



## NEW BEGINNING: THE COUNTER CULTURE IN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

**JEAN-DANIEL COLLOMB**  
*Université Jean Moulin, Lyon*

Although it appears to have petered out in the early 1970s, the counter culture of the previous decade modified many aspects of American life beyond recognition. As a matter of fact, there is a wealth of evidence to suggest that its transformative effects are still being felt in American society today. The ideas nurtured by the counter culture have deeply affected the institution of the family, the education system, and the definition of gender roles, to name only the most frequently debated cases. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that American environmentalism was no exception. Indeed, the American environmental movement as it has unfolded since the 1970s bears little resemblance to its earlier version. Up until the 1960s, American environmentalism had been dominated by small-sized, rather exclusive and conservative organizations, like the Sierra Club, whose main focus had been wilderness preservation. By contrast, contemporary American environmentalism has now turned into a mass movement whose membership ranges from old-style nature lovers to radical anti-capitalist activists. Contemporary environmentalists now concern themselves not just with wilderness preservation but also with quality-of-life issues, the effects of high consumption and of the so-called American way of life, and pollution. Such a shift in style and objectives begs several important questions: in what way did the counter culture of the 1960s reshape and redefine American environmentalism? More important still, why were the ideas advocated by the counter-culturalists so easily integrated into the environmental agenda? Put differently, one may wonder whether the *rapprochement* between counter-cultural thinking and environmental activism was inevitable. Answering these questions may help one identify and grasp the philosophical meaning of the counter culture, and its implications within the larger context of American society.

*Rich in Means, Poor in Ends: The Counter Culture against the Techno-Industrial Order*

First and foremost it seems worth probing the counter-cultural indictment of technological progress and its consequences. In the main, counter-cultural reservations with regards to technological development originated in the 1950s as several prominent American intellectuals voiced concerns about the advent of what came to be called the technological society. The basic idea that underpinned the critique of technological progress in the 1950s was that a rationalizing—and ultimately debilitating—process was at work in American society, actively reshaping many fundamental aspects of human and social life. For instance, authors like William H. Whyte, who published a much-discussed book entitled *Organization Man* in 1956, and David Riesman, with *The Lonely Crowd* in 1950, explored the repercussions of the bureaucratization of the workplace both in the public and private sectors. They both contended that social conformity and other-directedness, rather than self-reliance and creativity, were becoming the norm in American society. American people, in other words, were becoming a more submissive, less autonomous, and more gregarious lot. In a book entitled *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized Society*, which went on to influence many New Left activists and counter-culturists, Paul Goodman portrayed the post-WWII industrial order as a frustrating and sterile social environment which made it very difficult indeed for young people to grow up and mature into free and responsible adults. Under the normalizing effect of technological rationality, ideological and social conformity, and consumerism—the combination of which he dubbed “the organized system”—Goodman claimed that the young Americans of the 1950s were apt to become apathetic and cynical, and were hence unfit for life in a genuinely free and democratic society.

Such misgivings about life in modern America were more broadly conceptualized in Herbert Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. As the subtitle of the book suggests, the German-born philosopher focused on advanced industrial society which he defined as follows:

The analysis is focused on advanced industrial society, in which the technical apparatus of production and distribution (with an increasing sector of automation) functions, not as the sum-total of mere instruments which can be isolated from their social and political effects, but rather as a system which determines *a priori* the product of the apparatus as well as the operations of servicing and extending it. In this society, the productive apparatus tends to become totalitarian to the extent to which it determines not only the socially needed

occupations, skills, and attitudes, but also individual needs and aspirations. It thus obliterates the opposition between the private and public existence, between individual and social needs. Technology serves to institute new, more effective, and more pleasant forms of social control and social cohesion. [MARCUSE 1964 : 13]

Marcuse asserted that the United States, as the self-described leader of the free world, spearheaded a world which was free in name only. Interestingly, Marcuse also suggested that scientific and technological progress had turned out to be the very instruments of domination that precluded individual freedom by replacing it with false freedoms which eventually proved to be merely engineered behaviors in a highly standardized social environment.

As a result, all these thinkers—Marcuse, Whyte, Goodman, not to mention C. Wright Mills—came to wield tremendous influence among counter-culturists and in New Left circles. For one thing, the works written by those social critics provided the counter culture with part of its ideological justification by singling out some of the causes for the existential *malaise* that seemed to scourge many young American adults in the 1950s and 60s. In addition to their hard-hitting critique of the dominant social and ideological patterns in American life, authors like Paul Goodman also set forth social and cultural alternatives of their own from which the counter-culturists could draw their inspiration. Small wonder, then, that the rejection of the techno-industrial order lay at the heart of Theodore Roszak's epoch-making and seminal work on the counter culture, which was published in the year 1970. It should be noted that the subtitle of *The Making of a Counter Culture* points directly to issues related to technological progress: *Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*. Roszak bemoaned the clout wielded by technical experts of every stripe in advanced industrial society. Their supremacy, he warned, made for a deadlocked society in which behaviors, opinions, and tastes were manufactured by government and corporate interests. To Roszak, the counter culture provided a possible way out of the debilitating techno-industrial order, a deeply needed reaction against it. Hence his desire "to assert the primacy of the non-intellective powers" in an age when scientific experts held sway [ROSZAK 1970 : 54-55]. As they took exception to the purely scientific worldview which Roszak claimed pervaded the age, hippies and counter-culturists were those who were bold enough to drop out of the highly organized and integrated system of mainstream American society. In such circumstances, drug consumption could be seen as an attack on the so-called "linear thinking" of the technicians—although it is worth noting that Roszak was well aware of the limitations of such a position [159].

Thus one may argue that the counter-culturists did not simply take issue with traditional values and behaviors such as patriarchy and social hierarchies but also, and most importantly, with the age-old American faith in technological progress. In order better to grasp the significance of this position, a word needs to be said about the works of French philosopher Jacques Ellul, whom Roszak quotes twice in his seminal piece on the counter culture [6 & 231]. To Ellul, technology is a fundamentally ambivalent phenomenon. It does not apply to automation only. Indeed, it may also apply to all aspects of human life and all sorts of activities that do not involve the use of machinery. For example, in *La technique ou l'enjeu du siècle*, published in 1954, he defines managerial action, which was to become so central to the liberal policies carried out by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations of the 1960s, as nothing more than the application of technology to social, economic and administrative life [ELLUL 1954 : 9]. Ellul is quick to point out that before the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment, technology had been integrated into a larger social and cultural framework which imposed serious restrictions upon it. Ellul argues, however, that from the advent of the modern scientific worldview onwards, Western men and women have gradually lost the upper hand over technological development and have made themselves increasingly subservient to it. That is why Ellul claims that in the modern scheme of things technology is no longer merely instrumental since it tends to foist its structure and rhythm upon human life and thinking. Put simply, Ellul asserts that there is such a thing as a technological *Weltanschauung*. As such it does not make much sense to characterize technology as a neutral and value-free phenomenon.

This leads Ellul to claim that technology is the main determinant of life in advanced industrialized countries such as the United States or France, indeed, so much so that the process of technological innovation is set to “algebrize the world”:

Le système technicien implique une utilisation universelle qui vient se plaquer sans s’y enraciner, sur la diversité des cultures et des civilisations. La culture ne peut pas être universelle. Parce que l’homme ne l’est pas. Il est d’un lieu, d’une race, d’un passé, d’une formation, d’un temps spécifique. Le fait de l’universel technicien exclut la possibilité d’une culture. Mais cela ne veut pas dire que tout ce que l’on a jusqu’ici considéré comme culture est simplement *anéanti*. Non point, chaque partie est rendue seulement obsolète. Elle subsiste en dessous de l’Universel technicien, sans avoir plus ni utilité ni sens. [ELLUL 1988 : 274-275]

Ellul interprets the triumph of technological progress in advanced industrial societies as a process of rationalization of all aspects of human life in order to achieve ever greater efficiency. The goal is to pave the way for a well-ordered society organized along purely rational lines, and in which all human passions are kept in check so that the technological machinery may function smoothly.

Central to Ellul's critique of the technological society is the notion that the pervasive domination of technological rationality precludes genuine human freedom and spawns endemic existential *malaise*. There is a simple reason for this, Ellul points out:

[...] pour le moment, l'homme est encore un être irrationnel. Ce fut l'erreur tragique du 18<sup>ème</sup> et du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle de penser que l'homme était d'abord un être de raison et qu'il fallait supprimer tout l'irrationnel. L'homme est un être de passion, de sang et de chair, de pulsion et de désir. Quand il vit dans un cadre purement rationnel, il est très malheureux. Il lui faut alors des compensations. [ELLUL 2008 : 79]

To make matters worse, Ellul adds, the technological society provides no higher purpose for its members as ends are systematically overridden by means. Efficiency, in other words, is sought for the sake of efficiency; it becomes an end in itself [81]. In the process, life is deprived of a higher meaning, spiritual or otherwise. In this regard, Ellul's remarks on the *ennui* and aimlessness prevalent in the technological society echo Paul Goodman's argument that maturing into a responsible and resourceful adult is a tall order in a society which does not give its young men and women worthy goals to pursue.

Jacques Ellul's critique of the technological society seems to account for many of the aspirations of the counter-culturists of the 1960s; their disdain towards bureaucratic jobs, their refusal to embrace the scientific worldview, their emphasis upon sexual pleasure and self-expression, their reluctance to abide by the rules established by mainstream society, and their plea for a simple life. Given the counter culture's opposition to the ways of the technological society, it is no wonder that some of its proponents set out to redefine the desirable relationship between man and nature.

### ***Fighting the American Prometheus: The Counter Culture Goes Green***

The reservations expressed by Marcuse *et al.* about the effects of technological progress meant that some counterculturists would inevitably

try to put forward an environmental message of their own. It was evident to these counterculturists that the modern industrial development model rested upon a radical and wholesale transformation of the natural order. In the larger context of the technological society, nature is seen as no more than a pool of resources to be exploited, improved, and reshaped by technological devices and processes. From an environmental perspective, the techno-industrial order amounts to a large-scale re-ordering of nature along rational lines to suit the needs of industrial production and development. As already pointed out, the rationalizing process described by the likes of Jacques Ellul and Theodore Roszak does not apply solely to the realm of human activities. It also aims to bend nature to a rational order defined by humans.

Interestingly, many countercultural thinkers appear to have had an environmental message to convey. This is not to suggest that Paul Goodman and Herbert Marcuse were environmentalists in a strict sense. They were not, but in more ways than one their works are relevant to environmental thinking. In *One-Dimensional Man*, for instance, Marcuse makes it clear that nature also falls victim to the unrelenting development of the industrial complex:

The industrial society which makes technology and science its own is organized for the ever-more-effective domination of man and nature, for the ever-more-effective utilization of its resources. [MARCUSE 1964 : 30]

Likewise, Theodore Roszak chose to underscore the environmental damage wrought by the consumer society opposed by the counter-culturists. Roszak deplored the growing chasm separating members of the technological society from the natural world. In the process, he added, modern Americans were becoming deaf to the lessons of nature:

The trouble is, we *don't* trust to the way of the world. We have learned—in part from the accelerating urbanization of the race, in part from the objective mode of consciousness so insistently promulgated by Western science, in part, too, perhaps, from the general Christian disparagement of nature—to think of nature as a pit of snares and sorrows. Nature is that which must be taken unsentimentally in hand and made liveable by feverish effort, ideally by replacing more and more of it with man-made substitutes. So then, perhaps someday we shall inhabit a totally plastic world, clinically immaculate and wholly predictable. To live in such a completely programmed environment becomes more and more our conception of rational order, of security. [ROZAK 1970 : 249-250]

Roszak went on to endorse a more holistic and ecological perception of the natural world at odds with the environmentally harmful ways of the technological society. Embracing nature could be a way for American radicals to escape the supremacy of technological progress and the belief in man's ability to control and direct natural processes and resources at will.

No author better illustrates the environmental message of the 1960s than Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring*, published in 1962. Carson was a marine biologist with an interest in ecology. The publication of *Silent Spring* made front-page news as it exposed the dangers of the widespread use of pesticides both for human health and for ecosystem health. For several decades, the chemical industry had been a success story in the United States as it greatly enhanced, among many other things, agricultural productivity. It was also useful for a multitude of industrial and commercial purposes. As the post-WWII economy boomed, the use of pesticides and other hazardous chemicals increased accordingly. Meanwhile not much attention was paid to the harmful repercussions of the so-called "synthetic revolution". Yet Rachel Carson, for one, gradually came to the realization that pesticides and other chemicals were not unequivocally good. Observing ecosystems at close range, she saw that the synthetic revolution could have many little-known (and seldom advertised) unintended consequences [LEAR 1997 : 312-338]. In other words, she refused to partake of the gospel of progress which had captured the imagination of most of her contemporaries.

It should be noted that *Silent Spring* was not an onslaught against science *per se*. Indeed Carson, a life-long scientist, couched her criticism of pesticide use in ecological terms. What she did call into question, however, was America's unflinching faith in scientific and technological progress. She urged self-restraint on her fellow Americans because, as she saw it, it was necessary that they should adapt to the needs of ecosystems instead of trying to force pre-conceived, pseudo rational patterns on them. *Silent Spring* taught America the simple ecological lesson that, from an environmental perspective, there was no such thing as a free meal, and that technological progress ought to be limited and constrained because it could rapidly turn out to do more harm than good. The complete control of nature by human agency was to remain forever elusive. Anyhow it was not a desirable end to pursue, Carson suggested. Her call for self-restraint was a lesson in ecological humility in an age and a nation almost wholly committed to the gospel of technological progress. Science and technology ought not to be seen as infallible, Carson warned:

The 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed

that nature exists for the convenience of man. The concepts and practices of applied entomology for the most part date from that Stone Age of science. It is our alarming misfortune that so primitive a science has armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons, and that in turning them against the insects it has also turned them against the earth. [CARSON 1962 : 257]

Small wonder Paul B. Sears has dubbed ecology “a subversive subject” [WORSTER 1977 : 58]. Even though Rachel Carson was no counter-culturist herself, her best-seller set the stage for the questioning of the environmental destruction wrought by industry in the 1960s and 1970s.

Such a trend was reinforced by further developments during the 1960s. The seamy side of technological progress was laid bare by the endemic pollution problems that plagued urban and rural areas throughout the United States at the time. After all, urban sprawl, air and water pollution, smog in the Los Angeles area, noise pollution, and traffic congestion, to name but a few of the fast developing environmental problems of the age, were all unintended consequences of industrial progress. In the 1960s, those trends largely contributed to undermining America’s unflinching faith in progress and prompted many counter-culturists to feel even more estranged from the American way of life. This growing environmental awareness was stoked by several environmental catastrophes, such as the burning of the Cuyhoga river in Ohio or the Santa Barbara oil spill off the coast of California, which, in marked contrast to previous similar episodes, were broadcast on television, thereby drawing the attention of millions of Americans. What was more, the US military’s massive use of chemicals like Agent Orange during the Vietnam war caused major environmental damage. In parallel, the anti-nuclear movement was quick to underline the absurdity of a man-made technological breakthrough that had created the conditions of human annihilation. Likewise, the nuclear industry, which had strong support from the government and from most Americans in the 1960s, came under more and more scrutiny under the pressure of a small number of dedicated anti-nuclear activists who underscored health and security risks. In 1964, a local organization managed to defeat a plan to build America’s first nuclear plant at Bodega Bay, California, near the San Andreas fault. Here again, these activists were taking issue with the reassuring tone of government and industry and argued that technological development could pose serious threats to human health and the health of the land. Anti-nuclear activism in the United States intensified in the 1970s [SMITH : 96-107]. To be sure, technological progress did not recede to the margins of American life in the 1960s. It remained the prime mover of the



American economy. It did continue to receive government support and highly favorable coverage in the general media. Yet, from the 1960s on, a growing number of jarring voices endeavored to make themselves heard. Such a change of mood goes a long way towards explaining why there was an environmental dimension to the counter culture.

Witnessing environmental damage caused by high consumption and large-scale industrial activities led many counter-culturists to take a swipe at the American way of life and its strong emphasis on consumption on environmental grounds—even though it was by no means the only reason why they took such a stand. It was not very long before many radicals became aware that the development of the consumer society—the twentieth-century version of the American dream—was predicated upon technological innovation. Put simply, it was the techno-industrial complex, by delivering cheap goods and services on an extremely large scale, which made it possible for the consumer society to develop and thrive. The rub is that a high standard of living usually comes at a heavy environmental price. It often entails resource depletion and pollution; waste disposal quickly becomes a headache. In a book entitled *Communitas*, written with his brother Percival in 1947 (which attracted much attention in counter-cultural circles in the 1960s) Paul Goodman wrote about “the absurdity of the American Standard of Living”:

[...] with this technology of choice, we have an economy of abundance, a standard of living that is in many ways too high—goods and money that are literally thrown away or given away—that could underwrite sweeping reforms and pilot experiments. Yet our cultural climate and the state of ideas are such that our surplus, of means and wealth, leads only to extravagant repetitions of the ‘air-conditioned nightmare’ as Henry Miller called it, a pattern of life that used to be unsatisfactory and now, by the extravagance, becomes absurd. [GOODMAN 1947 : 11]

Paul and Percival Goodman claimed that America’s high standard of living makes no environmental sense. It destroys landscapes and natural resources and serves no higher social good. Starting from the same assumption, some counter-culturists set out to devise more environmentally and socially benign living arrangements. After all, finding alternatives to the consumer society and to the techno-industrial order was what the New Left and the counter culture were principally about.

The example of the hippies’ experiments in communal living immediately springs to mind. More often than not, there was an environmental dimension to the many communal efforts undertaken by hippies in the 1960s and beyond. By going back to the land, these counter-

cultural communitarians sought to live the simple life—away from what they perceived to be the wastefulness and mindlessness of the consumer society. They were unwilling to be part of huge bureaucracies, whether public or private, which required the large-scale exploitation of natural resources in order to function properly. They believed that living off leisurely and non-intensive cultivation of the land on the margins of mainstream society would enable them to withdraw from the techno-industrial complex they rejected and not be at odds with nature. The historian of the 1960s in the United States, Terry H. Anderson, goes so far as to characterize the hippies as environmentalists in their own right:

Hippies were environmentalists. They did not invent the movement, of course, for many citizens became concerned about pollution throughout the decade, but hippies boosted ecology and practiced such values. In Eugene, cultural activists created Cyclists Revolting Against Pollution, CRAP, “clean-air guerrillas” who drove in groups “to show people there are ways to move other than foul automobiles spewing death.” But more often they established “people’s parks.”  
[ANDERSON 1995 : 266]

The point, of course, is not to argue that the counter culture and environmentalism were one and the same movement or that the Movement dealt principally with environmental issues. Rather, it seems fair to state that given the extent of the counter-cultural disaffiliation from the mainstream faith in technological progress and from America’s addiction to material consumption, it was inevitable that environmental concerns would be added to the counter-cultural agenda. This trend was confirmed with publications like *Whole Earth Catalog* and *Mother Earth News*, which, although by no means devoted solely to environmental issues (at least as far as *Whole Earth Catalog* was concerned), featured products and ideas that would make it easier for readers to achieve a sustainable and environmentally-friendly way of life [GOTTLIEB 1993 : 99]. Counter-cultural pleas for the simple life were continued well into the 1970s. The poet *qua* environmentalist Gary Snyder, who had been involved in the beat generation and in the hippie movement, published a collection of poems entitled *Turtle Island* in 1974. In his poems, Snyder attempted to fuse ecological thinking and Buddhist ideas, and placed a premium upon simple living [SNYDER 1974]. In addition, the 1970s also witnessed the birth of a movement called ecofeminism. As the name suggests, it was an attempt to weld the feminist critique of male domination with the environmental agenda. Ecofeminists contend that the environmental crisis with which the world has to grapple is in fact the outcome of male domination. They see the spreading of “feminine” values as a potential solution to avert ecological collapse [MERCHANT 2005 : 193-

222]. The advent of ecofeminism offers yet another illustration of the environmental potential of the counter culture.

*The Counter Culture Lives On: Reshaping the American Environmental Movement*

As the title of this article suggests, the American environmental movement was profoundly modified after the 1960s and bore little resemblance to early-20<sup>th</sup> century conservationism. The new objectives and values of American environmentalism took center stage on Earth Day in 1970. Earth Day was a nationwide event organized by the Democratic Senator for Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson, with a view to making the general public aware of the environmental problems facing the United States. This event was a huge success; it received a lot of media coverage and millions of people attended [OPIE 1998 : 431-433]. From the perspective of the history of American environmentalism, Earth Day seems to mark a turning point as wilderness preservation featured less prominently than issues related to pollution. Issues of air and water pollution, overpopulation, and pesticide use were debated at length while wilderness preservation, hitherto the mainstay of US environmentalism, took a back seat. As Robert Gottlieb has pointed out, it was "tied to the enormous surge of interest in quality-of-life and environmental issues in the late 1960s" [GOTTLIEB 1993 : 105]. In other words, the activism of the 1960s had created the conditions for heightened interest in environmental issues. It should be noted, however, that Earth Day was not a radical or even counter-cultural event. It was all-inclusive and rather middle-of-the-road but it also bore witness to a crucial shift in the American environmental movement. Symbolically, Earth Day kicked off the so-called "environmental decade" during which Congress passed a wealth of environmental laws both to address pollution and to further wilderness protection, especially in the state of Alaska [SHABECOFF 1993 : 129-148].

From the 1960s onwards, American environmentalists became more concerned with pollution, quality-of-life issues, and even social justice. As a rule, this had not been the case before. This sudden change did not sit well with some traditional conservationists who felt uncomfortable with the new activists joining the movement [GOTTLIEB 1993 : 107-108]. Old-style environmentalists feared, with good reason, that the objectives of the movement would be significantly altered in the process. They failed, however, to stem the tide. Thereafter the American environmental movement was to be actively reshaped by an influx of former counter-culturists and New Left activists. Former SDSer Tom Hayden, who sought to further the environmentalist agenda in California politics in the 1970s and

after, is a case in point. It should be borne in mind that these former counter-culturists came with ideological baggage of their own. They were not simply integrated into the existing framework. Instead, they gave the American environmental movement a new impetus by making it more critical of the social and economic *status quo*. Before the 1960s, environmental organizations like the Sierra Club had been rather conservative and exclusive clubs unwilling to antagonize the powers-that-be and never associated with radical politics. After the 1960s, for instance, the agenda of the Sierra Club was extended to include issues beyond wilderness preservation, which had originally been the Club's *raison d'être*. What was more, the Club became more assertive and more confrontational under the influence of its executive director David Brower—so much so in fact that he was forced to resign from his position in 1969 [COHEN 1988 : 395-434]. Yet, there was no turning back: the Sierra Club no longer concentrated solely on wilderness issues as demonstrated by its involvement in the anti-nuclear movement since the 1960s [MILLER 2009 : 46]. Such a change would hardly have been possible before the radical sixties.

Another case in point was Greenpeace. Although the organization was founded in Canada in 1971, several Americans were instrumental in its establishment. Moreover the early focus of Greenpeace was centered on US nuclear testing. In many respects, Greenpeace epitomizes the new kind of environmental activism that assumed center stage in the wake of the 1960s. The founders of Greenpeace were a heterogeneous crowd ranging from ex-civil rights activists and Quaker pacifists to counter-culturists. For all their disagreements—most notably with regards to style and drug consumption—the early members of Greenpeace coalesced around the idea that the type of activism that had been so prevalent during the 1960s ought to be used with a view to protecting the environment and protesting against the nuclear tests carried out by the American military. One could argue that the creation of Greenpeace was an attempt to fuse counter-cultural radicalism and ecology. The science of ecology and environmental activism, as some members of Greenpeace saw it, were radical in that they were a new and original means to call “the entire philosophical foundation of Western philosophy and civilization” into question [WEYLER 2004 : 49]. The point was that ecological thinking undermined the notion that man was a creature radically different from all other living beings. In point of fact, ecocentric conservationists like Aldo Leopold had already made it clear that in the biosphere everything was related to everything else and that, as a result, human communities ought to learn to live within and adapt to larger ecosystem communities instead of constantly attempting to take them over and remodel them at will [LEOPOLD 1949]. With the advent of Greenpeace, in

other words, the counter-cultural indictment of domination took on new environmental meaning, thus creating a common ground between political and cultural radicalism and ecology.

The influence of former counter-culturists also made itself felt when Deep Ecology was introduced in the United States in the 1980s. The proponents of Deep Ecology set out to question Judeo-Christian dualism and the notion that humans are separate from the rest of nature. They advocated a decentering of the human perspective and supported the advent of a new form of ethics whose goal was not human welfare *per se* but ecosystem health with man being but one member among many of the biotic communities he inhabited. Interestingly, American Deep Ecologists appear to have derived part of their inspiration from the radicalism of the 1960s. In a book entitled *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*, American Deep Ecologists Bill Devall and George Sessions drew up a list of authors, thinkers, and trends which had foreshadowed radical ecology. Among them featured Rachel Carson and, most importantly the counter culture's poet laureate Gary Snyder [DEVALL SESSIONS 94 : 25-26; 39]. As in many other fields counter-cultural ideas outlived the counter culture itself. Many former counter-culturists and New Left activists got actively involved in academia, education, and social work after the 1960s [O'NEILL 2001 : 79-109]. Environmental activism was no exception.

In *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, American historian Richard Hofstadter contended that Americans had historically been more inclined to embrace technological progress unquestioningly than their European counterparts. While he does acknowledge that many Europeans have been enthralled by the gospel of progress and that some Americans have indeed tried to resist technological hegemony—Henry David Thoreau in the mid-nineteenth century being a case in point—, Hofstadter contends that America's "widely shared contempt for the past" and its concomitant "passion for the future" had created the ideal conditions for the technological *ethos* to flourish in its midst [HOFSTADTER 1962 : 239-240]. If history is any guide, therefore, the counter-cultural critique of America's addiction to technological progress marks out the movement as a truly original social phenomenon. In a book he published recently, Morris Berman also singles out the counter culture as part of a minority American tradition that tends to be skeptical of technological progress [BERMAN 2011 : 30-33]. There is no question that the New Left and the counter culture did not focus upon the repercussions of technological progress and environmental issues exclusively. They did not. Yet the hippies' call for simple living and self-restraint is arguably one of the most radical and compelling arguments put

forward by the men and women committed to the Movement. In that respect, the environmental message of the 1960s highlights both the potential and the limitations of the counter culture. On the one hand, the environmental movement gained momentum from the 1960s onwards as more sympathizers joined in and as American environmentalists began to address a wider range of issues. Yet, on the other hand, consumer culture and faith in technological progress have undeniably retained their grip on the American psyche. Although there is no doubt that environmental consciousness has come into its own in the United States, the environmentally-friendly society many hippies craved has failed to materialize. Instead, Ronald Reagan's victorious campaign of 1980, which emphasized unlimited economic development—in marked contrast to Jimmy Carter's plea for moderation and simpler living—and did not seek to hide its hostility towards environmentalism, marked the triumph of the technological *ethos*. As a matter of fact, Reagan's lasting popularity serves to suggest that the counter culture represents no more than a minority tradition in American history.

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