

## POSTMODERN PROVOCATEURS

### pp. 53-94

#### 3. Karl Marx (1818 - 1883)

“Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world. It is the opium of the people.”

Key works: *The Communist Manifesto* (1848); *Das Kapital* (1867).

Summary: German political theorist and philosopher who provided a detailed critique of the capitalist system and proposed a future utopia of equal citizens.

Marx believed Hegel's view that history developed from a clash of opposing systems. He believed that before capitalism, a mercantile system operated (goods were bought and sold in a marketplace of producers and merchants). A capitalist system emerged as labour became a commodity (when peasants, facing the decline of feudal agrarian society, needed to sell their labour as they no longer worked the land which produced their sustenance). People sell labour and are paid for work done in a given period (so they are selling the capacity to work not the product of their work).

Marx referred to the working class who sold their labour to survive as 'proletarians,' while those who bought labour (generally owners of capital) were 'capitalists' (or the 'bourgeois' class).

Capitalists were different from merchants because the latter merely bought goods in one market and sold them in another, while the former exploited the difference in labour costs and market value (labour costs were lower than the costs of manufactured goods, which had a 'surplus value' in the marketplace - the greater this surplus value, the greater the profit).

Marx believed capitalism was prone to cyclical crises. Since surplus value from labour is the source of profits, he concluded the rate of profit would fall as the economy grew (i.e. the law of supply and demand; in a growing economy, there is more demand for labour to produce the greater amount of products required to meet demand and so labour becomes more expensive, cutting into profits). When profit fell below a certain point the result would be a recession in which certain sectors of the economy would collapse. The price of labour would fall and make free up capital to invest in new technologies (which allow for greater and / or more efficient production and, hence, profits) and spark recovery.

Marx believed this cycle would become more acute over time, empowering capitalists and increasing the suffering of workers. His solution was for the proletariat to seize the means of production because they would supposedly create a more stable and egalitarian system in which everyone benefited.

Marx saw this development unfolding in historical terms: the class struggle would force capitalism to evolve into socialism and then communism (where the state withers away completely and people live in utopia). He used the Hegelian dialectic to illustrate this: thesis (bourgeois capitalism) versus antithesis (proletarian revolution) creating a synthesis (communist state operating by the dictum: 'from each according to his ability to each according to his need').

But the survival of capitalism two decades after Marx's death led to a split among his followers. Some concluded a socialist society could be created without revolution and through democratic means. This evolutionary approach to communism was exemplified by the establishment of the Fabian Society in London in 1883. A socialist debating society named after the Roman General Quintus Fabius Maximus, whose chief strategy had been to weaken the opposition by harassing operations rather than through pitched battles, persuasion, rather than revolutionary activism, was the order of the day. The Society attracted many eminent radicals (in various fields) of the time including psychologist Havelock Ellis (1859 - 1939) (*see*

*chapter on Sigmund Freud*), theosophist Annie Besant (1847 - 1933) (*see chapter on Helena Blavatsky*), novelists H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett (1867 - 1931), playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950), and future Labour Prime Ministers Ramsay MacDonald (1866 - 1937) and Clement Attlee (1883 - 1967) (social democracy becoming the basis of several political parties around the world such as the British Labour Party).

The Fabians agreed with Marx that capitalism had produced an unjust and inefficient socioeconomic outcome and sought to remake society “society in accordance with the highest [humanist] moral possibilities,” and allowing for such a transition to be “as painless and effective as possible.”

In contrast to this evolutionary view of communism, other Marxists preferred a more revolutionary zeal. Vladimir Lenin (1870 - 1924), leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party, believed Marx had underestimated the power of capitalism and that a revolutionary seizure of political power *on behalf* of the proletariat was needed to overthrow the system.

World War I led to the Russian revolution and ascendance of Lenin’s leadership of the communist movement. He claimed to be the heir to Marx and developed a political program called ‘Leninism,’ which called for revolution led by a centrally-organised Communist Party.

In China, Communist leader Mao Zedong (1893 - 1976) also claimed to be an heir to Marx, but argued peasants and not just workers could play a leading role in revolution.

Some who held to the revolutionary model of Marxism, faced with the absence of a working class revolution in their communities after World War I, proposed that the culture of Western society was itself acting to preserve the bourgeois hegemony and, hence, required an overhaul to allow for socialism to emerge. Critical Theory emerged from such deliberations, which ultimately became the basis for ‘political correctness’ (*see below*).

## THE MARXIST LEGACY

Communism as a mass movement in the 20th century saw hundreds of millions live under totalitarian dictatorships (and tens of millions murdered by various regimes - Stalin’s Russia, Mao’s China, Pol Pot’s (1925 - 1998) Cambodia, etc). Apologists for Marx argue his ideas were distorted by some of his followers and that he himself imagined a worker revolt as more in the manner of the French Revolution (although the fact this was a particularly bloody affair seems to escape their notice).

Marx’s ideas have also had an influence on 20th century Christianity: specifically, the emergence in the 1960s of ‘liberation theology.’ This was a controversial school in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church and had particularly widespread influence in Latin America. It explored the relationship between Catholic theology and political activism, particularly in areas of social justice and human rights. Proponents sought radical changes in the political and economic institutions of Latin America along Marxist lines so as to make Christian love for the poor truly effective. This view saw the failure to engage in the revolutionary struggle against oppressive regimes as a failure to respond to the yearning of the poor for liberation (and, as such, placed Christians in the camp of the oppressors).

Such a Marxist take on the vision splendid informs director Pier Paolo Pasolini’s (1922 - 1975) *The Gospel According To St. Matthew* (1964), where Jesus is depicted as an earthy, physically-unattractive (“thin, stoop-shouldered, heavy-browed,” to quote the director) counter-culturalist - in a challenge to (biblically-inaccurate) neo-traditional Western portrayals of Christ. The neo-traditional (or, more correctly, pseudo-traditional) view, reflecting the age of optimistic humanism in which it was birthed, spiritually-emasculates Jesus, rendering him largely an espouser of mere platitudes concerning right living: a Jewish Confucius, if you will, who is a mannered and circumspect tall, handsome Aryan; and so not a [meta-]physical Other that is threatening to white middle-class bourgeois suburbia, as the Jesus of the written word so often is: “I come

not to bring peace, but a sword...I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." (A vivid illustration, if ever there was one, of the erroneous way so many see [neo-traditional] "Christianity" and "Christ" as interchangeable terms.)

Typifying the neo-traditional view is Jeffrey Hunter's Messiah in the stylised *King Of Kings* (1961), the kind of glam-biblical depiction that can grow cloying after awhile and, indeed, the casting of the then popular teen idol Hunter as the Son of God did draw critical fire - one contemporary critic even cruelly deployed the cynical sobriquet 'I Was A Teenage Jesus' in his write-up.

Pasolini's Christ is certainly more biblical than Hollywood's in terms of how Jesus *looks*; note the words of the prophet Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah: "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." Indeed, the choice of a wholly non-professional cast (comprising a cross-spectrum of the local proletariat - peasants, factory workers, truck drivers and the like) with southern Italy as a backdrop (and no attempt to affect the look of ancient Palestine) makes the film the very model of anti-glamour (it comes across as a low-budget documentary). The script follows suit, being almost verbatim the text of the gospel (Pasolini shot his film following *Matthew* page-by-page, rather than use a screenplay). But the biggest departure from traditionalism is how Pasolini imbues his Christ with a visceral radicalism. This Son of Man is a proto-hippie, a Hebrew Che Guevara (1928 - 1967) who has shed his militant atheism and found an accommodation between his anti-fascist politics and the faith. This Jesus connotes a message of earthly liberation for the oppressed masses (where Imperial Rome can double for Imperial Washington or the British Raj or, more generally, the monolithic modern capitalist super-state that pollutes the earth and produces only Marcuse's one-dimensional humanity). Of course, the entire enterprise ironically subverts Marx's dictum that religion is the opiate of the people but then Pasolini was something of a maverick (witness Satan disguising himself as a Catholic priest or the casting of Pasolini's mother as the Virgin Mary - as well as the fact the gay, Marxist atheist chose such subject matter with which to work in the first place; he had actually done so serendipitously - after attending a seminar at a Franciscan monastery in Assisi in 1962 at the invitation of Pope John XXIII (1881 - 1963) (*see chapter on Julius Wellhausen*), who had called for the church to enter into a dialogue with non-Catholic artists, and finding himself desiring to escape Assisi's crowded streets, overwhelmed by visitors because the pope was visiting, he decamped to his hotel suite and read the gospels in one sitting to pass the time).

(It is interesting to contrast this film, which established the 'Comrade Christ' image of Jesus for an entire generation of counter-culture vultures, with director Mel Gibson's (1956 - ) *The Passion of The Christ* [2004] which unwittingly triangulates the neo-traditional and the radical spheres, transcending the limitations of both in locating Christ in a vision of almost unimaginable - to timid [modern] Western eyes - suffering. The über-agony and ecstasy so completely overwhelms viewers with the pain and humiliation Jesus undergoes that they are, on one level, implicated in the brutalisation and murder of the god-man. This is, in essence, what the Bible professes to be the cause of the whole spectacle: "He was wounded for *our* transgressions; he was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him; and with his stripes *we* are healed." Gibson's refusal to *explain* the story of Christ but, rather, *show* it through flashbacks interspersed with the scenes of torture, is more impressionistic, in keeping with the postmodern tone of apolitical spirituality and mystery and preference for subjective brush strokes rather than stark, objective ("the camera never lies") photorealism. The patron of *The Passion* whose curiosity and / or conscience has been pricked by the experience is left with the choice of going no further down this intriguing yet troubling path or else deciding the man and his mission warrant further investigation - in contrast to having it all served up on a platter as with Nicholas Ray [(1911 - 1979) director of *King Of Kings*] and his ilk or even Pasolini. It all brings to mind the old Chinese proverb: "Tell me, I will forget. Show me, I may remember. Involve me, I will understand." Then again, this is hardly surprising as Gibson's film reaches back to the premodern tradition [another postmodern touch] of passion [or mystery] plays, one of the earliest Western European forms of drama, which sought to represent biblical tales as tableaux with antiphonal musical accompaniment [and which, hence, were *interactive*, drawing the audience into the drama as active players through chanted responses to the action on the living screen down front].)

Even though Marx's ideas have been largely repudiated by history (e.g. collapse of Communist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe, adoption of Western capitalist-style economy in China, etc), socialism still

largely informs the ideals of decision-makers in such international agencies as the United Nations and European Union (e.g. the push for collective world leadership in the form of global governance or union of nations to speak with one voice, cooperation through international treaties instead of competition, increasing centralisation of power and growth of bureaucracy, etc).

Also, millions in academia (and beyond) retain a Marxist framework for ascertaining the supposed reality behind the veneer of capitalist society; predominantly, the core idea that economic structure determines everything (which ignores the culpability of the individual in power plays and, as a Christian observer would say, the expression of an individual's 'fallen human nature': the subtext to economic power in a capitalist sense being the greed of both bourgeois power brokers *and* consumers [of all classes, in a system where 'class' is having less meaning - see below]; and a greed that, like other unsavoury characteristics of human beings, is universal - witness the avarice displayed by the Soviet apparatchiks in lining their own pockets in communist Russia - *see chapter on John Maynard Keynes*). Hence, in such a view, the right to private property, for instance, exists only because it serves bourgeois middle class relations of production. The same is true for every other societal right or civil liberty; they have no deeper moral underpinning because morality itself is an illusion (just another weapon of the ruling class). Similarly, history, literature, the arts, social sciences, religion all exist to enable the preservation of ruling class hegemony (an concept informing Critical Theory and 'political correctness').<sup>15</sup>

Internationally, this view sees the export of Western culture generally and American culture specifically to other nations in the form of films, TV programs, popular music and food as just another form of cultural imperialism which helps preserve the global economic power structure (with Uncle Sam at the top of the pecking order); just as the Victorian glorification of English culture, with its central theme of Western progress and its inherent 'gentlemanly' civilising power, was exported to the British colonies as, the Marxist contends, nothing more than an attempt to underpin British (political and economic) hegemony. Alan Woods (1944 - ), editor of [www.marxist.com](http://www.marxist.com), reflects this view in his essay "Civilisation, Barbarism And The Marxist View Of History" (2002):

The Victorians had a very one-sided view of history, which they saw as a kind of triumphal march, an unstoppable march upwards towards progress and enlightenment - led, of course, by English capitalism. This idea also served as a convenient justification for imperialism and colonialism. The "civilised" British went to India and Africa, armed with the Bible (and also a number of warships, cannon and high-powered rifles) to introduce the ignorant natives to the joys of western culture. Those who showed a lack of enthusiasm for the refinements of British (and also Belgian, Dutch, French and German) culture were rapidly "educated" by bullets and bayonets.

...In the recent period it has become fashionable also in some "left" intellectual circles to deny the existence of progress in history. In part, these tendencies represent a healthy reaction against the kind of cultural imperialism and "eurocentricity" that I referred to earlier. One human culture is said to be equally as valid as any other. In this way, the European progressive intellectual feels that he or she has in some way "compensated" for the systematic rape and pillage perpetrated against the peoples of the former colonies by our forefathers - plunder which, of course, continues to the present day although under different disguises.

The intentions of these people may be laudable, but their premises are completely wrong. In the first place, it is rather cold comfort for the millions of oppressed and exploited people of Asia, Africa and Latin America to learn that their ancient cultures have now been rediscovered by European intellectuals and are held in high esteem by the latter. What is necessary is not symbolic gestures and terminological radicalism but a genuine struggle against imperialism and capitalism on a world scale. However, in order that this struggle should be successful, it must be placed on a firm basis. The prior condition for success is a relentless fight for Marxist theory.

The counter-argument is that the dominance of American culture globally is unintentional (given the laissez-faire market that governs its production as opposed to government investment), rather than a Machiavellian

scheme to crush all before it. But the Marxist would see this argument itself as just another attempt to prop up the powers that be in Washington and Wall Street.

Some have criticised the preponderance of such ideas in the university campuses of the West, claiming it has caused a withering away not of the state but of opportunities for intelligent conversation and reasoned debate (and undermined confidence in the tertiary education system as a whole).

## THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE: NATURE, CULTURE & MORALITY

It is prudent to examine Marx's ideas in terms of their implications for the environment, culture and morality. While his sociopolitical prescriptions have amounted to little more than medico-cultural quackery analogous to a snake oil salesman in a cultural shaman's clothing, Marx's diagnosis (of the cyclical crisis of capitalism inherent within its make-up) remains potent. The idea that the free market is not a wholesale boon for humanity can be seen in the adverse effects of unchecked consumption and industrialisation on the environment, as well as the postmodern meltdown of cultural markers (highbrow, lowbrow, mainstream, underground, ethnic) in the drive to absolute commodification of culture wherein:

\* Unique localised cultural identities face pressure from an emerging global cultural hegemony (often seen as purely American but, in truth, a capitalistic cultural hegemony, based on the universal appeal of self-actualisation through material acquisition [self-centredness and greed], that happened to emerge in Great Britain first, because of the Industrial Revolution, and which reached its apogee in American mass consumer culture after World War II: mass media - television, films and now the internet - have been as effective as a billion missionaries - money may talk, swear, as Bob Dylan said, and lie, but it also proselytises - in taking this gospel of the free market to the masses beyond the West's borders, such that we see young men downtown Tehran sporting San Francisco 49ers t-shirts and caps and their kin in Casablanca and Zanzibar armed with ghetto blasters pumping out Michael Jackson's [1958 - ] "Thriller").

\* Cultural markers cease to have any meaning precisely because everything is for sale, and we are all 'equal' because we are all (potential) consumers (the consumptive masses of the 'classless' market) in the democracy of the dollar (in which your wallet represents your vote and your bank balance is the level of your enfranchisement - or lack thereof). (Philosopher Theodor Adorno [1903 - 1969] saw the existence of 'culture industries' in the West which deliberately manipulated the masses to help maintain bourgeois hegemony.)

This vision of the world as a marketplace with a sales tag affixed to everything features in Stanley Elkin's (1930 - 1995) *A Bad Man* (1967). The protagonist, Leo Feldman, is the owner of a department store. The ultimate salesman for whom the customer is always right and no deal is out-of-bounds, he is sentenced to a year in prison for doing 'favours' for those who patronise his business (all manner of 'under the counter' services such as arranging illegal abortions, supplying drugs and firearms for patrons on the edge, and so on).

While in prison he recalls his poverty-stricken upbringing with his father and the wagon they operated selling their wares in outdoor markets in the early 20th century. The father, Isidore, is a wild-eyed eccentric who annoys his son no end with his over-the-top spruiking as well as his continual pseudo-mystical references to the 'one unsaleable thing,' in the manner of the Riddle of the Sphinx:

[Leo stared at his father] without moving. "What *is* the unsal[e]able thing?" he called.  
"The unsal[e]able thing? My God, don't you know?"  
"No."  
"No?"  
"You never told me."  
They were shouting at each other.  
"I didn't?"  
"Not once."

“Never?”  
“No.”  
“I had to tell you? You couldn’t guess?”  
“I never bothered.”  
“Some son.”  
“Well?”  
“Well what? What well?”  
“What is it?”  
“What is what?”  
“The unsal[e]able thing.”  
“It’s me,” he said

A year later his father began to cough. The boy was always with him now on the wagon. During the choking, heavy seizures brought on, it seemed, by the swelling, passionate spiels themselves, his son would take over the cries, shouting madder and madder things into the streets. The cough grew worse; it would begin as soon as he started to speak.

[Isidore] went to the doctor. “It’s cancer,” he told his son. “I’m dying.”

“Can he operate?”

His father shook his head. “It’s terminal.” He coughed.

“Terminal,” his son repeated the word.

“Sure,” his father said, coughing so that he could hardly be understood...The boy went to the doctor and conferred with him. Three months later, when the old man died, his son got in touch with the doctor. They argued some more, but it was no use. The doctor, on behalf of the tiny hospital, could offer him only fifteen dollars for the body.

In the biblical tradition, where (pursuit of) money is the root of all evil, we see Judas Iscariot, disciple of Jesus Christ, betray the Son of God. Judas is inspired by the ‘cosmic powers of this dark age’ which act upon his devious and greedy heart (he has already spent a considerable time pilfering the money box of Jesus and the disciples - which held offerings bequeathed to the group by Jesus’ followers and other sympathetic locals). Some have seen an ideological disillusionment in the man in that he saw Jesus as a political liberator (which, we have seen, is the view Pasolini emphasises) but lost his ‘faith’ in the cause when the Nazarene carpenter’s mission turned out to be about ending the tyranny of sin rather than the tyranny of Rome. What is without dispute, however, is that the means of the betrayal were the proto-capitalist system of barter and trade. Judas attached a price tag to Jesus in selling him out (thirty pieces of silver), such that not even (the Son of) God escapes the profaning of the sacred on the high altar of the market. God is displaced by Mammon, as Bob Dylan sings in “It’s Alright Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” (1965):

Disillusioned words like bullets bark as human gods aim for their mark  
Make everything from toy guns that spark  
To flesh coloured Christs that glow in the dark  
It’s easy to see without looking too far that not much is really sacred...

Capitalism is like a shark: to survive it must always be swimming. It must constantly consume anything and everything in its path (although in this latter sense it is more voracious than a shark because even a member of the species *Chondrichthyes Elasmobranchii* is satiated, for a time, post-feeding). In its purest expression, capitalism calls ‘black’ ‘white’ and ‘white’ ‘black’: it’s vices (‘avarice’ and its bedfellow ‘expediency’ - incorporating pragmatism and convenience) it upholds as virtues: “Greed is good,” says über-capitalist Gordon Gekko, the amorally reptilian (hence the surname) and highly successful (because of it) market kingpin and neo-robber baron in Oliver Stone’s [1946 - ] *Wall Street* [1987]).

And in director Francis Ford Coppola’s (1939 - ) *Apocalypse Now* (1979), the mad Colonel Kurtz relates an epiphany he has had about morality, civilisation and the human will whilst fighting the Viet Cong in the jungles of Vietnam:

We went into a camp to inoculate some children [for polio]. We'd left the camp...and this old man came running after us, and he was crying. [So w]e went back there. T[he Viet Cong] had come and hacked off every inoculated arm. There they were in a pile, a pile of...little arms, and I remember...I cried. I wept like...some...grandmother. I wanted to tear my teeth out. I didn't know what I wanted to do. And I want to remember it. I never want to forget it. I never want to forget.

And then I realised, like I was shot, like I was shot with a diamond - a diamond bullet right through my forehead. I thought, 'My God! The genius of that, the genius...the will to do that. Perfect, genuine, complete, crystalline, pure.' Then I realised they were stronger than we because they could stand it.

These were not monsters. These were men, trained cadres. These men fought with their hearts, who have families, who have children, who are filled with love, but they had the strength, the strength...to do that. If I had ten divisions of those men, then our troubles here would be over very quickly.

You have to have men who are moral, and at the same time, who are able to utilise their primordial instincts to kill without feeling, without passion, without judgement. Without judgement. Because it's judgement that defeats us.

Kurtz, who has broken away from central army command and is conducting his own war-within-a-war deep inside Vietnam, evokes the spirit of Nietzschean man (*see chapter on Friedrich Nietzsche*) but also exemplifies the detached amorality at the heart of capitalistic society (the original setting of the story in its earlier book form - Joseph Conrad's [1857 - 1924] *Heart Of Darkness* [1901] was the colonial Belgian Congo and the boat that transported the protagonist up river was a merchant vessel rather than a naval patrol boat). Whether standing outside civilisation like Kurtz or positioning oneself close to the centre of its authority structure like Gekko, both exemplify the ruthless, detached will to power that allows for the survival of the fittest in the zero-sum game of the natural or concrete jungles.

The morality Kurtz bespeaks is a subjective one: the capacity to see it purely in terms of the mechanics of the task at hand. Whatever advances the task is good, whatever inhibits it is bad. Greed (like the other six deadly sins) is, hence, good because it stimulates the will to power, to impose itself on the environment. Frugality is not just bad, it is the province of the weak (which, in this Nietzschean worldview, is the kingdom of darkness - *see chapter on Friedrich Nietzsche*). (Or else a recipe for neurosis, in terms of reining in free expression of the libido, in the Freudian context - *see chapter on Sigmund Freud*.) The disappearing jungles and rainforests (see below) and concurrent urbanisation (such that more than 50% of the world population will inhabit cities for the first time in history by 2007, according to a recent UN study) may have changed the physical landscape but the terrain of the corrupted human spirit remains the same.

A market that doesn't expand soon sees business confidence sag with attendant implications for future investment and employment (and, hence, consumption, which Keynes said was the lifeblood of capitalism - *see chapter on John Maynard Keynes*). Market contraction is even worse than a flatlining economy. Markets that experience 'negative growth' (for two quarters) are officially deemed in recession (*see above*). If the condition takes hold then the economy enters depression. Some economists see Japan as having experienced a depression since the early 1990s. The last depression in the West was the Great Depression (*see chapter on John Maynard Keynes*).

Market expansion entails both the search for new resources (to produce the increasing volume of goods) as well as new markets (new consumers, either individuals or groups of individuals, overseas or else within one's society who, heretofore, had not received marketing attention from big business e.g. the gay subculture - see below)

The necessity for market expansion, for a great part, explains the emergence of globalisation (and its inevitability). The Wikipedia online encyclopedia identifies several key elements in the process of globalisation:

- \* An increase in international trade at a faster rate than...growth in the world economy.
- \* Increase in international flow of capital including foreign direct investment.
- \* Greater transborder data flow, using...technologies such as the Internet, Wikipedia, Communication satellites and telephones.
- \* Greater international cultural exchange, for example through the export of Hollywood and Bollywood (India's film industry, which produces more films per annum than Hollywood) movies.
- \* Reduction in global cultural diversity through assimilation, hybridisation, Westernisation, Americanisation or Sinosisation of cultures.
- \* Erosion of national sovereignty and national borders through international agreements leading to organisations like the WTO [World Trade Organisation].
- \* Greater international travel and tourism.
- \* Greater immigration, including illegal immigration.
- \* Development of global telecommunications infrastructure.
- \* Development of a global financial system.
- \* Increase in the share of the world economy controlled by multinational corporations.
- \* Increased role of international organisations such as WTO, WIPO [World Intellectual Property Organisation], IMF [International Monetary Fund] that deal with international transactions.
- \* An increase in the number of standards applied globally; e.g. copyright laws.

A cursory examination of this list demonstrates that capitalism drives integration of sociopolitical systems (at the global just as much as the local level) so the market can expand more smoothly and generate more profits so as to further oil the engine of capitalism (like most systems, it is self-justifying and self-replicating, although its by-products are arguably more damaging than all others - think of the Borg in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* [1987 - 1994]: cyborg half-man / half-machine creatures who assimilate all other races, junking civilisations - taking what is useful and leaving the rest in a smoking ruin - like companies that have fallen prey to takeovers, the end result being a homogenous empire wherein sameness is next to godliness; the paths of metaphor and reality diverge, of course, with regard to the collective will of the Borg - a giant mind symbiosis of millions of beings - versus the supreme individualism of capitalist society).

Of course, as said, in the end, nothing is sacred in this system, where the pursuit of money (as a means to self-actualisation - *see chapter on Friedrich Nietzsche*) has become something akin to a world religion, thanks to economic rationalism (*see chapter on John Maynard Keynes*), technology and globalisation. (The young Leo Feldman exemplifies the system's profane creed, haggling over the price for his father's cadaver while the old man is still alive. Judas Iscariot, reminding us of the insidiousness of greed unchecked as transcending culture and time, nevertheless foreshadows the materialism in our age, wherein even spirituality cannot escape its gravity, as the money lenders return to occupy the temple in the form of the cult 'franchises' of Scientology and its ilk - *see chapter on Helena Blavatsky*, proponents of the 'prosperity' doctrine in Western Christianity - in which God is something of a spiritual stockbroker determined to make you materially wealthy, or the trend towards the holding of 'conscious living' expos in Western cities where everything - karma, tranquility, transcendence - is available for the right price.) Sacred cows cannot be

countenanced in such a system because they interfere with the market. Examples of such sacred cows that have fallen / are falling by the wayside (in part, due to the market pressures) include:

1) A philosophy of the natural environment that seeks to preserve mother nature for the simple principle of being good stewards of natural resources, in the Christian tradition, or else higher animals who owe our very survival to the earth in the secular (or Gaia in the New Age) ecological tradition.

Environmentalists regularly speak of the increasing danger of unchecked market expansion. Growth that 'rapes the earth,' as deep ecologists would say (*see Earth Energy entry in footnote 25 below*), is considered unsustainable. For example, William F. Laurance [c.1962 - ], a research scientist from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, says that development in the Amazon rainforests in Brazil is causing an area the size of 200+ gridiron football fields to be lost every half-hour. It is this kind of statistic (as well as the effects of unchecked development such as global warming and climate change) that helped bring a large mass of the Western political establishment to the environmental table at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and shifted the debate from the extremes of deep ecology on the left and the corporate mentality wherein 'green doesn't go with my Gucci' on the right to the (perceived) middle ground of sustainable development (*see Earth Energy entry in footnote 25 below*). Following on from this, we have seen the international push for the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol (1997) by numerous governments, even though scientists have said the overall impact of the Protocols targets for greenhouse gas emissions by industries on slowing global warming will be negligible. Proponents counter that the treaty will help usher in a change in the mindset of people and, hopefully, spur further sacrifices on the part of rabid consumers which will see significant changes made to lifestyle and living (and, in turn, have an effect on climate change). But the large-scale resistance to the Protocol (led by the US, opponents cite the impact on economic growth of adopting targets for little reward) vividly illustrates the near-impossibility of inspiring people to give up something (tangible) for nothing (or something intangible for several decades). It seems while people will sacrifice things (even their lives) for religious or other crusades or causes, the vast majority of people are not so altruistic or magnanimous when it comes to giving up their right to accumulate material wealth (representing the near-universal triumph of the 'rights theology,' in its elevation of the Self above all - *see chapter on Søren Kierkegaard*).

2) Artificial divisions of culture (high, low, ethnic) that, ultimately, inhibit the freedom of cultural consumption by all consumers.

Firstly, though, it is necessary to understand what is meant by the term 'culture.' The Wikipedia entry on 'culture' says that:

Popular use of the word...in many Western societies...reflects the stratified character of those societies. Many use the word...to refer to elite consumption goods and activities such as fine cuisine, art, and music. Some label this as "high" culture to distinguish it from "low" culture, meaning non-elite consumption goods and activities [e.g. eating at McDonalds, watching a soap opera on TV, going to a baseball game, etc - 'middlebrow' is somewhere between the two, a person who is partly 'culture' but not overtly so].

18th and early 19th century scholars, and many people today, often identify culture with "civilisation" and oppose both to "nature". Thus people lacking elements of "high culture" often seemed more "natural," and observers often criticise (or defend) elements of high culture for repressing "human nature".

By the late 19th century, anthropologists argued for a broader definition of culture that they could apply to a wide variety of societies. They began to argue that culture is human nature, and that culture has its roots in the universal human capacity to classify *experiences* [emphasis added], and encode and communicate them symbolically. Consequently, people living apart from one another develop unique cultures, but elements of different cultures can easily spread from one group of people to another [such as the perceived US 'cultural imperialism' that we have already looked at].

Anthropologists have thus had to develop methodologically and theoretically useful definitions of the word. Technically, anthropologists distinguish between *material* culture and *symbolic* culture, not only because each reflects different kinds of human activity but because they constitute different kinds of data that require different methodologies.

Another common way of understanding culture is to see it as consisting of three elements: *Values* (ideas), *Norms* (behaviours), and *Artifacts* (things, or material culture).

\* Values are ideas about what in life is important. They guide the rest of the culture [e.g. the social democratic values that govern Western societies, promoting individual freedoms such as the American 'Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness'].

\* Norms are expectations of how people will behave in different situations. Each culture has different methods, called sanctions, of enforcing its norms. Sanctions vary with the importance of the norm; norms that a society enforces formally are called laws. [The social contract, as we have seen, ties the individual to the state where the former agrees to abide by the norms established by the latter.]

\* Artifacts...derive from the culture's values and norms [e.g. the system of democratic government, or the system of capitalistic enterprise which feeds consumer needs and wants - 'creature needs,' as Lee Rainwater described them - *see chapter on Søren Kierkegaard*].

As a rule, archeologists focus on material culture [associated with artifacts], and cultural anthropologists focus on symbolic culture [values and norms], although ultimately both groups maintain interests in the relationship between these two dimensions...

In the early 20th century anthropologists understood culture to refer not to a set of discrete products or activities (whether material or symbolic) but rather to underlying patterns of products and activities. Moreover, they assumed that such patterns had clear bounds (thus, some people confuse "culture" for the society that has a particular culture). In smaller societies [e.g. an African tribe] in which people merely fell into categories of age, gender, household, and descent group, anthropologists believed that people more or less shared the same set of values and conventions. In larger societies [e.g. the United States] in which people undergo further categorisation by region, race, ethnicity, and class, they believed that members of the same society often had highly contrasting values and conventions. They thus used the term *subculture* to identify the cultures of parts of larger societies. Since subcultures reflect the position of a segment of society vis-à-vis other segments and the society as a whole, they often reveal processes of domination and resistance.

Cultural studies developed in the late 20th century, in part through the reintroduction of Marxist thought into sociology [the science of the social rules and centrifugal and centripetal processes that draw together and force apart individuals, groups and institutions in a society], and in part through the articulation of sociology and other academic disciplines such as literary criticism, in order to focus on the analysis of subcultures in capitalist societies. Following the non-anthropological tradition, cultural studies generally focus on the study of consumption goods (such as fashion, art, and literature). Because the 18th and 19th century distinction between "high" and "low" culture seems inappropriate to apply to the mass-produced and mass-marketed consumption goods which cultural studies analyses, these scholars refer instead to popular culture.

The collapse of cultural markers can be seen with:

\* The move by such high culture luminaries as operatic tenor Luciano Pavarotti (1935 - ) into pop music in the late 1980s and actually recording with pop figures such as U2 in the 1990s. While pop is the epitome of lowbrow music, opera is, arguably, the bastion of high culture (along with ballet and other forms of classical dance - whose own concessions to the postmodern turn can be seen with the popularity of the *Riverdance*

phenomenon in the 1990s - and classical music - witness 1970s heavy glam rockers Kiss recording with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra). And yet, we have now witnessed the emperor of lowbrow (television) trash-talk show figurehead Jerry Springer (1944 - ) get his own opera (which makes the vogue for 'pop operas' in late 1960s and early 1970s pop music, such as The Who's *Tommy* [1969], seem classy, sophisticated and positively reverential).

\* A traditional pre-rock pop singer such as Tony Bennett (1926 - ) cavorting on MTV (pop videos were an essay in audiovisual lowbrow and yet now pop video directors such as David Fincher [1962 - ], Spike Jonze [1969 - ] and Michel Gondry [1964 - ] win international awards and use their video clip successes as launching pad for careers directing movies) and recording with Country-esque popster k.d. lang (1961 - ); while an old-time rocker like Rod Stewart (1945 - ) puts on a suit and tie and records albums of traditional pre-rock pop numbers such as "It Had To Be You."

\* DJs such as Fatboy Slim (1963 - ) and Moby (1965 - ), heretofore gods of the decidedly non-mainstream dance music scene, achieve international stardom. Similarly, jazz and trad-pop singer Norah Jones (1979 - ) tops the charts with little concession to prevailing tastes in popular music.

\* The rock invasion of theatre with the Queen musical *We Will Rock You* (2002), although, in truth, Freddie Mercury's (1946 - 1991) camp schtick was always suited to the campness inherent in music theatre. But we also see the (machismo rocker) Rod Stewart musical *Tonight's The Night* (2003), also penned by one-time king of British alternative (underground) comedy Ben Elton (1959 - ), who has had a successful career as a novelist of international renown (e.g. *Stark* [1989], which was subsequently made into a TV series) in addition to his TV-scripting exploits (e.g. *The Young Ones* [1982 - 1984], *Blackadder* [1983 - 1989]).

\* The 1970s underground punk 'spokesman for a generation' Johnny Rotten (1956 - ) appearing as his alter ego John Lydon on the mainstream British "I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here" (2004) reality TV show, the height of mainstream. Television has also seen shows conceived in the so-called 'underground' achieve international success (e.g. *South Park* [1997 - ]). Similarly, in cinema, we have *The Blair Witch Project* (1999).

\* The popularity of TV programs such as *Jackass* (2000 - ), whose star Steve-O (1974 - ) entertains his fan base through various stunts such as eating grass, burning himself and stapling his testicles to his legs. In essence, such 'art,' like that of the theatrical renegades who compose the Tokyo Shock Boys or their American kin in the Jim Rose Sideshow, while harking back to freak shows in the carnivals of yesteryear, largely appropriates the modus operandi of 'underground' neo-Dadaists who engage in 'shock' tactics (such as stabbing oneself with a syringe while extolling the virtues of shooting up in a spoken word piece) to assault the sensibilities of their audiences, which they view as having becoming desensitised over time (due to the deadening effects of consumerist culture) and so more and more impervious to the heretofore edgy and challenging traditions of modern art (whose boundaries, hence, require reconstituting in the very manner they prescribe to remain challenging and relevant). Steve-O and his ilk, of course, eschew high art considerations in favour of the market (so that 'shock' becomes just another way to make a buck).

\* The development of 'Indiewood,' a product of the collision of Hollywood and the American independent movie scene. *Pulp Fiction* (1994) was the first such film, a creation of the 'underground,' it was as successful as a typical prepackaged Hollywood blockbuster. The Miramax studio led the charge in sinking millions of dollars into indie films but eventually every mainstream movie company had a division which developed 'indie' cinema.

\* The successful move by stars of non-Western cinema into the mainstream Western movie industry (e.g. Jackie Chan [1954 - ], John Woo [1946 - ], Chow Yun-Fat [1955 - ], etc). And the increasing success of 'ethnic' productions in cinema (e.g. *Bend It Like Beckham* [2002]) and TV (e.g. *The Kumars At No. 42* [2001 - ]).

\* The, excuse the pun, penetration of the mainstream by porn culture (a bastion of the lowbrow). Mainstream movies began to delve into the previously discrete pornographic celluloid scene in the late

1990s (e.g. *Boogie Nights* [1997], a loose depiction of the life and times of porn legend John Holmes [1944 - 1988], who also turned up as a real life character in the pseudo-documentary *Wonderland* [2003]). Similarly, porn actors such as Traci Lords (1968 - ) and Ron Jeremy (1953 - ), who is much sought after as a 'talking head' by the big media chains, have crossed over into mainstream cinema. Homemade pornographic movies by mainstream actors and celebrities (that have inadvertently found their way onto the internet) have also seen the phenomenon work in reverse (e.g. Pamela Anderson [1967 - ], Paris Hilton [1981 - ], etc).

\* The cross-pollination between the (high) art world and pop music scene with artist Damien Hirst (1965 - ) (famous for his *Natural History* series of dead animals preserved in formaldehyde) collaborating with popster David Bowie (1947 - ). Hirst (along with spiritual kin Mark Kostabi [1960 - ], who no longer even paints his 'own' work, and Jeff Koons [1955 - ]) represents a generation of artists whose capacity for self-promotion has become their art (or just as important as their painting, sculpture, etc). Influenced by Andy Warhol, they have sought attention, if not outright fame and pop notoriety, beyond the limits of the previously high culture aesthetic of their industry.

\* The now endless parade of cultural studies delving into trivialities such as the history of the smile, or the 'F' word, etc. As a character in Don DeLillo's (1936 - ) *White Noise* (1984) says (about the cultural studies department in the humanities faculty on his campus):

I understand the music, I understand the movies, I even see how comic books can tell us things. But there are full professors in this place who read nothing but cereal boxes. It's the only avant-garde we've got.

But now, of course, such literary deconstruction has become a popular commodity capable of topping *The New York Times* [1851 - ] bestseller list, which speaks to the power of the preference (consumer choice) for the frivolous, inconsequential and ephemeral (a societal-wide trivial pursuit, if you like) in capitalism (in the best tradition of product disposability).

Never before in history has there been the potential to 'do it yourself' in the best punk tradition and find yourself quickly becoming a (global) cultural force. The golden rule is that if you can tap into a market for your product then the sky is the limit. The aesthetic sensibility of the product (underground, mainstream, whatever) is now irrelevant.

Nor is working in a lowbrow medium a barrier to critical acclaim, high art pretensions or mainstream acceptance (e.g. the critical turnaround for rapper extraordinaire Eminem (1972 - ), who went from being a byword for cultural decline for critics proclaiming the death of culture to a cutting-edge champion of the zeitgeist - e.g. cultural critic Nelson George (1957 - ), who asserted the songs of Marshall Mathers III were artistically and socially valid because they expressed the angst and emotions of young disenfranchised white men - in two years).

Of course, culture vultures have been bemoaning the 'death of culture' for decades.<sup>16</sup> Some thirty years ago, American TV producer Chuck Barris (1929 - ) was the poster boy for this cultural critique. The man who devised such cotton candy televisual experiences as *The Dating Game* (1965 - 1973) and *The Newlywed Game* (1967 - 1974) (where couples were inspired to reveal highly personal details about their partner in a bid to win a refrigerator) had come up with a new low: *The Gong Show* (1976 - 1980). It featured deliberately woeful acts - singers, dancers, magicians, etc - and exulted in the humiliation of these sincere but talent-challenged individuals.

Barris went on to write a bizarre autobiography wherein he claimed to have used his TV career as a front for his true role as a hitman working for the CIA. *Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind* (1982) subsequently became a movie (2002) which, ironically, garnered critical acclaim. Painting a picture of an intensely self-loathing individual, the final lines of 'Barris' in the movie stand as not just a testament to his own guilt about how he made his money but also to an entire Western cultural tradition that has debased itself by pandering to the almighty buck by way of the lowest common denominator:

I came up with a new game show recently. It's called 'The Old Game.' You got three old guys with loaded guns on stage. They look back at their lives, see who they were, what they accomplished, how close they came to realising their dreams. The winner is the one who doesn't blow his brains out. He gets a refrigerator.

The money men, bean counters, accountants, et al have taken over cultural expression in the West. Success is determined purely by the bottom line, the only aesthetic left. The same effects have been experienced in sport, where amateurism was subsumed in a wave of professionalism - the Olympics, tennis, etc - or else moved from a weekend pastime where sportsman received little pay to a multi-million dollar industry (e.g. baseball, soccer, etc). Sporting stars were like pop stars decades ago (e.g. Babe Ruth) but now they are one-man industries (e.g. Michael Jordan [1963 - ], whose mammoth earnings in basketball were a pittance compared to the wealth generated by Michael Jordantm - clothing, footwear, video games, etc). Some fans have voiced disquiet about how the 'fun' has gone out of their game along with the passion, where robo-sportsmen go through the motions and play not to lose rather than to win because losing is perceived as hurting their image which hurts the capacity to sell more product.

A good example of the sea change in sport brought on by the commodification of everything is the game of cricket. Cricket, for better or worse, was the ultimate 'gentlemen's game,' the sporting equivalent of high art. Fair play, the infallibility of the umpire, and the like exemplified the on-field amusement. In the late 1970s, Australian media baron Kerry Packer (1937 - ) wanted to televise the game on his commercial station Channel Nine but the Australian Cricket Board denied him the rights (preferring test matches to be screened on the national broadcaster the ABC). Packer's response was to offer the game's best players 'blank cheques' to sign onto his anti-establishment World Series Cricket version of the game. All manner of showbiz-style shenanigans ensued with players battling it out in 'Supertests' (Australia versus the Rest of the World) and one day matches played under lights. Heretofore a novelty of the game, one day matches were a marketing dream and proved extremely popular (especially as a result was achieved in one day as opposed to the potential five in test matches, and players attempted to score at a rapid rate to win, which was more entertaining than the slow and methodical way batsmen went about building a total otherwise - little or no time for this in the era of 'time is money'). The end result was a complete capitulation by the Australian cricketing establishment (even though World Series Cricket had run up huge losses in its two seasons). Packer got the exclusive deal to televise cricket that he was after. The old men in blazers who ran the game were not so much lined up against the wall and shot in this professional revolution as quietly ferried off to the retirement home. The era of sporting sentimentality was over. In turn, one day cricket proliferated such that, beginning as a novelty in 1971, it is now the dominant form of the game. Gone are the cricketing whites in the one day game too, replaced by national colours (further accentuating the competitiveness of the modern era, as opposed to the staid conformity of white). In more recent times, names and numbers of players have been added to uniforms (following US pro-sports such as baseball). Player salaries have skyrocketed too (although they are still dwarfed by the gargantuan American payrolls).

3) Moral systems which do not promote the 'tolerance' of all lifestyles that do not engage in non-consensual physical harm of others.

Paul Varnell in his article "Gays And Economic Development" (2001) says:

If you are a government official who wants to promote business and economic development in your city or region, particularly high technology development, the most important thing you can do is create conditions that attract a large number of gays.

That is the fascinating conclusion of a new study, "Technology And Tolerance: The Importance Of Diversity To High-Technology Growth" by Richard Florida [c.1959 - ] and Gary Gates, published in June by the Brookings Institution.

The argument is relatively simple and straightforward.

Although gay men are disproportionately employed in high-tech industries, gays themselves do not necessarily directly cause high tech business development.

But rather, the presence of gays in an urban area is the most reliable measure, the most sensitive barometer, of an open-minded and creative social atmosphere that draws the highly talented people high tech companies typically seek as employees:

“They (gays) signal a diverse and progressive environment that fosters the creativity and innovation necessary for success in high tech industry.”

Thus, alluding to the old coal miners’ practice of taking a canary along into a coal mine because of its high sensitivity to toxic coal gases, Florida and Gates call gays “the canaries of the knowledge economy.”

Secondarily, because gays often have the disposable income to take advantage of recreational and entertainment offerings and migrate to where they are available, the presence of gays provides a good indicator for the existence of a broad spectrum of lifestyle amenities attractive to other adults.<sup>17</sup>

The supposed link between tolerance, innovation and capital aside, the need for new markets has seen companies chasing the ‘pink’ dollar, as it is known in business, wherein, for instance, Sydney, Australia has been marketed as a tourist destination worthy for consideration precisely because of its world-renowned Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras during the southern summer.

If a moral structure is such that it inhibits market growth then what? Stock options or sin? Does anyone really imagine that morality will win that particular contest?

Any ideology which harms the bottom line is an anachronism in the culture of commodification. The economy just can’t afford it.

As Marx said in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors”, and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment”. It has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom - Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation into a mere money relation.

## THE ‘MYTH’ OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Marx lost his way not merely in the solutions he offered to the accurately diagnosed problems inherent in capitalism, but also in his reductionist tendencies, whereby, whilst calling on proletarians to unite and cast off their chains, he simultaneously chained them (and everyone else) to the engine of history.

British journalist and Christian iconoclast Malcolm Muggeridge (1903 - 1990) considered Marx (and, later, that of Sigmund Freud - *see chapter on Sigmund Freud*) in terms of the changes his ideas engendered to the concepts of free will and responsibility for one's actions, in his autobiography *The Green Stick*:

Freud and Marx...undermined the whole basis of Western European civilisation as no avowedly insurrectionary movement ever has or could, by promoting the notion of determinism, in the one case in morals, in the other in history, thereby relieving individual men and women of all responsibility for their personal and collective behaviour.

Determinism holds that all individual behaviour is an outworking of prior events (such as the course of history as Marx, by way of Hegel, asserts) or else natural causes (psychological in the case of Freud and biological in the case of the Darwinian 'biological worldview' - *see chapter on Charles Darwin*). There can be no such thing as free will in this cosmos and, thus, no personal responsibility for one's actions (in turn rendering the notion of consequences for actions arbitrary and absurd).

15

William S. Lind (1947 - ) in his address "The Origins Of Political Correctness," (2000), discusses the roots of this sociopolitical movement in the failure of Marxist revolution to emerge during and after the First World War.

Marxists across the continent believed that the European working class would overthrow the bourgeoisie in the aftermath of World War I, taking the opportunity afforded by the war-driven social dislocation to find solidarity in class consciousness with their fellow proletarians in other nations and rise up (rather than unite under the anachronistic banner of nationalism). Yet, apart from Russia, the absence of revolution perplexed many Marxists (and even with the Bolshevik takeover, the failure of it to spread to other nations dampened the initial enthusiasm of Marx's followers - indeed, the Spartacist uprising in Berlin, the Béla Kun (1886 - 1939) government in Hungary, the Munich Soviet all conspicuously failed to garner the support of workers). As for nationalism being an element of false social identity (which would wither on the vine after having had its ideological bankruptcy exposed), Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859 - 1941) of Germany, whose own policy of overturning laws banning socialist parties had allowed for the emergence of the German (Marxist) Social Democratic Party in 1891, was happy to shake the hands of the SDP leaders and declare, at the conclusion of the Great War: "I do not know political parties any more, I only know Germans." And in spite of the initial years of political chaos that followed, a Western capitalist democracy did evolve in Germany in the form of the Weimar Republic. There and elsewhere, the economy prospered and, for a time, extremists of the Right and Left were marginalised.

Two thinkers emerged at this time to address the conundrum of worker apathy for revolution. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891 - 1937), whose ideas would later be published in a series of *Prison Notebooks* (1929 - 1935), the title alluding to his incarceration at the hands of Mussolini's Fascist regime, proposed that

- a) Bourgeois cultural hegemony was a cornerstone in the maintenance of the capitalist state
- b) Popular education for the masses was needed to cultivate a group of working class intellectuals (to counter the bourgeois academic elite).

In 1919, Hungarian Gregor Lukács (1885 - 1971), who was widely considered the most brilliant Marxist theorist since Marx himself, blathered aloud in exasperation: "Who will save us from Western Civilisation?" Lukács had similar ideas as his Italian compatriot, which he presented in *History And Class Consciousness* (1923). However, unlike Gramsci, he was able to implement some of them during his stint as Deputy Commissar for Culture in the short-lived Kun regime, introducing sex education into schools (which precipitated revulsion in Hungarian society, workers included).

The same year as Lukács' book, German businessman-turned-Marxist Felix Weil, troubled by the divisions among Marx's followers in Germany (which had, at one time, sunk to the level whereby fights had broken out between rival factions at the funerals of leftist leaders assassinated by right-wing adversaries), decided

to bankroll the establishment of a left-wing think tank: the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research).

The 21st Century School website ([www.21stcenturyschools.com](http://www.21stcenturyschools.com)) describes the organisation thus:

[Founded in Frankfurt, it] was an affiliate...of the [local] University. One of the major purposes of the Institut was to focus upon contemporary developments in society in order to work out “a comprehensive theory of social life” for the purpose of remaking society. Another was to highlight subjects felt to be inadequately treated at German universities: the economic interpretation of history, psychoanalysis, social psychology and the classical sociology associated with Max Weber. [The members of the Institut] conceived of Marxism as an open-ended, historical, dialectical theory that required development, revision and modification, precisely because it was, they believed, a theory of contemporary socio-historical reality which itself was constantly developing and changing.

They saw the need to concern themselves with consciousness, subjectivity, culture, ideology and the concept of socialism precisely in order to make possible radical political change.

In this context it is significant that the [Institut] was founded in 1923, the year marking the end of the period of revolutionary upheaval that began with the Russian revolution and the end of [World War I], while also marking the beginning of the stabilisation of capitalism and bourgeois rule...

...After the premature death of its first director, Karl Albert Gerlach, the Austrian Carl Grunberg, who had edited a yearbook for the history of the workers’ movement, took over the directorship...For Grunberg, the aim of Marxist research was to discover the causes and laws of social change. Grunberg believed that social life in all its manifestations [was] a reflex of the existing economic system, and that the key to social theory [could] be found in the laws governing the economic system. [However,] Grunberg had a serious heart attack and was forced to step down from the directorship in 1929; [consequently,] Max Horkheimer [1895 - 1973] was named director in 1930. Under Grunberg, the Institut had given up much of [the] emphasis upon contemporary social life. Horkheimer shifted back to its original purposes. Under Horkheimer’s direction the Institute carried through a unique synthesis of philosophy and social theory.

Horkheimer delivered his inaugural address on January 24, 1931; it was entitled “The Present Situation Of Social Philosophy And The Tasks Of An Institute For Social Research.” Horkheimer called for a new sort of synthesis between philosophy and the specialised sciences [and] stated that the project would unite:

[P]hilosophers, sociologists, economists, historians, and psychologists in an ongoing research community who [will] do together what in other disciplines one individual does alone in the laboratory - which is what genuine scientists have always done: namely, to pursue the great philosophical questions using the most refined scientific methods; to reformulate and to make more precise the questions in the course of work as demanded by the object; and to develop new methods without losing sight of the universal.

...Among Horkheimer’s collaborators were Theodor Adorno, philosopher and musicologist [who coined the term ‘culture industry’ to denote, as said, his concept of how society was supposedly controlled by a standardised culture, initiated by the elites, which commodified products]; the psychoanalyst [and later member of the American Socialist Party] Erich Fromm [(1900 - 1980), who promoted the existential concept of individuals taking independent action and devising their own values from using reason rather than meekly accepting authoritarian moral values], and the economists Henryk Grossmann [1881 - 1950] and Frederick Pollock [1845 - 1937]. Herbert Marcuse, [sociologist] Leo Lowenthal [1900 - 1993], [historian] Karl Wittfogel [1896 - 1988] and [sociologist] Walter Benjamin [1892 - 1940] also contributed, giving it a rich interdisciplinary brilliance.

The school of philosophy that emerged from the Institut became known as the ‘Frankfurt School,’ but its work was derailed, in a manner, by World War II (which dispersed the Institut’s members across the globe - the Institut had relocated to Geneva after the rise of Hitler in 1933 before moving again to New York in 1935; it re-opened in Frankfurt in the 1950s). However, after the conflict, the School’s ideas proved highly influential in Western academia. Its focus on unravelling the component parts of Western society (as a means to radical social change) evolved into what became known as Critical Theory, which embodies two distinct areas of inquiry:

- \* Personal identity, both the private and public self (and especially the conflict between these).
- \* The role played by cultural institutions (e.g. the media, the political and religious establishments, the spheres of science and education, etc) in shaping identity / the self and societal norms.

Lind describes this theory as having sprung from Horkheimer's fusion of Marx and Freud (*see chapter on Sigmund Freud*):

The theory is [based on criticism as a means to an end of bringing] down Western culture and the capitalist order...[No alternative is offered to what is critiqued because critical theorists] say it can't be done...we can't imagine what a [truly] free society would look like...[a]s long as [we are] living under repression - the repression of a capitalistic economic order which creates...the Freudian condition [of 'one-dimensional man,' as Marcuse rendered it]...

Critical Theory provided the philosophical framework for a range of sociopolitical critiques operating on university campuses (and elsewhere):

- \* Gender studies - such as women's and queer studies, wherein the masculine hegemony marginalises other sexualities.
- \* Critical race studies - such as black and latino studies, wherein the white Anglo-Saxon hegemony marginalises other racial groups.
- \* Semiotic and linguistic theories - such as the ideas of semiotician Roland Barthes, where cultural texts (newspapers, films, novels, etc) are systems of signs whose underlying structure forms the "meaning of the work as a whole," as well as texts to which the reader brings their own ideological baggage which frames the textual reading (negating the writer's 'intentions' and necessarily culminating in the Death of the Author).
- \* Psychoanalytic theory (focusing on culture rather than individuals) - for example, the work of Jacques Lacan [1901 - 1981], who diverged from orthodox ideas in psychoanalysis in rejecting the concept of a stable self - *see chapter on Sigmund Freud* - and asserted that Freudian aims to strengthen the ego minimise repression and neuroses (to achieve psychological wellbeing) were pointless because the self was itself an illusion, being just another product of the unconscious mind.
- \* Deconstruction - as exemplified by the ideas of philosopher Jacques Derrida (1935 - ), who proposed that no philosopher could be completely independent from that which is being critiqued and, consequently, there can be no absolutes or rational truth precisely because all is discourse is compromised by a person's interaction with their environment (on one level, a philosophical treatment of relativity - *see chapter on Albert Einstein*). An extension of this was Derrida's deconstructive readings of texts, which aim, in the manner of separating a chemical compound into its discrete elements, to deconstruct a text and lay bare its grounding in a particular metaphysical tradition (such as the Western) and the contradictions and biases that emerge from such scrutiny (i.e. exposing the supposed "claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying [representing meaning] over another," as Barbara E. Johnson [1947 - ] says).

Michel Foucault (1926 - 1984) shared Derrida's ideas about texts but focused more on the relationship between power and knowledge - specifically, how 'truth' is arrived at through the operation (and manipulation) of power by cultural institutions.

Herbert Marcuse addressed such hegemonic power plays in his "Repressive Tolerance," (1965), in which he wrote that the Western tradition of free expression was actually repressive, because the elites kept the masses indoctrinated into ideologies which served the elite agenda, such that people "parrot as their own, the opinion of their masters...Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left...":

Democracy is a form of government which fits very different types of society (this holds true even for a democracy with universal suffrage and equality before the law), and the human costs of a democracy are always and everywhere those exacted by the society whose government it is. Their range extends all the way from normal exploitation, poverty, and insecurity to the victims of wars, police actions, military aid, etc., in which the society is engaged - and not only to the victims within its own frontiers. These considerations can never justify the exacting of different sacrifices and different victims on behalf of a future better society, but they do allow weighing the costs involved in the perpetuation of an existing society against the risk of promoting alternatives which offer a reasonable chance of pacification and liberation.

Surely, no government can be expected to foster its own subversion, but in a democracy such a right is vested in the people (i.e. in the majority of the people). This means that the ways should not be blocked on which a subversive majority could develop, and if they are blocked by organised repression and indoctrination, their reopening may require apparently undemocratic means. They would include the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armament, chauvinism, discrimination on the grounds of race and religion, or which oppose the extension of public services, social security, medical care, etc. Moreover, the restoration of freedom of thought may necessitate new and rigid restrictions on teachings and practices in the educational institutions which, by their very methods and concepts, serve to enclose the mind within the established universe of discourse and behaviour - thereby precluding *a priori* a rational evaluation of the alternatives...

...While the reversal of the trend in the educational enterprise at least could conceivably be enforced by the students and teachers themselves, and thus be self-imposed, the systematic withdrawal of tolerance toward regressive and repressive opinions and movements could only be envisaged as results of large-scale pressure which would amount to an upheaval. In other words, it would presuppose that which is still to be accomplished: the reversal of the trend. However, resistance at particular occasions, boycott, non-participation at the local and small-group level may perhaps prepare the ground.

As said, Marcuse was highly influential on the emerging Western liberal establishment in the late 1960s and early 1970s (indeed, he coined the famous counterculture slogan: "Make Love, Not War"). His ideas became an agenda for action in which critical theory could help achieve the Frankfurt School's endgame of radical social change (subversively pulling down the pillars of the temple, Samson-like, so a new religion could rise from the ashes). Namely, the prosecution of a counter-tradition to the existing tradition of tolerance, whereby prevailing norms could be undermined by targeting their propagation through language: in effect, cultivating a new language which exhibited the ideas and concepts of the liberal counter-tradition and simultaneously critiqued the dominant tradition. Adapting Marx and Hegel, in theory this would see a liberal /socialist hegemony replace the traditional capitalist one.

'Political correctness' (a term originally used by communist intellectuals in the 1930s before being dusted off by neoconservatives in the 1990s as an expression to deride the Marcusian project to 'liberate' tolerance) came out of these ambitions. Initially, academia began to implement this Marcusian version of tolerance (e.g. in developing policies against non-sexist language, etc).

Gerald Sirkin (1920 - ) Natalie Sirkin relate an example of the kind of politically-correct witch hunts that became de rigueur on Western campuses in their essay "Western Culture's Got To Go" (1989):

You have inherited an asset of incalculable value. You may not be aware of that inheritance, but it is what permits you to live in a country where justice, liberty, and generosity are the guiding lights, where democracy works, where a productive economy provides material well-being and the expectation of ever more.

Your inheritance...is what we call “Western culture.” It is the ideas, attitudes, and values, developed over centuries, that make us different from people in many other parts of the world whose unfortunate citizens in great numbers seek to enter our country, legally and illegally.

Western culture is not transmitted through the genes. It has to be taught to each succeeding generation. To transmit this heritage, we depend on our schools and colleges.

Never has a public trust been more misplaced.

We are reminded of the rupturing of our cultural pipeline by the current debate over curricular changes at Stanford University.

In a speech at Stanford on April 18, Secretary of Education William J. Bennett [1943 - ] blasted that University for scrapping its basic course, “Western Thought,” which has been required for all freshmen.

The “Western Thought” course was introduced in 1980. It was a step toward rebuilding the worthy curriculum that was trashed in the 1960s and [1970s] at the hands of nihilistic students and deranged faculty. The course consisted of the study of great books that [have been] the landmarks in the long development of Western culture.

“Western Thought” from its inception became the target of a small but loud gang of protesters. Their chant in a demonstration last year, led by [prominent black activist the Reverend] Jesse Jackson [1941 - ] - “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western culture’s got to go!” - tells us what they [wanted]. Their ostensible objection to the course [was] that white males [c.f. ‘dead white males’ were] over-represented in the reading list while women, blacks, American Indians, Hispanics etc. [were] omitted.

The Stanford Faculty Senate voted 39-4 with 5 abstentions to gut “Western Thought.” Nine of the 15 required books and all 18 “highly recommended” books [were] dropped, to be replaced [with] “works by women, minorities and persons of colour.” Whatever may be the proper role of such books in education, they [were] no substitute for the great classics that [have been] the foundation stones of our culture. Choosing books by authors’ gender or ethnic category rather than by the books’ quality ought to embarrass all educators.

The name of the course [was] changed from “Western Thought” to “Culture, Ideas, and Values.” The Senate voted to drop “Western” from the course description[, deeming the word] “inappropriate,” “anachronistic,” “provincial,” and “because of its symbolic significance.”

Class discussion (in each quarter of the academic year) [was now] to include “substantial attention to issues of class, race, and gender.” The course [would now] be supervised by three students and eight to ten faculty members.

The Stanford Senate’s action was not an educational but a political decision. In Secretary Bennett’s words, “A great university was brought low by the very forces which modern universities come into being to oppose - ignorance, irrationality and intimidation.”

As graduates, exposed to such seemingly egalitarian concepts, took their place in society at large, they carried such ideas with them. The media began to institute ‘political correctness’ in the late 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. *The New York Times* began using the word ‘gay’ as a synonym for a homosexual in 1987. Five years later, the paper’s publisher announced that diversity would, henceforth, be a priority for the publication). With the adoption of politically correct language / concepts in such globally-prestigious news media (e.g. in addition to *The New York Times*, other papers such as *The Washington Post* [1877 - ], and TV and radio outlets such as the British Broadcasting Corporation, etc), it was only a matter of time before it spread throughout the Fourth Estate. Returning to Orwell’s notion that language shapes thought (*see*

*footnote 9*), the propagation of politically correct ideology, wedded to the existential rebellion of the 1960s (see *chapter on Søren Kierkegaard*) helped begat such views on a mass scale throughout the West (however, it also bred much resentment - and, ironically, predominantly in the working class - although advocates of 'political correctness,' restated the ideas of Gramsci in explaining such resentment was an outworking of a lack of formal education among workers - the 'political re-education' of members of the previous government in the aftermath of a revolution springs to mind). 'Political correctness' also infused religious liberalism at the twilight of the 20th century, when liberals sought to 'liberate' Christianity from fundamentalists and make the Gospel more 'tolerant' in a pluralistic society.

Because the existing tradition is that which 'political correctness' seeks to subvert in its aim of 'liberating tolerance,' by necessity white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (i.e. 'WASP') males (embodying all the tenets of the prevailing hegemony) become the metaphor for the evils of repressive Western civilisation (ironic in a way, given that Marcuse and the other members of the Frankfurt School were WASPs). And the United States, the dominant cultural hegemony and founded (and 'ruled') by WASPs, becomes the ultimate punching bag for the world's ills.

16

Arguably, what we are now seeing is the fast approaching end of a long and relentless march (a cultural revolution dwarfing anything Mao Zedong could have imagined) as the last few - and, perhaps, brightest - beacons of high culture slowly dim before their final extinguishment. There will always be highbrow cultural forms but the sensibilities associated with their expression - status, elitism, power, in short: snobbery - will, in all likelihood, disappear (or be displaced by the base capitalist consideration of whether you have enough money to afford the respective entertainment).

Such formalism might be illustrated by the system of royalty in Great Britain, where the Queen reigns as 'Elizabeth II ~ Dei Gratia Britanniarum Regnorumque Suorum Ceterorum Regina, Consortionis Populorum Princeps, Fidei Defensor (by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith)' and yet no Briton (Her Majesty included) upholds the divine right of monarchs (although the majority of the English still greatly appreciate the outward form - the pomp and ceremony - of it all). Similarly, the postmodernist vogue in the late 1990s for retro-modernist furniture exulted in the figures and shapes of the modernist style, while ignoring the aesthetics of modernism. Thus, consumers purchased an Aarnio Ball chair or a Frattini nesting table simply because they were exercising a taste-based preference for the physical item and not because they were also buying into the original modernist connotations of such pieces - to wit: a desire for ownership of such objects to (help) project an image of the owner as 'thoroughly modern' and not anachronistically traditional.

Of course, in such an emerging (popular) culture where there is no up or down (like cyber- or actual space), there can be no true critical voice: cultural expression is merely aesthetic activity which entertains (even if it challenges or seeks to challenge) because in this hypercapitalist world the patron is nothing more than a consumer at the end of the day. George Melly (1926 - ) in his book *Revolt Into Style* (1970) says pop culture treats "history as a vast boutique." The consumer buys into styles as one purchases clothes, mixing and matching as directed by one's subjective and fluid tastes. Accordingly, 'ranking' culture according to some absolutist critical scale becomes arbitrary (or worse, in the Marxist view, elitist: merely a transparent attempt to shore up the hegemony of the ruling class). The only aesthetic success in this cultural market is what sells. All else is worthless.

17

The implication of such a view is that societies which are tolerant of a diversity of lifestyles feature a dynamic of openness and exchange of ideas such that the kind of creativity and innovation which fuels cultural and scientific advancement flourishes. The corollary of this view is that 'intolerant' religious belief systems (such as Christianity) are detrimental to creativity, innovation and cultural-scientific advancement, and follows in a long tradition of viewing religion more generally and the Christian faith more specifically

as a bastion of superstition and ignorance that hitherto held science back (e.g. the idea that Christianity unnecessarily prolonged the Dark Ages).

A counter to this line of thinking is advanced by Eric V. Snow (1965 - ) in "Christianity: A Cause Of Modern Science?" (1997):

When we think of Christianity's role in the rise of science, what do we think of? How it hindered it, such as the conflict between Galileo...and the Inquisition in the 17th century? Or, perhaps, do we think of Thomas Huxley [1825 - 1895] debating evolution with Bishop Wilberforce in the 19th century? What we need to do now is take a deep breath, and take a step out of today's overwhelmingly secularised intellectual climate, and consider this: Modern science arose among avowedly Christian clerics, theologians, monks, and professors of medieval and renaissance Catholic universities and monasteries. Normally, the Middle Ages are regarded as having a worldview...opposed to that of science[,] by atheists and agnostics...Yet, if science gradually arose during the medieval and Renaissance periods, but Christianity and science are seen as totally incompatible, how did this occur? After all, neither [astronomer] Galileo nor Copernicus, who maintained the sun was at the centre of the solar system, not the earth, were sceptics or unbelievers, unlike such medieval predecessors as the Islamic poet and astronomer Omar Khayyam (1048 - 1122) or Frederick II (1194 - 1250), Holy Roman Emperor? The remarkable truth is that the worldview of Christianity was absolutely necessary for the rise of modern science...

We must avoid assuming technological advance proves a given civilisation has science, or modern science, for most inventions that affected daily life in the pre-modern world economically were "empirical" discoveries by craftsmen and other pragmatic types, not true scientists meditating on the laws of nature. While the Greeks, Chinese, Indians, and Islam all had what can be fairly called "science," their science lacked the rigour and vigour that would characterise the West's science from Galileo onwards, and soon fizzled out...In order to have some idea of what culture's science really qualifies as science it's best to introduce a definition here to avoid misunderstandings: The systematised collection of knowledge about nature through using only reason and sense experience in order to discover the underlying laws of nature, which explain how nature is organized and allow future accurate predictions about nature's processes or objects to be made. For all the world's civilisations, only Greek geometry fully met this definition, along with mathematics in general, prior to the time of Galileo, and that is only by excising the "sense experience" part of this definition.

[Benedictine monk, theologian and physicist Stanley L.] Jaki [(1924 - ) says]:

[The] historiography of science has still to face up honestly to the problem of why three great ancient cultures (China, India, and Egypt) display independently of one another, a similar pattern vis-à-vis science. The pattern is the stillbirth of science in each of them in spite of the availability of talents, social organisation, and peace - the standard explanatory devices furnished by all-knowing sociologies of science on which that historiography relies ever more heavily.

All of these conditions may be necessary to allow a civilisation to develop science, but we have to look to the intellectual climate to understand why only one particular civilization developed a self-sustaining, modern science. Peculiarly, this same culture had been in the immediately preceding centuries intellectually and economically quite backward compared to the great Eurasian cultures that rivaled it. Those influenced by Marxism may often be loathe to investigate how the intellectual climate can independently change on its own, and influence politics and economics. For we should realize that while the mode of production (the technology and system of economics utilized by a society) can and does influence the superstructure of ideology as Marx maintained, the reverse influence can and does happen also. "Ideas have consequences" is an assumption that won't be proven here, but it is a perfectly reasonable one when so much religious behavior is not tied to the economic self-interest of some class in society.

So...what ideas are necessary...in the intellectual climate of a civilisation to keep science self-sustaining, instead of dying out after a few centuries of progress?

\* First, a linear, potentially quantifiable conception of time that clearly distinguishes past, present, and future promotes a scientific view of nature and its cause-effect relationships is necessary for a scientific outlook. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, this idea comes from the act of God in creating the universe from nothing at some specific point of time in the past, and then time is seen as progressing through the present on to the future with the second coming and the day of judgment. The alternative view of time, the concept of the "Great Year," maintains centuries-long time cycles exist in which the future repeats the past exactly or almost exactly, making progress of any kind theoretically impossible. This idea of time breeds a sense of complacency ("we know it all already") and / or hopelessness, hindering the development of science in a given culture.

\* Second, if science is to exist, explanations of natural phenomena must avoid a priori, pseudo-scientific "explanations" that really do not describe the causes of events, such as astrology.

\* Third, science is hindered by the 'organismic' view of nature. This idea conceives all of the universe as alive, as if it was one huge organism which goes through the above mentioned cyclical process from birth, to maturity, then death, to be born again. The tie to pantheism - believing EVERYTHING is God, a standard Hindu view - is obvious here. This outlook sees what we moderns consider inanimate (and non-divine) objects, like rocks, the planets, the stars, the oceans, and other natural objects to have wills of their own, or intelligence of their own.

\* Fourth, science is hindered if the reality of the basic orderliness of the universe ("the external real world") is denied. Humans will not often investigate carefully what is considered not to really exist, or that which will be changed at whim by the God(s), or nature herself.

\* Fifth, the heavens (outer space) must not be considered alive, or divine, if a scientific astronomy is to exist.

\* Sixth, a balance between reason and faith is necessary, without the religious people totally rejecting science or natural laws, and without the philosophers / scientists totally rejecting the claims of religious truth.

\* Seventh, man needs to be seen as fundamentally different from the rest of nature, as having a mind that makes him qualitatively different from the animals, etc., not just quantitatively different. The foundations for this view are laid in the Judeo-Christian world view in Genesis where man and woman were made in God's likeness and image, and were told they had dominion over the animals (Genesis 1:26-29).

So long as all or most of [the non Judeo-Christian] ideas in these areas are believed by a great majority of the intellectuals / "wise men" of a given culture, a self-sustaining science will not come to exist in a given civilisation, especially any true science of bodies moving in the external real world (i.e. physics, unlike math[s]). (Also *see footnote 26* for a summary of the New Age world view.)

Also, James Hannam, in his essay "Christianity And The Rise Of Science" (2002), summarises the contributions the Christian faith made to the development of modern science:

\* The preservation of literacy in the Dark Ages - Because it is a literary religion based on sacred texts and informed by the writings of the early church fathers, Christianity was exclusively responsible for the preservation of literacy and learning after the fall of the Western Empire. This meant not only that the Latin classics were preserved but also that their were sufficient men of learning to take Greek thought forward when it was rediscovered.

\* The doctrine of the lawfulness of nature - As they believed in a law abiding creator God, even before the rediscovery of Greek thought, 12th century Christians felt they could investigate the natural world for secondary causes rather than put everything down to fate (like the ancients) or the will of Allah (like Muslims). Although we see a respect for the powers of reason by Arab scholars they did not seem to [take] the [next] step of looking for universal laws of nature.

\* The need to examine the real world rather than rely on pure reason - Christians insisted that God could have created the world any way he like and so Aristotle's insistence that the world was the way it was because it had to be was successfully challenged. This meant that his ideas started to be tested and abandoned if they did not measure up.

\* The belief that science was a sacred duty - ...The early modern scientists were inspired by their faith to make their discoveries and saw studying the creation of God as a form of worship. This led to a respect for nature and the attempt to find simple, economical solutions to problems. Hence Copernicus felt he could propose a heliocentric model for no better reason that it seemed more elegant.

Not all these factors were unique to Christianity but they all came together in Western Europe to give the world its only case of scientific take off which has since seen its ideas spread to the rest of the world.

#### **4. Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882)**

“We must, however, acknowledge...that a man with all his noble qualities...still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.”

Key work: *On The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859).

Summary: British naturalist whose ideas laid the foundation for the theory of evolution. Darwin proposed living things evolved over time via natural selection (“survival of the fittest” or “the law of the jungle”), as weaker animals died out and only the strong survived. By this method particular characteristics of a species became dominant and, over time, species could evolve into complex forms.

Before the Enlightenment, the Bible was accepted as the final authority on the origins of humanity (i.e. creation ex nihilo, coming forth into existence out of nothing by the command of God). But in the 18th and early 19th centuries, influenced by rising post-Enlightenment agnosticism, opposing theories arose.

In 1753, Swedish botanist Carl Linne (1707 - 1778) tried to categorise all known species of his time into categories. His classification was based on the premise that a species was the smallest unit and that each species belonged to a higher category.

Soon after, French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc (1707 - 1788) was the first to propose the idea that species *could* change. He was followed by Erasmus Darwin (1731 - 1802) (grandfather of Charles), a physician with an interest in botany, who, in the late 1700s, claimed species *had* changed over time.

During this same period, geologist William Smith (1769 - 1839) was employed by the English coalmining industry to develop the first accurate geologic map of England. He devised the Principle of Biological Succession (which states that each period of earth history has its own unique assemblages of fossils) and became the father of stratigraphy; the correlation of rock layers based on their contents (such as fossils).

Geologist Abraham Gottlob Werner (1750 - 1817) and naturalist Georges Cuvier (1769 - 1832) were proponents of Catastrophism, the theory the earth and geological events had formed suddenly, as a result of some great catastrophe (such as Noah's flood). This view was largely acceptable because it didn't challenge the Bible. Cuvier (the founder of paleontology, the study of fossils) eventually claimed there had been several creations after multiple catastrophes. Zoologist Louis Agassiz put the figure at fifty to eighty catastrophes.

Naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744 - 1829) developed one of the first theories on *how* species changed. He said every new generation inherited the traits of its ancestors. Traits became enhanced with repeated use or weakened (or removed) by disuse in each individual, who then passed the strength or weakness directly to their offspring. But the theory was not acceptable to many: the lack of a mechanism was a problem (as were the implications for biblical views of creation).

It was Charles Darwin who devised the first (conceptually) coherent mechanism explaining how the process may have occurred (although not the biochemical means for traits to actually be passed on - Gregor Mendel (1822 - 1884), the father of genetics, only published his work in 1866 and it was only in the 20th century that its implications were realised - and when his theories were used to develop what is called the 'modern synthesis' of genetics and natural selection into Neo-Darwinism).<sup>18</sup>

In 1831, he graduated from Cambridge, where he had studied natural history. He was recommended for the position of companion to Robert Fitzroy, captain of the HMS Beagle, which was departing on an expedition to chart the coastline of South America. The position allowed him to study geological properties of continents and a host of living organisms and fossils. (He collected a large number of specimens new to science in a methodical way and sent them to the British Museum, making him a precursor of ecology.)

During the voyage, he visited the Cape Verde Archipelago, the Falkland Islands, the South American coast, the Galapagos Islands, New Zealand and Australia. After returning in 1836, he analysed the specimens he collected and noticed similarities between fossils and living species within the same geographic area. In particular, he noticed that every island in the Galapagos Archipelago had its own kind of tortoises and birds that were all slightly different in appearance but otherwise similar.

In 1837, ornithologists at the British Museum informed him that different species of birds he had taken in the Galapagos were all finches. Soon, he developed a hypothesis that all the different turtles on the Galapagos Archipelago had originated from a single species and adapted to life on the different islands in different ways.

While Darwin had been on his voyage, geologist Charles Lyell (1797 - 1875) published his *Principles Of Geology*. He was a major advocate of the controversial idea of Uniformitarianism, the idea earth was shaped by slow-moving forces acting over a very long period of time.

Uniformitarianism was not new; Scottish geologist James Hutton (1726 - 1797) had first proposed it in 1788. Hutton had noted, for example, that many layers of sedimentary rocks butted up against other layers at unusual angles, suggesting one had been laid down, then tilted, then another layer deposited. He also proposed the interior of the earth was hot and this heat was enabled the creation of new rock: land was eroded by air and water and deposited as layers in the sea. Hutton also opened up the concept of 'deep time' for scientific purposes, in opposition to Catastrophism. Rather than accepting a young age for the earth (in harmony with the Bible), he maintained the planet must be much older.

Hutton's work was largely ignored because it was nearly unreadable. Natural philosopher John Playfair (1748 - 1819) restated the idea in 1802 but Lyell's work brought it to a mass audience. And it influenced Darwin as he formulated his ideas about evolution over the next two decades.

The Theory of Natural Selection that he devised can be summarised thus:

\* Species reproduce in excess numbers capable of survival.

- \* But adult populations remain (mostly) constant.
- \* Consequently, there must be a struggle for survival.
- \* All species vary in characteristics and some of which promote advantages and others disadvantages in the struggle for life.
- \* The result is a natural selection where the more advantageous characteristics survive and the less advantageous ones are eliminated over time.

Upon its publication in 1859, the theory was a sensation. It was championed by most scientists and opposed by powerful religious forces in England; the ensuing debate pitting science against religion in a battle for the minds of men that science was, in the main, to win.

Many within the Evangelical and High Church were shocked by Darwin. The most famous opponent of evolution was Samuel Wilberforce (1805 - 1873), Bishop of Oxford (and son of William Wilberforce (1759 - 1833) - see below). He organised a public debate on the issue with biologist Thomas Huxley (grandfather of novelist Aldous Huxley and, inaugural head of UNESCO and World Wildlife Fund founder Julian Huxley [1887 - 1975]).

Wilberforce masterfully presented the authority of the biblical account before he turned to Huxley and demanded to know if the biologist was descended from apes through his grandfather or his grandmother. Huxley replied that he would rather be descended from apes than from a cultivated man who used his eloquence in the service of prejudice and falsehood.

Although both sides claimed victory in this watershed debate, the Church was on the defensive against the forces of (agnostic) science from then on.

Of course, there were already liberal factions in the Church who rejected the traditional creationist view and they accepted Darwin's ideas.

In the early 19th century, England experienced a series of Christian revivals (in essence, continuations of the Methodist revival) and during which the Evangelical faction of the Anglican Church had formed. Evangelicals recovered the doctrine of salvation which had long been lost in the ritualistic Church of England. They proceeded to profoundly influence English society both morally and legislatively (e.g. William Wilberforce had played a key role in seeing slavery banned), such that by the 1830s they had transformed the Victorian middle-class into the puritanical institution (with its emphasis on family life) it became.

But there was already a generation of agnostic scientists, philosophers and artists challenging biblical norms. Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, who emphasised pantheistic themes of finding the transcendent within nature, were widely read among the intellectual elites, who had embraced positivism (*see Introduction*).

The Church hierarchy largely failed to take a stand against the agnostic tide and Evangelicals began to voice their anger at this. In turn, many churchmen who were sympathetic to these non-biblical influences saw the Evangelical response as reactionary. The liberals believed the Church needed to be more accommodating to the new ideas exploding all around or else risk being left behind. In 1860, a group of liberal clergy published *Essays And Reviews*, where they expressed such notions: "...the majority of Churchmen, by holding fast the narrow, fundamental beliefs, (will) estrange themselves more and more from contemporary thought."

The Reverend Charles Kingsley (1819 - 1875), a novelist and social reformer, saw Darwin as a *saviour* of religion, a man who had brought it to maturity. Science, to Kingsley (and thousands of others) was a method for fighting false religion and its twin vices of ignorance and bigotry.

Some liberals tried to integrate evolutionary processes into their faith. Geology professor (and later Dean of Westminster) William Buckland (1784 - 1856), had already argued that each of the days mentioned in *Genesis* was an epoch (a geological period of millions of years). Now American botanist Asa Gray declared that 'evolution' was merely the name given to a God-ordained process which produced humanity (a concept Charles Lyell supported). In 1864, 700 English academics and clergymen published a declaration stating their belief that science and the Bible could be reconciled.

The result of this (and influenced by higher criticism - *see chapter on Julius Wellhausen*) was that by the end of the century, most churchmen in England had accommodated evolution into their theology and rejected a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible.

As a consequence of Darwin's theory, there was a sea change in Western cosmology: in a single generation, the Judeo-Christian worldview was supplanted by what might be called "the biological worldview." Slowly but surely, the notion of humanity created and governed and destined by a loving Creator God was usurped by the notion of biology as destiny: the idea that humanity is progressing forwards and moving up the evolutionary ladder, from the primordial slime of the past to a sophisticated, highly-evolved future. The impersonal force of evolution became the engine of history relentlessly driving humanistic progress (wherein the problems faced by humanity would be solved by education, better housing, medicine, etc rather than by the Christian doctrine of redemption from sin through faith in Jesus Christ). The Bible as final authority was lost. (Of course, the pessimistic philosophers of the 19th century such as Nietzsche - *see chapter on Friedrich Nietzsche* - realised the consequences of this only too well: Man had become nothing more than a higher animal<sup>19</sup> and concepts such as "love," the "spirit" and "soul," would, in turn, fall prey to reductive science and becoming nothing more than chemical reactions in the brain. The sacred cosmos filled with hope and redemption - for which it still had been for the masses, unlike the elites - would become the cold, heartless and unforgiving universe filled with sound and fury yet signifying nothing.)

## SOCIAL DARWINISM

In such a cosmology, all was subservient to biology and progress (including morality) and an outworking of Darwin's theory (albeit unintended by him) was 'Social Darwinism.'

Social Darwinism originated with sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820 - 1903), applied the Theory of Natural Selection to philosophy, psychology and sociology (although he began to develop his ideas before Darwin published his theory). In *Progress: Its Law And Cause* (1857), Spencer argues that Darwin's "law of organic progress is the law of all progress. Whether it be in the development of the earth, in the development of Life upon its surface, the development of Society, of Government...this same evolution of the simple into the complex, through a process of continuous differentiation, holds throughout."

Spencer's 'synthetic philosophy,' as he called it, focused on race and class and he ranked societies in terms of how far they had developed on a scale of progress (the English were, naturally, at the top). Co-opting Darwin's theory gave popular credence to Spencer's ideas (which were also later used to justify the right of the English to rule over 'inferior' races).

By the late 19th century, such ideas led to the emergence of the concept of eugenics, a pseudo-science wherein selective breeding (human or animal) supposedly improved a species over time. The most notorious use of eugenics was by the Nazis to maintain Aryan purity in the German population: during the course of the Third Reich, Hitler ordered the sterilisation of tens of thousands of Germans deemed mentally unfit (and, of course, the attempted genocide of European Jews whose 'racial inferiority' was polluting the global gene pool).

However, it is little known today that the United States had the second largest eugenics program in history. From the late 19th century, in fact, several states outlawed citizens deemed mentally imbecilic from marrying (to eliminate their supposed biological impurities from contaminating the genetics of the general populace). Some states, such as Virginia, even sterilised ‘imbeciles’ (a 1927 US Supreme Court ruling backed the Virginian laws such that the state only ended its program in the 1970s).

Eugenics was also implemented in various Western nations (e.g. Sweden, Australia, etc) on a smaller scale than Germany and the US.

## THE BIOLOGICAL WORLDVIEW TODAY

Although eugenics has been largely rendered ideologically bankrupt, the biological worldview remains at the centre of Western civilisation.

It is the orthodoxy in biology (such that it is virtually impossible to be a practising biologist anywhere in the world without subscribing to the theory of natural selection). With its imperative on humanity’s mastery of its destiny through biology, it is a cornerstone of the genetics revolution (genetic modification of crops to overcome food shortages, test tube babies to overcome sterility, cloning to overcome mortality, genetic engineering to overcome diseases in offspring and even to create customised children: a master race based not on genetic purity but fad and fashion, etc).

Its determinism is also, arguably, a factor in the cultural acceptance of homosexuality (through the thesis that there is a ‘gay gene’ and, as such, homosexual individuals were born with their orientation, rendering talk of the morality of such an orientation nonsensical). And of abortion (merely the process of a higher animal exercising biological control over its reproductive system and not so much ‘eating’ its young as discarding its ‘zygotic refuse’). And, in some circles, an excuse for criminality (genes which promote anti-social tendencies and so morally excuse an individual of their actions). Indeed, any deviation in behaviour from the Judeo-Christian norm becomes, in such a setting, merely biological and so beyond morality.

Finally, we see the biological worldview in the socialist drive toward global governance and unity of the human race (so as to achieve the ultimate genetic and technological destiny of Homo sapiens in overcoming physical death and dominating the earth and beyond).

18

Gregor Mendel discovered the laws of genetic inheritance in his research into intra-species variance in flora. But the importance of the work was not recognised until after his death.

His theories were rediscovered at the turn of the last century, and biologists soon debated the implications of genetic inheritance for the theory of natural selection. Different schools of thought emerged as some continued to advocate Darwin’s idea that only small variations in the population of a species could allow for natural selection, while others saw the work of Mendel as indicating that great variation was the mechanism for natural selection.

Eventually, in the 1930s and 1940s, the ‘Neo-Darwinian Synthesis’ or ‘modern synthesis’ emerged, which fused Darwinian biology with Mendelian genetics to arrive at the central principle of biological inheritance: that genetic variation is the product of chance arising from mutation of genes and recombination (where the genes of offspring are different from the parents).

19

This reductionist view of a human being as little more than a higher animal influenced the behaviourist school of psychology, which holds that observing people’s behaviour is the best way to investigate psychological and mental processes (as opposed to Freud’s focus on the unconscious - *see chapter on Sigmund Freud*). The most well-known behaviourist was American psychologist B.F. Skinner (1904-1990),

who believed that all life (including one's 'private' life) could be seen in terms of animal behaviour (hence, behaviour by one person could be understood because patterns of behaviour are universal to all 'human animals'). And all behaviour is determined by environment from the time we are infants in such a scheme (or 'conditioned,' as Pavlov said - see below).

One of Skinner's most famous experiments involved pigeons in a cage that was attached to a device which delivered food to the birds at regular intervals. Skinner discovered the birds associated food delivery with the (random) behaviour they were exhibiting when the sustenance was delivered. The experiment was designed to test his theory of the development of superstition. He relates the results in his essay "'Superstition' In The Pigeon" (1947):

One bird was conditioned to turn counter-clockwise about the cage, making two or three turns between reinforcements. Another repeatedly thrust its head into one of the upper corners of the cage. A third developed a 'tossing' response, as if placing its head beneath an invisible bar and lifting it repeatedly. Two birds developed a pendulum motion of the head and body, in which the head was extended forward and swung from right to left with a sharp movement followed by a somewhat slower return...

...The experiment might be said to demonstrate a sort of superstition. The bird behaves as if there were a causal relation between its behaviour and the presentation of food, although such a relation is lacking. There are many analogies in human behaviour. Rituals for changing one's luck at cards are good examples. A few accidental connections between a ritual and favourable consequences suffice to set up and maintain the behaviour in spite of many unreinforced instances. The bowler who has released a ball down the alley but continues to behave as if he were controlling it by twisting and turning his arm and shoulder is another case in point. These behaviours have, of course, no real effect upon one's luck or upon a ball half way down an alley, just as in the present case the food would appear as often if the pigeon did nothing -- or, more strictly speaking, did something else.

Skinner was profoundly influenced by the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), who experimented with dogs (the famous 'Pavlov's dog' research) and first described the phenomenon known as 'conditioning.' Behaviourists believed that conditioning could be used to change human behaviour in the manner of animals and correct negative behavioural tendencies in a patient.

Skinner's seminal works were *Science And Human Behavior* (1953) and the earlier utopian novel *Walden Two* (1948) (which describes a community based on behaviourist principles wherein consumption and pollution are reined in, work is divided equally among the members of the commune, and children are raised communally and taught how to handle their negative emotions such as anger). In the preface to the novel, Skinner writes:

It is true that when the behavioral sciences have gone beyond the collection of facts to recommend courses of action and have done so by predicting consequences, they have not been too helpful. Not all economists agree, for example, on how an increase or reduction in taxes or a change in interest rate will affect business, prices, or unemployment, and political scientists are no more likely to agree on the consequences of domestic or international policies. In anthropology, sociology, and psychology the preferred formulations are those that do not dictate action...

From the very beginning the application of an experimental analysis of behaviour was different. It was doubly concerned with consequences. Behaviour could be changed by changing its consequences - that was operant conditioning - but it could be changed because other kinds of consequences would then follow. Psychotic and retarded persons would lead better lives, time and energy of teachers and students would be saved, homes would be pleasanter social environments, people would work more effectively while enjoying what they were doing, and so on.

These are the kinds of achievements traditionally expected from wisdom and common sense, but Frazier, the protagonist of *Walden Two*, insists that they are within reach of a special behavioral science which can *take the place of* wisdom and common sense and with happier results [emphasis added]. And what has happened in the past 25 years has increased the plausibility of his achievement - a community in which the most important problems of daily life, as well as certain aspects of economics and government, are solved....

It is now widely recognised that great changes must be made in the American way of life. Not only can we not face the rest of the world while consuming and polluting as we do, we cannot for long face ourselves while acknowledging the violence and chaos in which we live. The choice is clear: either we do nothing and allow a miserable and probably catastrophic future overtake us, or we use our knowledge about human behaviour to create a social environment in which we shall live productive and creative lives and do so without jeopardising the chances that those who follow us will be able to do the same. Something like a Walden Two would not be a bad start.

David Frum (1960 - ), in *How We Got Here: The 70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life - For Better Or Worse* (2000), describes how behaviourism came to envelop the postwar American mass consciousness, such that it became the psychology which crystallised in the bedrock of the pillars of justice: the court system became orientated towards rehabilitation (i.e. which portrays criminals as merely socially maladjusted individuals in need of conditioning / re-conditioning to be transformed into agreeable and productive members of society) rather than punishment. The courts became social laboratories for the conduct of a long-term experiment to eradicate criminality through scientific means. Criminals were but lab rats and at the end of all the experimentation with miniature mazes, running wheels and revolving doors, lay the promise of a more perfect world:

...American society...made a quiet, collective decision in the 1950s and early 1960s to view crime more indulgently. This disinclination to arrest and punish was [brought about because...m]id-century Americans felt much more certain than we do now that they had unlocked the secrets of human behaviour. In the era of B.F. Skinner, explaining human conduct in moralistic terms exposed one as sadly out of date.

[Indeed, how could one talk of moral consequences for actions if man was just an animal? Surely it made more sense to try and teach the 'hairless upright Pavlovian dog' new tricks, than punish it merely for being true to its animalistic innateness. Nature was beyond morality but it could be harnessed just as it could be manipulated in the manner canines could be collared or taught to 'play dead,' pass bowel movements outside the family home and jump through hoops, or so it was supposed.]

Just as "madness" had been transmuted into "mental illness" and "idleness" into "unemployment," so "crime" was reinterpreted as "delinquency," an unfortunate inability to bring one's conduct into line with the expectations of society [shades of Orwellian doublespeak - *see footnote 9*]. And as it was cruel and futile to jail the mentally ill and the unemployed, it was very nearly as foolish to jail the delinquent. The intelligent thing to do, from everybody's point of view, was to rehabilitate the delinquent or - even better - prevent delinquency from arising in the first place by rooting out the causes of crime. True, there was the awkward difficulty that nobody could agree on what those all-important causes might be. Was crime a psychological problem? Or was it sociological? But whatever caused crime, thoughtful Americans refused to accept punishment as anything but a last desperate resort, and they judged the need for punishment a failure as much of society as of the delinquent himself.

This "quiet, collective decision" was really a direct result of the spread of modernism into the mainstream via the consumer society (*see chapter on John Maynard Keynes*). To be modern and sophisticated was valued. Incarceration of criminals was associated with the ignorant and hamfistedly cruel past (which had, at one time, seen men hung for stealing loaves of bread). Rehabilitation was the 'enlightened' response of the scientifically and culturally advanced state.

Indeed, we begin to see scholarly works on delinquency appear in the 1930s, but there is a proliferation of titles in the late 1940s and early 1950s: *Juvenile Delinquency And The School* (1945), *Searchlights On Delinquency* (1949), *Delinquency Control* (1950), *The Challenge Of Delinquency* (1950), *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* (1950), *The Earliest Stages Of Delinquency* (1952), etc.

(Side-by-side with all the academic and institutional focus on delinquency, we also see, as said, urban cinematic dramas of the period focus on troubled youth - e.g. *The Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel Without A Cause* - both 1955.)

However, such societal indulgence in the supposed wonders of rehabilitation did nothing to actually alleviate the problem. Indeed, after 1960, there was a crime explosion, as reported offences doubled (even while the prison population fell - perhaps, as some have said, indicative of an emerging underclass of hardcore repeat offenders).

Attached to the question of rehabilitation of the individual is the question posed by Anthony Burgess (1917 - 1993) in his speculative novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), which was written in the spirit of pessimistic humanism which overtook its optimistic cousin in the 1960s: 'Which is worse - the criminal or the society that produces him?'

The possible causes of crime that Frum alludes to were answered by America in the 'all of the above' category, as the psychological needs of criminals were seen to be addressed by rehabilitation, while a campaign of social reform sought to address societal deficiencies which, in turn, supposedly created the conditions that promoted criminality:

...[T]he federal government and the states very logically hurled themselves with enthusiasm into [this] task...building public housing, funding summer jobs for youth, boosting welfare payments, squeezing the unemployment rate toward 3 percent, outlawing discrimination in hiring, housing, and public accommodation, appropriating billions of dollars of federal aid for early childhood education, and on and on in fulfilment of all the most precious hopes of every criminologist ever to bring home a degree from the fabled University of Chicago sociology department. No gardener ever attacked root causes more vigorously.

It was not so much a crackdown on the causes of crime as a war on poverty itself (*see chapter on Søren Kierkegaard*). But as Frum concludes:

Alas, the more tenderly society tried to salvage its delinquents, the more crime it got. We're still arguing over precisely what went wrong. Was it that welfare weakened family structures and multiplied the number of fatherless young men seeking to prove their manhood? Did criminals rationally assess the risks of getting caught and decide that crime paid better than it used to? Did the relatively declining pay for unskilled workers after 1973 lure young men into criminal careers? Did a century of black rage and resentment finally explode into an undeclared guerrilla war? Or was it perhaps a little of each and every one of these explanations, and a dozen others beside, that caused the post-1960 crime surge?

The society-wide backlash against liberalism in the court system was, of course, entirely predictable. More and more people, tired of being robbed or assaulted and seeing perpetrators 'let off' lightly (tired, in fact of the special behavioral science that had supplanted wisdom and common sense in the minds of judges, lawyers and social workers), began accusing the courts of being soft on crime, in increasingly vociferous terms. Politicians responded by enacting laws, in the 1980s, that restricted the discretion of judges to make the punishment fit the crime and, in the 1990s, with truth-in-sentencing legislation and the abolishing of parole in several states. (Many judges had actually responded *before* the political measures were put in place. Several constituencies in the US elect their judges and liberal justices rarely saw re-election in this new climate of fear and loathing, mob hysteria having replaced in many instances, or so it could be argued, one societal vice - self-indulgence - with another - vengeance: c.f. California's 'Three Strikes and You're

Out' law (1994), which eventually saw criminals incarcerated for life for having committed a minor, albeit third, indiscretion.)

Nevertheless, incidence of crime did fall in the 1990s (epitomised by the success of Republican Mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani (1944 - ) and his 'zero tolerance' philosophy of policing, wherein minor infringements were rigidly pursued by police: the theory being that it is often habitual criminals who commit minor crimes and so clamping down on such crimes invariably prevents worse offences from being committed). However, some have claimed this fall in crime was less to do with any crackdown and more to do with demography (there were simply fewer young men around in an ageing population and, in a more controversial assertion, abortion had also played a role: legalisation of abortion in 1973 and its subsequent widespread use by poor urban - ghetto - black women meant the poor black urban males who committed so much crime - out of all proportion to their numbers in the greater populace - simply didn't exist in anything like their earlier numbers to commit the crimes by the 1990s).

Europe, with its intact tradition of socialism and differing judicial cultures (and social climates) to the US (e.g. judges are not elected and, the costly and difficult appeals process aside, their decision-making is not beholden to any authority save the court of public opinion), has been slower to cast aside the policy of rehabilitation, although there have been more responses (albeit piecemeal), both judicial and political, in the 2000s.

## **5. Julius Wellhausen (1844 - 1918)**

Key work: *Prolegomena To The History Of Israel* (1878).

Summary: German theologian whose insistence on a purely scientific approach to studies of the Bible helped enable liberal theology to gain an ascendancy over fundamentalist readings of the scriptures throughout Europe (and in intellectual circles worldwide).

In the late 18th and early 19th century, a movement arose in German theological circles that sought to analyse the historical records of the Middle East from Christian and Old Testament times, in search of independent confirmation of the events related in the Bible.

Men such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 - 1834) and David Strauss (1808 - 1874) sought to discover the historical Jesus (and separate the myths they believed the Bible intermingled with facts). They were influenced by the new Enlightenment emphasis on reason but also by the anti-Semitism that ran through German society - Martin Luther made some anti-Jewish comments which influenced his Lutheran followers - such that they sought to discard Christianity's reverence for the Old Testament as God's Word to uproot Jesus from his Jewish context. (The ideas of these liberal theologians travelled to England with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and George Eliot's [1819 - 1880] translation of Strauss's *Life Of Jesus* [1846]. Liberal Anglicans also began to incorporate such ideas in doctrine in *Essays And Reviews* [1860] - see chapter on *Charles Darwin*.)

Wellhausen grew up in this tradition of what was later called 'higher criticism.' He believed human reason was entirely dependable and that the Bible was suspect as a document supposedly inspired by divine revelation. Christianity, far from having been bequeathed to humanity by revelation from God, he saw as having evolved over time, from pagan polytheistic (many gods) beliefs to the monotheistic (single deity) religion it became, and developed a scheme (called the 'Documentary Hypothesis') to ascertain 'true' authorship of the various books of the Bible.

He began with a hypothesis that that cults indigenous to one another evolved in the same way - from polytheistic to monotheistic worship - and determined that passages in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) dealing with sophisticated doctrine (eg. the one God, Tabernacle, etc) were inserted at a later date

than surrounding passages. Hence, he concluded scripture had evolved as culture progressed, and was not divinely revealed.

Other scholars had proposed the idea of multiple authorship of the Pentateuch (as early as a century before) but Wellhausen was the first to develop a rigid (some would say 'scientific') scheme<sup>20</sup> for gauging 'true' biblical authorship (giving his ideas - and 'higher criticism' and liberal theology as a whole - the veneer of scientific credibility in an era when science was fast becoming the new religion).

## WELLHAUSEN, THE WEST & THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Wellhausen's views (added to Darwin's influence) impacted the state churches of Europe to such an extent (reducing the Bible to merely a human work) that Christianity throughout the continent became a shell of its previous self: a set of human rationalisations rather than an inspiring faith offering hope and redemption through the work of a divine Christ.

Even Catholicism, the European Christian tradition perhaps most resistant to modernity, succumbed to the liberal tide. Various liberal theologians and church figures began to agitate for church tradition to be integrated with the daily experience of modern life but nothing was possible without a pope willing to take the church down this path. The papal election of the John XXIII, who had been elected as a 'stop-gap' figure due to his advanced years, afforded the liberals their opportunity. Pope John surprised everyone (not least the cardinals who supposed he would be a minimalist pontiff) when he called the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965) to devise ways to modernise church ritual, practice and beliefs. Although he died before it was completed, the Council brought about a great transformation of Catholicism which went beyond the actual changes to church practices (e.g. Mass being held in the mother tongue of the participants rather than Latin, et al), and what emerged was a church less beholden to dogmatism and canonical certainties. Traditionalists blame the Council for all the church's perceived ills today (e.g. decline of numbers in the priesthood, whose average age continues to rise, decline in numbers attending Mass, large drop in the number of Catholic schools and Catholic marriages - and significant rise in annulments, etc).

A similar liberal-induced spiritual decline occurred with the mainline denominations in the United States around the turn of the 20th century. But the muscular American brand of 'frontier' Christianity (grounded in a rock solid belief in biblical inerrancy), saw the rise of biblical fundamentalism which blunted liberal theology in the United States, in terms of cultural impact (while Victorian Puritanism began to relax in late 19th century America, the culture of the Land of the Free retained a far greater - and more aggressive - Christian resonance such that, for instance, fully 25% of respondents told pollsters in a 1999 survey that they believe in the literal Second Coming of Jesus Christ; regular church attendance, whilst low, is still markedly higher than in Europe and more evangelical in character; and what appears on free-to-air television is far more restricted than in the 'Old World' - such as no nudity or profane language).

However, the 'earthy' brand of faith in the New World has also, arguably, seen the rise of a more militant Christian liberalism than in Europe. Bishop James Pike (1913 - 1969) is a good exemplar of this tradition. *The Grace Cathedral San Francisco* website ([www.gracecathedral.org](http://www.gracecathedral.org)) details his ecclesiastical career:

[After serving with] naval intelligence during World War II...Pike and his wife joined the Episcopal Church and he began studies for the priesthood at Virginia and Union Theological Seminaries. Ordained in 1946, he served a New York state parish and as chaplain of Vassar College before becoming chaplain and head of the Department of Religion at Columbia University. In 1952, Pike was appointed Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York [the largest cathedral in the world], where his liberal sermons and television forum attracted much attention. In 1958, over conservative opposition, he was elected Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of California, becoming Bishop on the death of his predecessor...a few months later.

During his episcopate, Bishop Pike's increasingly iconoclastic views became front page news, and he was featured on the cover of *TIME* magazine. His radical theology rejected dogmatic

interpretations of the Virgin Birth and the Incarnation, questioned the basis of theological concepts such as Original Sin and the Trinity, and challenged the infallibility of scripture. His call to “demythologize” the church was an expression of his view that the church was burdened by “theological baggage.” He called for “more belief, fewer beliefs.”

A call for a heresy trial by the Episcopal House of Bishops in 1966 resulted in the formal censure of his theological views as “offensive” and “irresponsible.” He was in the forefront of civil rights, marching in Selma and being expelled from Rhodesia. Favourite sermon targets were abortion laws, capital punishment, apartheid, anti-Semitism, and farm worker exploitation. A prolific author, he expounded his views in controversial books such as *A Time For Christian Candor* [1964] and *If This Be Heresy* [1967]. Bishop Pike was also an early advocate of women’s ordination...[ordaining his first female deacon in 1965], but it would be another two decades before full acceptance of the concept.

Bishop Pike became increasingly disenchanted with the Episcopal Church, and institutional religion in general, and resigned as Bishop of California in 1966 - although, under church law, such an act was not possible for an ordained bishop. He joined the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, a liberal think-tank in Santa Barbara, but soon left it also, continuing his personal research and lectures. More guru than scholar, Pike was most at home as an outsider, an iconoclast, and a rebel....While [his] brilliant and restless mind continued to lead him on a fast-paced search for truth and meaning, his Christian faith remained with him, in a radical and raw form, and he continued to explore its roots.

Personal problems caught up with Bishop Pike [in] the 1960s...A chain smoker with an active attention-seeking personality, he had overcome a drinking problem in 1964. The suicide of his oldest son in 1966, and subsequent paranormal events [he came to believe his son was attempting to communicate with him from beyond the grave], led him on a long and highly public search, aided by noted psychics and mediums [*see chapter on Helena Blavatsky*], to reach and reconcile with his son. In 1967 he divorced [his wife] and the following year married his secretary...On a visit to Israel [in 1969] to research Christian origins, Pike and his new wife decided to drive from Bethlehem to Masada. The desert road, supposedly leading to the Dead Sea and Masada petered out, and the car got stuck as they tried to turn around. Mrs. Pike unwisely started down to the Dead Sea on foot, while he waited at the car. She stumbled down a rugged canyon in the searing heat and eventually managed to find help. Meanwhile, Pike had decided to follow her, but entered a different canyon, apparently slipped and fell to his death. After an extensive four-day search by the Israeli Army in the rugged and barren terrain, his body was found in the deep Wadi Duraja. At his family's request, and as he had someday wished, James Albert Pike was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Jaffa, the old seaport south of Tel Aviv.

The man who took up Pike’s mantle in the 1980s and 1990s was Episcopalian Bishop John Shelby Spong (1931 - ), who detailed his lifelong mission in *Rescuing The Bible From Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks The Meaning Of Scripture* (1992). In 1998, Spong, somewhat pretentiously, detailed ‘Twelve Theses’ he wished to debate as part of his “Call For A New Reformation” to enable Christianity to adapt to the cultural environment of the coming 21st century and thrive once more:

- 1) Theism, as a way of defining God is dead. So most theological God-talk is today meaningless. A new way to speak of God must be found.
- 2) Since God can no longer be conceived in theistic terms, it becomes nonsensical to seek to understand Jesus as the incarnation of the theistic deity. So the Christology of the ages is bankrupt.
- 3) The biblical story of the perfect and finished creation from which human beings fell into sin is pre-Darwinian mythology and post-Darwinian nonsense.

- 4) The virgin birth, understood as literal biology, makes Christ's divinity, as traditionally understood, impossible.
- 5) The miracle stories of the New Testament can no longer be interpreted in a post-Newtonian world as supernatural events performed by an incarnate deity.
- 6) The view of the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world is a barbarian idea based on primitive concepts of God and must be dismissed.
- 7) Resurrection is an action of God. Jesus was raised into the meaning of God. It therefore cannot be a physical resuscitation occurring inside human history.
- 8) The story of the Ascension assumed a three-tiered universe and is therefore not capable of being translated into the concepts of a post-Copernican space age.
- 9) There is no external, objective, revealed standard writ in scripture or on tablets of stone that will govern our ethical behaviour for all time.
- 10) Prayer cannot be a request made to a theistic deity to act in human history in a particular way.
- 11) The hope for life after death must be separated forever from the behaviour control mentality of reward and punishment. The Church must abandon, therefore, its reliance on guilt as a motivator of behavior.
- 12) All human beings bear God's image and must be respected for what each person is. Therefore, no external description of one's being, whether based on race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, can properly be used as the basis for either rejection or discrimination.

The roots of Christian fundamentalism go back, ironically, to the same year that saw the publication of Wellhausen's *Prolegomena*: 1878 - when a group of bible scholars met for the first time at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, near Niagara Falls and helped establish the principles of what became Christian fundamentalism. In 1910, these beliefs were distilled into what were known as the 'five fundamentals':

- \* Inerrancy of the Bible.
- \* The virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ.
- \* The doctrine of substitutionary atonement (Jesus paying for humanity's sins on the Cross).
- \* The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- \* A physical return (second coming) of Jesus Christ.

The conference met annually for several years and spawned new missionary activity; contributed to the rise of a large Bible conference movement, and the Bible institute and college movement; initiated the fundamentalist emphasis on concentrated Bible study; and inspired a large amount of literature on the subjects of prophecy, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and missions.

Point and counterpoint, we see the opposing philosophies of religious liberalism and fundamentalism battling each other across the landscape of the 20th century and beyond.

Liberalism would evolve into neo-orthodoxy (*see chapter on Søren Kierkegaard*) as the Christian influence declined into an almost aged morbidity in Europe (akin to the ageing of the continent as a whole) while fundamentalism fuelled a faith that thrived in the US (in turn giving rise to a strident political influence by way of the Religious Right which emerged in the late 1970s, and the creation science - or creationist -

movement that sought to demonstrate scientific discoveries, far from backing the cause of evolution - *see chapter on Charles Darwin* - were actually in accord with the biblical presentation of the world's origins) and positively exploded in the 'global south' (i.e. Latin America, Africa and Asia), such that, on current demographic projections, by 2050 only one in five Christians will be a non-Hispanic White (as Philip Jenkins [1952 - ] contends in *The Next Christendom: The Coming Of Global Christianity* [2003]).

20

Wellhausen's scheme centred on the Pentateuch which, like other scholars, he believed was written by a number of people over a long period. He narrowed the field to four distinct narratives. For instance, he stated: "According to the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament the priestly legislation of the middle books of the Pentateuch was unknown in pre-exilic time and...this legislation must therefore be a late development." In his scheme, the letter "P" (for *priestly*) became associated with this view.

He also believed another identity had edited the four accounts into one text. Using earlier propositions he argued that each of these sources had its own vocabulary and emphases, and that passages belonging to each account could be distinguished by differences in style (especially the name used for God, the grammar and word usage, and authorial concerns).

\* The 'J' source: God's name is 'YHVH,' which German scholars transcribed as 'Jahweh' ('Jehovah' in English).

\* The 'E' source: God's name is 'Elohim' (Hebrew for 'God' or 'Power') until the revelation of God's name to Moses, *after* which God is referred to as 'YHVH.'

\* The 'D' source: Author of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel and I and II Kings.

\* The 'P' source: The priestly material (God's name is 'Elohim' or 'El Shaddai').

Wellhausen argued that from each source's style and point of view, one could infer things about the times in which the source was written. He argued that the progression evident in these four sources, from an informal and decentralised relationship between people and God in the J account to a formal and centralised expression in the P account, was an outline of the development of Judaism.

Although naturalistic (shunning supernaturalism) Old Testament scholars still subscribe to the central thesis of the Documentary Hypothesis (i.e. multiple authorship of the Pentateuch), modern archeological discoveries have greatly weakened Wellhausen's reconstruction of Old Testament history (and the supposed evolution from polytheism to monotheism). Discoveries since the 1920s have revealed the Old Testament narratives are more accurate than were once thought. Additionally, Wellhausen's contention that the Israelites worshiped a tribal god has been challenged by the fact that no instances of such a tribal-god concept have been unearthed in the religions of the ancient Orient.

## **6. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900)**

"The last Christian died on the Cross."

Key works: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883); *Beyond Good And Evil* (1886).

Summary: German philosopher who challenged the foundations of traditional morality and Christianity, proposing that people should live by their own self-determined morality and give free rein to the natural human desire to impose one's will on one's environment.

Nietzsche, the son of a minister, entered the University of Bonn in 1864 as a theology and philology student but his interests gravitated towards the latter (a discipline then centred upon interpretation of classical and biblical texts).

Reading widely, he was influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World As Will And Representation* (1818). Schopenhauer (1788 - 1860), who was influenced by the British empiricists, saw life as nothing more than an ongoing interplay between objects and desires. He believed humans lived in the realm of physical objects but were tormented because they also inhabited the realm of intangible desires (and were forever looking beyond the 'limitations' of the physical to the 'promises' of the transcendent).<sup>21</sup> Although his response to this was pessimism (and to advocate atheism to put a check on transcendent desire), he also advocated art as a means of escape. Finally, he also proposed that human will was superior to intellect because its expression was the driving force of the world.

Nietzsche became a professor of classical philology at the University of Basel in 1869, but retired due to poor health. Thereafter, he wandered Europe, gypsy-like, penning his major works. Some say he contracted syphilis as a student (and it was the cause of his later madness, although physicians from his time in an asylum said he lacked the disease's symptoms). Regardless, his health declined until he collapsed in Italy, wearing only underwear and tearfully embracing a horse that had been beaten by its owner). He spent his last years insane, unaware of his growing influence.

Nietzsche was largely out of step with his times. The age was one of a developing optimistic humanism with humanity at the centre of the universe and the notion that it could conquer nature and overcome its problems through scientific accomplishments and cultural advance in the ascendant. The spirit of the age is exemplified in the scientific romances of Jules Verne (1828 - 1905) and H.G. Wells. They propound the supposed benefits of a progressive worldview based on rationalism and revolutionary commitment to make the world a better place, while also diagnosing society's ills (the prejudiced, reactionary, imperialist and racist streams in Victorian culture with a few dystopian warnings of what could happen if we abandon this enlightened path thrown in for good measure).

Nietzsche's brand of pessimistic humanism did not sit well with this view. But his claim that God had died (i.e. that the power of religion to act as a force for social and metaphysical cohesion had expired) was not so much a call to arms against religion as an acute observation of what had happened. (Others have also commented on the potentially dire implications of this.)<sup>22</sup>

In *The Gay Science* (1882), he portrays this idea in a parable:

Have you ever heard of the madman who on a bright morning lighted a lantern and ran to the market-place calling out unceasingly: "I seek God! I seek God!" As there were many people standing about who did not believe in God, he caused a great deal of amusement. Why? is he lost? said one. Has he strayed away like a child? said another. Or does he keep himself hidden? Is he afraid of us? Has he taken a sea voyage? Has he emigrated? - the people cried out laughingly, all in a hubbub.

The insane man jumped into their midst and transfixed them with his glances. "Where is God gone?" he called out. "I mean to tell you! We have killed him, you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction? - for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!

“How shall we console ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest that the world has hitherto possessed, has bled to death under our knife - who will wipe the blood from us? With what water could we cleanse ourselves? What lustrums, what sacred games shall we have to devise? Is not the magnitude of this deed too great for us? Shall we not ourselves have to become Gods, merely to seem worthy of it? There never was a greater event - and on account of it, all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto!”

Here the madman was silent and looked again at his hearers; they also were silent and looked at him in surprise. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, so that it broke in pieces and was extinguished. “I come too early,” he then said. “I am not yet at the right time. *This prodigious event* is still on its way, and is travelling - it has not yet reached men’s ears. Lightning and thunder need time, the light of the stars needs time, deeds need time, even after they are done, to be seen and heard. This deed is as yet further from them than the furthest star - and yet they have done it themselves!”

It is further stated that the madman made his way into different churches on the same day, and there intoned his Requiem aeternam deo. When led out and called to account, he always gave the reply: “What are these churches now, if they are not the tombs and monuments of God?”

Consequently, Nietzsche’s entire philosophy revolved around the implications of the death of God for the individual. Because if God is dead then “everything is permitted” - nothing is inherently right or wrong. How then does one negotiate life in a world where there is no absolute moral code?

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra, A Book For All And None* (1883), is, in effect, a manifesto of self-sufficiency in a world without God. Thirty years after its initial publication, 150,000 copies were issued by the German government as inspirational reading (along with the Bible) to soldiers during World War I (ironic, given how antagonistic it was to the Judeo-Christian worldview).

The book depicts Zarathustra, a strong-willed outsider who envisions a life of healthier being than that which most people live. Zarathustra claims “God is dead.” He then explains how human beings move from this realisation to a higher mode of being which he calls the *Übermensch* (i.e. “Overman,” or “Superman”):

- \* By his determination to destroy old ideals.
- \* By actually engaging in a process of destroying old ideals.
- \* By overcoming the human tendency to believe in transcendent truths (like the existence of God).

Nietzsche wants to destroy Christian conscience. Only by ceasing to think in a God-centred way can a person become an *Übermensch*. Initially, he targets the Church which he sees as the opposite of what Jesus preached. (Despite his hatred of Christianity, Nietzsche had a high view of Jesus the man whilst rejecting His divinity.) The reason for this is a process initiated by the apostle Paul, which morphed Jesus’ teachings to a simplistic remedy-punishment doctrine.

(In *The Antichrist* [1885] Nietzsche went beyond agnostic and atheistic thinkers of the Enlightenment who felt Christianity may simply be an untrue religion, in claiming it was deliberately propagated as a subversive religion within the Roman Empire by Paul as a form of covert revenge for the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple during the Jewish War.)

Furthermore, God is a contradiction to the physical reality of the world and, accordingly, is not real. Nietzsche wants to do away with Christian dogma and separate man from the idea of God and a transcendent great beyond.

Once man has undergone the hurtful but essential process of denying God, he is on his own and has to create his own moral ideals. In establishing these, he no longer ranks them according to transcendental aspects because this would again aim towards the beyond. Instead, there are no absolutes anymore.

The most difficult step is basing one's entire life in this world. Placing faith in anything transcendental is pointless and prevents humans from becoming *Übermensch*.

In overcoming this tendency toward transcendentalism, a person undergoes three phases:

- \* He moves from professing dogma to a godless place.
- \* He becomes fully aware of his new freedom.
- \* He achieves complete independence, a strong individual imposing himself on the landscape.

Nietzsche said the *Übermensch* lived by a 'master morality' (wherein he expressed his anger directly, was creative / positive, self-aware, experimental, strong-willed, self-directed and proud without being vain). He was free of the Judeo-Christian culture's 'slave morality' (resentful, reactionary / negative, self-deceiving, prudent, weak-willed, other-directed and humble / meek).

In *Beyond Good and Evil, Prelude To A Philosophy Of The Future* (1886), Nietzsche challenges the idea that exploitation, domination and destruction are objectionable. He believes people desire to discharge their strength and express their 'will to power' and denies there is a universal morality applicable to all humans, instead designating a series of moralities in order of rank according to application: some are more appropriate for dominating and leading social roles; some for subordinate roles. What counts as a legitimate action depends upon the kind of person one is. The deciding factor is whether one is strong, healthy, and overflowing with life, or whether one is weak, sick and on the decline.

## NIETZSCHE AND NAZISM

Intentionally or not, Nietzsche was a strong influence on Adolf Hitler and the Nazi movement.

Nietzsche's apologists argue his co-opting by the Nazis was due to the efforts of his sister, Elisabeth (1846 - 1935), who promoted his ideas in Weimar Germany, consorting with anti-Semites from her husband to Hitler out of a desire for revenge against a brother whose love for her waned when she caused his friendship with the author Lou Salomé (1861 - 1937) to come to an abrupt end.

The apologists claim it was, thus, possible for the Nazi interpreters to selectively assemble passages from Nietzsche's work into presentations that supposedly justified war and aggression in the name of nationalism and racial supremacy.

As for Nietzsche's supposed anti-Semitism, (throughout his works can be found derogatory references to Judaism, in particular to the role supposedly played by the Jews in the degeneration of the Christian religion) the apologists say it was more a case of 'anti-Judaism' and that, overall, he thought Christians, as much as Jews, were responsible for the 'slave morality' prevalent in the world.

They point out, Nietzsche had broken off his friendship with composer Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883) at least partly because of the latter's persistent anti-Semitism (which Nietzsche argued was as idiotic as being anti-French or anti-Polish, etc). He also wrote to his sister and chided her for marrying a virulent anti-Semite, and, in one of his last letters to a close friend, he stated he wished to "shoot all anti-Semites."

However, it is true that he was a strong influence (at least inadvertently) on Nazism. One might say that his views were distorted by the Nazis (much in the manner that Darwin's theory 'morphed' into Social Darwinism - see *chapter on Charles Darwin*). But it is the case that Hitler was fully taken with Nietzsche's

ideas (especially attractive to the failed Austrian artist was the Nietzschean concept that the artist-tyrant is justified for all eternity by his work), even if he misunderstood them (as the apologists argue). So taken was Hitler, in fact, that he ordered a copy of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* be distributed to every member of the German Army (as the Kaiser had done in World War I).

If we consider some select quotes from Nietzsche we clearly see their mirror in Nazi ideology:

“Society has never regarded virtue as anything other than as a means to strength, power, and order....(It is not entitled to exist for its own sake but only as a...means (by) which a select race of beings may elevate themselves to their higher duties.”

“Man shall be trained for war and woman for the procreation of the warrior. All else is folly.”

“Ye shall love peace as a means to new war...You I advise not to work, but to fight. You I advise not to peace but to victory...War and courage have done more great things than charity.”

There was also a physical description of the *Übermensch*:

“The magnificent *blond* [sic] brute, avidly rampant for spoil and victory.”

Above all, was the concept of the coming elite who would rule the world give birth to the Superman: “A daring and ruler race is building itself up....The aim should be to prepare a transvaluation of values for a particularly strong kind of man, most highly gifted in intellect and will. This man and the elite around him will become the ‘lords of the earth.’”

So many of Nietzsche’s ideas find expression in Nazism. It is hard to doubt Hitler considered himself the *Übermensch* of Nietzsche’s ‘prophecy’ (even if the philosopher was not specifically conveying verbatim the later concepts of Aryan supremacy, et al).

## NIETZSCHE’S LEGACY

Nietzsche’s declaration the religion of ancient Greece was superior to Christianity because it portrayed strong, heroic and muscular men as role models (and did not demonise healthy natural desires, such as creativity and writing poetry) renewed the Enlightenment vogue to celebrate the achievements of one’s pre-Christian ancestors (and, indeed, the pagan world unfettered by ‘slave morality’).<sup>23</sup>

Nietzsche’s insistence that the decay of religion requires humanity take responsibility for setting its own moral standards inspired several existentialists (e.g. Albert Camus).

Another legacy is his influence on French deconstructionist circles from the 1960s through the 1980s (especially the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault), with his “God is dead” ethos and the notion of (will) power as the subtext of all individual behaviour readily apparent in the philosophical apparatus of this movement (which, in turn, proved highly influential on the emergence of postmodernism).

Above all, the times changed to suit Nietzsche just as they had done with Kierkegaard, enabling his ideas to find widespread acceptance in the West.

Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler (1870 - 1937) developed a form of ‘individual psychology’ wherein individuals strive for ‘superiority’ (more commonly referred to today as ‘self-realisation’ or ‘self-actualisation’) and which was influenced by Nietzsche’s notions of striving and self-creation. The entire human potential movement (which rejects separation of mind and body), humanistic psychology, and pop psychologists of ‘self-esteem’ are equally indebted.

The emergence of the self-esteem movement in the 1970s is, in effect, the final triumph of Nietzsche. Influenced by psychologists whom Nietzsche influenced (such as Adler), the movement focused on one’s

self-image at an emotional (rather than rational) level. It took its cues from psychotherapy, wherein the goal was to bring about a high degree of self-esteem in an individual (seen as a sign of mental health). Proponents argued that self-esteem led the way and achievement, behaviour and character followed.

Thanks to the movement's efforts, the notion that low self-esteem was an explanation for all personal failings spread throughout Western culture. The influence of the 'rights theology' (*see chapter on Søren Kierkegaard*) also fed this development, as the notion that people had rights in tangible areas such as politics, sexuality, etc spread to the intangible realm: people had a right to happiness. After all, didn't the US constitution extend rights beyond life and liberty to the pursuit of happiness?

Self-esteem became almost a universal panacea to all manner of undesirable personal and social outcomes. In the 1980s, the US state of California set up a task force to promote self-esteem and research its connection to personal and social responsibility (specifically, as it related to crime and violence, alcohol and drug abuse, welfare dependency, teen pregnancy, child abuse and domestic violence and children who failed academically). The seven learned professors who presented their findings astonished one and all with their assertion that there was little evidence that self-esteem was the cause of social ills (in fact, it was the *high* self-esteem of many individuals, propelling them to smug arrogance, that had been responsible for their reckless behaviour in the first place). But by then the idea had taken hold in the general populace so it didn't matter what the research said.

Subsequently, we have seen the fruit of this erroneous notion in many areas of society. For instance, in education, it is a widespread practice to present report cards that don't clearly reveal the lack of achievement by a struggling student lest one damage his self-esteem (flowery language is utilised to mask a student's deficiencies). There are also thousands of teachers who have stopped using red biro's to mark the work of students because it is similarly seen as damaging the fragile esteem of children and youth. There has even been a move to run classroom activities which aim to convince students of their uniqueness and importance so as to make them feel good about themselves. Psychologist Martin Seligman has claimed such an over-focus on self-esteem has had the opposite effects of those intended. By emphasising how children *feel* at the expense of what they *do*, teachers have inadvertently contributed to two generations of students becoming *more* vulnerable to depression (because in addition to the burden of high expectations students now also face the added burden of - being seen to be - emotionally and psychologically strong and 'in control.')

Paul Brians (c.1942 - ) tracks "The Influence Of Nietzsche" (1998) in his eponymous essay, wherein many Western ideas in common parlance today bear the philosopher's mark:

- \* The goal of life is to find yourself.
- \* The highest virtue is to be true to yourself.
- \* Life is short so experience it as intensely as you can.
- \* Challenge yourself; don't live passively.
- \* Culture shapes our values so as society changes we need new values.
- \* Knowledge and strength are greater virtues than humility and submission.
- \* Sexuality is not the opposite of virtue, but a natural gift that needs to be developed and integrated into a healthy, rounded life.
- \* When you fall ill, your body is trying to tell you something; it knows best.

\* People who hate their bodies or are in tension with them need to learn how to accept and integrate their physical selves with their minds instead of seeing them as in tension with each other. The mind and body make up a single whole.

\* Many people suffer from impaired self-esteem; they need to work on being proud of themselves.

\* Overcoming guilt is a vital step to improved mental health.

Such notions have their roots in Romanticism, but Nietzsche repackaged them and 'transmitted' them to the modern world in a potent, cohesive philosophy of self.

The times certainly changed to suit Nietzsche but the arrival of *the prodigious event*, far from creating a world of supermen merely saw the emergence of a world of lowly men and women, scratching about for some supposed latent spark of superhumanity within and all the while lining the pockets of the self-improvement industry.

20

There is an Eastern parallel to Schopenhauer's 'cosmological schizophrenia' in the Buddhist view. Buddhists believe that all human suffering arises out of our desires. The path to enlightenment (the transcendent highest state of being known as 'nirvana,' which is beyond all that can be described or defined) involves eliminating suffering through 'awareness,' a process driven by the practice of meditation. The Buddhist belief in reincarnation and karma (reaping in this life what you have sown in the last) means that reaching nirvana is a multi-incarnation journey wherein one tries to move up the ladder to higher and higher states of being until one arrives at the blissful state of absolute nothingness or 'oblivion,' free from suffering and desire and with the self wholly subsumed within the divine essence of the universe.

In contrast, Christianity's approach to the problem of the human condition is for the Christian to live in this world (the realm of objects or the physical world, 'fallen' from a state of utopia because of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) but not of it (the realm of transcendent "faith, hope and love and the greatest of these is love"). The mechanism allowing one to hold on to transcendent desires while enduring the pain (and ennui and daily humdrum) of existence is the person of Christ, inhabiting the spirit of the believer after they have accepted the lordship of the Son of God in their life. It is the relationship with the person of Christ that is the highest 'calling' of a human being, allowing Jesus to act as a mediator between temporal reality and eternal life, and satiation of desires - within a Christian moral framework - to be a valid part of life but not the ultimate goal of the individual (as they are in the non-Christian realm, at least according to Schopenhauer, Buddhism founder Guatama Buddha, and numerous others).

21

Pitirim Sorokin (1889 - 1968), who founded Harvard University's Department of Sociology, restated the Nietzschean cultural diagnosis half a century later. Sorokin believed that when something other than religious faith underpins morality, which underpins society, then that society will begun to fall apart. Sorokin saw this happening to Western society and called it "the crisis of our age" (he spelt out his belief in an eponymous book published in 1941), although he believed that it was a nightmarish transitional period out of which would eventually emerge a far healthier era in which God would once more find a place at the centre of human affairs.

Russell Kirk, in his essay "Malcolm Muggeridge's Scourging Of Liberalism" (1989) discusses the tradition of this cultural diagnosis (which was so memorably evinced by the apologist Malcolm Muggeridge):

Along with [Catholic poet] T.S. Eliot [1888 - 1965] and [philosopher] Donald Davidson [1917 - 2003]...Malcolm Muggeridge tells us that, as Christian belief is rejected, so modern civilisation stumbles down to dusty death. So thought the novelist Robert Graves [1895 - 1985]; so the historian Eric Voegelin [1901 - 1985]; so the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin. Culture arises from the

cult; when the cult dissolves, so in time does the culture. Thus Muggeridge's declaration that the destruction of religious belief causes the collapse of modern society is not peculiar to him; but he expresses this shattering judgement with high sardonic power. Take this passage from "The Great Liberal Death Wish" [1966]:

It is, indeed, among Christians themselves that the final decisive assault on Christianity has been mounted; led by the Protestant churches, but with Roman Catholics eagerly, if belatedly, joining in the fray. All they had to show was that when Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world, He meant that it was. Then, moving on from there, to stand the other basic Christian propositions similarly on their heads. As, that to be carnally minded is life; that it is essential to lay up treasure on earth in the shape of a constantly expanding Gross National Product; that the flesh lusts with the spirit and the spirit with the flesh, so that we can do whatever we have a mind to; that he that loveth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. And so on. One recalls a like adjustment of the rules in [George] Orwell's *Animal Farm* [i.e. the pigs' alteration of the rule 'All animals are equal' to that of 'All animals are equal but some are more equal than others,' allowing justification for the porcine hegemony]. A whole series of new interpretative 'translations' of the Bible have appeared supporting the new view, and in case there should be any anxiety about the reception of these adjustments in Heaven, God, we are told on the best theological authority, has died.

22

An interesting point to be made about the Enlightenment revival of concepts and ideas from the Hellenistic world view (and their supposed superior intellectual grounding than Judeo-Christian ethos) is not just that the Greeks were polytheistic and worshipped a panoply of gods (which is well-known, *see also footnote 41*) but also the number of similarities between this culture and the cosmology of the East. Os Guinness (1941 - ) in *The Dust Of Death*, explores this theme:

Scholars are becoming increasingly convinced that the impulses leading to Greek philosophy were closer to the Indian than the Judeo-Christian worldview.

The question of time is an important case in point. Both the Greeks and Hindus viewed time as cyclical and limitless; in the Judeo-Christian worldview, time is linear, teleological [having a purpose or destiny], and limited. Another point of contrast is the question of reality. The Greeks viewed the physical universe as a world of shadow, less true or less real than the transcendent ideal that was beyond knowledge. For Hindus, the physical universe is a world of 'maya' or illusion, while the true reality is Brahman or the God beyond [*see chapter on Sigmund Freud*]. This is in total contrast to the Christian and Jewish view of God's creating a real universe that is not an extension of his essence but is distilled from [H]imself. It is well known that [Greek mathematician] Pythagoras was [as said] a teacher of reincarnation, and even Plato taught an Eastern type of asceticism (practising strict self-denial as a measure of spiritual discipline) and recognised the need for an illumination somewhat similar to the more developed Hindu meditation.

I raise this point due to the spiritual turn to the East that has occurred with the rise of the New Age movement (*see chapter on Helena Blavatsky*).