

© The United Nations University, 1980
Printed in Japan

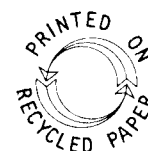
ISBN 92-808-0154-6

HSDRGPID-40/UNUP-154

**THE BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN:
A PARADIGM OF THE VALUES OF
THE MASS-CONSUMPTION SOCIETY**

Kimon Valaskakis

Director, GAMMA Research Group
Université de Montréal/McGill University
and Professor of Economics,
Université de Montréal, Canada



This paper by Kimon Valaskakis, assisted by E. Iris Martin, was first presented at the GPID III Meeting, Geneva, 2-8 October 1978. It can be considered as a contribution to the Dialogues sub-project of the GPID project.

Geneva, March 1980

Johan Galtung

It is being circulated in a pre-publication form to elicit comments from readers and generate dialogue on the subject at this stage of the research.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
I. The Basic Beliefs of the Mass-consumption Society	3
First Belief: Happiness is achieved primarily through the accumulation of things	3
Second Belief: Anthropocentrism	5
II. The Ideals of the Mass-consumption Society	8
First Ideal: Work Ethic	8
Second Ideal: Growth Ethic	10
III. The Preferences of the Mass-consumption Society	12
First Preference: The Cult of Newness	12
Second Preference: Property Rights	13
Third Preference: The Fragmentation of Needs	13
IV. Conclusion: The Implications and the Options	15
Notes	20

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to identify some of the salient features and philosophical assumptions of the mass-consumption society. It is based on continuing work by the GAMMA Research Group¹ on the definition of a "conserver society" and its points of divergence and convergence with our present "consumer society." It focuses primarily on the underlying values of the North American life style in an effort to understand the basic paradigm that seems to be the intellectual anchor of that life style. As such, it only briefly surveys the historical roots of this world view and instead concentrates primarily on making explicit the implicit value system that may explain the behaviour of the typical North American consumer who, for good or for ill, is becoming the model for the second, third, and fourth world.

It is important at the outset to closely define our interpretation of the often used and frequently abused concept of a "system of values." All decisions, attitudes, and behavioural patterns which are not the result of pure instinct seem to be based, both in individuals and societies, on a process of valuation. This process involves attaching a certain importance to X, a greater importance to Y, a lesser to Z, and so on and so forth. In some very fundamental sense, our values are the ultimate criteria by which we judge our experiences, our perceptions, and our behaviour and that of others.

A value system can be said to be composed of at least three elements: beliefs, ideals, and preferences.

A belief is a statement we hold to be true about the world (whether in fact it is or is not true is of course beside the point). An ideal is a judgement that a certain kind of behaviour or a certain situation is

"better" than another one. In fact, an ideal is a superlative and it describes not only the better but the best situations. Finally, a preference is an opinion stating that we like this and dislike that, etc. A preference is distinct from an ideal. We might think it morally good to be chaste (an ideal) and yet have distinct preferences for non-chaste behaviour. We might believe in the virtues of slimness (ideal) and proceed to gulp down a banana split de luxe.

The structure of beliefs, ideals, and preferences is more often than not implicit rather than explicit. We may know what our beliefs are at the conscious level but the structure of ideals and preferences is much more difficult to pin-point, for the very simple reason that, insofar as the two may be in contradiction with each other, we prefer to hide them. Thus, it takes some prodding and some analysis — perhaps even some psycho-analysis — to get a person or a society to "confess" its values. Yet such a "confession" is necessary for an understanding of behaviour.

1. THE BASIC BELIEFS OF THE MASS-CONSUMPTION SOCIETY

At the root of the value system of the mass-consumption society are two important beliefs which together may form what Thomas Kuhn has called a "paradigm" or world view.

First Belief: Happiness is achieved primarily through the accumulation of things

In the depth of the Great Depression of the 1930s a popular folk song encapsulated in musical form the frustrations of an affluent society suddenly immobilized. The song, "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," described a wonderland of plenty, reflecting the psychological state of a society living in relative want. Some of its lyrics are instructive.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain
There's a land that's fair and bright
Where the hand-outs grow on bushes
And you enjoy every night

Oh the buzzing of the bees in the cigarette trees
The ice-cold soda fountain,
Where the lemonade springs and the roast duck sings
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

In essence the folk song is an ode to materialism. It articulates the point of view that the degree of individual and collective happiness is directly related to the number of things we possess (possibly reflected by the altitude reached on the BRCM).

The mountain of commodities even has its indicator: the gross national product (which to its detractors is getting grosser and grosser all the time). Growth of the GNP is interpreted as an increase in the standard

of living (again the analogy of altitude, as with the mountain) and therefore an increase in "happiness."

It is also interesting to note that in micro-economic theory a person's well-being is measured by what are technically known as "indifference curves." These reflect levels of satisfaction and have been likened to "contour-maps on the mountain of happiness." Each contour line represents a certain altitude, and the higher the indifference curve the closer we can get to the elusive "bliss point"... in our terms the peak of the Big Rock Candy Mountain where complete pleasure prevails and there is nothing left to do for an encore. It is the point of total saturation.

The parable of the Big Rock Candy Mountain finds a third echo, in world literature. Franz Kafka's Castle, that mythical centre of power, is atop a mountain (but what type of mountain remains unclear even though many symbolic interpretations are permissible). The hapless "K," hero of Kafka's works, continually seeks to get to the Castle but is always prevented, even though his behaviour seems to be monitored from up there.

In Albert Camus's The Myth of Sisyphus, man is likened to the unfortunate Sisyphus of Greek mythology, forever condemned by the gods to roll a heavy stone up the hill - only to see it roll back on him when he reaches the top. Camus's essay, perhaps the principal expression of his philosophical position, sees human life as an exercise in futility and from that perception stems his theory of absurdism: if everything is absurd, one might as well act absurdly. For Camus's Sisyphus, although the climb is futile, it is the journey up the heights that fills man's heart.

It should be noted that if the Big Rock Candy Mountain is a paradigm of a certain life style, it would be tempting, but we submit erroneous, to associate it exclusively with the capitalist system. It is also the basis of dialectical materialism and the economic determinism of certain forms of socialism. The difference between the capitalist and socialist viewpoints in this connection seems to lie not in the realm of objectives but in the realm of means to get to the objectives. In both systems, the improvement in overall well-being is inexorably linked to the improvement

in material well-being. Where the systems diverge is on the question of distribution of income and dynamics of change. The capitalist system favours market allocation of the "goodies" of the BRCM, even if that market allocation leads to gross inequalities.

The socialist system favours central state allocation of the "goodies" and is opposed to their private ownership. As far as the question of dynamics of change is concerned, the capitalist position favours growth via laissez-faire (in other words an increase in the size of the BRCM). The socialist position believes in the inevitability of class struggle and of a zero-sum game where the advent to power of one class in effect dethrones another.

The agreement between the traditional right and the traditional left in accepting the basic BRCM paradigm has contributed to the development of the new left, more ecological in philosophy and contesting the desirability of a BRCM as happiness. This new political polarization will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

Second Belief: Anthropocentrism

One of the legacies of the Judaeo-Christian tradition (itself a primary building block of western civilization) is the belief in man's supremacy over nature. This doctrine, which we call "anthropocentrism," states that:

- a) Nature is created to satisfy man's needs (i.e., nature is subservient to man);
- b) Nature is endowed with unlimited resources, therefore no threat of ultimate depletion of resources is to be taken seriously;
- c) Nature is basically incompetent. It seems to do nothing right. Therefore, man has to take it upon himself to transform, modify, and convert nature.

The idea that nature is created for man is well-entrenched in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures and surfaces in our language whenever we talk of "mastering the environment," meeting the "challenge of nature," etc.

Unlike many eastern religions such as, among others, Buddhism, western religions see man as separate from nature and almost not quite subject to its laws. This after all is the message of Genesis. The garden of Eden was there for Adam and Eve's good pleasure.

There is also an assumption that nature is evil and that man has to protect himself from its whims. Witness for instance the classical exchange between the two protagonists in Peter Weiss' famous play, Marat/Sade.

Marat: I read in your books, de Sade, in one of your immortal works, that the animating force of Nature is destruction and that our only instrument for measuring life is death.

de Sade: Correct Marat, but Man has given a false importance to death. Any animal, plant, or Man who dies adds to Nature's compost heap, becomes the manure without which nothing could grow, nothing could be created. Death is simply part of the process. Every death, even the cruellest death, drowns in the total indifference of Nature. Nature herself would watch unmoved if we destroyed the entire human race. I hate Nature, this passionless spectator, this unbreakable iceberg face that can bear everything, that goads us to greater and greater acts. But even though I hate this goddess, I see the greatest acts in history have followed her laws. Nature tells Man to fight for his own happiness and if he must kill to gain it, why then the murder is natural. We must reproduce, we must destroy. The balance must be kept... 2

In contrast is a North American Indian tribe's prayer to Mother Nature:

O Grandmother Earth and Mother Earth we are of Earth and belong to You. O Mother Earth from whom we receive our food, You care for our growth as do our mothers. Every step that we take upon You should be done in a sacred manner. Each step should be a prayer.

Dakota Prayer.

Not only is nature viewed as subservient and to some degree "evil" in the mass-consumption paradigm but - strangely - also as bountiful and endowed with unlimited capacity to satisfy man's thirst. It is an immortal golden goose which cannot be destroyed. Because of this assumption, man's treatment of his environment in industrial societies has been heavy-handed and parasitic - augmented by the belief that the host cannot be killed by the parasite, a proposition that is becoming challengeable today. The belief in the indestructibility of nature has allowed man to give himself licence to abuse his environment and without regard to conse-

quences.

Finally, there is the curious assumption that nature is not only subservient and indestructible but also incompetent. Industrial man sees himself as Homo faber, man the doer, the transformer, the converter, forced to do, transform, and convert because nature makes such a mess of it. One school of modern medicine, for instance, seems to be based on the assumption that surgery has to remove many of the body's organs when they malfunction and that an individual can only survive properly by supplementing his natural diet with dozens of pills and drugs. The scalpel-happy surgeons are quick to suggest an operation to correct nature's incompetence, and pharmaceutical companies continually promote their chemicals to counterbalance nature's excesses. Thus, we have "uppers" and "downers," stimulants, depressants, aphrodisiacs, appetite promoters, appetite quenchers, etc.

Homo faber decides that a river is here to be dammed, a forest to be cut down, an animal to be hunted or domesticated, and a field to be landscaped. This belief has, of course, important implications because from it stems the idea of "transformation" or "through-put" which is at the core of an industrial system.

II. THE IDEALS OF THE MASS-CONSUMPTION SOCIETY

Among the ideals that characterize the mass-consumption society are two that have particular relevance in explaining our way of thinking. The first is the work ethic and the second the growth ethic.

First Ideal: The Work Ethic

The work ethic is the legacy of early capitalism and the Protestant Reformation. In Max Weber's famous treatise on The Protestant Reformation and the Spirit of Capitalism, a relationship was found between the capitalist spirit of accumulation and the Calvinist doctrine of salvation through hard work.

This ethic has now been somewhat deflected into a modern variant. The contemporary equivalent is the employment ethic and there is a subtle distinction between the two. The work ethic of old enjoined the citizens to work hard and productively. The contemporary version enjoins society to provide a job for every one, regardless of whether or not that particular job is in fact productive. As a result we tend to create jobs rather than get the job done, a misplacement of priorities that may generate a great deal of waste.

The employment ethic is also allied to the transformation bias of our mass-consumption economy. If nature is indeed incompetent and her work has to be constantly improved and modified by human hands, the source of economic value becomes labour time. This idea is found in the classical works of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill, but also in Marx who, of course, makes labour the kingpin of the entire production

process. Further, in modern economic accounting, we speak of transformation as "value added" and one way of judging the economic performance of a nation is to measure the value added via transformation. The point is that all transformation is deemed useful and the economic accounts are blind because they do not distinguish between productive and unproductive modifications.

The construction of an appliance which self-destructs after one use leads to its replacement and to much "value added." A durable appliance, on the other hand, which survives repeated use leads to less "value added." Curiously, our national accounts favour the former and have little good to say about the latter. This is all because our value system, as far as this aspect is concerned, is based on an activity model. The more activity the better.

Three examples can illustrate the ultimate absurdity stemming from the confusion between "production" (the creation of utility in the technical sense) and "agitation." A massive earthquake or war that leads to great destruction and death does not appear as a negative item on the national accounts. If the disaster leads to substantial reconstruction, there is a boom in the construction industry. At the same time, to go further into absurdity, the undertakers' business flourishes because of the great number of deaths. The Gross National Product shoots up and the statistics measure economic growth and "job-creation."

If instead of a major disaster we have a happy occurrence, say an increase in the general health of the population, greater immunity to the common cold, influenza, and other diseases, how do our economic accounts reflect this? By a decrease in the GNP. Hospitals, doctors, and pharmaceutical companies work less and there is unemployment in these sectors. We deplore this fact and remember nostalgically the time when, due to disease, there was full employment in the health-care industries.

Finally, the third example comes from John Maynard Keynes who in the 1930s revolutionized economic thinking. Keynes was obviously a genius and his insights were particularly useful in dealing with the social crises the

western world faced in the 30s. The crisis of the 1930s was one of a lazy economy needing to be "pump-primed" by spending, whether productive or not. Thrift, saving, husbandry of resources became suddenly vices not virtues. The virtue lay in spending to create jobs. At the limit, Keynes even had the courage to suggest that "people should be employed to dig holes in the ground and fill them up again, if necessary, in order to create purchasing power and spending."

We now are grappling with a fuzzy confusion between the virtues and the vices of spending. Every government in the industrialized world is likely to be placed on the racks, whether it spends or not. If it chooses an expansionary budget and spends lavishly, it will create (fictitious) jobs and be accused of generating waste and inflation. If it chooses a thrifty, economically conservationist policy, it will be indicted for tolerating a high unemployment rate.

The root of the problem, we submit, is the inability of the mass-consumption society to distinguish between productive and unproductive employment. The appearance of work becomes the summum bonum. Everyone must have a job, even a fictitious one.

The counter-position is to argue that a distinction must be made between jobs and income. Everyone should certainly have an income but jobs created should be real jobs, not digging holes and filling them up again.

Because of the mass-consumption society's embrace of fictitious job-creation as an end in itself, many real jobs that should be performed are not, while the scarce and precious human resource is squandered in meaningless endeavours.

Second Ideal: The Growth Ethic

Not only does the mass-consumption society advocate employing everyone to busily transform our natural surroundings, whether for good or for ill, but the level of activity in doing so must be constantly increased.

This is the "growth ethic." The young culture of North America has always had a fetish for growth: industrial, muscular, economic, political, psychological, etc. What is not growing is assumed to be dying. Therefore, the best way to guarantee vitality is by growth.

It is interesting to note that this "growth bias" is not as prevalent in other cultures. Whereas a North American might say, "This experience has been very valuable to me and has contributed to great 'personal growth'," the French rendition, "Cette expérience m'a beaucoup servi et a contribué à ma 'croissance personnelle'," sounds contrived and false. A European will speak of "growth" when discussing very specific material things such as business inventories, a bank account or whatever. A North American will usually speak of "growth" ecstatically in any field, quantitative or qualitative.

In an important conceptual breakthrough as to the true meanings of "growth," G.T. Lockland has distinguished between three versions of this process. "Accretive" growth is more-of-the-same, in the sense of additions to a stock. "Replicative" growth refers to the process of mitosis in biology where a cell reproduces its exact replica. Unlike accretive growth, which is additive, replicative growth is multiplicative. The third type of growth identified in Lockland's essay is "organic." This implies diversification, and non-equal and especially non-constant growth rates for sub-systems within a system. For instance, a baby's arm grows but not indefinitely! At some point or other, it stops growing and the overall physical development of a human being is marked by one key word: balance. Balance means no growth in some sectors, positive growth in others and negative growth in yet others (for instance reducing the waist line!). When the growth is organic, it limits itself and no hazardous side-effects are likely.³

One of the principal weaknesses of our mass-consumption society is its apparent inability to discriminate between types of growth. Instead, through a sort of social genetic code, cities, factories, products, and individuals reproduce themselves in ever-increasing quantities, creating dangerous exponential paths of expansion for certain sectors of society at the expense of others. Growth for growth's sake leads to unbalanced growth.

III. THE PREFERENCES OF THE MASS-CONSUMPTION SOCIETY

The Cult of Newness

The spin-off of the growth and work-ethic syndromes is the cult of newness. Unless something is "brand new" it is somehow tainted, it has lost its virginity, it is to be avoided. It is well known that a North American car loses up to a third of its value as soon as the first owner inserts the ignition key. There is a stigma attached to a "used" car, a "used" appliance, or a "used" anything. It is a sign of poverty and therefore of failure. The cult of newness can even go to the pathological extent of the old widow who could not bear to live in an apartment that had been inhabited by someone else because she considered such an apartment unclean. Therefore, she would perpetually move to brand-new buildings and would be dismayed if no new building were constructed in those areas where she expected to live.

Brand-newness means driving late-model cars, having late-model appliances, and late-model everything. That in its turn incites even more the transformation and activity ethic, which leads to producing and reproducing all these late-model objects. An amusing example of the cult of newness is evident in the following advertisement found in a Montreal furniture store: "We have the 1978 model of Louis XV living-room furniture. Trade-in your old Louis XV set for a brand new factory-fresh late-model version of this period style."

Another version of the same absurdity is found in McLuhan's anecdote about the avid consumer who goes into the antique store and asks "What's new?"

Property Rights

The other aspect of newness is private property. Unless an individual can have private ownership of the things he wishes to consume, the benefits of newness disappear. What is the point of having the "latest" unless it conveys upon the bearer some exclusivity? This leads right into an accumulation ethic, where consumers buy a variety of things sometimes hardly worth owning in the first place.

The temptation to buy things we rarely use just because we have been persuaded that we need them is yet a further element promoting mass production and therefore high transformation.

The Fragmentation of Needs

William Leiss of York University (Ontario) has shown in a recent book, The Limits to Satisfaction, that the mass-consumption society not only leads to the proliferation of needs but also to their fragmentation. This is an important point. We are taught to believe that we have very specific needs which can only be satisfied individually. This leads to the fragmentation of needs, in turn promoting the fragmentation of commodities.

Witness, for instance, the North American man's travel luggage. It may contain hair spray, shaving cream, skin bracer, eye drops, toothpaste, mouthwash, dental floss, cologne... and we have, at this point, reached only the owner's neck. For the ladies, we must multiply that probably by a factor of two and add the emulsifiers, nail-polishes, beauty oils, etc. all the way to the popular foot deodorants.

Since our mass-consumption society depends on just that - massive consumption by the masses, or, to paraphrase Jeremy Bentham, "The greatest consumption by the greatest number of people" - what better way is there to proceed than by multiplying needs, joyously and indefinitely. After all, every emulsifier, every electric back-scratcher, and every tippable

nylon stocking creates a job and a profit somewhere, somehow. Strangely, there is an objective alliance between some forms of organized labour and business because both thrive on waste and the fragmentation of needs and commodities.

In the final analysis, the first two commandments of the mass-consumption society are: (1.) "Create More Desire," and (2.), "Thou Shalt Consume." Advertising pervades our life ubiquitously - on the bus, in the subway, in the car, at home, on the radio, on television, in the newspapers, in magazines, and even sometimes in the sky written in the clouds. We are told to "buy now, pay later"; "fly now, pay later." Fifty cents of every consumer dollar is received by marketing intermediaries or used to pay manufacturers' marketing-related expenses.

IV. CONCLUSION: THE IMPLICATIONS AND THE OPTIONS

This paper has attempted to make less obscure the dominant intellectual paradigm of the mass-consumption society as it exists in North America and the value system that is its central element. The explication of a value system underlying a societal structure is particularly important because it identifies "what it is we are up against" in trying to reform the society. Since the principal work of the GAMMA Research Group has been in the definition of a series of alternatives to the mass-consumption society, grouped around the generic concept of "The Conserver Society," it was crucial to fully understand the status quo. Without going into much detail as to what the alternatives could be (since this should really be the subject of a separate paper or papers), it is possible to outline the various options that are involved.

First it is important to realize that two sets of alternatives can be envisioned:

1. Those that accept and legitimize the basic paradigm of the Big Rock Candy Mountain as a desirable value system but seek improvements within it.
2. Those that reject the desirability of that value system, preferring a radical change and the move towards new value systems.

The Conserver Society Group of Options straddles both positions.

- a) Alternatives to the Mass-Consumption Society that Assume Acceptance of the Big Rock Candy Mountain Paradigm

The BRCM is, it should be remembered, a way of expressing in caricatured form the materialist conception of history. Once again, we submit that,

in our opinion, this paradigm is shared by both capitalist and socialist systems, which disagree not on the desirability of material accumulation but on the process (market-led or state-led growth) and on the distribution of benefits (market-allocated vs state-allocated benefits). Within this world view, there may be various ways of achieving the same thing.

A better and more equitable consumption society is envisioned under what we have called Conservator Society One.⁴ This scenario advocates growth-with-conservation, a minimization of wasteful practices, and a constant quest for efficiency. This efficiency is achieved through the use of superior technology, more rational consumption and production techniques, and energy and resource conservation. Its motto is "do more with less." In other words, more shoes and ships and sealing wax using fewer resources. It is the economizing model par excellence.

CS-1 does not require a change in value systems. It requires a change in behaviour. Wasteful habits are given up in favour of more conserving ones. Translated into BRCM terminology, it means that we are going to strive to be better mountain-climbers. The quest for the heights remains unchanged however. Moreover, in order to achieve more equitable income distribution, all mountain-climbers are given the same or similar equipment (the means of production). Equality of opportunity is encouraged and promoted.

Conservator Society Two adopts the same ideals but introduces one constraint. At some point or other, there will be satiety. Enough will be enough. The climb to the dizzying heights must end someday before the mythical "bliss point" is reached. There is no bliss point. There is instead an affluent stable state or plateau of affluence. Rather than do more with less, as in CS-1, CS-2 advocates "doing the same with less." The "same" may be today's height, tomorrow's, or yesterday's. The "altitude" is negotiable once the principle of the stable state is accepted. Once this desired "altitude" is reached (\$5,000 per person? \$50,000 per person? 100 grams of protein per day? 200 grams per day?), energies, both human and mechanical, are diverted to non-economic pursuits. CS-2 assumes diminishing returns to affluence itself and the need to divert activity to more abstract endeavours.

There is of course another path along the BCRM and that is towards the anti-conserver or Squander Society. Whereas present society "does more with more" and the Conserver Societies 1 and 2 "do more with less" and "the same with less" respectively, it is possible to "do less with more." The process of conscious squandering and maximum spending is, interestingly enough, completely compatible with the job-creation ethic where governments compete to create fictitious jobs in wasteful sectors while the real jobs remain undone.

b) Alternatives to the Mass-Consumption Society that Imply
Rejection of the Big Rock Candy Mountain

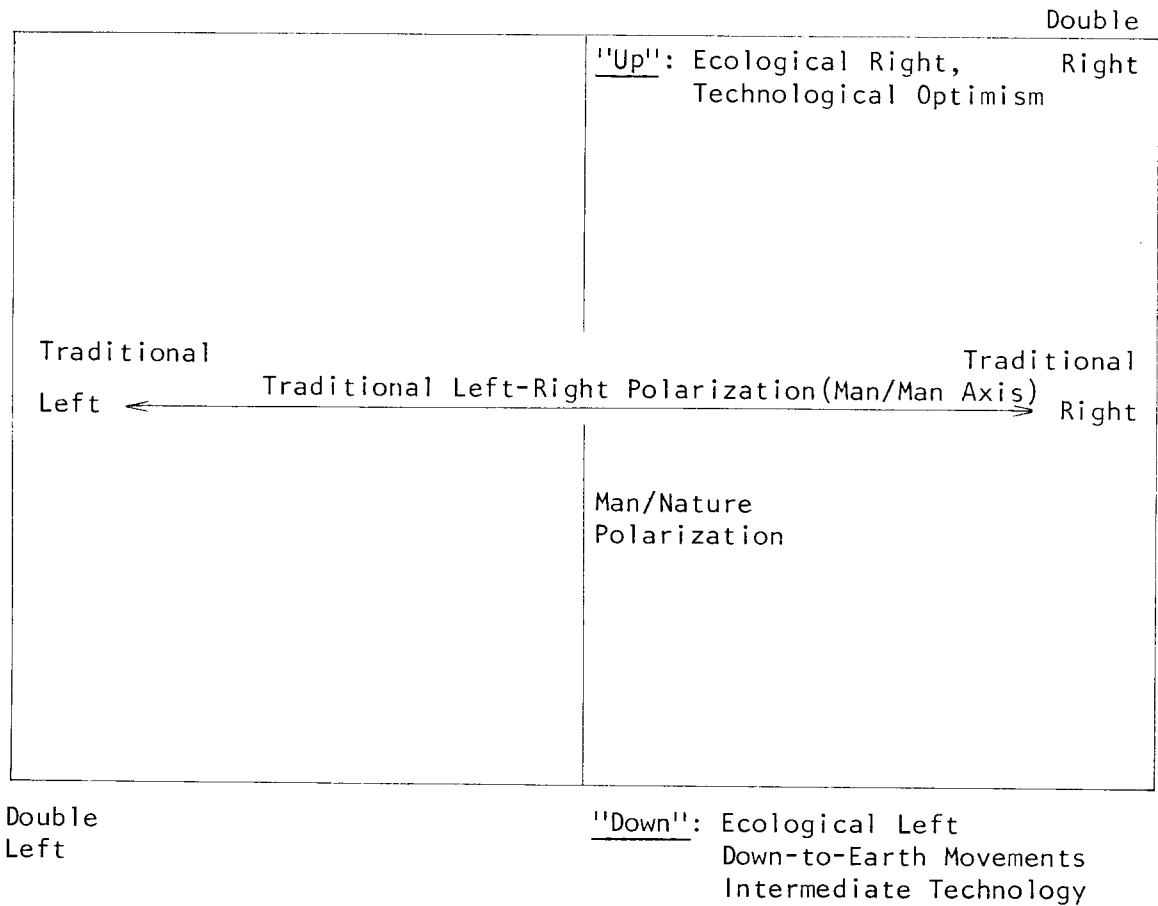
Rather than become better mountain-climbers or set limits to the altitude to be reached, it is also possible to give up that activity altogether and divert energies elsewhere. Conserver Society Three advocates "doing less with less and doing something else."

Instead of climbing we descend towards the valley. Obviously such an about-face requires a fundamental value change. The value system of CS-3 is akin to Schumacher's vision in Small is Beautiful,⁵ F. Goldsmith's Program of De-Industrialization,⁶ and the emerging life style of western North America known as "voluntary simplicity." A human-scale economy, using soft technology, exists in ecological harmony with its environment. Renewable or "income" resources are used in place of non-renewable "capital" resources.⁷

Among the implications of these new emerging alternative life styles is one upon which we will focus, to end this paper: it is a new political polarization for the 1980s and 1990s, where two lefts and two rights will compete for the allegiance of the interest groups and the general public.⁸

The Traditional Left faces off against the Traditional Right. The issue at stake is man's relationship to man (see figure 1). The Traditional Left attaches highest priority to questions of inequality, domination, and man's inhumanity to man. The Traditional Right is for the free market and the opportunity for individual profit.

FIG. 1 A New Political Polarization for the Eighties?



EXPLANATION OF DIAGRAM

1. The Traditional Left is for economic growth with more equitable income distribution.
2. The Traditional Right is for economic growth and is not concerned with a more equitable income distribution.
3. The Uppers or Ecological Rightists are technological Optimists.
4. The Downers or Ecological Leftists are anti-growth/soft-technology advocates.

There is a possibility of four other extremes (double Left/double Right, etc).

The Ecological Left (or "Downers") is for environmental harmony and against the economic growth ethic of both the Traditional Left and Right. It is a "down-to-Earth" movement stressing our roots and the fact that we belong within nature. In contrast, the "Uppers" or "Up-Wingers" are technological optimists believing in technological solutions for most problems. They are in essence the New Technostructural Elite discussed by Galbraith!⁹

The interesting feature of this new quadri-polar political spectrum is that various combinations become possible. A wealthy capitalist (Traditional Right) may well espouse ecological leftism (e.g., many Club of Rome members). A militant socialist may be for technological fixes and thus adhere to the ecological right (e.g., militant socialist parties in favour of generalization of nuclear power). Finally, an extreme ecological leftist may well be perceived as a reactionary by Traditional Lefts (thus: Edward Goldsmith, in favour of de-industrialization and a return to an agricultural life style, is frequently heckled by leftist demonstrators and called a fascist).

The new polarization of the 1970s and 1980s seems to portend imminent paradigm shift. The Big Rock Candy Mountain, logical sequel of the Industrial Revolution and the mass-consumption society, is now undergoing change. There is room for alternative life styles. The intellectual market for new development priorities is now wide open. Avis aux amateurs!

NOTES

1. University of Montreal/McGill University research group specializing in interdisciplinary long-term forecasting and planning, better known as "futures studies" or "prospective" in French.
2. Peter Weiss, The persecution and assassination of Jean Paul Marat as performed by the inmates of the asylum of Charenton under the direction of the Marquis de Sade.
3. G.T. Lockland, Grow or Die, 1974.
4. K. Valaskakis, P.S. Sindell, J.G. Smith, The Selective Conserver Society (Vol. 1 of the GAMMA Report on the Conserver Society, Montreal, 1978).
5. Abacus Books, 1973.
6. Papers of the 1975 Houston Conference on the Limits to Growth.
7. See The Futurist, Summer 1977.
8. Condensed from a forthcoming article by K. Valaskakis, "Left, Right, Up, and Down: A new political polarization for the eighties."
9. J.K. Galbraith, The New Industrial State, and Economics and the Public Purpose.