



Cybernetics In Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano

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ABSTRACT

In *Player Piano* (1952), Kurt Vonnegut depicts individuals who fall prey to a dominating cybernetics system that amplifies its influence through computers, consumer culture, and the advertising sector in postwar America. The article explores the concept of cybernetics in *Player Piano*, which reduces people to sentient machines and mindless bodies. *Player Piano* is an attempt to use machine analogies to make sense of complex systems. It is difficult to depict a cosmos that is predetermined and gives humans no free will.

Keywords: Cybernetics, Consumer Culture, Advertising Industry, Dystopia, 1950s America

Introduction

The 1950s American good life is characterised by the terms of economic condition. Americans of this age believed that the good life would last forever, and that they would always have access to cars, televisions, and an opulent and comfortable lifestyle. Actually, Lawrence Samuel in "Brought to You By: Postwar Television Advertising and the American Dream" claims that the American Dream offered all citizens of the country "a family, car, and suburban home full of modern appliances" (xi). As a result, the mass-production sector looked to the American people following World War II, who were ready to reap the benefits of the American Dream. Additionally, producers were content to persuade these customers to buy an increasing amount of goods.

Nonetheless, a lot of writers and critics discovered that the prosperous 1950s adopted a capitalist inclination. This system is as observed by Antonio Gramsci in *Selection from Cultural Writings*: A given socio-historical moment is never homogeneous; on the contrary, it is rich in contradictions. It acquires a personality and is a moment of development in that a certain fundamental activity of life prevails over others and represents a historical peak: but this presupposes a hierarchy, a contrast, a struggle. (93)

Additionally, a number of writers from this milieu used writing to critique the 1950s American consumer capitalist system. In *Player Piano*, Vonnegut critiques the mechanised, consumerism-driven American society of the 1950s, which used the post-World War II emergence of information and communication technology as well as the advertising business to control people's minds. The cybernetic environment of 1950s America, which manipulates individuals through consumer culture, the advertising industry, and unemployment, is examined in this research as it relates to the novel *Player Piano*.

Player Piano: a Criticism of 1950s America

While many critics have seen *Player Piano* as a futuristic work, John Tomedi in his analysis in *The Great Writers: Kurt Vonnegut* says: "*Player Piano* was [relevant] to the 1950's" (x) in *Player Piano* the "managers and engineers learned to get along without their men and women" (1). They "had found that the bulk of secretarial work could be done - as could most lower-echelon jobs - more quickly and efficiently and cheaply by machines" (2). People in the *Player Piano* civilization are waiting for new technologies to be developed so they can be told what to do. They no longer possess the sense of "being," which is the fundamental basis of human dignity. Vonnegut's *Player Piano*, in the words of Robert Tally in *Vonnegut and the Great American Novel: A Postmodern Iconography* says: "illustrates what happens to the soul of man in the world of machines" (21). According to Farrell in *Critical Companion to Kurt Vonnegut* says: "machines take over routine human labour in *Player Piano*, leaving people feeling useless and outmoded" (ix), yet people are still

employed by the advertising business and consumer culture to consume their wares. As a result, the two main ways that society manipulates its citizens are by forcing them into unemployment and then turning them into consumers. In what follows, I'll talk about the notion of cybernetics as a controlling system that transforms people into mindless bodies and intelligent machines.

3. The Cybernetics Tyranny

Throughout history, people have made themselves more vulnerable to outside influence when they have given up challenging the status quo and realised the value of critical thought. The novel's protagonist, Paul Proteus, defends the condition for himself: "Objectively, Paul tried to tell himself, things really were better than ever. For once, after the great bloodbath of the war, the world really was cleared of unnatural terrors - mass starvation, mass imprisonment, mass torture, mass murder"

(6-7). Paul thinks, "Objectively, know-how and world law were getting their long-awaited chance to turn earth into an altogether pleasant and convenient place in which to sweat out Judgment Day" (7). Because of human creation, the world is now mechanised and devoid of purpose. The most influential engineer in Ilium, Paul, would often read adventure novels while at work and sometimes check the switchboard to make sure everything was running smoothly at the plant. The elimination of any indications of real labour meant that humans would only exist in an automated society that aimed to convince the bodies of the outdated to buy more mass-produced goods. In Vonnegut's *Player Piano*, a post-World War II America is depicted in which virtually all human labour has been replaced by machines and all decision-making is done by a central computer. As stated by Donald Morse in "Sensational Implications: Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano*" says:

According to *Player Piano*, the world is set to experience a Third Revolution in which computers will do all cognitive tasks. This will follow the First Revolution, in which machines replaced human manual labour, and the Second, in which machines replaced all human routine work. (304)

In a similar vein, *Player Piano*'s protagonist Paul Proteus says, "the First Industrial revolution devalued muscle work, then the second one devalued routine mental work" (14). Paul continues:

In a way, I guess the third one's been going on for some time, if you mean thinking machines. That would be the third revolution, I guess - machines that devalue human thinking. Some of the big computers like EPICAC do that all right, in specialized fields. (14)

By the third revolution, Vonnegut calls cybernetics a mind-control system and issues a warning about it. In Vonnegut's *Player Piano*, Norbert Wiener—the inventor of cybernetics—is directly mentioned. The protagonist of the book, Paul Proteus, says: "All those years ago, back in the nineteen-forties, a mathematician named Norman Wiener made this statement. You're too young to be familiar with anything other than the current state of affairs, so it's all new to you (14). Vonnegut demonstrates how America in the 1950s was too young to comprehend the advancements in technology. Wiener categorises the development of machines into four stages, as noted by Dani Cavallaro in "Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson" says that "the golemic age (a pre-technological world), the age of clocks (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), the age of steam (late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and the age of communication and control (the era of cybernetics)" (12). According to Wiener in *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* says that the human body functions: "as a magical clay shape, as a clockwork mechanism, as a heat engine, and finally as an electronic system" (12). The body takes in "information through the senses and of subsequently acting upon the information received" (12), functioning as an electronic system akin to a communications network. Cybernetics takes into account the idea that:

if the human body can be conceived of as a machine, it is also possible to design machines that simulate the human organism. This is effected by using as a working model the nervous apparatus, a graded system of control governed by the brain. A machine so designed is a cybernetic organism, a technological construct that replicates the human body on the basis of an understanding of the structural similarities between machines and living organisms. (12)

Cybernetics manipulates the human mind to regulate behavior. Vonnegut in the novel critiques the cybernetic setting where "people stuck in one place all day, just using their senses, then a reflex, using their senses, then a reflex, and not really thinking at all" (14). He sees that in the third revolution people will be replaced by "thinking machines" that "devalue human thinking" (15). Indeed, Vonnegut forewarns us of a third revolution in which robots would make decisions and think for us. He brings up the first and second revolutions in order to discuss a more menacing revolution that would take over every area of our lives.

Player Piano presents an organized society centered on production, consumption, and profit. Regardless of the implications this procedure may have on humanity and personal fulfillment, efficiency and productivity are maximized in this society as everything is chosen by computers. Peter Freese in Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* claims that *Player Piano* is "the first prophetic depiction of 'tyranny by computer' in American literature, which in 1952 was a highly speculative anticipation of coming developments but assumes a surprising topicality in our computer-governed times" (90). *Player Piano*'s postwar American civilization is predicated on the idea that people may achieve their utopian dreams of wealth and pleasure when they are free to enjoy the things produced by machines. However, in actuality, individuals are feeling outdated, unhappy, and disillusioned. People have lost their mental faculties and forgotten the active role of their bodies because their brains have become fairly passive, which is important for the consumer culture and

automated society that depends on them for increased consumption. Vonnegut critiques the cybernetic society that provides the tools for structuring social life around impersonal rules that can be recorded as data and converted into material goods that the general public may purchase.

The postwar civilization of the *Player Piano* is too young to recall a world without technology. The people "couldn't remember when things had been different, could hardly make sense of what had been, though they didn't necessarily like what was." The older generation, who had been "the rioters, the smashers of machines" before society changed, is no longer violent but filled with churning resentment (29).

The average person has no idea what to buy, what to do, or what to dress. While the majority of the population experienced unemployment and depression, engineers and managers in this society benefit from the consumer culture by buying new items. Every resident is imprisoned in a computerised world where humans have no actual place or purpose. In *Cybernetics: Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, Norbert Wiener makes an argument for a theory of control and communication that takes into account the fact that humans transmit messages inside a system to manage their immediate surroundings. Wiener uses this idea to show how human communication is comparable to a machine's ability to carry out a job in a predetermined order by drawing comparisons between the two species. Not only do humans in *Player Piano* resemble machines, but machines also provide them with what they require to survive. Paul Proteus is dissatisfied with modern civilization since machines are run by other machines rather than by humans. Satire is used in the book to highlight the ordinary American family life. Edgar Rice Burroughs Hagstrohm and his family, who reside in an M-17 home that cleans itself, are portrayed by Vonnegut. He has a car, furnishings, equipment, and automated pay roll deduction payments in his home, all of which are managed by God EPICAC XIV, a powerful computer. The EPICAC XIV computer is capable of handling thousands or even hundreds of tasks at once without experiencing any lag. It means that there is no job for humans to perform. Humans are now flawed and machine-like due to the perfection of machines.

Wiener contends further that humans function like machines because of their propensity for information processing and their need to keep an eye on both their own and other people's environments. The advertising sector, which is founded on information processing in a consumer culture, controls the residents of *Player Piano*. According to Wiener's *The Human Use of Human Beings*:

society can only be understood through a study of the messages and communication facilities which belong to it; and that in the future development of these messages and communication facilities, messages between man and machines, between machines and man, and between machine and machine, are destined to play an ever increasing part. (15)

Controlling our surroundings is communication's primary purpose. Wiener contends, "information is a name for the content of what is exchanged with the outer world as we adjust to it, and make our adjustment felt upon it" (16). According to him, the goal of human communication is to become acquainted with a unique environment while simultaneously affecting certain features of it. According to Wiener, information is what keeps an environment organised (20). Information therefore takes on the role of control. Information is used by consumer culture to manipulate its populace. When used in a consumer culture, the concepts of cybernetics are used to show how advertising functions as a communications medium and the discipline which has made the mechanisms of feedback its primary concern and therefore, it will be argued, offers the tools and perspectives to successfully model the highly complex and dynamic interactions that typify advertising communication. Cybernetics views advertising communication as an environment-controlling observation system. In *Player Piano*, Vonnegut challenges the advertising industry's rationale as a hierarchical structure. As a means of communication between businesses and customers, advertisements, in Vonnegut's opinion, really aim to encourage people to purchase more. In this kind of civilization, the advertising sector manipulates people's minds and turns them into mindless consumers, turning them into mindless bodies.

In *The Human Use of Human Beings*, Wiener discusses how studying signals might be used to manipulate "machinery and society." He views cybernetics as the message theory. One important concept in the study of technology and society is the control of machines. It is not feasible to keep technology and society apart. We may think of consumers as society and the communication process as technology when it comes to advertising communication. The means by which businesses may influence customers to buy their goods is communication. Wiener expands the concept of cybernetics to emphasise humans as a component of the communication system in *The Human Use of Human Beings*. He believes that consumer behaviour is concerned with how people fit into the marketing communications process and how consumers react to advertisements. Marketing academics try to crack the codes that lead consumers to go from reading commercials to making purchases by taking into account messages and communications. This process results in communications models. In actuality, the advertising sector employs visuals to persuade consumers to purchase more. The accoutrements of utopian ideas, such as plenty, prosperity, and equality, were shown in 1950s American commercials. These commercials were played on radio, TV, in movies, and in magazines in order to maintain consumer culture. Actually, they are representations of a perfect world without any ways to get there. As said by William Leiss:

Advertising ideology is a set of false and misleading concepts about reality, and in two major dimensions this ideology actually works: the stress on satisfaction through consumption rather than work and the Hollywood set, where the world is portrayed as free from racial and class conflict, idyllic and false (29).

The purpose of advertising is to convince the viewer that by buying the products being promoted, they too may experience the emotions conveyed by the pictures. In this way, the advertising sector minimises the value of human existence to a consumerist cliché. In actuality, the emergence of dystopian hell and the collapse of the utopian ideal coincide with the growing influence of the advertising sector. Such a dominating culture spreads widely in order to encourage customers to increase their consumption. The advertising business hides the past methods used to influence customers' thoughts and motivate them to purchase more without challenging the manufacturing process. Actually, advertising separates the product from the labour reality that created it. The picture conveys little knowledge of the manufacturing process or the effects the product has on society. In *Sexuality for Sale*, Janice Winship writes that

Despite its glorifying display of commodities, advertising represents a moment of suspension in their production and circulation: production – the sweat and exploitation of work – is over and hidden in its verbal and visual persuasion: the consumption of someone else's (or your own) objectified labour, to which you, the as-yet-passive spectator, are invited, has not begun. Yet in monopoly capitalism advertising has become integral to these circuits of production and circulation: it sustains the movement of commodities, from their social production to their individual but socially repeated consumption, which eventually ensures the reproduction not only of the individual but of capital too. (217)

Since the message is at the core of the paradigm, consumers are seen as passive recipients of information from the market. The goal of the advertising business is to persuade consumers to make more purchases by using a compelling message and creative content. In this instance, the communication takes into account the handling of information between customers and advertising. Although consumers can contribute to the production of the advertisement, they are ensnared and subjugated by the advertising agency that inundates them with data in the cybernetic model of commercial communication. Advertising agencies prevent consumers from creating their own information in cybernetic and virtual metaphysics, which turns people into commodities. According to cybernetics, humans have lost their individuality and have just evolved into mindless machines that serve consumer society.

Mindless Consumer Bodies and Sensible Machines

Player Piano opens in New York's Ilium. Vonnegut was well familiar with the city and company General Electric (G.E.), whose fictional headquarters are located in Schenectady, New York, and are called Ilium. He was employed for G.E. from 1947 to 1951. Given Vonnegut's acquaintance with the firm and G.E. as a symbol of consumer capitalism in 1950s America, using G.E. is extremely germane to the story's topic. In the 1950s, G.E. was regarded as the biggest business and the pioneer in the development of technologies for mass manufacturing. Vonnegut portrays the qualities pushed by G.E. as advantageous to every American in *Player Piano*. He draws advertising that stand for the advancement, contentment, and comfort of the customer. As is typical with dystopian novels, *Player Piano's* storyline, according to Moylan in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, takes into account the emergence of tensions within Vonnegut's parody of 1950s America. The fundamental tension in the narrative is that which exists between Paul Proteus's living conditions and the promises made by industrial production. The narrative of Paul Proteus is told via the *Player Piano* "was the most important, brilliant person in Ilium, the manager of the Ilium Works, though only thirty-five" (1). But "he didn't feel important or brilliant at the moment" (1).

Despite leading a privileged life, he feels unfulfilled, confined, alone, worn out, and dehumanised. Paul feels easy and comfortable with the mass goods, but he doesn't get the same sense of Paul feels easy and comfortable using the mass commodities, but he does not experience the same level of satisfaction that the advertising portray. Paul is unhappy with the consumer society because he believes that human dignity is being lost. His aim is to establish a new civilization that values people above machines and material possessions, elevating the status of humans. Paul is angry at a world that treats people like disposable commodities and renders them nearly useless. According to Vonnegut, "computers and efficient machinery have eliminated the need for the vast majority of workers," demonstrating that human labor—both physical and mental—is no longer necessary (119). As a result, society is gradually moulding people, devaluing their potential, and depriving them of their dignity. Paul is sad because there are no human values in the world. He is torn between leaving this mechanised society and its consumer culture as a utopia and accepting it as such. There is a movement in the midst of this automated system that aims to remove robots from society and put people back in their proper roles. The organisation known as the Ghost Shirt Society is spearheaded by Reverend James J. Lasher, who advocates for human dignity and takes into account the actions of those who have been displaced. Vonnegut in *Player Piano* observes, "For generations they've been built up to worship competition and the market, productivity and economic usefulness, and the envy of their fellow men - and boom! it's all yanked out from under them" (90).

These people are no longer valuable members of society; they have lost their usefulness. Paul makes the decision to quit his work and join the Ghost Shirt Society, which inspires individuals to rebel against the crappy ideals of the modern society. Paul thinks that The Ghost Shirt civilization can help transform the civilization that is controlled by machines. Vonnegut portrays the ambivalence towards technology in The Ghost Shirt Society. The rebels are unable to determine whether machines need to be destroyed or left intact. Ironically, among the devastation, the rebels themselves search for machine components that are intact. While his hands were occupied with what they like doing the most, Paul observes a member of their society

who "was proud and smiling." "...putting machines in place of men like himself" (338). According to Vonnegut, people are "eager to recreate the same old nightmare" that they previously opposed (295). In reality, the consumer culture promises to replace the outdated things with the new ones thanks to new technologies.

This approach, according to Proteus Park manager Dr. Ned Dodge, "simplified planning and production all the way round" (163). Dodge's assessment of the living, providing amenities to Americans, is consistent with the 1950s advertising sector. Ned talks about how a family can "live" and "get a little fun out of life" with the "ultrasonic dishwasher," which cleans with "high-frequency sound," and "radiant heating," which "cooks by high frequency" and gives users "perfect control" over food preparation (164). In a "matter of seconds," the dryer needs to give the clothes a fresh outdoor scent. Dodge encourages commercial products as a means of enhancing and defining an individual's lifestyle, while also praising the advertising business. He uses strong language that arouses feelings and enthusiasm. Regarding the producing procedure, he says nothing. As I covered before in this chapter, the advertising industry's job is to simply persuade the reader without providing background information on the manufacturing process or outlining working conditions at the facility.

Actually, the advertising sector represents "the state of being" and ignores the historical process in order to replace real with unreal. J. Fisher Solomon, in *The Signs of Our Time*, argues the function of advertising industry that "substitutes signs for things, framed visions of consumer desire for the thing itself. The success of modern advertising, its penetration into every corner of American life, reflects a culture that has chosen illusion over reality" (76).

Through the use of modern technologies like computers, the advertising business, information and communication, and the like, advertising produces an illusionary atmosphere in the cybernetic environment where the unreal is represented as real. People are then exposed to new values. According to Monica Brasted in *The Values of the Consumer Culture Reflected in the Advertisement of The Saturday Evening* says, "leisure, style and success, luxury and comfort... each of these values was framed as being mediated through consumption of the goods" (239) are among the cultural values that the advertising business establishes for the contemporary day. In *Player Piano*, Vonnegut satirises this new exploitative structure, which he genuinely recognises. Vonnegut is the embodiment of the Shah and Wanda Hagstrohm, undermining Dodge's assessment of the purpose and advantages of the mass-products.

The spiritual head of the Kolhour, the Shah of Bratpuhr, visits the United States in order to observe "what he could learn from the most powerful nation on earth for the good of his people" (19–20). The Shah is a wise guy who observes that Americans fail to understand how people might become naive. The Shah wonders who owns these slaves after seeing the Reeks and Wrecks' behaviour during his tour of America. According to Doctor Ewing J. Halyard, "a heavy, florid, urbane gentleman of forty who works for the United States Department of State," they are "citizens employed by government," not slaves. They are entitled to the same freedoms of expression, religion, and voting as any other citizen. They used to manage machines at the Ilium Works before the war, but now days, machines are far more adept at regulating themselves. "Less waste, much better products, cheaper products with automatic control," he says in closing (20). People lose significance in the computerised world and their lives have no purpose. The Shah is interested in the causes of these occurrences and the rationale for "so quickly" action. Why do people feel the need to "not waste any time on these things"? (164).

Despite his admiration for technical advancements and his assertion that this is the finest America has to offer, Shah eventually starts to doubt the system and recognises the hollowness of the cybernetic consumer culture. The Shah notes that under American consumerism, people are degraded to the level of mindless bodies. Before departing the technologically advanced country, the Shah asks his host, "What are people for in this consumer automated society?" (320). Vonnegut challenges his audience to reevaluate the place of humanity in the computerised world by posing this query. Additionally, Vonnegut in *Player Piano* shows how Wanda, the all-electric housewife, stops caring to use her "ultrasonic washer" and says she "has been doing the washing in a tub for a month now." Her statement, "Oh, I don't mind," conveys her lack of concern. It's actually how I like to do them. Kind of a relief, that is. A body needs alteration. It doesn't bother me, gives me a task to do" (165). Wanda observes the hollowness of the advertising sector, which promises people a successful and contented existence. She is ensnared in the world of automation. Vonnegut highlights the need of preserving human existence beyond simplistic notions of production and consumption.

People shouldn't be handled like machines. He thinks that we shouldn't let robots take the place of human dignity and morals. Weary of the computerised world, Paul tries to establish a new civilization that values humans over computers and recognises the intrinsic value of individuals. He finds fault with the civilization that has rendered humans all but extinct. He makes an effort to reiterate his message to mankind. In *Forever Pursuing Genesis*, Leonard Mustazza clarifies that Paul is searching for paradise. However, he is not looking for the idealised world that commercials have painted for him. He actually wants to go away from this world. Mustazza claims that Paul is searching for Eden.

Though Paul's imagined Eden would differ much from the one he contemplated before his inebriated speech, it will nevertheless have an immediate impact on his way of thinking. Ironically, though, the reader sees something in Paul's original goals that he does not; namely, that the new path he has chosen is not really novel at all, but rather rather traditional. Instead of creating the expansive rural utopia he saw at the bar, Paul

chooses to create a little Eden for himself (37). Paul want to get away from the world of materialism. "The fantasy of the new, good life ahead of him" is what he wants to live. A man and wife had a space somewhere, apart from society (146). After purchasing the Gottwald Farm, he is let down by his wife's refusal to move in: Once, when Paul had visited his farm, he had urged Mr. Haycox to put him to work directing the hand of nature, in the manner of a man giving his life to God. He quickly found that the hand he was clutching so tightly was rough and lethargic, as well as hot, damp, and odorous. Furthermore, the quaint little home that he had mistaken for a representation of the prosperous farmer's life was as meaningless as a Venus statue outside a sewage disposal facility. He hadn't turned around. (259)

Paul fails in creating the utopia he envisions by this farm, far off from the materialistic consumer culture, since his tangible experiences do not align with his ideal goals. Vonnegut used Professor von Neumann, whose name refers to John von Neumann, who collaborated with Norbert Wiener on the idea of cybernetics, to convey his views about the materialistic society. "Who had taught political science at Union College in Schenectady," fictional von Neumann claims: "After surviving Armageddon, man has entered the Eden of endless peace, only to find that all he had anticipated taking pleasure in there, pride, dignity, self-respect, and worthwhile labour, yet it has been declared unsuitable for human consumption (301). He observes that the materialist world has robbed humanity of pride, dignity, and self-respect. Professor Neumann observes that during a war, technology's unassailable right to grow in strength and reach was practically a divine right in terms of national existence. The lives of Americans are owed to better machinery, methods, structures, managers, and engineers. The Ghost Shirt Society and I am grateful to God for these ways of enduring the battles. However, the strategies we employed to win wars cannot be applied to secure prosperous lives for ourselves during peacetime. The issues surrounding peace are even more nuanced.

According to Vonnegut, technical advancements that were "used to win battles in wartime" have left Americans in debt. However, by substituting robots for people during peacetime, these technologies diminished human dignity. As fictitious Neumann proposes:

men and women be returned to work as controllers of machines, and that the control of people by machines be curtailed. I propose, further, that the effects of changes in technology and organization on life patterns be taken into careful consideration, and that the changes be withheld or introduced on the basis of this consideration. (302)

While the automated machine was often used as a symbol for the terrifying prospect of human extinction, it also made the promise to liberate humans from work. Vonnegut sheds light on how humans is marginalised in a civilization run by machines. Vonnegut demonstrates why humanity will perish if machines take the place of people. In order to prevent dystopian fiction from becoming reality, Vonnegut uses his dystopian novel to urge us to reevaluate our way of life. As Paul puts it, "machines, organisation, and the pursuit of efficiency have robbed the American people of liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (314).

Conclusion

Player Piano critiques the cybernetic America of the 1950s, when machines and the advertising industry pushed people to the periphery, creating a materialistic, meaningless society that on the surface appeared to give plenty and a perfect existence for everyone. The story exposes the 1950s American society's propensity to treat people like disposable commodities. Vonnegut perceives dissatisfaction in 1950s America and attacks the advertising business, consumer culture, and post-World War II mechanised civilization that degraded people to dumb bodies and clever machines. In his portrayal of the shaky basis of American consumer culture, Vonnegut demonstrates that while the 1950s saw a strong economy, this power was predicated on a foundation that required continual and fulfilled demand for its goods; otherwise, the system would collapse. He criticises the consumer culture, the advertising business, and the automated society for controlling people's thoughts and transforming them into mindless bodies and clever machines. According to Vonnegut, individuals are dictated to about what to believe, dress, buy, and do, and their unique opinions about or potential contributions to that society are not accepted. Vonnegut highlights the need of preserving human existence beyond simplistic notions of production and consumption. People shouldn't be handled like machines. He thinks we shouldn't let robots take the place of our morals and dignity. In order to avert catastrophe, he begs us to preserve our sense of dignity in both our personal and professional lives.

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