

supercomputers that provide information far more useful than that from rodent testing. Surgery will depend not on the steady hand and experience of the doctor but on devices such as the recently invented ROBODOC, combined with new imagery technology and computers that essentially make flesh and bone transparent in 3-D images, allowing machines to make cuts or dissolve tumors and blockages in exactly the right place.

Initially, such developments will drive up health care costs, Wyke says, but as they proliferate, cut patient recovery times, and save productive lives, they will more than pay their way. She predicts that by 2050, the average life span in developed countries will be a century. Doctors won't disappear, but their role will greatly diminish as computers and robots are increasingly used to diagnose illness, prescribe medicine, and perform surgery.

Predictions beyond 20 years are usually more speculation than science, but I suspect Wyke's forecast is on target. We are already undergoing a medical revolution, with treatments and cures coming at a pace that's furious compared to just a few years ago. Luddites like Jeremy Rifkin will have to be defeated, and death never will. But hold on to your chairs, because we are on the verge of some very exciting times.

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Steven Hayward

First the wrong: Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society* (Alfred A. Knopf), which was first published in France in 1954 but did not really make a mark until its publication in the United States in 1964, after which it became a favorite of the highbrows within the 1960s counterculture. Ellul, one of those curious figures who made French sociology so much more interesting than the Anglo-American version of the discipline, wrote several worthy books (some of them on theology), but *The Technological Society* was not one of them. It promoted the commonplace view that our advance toward a high-technology future would be dehumanizing. He wondered how we would manage to control this portentous technology. The collective problem posed by technology has turned out to be false, of course, as technology empowers people and diminishes government control.

The prophetic: When Charles Murray published *Losing Ground* to great fanfare in 1984, a few graybeards noted that it vindicated Edward Banfield's much-despised 1968 book *The Unheavenly City* (Little, Brown). Banfield challenged the premises of the War on Poverty while it was still in its ideological heyday (even though ordinary citizens had grown tired of it by 1968). He argued that lack of money was the least of the problems of the underclass and predicted that government programs aimed at solving urban poverty were sure to make things even worse. By 1984, Murray was able to fill in the details of Banfield's prophecy. You can draw a straight line from Banfield to Murray to today's welfare reforms, which impose time limits on eligibility, emphasize work, and require individual responsibility.

The future: Francis Fukuyama's 1992 book *The End of His-*

tory and the Last Man (The Free Press) deserves a second look, in part because current troubles in the world have given Fukuyama some second thoughts about whether he was correct that liberal democracy represented the final stage in the political evolution of mankind. But the second aspect of his book—the Last Man—also should prompt some fresh chin pulling. The sluggish public reaction to President Clinton's scandals suggests that we are indeed in the condition of Last Men who care only for comfortable self-preservation; the anti-smoking crusade looks like a perfect expression of the snobbery that Fukuyama, following Nietzsche and Kojève, predicted would be the most prominent moral trait of the Last Man. And yet, might the collapse of the tobacco bill have been a turning point? Might the growing support for serious Social Security privatization prove a portent that more of us would indeed like to break out of our rut, as Fukuyama predicted at the end of his book? This might be grasping at straws, but if in fact the progress of the nanny state is not an irreversible process, there is a decent chance that the Last Man of the liberal democratic age need not be a despicable man.

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Charles Murray

They appeared in the same year, 1962: *The Other America*, by Michael Harrington (Macmillan) and *Capitalism and Freedom*, by Milton Friedman (University of Chicago Press). The elite's response to their publication was almost a caricature of the biases of the time. *The Other America* was greeted ecstatically. Dwight McDonald's *New Yorker* review of it was read by John Kennedy and prompted the staff work for the War on Poverty. *Capitalism and Freedom* was not reviewed in any major American newspaper or newsmagazine.

How wrong can one book be? *The Other America* has to be a contender for the world record. Ignore the many evidentiary problems with Harrington's attempt to portray America as a society with 50 million people in poverty. The real damage was done by his underlying premise: Poverty is the fault not of the individual but of the system. Seized upon as the new intellectual received wisdom, this view drove the design of social policy for the next decade: expanded welfare programs that asked nothing from the recipients, a breakdown of accountability in the criminal justice system, erosion of equality under the law in favor of preferences to achieve equal outcomes. All were bad policies that caused enormous damage, underwritten by the assumption that people are not responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Meanwhile, Friedman got it right. In a free society, the vast majority of people can be in control of their lives. It is a free society that best provides for those who remain in need. A free society produces in reality the broad economic prosperity that Harrington sought through Marxist theory. Harrington's book is a road map for understanding just about everything that went wrong with social policy in the last 30 years; Friedman's is a road

map for understanding just about everything that went right.

A book that is likely to be seen 30 years from now as anticipating intellectual trends is E.O. Wilson's *Consilience* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998). I find its broad vision of a unity of knowledge, a coming together of our understandings in the hard sciences, soft sciences, and humanities, to be compelling. It is perhaps most obvious that sociologists and political scientists must reconcile their conclusions with the discoveries of the geneticists and neuroscientists, but the hard scientists have some bridges to build as well. Ever since the quantum revolution began a century ago, the image of the clockwork universe where everything could be predicted if everything were known has been breaking down. The hard sciences are increasingly one with the poet, recognizing that the universe is not just stranger than we know but stranger than we can imagine. To me, E.O. Wilson's vision of the scholarly future is not just discerning but exciting.

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John V.C. Nye

Most Mistaken about 1968–1998: Paul Samuelson's *Economics* (various editions, current edition from Irwin co-authored with William Nordhaus). Some colleagues are going to shoot me for this, but Samuelson's introductory textbook deserves a prominent place in a list of seminal works that completely missed the boat. This great mathematical theorist somehow managed to produce a best-selling work that enshrined activist Keynesianism as the mainstream policy instrument (excepting a few "extreme left-wing and right-wing writers" seventh edition, 1967); praised high levels of government taxation and regulatory intervention (opining that the state could play "an almost infinite variety of roles in response to the flaws of the market mechanism," 15th edition, 1995); claimed that there was little observable waste in government spending (third edition, 1955); and systematically overestimated the economic success of the Soviet Union, claiming as late as 1989 that "the Soviet economy is proof that... a socialist command economy can function and even thrive" (13th edition).

Most Far-Sighted: *The Rise of the Western World*, by Douglass

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North and Robert Paul Thomas (Norton, 1973). Selecting this book might seem like special pleading, as North is both my colleague and a good friend, but there are objective grounds for highlighting the contributions of *The Rise of the Western World*. This book and subsequent work by North (who shared the 1993 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics) helped to change the academic debates about development by focusing attention on the institutions of market capitalism, particularly the rule of law, secure property rights, and the low transactions costs that are the hallmarks of well-functioning markets.

The book dismissed arguments that attributed modern economic growth to technical change as putting the cart before the horse. North and Thomas memorably argued that technology did not cause economic progress, but that technological progress was itself part of the process of modern economic growth ultimately promoted by good institutions. The failure to understand that new technology without sound markets does not produce long-lasting development led to failed policies both in the East bloc, which thought that economic growth was all about build-

ing more steel mills, and in the West, with programs designed to transfer capital and technical know-how to the Third World while paying scant attention to the price system and existing political institutions. North's work inspired renewed interest in microeconomic as opposed to macro policies of development throughout the world, and it served as the inspiration for other groundbreaking books, such as Hernando de Soto's *The Other Path*. North's perspective also gave him the insight to criticize conservatives who pushed for simple-minded deregulation in Russia in 1991 without taking into consideration the institutional problems facing the ex-Soviets.

Most Relevant to the Future: *Mercantilism*, by Eli Heckscher (Allen and Unwin, 1935). The rebirth of economic competition as political struggle, best seen in the misguided economic nationalisms of Lester Thurow and Pat Buchanan and compounded by Asia's woes, will give rise to more intense mercantilist struggles in the near future. At home, the limits to direct tax-and-spend policies do not mean that the government will shrink. Instead, efforts increasingly will be shifted to direct regulation and control through unfunded mandates of all forms. Can't have a national health program? No big deal, just require businesses to provide health care and regulate the HMOs. Heckscher forces us to confront the unpleasant fact that the struggle to form viable states inevitably will be accompanied by unpro-