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PREVENTING FUTURES: RAY BRADBURY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF
PROGRESS

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ABSTRACT

History, philosophy, and literature are closely related, and they often respond to each other. Historical events frequently prompt changes in both philosophy and in literary style. Whether or not these changes themselves form a pattern of progress according to a historical narrative is open to question, a question that this thesis takes up through literary texts. This thesis will focus primarily on two topics: the idea of progress and the work of Ray Bradbury. The very idea of progress-or the idea that humankind has and will continue to improve indefinitely- emerged as the result of a specific set of historical circumstances and persisted until World War II. Afterwards, there was a fundamental attitude shift away from this idea and toward a distrust of innovation and progress. In this thesis, I will show that a similar philosophical arc takes place in the work of Ray Bradbury; his ideologies shift as a result of World War II in a similar way to many philosophers at the time. To what extent can Bradbury's ideas actually influence this type of progress? Is this shift in Bradbury's ideology an attempt at progress in itself?

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Chapter 1

A History of Progress

Philosophy and literature are closely related; each is responsive to the other as well as historical circumstances surrounding its creation. As the world changes, then, so do both philosophy and literature, frequently in response to one another. This phenomenon occurs in numerous philosophical and literary contexts, from Sigmund Freud and children's literature to feminism and romance novels. As history prompts philosophical response, literature responds to contemporary philosophy accordingly. Although this relationship between history, philosophy, and literature can be observed throughout written history, one particularly fascinating instance occurs between the narrative of progress in Western thought and one author in particular: Ray Bradbury. In order to understand this relationship between history, progress, and Bradbury, it will be necessary to understand historical and philosophical contexts, Bradbury's biographical background, and texts written by Bradbury and his contemporaries. After examining these, it will become apparent that Bradbury's writing traces a similar philosophical arc to that of his contemporaries in regards to progress as a response to historical events.

Before delving into the ideas as stated above, it is necessary to define our terms as they will be used throughout this piece. First, we must define our central philosophical term: the idea of progress. The idea of progress is a specific understanding of human history stating that humankind has and will continue to improve over the course of history. This definition, although concise and seemingly simple, can encompass a wide

range of ideas; improvement of the human condition can have several meanings. A greater happiness for a greater number of people may be considered an improvement in the human condition, as can increased life expectancy, reduced infant mortality, etc. In this essay, we will examine progress as a function of technological development, as well as the philosophical and literary responses to each. We will then trace an arc in popular thought from belief in progress to criticism of progress and examine how this arc in thought manifests itself in the work of Ray Bradbury. In understanding Bradbury's philosophy of progress, we can more clearly weigh the benefits and drawbacks of our interactions with technology; how do Bradbury's texts provoke meditation regarding use of technology and its effects on society? Can these texts make any sort of meaningful impact, prevent any futures? Is Bradbury's view of progress actually a form of progress in itself?

Enlightenment Views of Progress

The idea of progress came into being in part as a response to a series of historical events. It emerged most notably during the Enlightenment as a response to the Scientific Revolution. During the Scientific Revolution, there was a shift in thought away from traditional Christian ideology toward something groundbreaking: science. Until this time, questions about nature and humans' place within it were answered by religious authorities, who used religious texts as sources of knowledge. Those with biblical knowledge were widely considered to be highly educated, and much of the available education took place at monasteries through religious orders. In other words, the church

had a sort of intellectual monopoly. In the 16th and 17th centuries, however, this began to change. Thinkers emerged on the intellectual scene, challenging the accepted notions of creation and function of the universe. These thinkers studied physics, alchemy, astronomy, and math with the end goal in mind to make sense of the world around them. Among these historical figures were Nicolaus Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, and Galileo Galilei. These thinkers began to turn from religious laws and commandments toward physical and natural laws in order to understand the world around them. The church and religion had not parted ways entirely at this time; in fact, these natural laws were seen more often as the ways that God had created the earth rather than as an alternative to theological principles. However, it is worth noting that these scientists were met with heavy opposition by church officials.

Until the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th Centuries, the geocentric model of the universe was widely accepted and had been incorporated into church doctrine. This model held that the earth was the center of the universe and that all other celestial bodies orbited around it. Copernicus, in his work *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* presented the heliocentric model of the universe in which he argued that the sun was in fact the center of the universe. This caused great disturbance among the emerging scientific world as well as among church authorities, who immediately rejected the theory and reasserted their own. This theory was supported by several other prominent thinkers at the time, including Galileo, who was tried as a heretic due to his convictions and sentenced to house arrest in 1633 (Machamer). Galileo was influential in the field of physics as well; he studied planetary motion and gravity.

The Copernican Revolution, or the proposal of a heliocentric view of the universe, was critical in future advances in science and had important implications to the idea of progress. Specifically, it prompted further study into the exact ways in which the universe functions; physicists such as Johannes Kepler and Sir Isaac Newton attempted to answer these questions. Johannes Kepler and Sir Isaac Newton were prominent in the study of physics in the 17th century. Kepler attempted to formulate universal laws of planetary motion, or to use basic mathematics in order to understand how celestial bodies move. Kepler wasn't able to generate laws regarding how planets move, but his laws describe planetary motion accurately (Ventrudo). Kepler's work was highly influential to Newton, who took his laws of planetary motion and created a series of laws to explain the phenomena that Kepler had so accurately described. As a result of this influence, as well as his own study, Sir Isaac Newton formulated the law of universal gravitation. The importance of these scientists and mathematicians cannot be overstated; their accomplishments not only gave birth to the sciences as we understand them today, but launched humankind into a new era of technological progress and scientific understanding; at this critical time in history, religion and science began to part.

Because the church had now lost its intellectual monopoly and scientists were able to share information and ideas in order to explain their world and their universe, it became clear that ideas did not exist in a vacuum, and they were certainly not stationary. While religion contained a set of concrete doctrines that could be learned and understood as they were without the possibility of being disproved, science gave humankind the chance to create cumulative knowledge. More importantly, science provided the means to disprove ideas methodically and then share modified theories. Just as Newton improved

on the ideas of Kepler, future scientists could improve on the ideas of Newton and infinitum. This idea, while commonplace in the modern age, was revolutionary; knowledge was not finite, but capable of growth and development. And thus, the idea of progress was born out of this 16th and 17th century tradition.

The Scientific Revolution created the context for a philosophical revolution known as the Enlightenment. During the Enlightenment, philosophers responded to the scientific revolution by applying scientific principles such as logic and empiricism to other subjects, including politics, ethics, and aesthetics. Just as scientists were beginning to understand the natural world through laws of motion and universal gravitation, philosophers yearned to apply the same logical processes to human interactions.

Enlightenment thinkers such as Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, David Hume, and Benjamin Franklin wrote about many facets of society, including this blossoming idea of progress.

In the French Enlightenment, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet wrote on the idea of humankind's progress; he was neither the first nor the last to do so, but his ideas played a large part in shaping Enlightenment ideas of progress.

In his dissertation *Outlines of an historical view of the progress of the human mind*, Condorcet traces the history and progress of humankind from pre-civilization (although he acknowledges that any arguments regarding this period in time are conjecture) to present-day. Condorcet discusses the Scientific Revolution. He details the contributions of Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler, and elaborates as to how these thinkers created greater separation of religious institutions and knowledge acquisition. He

explains that “The human mind was not yet free, but it knew that it was formed to be free” at the end of the Scientific Revolution (Marie). After his discussion of the scientific revolution, Condorcet discusses the progress that humankind has made since, comparing the current state of affairs with earlier times in which liberty did not exist as a concept and humankind was enslaved by religion and superstition. Ultimately, Condorcet argues that:

No bounds have been fixed to the improvement of the human faculties; that the perfectibility of man is absolutely indefinite...[and] has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has placed us. The course of this progress may doubtless be more or less rapid, but it can never be retrograde; at least while the earth retains its situation in the system of the universe, and the laws of this system shall neither effect upon the globe a general overthrow, nor introduce such changes as would no longer permit the human race to preserve and exercise therein the same faculties, and find the same resources (Marie).

In this passage, the idea of progress is stated explicitly; humankind has no limitations as a whole, and its progress can be slowed but never stopped. Provided human beings have resources, Turgot argues, there will be indefinite progress.

Condorcet’s theory of progress was not unique, but was shared by many enlightenment thinkers. Among those thinkers was British empiricist David Hume. Hume was perhaps the first thinker to link the idea of progress with politics; in *On the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*, he argues that progress in both arts and sciences must emerge from the context of a republic instead of a monarchy. Hume writes, “it is

impossible for the arts and sciences to arise, at first, among any people unless that people enjoy the blessing of a free government” (Hume). Hume not only believes that a republic is a necessary precondition of progress in arts and sciences, but also that international collaboration creates an ideal setting in which progress can be made. He argues that “nothing is more favourable to the rise of politeness and learning, than a number of neighbouring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy” (Hume). The importance of Hume’s ideas relative to the philosophy of progress lies in the connections he makes between political climate, international collaboration, and progress. These ideas lay the foundation for further connections between technology, politics, and the human condition that ultimately cause a shift away from the idea of progress following World War II.

In America, the idea of progress also blossomed in the 18th century. Benjamin Franklin wrote about the idea of progress in a letter to Joseph Priestley, a Pennsylvanian theologian, scientist, and inventor, in a letter dated Feb. 8, 1780. Franklin, aware of his friend’s contributions to scientific understanding and technological development, mused on the progress he had seen during his lifetime:

The rapid Progress true Science now makes, occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born so soon. It is impossible to imagine the Height to which may be carried in a 1000 Years the Power of Man over Matter. We may perhaps learn to deprive large Masses of their Gravity & give them absolute levity, for the sake of easy transport. Agriculture may diminish its labour & double its produce. All Diseases may by sure means be prevented or cured, not excepting even that of Old Age, and our Lives

lengthened at pleasure even beyond the antediluvian Standard. O that moral Science were in as fair a Way of Improvement, that Men would cease to be Wolves to one another, and that human Beings would at length learn what they now improperly call Humanity (Franklin).

Franklin's thoughts as expressed in this letter indicate that this idea of progress was not an exclusively European phenomenon; rather, it was a widespread phenomenon caused by the blossoming of science and industry. Franklin expressed the belief that the developments he had seen in his lifetime were but the beginning of a long chain of events; he appeared to believe even that mortality could be improved upon. This unflinching belief in progress was emerging during this period, although it was not without challenges.

During the Enlightenment period, philosophers seemed to widely agree that progress was occurring, and that this was a natural human progression. However, the exact mechanism by which progress was taking place wasn't examined fully until the 19th century.

Progress in the 19th Century

The late 18th and early 19th centuries encompassed several drastic changes of similar scope to the Copernican Revolution. The church had lost some of its hold on society, and empiricism reigned supreme. Historically, this was a fascinating time that saw some of the largest shifts in human lifestyle seen to date. Two developments

important to the philosophy of progress occurred at this time: Darwin's theory of evolution, and the Industrial Revolution. Each of these impacted philosophers to understand progress and the mechanisms by which it occurs.

The Industrial Revolution took place roughly from 1760-1850, and largely confirmed the narrative of progress that had emerged during the enlightenment. During this period, there were large technological developments that directly influenced quality of life in Europe and the United States. Historical figures such as James Watt, Eli Whitney, Samuel Morse, Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison each created at least one revolutionary invention that changed the lifestyle of the average citizen in both Europe and the United States. While it is worth noting that the majority of these figures lived in the United States, the Industrial Revolution cannot be viewed strictly in an American context; this was indeed an international occurrence.

During the Industrial Revolution, transportation was expanded and improved upon to make moving from one place to another more efficient. In 1775, James Watt created the first successful steam engine. With the increased capability to travel and communicate across long distances came increased capacity for knowledge sharing. With this new capacity came another revolutionary idea that the entire world was subject to one universal organizational force: natural selection.

The significance of Charles Darwin to the fields of biology makes itself plain; his importance to philosophy is slightly less clear. Following the work of Jean Baptiste Lamarck and along with Alfred Wallace, Darwin (1809-1882) developed the groundbreaking theory of evolution by natural selection that paralleled several arguments made for the mechanisms by which the human condition progresses. Darwin wrote *The*

Origin of Species in 1859 after his experiences with finches in the Galapagos Islands left him with a groundbreaking idea regarding evolutionary progress.

Darwin's incredibly complex idea boils down to a few simple statements. First, if resources are finite, then there is a ceiling to reproduction of all creatures. Darwin explains this idea in *The Origin of Species*, "A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase. ...as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence" (Darwin). Second, due to finite resources, all living things are subject to selection pressures under which they compete to reproduce such as changes in availability of food or climate shifts. Finally, those who survive to reproduce pass along their traits to subsequent generations, thereby removing individuals or species less adapted to their environment. Regarding the final two points, Darwin writes, "A grain in the balance (between number of individuals and available resources) may determine which individuals shall live and which shall die—which variety or species shall increase in number, and which shall decrease, or finally become extinct" (Darwin). In other words, due to selection pressures and competition between species, those most adapted to their environment will gain an advantage and ultimately render those least adapted extinct.

Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection presented an obviously controversial challenge to church doctrine (although it is worth noting that Darwin's most vocal adversaries at the time were not clergy, but geologists, who believed that the earth was not old enough for the process of natural selection to have created the amount of biodiversity on Earth), but it also put forth another idea more significant to the philosophy of progress: conflict, or even death, as a means of improvement.

19th century philosophers responded to the confirmation that progress was indeed occurring, as supported by the Industrial Revolution, as well as Darwin's theories by attempting to identify the ways in which progress was actually achieved. Several of them argued, just as Darwin had, that there were primary mechanisms through which progress was made.

G.W.F. Hegel was one of the most outspoken proponents of the idea of progress in the 19th Century. In his *General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, Hegel discusses the mechanisms through which progress is achieved. For Hegel, progress happens when opposites conflict and ultimately create a new universally accepted concept, which will be challenged in turn. This idea of conflict as a means of progress was revolutionary at the time, but was supported by contemporary scientific theory and historical developments. In *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, Hegel writes:

Thus, in existence, progress appears as an advance from the imperfect to the more perfect. But the former must not only be taken in abstraction as the merely imperfect, but as that which contains at the same time its own opposite, the so-called perfect, as germ, as urge within itself... The imperfect, thus, as the opposite of itself in itself, is its own antithesis, which on the one hand exists, but, on the other, is annulled and resolved.

(Hegel)

In this passage, Hegel outlines his ideas regarding progress and how it occurs over the course of history. Put simply, Hegel believes that all ideas contain both themselves and their counterparts, and that through conflict they are brought to resolution and one overcomes the other. His mode of progress is similar in nature to Darwin's discovery of

natural selection; just as the natural world progresses through conflict, so too does the world of human ideas and understanding.

Hegel's understanding of history reflected his historical context; this context led to a greater trust in science and technology for many thinkers of the time. Increasingly, trust was placed in science over religion, and the two fields became more polarized.

Technology continued to improve quality of life at this time, making life more comfortable and safer over time.

It is worth noting that this idea of progress persisted until World War II, despite the destruction and horrors of World War I. Technology and science played large roles in combat during World War I; their impact cannot be overlooked. Advances in chemistry led to the development of poison gas; tanks were invented to pulverize enemies in trench warfare. Any of these inventions could easily be said to have changed the course of history, but they did not change the trajectory of the idea of progress in the same way that World War II's technology did. While it could be argued that the idea persisted through World War I because none of the technological developments possessed the potential for mass extinction in the way that the atomic bomb did; however, this may be an oversimplification. The first World War was called "the war to end all wars," a nickname that sounds oxymoronic at first, but one that actually reflects ideals put forth by Darwin and Hegel. At the time of the first World War, conflict was still seen as a method to achieve progress. To call World War I "the war to end all wars" is to subscribe to the ideology that with conflict comes potential for progress, and for decades that is precisely what many thinkers did. This ideology was ultimately shaken by World War II.

Post-War Notions of Progress

The idea of progress ultimately declined as the result of the atrocities of World War II; it was during the war that humankind's technology began to pose a threat to its survival and could no longer be seen as a tool by which to achieve progress. The culmination of ideas had led not to an increase in quality of life as it had before in the Scientific and Industrial Revolution, but rather to the possibility of human extinction.

Historically, World War II was a time of great conflict, but also of great technological progress. Radar was developed during the war, which allowed for triangulation and aversion of surprise attacks by enemies. Penicillin was mass manufactured, DEET was concocted to limit mosquito populations, and blood transfusions were perfected. All of these developments, Bradbury would agree, were beneficial to humankind and fit neatly into the narrative of progress prevalent in popular philosophy and literature. However, not all inventions and innovations that emerged from the war. During World War II, napalm was created, as were smoke screens and flame throwers.

Most importantly to our narrative of progress, however, is the invention of the atomic bomb. Upon seeing the first test of the atomic bomb, Robert Oppenheimer said, "A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent. There floated through my mind a line from the "Bhagavad-Gita" in which Krishna is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty: "I am become death: the destroyer of worlds" ("J. Robert Oppenheimer"). Oppenheimer was not the only scientist involved in the Manhattan Project who understood the inherent potential for human extinction in the

atomic bomb. Albert Einstein said of this new creation, ““The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe’ (Krauss).

This reaction to the atomic bomb was not uncommon; it represented for the first time humankind’s ability to progress past its capability to effectively manage its output. Following the war, many philosophers ceased to look to science and technology as a means of progress, but instead yearned for stability and social harmony. The invention and detonation of the atomic bomb ushered in the postmodern era of philosophy and paved the way for several important thinkers such as Theodor Adorno and John Rawls. Each of these philosophers turned their attention from technology and conflict as a means of progress to alternative means of developing as a species. However, their philosophies are extremely divergent and take up the narrative of progress in very different ways.

Theodor Adorno, a holocaust survivor and philosopher, wrote *Minima Moralia* as a response to his experiences during World War II as well as to debunk some Hegelian notions of progress that had persisted through World War I (Meek Lange). Rather than viewing the clash of ideas and subsequent discoveries as a means by which to achieve progress, he understands human history in terms of destruction as the result of conflict. He wholeheartedly disagrees with Hegel’s notion that conflict begets progress, and points out the problems with such ideas in his text:

The thought that after this war life could continue on ‘normally,’ or indeed that culture could be ‘reconstructed’ – as if the reconstruction of culture

alone were not already the negation of such – is idiotic. Millions of Jews have been murdered, and this is supposed to be only the intermission and not the catastrophe itself...As long as like follows like, the catastrophe perpetuates itself...The logic of history is as destructive as the human beings which it begets: wherever their inertia tends to go, it reproduces the equivalent of past calamities. (Adorno)

In this passage, Adorno directly attacks Hegelian ideas of progress, instead arguing that destruction and murder can build upon themselves with no upward potential for progress. His comment regarding the Holocaust- that the murder of millions of Jews cannot be seen as the means to a positive end- directly conflicts with the Hegelian ideal of progress, and perhaps rightly so. Adorno expresses his disillusionment with the idea of progress by taking the historical events of World War II to their logical extreme; if vengeance becomes commonplace, what prevents an endless cycle of destruction from replacing what was previously perceived as an endless cycle of progress? With the creation of newer and crueler ways to kill other human beings comes this potential, which Adorno recognizes.

Where Adorno turns on the idea of progress entirely, instead viewing history as a downward spiral, not all postmodern philosophers agreed with this view of human history. John Rawls was one of these philosophers (Meek Lange). Rawls' texts do not discuss science as a means of progress, but rather the restructuring of societies to respect the rights and freedoms of individuals. This had obviously not been done during World War II, and Rawls' proposal that humankind revisit political philosophies reflects this

historical moment. Rather than applying scientific laws to political discourse as Enlightenment thinkers had, Rawls urges humankind to consider individual rights from an ethical perspective. He proposes a shift in the organization of society, and discusses what an ideal society may look like. This society is not built upon the idea of progress of the technological or economic variety, but rather upon individual rights. Rawls describes a “well-ordered society” as one that is “not only designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice” (Rawls 4).

Although these two writers have radically divergent ideas regarding the future of humankind, their similarities are important to our narrative of progress. While reactions to World War II were varied and sometimes extreme, many of them began to reject science and technological development as the most important means of human progress. On the contrary, they frequently began to embrace a return to political liberalism and ethics to direct future progress.

The relationship between these philosophers’ ideas of progress and their historical context should, at this time, be evident: each philosopher responds both to his historical context and to his contemporaries’ writings. Broadly speaking, the philosophy of progress has been shaped by historical context, and eventually fell out of favor when its context could no longer be used as support for its content. The Scientific Revolution provided excellent evidence for the idea of progress, as did the Industrial Revolution. However, as a result of the atrocities of World War II, the idea of endless progress fell out of favor with many prominent thinkers, ushering in the postmodern era. In short, with

the invention of science came a belief in endless capacity to improve human life and understanding, but following World War II there came about a fundamental distrust in technology that tainted this model of understanding human history. Following the war, progress became a paradoxical construct; the more technological progress was made, the greater potential humankind had to destroy its well-being. This is, admittedly, a generalization based on the thoughts of several popular writers at the time; in no way was this abandonment of the idea of progress universal. As with any philosophical subject, there were and are several different arguments being made at any given time concerning progress. This trend from belief in science as a means of progress to a focus on humanity to achieve progress following World War II is simply the most dominant thread, as well as the one easiest to follow. It is this vein that we will follow through Ray Bradbury's work as we proceed.

Chapter 2

Ray Bradbury and the Idea of Progress

Just as philosophy responds to historical context and literature, so does literature respond to both history and philosophy. This trend is visible in a multitude of authors on a multitude of subjects, but for our purposes we will focus on the notion of progress and Ray Bradbury, specifically.

Bradbury's Early Life and Work

Bradbury makes an interesting case study in literature responding to its historical and philosophical contexts for several reasons. Bradbury was born in 1920, and lived through some of humankind's largest technological developments as well as its largest crises to date. Over the course of his lifetime, the philosophy of progress changed dramatically, and these changes are reflected in Bradbury's work. As the result of the historical and philosophical contexts of Bradbury's life, his work traces a similar philosophical arc to the one that many influential philosophers of his time from belief in technology as a means to achieve progress to skepticism of technological progress.

An idyllic family life and a stable suburban setting characterized Bradbury's early life. He was born to parents Leonard Spaulding Bradbury and Ester Moberg Bradbury on August 22, 1920 (Ray 1). His father ran lines for a telephone company, and his mother was an immigrant from Sweden. Bradbury made claims, which were universally

criticized, to remember his birth. He believed that, because he was born at 10 months instead of the usual 9, he had heightened senses and as a result remembered much more of his early life than others could imagine (Eller 9). His experiences shaped his writing from a young age, often in ways that were quite clear.

In *Becoming Ray Bradbury*, Jonathan R. Eller discusses Bradbury's upbringing and its influence on his writing; Bradbury's historical and social contexts were frequently reflected in his writing. One telling example he uses is from Bradbury's early work. Eller explains that Bradbury had an experience as a teenager in which he happened upon an exhibit of fetuses in jars while walking the boardwalk. The encounter with the exhibit shocked Bradbury, who explained, "The whole thing chilled me... I knew nothing of life. I grew up in an age when we never discussed anything to do with sex or where children came from, or babies, or anything. I had never seen a picture of a fetus, I had never seen one before, so I left the exhibit chilled" (Eller 9).

This encounter was later written into a story called "The Jar," that was published in an edition of "Weird Tales" in November 1944. In "The Jar," the protagonist, Charlie, happens upon an exhibit similar to the one Bradbury encountered in his youth; he purchases one of these jarred creatures that horrified Bradbury so and takes it home with him. From there, however, the tale becomes increasingly extreme as Charlie and the other townspeople impose their own personal histories on the amorphous jarred creature (Bradbury, "The Jar" 49-56). Just as these townspeople projected their own feelings onto the nebulous blob of flesh in the jar, so does Bradbury allow his work to serve as a conduit for his own personal experiences. "The Jar" is just one example of a larger trend in Bradbury's work; he allows his experience to inspire his writing, leading to honest and

visceral prose that is telling of both Bradbury's experience and of the society in which he lived. This tendency of Bradbury's becomes increasingly important as we continue to analyze his work within its historical and philosophical context.

Bradbury attended Los Angeles High School from 1935-1938. These years were not especially active as far as publications were concerned. Bradbury was writing, but his work tended to be a bit self-conscious and emulated other authors rather than creating a unique voice. He responded most often to his own environment and the styles of other science fiction authors at the time (Eller 17). His writing had style, and he displayed a gift for writing to convey mood, but he had not yet developed political or philosophical implications in this early work that readers of *Fahrenheit 451* have come to cherish over the years. High school was a learning time for Bradbury; he studied writing and was hungry for feedback from his teachers. He learned about the stars and the solar system, and this learning clearly inspired many of his future stories. Although he had a thirst for knowledge, attending college was not in the cards for Bradbury, whose family did not make enough money to help him continue his education. As a result, Bradbury continued to educate himself at the public library near his home (Eller 10).

Bradbury's early published work was influenced by some of what he studied at this public library, as well as by the historical context in which he was writing. Bradbury's first published stories were in *Futura Fantasia*, a self-published magazine of which he was the editor-in-chief. *Futura Fantasia*, or *FuFa* as Bradbury often lovingly called it, was published briefly from 1939 to 1940 (Eller 33).

Historically, this was a curious moment in American history. Although World War Two was happening in Europe, the United States was not yet involved in the conflict

and its implications had not yet reached the average American on a personal level as it would in the years following Pearl Harbor. The United States was still economically depressed, but not to the degree that it had been in previous years. From a progress perspective, things appeared to be looking up. Increasing technology had created opportunity, and some hope had been inspired. Philosophically, progress was still on the mainstream consciousness; there was still the belief that with time comes progress and increased quality of life.

Bradbury seemed to buy into this idea between 1939 and 1941, immediately following his high school graduation and at the beginning of his self-education. At this time, Bradbury became interested in and briefly bought into a political ideology that may sound unfamiliar to the modern ear: technocracy. Technocracy was a political movement dictating that society ought to be ruled by those with the most scientific expertise or technological understanding. The idea of technocracy emerged in the “early 20th century as a response to the Progressive movement”, and persisted through the Great Depression (The Editors). The technocracy movement carried with it the underlying assumption that with technology comes progress and, ultimately, an increase in quality of life for citizens of the technocracy. Prior to World War II, Bradbury read about technocracy at length, even signing up as an official member of the movement, and allowed it to inspire several of his works. To Bradbury, technocracy struck at attractive balance between capitalism and socialism, and his belief in this idea permeated his stories, particularly those contained in *FuFa*.

When asked about his involvement in the technocracy movement, Bradbury explained, “the basic idea was to have a government where experts were hired to run

departments...I went around talking about technocracy to everyone, and I bored the hell out of them. I put everyone to sleep” (Weller 169). Bradbury’s involvement in the movement was brief, but can still be found in his writing from 1939-1941.

After signing up as a member of the technocracy movement, Bradbury received a book called *Technocracy Study Course* (“Writing”). This book was highly influential to Bradbury at the time; although his belief in technocracy was short lived, it was passionate. This book outlined the idea of technocracy, “that the production and distribution of an abundance of physical wealth on a continental scale for the use of all continental citizens can only be accomplished by a continental technological control- a governance function- a technate” (*Technocracy, Inc.* vii). Technocracy, as a theory, posited that progress was, in fact, taking place, and that the appropriate leaders could ensure that that progress benefitted all those participating in the technocracy equally. Bradbury’s copy of *Technocracy Study Course* contained the following:

We have observed that the rise of the human species and the corresponding adjustments, both up and down, of the other species or organisms, have been due almost entirely to the fact that the human species has progressively accumulated new and superior techniques by which a progressive larger share of the total available energy could be converted to its uses (213).

This passage from the *Technocracy Study Course* is particularly relevant to the philosophy of progress that was visible in Bradbury’s work prior to World War II. Although there was not much of said work, it contained the underlying ideology expressed in the text above. Technocrats asserted that humankind has progressed

technologically over time, allowing the species to rise to dominance. Technocrats take this ideology one step further, arguing that allowing those individuals with the most expertise in any given area to govern would allow for technological progress to be realized as social progress.

Bradbury read and internalized this text, allowing its ideas of technology, progress, and leadership to permeate the stories contained in *Futura Fantasia* from 1939 to 1940. Most notably, the Technocracy movement ideology was present in his work “Don’t Get Technatal” published in the first edition of *FuFa*. In “Don’t Get Technatal,” Bradbury writes a tongue-in-cheek story about a writer struggling more than the average author for a very strange reason: the world has been robbed of plots. The story is set in a fictional future where a utopia has formed, to the joy of the average citizen, as the result of the implementation of a technocratic government. Technocracy has, in the story, allowed for the ultimate human progress: crime is no longer necessitated by poor living conditions, murders are non-existent, and children are raised as ‘model citizens.’ Because of the lack of conflict in society, the protagonist has run out of ideas to write stories about (Reynolds). The struggling author, Sam, complains to his wife about his lack of inspiration in this technocratic society, saying:

...all my life I wanted to be a writer. Okay. I'm writing for the pulp magazines for a coupla years. Right? Okay. Then I'm writing sea stories, gangsters, political views, first class-bump-offs. I'm happy.... I'm in my element. Then—bingo!—in comes technocracy, makes everyone happy—bump! out goes me! I just can't stand writing the stuff the people read today. Everything is science and education (Reynolds).

This passage is telling of both the ideology of technocracy as well as Bradbury's feelings regarding technology as a means of progress. The speaker discusses technocracy in terms of its impact on society, but Bradbury's use of language in this text is particularly interesting. Despite his youth and relative inexperience in publishing, Bradbury's use of language in this text carries significant philosophical implications. The above passage was written to indicate that the improvements made to humankind's quality of life by technology and technocracy would not be gradual, but immediate. Bradbury's use of the interjections "bingo!" and "bump!" convey to the reader the impact that technocracy would have on the human condition would not be gradual, but immediate. Bradbury sees taking advantage of technological progress and technical understanding as a way to radically and quickly improve society.

In "Don't Get Technatal," which he wrote under the pseudonym "Ron Reynolds," Bradbury makes it abundantly clear that technology ought to be used as a tool to achieve social and political harmony. One could see why he might believe this given his historical context; humankind had made leaps and bounds as far as technology was concerned, and there was a resulting increase in prosperity. Bradbury responded to this historical moment by subscribing to the ideals of technocracy. "Don't Get Technatal" is an important text because it demonstrates that Bradbury did, perhaps briefly, believe in the concept of progress before World War II. In this, he was not alone. As discussed previously, the idea of progress was centuries old and had overwhelming support in the years prior to World War II.

Bradbury's thoughts on technocracy were expressed in numerous other places throughout his early work with FuFa. Under his own name, Bradbury published the poem "Thought and Space" in the Summer 1939 issue. The poem, although short, discusses human brainpower and thought as a way to transcend humankind's physical imitations. He writes, "One thought shall travel midst the gods' playthings/ Past cindered globes where choking flame still sings/ No wall of force yet have ye firmly wrought/ That chains the supreme strength of purest thought" ("Thought and Space"). The implication of this poem, that thought is far more powerful than any physical, social, or even divine limitations, demonstrates his view regarding humankind's potential for infinite progress. Through this poem, Bradbury communicates that thought and brainpower are means to defy all physical and social constraints, leading to progress. With enough thought, Bradbury seems to say, not even the sky is the limit.

This idea was not limited to this poem alone, but could be seen in any number of iterations in Bradbury's work while he subscribed to the ideals of technocracy. Also in the Summer 1939 edition of FuFa, Bradbury wrote the following editor's note:

You may have wondered why I placed the technocrat story and article in FuFa. Well, it's because I think Technocracy combines all of the hopes and dreams of science-fiction. We've been dreaming about it for years—now, in a short time it may become reality. It surely deserves support from any serious fictioneer [sic]. [...]whether you are an optimist or a pessimist about the future of humanity, you'll find either side in FuFa. (But on the side, I'm all for the Technate, aegh!) (Bradbury, "An Explanation").

This note reflects Bradbury's early philosophy of progress- at this moment, he feels optimism regarding the future of humankind due to its progress in science and technology. He contrasts his views with several others published even within his own magazine, contrasting his optimistic technocratic views regarding technology with those of his contemporaries who believed that technology would lead to the demise of humankind. The view of history that Bradbury and his fellow technocrats held, that technology was a means of social progress, was rather popular in the late 1930s, but was by no means ubiquitous. As with any philosophical contention, there was a level of controversy surrounding technology and progress.

Bradbury addresses this controversy in his Fall 1939 edition of *FuFa*. In his editor's preface to the magazine, he declares, "A newer, plumper *Futura Fantasia* greets you, with more articles, more value and less technocracy!" (Bradbury, "Editor's Note"). In explaining why there would be less technocracy, Bradbury writes, "As you will notice there is not a great deal to be sed [sic] about technocracy in this issue mainly becuz [sic] I am tired of talking and the response we get is vury, vury [sic] funny, if not childish. If someone cares to challenge us on technocracy we shall be only too glad to answer all questions..." (Bradbury "Introduction") Despite his continued loyalty to the cause, it seems as though Bradbury's frenzied advocacy of technocracy was fading. His political ideologies did not shift dramatically at this time, but Bradbury's lack of willingness to further defend technocracy foreshadows his future beliefs.

Bradbury has gained a reputation for being quite a technophobe over the course of his career, despite his initial beliefs in technocracy. The shift away from technocracy toward

more democratic ideologies began around 1941. By the time the Winter 1940 edition of *FuFa* was published, there were almost no references to technocracy present therein. In the Summer 1939 issue, Bradbury's magazine had used the word "technocracy" 22 times; by the Winter 1940 edition, however, technocracy was only mentioned once. Within the course of a year or two, Bradbury turned away from technocracy altogether. When asked about why he ultimately abandoned technocracy, Bradbury tells a simple story. He attended a meeting for technocrats, enthusiastic and excited by the ideals that he had come to favor so strongly. However, when he attended the meeting, he was disturbed by what he saw. The head of the movement, Howard Scott, entered the meeting and took the stage, surrounded by men in grey suits. Bradbury says that he remembered thinking, "This isn't that much different from Fascism or Communism, where people get together and wear the same suits, that have the same emblems, and speak the same jargon" (Weller 169.) Bradbury's sudden realization of technocracy's flaws and subsequent abandonment of the movement left a gap in both his political ideology and writing that needed to be filled. This gap in ideology set the stage for Bradbury's later work to flourish. It is in this context, as well as the historical and philosophical context surrounding Bradbury, that we will examine Bradbury's work following Pearl Harbor.

Preventing Futures: Bradbury's Alternative to Postmodernism

Ray Bradbury once quipped in an interview, "I'm not a futurist. People ask me to predict the future, when all I want to do is prevent it" (Wartzman). In considering

Bradbury's work within the context of World War II, this quote could not be more essential to understanding. While many post-war authors made a transition from trusting technology as a means of attaining social progress to complete distrust of technology, Bradbury did not change his stance quite as dramatically. Bradbury did not mourn the progress that had already been made by technology; he saw medical progress, increased infrastructure, and cleaner energy as gifts of the modern age. Where some post-war philosophers and novelists turned on technology altogether, Bradbury viewed it with a qualified distrust. His skepticism was not directed toward past uses of technology, but toward futures in which technology remained unchecked. It is worth noting, for the purposes of further analysis, that Bradbury did not hate technology at any point in his literary career; rather, he wrote about futures in which technology is misused in order to prevent those futures from taking place (Eller 166). It is within this framework that we will study his post-Pearl Harbor texts.

Although it may appear fallacious to argue that Bradbury's ideological shift in the early 40s was the direct result of a historical event, there is evidence indicating causality between Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Bradbury's shifting opinions. If his stories are of any indication, Bradbury recognized potential for human extinction inherent in the atomic bomb. He saw that progress of the technological variety no longer led to progress of the social variety; in fact, just the opposite. In an interview, Bradbury explained, "smog, freeways, cars, atom bombs, most of humankind's trouble these days comes from an abundance of machinery and an undersupply of imagination applied to that machinery" (Aggelis 18). Bradbury recognized that humankind's potential to produce

technology had finally surpassed its ability to appropriately manage its creations. This potential, if left unchecked, could have disastrous social and political repercussions. He expressed this idea in interviews, but also in his stories and novels.

The atrocities of the atomic bomb and the effect they had on Bradbury's views of technology are expressed through numerous stories in *The Martian Chronicles* as well as *The Illustrated Man*. Bradbury began writing *The Martian Chronicles* in 1946, the year immediately following the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Bradbury often expressed the fears that he experienced at this period in history; he often considered the implications of the atomic bomb, and those fears manifested themselves as so many of Bradbury's thoughts and experiences did: in his stories. In *The Martian Chronicles*, we can find several stories in which these fears play themselves out in one form or another.

Many critics have argued that *The Martian Chronicles* is a collection about imperialism and its impact on native cultures and environments. In many ways, this is true. The text supports this interpretation on many levels; however, *The Martian Chronicles* also contains several stories that communicate a great deal about Bradbury's philosophy of progress.

"There Will Come Soft Rains" appears in *The Martian Chronicles*, inspired by the atomic bomb drops on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "I picked up the newspaper after Hiroshima was bombed, and they had a photograph of a house with the shadows of the people who lived there burned into the side from the intensity of the bomb," Bradbury said, explaining this newspaper article as his inspiration for "There Will Come Soft Rains" (Weller 116).

In “There Will Come Soft Rains,” Bradbury depicts an eerie scene in order to convey to the reader the insignificance of technological conveniences in the larger scale of technology’s potential. He does so in a unique and striking way: there are no human beings in the entire story. The tale takes place in a post-apocalyptic setting, and all humans who would typically be present have been wiped out by an unnamed calamity, presumably an atomic weapon detonation. Bradbury writes about an automated home that continues to operate despite the demise of its residents, creating an unsettling effect. The home continues to clean, cook, and entertain for a family long since deceased. The story highlights the irony inherent in technological progress: its advancements have made life simpler and more convenient, but the same advancements that lend convenience to life can also wipe out those meant to enjoy said conveniences. This paradox is never explicitly stated; instead, Bradbury allows the continued existence of technology after the extinction of humankind to speak to the point that technology has the potential to both kill and outlive humanity.

The automated home performs several tasks for the long gone family. Bradbury writes, “The fire burned on the stone hearth and the cigar fell away into a mound of quiet ash on its tray. The empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.” (Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains” 239). In his description of this cigar, he shows that the objects that humankind generally interacts with and enjoys are just that—objects. They have no meaning without their human counterparts. In light of the destruction of humankind, the technological luxuries that the family had afforded themselves seem superfluous, because they ultimately did not help the family’s livelihood

or well-being. The family is dead due to technological progress, similar to the progress that allowed them to live in such luxury in the first place. In this piece, Bradbury highlights both the dangers of unchecked technological progress as well as the unimportance of modern technological conveniences.

After the house has carried out this series of unnerving activities, it asks the absent patriarch of the home which poem he would like to hear that evening. Upon hearing no response, the home chooses a poem at random to read to the nonexistent family. The following is an excerpt from the poem:

And not one will know of the war, not one

will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,

if humankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,

Would scarcely know that we were gone (239)

This poem creates an eerie tone to an already chilling piece. It highlights the unnatural state in which the family lived prior to this weapon detonation that annihilated their town. Nature, the poem declares, will be unchanged and powerful even after the extinction of man. Technology and the idea of progress were not a reality, but merely a construct of man designed to create a false sense of control over the power of nature. Technology may outlive humanity, may even create circumstances in which humankind

can no longer survive. Technological progress, if misused in war, ultimately renders all other technological progress obsolete. Ray Bradbury clearly wished to avoid this possible future, and “There Will Come Soft Rains” is his attempt to contribute to the aversion of said future.

“There Will Come Soft Rains” was written as a direct response to the atom bomb detonations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is not, however, the only story that Bradbury wrote as the result of this historical event. “-And the Moon Be Still as Bright” responds philosophically to the historical events that took place during World War II as well. In this text, however, a character in the text, Spender, fulfills the role that Bradbury reports to be his- to avoid possible futures. Through this story, Bradbury warns of the effects of technology on the arts and religion.

Published as part of *The Martian Chronicles*, “-And the Moon Be Still as Bright” tells the tale of an ill-fated mission to Mars. In the story, a crew of American astronauts lands on Mars, only to discover that there was once an incredibly beautiful and civilized civilization there, a civilization that is now apparently extinct. The American men proceed to disrespect the Martian land and deserted cities, going so far as to drunkenly vomit inside their important buildings. Seeing this, one of the men, named Spender, leaves the group and goes into hiding, vowing to murder the remainder of the crew one at a time in order to spare the beautiful red planet their disrespect and destruction. Spender respects the beauty of this new place, and contrasts it with the ugliness that technology and war have created on Earth.

When confronted about his motivations for murdering his comrades by his Captain, Spender explains, “ –The war! You heard the Congressional speeches before we left. If things work out they hope to establish three atomic research and atom bomb depots on Mars. That means Mars is finished, all this wonderful stuff gone” (Bradbury, “- And the Moon Still Be As Bright” 88).

This passage speaks volumes regarding Bradbury’s views on technology and progress; while he understands that some technological progress has improved the quality of life, he sees that when left unchecked, technology is an incredibly destructive force. This portion of Spender’s impassioned speech discusses the prospect of what many would consider significant technological progress: atomic weapons testing centers built far away from human populations. The prospect of culminating research initially launched the idea of progress in light of the scientific revolution, but this story takes the trope of research as a means to progress and turns it on its head. Bradbury’s writing in this story is curious because it takes what sparked the idea of progress- an increase in scientific research- and paints a vastly different picture of it than he would have before the war began.

Spender serves as a conduit for Bradbury’s ideas regarding progress once more in his discussion with the Captain, explaining exactly what the impact of technology will be on the beautiful Martian landscape. He exclaims:

It’s simply me against the whole crooked grinding setup on Earth. They’ll be flopping their filthy atom bombs up here, fighting for bases to have

wars. Isn't it enough they've ruined one planet, without ruining another; do they have to foul someone else's manger? (88)

Once again, technological development is not discussed in terms of social progress in this passage, as it was early in Bradbury's work in *FuFa*, but rather in terms of complete destruction. Bradbury's use of language is curious in this passage; he discusses technology not only in terms of destruction, but also in terms of loss of innocence. Technology has the power to "foul someone else's manger," or ruin their purity and innocence in favor of feigned progress. Although manned space travel had not yet come about, Bradbury saw in the technological progress of man a disturbing possibility for humanity to destroy not only the Earth, but planets that remained untouched as well, all in the name of progress. This passage emotes anger at perpetual misuse of technology to kill rather than improve, but also disgust at the loss of innocence that accompanies these advances.

In "-And The Moon Still Be As Bright," Bradbury takes his disillusionment with technological progress one step further: he appeals to the reader's sense of nostalgia and argues the benefits of a return, at least in part, to the sort of society that existed before the Industrial Revolution. Spender explains his ideas, saying:

...I've seen that what these Martians had was just as good as anything we'll ever hope to have. They stopped where we should have stopped a hundred years ago...they knew how to blend art unto their living...these Martians have art and religion and everything... anything that's strange is no good to

the average American. If it doesn't have Chicago plumbing, it's no good.

The thought of that! (87)

In this passage, Spender yearns for a time before science, art, and religion were entirely separate entities. Though Bradbury was not mournful of all advances in technology, this passage communicates a message of regret for the polarization of science, religion, and art. Bradbury sees some technological progress as helpful, but points out through this passage that in a balanced society, art and religion could peacefully coexist with science. Technology and science, Bradbury seems to say through this passage, have not increased our quality of life, merely narrowed the scope of what we consider to be a life well lived well past what is reasonable. Technology has limited our abilities to appreciate cultures outside our own, nearly eliminated our ability to have faith in something larger than ourselves while functioning in society, and destroyed hope for a world in which art and science are one in the same. Spender, and by extension Bradbury, mourns the loss of these possible worlds. To them, it seems, these worlds would be more beautiful places to live in. Because of science and technology, they no longer exist. Despite Bradbury's confessed intentions of "preventing futures," this text applies directly to the time in which he lived as well as to the modern day. Perhaps the future in which humankind lost appreciation for art, culture, and religion in favor of technology was a future that Bradbury was unable to prevent after all.

Until this point, we have focused predominantly on the ways in which Bradbury perceived technology as a threat to society as a whole in a quasi-political sense. This was not the only threat he seemed to understand as the result of technological advances.

Bradbury also perceived a threat to the young as well as to the family unit. Traditionally, youth is seen as the ultimate potential for progress. Teachers and parents tout the mantra “children are the future!” in American schools on a regular basis for exactly this reason; children are seen as untapped raw potential. In children lies all potential for progress yet to come. Understanding this cultural understanding of the role of children, Bradbury writes a tale about an instance in which progress made by adults corrupts children, the ultimate source of future progress. In this way, Bradbury indicates that progress may in fact negate progress. This story, published in *The Illustrated Man*, is called “The Veldt”.

In “The Veldt,” George and Lydia Hadley own a “Happylife home,” a house that performs tasks for them such as tying their shoes, making them dinner, etc. What’s most intriguing about this home, however, is what it provides the children: an interactive nursery. This nursery allows the children to project their imaginations onto the walls and interact with these imaginary environments. The Hadley family pays handsomely for this feature of their home; they see it as an investment in their children and their future well-being. However, this investment begins to go awry as the children begin to project grotesque and violent scenes onto the walls of the nursery. Specifically, they project gruesome images of Africa and prides of lions hunting. Concerned with this turn of events, the Hadley parents call their friend, a psychologist.

The psychologist speaks to the effect of this technologically advanced nursery on the Hadley children. He tells the Hadley parents, “You’ve let this room and this house replace you and your wife in your children’s affections. This room is their mother and father, far more important in their lives than their real parents” (282). The psychologist

speaks to the effect that technology has on children's development as individuals, as well as to the family unit as a whole. The technology in this nursery, initially created to "study the patterns left on the walls by the child's mind...and help the child" remained unchecked, ultimately leading to the destruction of the potential of the Hadley children to function normally. The children cannot thrive as individuals, and therefore within their family and society, because their socialization has been hampered by their dependence on technology. Their ability to form emotional bonds with others has been annihilated by their relationship with technology. When told they would need to turn off their nursery, one says, "That sounds dreadful! Would I have to tie my own shoes instead of letting the shoe tier do it? And brush my own teeth and comb my hair and give myself a bath?... I don't want to do anything but look and listen and smell; what else is there to do?" (280). The children's protestations illustrate Bradbury's fears of dependence on technology; these children have been rendered incapable of living fully human lives by their frequent substitutions of technology for human interaction and family bonding. Instead, they feel emotional connections to objects and have been robbed of agency over their existence. They are content to be passive participants in their own lives; this is the opposite of meaningful progress.

The psychologist speaks to Bradbury's views regarding technology once more, saying, "Like too many others, you've built [your life] around creature comforts. Why, you'd starve tomorrow if something went wrong in your kitchen. You wouldn't know how to tap an egg" (282). Through the psychologist, Bradbury speaks to the devolution of human capability as the result of technological progress. With this type of technological progress, Bradbury indicates, comes a reversal of actual progress insofar as quality of life

is concerned. While conveniences can be a great luxury in moderation, Bradbury warns against leaving them unchecked for fear of eroding the possibility of building fundamentally important human relationships such as the one between parent and child. The Hadley's' tale is a cautionary one: overdependence on technology can lead to a breakdown in family structure and communication. For the Hadley parents, the story ends with their murders at the hands of their emotionally stunted children. For the reader, there is still time to understand the impact that technology can have on relationships.

Unlike in texts previously discussed, in "The Veldt" Bradbury does not merely diagnose a social ill, but actually prescribes a change. The psychiatrist ends his speech with a recommendation that might as well have come out of Bradbury's own mouth, "...turn everything off. Start new. It'll take time. But we'll make good children out of bad in a year, wait and see" (282). This text was published in 1951, several years after the war had ended, and it would appear as though Bradbury had passed his initial visceral reaction to unchecked technology and had taken the time to devise a solution, a way to avoid the futures he saw emerging. To Bradbury, avoiding a terrifying future was as simple as turning away from technology that makes humanity less human. In other words, humans should be fulfilling their own needs, using technology to save and enhance lives, rather than living through it.

Bradbury was no stranger to this idea; he refused for the entirety of his long life to drive a car even once. Once, when interviewed, he said, "The automobile is the most dangerous weapon in our society - cars kill more than wars do. More than 50,000 people will die this year because of them and nobody seems to notice" (Aggelis 165). Bradbury

insisted that we make “make pedestrians the center of our society again” rather than cars for precisely the reason that the psychologist in “The Veldt” suggests the Hadley family take a break from technology: to Bradbury, technology that we have come to view as “essential” has begun to remove humanity from society. His remedy is to simply revise our understanding of technology as a luxury, not as a necessity, and take intermittent breaks from its use.

Bradbury’s Prevention as Progress

Unlike his philosophical contemporaries, Bradbury did not turn on technology entirely in the years during and following World War II. He understood that technological progress had, in fact, produced some astounding social progress in the years leading to the war. He did not aim to undo all technological progress; in fact, preventing futures was, in itself, a form of progress. Bradbury’s profundity emerges in his ability to understand where unrestricted technological progress may lead to backslides in the human condition; his texts aim to avoid those futures and replace them with ones in which humanity uses technology responsibly and remains at the center of their own universe.

Consider Bradbury’s writing in light of Theodor Adorno’s philosophy; this is not to say that Bradbury was reacting to Adorno. However, Bradbury’s ideas have particular resonance when viewed within the historical and philosophical context of Adorno. His views are certainly not as extreme, but Bradbury seems to understand the potential for

technology to lead to the sort of vengeful cycle discussed in *Minima Moralia*. Bradbury takes technological progress to its logical extreme in the same way that Adorno does with the culmination of anger and destruction. Their results are not entirely dissimilar.

Bradbury, in this way, expresses his fears: that unchecked technological advances will lead to an Adorno-like future in which the worst parts of human nature thrive and destroy because they are given the appropriate platforms to do so.

The future Bradbury seems to be a proponent of, rather than an Adorno-like model, is one similar to Rawls'. Bradbury hopes to once again make humanity the center of society; he sees our techno-centric society as problematic and leading toward a disastrous and slothful future. Instead of the focus on technology he perceives as present in modern society, he proposes that society return to the liberal ideals discussed by Rawls. The rights and freedoms ought to be honored, revered, even, by society; and Bradbury's texts urge his readers to consider where their use of technology impedes these freedoms and removes their humanity.

Through his writing, Bradbury aims to prevent futures; by prompting his readers to think about the potential for these disastrous cycles as the result of their attachment to technology, he hopes to promote a Rawlsian future instead. This future would allow for technology to play a role in human life insofar as it promotes individual and societal welfare, but perhaps diminish its influence on our day-to-day lives.

With Bradbury's propensity to provoke thought through his work comes a set of questions. Bradbury aims to convey to the reader that use of technology has potential to

subvert meaningful progress. But can these provocations for thought make any actual meaningful difference? Is Bradbury's mission a feasible one? Possible, even? Is his turning away from technological progress actually progress in itself?

Bradbury discussed this idea in an interview with *Playboy*, and although he was joking, his statements resonate with our question of the tangible impact of Bradbury's texts. When asked about his texts and the real life implications they have had, Bradbury responded,

For instance...when a bright Sony inventor read about my seashell radios in that novel, he invented the Walkman. That was one good thing to emerge from that book - the banishment of most picnic-ruining ghetto blasters. But I had no idea I was doing it. (Kelley)

In short, Bradbury accurately understands his texts' potential to change the world. He cannot directly affect change, but the provocation of thought in itself can perhaps diminish technological progress and create meaningful human progress. In reading Bradbury not only for its entertainment value, but for its philosophical value as well, we can more fully understand our society and its relationship with technological progress. As the result of reading Bradbury in this light, we can come to understand the differences between beneficial technology and the unchecked technological progress that Bradbury would argue is simply a wolf in sheep's clothing. If his texts change the views of even a handful of readers and change their perspectives regarding technology, Bradbury will

have become one step closer to achieving his ideal of progress, a goal of preventing futures.

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ACADEMIC VITA

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Education

B.A. English and Philosophy, 2014, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Honors and Awards

Recipient of Dotterer Award
Academic Honors 2010-2013
Liberal Arts Enrichment Grant recipient
Recognized Paterno Fellow

Association Memberships/Activities

Mock Trial Association Team Captain
All-Regional Attorney, American Mock Trial Association
Member of Phi Eta Sigma Honors Fraternity
Secretary, One Stage Revolution

Professional Experience

Schreyer Honors College: University Park, PA Intern, August 2013- Present
Compile and analyze press releases about Ireland's female presidents
Identify and summarize rhetorical devices used in campaigns
Present findings to Schreyer's Associate Dean

Ryan, Morton, & Imms, LLC: West Chester, PA Intern, May 2013-Present
Perform basic legal research
File documents at courthouse
File inheritance taxes and tax returns
Deliver documents to clients

Development Center for Adults: Pleasant Gap, PA Volunteer, Spring 2012-13
Assisted adult learners in assimilation after moving to America
Developed lesson plans for language development
Edited a Masters' thesis for pupil from Korea

AIM Academy in Manayunk, Conshohocken, PA Intern, May-June 2012
Matched nonprofit to grants amounting to over \$50,000
Made regular reports of my findings to a supervisor

The Pennsylvania State University: University Park, PA Intern, August- January 2010
Assisted in organizing and marketing a conference on sustainability ethics
Proofread documents for publication