regime has impressive social and economic gains to its credit. The ability to insulate the principal tasks of government from the turbulence of ideological and power politics was the great skill of Chou En-lai, chief executive of the People's Republic during this period. How much more he and those around him could have achieved in more serene circumstances, and how much ideological conflict has cost the Chinese people in material well-being! From her own account Chiang Ch'ing bears a large share of the responsibility.

The omissions in Chiang Ch'ing's statements are often as important as the sentiments expressed. She projects no significant understanding of the philosophy of history and only limited recognition of the ultimate toll taken on a large nation by hectic campaigns of struggle. There is little mention of her personal relationship with Mao. He appears more important to Chiang Ch'ing as the Chairman than as her husband or as a personality. Antagonism to American policies is vigorously stated, but there is no adequate explanation of the dramatic rapprochement with the United States made around the time of the interviews. In focusing on *what* or *how* things have taken place she seems strangely unaware or unable to explain *why* they occur. On both foreign and domestic events Chiang Ch'ing's judgment is peculiarly one-sided; this provokes concern at the extent to which these insular views are shared by other contemporary Chinese leaders. For China's sake one must rejoice that Madame Mao could not rise to the apex of power. Yet we owe this singular woman an immense debt of gratitude—her concern for historical vindication has provided a document of transcending value, enabling us to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge of the intimacies of Communist governments. Her testament is enriched by the beauty and honesty of Roxane Witke's prose. This is Witke's first major, independent work. Its promise suggests a literary career far more enduring and eminent than that of the meteoric political life of her subject.

What of Chiang Ch'ing's future? She is now officially disgraced and reviled by China's new leader, Hua Kuo-feng, a political back-bencher when she was granting these quasi-regal audiences to Roxane Witke. It is difficult to imagine the resourceful and vibrant Chiang Ch'ing in permanent obscurity. Perhaps, as is not uncommon in the People's Republic, she will be rehabilitated. If this occurs, a recantation of these interviews that have contributed to her downfall will surely follow. In any case, one recalls the threat Stalin used to control Krupskaya Lenin: "the party will appoint someone else as Lenin's widow."

The Fall of Public Man by Richard Sennett

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Edward J. Curtin, Jr.

Richard Sennett undermines the prevailing ethos of our society in a radically conservative way. As a result he will be criticized and praised for all the wrong—and right—reasons, depending on the reader's intellectual, emotional, and political allegiances. This is a complex book written by a sophisticated leftist. It overflows with brilliantly handled historical and theoretical material, and yet, despite the dazzle, there is a pure simplicity to its central theme. In its own way it is a kind of moral tale—similar to the way Sennett views Weber's "Protestant Ethic"—describing the ironic consequences of the human failure to learn the paradoxical logic of reversed effort.

Over the course of two centuries, Sennett argues, in the name of spontaneity, people became too self-conscious to be spontaneous. Self-absorbed in the newly revered phenomenon of personality and obsessed with validating the self, we discovered nothing to validate but amorphous feelings in search of a substantive self. That is Sennett's version of the vicious circle. In glorifying the isolated personality at the expense of a public life comprised of strangers and codes of impersonal meanings, the modern person suffocates himself in the name of fulfillment. All this has its roots, Sennett tells us, in the lost ability to play, which is the power to be sociable. It is in playful reality that one acquires the freedom from self that is necessary for self-gratification. The power of play allows for civility—"treating others as though they were strangers and forging a social bond upon that distance." Such civility is most likely in the public geography of a city. But in our serious search for psychological palliatives we have abandoned the public world of strangers in the cosmopolitan cities and have become less civilized, further distanced from each other and ourselves, and more and more anxious about individual feeling. The more we try to validate ourselves the more our self-absorption denies us personal gratification. And all the while our real self-interests are ignored as the forces of social domination maintain their power and the public world grows more dangerous.

Today's imbalance between public and private life did not exist in the eighteenth-century city. Sennett catalogues the forces at work over the past two centuries that changed the public world of the ancien régime capitals of London and Paris into our present intimate society. Sennett details the fascinating ways the eighteenth-century Parisians and Londoners *invented* sociability in public. Public expression was antisymbolic: There was no hidden reality behind the obvious; the body was treated as a mannequin, speech was a sign. A clear distinction was maintained

between the public and private spheres. In public, the realm of culture, one presented emotion (as distinct from representing it); for the person in public had an identity as an actor and a function commensurate with it. In private one acted naturally and simply. The public and private were clearly distinct but *complementary* realms. Life on the street and life in the theatre shared a common code of belief. These were forms that allowed both stage actor and public citizen to be communicative and sociable without being intimate.

Over the next two centuries, however, all this changed. Sennett sees three forces altering the public life of the nineteenth century: industrial capitalism, a new secularity, and the survival of one facet of ancien régime public ideology. In analyzing these changes, he draws on a vast range of material: demographic shifts; styles of dress, speech, and gesture; transformations in the theatre; the creation of the department store; the demise of the café and coffeehouse; shifting family patterns; the rise of the musical virtuoso; the Dreyfus affair; the rise of the charismatic politician epitomized by Lamartine; and so forth. The theatrical public life of the eighteenth century was transformed in the nineteenth century into a passive spectacle; individual personality became a social category and the image of man as an actor died; silent observation became a principle of public order in a tumultuous time; the family came to be seen as an idealized refuge from the public realm and a yardstick with which to measure public life. In short we learn how the antiurban bias of our own intimate society developed out of the changes in the public life of the nineteenth century. Passive, silent, one is fearful of strangers and impersonality, of involuntarily revealing oneself. The spectator-citizen of the last century has given birth to an even less civil child, one who can no longer play. He is "an actor deprived of his art."

Public culture has died in our day; public man has fallen; intimacy is the rule. "Social relationships of all kinds are real, believable, and authentic," writes Sennett, "the closer they approach the inner psychological concerns of each person. This ideology transmutes political categories into psychological categories [and] we continue to burden close relations with others with these hidden desires for security, rest, and permanence." Having thus—out of fear of risk-taking—created a single standard for measuring reality—intimacy—we have created a claustrophobic social reality that is subtly tyrannical.

This tyranny takes two forms. Politically, power is seen in terms of personality and community. Second, the fear of impersonality means the abandonment of the city as a place of diversity of experience and a concomitant overburdening of the private realms of life with unfulfillable expectations.

Ours, says Sennett, is an age of mass "communications" via electric media. Radios and televisions everywhere send a one-way flow of messages to millions of passive, silent spectators ensconced in the privacy of their homes. The latest, fast-breaking news is no sooner heard than forgotten. Constant titillation is the norm as "investigative news teams" explore and expose the private lives of public figures. *People* magazine flourishes; personality, not power and policy, are of interest. Everyone is feeling in public; every life is an open book. A presidential candidate sincerely discusses his sexual desires and temptations; his predecessor poses for the cameras popping his own toast—such a nice guy! The citizens are pleased—such candor! Personality is everywhere, and the new god of warmth reigns supreme.

All the while public life is abandoned as illusory and formal, not capable of bringing us "self-fulfillment." "The result," says Sennett, "is that the forces of domination or inequity remain unchallenged." This new small world is cut off from the objective autonomy of the primary social institutions. Ironically, this privatization of the modern individual is a crucial factor in the pervasiveness and strength of social control.

In the lives of everyone, both in public and in private, intimacy is the new god. Anxiety about individual feeling is joined with the narcissistic search for self, which brings no gratification. Openness, self-disclosure, spontaneity, and honesty are the prevailing virtues. Masks are out; roles are all phony; walls are down; people are free to express their feelings openly—having first "gotten in touch with them"—and to be *real*. Everyone is confessing to everyone else, searching for themselves, being genuine. And it is all deadly serious, so serious in fact that it is a joyless, tyrannical burden deforming both individuals and the society at large. As Sennett says, "Each person's self has become his principal burden; to know oneself has become an end, instead of a means through which one knows the world."

This is understandable; for we live not only in the shadow of the fall of public man but in a time of secular immanence (despite the recent religious "revival") when the old gods have died. Bereft of ritual, of transcendent myths and symbols, we are thrown back upon ourselves. The frantic search for intimacy that characterizes our day is a new form of religious longing. "Warmth," as Sennett rightly notes, "is our god."

The key to Sennett's moral tale, however, lies beyond the scope of *The Fall of Public Man*. It calls for a sequel that explores the category of the sacred and its transformation in our time. We moderns are saddled with a peculiar form of self-consciousness that precludes the direct creation of a sacred, ritualistic context for social life: Our gods are too small; we are suffocating to death. One hopes Sennett will gift us with such a sequel; perhaps he will call it, in a fittingly playful and theatrical spirit, *After the Fall*.