a best seller entitled *Looking Out For #1.*

In the same respect, one might point out that the very elements contributing to an "ideology of the middle class" are the elements leading to its ideological demise. One major underlying reason for the growth of the university was the concern of self-made men for the social status of their children.[70] Ideologically the emphasis on education denied class, ethnic and sex barriers. With the corporate expansion and bureaucratization, the existant barriers were in large part removed. In a world where it appears as though everyone who wants to become a professional, can in fact become a professional, the status of being a professional is ultimately questioned. New means of differentiating oneself must be established. Hence the emphasis on life-style has superceded the definition of self by career. Paradoxically, however, at the same time

women and other minority groups are striving for both life-style and career, making the ultimate quest even more precarious.

Within the professions themselves, more and more differentiating must take place, and new areas of expertise must be discovered. The human potential movement itself, as well as the rise of the current psychologically oriented self-help books, was partly the result of a group of psychologists and psychiatrists who not only wanted to differentiate themselves from traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, but who also wanted to expand the market for their services. Hence, therapy for "normal" people, functional at the group level, rapidly multiplied the need for the services of the new "humanist" psychologists.

At the same time, the very argument that these psychologists used against the traditional methods - that they wanted to end the dependency of client on psychiatrist, by teaching the individual to help oneself - has in part given rise to the growing de-legitimation of professionals as a whole. Although this has no doubt succeeded in diminishing public credibility and respect for professionals, the effects on the reality of professionalism is uncertain. (Within the field of psychiatry a new movement toward scientific expertise with medical underpinnings has arisen to "escape from the troublesome subjectivity of the human mind," as well as, one might add, from the troublesome success of the humanists. Hence people with titles like biochemist, psychobiologist, neurophysiologist, and psychopharmacologist are attracting scarce federal funds and replacing traditional psychiatrists as chairmen of hospital psychiatry departments.[71]

The very paradox of the self-help literature itself lies in the trend toward de-professionalism. The ideal of the books is to have a world where there is no need for self-help books, no need to rely on experts for advice. Hence the very form of the books is a negation of their substance.

*Summary.*

To conclude, the shift toward "selfism" represents a multi-faceted problematic. This not only involves structural changes, but how these changes are interpreted by individuals. The middle class orientation toward work has traditionally been one which placed an intrinsic value on work itself. As Larson points out, "The notion of calling is the ethical base of the modern division of labor."

> Whatever else the service orientation is in a secularized society, its ethical and motivational base must include a sense of work as self-realization and a sense of duty to one's calling deeper than just compliance with a set of standards. 72

Not only has this commitment to work been eroded, but also the traditional structure of a career, the "succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered, predictable fashion,"[73] has now become unpredictable. In fact, the total life span of the middle class, according to its traditional structure, has become unpredictable. Marriage, careers and economic security no longer promise equitable return on investment. The erosion of the two

major components of the structure of middle class life, work and family, leaves little alternative than the shift to a commitment to self, an alternative which can still maintain the central tenets of the ideological underpinnings of that life: individualism, liberalism, and free will.

*Notes to Chapter V:*

[1] Robin M. Williams, Jr., *American Society*, New York: Alfred A. Knopt, 1951, as quoted in Louis Schneider and Sanford Dornbusch, *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 43.

[2] Schneider and Dornbusch; Sanford M. Dornbusch, "Popular Psychology: A Content Analysis of Contemporary Inspirational Nonreligious Books," in *The Quest for Self-Control*, edited by Samuel Z. Klausner, New York: The Free Press, 1973, 126-140.

[3] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, 61.

[4] Woodrow Wilson, *On Being Human*, 1916; Margaret Trudeau, *Beyond Reason*, 1979.

[5] Justin Thomas, *How I Overcame My Fear of...*, McClelland and Stewart, 1979.

[6] Robert Paul Wolff, *The Poverty of Liberalism*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.

[7] Robert A. Nisbet, "Conservatism and Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology*, September 1952, 167-175.

[8] See, for example, Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968.

[9] Edwin Schur, *The Awareness Trap*, New York: New York Times Book Co., 1976, 7.

[10] Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977.

[11] Georg Simmel, "Group Expansion and Development of Individuality," in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, edited by Donald N. Levine, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, 251-293, 271-2.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] For an excellent example of how the dilemmas faced by Rousseau reflects the current situation, see Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society*, New York: Antheneum 1970.

[14] Daniel Bell, "The return of the sacred? The argument on the future of religion," *British Journal of Sociology*, December 1977, 28:4, 419-449, 430.

[15]Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976, 13.

[16]*Ibid.*, 21.

[17]This makes emperical sense: the late fifties and early sixties saw an enormous increase in enrolments in universities and colleges. As Walter Kaufmann points out, "Even the best education must increase alienation. At every turn it shows us how what is familiar is not comprehended, and how what seemed clear is really quite strange. Comfortable prejudices crumble as we discover how little we know. If alienation is more widespread now than it used to be, it is because more people receive more education today than formerly." "The Inevitability of Alienation," Introduction to Richard Schacht, *Alienation*, New York: Anchor Books, 1970, xv-lviii.

[18]Bell, 1976, 145.

[19]Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978, 259.

[20]*Ibid.*, 325.

[21]*Ibid.*, 328.

[22]*Ibid.*, 33.

[23]Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978, 26.

[24]*Ibid.*, 32.

[25]*Ibid.*, 218.

[26]*Ibid.*, 232.

[27]Dennis Wrong, "Identity: Problem and Catchword," in *Skeptical Sociology*, London: Heinmann, 1977, 81-96, 83.

[28]Daniel Bell, 1976, 69.

[29]*Ibid.*, 148.

[30]Many, including Sennett and Lasch, would argue that this seeming co-operation only seeks to hide the power relationship.

[31]Lasch, 3.

[32]Claude S. Fischer reviewing *The Fall of Public Man* in *Contemporary Sociology*, March 1978, 7:2, 163-165, 164.

[33]Nisbet, 168.

[34]Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, New York: The Free Press, 1964 ed., 434.

[35]Anthony Giddens, "Four myths in the history of social thought," *Economy and Society*, November 1972, 1:4, 357-385.

[36]Donald Stone, "The Human Potential Movement," *Transaction*, May/June 1978, 15:4, 66-68, 67.

[37]*Ibid.*, 38.

[38]Durkheim, 434.

[39]Yehashua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*, Mass.: Cambridge, 1964, 9, as quoted in Steven Lukes, *Individualism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973, 28.

[40]David L. Miller, *Individualism, Personal Achievement and the Open Society*, Austin: The University of Texas, 1967.

[41]Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1976, 1.

[42]John G. Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965, 2.

[43]Bledstein, 22.

[44]Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, 5.

[45]*Ibid.*, xviii.

[46]Bledstein, 112.

[47]*Ibid.*, 333.

[48]See, for example, Kenneth Boulding, *The Organization Revolution*, Chicago: Quadrangle, 1968.

[49]Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1967, 166, as quoted in Larson, *op. cit.*, 137.

[50]Larson.

[51]*Ibid.*, 227.

[52]David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.

[53]Larson, 229.

[54]*Ibid.*

[55]Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," in *Between Labor and Capital*, edited by Pat Walker, Boston: South End Press, 1979, 5-48, 29-30.

[56]*Ibid.*, 30.

[57]Working class women have traditionally held jobs outside of the home so this same transition does not apply in quite the same way.

[58]For an example of the work this entails, see Dorothy Smith, "Women, the Family and Corporate Capitalism," in *Women in Canada*, edited by Marylee Stephenson, Toronto: New Press, 1973.

[59]Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, London: Hutchinson University Library, 1974, 186.

[60]See Joseph Bensman and Arthur J. Vidich, *The New American Society*, Chicago, 1971, regarding the "revolution of the middle class," as noted in Giddens, 178.

[61]Giddens.

[62]Larson.

[63]Giddens elaborates on these in "The Growth of the New Middle Class," in *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, 177-197.

[64]Larson, 212.

[65]Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich, and David Manning White, *Identity and Anxiety: Survival of the Person in Mass Society*, Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960, 17.

[66]*Ibid.*, 18.

[67]Harold Rosenberg, "The Orgamerican Phantasy," in *Identity and Anxiety*, *op. cit.*, 319-328.

[68]*Ibid.*

[69]C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, 172.

[70]Larson.

[71]"Psychiatry on the Couch,: *Time Magazine*, April 2, 1979, 44-52. Martin Gross was also arguing for this return to science in *The Psychological Society*, New York: Random House, 1978.

[72]Larson, 62.

[73]Harold Wilensky, "Work, Careers, and Social Integration," *International Social Science Journal*, 1960, 12, 554, as quoted in Larson, 70.

Chapter VI

*Conclusion.*

This book outlines a pleasant approach to achieving happiness - an approach that relies on responsibility for and commitment to yourself, plus an appetite for living and a desire to be all that you choose to at this moment.
(W. Dyer, *Your Erroneous Zones*, 1976)

Looking out for Number One is the conscious, rational effort to spend as much time as possible doing those things which bring you the greatest amount of pleasure and less time on those which cause pain. Everyone automatically makes the effort to be happy, so the key word is "rational."
(R. Ringer, *Looking Out for #1*, 1977)

Transactional Analysis...has given a new answer to people who want to change rather than to adjust, to people who want transformation rather than conformation. ...it is enabling persons to change, to establish self-control and self-direction, and to discover the reality of a freedom of choice...and to be responsible for these choices.
(T. Harris, *I'm OK - You're OK*, 1973)

The source is not outside us; it is within. ...We are accountable only to ourselves for what happens to us in our lives. We must realize that we have a choice: we are responsible for our own good time.
(M. Newman, *How to Be Your Own Best Friend*, 1974)

The foregoing has pointed to what appears to be a change in cultural values as reflected in popular inspirational self-help literature. Whereas the literature popularized at the turn of the century "inspired" its readers toward success through hard work and deferred gratification, and the mid-century literature stressed the importance of personality and self-management, the contemporary literature emphasizes self-love and hedonism as important goals to be achieved through rational thinking, present-day living and a commitment to self.

It has been pointed out that inspirational self-help in North America has been a cultural production of the middle class, and as such has reflected the desires and anxieties of that class in response to changing structural conditions. The ideology of the self-made entrepreneur gradually gave way to the scientific manager of mind, morals, and industry. The quest to ascertain status occasioned the growth of books on etiquette and appearance. Throughout the literature there remains an emphasis on self-control, first as a means toward manipulating the environment, and then as a means to manipulating one's appearance to others. The current literature is concerned quite specifically with internal control as a means to transforming the "inner life."

Samuel Klausner commented on the results of earlier findings with the following query:

> Does interest in controlling the internal as opposed to the external world depend upon the position the individual occupies in the hierarchy of power - that is on his realistic chances of controlling the environment? Might the disenfranchised be concerned with internal control and might the upwardly mobile be concerned with environmental control? 1

The recent shift toward internal control without the benefit of an external objects has, it is argued, been the result of the growing powerlessness of the middle class and their increasing sense of dislocation in the social sphere.

An exact definition of the middle class has been avoided. For the most part, the emphasis has been on a cultural interpretation, or what might be termed the "ideology of the middle class" - that broad spectrum of attitudes and assumptions about the world that has, as Bledstein points out, referred to a state of mind any person can adopt and make his own. That there is a middle class and a middle class culture cannot be denied, but it is symptomatic of its very illusive character that intellectual debates are continuously attempting to define it.

That the previous self-help literature has reflected the concerns of the entrepreneur, or would-be entrepreneur, which then became the concerns of the growing occupations situated within the industrial complex cannot be questioned. Reinhard Bendix has pointed out that the success ideology was clearly not relevant or applicable to the average worker in business or industry.[2] With regard to the contemporary literature, as one reviewer points out in response to Martin Gross's *The Psychological Society*:

> We overlook that numerous company of Americans among whom psychotherapists are as popular as undertakers, or whose only association to the word "shrink" is something that happens to clothes not washed and dried properly: adolescents and young people who do not attend college, farmers, policemen, firemen, blue-collar workers, truck drivers, domestic servants, blacks and Puerto Ricans, readers of Ms. magazine, hunters and fishermen, Southerners, small-business men, people who live in towns and villages in the West, the Middle West and New England, old people. These citizens know little or nothing about the psychological society, and whatever their problems, they are not likely to have heard of Frederick Perls, or Arthur Janov, or Ida Rolf - or even, in many instances, Sigmund Freud. 3

While one could take issue with some of the examples mentioned, the point remains that there is a distinction of kind.

Apart from its specific location in the social structure, this type of literature stems from multiple sources. The American tradition of self-help, as with the self-made man, arose from the settler's encounter with the new land. Lacking guilds, an apprenticeship system and a defined aristrocracy, there were no limits placed on how far one could go, what direction one should take, or how one should do things. Hence innovation, adaptability and self-made expertise were valued, and the notions of limitlessness and free choice were endemic to American life. Identity transformation has also been characteristic of American life-styles: new Americans exchanged new identities for old and left the past behind; East coast Americans went west to start life afresh; the contemporary American can simply stay in the same place and become transformed.

Perhaps because of the lack of tradition and the feeling of a sense of place, Americans have always been marginal people, searching

for their identity first of all in God, then in money, and then in their careers. As these outlets became exhausted, the search for "true" identity was instituted. The most recent embodiment of the self-made man is the life of Werner Erhard, the founder of *est*, as told by William Bartley, a well-known American philosopher:

> It tells the story of a rogue genius and American original whose person, life, education, program, are all at issue. It is the story of Erhard's life, education, and transformation, and tells how a poor boy from Philadelphia, a car salesman named Jack Rosenberg, a liar, an impostor, and a wife-deserter, got to that California freeway: how he became a man of integrity and compassion. It is also a universal story of the search for true identity and for Self. 4

What is essential to the ideology of identity and self-fulfillment is that it embodies the concept of limitlessness integral to American life, as well as the concept of equality, for personal fulfillment seems possible for everyone. Both of these concepts were also embodied in the structure of careers:

> Historically, the middle class in America prospered because it did not depose any identifiable social groups or compete for a fixed and scarce amount of wealth. Americans were consumer oriented, sensitive to the expanding possibilities of popular demand, and they expressed less fear about overcrowded professions and restricted white-collar occupations than did the English. The middle class in America grew, metaphorically speaking, by piling layer upon layer. An individual or group sought to cultivate a new clientele, to develop a new service or function, to apply a skill in a new kind of way, and enlarge the social need for an occupation. 5

Within the life of the middle class there has been, ideally, no limits to growth. America was open and free for the individual to develop as much as she or he could. Psychology arose partially to

account for failure, and partially to help cultivate the ego necessary to "push upward and onward." However, as Benjamin Nelson points out:

> Linked with Protestant religion of self-reliance and the "instrumental activism" in American Puritanism, it is typical that once it was decided to organize the overcoming of neurosis, no cultural limits were placed upon the achievement of a liberation from sin and guilt in relation to the superego. 6

The trend toward moral individualism can be regarded as simply a completion of this liberation, which at the same time completes the economic and political revolution set in motion by liberal utilitarian ideology in the eighteenth century.

American tradition has contained, therefore, a "culture of limitlessness." The American middle class in particular has never had to conceive of scarcity, deprivation and unfilfilled needs. America has always been seen and presented itself as a land of abundance - it has no history of plague, famine, real want, and has not known invasion, external conquest or domination. The quest for self has been set in motion in this decade precisely because this tradition has now been challenged. America is now being confronted with an energy crisis, inflation, a shrinking stature in world affairs, and economic stagnation; in short, by a spectre of scarcity, which in turn is making the reality of external limits more and more socially transparent. These limits have for some time now been felt with regard to career expansion and job satisfation. Hence the pursuit of these goals have been displaced to a realizable realm: the commitment to self.

The traditional commitment of the middle class in America has been to one's calling and to one's family. It has been argued that it is the erosion of legitimacy in these two spheres that has been the central element behind the changing values. In this sense, the long term erosion of religion is not an important clue to the immediate situation because one of the anomalies about North America that sets it apart from most European countries is that the United States has never had the legitimate institution of religious authority, one which has embodied or served as the foyer of morality. As Edward Tiryakian has pointed out, the absence of such a central religious institution means that at the societal level the United States has not had an institutionalized or institutionally-grounded moral system. Contrary, therefore, to the interpretation that America has been unstable:

> ...is that, during the entire historical experience of the United States, the moral system, by virtue of not having a specific religious institutional grounding, has been diffused in various sectors of society to a significantly larger extent than in other societies, hence that the United States is one of the least anomic modern societies. ...the United States might be seen as exceedingly viable because its moral system has never been taken for granted or seen as well delimited, because its moral system has been institutionally extensive rather than specific or intensive. 7

With the erosion of institutional and political legitimation, morality therefore becomes ideologically situated in the individual. It is ridiculous to suggest, as Lasch does, however, that this leads to an anti-social individual, for the very belief itself is a social derivation. This is why Thomas Luckmann refers to the trend toward

selfism as "the invisible religion," the replacement of the institutional specialization of religion by a new social form of religion (although, referring back to Tiryakian's remarks, it is possible to suggest that religion in America has always borne an invisible characteristic). However, as Luckmann points out:

> Institutional segmentation of the social structure significantly modifies the relation of the individual to the social order as a whole. His "social" existence comes to consist of a series of performances of highly anonymous specialized social roles. In such performances the person and the personal, biographical context of meaning become irrelevant. ...The missing (or poor) integration of the meaning of institutional performances into a system of subjective significance does not disturb the effective functioning of economic and political institutions. 8

This modern "sacred cosmos," argues Luckmann, appears to operate as a total ideology in that it provides an encompassing assortment of plausible ideas which supports the functioning of modern industrial societies, but without explicitly legitimating them. As well, he suggests, the new social form of religion does not appear to represent the vested interests of a particular social stratum and it is not articulated as a program of political and social action:

> While the new social form of religion supports the dehumanization of the social structure, it also "sacralizes" the (relative) liberation of human consciousness from the constraint of the latter. This liberation represents a historically unprecedented opportunity for the autonomy of personal life for "everybody." It also contains a serious danger - of motivating mass withdrawal into the "private sphere" while "Rome burns." On balance is this good or bad?

This is a question impossible to answer at this time. Philip Rieff has proferred a positive outlook to a facet that, in sociology at least,

generally bears negative connotations:

> ...the contemporary moral revolution is anti-political; more precisely, it serves the purposes of the present anti-politics, representing a calm and profoundly reasonable revolt of the private man against all doctrinal traditions urging the salvation of self through identification with the purposes of community.
>
> In its reasonableness, the triumph of the therapeutic cannot be viewed simply as a break with the established order of moral demand, but rather as a profound effort to end the tyranny of primary groups moral passion (operating first through the family) as the inner dynamic of social order. Crowded more and more together, we are learning to live more distantly from one another, in strategically varied and numerous contacts, rather than in the oppressive warmth of family and a few friends. 10

At the same time, however, moralizing has belonged to the ambitious middle range of society, although the locus is perhaps more ideological than structural. The attempt to assert a renewed status and control may result (and there is some evidence that this is already taking place) in a reassertion of conservative moralizing which will at the same time be utilized as an ideological justification for excluding certain segments of society from their newly claimed freedom. If it remains true, however, that the social structure no longer requires constraint from individuals, then the conservative reaction will remain for the most part unheeded, and the new morality of selfism will continue unabated.

The foregoing has isolated but a few of the many variables that have occasioned the phenomenon of selfism, and much further research is necessary before one can provide a thoroughly adequate analysis. The task of the sociologist is perhaps to attempt to stand back a little

further from one's own complicity in the situation, for it appears as though the recent critics have found it difficult to escape their own position, not only in the class structure, but also in fearing the loss of the legitimated status of truth bearer.

Perhaps, however, one should not even suggest that a "crisis" is at hand, for, as Alain Touraine points out:

> When we speak of crisis, we are looking at society from the point of view of the ruling forces; when we speak of transformation, we imply that we are studying the formation of a new cultural field, new relations, and new social conflicts. This directs our attention not only to the birth of new social movements but also to the shaping of new forms of power. A crisis is not a situation; it is an incapacity to act. 11

Within the context of sociology itself, perhaps the current situation will serve to open up renewed and innovating thoughts regarding the relationship between the individual and society.

*Notes to Chapter VI:*

[1] Samuel Z. Klausner, *The Quest for Self-Control*, New York: The Free Press, 1973, 366.

[2] Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry*, Berkeley: University of Californa Press, 1974.

[3] Review of *The Psychological Society*, *New York Times Book Review*, April 23, 1978.

[4] William Warren Bartley, III, *Werner Erhard. The transformation of a man: The founding of est*, New York: C.N. Potter, Inc., 1978, xx. Bartley neglects in this passage to mention it is also the story about how Erhard became a millionaire selling transformation to others.

[5] Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1976, 38.

[6] Benjamin Nelson, "Self-Images and Systems of Spiritual Direction in the History of European Civilization," in *The Quest for Self-Control*, 70.

[7] Edward A. Tiryakian, "Neither Marx nor Durkheim...Perhaps Weber," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1975, 81:1, 1-33, 12.

[8] Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974, 95-6.

[9] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968, 242-3.

[10] Alain Touraine, "Crisis or Transformation?" in *Beyond the Crisis*, edited by Norman Birnbaum, London: Oxford University Press, 1977, 17-45, 44.

Appendix A

*Methodological Appendix.*

> Because of the necessary ambiguities of the process of communication, the content analyst cannot assume that he is studying the thinking of the reading public... Rather, one studies what writers write and uses it as a biased index of what readers read. Content analysis of literature is not a substitute for interviewing a population, but it can be a source for preliminary checking of hunches. 1

The books chosen for this study have all been best sellers, since this is a basic requirement for their inclusion. Best sellers were chosen because of the argument put forth by Schneider and Dornbusch:

> It seems reasonable to believe that books bought by large numbers of persons are likely to have content which in some way corresponds with the dispositions of the book-buying public. One must suppose that books are bought as a result of pressure exerted upon the individual, as by advertising or coercion from friends. The books might then stay unread, attractive or unattractive additions to living-room bookshelves. Although we cannot prove the point, we wish to make it clear our general assumption that these books were read and that they had a direct thematic appeal which gave them an advantage in competition with other volumes.
>
> Even with this assumption, the technique of content analysis by itself obviously provides no direct access to the meanings assigned to an author's words by his readers. But there is not likely to be great disharmony between an author's views and those of his readers when they invest their own funds to purchase his books. ... People appear to expose themselves to those offerings of the mass media which coincide with their predilections. 2

The best seller lists of *The Publishers' Weekly*, authoritative journal of the publishing world, provided the source. The time span selected was from January 1970 to May 1979. The criteria used was that the book must have appeared on the best seller list for at least four consecutive weeks.

For the purposes of this study, "self-help" refers to those books which addressed directly to the reader for actions toward self-improvement. The intent was to have books oriented toward adults which stress self-help in general, rather than any specific theme, with two exceptions. The analysis is therefore limited to general self-help books, eliminating works which emphasize sex, diet, or religion. A future analysis of contemporary religious inspirational books would be useful to complement this study and the earlier one by Schneider and Dornbusch. An analysis of popular sex manuals has been done by Dennis Brissett and Lionel Lewis.[3]

The two exceptions to the aforementioned criteria are directed to specific groups but were selected for the following reasons. The inclusion of Dr. Thomas Gordon's *Parent Effectiveness Training* was deemed important because of the hypothesis that it would reflect current values in its advice on child-rearing; a hypothesis which proved correct. Dr. George Sheehan's *Running & Being, The Total Experience* was selected not only because running has become the fitness craze of the decade, but because it becomes apparent that there is more to it than mere physical fitness. For example, a recent article reported that therapists

are finding a connection between running and divorce, arguing that significant personality changes are taking place in joggers and runners, affecting their marriages.[4] Also, by labelling the book *The Total Experience*, Dr. Sheehan is purporting to give advice on more than physical fitness, hence his book has been included as a plausible addition to the overall findings.

Of the books selected, four of the authors had two books on the best seller list. It was felt that in the event of value discrepancies in the books, only one book per author should be included because the weight of the analysis could have been off-balanced. Thus the following were excluded:

Wayne W. Dyer, *Pulling Your Own Strings*
Robert J. Ringer, *Winning Through Intimidation*
Michael Korda, *Power!*
Harold H. Bloomfield, *Happiness: The T.M. Program, Psychiatry and Enlightenment.*

The following is a chronological list of books analyzed for content, in the order that they appeared on the best seller lists:

Thomas A. Harris, M.D., *I'm O.K. -- You're O.K.*, New York: Avon Books, 1973.
Mildren Newman & Bernard Berkowitz with Jean Owen, *How to Be Your Own Best Friend*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1974.
Harry Browne, *How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973.
Manual J. Smith, *When I say no, I feel guilty*, New York: Bantam Books, 1975.
Harold H. Bloomfield, M.D., Michael Peter Cain, Dennis T. Jaffe and Robert B. Kory, *TM Discovering Inner Energy and Overcoming Stress*, New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1975.
Dr. Thomas Gordon, *Parent Effectiveness Training*, New York: New American Library, 1975.
Michael Korda, *Power! How to Get It, How to Use It*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1976.
Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *Your Erroneous Zones*, New York: Avon Books, 1977.
Robert J. Ringer, *Looking Out for #1*, New York: A Fawcett Crest Book, 1977.
Dr. George Sheehan, *Running & Being, The Total Experience*, New York: Warner Books, 1978.

The coding categories (listed in Appendix B) follow a similar format to the study done by Schneider and Dornbusch. These categories were, however, extensively revised and simplified to meet different time, labor and research requirements. Schneider and Dornbusch assigned summary scores for each category. The present research eliminates the scoring process, using instead numerous examples to back up the categorizing. This was possible because of the limited number of books being read. The analysis is, therefore, more qualitative than quantitative. Also, the approach is thematic rather than, say, using frequency counts. It was felt that frequency counts would limit the scope of the analysis, whereas utilizing a more textual approach would allow the researcher to extract the meaning of the book in relation to the wider culture. As such, a more "symptomatic" reading was utilized, treating the books as indicators of certain cultural phenomena.

The codes used are principally those of connotation rather than denotation, inasmuch as they attempt, through the analysis, to go beyond the literal meaning of the text and to refer also to the implied meanings that must take into account the dominant meaning patterns and current understandings of the social world. The coding categories therefore remained open-ended.

*Notes to Appendix A:*

[1] Sanford M. Dornbusch, "Popular Psychology: A Content Analysis of Contemporary Inspirational Nonreligious Books," in *The Quest for Self-Control*, edited by Samuel Z. Klausner, New York: The Free Press, 1973, 126-140, 126.

[2] Louis Schneider and Sanford M. Dornbusch, *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, 156.

[3] Dennis Brissett and Lionel S. Lewis, "The Big Toe, Armpits, and Natural Perfume: Notes of the Production of Sexual Ecstasy," *Transaction*, January/February 1979, 63-72.

[4] *Maclean's Magazine*, "Marriage Running Down," August 6, 1979, 43.

Appendix B

*Coding categories used in content analysis.*

The following categories were utilized in the form of asking questions of each book, hence the alphabetical listing refer to the type of responses desired, the coding was not limited to these responses. Where the responses did 'fit' the given ones, comments from each book were added to expand on the actual meaning intended by the authors.

1. Stated function of the book:
   (e.g.: some possible responses, could be any, of one of the following)
   a. shows the reader how to "grow"
   b. leads to self-understanding
   c. helps the reader achieve social adjustment
   d. helps the reader find happiness
   e. helps the reader achieve success
   f. helps relieve stress

2. The "ideal" personality is described as:

3. The "problematic" character is described as:

4. The human being is analogized to:
   a. a computer
   b. some other machine
   c. an animal

5. The most important thing is life is:
   a. anything you want it to be
   b. friends, family
   c. success
   d. money

6. The basic task in life should be:
   a. love of self
   b. love of others
   c. success in business
   d. social adjustment

7. Human beings are naturally:
   a. happy
   b. free
   c. social
   d. alienated

8. Our essential nature is:
   a. good
   b. good but subject to error
   c. evil but perfectible
   d. evil

9. Morality is regarded as:
   a. an individual assessment
   b. a community assessment
   c. God-given, hence universal

10. Freedom is described as:

11. Love is described as:

12. Happiness is described as:
   a. growth
   b. self-understanding
   c. contentment
   d. social adjustment

13. Happiness in this world:
   a. can be expected by all who want it
   b. can be expected by most
   c. can be expected by only a few
   d. cannot be attained

14. As an individual, one is:
   a. perfect the way one is
   b. with some changes can be perfect
   c. with hard work can become perfect

15. Level of "external" aspirations should be:
   a. without limitation
   b. according to one's capabilities
   c. moderately high
   d. one should be satisfied with what one is and has

16. Self-denial is:
   a. unhealthy
   b. unnecessary
   c. healthy
   d. necessary

17. Attitudes toward relationships are:
    a. self comes first
    b. self and others equally
    c. others come first

18. Obligations are considered to be:
    a. enslaving
    b. that which holds society together

19. Dependency relationships are viewed as:
    a. a matter of choice
    b. unnatural and should be changed as soon as possible
    c. a natural and inevitable part of society

20. Dominating relationships are viewed as:
    a. a matter of choice
    b. unnatural
    c. natural

21. Feelings and emotions are:
    a. attitudes of choice and can be controlled at will
    b. natural reactions and should be expressed accordingly
    c. should be controlled as much as possible
    d. are uncontrollable

22. Guilt, worry, depression, anxiety, etc., are caused by:
    a. self
    b. others
    c. institutional life
    d. enculturation

23. Such feelings can be overcome by:
    a. changing the self
    b. changing others
    c. changing society
    d. seeking professional help

24. Problems are caused, and can be rectified, by:
    a. self
    b. others
    c. society
    d. supernatural forces

25. Change takes place at the level of:
    a. the individual
    b. society

26. Limits attached to change:
    a. no limits
    b. limits set by self
    c. limits set by social situation
    d. limits set by psychological determinism

27. One should:
    a. actively seek change
    b. be open and receptive to change
    c. resist change

28. Systems of meanings and rules:
    a. are self-imposed illusions
    b. are culturally-imposed illusions
    c. can be controlled by individuals
    d. are outside of individual control

29. The past, present, and future are:
    a. all important
    b. only the past is important
    c. only the future is important
    d. only the present is important

30. History:
    a. has no meaning or purpose
    b. has an order beyond individual or social will
    c. can be controlled, subject to human will

31. Sources of testimonials or case histories:
    a. from all social strata
    b. mainly one class
    c. are popular heros
    d. other

32. Examples used seem to be directed toward:
    a. everyone
    b. one social class
    c. one particular group
    d. one particular sex

33. Society is headed toward:
    a. destruction
    b. destruction unless proper route is taken
    c. has never been in better shape

Appendix C

*A note on the authors.*

Over half of the authors of the books analyzed trained in the field of psychology or psychiatry. Harold Bloomfield is a psychiatrist and Clinical Director of Psychiatry at the Institute of Psychophysiological Medicine in El Cajon, California. Dr. Bloomfield's co-authors are Michael Peter Cain, an artist and professor of art at Maharishi International University; Dennis Jaffe, a social scientist at Yale and presently in the Department of Psychiatry at U.C.L.A.; and Robert Kory is Vice-President of Expansion for the American Foundation for the Science of Creative Intelligence (a *TM* establishment) in Los Angeles.

Dr. Wayne Dyer is a psychotherapist and professor at St. John's University in New York. Dr. Thomas Gordon is a licensed clinical psychologist, a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and a past present of the California State Psychological Association. He was a consultant to the 1970 White House Conference on Children and consulting psychologist for NBC's TV show for children and parents, "Watch Your Child." He is also the founder and president of Effectiveness Training Associates, a nationwide training program for parents, teachers, and others working with children. Dr. Thomas Harris is a psychiatrist specializing in Transactional Analysis and works closely with Eric Berne.

Mildred Newman and her co-author Bernard Berkowitz are both practising psychoanalysts and certified psychologists in New York City. Ms Newman trained with Theodore Reik. Their third co-author, Jean Owen, has an M.A. in Philosophy and does audience research for television, and is a writer and editor for an opinion research organization (which no doubt has much to do with the fact that *How to Be Your Own Best Friend* sold more than all the other books except Harris's).

Dr. Manuel Smith is a clinical-experimental psychologist and therapist in private practise, and also an assistant clinical professor of psychology at U.C.L.A. Dr. George Sheehan, the author of *Running & Being* is a cardiologist and the father of twelve children. He describes himself as being a "nervous, shy, noncombatant who has no feeling for people."

The last three authors describe themselves as "self-made men." Michael Korda, however, has a university education; he is the Vice-President of a major publishing house. Robert Ringer describes himself as a two-time failure who is now successful at selling books. Harry Browne is an investment counsellor who has "found ways of earning money to live well without becoming a slave to responsibilities." He does not acknowledge the present social situation that makes this possible.

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