

Fundamental idea of the authors essay

Countries, United States



Where the Wasteland Ends by Roszak

Roszak's book is about the political life and its many religious dimensions. He argues that one cannot possibly and adequately talk of politics without referring to religion. What Roszak is referring to here is not the commonly known religion, but rather what he refers to as the Old Gnosis, or what he calls mysticism. The author aimed to discover how this type of religion was eliminated from many cultures, and how this elimination affected the lives of the society and the politics within that society. Roszak is of the opinion that the repression of many religious dimensions has been a necessary occurrence in the society, as it has become a mandatory trend for the paving of the way for industrial development. Its achievement as well has been both inevitable, and ruthless. This secularization as the author calls it is a political issue, despite the fact that many people have not been able to categorize it as so.

Secularization has thus been taken to be a thing of the norm, and many have accepted it and adopted it without much protest. However as, Roszak argues, this trend of adopting secularization without protest is changing. To him, this is the end of the wasteland, and the start of human fulfillment and wholeness. Roszak argues that the society needs 'the next revolution' just as much as 'revolution' itself because it will liberate the society's 'visionary powers from the lesser reality in which they have been confined by the urban industrial necessity' (Roszak, 1972, pp. xxvii). He is not of the idea that industrial economy should be eliminated, but rather that this industrialism must be disciplined if it is to be made tolerable and livable spiritually.

Societies and Economic Systems by Karl Polanyi

Polanyi defines a market economy as market system that is self regulatory; or rather an economy that is driven only by the prices in the market.

Naturally, as the author argues, no society can exist without some sort of economy in operation. He is however; quick to point out that the institution of market did not play such a big role in the later Stone Age (Polanyi, 1944).

The author cites Marx Weber as one of the campaigners of the importance of primitive economics. Recent studies are shown in the text to be of the opinion that, man is a social being with a changelessness attribute. The importance of this attribute to economics is that man's economy is very closely related to his social relations. Polanyi seems to think that man acts for the sole purpose of his standing in the society, his assets and social claims, and not to safeguard his personal interests. With such interests in a society, the economy system then becomes subjective to noneconomic motives.

Polanyi gives us two main principles of behavior that govern production and distribution, and these are redistribution and reciprocity. Reciprocity, according to the author works well in a society that is build on a sexual organization, while redistribution is said to be most effective in a territorial society. These two principles have the ability to run an economic system without the use of records and administration. Reciprocity however, dominates redistribution when it comes to social behavior. The author adds the house- holding principle to the two and points out that these three were mainly useful in the Western Europe economic systems (Polanyi, 1944).

The End of Work by Rifkin

Rifkin points out that civilization has been mainly structured around the concept of work. He gives some examples of lifestyles which were as well predominated by work like the Neolithic, and the Paleolithic eras. However, it is clear from the text that this reliance on work by various ancient eras is changing especially after most production activities have continually been eliminating the need of human labor. What is, replacing this human labor is the emerging new information and communication technologies. Most mainstream economists, as the author points out, are calling this change 'adjustments', which will be short-term, necessary for the Third Industrial Revolution. The result of this is large unemployment rates in most countries. The author gives several examples of companies that have restructured their operations cutting thousands of workers from their workforces, for example Bankcorp. The author points out that the rates at which the newly created, low paying, and temporary employments are emerging cannot match the unemployment rates (Rifkin, 1994).

These new jobs are so badly paying such that the government has to assist these people in making ends meet. For example, there are numerous government food assistant programs, private food banks, soup kitchens and pantries all working to feed the poor. In addition to chronic hunger, an increase in disease and illness is also another consequence of these layoffs. It is however, apparent from the text that there are a few people who benefit from these new technologies, those who live in affluent lifestyles far better than the turmoil facing millions of the unemployed. The same fears of

unemployment and increasing poverty are being witnessed in Japan and Western Europe also, especially in Germany (Rifkin, 1994).

The Wasteland Within and About Us by Roszak

Single vision is a term Roszak adopts from William Blake, which in this context is supposed to refer to the 'sensibilities we often refer to as alienation today' (Roszak, pp. 76). The author points out that, one's personality is greatly affected by the artificial environment. To show how diminished the orthodox of consciousness is diminished in our culture, the author uses dreams as an illustration. He points out that each one of us dreams but at times, some individuals might be misled to think that they did not dream at all during their sleep, whereas the fact is that they indeed dreamt. The author sees sleep as a rich life of dreams that leads from the dark mind's levels that are ever so deep; to him sleep is just not a mere relaxation technique, nor unconsciousness.

Roszak argues that the heavy burden presented to us by the 'knowledge problem' results only when our sensory participation experience has been significantly weakened (Roszak, pp. 90). He however, points out that we have continually grown stupid about the occurrence and feeling of experience that the relations between known and knower have become so problematic. He then lets us know that most cultures have become single visional, making their head the headquarters of all their operations, and ignoring their consciousness. The author then uses sex and organism to show how single vision looks to imperialize one's body, just like the way primitive cultures are imperialized by civilized cultures. Roszak finally

argues that the urban- industrialism emits an artificial environment, which only requires a fraction of the human whole, the dream bereft fraction.

References

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