

**Book III**  
**Persistent Illusions**

**The Rise of Science, the Defeat of**  
**Irrationalism and Restoring Intelligent Inquiry**  
**to Art**

Note: This 3<sup>rd</sup> and last book in this trilogy is an application of earlier ideas developed in the previous two books. It is my favorite book in many ways. I apply some of the basic ideas and research I was working with in the previous books to domains mostly outside the religions. I begin with a series of essay on Greek and Roman cultural history and speculate on occurrence of the dark ages. The essay on the Myth of Praxiteles examines the probable fictional creations of the character of Praxiteles in art scholarship about Classical sculpture. Then I proceed to compare the rise of the myths or fictions of Jesus and Muhammad and how they play out in today's world. Then an essay on the transition of medieval to modern and the role of the Eucharistic in myth and ritual. Then a long essay on the abuses and denials of science by various religious writers, traditionalists, creationists and others, as well as various abuses of science itself, particularly coproate 'science'. This continues the earlier essay on Darwinism and the mistaken attempt to make religion seem evolutionary. That essay, in the first book is called "Darwin, Pascal Boyer and the Evolutionary Theory of Religion". These two essays should be read together as in some ways they are the heart of these books. I include an essay about Chomsky and his linguistics as an example of a scientific theory that was at least partly mistaken but which had great influence for

many years. I explore some of the reasons why it might have failed. Then there is an essay on the history of art and why an art that serves power fails. These are application of the ideas I have explored throughout all three books. So I offer here a theory of history and what it was about. I end with a partly personal conclusion that appeals to all three books and could be read as something of an introduction to all three.

1. The Dead Hand of Plato: On Plato's Theofascism
2. On Aristotle, Lucretius and the History of Science
3. Misuses of Scholarship in the Making of the Myth of Praxiteles
  
4. Hypatia, Pseudo Dionysius and the Killing of Classical Science
5. The War between Christian and Islamic 'Fascism' and the Myths of Jesus and Muhammad
  
6. On Those Who Hate Science and Reason:  
(Anti-Science and Irrationalism in Guenon, Wolfgang Smith, and other Reactionaries.)
  
7. Chomsky's Cartesian Speciesism and the Failure of his Linguistics
  
8. Beyond the Dead End of Traditionalist and Modernist Aesthetics:  
Restoring Intelligence to Art
  
9. Conclusions

## **1 Dead Hand of Plato:**

### **On Plato's Theofascism**

One of the most persistent illusions or fictions in Western culture is Plato's ideology. According to Richard Dawkins, Ernst Mayr, the great biologist who died in 2005 at age 100, said that the discovery of evolution was held back by "the dead hand of Plato".<sup>996</sup> Mayr is correct. The "dead hand of Plato" is a good phrase. Mayr's complaint about Plato is that he reduces actual beings to mere ideas. Plato claims a cow was created by an "intelligent design" cow, an archetypal cow, a "Ur" cow, living somewhere with the absolute "good" in the divine mind. Plato hates history. He doesn't like the idea of evolution and wants everything to emanate from abstract "Eidos" or ideas, of which everything is but a pale example. This is called "essentialism", this effort to reduce everything to non-existent 'essences'.

This is the third time I have written about Plato. In my romantic and young teens I was enamored of him without having ever read him. I picked up Platonism through Percy Shelley, Coleridge, Eugene Delacroix and Will Durant's History of Philosophy. I did not yet understand how wrong Plato was or how saturated romantic culture is with his anti-science ideology. I did not realize then that Platonism is a quasi-religion that propagates itself through culture. In the 1990's I started questioning Plato seriously and have continued doing so over the years. I think that Whitehead was mistaken that history is divided into Aristotelians and Platonists. There is little excuse to be Platonist anymore. Aristotle is interesting as a historical antecedent to science. But Plato cannot be

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<sup>996</sup> Dawkins, Richard. The Greatest Show on Earth Free Press 2009 pg 21

taken any more seriously than any other philosopher who has had unfortunate influence on history, such as Hegel or Confucius, Shankara or Nietzsche.

In this essay on Plato I want to record the baneful influence of Plato on Theofascism and traditionalism and right wing thought in general. In his great work, the Open Society and its Enemies, Karl Popper speaks a great deal about Plato and totalistic systems. <sup>997</sup>He echoes Bertrand Russell's claim that the origin of fascism is in Romantic thought and then traces a similar lineage of reactionary ideologies coming from Plato all the way to anti-enlightenment romantics like Hegel. Popper points out that Totalitarianism has both its left leaning and its far-right components. <sup>998</sup> This is obvious of course and many have noted that Mao and Stalin are not very different from Hitler. Popper is right that the origins of totalism in the West is probably Plato and Hegel, at least as far as systematic exposition goes<sup>999</sup> The environmental writer Edward Abbey speaks of the need to turn Plato and Hegel on their heads, and I agree

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<sup>997</sup> Popper uses the terms "totalitarian" rather than totalist.

<sup>998</sup> Which is why a Guenonian neo-fascist like Alexander Dugin in Russia hates Popper book Open Society and its Enemies. Dugin says he wants to resurrect "Heraclitus [who] called [war or] "hostility" the "father of things." ". Dugin hates the "Open society" and wants to return to Guenonian tribalism--- a totalitarian "closed society" and he wants war. He says that between the Open Society and his Guenonian Utopia is 'us and them' and there "is only enmity, hatred, brutal struggle according to rules and without rules, for extermination, to the last drop of blood. Between them are heaps of corpses, millions of lives, endless centuries of suffering and heroic deeds." This is the sort of bombastic and bellicose rhetoric that Traditionalism ends up producing. See also Dugin's The Knight Templars of the Proletariat, an absurd view of history as an excuse for ultraviolent "totalization of the subject", very much the sort of fascism one finds in Plato. He declares that the "doctrinal, ideological defeat of all "open society enemies" is at hand." Here again we have a bogus resurrection of the mythic Knights Templars, who really were just a bunch of capitalist gangsters hired by the Vatican.

[http://www.feastofhateandfear.com/archives/dugin\\_01.html](http://www.feastofhateandfear.com/archives/dugin_01.html)

<sup>999</sup> Early Chinese or Hindu and Roman systems had social structures that were totalistic in certain ways. Islam is intensely totalistic even today in many countries. Arthur Versluis claims that American is not a totalistic state, which is true in a superficial reading of the matter, but not one takes into account all the totalistic regimes the US has created or supported, from Saddam Hussein to Pinochet, to the Shah of Iran---even Pol Pot was largely the result of the US bombing of Cambodia--- then yes, the U.S. has had totalistic leanings and policies.

with his reasoning there. <sup>1000</sup> Abbey also notes that those who believe in God lack imagination. Abbey writes:

“If man’s imagination were not so weak.... he would abandon forever his fantasies of the supernal. He would learn to perceive in water, leaves and silence more than sufficient of the absolute and marvelous, more than enough to console him for the loss of the ancient dreams.”

This is exactly right. The factual is what matters. The notion of the “Absolute” is metaphysical fiction. Plato is an escapist into non-existent archetypes. In fact, all there is this earth and the things upon it. Plato created his theory of the archetypes as an antidote to reality and a way of exalting human language as a system of unreal symbols. Giving symbols high status is a way of denigrating all that is not human and all that is not linguistic. This will become Descartes and then Chomsky’s error many centuries later, as I will show in a later chapter.

Mayr, Russell and Popper are far from the only ones to see Plato as a conservative reactionary with theofascist tendencies. Clifford Conner writes in the excellent A People’s History of Science that Plato “represents a political reaction against the Ionian enlightenment, in the interest of the ideal of a slave-owning, class divided, chauvinistic city state which was already an anachronism”. He also observes that Plato hindered the science of his time and “certainly played a significant role in a two thousand-year-retardation of scientific thought.” Conner is right about this. Plato’s elitist philosophy promoted a contempt for the physical world that was anti-science and anti-materialistic. Science was largely the creation of ordinary people, craftsman and women over many

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<sup>1000</sup> Abbey, Edward Desert Solitaire. Ballantine New York 1968 pg. 200, 219 and elsewhere in the book . This whole book is strongly anti-Platonic and wonderfully so. It is perhaps one of the best, if not the best single book on environmentalism in the 20th century. Abbey does not go as far as Thoreau or as deep, but he goes very far in this book for him. It is his best book too. Henry’s complete Journal is the best book on Nature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

millennia. Carpentry, pottery and weaving , metallurgy (blacksmithing), math<sup>1001</sup> and writing were all created by ordinary people. Elite leaders like Plato tried to claim them as the exclusive domain of the wealthy upper classes. Plato perpetuate the undemocratic deals of these elites.

The Platonic state in the Republic is a totalitarian state. Plato, like Christianity, Hinduism and virtually every other major religion views the world as sunk in illusion and falsity, and which must use drastic measures to redeem and reorder the world. This system of convincing a population that they are alienated from the earth creates the artificial need of priests. Plato claims mankind is immersed in a "barbaric slough", (7,530,d) and only Plato's totalitarian philosophy can redeem humanity. Plato goes even further than this, and says that the man that understands Plato's ideas, must necessarily desire to save the rest of mankind out of "Pity" (518,a-b). This strategy of having to create a totalistic institution because mankind needs to be saved is used in all totalitarian states. Hitler, Stalin, Mao as well as virtually all large scale religious institutions have justified their aspiration to power on similar grounds.... Buddhism and Christianity use a similar kind of pretence of caring for others as a selling point for their claim to legitimacy of the need of total power.

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<sup>1001</sup> Guenon tries to mystify math and make it an elitist and ancient system for initiates. That is false. Plato also tried to mystify math. In fact, Pythagoras, who many try to say was the original mathematician who had great knowledge of the "Mysteries", in fact appears to have had nothing to do with math. Clifford Conner shows that Pythagoras did not lay the foundations of mathematics and that the belief that he did is a myth crated by writers such as Proclus, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. See Conner, Clifford, D., A People's History of Science, Nation Books 2005, pg. 139

Popper points out that in his book The Laws Plato shows hatred of the individual and that every person should never think for themselves but follow the leader.

The second passage, also from the *Laws*, is, if possible, even more outspoken. It should be emphasized that the passage deals primarily with military expeditions and with military discipline, but Plato leaves no doubt that these same militarist principles should be adhered to not only in war, but also 'in peace, and from the earliest childhood on'. Like other totalitarian militarists and admirers of Sparta, Plato urges that the all-important requirements of military discipline must be paramount, even in peace, and that they must determine the whole life of all citizens; for not only the full citizens (who are all soldiers) and the children, but also the very beasts must spend their whole life in a state of permanent and total mobilization. 'The greatest principle of all', he writes, 'is that nobody, whether male or female, should ever be without a leader. Not should the mind of anybody be habituated to letting him do anything at all on his own initiative, neither out of zeal, nor even playfully. But in war and in the midst of peace - to his leader he shall direct his eye, and follow him faithfully. And even in the smallest matters he should stand under leadership. For example, he should get up, or move, or wash, or take his meals . . . only if he has been told to do so . . . In a word, he should teach his soul, by long habit, never to dream of acting independently, and to become utterly incapable of it. In this way the life of all will be spent in total community. There is no law, nor will there ever be one, which is superior to this, or better and more effective in ensuring salvation and victory in war. *And in times of peace, and from the earliest childhood on* should it be fostered - this habit of ruling others, and of being ruled by others. And every trace of

anarchy should be utterly eradicated from *all the life of all the man,* and even of the wild beasts which are subject to men'.

These are strong words. Never was a man more in earnest in his hostility towards the individual. And this hatred is deeply rooted in the fundamental dualism of Plato's philosophy; he hated the individual and his freedom just as he hated the varying particular experiences, the variety of the changing world of sensible things. In the field of politics, the individual is to Plato the Evil One himself." (*Open Society* pg 101)

Plato is a totalitarian and both like Hitler Mao or Stalin. The ideal ruler or savior, as it were, in Plato's Republic is the "guardians" or Philosopher Kings, who are the "king bees and leaders of the hive". (7,520,b) These rulers, Plato tells us, must "have proved themselves in both war and philosophy." Caste is metaphysics in Plato. This conjunction of war and philosophy is interesting because it shows the relation of Plato's metaphysic to the will to power. The philosopher must be a warrior because the world does not conform to his beliefs. Plato's visionary Utopia, like all Utopias, must be imposed by force. Children are to be taken by force from their parents and given to the state to raise; labor is to be forced also; slavery is a norm; and a caste system is recommended to be as rigorous as the Hindu system. The Guardians are the nearly divine overseers of a totally planned society, like the Brahmins in India or the Priests in Egypt.....

In Plato's Republic he recommends, like the Hindus and Hitler, selective breeding, caste eugenics, rigorous social control and a doctrine of mind control that would oversee the intimate behavior and thoughts of

all citizens in his 'utopia'. Like Himmler<sup>1002</sup> and the Hindus, Plato devalues both men and the world to make it conform with a vision of intellectual supremacy. He notices only the benefits of this system of knowledge and power and does not consider the victims against which it perpetuates its violence.

Guenon and his traditionalist followers are Platonist, and like Plato they are 'counter-revolutionaries' in the sense that this phrase was used to describe Hitler and Mussolini during World War 2. Guenon creates his spiritual theofascism to be organized around a social elite who defend caste system. It might be worth noting Schuon's third wife told me that Schuon compared himself to Plato and Shankara and thought Plato the "perfect metaphysician".<sup>1003</sup>.....

Karl Popper notes that Plato's development of an unjust caste system occurs as part of Plato's effort to create a religion for his Republic. "The Myth of Blood and Soil",<sup>1004</sup> is a foundation myth for the society and the basis of the Platonic state. In the myth the rulers will be the upper caste and have gold in their veins; the warriors will have silver; the producers have iron or brass—in short a hereditary caste system. Once the people are fashioned, they cannot change their basic characteristics, nor can they ignore their responsibilities to the soil. In other words, there will be a kind of eugenics and justification of slavery. This is justified by Socrates as follows. Socrates says, "could we fabricate one of these handy lies....with the help of one single lordly lie we may, if

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<sup>1002</sup> In his biography of Himmler, Peter Padfield notes that Himmler was devoted to the Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita, and "he never went anywhere without it". Padfield notes that this fact is "important for any attempt to understand what Himmler believed he was doing" The question arises then: why should this Hindu text, obscure in Germany during Himmler's time, be connected in a fundamental way to one of the worst atrocities in history? Robert Oppenheimer also quotes this book to justify the killing done by the Atom bomb in Nagasaki.

<sup>1003</sup> But Schuon worried that his style was much dryer than Plato...which it is

<sup>1004</sup> Republic IV. 414-415 etc. (some call it the Myth of Metals)

we are lucky, persuade even the rulers themselves, but at any rate the rest of the city”<sup>1005</sup>

Popper deduces from Plato’s need to found his Republic on a lie that:

“nothing is more in keeping with Plato’s totalitarian morality than his advocacy of propagandistic lies” at the basis of his system. Popper later notes that

“the more we try to return to the heroic age of tribalism, the more surely do we arrive at the Inquisition, at the Secret Police and at romanticized gangsterism. Beginning with the suppression of reason and truth, we must end with the most brutal and violent destruction of all that is human”.<sup>1006</sup>

Plato, arch-gnostic and primary source of the traditionalists is thus one of the origins of the totalistic idea, which lead to the horrors of the Christian Inquisition, and later atrocities. Plato is an important source for Islamic ideology, as can be seen in Rumi and Ibn Arabi, who used Platonic ideas to bolster his doctrine of the ‘unity of being’. Indeed, Plato and Muhammad are both poets who share a hatred for poetry, as both want only their particular systems of delusion to prosper. Muhammad actually killed poets he disliked, whereas Plato condemns them in his books, particularly Homer, who is a more interesting recorder of myths than Plato in many ways.

So what amazes me about Popper as well as Conner’s understanding of Plato is that both of them correctly deduced that Plato is an extreme

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<sup>1005</sup> Popper Karl, Open Society and its Enemies. Pg 140

<sup>1006</sup> Ibid. pg 200

reactionary and that he is a force against science and enlightenment. Schuon and Guenon and religion in general are Platonists who seek to undermine science. The whole notion of transcendence is fictional. There is no such thing. The claim to transcend is merely a fictional form of “inwardness”, or mental removal from a situation. The inward mystic seeks to project himself on the universe by emotional self-magnification and narcissism. “Transcendence is this projection; it has no reality but is merely mental or emotional dialation. I have seen this time and again with people in religions, cults, New Age poets as well as astrologers, Jungians and wanna-be goddesses<sup>1007</sup>. Reason is thrown out the window and feeling is worshiped in a narcissistic mirroring of inner states. The worship of what one feels ‘within’ becomes a religion for some of these people. This way of escape, supported by such poets as Robert Bly, Coleman Barks, Rumi and Rilke is a way or irresponsible escapism and denial of the facts of our actual lives and the conditions of the world we live in. Their flight to the ‘beyond’ becomes an escape from the real.

What matters is the fact of the earth the actual lives we live. What matters is life, not the deaths we suffer, not imaginary deities, not dreams. Death offers no transcendence. The effort to set up religions merely sets up another cloudy mystification of human centered ignorance and arrogance. Efforts at transcendence of the earthy condition merely wastes the earth’s substance. Transcendence must be transcended ( gotten over with) if there is to be any improvement in our condition here on earth.

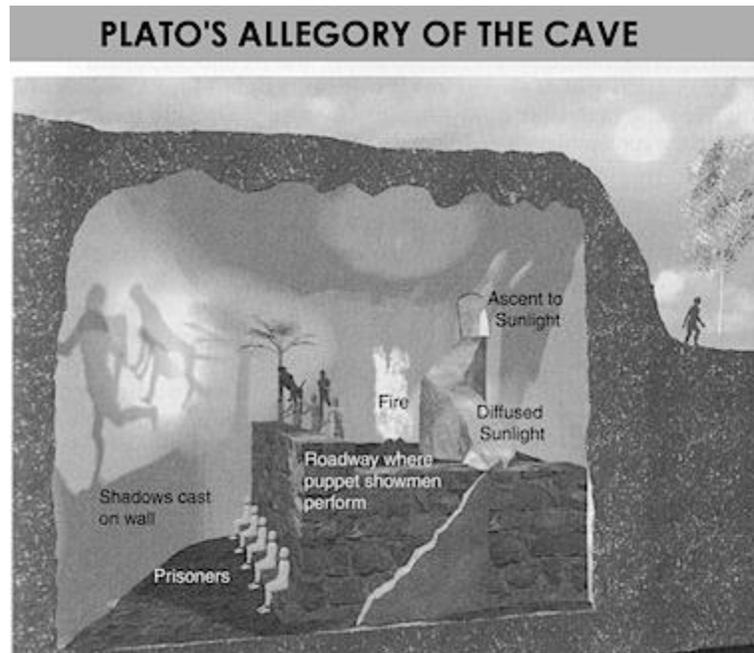
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<sup>1007</sup> The growth of the “Goddess” religion in the last 40 years is an interesting phenomena. I do not know if it has been systematically studied, It was clearly engendered by feminism and it is a reaction to the patriarchal nature of most of the religions, One wonders if “theology is really less fictional than theology, and if the archeological work of Marija Gimbutas has anything truthful about or as her critics claim, is if mostly wishful thinking. She did identify a huge number of ancient statues but whether they are goddess statues or not is another question. Gimbutas has been criticized for creating an archaeology can slip into reflecting what she wanted to see, though it is probably true that male deities were created that sought to destroy pagan goddesses. This is the usual power play of mythology. But archeology does need to protect itself from the sort of abuse that seeks to make a religion of past religious objects..

There are many writers on religion who invoke Plato as their model. Schuon, Guenon, Coomaraswamy, Wolfgang Smith, Arthur Versluis, Eric Voegelin, as well as romantic philosophers and poets going back centuries. I recently read Arthur Versluis book, New Inquisitions, Heretic Hunting and the Intellectual origins of Modern Totalitarianism. I will review parts of it below. However, here I note that he ends this disappointing book with a paeon to Plato's horrible and backwards totalistic "vision" or the Allegory of the Cave. Plato is a regressive and cramped thinker.

As I wrote many years ago regarding the Cave of Plato:

"Plato had it wrong. The world is not a dank, dark cave of illusions. One could even say that Plato had it backwards. The illusion is Plato's dream of total knowledge. His sunlit world of Ideas existing like diamonds of purity in the Mind of God seems nothing more than the dream of aristocratic supremacist longing for transcendent power. Plato's universal "ideas" are merely verbal generalizations created out of facts in this world. He was wrong to generalize particular facts into universal Abstract Ideas. Something that is "good" is not an emanation or radiation of an idealized "Good". A particular tree is not an example of an "ideal tree". Plato made the mistake of falling in love with the creations of his own imagination. The gods or the "ideas" are the images on the wall of the cave in Plato's metaphor.



Because the world did not fit his dream,<sup>1008</sup> Plato fell to despising the world that we actually live in. His myth of cave is a lie. The exact opposite is the truth. It is the reverse of reality. The world that is not the dream of the Good becomes, in Plato's vision, a bad world—a "slough"—and needs to be reordered by force. The philosopher becomes a warrior because the world does not fit his idea and the Philosopher-kings are the tyrants who will reorder reality to force it to conform to Plato's vision.....

Plato and his followers ended up himself being a cave from which we must escape. Religion is the cave form which we must escape. Neither Plato's Cave of shadows nor the false idealization of Plato's imaginary "divine" world of the Ideas is real. It is gods and

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<sup>1008</sup> I found this picture online and thought it marvelously clear, so I use it here, but I was unable to determine who made it, to give attribution for it.

ideologies that are the shadows on the wall. I have turned Plato's Cave inside out and it is his "Ideas" and the myths of his religion and philosophy that would enchain people. It is Plato himself who is the cave of false idols. His archetypes are false idols. The world of sunshine and trees and deer in the forest is not Platonic. These are real. Plato's world is not my world. Rejecting Plato brings one out of his cave of gods and idols into the light of the real world. An imperfect world without Plato's Cave or his Utopia is world enough for me."

I wrote this 18 years ago, in 1992. I am gratified to see it supported in many of its details in Karl Popper's critique of Plato in The Open Society and its Enemies and in Conner's People's History of Science. Popper wrote later about writing his book that

"in giving a detailed description.... of Plato's political philosophy, I was, more and more overwhelmed by the quite unexpected flood of evidence in favor of what I may perhaps loosely illustrate here by the admittedly absurd equation: Plato = Hitler

I agree that the equation is absurd,--- absurd but true. Popper says, all his attempts to refute it "led to meager results". Plato's influence is much larger than Hitler's and longer, so a though refutation of his ideological system is that much more important. Therefore, Popper concludes that Hitler is a "clownish exponent" of the "pernicious and more serious movement" that was initiated in Plato's Republic. This was Bertrand Russell's belief as well. I agree with both Russell and Popper. The imagination is a questionable entity.

Schuon and Guenon are also "clownish exponents" of Plato. Totalism or theofascism seems an absurd thesis until you begin to see

the mass of irrefutable evidence that is at the basis of it. The equation of “Plato= Hitler” really means that the transcendental and the spiritual are “noble lies” that are foisted on populations to insure that elites—be they Hindu Brahmins, Dalai Lamas, Hitler’s SS or Europe’s aristocratic Catholics--- stay elite. The ‘masses’ of ordinary folks are kept in poverty and want. Clifford Conner is right that Plato system was a significant factor in prolonging the dark ages and medieval ignorance and thus of holding back the development of science. It is this same outmoded and I believe, discredited, anti-scientific Platonism that the traditionalists have sought to revive in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Platonists have also tried to reintroduce this reactionary ideology in our universities, as I will show in a chapter below.

### **On Aristotle, Lucretius and the History of Science:**

The earliest antidote to the poison of the Platonic philosophy was Aristotle. He is not without his problems. He is often wrong, and stresses logic over observation. Tyco Brahe, for instance, proved that Aristotle was wrong to think that the stars never change when he saw a supernova explode 1572. But, despite his many shortcomings, Aristotle is an interesting thinker even now. His book on animals, while factually incorrect on many things, is interesting if for no other reason that it is an early attempt, the first of its kind, to understand the reality of the earth we live on, and thus is an authentic if inaccurate attempt at science. It is the first attempt to catalogue nature and our place in it.

This is a good thing<sup>1009</sup> and a problematical thing, at the same time<sup>1010</sup> Aristotle had made no secret of his contempt for Alexander's pretense of divinity, and that is delightful and utterly non-Platonic. Aristotle rightly argued that there are no universals (Eidos) that are unattached to

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<sup>1009</sup> One can argue that it leads to Linnaeus, which is true, whose system of classification is by and large a good thing, but which gets abused when it is taken to mean that humans are supreme over all other species, a mistake that Linnaeus himself makes. Linnaeus writes in his essay "the Oeconomy of Nature" (1749), wrote that:

All these treasures of nature, so artfully contrived, so wonderfully propagated, so providentially supported throughout her three kingdoms [animal, mineral vegetable] seem intended by the Creator for the sake of man. Everything may be made subservient to his use; if not immediately, then mediately, not so to that of other animals. By the help of reason, man tames the fiercest animals, pursues and catches the swiftest, nay he is able to reach even those, that lye in the bottom of the sea (Quoted in Oelschlaeger, Max. The idea of Wilderness New Haven Yale University 1991 pg. 105)

<sup>1010</sup> It is also the first in a long series of speciesist appreciations of animals. Aristotle, Descartes and Chomsky are in differing degrees speciesist, which to say their views are largely human centered or anthropomorphic. Speciesism is a kind of racism applied to species. While other aspects of their thought might interesting, this aspect is not. I wonder why this thread of disparagement of others species developed in philosophy. Perhaps it was because of the mental, precious and rather elitist character of a lot of philosophy. In Descartes case, it was a tacit Christian hatred of the body, certainly. Aristotle's attempt to catalogue all animals is amazing. He invented zoology all at once. But he writes .

“ It is evident then that we may conclude of those things that are, that plants are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men; the tame for our use and provision; the wild, at least the greater part, for our provision also, or for some other advantageous purpose, as furnishing us with clothes, and the like.( from “On Government” Book 1 Chapt:8---

And the part about animals being “created” for the sake of men is merely speciesist prejudice. While there are species who are dependent on each other, such as symbiotic species. But even they exist do not exactly exist for each other, nor where they “created”. Species are self-existing and indeed, self-created or rather created by their own interactions with ecologies.

Chomsky's speciesism is harder to explain. Part of it might be driven by his linguist theories, which appear to be incorrect, involuted, subjectivist and unempirical and part of it might be because he may favors animal testing. I could also be a love of meat or an upbringing in which he was taught a low tolerance for other animals. But it appears to be a case of good old fashioned supremecism of an irrational kind. He is very stridently anti-nature's rights, though lately he has been favoring a mitigated and lukewarm notion of nature's right that only favors human uses for animals, which really is not nature's rights at all. This is more or less Aristotle's speciesism again. It is curious that a man so otherwise enlightened about human rights would be so obtuse about nature's rights.

<http://aristotle.thefreelibrary.com/A-Treatise-on-Government/1-8>

existing things.<sup>1011</sup> Advancing far beyond the absurdity of the Platonic Ideas, Aristotle did basic research in botany, zoology, physics, astronomy, chemistry, meteorology, and several other sciences. Aristotle's scientific shortcomings were many but that hardly negates the great advances he made. His notion of the “great chain of being” or the ladder of life is false and wrong and hindered science, but his observations of Octopuses, Cuddle fish and many other animals are accurate and exact. His effort to be empirical is far ahead of his time. Descartes and Chomsky will later follow Plato by denigrating the empirical in favor of ideas and symbolist mental constructions. Darwin will do the opposite and that is why he is preferable. Hipparchus and Da Vinci, among many others, would further Aristotle’s work, but for centuries no one surpassed it.<sup>1012</sup> He is to be praised for this, despite his rather human centered views, which I duly note.<sup>1013</sup>

Typical of many that would decry Aristotle, Guenon and Schuon disliked Aristotle because he is too scientific, as one would expect. Schuon writes “

“If Aristotle is to be blamed it is for the quite contrary reason that his formulation of metaphysics is governed by a tendency toward exteriorization, a tendency which is contrary to the very essence of all metaphysics. Aristotelianism is a science of the Inward expanding toward the outward and thereby tends to favor

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<sup>1011</sup> 18:83-99 of *Surah Al Kahf*. In contrast the Koran teaches that Alexander was a sort of Prophet-King who prefigured Muhammad. This is fiction making at a high level and one that would have given Aristotle a good chuckle. Whoever wrote this chapter in the Koran was reading other texts which claimed his divinity. Like most of the Koran this is a literary creation.

<sup>1012</sup> Avicenna or Ibn Sina is worth looking at too, as he is a Persian thinker and doctor of medicine somewhat ahead of his time, and very much an Aristotelian, and even accused by Muslims of being an atheist, perhaps to his credit.

<sup>1013</sup> There are many errors in Aristotle, not just on animals but on many subjects. Victor Stenger discusses some of them in God and the Folly of Faith. One of the worst effects of the Aristotelean system was its use by the Scholastics, who made Aristotle into a dogma. Stenger notes this on page 73 of his book. He notes that “Ironically, Aristotelean Dogma joined Christian dogma in impeding the development of science.”

exteriorization, ....The Aristotelian Pandora's box is scientism coupled with sensationalism; it is through these concepts that Aristotle deviates from Plato by replacing the interiorizing tendency with its inverse. People say that the Church has kept science in chains; what is certain is that the modern world has unchained it with the result that it has escaped from all control, and, in the process of destroying nature, is headed toward the destruction of mankind.".... <sup>1014</sup>

This hatred of Aristotle is ridiculous and founded on multiple delusions or fictions. Aristotle opens up toward a real empirical and evidentiary point of view, something that was far beyond Schuon's absurd belief in his own infallibility. Schuon dislikes objectivity and wants philosophy to be firmly grounded in the subjective, romantic and the arbitrary "interior" dictatorship of delusions he calls the "Intellect".

Schuon only liked Aristotle to the degree he could be enlisted to promote his delusional and subjective metaphysical ideology. Otherwise he hated Aristotle's rationalism. He writes of Aristotle's rationalism and expresses his hatred off reason and says

“ we reject rationalism not because of its possibly plausible criticisms of humanized religion, but because of its negation of the divine kernel of the phenomenon of religion; a negation that essentially implies the negation of intellectual intuition, thus of that immanent Divine Presence which is the Intellect. The basic error of systematized rationality — by the way, it is wrong to attribute this ideology to the great Greeks — is to put fallible reasoning in place of infallible intellection”

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<sup>1014</sup> [http://www.sophia-perennis.com/philosophy/aristotle\\_plato.htm](http://www.sophia-perennis.com/philosophy/aristotle_plato.htm)

The notion of Schuon's self-serving and narcissistic "infallible intellection" is a joke, of course, there is no such thing, and Guenon's and Schuon's whole system depends on this non-existent fiction. The hatred of reason implied in Schuon and Guenon is quite palpable. Their notion of the "heart-intellect" is merely an effort to make the irrational transcendent. The closed-in subjectivity of Traditionalist thought makes it inward turning and cultish, a sort of citadel of fictions and mirrors.

The ambiguous and often hateful attitude toward Hellenism on the part of Schuon and Guenon arises because they hate science. A history of the facts points to very different conclusions. The advance of Greece toward understanding and knowledge is considerable and unquestionable. Aristotle is much more responsible for this than Plato, whose religious thinking held back progress. The history of the nude figure in sculpture shows this progress quite clearly. In a relatively short time the Greeks of Aristotle's time created the Parthenon and the most anatomically accurate and expressive statues ever made before the Renaissance, a fact that would keep Greek art at the pinnacle of achievement until the Renaissance. Indeed, from Phidias to Leonardo is a natural step and in between are nearly 1500 years of Christian reaction and backward leaning devolution: the properly named "Dark Ages".

A typical example of Christian hatred for science and enlightenment as well as Greek art is the Italian, Savonarola, who fulminated in his sermons against Greek art as if it were the art of hell. Botticelli rather foolishly destroyed some of his paintings because of Savonarola's fanatical influence on him. Michelangelo loved him, and created his tortured and muscular nudes in a thrall of reactionary longing for the Platonic beyond. There are still those who would burn books and silence knowledge to insure the livelihood of priests, ministers and bureaucrats, and create a Sistine Ceiling to glorify the transcendental fictions of the unjustly rich.

Aristotle is not only key in the development of Greek art but his influence spans beyond the Renaissance. While certainly much can be found in Aristotle that is objectionable, it is a fact that he lifted us through the dark ages and into an awareness that led to science, even though his own system was not very scientific. Plato did not do that, as I have shown in this book, Plato is the father of many retrograde, backwards leaning dictators, reactionary poets, scholarly or religious fanatics. He inspired many of the reactionary movements before and after the French Revolution. Aristotle, on the contrary, brings us to science, inquiry and away from the rule of authority, Aquinas and Augustine. The Catholic Church was right to feel that Aristotle was a threat to their fictions, whereas Plato is enshrined in most Dark Age thinkers from Origin and Dionysius the pseudo Aeropagite to Johann Scotus Erigena as well as many modern advocates of spirituality, such as Meister Eckhart to Ananda Coomaraswamy. Platonic mysticism is the refuge of reactionaries, monarchists and Dark Age escapists. This is not to say that Clifford Conner is incorrect in his criticism of Aristotle, He is right. Conner notes that

“Aristotle scientific legacy, although of mixed value, was potentially much more constructive than that of his teacher.” [Plato.] On the negative side, his physics was based on the same kind of a priori method that rendered Plato’s knowledge seeking sterile. But unlike Plato, he was willing to admit the evidence of his eyes, hands, and other sense organs, in the pursuit of biological and sociological knowledge”.<sup>1015</sup>

Conner goes on to complain, rightly, that the great man view of the history of science is a mistake. Science was not merely the result of

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<sup>1015</sup> Conner, Clifford, A People’s History of Science Naton Books, NY. 2005, pg, 152,53,

Galileo, Aristotle or Faraday, but was the result of countless and largely anonymous, potters, blacksmiths, chemists, and old women that nurtured plants and delivered babies, when men were still bleeding people and spreading disease every time they did surgeries, due to dirty knives and scalpels. Moreover, the mistakes of Aristotle were considerable and the Church did great harm to humanity because of its “oppressive conservatism”, and “rigid orthodoxy which paralyzed inquiry into the workings of nature.”

Christianity is not the source of the revolutions that happen in America in 1776, France in 1789, Russia in 1917 or Islam in recent decades: Greece and Rome are. You can already see this in Aristarchus, Hipparchus and Hypatia, as well as Lucretius. Indeed, De Rerum Natura, or Of the Nature of Things by Lucretius is a logical extension of Aristotle, but better. He not only advocated democracy but also had an idea about matter that presages evolution and atoms. Some think of him as the first naturalist and atheist.

The idea of equality was not a Christian creation, as some Christians would like us to think. The mythic Christ of the Gospels says clearly that one should render to Caesar all that he wants and live only for the next world. The fictional Christ of the Gospels is supposed to have said “Servants, obey your masters”, a quote that many Christian ministers used to justify slavery. Indeed, the slave owners were mostly Christians and churches opposed abolition in far more number than favored it, prior to the Civil War in America. Equality was largely a Greek creation, though Plato opposed it, democracy begins there and is mentioned in Thucydides, and Aristotle was aware of it, though he wished to limit it, fearing the poor.<sup>1016</sup> It is already implied in Lucretius and others, not to mention Greek science which is really amazing and

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<sup>1016</sup> here is an interesting essay on this and the idea of the history of the idea of equality by Jarath Clifford. <http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/LocatingEquality.pdf>

forward looking and based on fact and the observation of nature. The separation of Church and state really has its origins in nominalist denials of Platonism and thus in Aristotle and Lucretius. Science implies a sort of equality already. Science is very much a result of ordinary people doing a great deal of the work, they invented forging and blacksmithing, farming techniques, pottery and many other things. This Greek and Roman stress on nature, facts, observation and the ordinary is already apparent in Lucretius.

One can already see the outline of the modern world in Lucretius. He denied of the importance of religion. He said of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter to the gods that "Such is the terrible evil that religion was able to induce."<sup>1017</sup> Lucretius' effort was to found science as a normative way of looking at the world. The early Church sought to eliminate his book from existence.

Lucretius is the real hero of the pre-modern period. The myths of Jesus, Allah and god idea prevents democratic politics because democracy is premised on the idea that we create social orders and they are not absolute, unchanging entities, forced on us by gods and other fictitious symbols. Gods and hierarchies are not natural phenomena but come from interested fictions created by class and elites. Social orders ultimately arise out of human subjective interests, not gods. Lucretius opposes the divine order and distinguishes between properties and states and suggests that it is only matter and nature that are real and have properties. Lucretius writes:

A **property** is that which not at all

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<sup>1017</sup> This is discussed in Tim Whitmarsh's Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World

Can be disjoined and severed from a thing  
Without a fatal dissolution: such,  
Weight to the rocks, heat to the fire, and flow  
To the wide waters, touch to corporal things,  
Intangibility to the viewless void.  
But **state** of slavery, pauperhood, and wealth,  
Freedom, and war, and concord, and all else  
Which come and go whilst Nature stands the same,  
We're wont, and rightly, to call accidents.<sup>1018</sup>

Lucretius would disagree with Daniel Dennett that religion is a “natural phenomena”. States and religious or political systems are accidents and so changeable. The status of kings, women, the poor and the rich, is not a property of these things, but a state that can be altered. The unjust treatment of the poor by the rich can be changed. This anti-Platonic view is right. His naturalistic materialism is already implicitly democratic, though he does not spell that out. The Enlightenment sidestepped Christianity and turned to Greco-Roman antiquity to create the various American, French, Russian revolutions – and lately the Muslim revolutions. Locke, Hobbes. Marx and Tom Paine had created the idea of equality in its modern conception.

The Christian world helped bring on caused the Dark Ages, burning libraries, destroying the work of classical writers, breaking down temples and sculptures. The dark Ages begin in the murder of Hypatia, 800 years of frequent stagnation, suppressed curiosity and brutal autocracy of priests and fear. The Renaissance was hugely important and grew out of an effort to restore Greek and Roman culture which had been all but destroyed by Christian fanaticism. The ideas of men like Lucretius

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<sup>1018</sup> On the Nature of Things. De Rerum Natura  
[http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature\\_things.1.i.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.1.i.html)

and Aristotle undermined the irrational in Christian culture, slowly over many centuries. During the 1300's, the time of Innocent III and the Nominalist/Realist controversy, the Nominalists are the forward looking group –condemned by the Church---and are implicitly Greek in their point of view. By the time of Leonardo, we see a man reading Greeks and Romans, or Middle Eastern translations of these, the Church is largely gone. He is not reading churchmen, who he mostly hates, for good reason, By the time of 1789 it is Greek and non-Christian culture that matters, and De Maistre, a Platonist, is absurd, because of his reactionary response to science and 1789.

So if we look at the art that follows upon Aristotle's theory of mimesis and the ideas of Lucretius, a few things are clear. The art of Greece is brilliant and fecund. The Romans continue this somewhat lessened. The history of art in the Dark Ages takes a serious decline. It is often too literary and even mythical in some cases. Lies, myths and imagination justifying unjust powers and abound in the Dark Ages. The Dark Ages were brought about by the Jesus and the Muhammadean myths which nurtured extremely repressive political and legal systems such as The Inquisition and the Sharia.

.. But with the rise of absolutist kings in the 1600's there was a growing tendency to use Greek realism as a model. But Greek Realism tends to get deformed by Platonistic idealism under aristocracy. The uses Europeans made of Classical sculpture in 19th century Europe are confused and politically ambiguous. The French Revolution artists saw the Greeks as forward looking embodiments of liberty and rightly so. But the kings of the Restoration period tried to restyle the Greeks as 'divine right' reactionaries. The restoration Kings wanted a more Platonist and authoritarian culture that inspired the Bourbon kings. Filmer's 'divine right' ideology applied to classical sculpture and painting has some atrocious results in Ingres, Van Dyke and other propagandists for the upper classes.

. Kenneth Clark makes the unfortunate distinction between the Venus Coelestis and Venus Naturalis. Clark was following Plato, which is often a mistake. Clark writes about classical sculpture in his book the Nude. The Madonna/whore complex that is implied by this is misogynistic and elitist. While it is true that most religions set up their images of women in just this way, one must observe that women are not celestial beings but natural and actual ones, ---like men they are animals.

Plato's notion of the celestial nature of the human body<sup>1019</sup> would result in such atrocities as Michelangelo's abuse of the musculature of the male form in order to create visual propaganda for the Catholic Church. He paints himself as a disgusting flayed skin, which is as ridiculously self-effacing as the other figures are ridiculously muscled and huge. As great as the Sistine Chapel is supposed to be, I find his figures repulsive precisely because he has inflated them into massive body builders who are more about caste and power than about being human. Indeed, the excessively ideal human figures of the Baroque and Rococo, and even up until the Academy of the 19th century, from Reubens to David, are meant to inflate the egos of the rich, monarchs, royal families, Popes and dynastic gentleman who wanted to magnify themselves of make themselves eternal, with abused Greek conceptions of the human body.<sup>1020</sup> This eventually leads us to the monumental emptiness of corporate art.

That said, it also has to be said that the treatment of the human body from Leonardo<sup>1021</sup> to David has a certain non-Christian humanism

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<sup>1019</sup> Schuon's ridiculous Icons are an outgrowth of his belief in his own 'celestial' body. He thought was a prophet of the highest degree and painted pictures of himself that attempt to show himself as this. I can attest that there was nothing at all celestial about Schuon's geriatric anatomy. His cult of the Virgin Mary was likewise merely a decadent over lay of nudist femme fatales of the fin de Siècle pasted on top of Byzantine Iconic forms.

<sup>1020</sup> See Curtis, Gregory, Disarmed: the Story of the Venus de Milo. This is a good study of the effect of Greek culture on 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, with some indications of the influence of Greek culture on the Enlightenment.

<sup>1021</sup> Leonardo's Anatomical Manuscript A contains some of the best anatomical drawings of the human body ever done. He calls the body a ;'l'opere mirabile della natura" a 'marvelous work of

in it, and this is good, as it is based on reality. This becomes even clearer in the French Revolution, where Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" shows a devotion of liberation from the powerful that is new. Da Vinci and Rembrandt, and Courbet lead the way to a new way of seeing. The failure to see the good that was incontestably in the French Revolution is the failure to question the upper classes, who brought it on themselves.

<sup>1022</sup> It was inevitable that the religious ideology of the Ancien Regime would fail, and science and democracy come to question power.

These developments suggested a non-Platonic understanding of the body that is sympathetic and scientific. Idealism fails to show the truth and the cult of beauty that accompanies it is questionable. As Darwin showed the beauty of the young body is mostly about reproduction, not state authority, divinity or the ideal of monarchist and corporate governments. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the body in art is greatly deformed in line with the atrocities produced by competing forms of power, both Marxist and Capitalist. Some of this remains even in a recent painter like Lucian

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nature" and though he refers to the soul and the divine and other religious terms he has really gone beyond them into the facts of the actual.-

<sup>1022</sup> Yes, the revolution went too far, as Eugen Weber notes

men like Robespierre stood for the will of the people as long as the people's will matched their own visions. Ever offering to die for their beliefs, they got the sour satisfaction of undergoing the martyrdom they professed to seek: murderers murdering murderers before being murdered in their turn, until the last days of July 1794 brought an end to the Terror, though not to continuing terrorism.

Yet Robespierre and Napoleon are not the revolution, but the failure of it. The success of the revolution is the questioning of the powerful, the idea of rights and justice for nature and the poor. This is not nothing. If it was hated by the likes of Burke, or more recently Simon Schama, but well, of course they hate it. It was a bloody battle that ultimately had right on its side and it still does. The world was not made for the unjustly rich. This is not a surprise to anyone who is aware of what nature and living really is.

Freud<sup>1023</sup> The development of realism in art and science is a great advance which has its origins in Aristotle and not in Plato. Art after Da Vinci cannot be taken very seriously unless it is somehow developed in accord with science. The Neo-Platonism that inspired Michelangelo and Dante is already medieval decadence and is in process of dying along with the Christian dogmatism that inspired it and this issues into Symbolist art and surrealism. As Da Vinci showed the beauty of the human body is not diminished by the abandonment of the religious or “celestial” fictions. The understanding of the body of humans and animals as a fact of nature and not a celestial fiction was a great advance for science, medicine, and health. It also made it possible to criticize unjust systems like Plato and the Catholic Church, whose view of the human body was elitist and caste ridden.<sup>1024</sup> The view of the body which served “nobility” was one that favored gigantic figures with rippling muscles.

The long term effect of the realism and proto-scientific ideas of Aristotle was to ultimately subvert the power of the Church and help create the concern with nature that would one day lead to science. Aristotle disliked Plato’s theory of ideas and his Archetypes. That is all to the good. There is the unfortunate fact that Aristotle’s excessive concern

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<sup>1023</sup> The limitations that are implicit in Rembrandt’s, Freud’s or Courbet’s presentation of the nude are due to their fidelity to reality. I admire this. The loss of the ideal notion of the body does take some getting used to for some people, but it is truth that matters more than dreams. Lucian Freud’s works have been called “corpse like”. And it is true there is a problem with some of his nudes and his coloration which one might call Kafkaesque. But I see this as perhaps a technical problem on Freud’s part or an inability to use color in a way that is not literal, wooden or clumsy. But this is not to say that Freud’s work lacks the beauty of the ordinary and the frail. He is a good painter of the nude and one of the best in recent times, even if he was a rather detestable man, a horrible man to women, a gambler, violent and questionable how he lived his life. Probably not good for art, if it is to be an example to others, to have such a borderline criminal mind doing paintings that express himself. But he is an inventor of unusual poses and existential humanity. It is true that his biography poses some serious ethical problems. But that is another issue. His sexualized nudes are honest even if often gross. I admire the honesty, even if I find his color and paint use somewhat poorly done.

<sup>1024</sup> Kenneth Clark’s book The Nude is very interesting and worth reading. He is much too Platonist for my taste, but he is an excellent scholar and thought provoking.

with logic had a great influence of Scholastic medievalists like Thomas Aquinas, who tried to make a bogus “science” of metaphysics. But ultimately Aristotle’s concern with science lead to the undermining or transcending of such vain transcendental systems. Plato survives only in backwater areas in poetry, Ruskin’s polemics, or Shelley’s need of escape or transcendentalists like Emerson, Rumi and bizarre Sufi cults like the Schuon cult. By the Renaissance, Aristotle’s concern with reality and evidence had undermined the Scholastics and the road to science was open. There was all along a tendency of ethically unscrupulous people and governments to misuse science, and I will discuss that later.

By the time of Darwin the “dead hand of Plato” could be put aside from our eyes and we could see ourselves as rational animals on an earth that needs our care and attention. First Aristotle and later, and more importantly, Darwin is the antidote to Platonism, and this helps explain why the traditionalists and other anti-science fundamentalists hate Darwin so much. Darwin, true son of Aristotle’s concern with animals, goes way beyond Aristotle and is really the first scientist who sees nature as one thing and humanity a part of the whole, not above it. This is a very important discovery for both the earth and human beings. It also is Darwin’s contribution to the destruction of slavery and animal and nature’s rights. Darwin’s ideas prefigure the idea of speciesism and the critique of the misuse of ecologies.

We are beings among other beings on an earth that evolved and is still evolving. We all have the right to be here. Learning the full extent of what this means is what science and art are all about. The Canadian naturalist-writer, John Livingston defines wildness as “a state of being in which one is an autonomous organism, yet bonded and subsidiary to the greater whole.”<sup>1025</sup> This defines nature’s rights too, as well as the concept

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<sup>1025</sup> Livingston’s book on the [Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation](#) is really excellent, though he is

of preservation, and when Thoreau said, “in wildness is the preservation of the world”. The recognition of trees, plants, animals, water, weather, climate, forests, and rivers as being equal to human beings, even superior to us in many ways, should be obvious. Without nature, human beings are irrelevant and extinct. Nature comes before humans. But 500 Years of the erroneous concept that all is to be compared to “man” and “man is the measure of all things” has created a huge fiction that is destroying the earth, and externalizing nature to human centered greed.

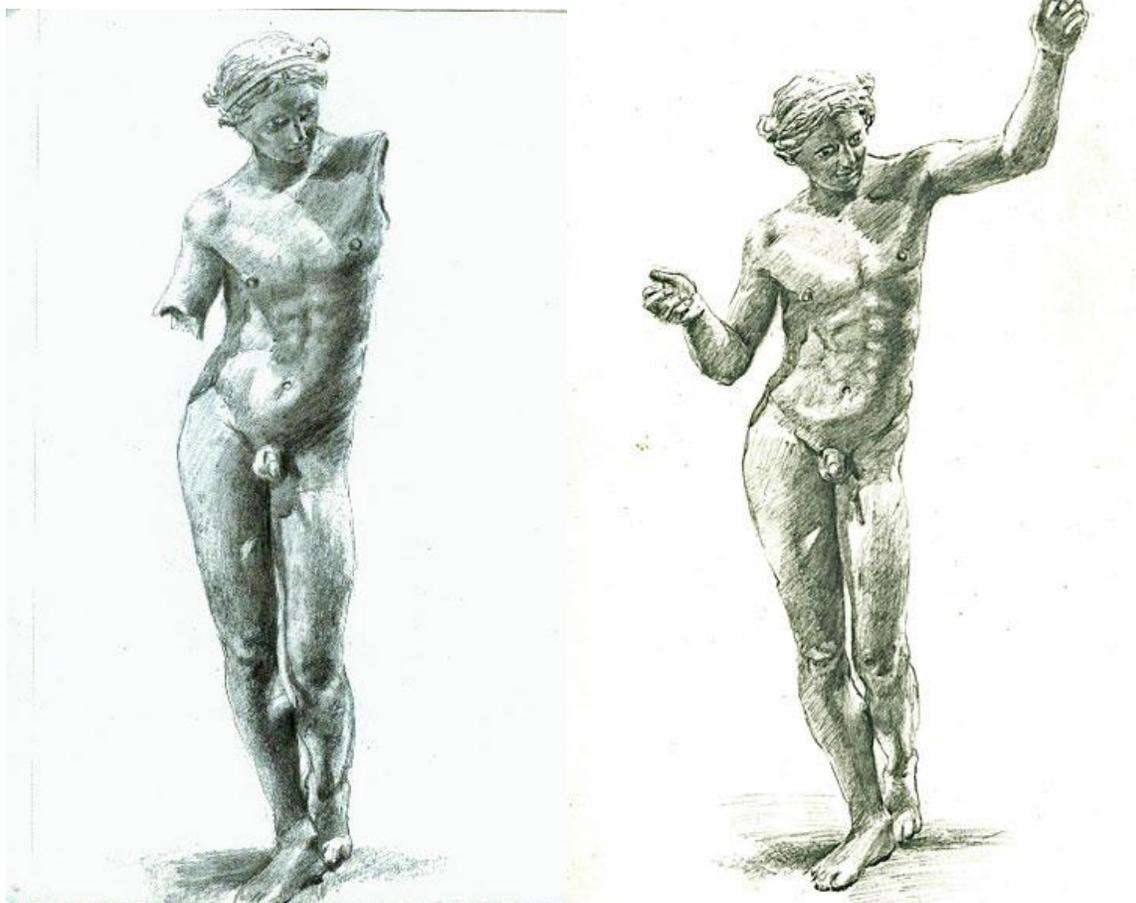
So understanding the role of Aristotle and Lucretius in the history of culture and science is important is grasping how we came to our age, and how we are still rife with conflicts between symbolic idealism and religion on the one hand and realism and non-corporate science on the other. Overcoming the arrogant speciesism of human centered, CEO or market culture, is essential in the recognition of the preservation of nature’s rights.

## **Praxiteles: Making the Myth of Praxiteles and the Misuse of Scholarship**

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mistaken about a few things, such as his claim that ungulates and rabbits “collaborate” in being prey. No animal wants to be prey. But his description of immortality as an excuse to make humans feel superior to non-human animals is original and very good. He notes that “if man is not immortal, there is no meaning to his existence”,--- this is of course, the standard fiction of religion, to claim human have immortal ‘souls’. This claim is the basis of human supremacy over other animals, and it is a specious claim.

“ if the highest purpose is the human purpose, necessarily and inevitably. This is what we are saying everytime we use the word “resource”. (Pg 102, Fallacy, in J, McClland and Stewart, Toronto, 2006)

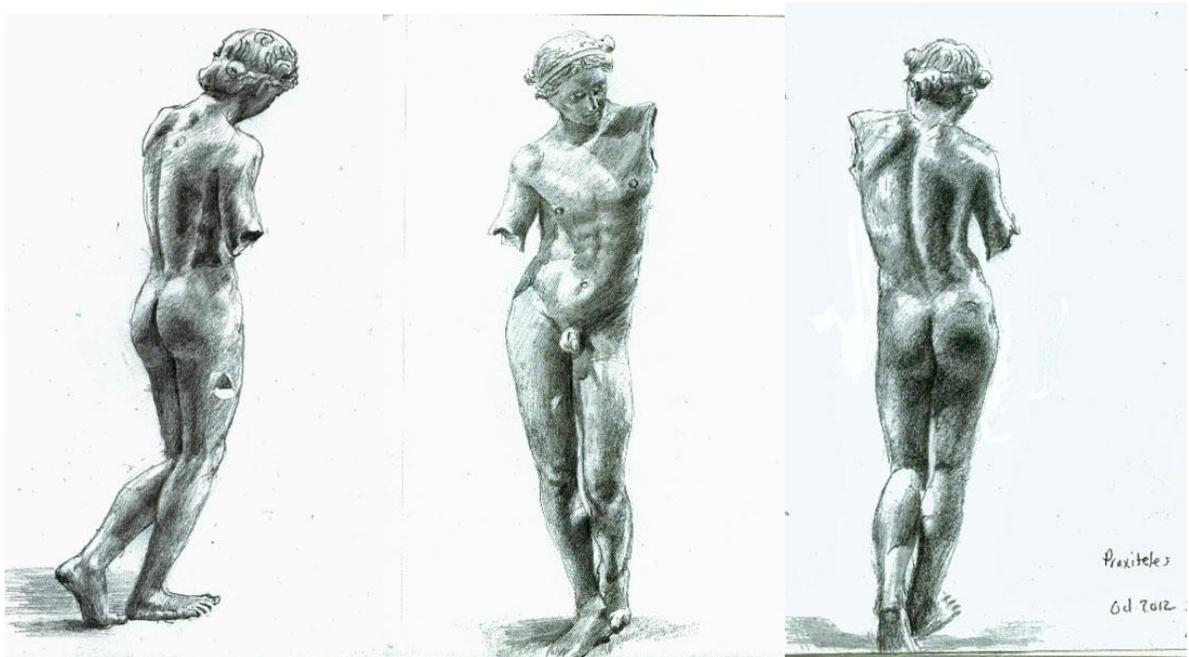


Reconstruction the Apollo as it might have looked  
, actual sculpture on left, reconstruction on right.  
Sculpture likely to be falsely attributed to Praxiteles

“some statues do in our day....obtain a  
much greater price..... if they inscribe the  
name of Praxiteles on their marbles...”

Phaedrus 15-50 BCE

For fun I did some studies of the 3 Apollo sculptures on show at Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) on show in 2013-14.. One of the Apollo sculptures belongs to CMA, one to the Louvre and one to the Liverpool Museum in Britain. The design of these sculptures is claimed to be by Praxiteles. The Cleveland Sculpture is claimed to be the actual one by him and the other two copies. This is certainly not true as the evidence suggests that “Praxiteles” may be the invention historians and scholars. Above you see my more recent attempt to turn the existing sculpture into what it might have looked like when it was made, minus the tree. Here are the three drawing I did in late 2012 and early 2013..



My drawings of the CMA Apollo Sauroktonos,  
(claimed to be by Praxiteles, but probably Roman)

Doing these drawings was a joy. I came to see why artists from Leonardo to the 19<sup>th</sup> century idealized Greek and Roman art so much. It is beautiful with a beauty that fascinates and invites you into it.

When I did the first three of these drawings I was blissfully oblivious to all that I will write about here. Indeed, the joy, precision, perfection, craft and humor in this sculpture is so palpable that I was really drawing that above all. Not only is the great god Apollo here pictured as a slight teen, lovely in strength and form, but the reverence here is for his physicality, not his godlikeness. Indeed, this image is decidedly not a god but a real human. The image is supposed to be about the Greek god Apollo conquering Chaos represented humorously as a tiny serpent. But this is unlikely and the allegory does not hold up except as a joke. If the small lizard is “Python”, or Chaos, then the sculpture is a parody or satire on the idea of Apollo conquering Chaos.

My idealization of Greek sculpture could only last a month or two. This is not to say that the sculpture lost anything of their appeal. The sculpture was billed as a “Praxiteles”, but I did not care about that. Once I started learning about the facts behind some of these sculptures I had to adjust my views. When I did these drawings I did not realize that this sculpture had cruelty embodied in it. Originally I did not see this aspect of the sculpture as the Cleveland Apollo is without arms. I was merely drawing a very lovely young man whose body celebrate youth, existence and human kind. In the Cleveland Apollo he is not pictured as a boy being cruel to animals. But in the Louvre and Liverpool Apollo he is holding a string in one hand to tease up the lizard. In the other he holds an arrow, presumably to kill the lizard once it crawls up the tree.

But as I studied the various versions of the Apollo that visited the Cleveland museum I realized the metaphor of the cruel boy appears to be more of an excuse than a reality. If there is a myth at the heart of this is not obvious, even in the Louvre, Liverpool or Vatican versions. It certainly is not about conquering Chaos. On face value the sculpture appears to be a spoof on heroic or mythic sculptures and perhaps a spoof on Greek Gods. This too would indicate a Hellenistic rather than a classical origin. This is not a sculpture of deep religious faith but one of

consummate skill and playful satire of religion.

Though I love the form of this sculpture and have studied it intensely, I dislike the aspect of cruelty in more intact versions of this sculpture think it part of the history of cruelty to animals that develops in Greece and Rome and later joins with Christianity to create Speciesism. This speciesism is certainly present in Ancient Greece. This is already present in Aristotle who wrote in his book on Government:

It is evident then that we may conclude of those things that are, that plants are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men; the tame for our use and provision; the wild, at least the greater part, for our provision also, or for some other advantageous purpose, as furnishing us with clothes, and the like

As we know now, animals were not “created” but evolved and the notion that they exist simply for humans is self-serving anthropocentrism. The ideology of the Great Chain of Being is repulsive. But my desire to draw this sculpture, an Aristotelian form if ever there was one--- also had primarily to do with its fine proportions and to draw some male figures. I am quite able to separate the ways in which Aristotle was wrong from the ways in which he was right. Like the historian of the time, he is a mixed bag, and does some things well and other things very badly. He is certainly better than Plato in any case. Moreover, I had been painting studies of females for a year or so needed to study the male body more.<sup>1026</sup>

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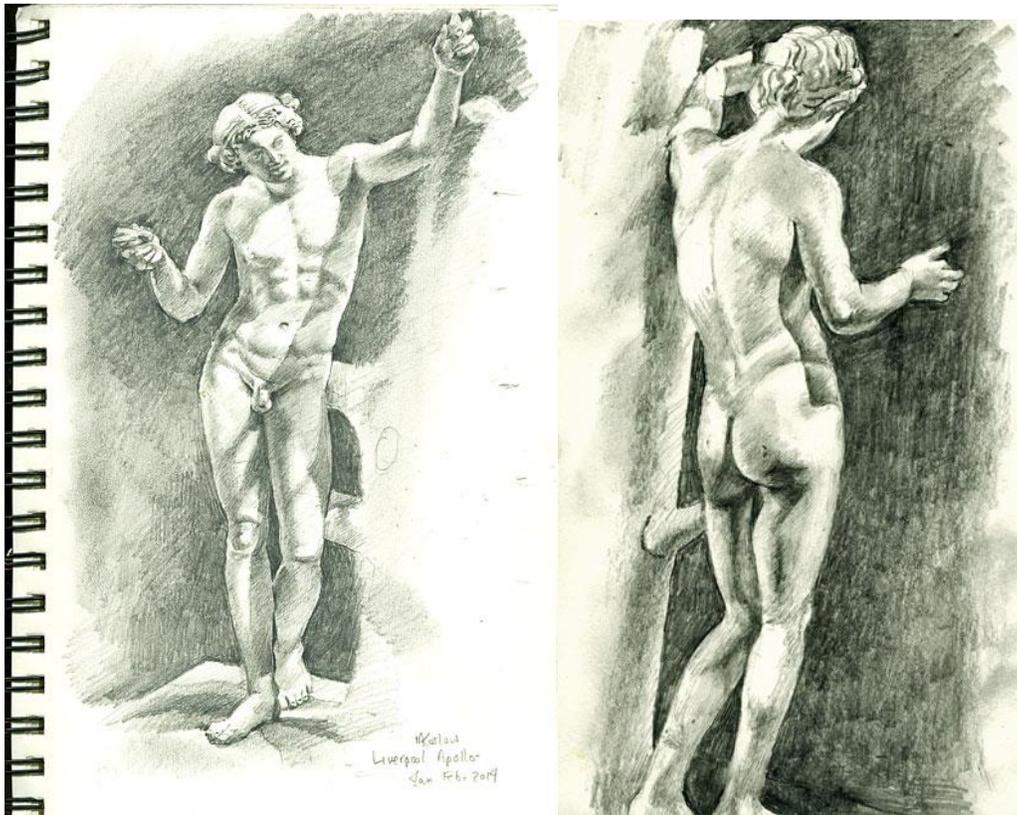
<sup>1026</sup> Cleveland was very forbidding and precious about drawing sculptures in their ‘special exhibition’ rooms. They would not let me draw the Louvre sculpture so I contacted the Louvre and got permission from them to do so. CMA only gave me three hours to draw it, which is not enough. I can only do one of these drawings in 5 or 6 hours or more. This was rather petty I thought, as the Louvre and many other museums have much more enlightened policy where they let anyone draw anywhere in the museum, any time, provided there is not a busy show going on such that artists get in the way of the crowds. There is no copyright restriction in doing drawings as drawing is not copying. CMA’s policy on this is wrongheaded. There is no good reason for it other than the exercise of arbitrary and irrational power.

In any case, the sculpture appears to have a lot of mixed motives in it. On the one hand, this image recalls the Yakshi image outside Hindu temples where a female goddess touches a tree with her heel and the tree bursts into flower. The Yakshi goddess is obviously a fertility image and probably is based on older pre-Vedanta imagery. There is no historical connection as far as I am aware with this Apollo. But Platonism and Vedanta appear to have cross pollinated to some degree, both of them being caste obsessed, authoritarian, patriarchal and elitist systems of unjust privilege.. The figure of Apollo is also a fertility image, once the lizard motif is ignored. The beauty of the young man is quite extraordinary and suggests the loveliness and fertility of youth. Vedanta and Plato are both anti-nature as is the motif of the Lizard killing. But this is so superficially presented that it is hard to take seriously, indeed, it reads as a joke or a satire on the image of Apollo as the sun god, vanquishing Chaos.

I seems to me that this Apollo might have some of the old fertility image of the youth as image of "Life" or Kouros in it, in a latent sort of way. The meaning of this opposes the image of the killer. The killing of the lizard is sometimes connected to the rebellion of Greek religion against the snake/nature worship of indigenous culture in Greece and thus might connect to Orphic myths, in which Orpheus is seen as a sort of enemy of wild nature. What is really being killed in an ancient respect for the natural world. This would be the opposite of the Yakshi image, which celebrates woman and nature, at least on the surface. But then this sculpture is probably Roman and there is a confusion of motives in it, and the image of the fertile and virile youth need not be reconciled with the Lizard killer image. Pastiche is common in these works in the Hellenistic period, and these images are very fluid and change meaning easily. In any case it was the fertility or virility of this young man that I was drawing, the lizard killing aspect does not interest me at all.

The Cleveland sculpture has some features that are absent it he

others. It is wonderfully drawn and has much greater detail in the forms than the Liverpool or the Louvre versions. The fingernails the hairband are very exact and true to life for instance. It is the most balanced and best proportioned and drawn of the group of three. I did these drawing of the Liverpool, on the left and the Louvre versions too. The latter, on the right, is not finished, as I explain in a footnote.



Liverpool Apollo and Louvre Apollo

( both alleged copies of an unknown original also allegedly by Praxiteles)

. In any case, in the process of doing these drawings, I was drawn into the historical and political arguments of scholars about Praxiteles, the presumed designer of the form of all these sculptures. Allot of what was said about this man did not make sense, so I began to look deeper. It soon became clear this could not be a Praxiteles and that this figure in history is not just problematic, but very likely a fabrication. Since it

became clear fairly quickly that this sculpture is an example of scholarship gone awry, it seemed a fitting topic for my third book which is about mistaken assumptions. This book is about the nearly religious/political assumptions that deform truth seeking and turn it into fictitious avenues. Eventually I got tangentially involved in Art History and archeology of the Classical period. First, I want to discuss myth making in modern art history and how and why it is created and sustained by the self-interest of scholars.

So, the main question of this essay is: Is Praxiteles a being of mythic fiction or an actual person? After a good deal of research it dawned on me at last that he is probably a fiction, partially or entirely. I conclude though my studies in this area, over the last several years, that a great deal of what passes as history of this period is fiction or dressed up stories of uncertain provenance. Most of the stories about Praxiteles are by Roman historians around the time of Pliny (23 -79 C.E. ) who was writing over 300 years after Praxiteles (395-340?<sup>1027</sup>), is supposed to have existed. I am used to history as search for reality and truth. This is not at all what history was during the time of Pliny. Unfortunately some modern Classical scholars also make up fictional histories, ignore contrary evidence and create a version of the truth that is to their liking, even if it never happened. William James puts forward the idea in his theory of religion and claims that if a story feels true it must be true, even if it is entirely made up. This what has happened with Praxiteles, and this fabrication goes back very far. In Pliny and other ancient historians one is as much in the realm of myth and religion as fact. Praxiteles is thus the creation of the fictional tendencies of historians.

Little of the information about Praxiteles can be trusted and most of it appears to be anecdotal or mythic, made up by these Roman

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<sup>1027</sup> his dates are unknown, but these are an average of those often used.

historians. It is impossible in many cases to verify what Pliny says, but he appears to be mistaken about so many things and made up history when it suited him. In Pliny, imaginative novelist, the poet, and the historian mix in really inappropriate ways. Part of the problem with classical scholarship is that these stories tend to form a sort of dogma and modern scholars reinforce each other's illusions about the supposed authenticity of reports made based questionable sources. One of the delights of my position is that I am not a classical scholar, however ongoing my interest is-- and so do not have to obey the hidden canons of the subject and can speculate freely on what the facts, -- or in this case, the absence of them, might mean.

So to begin rather randomly: besides Pliny, who I will discuss in more depth shortly, another writer trotted out to confirm modern scholarly prejudices, that the CMA Apollo was done by Praxiteles, is Marcus Valerius Martialis. He died around 104 C.E. He died nearly 400 years after Praxiteles made this sculpture Martialis writes of in his Epigram 172

Sauroctonos Corinth.

To you creeping, insidious child, lizards scratch, scratch that wants to destroy you.

This is rather trivial and ambiguous and seems a comment on the myth of Apollo rather than to a real sculpture on Corinth. One can read all sorts of things into an epigrammic poem like this. There was allegedly a bronze Apollo sculpture on Corinth but that it was by Praxiteles is merely a literary imagining and not a fact. While the poem is full of mythological suggestions, It is more or less useless as history. Yet it is used as a fact in the historiography of this work. It is not a fact but a piece of rhetorical fiction. Yet historians use this useless little bit of

information to add to the scaffold of the Praxiteles myth.

The same is true of the questionable epigrams of "Plato", who is claimed to have said "When Cypris saw Cypris at Cnidus, 'Alas!' said she; 'where did Praxiteles see me naked?' --- while this is clever, it is probably spurious. Plato did not write them. Cypris means Lady of Cypris or Aphrodite, of course. So the implication is that both Plato and Aphrodite are blessing the sculpture as having been done by Praxiteles. Actually this appears to be another fiction. This time put into Plato's mouth. Modern historians dutifully quote this as evidence of a sculpture that Praxiteles supposedly made, but actually there is little reason to suppose this is true.

Writing history in Greece and Rome was not really about truth but about a good story, an epic, or literature. According to J.L Moles, historiography after Herodotus and Thucydides is about "epic narrative" on the one hand, and the "attempt to establish factual truth" on the other. <sup>1028</sup> The Greek and Roman historians write a strange combination of fables and fact while trying to imitating the likes of Homer's Illiad, which is not history any more that the Bible is. This confusion of fact and fiction is present in Pliny, Atheneus and Pausanias, the main "history" writers about Praxiteles.

It was clear to me 20 years ago that from the age of Homer to the age of Plato, perhaps 400 years, involved an increasingly differentiation in culture. Inchoate and irrational gods became Ideas. This process was not whole cloth or entire. Even by Roman times there were few that had escaped the thrall of myth, including ideological myths like Plato created. So if Praxiteles was a real person, that person is now lost to history. The mythic imagination of Greece and Rome made him into a catch all for many sculptures, probably none of which were done by 'him', whoever he was, or if he was. This theory is of course speculative, but it has the

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<sup>1028</sup> Gill, Christopher. Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World, University of Texas, Austin 1993 pg. 91

advantage of actually fitting the facts now available to us, unlike the many books on Praxiteles, which are artful fictions .

Moles notes that Plutarch(46 – 120 C.E.) was quite willing to sacrifice historical fact to relate a good story with a moral. Pliny lived near the time of Plutarch and the same may be said of him. Seneca accuses historians of being liars. He writes “Some historians win approval by telling incredible tales”. At best it can be said that Pliny and Pausanias and others invented a literary story about Praxiteles and each one embellished it to the point where one cannot know if there was such a man, who or if he might have been. If there was such a person no one knows what he actually did. It is likely he did not exist at all. This is not quite the same thing as lying, but it is bad history and mythic fabrication, certainly. Rather than having art historians indulge this need of mythic magnification, I would much prefer to eliminate the attribution “Praxiteles” from art history all together and treat all the sculptures ascribed to him as not yet known and very possibly works done by many artists, all now invisible and neglected. They are all great sculptures, but even on face value they appear to be done by different hands.

At least with the sculptors Phidias and Polykleitos there is a better record than with Praxiteles. Polykleitos wrote a book on sculpture called the Kanon somewhere around 450-440 B.CE. one of the first datable books on aesthetics. Polykelitos is as close as we come to a Platonic sculptor, that is, one who created his works based on a mathematical formulae of sorts, rather like Leonardo’s Vitruvian man.. The workshop of Phidias for the Zeus sculpture was seemingly found in 1958 and there are some contemporary accounts about him, specifically in Plato, who mentioned him in Meno ( 91d). Also he appears to have been at work on the Parthenon. Plutarch’s biography of Phidias 500 years after the fact cannot be taken very seriously, however. So there is some admittedly

shaky evidence about what he did, though his existence is not in doubt.

But the record about Praxiteles is so very thin, so thin, in fact, I have come to believe he did not exist. He is largely and perhaps entirely, a fictive invention. The classical scholar Aileen Ajootian notes in her essay on Praxiteles that

Particularly in the case of Praxiteles the literary tradition creates a persona that consists of an accretion of literary tropes rather than a strict account of facts. <sup>1029</sup>

This is good but way understates the case. At least Ajootian admits there is a problem here, but then proceeds in much of the rest of her essay to treat literary fictions as if they were facts. Actually there is no contemporaneous evidence of Praxiteles ever existing. All the works ascribed to him could not be his and who actually did them is unknown. Classical art scholars have a hard time dealing with this unknown and so make up this or that simply to fill the void. While Da Vinci is incontestably real with thousands of manuscript pages and paintings ascribable only to him, and Van Gogh incontestably existed as over 900 letter prove, Praxiteles is a ghost, and appears to be a carefully nurtured fiction, not any less fiction despite all the true believers that worship at his many shrines. Maybe there was such a man, but it is doubtful and all the facts about him should be carefully studied and subjected to rigorous examination. I have not looked into them all, but from what I have seen so far, it is a story that is far more fiction than fact. I think rigorous dismissal of facts not supported by actual evidence suggests the man did not exist, as I show in this essay. I think this would still be the case even if more searching were done. He is the creation of bad art

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<sup>1029</sup> Palagia and Pollitt, Personal Styles in Greek Sculpture. Cambridge University Press 1996 pg. 97

historians and gives that discipline a bad name. He is a persistent illusion.

Biographies of Praxiteles, like the two volume set by Antonio Corso, are largely fiction stringing together a lot of questionable facts or fictions as if they were certainties, when they are anything but. The scholarship involved in Corso's book is extensive but is based on many unexamined assumptions, unquestionable dogmas and facts accepted that actually are later fictions. He obsessively builds his case out of thin air. He is willing to use the words "perhaps" or "Praxiteles must have", when in fact he does not know. Moreover he does not consider contrary evidence nor give much credence to the many critics of virtually every piece attributed to Praxiteles. He quotes Pliny like a Bible.

Art History here gets written without any fact checking or peer review and claims can be asserted that have no real basis in fact. True, there is more evidence that Praxiteles did exist than that Jesus of Nazareth<sup>1030</sup> existed, but that is saying little as Christ very likely did not exist.<sup>1031</sup> But we are largely in the realm of myth and legend with Praxiteles, as with Christ and Muhammad: indeed, in all these cases we find the same pattern of historical fudging, lies, myth creation and lots of

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<sup>1030</sup> The creation of the myth of Jesus overlaps the creation of the myth of Praxiteles, both having been created about 2000 years ago. It may be the same mythic and historical interplay and hyperbole is at work in both. Earl Doherty and others claim that the Christ myth precedes the attempt to create a gospel narrative, which are fictional stories which justify the already existing myth. The evidence suggests that this is a fact. This happens around 100-200 C.E. Roman writers are important in the creation and eventual state imposition of the Christian myth. In both cases we are dealing with a fiction that treated as historical fact. Of course the function of the Praxiteles myth is to serve the Roman Empire in a minor way, whereas the Christ myth becomes a huge organizing force that helps create the Dark Age Feudalism that would supplant Rome, though mostly Christianity is a Roman creation. But these are complex matters I only allude to here

<sup>1031</sup> For more on the Christ Myth see Earl Doherty [the Jesus Puzzle](http://www.jesuspuzzle.humanists.net/jhcjp.htm)  
<http://www.jesuspuzzle.humanists.net/jhcjp.htm>

or here <http://www.jesuspuzzle.humanists.net/home.htm>

see also

On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt  
By Richard Carrier. 2014

time between the time when the subject supposedly existed and any actual records that claim what they did. All these men appear to be later literary creations, when in fact there is little or no mention of them at the time, and nothing of a factual nature..

It may be that there was another Praxiteles who lived later or that maybe a 'Praxiteles' did exist, or at least a sculpture by a man of a similar name existed, as some attributions have been made because a name was misread.<sup>1032</sup> No one knows the origin of any of these sculptures. The Hermes and Dionysius sculpture is probably Roman for instance, but is usually placed squarely in the Praxitelian canon. Since the originals are gone, or rather, they may not even have existed, no one can now tell if copies of it look like exactly it or not, or even indeed if the presumed copies are actually copies or original works. Many of the works false attributed to Praxiteles are probably original Roman creations.

There are a number of inscribed bases with Praxiteles signature on them, but no sculpture above it.<sup>1033</sup> But this tells us little and anyone who is handy with a chisel can write on marble. Some of these are very dubious at best. The one comment of Pliny that might be somewhat convincing is his claim that many people went to visit the Aphrodite of Cnidus after Praxiteles made it. He writes that "There are works by him [Praxiteles] at Athens in the Ceramics, but first and foremost not only of this, but indeed in the whole world, is the Venus that many have sailed to Cnidus to see." But all this really implies is that people went there during the time of Pliny, which is nearly 400 years after the sculpture was supposedly created. So Pliny has not really given us anything except

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<sup>1032</sup> One group sculpture of the Sauroktonos type, the Ildefonso, uses the Sauroktonos image for instance, but might be by a Praxiteles, whose name is quite similar, says Aileen Ajootian in Personal Styles in Greek Sculpture. Pg121

<sup>1033</sup> Corso discusses one such inscription and spends a whole day trying to read it, and concludes it does say Praxiteles. His career depends on seeing it that way. But barely readable words written on stone are not proof of anything. One cannot infer a whole history of an individual from blurred writing on an old stone, since no one knows when it was written or by whom, or even if it really says what is claimed.

knowledge that it was admired in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.

I would like to imagine a Praxiteles may have existed. But there are simply no facts to prove that he did. The one sculpture that is supposed to have been definitely by him is the Aphrodite of Cnidus or Knidos. The basis of the attribution of the Knidian Aphrodite sculpture to Praxiteles is again Pliny. But even here in this most 'certain' of Praxiteles sculptures, there are many doubts about the literary heritage of it. Pliny, Atheneus, Pausanius and others cannot be trusted. Christine Havelock notes that "there is not a trace of the Knidia in the art and literature of the fourth or third centuries" B.C.E. <sup>1034</sup> This fact should have suggested to this author that this is evidence that perhaps the man did not exist and the Knidia is a later creation by someone else, Hellenistic and not Classical. Maybe it was done by a Greek sculptor working for the early Romans. There does not seem to be any record of anyone seeing the Knidian Aphrodite till around 220 230 BCE, when a few ambiguous coins turn up with the image on it, though how those coins were dated is not very clear to me, nor is it clear that this is the sculpture called Knidia on the coin. Havelock also notes that

"the figure [of Knida] is not mentioned in any contemporary source. She was ignored or unknown to the philosophers, dramatists, and poets of the fourth century and the early Hellenistic period" <sup>1035</sup>

It is a presumption to say "she was ignored" when it is not certain that she even existed then. This surmise and assumption is how myths maintain themselves. The Knidian Aphrodite is mentioned by

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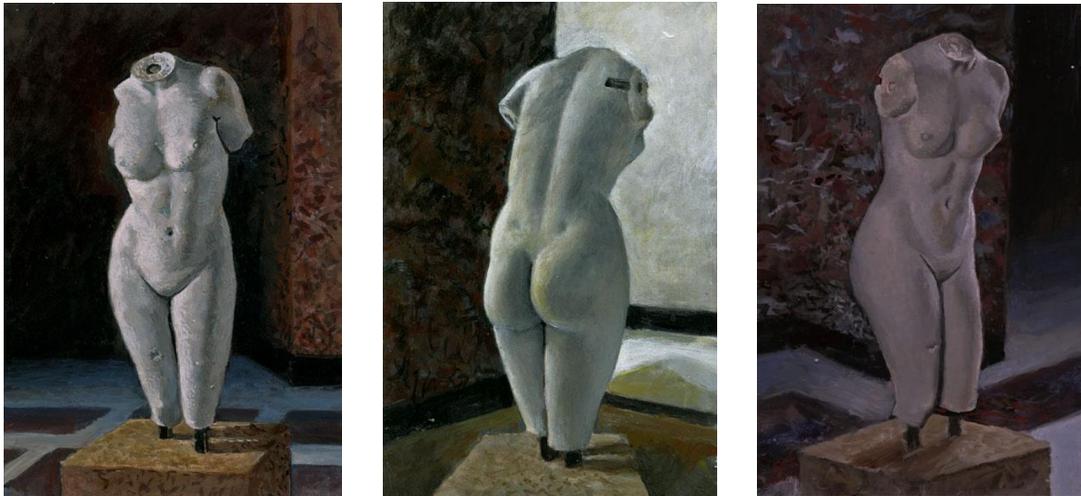
<sup>1034</sup> Havelock, Christine Mitchell [The Aphrodite of Knidos and Her Successors: A Historical Review...](#)

<sup>1035</sup> Ibid. Pg. 55

Poseidippis, who mentions it the early 200's BCE, and it is noted that this historian does not mention Phyrne at all. This is 150 years or so since it was supposedly made by Praxiteles. It is reasonable to suppose that this, his most famous sculpture, was probably not made by him at all and is later, Hellenistic.

But if Poseidippis is the first to mention the sculpture, and there is not mention of such an important work before that, it is clear the fiction begins there. The notion that it was made 150 years earlier and no one mentions this important work is absurd, he did not make it.

Pliny made up his imaginary stories about the Knida and other sculptures 200 years later. The notion that one can believe Pliny, given this record, is utterly absurd. It is likely he merely embellished the exaggerated fictions of others. Yet art history scholars go on saying it is certain Praxiteles did make this one sculpture, the model for thousands of other Venuses.



Three Views of the Louvre's Aphrodite of Knidos, allegedly by Praxiteles  
Torso  
small oil paintings by author

There is no basis for this supposition at all, and if the rules of evidence matter, the only real likelihood is that Praxiteles is a myth pushed by Poseidippis, Pliny, Pausanias, Atheneus, as well as by recent art historians such as Palagia, Corso, Havelock and many others. They all made it up, unknowingly perhaps, but nevertheless. It was exceedingly common for Greek and Roman historians to do this--- just as Herodotus made up the hairy mane and tail he imagined to be on the Hippopotamus of the Nile as well as his exaggerations about the huge size of the Persian Army.<sup>1036</sup>

In fact the absence of evidence for Praxiteles is indeed, in this case, evidence of his absence. It is pretty sure that this artist is a myth. Perhaps some evidence would turn up eventually showing he was real. But until that happens it is most reasonable to assume he is the literary creation of art historians and anthropologists who should have been novel writers. The fact of so much uncertainty in the records about him gives one pause. The lack of evidence is more in favor of his being a myth than a reality. Havelock mentions that there is a “surprising” flowering of interest in the Knidian Aphrodite about 100 BCE, and this suggests that it does not exist much before that. This not “surprising” at all if the sculpture was made around 200 BCE or later. So it is not Greek at all but Roman and the coins merely represent a prototype of sorts or a growing trend in form. This has the ring of truth in it, and of honest assessment based on the facts. So perhaps Roman sculptors made the form of the Knidian Aphrodite, as well as most of the other Aphrodites, since nearly all of them are indeed Roman and after 200 BCE. The form was probably not the creation of one sculptor but of many over a few hundred years.

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<sup>1036</sup> Herodotus also thought that sheep in Egypt had huge tails and that there were flying snakes in the Middle East. History in those days was largely make believe and this is long before Pliny, who might be a little better, but not by much.

But all the other sculptures ascribed to Praxiteles are very doubtful. It is humorous to look at the list of works that is attributed to Praxiteles. There are about 70 works, 10 of them "disputed" when actually all of them are disputable and there are no originals that are uncontested, including the Aphrodite. No one could have made 70 advanced sculptures of this quality in less than five lifetimes. Since this is impossible, there clearly there has been a lot of fiction written about this guy. He is a dumping ground for lovely sculptures that scholars have trouble attributing to anyone. Experts I have questioned have no real evidence about Praxiteles, they merely have "faith" in Pliny, Pausanias, Lucian and others that mention him, and so claim he existed and made the works that are disputed to be his.<sup>1037</sup> This is religion or politics and not art history. . So is Praxiteles entirely the invention of Roman historians and modern museum curators, anxious to attribute "their" pet sculpture to a great name that has no reality at its base? It would seem so, or at least, this seems one likely conclusion, all too often denied by classical scholars. The refusal to admit this very reasonable assumption is itself worrying.

The idea that the existence of Praxiteles should not be questioned—as one eminent classical art scholar said to me—is dogma and not rational. There is a dogmatic myth that the main sculptures in the Praxitelian canon were not created by anyone but him, even if the originals were lost, and in the absence of convincing evidence. This is not art history but fancy, dogmatism and mistaken. Classical art scholarship appears to be largely based on literary fiction and dogma and to be little supported by any facts or contemporary witnesses. It is really just a tissue of literary associations loosely attached to existing works. The works themselves are amazing, there is no doubt about that, but the

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<sup>1037</sup> for instance Corso argues that Cephisodotus or Kephisodotos was Praxiteles' father, son or son in law or father and that Pliny is a source of this. But the idea that Pliny knew anything about it very farfetched to begin with.

history that surrounds them is probably bogus. What is amazing in the Knidia, the Apollo, Dionysius and other sculptures is the men who made them all of them unknown and invisible.

But there is one fact that can be demonstrated. There is an historical record of one man saying, in effect, that Praxiteles is a dumping ground. Phaedrus (15 BCE, 50 CE) said it was all bogus at the time. He writes something very interesting that no scholar has bothered to quote as far as I can tell. In his Prologue to the Fables he says:

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“If I shall anywhere insert the name of Æsop, to whom I have already rendered every honor that was his due, know that it is for the sake of his authority, just as some statues do in our day, who obtain a much greater price for their productions, if they inscribe the name of Praxiteles on their marbles, and Myron on their polished silver. Therefore let these Fables obtain a hearing.”<sup>1038</sup>

Phaedrus, who at least was a real person, wanted to be Aesop, (who probably did not exist either). But at least he is honest about it. Phaedrus was aware that many sculptures attributed to Praxiteles were fake, yet many put the name of Praxiteles on their sculptures and claimed it was really by him, because it promoted their work into the myth. That is how 70 sculptures got the name Praxiteles on them. He is saying that if you want to be listened to, make it up, it takes “fables to obtain a hearing”. This is evidence of a common understanding at the time of the need to lie and to lie specifically about Praxiteles. Pliny and Herodotus, Pausanias and others told fables, but were not honest about it. Perhaps the Knidian Aphrodite was indeed by a man whose name is

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<sup>1038</sup> Phaedrus. The Fables of Phaedrus Book V Prologue

[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25512/25512-h/25512-h.htm#riley\\_V\\_pro](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25512/25512-h/25512-h.htm#riley_V_pro)

lost who lived around 200 BCE. Maybe his name was Prasiteles or Positelis or even Praxiteles and all the other sculptures are free-loaders on his name. This is more plausible than the imaginary existence of a Praxiteles living at the time of Aristotle, for whom there is no evidence at all. But what if there really was a Praxiteles in Greece who made the famous sculptures. Nope.

Yet if Phaedrus knew the name Praxiteles was being forged and promoted as myth, it seems likely this was not an uncommon occurrence. This would explain all the sculptures around with that name attached to them. It is entirely reasonable to doubt the existence of Praxiteles and see it all as myth. This ought to be a valid point of view in classical studies. It might even be the right one.

Phaedrus is already saying around 25 CE, that many of the sculptures then called Praxiteles were not actually by him, and this is not long before Pliny writes fables in praise of Praxiteles. It is much more likely that Phaedrus is telling the truth than Pliny. Phaedrus was writing fiction with a moral lesson and thus telling white lies in order to tell the truth. Sometimes, not often perhaps, but sometimes, fiction is truer than non-fiction, as in Dickens or Shakespeare. Pliny is doing the opposite from Phaedrus, he is writing "truth" that is actually a mythical concoction or a lie. It was already known that the name Praxiteles was a way to pawn off things that were not real. Phaedrus implies it was common knowledge. Just as Homer is probably a made up composite of many poets and generally seen as the culmination of many generations of oral story-telling that resulted in the Iliad and Odyssey, so Praxiteles is not one sculptor but many sculptors. Like Homer, Aesop is also a "literary" trope or cultural tradition. The man probably did not exist, but the character is a catch all for a type of story. The Greeks and Romans were still living in a twilight area where truth and fiction are blurred. Praxiteles maybe a fictional character of this kind, an attribution dump.

What is clear is that the name "Praxiteles" bolsters or hypes up the image of the Roman authors and modern scholars that write about it, as well as archeologists that promote his sculptures. Like the 'god' fiction Praxiteles creates jobs and careers. So who cares if it might be all fiction? Isn't a good story better than reality anyway?

My own preference is for the truth, as the world is full enough of actual marvels without dressed up fictions added to them. As Gregory Curtis shows in his excellent book Disarmed, those who worked at the Louvre in the early 1800's actually cut off the signature of the artist who did it and claimed it was a Praxiteles, to bolster its fame. This guy has been used for millennia as a dump for masterpieces. Actually, as we now know the Venus de Milo was Carved by Alexandros, a little known sculptor of Antioch around 150 BCE. Maybe he did the Aphrodite or the Sauroctonos too? Phaedrus would laugh out loud about this. As it is exactly what he said people were doing nearly 2 thousand years earlier. Unfortunately the Louvre has not learned from its own mistake and is still trying to push the myth of Praxiteles. Though there is proof that times have changed. At an exhibition of works allegedly "by" Praxiteles in 2007 at the Louvre, one of their promotional documents admits that

"The numismatic and literary sources presented in the display cases are the only surviving and reliable historical records that we may use to supplement our understanding of the sculptor, since virtually all of his works fell victim to the ravages of time or the vicissitudes of history".

Actually the literary sources are really useless, since the writings of Pliny, Atheneus, Martialis and Pausanias,--- all of whom are used to claim that Praxiteles is real,--- are all questionable. They are all heavily involved in myth making, and though they occasionally pepper their

works with facts it is largely unknown which are facts and which are make believe stories meant to entertain. There is yet to be a really thorough evidentiary vetting of these ancient texts, as there ought to be. They are so full of mistakes, fabrications and myth. So the Louvre show of 2007 is questionable at best and probably misleading and involved in the same myth creation.

A brief glance at Pliny's Natural History would convince anyone with reason that this man is not to be trusted. He writes all sorts of nonsense. He says, for instance, that dragons leap out of trees and eat elephants. He says that a "Phoenix" exists in Arabia and he imagines that

"it lives five hundred and forty years, that when it becomes old it builds a nest of cassia and sprigs of incense, which it fills with perfumes, and then lays its body down upon them to die; that from its bones and marrow there springs at first a sort of small worm, which in time changes into a little bird: that the first thing that it does is to perform the obsequies of its predecessor, and to carry the nest entire to the city of the Sun near Panchaia,<sup>5</sup> and there deposit it upon the altar of that divinity" ( Natural History 10,2)

. His book is full of nonsense like this on many subjects. The idea that he can be trusted on something 300 years before him is absurd.<sup>1039</sup> Are Atheneus, Pausanias and Pliny to be trusted? The simple answer is no. Looking at Pliny's Natural History made me think few scholars of Greek

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<sup>1039</sup> About salamanders for instance: " the salamander, an animal like a lizard in shape, and with a body starred all over, never comes out except during heavy showers, and disappears the moment it becomes fine. This animal is so intensely cold as to extinguish fire by its contact, in the same way as ice does. It spits forth a milky matter from its mouth; and whatever part of the human body is touched with this, all the hair falls off, and the part assumes the appearance of leprosy> N.H. 10, 86

sculpture have actually read him, or if they did they are very gullible. Phaedrus was certainly right.

However, there are exceptions. At least Olga Palagia points out in her essay, "Pheidias Epoiesein",<sup>1040</sup> that Pliny is prone to give a sculpture a mistaken attribution when it is not factually indicated at all, simply because it conforms to his "value judgment" . For instance a sculpture of a man named Alcibiades is supposed by Pliny to have been done by either Praxiteles or Scopas, but this work could not be by either Praxiteles or Scopas since "Alcibiades lived in the wrong century", she says. Pliny makes great names like Praxiteles or Scopas a "magnet of attribution" she says. Pliny thought that if a given sculpture was beautiful it must be a Phidias or Praxiteles. Palagia goes to great lengths to show that sculptures were misidentified or wrongly attributed by both Pliny and Pausanias, writing nearly 400 years after Phidias and Praxiteles. How could it be otherwise?

Pliny and Pausanias were not the only ones to mis-attribute sculptures. So did the Classical scholar, Furtwangler, whom Palagia accuses of having an "ad hoc" method of deciding who did what sculpture. She notes that classical experts on sculpture have made irresponsible attributions on the basis that "this [sculpture] is so beautiful it must be classical and was probably made by someone we have heard of". Cleveland basically claims that their Apollo sculpture is a Praxiteles because it is too beautiful to be anything else. That at least is known and Phaedrus admits that all sorts of people claimed that a given sculpture was by Praxiteles when it was not..

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<sup>1040</sup> Palagia, Olga, "Pheidias Epoiesein", [http://www.arch.uoa.gr/fileadmin/arch.uoa.gr/uploads/images/melh\\_dep/papers/palagia\\_pheidias\\_epoiesen.pdf](http://www.arch.uoa.gr/fileadmin/arch.uoa.gr/uploads/images/melh_dep/papers/palagia_pheidias_epoiesen.pdf)

I do not mean here to imply that Palagia herself is beyond these illusory attributions. She mentions the imaginary love between Praxiteles and Phryne as if it were a fact. Actually the historical record suggests this story is clearly the result of the imagination of Athenaeus (200 BCE), probably promoted by less embellished comments from earlier writers.<sup>1041</sup> The story is traced in Christine Mitchell Havelock's book The Aphrodite of Knidos and Her Successors. She shows the Phryne myth grew up slowly as a sensationalist literary fiction over several centuries, and implies that if there was any basis for it, it might have been someone else entirely, as there was more than one Phryne. The Athenaeus story in the *Deipnosophistae* (d. after 200 C.E.) about Praxiteles love for Phryne is well told, but there is not a grain of truth in it. Havelock quotes an earlier version of this myth, very likely the first version, which comes from around 200 BCE. The Athenaeus version is a few hundred years later and he added salacious details about Phryne taking her clothes off at her trial. Havelock notes that this “perhaps did not even happen”. There is no perhaps about it, as indeed, the whole story is probably a concoction. Corso seems to take every word of Pliny as 'gospel' and never questions if the gospel might be a fiction.

I don't think Havelock draws the logical conclusion that the Phryne of myth is a fabrication, but she should have. She comes close, in any case, and it is obvious to me that the myth should be questioned. A more skeptical attitude towards the historicity of Phryne anecdotes is certainly warranted. These authors, Palagia and Havelock, both notably women, begin to question these myths but do not draw the logical conclusion, though they comes closer to it than many other classical scholars. Just about everything, actually—everything--- about Praxiteles is fiction and the historians who write about Greek sculpture created and are still creating a mythic or legendary series of stories about the sculptor..

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<sup>1041</sup> See also Phryne in Modern Art, Cinema and Cartoon by Eleanora Cavallini.

The Phyrne story was later painted by Gerome, Turner and many others, and is obviously a male voyeuristic fantasy which persists by virtue of its erotic content. and cannot be taken seriously as a historical account of anything. It is used to claim that this or that statue is actually by Praxiteles of Phryne the Hetaerae or courtesan. The name Phyrne was a common one for prostitute or courtesan during the classical period. It would be safe to observe that Gerome's fantasy accurately reflects the fabricated story of Athenaeus and thus reflects male sexual fantasy in the begging of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE..

Both the Gerome and Atheneus stories are rather sensationalist and transparent stories and hard to take seriously as history. Though one must add that the need to make such a fantasy float as a real event is itself part of history. The convenient thing about Praxiteles is that because there are no real facts about him that anyone one can point to, the scholar who writes about him are much freer than usual to express their creative instincts and claim him as their own. Yet at the same time they can write about him as if he were a real person, not a fiction. This makes Praxiteles almost a religious figure, like Jesus or Muhammad, and one in which sexual allusions are both allowed and even built upon as part of "history". One could rightly say then that the myth of Phyrne is really a cloak for the hypocrisy of mostly male scholars and painters.



Phryne before the Areopagus by Gerome, 1861f

As to the coins, my preliminary finding is that they all appear to be Roman creations, at least as far as the Sauroktonos coins are concerned.<sup>1042</sup> They are mostly from one period in the 2nd century C.E. and since Praxiteles himself seems to be a Roman creation to a large degree, this is not surprising. Havelock mentions coin images of Knida but none of them are much older than 200 BCE. But are they of the Knidia?

Since there are no Praxiteles that exist with any concrete reference or reality other than in 1st or second century BCE, and all others are

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<sup>1042</sup> Patrician Laurence writes of these coins that “I would repeat: this is a unique phenomenon. A famous statuary type used in one region and, as a series [of coins]: nowhere else. Never before Antoninus Pius, never after Diadumenian.( 208 – 218 C.E.). Martial writes it up at Rome, but it never appears on a Rome-mint coin. Marble copies are found in Greece, but it does not appear on Greek Imperials from the Greek peninsula or islands” Antoninus Pius lived 86 C.E. – died 7 March, 161 C.E...This is rather late and is close to the time of Pliny who died in 79 in the explosion of Vesuvius.

hearsay or invented fiction, and some coins from the same period, it is virtually impossible to identify a style or a man's work and significance. The evidence suggests that Praxiteles did not exist and all the sculptures attributed to him are 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the oldest being 220 BCE or so. In fact the Praxitelian oeuvre is heterogeneous and looks like it was done by many invisible sculptors.

This is a particularly clear example of historians abuse of history. This makes all scholarly writings about Praxiteles more about their authors than about the fictional character they write about. They are writing imaginative fiction, not art history. Tangentially such writings might also be about various more or less random sculptures, some of them of exceptional quality and beauty, which could have been done hundreds of years after the man Praxiteles might have lived. Thus, virtually all Praxiteles studies are largely fiction of a rather cultish kind, and fiction created and sustained by scholars as an attempt to sustain careers and serve ambitions.

This looks to be the case with the Cleveland Apollo, which follows the by now usual pattern. The three sculptures below were all in a show in Cleveland in 2013-14. The one on the left is said by curator Michael Bennett to be an authentic Praxiteles. The only one on earth, he passionately imagines. But this is probably just hype and in fact it is a later Roman work, as I will explain shortly. The one in the middle, from the Louvre, in some ways the most beautiful, since it is almost complete, although heavily restored. The one on the right is the Liverpool Apollo.



From Left to right : the Cleveland Apollo, the Louvre Apollo and the Liverpool Apollo, all likely mis-attributed to a Praxiteles original

Cleveland bought theirs in 2004 from a questionable antiquities dealer, who claims to have gotten it from East Germany. There are those who doubt this story, and the museum has not been forthcoming about aspects of its origins according to some. This sculpture is really beautiful, though very damaged. It is claimed by Bennett that it was done by Praxiteles (370-330) but he has not demonstrated anything other than it was probably made sometime between 350 B.C.E. and 100 B.C.E., probably closer to the latter. This could mean many things. It could have been done by many people between 350 and 100 BCE. It is unlikely the earlier date is at all accurate as I will explain shortly. It could be Roman, it could be by virtually anyone else. The evidence does not suggest it is the one that Pliny records in the 1st century BCE, which is certainly a fake in any case. It is claimed by the Cleveland Museum to be the one that is said to have been at Delphi. But this is also fiction with little or no basis to it. Since there is not one sculpture by Praxiteles whose authenticity is uncontested, is it likely to be really by him?. For one to suddenly turn up at this late date is certainly doubtful. It has

been thrust into view without much real debate as to its character and origins. It is claimed it was probably taken out of Greece by Nero along with shiploads of 500 other sculptures. But no one knows that this is case either. This maybe more art history of the sort that does not go before its critics for their fair assessment, but one that is thrust on the public as part of a PR campaign. This has some of the marks of a flim flam.

So I looked closer. Michael Bennett and Antonio Corso both heavily depend on Pliny's Natural History and the book of Atheneus to defend their claims about Praxiteles' creations. The basis of the attribution of Apollo Sauroktonos is again Pliny. This sculpture is mentioned by Pliny,(NH. 34. 19, or in some editions 34, 70?) but in brief and rather trivial terms. Pliny says

"Praxiteles also made a youthful Apollo called in Greek the Lizard-Slayer because he is waiting with an arrow for a lizard creeping towards him."

This is not enough to base an identification on, as it could well be as Phaedrus says, merely a trumped up pretence or a promotional fiction. One needs a lot more than a questionable quote from a source writing hundreds of years after the fact to establish anything.

Bennett has a nearly religious view of the sculpture and says that in Ohio he has recreated the "Temple of Art", like Delphi, where the sculpture was supposed to have been originally housed. Bennett tries to relate the sculpture to an imaginary American "Temple of Art" and compares it to the Greenough sculpture of George Washington and thus folds it into a Nationalist ideology, evoking transcendentalist ideas of

Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism of the 19th century. <sup>1043</sup>  
This is not history, but Republican myth, politics and religion. It is also poor scholarship and unwarranted, despite the extraordinary beauty of the sculpture. Since Pliny is often mistaken and his attributions are often 'value judgments' rather than real scholarship based on facts, as Palagia has shown, Bennett has made a “value judgment” that because the sculpture is beautiful it must be by Praxiteles. <sup>1044</sup> . In other words

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<sup>1043</sup> Bennett does not like “collective ownership” of art and calls it “ideology” but exempts private ownership from the same charge, when obviously both of these are ideology. (pg. 48 of his book). He claims "ancient art transcends archeological context", which is nonsense as all art has a place of origin and this always matters. But since the provenance of the Cleveland Apollo is rather suspicious, it is not a surprise he would say that. Actually a great sculpture like this really does belong to everyone. The Elgin Marbles belong in Greece, since they were stolen off the Parthenon and Britain should return them. So likewise this sculpture probably should make regular visits to Italy and Greece, where it is from. Art done for the ultra-rich has always been a corrupting influence on culture,--- and often results in poor art-- as the French Revolution understood very well.

<sup>1044</sup> Victoria Button writes in her Thesis that :

This statement underlines one of the problems associated with conventional connoisseurship as a methodology; it is often used for attribution purposes, as a means of explaining the appearance of an artwork, and a way of making the evidence fit preconceived ideas. Further, in its tacitness, traditional connoisseurship is neither a methodology that is measurable, nor is it a transferable tool for use by anyone other than the connoisseur. Prior to the development of and access to instrumental analysis and innovations in examination technology, .... This unquestioned opinion of the connoisseur has permeated art historical methodology for centuries, but can be an unquantifiable solution to many questions relating to an artist’s production. Such an approach has sometimes limited potential new approaches to Holbein’s portrait drawings for fear of questioning authorities on Holbein. ....The position of old-fashioned connoisseurship’s ability to understand an object’s production was questioned in relation to the now much valued collaboration between scientists, conservators and art historians. Leonardo expert and art historian Martin Kemp responded that connoisseurship was still valid. However, since there was too much information still open to interpretation, art historians needed to work out their methodology in order to better integrate it with science. Further, emphasizing this lack of definition, Kemp answered by responding that the way we deal with connoisseurship now is ‘arbitrary, chaotic and opportunistic’.

claiming the Cleveland Apollo is a Praxiteles follows a well-established trend of questionable attributions made by museum curators. Palagia notes that though Pliny's tendency to literary and mythic attributions is a practice on the wane, but it is still alive and well in some places. The Cleveland Museum of Art, and Michael Bennett appears to be one of these places.<sup>1045</sup>

Pliny mentions the Apollo Sauroktonos was a bronze. But though the Cleveland Apollo is a bronze, there have been so many false attributions in history for pieces claiming to be a Praxiteles, one should be very cautious. His signature appears in many places, indeed, there are far more signatures than facts about his life, suggesting again that Phaedrus is right and the name Praxiteles and the word fable are nearly synonymous.. The Cleveland Apollo has no valid provenance to speak of, so the most one can say is that it is damaged, but beautiful.

Palagia notes herself that it is not Greek but Roman and she says in a letter to the author this is so because "the face is Roman" and the bronze "has too much lead in it". Bennett says the lead content is 15%, and 10 % tin and the rest copper. This is a high lead content. Carol Mattusch says in her Greek Bronze Statuary. (pg. 15) that the Greek used little or no lead until later and suggests that a large amount of lead probably indicates a later date, or as Palagia says, it may mean it was Roman. This is the science of archeology at its best. So the physical evidence suggests that this statue is Roman and not Greek. If these facts

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<http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/1357/1/Victoria%20Button%20PDF%20FINAL%20THESIS%20MAY%202013.pdf>

<sup>1045</sup> Going further than false attributions, it is not out of the question that the Cleveland Apollo is a looted antiquity. CMA is "withholding information from the public regarding the history of the Apollo" one author claims. The provenance of this work is very questionable. The story told about its origins in an East Germany Garden might be fiction. The work was bought from some suspect antiquities dealers called the Aboutaam brothers. They have been in trouble with the law on various dealings in ancient art. So CMA has not been very honest about this piece. Sherman Lee was very open and honest about such things, but subsequent Directors have not been so truthful or above board. Everything about the CMA sculpture is questionable, in short.

are correct, and I think they are, one can definitely say this sculpture is not Classical. It is not by an imaginary Praxiteles. It is probably Roman and Hellenistic. I am not sure why the idea of the Apollo Sauroktonos is thought to be a Greek idea at all as nothing ties it specifically with Praxiteles, other than legend or fable.. It is probably not even Greek.

A study put out by the Getty Museum online called Small Bronze Sculpture from the Ancient World suggest somewhat different conclusions and says that by the time of Classical sculpture lead content was on the rise. But David Scott, the author of one of the essays here says that lead content is very low in the 4th century, which would include Praxiteles. So again, this sculpture is probably either late Greek, well after Praxiteles or more likely Roman. Of course, there are variations of lead content even in early sculptures so this is not a certainty. It is remotely possible that there may have been an anomalous Greek sculpture that had high lead content. But the evidence is much stronger that it is a Roman sculpture. No one has been very honest about these concerns, which again suggests that Phaedrus had it right, the name Praxiteles is an 'attribution magnet' or dump, that people use to try to hitch their wagon to the Praxiteles star, even if there is no such thing. Praxiteles appears to be the pet creation of scholars.

2300 years is a long time for anyone to know who made a given sculpture. Given the unknown provenance of the Cleveland Apollo it is sure that no one should be claiming certainty about authorship. No one knows who did it. The only known facts about it are that is that it is probably Roman, probably Hellenistic but not from the Classical period. It is not a Praxiteles, of course. No one knows where it was or where it came from. How it ended up in East Germany is also mysterious and some think, suspect. That makes it highly dubious. But like the Venus de Milo which was also claimed to be by Praxiteles and turned out not to be, this one is really lovely. In the end it is the beauty of these

sculptures that matters, and one can wonder about their origin , but be aware that in the absence of facts the human mind is prone to create delusions, and they are prevalent in all the alleged sculpture of “Praxiteles”. So there is the beauty of the sculpture on the one hand, that I tried to show in my drawings, with variable results, and there is the human comedy of attribution, which shows all the usual foibles of human vanity, ambition, lying, envy and in fighting, pretense and posturing. The whole Praxiteles enterprise is invention, surmise, fabrication or based on little or no actual fact. This is an interesting story that probably belongs more in a book critical of religion than anywhere else. The creation of the myth of Praxiteles is an example of how gods and avatars get made, born of human delusions and nurtured by the will to power, poor scholarship, nationalism and unjust wealth.

Having watched myself how a nearly religious tendency has developed around the Cleveland Apollo, it is interesting to speculate how Greek sculpture has attracted a nearly religious following since the Renaissance and done so in relation to political ideology. This is no doubt connected to the erosion of Christianity and subsequent rise of nationalism as a civic religion. The French claimed the Venus De Milo <sup>1046</sup>as their own, even though they basically stole it, and the English did steal the misnamed Elgin Marbles, which really are the Parthenon marbles, and which should have been returned to Greece long ago. <sup>1047</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Byron wrote of the theft of the Parthenon marbles that:

“Dull is the eye that will not weep to see

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<sup>1046</sup> The French curators and experts lied about it being a Praxiteles in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. They knew it was not by him and even cut off the actual sculpture’s name off the original to try to sell it as a Praxiteles, and later on the name on the base was found. It was not a Praxiteles and it was not and there were even jokes about this as you can see on page 87 of Disarmed by Gregory Curtis.

Thy walls defaced, thy mouldering shrines removed  
By British hands, which it had best behaved  
To guard those relics ne'er to be restored.  
Curst be the hour when from their isle they roved,  
And once again thy hapless bosom gored,  
And snatch'd thy shrinking gods to northern climes abhorred!"

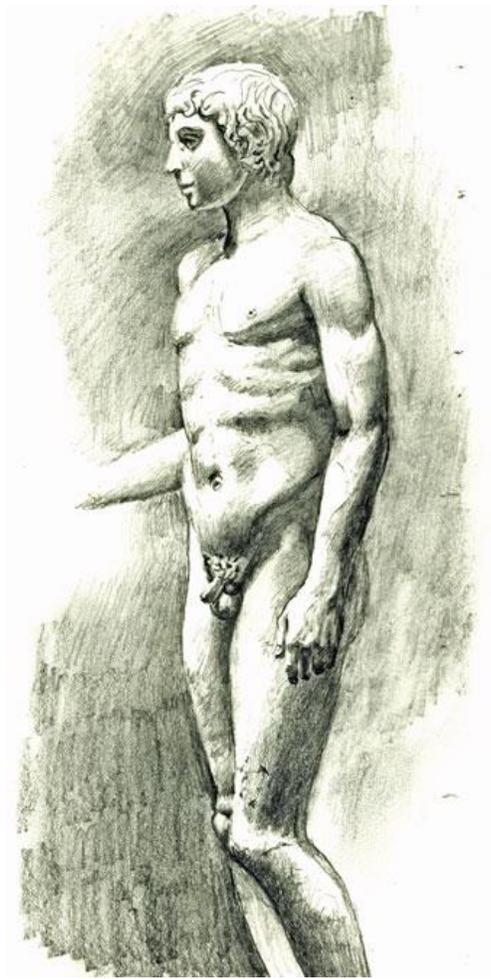
The French Revolution artists saw the Greeks and Romans as forward looking embodiments of liberty, which of course many of them were. But the kings of the reactionary Restoration period tried to restyle the Greeks as 'divine right' reactionaries, and some of them, like Plato, were that exactly. The rebellion against the mythologizing tendency moved toward abstraction and this just made matters worse, not better by helping the corporate ideology of personhood solidify in demonstrations of emptiness and neo-religious delusions. Thus, Greek and Roman sculpture, which grew out of the archeological context, has had a troubled and political history.

The Cleveland Museum of Art, motivated by a reactionary American politics claims to have created a "temple of art" around their Apollo and tried to tie it to 21 century globalist and neo-colonial economic ideology. This is another form of nationalism and manifest density, updating 19<sup>th</sup> century civic religion. In order to justify the capitalist speculation on art objects Bennett writes panegyrics against archeological "context" and public ownership and despises the fact that art always arises in a specific place. This is the ideology of global corporate ownership, a delusion, which itself is a fiction. The Greek Culture Ministry in contrast attacks the Cleveland Apollo,--also inspired by nationalistic civil religion. The Greeks and Italians, at least, have the advantage of being the place

where these things arose. The Greeks prevented The Cleveland Apollo from appearing in the 2007 Louvre show on Praxiteles. The Greeks claim it was stolen, which it may have been, as its origins are suspect. This is not without relation to the fact that the Germans, Americans and others have been trying to punish Greece for not adhering well to corrupt economic “austerity” programs created by banking institutions and countries bent of a neo-colonial and corporate agenda of punishing those who do not go along with an IMF economic agenda, rather like the mythic Sherriff of Nottingham who steals for the poor to give to the rich.. In any case, my purpose here is not to enter into the fray of these political and quasi-religious battles, but simply to point out that the political battles produce very poor scholarship. I side with the sculpture itself and deny it is a Praxiteles and decry its bad use by scholars, historians and political propagandists. It is lovely.

In the end, it does not matter who made these lovely sculptures, nor the poor scholarship that surrounds it. The Cleveland Apollo and other great Greek and Roman works in stone and bronze are great sculptures that reflect the science and observations that started with Aristotle and become the astronomy of Hipparchus and the wonder of Hypatia and after the suppression of empirical culture with the mythicizing Dark Ages, returned in the work of Da Vinci. The Apollo and the Aphrodite are wonderfully drawn and formed. The sculptors who made them were no doubt devoted to clear eyed observation and not political propaganda. It is not a religious object but an example of Greek and Roman art that embodies an Aristotelian proto-science and a love of the human form that is objective and new, populist and democratic. The rather political and religious scholarship that wants to make the sculpture mythic or national, or an example of late capitalistic corporate Manifest Destiny is really out of place. The fact these sculptures have led so many scholars astray is interesting. Even Phaedrus, more honest than

others, had sense enough to be honest about all the falsification that was going on over these great works of art. It is back handed complement to these works that they have inspired centuries of fiction and fabrication and very likely the mythic invention of the character of Praxiteles, who never existed. But it is about time we cleared the field a bit and started looking at the reality in which these great works were lied about and authorship fabricated. Their beauty shines all the better in the midst of all the vain fables and lies, propaganda and politics that surround them. They really belong to all of us, and those who claim to own them are just pretenders. Phaedrus might have written a good fable expressing just this. He could have called it: A Parable of Greed: How the Great Invisible Sculptors were Written out of History. Or “is it a Praxiteles—what nonsense!”.



Statue of an Athlete

. CMA. Roman, 1<sup>st</sup> century,  
sculptor unknown,  
drawing by author

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## **Hypatia, Dionysius The Aeropagite and the Killing of Classical Science**

As I will show in an upcoming chapter, Christ and Muhammad are probably mythical fictions created to serve a certain sort of politics. If this thesis is correct, it explains many of the facts surrounding the creation of the fictions of the Gospels and the “fall of the Roman Empire” as well the eclipse of classical culture. It is indeed the case that the origin of the Christ myth is extremely murky as is the origins of Islam, which I will also consider in the same chapter. I think the evidence shows that there is a myth involved here, in both the case of Christ and Muhammad. It is very likely that neither man existed.

So, let us suppose for now that Christ and Muhammad are myths, why did they both grow up in relation to the “fall” of the Roman Empire and the onset of the Dark Ages?. Christianity and Islam were created between 150 and 750 CE. These are systems of fictional mythology that grew up in the vacuum created by the fall of the Roman Empire. There really wasn't a fall, exactly, there was a transformation of power away from the centralized administration of classical Rome into the Feudal fiefdoms of the Dark Ages. The new systems of power were very destructive and backward leaning, based on new myths that supplanted to Pax Romana. The new religions that sustained people and justified powers were both born of despair, deserts, and bitterness. Nietzsche was not entirely wrong to say that Christianity was born of guilt, punitive repression and resentment, this is evident in Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling. Islam on the other hand was born of male bravado, the indifferent geometry of the desert, solar heat, cruelty and punitive repression. Crystalline implacability, the misogynistic veil, the garden

that is cramped into an architectural scheme and the scimitar at the necks of Christians and Jews.

It is true that that Islam preserved some of the Greek and Roman philosophy and culture destroyed by the Christians as Rome fell. But it did so in the context of draconian Islamic rule. When one begins to understand why the fall of the Roman Empire happened, one can get an outline of the forces that extremely tragic event brought into play and how human development was put in abeyance for nearly a thousand years. There are many theories about why the Empire “fell”. Gibbon said that

The decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight.

From what I have read it appears that Rome fell partly for the reasons Gibbons cites, but he might not go far enough. The betrayal of the Republic by Caesar and Augustus set up a monarchy that was tyrannical and based largely on slavery. It was a society based on plunder and looting as well as taking riches from conquered territories. Like the Monarchs before the French Revolution the poor were highly taxed and the rich were largely exempt. This is of course very much like today where corporations take from everyone and give little or nothing back and the middle class is burdened excessively with paying the costs of the rich. Global warming, poverty and extinctions of species are the result. The Roman empire seems to have existed not to serve everyone but to serve the Administrators, and thus the top prospered while the middle sunk under the weight of their exploitation. In Rome the taxes

where unyielding. Christianity was merely added into this system of corrupt power and became its heir. Thomas Hobbes was probably right when he said that

“ from the time that the Bishop of Rome had gotten to be acknowledged for bishop universal, by pretence of succession to St. Peter, their whole hierarchy, or kingdom of darkness, may be compared not unfairly to the kingdom of fairies; .....And if a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof: for so did the papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power.”<sup>1048</sup>

In other words, the Christian Dark Ages preserved the worst elements of Rome and repressed or destroyed the best’ science, civic minded republicanism, justice. Richard Carrier tries to claim that Christianity did not supplant the Roman Empire but filled up the vacuum left by its self-destruction.<sup>1049</sup> This is not quite the whole story either. Christianity kept the injustices of the Emperors and restyled unjust power as a papacy and a feudal system, which basically was a caste system, like in India. Justinian was seamlessly both a Christian and a Roman Emperor. Hobbes is right: “the papacy is no other than the

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<sup>1048</sup> <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/hobbes/thomas/h681/chapter47.html>

<sup>1049</sup> Richard Carrier’s scholarship is very narrow and though he is good at what he does, it is restricted to early Christian history and not much else. I saw him speak in 2015 and he is a good speaker, in general and makes a convincing case that Christianity is a myth, though it is good to read him with other authors, Doherty, Dawkins, Russell and others. I asked him what he will do now that he has established that Christianity is probably a myth, and he had no answer. He did not grasp why the myth was created or why it persists and said this is outside his area of expertise. I can see that this is true and so supply my own views on this subject in these essays on mythic Christianity and the Eucharist. The important question is what social forces allow Christian myths to continue as if they were facts, when they are not.

ghost of the deceased Roman Empire”.

Christianity and Islam are a sort of saprophyte on the Roman Empire, and probably would not have existed but for the Roman world. The myth of Christ, who probably never was a real person, was erected to adapt to Rome and serve a new repressive regime, even worse than the Emperors. The survival of Christianity in today’s world is curious and can be explained by the fact that this myth still served powerful interests, while at the same time being very useful as a means of moral repression or control of the population.. There is thus a natural succession between a tyrant like Julius Caesar and a tyrant like Innocent III as well as the tyrants of today’s corporate global “free traders”.

It is interesting that the Traditionalists needed to go backwards and idealize the dystopia of the Dark Ages, reversing the actual trend of history that shows that the Dark Ages were indeed dark and a great decline. To identify themselves with arcane hierarchies such as medieval Christianity, Islam or Hinduism, they show their contempt for ordinary people and their desire to return to the injustices of the past? I read somewhere that the word ‘Hierarchy’ was coined by so called Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, who was for long centuries wrongly supposed to be the Areopagite mentioned in St. Paul, but who in fact lived somewhere around between 476 and 532 C.E. 400 years after Paul. He is thought to have been Syrian monk, and his works advance a really conservatively radical belief in “top-down” organization, as well as extreme sorts of spiritual escape. Also known as Pseudo-Denys, which is what I will call him. His books, such as “Celestial Hierarchy and The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy advance an authoritarian view of political Gnosticism which combines a Christian Neo-Platonism with a Roman totalism. He is one of the fathers of the Great Chain of Being idea, which Darwin shattered forever.

He is certainly writing under a pseudonym and no one knows yet

who the real author of these works are. He may be a student of Proclus.(d. 485 C.E.) Pseudo-Denys' most famous book is The Divine Names which advances a Platonist view of reality as a series of archetypal generalities. Pseudo-Denys is writing after the time of the destruction of the great Library of Alexandria, an act accomplished largely by Christian fanatics eager to destroy the greatness of Greek science and learning. His blending of Platonist authoritarianism and Christian will to ignorance is a poison brew. There is a late Roman decadent and syncretic flavor to Pseudo-Denys' gnostic attitudes that ties him to Plotinus. (204-270. C.E.), who was originally from Alexandria. Bertrand Russell says of Plotinus that he "is both an end and a beginning—an end as regards the Greeks, a beginning as regards Christianity." Plotinus has the "defect of encouraging me to look within rather than to look without". This subjectivism is also the defect of the Hegelians and the traditionalists. Thus the subjectivism and escapism of Pseudo-Denys brings us back again the thesis of this book, which begins with William James and the attempt to critique delusional nature of subjectivism. Science is about truth not about useful delusions, as James hoped, wrongly it turns out. Curiosity is a huge important value to good science and to childhood and art. The subjectivism of Christianity became the enemy of scientific curiosity, and this animosity infects the traditionalists as well.<sup>1050</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote that

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<sup>1050</sup> You can see this hatred of curiosity in Guenon and Schuon's writings in various places. For instance in To Have a Center, (pg. 172) Schuon writes that "scientific curiosity has always existed, we repeat, but under normal conditions, it has been delimited by much more important and more realistic interests, namely, metaphysical science and religion". Arthur Versluis, likewise an anti-evolution and anti-intellectual thinker, condemns "fascination" in similar terms. This anti-'worldly' desire to limit curiosity with metaphysics is what made the Catholic Church put Galileo in jail for thinking and studying. I talked to Schuon on a number of occasions about science. He knew next to nothing about science. His views are very ignorant. The essay in which this nonsense about curiosity occurs was prompted by Dr. Wolfgang's Smith's visit to Bloomington in 1990 and Smith and Schuon did not see eye to eye. So Schuon tried to one up Smith with this essay, called "Concerning a Question of Astronomy" I which he tries to justify the rather ignorant

I have never built up a philosophy of my own or wished to establish a new school of thought. Perhaps the greatest thing I have learnt is never to think for myself” <sup>1051</sup>

This need of being humble and ignorant or “grateful” and anti-intellectual is common in the religions, and one finds it in many religions, where submission to authoritarian structures abound. Curiosity is Leonardo’s best trait and one that one sees in Darwin too, and any really good artist or scientist. This is natural in children too, at least until schools or parents, government or corporations get it out of them. It grows by leaps and bounds since the Renaissance as if reflected in museums and explorative sciences of all kinds. It could be that for some, ignorance makes one happier, as “ignorance is bliss” and religion “loves the beautiful wound” that makes the postulant a needy and willing slave. Such an attitude is admired by the ruling classes and is good for business. But science is not about that, either.<sup>1052</sup> Science prefers people of conscience who seek the truth, are honest about evidence and

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views of geocentrism. Smith’s reactions to Schuon voice in his books reflect a similar ignorance. Actually both Smith and Schuon were mistaken. I learned from the fight between these two men that both were men of bloated self-importance and deep delusions. I write about this further in the last essay in this book.

<sup>1051</sup> After-dinner speech on the occasion of his 70th birthday 1947

<sup>1052</sup> This Cult of the Dumb is interesting. I have found it among Stalinists, who scarcely exist anymore. It can be found now in ‘post-modern art’, where art is now devoted dogmatically to subjective delusions exclusively. One is not allowed to be skilled at drawing or painting, one must never represent reality, art should only be about itself and one must deny beauty. This is not art at all, of course, but a perfect image of corporate emptiness and decadence became an aesthetic dogma. Endless paintings of abstract vacuity are produced. This dogma of the Empty is visible in inane magazines like *Art Forum* or *Art in America*. Art become an abstract image of the fiction of corporate personhood which like the gods, does not exist. It is a metaphysical fiction akin to religious fictions. Abstract art is merely the dogma of corporate personhood made into a propagandistic art product. Piet Mondrian, one of the founders of empty Corporate Art, said “Nature is a damn wretched affair, I can hardly stand it”. This ignorant attitude toward his own body and to life in general also characterizes much of mysticism and religion. He was influenced by Blavatsky and theosophy. Mondrian’s aesthetic of world denying, vacuous abstractions now rules in a place like Manhattan in New York City where nature is banished and the cold hearted businessmen rules over a largely dead environment, void of animals, other than humans. Such paintings I find repulsive. It is dead, corporate art. ( see National Gallery of Art, 1984, Abrams, pg 612)

don't cower before bible beating authorities or CEO worship. Science cures wounds and does not revel in them like god is supposed to do.

Coomaraswamy is proud of his ignorance, like St Denys. The association of books and vanity is part of the mythos of submission to authoritarian and escapist religions. You are encouraged to not think and not inquire. In Buddhism and Christianity ignorance is fostered and cultures as a virtue, and one is not supposed to ask why the supreme goods of the religions are “Unknowable” and “Nameless” or ‘Unlearned’. Learning is to be ashamed of and inquiry is forbidden, no thinking allowed, since only the King, Masters or priests or have a grasp on the unlettered profundity of the ‘unknowable mystery’, which is nowhere defined. Indeed, the antinomianists and anti-intellectuals in the religions, from Niffari<sup>1053</sup>, to Lao Tzu and Solomon, all resemble the book burners in Ray Bradbury's great Fahrenheit 451. Knowledge is a ‘weariness of the flesh’. Best to be stupid, poor and die young living in fantasies of eternal life. The word “Islam means, “submit”. Be stupid for god. Books are inconvenient, the authorities never want anyone to ask questions. Mao and Stalin or Andy Warhol all had a similar allergy toward anyone knowing much of anything. They all thought it best to have lots of propaganda and little real content, and let Aldous Huxley's Big Brother or in Warhol's case, let Advertiser's take over directing people's minds.

Like Plotinus, Pseudo-Denys creates an otherworldly doctrine of “negative theology” which promises escape and inner enclosure in a

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<sup>1053</sup> A typical saying of Niffari's is this

” Be with Me, not with things. If anything reminds thee of Me, or concentrates thee upon Me, it only reminds thee of Me in order that thou mayest forget it, not Me, and that thou mayest be with Me, not with it; and it only concentrates thee upon Me in order that thou mayest be separated from it, not from me.

When you unpack this antinomian sentence it boils down to a radical rejection of existence and a delusional election of the “Me” which is a godlike being beyond being. This is delusional fiction of a high order and one that in the end is a worship of death, pretty typical of mystic utterances. You find the same thing in Zen, Lao Tzu and other mystics. It is world hatred as poetry. Indeed, poetry tends toward this in a certain way, as the end of poetry is the abstract character of language itself, which is bankrupt and empty.

decadent and gnostic system of intuitive and intellectual flights into metaphysical realms. Be dumb if you want to know god. Such Christian classics as The Cloud of Unknowing come from this ideology and enjoining followers to be mindless and covered in a “cloud of forgetting”, hating the body and life and “giving up all that thou hast” for a fictional god. Both Plotinus and Dionysius the Areopagite despise the actual world of the senses and of ordinary life where frogs trees and humans all life in a world of earth and sky. The Roman empire had fallen, life was awful; food scarce; disease common, suffering everywhere. Be dumb for god, escape into a monastery, read Pseudo Denys. The opposite of these mystic obscurantists is Hypatia, who is morning light by comparison to their dreaded escapism.

The murder of the great Alexandrine mathematician and astronomer Hypatia, (350- 415. C.E.) occurred at the library of Alexandria . The library itself was partially destroyed at various points prior to 415 but it seems that its final death knell was with the death of Hypatia in 415, as after that Alexandria is largely finished as the cosmopolitan city learning that it had been. <sup>1054</sup> Hypatia may have been one of the last lights of classical learning, put out cruelly by a Christian mob of fanatics, egged on by Christian rule in Rome. It appears this occurred because Emperor Theodosius had passed his Christian “Theodosian decrees” in 391, C.E. in which he condemned all paganism and ordered the destruction of Temples and places where so called “pagans”--- meaning non-Christian Romans and Greeks, practiced,

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<sup>1054</sup> Gibbon suggest the Library was finally destroyed around this time. Socrates Scholasticus writes that *Theophilus exerted himself to the utmost ... he caused the Mithreum to be cleaned out... Then he destroyed the Serapeum... and he had the phalli of Priapus carried through the midst of the forum. ... the heathen temples... were therefore razed to the ground, and the images of their gods molten into pots and other convenient utensils for the use of the Alexandrian church ...* If this is the case, then it is possible the library was mostly destroyed prior to Hypatia being murdered and Theophilus and Cyril are the destroyers of one of the greatest libraries that ever existed and one of the most amazing women of the ancient world.”

learned and taught. Gibbon refers to this period as one of unprecedented cruelty. He writes

“The ruin of Paganism, in the age of Theodosius, is perhaps the only example of the total extirpation of any ancient and popular superstition; and may therefore deserve to be considered as a singular event in the history of the human mind.”<sup>1055</sup>

This is genocide of course. There are many examples of Christians destroying, pillaging, desecrating, vandalizing many of the ancient Pagan temples, tombs and monuments under this decree. Indeed it is referred to as a war on Classical culture.<sup>1056</sup> It is quite clear that Christians ended Greek and Roman civilization by repressing it and usurping its latent powers, while undermining its good qualities, not just taking over the vacuum of its absence, but actively murdering it. Christianity did fill the vacuum provided by the failing Roman empire on the one hand, but the Christians did facilitate the destruction of culture, art and science by violence. This brought a downward slide at this time that lasts nearly a thousand years. The destruction of Roman infrastructure and development of the Feudal systems were very backwards happenings.

Hypatia was really the woman of the future, the hope for what was to come. There would be no one like her until Leonardo, 1100 years later. She was murdered by a Christians, led by a Christian fanatic named Cyril, who apparently also destroyed the library, though there is some confusion about this in the history. Some Christians like to apologize for his brutality, but it appears he and other Christian Romans were very

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<sup>1055</sup> Gibbon, The History of the Rise and fall of the Roman Empire 1776-1789. chapter 28  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gibbon-decline28.asp>

<sup>1056</sup> The persecution of Romans and non-believers by Christians would continue on for many centuries. Christians like to present themselves as victims but actually they did for more harm that were harmed. It is true that in 303, Diocletian orders Roman forces to persecute Christians. He orders Christian churches closed throughout the Empire and scriptures burnt. But Christians kept on getting revenge for this for many centuries,.

brutal. The destruction of Roman culture was ordered by the Christian Emperor Theodosius. What is clear is that Cyril was a Jew persecuting theocrat and wanted to extirpate science. He was what I would call a Christian theofascist. Gibbon notes that the murder of Hypatia has imprinted an “indelible stain on the character and religion of Cyril of Alexandria”.<sup>1057</sup> This is true. Hypatia was falsely accused of black magic because she had built an astrolabe, a very important object that was useful in triangulation, predicting time and distances and finding planets and stars as well as a navigational tool. Hypatia’s father was also involved in developing the Astrolabe and early astronomy and math.<sup>1058</sup>

The attack on Hypatia was thus an attack on science. Carl Sagan speaks of it one of the great tragedies of human life on earth. Hypatia was a brilliant scientist and one of the last enlightened minds before the Christian Dark Ages descends. What good there was in Rome was largely done in by Christianity. Hypatia was an amazing student of the great

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<sup>1057</sup> Gibbon full passage in chapter 47 states

“Hypatia, the daughter of Theon the mathematician, (was initiated in her father's studies; her learned comments have elucidated the geometry of Apollonius and Diophantus, and she publicly taught, both at Athens and Alexandria, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. In the bloom of beauty, and in the maturity of wisdom, the modest maid refused her lovers and instructed her disciples; the persons most illustrious for their rank or merit were impatient to visit the female philosopher; and Cyril beheld, with a jealous eye, the gorgeous train of horses and slaves who crowded the door of her academy. A rumor was spread among the Christians, that the daughter of Theon was the only obstacle to the reconciliation of the praefect and the archbishop; and that obstacle was speedily removed. On a fatal day, in the holy season of Lent, Hypatia was torn from her chariot, stripped naked, dragged to the church, and inhumanly butchered by the hands of Peter the reader, and a troop of savage and merciless fanatics: her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp oyster shells, (and her quivering limbs were delivered to the flames. The just progress of inquiry and punishment was stopped by seasonable gifts; but the murder of Hypatia has imprinted an indelible stain on the character and religion of Cyril of Alexandria.”

Gibbon references various authors as sources

<sup>1058</sup> Hypatia is credited with saying some interesting things, such as..” “All formal dogmatic religions are fallacious and must never be accepted by self-respecting persons as final,” “Reserve your right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all” “To teach superstitions as truth is a most terrible thing.”, which is a comment that should be directed at Religious studies professors. These are enlightened comments and may be partly why she was killed.

Library and of Aristarchus and Hipparchus, , who, much earlier, had discovered that the sun was the center of the solar system. <sup>1059</sup> Indeed, it has been said that the origin of modern science is to be found first with the Greeks and later at the library of Alexandria.

The truth might be a little different. The real origins of science are probably the unknown creators of pottery, metallurgy and writing long before the Greeks. In any case, the Christians who murdered Hypatia, carved up her body. This dismemberment exemplifies the Christian hatred of the Greek and Egyptian rationalism and science. The church took pride in its “hatred of the world” as if such immoral hatred were a virtue. Christianity’s war against the actual is part of an effort to create an ‘otherworldly’ detachment in the minds of followers. To dissociate minds from reality is what religion are gifted at doing.

The killing of Hypatia and destroying of the Library is also about the triumph of an irrational Christianity and a residual Platonism that is destructive of reality. The killing of Hypatia is also the first Christian butchery against so called “witches”, who mostly were herbalists and midwives and thus, like Hypatia, female scientists of a kind. The murderers of Hypatia in 415 C.E. are the antecedents of later Christian Inquisitors and crusaders. The murder of Hypatia hints at a future of traditionalists, creationists and other bigots of anti-science.. Right-wing Christians, Moslems. Hindus, Jews and Catholics in today’s world, with their wars against Kashmir, Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan as well as

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<sup>1059</sup> Aristarchus 310-230 BCE, Hipparchus 190-120 BCE

Archimedes wrote of the heliocentrism of Aristarchus that “ His hypotheses are that the fixed stars and the Sun remain unmoved, that the Earth revolves about the Sun on the circumference of a circle, the Sun lying in the middle”. Eratosthenes discovered the circumference of the earth to within a few thousand miles. His calculation was 28,000 miles whereas the truth is about 25, 000. Some of this was more or less known to Hypatia, apparently, but was later suppressed by the Christians, who also tried to suppress Copernicus and Galileo a thousand years later. There is a supposition that Hypatia believed in the Heliocentric theory of Hipparchus, but if this is true, I can find no evidence for it, though she must have known about it, as she was an expert on Ptolemy who talks erroneously about Hipparchuses ideas. Did Hypatia realize tht Ptolemy was wrong? We do not know.

their anti-science, anti-education and anti-humanists views, recall the killers of Hypatia. Traditionalism is a monster that breathes the fire of right wing zealotry.

The end of the Roman Empire is a dire time where scientific knowledge of the world is under threat by an increasingly inward and escapist spiritualism,<sup>1060</sup> such as one sees in Plotinus and Dionysius. Irrationalism is a force of repression and one that active ought to suppress science. This is true in today's world just as it was after Hypatia's murder. The Dark Ages are spearheaded by Christians, but later Islam<sup>1061</sup> and other mystery cults of the "barbarians" arrive, with their superstitions and myths. Dionysius' antinomian "via negativa" hovers like a world-hating nightmare over the monastic abyss of the Dark Ages. The system of Pseudo-Denys is a gnostic dream that floats over the increasingly barbaric and threatening poverty and failure of the dying Roman Empire before and after the period of Justinian the Great(482-565 C.E.). The Dark Ages would last nearly a thousand years until finally thinkers like Dionysius the Areopagite and Augustine are superseded by Roger Bacon and the early Nominalists. The latter finally open the door to science. The birth of science depends on the denial of the escapist dreams of Dionysius, Plotinus and the medieval pantheon of hierarchical saints. Leonardo, Galileo. Newton, Darwin and Einstein are the inheritors of the realism and inquiry that Hypatia represented 1600

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<sup>1060</sup> Schuon badly misunderstood Hellenism and the Greeks. For him Plato was a 'prefiguration' of himself the "pure" intellectual. Schuon thought "rationalism and scientism were deviations from and caricatures of this intellectuality", which is nonsense. The truth is the other way around. The Platonic or Plotinian notion of the Intellect is a subjective morass, a sort of irrational irradiation of whatever you please—it is from this morass that all Ibn Arabi's and Schuon's crazy and confused 'visions' come. Rationalism has its origins more in Aristotle than Plato, though certainly Socrates was a rationalist. Schuon's super-rationalism is a construct, a pretence, an organ of make believe.

<sup>1061</sup> Of course Islam did have a good effect in that the work of some of the Greek and Roman scientists and philosophers was preserved in Islamic libraries when Christians turned against science and their own heritage. While there was an increase in scientific activity in Islam around the time of Al Ghazali (1058-1111) C.E. and later, the rise of clerics and the dogmatic character of Islam tended to suppress inquiry.

years before

So, Pseudo-Denys is a decadent retrogressive figure, a sort of eclipse of reason into a mystical worship of imaginative and escapist metaphysical creations of the mind, like Plotinus, who is from the same time. Dionysius the Areopagite is a source and influence on traditionalist theofascism, which also exists in a time uncertainty and questioning. Dionysius the Areopagite is a father, along with Augustine, of Christian theocracy. He had an enormous influence on Aquinas who quotes him 1700 times. Pseudo-Denys created the atmosphere of the medieval church that led to the terroristic state of Innocent the III . Pseudo-Denys or Dionysius the Areopagite's ideas have a flavor of effete Hindu and Platonist caste ideology. His ideas also have a close affinity with the systems of Schuon, Guenon and Coomaraswamy.

A lot of the nostalgia for supercilious hierarchies so much present in the traditionalists comes from longing for reactionary systems like that of Pseudo-Denys . The origins of science are in the opposite direction, toward lesser hierarchy. You can see the rediscovery of the Greeks in the Renaissance and even more at the time of the French and American revolutions, where a real revival of anti-hierarchical ideas begins and flourishes, with many attempts to put it down and destroy it, Traditionalism among others. The importance of the Enlightenment is a pivotal thing in world history. You can see this even in as obscure and area as Fashion, where the absurdly huge overdone dresses of the Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> era give way to simple Neo- classical clothes that are relatively plain and flattering to the human body. Even clothes were democratized and the bloated excesses of the rich downsized. A figure like Johan Wincklemann is very interesting in this change, as he was a largely self-taught neo classical scholar, who helped change the world. <sup>1062</sup> Gregory Curtus writes that

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<sup>1062</sup> He also largely invented art history. He appears to have been wrong about a lot of things, but

Winckelmann's work, simplified and politicized, became the bedrock of the [French] Revolution's thinking about art. In October 1794, as the Terror faded after the execution of Robespierre three months earlier, the Convention appointed a committee to make a new translation of Winckelmann that could be used as a reference book,<sup>1063</sup>

There also is a 'religious' or spiritual dimension in this cultural effort to create a sort of state religion out of classicism. There is a 'spiritual' component to the political effort to overthrow a corrupt monarchy and set up a better state. This shows again the close connection between religion and politics.<sup>1064</sup> Though in this case, the announcement of the enthroning of the goddess of reason in Notre Dame has a decidedly 'secular' ring to it. Here we see religion become a civil affair, and much lessened in severity. But then there is the growing problem of colonialism which results and this too became oppressive and harmful. All this has to do with the overthrow of the system of Aquinas and Pseudo-Denys.

Quite apart from the effort to create a state religion about 1787, the effort to create a science for the common good is everywhere. After 1800, this "Enlightenment" is a tremendously liberating thing. But just as science is liberated and rising after 1800 a force of reaction also sets in, trying to drag it down. What is common in all the reactionary thinkers I

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what is fascinating about him is his hybrid attempt to free European culture of Christianity, even as he could not refuse his own attempt to make a religion of the worship of Greek art.

<sup>1063</sup> Curtis, Gregory, Disarmed: the Story of the Venus de Milo. Pg 56. This is a very well done history, full of interesting asides and meanders on a very worthy topic. It tells how the sculpture was basically stolen by the French and who it scholars deceived the public about its origins.

<sup>1064</sup> Another example would be the Shema of Israel, which states, *Sh'ma Yisrael Shema Eloheinu Shema Ehad*. (Hear, O Israel, the Name is our God, the Name is One) or Hear, O Israel, the Lord God is One". The oneness is a political oneness and the point is tribal and ancient. The apartheid system that is Israel is a logical result of this mentality, as for instance is shown in Gaza, where nearly two million people are daily subjected to brutality and humiliations so that is Israel can have its theocracy. The Palestinians have a right to their land too, and Israel has tried to steal all their land.

have been discussing is a devotion to antinomian irrationalism, a devotion to escapism, hierarchy and a cult of the irrational and subjective “Intellect”. They also share a hatred of the actual world and an anti-scientific attitude. The “Closing of the Western Mind”, in Charles Freeman’s phrase, that took place about 2-500, C.E., was all about creating a Christian system of oppression and authoritarianism spearheaded largely by Pseudo-Denys. A sort of fundamentalist-fascism or theofascism appears then and replaces the Roman Empire with a noxious form of government by priests and church/state alliances, governed by feudal lords who basically were laws unto themselves.. Like those who wanted to go back to the middle ages or to stop the Enlightenment, Guenon and Schuon were nostalgic for this time of horror and ignorance, when men who thought as they do ruled over the forced ignorance of the believing and brutalized masses. The counter enlightenment is an effort to return to the ignorance and dogmatic irrationality of the Dark Ages.

Guenonism is a reactionary, anti-intellectual system of conspiratorial thought that seeks to return to the Dark Ages and Pseudo-Denys. Guenon wanted to go back before the Enlightenment brought Church and monarchy into question, before evidence mattered and the dictators of dogma held sway with a whip, a jail cell and a will to burn women at the stake. Guenonism creates a Manichean worldview in which those who side with Guenon are good and everyone else is profane or evil. But Guenonian Manichaeism is the not the sole cause of the attraction of Guenon; rather religious motivations are interwoven with economic and political factors. Guenon appeals to the "three R's" in the fascist mentality: revenge, renown, and reaction.<sup>1065</sup> Guenon wants

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<sup>1065</sup> This analysis comes from Louise Richardson. She writes about various cults and terrorist groups and uses the example of Aum Shinrikyo, a Buddhist/Christian cult, which perpetrated a

revenge against the modern world, to be renowned as the pinnacle of “wisdom”, and wants to foment reaction against democracy, human rights and the Enlightenment. There are those who find comfort in hierarchy and inequality. They like to stand above and look down on others. Those who suffer below them are irrelevant and obscure and they do not care about their plight. “The poor we always have with us” they exclaim, following Christ’s comment, probably inserted in the gospels by those who wanted divine sanction for inequality.

Guenon appeals to irrational reactionaries who want revenge against reason and science, to go back to former systems of superstition and the power it gave to ignorant priests and panderers of tall tales and fictions. Guenon appeals to the desire of his followers for renown by fostering a notion of elitism, hierarchy and aristocracy, the qualities that killed Hypatia and enthroned Pseudo-Denys. Guenon himself had delusional notions of his own importance and passed this on to most of his followers. Guenon's hateful and elitist system employs reactionary political views, which were hidden behind his interest in ritual and religion. As I will show, various traditionalists have collaborated with right-wing political systems, belong to various cults or employ reactionary ideologies. Guenon's rhetoric is quite commonly lofty and messianic in its apocalyptic paranoia. He actually believed the nonsense he put out. Schuon, Evola, Dugin, Nasr and Lings also believed their own

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sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995. The Al Qaeda cult was another movement that sought to kill many. Richardson observes that these groups require three components: alienated individuals, a complicit society or community, and a legitimizing ideology. Its troops are motivated by some mixture of three key goals: revenge, renown and reaction from the enemy. The characteristics are present in the Guenonian groups too, but only Evola’s group has actually resorted to violence as far as I know, Schuon depended on other means of psychological manipulation. For a review of Richardson’s book see

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/10/books/review/Walker.t.html?oref=login>

rhetoric. The political dimensions of Traditionalism are hidden closely, even indistinguishably, behind esoteric symbols, arcane essays and secretive rituals. This allows Traditionalism to seduce many into the far right without followers even being aware of it. The Guenonian strategy is to claim to represent the invisible truth, but never to reveal that this Truth---- capital "T"--- is a fabricated lie made up of a pastiche of religious mythologies. The "Truth" in Guenon is a lie, a delusion, or to use Richard Dawkins phrase, a "god delusion". Guenonian Traditionalism it is a secretive or esoteric ideology, which hides political interests. Because of this secrecy and claim to esoteric centrality, there are very few critical assessments of the work of Rene Guenon or of traditionalism in general. But when we look back to Pseudo-Denys we see the reactionary hatred of the enlightenment in advance and in that you see why these men hated the modern world and science. We also can see why Hypatia was the future, and looks forward to Leonardo, humans rights and Darwin.

## **The Myths of Jesus and Muhammad and the War between Christianity and Islam.**

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### **Introductory Remarks**

It is a time where ordinary people in Islamic countries have at last gotten some inkling of enlightenment values of human rights and political liberty to such a degree they are at last trying to overthrow reactionary dictatorships in Egypt, Iran, Syria and elsewhere. I am far from being a racist and believe that people from these nations deserve freedom from the religious ideologues and dictators that control the thoughts and behavior of many people in these places. I am on their side as far as human rights goes, insofar as I have a side. But I do not side with either Islam or Christianity. I am also opposed to the far right in the US and Europe, and am not on their side, either. The American far right and the Iranian far right, for instance, are very little different, even if they are opposed. I favor neither. Those who accuse me of being on any side in these conflicts are mistaken, I am on the side of ordinary people everywhere, and not on the side of religions, states, or dictators. If people wish to blame me for thinking this way, so be it, it only shows that they are on the side of injustice.

There are of course, reactions from the far right in these countries. It has also brought out the old cold war tensions between America and Russia, fighting for resources. Given this fact, it is interesting to look again at the relation of traditionalism to reactionary ideology. The so called "clash of civilizations" that inspired the racism of George Bush and others, was really a clash of bogus mythologies that serve wealth and power. My point in this essay is to say that "both houses" are corrupt. What matters is an elimination of religion from both sides of the argument. No special rights should be given to Iranian, Israelis, far right Americans or Saudis. What we need is an admission that both sides need to recall and implement enlightenment values of human rights and

political liberty. I do not mean by this that Europe and America are the model of how everyone should behave. I mean that all peoples have the same rights, and one is not better than another.

This cannot be done with the fanatical views of jihadist governments or the fanatical fundamentalist capitalists such as George Bush, Hillary Clinton, or Trump in power. We do not need these war mongers. The British journalist, Robert Fisk, is probably right that the American ( or Russian) military attacks on the mid-east are the primary reason for the vile revenge laden response of Iranian, Afghanis and Syrians, among others, to these attacks.<sup>1066</sup> The important thing is the overthrow of reactionary dictatorships in Egypt, Iran, Syria, the United States and elsewhere. The reactions from the far right in these countries is not the only fuel behind these conflicts. Many Iranians claim the battle is the result of occult groups like the Freemasons or the Bahai religion, nonsense probably, but this scapegoating serves the regime. This is as absurd as Jesus being the driving force of western righteousness and world expansion. A thorough critique of Islamic and Christian religion is justified. I will attempt a partial critique of these religions in this context.

To say this is a slightly different way....The mythic fight of Islam against Christianity masks the old cold war tensions between America and Russia, fighting for resources. My contention is that most citizens of America, Rssia or Iran are not guilty of the perfidious things their governments do. Given this fact it is interesting to look again at the relation of traditionalism to reactionary ideology. It is a kind of extremist

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<sup>1066</sup> Proof of this was had on May 15, 2018, in Gaza when Trump had a ceremony mmraking the installation of the Ameerican Embassy in Jerusalem, and as a result of that the Israelis killed over 60 people and wounded 2700 in the Gaza Strip when they hald a non violent protest against Trump. Those who were shot by the Israelis, most in the legs were shot with exploding bullets, which fragment when they hit a body, and casue huge damage, resulting in my oeple suffering amputations. This horribly unjust action, ordered by Netanyahu, will no doubt result in a futher escaplation of the Mideast war. Ideology and religion is the root of this war and until both sides learn to respect the other as human animals and ignore their absurd religious differences, people will keep dying.

version inside the western world that exposes the corruption of both sides. The fiction of tradition drives the hatred of both sides against each other, and it is utterly an illusion. The so called “clash of civilizations” that inspired the racism of George Bush as well as militant Wahabi Islam, was really a clash of bogus mythologies that serve wealth and power. My point in this essay, again, is to say that “both houses” are corrupt. What matters is an elimination of free market ideology and religion from both sides of the argument, as a consequent admission that both sides need to return to their essential humanity and not their religious intolerances. This means that corporate capitalism and Islamic Fundamentalism are equally guilty in this conflict and here I am bringing both of them into question, not supporting either a western Islamophobia or a Middle eastern conspiracy theory based in a fanatic religion. Those who support one or another of these antipodes are one source of the problem.

Both sides of the political spectrum must be questioned right down to the roots of their myths. Christians and Muslims are both people. So I am not writing an Anti-Islam or anti-Christian screed here. I am myself critical of both Islam and Christianity. But there are huge factors in these conflicts as must be dealt with, those who say religion has nothing to do with it are mistaken. And those who say it is only religion that is at stake are wrong too. People have a right to their beliefs even if they are erroneous, so long as they do not impose them or hurt others. But in this conflict there are bloody impositions on every side. Israelis build settlements that steal Palestinian land, and keep Palestinians in a virtual slave state in Gaza. Americans starve countries of medicine and food using embargoes, kill people with drone strikes, drop bombs on cities and kill civilians without remorse. Moslems, rip each other apart in Syria, hang or stone women, cut off heads, throw acid on girls going to school, bomb European cities in the name of their religion. Christians

torture Moslems in prisons, partly for religious reasons. Moslems fly airplanes into buildings. Christian exceptionalism and Moslem jihad are in the background of all this.

I just want to try to look at it according to what I have learned about it in my life, as objectively as I can. Just how the myths of Jesus and Muhammad got started thus becomes an interesting question as the imagined “clash” really was a clash of mythic ideologies and not of rights or the need of liberty, which I take as a given in Iran as well as in the United States. No one wants to live under autocratic terror, whether that terror comes from Corporate CEO’s, Syrian kings, Mullahs, Christian Republicans or Moslem extremist traditionalists. A plague on all their houses.

People are just people. Those “people” wrongly called Muslim, are just like those wrongly called “American”, or “Christian”. I grant that there are many ignorant people in both nations that believe all the wrong-headed propaganda that spews from the mouths of politicians. So-called Muslims or Europeans are highly various people, all more or less similar and belonging to the same earth. In Iran as in America, patriotism has to be forced by constant reminders, slogans, flags, buttons, TV shows. People fall into religions or national states by accident and are rarely guilty of them. Most religious people are decent people, but no religion is decent. Religions are ideological systems of coercive behaviors. Few humans are coercive by nature, but many leaders, Presidents, clerics, Mullahs, CEO’s or generals are. The leaders and exploiters of these states are the primary problem.

Given the virulence of U.S. and Christian aggression against many Islamic nations for many years, as well as U.S. alliances with Israel, it is understandable that many leftist groups express a lot of sympathy with Islam in compensation.<sup>1067</sup> But this is very problematical as there are

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<sup>1067</sup> In some leftist circles this sympathy sometimes reaches the point of ignoring the harms done

serious problems in these countries and much of it arises from poor education, superstition and the religion of Islam. So while the term Islamo-fascism is often a term of abuse when used by U.S militarists and Christian far-right fanatics, it is also merely descriptive of governments and religious leaders of these countries. Islamo-fascist nations are above all fascistic toward their own populations. The term is descriptive when we talk about the governments and religious fanaticism of these countries, their horrendous human rights records, imprisonments, stonings, misogyny, refusal to let girls go to school, clitorectomies.

The Christian quasi-fascism of a George Bush, or Trump, is also a problematic term for the same reason. They both killed many people because of their erroneous belief systems. They steal from the poor to give to the rich, who already have too much. These are abstract ideologies, as distinct from the people who have to live under them. They lie about what they are doing, they kill and get away with it. The guilt is only with the ideologies and those who exploit it directly.

'Fascism' is sometimes defined as a state/big business alliance. I put single quotes around the word fascism here because it is a problematical concept, as I have shown throughout this book. As Isaiah Berlin and Bertrand Russell showed it is really just a word for abusive power, or unjust and tyrannical governments. With the word "theo" added to it, the word theofascism is meant to describe abusive spiritual delusions and social systems, from India to Islam, Christendom, corporations and random modern cults and organizations. Quibbling over a word like fascism is not what this book is about. Getting to the heart of destructive states and organizations is..

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by Islamic countries. Some in Chomsky's circle act as if Palestinian or other Moslems are without fault, which is certainly not the case.. Chomsky has his own agenda of "worthy victims" which he praises and unworthy ones, like Israelis, which he ignores. This tendency reveals an interested dogmatism which sometimes appears to amount almost to a religion in Chomsky's case. I write of this in a later chapter. The hatred of Christian and Islamic peoples on both sides leads to much suffering and death and the problem is the politics and the religion of these people.

So the term Islamo-fascism is problematical, as is the Christian fascism of the Bush family or Trump racism. Saudi Arabia is basically a religious government with fascist overtones, supported by oil and monarchy. This hardly means that most ordinary people in Islamic countries are fascists.<sup>1068</sup> They cling to their religion out of desperation, indoctrination, necessity or force of oppression. The concept of Islamo-fascism is thus a political concept and one that responds to corporate fascism. There are neo-fascist governments in many places on earth, in the west and the east and in between.

Does the problematical term, “Islamofascism” apply to traditionalism too? My own experience with Islam might shed some light on this problem. I think this term can be applied to the orientalists Guenon and Schuon both of whom adopted Islam, at least superficially. Both were Moslem or more accurately were Moslem within the context of their ‘esoteric’ “super religion”<sup>1069</sup> of their own making, which they called the *religio perennis* or universal esoterism. Both were also attracted to far right versions of what I have been calling theofascism, which is not fascism per se, but a religious form of far right thinking, such as one finds in Franco and the Japanese, Jewish or Iranian state. Schuon’s follower Martin Lings said the Fascist Franco was the best form of government. Schuon himself liked Japanese fascism and Guenon flirted rather closely with the French fascist group Action Française who, incredibly, he rejected as being too liberal. So these men are accurately called

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<sup>1068</sup> The religious police (*mutaween*) certainly are as is the prohibition on women driving cars in Saudi cities. The women of Saudi Arabia only got the vote last year, which indicative of how backward this country is. Women there are required to have male “guardians” and are restricted on most of the major decisions of their lives.

<sup>1069</sup> I think I first came across this term in some writings by Schuon’s follower Albert Cottat. But it is also used by Charbonneau-Lassay in some letters he and Guenon wrote back and forth. Esoterism and the notion of super religion are not different concepts. They both refer to a fictional notion of a transcendent unity in the heart of all the religions. In which the delusion of all the religions radiates like a delusional sun from a center to all the planets or religions beyond it. There is no such esoteric kernel, but charlatans profit from promoting it as if there were.

theofascists. But to discuss this requires a bit of a digression on Islam itself.

I was myself a Muslim for a few years, and only became a Moslem experimentally, on Schuon's personal insistence and was only a Moslem within the context of the Schuon cult. I got to know Moslems outside of the cult during the decades or so that I worked with oriental carpets. I have known many Moslems and consider them fine people. Except for a few fanatics Except for a few fanatics Most of them carried their religion as superficially as Chrstians do, indeed, it is irrelevant., most Moslems do not care any more about their religion that most Christians do, which is minimally, or hardly at all. I am not therefore "Islamophobic", since I have a good idea what it means to be Moslem and know something about it. These are decent people who live good lives and happen to have been indoctrinated in a given faith at a young age. They might go to church or to a mosque, say the prayers and do the rites, but they only care about their religion when pushed into an extreme, at the death of a loved one, or when they are marryng outside their religion. On some level, most people realize religion is a delusion, a fake system of social controls and behavioral correctness.

There is an a largely American Islamophobia, certainly, mostly fueled by the far right, which is a form of racism, where all Muslims are thought to be evil or terrorists.<sup>1070</sup> Such views are used to persecute Islamic immigrants in Europe as well as Palestinians, as Trump has tried to do, devoted as he is to the logic of Me, and corporate greed. The far right in America are mostly racists who hate another religion. I am hardly among these.

When one realizes that all the main players in these wars are living the lies of one delusion or another, it is obvious what needs to be done. Israel uses the Bible and Jewish fundamentalist ideas to harm and

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<sup>1070</sup> Donald Trump, who wanted to ID all Muslims in the US rather as the Germans put yellow stars on Jews, is just such a purveyor of hate speech, and fascistic hatred.

persecute Palestinians in a similar way. One need only watch the death tolls from virtually every major Jewish/ Palestinian conflict to see that the Palestinian are the ones being persecuted and killed, far more often than the other way.

But, that said, there is also a species of Moslem who uses the concept of Islamophobia to justify Islamic violence and violations of human rights. I do not admire this. Salman Rushdie writes a harmless novel and Iranians want to murder him. Theo Van Gogh, a film maker who questioned Islam was brutally murdered for his work in 2004. A few tasteless cartoons about Muhammad and death threats are issued in a Jyllands-Posten publication and 200 people died in the unrest that followed. Muslims murdered 11 people, mostly journalists at the magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris in January, 2015. 129 people were murdered in Paris by the group ISIS in November, 2015. More were murdered in a discotech in the United States. These really repulsive murders are the result of religious/political fictions believed to be real in countries from Iran, Syria, America and France. Many Moslems abjure and deny this sort of violence is inherent in Islam. I have doubts that that is true. Islam is rarely a religion of Mercy and the “lightning like expansion” of Islam in its early years was brutal and involved forced conversions at sword point. The Koran justifies this.

But one cannot deny that this sort of extremism was always a possibility in the Islamic ideology, just as it has been in Judaism, Christianity or most other organized religions. The hatred of the west is so palpable in Islamic countries that the Koran becomes a political document outlining sociopathic actions that involve killing innocent people, however this sociopathology might be partially fueled by corrupt actions of western governments themselves. Moslem fanatics use fear and threats of death to try to impose their religion on others, and deny them a choice in their religion. So there is a species of fundamentalist fascism in Islam, this is really incontestable. Actions of individual

Moslems are certainly extreme, as has always been the case with Christians, from the Inquisition to the brutal murder of Native tribes of many kinds--- but both religions depend on magnification of motives, hyperbole and hatred of the actual world in favor of transcendence.

Indeed, when one looks at the origins of Islam it appears that just as Praxiteles was invented at a time when lying was a regular strategy sculpture dealers and cultural leaders, so myth fabrication was a feature of men who made up Islam and Christianity. The militarism of Arabs from 600-1000 C.E. might well be the reason for the Koran and not vice versa. The Koran appears to be the later evolved justification of the militarism that already existed in the Middle-east.<sup>1071</sup> In the modern world the Koran becomes a justification of really horrendous human rights crimes. The Bible performs a similar if more diffuse role in western societies, bringing about the Inquisition or abusive priests because the ideology is skewed that way..

In Israel there is another kind of Jewish fascism or fundamentalism. In Iran it is theofascism that is the problem and theocratic regime kills those who disagree with it. Religion opposes free speech. So I say at the outset that my views are not Islamophobic but nor am I am apologist for Israel, Corporate-fascism, Judeo-fascism or Islamo-fascism. I am opposed to all these abuses of power and I know that Islam is not immune to these abuses, and neither is Israeli Judaism or American capitalist Christianity.

Vijay Prasad notes in an essay that

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<sup>1071</sup> Ibn Khaldun 1332—1406, writes

In the Muslim community, the holy war is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and (the obligation to) convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force. (*The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History* (abridged), trans. Franz Rosenthal, Princeton UP, 1967, p.183)

“A genuine, compassionate atheism would understand that it is the poor who most often take refuge in religion because it is a heart in a heartless world, it is the soul in soulless conditions” <sup>1072</sup>

Leaving questionable concepts like “soul” aside, I only partly agree with his point. One has to point out that ignorance is no excuse for crimes of religious hate. Muslims have rights too and should be respected as such, but this hardly means that one should support any regime that uses the Koran to fuel hatred and creates a regime in which ordinary people are reduced to filling their hearts with delusions and then clinging to them. It is clear that all regimes use religion to fuel nationalism and nationalism is toxic, in any country. It survives by stigmatizing the other. I have met many Americans whose heads are filled with Fox news “alterantive facts” which are just lies, promoted by paid liars on TV, hand phnes or computers. We therefore have to look deeply and factually, at the roots of the Capitalist, Islamic and Christian conflict.

So what is the historical origin of these conflicts? How did Islam and Christianity get created?. Clearly, they grew out of the fall of the Roman Empire. But how did the enlightened attitudes of the Greeks and Romans get suppressed under growing cults like early Christianity and Islam? I will try to answer these questions here.

### **The Myth of Muhammad**

Not unlike the Crusading West, from the outset of its career, Islam was a violent religion spreading itself with sword and conversions accomplished under threat. <sup>1073</sup>This is just a fact. The scimitar was the

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<sup>1072</sup> <https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/when-new-atheism-meets-islam/>

<sup>1073</sup> One can see in this carpet that The angel Gabriel has been imposed on an older image. The older image is a camel made up of animals and people, as well as fish, every species, in short. It is an early pre-islamic animist image. In some Persian small paintings it can be seen by itself as in this painting from the MET. I am sure the roots of the image go back to the pre Islamic poems

reason for its success. The complement of Islamophobia is a fanatic Muslim fundamentalism which thinks it is OK to strap bombs to yourself and blow people up or that anyone who criticizes Islam should be killed. Paranoid conspiracy theory is nearly a norm in Islamic countries. Iran is prone to rewriting history from a conspiratorial perspective to justify its regimes. One has to admit that fear of Islam is not entirely a phobia but a reasonable fear, as Muslim fanatics are real and some of them are in charge of states, such as Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia. In a similar way one must admit that Christian capitalism—which is extended by Israeli Judaism--- is likewise a force of delusion and aggression. The wars that result from these interacting mythic systems are very bloody and cruel.

Indeed, the Middle East is perhaps the bloodiest area of the world in the last 50 years. During the first Iraq/Iran War for instance it is thought that a half million to a million people were killed, though arguments

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about camels and other animals, where early middle easterners saw animals as not only part of their lives, but almost worshipped them. This love of animals was condemned by the mullahs. The imposition of the Koran on such peoples is what the angel Gabriel represents in the left carpet picture. I owned this carpet for many years, but traded it away when I realized this. I always liked the camel itself, and the love of animals it represents. The angel was merely human centered domination. The birds in the corners are the Simurch, I think, the many birds that are one bird in Attar's allegory. Attar was totally wrong about birds, they are not symbols.



persist as to just how many. The U.S and U.N. sanctions against Iraq in the late 1990's are said to have killed half a million. Chomsky claimed the death toll as higher than this, but I doubt how accurate he is. In any case, many died and many of them were children. Many more died in U.S. attacks on Iraq. The various civil wars in Afghanistan, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere killed many more. These deaths are both political, economic and religion based. As I have said throughout this book religion is a source of great conflict between peoples and hides political and economic motivations.

I once had some interest in Islam from the point of view of its art, poetry and textiles, as I repaired and restored Oriental carpets for a living for a decade or so. I worked for various Moslems. I was curious about Islam, though when I tried to read the Koran I had real doubts about it. I had no intention of joining it. I had been reading Nicholson's Rumi and other Sufi writers like Hafiz or Sadi since 1979 but did not yet have any clear critical perspective on Islam or its poets. Nazim Hikmet was a poet who questioned the Saffavid romantic trascdentalists. I think I made the mistake of separating Hafez and Rumi them from Islam itself., making them exotic, romantic and orientalist poets, a common mistake in the West. My interest in Islam was romantic and literary, and before I saw through most literary and romantic tendencies. This was a mistake on my part. The reality of life in the Middle east is very different that orientalist fantasy.

Scott Anderson writes that:

One of the Arab world's most prominent and debilitating features, I had long felt, was a culture of grievance that was defined less by what people aspired to than by what they opposed. They were anti-Zionist, anti-West, anti-imperialist. For generations, the region's dictators had been adroit at channeling public frustration toward

these external “enemies” and away from their own misrule. (NYT, Aug. 2016)

There is truth to this. The very low standing given to women in these societies is disturbing and unjust. It is probably true that Islam in the 8<sup>th</sup> century was better than European treatment of women in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, but that is saying very little. I saw myself how Schuon and Guenon had been attracted to Islam because it opposed the west which they were part of but hated. I knew their interest was partly because of the macho culture of Islam that they admired. The preference for males in Islamic society is Koranic and religion created. I also saw how Abdollah Shahbazi in Iran had generated bizarre conspiracy theories about Behai and Freemasons. Given Iran’s bellicose history and tendency to isolation, such paranoid history’s as Shahbazi writes are to be expected. But this hardly makes them factual. Shahbazi seems to serve the propaganda needs of the Iranian state. As Iran is a theocracy, it is hardly interesting to do that.

I was never part of Iranian culture, but I was a very curious young man, and got to know many former Iranians. Iran is not a religion or a state apparatus but a place with many humans in it all of whom need protection from their own government and ideological ministers. The function of Islam in this state is to prevent the protection of individuals in favor of a “them verses us” ideology. I have no interest in this strategy and find it wrong headed. But it may be useful here to look at my own history in the midst of the complexity of these cultural conflicts.

Islam is a political religion, as are they all. I stress that it was on Schuon’s insistence I became a Moslem. He said to me in his strong German accent that “if you want to take full advantage of my perspective you must accept Islam”. I did not realize yet that Schuon was a fraudulent spiritual master, or indeed, that all spiritual ‘masters’ are frauds in one way or another, since the premises of “Spiritual

Enlightenment”, qualification and or realization are all based on subjective fictions. But I did not know that then. I wanted to learn what Schuon knew, so I did what he asked of me for a year or so. Little did I know then that he actually knew very little and what he had to teach was mostly superficial superstition and empty formulas. I learned some basic Arabic and could recite brief parts of the Koran, and I read some attendant literature as well as Schuon’s own works and “texts” on it, as well as practicing the various empty prayers, fasting and behavioral codes. The praying cycle of a good Moslem is intense and not easy to sustain. But for about two years I did the five times a day formal prayer and the fast, as well as the incessant prayers Schuon taught me. Schuon did not require the fast but for two years I did it.

But it was a huge mistake. The Koran really disturbed me and I disliked it more and more as time passed and I learned more about it. I have no fear of Muslims as people. But the religion has many repulsive features, as does Christianity, Hinduism or Judaism..

So far from being Islamophobic I did all I could to learn about the religion, more than most westerners. What I learned shocked me.<sup>1074</sup> I don’t go as far as Richard Dawkins who says “Islam is one of the great evils in the world”.<sup>1075</sup> I doubt the existence of evil, but certainly Islam encourages human excesses of ignorance, malice and violence, as does Christianity and capitalism. Like Christianity, Islam is horrendous toward women and full of superstition and myth. The same is true, in differing degrees, of every religion, and I include Marxism as a ‘religion’,

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<sup>1074</sup> For more on the term Islamofascism see Christopher Hitchens on the use of the term. I am not sure I agree with everything he says here but it is worth reading. Here:

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/fighting\\_words/2007/10/defending\\_islamofascism.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/fighting_words/2007/10/defending_islamofascism.html)

Hitchens died, (Dec. 15, 2011) as I worked on this book, and I was very sorry to see him go. He was wrong to support George Bush’s Iraq war, but he was right about many other things. He opposed the use of torture by U.S. troops in Abu Ghraib and Haditha, and the U.S. government’s use of waterboarding.

<sup>1075</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyNv8kvd2H8&feature=related>

namely an ideology.

The best and most accurate writer I have read on the religion of Islam and Sufism is David Hall. A fine and honest person, David and I wrote back and forth in the 1990s. The basis of Islam is the Koran. David has written well about how the Koran and hadith were doctored and invented texts written over a century or more after Muhammad died. David writes:

“ the Koran could well stand as the supreme example of a man-made text, worked over and doctored to an unfathomable extent, and subsequently endowed with a transcendental provenance by the associative and projective proclivities of the human imagination.”<sup>1076</sup>

In other words it is just mythic book as is the Bible, it is a man-made thing, a fiction that was constructed to serve an institution and a system of power. The Koran and the Bible need “to be desacralized”, Hall says, “and put... into their historical and geographic context.” Yes, but unfortunately for all those who continue to die or suffer because of these myths, the Koran, like the Bible, is accepted irrationally as the “inspired word of god....and it is a book full of hatred and violence”, David says. A good demonstration of this is in Sam Harris’s The End of Faith.<sup>1077</sup> He gives many quotes from the Koran and observes afterwards that

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<sup>1076</sup> <http://newhumanist.org.uk/581>

<sup>1077</sup> Harris is a strange thinker, so here I am just quoting from his book about the Koran. It hardly means I agree with Harris about all things, I don't. But I do not find Harris terribly clear, for instance Chris Hedges attacks Harris for supposedly supporting first strike nuclear attacks on Islamic countries, but if you read or listen to Harris talk about this, he is merely saying that an extremist Islamic position would not mind attacking the west with nuclear weapons and in that case they might be used in preemptive self defense. This is a hypothetical scenario that is very different from what Hedges accuses him of. I find him terribly ambiguous about this and would not like to accuse him one way or another, since he is really unclear.

“On almost every page, the Koran instructs observant Muslims to despise non-believers. On almost every page, it prepares the ground for religious conflict. Anyone who can read passages like those quoted and not see a link between Muslim faith and Muslim violence should probably consult a neurologist”<sup>1078</sup>

This is accurate and my own reading in the Koran conformed this is true. Islamophobes have an irrational fear of most Moslems, who are generally peaceable. But to pretend that Islam itself, as a religion, is peaceable is ludicrous. To anyone well informed about it is entirely reasonable to fear Islam given its endorsement of violence and hatred towards outsiders. The mullahs who control the interpretation of the Koran dislike any sort of criticism and are likely to express interest in killing anyone who questions too deeply the text of the Koran. The “lightning expansion” of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries had to do more with blood and butchery than beatitude, though murderers often feel beatific as they kill, apparently. Trying to present Islam as a religion of peace is itself a fabrication.

Sam Harris is right about this anyway. After two years in Schuon’s tariqa I had concluded that the atmosphere of moral blackmail, conspiracy and threat that I found in the Koran was very much present

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<sup>1078</sup> Harris, Sam. The End of Faith. NY. Norton 2005 pg 123. his is a good book, in general, but it is weak in some areas. Harris is not very clear about Israeli violence and rather dismisses charges against Israel. In fact Israel kills far more Palestinians than Palestinian kill Israelis. Both religions are horribly murderous and to take either side is immoral, which is why the US is unethical in its exclusive support of Israel. Israel needs to be dismantled as a religious state, Palestinians need to stop justifying suicide bombings and Israelis need to get out of Gaza and the West Bank. The problem all around is religion. It is the influence of religion that must be undermined for there to be peace. The Iranian and Israeli state both need to be dismantled and the theocratic rule of Mullahs and Rabbis undermined. Religious states are poisonous states. The world goes on its merry way, whatever I think. Harris is not very clear, again. I am well aware my proposals are not likely to be taken seriously, as religion is so entrenched, but I make them anyway, trying at least to be clear, even if the proposal is unattainable, it might be the solution to the problem. That direction seems to be the one we should move towards in Iran or Isreal—but will they, probably not, at the moment.

in and around Schuon too. The same exclusivist and militant hatred is in Guenon too. This was not just because of their Islamic affiliation, but that was certainly part of why they were such toxic leaders. I became a Muslim only because Schuon insisted on it. Yes, I wanted to try it too, as I was young, avid and eager to learn anything as an experiment. I practiced many religions in those days as I wanted to understand them from the inside. It was an act of journalistic curiosity. I was a sincere practitioner when I was doing it. I was willing to practice any religion and tried many. I wanted to see what they all had to offer in an effort to understand what they were and if they represented anything real. I was 30 and very passionate for experience and knowledge. But I did not yet understand much of what I grasp now. But my exploration of Native religions, Tibetan Buddhism, Islam, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christianity, Zen, Vedantic and Hare Krishna Hinduism and other religions gave me a rather journalistic and insider view of these faiths and how they operate. Islam was something I wished to experience, one of many. But the experience went sour pretty quickly and I left the religion somewhat scared and horrified by it. I saw concretely that the blackmailing repressiveness of the Koran and the Sharia was in the Traditionalists too. Anyone sane and concerned with humanity should reject this.

Islam's primary documents talk endlessly about threats of burning and scorching people. Let's look at a few quotes. The Koran says "*all things have been created after fixed decree*" (54:49) "*[T]hose that deny Our revelations shall be punished for their misdeeds*" (6:49). "*Those that deny Our revelation We will burn in fire. No sooner will their skins be consumed than We shall give them other skins, so that they may truly taste the scourge. God is mighty and wise*" (4:55–56). Only a theofascist and tyrant or 'evil divinity' or God of the worst sort would create a world that burns so many people by decree. The god of the Koran in his own words is "mocking," "cursing," "shaming," "punishing," "scourging," "judging,"

"burning," "annihilating," "not forgiving,". The Koran, like the Old Testament (OT), is full of violence and encourages violence. In Genesis, the Old Testament says, for instance, that "Every living substance that I have made will I destroy." (7:4) This need to threaten and destroy is typical of theocratic systems

*Slay them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is worse than carnage. . . . [I]f they attack you put them to the sword. ....Fight against them until idolatry is no more and God's religion reigns supreme. (2:190–93)*

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This is hate speech, racist and them V us.

*"Never think that those who were slain in the cause of God are dead. They are alive, and well provided for by their Lord; pleased with His gifts and rejoicing that those they left behind, who have not yet joined them, have nothing to fear or to regret; rejoicing in God's grace and bounty. God will not deny the faithful their reward" (3:169). ( this justifies all sort of violence, including suicide bombing.)*

*"They will not cease to fight against you until they force you to renounce your faith—if they are able. But whoever of you recants and dies an unbeliever, his works shall come to nothing in this world and in the world to come. Such men shall be the tenants of Hell, wherein they shall abide forever. (2:217–18).*

*"God will mock them and keep them long in sin, blundering blindly along" (2:15).*

*A fire "whose fuel is men and stones" awaits them (2:24).*

*They will be "rewarded with disgrace in this world and with grievous punishment on the Day of Resurrection" (2:85).*

This list could go on. In the Old Testament (OT) God kills everyone in Sodom and Gomorrah, women children old people, sick people. This is not a good god any more than is the tyrant of the Koran. Christian "sacred" texts are just as bloody as the Koran.

The Koran emphasizes knowledge as "Unity" (tawhid).. In the Koran, Knowledge is knowledge of god, and the divine Book sets up a hierarchy of those who submit and those who reject, the system of knowledge, associated with the Book, the Koran. Those who reject should be killed or burn in hell, those who accept go to paradise. This is an unwarranted assertion that has no proof. Knowledge means submission, as indeed, the word Islam, means submission.. Defining God as all powerful, gives his representatives justification for killing and social control.

The Koran states that "to Him belong the dominion of the heavens and the earth: It is he who gives life and death, and he has power over all things: he is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and he has knowledge of all things". <sup>1079</sup> This claim to total knowledge is meant to grant the leaders of Islam total power. This is indeed a kind of theofascism and one can see it exercised in Islamic terrorism, however pundits might seek to apologize for Moslems in general, who are not usually terrorists.. The same is true of the old and new Testaments, where non-believers are also burned in a fictional hell. The early books of the OT, like the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua are little different than the Koran and advocate massacres and genocide, against men,

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<sup>1079</sup> Koran (S.LVII2-3. Ali, Yusuf pg.1497)

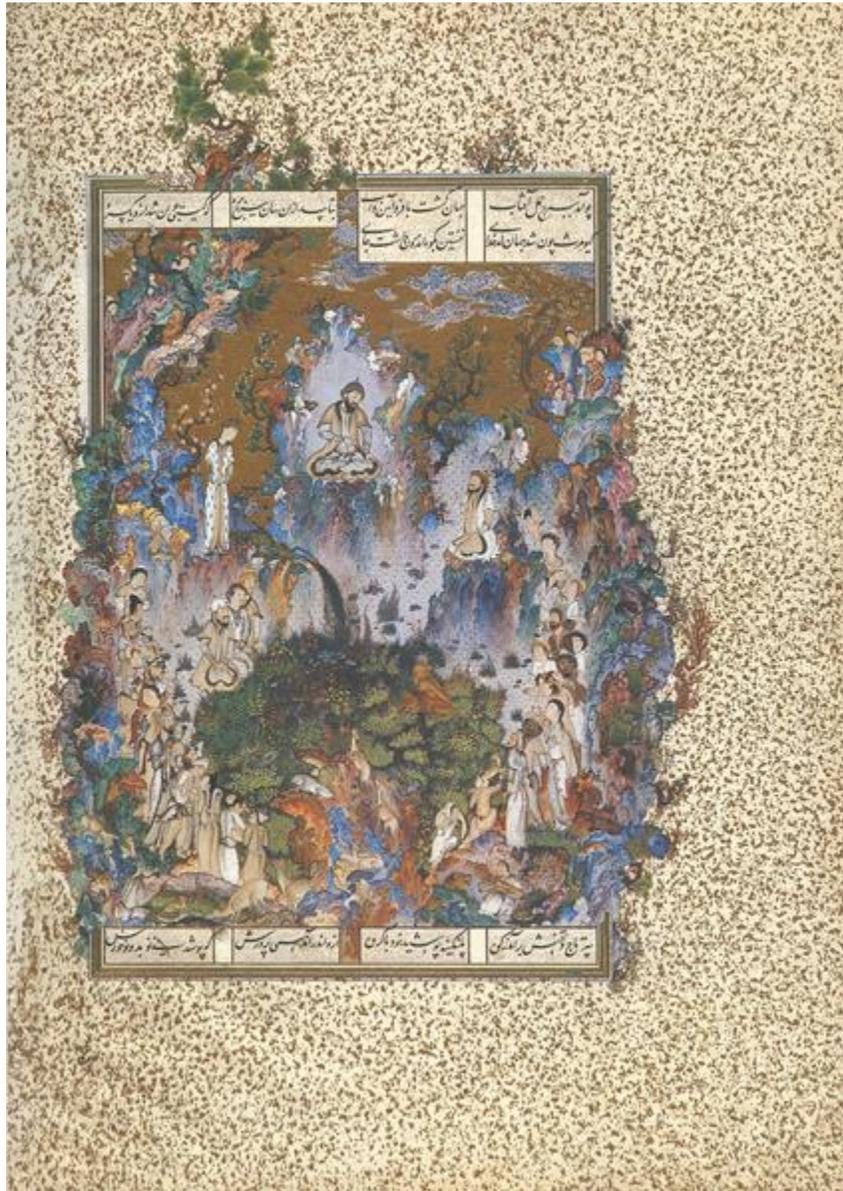
women, children and old people.<sup>1080</sup> It is any wonder Christians, Israelis and Moslems are still murdering each other?

The Islam I dreamily thought I loved was really just a poetic phantasm of my own making, encouraged by the romantic nonsense of Rumi, Hafez and Coleman Barks, a poet and proselytizer who I got to know before I joined the Schuon cult.<sup>1081</sup> I was reading Rumi and imitating him years before I met or knew of Barks. I am not sure there is any honor in being prior to any delusional New Agers. But I finally realized that the poetry of Rumi, Rilke, Hafez and Barks are escapist narcissism and mistaken. Dreams of Persian Gardens like the paintings of Sultan Muhammad once made me think all that might be real, when actually, Persian gardens are Darwinian collections of plants, just as they are where I live now. Hafez and Sultan Muhammad lived in the realm of make believe. Such things are just Sufi dreams based on myths created by Islamic poets and the religious. The lamp that burns in the Niche is a lovely image one sees in many carpets or tile-art, but it is just an image, no more true than the Eucharist or the Tibetan colored prayer flags. There are many things in life that are beautiful but not true.

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<sup>1080</sup> The Old Testament has many other horrors, all showing that the god of that book is a cruel and petulant tyrant. Abraham is forced by god to cast you Hagar and her son Ismael. (16:5-6) --- 'cast out this bondwoman and her son.' Abraham is willing to murder his son Isaac. Moses murders someone, God kills many Egyptians and sends plaques on them. He kills Moses because he did not cut the foreskin off his son. God advises the beating of slaves. 21:20-21. God advocates endless killing of animals and destruction of nature and calls man the dominant being on earth. He practices torture on Job. It is really quite endless how vicious and revengeful the Jewish/Christian God is. No one in their right mind should pray to such a fictional monster.

<sup>1081</sup> I was also involved with Robert Darr (Abdul Hayy) who was a rug dealer I worked with and a "Sufi". He is also a boat builder of exquisite handmade craft. A wonderful idealistic man in many ways, Bob went to Afghanistan and set up rug production in Afghani refugee camps during the Soviet war against Afghanistan. I helped him sell some of the resulting carpets. He was made to leave that country and accused of being a CIA spy, which he was not, as far as I know. But Bob adopted a dreamy, idealized, New Age and really inaccurate version of Islam as a way of life. See his [The Spy of the Heart](#). This is American Sufism as a feel good, delusional escape from reality and has very little to do with real Islam. It is new age orientalism



Sultan Muhammad

**Gayumarth, first Shah of Iran, enthroned among his courtiers clad in leopard skins at the opening of the Shahnama. <sup>1082</sup>**

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<sup>1082</sup> This painting by Sultan Muhammad, one of the best of Persian miniatures showing one of the founders of Iran as a saintly figure. While it is a great painting, it is, like Michelangelo's Last Judgment, a work of political/spiritual propaganda, as shows again the political character of Sufism

I loved the poetry of Rumi long before I realized what a poison it contained and before I met Barks. Indeed, I found Barks to be something of a con-man. There is a lot written about his bad translations of Rumi, but actually the problem is not so much the translations as Rumi himself. Rumi was a reactionary Mullah, and misogynist, whose philosophy espouses a hatred of the ordinary earth and longing for what does not exist. The expatriate American Muhammad Legenhausen loves Barks and wrote a glowing essay about him. I certainly do not agree with him about Rumi. <sup>1083</sup>

When I was young I loved the poetic idea of Iranian and Afghani tribal culture before I really understood how common ignorance and superstition were in these countries and how important education must become there. I was not yet able to separate the people that had made oriental carpets and tended Qashgai goats from their religion, oil and theofascist governments. There is no question in my mind but that Islamic design is one of the best the world has ever produced. I still retain a deep love of Oriental carpets. I loved Moroccan and Iranian tile work but did not yet understand how Islam in Iran or elsewhere is an anti-intellectual force that levels and destroys minds. I loved Islamic architecture and some of its people who I had met in my trade.

Reading Edward Said <sup>1084</sup> helped me quite a lot after I got out of the

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<sup>1083</sup> Legenhausen works in the reactionary Khomeini college in Qum Iran. He uses Rumi to reject enlightenment ideals and embrace an irrational religion.

<sup>1084</sup> See Said's Orientalism, which is a subtle book that does not endorse Islam but nor does it endorse the western hatred of it. Ibn Warraq's hatred of Said expressed in his book In Defense of the West, seems unwarranted to me. Indeed, I looked through the book and thought it a badly done attack on a decent man. Said says explicitly that he is not a Moslem and does not support what that religion does. Warraq falsely accuses him to have supported Islam's tendency to paranoia about the west. The West has created its own enemies in Islam by its irrational support of Israel. Said is in open opposition to Islamic abuses of human rights as he is opposed to Euro-

Schuon cult. He is often condemned by the far right, but there is truth in things he said, even if some of his scholarship is less than perfect. No scholar is perfect, as no one knows everything. He helped me see that views of Islam in the west are false. Said is right that the important thing about the “orient” is not its religion but its people, whose humanity is independent of its religion. Certainly, his book contains real mistakes, and I tracked some of them down. But much of the main thesis of his book is sound. I realize now that many Moslems are, like most Christians, ignorant of the injustice and horror perpetuated in the history of their religion and culture. They don’t want to know what Catholicism actually did in thequisition or the sale of Indulgences. The history of the 900’s in Europe is a constant nightmare partly because of the corruption of the Church. People belong more to Islam out of habit and familial and national allegiance than anything else. Islam is not a fact but a cultural construction. It is no more real than Santa Claus is real.

In the years of my searching, I am sorry I met no Moslem willing to question the faith, other than David Hall. Most followers of Schuon were only sometimes Moslem. Like me, Moslem true believers are largely innocent of what their religions had done to others.<sup>1085</sup>

Once I left Schuon in 1991, I realized that I wanted nothing to do

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American abuses of human rights too. I agree with him about both these matters. Moreover it is hard not to appreciate Said on many things, in his writing on music or literature, for instance. Hitchens also attacks Said, and Hitchens records in his biography that Said thought Hitchens a “racist”—Warraq critique of Islam has some good insights, but he aligns himself with Christian fundamentalism and the far right in the U.S., which suggests he was a man who wrote one decent book and had one good idea.

<sup>1085</sup> Muhammad Legenhausen, for instance, whose real name was Gary, is caught in Iran teaching rich Mullah’s kids about western ideas. This devotion to the clerics to a very repressive state is disturbing. As an expatriate Moslem he has elected to be a propagandist for Islam. I understand that religion is an accident of ones upbringing or of unfortunate choices one has made and I separate the people who live under Islam—or other religions--- from the religion itself. Legenhausen is a nice man, even if I find his intellectual choices and culture questionable.

with Islam as a religion. I did not want to contribute to its power in the world or its history. I was not “islamophobic”, nor a racist. It is not racist to enter or leave a religion, which is merely a way of thinking, a way or living and doing rituals, merely reading a book, praying 5 times a day or saying incessant prayers. It did not matter that I said the word ‘allah’ over and over, it could have been ‘Plesiosaur’, which at least was a real thing, not just a word with no verifiable content.. My leaving Islam had nothing to do with racism or Islamophobia.. I easily stopped praying the prayers and observing the observances<sup>1086</sup>. I merely regretted what Schuon had asked me to do. I am not and have never been a hater of races or of people who call themselves Moslem, who come from many races.

Guenon and Schuon, following Encausse, invented the bogus category of esoterism/exoterism so that esoterism could have parasitical supremacy over and above exoterism. Indeed, Aristotle might be the first use of these terms and he defines them to refer to his written work. He made a distinction between works Aristotle intended for the public (exoteric), and the more technical works intended for use within the school (esoteric). Modern scholars commonly assume these latter to be Aristotle’s own (unpolished) lecture notes (or in some cases possible notes by his students). So esoteric has nothing spiritual about it, on the contrary it

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<sup>1086</sup> Though in subsequent years I saw how effective the training had been. I had done Buddhist invocation and then the Jesus Prayer for a few years and then the Schuon invocation for two years and it reverberated in my brain for years afterwards, like an old song I could not get rid of. I had an emotional attachment to these prayers too, which I took time to mourn over once I left it. There is a curious warmth and solipsistic satisfaction to praying deeply. It is a form of talking to oneself all the time, except that one projects this talking to oneself on a fictional deity or a mantric formula, like an empty mirror, as the Buddhists call it. The illusory belief that this is effective partly comes from this interior warmth and satisfaction at ones efforts. It is a kind of yogic self-hypnotism. It creates conformist thinking and a form of inner self-policing. It is a perfect form of social control, as one controls oneself from the inside, internalizing an absolute policing mechanism. This gives the illusion of permanence, as well as the illusion of belonging to something eternal and beyond suffering. But this is a delusion, however socially useful it might be to those who coordinate and manage populations.

merely refers to more technical shop talk. Sufism is not an 'esoterism' but just the mystical arm of unjust Islamic tyrannical states. Once I saw that this house of cards was a farce, the house came crashing down and I have been unable to believe any of this nonsense since then. The more I have studied it the more I see that religion has no basis in truth, but rather exists as a propped up series of unexamined fictions, largely political or psycho-social in nature, all of which contribute to human misery and unjust states. Believers use the terms of the religion without ever really analyzing what they actually mean or how they serve a social, economic or political functions within an organization.

The religion of Islam is a very negative force, however it may act as a unifying social agent in the countries where it is strong. Saudi Arabia, is one of the most backward, autocratic human rights abusing countries in the world. This is certainly in part due to the Koran and its powerful and rigid social codes. The Koran accomplishes "surrender" ( Islam means submission or surrender) by force of threat and blackmail. The Koran and Islam in general is a religion of blackmail. The demand to surrender totally to Allah is what gives us suicide bombers. In Nigeria submission to Islam has even involved Muslim extremists killing children and blowing up schools. The twisted logic of this is that the Muslims hate science and western education and blowing up schools and killing children is their protest. Should anyone killi peole in a discoteque because they are dancing? Obviously not. Islam is a religion of imposition and often violent imposition. For instance, some friends told me after I renounced the Schuon cult and left Islam that the sentence for those who practice Islam and then leave Islam is death. This surprised me, but I found out later that many have been killed who have left Islam and criticized it. "Big Brother" is watching you in Islam; either you believe it and follow what it says or you die! This utter suppression of inquiry and experimentation is anathema to all open minded investigation and repulsed me deeply. I merely tried on a belief system as

one tires on clothes. Only a manifestly false religion would behave in this Mafioso fashion. Had I known when I went into it that the sentence for leaving Islam is death, I never would have joined it. I only joined it because Schuon insisted on it, and would not have done so otherwise. I have since learned too many things about it to do more than try it on for size and it certainly did not fit.

In my case, I joined Islam on the insistence of a corrupt spiritual master and do not feel that I should be punished for anything. The fact of having suffered under the direction of such a person was already punishment enough. Being a whistle blower about the Schuon cult brought its own special forms of harassment and torture. I joined Islam only because Schuon required it, not because I was planning to be a Moslem. It is unpelasant to get death threats and I have been issued a few. Bringing Schuon to court and exposing him and then watching as his lies multiplied and he issued threats and engineered a cover up, taught me who he really was. I know more about who this man really is than anyone. I watched the cult lie in public and saw many people hurt by Schuon. It was a terrible experience. They slandered many people and continue to do so to this day. Schuon's malicious, lying and bitter behavior both before and after the legal case brought against him by the state of Indiana showed me what a fraud he and his followers really are. I knew for a fact that he was guilty, so that made all the actions of him and his cult appear to me as they were, --the actions of a man willing to con and cheat, bully and lie to anyone in a hysterical effort to preserve his reputation. He was a con-man cult leader and a fraud as well as a coward who hid behind lies and intimidation tactics. His pose of holiness was totally stripped away and I saw his real person: Schuon was a cult leader and psychopath incapable of remorse.

However, Schuon and Guenon had a very different interest in Islam than I did. I was merely curious and trying to understand if religion had any truth in it. I got to know Islam well enough to reject it and leaving

Islam was a good decision. Participating in Islam for two years taught me enough that I could be critical of it with some knowledge of what I am saying. However, Islam is central to Schuon and Guenon if not Coomaraswamy and Evola. Indeed, I have gotten many letters over the years, asking me to confirm that Schuon was not a real Moslem. Actually, he was a Moslem for many years as were most of his followers. While he added special obsession to his Islamic stance, he was very much a Moslem and more true to it than many realize. The cult did their best to be “good Muslims”, and the effort to brand them as bad Muslims is really irrelevant to the facts. Being a “good Muslim” is not a guarantee of anything. Yes, Schuon did cheat on becoming a Shaykh, and claimed special election based on bogus dreams of his own and by his disciples. There is a book of dreams that the cult has which tells of dreams and it is supposed to justify this guy and his power. It doesn't. However, the whole history of Islam is rife with such cheating. Many Sufis do this. Muhammad himself appear to be a mythic fabrication. It is true that Schuon was not a good Moslem in some ways, neglected Ramadan and drank wine. He had trouble keeping his pants on and danced around as if he were a nudist Native American ---this is true, --- but he was not wrong to question orthodoxy, since nearly all the ‘great’ Sufis questioned the Islamic law of the Mullahs . The sharia is a monstrous institution that sanctions violence and stoning as well as abuse of women. Some Sufis have murdered for questioning Sharia. As Amnesty International has demonstrated over many years, the Sharia in Islam is a monstrous institution that creates many horrible violations of human rights.<sup>1087</sup>

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<sup>1087</sup> there used to be a very interesting website called Human Rights Abuses in Islamic countries. (HRAIC), was forced off the net by Moslem fanatics. But some of its posts still exist on the web and these are instructive. Amnesty International website states in 2011 that Islamic countries continue to perpetrate some of the worst human rights violations in the world. There is continued silencing of dissent, torture, cruelty, discrimination and other violations. In regard to discrimination against women. The AI website states “2010 saw little improvement in the status of women and girls who, across the region, continued to face discrimination and violence,

But even if Schuon had been perfectly orthodox, Islam is a still a very disturbing religion, and Schuon's reasons for participating in it were as questionable as the religion itself. People who write me letters seem to think that being an orthodox Moslem is intrinsically a good thing. I do not think so. Islam itself is questionable just as Christianity or any organized system of make-believe is questionable. The Crusades were a monstrous mistake as was the Iran-Iraq war.

The question is how to study systems of belief from the outside. I came to understand Islam from the inside and now see it now from the outside. Believers are scared to look at their religion from the outside. A "secular view" of Islam is the only one that makes sense. The whole idea of the "secular" however, is a misnomer. Secular and secularity derive from the Latin word 'saecularis' meaning "of a generation, belonging to an age". There is nothing that is outside the secular or time. The idea of the timeless eternity is a literary and religious fiction. Therefore the notion of the 'secular' is a false concept since there is really nothing except the "secular". The "sacred" is the fabrication. The religions that oppose themselves to the secular are merely pulling themselves up above the secular by means of illusory bootstraps. Their elevation is a delusion.

Religions should be subjected to study that is much more thorough and questioning. For instance Ibn Warraq claims on the basis of various authorities that Muhammad died in A.D. 632, yet "The earliest material

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including within the family. Men remained superior under family and personal status laws in matters such as marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, and women continued to be accorded inferior status under the criminal law. Particularly in more traditional areas, girls were subject to [child abuse] early and forced marriage and women who challenged strict dress codes or were seen by male relatives as not conforming to their particular notions of family "honor" risked violent reprisals and even murder at the hands of their fathers, brothers, husbands or other male relatives. In all too many cases, men who cited "honor" as a mitigating factor escaped any or appropriate punishment for crimes of violence committed against female members of their families."

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/annual-report/2011/middle-east-north-africa>

we possess on his life was written by Ibn Ishaq, in A.D. 750. This is 130 years after Muhammad's supposed death. Very little of the real person would survive in such a long time, and what did survive must have been largely invention.

The split between the Sunni and Shia factions of Islam is also largely political and its origins are also clouded in historical mist. It appears to have been driven by political and geographic divisions between various people conquered by Islam in the founding centuries after the creation of the myths surrounding Muhammad. How these myths get started in each case is hard to divine. But given that The Sunni/Shia split has many analogies with the Catholic/Protestant rift, and we know how Protestantism got started, it is not hard to imagine that these rifts had to do with psycho-social dynamics that got attached to stories and myths, such as the myth of Ali, and his fight with the Caliphs, who headed up Islam.<sup>1088</sup> These stories are themselves questionable as they were written up to 120 or more years after the death of Ali<sup>1089</sup> and nearly 200 years after the death of Muhammad and so are very likely heavily fictionalized by political concerns. Ali was the reputed grandson of Muhammad through Fatima. But all this is probably false and those who claim to descend from the prophet are really just pretenders, as the Prophet himself is probably a fiction. Ali was further fictionalized by the poets of the Safavid dynasty(1501 to 1722) in Iran. So, very likely, what we are looking at in both Islamic and Christian history is the record of myth making done by political factions who were fighting for power and influence. Indeed, there is a great deal of evidence that both Christ and Muhammad are largely inventions. I do not know this for sure,

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<sup>1088</sup> Shia Muslims lionize Husayn Ibn Ali because he refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph, and was assassinated by Yazid. He becomes a martyr to the Shia cause. The Shia is only about 10% of the population of Islam the rest being Sunni.

<sup>1089</sup> The earliest somewhat 'reliable' account of the events surround the death of Husayn Ibn Ali was Hisham Ibn Al-Kalbi (died in 204 AH)

obviously, but it is a more likely story than the one we are told by partizans of these religions.

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### The Myth of Jesus

The fact that Muhammad is largely and perhaps entirely an invention of politics is echoed in early Christianity. We have a clash of two systems of myth and social organization over millennia. This is obvious early on in Christianity. The Christian Gospels, written 60 to 150 years after the death of the man named Jesus, just as the life of Muhammad was a later invention . It is reasonable to doubt that Jesus ever existed, and indeed, the thesis that he did not has been seriously and convincingly proposed.<sup>1090</sup> There is no contemporary evidence that Jesus existed. Indeed, the whole Jesus myth appears to be a fabrication by the early church and later co-opted as part of the Roman empire. The Roman Empire made this obscure cult famous, not the mythical story at its root. It appears for instance that the only independent historical witness that Jesus existed was written by Josephus and this has been shown to be a forgery inserted into a first century document in a latter century , probably the forth. Dan Barker has a very interesting chapter about this in his book, Godless, ( see pages 251-276).<sup>1091</sup> He is one of the

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<sup>1090</sup> See Richard Carrier, Earl Doherty and Dan Barker. See Pg255 of Godless, Barker excellent book criticizing Christianity and the old and new Testaments. Godless tells the story of Dan Barker who was a fundamentalist Christian preacher but gave it up when he realized it was all make believe and a lie. The Jesus myth may have started with a Jewish story about the son of Miriam, who was stoned to death and hung up on a tree. ( pg 269) There are other plausible origins of the Jesus myth suggested. It appears the whole thing is based on a literary fiction.

<sup>1091</sup> For another writer who claims Jesus did not exist see also Richard Carrier, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbTbEvFSSF8>

the best of the critics of American Christianity and their unique idea of a sentimental 'country western' God. He states that the paragraph about Jesus "is absent from early copies of the works of Josephus. For example it does not appear in Origen's second century version of Josephus"..., and "does not appear at all until the beginning of the fourth century"..

The origin of the Gospels is a veritable thicket of contention and is so, it seems, because they were written so late and no one really wants to admit this. There are many variant manuscript texts of the early gospels and many of them occur up to hundreds of years after the events they are supposed to describe. Matthew, Mark and Luke all appear in manuscripts that are dated to around 200 C.E, which means they are all likely fabrications and based on little or no facts at all, written before that date. When they were written is not clear, Doherty claims that

Only in Justin Martyr, writing in the 150s, do we find the first identifiable quotations from some of the Gospels, though he calls

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Carrier who claims convincingly, I think, that Christ is a myth not an historical fact. He says that Christianity was a "dying and rising" agricultural cult, that turned into a Salvation and Mystery cult. He appears to follow Earl Doherty who thought Jesus was entirely a mythic construction. I agree. Carrier and Doherty have the merit of actually caring about evidence and reason, unlike the fundamentalists who are caught in medieval dogmatic argumenta and battles over words. Carrier writes that

As Doherty argues, "Jesus Christ" (which means "The Anointed Savior") was originally a heavenly being, whose atoning death took place at the hands of demonic beings in a supernatural realm halfway between heaven and earth, a sublunar sphere where he assumed a fleshly, quasi-human form. This and the rest of the "gospel" was revealed to the first Christians in visions and inspirations and through the discovery of hidden messages in the scriptures. [as is evident in Paul, who does not mention the historical Jesus] After the confusion of the Jewish War and persistent battles over power in the church, rooted in a confused mass of variant sectarian dogmas, a new cult arose with the belief that Jesus actually came to earth and was crucified by Jews with the complicity of the Roman authorities. [by a process he calls Euhemerization, which is the fictional creation of a historical person being created as if it were historical, when in fact it is a myth]] To defend itself against sects more closely adhering to the original, mystical faith, the new church engaged in polemics and power politics, and eventually composed or adopted writings (chiefly the canonical Gospels) supporting its views"

see

[http://infidels.org/library/modern/richard\\_carrier/jesuspuzzle.html](http://infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/jesuspuzzle.html)

them simply "memoirs of the Apostles," with no names. And those quotations usually do not agree with the texts of the canonical versions we now have, showing that such documents were still undergoing evolution and revision.

But Doherty waffles on this and sometimes thinks they might have been written as early as 90 C.E. I asked Carrier about this, in person, and he also waffled and mentioned the "consensus view" that Mark must have been written after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. but admitted that this could well be a later backdating of the Temple story in Mark. The only real fact that supposedly dates the Gospel of Mark is the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. This is proof of nothing, as backdating is very likely,--it was a well known event--- so the date is probably mistaken. The early Epistles of Paul, sometimes dated as early as 50. C.E. never mention Jesus as an historical person, so there is no evidence there, indeed, this is evidence against the historicity of Jesus.<sup>1092</sup>

So very likely, the Gospels are second century as there is no reliable mention of them until 130-150, C.E. and no copies are before 180 C.E. except ones whose dates are contested. There is the case of Papius (70-163 CE), whose writings do not exist but who is quoted much later by Eusebius (260-339? CE). But this is very possibly a specious quote and moreover Eusebius attacks Papius as incredible and a myth promoter.

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<sup>1092</sup> Indeed, the fact that Paul does not mention the historical Jesus at all, suggests that those that probably proselytized Paul did not either. Since the earliest people who describe Jesus do not mention a real person, they are more likely to be correct. Jesus was an idea, not a person. So the early Christians already think of Jesus as a cosmological principle and not a person who was actual. This further suggests that the Gospel writers are making up a fiction based on an idea, not a person. This is indeed how the Gospels read, with their imaginary stories of a guy walking on water, raising the dead, driving pigs off a cliff and killing a tree by magic, not to mention turning the water into wine and turning a piece of bread and fish into something to eat for 5000 people. These are all invented fabrications.

This is hardly evidence of anything, except possibly the fictional nature of the Gospels.

If Josephus's writings about Jesus are an interpolated forgery, and it fairly certain they are, it seems likely that the man did not exist at all and is a myth. Carrier claims that the gospels are in circulation by 110, C.E..<sup>1093</sup> But that too is unlikely. Earl Doherty claims that Christianity began with a mythical Christ that was a creation of Paul who wrote in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and that the Gospel Jesus was a later, fictional creation. Thus the case can be made reasonably that none of the main historical elements of the Jesus myth existed in any factual form before 150-180 C.E. Doherty writes:

Most astonishingly, all the major apologists before the year 180, with the sole exception of Justin (and a minor apologist from Syria, Aristides), fail to include an historical Jesus in their defenses of Christianity to the pagans. This includes Tatian in his pre-*Diatessaron* days. Instead, the apologists bear witness to a Christian movement which is grounded in Platonic philosophy and Hellenistic Judaism, preaching the worship of the monotheistic Jewish God and a Logos-type Son; the latter is a force active in the world who serves as revealer and intermediary between God and humanity. It is very unlikely that the historical record of Jesus is

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<sup>1093</sup> This early date seems to rest on the letter of Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians, which supposedly was written in 107. C.E. and which supposedly mentions the Gospel of Mathew. But actually this letter might be a forgery, or it is poorly dated, and could be as late as 130 or even later, or it might not be about Mathew at all. So it is perhaps better to say that the Gospels were written between 110 and 180. Doherty writes that "The first clear non-Christian reference to Jesus as a human man in recent history is made by the Roman historian Tacitus around 115 CE, but he may simply be repeating newly-developed Christian belief in an historical Jesus in the Rome of his day." So there is little reasons to suppose an earlier date than this. 130 CE seems about as early as one can imagine a date for the gospel fictions.

accurate or real, that the miracles happened or that any resurrection occurred.<sup>1094</sup>

These are serious claims and have reason and evidence on their side. Tatian created a “Harmony” of the four gospels between 160-175 C.E., and this has shown, for instance, that later additions were made to the Gospels, such as Jesus’ encounter with the adulteress in John, which is not ‘original’. I should add nothing in the Gospels appears to be “original”, it is all made up. Moreover there are many interpolations in the text too, which means later authors inserted things they thought should be in the text. A better name for this is forgeries. The Gospelers were merely good fiction writers, like Charles Dickens, except that Dickens is not creating forgeries and false histories. The Gospels writers, none of whom are known, the names of the four men, Matthew, Mark Luke and John are themselves fake. What is amazing is that so many “scholars” think Jesus was a real person. This goes far to questioning the value of many scholars, who appear to be in collusion with delusion, as it were.

In any case, the specious notion that Jesus was a real person is the basis of the argument, which makes perfect sense, that the early religious writing of Chrtiatianity, belongs more in literature departments than history.

The New Testament is a patchwork of forged fictions written over a few hundred years’ time, as is the Koran and probably other “sacred”

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<sup>1094</sup> In The Jesus Puzzle: Pieces in a Puzzle of Christian Origins  
<http://www.jesuspuzzle.humanists.net/jhcjp.htm>

texts, such as those that set up the myth of the Buddha..<sup>1095</sup> The Gospels were evidently pieced together in the middle of the second century by those just before Tatian or possibly a little earlier, say 130C.E. or after. Polycarp ( 80-167 C.E.), for instance, who wrote around this time, Polycarp does not mention the historical Jesus in his one surviving text. He only mentions the Jesus who is a mythical and not an historical character.

The mind set of people who would do that, ----make up these myths, is mysterious, but not that hard to fathom. People have been making things up ever since language made it possible. Kids do it, and so do adults. It is quite safe to conclude that the Christian myth started as a cult and become useful to people in power in Rome, and later as part of the feudal system once Rome fell, hence its long life: 2000 years. As time went on a false certainty about the origins of Jesus grew up and the fake gospels were set up as real instead of the fictions they are. If this is true, and I think it is, most of what goes by the name of history is false, and the actual history of the last 2000 years should be prictured as something very different.

It seems there were men who wrote up the gospels and knew they

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<sup>1095</sup> When I have talked to Bible quoting fundamentalists, I have said to them that Jesus probably did not exist and it is interesting to watch their heads go into overdrive, the record player of biblical phrases and dogmas going around and round in their brains, straining to keep the habit of irrational belief alive by ceaselessly repeating their born again creed. Religion is an irrational habit of dogmatic phrases and abstract and unwarranted beliefs and stories held onto desperately. Evidence does not concern them at all, they only care for their feelings and dogmas given them by artful religious creators like the Gospellers. Phrases like “the fallen world” or “when Jesus came to earth” like he was an alien, or “God had his son killed for the good humanity”, roll of their tongues unexamined. They are unaware that any man who kills his son is a bad father and there is no evidence at all anyone ever “came to earth” and the world that we live in is hardly “fallen” from anywhere. Religious language is based on falsehoods and erroneous metaphors or stories repeated over and over until they seem to be facts..

were a lie, and within a short time this was so successfully hidden that people started to believe the myth. I understand how this works as I saw myself how in the Schuon cult the presumed divinity of Schuon was believed in by a large group of hundreds of people, all of them carefully and utterly deceived by Schuon and Schuon's inner circle, who knew very well he was neither divine or even very nice. Primordial gatherings were developed to fulfill the need of ritual. Schuon believed his own lies and promoted them readily, the lie that his nudity had sacramental significance, for instance. Women believed he was "healing" them by touching them sexually. People are very gullible and want to believe the most ludicrous nonsense, if it flatters their vanity or exalts their subjectivity, even if it exploits them sexually. In the case of Jesus, making up his existence, and getting large numbers to believe it too, was easy. It was made even easier by the excellent mythic and fictional skills of the Gospels writers, whoever they were, their names being fictions too. The Gospels tell a great story and this adult make-believe story was exploited and promoted with great effect for nearly two thousand years, as countless paintings, sculptures, Churches, Cathedrals and a huge secondary literature testify.

That the Gospels were primarily propaganda tools for a cult interested in power is obvious in the actual behavior of the Church over millennia as well as when one watches closely the behavior of individuals who fall under the spell of Christian Bible. Here the artist George Bellows show the fundamentalist preacher Billy Sunday haranguing a revival audience into a state of mental submission and fear. He was a far right conservative in the 1920's who screamed and yelled about the doctrine of damnation, getting results by "inspiring fear and gloom in the hearts of "sinners."

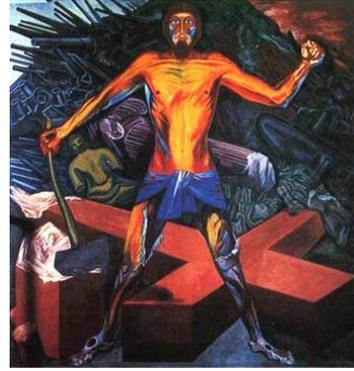


George Bellows Billy Sunday

The Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco did a few amazing anti-mythic pictures, the first of their kind, such as the one where Christ chops down his own cross. In a similar painting the Christ of Orozco chops down the cross and topples the Buddha. <sup>1096</sup>Interesting images, which unfortunately do not escape the domain of the mythical itself. Even the proletarian Christ is a myth that is a fiction that has destructive consequences in Russia and China and should be abandoned.

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<sup>1096</sup> Orozco, Picasso, Rouault and other modern painters were condemned by the Catholic Church for such images, This dogmatic defense of fictional symbols is a curious phenomenon in human history. The idea of the “Cross” is a medieval fiction if ever there was one. It does not appear in art until perhaps 800 years ago and does not become a regular image until 700 years ago. This corresponds pretty closely with the creation the Catholic empire in Europe, the aftermath of the Crusades and the control of an aristocratic elite over Europe. The “tradition” of Catholic Christianity is just this economic elite fabricating their own symbolism to control minds and hearts in the interests of the economic status quo. See elsewhere in this book on the Donation of Constantine.



### **Manufacturing Myths and Visions in Religions.**

Once one realizes that Christ did not actually exist it becomes easy to understand how unlikely it is that Muhammad existed. A great deal of the force behind the “clash of civilizations” is based on delusion and greed, political invention and bad history. It is a war of mythic fictions. People die for these figments of imagination, unfortunately. The gospel writers are responsible for all these deaths, and who they were is entirely unknown. This makes all the deaths of the Crusades, Inquisition, and many wars without any real people to blame. That there were real people who wrote the nonsense of the Gospels cannot be doubted. But they escape all blame by being anonymous. Preaching the Gospel to all nations becomes thus a sort of crime. Indeed, proving the delusion that Jesus was a real person, when there is so much doubt that he was, is unconsoinable.

That two, maybe three, of the major religions were created in the Mideast is fascinating and suggests that the political conflicts there required lies of huge magnitude. There is so much creative fabrication and outright myth making in both the Jesus and Muhammad myths that there must have been a fertile psycho-social ground for it to germinate

and prosper. The reasons for this should be looked into much more deeply. I won't be able to do this in a complete way here, but I make a start on this subject. Religions thus became a kind of introduction to an historical pathology endemic to culture. Far from "saving mankind" Jesus implicates mankind in a tragic dark comedy of human susceptibility to delusions. History became a tragico-comedy, a sort of "Folly" in Erasmus's word.

Like Christ. Muhammad too was most likely a mythical construction of priests or rather, mullahs, clerics and forgers. In any case, the creation of fiction of Jesus is not much different than the creation of Muhammad. Both are creations of an eager cult, which expands enormously through literary means of books like the Koran or the Gospel writers. A great deal is known about the falsities pandered the name of Islam. Many and probably all of the "hadith" or sayings of the Prophet and doings attributed to the Prophet are fictions or outright forgeries, as David Hall says. Other scholarship echoes this.

Ibn Warraq also says that "serious scholars have called in question the Koran itself."<sup>1097</sup> I do not trust Ibn Warraq very much. But there is a great deal of evidence that this historical skepticism toward Muhammad and the Koran is warranted. A cache of Korans from the 700's were found in 1972 in Yemen, the Sana'a manuscripts. This is more than a century after Muhammad is supposed to have lived, and according to Gerd R. Puin<sup>1098</sup> these show that the Koran was a later and evolving text. Toby Lester writes of Puin's work that:

"Some of the parchment pages in the Yemeni hoard seemed to date back to the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., or Islam's first two centuries—they were fragments, in other words, of perhaps the oldest Korans in existence. What's more, some of these fragments

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<sup>1097</sup> Ibn Warraq's Why I am not a Muslim ( Prometheus Books, 2003 pg. 66

<sup>1098</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/issues/99jan/koran.htm>

revealed small but intriguing aberrations from the standard Koranic text. Such aberrations, though not surprising to textual historians, are troublingly at odds with the orthodox Muslim belief that the Koran as it has reached us today is quite simply the perfect, timeless, and unchanging Word of God.”<sup>1099</sup>

This skepticism towards the Koran—and other books like the Gita, Dhahamapada or the Bible--- must also be extended to other mythical aspects of the religion. As David Hall points out in his really excellent book Islamic Mysticism, that “the myth of an original orthodoxy from which later challengers fall away is almost always the retrospective assertion of a politically dominant group whose aim is to establish their own supremacy”. This is certainly the case in Christianity, where the mythical person of Christ was clearly a literary fabrication, made up by Paul<sup>1100</sup> and the later people that wrote the original “Gospels”, The Gospels promote fictions and the purpose of this was to justify the Roman Church, ultimately, as Christianity became the state religion. Christianity would have been a minor local cult otherwise. Likewise, orthodox Islam appears to be based on local mythical constructions, erected into state religions. Hall concludes that the “narrative that purports to be the life of the Prophet of Islam appears as a baseless fiction..... <sup>1101</sup>concocted for propaganda purposes”. <sup>1102</sup> Hall even goes

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<sup>1099</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/issues/99jan/koran.htm>

<sup>1100</sup> Paul might be a 2<sup>nd</sup> century fabrication The earliest existing letter of Paul’s epistles is P 46, which is in the University of Michigan, which is dated to about 180-200 C.E.. This too suggests that the whole enterprise of Christianity is really an affair of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, not the first.

<sup>1101</sup> I have discussed the fiction of orthodoxy throughout these books. One recent example of this is from Africa, where Moslem families who have had a member with Ebola continue to wash their hands at the mosque, thus putting the lives of others as of lesser value than the Koranic injunction to wash your hands before prayer. Killing people matters less than being orthodox. Ebola is a very deadly disease which as yet has no real cure. Obvious refusing orthodoxy is the more reasonable choice here.

<sup>1102</sup> Hall, David. Islamic Mysticism, A Secular Perspective. Prometheus Books. Amherst New York. 2000 pg. 62

further than this and quotes Margoliouth as saying that in the traditional biographies the character which the early narrators “ascribes to [the] prophet is exceedingly repulsive.”

So, when we look at why minor westerners like Guenon and Schuon became Moslem, it is no surprise that there are insidious reasons. These reasons go to the heart of why Christianity and Islam are fundamentally questionable and why Guenon and Schuon tended toward theofascism. <sup>1103</sup> There is truth in the fact that Islam, like Christianity, has tended to brutality and totalism, even back as far as the character Muhammad himself. As David Hall has observed “Ibn Warraq assessment of Muhammad in his book Why I am not a Muslim is really gruesome and hideous.” <sup>1104</sup> I think Warraq is questionable in various ways, as he tends

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<sup>1103</sup> Many writers on Guenon and Schuon are orthodox fanatics. They want to get distance from Schuon and Guenon. They bend over backward to try to say that Schuon and Guenon are not real Moslems. This is not accurate. Sedgwick tries to say that they were really interested in universalism or their “super-religion” and that is true. But Islam deeply flavors the bitter, inquisitorial and accusing style of both men. This should be acknowledged. Islam was not just a religion for them, but a banner of hate and defiance. In some ways they were both much deeper and better Moslems than Sedgwick or other detractors. To some degree as yet unstudied, much of what is sour and destructive in Schuon and Guenon comes from Islam. Their inner fidelity to the ‘spirit’ of Islam is not a token of something to praise them for, rather, if you really understand why they were Moslems you will be alarmed if you look with any depth into their writings. Islam is an alarming religion when you really look at the Sharia and the Koran and what they really say and do. These are men whose god is a weapon of repression and arbitrary harm, who seek to exalt themselves and will lie to anyone who questions them closely. This is partly why they are “good Moslems”, they follow the prescriptions and contradictions of that religion pretty closely.

<sup>1104</sup> Ibn Warraq’s Why I am not a Muslim ( Prometheus Books, 2003) is a very interesting, but problematic, critical work on Islam , which echoes Bertrand Russell excellent, Why I am not a Christian. But Warraq does not have the enlightened view of Russell in many cases. He points out that the human rights record of Islam is atrocious, but seems to have little understanding of western and American atrocities.. But in later years he favored a sort of holy war between the west and Muslim nations. He supported Bush’s attempt to restart the Crusades against Islam. He does not have the subtlety of Edward Said, whose work on the middle east respects the people, while avoiding the extremist ideology and the fanatical fundamentalism. Said is really very profound on exile and homelessness of the Palestinians and others. Warraq is contrast is an apologist of injustices committed by the West. See also Muhammad ( Gary) Legenhausen’s “Why I am not a Traditionalist.” as well as [Islamic Mysticism: A Secular Perspective](#) by Ibn Al-Rawandi/David Hall

to ‘essentialize” Islam, to use terms Edward Said might utter. <sup>1105</sup> and serve western or orientalist hatred and racism against the west. His attacks on Ed Said are politically motivated and he misses the value in Said’s work. Said was right to insist of the human rights of all Orientals, while distancing himself from their religions, which he thought absurd. Any intelligent man looking at the facts would do this. Muslims are first people and deserve protection, whatever their religious beliefs.

Warraq’s vision of the “west” as somehow holy and wonderful is equally lacking in nuance and appears to be far right nonsense. But there is some truth in Warraq’s views of Islam. His hostility to it has some foundation in fact, even if he appears to be politically motivated. Islam is primarily a political system to begin with and always has been. Facts are facts and where Warraq is factual he cannot be denied. If one looks at sources by non-Muslims about Muhammad there is little to be gained, though much is claimed of these questionable things. There is a reference to Muhammad in Palestine in 636, CE. But this is highly problematic and may be false. The document in question: “ *Doctrina Jacobi* (a document dates to 634-40 CE and was probably written by a Christian living in Palestine. It is anti-Semitic and anti Moslem too, or rather it is not even speaking of Moslems, perhaps. Here is what it says:

“What is your opinion, my master and teacher, on this prophet who has appeared among the Saracens?’

With a mighty sigh, he replied: 'He is an impostor. Prophets don't come with sword and chariot. Truly the events of today are the works of disorder.’”

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<sup>1105</sup> Warraq ‘s attacks on Ed Said are highly questionable too, as is his rather ignorant embrace of George Bush.

This could mean many things and might not refer to Muhammad at all, but another cult leader who had an army. A recent Koran now called the Birmingham Quran is also questionable. One Moslem scholar says of it

“Saud al-Sarhan, the director of research at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, said he doubted that the manuscript found in Birmingham was as old as the researchers claimed, noting that its Arabic script included dots and separated chapters – features that were introduced later. He also said that dating the skin on which the text was written did not prove when it was written. Manuscript skins were sometimes washed clean and reused later, he said. ”<sup>1106</sup>

There is also an account of the Arab conquest of Jerusalem by Sophronius -- the patriarch who is said to have surrendered the city in 637 -- and a letter written in 647 by the patriarch of Seleucia make no reference to the Arab conquerors as Muslims, or show any awareness of a religion called Islam”. There is also the writing of the Bishop Sebeos, dating to the 670s in which he has Muhammad "insisting on the Jews' right to the Holy Land.” This is odd and perhaps spurious. John of Damascus mentions the Koran in 730, but that too has problems. In short the origins of Islam are very suspect, contradictory and doubtful. The origins of Islam are a thicket of questions and the best that can be said is that Muhammad may have existed, or he might not have existed, but he probably did not write most, if any of the Koran, which appears to be an “evolving document”, or in other words a pastiche, written by various unknown authors over a long period. <sup>1107</sup>

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<sup>1106</sup> <https://rjosephhoffmann.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/the-bbc-birmingham-quran-facts-fiasco/>

<sup>1107</sup> Richard Carrier felt the need to weigh in on this controversy for some reason, though he admits to know little about Islam. He states “it is at least significantly more probable than not that

As David Hall says, “Islam is fundamentalist by nature, and not by some peculiar and aberrant recent development.”<sup>1108</sup> The fundamentalism of Islam makes it a religion of extremist views and cult-like intransigence. Muhammad is a partly fictional character made up by Muslim scholars and exegetes 150 years after the shadowy man called Muhammad actually lived, whoever he may have been, and no one really knows, just as Christ is probably mostly or entirely a literary invention.

Writers like Robert Spencer and Ibn Warraq comb many sources to show that Muhammad might not have existed. I doubt he existed too, or if he did, it is irrelevant as the Koran is still a pastiche of many authors. What is clear is that the character of Muhammad in the Islamic myth did have many people assassinated and murdered. This does not seem to be in question by anyone in Islam, unlike other pronouncements by these authors. For instance, Muhammad, reportedly, had assassinated a female poet, Asma bint Marwan, in her bed when she was asleep with her children. After the murder Muhammad is reported to have commented “a couple of goats will hardly knock their heads together for it”. This comments demonstrates the man’s lack of virtue and compassion. Of course it has to be said that all statements about Muhammad are in parenthesis, as it is quite likely that none of these things actually happened at all, and he may not even have existed.<sup>1109</sup>

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a guy named Mohammad existed, and cobbled together the Quran, perhaps adapting earlier writings from a Torah observant Christian sect, and perhaps not alone, and perhaps even at someone else’s behest” I am more skeptical of the early Islamic sources than Carrier is.

<sup>1108</sup> In his essay “Islam is religious fascism”

<http://www.voi.org/books/foe/ch26.htm>

<sup>1109</sup> There are a few early citations, some of which are quoted above, that he may have existed, though these are sketchy and not very definitive. The Koran comes much later, up to 150 years later than Muhammad is supposed to have died. Some sources even suggest parts fo the Koran existed before Muhammed (John Wansbrough), while others (Gerd Puin) insist that it was a document that evolved over several centuries and is a "cocktail of texts". ( Patricia Crone}. Others claim that the Moslems where actually Palestinian and may have been Jewish. (Michael Cook) . Yehuda Nevo and Judith Koren claims that Muhammad probably never existed. In short the whole area of research around Muhammad and the Koran is problematic, confused and without much real evidence. As with the origins of the Gospel the existence of Muhammed is a

But the brilliance of myth is that they need not have happened to act as promotion for the behavior these describe.

With that proviso in mind, it is also said in the myth that Muhammad had two other poets murdered too: Abu Afak, evidently because Muhammad did not like competition and criticism, like most cult leaders, and thought himself infallible.<sup>1110</sup> After that he had Kab Ibn-al Ashraf murdered, again because he was critical of the ‘prophet’. These are only a few of many assassinations and killings by Muhammad and his followers. Again, whether these events actually happened or not is an open question, but the important thing is the literary tradition says they happened and thus these stories are part of a cultural and imperial despotism that is advocating killing poets or thinkers who don’t agree with the cult leader Muhammad. These kinds of “traditions” many of them based on myths of outright fabrications, nevertheless had a big influence on history. These stories also indicate that the ideological Totalism that is Islam results in a form of “doubling” whereby it becomes OK to kill for the ‘god’ they worship.

Muhammad was a poet who hated other poets and said of them

“And as to the poets, those who go astray follow them.

Do you not see that they wander about bewildered in every valley?

And that they say that which they do not do, (Koran:26:224-226)

For Muhammad poetry is nothing but mindlessness towards God and hereafter, whereas Koran, which is also poetry, makes man remember God. This is the rationalization for killing poets: only Muhammad is the “real” poet”, because he has mythologized a certain conception of God. In fact the poets Muhammad killed were hardly any less deceivers Muhammad, who is hardly an exemplar of virtue. Indeed, the preachers

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thicket and just about any view can be justified, and so no view is certain.. As with Christ, this suggests a myth rather than a factual history.

<sup>1110</sup> Ibid.pg 93, 94.

of every religion “wander bewildered in every valley” as does Ovid, Dante and so many other poets who extol the virtues of unjust empires..

Plato did what Muhammad did too, hypocritically condemning, poets when he was himself a poet. “Only I am the real poet” all these poets say. Poets hate each other oftentimes and want only their own poetry to be considered the real thing.<sup>1111</sup> Plato and Muhammad both demanded a theofascist society and a poetry that served transcendental delusions and the theocratic state. Plato wanted poetry to serve only his tyrant guardians. He didn’t hate poetry, but like Muhammad, he wanted all poetry but his censored. Poetry for Plato must conform to Nazi-like state he designed in the Republic. Plato upbraids Homer for not propagandizing enough for non-existent gods. In other words Plato wanted poets to lie about reality better. Plato’s ideology would come to serve Christianity very well. Platonism is central to the Dark Age construction of Church and Feudal social orders. Dionysius the Areopagite’s creation of a Christian political hierarchy would be thoroughly Platonic and help the eclipse of enlightening culture. The Christian theofascism of the Crusades and more recent wars on Islam has its origins in the hierarchies of Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius.

I add also that I must conclude from the dismal history of Plato and Muhammad, that poetry is easily co-opted by irrational systems of all kinds, and can be a real danger. It easily serves the theocratic will to power or other regimes of delusion. Using language to deceive appears to be as old as language, which is why many scriptures are poetry and are meant to deceive. There is hardly any poetry that has science as its basis, though science has influenced a few modern poets such as Whitman, Theodore Roethke or Marianne Moore..

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<sup>1111</sup> An interesting take on the hate of poets for each other is Jean Cocteau’s movie Orpheus, where he shows this graphically.

But to return to Muhammad. Muhammad, like Dostoyevsky, was very likely an epileptic, was prone to have elaborate visions. Ibn Warraq puts forward the case that Muhammad's 'revelations', were, in fact, merely the result of shamanistic trance or mediumistic states, probably self-induced and probably faked. Even if, as is likely, Muhammed is a fiction, the character has some truth in it. Having watched on many occasions how Schuon faked his visions to justify his behavior, I see how easy it is to do. Anyone with a good imagination can claim to be a prophet who has visions. Muhammad, like Schuon, could evidently fall into such 'trance states' ---or more likely the appearance of such states--- whenever the need arose, and it arose frequently. Warraq gives evidence that Muhammad was prone to "cheating" his revelations at convenient moments when he needed to justify killing people, taking wives that were too young or to pacify his unruly harem. This is true of Schuon too. In one case he had a vision while sitting on the toilet, <sup>1112</sup> when the Virgin Mary told him one of his wives was in league with the devil. Evidently his vision was an effect of excessive digestion, as Scrooge says in the Christmas Carol. Perhaps Schuon's visions of the nude Virgin Mary was a bit of 'undigested piece of beef' as Dickens suggests. Schuon was a highly emotional man, who tried to squash his emotions and pretend to a virtuous calm. But his hysteria was evident to me in his fake visions, where the Virgin was enlisted to do his bidding, even when he had an attack of anxiety and anger while in the bathroom. It never occurred to him that his "marriages" were fake and he might be at fault.

Ralph Waldo Emerson<sup>1113</sup> colorfully referred to spiritualism as the

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<sup>1112</sup> Schuon claimed to have a vision of the Virgin Mary condemning Maude Murray while he sat on the toilet. I laughed when I heard about this from Maude and it helped me realize what a charlatan and liar Schuon really was. Many people read on the toilet, whereas Schuon had attacks and hallucinations. .

<sup>1113</sup> Emerson is an interesting case. Besides being an exceptionally good writer, perhaps too good, he is also too Platonic and too religious. He wrote nonsense such as claiming that "Natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact." This absurd idea would suggest that earwigs or diatoms, Meer cats or Rhinoceros hide a spiritual fact behind them. The absurd idea that rhino horns increase

“rat hole of revelation” but this phrase could fit Schuon, Guenon and other ‘prophets’ and cult leaders as well, from Joseph Smith and Mao to Da Free John. It is interesting that Schuon also claimed that various of his writings were “revelations”<sup>1114</sup> and he justified his bizarre marriages by having convenient “visions” –usually of the Virgin Mary, who also sanctioned his erotic interests and needs. What is of interest about such “visions’ is that they are entirely the fiction of the mind of he who has them and no one can question what is ultimately subjective. Darwin said that “for myself, I do not believe that there ever has been any revelation” I am inclined to agree with Darwin.. The problem with Schuon or Muhammad or any crackpot who claims special election by god is that no one can prove that he didn’t have the visions. On the other hand, he could never prove that he did. It should follow that such visions have no merit at all--- other than a story telling or literary merit—but religions blow them up such stories to grand proportions and sell them as the Truth, Capital T. Gullible followers believe such nonsense, or it gets written in some holy book or ‘text’ and everyone thinks it is true. I watched this happen in the Schuon cult and saw that people want to believe the most unlikely rubbish as being sent by imaginary gods and

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male potency has not basis is reality at all. It has resulted the near extinction of these amazing animals.. Emerson was a spiritual elitist, and a sort of symbolist. This has allowed far right spiritualists like the traditionalists to try to claim him as their own. But actually as the “rat” comment shows, he is not always sanguine about religion. Transcendentalism failed in many ways, as Thoreau’s work shows. The last ten years of Thoreau’s writing are increasingly cynical both about Emerson and the transcendentalist project. He becomes more and more of a Darwinist and a scientist---to his credit

<sup>1114</sup> Schuon told me his essay on the “Conditions of Existence” and the essay on the “Mahashakti” which is a veiled magnification of his last “wife” the blond former masseuse--- were both “revelations”. He said this also about his idea of the “themes” also. What is clear when you read these works is that “revelation” means that he felt deeply about it, as he had an intuition, and in the case of the “conditions of existence” he is merely invoking a “meme” or an influence that comes though Schelling or the German Transcendentalists, combined with Sufi ideas. In the Mahashakti essay he is merely involving the romantic idealization of women. So the revelation just turns out to be a deeply felt intuition, and hardly means it is true or divinely inspired. This is true of ‘revelations generally and not just of Schuon’s in particular.

naked or clothed virgins. This is the tragico-comical fact of the religions. They are fake systems of make believe that many follow or live by as if they were true.

There are many examples of dreams used by religions as justifying mechanism. This is logical since religions are highly subjective and invented social systems that need an arbitrary source by which disciples can be captured and retained. Getting into someone's unconscious through dreams and visions is one such mechanism of control and suggestion. Some branches of Islamic Sufism, such as the Naqshbandiyya, or the Nimtallahh rely enormously on dreams to justify themselves. There is even a rather self-serving system of dream interpretation used by the 'Sufi masters' in these groups. Indeed, this is true to some degree of all of Sufism, which is a subjective mysticism of the inward and irrational. Indeed, most and perhaps all of the major religions or cults are largely inspired by irrational delusions, visions, dreams or outright fabrications of the founders, and this is true of Christ, Auorbindo, Krishnamurti, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and many others from Rumi to Hallaj and Niffari. Belief in religions inspired by dreams is to subject followers to the most arbitrary rule and to try to control them by gaining access to their subconscious.

The charlatan Tibetan Buddhist Chogyam Trungpa claimed his mother had a vision or dreams in which and when he was born someone saw a rainbow in the village. In Tibetan Buddhism it is a cultural practice that these claims, which are merely coincidence, and are a convention way of demonstrating one is a reincarnate lama. On this basis one can claim what, in fact, is an unearned status. Trungpa ended up drinking and drugging himself to death as an 'insider' teacher at Naropa Institute.

“The night of my conception my mother had a very significant dream that a being had entered her body with a flash of light; that year flowers bloomed in the neighborhood although it was still winter, to the surprise of the inhabitants.... <sup>1115</sup>

One cannot deny such claims nor affirm them. There is no connection between the flowers growing in winter and his birth, but Trungpa invents one. In Tibetan culture such arbitrary and possibly invented lies are the road to high status. Indeed, the mental imaging of “Yidamms” and entities like the Sambogakaya or Nirmanakaya are really about training the mind to submit to a system of imaginary mind and social directions or control. The ‘science’ of these imaginary creations is exacting and complex. It captures adepts in a web of subjective invention akin to dreams and makes reality over in the image of the unreal, just as William James would have approved of.

Another example of this using phony visions to claim spiritual election of power is to be found in Mormonism. Joseph Smith, the charlatan founder of the Mormon religion also claimed elaborate visions. It is documented that in early in his career, in March 1826, Smith was arrested for posing as an impostor and defrauding citizens in a gold digging business he tried to set up. Interestingly, Smith called himself the new “Muhammad”. Smith was another polygamist and charlatan as were Schuon and Muhammad. The Book of Mormon was founded on such visions that were just more elaborate than the gold digging business that Joseph Smith had lied about earlier in his career. He was unable to defraud people with fake gold so he decided to create a religion based on fake gold tablets he said he found in the ground. Joseph Smith claimed that his visions were copied from golden tablets an angel directed him to find in a field or side of a hill in New York. The story goes that even though the plates are in a foreign language, the angel helps

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<sup>1115</sup> Quoted in Geoffrey Falk : <http://www.strippingthegurus.com/stgsamplechapters/trungpa.asp>

him to decipher and translate them. Then the plates are conveniently taken up into heaven, never to be seen again.

Smith gets various people ( the “eleven”) to claim that they saw the tablets. There were no tablets and plates and no angel. Interestingly the proof that Joseph Smith was a charlatan was made long ago. The tablets and angel story of Smith were proven to be hogwash by Mrs. Martin Harris, the wife of Smith’s scribe, one of the alleged “witnesses”.. She stole the first 116 pages to prove to her husband Smith was a fake. She dared Smith to reproduce the lost pages and he could not do it. <sup>1116</sup> Notice that these facts have been accessible or known for 180 years and Mormons still dutifully believe their bogus “Book” came from “God”. Facts cannot confuse the faithful.... The Mormons went on to do some horrible things such as Mountain Meadows massacre in 1857, in which fanatic Mormons who first tried to pretend they were Native Americans, killed 120 people. Smith was a psychopath who was willing to lie to get what he wanted. Smith was a sexual predator who married 11 women who were already married to Mormon men, alleging all sorts of nonsense in order to steal their wives, and then sent some of the men off to missions. Schuon took other men’s wives too and then claimed visions to justify his abuse. Smith, Schuon, Muhammad and other cult leaders claim all sorts of justifications for their desires. If it suits them, they claim to be beyond desire.

The Koran, is also based on fake visions. These visions are very likely a creation of men who mythologized Muhammad, whoever he actually was, no one really knows—probably no one. The earliest information of Muhammad was written by Ibn Ishaq, in A.D. 750. There

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<sup>1116</sup> Christopher Hitchens discusses this at some length in his book God is Not Great. ( see pages 161-164)

were 130 years after Muhammad's supposed death where he was mythologized and the Koran as probably written or heavily doctored by others. Fake visions justified Muhammad when he wanted a child wife. His wife Aisha was only nine, a grotesque marriage that occurred when Muhammad was 53. Of course, that is assuming any of this actually happened, which is doubtful at best. If it did happen, it is really a form of child abuse and rape, this giving away of very young girls.<sup>1117</sup> There is no way the practice of taking pre-menstrual or pre-pubescent girls is safe or healthy for the girls.<sup>1118</sup> The fact that is done underscores the absurd cruelty of male dominated sexual politics of the time( and of our time too, where similar practices are allowed in Islamic countries). This legalization of pedophilia is an aspect of the Koran and Islam that certainly influenced Schuon. The early marriage of Aisha to Muhammad, while obviously unjust, flourishes in some Muslim countries where women are ruthlessly oppressed by Moslem misogyny and patriarchal values. <sup>1119</sup> Recently such child abuse and child rape occurred after 1979

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<sup>1117</sup> Hishām ibn Urwah, a prominent narrator of sayings of the Prophet (the Hadith), who died in the year 756AD. He was Aisha's great-grandnephew, who first suggested that his great-grand aunt was only nine-years old on the day of her wedding, 125 years after the said event. One Hadith says *Then he [Muhammad] wrote the marriage (wedding) contract with Aishah when she was a girl of six years of age, and he consumed [sic, consummated] that marriage when she was nine years old.* If you deny that this is true you deny the hadith and to do that is to deny the basics of Islam. The Hadith are obviously false. Most of Islam is based on this nonsense , but because they are promoted by a clergy they are followed by people as if they were law..

<sup>1118</sup> The New York Times reports that this same practice is now being used on young girls who are made slaves by male followers of Isis, a fundamentalist militia in Iraq and elsewhere. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/world/middleeast/isis-enshrines-a-theology-of-rape.html>

<sup>1119</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini was a real monster, reflecting the monstrosity of beliefs at large in Islam. His Little Green Book and other writings are some of the most shameful things I have ever read. Some of his disgusting edicts are about having sex with animals, nine year old girls are allowed to marry. Ayatollah Khomeini says in his Green Book that "A woman who has not yet reached the age of nine or a menopausal woman may remarry immediately after divorce, without waiting the hundred days that are otherwise required." And thus child abuse was state sanctioned in those days. There were apparently practices involved babies that are very repulsive. These ideas are evidently not uncommon outside of Iran as well, showing that Islam does indeed have a depraved sensibility as regards women and children. Schuon got some of his bizarre ideas from these sources of Islamic misogyny and child hatred. The Green book makes Islam detestable and Iran

when the leader of Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini, following Muhammad's bad example with Aisha, lowered the marriage age for girls from eighteen years old down to nine years old. This allowed state sanctioned child abuse and child rape and the guilt of it goes back to Muhammad and his fake visions.

Perhaps one of the worst parts of Islam is Muhammad's brutality. In the "Battle of the Trench", ---really the massacre of the Trench, Muhammad ordered his men to hack off the heads of seven or eight hundred people in Medina, their heads and bodies falling into a huge mass grave or trench.<sup>1120</sup> Muhammad returned from the "horrid spectacle to console himself with the charms of Rihana, whose husband and all her male relatives had just perished in the massacre."<sup>1121</sup> This is a repulsive act of the worst sort of sadism. It disqualifies Mohammadism from any sort of moral consideration. This is a criminal act of a vile man with no conscience. This and other similar stores about Muhammad—yes there are other atrocities---- explains why Islam has been particularly vicious as a religion. Muhammad was not a nice person, or more than that, he was, like Joseph Smith and other cult leaders, a psychopath----a cruel, murderous, self-promoter of the worst kind. He was hardly a saint

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an immoral nation that allows pedophilia. You can see some of the horrific and repulsive edicts about how to oppress and abuse girls, women, animals and babies here:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/57040439/The-Little-Green-Book>

<http://islammonitor.org/uploads/docs/greenbook.pdf>

This article summarizes some of what is objectionable in his writings, though the political motivation behind some of these things are questionable too.

[http://islammonitor.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3306:the-relic-of-iran-and-his-wallah&catid=195&Itemid=61](http://islammonitor.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3306:the-relic-of-iran-and-his-wallah&catid=195&Itemid=61)

<sup>1120</sup> his practice of beheading people has been recently used by the Moslem group Isis, for instance in Libya, where in 2015, 21 Coptic Christians had their heads cut off, in violence unleashed partly due the anarchy 4 years after the killing of Muammar Qaddafi.

<sup>1121</sup> Ibn Warraq. pg 96

and his religion holds a stamp of this bad character. Again, given that Muhammad is probably largely the invention of followers, the creation of this awful character by early Muslim scholars and creators of Hadith suggests a violent and cruel culture. While modern Moslem culture and individual Muslims today might not fit this description, and I know this to be the case. it is clear that there is an element of this psychopathology in the religious culture itself and it erupts periodically into today's world.

From all that I know about Guenon and Schuon, I can see why they were attracted to Muhammad and Islam. They both had psychopathic tendencies. The both hated modern Europe and going into Islam involved a kind of reactionary bad-boy revenge against the superiority of science and enlightenment culture, on the one hand. On the other, they liked the barbarity and misogyny of Islam. It is an exotic and combative religion, rather like the warriors of the Plains "Indians" which Schuon so much admired. <sup>1122</sup> It gives men, as a sex, great and undeserved power, as was evident in recent years in the killing of perhaps a million people under the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran<sup>1123</sup>, or repulsive stoning of women by the Taliban in Afghanistan or the throwing of acid on little girls faces who

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<sup>1122</sup> Schuon had Gustavo Polit sing a versions of the song about "Allah" in which a native American drum was played to a warrior beat. Polit would scream out, Allah, bong bong Allah, bong bong , la illiha illa lhah, la illiha, illa lhah,, illa lhah,, illa lhah, bong bong. Schuon wanted to turn Islam into Sioux or Crow religion and he clearly succeeded . Followers of Islam are outraged by this, but the fact is that Islam is as bogus a religion as Schuon's pastiche of Siouxish Sufism.

<sup>1123</sup> It is interesting to note that the French philosopher Michel Foucault thought very highly of the Iranian revolution in 1979 as saw it as a resurgence of the "possibility of political spirituality". It was a blood bath, but Foucault, good romantic that he was, was a student of Nietzsche's concept of heroic cruelty and liked heroic bloody conflict and the atmosphere of Koranic "discipline and punish" that surrounded the Ayatollah Khomeini. Only a devotee of Sade could enjoy the Iranian revolution. Foucault's notion of "political spirituality" is very close to what I am calling "theofascism", except that my term has a negative moral valuation attached to it, whereas Foucault approved of this same fascism. Moreover Foucault saw the rise of fundamentalist Islam as a rejection of Renaissance and Enlightenment values, which it certainly was. Guenon and Schuon also reject Renaissance and Enlightenment values like democracy, rationality, equality and human rights. As you can read in Foucault's biography , he liked cruelty and sadism and was sadistic himself in his pursuit of certain cruel kinds of pleasures.

dared to go to school in countries where Muslims don't like little girls to be educated. Since both Guenon and Schuon were actually rather weak and fearful men, Islam gave them a feeling of power and machismo. <sup>1124</sup> It also appealed to their need of secrecy, their paranoia and in Schuon's case, his need of realizing a polygamous sex fantasy. But beyond that, Islam was easily used and exploited. It is a backward religion full of superstitions and ignorance and they could arrogantly use it to their own ends. Guenon and Schuon wanted huge power. Muhammad had power and abused it in mighty ways. The Koran is obsessed with evil and punishment as were both Guenon and Schuon. It is a vicious and cruel book in many ways and a strong flavor of that is in both Guenon and Schuon's work.

Guenon and Schuon admired the Koranic pose of infallibility, as well as Muhammad's ability to justify the most atrocious behavior with visions and sermons. Schuon even tried to emulate aspects of the life of the Prophet, the taking of young girls, the need of multiple wives, the pose as the great leader, the nose in the air looking down on everyone, the pretense at prophethood. Evidently Muhammad was quite a charmer, too, like most psychopathic leaders. Neither Schuon nor Guenon had much charm, though Schuon did manage to mass a fairly large following a few hundred duped and unquestioning followers. He didn't achieve this by charm, but by a sort of imperious secrecy. He was excellent at looking taller than he was and putting his nose in the air as if above everyone. He hid behind his poses, the pose of his books, the pose of Shaykh,

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<sup>1124</sup> Schuon elevated Muhammad to absurd heights in his mind and thought he was himself Muhammad's successor as last Prophet "at the end of time". He had an idea of the "form of the prophet" which he spelled out in various writings, and many of the characteristics of this imaginary being Schuon tried to take on as his own character. Schuon 1<sup>st</sup> wife Catherine did a painting of Schuon riding into Mecca behind Muhammad, as if he were one of the inner circle of Muhammad's jihad. Schuon was very interested in war and stories were told about him in the cult as being a brave soldier. Schuon's delusional need to see himself in the most grandiose terms spread to his followers who also praised him excessively, indeed, that was the main qualification to be in the cult and those who pandered to him ego most we highest in the cult.

prophet, poet and painter. His paintings are poses and the skirts of his wives are part of the poseur's ambiance. Schuon was always posing. Indeed, it would be accurate to say that the wives of Schuon played a major role in the creation of a mythic imposture. They were part of his posing, part of the theater and charade. The same is true of Muhammad's life and his wives.

Clearly Islam already had fascistic tendencies when Muhammad was alive. No one actually knows if there was such a person, he is so heavily mythologized, but the myth states that he committed atrocities against outside groups, Jews and Christians, notably, and committed assassinations, violated human rights regularly and had an apocalyptic and nationalistic agenda which included delusional ideas of his own self-worth and willingness to be cruel and oppressively unjust to others.

<sup>1125</sup>Some of these fascist tendencies continued well after Muhammad appealed to Guenon and Schuon. One can see the long term influence of Muhammad's bloody minded love of atrocity in suicide bombings, the Iran-Iraq war, Iran under Khomeini or Osama bin Laden's bombings.

Whatever one says about Islam and its horrendous violations of human rights, the term Islamo-fascism is problematical. I use the term while being aware of its questionable features. It does have various features that are just. Yes, it is questionable because the term got famous by the use of it by right wing talk show hosts like Rush Limbaugh and Christians sympathetic to the Bush administration. It was used as term of abuse blanketing all Moslems with the term. I know many Moslems who are not fascists and abhor fascism, respect children

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<sup>1125</sup> One book that takes this Muhammadan point of view is Samir Hariche Rabasso's Perennialism in the Light of Islam, which is an exclusivist and fundamentalist sufi text trying to exalt the myth of Muhammad into a first principle. The logical result of such a text is of course, the denigration of everything that is not Islamic. It is a sophistic text that basically holds that all things lead to Allah and anyone who denies this is the enemy of Allah, without noticing that this is a circular and militarist argument. Christian fundamentalism employs the same circular argumentation that results in horrors committed in the name of the righteousness of the exclusive god.

and human rights. On the other hand, if Muslims called Bush's supporters and Neo-cons Americo-fascists they would pretty much right on target in various respects. Bush used the term as part of his effort to create propagandistic support for his unjust war against Iraq and Afghanistan. It is thus a term promoted by those with a murderous agenda. But one could say with only very slight exaggeration that the fascists in the Bush administrations met the fascism of Middle Eastern Islam and that is what America's unjust Imperial war in Iraq and Afghanistan were all about. I did not support any of these wars of aggression. But there are accurate features in the term.

But it is true, nevertheless, that Islam has many 'fascist' features,---- if fascism is defined as 'an oppressive apocalyptic and unjust government that employs questionable means to harm people and subvert human rights in the name of an irrational and mandatory creed---- well, Islam fits this to a "T". This very wide definition of fascism fits both the Bush administration and many Islamic leaders from the Saudi's to the Iranians. As David Hall wrote:

There no way [that Islam] can ever be made compatible with pluralism, free speech, critical thought and democracy. Anyone convinced they already possess the truth have no need for such things. Although Muslims resident in non-Muslim countries clamor for every kind of indulgence for their own beliefs and customs, there can be no doubt that given any kind of power they would impose their own beliefs and eliminate all difference. In short, Islam is religious fascism....

The violations of human rights which are excused by both the West and Islamic countries in the Middle Eastern Wars are due to similar systems of injustice. But fascism usually has a strong nationalist element. If theofascism is defined as 'an oppressive apocalyptic and unjust

government that employs questionable means to harm people and subvert human rights in the name of an irrational and mandatory creed', then this definition also helps us very much to define traditionalism. It shows how systems of power—religions as well as states--- operate to create harm and violates each other's human rights and produce atrocities. Certainly up until now, Islam has proved itself fascistic in a state like Iran or Sadi Arabia, yet is also has theofascism elements in its defining its state as a theocracy and oppressing its population by means of Islamic law and the Koran. The same is true of capitalism of a Christian variety, as Christian leaders on the far right seek to subvert democracy and institute a theocratic Christian republic. Will these systems continue to be so harmful in the future?

However, "Islamofascism" might be a politically motivated term; it still helps define accurate aspects of theofascism in Islam. Theofascism is a term that includes the Bush administration and the Iranians or the Osama Bin Laden cult, as well as Guenon and Schuon, under its umbrella. Islamofascism has some different qualities. In any case, I am not sure that definitions matter all that much. Both the terms 'totalism' and 'spiritual fascism' describes many concrete realities of romantic far-right thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that is the reason for using it. The term totalism might be as accurate, but it does not concretely specify the peculiar religious nature of some of these forms of oppression and abuse. I prefer the term theofascism for all these developments. There appear to be growing currents toward liberation from the oppression of the Koran and Wall Street and so one can hope that Islamofascism as well as American fascism of the Christian and business class will increasingly be outdated and decline.

It might be useful to note here that Schuon, like other Sufis who liked the liberal freedom of "the tavern" and "wine", disliked Islamic fundamentalism and wished to distance himself from it. He didn't dislike it because it is "exoteric" And not because it was ignorant, cruel,

misogynistic and backward,. He liked backwardness, misogyny and dogmatic forms of oppression. He disliked Islamic “exoterism” because it was common, conventional, and not elitist or esoteric. It was not him, in short. He disliked every religion for not being him. He believed he was the “essence” of all religions. He thought he was Jesus at the end of time, hence his name Isa, which means Jesus.. He wanted an extreme freedom to be the heroic and romantic individual of an ultra-conservative spiritual movement, where he could take nearly infinite license for himself while others had to follow orthodox rules. What Schuon liked was the romantic backwardness of tyrants like the Japanese emperor or the Shah of Iran. Schuon’s disciple and lackey Hossein Nasr was a sycophant to the Shah’s court. The Shah’s state was a monarchist and neo-fascist client-state set up by the U.S. government. That was fine with Schuon and he supported it. What needs to be understood is that men like Nasr and Schuon are not very different than the Taliban or the Saudi government. Islam oppresses Muslims more than anyone else. It is Muslims that suffer from the excesses of the Sharia and the violations of human rights. Salman Rushdie pointed this out years ago. Iran put a Death sentence on his head for writing a novel in which Muhammad is questioned. <sup>1126</sup>

Bertrand Russell thought Thomas Carlyle was a precursor to German Fascism.<sup>1127</sup> Schuon’s view of Muhammad was like that of

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<sup>1126</sup> The pop singer Cat Stevens converted to Islam in 1977 and also called for Rushdie’s death, showing a lamentable lack of insight as well as how easy it is of a man who wrote a wonderful song like” Peace Train” would endorse murder of an innocent writer to protect the fictions of the Koran. Cat Stevens is a good example of how religion takes hold of the heart of someone and can make them betray themselves, a process R.J. Lifton calls ‘doubling’..

<sup>1127</sup> Bertrand Russell XE "Russell, Bertrand

, “The Ancestry of Fascism” in *In Praise of Idleness* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1935), 103. In this essay Russell identified Carlyle as a genealogical antecedent to Fascism see Jonathan Claymore McCollum thesis here for an interesting discussion on Carlyle and his ambiguous relation to fascism. Here:

<http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/ETD/image/etd2044.pdf>

Thomas Carlyle, the British romantic who wrote about the "The Hero as Prophet". Schuon was also prone to romantic, even Byronic hero worship. Carlyle thought that Muhammad was a man "full of wild faculty, fire and light, of wild worth all uncultured, working out his life-tasks in the depths of the Desert" <sup>1128</sup> and elsewhere he says he was "barbarous son of Nature, much of the Bedouin still clinging to him". Carlyle's view echoes why Schuon loved Muhammad. Schuon, who had so much of the staid and retiring German 'burgomeister' about him, wanted to be a wild, romantic Native American, because in fact he was a rather small and bored European with a need of excitement. This need is partly why he started dressing like a Native American and holding nudist ceremonies. Also like Carlyle, Schuon was attracted to the far right, the divine right of kings and if that could not be had, then military leaders and businessmen. Schuon and his followers sided with the corporate republicans in the United States against Islamic fundamentalism. Even up until a few years after Schuon's death, prominent Schuonians were still giving large donations to right wing parties in the United States. The Schuon cult is republican and supports the egregious delusions of the far right. The republicans want to increase inequality and feed the rich while stealing from and harming the poor and the middle class. Indeed, the Christian right is by and large a supporting party to feed the ultra-rich and starving the poor. Though individual republicans are often ignorant of this. Schuon was like the Sheriff of Nottingham and nothing of Robin Hood about him. The far-right corporate strategists seek to advance "the manipulation of populism by elitism", in Christopher Hitchens words. The deeply unpopular Republican Party which really only cares about the ultra-rich, had to re-brand itself deceptively and present itself as grassroots Christian organization that cares about abortion and attacking teachers for making minimal salaries, while

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<sup>1128</sup> Quoted in Ibn Warraq, Why I am not a Muslim, pg. .23

letting CEO's get away with stealing billions of taxpayer's money in bonuses and Bailouts.

The point I am making here is that the peculiar nature of systems of power is that they shift ground and change over time. Theofascism is not a political party as much as it is a far right tendency to repress and dominate along romantic and anti-scientific lines, to deny human rights and service elites in the name of god or gods. That such an orientation should be vague and shifting over time is to be expected. It is a mythical construction and floats uneasily in actual history, acting more as a goad or an ideal than a factual thing. The reason the term 'theofascism' is more accurate than 'religious neo-fascism', or other terms is that theofascism helps explain the many shifts that traditionalism took. These changes occurred over the long period of time, from De Maistre's anti-enlightenment idealizations in the 1800's to Carlyle's Hero worship to T.S. Eliot's Catholic anti-Semitism, American Republicanism or Guenon's ideas or even the recent, rather pathetic, endorsement of Prince Charles of traditionalist ideology. <sup>1129</sup> 'Theofascism' is just this longing nostalgia for the sugared over decay of theocratic and political glory. The idea of theofascism is that all must be controlled by and for the upper class and the gods serve them.

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<sup>1129</sup> Since I lived in England in the 1980's and walked past Buckingham palace often, as well as visited Windsor Castle, it has not ceased to amaze me that England holds onto these ridiculous theofascist and monarchical relics of past glory. In reading and endorsing the traditionalists, Prince Charles longs for the hierarchy of the old days, when god and throne were two pillars of arbitrary power. The British spends 49 million dollars a year on these useless old parasites. Charles reads Schuon and has his court composer, John Tavener writes hymns to Schuon's "virgin" completely unaware of the decadence and escapism of such falsely universal art. Tavener is a romantic dreamer whose music has less connection to reality than Madonna or a gangster Rapper. But what else can Charles do, he has spent most of his life living under his mother's shadow, keeping himself busy with endless hobbies and duties, unable even to summon much sympathy when his far more interesting ex-princess dies in a car wreck in Paris. The royalty in England are parasites that should have been dismissed from their jobs and position of power decades ago. There is no good reason to keep them, these living relics of a horrendous system of governance we would have been well to have revolted against.

So Richelieu or Torquemada give the priests guns and let them shoot all those against religion. Indeed, Richelieu was nearly a perfect example of a theofascist.



Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) Painting by Philippe de Champaigne 1637,

He was a Catholic Cardinal who sought to maximize both the power of the church and the French state. He worked under Louis 13<sup>th</sup> . He helped create the Absolutist state that would cause so much suffering in France and bring about the French Revolution. You can see the same centralization of theofascist oppressiveness of the Chinese Government too, the Inquisition and the dictatorships of Cortez and the Spanish in Latin America, in Iran and Israel in their far-right parties, as well as, in the apocalyptic Nationalism of George Bush, ne finds theofascism also in the backwaters of less well known men as in the anti-evolutionism of Hossein Nasr or the admiration of Martin Lings for Franco's fascism.

From the point of view of the nostalgic ideals of theofascism, one can survey the world and find everything wanting except the universal "truth"

of a god which only the elite can recognize. This bitter and escapist comfort appeals to those who hate the world they live in, caught in the past that never was – and most importantly, who cannot escape their dream of spiritual supremacy. The traditionalists are spiritual supremacists just as the KKK were white supremacists. In his later work, Evola said it pretty clearly. He wanted a “neo fascism”, a Guenonian fascism that would go beyond the fascism of the Nazis. He wanted to rebuild fascism after World War II as something not called fascism but as a “Spiritual Force”. Evola writes that

Unfortunately, today, we cannot think of more than an inner, spiritual defence, for lack of the necessary base for a third military and economic bloc able to oppose in any way both perils on the plane of world politics. Inner defence, however, from Americanism as well as from communism, would already signify a great deal <sup>1130</sup>

Theofascism is a Jamesian inner state of defence against the freedom and human rights values of the Enlightenment. A traditionalist state of “inner theofascism” as Evola might call it. Again the Romantic stress of the “inward”. William James, I am sure, would applaud. In other words, fascism after 1945 becomes a spiritual thing, an “inner defence”—indeed inwardness posing as apolitical is the real politics of the postmodern world.<sup>1131</sup> This apoliteia allows totalist institutions like sociopathic

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<sup>1130</sup> “Fascism and the Traditional Political Idea” [http://thompkins\\_cariou.tripod.com/id24.html](http://thompkins_cariou.tripod.com/id24.html)

<sup>1131</sup> This stress on inwardness inner escape from the realities of life on earth is preached in such poets as Rainer Maria Rilke or Robert Bly as well as in New Age thought of many kinds. All of this is inner theofascism of a poetic kind, in various stripes and colors

corporations<sup>1132</sup> to rule the world with a dead hand. The reality behind theofascism is a question of level and degree. Theofascists differ from ordinary fascist in the level and degree of their will to escape and longing for power and glory, however retrospect. The hatred of science and longing for caste hierarchy and wish to get revenge against the ravages of capital and communism inspire them. Fascists are merely nationalists who use religion to mask capitalist greed and human rights abuses. Theofascists want to see the whole world undermined or destroyed in the name of the one and universal truth owned by a tiny elite or apocalyptic remnant. Theofascism is a way of thought and an inner attitude, as well as a hope that one day the political will rise up once again and summon an apocalypse of revenge against the modern world. There is this meanness and hatred that exists in the traditionalist's movement, I have seen it, and it is meanness born of excessive pride. Indeed pride might even be said to be its core value, its heart centered on a beatific hate, a Guenonian thirst for transcendental 'evil' done in the name of good. I could sometimes see this hatred masked as 'truth' in Schuon face quite

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<sup>1132</sup> See also the documentary The Corporation  
[http://www.thecorporation.com/index.cfm?page\\_id=46](http://www.thecorporation.com/index.cfm?page_id=46)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Corporation\\_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Corporation_(film))

“According to DSM-IV (Diagnostic Statistical Manual), sociopaths are those with this antisocial personality disorder who have a longstanding pattern of “disregarding the rights of others.” The major component of this disorder is “the reduced ability to feel empathy for other people. This inability to see the hurts, concerns, and other feelings of people often results in a disregard for these aspects of human interaction...irresponsible behavior often accompanies this disorder as well as a lack of remorse for wrongdoings.” Treatment is rarely sought because sociopaths see the world as having problems and negative consequences are often blamed on society. This definition is certainly true for AIG and the Big Bailout Banks as well as Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck, although it kind of holds true for conservative Republicans, too.”  
Quoted from

[http://open.salon.com/blog/drama\\_donna/2010/02/07/corporations\\_are\\_sociopaths](http://open.salon.com/blog/drama_donna/2010/02/07/corporations_are_sociopaths)

palpably. Schuon was a small man and like Napoleon Bonaparte he admired, he had an amazing way of glowering down on people and holding his head up in haughty sneering disdain for all but a tiny few. At times he looked quite psychotic. Napoleon was a murderer and despot and in a much smaller way, Schuon aspired to something like that. He was merciless even with those he claimed to love. I saw that too. He was an ignorant man in many ways, ignorant with dogma and intolerance who claimed to be infallible but actually was one of the most fallible men I ever met. Napoleon is a really odious character, who prefigures Hitler, and Schuon is merely a cult leader, but the hatred of democracy and the drive to absolute power is the same in all of them.

So regarding the definition of totalism, religious neo-fascism, and theofascism, I think it is best to err on the side of simplicity. Occam's Razor was a useful notion that was meant to undermine the scholastic need to over-define everything and "multiply entities beyond necessity". (*Entia non sunt multiplicanda sine necessitate.* ) It might be worthwhile to call the traditionalists "universal fascists", since they did not identify with one state or religion as do ordinary fascists, but they did see themselves as an elite who harkened back to gnostic past, which justified their belief that the vast rabble beneath them with not worthy of life. But none of these many terms for the traditionalists version of fascism quite applies. "Spiritual fascism" is what Guido De Giorgio, an important traditionalist student of Guenon called their own belief system. Let stick with the idea of theofascism in this book and see where it takes us.... It has been a remarkably fruitful thesis.

In the meantime, Egypt has thrown out the tyrant and torturer Hasni Mubarak, Tunisia changed its government and Syria is in revolt against its tyrant. That is all good news. Will the Mid-east go the way of South America and begin to question the tyranny of corporate Wallstreet and the World Bank as well as the tyranny of Islamic religion? I hope so.

But it seems unlikely. Or will it descend into the decadence of Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Taliban with their theocratic and misogynistic mullahs and princes? Will the so called Arab Spring bring about real democratic change or merely be a replay of Islamist violence and autocracy? Tariq Ramadan, Moslem professor of contemporary Islamic studies at Oxford University, appears to think that this movement is not really connected with Islam at all, and that what matters here is economics, and there is no doubt partial truth to this point of view. But this scholar has his own Moslem point of view that wants to deny the importance of Islam.<sup>1133</sup> But there is no denying Islam is a huge force for superstitions, violence and ignorance in the Middle east, with fanatics killing each other every time someone in the west criticizes Muhammad, who is a cardboard cutout, indeed, whose very existence is in question.<sup>1134</sup> It is a chilling fact that though the uprising in Egypt had a large support from women all across that country, the men took over the movement and have given nothing to the women as yet. This may or may not be a sign of things to come. Indeed, as much as one hopes that Middle Eastern countries might one day become more devoted to human rights, Robert Fisk, an expert on that area, points out that one can have little hope that this will happen right away. The U.S. government does not want it and Islam is against it. The religion of Islam still acts as a deterrent for democracy even as nominal “Moslems” as individuals might be for democracy and human rights. So far democracy is still in peril in the "Arab Spring”

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<sup>1133</sup>

This writer is a fairly common phenomena in power struggles. Christians hate him, Islam loving leftists love him and the truth is on neither side because both Islamists and Christians are wrong.

<sup>1134</sup> As I said earlier, the first biography of Muhammad, that of Ibn Ishaq, dates from 130 years after Muhammad's death, -- but that books survives only in large fragments reproduced in even later writings. No biography is authentic written that far from its source.

In conclusion, what I have learned of the manufacture of myths of Jesus and Muhammad as well as cult leaders and depots like Schuon and Napoleon, is that it is incontestably true that power corrupts and religion is mostly the nimbus or cloud of fictions and myths that develop around and serve the pretence and falsity of power. Religion is a "persistent fiction", an alternative,, subjective 'truth' that is based on lies. While there may be some tenuous evidence that Muhammad existed, one can still doubt his existence with much contrary evidence. Jesus probably did not exist. It is fairly clear then that the wars of religion between Islam and the west are based on many falsehoods and myths. Any effort to decrease the influence of religion in the region is thus a good thing, as it helps defeat the political myths that fuel much of the hate. To defeat the "Clash of Civilizations" requires realizing that people in Moslem and Christian countries are basically the same. The religions that separate them are myths that really have little or no basis in reality. The "Clash of Civilizations" disappears like smoke once the mythic constructions that cloak the economic tensions are dismantled. In the end it is all about fair distribution and the need to suppress the greedy and reign in the power hungry, not only in Islam but in Christian/corporate countries as well.. Dealing with the unfair distribution of resources, caring for nature, and creating fair systems of sustainable economies is what future politics is all about, not only in the Middle East but in America and China as well. It really is one world now, and all people and animals and environments matter, not corporations, religions or kings and other ideological and institutional systems of old. Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha<sup>1135</sup> and Krishna all belong in the dust-heap of history with Zeus and Odin and other abandoned gods and goddesses.

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<sup>1135</sup> The Buddha is even more likely a myth than Muhammad, as I wrote earlier, "The earliest aniconic images of the Buddha date to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and the first iconic images to the first century CE so it would be safe to suppose that the Buddhist myth was created during these years and not before.."

Persistsant fictions must be faced. Maybe then the ceaseless wars will stop.. .

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**THE TRANSITION FROM THE MEDIEVAL TO SCIENCE**  
**AND THE ROLE OF THE EUCHARIST**

**Note:** This was written originally in 1994 for a Medieval history class I took at Baldwin Wallace College in Ohio. But it has been extensively reworked in the last few years, because there is so much in it and so much worth saving for others.. This makes it one of the oldest essays in this book and one of the most complex. The historical vision it demonstrates goes back to Platonists and moves up to the present. The part at the end about the poet Rene Depestre, I owe to Jack Hirschman who turned me onto Depestre back in 1979. It was originally written as part of my rebellion against the ideas of Rama Coomaraswamy and Wolfgang Smith, both of whom I got to know pretty well. But on a deeper level it was written out of a longstanding ambiguity about Christianity in my own mind and heart. My own experience with this religion goes back to my childhood and my view of it, though I occasionally succumbed to a loving interest in it, and went to monasteries and talked with priests and Nuns, read Christian philosophy and so on. As I learned its actual history, I grew more and more skeptical of it. This the result of all I have

learned about it, on many levels and kinds of inquiry. Sept.2015

This essay is divided into the following subsections:

**Preface: Rama and Me and Repulsion at Eating the Dead God**

**1.The Eucharistic Myth of Paul**

**2.Constantine, Charlemagne and Napoleon**

**3.General Observations on the Eucharistic Controversy.**

**4. Innocent the 3rd and the Universal Church**

**5.Plato, Aristotle and the Realist-Nominalist Controversy**

**6.The Transition from Eucharistic ‘Truth’ to scientific truth**

**7. Some Observations on Cannibalism and Conclusions**

**Preface: Rama and Me and Repulsion at Eating the Dead God**

I wrote the ideas in this essay first in 1994, for a history class. But I have re-worked it since then. It is a fascinating area that I do not think has been looked at very carefully before. The history of the myth of Jesus has been covered pretty well by Richard Carrier<sup>1136</sup> and others, whose textual inquiries are logical and coherent. But it remains unclear how the religion managed to foist itself on so much history for so long.

Christinaity is a ‘persistant fiction”.

This essay in its original form outlined many of my intellectual, political and ethical objections to Christianity and states that I no longer

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<sup>1136</sup> On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt  
By Richard Carrier. 2014

consider myself a Christian. One philosopher that I started reading in my teens that I still admire for various reasons is Bertrand Russell. I read his History of Philosophy more than once and liked some of his essays on social issues. His book Why I am not a Christian is interesting, and I agree with many of his points. Indeed, Russell outlines something similar to what I have written about at length, namely that systems of unjust knowledge create cruelty in order to uphold their authority. He notes for instance that

The more intense has been the religion of any period and the more profound has been the dogmatic belief, the greater has been the cruelty and the worse has been the state of affairs. In the so called ages of faith,..; there was the Inquisition,...there were millions of unfortunate women burned as witches and every kind of cruelty practiced upon all sorts of people in the name of religion" <sup>1137</sup>

In contrast, Russell notes, "every improvement in criminal law, every step towards the diminution of the war, every step toward the better treatment of colored races, or every mitigation of slavery...has been opposed by the organized churches of the world" He concludes by saying the Christianity in particular has been "the principle enemy of moral progress in the world". This is a restatement of what I have been saying in this book, that religion is a part of politics, but goes by another name. <sup>1138</sup>

Even in the current world it is clear that religion correlates with violence.. In America in the last 20 years, three violent and repressive presidents in the U.S. have been Republican Christians: Reagan and the two Bushes. Between them they killed hundreds of thousands of people

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<sup>1137</sup> 12. Russell, Bertrand. Why I am not a Christian. Allen and Unwin, 1957, pg. 20

<sup>1138</sup> Russell also notes that many "religious people think it is a virtuous act to tell lies about the deathbeds of agnostics and such" The far right attacks Russell when they can, even to this day, though few have actually read him or studied his works. Russell was not a perfect person, no one is, but he was one of the more interesting of the last 100 years.

in Central America, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, all in the name of "god" or "Jesus" and American exceptionalism. Indeed. The most destructive force in the world today is the largely corporatized Christian right that currently has a decisive influence on the American government.

But though Russell defines very well how Christianity promotes narrow-minded thinking in terms of Them verses Us and cruelty, he did not go quite far enough into the ins and outs of scholasticism and how the church came to be so central to many historical atrocities. Nor did he quite explain how fundamentally opposed to nature, animals and life much of Christianity has been. He did not explore very deeply the strange relations of Christianity and science either. However, he did correctly show how absurd and destructive Christianity is on the subjects of sex and womanhood.

The intellectual arguments that accompanied my abandonment of Christianity is explored both here and in other essays written between 1991 and 97. But what I did not explain in these essays is what brought this about in my actual life of this period. I will write a little about that here.

When I left the Schuon cult in 1991, two of the people that helped me get out of the cult were Wolfgang Smith and Rama Coomaraswamy, the son of Ananda Coomaraswamy.. I discuss Wolfgang Smith elsewhere in these books so I will not dwell on him much. Suffice it to say that I had no interest Dr. Smith's reactionary and inaccurate ideas about the theory of evolution, based on 1930's creationism. Dinosaur bones are much older than any idea of gods or any abstract ideology, Platonic, Taoist or otherwise.

But in this essay I will discuss Rama Coomaraswamy. Rama, like

his father Ananda, had developed a backward looking, right wing and elitist notion of religion. Indeed, what I learned from Rama is how political religious ideology really is. Virtually everything Rama has written trying to justify the Mass prior to Vatican 2 is political, though it is dressed up as a defense of a ritual. The eucharistic ritual he defends is literally fiction, but the politics is not.

Rama's father Ananda was an upper class exiled Hindu brought up in England, nursed on William Morris and reactionary, Symbolist and romantic ideas. He later returned to Sri Lanka, and became a reactionary aesthete, who wished to revive the medieval caste system. Coomaraswamy's interest in "sacred art" was basically political concern that grew of a nostalgia for lost or dying forms of political power. This political concern was sublimated and even denied behind a pose of ultimate spirituality, derived partly from Rene Guenon. Like other forms of spiritual fascism, Ananda Coomaraswamy's ideology is based on a nostalgic, apocalyptic and gnostic nationalism. Coomaraswamy longed for a return to the imagined India of his great grandfathers on Sri Lanka and Ancient India. He also wished to go back to the days of monarchic aristocracy of Meister Eckhart's Europe.<sup>1139</sup> Indeed, Coomaraswamy was part of the effort to restyle the medieval scholastic and aristocratic Eckhart as a New Age Vedantist of a Blavatskian stripe. Rene Guenon

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<sup>1139</sup> Eckhart was condemned as a heretic and tried in the Inquisition and may have died because of it, though there is dispute about how he died.. He preached a syncretistic vision which appealed to traditionalist mystics like Ananda Coomaraswamy. He was resurrected from obscurity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by German mystics like Von Baader, who liked his universalistic tendencies. Since Von Baader he has been used to promote 'non-dual' awareness. Baader himself was a sort of disciple of Schelling, another transcendentalist mystic. Eckhart relies heavily on myth and analogy as do the traditionalists. Eckhart's hatred of the earth is typical of medieval mystical doctrines. He writes "The heavens are everywhere alike remote from earth, so should the soul be remote from all earthly things alike so as not to be nearer to one than another" He also advocates a sort of "aristocracy" of the soul based on renunciation of all relationship to existing things. He writes "The man who has truly renounced himself and does not once cast a glance on what he has renounced, and thus remains immovable and unalterable, that man alone has really renounced self" This is theocratic mysticism and goes well with caste elitism., which is always an aristocratic system. (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/eckhart/sermons.vii.html>)

had also longed for the return of the horror of the European caste system of the Medieval Church of the Inquisition, just as some of the Nazi's had longed to return to the Knights Templar. Indeed, Guenon and Coomaraswamy, who became friends, were both exiles as well as political reactionaries who endorsed monarchist and theocratic politics . Like his mentor René Guenon, Ananda was a "spiritual fascist", and his son Rama continued this "tradition".

But I did not know this yet in 1991. In 1991 I talked with Rama on the phone regularly for about a year or more, with many long and frequent conversations. I had had the misfortune of having witnessed Schuon molest some underage girls in secret rituals called "Primordial Gatherings". My relation with Rama was not one of spiritual guide and student, though he tried to make it that. I thought I should go to the police about what I had seen, but was afraid to do it, as I knew there would be retaliation and slanders against me. Rama had insisted that I should be courageous and expose Schuon's crimes. I agreed with this. He advised me to go to the police. My mother, Wolfgang Smith and others I consulted, thought I should tell the police about Schuon too. Rama was also interested in confirming his already dismal opinion of Schuon's psychology and questioned me deeply about how Schuon behaved. He was using Schuon as an example of a cult leader who had serious mental problems. Rama was about to change careers and wanted to give up surgery and get into psychology instead. Rama was ill and could no longer do surgery. He also advised me to attend Catholic services, which I tried out for a time, but found to be hopelessly narrow and medieval, even repulsively so. I talked with Dr. Smith fairly often as well, who was then closely in touch with Rama. Wolfgang had a feeling or "horror" about Schuon, after I told him what I learned of him. Both Rama and Wolfgang knew how much I suffered from that cult and what they had

done to me and others. They both hated Schuon and said that he was "evil and "satanic" and supported the idea that he be prosecuted by the law. So it is true that Smith and Coomaraswamy, as well as my mother, were instrumental in getting Schuon arrested.

I owed these men a certain gratefulness for helping me get out of the cult, but was soon in conflict about who they were and what they wanted me to believe and endorse. Wolfgang Smith and Huston Smith (no relation) had earlier advised me to enter the Schuon cult. It became clear to me that Rama offered to help me to get out of the cult because he had doubted Schuon's sanity for years. But he and Smith merely wanted to convert me to their extremist and fanatical beliefs, and when I did not go along with that, their friendship and well wishes vanished. I was merely an object of proselytization. Rama never aided me psychologically and indeed, I thought his ideas about psychology were crackpot and wrong. He was trying to apply his dad's ideas of Vedantic and Medieval Christianity to psychology, which did not work. He had some understanding of cults, but I disagreed with him that Schuon was "evil". Schuon created a kind of phony spiritual psychology that combined metaphysical ideas with modern psychological theories and Rama resembled Schuon in this. After Rama became a psychiatrist, in the middle 1990's, his psychological theories combined metaphysical ideas with modern psychological theories in really wacky ways and I lost respect for Rama's abilities as a thinker. He believed in exorcism and other medieval nonsense and tried to impose his really backward and archaic theories upon psychology. I knew Rama before he ever became a psychiatrist and was aghast when I learned how he was applying his ideas to people. His effort to label homosexuality as a spiritual disease-- is a case in point. Rama hatred of science and the theory of evolution made him a bad scientist and I'm sure did not help him as a psychologist. Rama combined his hatred of science with his backward and reactionary political ideas and this is a poison combination that can

be seen in his writings on women, Gays, the Inquisition and other subjects. In any case, Coomaraswamy Schuon and Guenon all created a horrific system of psychological analysis that treats anyone who questions spirituality as sick and "profane", insane or satanic. I could not accept what they thought about evolution, psychology or religion. But it is typical of the traditionalists that they shun or ostracize those who refuse to think as they do. They had no interest in me, but were merely using me to exalt their particular form of fanatical religion. I resisted such use of me.

Rama's hypocritical and two faced behavior often disturbed me. For instance, Rama said that if I go to a traditional Catholic Church I should lie about him in the confessional to the priest. What kind of man wants you to lie in this context? He said he did not want 30 year involvement with Schuon to be known to the priests because that would compromise his position in the church to which he belonged. I was aghast at his telling me to lie. He was saying priests are corrupt and they talk among themselves about what they hear in confession. I realized later that this is why Innocent III set up the Confession rite, so he could monitor the populations and what they were doing and thinking. It was a way to control people. I often used to think it was a questionable rite, but I finally realized confession really is a trap of sorts to monitor correct behavior. This is one facet of Catholic corruption, there are many more.

I was also aghast at various other things he told me. For instance he said one day in a conversation that Hitler was 'not that bad a man' and that the holocaust had been greatly exaggerated. He said that the Inquisition was not altogether a bad thing. He has since become something of an Inquisition denier as well as a holocaust denier. He was convinced and often said that he thought Schuon was an 'evil man', but then he quotes him liberally in his books. I disliked Rama's addiction to calling everything he disliked evil. He even said he performed exorcisms,

and believed that doing these superstitious, medieval rites constituted a sort of spiritual psychology. I do not believe in "evil". Having seen Schuon's delusions of grandeur and willingness to use and hurt others, I was quite aware Schuon was not a good man, But he was not 'evil', as both Rama and Wolfgang Smith said to me repeatedly on the phone or in writing. The concept of evil posits a supernatural being that acts as an agent thought individuals, this is absurd. Schuon was selfish and vainglorious, malicious and willing to lie at the drop of a pin,-- Yes. But I soon saw that Rama also wished to vault himself. He wanted to be the paragon of all truth and was himself head of an apocalyptic cult. He set himself up as a sort of Pope of the Post-Conciliar Church.

Rama was an heart surgeon and complained to me on the phone that he should not have to pay malpractice insurance. He made 1000 dollars and hour plying his trade, but appeared to think those who might suffer from the mistake of his knife deserved no right to sue him for suffering and punitive damages. I found this greedy an selfish. Indeed, Rama's way of looking at the world was elitist and corporate. Like many doctors in the United States he was overpaid, and his income ought to have been cut in half or less under some form of a single payer system such as they have in Japan or Britain. Rama became a catholic "priest" who was also married. I have no objection to priests being married, or being homosexual for that matter, so long as they are open about it and obey our societies laws. But Rama was making up his own religion and then calling it "traditional", while he castigates virtually everyone else for "picking and choosing" their own religion, when that is exactly what he does. His particular brand of John Birch Society catholic or spiritual fascism did not interest me. He tried to ram it down my throat, more or less, but I rejected it. He held that against me and thought ill of me because I would not conform to his fanatical beliefs.

That said, it is also true that Rama was a sweet man in many ways, and he did help me get out of the Schuon cult and I was grateful to him for that and told him so. Rama was one of many ex members of the Schuon cult who were very helpful to me after I left the cult. Schuon had made many enemies and they were all ready to help someone who had seen as deeply into the workings of the cult as I had. I was also grateful to Rama for his encouraging typing up and sending out my original document about the cult. The cult punished him for this and made him sign a confidentiality agreement that we would never use their names or talk about Schuon in public. That kind of legal agreement ought to be illegal. Rama knew I was telling the truth about the involvement of young girls and had assisted the police in their investigation of Schuon. But Rama was weak and unable to escape the Schuonian blackmail machine. He ended using them to get his father's books published-- a move I thought duplicitous and cowardly. I grew distrustful of Rama and his ideas during the course of my relation with him. He began to sound increasingly like an extremist fanatic--- a Torquemada, Savonorola or some other fire-brand Inquisitor. He was moralistic to the extreme and believed himself to be in possession of the absolute "truth, capital "T". He reminded me increasingly of Nazis, fundamentalists, and cult leaders. His ideas against evolution were creationist, ill researched and absurd, as were the similar ideas of Wolfgang Smith. Both of them knew almost nothing about biology, as I have said.

Rama had appointed himself the intellectual leader of a fanatical right wing religious movement that called itself various names, but which essentially goes under the rubric, "traditionalist Catholicism". They believe that the Catholic Church was abandoned by the popes in the 1960's, who wisely liberalized the church and made it more democratic. Rama wanted a return to the autocratic and tyrannical Church of old,

the same Church which signed a concordat with Hitler. It was a political preference above all, though Rama was blind to his own politics, as are most traditionalists. Rama thought he was in possession of the truth, as he claimed, and I began to see that his religion was a form of arbitrary dictatorship based on nostalgia for a traditional church that was not much good 500 years ago and which does not deserve now to be resurrected. His views of homosexuality were little better than the Nazi's. He says in his writings that homosexuals should be punished "both in this world and the next" -- the imaginary next world of "hell". He also has supported a wacky conspiratorial smear campaign that seek to brand homosexual priests as part of a satanic plot. The reasons for homosexuality in the Catholic Church are fairly clear. The absurd policy of celibacy, with an accompanying misogyny is the primary cause. The cause is not Satanism, which is really quite rare--- but the same old ordinary abuse of power and corruption that has characterized Catholicism for many centuries.

Moreover, Rama's views on women were reactionary, sexist and patriarchal. I finally decided that though I was grateful for his help that he was not going to be my teacher or mentor in any way. Indeed, as I began to look closely and objectively at the Church that Rama and Dr. Smith claimed to love, I began to come to a firmer assessment of the reasons why I had doubted the truth of Christianity for so long. But for all that I did not leave the church because of Rama. He was just one of the last instances of Christian hypocrisy and fanaticism that I finally decided to leave it. I did not leave the church because I disliked it as a child. I particularly disliked the use of the crucifixion as a tool of exploitive sympathy. I was horrified by this image as a child, and consider that subjecting children to images like that is a kind of abuse. Such images are abusive and do not belong in classrooms. Nor did I leave

the church because my mother was molested by a priest, which she was, or because I was molested by a priest, which I was, at age 12 or 13. There were other deeper reasons, in addition to these reasons, that I left Christianity and eventually, religion.

So, why did I reject Christianity? This whole long essay is about why. The last time I went to Church was in 1991. I found myself sitting in church and as the Eucharistic species was about to be passed out I had a physical feeling of revulsion for it. I did not want to have anything to do with it. I found the idea of eating the body of a some man of 2000 years ago repulsive. The "mystery" of the Eucharist was a lie about nature and the world. I did not want to eat the dead body of a man, no matter how symbolic that body was claimed to be. I did not want to drink his blood. I did not want to partake of this symbolic cannibalism. There was nothing "satanic" in this rejection of the Eucharist. Indeed, my objections were all ethical and moral. The same revulsion would eventually lead me to become a vegetarian in 1998. I rejected Christianity because it is a gnostic religion that sees the natural world as "original sin" and is "fallen". It exalts a transcendent fiction above the actualities of the real world of nature. It is human centered. Its hatred of the natural world is repulsive to me. Eating the Eucharist seems a sort of psychological blackmail. I was supposed to eat this body and drink this blood to partake of world and life-denying spirituality. I would be better than other people if I did it. But I did not want to be better and did not see nature as place of evil. I became a vegetarian for the same reason that I could not partake of the Eucharist. I could no longer participate in the hatred, abuse and exploitation implicit in the act of eating animal meat. I left Christianity and the eating of meat largely because I respect both human and nature's rights too much.

I stood up in the pew left the Church shortly after I felt repulsed by eating the flesh of the dead god and drinking his blood. I never went back to it. I'm sure I never will. I have learned too much about the history of Christianity and how many lives it has destroyed, both in the human and animal and natural world to ever be a Christian again. It became clear to me in time that Christ is a fiction, he never existed. It is a myth. Millions of people believe it, but none of it ever happened, it is a fabrication of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, made up in the 100 years after Paul the evangelist, who never said a word about the historical Christ, because there never was one..

### **The Eucharistic Myth of Paul**

Of course, there were other reasons I left Christianity besides revulsion about the Eucharist. I saw how deeply Christianity had been involved in harming non-Christian peoples; how Christian missionaries hurt poor and native peoples all around the world; how deeply Christianity had been involved in fomenting wars and injustices: how destructive politics in the United States was deeply influenced by right wing Christians. These and many other reasons decided me to renounce Christianity.

Since it is now clear to me, if not to others, that the Christ story is a fiction, how did it come about and why? How did the Eucharist come to exist as the primary rite in Christianity?. It is clear from Earl Doherty's writings that Paul or those who used the Pauline fictions, created a new religion during the first and second century in which a figure named Christ was given the attributes earlier ascribed to Attis, Dionysus, and Osiris? Attis was a self-castrating god of vegetation, whose devotees were part of the Cybele cult and who were celibates.. Dionysus is a god who is

killed as a child but reborn from the thigh of Zeus, and thus is a god of rebirth and wine was important in his cult, Bacchus is one of his names.. Osiris is an Egyptian myth also deals with a god who is dismembered and reassembled in a rebirth. These are all death and rebirth myths. The notion of the god who is eaten maybe distantly related to the Chronos myth who ate his children, who managed to live in his belly. His child Zeus causes them to be disgorged. The children are Demeter, Hestia, Hera, Hades and Poseidon, who are Greek gods themselves.



Painting by Peter Paul Rubens of Cronus  
devouring one of his children

I have a theory that the Gospels writers adapted an Egyptian myth, somewhat reversed, to create the Eucharist story. My theory is as follows: I think it likely that the Eucharistic myth begins in the Osiris myth of Egypt. In the Osiris myth, of course, in one version, the god is dismembered and then brought back to life from the many pieces, but he

is not eaten, he is pieced back together, in most versions by his wife/sister Isis. Making people eat the dead god was a stroke of theurgical fiction of great genius, perhaps following Cronos as a Greek Model, since it got the fiction into one's stomach, making it more real than fiction. In one sense, Jesus is Osiris who gets eaten by followers in a sacrificial feast.

While the Christ myth certainly evokes the Osiris myth, it also evokes other aspects of the Osiris story. In Egyptian myths about the fate of the dead, the dead were judged by a god named Anubis. If you were weighed in the balance to be good you went off to join Osiris, but if found wanting were given to a "devourer"-- a goddess named Ammit. The Gospel writers made Christ be both Anubis, Osiris and Ammit, all in one. Jesus becomes not only the judge of all souls in heaven and hell (Anubis), but was supposed to be "meat" that would feed live souls and thus give them a better afterlife. Jesus reverses the soul eating of Ammit by being eaten himself, and thus creating new souls for god. He is like Osiris in being a heaven god who is resurrected. But he is like Ammit and in being the god of those who eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood get eternal life, and saved from damnation. The Osiris/Anubis/ Ammit myth is very similar to the Christian myth and may be one of the origins of the myth of Eucharistic communion idea. I have no proof that this is where the Gospel writers got the story, but it makes a certain sense. It was a brilliant fiction, in any case, and simplifies the Egyptian myth seamlessly. Perhaps the Gospel fictions add to the Ammit myth the Christ's blood and body as feast to the story of the sacrificial vegetation god, Osiris.

The notion of gods who are saved by Zeus is not that different than Christ whose saves lives by being eaten. These are chaotic dream stories which are bizarre, non sensical and violent. Christ was an idea, not a person: a composite, made of a syncretic combination of mythic dream

stories, --- a Platonic creation, designed by some rather brilliant story tellers of the Gospels as a being of divine proportions who is reborn after he dies and enters heaven. The beautiful young man who dies and is eaten by his followers might have its origins in war stories too. The young man who dies is seen not to die, but to become part of his followers, who love and worship him.

In the earliest Eucharistic stories the memorial feast is a cosmic event, not a literal one. Paul writes that Christ is not an actual person, but a cosmic force, like the Greek gods. Later perhaps, Doherty and Carrier claim, probably in the middle of the second century, he was made into a historical person ( euhemerization) by the many Gospel writers who made up the fiction of his life. <sup>1140</sup>

How exactly the theme of eating the dead god was incorporated into the gospels, is still unclear, and neither Doherty or Carrier have really answered that, nor does anyone else know as yet. The many violent myths of devouring children or eating gods are psychotic images that were created to serve social purposes. Why they worked is obscure, though it is obvious that they were images that distorted and yet exploited basic sexual and biological drives of parenthood, eating, sex or birth giving. The Eucharist is first mentioned in Paul, and it appears that Paul is describing a mythic event and not an actual occurrence. The point of the myth is to try to recreate the consciousness of being saved by the body of Christ each time one does the rite. There probably was no Christ so there was no Eucharistic dinner. But the historical event is irrelevant anyway, all that matters to the Church is the ritual enactment. The actual rite seems to appear in history after the invention of the ritual by Paul or the Gospel writers.. The Eucharistic myth appears to develop

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<sup>1140</sup> I discuss the dating of the Gospels in another chapter in this book. Carrier holds to earlier dates, but I am not sure he is right. I will not reply to the details of that here. It seems clear that the early dates supplied by Christians for the Gospels are fake, and the early Roman writers like Ignatius and Josephus are also fake or interpolations. So there is little reason to believe early dates. 125-200 C.E. is a fair estimate of when they were created.

slowly form Paul to the Gospel writers, over 50-75 years between 75 C.E. and 150 C.E.. Like the Gospels themselves the origins are obscured in the mists of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

This is of course, highly speculative. No one really knows how the mythic elements got developed or how they were thought up. But it is not at all uncommon to have myths like this develop at that time. It fits the taste for repulsive myths that develop during this time of bloody animal sacrifice and vegetation myths. The fictional reenactment of the Eucharistic ceremony has lasted many centuries, and still exists. It was developed as many myths are developed, grown from a combination of subjective and rather psychotic imagery in repulsive myths used as part of political opportunism. The history of the Eucharist is really the history of a political construction, always fraught with difficulty and contention. The history of these disputes is clear however and I will be talking about that here.

So the myth of Christ got translated into the political actions for more than a thousand years. In her study of the Eucharist, Corpus Christi, Muri Rubin has provided a scholarship on the history of the idea and practice of the Eucharist in the late medieval culture. She concludes this book with the telling sentence:

"the Eucharist was related to a compelling narrative, to a most powerful ritual, to most useful and familiar practices, and it became a receptacle of power, as well as a way of challenging such power."<sup>1141</sup>

Her thesis is therefore, that the Eucharist enshrines a politics and a theory of knowledge, which acts as an organizing power in late

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<sup>1141</sup> Rubin, Muri, Corpus Christi, The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture. Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 361

Medieval culture, and one should add, as an organizing force for the end of the Roman Empire, the developing Feudal system and the Dark Ages. Contentions about the nature of the Eucharist were also a way of challenging the power and authority of the institutions of the time, as Luther would make clear much later.<sup>1142</sup> Luther denies the cosmological aspect of the Eucharist and makes it merely a “rememberance”. My concern here is to take the historical development of the Eucharist as a thesis and use this as a starting point and to show that the transition from a Christian society which had the Eucharist as its central symbol to a secular, scientific society, which had the human reason as its central symbol, is primarily a transition from one kind of power to another. The myth functions as a device for organizing social and mental behavior.

The Eucharist was the central symbol of the power and authority of the Church and the states that served it. With the rise of the Protestant rebellion and the scientific revolution that accompanied this rebellion, the center of power becomes transferred to science, capitalism and the modern state. The Eucharist was supposed to symbolize the "purity" of the Intellect and of Christ who represented this Intellect, and this theory of knowledge presumed to be "disinterested" and objective. The foundations of the scientific presumption to attain disinterested truth through "pure" science has its roots in the Medieval theory of knowledge.

The thesis in this essay was originally is part of a much larger inquiry of preparatory studies which I hoped to pursue further in

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<sup>1142</sup> Luther is an interesting and complex character. He is one of the first real insurrectionists and critical thinker who brought self-appointed “authorities” into question. In this he is in accord with the Renaissance and the rise of science. He presages the later French and American revolutions on the one hand, I cannot but praise him for this. But he is also a sort of grandfather to the Nazis. He was a racist and an anti-Semite of a terrible kind. He unleashed a hatred of art of all kinds rather than just a hatred of Catholic relics and other “Popish” portrait paintings of the ultra-rich. The destruction of art after Luther died is a terrible thing, one of several iconoclastic movements that would victimize art in world history. In this he was like Savonarola and the Bonfire of the Vanities. Luther is in many ways the father of today’s fundamentalist far right Protestant Christians in the U.S. and elsewhere.

graduate school. I completed that and was still not satisfied that I arrived at a real understanding of what happened and why. My purpose was originally to explore the relation of theories of knowledge to the social practices and powers and atrocities that result from them, as this relation reveals itself in diverse cultures and environments, philosophies, historical manifestations and practices. Starting out quite specifically with the period between Homer and Christ, I moved out into the history of religion and politics in general.

So, originally, I explore the growth of a totalitarian system of knowledge and power as revealed in the transitional period from Homer to Plato to Christ. I had concluded in an essay called "Homer, Plato and the Gnostic Tradition" with the observation that the symbol of "Christ as the Universal Man.., was enormously successful in providing a paradigm of universal power to order and control men's souls." I came to a similar conclusion in regard to the significance of Plato's philosophy:

"The idea of turning the symbolic and mythological concerns of Homer into ideological and increasingly metaphysical and political, sublimated, rationalistic, explanations in Plato is a process that enormously extends the scope and ambition of Greek culture. Plato's abstract conceptions can be applied to society more concretely and uniformly than the local mythology of Homer and this allows of greater precision and control. This tendency to generalize concepts applied to all areas of interest is furthered by Aristotle, with his tendency to rationalistic catalogue. Both the Empire of Alexander, who was Aristotle's student, and the more distant Roman Empire, which founded itself on the Greek model, are largely the result of the Platonic and Aristotelian liberation of the Greek will to power through knowledge."(pg.20)

I started to move beyond the ideas of Plato, rejecting them, ultimately. But Plato was trying to generalize the ideology of social control across a wider area than there mere fictions of Homer could do. The Christians began with a Platonic construct of the Christ as a sort of Demiurge and then wrote histories about this fiction to make it seem real. This was already evident in the Jewish philosopher Philo who postulated a Logos, based in Greek and Platonist ideas. In Philo the Logos has the function of an advocate on behalf of humanity and also that of a God's messenger to save the world. It is clear that Paul had no notion fo Christ as a person, but only thought he was a deity, like Philo. It was not unusual and the Romans like to write histories of gods as if they were real people. This appears to have even been done with Praxiteles, the sculptor, as I show in another essay in this book. In any case, it is Paul who imagines the Eucharist idea first in 1, Corinthians, 11: 23. This states

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

In other words the central Christian rite is a fiction of Paul's imagination, though exactly who Paul was no one really knows. We are

supposed to believe him, even though he gives no evidence Jesus actually existed.

So early on there was already a syncretic combination of an invented Platonic ideology combined with the image of Christ, which was initially an abstraction that had no history attached to it at all. I understood that the Christian Apocalyptic idea of Salvation had already combined with Greek ideas in Paul's imagination. He was a man of the Roman Empire which itself is a totalistic society whose roots are to be found in the theory of total knowledge and total social control developed by the Greeks of the time of Aristotle and Plato, but more Plato than Aristotle, who is something of an anomaly. It is not by accident that almost all of the early Church Father's, from Origin and Gregory of Nyssa, to Dionysius the Areopagite (Pseudo Denys), Augustine and John of Erigena are Platonists. The Platonic theory of metaphysics is a theory of the universe as a hierarchy of knowledge descending from Heaven to earth; and those who represent this knowledge are the "elite". This is the now discredited ideology of the Great Chain of Being, which I have discussed often in this book.

The Platonic theory was already adapted to Christianity in the Gospel of John too, where he refers to Christ as the universal "Logos", Philo's idea. The Augustine theory created the idea of the Church as the intermediary, "pontifex" or bridge between God and the world, and therefore claims itself to be the only truly authentic and legitimate power in the world. Augustine's idea is the natural result of the combination of Christ as the Logos and the cosmological hierarchy envisioned by Plato. The development of the Eucharist as the ingested and active symbol of the universal Church and its total power over both the world and the individual human "souls" who lived in this world, was an inevitable consequence of the Platonic Christian theory of knowledge, exemplified best in the philosophy of Augustine. The Eucharist was meant to

transform the Roman Empire into a dominion over subjects through the ingestion of the divine god. This is already implied in Paul, who appears to have invented the myth behind the Eucharistic rite.

The Augustinian philosophy is the dominant philosophy through the Dark Ages until the translation of Aristotle's works from Arabic into Latin at the end of the 12th century. The availability of Aristotle's works, and their manifest difference from those of Plato, especially on the subject of the theory of universals, provoked the Nominalist/Realist controversy, and this brought the nature of the Eucharist, and therefore the Church itself, as the embodiment of total knowledge, into question. The story of the Nominalist/Realist controversy is at the center of the debate over the authority of the Church, and one of the results of this controversy is that the outlines of a new form of power through knowledge would begin to form, namely, the beginnings of science, the rise of secularism, nationalism and the concern with man as an individual apart from God and the Church. This is a complex story of a persistent delusion that originates in Paul and goes on until the present, so be prepared for some complicated retellings.

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### **1. Constantine, Charlemagne and Napoleon**

The period in question can be roughly framed by two Coronations, that of Charlemagne and that of Napoleon. The Coronation of Charlemagne is described by Philip Johnson as follows:

"The Pope insisted on performing a Roman ritual under which he placed a crown on Charles' head and then prostrated himself in an act of emperor worship.. Charles was taken aback by this weird eastern enactment, which was completely alien to

anyone coming from north of the Alps, with a Germanic background. It seemed suspicious to him that the crown, which he had won by his own achievements, should be presented to him by the Bishop of Rome as if it were in his gift."<sup>1143</sup>

This act, on Christmas day 800, defines the history of the next seven centuries in that it reveals the ambiguity in the struggle for power between the Church and State or the Church and Monarch. Christianity is a form of politics that created metaphysical justification to further itself. The "Holy Roman Emperors", after Charlemagne, would claim, in varying degrees, some measure of divine right, and, both in opposition and complimentarily to the power of the Kings, the Popes would claim their superiority and dependence to the Emperor on the basis of their intermediary position between the "worldly kingdom", which belonged to the King, and the Augustinian "City of God" which the Church was supposed to represent in anticipation of the final apocalypse. The city of god is merely a mythic magnification of the process of political fiction making.

The complex arrangement of worldly and spiritual power lacked the totalistic simplicity of the Constantinian formula of the union of Church and state in one man, namely Constantine himself. Constantine established the emperor as the ultimate regulatory authority within the religious discussions involving the early Christian councils. He stressed orthodoxy and set up a system to punish dissent. The metaphysical enunciation made dogma at Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.), concerning the two natures of Christ, that he is "True man and True God" was a symbolic expression of the unity of Emperor and Church. This formula of Constantine and was neat and symmetrical and seemed to justify his

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<sup>1143</sup> Johnson, Philip. A History of Christianity, Anteneum, 1976, p.126

rather megalomaniacal claim to an absolute theocratic monarchy such that all enemies of the state were necessarily the enemies of God.

The case of the Coronation of Napoleon, 1400 years later, represents a complete shift in emphasis from the Coronation of Charlemagne and the monolithic theocracy of Constantine. Napoleon forced the Pope by various means to submit to allowing him to crown himself. This act, which put the Romantic and unique individual, at least symbolically, above the church, and the state, brought to an end to conflict of the Church and state that had concerned Constantine and Charlemagne. After Napoleon, authentic knowledge and power are increasingly less likely to be perceived as coming from the Authority of the Revealed Truth of the Bible and the Church and increasingly from man himself. Napoleon's self-crowning is an ironic reversal of the Coronation of Charlemagne. After Napoleon, conflicts in the pursuit of power would concern the relation of states to individuals and the church would be all but replaced by science as the touchstone of the knowledge/power relationship.

The supremacy of Reason, symbolized by science and by the enlightened individual or state, which Napoleon claimed to be when he said "I am France", had replaced the supremacy of Christ, as the arbiter between the true and the untrue, the real and the unreal. This passage from a world centered on the otherworldly Christ, considered as locus of authentic knowledge and power, to man's reason considered as the authentic locus and determinant of legitimate knowledge and power is the subject of this essay. The consideration of Napoleon might seem out of place in an essay on religion but comparing him with Constantine is the most expeditious way to express the perimeters of my inquiry. The brightest minds of the French Revolution sought of end tyranny of all

kinds, Napoleon betrayed that ideal and set himself up as a secular tyrant.

## **2.General Observations on the Eucharistic Controversy.**

The Eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation was declared dogma at the Lateran Council of 1215. This Dogma was reiterated and strengthened at the Council of Trent(1554-1560). The dogma states that through the Consecration by the priest at the altar that a "change is brought about of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood." <sup>1144</sup> This dogma is perhaps the most important in the history of the Church for a number of reasons. First, it reaches back to the essence of the message of Christ. Secondly, it repeats the definition of Christ at Chalcedon that made Christ "true Man and true God". Thirdly, the formation of this dogma between 1215 and 1560 occurs precisely at that point where the Church was in process of creating a world Empire. Lastly, the Council of Trent in 1554 is primarily a reactionary attempt to curb the rise of Protestantism and secularism which the Church rightly perceived as threats to their total power and control of the faithful. It is this last reason that gives this Council its particular reactionary fervour and it is this fervour which makes the most reactionary of today's traditionalist Catholic Fundamentalists harken back to the Council of Trent as the definitive statement of Church Authority and authenticity. Traditionalist Catholicism is a nostalgic

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<sup>1144</sup> Schroeder, H.L.Rev. The Cannons and Decrees of the Council of Trent Tan Books, 1978, pg.75 4. See also Coomaraswamy, Rama. The Destruction of the Christian Tradition, Perennial, 1979. This book rather absurdly tries to pander fear and tries to maintain that the apocalypse is now upon us because the Council of Vatican 2 in 1966 changed the performance of the Eucharistic rite. It is a book of deep, reactionary bitterness and hatred of the modern world, that even recommends the restoration of the "Oath against Modernism" for all Catholics, and also attacks the theory of evolution and democracy as manifestations of the devil. Coomaraswamy's obsession with evil reminds one of reactionaries like Savonarola. It is a very interesting book however, if one would study the nature of religious fanaticism and the manner in which the will to power becomes attached to symbols, such as the Eucharist.

political movement that uses symbolism to try to resurrect a dead form of power.

In any case, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 decided the issue of the Church's stand on the subject of universals and this was reinforced by Trent. This subject was the central philosophical issue of the Middle Ages. The Church decided in favor of the Realist position, more or less, rather than the Nominalist position. The Realist position was essentially Platonic, and summarized in the Scholastic formula, **Universalia Ante Rem**; the universal is prior to the particular thing, or the idea comes before the physical, aristocrats and priests prior to other people. In the philosophy of Aquinas and others, a more Aristotelian concept of universals would be combined, rather ambiguously, with the Platonic position. It was this ambiguity that led to the Realist/Nominalist controversy over the subject of universals and made the question of universals central to the controversy over the nature of the eucharist.

The Nominalist position attacked this very ambiguity, since it was by no means clear how Christ could enter the Eucharistic host and become one with its substance without being contained also in its material substance. The Nominalists asked how Christ could become bread and wine when the bread and wine were not literally Christ. The standard reaction of the Church, as far back as St. Paul and Augustine, was that this paradox was a great “mystery” and it would be a grave sin, indeed perhaps the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost itself, to question this divine mystery. This Mystagogical, obscurantist strategy was effective, but appealed more to fear than reason. The Church of this time was fast becoming the central and totalistic power over the entire European continent, while yet the recent translation of Aristotle and new economic benefits had encouraged many to try to reason for themselves. Thus, even while the church was trying to use reason to justify its power

and legitimacy, which was based on the Eucharist, others were using this same reason to question the authority of the Church and bring into question the Eucharist.

The Nominalist position, at least in its clearer forms, as in Berengar (c.999-1088), Rocellinus(c.1050-1131) and William of Occam(d.1347) was derived almost entirely from Aristotle, and tended deny the reality of the Platonic universals, claiming universals were conceptual abstractions from particular things. This brilliant legal strategy had an important factual truth as its base. The truth was that ideas do not create things, things have an independent existence. Thus the Nominalists claimed the opposite of the realists and in the corresponding scholastic formula, claimed that “ **Universalia Post Rem**”—or universals come after things. It is this latter view that is obviously the true one, though, it can be stated that that was not easy to know in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Nominalist position formed the conceptual basis of what would become science. This is not to say that Nominalism was a scientific position, rather it expressed the possibility in idea form of what would become science in practice two centuries later, between the period of Roger Bacon and, Da Vinci, Francis Bacon , Galileo and Newton. While science develops out of the Medieval controversies, it is in opposition to it in very important ways, as would become clear with Darwin.

### **3. Innocent III and the Universal Church**

Having generally outlined the nature of the Realist/Nominalist controversy and indicated something about its relation to the Eucharist and the dogma of transubstantiation, it would be useful to situate these

developments in the context of aspects of the history of the period. The dispensing of the Eucharist was the central rite of the church, over which it exercised complete control. The Eucharist was a political symbol that one had to eat, and thus, or so it appeared, Christ became a part of the body that ate it. This is pure fiction, of course, but it was strongly believed to be true, in fact. It is difficult to understand this power in our time because, the people of medieval times were convinced by priests, churches, cathedrals, art, government and all the accoutrements of their culture, that to question the church was a sin and to question the Eucharist was the worst of sins, because it amounted to questioning Christ as a savior. This is magical thinking of a very developed kind. It requires policing, since it is so unlikely.

Since, allegedly, the salvation of one's soul depended on the Eucharist as the central sacrament, one stood and fear of the church, and indeed, the church had granted itself not only the power to murder heretics but to pronounce excommunication, which meant that one would be shunned as well as damned, a “fate worse than death” it was claimed. Of course, this is blackmail of a vile kind, basically a form of mind control, and a variation of this effort to demand conformity on pain of death characterize all bad governments and institutions. But it was an effective use of psychological terrorism.

Innocent III used excommunication as a political tool in the case of Markward of Anweiler. Innocent wrote:

we excommunicate, anathematize, curse and damn him, as oath breaker, blasphemer, incendiary, as faithless, criminal and usuper, in the name of God the Almighty, and of the son and the Holy Ghost by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul

and by our own [authority]... we order that henceforth anyone who helps him shall be bound by the same sentence. <sup>1145</sup>

The Fourth Lateran council, it should be observed in passing, also made Confession compulsory for all Catholics. This is not without importance. Just as the Eucharistic rite was meant to incorporate the souls and bodies of the believers into the Church by communion, the Confessional rite was intended to circumscribe and gain control over the most intimate aspects of individual conscience. Telling on others as well as oneself became a tool of surveillance. The Church wanted not just the minds of the population but to control their inner thoughts as well. They also wanted a means to spy on enemies. The rite of confession and the growing power of the Inquisition were both developed under Innocent III and expanded to create a totalistic society such as both Plato, Hitler and Stalin might admire. They wanted complete control of individuals from the most intimate aspects of the sexual and psychological selves, to every important act of their lives, birth, puberty, marriage children and death. The Catholic drive for control extended into every area of society, from the interior of minds and houses to the streets and up into the governments and banks.

Innocent III also consciously turned the Crusades into a campaign of thought control, killing off or inciting lynch mobs to kill groups thought heretical, such as the Albigensians. Under his papacy the Church achieved the apogee of its power. Innocent devalued the role of the Monarchs and with the use of the Interdict managed to blackmail Kings into submission to the Papacy by threatening excommunication and therefore hell, if the King did not submit. He compared the Papacy to

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<sup>1145</sup> Johnson, Philip. A History of Christianity Antheneum, 1976, pg.199

the Sun and the monarchy to the moon ~.~A He wrote that Christ "left to Peter the governance not of the Church only but of the whole world". The megalomania encountered in a sentence like this is rare; one finds it in an Alexander, Constantine, Hitler, and Stalin, but few others. But the will to power exemplified in Innocent is not a unique aberration but part of the very nature of the Church and of Christianity in general.

Augustine, like Innocent, also oversaw the murder of "heretics", that is people who had valid points of view the Church hated, and promoted various forms of thought control. Indeed, the missionary, crusading, worldwide ambition of the Church was largely inspired by the words of Christ himself; Christ's statement that "he who is not with me is against me" (Luke, 11:23) is a statement that is practically the defining characteristic of a paranoid will to power. It is an anti-democratic declaration of Jihad against those who think differently. When such an exclusivist fanaticism is combined with statements like "Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned"(Mark, 16:15-16) one has a formula for a totalitarian state that combines the "Two Swords", the sword of religion with the sword of politics. They are not actually different swords. With this two edged sword the Church in the east and the west forced submission to worldly and spiritual powers in a way so replete with injustice, fear, coercion and psychological and spiritual blackmail that the world is still recoiling from the excess to this day. Innocent was following long centuries of precedent, and therefore should not be thought of as an anomaly. The ruthless Roman empire had changed into the Christian Empire, and the Empire of Science would replace the Christians, despite some hangers on to the old mythologies, now detached from their hegemonic sources of power. This is why science is initially a bid for power and used by states to create wealth. For course in the case of science, there is science

proper, ordinary science, which is the study of nature, basic mechanics, tool making, pottery and iron making and there is corporate science or politicized science, and these are very different things. Corporate or imperial science is generally a bad thing, and results in colonial exploitation of the Americas Africa, Australia and the and south seas tribes, for instance. whereas ordinary science gave us pottery, blacksmithing, midwifery, Da Vinci's anatomy studies and botanical and taxonomic studies, among many other things. Spelling out how this change from dogmatic control of Churches to anatomy studies and the study of nature will take some time.

The slow abandonment of symbolic thinking is key in this change. Humans slowly abandon the idea of invisible ideas, gods, agents and symbols of human projections. In the use that Innocent III made of the Eucharist one sees an excellent example of the function of symbols. The Christ symbol is used both by individuals and by the Church for self-magnification through a claim to total knowledge. Pope Innocent had control of most of Europe and achieved it through whipping up the self-sacrificial and murderous impulse of the Crusades. He did this through mind control techniques exercised through the confessional and the Inquisition, and especially through the Eucharist, with its promise of salvation from a world kept hostage to miserable conditions. There was the feudal caste system which protected enormous economic disparities. Priests and nobles controlled separate legal systems, such that no commoner stood a chance of obtaining justice anywhere, and the priests and nobles were largely beyond the law. Anyone who questioned the Pope, the dogmas, the sacraments, or had association with those who questioned these could be killed could be called to the Inquisition and expected to recant or be tortured, and the refusal to recant meant death. The worst of all sins was to question the Eucharist. The Eucharist was the central symbols of an unjust political system. The illegitimate power

of the upper classes was insured by the existence of false symbols, claimed to be divine.

The Eucharist embodied the will to power through knowledge of the Church itself. The crushing totalitarian atmosphere of the period forbid any thinking outside of orthodoxy. The rite of confession made the individual person accountable to the church instead of to itself. The burning of the philosopher at the University of Prague, Jan Hus, (c. 1369 – 6 July 1415) was about this precisely. Like John Wycliffe, the English Scholastic philosopher, (c. 1320 – December 1384) Hus questioned the necessity of priests as intermediaries in the reception of the Eucharist, and implicitly he was affirming the value of the individual conscience above that of the Church. He was right to do so. But he was burned at the stake for questioning Church power, and this power was expressed by the Church's claim to control over the Eucharistic bread and wine, the wine being only allowed to the priests. Wycliffe and Hus are both influences on what would become science and democracy.

Wycliffe had questioned transubstantiation. His writings were condemned after his death and his body exhumed and burned without reburial. Hus followed Wycliffe and questioned why the laity could not drink the Holy Wine like the priests. Rubin observes that Hus' advocacy of the reception of wine by the "laity" would have "implied that the church possessed no inherent powers denied to the laity"<sup>1146</sup> To question the Eucharist was to question the Church and to question the Church was to question God, and this was an unpardonable sin for which burning at the stake was considered fit punishment. It was this sort of barbaric dogmatism that eventually led to the Church declining in influence and falling into disrepute. Who could believe in such a false and pretend organization and its bogus practices?

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<sup>1146</sup> 6. Rubin, Corpus Christi p.35

#### **4.Plato, Aristotle and the Realist-Nominalist Controversy**

It is indeed extraordinary that a symbol like the Eucharist could become the organizing mythical pivot around which a totalistic society could revolve. The implications of this fact are very far reaching. It indicates, for instance, how the most minimal means, in this case, a small white circle made of bread, can be used and exploited to organize an entire society around a symbol in order to preserve a system of knowledge and power for the benefit of an Institution. It is the ultimate in advertising, propaganda and mental coercion. This indicates that the needs of the people of the time to have promise of release from suffering and death and the oppression of the powerful, was very great; and indeed, this need for redress and justice is expressed in the prevalence of apocalyptic fantasies that accompanies the Eucharistic imagery of the period.

Such fantasies of power and the need to escape from the oppression of powers must have then, as now, arisen for quite concrete reasons and purposes. Boyer and Dennett are certainly mistaken that religion is created out of an evolutionary need. People make up stories for reasons, believe in myths and philosophies for reasons, and are willing to be deceived for reasons. How and why institutions oppress is due to evolution but the will of men bent of taking from others, setting up unjust aristocratic and making sure their clan or church is richer than others. While human needs, the need to belong, the need to follow ones parents, the need to have sex or die with dignity might be evolution based needs, the need of religion is not. Institutions need religion, not people. It is frightening that men who desire power can successfully exploit these needs; frightening that a society can be organized around such questionable symbols and that dissent should be so easily and ruthlessly eradicated by the powers of the period. I also find it

disillusioning that the philosophy of the period should have been so completely concerned with the maintenance of the elaborate structure of such a manifestly unjust system of knowledge and power. It appears to be the case that main-stream academic and scientific philosophy today has the largely the same function of justifying the knowledge system that justifies the powers of our society. Corporate science rules in most academies. I do find small comfort, however, in the fact that there were a few who did dissent and eventually the dissenters triumphed.

Those that dissented against the medieval Church laid the foundation for a new form of scientific knowledge and power. But this time the apocalyptic threats that the church had used to coerce through fear and psychological blackmail, would become literal apocalyptic threats both to nature and the existence of man. The rather silly apocalypse of St John was born of hatred of the world and desire for change. The same hatred of the world can be seen in Atomic Weapons. Oppenheimer's invocation of the Bhagavad Gita is an imperial power clam just like the Apocalypse of John. The hatred of nature in Christian dogma becomes the hatred of nature implicit in corporate science and environmental rape. Early science in the 17<sup>th</sup> century had the rape of nature as its goal, as is clear in Francis Bacons writings. Indeed, I think that a case could be made that yesterday's Realist/Nominalist controversy evolved into today's controversies about animals and language, global warming and the nature of the brain. Science would serve power unjustly, that is true, but it also became a powerful tool to question power and that is its real value. Darwin saw this quite well, whereas Newton was a power manger and joined the side of the unjust.

So, it is clear that the Realist/Nominalist controversy was primarily an argument that went on in the Church and universities and concerned the relation of Plato and Aristotle's ideas about universals,

which were contradictory. The Church/state hegemony created the Dark Ages and helped suppress centuries of scientific growth and insight. The Church had to be questioned. The questioning started internally, inside the system of injustice itself, in the symbol of empire and control. The question was: how could the Eucharist be justified according to the Realist or Nominalist position. Initially, the Nominalist position was developed from the view of Aristotle, "called the "master of those who know", who denied Plato's belief in universals existing as independent entities. The Nominalists, proposed, instead, that the Platonic ideas were conceptual abstractions from sensory or phenomenal experiences. This is correct. Plato begins with the Ideas and descends to matter; Aristotle begins with matter and ascends to "pure forms". The Church saw, rightly, that Aristotle's philosophy as a threat to their empire, and condemned Aristotle's Physics and his Metaphysics between 1209 and 1215, under Innocent III. This foolish move presaged the censure of Galileo some centuries later. But the condemnation of Aristotle was mere demagoguery. It soon became clear that Aristotle would not be gotten rid of so easily. Indeed, the only way to maintain the Platonist Christian and aristocratic state was by force, lying, excessive taxation, indulgences and the Inquisition.

So the Church adapted, trying to hold on to its fictive mythology of the Eucharist. It was found that the Aristotelian doctrine of substance and accident could be applied to the Eucharist without difficulty, since it meant that one did not have to affirm that the bread itself become Christ and was eaten and then digested and excreted, but only that the bread became "transubstantiated" into Christ. Only the accidents were digested, the substance of Christ joined invisibly with the individual person, or "soul" in Church language. How this happened was never really explained. But it was a clever ruse. The substance/accident distinction also preserved an opening to the Platonic doctrine of the

Logos and the ideas. This was important because the doctrine of Plato affirms the supremacy of the intellect as a suprarational and supra-mundane faculty which was capable of realizing God in its own essence.

Aristotle did not completely reject Plato's Ideal Forms, he stressed that ideal forms must be connected to matter; he maintained that only God is pure form. This stress on the materialistic aspect of Aristotle's ideas is what would provoke the Realist/Nominalist controversy, and eventually lead to modern science. The Platonist doctrine, which really is a fiction--- was the basis of the political authority of the Church from the earliest days of Christianity. Authentic knowledge, for Augustine, who was a Platonist, was the knowledge of the suprarational intellect, and thus knowledge was knowledge of Christ as the Logos or as the supreme ordering power of the universe. The Platonic concept of the Intellect, which Aristotle repeats with a somewhat different accentuation, was the fundamental basis of both the Eucharist and Church authority. In other words, in both Plato and Aristotle, the Intellect--- a divine and fictional faculty not to be confused with ordinary reason--- is accorded supremacy, and this supremacy is both political and metaphysical. Those who represent the Intellect are those to whom power over the society is granted. The Church combined Platonist and Aristotelian conceptions of the Intellect with the millenarian Christian concept of Christ as the Logos and supra-cosmological King and Exemplar.

Thus, to deny the supremacy of the supra-rational intellect was to question the very Eucharistic foundations of the Church. Plato's ideas could not be entirely denied unless there were some concession towards a universal Substance of which Christ was made. To dethrone Plato, as Aquinas did, was not fatal to the Church, but it did leave the Church in a precarious position. Aristotle's emphasis on matter and quantity left the nature of the Eucharist open to question, whereas Plato's symbolist, hierarchical, elitist and spiritual view led to a monolithic and totalitarian

interpretation of the Eucharist that admitted no questions. To deny both the Universal ideas of Plato or the Universal Substance of Aristotle was tantamount to a denial of the act of transubstantiation. This of course, was the “rankest heresy”. And it is this heresy that created science.

But having said this I must hasten to add, so that there be no confusion, that I have no concept of heresy myself. I am not a Christian and have no belief in the concepts that I am discussing. Heresy presupposes orthodoxy, and though I once believed that the concept of orthodoxy had a meaning that was real and efficacious, I think now that it is merely the codification of a knowledge system created in order to administer and legislate assent or dissent. I am opposed to knowledge systems that do not allow dissent. Dissent from orthodoxy is called heresy. It is clear to me that the primary purpose of the concept of orthodoxy in the Middle Ages was the maintenance of the knowledge/power equation that stained both the Church and the Crown. For myself, I recognize neither the power of the Church nor that of the Crown: I am not a Christian, or an aristocrat. I believe in the right of individuals to dissent and resist all or any who would use systems of knowledge, be this gnostic, religious, to impose by force or coercion, systems of knowledge, belief or practice. But I could not have this belief in human rights, were it not for the Nominalists. They are rarely thanked for their efforts, but it was an important effort that had centuries of consequences. They created an idea that led to the importance of physical evidence, and it is evidence that matters, not orthodoxy, wealth or dogma.

To understand the Realist/Nominalist controversy, therefore, one must step outside of the alternative of heresy/orthodoxy as well as the alternative believer/unbeliever, insider/outsider. Any other way of looking at the complex material of this period would lead one into a

partisan position and this would make it nearly impossible to assess what happened and why the controversy occurred. Thus, when one reviews the different thinkers of the two sides of the Realist/Nominalist controversy it becomes clear that there were many different answers to the question of the Eucharist. Below I will review some of these positions.

1. Augustine holds that the body and blood of Christ are separate but correlated to the species of bread and wine; this is the Platonist-Realist view. Augustine relates the Eucharist to the Intellect which he envisions as the "pontifex" or bridge between man and God. This identification of Christ and the intellect, and the belief that the Church alone represents Christ as the true and only legitimate power on earth is the view that governs all of Christendom until the Protestant rebellions.

2. Berengar, (c.999-1088), held in contrast, that the substance of Christ must have some relation to the accidental appearance of the bread and wine. This is a more or less Nominalist position. Berengar was declared a heretic.

3. Duns Scotus, a Platonist-Realist; went even farther than Augustine and claimed that the accidental bread was entirely "annihilated" by the substance of Christ. This position pushes the Platonist hatred of the world of matter and flesh to an extreme. How were these thinkers to make sense of the phrase in the gospel of St. John, "the Word became flesh",--- Christ does not say, and 'the Word became Flesh and annihilated it'.

4. Aquinas takes the view that "accidents realize Christ's physical presence, but only in an invisible spiritual and non-materialist way" <sup>1147</sup> This does not clarify anything and returns to the obscure mystagogy of

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<sup>1147</sup> Ibid, Rubin. pg 25

the Platonist-Augustinian position, even though an Aristotelian language is employed..

5. In contrast John Quidort (d.1306) held that "the nature of the Bread is assumed into the Word", This is more or less the Nominalist position.

Rubin summarizes all the critics of transubstantiation as holding that "quantity must be identical with the substance to which it is attributed" <sup>1148</sup> This view, implied by Aristotle's philosophy, meant that the bread and wine could not become the body and blood of Christ unless the bread/wine itself also became the body/blood of Christ. Is it an analogy or an identity? They wanted it to be both, which is impossible. Aristotle had provoked an argument about the nature of material substances, and the Church, which was taking the Realist position, was put in the difficult circumstance of having to justify what was logically and empirically absurd. The Church was backed into a corner: reality was intervening and the Church wanted make believe. This would lead eventually to the Protestant reaction, which would hold that faith alone could justify religion, since only blind faith could accept the absurd. Protestantism opted for "commemoration" rather than identity. Commemoration is a weak position, and the faith begins to fail, to be replaced by science, which is concrete.

Early science, influenced by the nominalists, on the other hand, would accept the fact of Christ as Intellect entering directly into matter. Indeed the "matter" of science would eventually supplant Christ and Plato. Since Christ is actually just human consciousness or reason extrapolated and magnified into a fictional and "divine" personification, the entrance of reason or intellect into matter meant that matter could be

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<sup>1148</sup> Ibid Rubin pg.34

dominated by man literally, and not just symbolically. Science supplants Christianity. Those who claim that science grew from Christianity are mistaken. Science grew from Greece and reasserted itself in defiance of the myth of the Eucharist as a heresy. The nominalists were not just arguing a position but began arguing for reality, fact, evidence, the world itself. What they were doing was starting us on the road to dispense with Christ all together and accept matter and the world as it is. This was due to Aristotle and was a real breakthrough. This is science or the beginnings of it.. Christ it turns out, was a fiction created by active imagination. All there really is, is bread and wine, no essence, no divine substance. So only reality matters. The Eucharist is now written out of history, which is no surprise, since it had no reality to begin with.

### **5.The Transition from Eucharistic Truth to Scientific Truth**

What needs to be grasped in the arguments involved in the Realist/Nominalist controversy is that the very foundations of the knowledge system which justified Church social power, the relation of Church and State and the entire hierarchical caste system of medieval society were all at stake. The philosophical battles reflect the battle for social control and hegemony. If the Nominalists were right, and universals were high mythic abstractions and symbols and not real or independent entities, then the Eucharist is nothing more than a magical superstition used to orchestrate social and psychological order. In other words the Eucharist is an exploitive symbolic device. If this were so, the Church was in deep trouble. This can be seen in hindsight of course---- I don't think the nominalists grasped the full magnitude of what they did at.

The rise of science was in the air, after 1000 years of Christian persecution of Greek and Roman science. But it was in the air, just as the Plague years around 1350 had empowered workers who were now

lesser in number so they had to be paid more. The feudal system was beginning to collapse. Workers start demanding more rights. They had been abused for centuries by the Lords and Kings and starting insisting objectively on their own rights. Unlike gods and ideologies, rights are not fictions, not delusional or imaginary inventions, as the historian Yuval Harari claims.. All living beings claim rights by being born and will fight for them if they need to even to the point of death. This is true of a worm, a cat or a human. They all claim the right to live and oppose the elimination of themselves.

Rights are the essence of the Enlightenment and require the dismissal of religious ideology. After the plagues of the 1300's the divine right of lords and aristocrats comes into question. Authority starts to be questioned: the feudal order is cracking. But the Church knew the Protestant rebellion was a rebellion against authority and it is obvious that the loss of the Eucharist symbols was the loss of caste Platonism, the aristocracy and the ideology of the Great Chain of Being. As the Faust myth shows this threat to the very center of the Catholic Roman Empire was definitely felt, even if it was not consciously known. In the end Faust was right, it was actual beings that matter, not gods and priests selling the beyond. Goethe saw this and exonerated Faust. Rights come later, and they are not accidental fictions but facts of survival on a difficult planet.

Aquinas proved that Aristotle could be adapted to serve the Church, but the adaptation was precarious at best, despite the Summa Theologica, whose encyclopedic finality already indicated that something fundamental was ending. Aristotle's ideas helped undermine Feudalism. The ambiguity of how Christ could be in the bread but not of it remained. The declaration of the dogma of transubstantiation in 1215 was largely a stop-gap measure designed to suppress dissent and control the extent of the damage that was already being done by Aristotle and the Nominalist

implications of his philosophy. Aristotle's philosophy implied that the material world is not just a corrupted shadow and copy of the world of the Ideas "Beyond" as both Plato and Christian doctrine held. This meant that power could be gained over this particular material world by categorizing, comparing and inquiring. A new kind of Knowledge/Power relationship was in the making: Science. This was certainly a good thing, though few knew that absolutism was still very powerful and stopping the greedy was exceedingly difficult. This was not what Michael Foucault would call a revolution, but was a fundamental shift in how the world was seen. It was not a shift in favor of power of the sort that Foucault was enamored of, but the opposite: it was a tide moving against power and abuse. It would not really happen till after the French Revolution.

If one accepts the possibility that the Eucharist is a symbol whose meaning is not literally true, but rather a mythological ritual that has to do with orchestrating social order through a theory of knowledge and social power, then one must conclude that Christ himself is not really present in the host. What is present there is a propaganda tool, a mode of consciousness—an ideology--- and a way of knowing that grants access to participation in the social order of Medieval society. The Eucharist was a brilliant deception that kept many in thrall for a millennia. It was a means of participating in a symbolic alternative world of power and knowledge; a world symbolized by Christ's omniscience and omnipotence. When one grasps this, then it is possible to see that the arguments about the Eucharist were not about a bit of wafer and a little wine. It was an argument that was really concerned the viability of Christianity—an religion and class in general--- as a ruling force in society. Aristotle and his influence on the Nominalists, such as Occam and Roger Bacon, had indicated that the power and knowledge symbolized by Christ in the Eucharist must become one with matter itself, figuratively speaking.

Leonardo is probably the first to see the reality of this. His science is secretive and he wants it to be because he knows the war lords and aristocrats will abuse it. Harari and Jared Diamond <sup>1149</sup> are wrong. They are largely apologists for a geopolitical control of resources, as well as the new corporations of today such as Google, Facebook or Apple. <sup>1150</sup> In recent books, Harari even claims that computers are a sort of god, rather as Marx claims that man is a god for man, Harari claims that computers are a kind of god of man, a “homo deus”. He calls this god the “internet of all things”. Religious thinkers are always trying to make transcendent entities and rule over others by promoting them.

Science is not developed to help the rich get richer or the weapons manufacturer kill people for profit. It is about understanding how things work in fact. The reading lists of Leonardo indicate a great deal of reading of classical texts as well as the study of math. He even read Al Hazen, also called Ibn al-Haytham (c. 965 – c. 1040), who studied Optics and math and was Iraqi, though he lived mostly in Cairo. In Leonardo’s mind and in much of his art, especially in his Notebooks, he has gone far beyond Christianity and even in his math studies he is striving toward an understating of physical forms and growth that anticipates later science and biology. He is a vegetarian who wants to make the world better and more just. He sees science as improving people’s lives and wants to protect it from abusers and power mongers who would turn it

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<sup>1149</sup> Jared Diamond is one of the original apologists for human supremacy from the 1990’s. His environmental determinism has some justice to it, but is overstated and combined with a notion of human exceptionalism that amounts to corporate cheerleading. His book Gun’s Germs and Steel was an attempt to show why western corporate culture is biologically superior to the rest of the world. In the end his work was an attempt to excuse western atrocities and to praise and blame Euro-American superiority as an effect of geography.

<sup>1150</sup> Harari, a sort of disciple of Jared Diamond, promotes religion as a form of social engineering and says it is necessary to social life. He is a Buddhist and the coldness of Buddhist analysis of part of this work. Buddhism sees the world as samsara casts a cold eye on life. This allowed for very terrible abuses.

into cash traded in corporate Wall Streets, who are indifferent to all things and beings but wealth.

But before Leonardo, science was largely a virtual possibility. Occam's theory of "consubstantiation" suggested that "things that occupy the same area are equal... but Christ's body and the bread occupy the same space.. .because where one is the other is, and the one does not contain the other." <sup>1151</sup> What this means is that the will to power symbolized by the image of Christ in the Eucharist must enter into matter itself. Human conscious will no longer be ruled by myth but by matter. This is the beginning of philosophical justification for the sciences. Indeed, the anthropomorphic imagery of Christ and the Eucharist were in process of being thrown off and what was left was the conscious reason as the embodiment of knowledge, and this reason, in math and science, as the Greeks and Romans already knew, could enter into matter itself and redirect it and exercise its power in a way that would do good. The fictional image of Christ as Savior falls away as the main thrust of power and Reason takes over as an activity of understanding matter and nature. This is what is stated in the English Revolution, when Thomas Rainsborough said that "I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he". This states that men are basically equal, and there is no overlord, Christ or King who is above all. The social implications of this are huge, as are the philosophical implications. Eventually Darwin would see that this was true in nature too, and that all life, human and natural, is somehow equal. Human rights becomes nature's rights. We have all evolved, and were not created and thus each species has rights in its own domain and is self-created, with no obligations, if they can "out fox" the predators and avoid the hierarchical gods, human overlords and dictators.

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<sup>1151</sup> Ibid, Rubin pg.33

Henceforth the problem of all life is to restrict the predators, regulate the rich and tax horders.

At the time of Da Vinci this very enlightened belief was not yet possible, though Leonardo came close to this, and saw things amazingly clearly for his time. Science was not yet the irreconcilable enemy of Christianity, but merely the logical unfolding of its inner motivation. Science unfolded from the impulse that rejected the Christ idea, on the one hand. Christianity had unfolded in opposition to the science of the Greek and Roman Empires, as we learn from Hypatia. Islam had preserved some of this rudimentary science and the Greek and Roman Classics. On the other hand, scientific domination of nature is a logical development of the Christian theory of knowledge, in some ways, though it is based on a rejection of religion. One cannot deny that the years of early science coincide with imperialism and colonial abuse of natives all over the world. But this is not the science that Leonardo envisioned. It is the science of Bacon and Descartes and their desire to torture nature into submission so that she gives up her secrets. But once Christian notions of human supremacy and misogyny against nature are abandoned, nature is no longer seen as less than humanity.

"The Word became flesh" is a symbolic statement which expresses a fundamental axiom of Christianity. If one translates this symbolic expression into what the words have actually meant as they were applied in history, then, the "Word" is the human will to knowledge and power sublimated into an image of the divinity of Christ. The "Word" is a mythical fiction, which does not actually exist except as an organizing idea. The "flesh", which is opposed to this fiction, is nature and matter, actual things: reality, men, women, rocks, water, eggs in nests and fish in the sea. Saying that Christ is nature is not a possible axiom in Christianity and so something had to go, and it was Christ's divinity that came into question. This happened by degrees, so the field of becoming or nature that science exploits to exalt man and gain power for him

would first have very human-centered exponents, as one find in Descartes and Bacon. These are power hungry men. Leonardo was already beyond them. The idea of the Intellect, which Christ was supposed to embody, was demythologized and made into another supreme principle, a fiction. When Christ was abandoned domination of the earth is the first impulse, unfortunately, but soon this leads to terrible injustices, so living with nature in a state of equal rights becomes more important. Leonardo already understood this, vaguely perhaps, around 1500. He grasped the danger of unfettered technical hubris and writes against it, over a hundred years long before Descartes is advocating for a totalizing science, nearly 500 years before the Atom Bomb is used and the scientist foolishly state that one "cannot hold back progress for fear of what the world will do with tits discoveries". It is not science that needs to be held back, but men in their greed and need of power.

"God became man in order that man could become God" Augustine had said. The first 1400 years of Christianity are Platonist and concern God, that is the Church, remaking man according to its image, its knowledge and its need of power. The second 600 or 700 years of western history concerns man trying to become God, at least virtually, through science. When Francis Bacon said that "knowledge is power" and that the scientists must "put nature to the rack and compel her to answer our questions" he was expressing consciously the will to total knowledge and power that had been latent in Christianity all along. Science fulfills the program of power and knowledge already symbolically indicated by Christ and Plato. The Christian concept of salvation becomes the scientific drive for total knowledge and power over the earth. The destructive abuse of nature by capitalism embodies the hatred of life and nature already present in Christianity. It has taken hundreds of years for this to be seriously questioned. For Descartes animals are still

nothing, as the Christians saw them, and incapable of true pain. Leonardo knew better, but no one was listening to him, but he understood what science is, just as potters understood it, and blacksmiths..

Christ was an image of man's purposes, and once the image was brought into question, the purpose of the image of Christ became clear. The symbolist universe of the Church used the Eucharist as the pivotal symbol around which it orchestrated a theory of knowledge into a system of social control. At first, science retained the presumption of intellectual supremacy that had been the basis of Plato and Christ and identified the intellect with matter directly, instead of through a mediating symbol, like the Eucharist. But as time develops, the supremacy of humanity comes to be questioned in Darwin and more seriously in recent decades, in ecology, biology and paleoanthropology. No one is a "master of the planet". Every species has its rights, and those who would harm species should be brought into question. There is still a long way to go, and the forces that created the ideology of human supremacy are very much still in play. Nature matters, and animals have rights too, and the notion of man as dictator goes the way of Christ as supreme judge—it was just another fiction on the road to appreciating the earth we live on. In the end it is matter itself, and living beings made of matter, that is lovable, and worth caring for.

To summarize all this as succinctly as possible; the Realist/Nominalist controversy had stripped the image of Christ and the Eucharist that symbolized him of their mythological dress, and the result of this was to reveal that the real motive behind the image of Christ was the will to power through knowledge. Thus released from the tyranny of the symbolic Christ, the belief of Renaissance man that he was the "measure of all things", followed naturally. Likewise the unmasking of the fundamental motive behind the Christian myth resulted in the Cartesian

Cogito, which signified that Man's reason was alone independent and the sine qua non of all knowledge and power and that nature was merely a mechanism that must be dominated, controlled and exploited by man. This is a very destructive view of science,-- in fact the origin or corporate science--- and one that takes some centuries to come into question. As Christ as symbol is seen less and less as supreme, Reason and the actual world become more important, but not all at once. The creation of an aristocratic Absolutism also resulted in a very cruel and autocratic science. The Eucharistic idea, thus literalized, was refashioned as the human reason which can "transubstantiate" matter through science to serve exclusively human purposes. These human purposes eventually themselves become overbearing to nature, species and the earth itself-- and must be humbled to allow nature and humans to avoid self-destruction by human hubris. Leonardo already anticipates Darwin and a better view of the world as an earth where each species and each physical process matters. Science after Darwin begins to open up into a less autocratic and more inclusive view of nature and other animals. Darwin, as well as the development of ecology, did a lot to mitigate the "man the measure" ideology of Descartes and Bacon.<sup>1152</sup>

Stretching it somewhat one could say that the equation of knowledge and power ceases to be symbolized in the Eucharist and begins to be actualized by the reason of men using mathematics as a means of dominating nature. In a certain sense the Eucharist evolves

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<sup>1152</sup> There is a close connection between scientific disinterestedness and the contemplative distance required by religious thought. This is evident in both Oppenheimer and the Inquisition, where this disinterest led to unspeakable horrors in both cases. Darwin initiated a notion of a more moral and ethical science which was not so removed from its source of study, and this is why he is an improvement over Bacon and Descartes. Leonardo had these concerns too, for similar reasons to Darwin. Bacon is preferable to Descartes however, because he at least advocates for an experimental and empirical inquiry, whereas Descartes suppresses experiment for arbitrary reason and derives his "truths" from an arbitrary reason and metaphysical gods. This leads him into many mistakes, as it would Chomsky more recently.

into mathematics. The symbol of the knowledge and power of the Church was the Eucharist; the symbol of the knowledge and power of science becomes mathematics. But eventually even math cannot embody everything and science ceases to be a tool of capital and must eventually become closer to what it studies, nature itself. . But this process is far from complete and many problems remain. One of the problems of science is its tendency to reduce everything to mathematical explication and forget evidence. Especially in the realm of sub atomic particles the math and reality get confused and it appears that some theories are more math based and have no basis in reality, string theory, for instance. This is a real danger and many people draw false conclusions about reality and origins of the universe based on faulty math and corporate science. <sup>1153</sup>

The problems of science are many, but they have to be addressed one at a time. Religion is certainly not going to answer anything. We have to work it out ourselves. The bulk of humanity is still either back in the dark ages or trying to enter into a period of questioning fictions. Human centeredness still reigns. Until that is brought into question globally, there will be serious injustices and continued extinctions. Nano tech, cell phones, quantum paradoxes will not save us. Bird's nests and Sea stars, Insects and Newts, just might,

It is important to realize that the mythological unmasking of the Christian myth released the Monarchy from its ambiguous tie to Christianity and allowed it to develop, eventually, into a nearly independent Absolutism, whose greatest excess would appear between reign of Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> and Napoleon. Then, after a short interlude between the demise of the Aristocratic state, the Old Regime was

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<sup>1153</sup> This is discussed at some length in Victor Stenger's the Folly of Faith. I am not sure if Stenger might be guilty of doing this sometimes himself.

replaced by the Corporate State. This was and still is very harmful. The Church itself was left to adopt and increasingly reactionary positions. It had to either try to shore itself against the ruins that it had unwittingly brought upon itself, or to adapt to science in ineffectual ways. This led the Church into an effort to impose its authority even as this authority was being seriously undermined. Figures like Savonarola, and his fanatical preaching of hell, his bonfire of the vanities, (destroying great works by Botticelli and others) and his megalomaniac attempt to restore the miraculous power of the Church, merely served to discredit the Church further. The condemning of Galileo, the Oath against modernism, the Inquisition were all part of this.

Throughout the later Middle Ages, the preaching of apocalyptic consequences reached increasingly hysterical levels of excess. The painting of Bosch, Breughel and the Isenheim Altarpiece of Grunewald indicate the apocalyptic fervor of a civilization in decline. Luther's attack on the corruption of the Sale of Indulgences was justified. The Praise of Folly by Erasmus indicates the degree to which the Church had failed to recognize the revolution which it had provoked. The "Folly" which the Church hated, was now being praised, however ironically. Its irony was lost on many who took it seriously as an endorsement of rebellion against the Church. The uprising of Protestantism was an attempt to preserve Christianity in accord with new developments in capitalism and the sciences, but even this was not very successful. The image of the mythic Christ as the cosmological exemplar of all knowledge and power had been seriously compromised. Humanism was ascendant, and mostly a force for the good, but committed grave injustices. Christ and the Eucharist would never again be regarded with the same credibility that had been possible with Augustine "the Hammer of the Donatists". The apogee of Catholic control of the world was under Pope Innocent III, the Pope of Inquisitorial tyranny, and after that Christianity declines. But this decline did not immediately make for a better system of power, far

from it. Science was liberated, but as the history of the airplane shows, once liberated, it is used more for killing than for good purposes. Just as Da Vinci feared, technical brilliance is used to drop bombs on cities and innocent people. Corporate personhood becomes the way to bring back the absolute authority of Kings and Popes and this depends on the abuse of science.

### **Galileo**

When one questions the Church's need to exterminate heretics it soon becomes clear that the heretical groups, by and large, were groups whose ideas were not in conformity with the Church or who questioned the knowledge system that supported the power of the Church. Galileo's 'heresy' amounted to a direct identification of the Christic "substance" with matter. This is the moment of transfer of authority from the Church. Many of these early 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries groups and individuals had ideas which are commonly accepted today. Science, democracy, communism, nationalism, free market economics, pluralism, relativism, historicism, evolutionary thinking, and many other modern tendencies have their origins or are partially derived from groups or individuals condemned by the Church. Such groups as the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Poor Men of Lyons, the Cathari, Puritans, Anabaptists and others. Later it was Oliver Cromwell's insurrection or the rising rebellion of Protestantism that brought King and Church into question.

Dutch capitalism, which was abusive in new ways, had a big influence both on art and trade, as well as the growth of science. The Eucharist was the supreme symbol of the Church's authority over life, death and the ultimate fate of souls and society. But once the Platonist-Realist view at the basis of the Eucharist was brought into question by the Nominalists, and science began to grow, new forms of authority and

justifications of knowledge systems and the power they confer came into play and be questioned themselves. The Eucharist was a Roman invention and one that was shrouded in the mythic projections of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Christ was himself an invention and one whereby a myth of the celestial being was fleshed out with historical fictions, called the “gospels”. But the fiction was eventually questioned, even if few could question the gospel stories themselves.

Perhaps the most important heretic, who in turn would become a martyr for the scientific program to seek control of society, was Galileo. Rubin observes in an interesting conclusion to her book that Wycliffe and Hus were allowed to criticize church wealth and the Pope, and were not condemned until they questioned the Eucharist. So likewise Luther was tolerated until he questioned the Eucharist. Rubin observes that it was Galileo's theory of atoms at " probably convinced the Holy Office that it was necessary to bring Galileo to trial for heresy". Galileo was condemned in 1520 because

"His corpuscular theory of physics threatened to change the way in which substance and accidents were related, and contradicted the Aristotelian foundations which were so necessary for the maintenance of the Eucharist as a mystery of Christ's body with the appearance of bread, Galileo's atomistic theory meant that the color taste, smell and heat, the accidents, were contained in tiny particles of substance which must remain, in the case of bread and wine, even after the consecration to produce the accidents of bread and this was obviously anathema.<sup>1154</sup>

Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition in 1615. Heliocentrism was decreed by the Church to be false and contrary to scripture, even

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<sup>1154</sup> Ibid.Rubin, pg.3g0

though it was obviously true. Books advocating the Copernican system were put on the index of banned books and forbid Galileo from advocating heliocentrism. He was tried by the Inquisition, found "vehemently suspect of heresy", was forced to recant, and spent the rest of his life under house arrest. And he was right. Galileo's heresy amounted to not just a declaration of the truth that the sun is the center of our solar system, but that he was guilty of a direct identification of the Christic substance with matter. Since, in fact, Christ himself was a fiction, there really was only matter and human efforts to grasp what matter is that was the real threat to the Church. Galileo was guilty of observation, curiosity and seeking evidence for the truth, all things the Church was opposed to. This is the moment of transfer from a medieval Christian society to a modern scientific society. The Church cannot be taken seriously after this.

The Church saw the nature of the threat much more clearly than did Galileo. But nevertheless, if one understands the symbolism involved here it is quite clear. Christ had been made by the Church into a symbol of the knowledge/power relationship, and had been identified first with the Platonic theory of knowledge and then with the Aristotelian theory of knowledge. The whole political and social apparatus or the Pre-scientific world depended on the Church not being questioned too closely about their myths and dogmas. Now, after Galileo, knowledge and power would become transferred from the otherworldly realm of Platonic symbols and Archetypes and the Aristotelian realm of forms and substances to direct identification of knowledge with man's consciousness and his ability to use the Cogito or Reason to study or exploit matter directly. People would have to choose studying matter, as Leonardo did or learn to exploit it like Descartes did in his vicious attitudes to animals or the Robber Barons, who stole what they did little to earn.

The relationship of God and man ceased to be a relationship of subservience and became a relation of identity. "God became man in

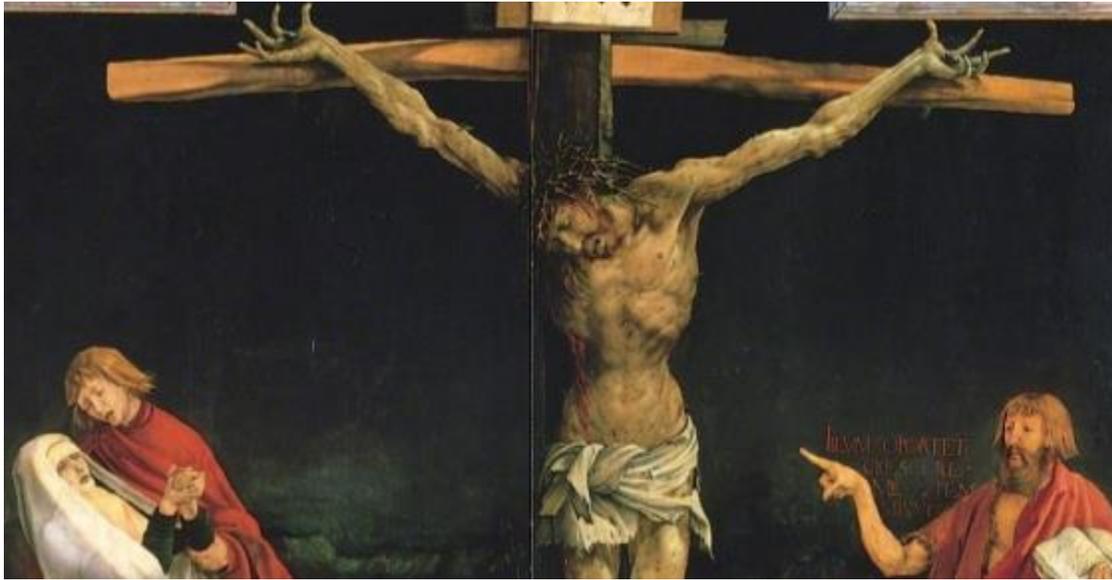
order that man would become God" Augustine had written, and with the advent of science, this Augustinian formula would come to be literalized into 'the power of man's reason entered into matter in order that matter could become man's reason', to paraphrase. In other words, the symbolism of the Eucharist would become literalized, and man, as a virtual God over nature, would be the sole power on earth, the "measure of all things". This is of course a euphoric and transcendentalist fiction of the early science promoters that man would be like a god. Newton and Oppenheimer certainly invoked godlike imagery. But that is not science, but myth making. One can see this split in Newton too, with his absurd alchemical theories pursued at the same time as he does some really great science. Even in a figure like Whitman there is this bizarre effort to create a transcendentalist Self at the same time as he writes some really amazing poems about being a human being on earth with nature all around him.

Science has slowly eroded Christianity and the Church. While science is the logical reaction against the Christian theory of knowledge, it leaves Christianity behind it. Yet science in its early years assumes its basic exaltation of the human over the merely natural.. The totalitarian power of the Church will become, over time, the totalitarian absolutism of kings and then the quasi divine injustice of the corporate and nationalist state, while the Church will decline and in some places nearly disappear, replaced by Protestant sects that are increasingly anti-scientific and on the wrong side of things.. On the worst level of change science adopted many of the unjust and arbitrary absolutism of the Kings and Popes it displaced. The sacrifice of Christ in the Crucifixion was a symbolic expression which denoted the Church's power over people. Once the Christ, now denatured as reason, became ascendant, the crucifixion of Christ, symbolized in the Eucharist also, would become the crucifixion of nature and the conquering of the earth. In short, power

corrupts and the corruption that made the Eucharist the ultimate symbol of power, now was expressed as a new form of injustice, the abuse of the global environment. It is really not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the abuses of early science come into question, in great thinkers like Thoreau or Darwin who begin to see that nature has been deeply harmed by the system of science as religions as vehicles of social power, both of them were horrified by the slave trade, especially.. It is not till the 20<sup>th</sup> that there are real rebellions against the abuses.

The paradox of the divine “Victim” who has power over life and death gives to the Crucifixion image a breadth that seems to cover all of life’s experience. The universality of the image creates assent to the image that seems to represent all power and meaning. The assent of believers in Christ is preconscious, visceral, and is repeated and reinforced each time one looks at the crucifixion image or takes communion wine and bread. Everything depends on the creation of mystagogy and ambiguity, as well as a personal address that this man was murdered for “you” and “you” eat his body and drink his blood to be absolved of the guilt for existing. The sophistication of the psychological strategy involved in this process of inculcating belief in Christ is enormous and compelling. I find it utterly repulsive now that I understand it, but I can see why many find it totally engrossing. It is this that allows Christianity to survive and promulgate itself. Looked at from a purely sociological point of view, the Crucifix is the most effective

propaganda or advertising image ever created.



Grunewald's Isenheim Altarpiece shows the medieval cosmic Christ finally broken down into a physical man suffering the worst of illness and wounds. He is utterly physical, suffering plague and leprosy, and fitted out to comfort victims of the plague, in a desperate attempt to keep power in the Church that had failed to do anything at all about the plague. It is the polar opposite of Justinian's 6<sup>th</sup> century, impersonal Pantocrator. The crucifixion image evokes sympathy and at the same time, guilt. The viewer is both the person who did this to this man, and the person who is "saved" by the torture of him. This dual creation of both guilt and gratefulness is a powerful strategy, really a kind of psychological blackmail, which was created to insure the obedience or followers as well as their guilt if they fall away". One is supposed to keep eating Christ's flesh and drink his blood to keep up the illusion of salvation. This manipulation of guilt, fear, taboo, and veneration is extraordinary advertising and helps sustain the power of those who exploit it. The writers who created this and the Churches who exploited it over many centuries deserve credit for the brilliance of their strategy,

even if they created one of the most exploitive mythologies the world has ever seen.

This is the absurd logic of myth, that things that in fact have no reality, start dictating things that have real consequences. It has always seemed absurd to me that the Christian apocalyptic idea would see the world destroyed, and even want it destroyed and that meant destroying utterly innocent forests, animals, ginkgo trees, sea slugs, planarians and polar bears. By what right did any “god” have to do that?. Christ was a symbol of man's power through knowledge over matter, the Churchmen thought, but the Church had really failed by Leonardo’s time. science developed the power of inquiry into a new supremacy of human consciousness over the material world. But then Darwin showed that somehow we are all equal and real science is not about supremacy at all, but understanding and compassion. What was lost in the transfer from Church power to the power of science was the anthropomorphic symbolism of Christ and all the stories that go with it. Then what was lost when Darwin came along was the hubris of Descartes and Bacon about the conquest of nature. The myth of human supremacy over matter remains in corporate science; corporations think they are gods now, rebirthing the Christ myth, and all that has changed is the symbolism-, from Kuala Lumpur to Dubai, to London and New York, where once stood cathedrals and temples now ‘transcendent’ corporate towers lord over cities all over the earth.

In other words, just as the Church kept its power over people by threatening apocalyptic consequences, so in our society the apocalyptic threats become concrete in the nuclear ,environmental and genetic threats. Species all over the earth are becoming extinct. The will to power through knowledge, the missionary expansionism, the apocalyptic fervor to reach perfect otherworldly truth--- these are aspects of science that are held over from Christianity but actually negated by science itself

since Darwin. But as Darwin showed, these are questionable things, science does not point toward supremacy but towards living with all species on earth. Darwin does not point towards man acting as a god, but men being men and women and being good to the world they share with other species. In the end, Corporate Personhood is as bogus and mythical as the Three Persons or as Christ and the Eucharist are. In the end we have to learn to live on the planet where we live and be skeptical of generalized abstract concepts made into powers and ideologies of supremacy. Abstractions of this kind are really misunderstanding of language and they reek social havoc. Corporations do not have the right to engineer animal DNA to make creatures that serve corporate whims. They are not gods, even if they act as arbitrary as the gods once did.

The locus of the knowledge/power relationship changed from Christ as otherworldly 'archetype', to Christ as substance, and finally to Christ disappearing and replaced with science and evidence as the source of knowledge of the world. Science is right Science was initially a power play, and had many questionable features. The accidental consciences of individuals living in a world ruled by science and not the Church is what matters in the world now. The Realist/Nominalist controversy had relaxed into the Renaissance. A thinker like Machiavelli represents the will to power of a scientific and Christian civilization that is now shorn of the image of Christ and the control of the Church.<sup>1155</sup> Robespierre's effort to set up an altar to Reason in the Cathedral of Notre Dame during the French Revolution indicates how far this process would go eventually. Just as the Church killed the name of god, some men, like Robespierre, started killing in the name of reason. Man himself, a "Cogitans", 'a thing that thinks' as Descartes called him, was taking upon himself the quasi-divine function of the Pontifex, the

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<sup>1155</sup> Though I suspect that Machiavelli was actually writing a satire in the Prince, -- though this satire is lost on those who push "Realpolitique".

bridge between heaven and earth.

But in the end that collapses too and Man, it seemed, could pretend to make a heaven of himself in his own world, and did not need the Church to act as a bridge and intermediary. When Marx finally declares that "Man is God for Man", the logical development of Christianity is completed. The paradox enunciated at the Council of Chalcedon, that Christ is "true man and true god", is finally explored to its logical conclusion in Marx, who in certain respects is the last Scholastic or perhaps the last true Catholic. After that is Darwin and the idea that humanity is not alone and we have to uphold our material and ecological world in one piece and honor all beings as our equals. There is no excuse to use abstractions like God, Reason, the State or Corporate Man, as a killing mechanism anymore. This is not easy and has scarcely begun as a process to be accepted in earnest, as most of us still live in the mythical past, clinging to illusions that are not true. But there is reason to look forward to a world where species are protected and humans are better to each other and gods and Robber Barons are gone.

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## **6. The Eucharist Spiritual Cannibalism and the Development of Corporate Capitalism.**

In conclusion, I was brought up a Catholic, at least until I was 11, when I was told by my parents I could leave the church if I wished. I did and did not return to it till I was nearly 30. I spent a few years as a Christian in my 30's. I'm glad to have had the opportunity to examine Christianity and its transition into science. I began to have doubts about the Eucharist years ago, and I am now certain that my doubts are reasonably founded. Christ was a myth, like the Greek Gods. I doubt I will ever be able to consider myself a Christian again. I am an atheist, though I do not much like that term. But I do not therefore abnegate

questions and mysteries, I just do not claim ultimate answers. I accept no gods. I reject the gnostic devaluation of the cosmos that is found in nearly all the religions. Darwinian science is a beginning to understand our earth and who we are within it.

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Rubin's book concludes with a speculation on the relation of cannibalism to Christianity which is psychologically profound and surprising. Speaking of the ambiguity of the Eucharist and the fact that it involved the eating of Christ's body, the body of a man who was supposed to be god, she observes:

"We know too little about the inner workings of minds to be able to assess the impact of the invocation of the taboo of eating human flesh, the fears and desires related to it. But what we can assert is by combining the most holy with the most aberrant/abhorrent- the routine workings of sacramental power- an image of the fullness of live-giving which dwells in the image of utmost transgression- a very powerful symbol was created, as awesome as it was promising. In the elaboration of the perfectly orthodox tales of Eucharistic miracles in which flesh stuck to the believers throats, in which a child appeared in a host poised for the priest's conception, transgression of taboo was sanctioned in limited areas. This area of the symbolic gave the occasion for playing with things dangerous, and going away from them unscathed." <sup>1156</sup>

Once the symbolist mentality is understood, the need of such abhorrent rites disappears. The subject of cannibalism has only recently

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<sup>1156</sup> Ibid. Rubin pg.36

been broached by anthropologists. But it would seem that the popular conception of what was involved in such actions is quite mistaken and involved more with fear and projection than with fact. Most cannibalistic actions appear not to have been motivated by a bestial desire to eat human flesh resulting from an imagined psychopathic or primitive mentality, but by the desire of a member of a tribe to assimilate the spiritual power or physical prowess of an enemy or relative that had died. The cannibalistic act is, as it were, the reverse of the act of offering human sacrifices. These are magical operations which require the superstitious belief in the spiritual possibility that the god requires food to eat and can assimilate the offered victim spiritually even though the actual creature sacrificed is burned or eaten by the priest offering the victim. The Christian Eucharistic ceremony, the Mass, is indeed cannibalistic in this sense, that is, it is the reverse of the sacrifice of Christ. The purpose of the Christian ritual, like 'primitive' cannibalistic rituals, is to assimilate the power and knowledge of the victim. This is obvious and undeniable. The moral abhorrence of this act is denied by Christians, even to their own awareness, because the promised benefits of eating the body and blood of Christ fare outweigh any moral scruple or repulsion for such an act. In the minds of Christians union with the imaged god and the promise of eternal life. Being one of the chosen elite matters far more than drinking human blood or eating human flesh. This is a kind of spiritual blackmail. In compensation for overlooking the immoral act of the eating of Christ's flesh the communicant receives the promise of a deified body in heaven, and the abhorrence for the actual act of the eating of flesh then becomes projected onto the human body and nature, considered in their materiality. The Christian associates the body with sin and sin with physicality and the natural. From this arises the usual Christian concern with guilt and punishment, particularly addressed against women, who are thought to be closer to nature and closer to the physical than men..

The ambiguity of eating the body of Christ combined with an attitude of holding the world as a place of sin and sacrifice results from the Christian theory of knowledge, which places the locus of knowledge beyond the world, and virtually deifies human consciousness insofar as this consciousness is conformed to the Christian paradigm. It is this which gives Christianity its attitude towards the world as a place of sacrificial violence, symbolized both in the Crucifixion and the apocalyptic expectation. Such attitudes towards nature and the world are toxic and delusional, creating a hatred of nature that is hardly “evolutionary”.

What is involved in the Christian rite is a complex arrangement of symbolic and literal factors which seek to impose a mentality and thereby a knowledge system, and this is accomplished by being made of both the most exalted symbolisms and the most morally abhorrent actions committed by the communicant at the same time. The paradoxical involvement in the simultaneous partaking of the exalted and the abhorrent in one act of eating creates loyalty, hope, and for some even contemplative exhalation. It is this act, a cultic act if ever there was one, which gives Christianity its peculiar power, and this which the Church exploited for a thousand years in building its empire. It is a powerful form of initiation, in that it encourages people to regularly commit a morally reprehensive act but covers over the act in beatific promises and claims that those who do this will be among the chosen, the special, the exceptional the saved. Those how have not indulged in eating flesh and drinking blood are the damned. Such a strategy might resemble a cruel fraternity house initiation ceremony, but in fact, the Eucharist was much more dangerous and fatal than any such college trick. Millions of people have died because of the power of the Church. The same is true of corporate power, which uses the idea of the Corporate Person as an abstraction to take form others untold wealth.

Dismantling these absurd magnified abstractions is thus a real possibility and within our reach if we wish to do it.

Rubin, unfortunately, does not follow out any of these conclusions, nor does she seem to see that power is not the principle purpose of the Eucharist. The Eucharist confers power because it represents a system of knowledge. In the scientific world the Eucharist is roughly equivalent to the consciousness of the scientist, who works through mathematical symbolizations to achieve knowledge and power. What I mean is that both the Eucharist and Math are epistemological constructions. They are equivalent only in that they are both used to acquire power over something, and both have mental constructs at their root. The church rituals and sacraments, in general, are roughly equivalent to the scientific method, which is to say that they function to establish credibility and to delineate the field of what is considered useful knowledge about the world. Of course, these are just analogies, and saying that Christ ascended into heaven is not at all the same as saying the electrical currents are often circular. Like the memes, which are also superficial constructions, analogies between science making and religion making are basically specious. What Rubin does not question, and it seems to me the central question, is why human consciousness, conceived in either scientific or Christian terms, should be considered either sacrosanct or supreme. When Erwin Schrodinger said, if I recall correctly, that the thinking ego does not appear in the scientific world picture because it is that picture, he was describing the immersion of human consciousness in matter, as a means of learning how things work. But he is mistaken in that science at its best is not merely ego, it is fact based on real observation and experiment. Religion tells us nothing about how things work, it keeps us in the dark, cowering before gods that do not exist. Science is not an abstract ideology and thus is

best used to create fairness and equity in social relations and between nature and humans.

We have to look into the roots of capitalism to see what the Eucharist is really about. cannibalism as an example of a complex concept or practice that is used to justify a will to power through a knowledge system: one comes across references in Marxist writings to capitalism described as a system of cannibalistic economic practices. Why is this? There is the purely historical reason that Marxism has affinities with an historical development of gnostic "heresies" that developed alongside Christianity, and that some of these heretical ideas held that Christianity was a cannibalistic sect. Charges of cannibalism would later be leveled at Christianity from Islam as well. But be this as it may, the relation of communism to Christianity is a close one, though neither most Marxists or Christians are prepared to admit the many affinities between the two millennialist ideologies. Hegel's delusions of being a manifestation of the Christic Logos, and the influence of this presumptive totalism on Marx is pertinent, because communism, like Christianity and capitalism became a system of power/knowledge that depended on force and violence to assert its claim to legitimacy. Initially, Marxism, like Christianity, was a marginal cult, and from a cult it turns into a state religion, gaining power, claiming to be a totality of knowing, a way of living, with systems to punish those who did not conform.

In any case, criticisms of the Christian Eucharistic rite as a cannibalistic rite go back to the first centuries after Christ. But a historical analysis sidesteps the fact that the charge of cannibalism is often used by many different peoples as general term for moral depravity of a supposed enemy's inhumanity. Christians charge "savages" with cannibalism, Islam charges Christianity with cannibalism; communism

charges capitalism with cannibalism, anthropologists charge Neanderthals with cannibalism.. All these charges may contain an element of truth, but mostly there they are efforts to justify the will to power and conquest of one system of knowledge/power against an enemy.

There is a certain truth to the Marxist claim against capitalism insofar as capitalism does indeed devour, metaphorically speaking, that which or those whom it uses to secure profits and power. The profit motive has devoured whole peoples and landscapes, as happens now in the Amazon jungles, or happened before, in Vietnam, or Africa, enslaving populations or resulting in atrocities. It is literally true that capitalism, devoured the substance of Native American tribes, and gobbled up the lands of these peoples and left mangled corpses and ruined animal populations behind them, Bison largely gone, Pronghorn Antelope gone, and now the Saiga largely killed off by the Chinese . In our time Insurance companies farm the sick and dying in hospitals and exploit their money for health care, just as coal companies devour the earth and spew chemicals and acids into creeks.

But on the other hand, when one looks at the Christian missionaries in the 15th to 19th centuries, one finds frequent efforts to accuse tribes in Africa, the South Seas or the Americas of cannibalism. Here the concept of cannibalism is a political hyperbole used to discredit a people or an ideology and thereby sanction a just war, aggression or exploitation against them. There were occasionally tribes that were cannibalistic, but very few. Thus, for a Native American to say that capitalists and Christians cannibalized their culture and lands has a certain truth to it, though the expression is not exactly accurate. But for the European who looked at all American tribes as cannibals, this was not just hyperbole but in nearly all cases a racist lie. The charge of cannibalism, like the charge that such and such a people are "evil", as when Reagan called the

Soviet State an "evil empire", is almost always an excuse for aggression. If one can reduce a people or population to "otherness" such that they become a "them", and thereby non-human, savage or evil, then murder, exploitation is sanctioned, The Nazi treatment of Jews was a sort of cannibalism, even to the point of making lampshades of their skin is a particularly gruesome example of the ideological alienation of the "other". This is ironic given the need of Europeans during Shakespeare's times to see Jews as "Shylocks who wanted their "pound of flesh". Marxism itself, in its Stalinist form, was also cannibalistic in this metaphorical sense, insofar as it eliminated or murdered whole sectors of its own population, while, at the same time, Stalinist propaganda used the concept of cannibalistic capitalism to justify aggression and war against capitalist nations.

In discussions about what is evil, or what is cannibalism, therefore, one is not so much talking about a literal event, but about a context, and the meaning of a concept within a set of complex circumstances. Evil, I think, does not exist as a reality in itself; that is, there is no metaphysical agent of destruction, no devil, no satanic reality. There are only acts of malice and destruction caused by societies and individuals. Just as the notion of "Limited Liability Company(LLC) is used by corporations to exclude their boards and CEOs from the unpleasant fact that they are in fact responsible for corporate abuses, so likewise, in a reverse way, is cannibalism used by unjust states and churches to blacklist its enemies. So likewise, with rare exceptions for survival, cannibalism is above all a symbolic practice, which orchestrates social motives; only incidentally is it an actual eating of flesh.

So, I am saying that there are two kinds of cannibalism, literal and symbolic. There is actual cannibalism. Cannibalism was practiced among the Hua of New Guinea, the Aztec or Iroquois. Then there is there

is symbolic cannibalism, such as occurs in the Christian Eucharistic ritual. But this distinction between actual and symbolic cannibalism explains very little. Regarding literal cannibalism Peggy Sanday, in her study Divine Hunger observes:

"More than just a reaction to external conditions cannibalism is a tangible symbol that is part of a system of symbols and ritual acts that predicate consciousness in the formulation of the social other and reproduce consciousness in the ritual domination and control of the social other. Where domination and control are subordinate to accommodation and integration, cannibalism is absent, regardless of the nature of the food supply" <sup>1157</sup>

In other words, food supply has very little to do with cannibalism; except in rare cases such as the Donner party, the late Neanderthals or in the Nazi camps where desperate people ate other people so they themselves could survive. But where cannibalism does occur in tribal cultures it is symbolic action, sometimes literal and sometimes not, whose purpose is to orchestrate social motivations, to control behavior and assert power. Literal cannibalism is as much an effort to impose a consciousness or a knowledge system as is symbolic cannibalism. Indeed, symbolic cannibalism, as occurs in the Eucharist in Christianity, may be far more enduring and ultimately destructive than literal cannibalism. The object of the devouring of other human beings is power, and not nourishment. 'Take and eat this wafer and you will be superior to all others', is the message.

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<sup>1157</sup> 2. Sanday, Peggy. Divine Hunger Cambridge University Press, 1986. pg.26

Power is defined as the ability to derive benefits and to confer sanctions or punishments for or against others. Cannibalistic actions, even in the symbolic form of the Christian Eucharistic ritual, fulfill this definition of power. The eating of the flesh and the drinking of the blood of Christ, is supposed to join the soul of the recipient to the substance of the body and blood of Christ. Since Christ represents a supernatural world, or "heaven" that is separated from this world, and access to this other world is possible only through the Eucharistic rite, the administrators of the ritual have power over the accessibility of the postulants to salvation, or failing this, to damnation. In other words, a standard of legitimate knowledge is imposed, represented by the body of Christ, and this standard acts a medium through which social conformity can be exacted and punishments against those who do not conform can be threatened and executed. The tortures of heretics by priests over the centuries, exceeds even the violent torture of victims by the Hua or the Iroquois. The Eucharist is thus primarily about creating the "other" who is not Christian, and thus holding oneself up as superior or supreme over others. It is a rite of political domination.

In other words, cannibalism is not about dietary nourishment, but about the maintenance of a social system and the imposition of a system of knowledge and cultural values. Even among the Aztecs, who, some claim, practiced cannibalism and human sacrifice in order to compensate for meat shortages, the material, dietary cause appears to have been incidental, or at most a convenient by-product. The principle reason for sacrificial blood rites among the Aztecs, seems to have been the maintenance of the metaphysical and cosmological system that upheld the hierarchical social order of the Aztec elite. It was a political act, like the Eucharistic rite. The Aztecs believed that the universe depended upon the blood of the sacrificed victims just as Christians believe that the universe began and will end in relation to the body and

blood of Christ. The violence of Aztec civilization was directed against smaller tribes considered to be enemies of the empire. Likewise, Christian civilization was spread by colonial violence, all over the world. "He that is not with me is against me"<sup>1158</sup> and "Go ye into all the world and preach ye the Gospel to every creature"<sup>1159</sup> are two of the many sentences of Christ that justified the violence and rapaciousness of Christian colonialist practices. Christ said he did not come to bring peace "but a sword", to divide "brother against brother", and indeed he did so, as two thousand years of bloody Christian wars and conquests demonstrate. Christ is a myth and the rite in which people symbolically drink his blood and eat his body is really a political act. The hypocrisy of the Conquistadores, whose own Eucharistic rite was symbolically cannibalistic, could hardly condemn native American practices when their own practices were as bad or worse.

The symbolic cannibalism of the Christian rite thus follows the same pattern of sacrificial and cannibalistic rites in many cultures. In order to preserve the power and values of the status quo, in a given society, sacrificial violence must be brought against those who live outside the society. Or, in the case of mortuary cannibalism, the dead of one's own people must be eaten, to preserve the power of tribal values against the ravages of time and bodily mortality. Among the Hua, of New Guinea, for instance, mortuary cannibalism serves to assimilate the spirits of the dead back into the living, as well as to preserve an elaborate reciprocity of balance and submission among power relationships between males and females. The devouring of dead males by females, the Hua believe, insures the tribe of regeneration.

The eating of the body of Christ has a similar, though much more universal function. The body of Christ is supposed to represent the

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<sup>1158</sup> Matthew, 12.30

<sup>1159</sup> Mark, 16.20

"truth". This "truth" is a totalistic abstraction which relativizes actual human bodies, and thereby reduces them to the inferior status of "flesh". The domination of "flesh" by the fictional idea of "spirit" then becomes a means of an apocalyptic effort at world domination and the domination of nature. The abstract and imaginary 'truth' of Christ becomes the means by which the flesh of nature and unbelieving infidels and savages are to be dominated. In other words, the price of salvation, in the Christian universe, is the crucifixion of the natural world, and this crucifixion solidifies the benefits which accrue to those who embrace the Christian ideal. Capitalism, as the fruit of Christian culture, joins with an abuse of science to "eat" the earth and give it to the rich. Destruction of other cultures as well as environmental destruction is built into the Christian model of the universe.

Or, to express this in yet a different way: The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ sets up an intangible and abstract ideal as the criterion of the ultimately knowable. This ideal makes of all actual reality, the "world" in Christian parlance, a reality that is lesser, and therefore dispensable. The truth is the opposite. The eating of the sacrificial victim in the form of the body of Christ becomes the principle means of participating in the non-existing and abstract reality that has been posited by Christ's sacrifice. The cruelty of the crucifixion is thus displaced and projected upon the world by the symbolic cannibalism of the Eucharistic ingestion of the fictional Christ's blood and body. Christ justifies this in the following statement "the world has tribulations, but be of good cheer because I have overcome the world".<sup>1160</sup> The price of Christ's crucifixion, in other words is paid for in worldly "tribulation", and Christ's victory is attained at the cost of those who live in the actual and ordinary, day to day world, far beneath the sublime abstractions of the "truth" of the Transfiguration and the sublimity of the "kingdom of

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<sup>1160</sup> John. 16.33

heaven". Nature and people must pay the price of the fiction of Christ. We get nothing in return, the whole play is set up to benefit those in power. Or to put this somewhat differently, the Christ image was a symbol of a mentality and state control, and as this became normalized in early science, the brutality of the human centered and transcendent viewpoint became an excuse and justification for conquest and murder, environmental rape and wars.

There is a huge difference between the imaginary, abstract, supernatural world, posited by the religions, and the actual world that we live in. The imaginary distinction of an eternal, supernatural world and an actual temporal world serves a social purpose by allowing the imposition of a legitimizing consciousness. This legitimizing consciousness is a political construction which imposes conformity and punishes deviation and by this means, it preserves power and control over a society. The human body inevitably becomes the theatre in which systems of knowledge play out their cruelties and their drives for supremacy. It need not be this way, but for most of human history this is how it has been. To say this is an inevitable fact of nature is to misread nature. The Eucharistic rite is a piece of fiction meant to create power for some at the expense of others. The myth is not actually needed and can be easily avoided. Once one understands how it functions in our social order, it is easy to distance oneself from it.

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Weber's thesis in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, that the Protestant rebellion of the Puritans and Calvinists was the origin of capitalism, while accurate in many respects, seems shortsighted. The words of Christ himself already imply a capitalist view of the world. The whole notion of original sin and the necessity of salvation implies a fictional debt to God, and therefore the entire

Christian world view is conditioned by notions of debt and payment. The parable of the Talents, the notion of gathering abstract or "heavenly" treasures, the pearl of great price, the "wages of sin" and the payment in suffering for the debt of the flesh of the Crucified-- these are all economic concepts, however they may be couched in metaphysical and symbolic language. One must pay for original sin, for sin in general, for existing. This is why Christianity trades in guilt. It wants to create an ontological debt which is infinite, so one must spend ones whole life paying it back. "The poor we always have with us" states a particularly cruel Christ, perhaps an anti-union Republican who hates immigrants. Did Jesus not understand his own pronouncement that the rich are camels who cannot get though the eye of a needle?.

One can trace an historical evolution, for instance, from the Church's sale of Indulgences, or spiritual insurances, as it were, to lighten the posthumous suffering of sinners, to the development of Insurance companies insuring slave and merchant ships that went to exploit the colonies and export Christian values to the New World.<sup>1161</sup> It is not far from slave ships owned and operated by Christians to the development of the modern insurance company with its entirely secular and capitalist exploitation for profit of fear, risk, sickness and death.

The capitalistic system of power and knowledge makes literal what was already virtual in the words of Christ. One can trace the origins of both capitalism and modern science to the Nominalist/Realist controversies of the 12th to 14th centuries. The Doctrine of Transubstantiation literalized the eating of Christ's flesh and drinking his blood. This makes the Eucharistic rite a literal act of cannibalism,

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<sup>1161</sup> Many insurance companies were involved in slavery. Indeed, the insurance system was partly created to facilitate the slave trade and write off its losses. JMW Turner already condemned this in his great painting of slaves thrown off the ship called the Zong in an effort to collect insurance. Aetna was involved in slavery, for instance. There has yet to be a thorough accounting of just how bad these companies are and how much damage they have done. This is hampered by the companies themselves, who have destroyed many records or keep them inaccessible.

however symbolic it may seem to be. In this rite one enters into a compact with the abstract world represented by the heavenly body of Christ, and therefore the actual world becomes a place of 'gross physicality', in Christian parlance, which must be radically transformed through knowledge. The world becomes a place to be dominated through man's knowledge, made in the image of Christ. This domination requires that nature be "transubstantiated" into man's understanding of it, Christianity, capitalism and science (abused for capitalist purposes) orchestrate a system of knowledge that confers power, and this power depends upon the ability to exploit nature and other cultures and people by transforming them into the image of Western man's desires. The cannibalistic act of the Eucharistic rite thus becomes the domination of nature and other cultures by Western man. The destruction of nature and other cultures follows from this ideology put into action. The Crucifixion likewise becomes literalized as the rape of nature. The exact process whereby the Eucharistic symbol and practice forged a mentality that eventually became capitalism, communism and science would have to be documented and explored in more detail, But the intent of this paper is speculative rather than documentary.

It is clear in any case, that cannibalism, symbolic or literal, is primarily a practice or a symbolic means of attaining power and of imposing a system of knowledge and control. The sublimated cannibalism that is practiced in a secular world of science and capitalism is not less horrible than that of the Aztecs. In fact, the capitalist and communist preying upon other peoples and cultures may be more horrible and stemming from a deeper hypocrisy than the more blatantly brutal cannibal cultures of the past. A recent case of this, in the early 1990's was the case of Jeffery Daumer, who murdered 17 boys and ate some of them. It is not without significance, for instance, that Jeffery Daumer's father describes himself in a recent book as someone who

buried himself in a scientific chemical laboratory because he found the world of human beings repugnant and chaotic.<sup>1162</sup>

A counter example to the case of Dahmer,<sup>1163</sup> who internalized both Christian and capitalistic suggestions of cannibalistic consumption and ideology, is the case of the Haitian poet René Depestre. Depestre, in his great poem "Rainbow for the Christian West", rejects the devouring qualities of capitalism and Christianity and stands up for himself as a man independent of these ideological systems of knowledge and power. For instance, here is a stanza from his great poem, where he rejects the Christianity that did so much harm to his beloved Haiti....

I do not remain seated under a tree  
The little Christ who was smiling in me  
Last night I drowned him in alcohol  
Likewise I drowned the Tablets of the Law  
Likewise I drowned all your sacred sacraments  
My collection of butterflies are monsters  
That you loosed on my black man's dreams  
Monsters of Birmingham monsters of Pretoria

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<sup>1162</sup> Science is not about an escape from reality at all. He misunderstood what science is, at its best. It is a celebration of existence and nature, not its denial. Systems of knowledge and power, like Christianity, posit a world of "truth" that is divorced from this world, and this world inevitably suffers from the divorce. <sup>1162</sup> Dahmer was a product of the psychology of rapacious capitalism, not too different than the CEO who expects unearned profits.

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<sup>1163</sup> Indeed, the Daumer case typifies not only aspects of primitive cannibalistic rites, but also destructive and devouring aspects of Christian and capitalist civilization. The Daumer case is a gruesome reminder of the destructive capacity of the will to power through religion. Whether one looks at cannibalism as practiced by the Hua, the Aztecs, Christians, or Jeffery Daumer, the constant that emerges is the will to power through ideology and the effort to legitimize this will to power. The concept of evil does not arise in this inquiry because labeling something evil, while perhaps useful in expressing moral outrage, does not lead one closer to understanding and thereby possibly preventing the destructive actions such as violence, war and virtual cannibalism of the sot practiced by corporate culture and states.

I collect your hysterias  
I collect your pale spirochetes  
I devote myself to the stamp collecting of your cowardly acts

Here I am a brand new Black  
I finally feel that I am myself  
In my new solar geography  
Me in the great joy of saying good-bye  
To your ten commandments of God  
To your hypocrisies of your bloody rites  
To the brewing of your scandals!  
Me in this fire of my veins  
Who has never prayed  
Me in this radium of my color  
Who has never bent the knee  
Me in this royal tree of my blood  
Who has never turned towards the West  
Leaves of submission  
Me in the geometry of my lions  
Me in the violence of my diamond  
Me in the purity of my crystal  
Me in the gaiety of rekindling life

For Depestre then, and for us too, it is possible to escape from the domination of a devouring and destructive capitalist, communist or Christian culture. “ I finally feel that I am myself”, he says. This is a great achievement. I remember feeling that in my early forties and I have not forgotten that. My education finally made me mostly free of the web of chains that kept my thought in thrall to powers. Nature is its own, animals belong to themselves, evolution is about beauty, a terrible

beauty that liberates us and denies killing and injustice, greed and the pursuit of a destructive power. The system that created wage slavery was a capitalist and unjust system that cannot be sustained. Depestre did not know it , but this freedom to be oneself, within the limits of nature, is what evolution is all about. Darwin understood this. Though one must still beware of becoming enslaved in yet another systems of symbols or powers. We need not live inside the enclosing envelope of symbols and systems of knowledge imposed upon us without real evidence. It would seem that this poetry of resistance is indeed one place to where a new Anthropology that does not serve the domination of exploitive knowledge systems might begin. Science is a celebration of life, not an excuse to exploit others or rape the earth.

Peggy Sanday observes in the earlier cited quote that "where domination and control are subservient to accommodation and integration, cannibalism is absent". The question then becomes: how is it possible to limit or the will to dominance and power. How do we oppose systems of knowledge that abuse and cause harms? How do we honor nature in our political arrangements such that we do not exterminate and exploit nature beyond its means and survival? Is there a way of knowing that does not assert power and which leads to "accommodation and integration", that eliminates extinctions, factory farms and hunting for pleasure, eliminates the Pharmaceutical industries and the sources of pollution and the historiography of conquest and oppression?. I do not yet know how to answer this question. But it seems to me that a truly useful Anthropology would begin with this question.

The relation of systems of knowledge and power to violence, ecological disaster, genocide and other aspects of history are almost still largely denied or unexplored. This is because we live in a Christian and

scientific society which resists questions about its own drive for knowledge and power, and poor people, animals, plants, the earth itself are “externalities” meaning they do not rate as part of the system of capital exchange. Science needs to take other species and the earth itself into account, beginning at the “bottom” with ocean plankton and going along the web or nature strand by strand and restoring life to an equitable balance. Nature is still seen as an infinite resource which the rich can take and take more from with no consequence to them. This is no longer tenable. Every being needs to love, not just the rich and those who take must give back. The ordinary Christian is unaware of living inside a system of knowledge and power which is mythological or "paradigmatic". Systems of knowledge and power are self-sustaining and self-reflective parameters of belief, which are very difficult to question because such systems conflate reality with their own view of the world. Science often goes outside such parameters, as Leonardo knew. Questions that fall outside the knowledge/power paradigm are resisted by religions, sometimes with violence. Questions about the Eucharist were resisted in this way. Questions about science and its social responsibility are often encouraged in contrast and that is a good thing.

The process by which human consciousness makes itself transcendental and thereby creates symbols, like Christ of Corporate Persons, is somewhat more clear. More research is needed to show how the myth of the Eucharist got invented. As I said at the beginning, I think that the Eucharistic myth is an inversion of the Osiris/Ammit myth of Egypt, where the god eats souls. Christ was eaten so as to create souls who would be owned by his ideology, “saved” was the word the myth uses. But Christian salvation is merely another form of enslavement. Indeed the creation of the myth of Christ or Muhammad is shrouded in mystery and deliberately so. But it is not hard to unravel it. I understand the act of self-magnification that is involved in the early years before

Jesus and Muhammad enter the world stage.. But exactly how the eucharist rite was created and by whom is unknown, It certainly as a brilliant creative burst to create a myth that would enthrall people for centuries. But to understand systems of knowledge and how they generate power would require more research into the nature and role of consciousness, symbolization, power and violence. In the case of the Eucharist we know how it was used, and that goes quite far in showing that it was created to be used as a social tool of manipulation and adherence. There is no 'original Christianity, there is only the process of the development of a system of make believe, reinvented each generation to insure that the system of injustice be maintained. It enabled Christians and capitalists to treat the whole world as another to be conquered and devoured

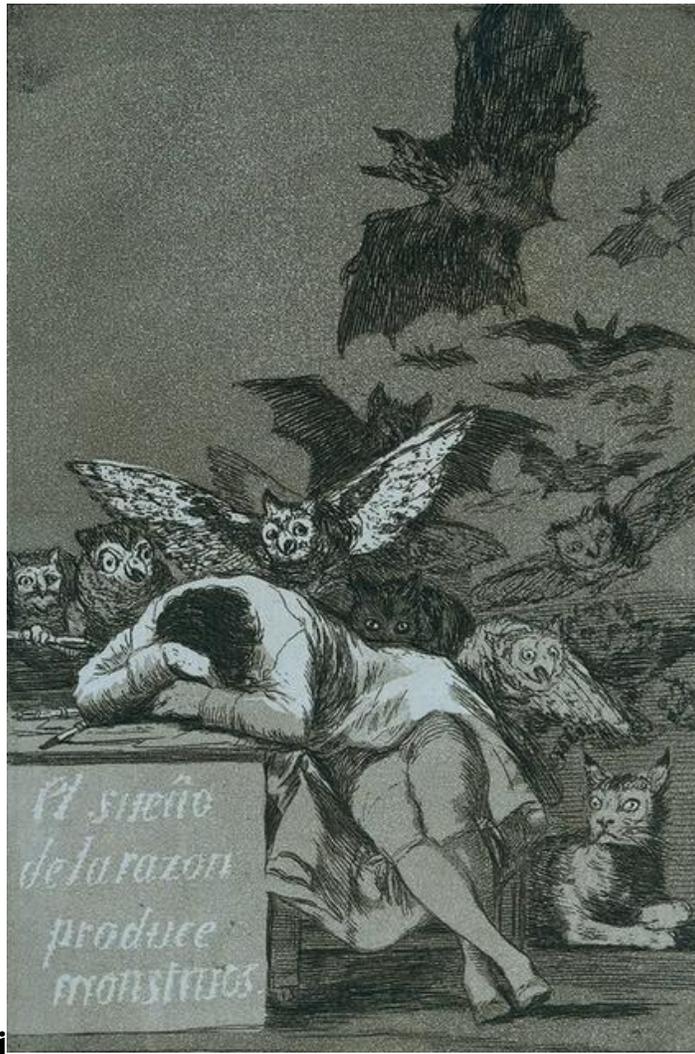
Finally, once the basic Christian theory of knowledge and power became sublimated into the scientific world view, the cannibalistic aspect of the Christian ritual was literalized into a form of inquiry that encouraged an attitude towards the earth and the earthly that was rapacious and devouring, "inquisitorial" to be precise. The Eucharist is primarily about the physical assimilation, through eating, of knowledge and power. The Christian model and ritual ceases to be a symbolic action and becomes secularized as a devouring of the earth and of nature in Christian capitalism in order that man might exalt himself. But thinkers like Darwin and others largely removed the rapacious scientism of Descartes and Bacon and point to a science that values the earth and nature and does not see it as an "other" to be devoured. The system of rights denying injustice begins to become undone with Darwin. Science must progress towards further integration of all life on earth. This is conclusion that is indicated by the history. This follows from the arguments I have made throughout this essay and is supported by much historical evidence. This is obviously not very favorable to Christianity or

capitalism. But my purpose here is to try to examine the historical record as honestly and as accurately as I can and I do this neither as Christian or a capitalist, but as one who wishes to examine the effects of systems of knowledge and power in the belief that human beings and the natural world deserve to be free of coercive and authoritarian impositions, be these religious, economic, political or otherwise.

**On Those Who Hate Science and Reason:**  
**Anti-Science and Irrationalism in Guenon, Wolfgang Smith and other**  
**Creationist Reactionaries.**

“Faith is believing what you  
know just ain’t so”—Mark  
Twain

“Don’t let it get you down, its  
only castles burning”--- Neil  
Young



**Francisco de Goya,  
"The Sleep of reason Produces Monsters" (1799)**

This essay is in eight parts as follows

1.Science verses Religion in History

2. Reality is not a Construction

3.Science defeats Fundamentalism and Traditionalism

4.Corporate Science

5.Louis Agassiz, Ananda Coomaraswamy and the Spiritual Fiction of “Virgin Nature”

6.Darwins Triumph over Religion and Anti-Science

7.Wolfgang Smith and Creationist Anti-Science.

8.Quantum Quackery and Fictional Essences

### **1.Science verses Religion in History**

Here I want to write about a subject that was dear to me since the beginning of my quest when I was a teen. How is science to be considered? And why are the traditional doctrines, fundamentalists, reality constructionists, romantics, medieval philosophers, New Agers and religion in general, so wrong in their dislike or hatred of it. I explored doubts about science at great length, and gave it a fair hearing. I finally decided the doubters of science, as well as those who abuse science for political or corporate motives, were wrong. So, these are my conclusions about haters of science, with some characteristic people used as examples of the more general trend.

When one reads a real scientist, it is clear that they are more than willing to admit their uncertainty. This is true of Von Leeuwenhoek for instance, who studied small beings as far as protists and bacteria under a microscope. While his studies are amazing and far reaching for their time, he was wrong about sperm being the primary determinant of life in mammals. He suspected he might be wrong , though he was not sure and doubts assailed him. He pushed forward his thesis and failed. In the 1670's no one really knew how human or animal reproduction occurred and so there were some wild theories and speculations about it, ranging from religious and spiritual fictions to attempts, like Van Leeuwenhoek to be objective and as accurate as he could be using tools like his amazing optical devices. It was not until 1843 that Martin Barry formally recognized the connection between female ovum and male sperm

objectively. There is no doubt, it had long been supposed, especially by women. But no men asked them. It was not till the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that women's views started to be respected, with Madame Curie and Rosalind Franklin.

How much about our earth we do not know now is completely unknown and we are as in the dark as Van Leeuwenhoek was in the 1670's. But that real progress has been made is undeniable. Well done and accurate science is thus paramount to our children's future. We need not only to understand ourselves, but all the lives on earth, as all lives are clearly as valuable as our own. Survival is what matters for all species. Humans need to work out how to eat, as meat fails the whole earth, and we need to work out our relationship to other species, which we murder at an alarming rate. Energy, greed, war, and religion are all problems that so far we have not dealt with well<sup>1164</sup> Once science is better tuned to studying human destructiveness, the world might stand a change of improving, human populations decreased, nature to be more protected, and the poor helped

The sleep of reason does produce monsters, and since there are no actual monsters, as I tell my children, what is meant by the word 'monstrous' is obvious to reasonable adults: monsters are in fact: dangerous politics, war, murder, big business, selfishness, greed, power, religion and delusional superstitions. Goya was right, what is really scary is people's ability to be deluded and to harm each other as a result of mistaken beliefs. Many people live in ready-made delusions of one

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<sup>1164</sup> Mosquitoes are not aware that they spread malaria or other diseases. Certain wasps use the larva of other species as hosts, and that is repulsive. But evolution is about survival and it is not relevant that we might object to the unethical behavior of some species. They are not as responsible as we are for the harms done. Being ethical in removing such harms done to our own species is the right way to go. It is mistaken to spray crops with herbicides that kill many species, merely so the cash crops will enrich already well off 'farmers', many of whom are actually corporate bureaucrats. Corporations are false entities, like religions and need to be removed as aristocracy was removed. Trees need rights, oceans need rights, and the abuse of the world for profit must stop. Human numbers are too high, climate must be protected, and so much else needs to be worked out studied and done. .

kind or another, be it religions, free market capitalism or Marxism. I think Mark Twain understood this too in his last decades. I have shown this over and over in this book. Religion is the delusional mistake of various social systems and not really the result of evolution, by Darwinian natural selection. Religion was not selected for by evolution, or I should say--- it is a product of culture. Some analysts try to say that cultural products are “by products” of brain or body faculties, indirectly, perhaps, but they are not directly caused by evolution. Evolution did not suggest that people deny global warming, or that they endanger others by believing bogus conspiracy theories about the dangers of vaccines against measles, mumps or Chicken pox. Ignorance did not create shamanistic theater where men in ancient societies tried to manipulate their tribal members by exploiting drama to create the illusion of healing through magical thinking. Ignorance creates these delusions, just as it creates the hatred of decent science.<sup>1165</sup> Of course, there is badly done science, or corporate science, but Darwin did not create that either. Evolution did not select for corrupt CEOs, indeed, they are their own creation and one we must downsize them if the earth is to survive with us on it.

Da Vinci began to doubt the fact of human destructiveness before others. He already deplored the slavery to things in 1500, around the time he did this drawing of things falling in a deluge from the sky.

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<sup>1165</sup> A good example of ignorance in action is Donald Trump who hired uneducated corporate oil executives who deny global warming, like Scott Pruitt head of the EPA who wants to destroy the environment, among many other ignorant people who want to destroy or silence real global science. See John Nichols *Horsemen of the Trumpocalypse: A Field Guide to the Most Dangerous People in America*,



destructive. The ease with which other people and animals are killed and environments destroyed is indeed alarming. The stupidity of Rodeo, shocking horses with electroshocks to make them buck off riders, killing pigeons in shoots, shooting bears or ducks for fun, all this is a ridiculous and unnecessary horror. This has to be slowed or stopped, ways to live with animals, fish and mammals in the ocean and birds must be found. Ways to manage harmful insects and plants that is not so poisoning must be discovered. The causes of human destruction have to be discovered and the earth made livable for all its inhabitants, not just humans. The hatred of science is justified in some cases, because humans misuse it so badly. This needs to be more thoroughly understood and studied. I am merely scratching the surface of these problems here.

Darwin continued Da Vinci's amazing prescience and insight. Science for him, as for Da Vinci was an ethical endeavor, not a glory for the unfairly rich. Darwin's illnesses were caused by his anxious fears and understanding about just what backlash his theory might unleash. He understood how irrational people are and how destructive they can be. Creationists are still attacking him 150 years later. He knew that the cultural apparatus was sustained by religious fictions and feared an assault on himself and his work. There was good reason to fear this reprisal. Ideology and class interest resist any change and attack those who criticize them.

The Pandora's Box of delusions I have tried to critique in this book is the panoply of malice and delusional dreams that haunts the bitter and escapist hearts of men and women even now. There is little or no evidence that religion confers potential reproductive advantages on anyone, on the contrary. Religion appears to have aided enormously in creating war and divisions between groups, doing great harm to ourselves, other peoples, and other species.

That religion is a delusional product of social stratification and

injustice means that it is of unfortunate group of behaviors that accrued over of human history and attached to us as part of our social make up. It is a welling up of frustrated needs and power hungry urges forced into testosterone-pumped transcendent fictions and seizing on populations because of political prejudice and the ease with which they attack the imagination. The fact that religions all over the world are fading and dying, shows that it is a sort of 'mental virus', as Dawkins awkwardly called it. But the decline and failure of religion also shows is mutable and can be overcome. <sup>1166</sup>

Religions are not really "memes" and can be easily dissolved by education. <sup>1167</sup> This is great news. It does not have to be eradicated by another religious ideology. Marxism foolishly tried to get rid the world of religion, but it did so religiously thus proving the political nature of all religions. It was one toxic system of belief fighting others. Politics too, can be a "disease" of the brain, metaphorically speaking. It can be a will to harm others through ideology and doctrine. To undo religion only requires that it be illuminated by the light of reason and good living. It is not really part of us, but merely an accretion grown from our rather incomplete development, Religion is a mistake of the heart that grows by dint of wishes and false hopes, ignorant but well-meaning parents, narrow minds and the refusal to follow evidence. Undoing religion requires real self-examination, inquiry and a deep love of life and the world. One has to be willing to

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<sup>1166</sup> The American election system , really a selection system is just such an example of ideological control, lying, shinning, prejudice, corporate engineering and fraud. The foolishness of the electoral college is an example of preserving the staus quo agasint democracy. IN my life time two right wing nuts, Bush Jr. and trump have gotten in because of this corrupt system of unjust electoral voting.

<sup>1167</sup> Dawkin's idea of a mental virus of course, is just a metaphor, like the concept of memes. In actual usage memes are merely mental play toys, play ideas, handles or names or a" system of behavior that may be considered to be passed from one individual to another by non-genetic means, especially imitation", like swear words, fads, fashions and the like, Meme theory cannot handle something as complex as religion.. Religions are long term systems of social control. Dismantling them is a complex social process.

admit one has been wrong.

The religious or symbolist view of the universe that is common to the religions has been dead since Galileo and Leeuwenhoek , killed by the microscope and the telescope, in addition to thousands of other inventions and the whole panoply of scientific thought that tests itself against reality. Science is not a “meme” either, but an “intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment”. The importance here is the stress on reality. A system of knowledge like, say, the means to deform species by the profit motive by misusing genetic ideas is not really science, but the corporate abuse of science. One has to distinguish science from its abuses.

. Indeed, there is little that matters in human history, since 1500, that does not have the progress of science and the diminishment of religion at its root. As far as the future is concerned, little matters but independent scientific thought, trying to grasp how nature and humans can work towards each other in a symbiotic and self-sustaining way. Religion, business and politics are clearly in the way of progress. But there are many who refuse to believe it. So, there are reactionaries and retrograde leaps backwards, and one religion after another, one political fiction or corporate or civil religion after another crops up, each claiming to be legitimate, but failing after a short period of time.

Indeed, it can be said that by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, religion is in severe decline and it survives mostly as a reactionary force, defending unjust social arrangements of the political right and business elite in many countries. The idea of countries, or nation states, itself is questionable and has its own sad history. The Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan keep trying to set up a reactionary orthodox state. There are many others: the far right Islamist parties in many countries; the Jewish state; the traditionalists; the American far right Christians; Catholics still living as if 12<sup>th</sup> century dogmas; Hindus still virtually supporting the outlawed

caste system; Native Americans still promoting pre-Columbus superstitions-- in all these and other cases, religion is backed up against a wall, backwards, slipping into magical thinking or supporting wealth and social injustice against science and progress. These are all real problems. For some years in the 1980's, liberation theology helped progressives in Latin America, but that is an exception that proves the rule. The mainstream religions around the world are failing, reactionary, dogmatically holding to increasingly irrational positions. Traditionalism is just one of many reactionary ideologies.

E.O Wilson writes that religion was a sort of 'mental trap' for humans that is being slowly replaced by more objective views. Once we realize that the religions are finished, the question of why religion happened at all becomes very interesting. Evolutionary theory is finally addressing why religion happened at all. It is clear that religion is not genetically encoded, which means it had nothing to do with our evolution as a species. This is to say that some aspect of our bodily and genetic make-up was misused or deformed by mental and cultural processes, and so went awry due to social pressures and the will to power. David Sloan Wilson, along with E.O. Wilson, claims that "group selection" is part of the reason that religion happened to humans. I have doubts that is true, but it is an interesting question. It is true that religion helped humans survive the attacks of outlying groups. But the idea that groups select genes is farfetched. Steven Pinker disputes this with many good reasons, while Richard Dawkins also attacks E.O Wilson rather vociferously.<sup>1168</sup> Pinker claims that "much of the work on group

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<sup>1168</sup> Steven Pinker claims that only individuals are selected in Darwinian natural selection, not groups.. He says at the end of a long essay that "both Dawkins and Wilson are outliers who fail to recognize that the days of pitting kin selection against group selection are over." I have no idea what is the truth here, though I incline more to Pinker than Dawkins, but the questions are interesting on both sides, as there is healthy had livingly debate going on about the evolutionary origins of religion. This is live science. Here is Pinker's essay: <http://edge.org/conversation/the-false-allure-of-group-selection>

selection has been funded by the John Templeton Foundation, an enormously wealthy organization with an agenda to harmonize faith and science”. This would indeed suggest that the thesis is probably invalid, as science should not be done to serve an ideological “faith”. In any case, competing hypotheses are not uncommon in science, and eventually physical truth will discredit well-funded ideology. It seems likely group selection theory is merely another failed and bankrolled hypothesis.

Dawkins claims religion is a “by product” of the tendency of children to believe their parents, and thus religion is a result of gullibility and the abuse of the innocent. This seems a sound though incomplete theory, the “by product” theory being highly questionable. Religion is fundamentally an abuse of trust and exploits the vulnerable, despite the fact that it occasionally helps people. Dawkins is right there. These are very live questions. But Stephen Jay Gould’s concept of ‘by-product’—he invented the idea--- seems to have little meaning. What is exciting about science is it is alive with such questions, real questions, while religion deals with mostly with dead issues and mythic fictions.<sup>1169</sup>

In this this essay I will show how science has trumped religion again and again, even while religion has mounted unsuccessful attacks on science. Not much has been written of the attacks on Science over the centuries, particularly in the last century. I will write an overview of some of this opposition to science here.<sup>1170</sup> It is clear that atheism is increasingly succeeding in our culture because religion and the group or cult psychology it fostered has ceased to be useful for human beings.

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<sup>1169</sup> For instance, religion wants to be an equal partner with science in schools, but then it really has nothing to offer. There are no botanists who can talk about the kinds of plants growing in the Garden of Eden. How did Three Toes Sloths get to the Amazon from Mount Arahata after the flood? Religion has no answers to such questions because these stories are myths. The notion that these mythic stories should be taught to kids in schools is wishful thinking.

<sup>1170</sup> This chapter is very long and could be a book on its own, but it does belong with the foregoing and is a natural consequence of what comes before this, so I keep it here.

Science is about verifiable evidence and not authority or intuition. Those who still are guided by the twin delusions of authority and intuition go astray of the truth. Foolish writers like John Milton write as if the Bible were truth<sup>1171</sup>. Newton did this in his religious, alchemical works, as Michelangelo did in painting. Walt Whitman thought American history was involved with Manifest Destiny, as if God were on the side of those who killed indigenous people or Railroad tycoons who helped extirpate the Bison. Whitman imagines himself in Leaves of Grass as a god like being who says “I contradict myself because I am big. I contradict myself because I contain all the opposites, because I am all”. But this is narcissistic hyperbole and very much in keeping with the ideology of American exceptionalism and the growth of bloated corporations. Whitman expresses what in fact is a bloated ideology or a civil religion. The magnifying social function fo such transcendentalist hyperbole is obvious.

Toxic and corporate religions like Scientology grew up as a mirror of the unjust corporate state in America, protected by the guarantee of the “freedom to be deluded”. clause in the first Amendment. <sup>1172</sup> One does

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<sup>1171</sup> I looked through Paradise Lost the other day and though well done. I thought it a ridiculous book of poetry, in many ways, Milton was a good craftsman, surely, and that is worth a lot in my view, but ridiculous in subject. Indeed, after science it is hard to take much poetry seriously. Milton was influenced by the Cromwell Revolution in England, and was anti monarchy, but still retains enough of the old absolutist ideology to write Paradise Lost. Blake wrote that “The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.” But this is a romantic view of him, though politically correct, though Blake is right that he is an ambiguous character. But his poetry like Dante is still the poetry of the ruling class, and fails on that account to do justice to those in real need..

<sup>1172</sup> The freedom of religion clause in the Constitution has allowed cults or religions to proliferate wildly in America, and even to infringe upon the Constitution itself. The first amendment states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” This first part is fine, but the second part is a guarantee of cult proliferation and galloping irrationalism. The freedom to be deluded and convince others to be deluded. This is partly what makes America so much more gullible and prone to religious fictions than Europe. There are other reasons too, namely the constant bombardment of advertisers teaching the public

not wish to stop the free exercise of thought, but distinguishing truth and delusion from insidious and deceptive or illegal practices is far more difficult than merely listing beliefs. What kind of society gives religions rights, but denies rights to animals and nature in general? The problem of cults and corporate persons, and these is little difference, is systemic and part of capitalism. The oceans and the animals in them are real yet have no rights, while any religious cult is given free reign and allowed legal rights. Such a system is backwards and serves unjust elites, as religion always has.

Science has alone shown real progress over the last 500 years. There are those cranks and reactionaries who deny that real progress has been achieved, but it is undeniable. People live longer, children are saved, and millions of other benefits accrue to us from science, too numerous to mention. But even without these benefits, the fact of gaining pure knowledge of say, Venus Flytraps, or pink Dolphins<sup>1173</sup>, all the species of wasps, DNA or the fact of galaxies--- all this is priceless. Science is not just cutting edge science, nanotechnology or particle physics. These areas might be questionable. Science can be about washing clothes in a better way or doing carpentry. After the discovery of plate tectonics, the facts of photo synthesis or the videos and photos of

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to believe all sorts of nonsense to get them to buy products they don't need, as well as a very poor education system, pummeled by efforts to privatize education and destroy free access to it. Living in American is sometimes like living in a Hieronymus Bosch painting, as delusions proliferate everywhere ..

I would contend furthermore that corporations are basically religious entities since they claim to be "persons" when actually this is a religious fiction. Corporations should be taxed and regulated as much as religions, or even more so than people. Their off shore activities should be heavily taxed so they cannot force salve labor on foreign populations bankrupting local populations.

<sup>1173</sup> Th killing off the the Boto, or Pink Dolphin of the Amazon is due primarily to the fisherman on that riever who murder them to increase their own profits. The same is true in the town of Taiji Japan where there are still yearly massacres of up to 2000 cetaceans for food, profit and fisherman.

the sun that are now available on the NASA <sup>1174</sup>website, religion is increasingly pathetic . Of course what is lost in religion is the unjust presumption of human supremacy. We are one of many beings all of whom have rights now. We are not corporate overlords who rule all with the dogmatic fanaticism of Jesus of Muhammad. It is so hard for those who are addicted to the ideology of human supremacy to give it up, even if they are otherwise enlightened. Just as the Christ myth made fanatical supremacists of Christians, so corporate ideology makes corporate boards and CEO believe in their own power and supremacy. This is not science. Ideologies attract people by the vision they provide of ultimate power or pride and it can be very hard to see through this. <sup>1175</sup>

But there has been a contingent of people who hated science ever since science began under the Greeks. Early Christian bigots who hated science, evidently, were among those who murdered the great female Alexandrine teacher and scientist, Hypatia. The Inquisition infamously persecuted Galileo and many others for free inquiry into the nature of the universe.

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<sup>1174</sup> See Solar Dynamics Observatory(SDO) This is a wonderful website and much can be learned from it.

<http://sdo.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

<sup>1175</sup> A good example of this is Noam Chomsky who adopts a Cartesian notion of human supremacy quite in opposition to his otherwise interesting political views. I include a chapter on Chomsky after this one partly to use him as an example of an enlightened man who went astray of science in various ways.



Galileo persecuted by the Inquisition

If the traditionalists had their way the Inquisition would be brought back. Indeed, the traditionalists are a school of reactionary and right wing thought that goes back to the Inquisition and before. The Inquisition was partly created by Innocent III in order to stop the rising desire for inquiry and critical thinking. The Renaissance was an expansion of knowledge soon opposed by such painting and book burning cranks like Savonarola, wildly preaching to others like Hitler would do in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Savonarola statue in Ferrara. Italy

. The Reformation in Germany, England and Holland was a step forward toward reform, but was opposed by the Counter-Reformation in which the Church sought to roll back these reforms, resulting in such reactionary blunders as the condemnation of Galileo.<sup>1176</sup> The council of Trent and the Inquisition were both engines of the Counter Reformation and sought to reverse the forward looking Reformation. Traditionalists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would quote the Council of Trent and the Inquisition as good things, but of course they were not. Neither the declaration of transubstantiation, which claimed that “Christ is "really, truly, substantially present" in the consecrated forms, or the Index of books condemned by the Vatican, were going to stem the tide of real science and evidence now pouring forth all over Europe. Thomas More was not going to stop it either. While portrayed as a martyr in a famous movie, actually, he had an aristocratic hatred of Protestantism and used torture, burning Protestants at the stake for the heresy of reading certain books. Not a good guy.

The Faust myth was an effort to stem the same tide, condemning inquiry and curiosity. It scared many into submission. By the 1800's, the most extreme counter-Enlightenment fulminator against reason and science is Joseph De Maistre. De Maistre was one of the more prominent “throne-and-altar” conservatives who vehemently opposed Enlightenment ideas of social fairness, human rights and science. In De Maistre's case the hatred for science and reason had to do with a fundamentalist notion of tradition which only allowed knowledge to proceed, if it were first defined and laid out by theology and approved by the patrician

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<sup>1176</sup> The Church saw, rightly, that Aristotle's philosophy as a threat and condemned Aristotle's Physics and his Metaphysics between 1209 and 1215, under Innocent the 3rd. This foolish move presaged the censure of Galileo some centuries later. But the condemnation of Aristotle was mere demagoguery. It soon became clear that Aristotle would not be gotten rid of so easily.

caste.<sup>1177</sup>

De Maistre longed for a return to the irrational faith of the Middle ages, especially the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when Innocent III and others initiated the Inquisition. Presaging today's holocaust deniers, he wrote extensively to justify the Inquisition, which itself was partly an attempt to stamp out free inquiry, which he also opposed. The rise of the universities was part of the effort to set up free inquiry in opposition to the dogmatic Church. Indeed, free inquiry has been opposed first by the Church, then by the aristocracy and lately by corporations. The effort to control science so it serves only the powerful is old and still present with us. This must be resisted.

To be against science is not at all the same as to be against religion. For the most part science is not ideology, though some use it as such. Religion is the science of the unreal, and has no equality with science, which is the study of the real. The term 'anti-science' is as questionable as the term "atheism": Newton's laws are true whether you believe them or not, whereas Jesus requires belief and even if you believe he is still make believe. There is no evidence he even existed.

It is questionable as to what exactly what an atheist is against? There is nothing there to be opposed to or "anti" or against in religion since it is all based on superstitious emptiness. I am not anti-god since

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<sup>1177</sup> A similar counter revolutionary is Edmund Burke, a darling of far right American federalists and corporate demagogues to this day. Burke writes that "The laws of commerce are the laws of Nature, and therefore the laws of God." Quoted in Marx Das Kapital) (E. Burke, l.c., pp.31,32) In – this is obscene and rank elitism is a form of fascism. Basically this is the point of view of corporate CEO's and other elitist sociopaths and 'trickle down' economists . It is quite true of course that money and gods have a lot in common, indeed, they are both fictional abstractions that primarily serve the upper classes. Christ even implied this when he said, I think with no ambiguity, to "give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to god the things that are gods". Money, gods and property are attempts by the rich to give themselves immortality. This is true even in Marxist versions of money and power, where the state seeks immortality. Burke was rightly condemned by Tom Paine for his efforts to subvert the gains of the French Revolution. Marx wrote against Burke as well. Far right ideologue like William Buckley liked his effort to keep the rich, rich and the poor, poor. Burke's support of "meritocracy" also tends to support only those who have means, not the ones who might be most able, given the chance.

there is no god to begin with. Dawkins is certainly opposed to superstition and delusion and does not apologize for it. Dawkins' atheism is very pointed and based on sound arguments, unlike his detractors who are invariably emotional and full of hate. I am not a friend of religion but do not think of myself as anti-religion, exactly since it is not clear what that would be. I hope the delusions of religions disappear one mind at a time, but it is not likely it will soon.

There is also the question of the evolution of religion, which is a very interesting subject, Why did it come to be, since it does not seem to have evolved, and why is atheism evolving to replace it? It is good news that so many historical gods are dead and gone, as it will eventually happen that the myths of Jesus and Buddha and Allah will fall into ruin too, like the Greek or Aztec Gods, who have vanished from history. Then the real questions of why religion can begin in earnest. <sup>1178</sup>

Tracing the history of the religious delusions is informative. As I mentioned, the traditionalists are descended from the romanticism and the Counter-Enlightenment, such as the religious reaction of De Maistre, hence their opposition to academic study, free inquiry and science. They want dogma, no peer review and no testing against reality. They want to return to the discredited “Realism” of the Platonic Scholastics of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and before or the counter Reformationists of the 15-1600s. Like the Inquisitors of old, they hate the Nominalism of that time and the growth of science out of such thinkers as William of Occam, Roger Bacon, Francis Bacon and Descartes. The hatred of

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<sup>1178</sup> David Sloan Wilson provides the flowing list of interesting scholars on the subject of the evolution of religion. Few of them are in religious studies, as one would expect. But these people are doing interesting research on religion as an evolutionary phenomena.

“ While evolution was never entirely absent as a perspective, the modern version became prominent at the beginning of the 21st century with books such as *Religion Explained* by Pascal Boyer, *In Gods We Trust* by Scott Atran, and my own *Darwin's Cathedral*. The field has burgeoned since then; a partial list of prominent names includes Jesse Bering, Michael Blume (ETVOL'S religious editor), Joseph Bulbulia, Joseph Henrich, Dominic Johnson, Arah Norenzayan, Anthony Slingerland, Richard Sosis, and Harvey Whitehouse.”

Newton or science has its origins in medieval irrationalism and the Inquisition. It grows by leaps and bounds in reaction to the French Revolution. As I discussed earlier in this book, anti-science thinking originates in the reaction of Romanticism to the Enlightenment, French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. This movement is often referred to as the 'counter-enlightenment'. <sup>1179</sup> The fight to oppose science is partly Church originated. But it extends into far right ideologues of many stripes. Adam Lee correctly writes that Creationists and other science haters think “everything has been going downhill since the Enlightenment. The willingness of people to think for themselves, to question authority, to investigate the world for truth - they see all this as a disastrous trend, one that only takes us farther from their ideal vision of a medieval, theocratic state.” <sup>1180</sup> Darwin is thus a breath of fresh air blowing on humanity the same wind of clarity and science that Occam only dreams of. There is a real world here on earth and it can be studied and has been studied, however imperfectly. Opposition to authoritarian systems is a good thing and goes with the open endedness of science.

But there are who hated science during the Enlightenment period such as romantics, Jean Jacques Rousseau or William Blake.<sup>1181</sup> These men are, in various ways, and in degrees, reactionaries of the ‘counter-Enlightenment’. <sup>1182</sup> Rousseau thought that science would create

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<sup>1179</sup> The counter-enlightenment continues today in the Creationists, haters of Charles Darwin, and the Republican Party, which would bring back slavery if it could and turn our society into a caste elitism with CEO’S playing the part of the “Guardians”.

<sup>1180</sup> [http://www.alternet.org/belief/152349/why\\_the\\_anti-science\\_creationist\\_movement\\_is\\_so\\_dangerous/?page=entire](http://www.alternet.org/belief/152349/why_the_anti-science_creationist_movement_is_so_dangerous/?page=entire)

<sup>1181</sup> W.H. Auden wrote humorously that Blake "Broke off relations in a curse, with the Newtonian Universe". This is true and his reasons for doing so do not seem either clear or cogent.

<sup>1182</sup> Blake is a complex case, because though he fulminated against science, he was very much man of the enlightenment in other ways, as his relation to Tom Paine suggests. He and Paine share a dislike of conventional religion as well as an apocalyptic political belief system. I remember talking to Martin Lings about Blake, who disliked Blake because he was too liberal and open minded, too questioning of the orthodox spirituality that attracted Lings to fascists like Federico Franco. Blake’s politics are what I like about him. But his anti-science opinions are

immorality and would lead to corruptions of various kinds. It is hard to see how knowing the truth about the world will corrupt people. Indeed, science leads to a common sense rationalism that is very ethical.

William Blake is an ambiguous case in the history of the Enlightenment and is partly opposes anti-scientific tendencies. Blake embodies well the divided mind of romanticism struggling between the liberating progressivism of science and the backward medieval desire for fictional gods and apocalypse. His inability to understand Newton is a vestige of his irrational medievalism, whereas Blake's endorsement of a character like Tom Paine show his reasonable and common sense side.<sup>1183</sup> Paine was a an amazing man far ahead of his time. An atheist, more or less, and a man of deep respect for human rights. Tom Paine was perhaps the best of the revolutionary heroes of America, his Common Sense having been a huge influence of the American Revolution.. He also had some influence on the English left and lived in the France in the 1790's to help the French Revolution. Certainly this makes him one of the greatest men of that age in three nations and far ahead of his time. Farther ahead than Blake. Indeed, there is no other

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ridiculous. I have met far too many poets who are anti-science. Many poets mistakenly believe their precious "inner life" will dissolve if they study chemistry or botany. This is just foolishness. Poets are in many cases, religious reactionaries, whose spirituality is anti-scientific. As I pointed out earlier in this book, Bertrand Russell rightly thought that romanticism has strong roots in religion and allies itself easily with a kind of fascist reaction.

<sup>1183</sup> There is a difference between a Blake, a Tom Paine and the systems of power and social control. Blake and Paine, however imperfectly, were concerned with human rights more than with power. Paine in particular was involved in opposing tyranny in the US, England and France. He served a year in prison in France, was hounded out of England by government death threats- Blake helped him escape, and returned to the US where he was driven increasingly to the margins by men hungry for power, such as Washington and Adams, who would not help him in his times of trouble, even though Paine had done so much to further the American Revolution. Paine is an early example of an historical trend of American elites trying to discredit, hound, persecute and marginalize the American movement towards equality and human rights. Those who fought for an end to slavery, women' rights, anti-war movements, nature's rights or environmental concerns, as well as anti- corporatism or the recent "Occupy" movement have always been opposed by corporate elites and demagogues from McCarthyism to today's republicans, bent on destroying the middle class and democracy.

man of that time as prescient and insightful and with as much scope of interests as Paine.

Blake's misunderstanding of Newton was caused by Blake's rather backwards tendencies.<sup>1184</sup> He blamed the wrong man. He thought Newton was a minion of the cruel industrialists or "mechanists" that polluted the sky of 19<sup>th</sup> century England, part of what created the "Chartered streets" of London where the "chartered Thames doth flow". But actually what caused the misery on the streets of London in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not Newton, but the Scrooge like Industrialists, slave traders and land speculators, bankers and manufacturers who Dickens so much deplored, and satirized in books like Our Mutual Friend. There is nothing wrong with machines or the wrongly called Mechanistic view.<sup>1185</sup> I admire Blake in some ways, but in others doubt him and his need of a religious or mythical system. Blake is a spiritual writer who makes up spiritual stuff as part of an effort to create an individual view of the world, and this cult of individual, still with us today, tends to make believe and falsity and conflicts with specific fact.

Newton, as a scientist, if not as a man, was not an industrialist. He

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<sup>1184</sup> Blake views are somewhat akin to left-wing critiques of science. Some of these state that science has a "bourgeois" and/or Eurocentric and/or masculinist world-view. While this criticisms may be true of some corporate science, it is certainly not true of science per se, which is quite open to women's rights or other peoples in other cultures. The jungles of Borneo still obey Darwinian biological processes. Darwinism generalized across borders and in this sense is "universal".

<sup>1185</sup> A good example of a bad history of science is David Fideler, inspired by Platonic thought, he mistakes the harms done by capitalism for science as a whole. Nature is mechanistic in some ways and not mechanistic in others, but this hardly means there are "souls" or divinities as Fideler tends to suppose. Machines can be used for good or ill and it hardly makes sense to condemn machines when it is the men who use them that are most at fault. His Luddite position is not thought out very well. Organic thought is very much a part of Darwinian thought, a fact that escapes Fideler. He is right to question Descartes, but that is one mistaken man and hardly all of science, Nature does not exist to be exploited and decent science takes this into account, in ecology, animal rights, biology, environmentalism and elsewhere. Fideler is a religious thinker who wrote a book on Jesus, calling him the "Sun of God". He is a Platonist, who imagines that higher level of cognition exists and esoteric knowledge, or gnosis, is possible in which "the mind becomes unified with the object of the knowledge.". He is quoting Plato of course. This is a fantasy view as is his concept of the "soul"..

was Master of the Mint for a time and evidently had 11 counterfeiters executed. He obviously liked having power, which is not his best quality, and Newton had many unattractive personal qualities. But his science is amazing and has truly universal implications, whatever his biography. As a man he was very confused alchemist and religious crank, like Blake. But his science stands out from all that nonsense and is something very different. His optics and his physics are still largely true and verifiable. His alchemy is merely embarrassing as are Blake's apocalyptic fantasies. In short, Blake is a mixed case among the early haters of science. This ambiguity might be reflected in Blake's portrait of him below. It is an idealized portrait, not at all negative, full of light and intelligence, and almost abalone in color. There is love of Newton in this picture, quite at odds with his negative writings about him. It is possible to see Blake as a divided man who might have been right in his art but wrong in his polemics. De Maistre is different in that he was foolishly against science in the most irrational and reactionary way, apparently down to his core, and this indicates religious obsession and fundamentalist thinking, as Isaiah Berlin shows in his brilliant and scintillating portrait of De Maistre.



Blake's portrait of Newton

Blake did not understand what the early Marx came to see fairly clearly, and that is that "free enterprise" capitalism was responsible for most of the misery of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and America. This misery is not imaginary. A society governed by men of profit will be mostly poor. Money invariably decreases the quality of things and makes them of less use and worth. Like gods, money is a fiction and a very harmful one. Marx was smart enough to see that science had to be part of the way out of poverty and exploitation. But Marx is a quasi-religious thinker too, a romantic like Blake. His notion of man as god is merely another religious construct. The problem with Marx is not so much his analysis of capitalism but his solution to the evil of it. He merely

replaces the rapaciousness of corporate capitalists, with the rapaciousness of the state. The Marxist embrace of science easily becomes trumped by dogma as we learned with Lysenkoism. Lysenkoism is a term used to describe the Soviet Union's distorted abuse of science by political or ideological motives. Creationism and Traditionalism are similar efforts to rewrite science in terms of ideology. They are a sort of metaphysical Lysenkoism. The Bush White House also sought to distort science by means of ideology in similar ways. <sup>1186</sup> Corporate anti-science does the same thing: they rewrite science to accord with their PR lies and the bottom line<sup>1187</sup> thinking of shareholder greed.

## **2.Reality is not a Construction**

There is another more recent fashion for anti-science that arises out of those who believe the obviously false view that reality is a human "construction". This occurs in "Post-modernist" thought, which is basically human centered nonsense. But Buddhism and Zen encourage this view too, as Buddhism posits a nothingness as a sort of abstract god, from which all things are to be seen, in a sort of grey state of impersonal distance and alienation. Contemplative distance is always a pose of superiority to reality. Reality is what matters, not the state Yuval Harari, who is a Buddhist of some kind, calls the "common imagination"

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<sup>1186</sup> Against a huge scientific consensus, Bush denied global warming and tried to set up bogus science to advance his claims and thereby move forward the ambitions of the very corrupt Oil and Coal corporations, who are most responsible for the harm to be done by global warming. The best book on this might be Naomi Klein's [This Changes Everything](#). She shows how these corporations are perhaps the most destructive on earth and how some of the environmental groups are in corporate pockets. She references The Nature Conservancy, WWF, the World Wildlife Fund, (WWF) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), all of which have partially been bankrolled by Oil companies.

<sup>1187</sup> Bottom line thinking, thinking for profits, is destroying the world. It is the way of thinking that corrupts the law, corrupts governments, and makes the rich the only voice that matters. It results in deformed crops, corn, cattle, people. It creates vast inequality, destroys nature and threatens the entire planet. It creates global warming and nuclear threats, ruins roads, schools, the future of children.

which is just Corbin's "imaginal world" restated.<sup>1188</sup> People really do suffer and their suffering is not an illusion. The notion of human subjectivity as the ultimate creator of reality is false. One can see why such an idea arose, when the religions were dying and science seemed to be taking over. This partly a result of Kant's have idealistic views, though Hans Vaihinger may have been one of the first to invent the idea of 'reality'; as a complete fiction. This is nonsense of course, but many new agers, science bashers, LSD takers, poets and adults sunk in make believe still believe this.<sup>1189</sup> Science is not religion and is not merely a "world view", and there is an element of good science that is "objective", which means that real aspects of the world are accurately described and explained, measured and experiments can be verified or not falsified.<sup>1190</sup>

Berkeley was wrong, the tree that falls in the forest does indeed exist or fall whether a person sees it or not. Actually, animals see it or live off its remains.<sup>1191</sup> It supports fungi, woodpeckers, ants, all sorts of

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<sup>1188</sup> Harari's book, *Sapiens*, is very interesting, though I have many qualms about it. It shares some overlap with what I have been writing in these books, though he does not really understand religion, I think. But I have only just started reading his book and have not finished it. (sept, 2015) I am about done with these three books, It is too bad I had not seen his book earlier.

<sup>1189</sup> Carl Jung and James Hillman both explore the idea of the world as a spiritual fictions made up by humans, which they want to encourage. The notion of religion as a "useful fiction" of course was seriously entertained by Schuon and other cult leaders who knew how to exploit such fictions. Novelists exploit this idea too. Junk novels take up a large proportion of the used bookstore shelf space, and this is because the need of escape is so great. Make believe has a small place in a child's life, as long as it is directed and one teaches them the difference between reality and fictions. But the rampant myth making that is thrust on kids in our society leaves them in dreams and ill prepares them for the real world.

<sup>1190</sup> Thomas Kuhn's relativist idea of paradigms is not very helpful and probably mistaken.

<sup>1191</sup> The Bishop writes that

" But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than for me to imagine trees, for instance, in a park [...] and nobody by to perceive them. [...] The objects of sense exist only when they are perceived; the trees therefore are in the garden [...] no longer than while there is somebody by to perceive them."

, ---this is silly. He does not realize that the Red Squirrel or the House Wren is always a worthy witness? The falling tree produces sound whether anyone hears it or not. The world of nature far outstrips the vagaries of human perception, which is deformed by the human dependence on



own ignorance about science. “exorcized”, please, it is a medieval world that has no reality in it. Certainly it is true that presuppositions, class or cultural origins, and ethnic culture effects how one sees the world to varying degrees. No one is completely objective. But science is about evidence and not authority or intuition. Science is nonfiction and seeks to explain realities in an objective way, unlike religion which is fiction and based on delusions and inventions of imagination. The process of study and inquiry in science is an unfolding in time and slowly the mythical conceits of individual scientists get weeded out of the science itself. But facts remain facts and some are more objective or accurate than others. It is foolish to abolish objectivity. Without objectivity we are back in irrational dogmas and the delusions of the medieval mind. Accuracy is important, as is measurement when it is possible. “There is reality out there” as is obvious by any study of animals or stars demonstrates. The post-modernist” movement’s attempt to marginalize reality itself has failed.<sup>1194</sup>

Like other ‘post-modernists’ Heidegger's critique of reason and science foolishly tries to negate the subject/object or sense/knowledge division. He repudiates the idea that that facts exist outside or separately from the process of thinking and speaking of them. He does not accept that mind independent facts exist. Of course, the entire world and the

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Smith this is certainly true. He was a man living in the thick of delusions. Smith is proud to live in myth and delusion as he says himself, for “outside of the sacred there can be no certainty, no absolute and abiding truth”. Living in this delusion is the cause of his life as for most of the traditionalists, as well as the Taliban, the Unibomber, the Inquisitors and other cultists, Marxists, Nazis, and true believers and fanatics of many different stripes and creeds.

<sup>1194</sup> Constructivist epistemology posits the idea that reality is human created. This is another form of narcissistic anthropocentrism and cannot be squared with science or with the facts of evolution. Variants of this view are held by many: Vico ,James Joyce, Ernst von Glasersfeld Gregory Bateson to a degree, Berkeley, Marx and Kant. The fact of the independent existence of animals and their obvious existence apart from us shows the fact of human involvement in reality. Animals are who we are. We are of this earth and of other species and no religious delusion or epistemological narcissism is able to abrogate this fact.

millions of species do exist and this non-human reality has primary rights. Heidegger's view is anthropocentric. Human centered solipsism is attractive to an increasingly inward and narcissist culture from the 1970s to the present. It is also what makes Heidegger a friend of the Nazis since his philosophy is one of escape, not of outward objective conditions and denies any political concern with the poor. This is true of Foucault too, who is close to being a fascist himself with his love of power and violence. Even Chomsky has solipsist elements in his philosophy. Solipsism is largely a city phenomenon, as people who live in cities think nothing else exists on earth but people, and nature, the lives of non-human species, the earth itself, scarcely exists for them, locked as they are in TV, computers and the world of media control, brands, corporate media and propaganda. To the subjective solipsist, all images are equal and all things are images, and little has reality except mind and self. This is a breeding ground of illusions.

The notion that 'truth' or reality is a construction and not verified against a concrete reality is certainly fashionable. But is it accurate? The obvious answer is no. All texts are not equal, and Darwin's Origin is not at all the same sort of book as the Bible, which is a tissue of mythic "facts". Darwin has evidence to defend it, and the Bible has little or no evidence to defend it, indeed, it appears by the evidence that Jesus did not even exist and the Old Testament is largely mythic fiction too.. Reading tea leaves and Tarot cards is not the same as doing blood tests or looking at a retina scan. Relativists like Derrida and other post modernists think that all things are attempts to get power over others and so all objectivity is an illusion. This is mistaken. The New York art world is awash in this sort of feast of delusions, a feeding frenzy of illusions created to keep the ultra-rich living in a permanently deluded state. Corporate art is largely made of these inchoate ideas, ideas which have nothing as their base and which are expressed in an art that expressing nothing, or nearly nothing.

I am not very fond of constructivist epistemologies. I once thought they had a lot of truth to them, but that conviction has diminished over time, as I began to see how delusions are perpetuated in many areas of life: in literature, art, TV, PR, politics, advertising, marketing. Once I abandoned religion in 1991, I began to fight with the chimera of misperception that most people live in. The capitalists want people to “create their own reality” as a means of keeping people buying as much irrelevant stuff as possible to fill the emptiness with. We live in a culture that atomizes everyone, where they can create their own little bubble of things and gadgets to surround themselves so that reality will not obtrude into their sequestered consciousness. Thus the ‘reality is a construction’ idea was so central to 1990’s culture, and continues on to this day in various forms.

I can see this fight going on in my 1997 book the Empire of the Intellect. I would make a lot of changes in that book if I rewrote it now. I was still clinging to the idea that the world is somehow our creation. What is our creation is the delusion that we are supreme. This error of perception only requires studying animals to see how wrong it is. While it is true that our languages and upbringing condition how we see to a degree, we do not make up the existence or our world, and only science has ever tried to study things as they are. Reality is with us and we must face the facts of it. Leonardo grasped this quite clearly. He could do nearly anything just using the principle of simple machines. Bird species certainly exist and are amazing in their processes of mating and making families. Photosynthesis happens, rain falls, death happens, nature and the sun are there, the stars and our mortality and our children to help us beyond our own lives. Life is the only immortality there is. Reality is out there and can be known to a deepening degree.<sup>1195</sup>

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<sup>1195</sup> An essay by Thomas Nagel’s states that we cannot know what it is like to be a bat. This subjectivist speciesism is very harmful. Daniel Dennett sides with this speciesist point of view, and with Nagel’s rather empty essay, and is proud of his ignorance of other animals. Actually bat

People do construct theories about it and sometimes their class, culture, or sex plays a role in how and what they see. But science has a way of bringing such errors, if they are errors, into the open eventually. Science is a process of refinement and of making our theories correspond more and more with what is actually out there. This is what science is all about and it has been fantastically successful.

There is a growing body of knowledge that is independent of subjective fictions. No one knows reality in entirety, certainly. But the beauty of science is in its tentative and provisional conclusions and its willingness to adapt when new evidence arrives. While this should abash all subjective constructivists, I do not mean to say that science is always right. Scientists make mistakes. But unlike subjectivists, science will admit its own mistakes. Science relies too much on math and when has no evidence to back up their theories, it sometimes acts as if a hypothesis were a fact when it is not. The positing of an "ether" in the late 1800's was an example of this. The "ether" was not there. But these are errors that tend to get corrected eventually. The undoing of religion frees us to real self-examination, inquiry and a deep love of life and the world. There is real hope in this, as I think as Leonardo and Darwin saw. The world without religion is amazing and wonderful, fearful and incredible place. Human beings become part of

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experts have been learning more and more just exactly what it is like to be a bat. Science is able to see more and more with empathy into the lives of actual beings. I helped a bat hibernate in my garage last winter when he fell off his perch and we put him back in his torpor and put a cloth over him to help him preserve warmth. I thought about Nagel's' essay a lot and think he is quite mistaken. Bats are amazing beings and the more one learns about them the more one knows them. Indeed, what matters increasingly is the study of the small minority, the small living things of earth. All life matters and all life has rights. Bats can be understood and must be. They are dying off at alarming rates. To understand their point of view and needs is vital in saving them. It appears that the worst culprit in bat population declines is aerial spraying of pesticides for west Nile virus and bird flu. The pesticide suppresses the immune systems and they become weakened and susceptible to the fungus that causes 'white nose syndrome'. Understanding the point of view of other species is what Nature's Rights is all about. It is not merely about doing for nature what benefits humans, but recognizing the biotic commons, the earth has rights, and not merely the human commons, where humans especially property owners are given specific dominating rights..

a very complex world and one where we can no longer excuse our penchant to destroy and harm our world. Indeed, harm done to our responsibility now exclusively. One cannot blame devils, excuse it by apocalyptic notions, or curse gods who do not exist.

Culture too can have its narcissistic tendencies. There is an anti-science tendency that even visits some left-wing writers based on mistaken notions of quantum mechanics or Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.<sup>1196</sup> Many people think, wrongly, that science equals subatomic particle physics or speculative theories of string theory. But actually speculative physics is not very important. Nor are ideas about a so far mythical "unified field" very important. This is merely metaphysics by another name. Physics was really something when Einstein and Bohr were alive and so many discoveries were made. But in recent years it has become prone to speculations of an often questionable kind.

Einstein criticized one physicist for having very good math but doing very poor physics. This is often true now. There is no basis in reality for the 'many universes' theory, for instance, yet many hold to it as if were real. Even the theory of the Big Bang, which at least has evidence in its favor, is hugely exaggerated, often to the point of competing with religious dogma. One suspects this dogmatism has something unconsciously religious in it. No one knows anything about the origins of the universe, or how big or old it is, in fact. What is imagined about it is all based on mathematical models or observations that raise many questions. We can only see out to the "event horizon" some 13-42 billion light years away. Humans only see the limits of their own viewpoint. No one knows what is more than 13 or 42 billion light years away, according to various ways of reading the sketchy evidence.

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<sup>1196</sup> Heisenberg's and Gödel's ideas are often joined in new age theories of reality construction. New Age thinkers like to try to make a lot out of Gödel's Incompleteness theorem. Dan Willard has started unraveling Gödel's idea on this, showing that causation in arithmetical systems is rather more complex than Gödel thought..

We do not even know what such numbers really mean, just as we did not know what was beyond Spain in 1491. These are more or less wild speculations based on incompletely understood facts. This is not science, but speculation. I don't know much about it either, despite attempts to learn.

The Multiverse theory is even more fictional and premature than theories of the origin of the universe. They turn the universe into a mathematical mind game. This is where modern math approaches theology in its arcane speculations and while the credibility of science is undermined by such fancies, it is not undone. Victor Stenger tries to trace the origins of the Multiverse idea in his new book, God and the Multiverse, but it seems he may be imagining things that are not there. The multiverse idea violates Occam's razor, which states in Russell's formulation of it, "Whenever possible, substitute constructions out of known entities for inferences to unknown entities." Metaphysics loves to make elaborate distinctions where there are no differences, and now science is doing that too, or at least a few mathematical physicists are. Such mistakes often occur at the limits of human perception, where human's start inventing things that are not there. Such mirages occur all the time in metaphysics. Now in the far reaches of math. It turned out there was no life on Mars despite the tendency of some scientists to imagine canals, little green men, or whatever. Even Carl Sagan did this. It makes sense that such errors would occur in theories that concern the farthest remove of both quantum and cosmological questions. One has to be careful of speculations on the edges of math, the universe and the atom, as all sorts of things can be projected into these empty and unknown areas. The good thing about science is that eventually these theories, such as Ether or the Multiverse, might either prove true or get deleted from science when evidence does not support them. Until that happens extreme skepticism is warranted.

The Multiverse idea, like the big bang or the seeming wave/particle paradox of light might inspire some people's religious longings. But real science does not indicate that at all. The wave particle paradox is simply the behavioral effect of particles that travel in waves, like sea drops travel in the sea waves. There is nothing mystical in it. It is the facts that matter in nature. People study the tree canopy in the Amazon, bird population declines or how to make a better way to clean water. These are real questions. How do the muscles in the body fit together, how does the heart work, how do hummingbirds fly? These are real questions that have answers. The answers are known and can be explored. The notion that science only regards the not yet discovered is itself an illusion.

One also should beware of thinking of physics as the first science. It really isn't. In the Newtonian realm there are deep certainties, but beyond that, there are more questions than answers. Biology, astronomy or geology are far more interesting than ultimate physics, as they deal with matters that are less speculative. The multiverse idea is clearly a hypertrophy of the heaven idea, or of the idea that 'other worlds' actually exist. Various physicists cannot help making this stuff up, even when the evidence does not support it. There is no life after death just as there are no alternate worlds or universes, as far as anyone knows. But the hatred of the actual world and its difficult and factual painfulness is culturally so deep and intractable, it persists even into cosmological physics, too swayed by mathematical speculations that are not grounded in facts..

Strictly understood, quantum mechanics has made real discoveries. But a lot of ink has been spent trying to extract moral or 'spiritual' values from quantum principles. This not only questionable but specious. Those who abuse quantum mechanics with magical speculations suppose its odd mathematical paradoxes are open to opportunist use. They want to see the universe as our creation and so imagine we are opportunistic narcissists. Barely understood quantum

strangeness is really not fair fodder for such occult appetites. The science behind it is highly speculative and hardly certain enough to give anyone this sort of platform on which to speculate further. Or it is simply misunderstood. This does not stop those who wish to use quantum physics for all sorts of nefarious occult and mystic adventures.<sup>1197</sup> There are hundreds of New Age books written out of magical speculations about quantum mechanics, all of them more or less questionable. But I will speak more of the abuse of quantum mechanics later.

The notion that reality is a “construction” of our belief systems is fashionable among many in the leftist, new age and right-wing religion camps. It is obvious why. Attacking science as being merely a fantasy enables religious and new Age fantasists to thrive. If reality is a construction than creationism and science are equally bids for power over people’s minds. Actually good science is not at all fantasy and not a “construction”. As Alan Sokal said, who arranged a delightful hoax to satirize post- modernist ideologues who do not think there is an reality out there---

“there exists an external world, that there exist objective truths about that world, and that my job is to discover some of them.”

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<sup>1197</sup> Huston Smith wrote, for instance in an “Open Letter to Richard Dawkins ” that “An increasing number of physicists are now beginning to say that the world looks more like a big thought than a big thing. Thought requires a thinker. Where does that leave you atheists ?” This is a very ignorant comment. The universe is not a thought. The cult of disembodied “consciousness” is a favorite ploy of religionists. This typically nasty and pretentious comment underscores what perennialism was all about. Huston Smith is merely employing magical thinking and the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. Actually, there are few if any real physicists who employ this sort of religious speech and even fewer, if any, that accept the nonsense that Huston and Wolfgang Smith write. The notion that the universe requires a creator is fiction, it doesn’t. That is an argument by analogy, which is misapplied to physical things. In any case the intelligence that is obvious in the universe is a result of physical matter, time and space itself not of any gods..

A scientist tries to find things out about reality and things and his discoveries have real results. The problem with the “ reality- is-a- construction” theory of is that it denies evidence, demonstration and science. It is a largely academic theory, divorced form nature and reality, and holds that reality is a human movie made for narcissist mirror lovers. Religions want reality to be a construction so they can manage people’s perceptions and control minds Science wants to improve lives for humans and nature and tries to make discoveries to aid our understanding of the actual. Science wants to remove fictions not enhance them as religion does. Mark Sedgwick, for instance, ends his Against the Modern World with a fashionable pronouncement that mimics the “reality-is-a-construction” views of post modernists. He says that “rational scientific discourse is only one of the ways that human beings construct their stories about reality” .<sup>1198</sup> This supposes that some shared delusional system of beliefs is somehow be equal to the evidence compiled, say, to show how a given body of a given weight falls through space according to  $F=MA$ . There is nothing commensurate between the theory of gravity or evolution and the fictive world of Sufism. Ibn Arabi’s or Rumi’s silly theories about god have no more validity than do astrology or Tarot as compared to Chemistry.. Chemistry matters, the fictions of Rumi and astrology or Tarot do not. Both Sufism and astrology are based on little or no physical evidence. New Agers are free to make the world over in the image of their own confusion. But this hardly means that reality is confused. The reality is a construction appears to allow everyone endless freedom when actually it wants to lock everyone in the prison of delusions. Thinkers like Sedgwick, Rorty,<sup>1199</sup> Foucault

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<sup>1198</sup> Sedgwick quotes Douglas Allen

<sup>1199</sup> If I understand him the philosopher Richard Rorty thought that there no objective point of reference from which we can make judgment regarding reality except insofar as such judgment are human centered judgments made by the community of thinkers. IN this case reality is a sort

and Feyerabend and many other post-modernists are simply imagining things in the jail of their illusions.

Chomsky says of post-modernism that is meaningless because it adds nothing to analytical or empirical knowledge. He asks why postmodernist intellectuals won't respond as

"people in physics, math, biology, linguistics, and other fields are happy to do when someone asks them, seriously, what are the principles of their theories, on what evidence are they based, what do they explain that wasn't already obvious, etc.? These are fair requests for anyone to make. If they can't be met, then I'd suggest recourse to Hume's advice in similar circumstances: to the flames."

This is correct. This is not to say that Chomsky himself is able to supply needed explanations about his work when they are asked. His linguistics have many features that are more based on his personal illusions than on empirical evidence.<sup>1200</sup> But Sufism, Creationism, astrology, perennialism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism – and perhaps even some of Chomsky's own theories--- to the flames!

Those who push the idea that 'reality is a construction' believe that facts of astronomical physics are supposed to be commensurate with whatever it might be, Taoism say, or racist Phrenology. Islam is supposed to be equal to chemistry or geology. Far right fundamentalist Christians and their pathetic theory of pseudo-scientific creationism is supposed to

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of commissar system decided by the guild of academics, which seems not very accurate. Reality is the fact of nature and we learn from nature primarily when we do science.

<sup>1200</sup> See Steven Pinker's *The faculty of language: what's special about it?*, which is a great critique of Chomsky failings as a Linguist and John Searle's "The End of the Revolution". There is also Dan Dennett's *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*. See chapter below this for more.

[http://www1.cs.columbia.edu/~sbenus/Teaching/TheorLx/Pinker\\_jackendoff\\_human\\_language.pdf](http://www1.cs.columbia.edu/~sbenus/Teaching/TheorLx/Pinker_jackendoff_human_language.pdf)

be equal to the amazingly detailed and vast theory of evolution. It is like comparing the fictional 'Virgin Birth' or 'Barbie dolls' to Da Vinci's notebooks. There was no Virgin Mary who gave birth without conception just as Barbie dolls are fictive women. Da Vinci's drawings are not fake but real, actual anatomy and real science, amazingly done with incredible skill and exactness. Some of his drawings have not be equaled by anyone to this day.<sup>1201</sup> Da Vinci added to reality, whereas the Barbie/Virgin fictions add to the glut of delusions. Science and myth are in no way equal or commensurate, the one is real and the other, fake, pretend, delusional.

A peculiar prejudice among post modernists is that all things are equal. Yoga and science are seen as somehow equal "worldviews". Grimm's fairy tales are certainly not equal to the enormous strides made in genetics since the discovery of DNA. Saturday morning cartoons are hardly the same thing as the science used to cure diseases through vaccines. The Paranoid fantasias of Guenon, Gurdjieff, Christ and other magicians of the illusory are hardly equal to going to the moon or seeking real and objective understanding of the sun and galaxies through astronomical science and advances in telescopes and radio, ultraviolet and infrared devices. We have come to understand how plants create food from sunlight and how cells replicate, how plate tectonics work and how all life is important in its way. Even something seemingly simple like making pottery is full of science and has far more in it that Tibetan prayer wheels or prayer systems, which are mythical.

Reality is not a construction so much as it is an inquiry of known or unknown facts and events, not necessarily discovered, perhaps already known but not well explained like the Alula<sup>1202</sup> of birds.<sup>1203</sup> The study of

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<sup>1201</sup> the drawings at Windsor can be seen here:

[http://www.academia.edu/4033683/Leonardo\\_da\\_Vinci\\_anatomical\\_drawings](http://www.academia.edu/4033683/Leonardo_da_Vinci_anatomical_drawings)

<sup>1202</sup> The alula of birds is a series of 1-3 feathers on the front wing of birds, which was wrongly called a "bastard wing", Actually it is a sort fo breaking device used by birds in flight when they ae about to land or stop flying.

plants has expanded vastly in recent years, with botanical studies being done across all continents, while religion flounders in 12<sup>th</sup> century decay. The insanity of Christian fantasies of the Virgin Birth , Christ's justifications of slavery or Muhammad's abusive ideas about women are hardly equal to the Emancipation Proclamation, women's rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or invention of the computer and the electric light.

Scientific facts are not "stories and myths" in Richard Rorty's language. There is nothing commensurate between the fact of Luna Moth evolution and the fiction of astrology or the beliefs on Confucians or Taoists. Modern physics, Chemistry or Ornithology have made amazing and real discoveries, unlike astrology or Taoism which have discovered nothing. The proposal that mere stories are the same as science "has all the advantages of theft over honest toil," as Bertrand Russell rightly said. <sup>1204</sup> Religion sells meaning that has no basis in fact. No doubt it comforts a few desperate people, as Chomsky rather foolishly claims in its defense, but that is hardly worth all the misery and mayhem religion creates. Science trades in facts that are facts, make of them what you will. Religion comforts sorrows at the expense of truth and ends by creating even more misery than would have been the case had it never created so many lies.

The idea that science is to be opposed is useful only to those who despise the truth and the improvements that arise from finding out about our world and ourselves. As Chomsky notes, opposing science only

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<sup>1203</sup> I have been looking forward to the 'age of discovery' finally coming to an end. We are close to that. After that there is no more excuse for exploitation. Discovery was partly a capitalist phenomenon, where the seekers went in, found gold, slaves, tobacco, potatoes, pelts, insects to use or and trees to cut down and speculated on them as commodities. This increased to the point when whole planet has been abused to a degree that is no longer sustainable and the exploiters need to be forcibly retired. This is a good thing and then we will have to allow for protection of species and lands. Then the idea that all species have rights will matter. This ought to be soon.

<sup>1204</sup> Quoted in Chomsky here:

<http://zmagazine.zcommunications.org/ScienceWars/sciencechomreply.htm>

serves to help “deprive oppressed people not only of the joys of understanding and insight, but also of tools of emancipation” and one should add, decent food, healthy water and medicines that work.

Moreover, if there is any legitimate critique of science it has to do with the abuse of science by corporations or governments. 53 of 100 of the world’s largest economies are corporations like Wal-Mart or ATT. Wal-Mart is bigger than Greece or Israel and its five owners are wealthier than the bottom 30% of all Americans combined. Such exploitive people should be taxed to the extreme. These truly obscene facts show how corrupt capitalism is. It is as foolish to abandon science to unjust corporate interests who will abuse it as it is to say that science is really equal to astrology or Mary Baker Eddy’s ‘Science of Faith’. It is also foolish, Chomsky writes, to claim that

“the "project of the Enlightenment" is dead, that we must abandon the "illusions" of science and rationality--a message that will gladden the hearts of the powerful, delighted to monopolize these instruments for their own use.”

Chomsky is right here. The traditionalists are very happy to encourage many to abandon science to the unjust and to give the world over the corporate or institutional control. Most religion serves the ruling classes. Being frightening is a standard tactic of right wing regimes, The world is going to hell, they all say, so you must obey us. Traditionalists want the world destroyed. Profane people deserve to die, Schuon thought. Schuon even told his followers that a special and exclusive heaven awaited them alone in the afterlife, a sort of traditionalist spa and private nudist garden suburb reserved only for them, since they were all so holy and even the walls of heaven will painted with the Sherwin Williams golden glow paint like they used in their houses in Bloomington, Indiana.

Islam is based on the Koran which is fiction and the Virgin Birth is

as much a fabrication as cartoons and fairy tales. In the quote above Sedgwick is being ridiculous, -- a delusional post-modernist---in the final paragraph of his book. There is nothing commensurate between the incredible science behind evolution and DNA and the make-believe that constitutes religious books like the Bible or Koran or the superstitions that lie at the base of Taoist or Native religions. There is nothing commensurate between the discovery of DNA and the outrageous fact that King David murdered Uriah so that he could take his wife Bathsheba who he had had seen bathing. The first has helped millions, the second is merely a sordid tale in a book of make believe adult cartoons. How do you compare the discovery of human blood circulation by Hooke and Da Vinci to the fantasies of Muhammad in the Koran justifying the convenient immorality of his marriage to a nine-year-old girl? How do you compare the saving of millions of lives due to cardiology to the ridiculous notion that Christ's body is in a wafer as if it were real flesh and blood that Catholics eat like cannibals at a symbolic ceremonial feast or wedding called the "Eucharist". The creation of the fiction of Christ's transcendental body produced the frightful result that ordinary human bodies were reduced to the "vessel of sin" that priests loved to speak of. Our bodies are all that we have and what, in fact we are, and the heritage of the abusive Christian idea of the body has helped kill people and hurt many others . The Eucharistic rite is a placebo ceremony that has never conclusively "saved" anybody. What it does is attempt to put the Church ideology inside people's bodies, and that is what Schuon was trying to do too, both in his mantric invocations and in his attempt to get others to worship his body as a "healing of the wombs". In various ways all the religions try to coopt the body as a locus of their power and control.

Many academics in the humanities are careerists and do not have to justify their beliefs by any sort of criteria of evidence and peer review.

What is needed is a much more rigorous notion of inquiry in the humanities, with much more critical views of human centered perceptions. The notion that the religious view of reality are somehow equal to science is nonsense. Thus, even the supposed exegetes of Traditionalism, like Sedgwick, are out in the ozone when it comes to science. Post-modernists like Sedgwick seek to diminish science to nothing more than just one among many competing narratives, all equally valid. This foolishness has no evidence to support it. None of the traditionalist has made any efforts to understand Guenon and his followers in relation to the actuality and reality of the world that science describes so well.

This hatred of evidence and fact is in the writings of the Brazilian Traditionalist Mateus Soares de Azevedo, for instance. Azevedo ought to be devoting all this energies to stopping the wholesale destruction of the Amazon Rainforest by his country and working with biologists to catalogue the disappearing species. Brazil is one of the biggest contributors to global warming because they burn down the rain forest at alarming rates, causing the weather patterns of the equatorial regions to change. They are also at the top of the list of countries that abuse and export animals in the animal trade. Parrots and Macaws are going extinct because of their negligence and cruelty. Instead, Azevedo wastes his life trying to support religious reactionaries and backwards creationists. That is good for the greedy destroyers of forest in his country but bad for all the species being killed. Azevedo flatters the dead Schuon and has evidently joined the little rag tag group of fanatics and survivalists that is left of the Schuon cult. Azevedo is a classic cult follower whose passionate and emotional attachment to a particular fictional viewpoint or perspective coupled with the automatic dismissal of all other views makes him a Schuonian fundamentalist. Virtually everything he has to say is born of the Schuon cult and Schuon followers Nasr, Oldmeadow and others. In his book, Fundamentalism in Islam, Christianity, and

Modern Thought, Azevedo imagines that Darwin is a fundamentalist and further imagines Schuon was an opened minded man. This is humorous and shows that he doesn't know anything about Schuon and hasn't read Darwin. His book is an attempt to revive credibility for the broken and dying world of traditionalist fundamentalism. As Legenhausen ( see above) has rightly pointed out, traditionalist thought is even more fundamentalist than the Taliban, the fanatical group of far right Muslims that ruled Afghanistan for years, terrorizing women and keeping girls from going to school. Azevedo writes that he admires the reactionary religion of those who deny Vatican 2. Those who deny the modernization fo the catholic Church are throw backs to aristocracy, creationism and the theofascism of Innocent III. His is an extreme case of fundamentalist reaction. This is an hypocritical and anti-science book allied closely with creationist and fundamentalism. Like other religious conservatives Azevedo would like to live in the darkness of dogmatism and deny the science that gave us the light bulb.

### **3. Science Defeats Fundamentalism and Traditionalism**

Fundamentalism is a reality construction--- a fiction---, unlike science, which is factual, non- fiction and not, in the main, a “reality construction”. Fundamentalism is a strict adherence to specific theological doctrines typically in reaction against science and enlightenment. Theological doctrines are merely the encrusted fantasy of ruling castes or elites who codified their world view in dogmatic pronouncements. Schuon was in favor of most forms of theological conservatism and hated science and modernism. Robert Lifton refers to this as “ideological Totalism”, which is what Schuon's system is, as a form of ‘fundamentalist totalism’. Azevedo follows the general pattern of the Schuon cult and likes to accuse others of what he is. He is a fundamentalist. He falsely claims that Richard Dawkins is a fundamentalist. He erroneously claims there is a “science

fundamentalism”.

The notion of that there is such a thing as an "atheist fundamentalist" is "a silly play upon words," says Sam Harris. Harris notes that "when it comes to the ancient Greek gods, everyone is an atheist and no one is asked to justify that to pagans who want to believe in Zeus." <sup>1205</sup>Azevedo is a far right Christian fanatic and Schuon groupie whose god is as questionable as Greek gods. Obviously, Azevedo understands little about science. As Dawkins has said

“We believe in evolution because the evidence supports it, and we would abandon it overnight if new evidence arose to dispute it. No real fundamentalist would ever say anything like that”

There are miles and reams of papers written in factual support of evolution, but virtually nothing of substance written on the factual life of Christ, who probably did not exist. There is not a shred of proof that he did exist. The many Gospels are probably fabricated. Certainly, there are those who have abused science, be they polluters, poisoners of the oceans, pharmaceutical companies or the makers of the atom bomb, and it could be said they are part of what been called “Big Science”. In service of Big Science some companies like Fizer or others have been found to write bogus papers and cheat on clinical trials. Since this company deals drugs it would not be entirely mistaken to call them drug dealers or perhaps glorified drug dealers. They work with CIA-like secrecy, as well as government protection, to protect their brands. Heads of banks and

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<sup>1205</sup> The term “atheist “ has many absurd features. Why should one who does not believe in a fictional god have to be defined as something negative?. Theism is the absurdity, not those who refuse to bow to the gods. People who believe in Santa absurdly feel they have the right to try to impose this absurdity on everyone. The same is true of Jesus or Buddha. This willingness to believe the absurd is no doubt a function of the social self which grew up as a survival mechanism in ancient times. Children or the young will believe the absurdity put out by the elders, just because they are elder. Atheism is misnamed, it really is just a normal way of seeing the world without fictions.

oil company executives, write legislation against global warming submitted by congressman to Congress, in acts of corruption. Oil and coal corporations have spent millions lying about Global Warming to the public as Naomi Klein shows in her books. But bad science is not science, nor is a corrupt democracy good government. Science is not about cheating or faking evidence. A fundamentalist is a man who had a blind obedience to scriptures regardless of evidence. As Cowboy capitalists, particularly Republicans tend to be fundamentalist in a similar way: they pursue their dream of ultimate wealth no matter what people say or how anyone suffers what those react. Chomsky, not without reason, calls them “the most dangerous institution in human history” because they threaten the planet not only with endless greed, but with nuclear war and global warming. Recently I wrote down some basic principles of the Republican Party and they indicate a party of decadent destroyers and greedy inequality mongers who should have never been allowed to have any power at all:

## **IMMORAL REPUBLICAN PRINCIPLES**

**by Mark Koslow**

We are not Skeletons<sup>1206</sup> but men and women of the Corporate Towers telling the toadies of Congress and the Executive and Supreme Court what to do. We are men of white power and wealth, driving our fast

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<sup>1206</sup> This refers to the poem of Allen Ginsberg, and here I am trying to write a more accurate account than Ginsberg did about the Right side of the ultra rich, and their cronies the Congress, White House and of the the Courts. Seeing these men and a few women as skeletons is not only funny, but accurate as they do not represent the American public at all, but rather the upper class interests of the ultra rich. They also are like the caricatures done by Honore Daumier, or Ken Russell's depiction of the House of Lords in the Ruling Class. Decadent skeletons serving the most corrupt parts of society in return for power and wealth. It is a disgusting thing, rightly using the most repulsive imagery. Their socks full of Merde, their mouths with lies, blood sucking vampires of what was once democracy.

commercial cars, or limmos around the belt ways of the great cities of  
exceptional America,  
The world belong to us, the upper class,  
forget everyone else  
get rid of democracy.  
Deny global warming and all relevant facts  
Forbid regulations,  
CEOs must be free to destroy the world for their grandkids.  
Only the rich matter, do not waste money on your kids.  
Freedom for CEO's everyone else in chains.  
Don't let them know CEO's  
are arbitrary dictators who hate democracy.  
Steal from the poor, give to the rich.  
Claim to be Christain, they do the opposite.  
No health care just wealth care.  
We have the right to our own money  
even if we stole it from our workers.  
Play golf on Wednesday, other days pretend you are working.  
We do not want to be taxed or to help poor idiots.  
Who did not inherit as we did.  
Abolish all estate taxes for the rich.  
The poor made our fortunes on their backs,  
with their hands,  
so tax them into poverty.  
Break down all government  
that helps the poor and middle class.  
We want no democracy for them.  
We are the aristocrats of ignorance.  
Ours in the arrogance of ignorance.  
We love the ignorant who vote for us.

We hate science.  
Government is only for the rich.  
Their suffering poverty is their own fault.  
Even Jesus said ‘the poor you always have with you.’  
Slaves need to “obey their masters” and we call that  
“employment at will”, meaning at our will,  
which means workers have no rights,  
only the CEO has rights.  
We have no “merit” and do little or nothing  
and call that hard work.  
“ we make money the old fashion way, we earn it”  
but only on commercials.  
Playing golf is hard work.  
Take lots of vacations at their expense.  
We have destroyed the American dream.  
The best of us are fascists at heart.  
So we must exploit terror threats,  
push guns which kill students in colleges,  
poor people in ghettos.  
Exploit kids by making them slaves of debt,  
Create “standards” in education to disempower teachers.  
Turn schools into factories for administrator profits.  
Turn students into indentured servants of banks.  
Let business take over colleges and education to eliminate free inquiry.  
No critical thinking or free inquiry allowed.  
Ape the views of the CEO, imitate of the Masters of Finance  
After all they too, profit from recessions and disasters.  
When a hurricane or earthquake hits,  
pulverize and pull out their eyes, privatize,  
“disaster capitalism” is where it is at.

Destroy the humanities which foster critical thinking  
Exploit the elderly in litigation free nursing homes, LLC,  
drug those sad sacks of bones into oblivion,  
Help drug companies gouge everyone, especially the old and sick,  
Tax breaks for the rich before all social programs.  
Exploit the sick while hospital administrators,  
insurance CEOs and doctors get rich.  
Give Socialist bailouts to banks and boardrooms of the rich,  
destroy all unions for the poor.  
No one cares that they did all the work that made our wealth.  
We do nothing and make more so we pay them less.  
Scapegoat immigrants, and brown skinned people,  
Try to keep women in their place,  
stop affirmative action for blacks  
and throw out the hordes coming over the border.  
Tax the middle class, above all, give Tax breaks to the rich.  
Promote bogus trickle down theory,  
which tinkles down, like urine, on the middle class.  
Cruel free market capitalism for the poor and middle classes  
while socialism is only for the rich.  
Kill unions at home while you bail out corrupt CEOs and banks.  
Send jobs overseas to be done by virtually slave labor, in China, India,  
Mexico...  
with no environmental regulations, or unions allowed.  
Lie and call corporations “persons”  
so only they have superior rights.  
Equate speech with money so only the rich can talk.  
They say “CEO’s are un-American and should be deported”,  
we must lie about that and deport Mexicans instead.  
Oppose the truth.  
Destroy democracy by fostering hate of government,

so business rules and everything is privatized.  
Create top down corporate autocracy  
with psychopathic CEOs on top.  
Steal worker's pensions for the rich.  
Steal Social Security savings  
and give hard earned money to the rich.  
Wall Street is run by computers for our benefit.  
Let corporations pay few taxes  
while the middle class pays most  
Let corporations put 35 trillion of untaxed money  
in offshore banks.  
Lie about everything, call these lies "alternative facts".  
Distract people with the Flag, Crosses and abortion,  
while you promote wars, religious ignorance, superstition and 'Gsus'.  
Encourage overpopulation—more workers to exploit.  
Deny evolution, so humans are superior to all other animals.  
Support more pollution,  
Create more global warming  
Deny global warming so oil and coal CEOs can profit,  
Support speciesism and endanger more animals,  
Oppose nature's rights:  
cut trees,  
Kill "weeds" with Monsanto products  
and let Monarch butterflies become endangered  
kill insects, frogs and bees with glyphosate.  
Have Congress only represent corporate interests  
have government only represent corporate persons, never citizens.  
Destroy National Monuments and give the land  
to oil companies to ruin the beauty.  
Convince as many as possible not to vote.  
If that fails, Gerrymander, or redraw districts, so republicans win,

to get rid of those who care about people..  
Cheat if necessary, as in the year 2000.  
Give public airwaves to private monopolies,  
encourage right wing radio and vapid scary TV  
that never has a social message.  
Let businessmen psychopaths become presidents.  
Assassinate people you do not like with drone missiles,  
forget the right to a trial.  
CEO dynasties matter, ordinary people are nobody.  
Close down government and stymie congress whenever possible.  
Control Supreme Court with right wing appointments  
who pass laws that let the rich control elections.  
Create an aristocracy of conscienceless greed.  
Uphold them as examples for the poor.  
Be part car salesman, charlatan and part thug,  
but pretend we are the beneficent chosen.  
Use propaganda to convince everyone this autocracy is good  
and really is democracy, even though that is a lie. <sup>[1]</sup>  
Lie all the time, create false news.  
Take their money  
while you give them choices that mean nothing,  
like choosing a religion, a cell phone,  
a computer site, TV channel  
or your favorite advertisement.

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<sup>[1]</sup> I wrote this as a mediation on a costume I was going to wear door to door when we went trick-or-treating with our kids. I was going to be a republican in satire. My kids would not let me and my 6 year old said, "it would be against your nature". So I did not do it, but I wrote down what I was thinking to put on the clothes. Shortened versions of some of the phrases were going to be put on the business suit and my hair would be greased down like old style Republicans. I would look like a businessman covered in my thoughts.

The planet is being ruined and millions led to suffer by profiteers, irrational deniers of global warming. Hardly anyone questions banks, CEO culture, oil energy or the gods that support corporations. Far from being fundamentalists, “atheists” are those who support what the Republicans deny. The atheists are actually are reasonists, naturalists or realists as opposed to delusional irrationalists. They are people who have a commitment to exploring evidence, and a readiness to embrace change. Science done properly is the opposite of fundamentalism, and has little to do with far right religion, corrupt Congress, the WTO or oil executives.

Azevedo could have saved himself embarrassment and trouble if he had just read Richard Dawkins excellent chapter “Fundamentalism and the Subversion of Science” in his book The God Delusion. Dawkins points out that he is a scientist not because he follows dogmas in books like the Bible or Koran but because “ I have studied the evidence”. <sup>1207</sup> He says “I am hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise” . He also notes that the Afghan Taliban resembles the American Taliban (i.e. Christian Fundamentalists) in that both share the same “narrow bigotry, heartless cruelty and sheer nastiness”. <sup>1208</sup> The Schuon cult has similar dogmatic beliefs in Schuon’s divinity and in the spurious religion of “gnosis”. The religious values Azevedo tries to propagandize in his writings on Schuon and other traditionalists are based on no real evidence, but merely subjective dogmas, inherited fictions and cult inspired irrational enthusiasms. The Schuon cult is all about adulation of Schuon as Big Brother of their thoughts. For them Schuon is the Mao of the Major Religions. Religious values are based on superstitions. They are incoherent, unreasonable

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<sup>1207</sup> Dawkins, Richard. The God Delusion. NY, Houghton Mifflin. 2006. page282

<sup>1208</sup> Ibid, pg.288. The Taliban in Pakistan recently murdered 100 children and 47 workers in a school. They were opposed to them learning anything other than the Koran and the Sharia. (Dec. 2014)

and valuable only to priests, cults and their deluded followers. Science on the other hand demands something much more accurate and well observed, more rigorous than mere superstition and irrational belief. To really understand scientifically you have to go outside and look. It is not good reading Thomas Aquinas, he gives you nothing. You have to watch the facts of the world, immerse yourself in them. Scientists have an accurate and precise standard of objective and testable evidence, as informed as possible by study and the scientific method. There is nothing like this in religion, which rejects that its theses be tested or falsified by review or even questioned. Dawkins notes that those who accuse him a fundamentalism are not used to being criticized. He says:

“The illusion of intemperance [ in Dawkins’s book the God Delusion] flows from the unspoken convention that faith is uniquely privileged: off limits to attack. In a criticism of religion, even clarity ceases to be a virtue and begins to sound like aggressive hostility.” <sup>1209</sup>

Dawkins is right, religion pretends to be immune to criticism. It is a self-serving system of rationalizations of falsehoods. When one rationalization fails another is offered. Many people are afraid of the fiction of hell. Others fear of speaking ill of fictional inventions like Muhammad or Christ, whose absurd visions and miracles never happened. Large groups of irrational people are scary. Muslim hoards, right wing Christians, or Jews in Gaza with automatic rifles or the Schuon cult in Bloomington, Indiana with endless money and lawyers are all groups of fundamentalists willing to kill, sue or harm others for their fictitious beliefs. Yet, absurdly, religion is defined as a private right in the Constitution, so anyone can believe any nonsense they wish and the

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<sup>1209</sup> <http://richarddawkins.net/articles/1071>

state will protect this nonsense. The separation of Church and state is always under attack by religions who want to create an American corporate, Christian theocracy, not too different than the white supremacist state longed for by the KKK. Trade agreements, like GATT, NAFTA or TPP are written in secret, and help spread the corporate takeover of the earth, spreading corporate power to every nation, making workers into powerless puppets of CEO greed. What should be supported is a separation of corporations and the state.

The Schuon cult and other cults, survive only by being very secretive. Secrecy increases abuses, encourages unethical behavior, protects those who are selfish or who mean harm, and acts to increase the likelihood of distrust, resistance, conflict and war. If people knew all the nonsense that goes on in destructive government offices, cults or corporate boardrooms they would be closed down immediately. But once bad governments, bad corporations or fundamentalist fanatics cross the line and pander their delusions in public they are fair game. They do all they can to destroy freedom of speech, but secrets have a way of coming out and few groups succeed in concealing the harm they do for long.

Those who say science is a fundamentalism understand neither science nor fundamentalism. Mindless followers of a cult leader are unable to think for himself or to look at evidence, though many end up leaving such organizations or rebelling against it. Secrecy produces whistleblowers who want to tell the truth. I know, as I was exposed to countless secrets about the Schuon cult and exposed them over a number of years. I further was forced to watch their cover up attempts and lies, once the truth was out about them.

I got to know the Traditionalists pretty well and they were fanatics at secrecy. They also pride themselves on their ignorance and call it a virtue. The Schuon cult is likewise not open to any sort of critical thinking. It is a cult or a totalistic system of irrational believers which does not allow any freedom of thought. Schuon claimed to be both

beyond fundamentalism and to be anti-science, as well as infallible and that is supposed to end all discussion. Actually Schuon was a fundamentalist about himself—I mean that his claim to infallibility rests on nothing other than empty assertion of his own subjective delusions. He claims on the basis of the fabricated and mystified notion of the “intellect” to be god or an incarnation of god. From this irrational nonsense is born Schuon’s hatred of science. The hatred of science proves his ignorant rebellion against reason and the rules of evidence. Resisting the evidence of science is itself evidence of clinging to subjective delusions.

When I really started measuring Guenon and the traditionalists against objective criteria, I began to see how insane and decadent these men, and their defenders, really were. So I looked long and hard and how they thought of science, and figured out that they are not just mistaken about it, but are vacant of real knowledge, as well as self-destructive. Science is the great adventure of the last 500 years. To seek to destroy or subvert it is not just closed-minded, but inhumane and insane. Religion is in decadent decline, as the Schuon cult itself proves, and has contributed nothing to our culture in the last few hundred years. The followers and exegetes of Guenon are really ‘out there’, not as galaxies are, indeed, really out there, but ‘out there’ in the sense of deluded in a mental impairment that is self-destructive. The hatred of rationality is real and renders them delusional in their devotion to irrational superstitions.

When it comes to science, Frithjof Schuon, Rama Coomaraswamy, Rene Guenon were ignorant men, as ignorant as the creationists. It is hard to say this fact any other way. Their abysmal refusal to inquire into what has been learned in recent centuries is a testament to their arrogant ignorance. Guenon claims that ‘Metaphysics is what is beyond , and is therefore supernatural.’ This is merely circular reasoning based

on false premises. There is nothing supernatural in Guenon or his followers---- I could see that well enough for myself with my own eyes. The followers of Guenon and Schuon merely indulge in adult make believe.

Guenon claims that science is rational knowledge, and rational knowledge is “indirect knowledge”. But this is dead wrong. Science gives us direct knowledge and religion merely inflated fantasy and indirect intuitions that have little or no evidence to back them up. Guenon claims that reason is a strictly human faculty and the “Intellect” and the Intellect is therefore beyond the human, “beyond reason”. In other words he claims to be in touch with superhuman Truth that is beyond humanity. One is supposed to believe his little formulas of “Truth” But this too is merely pathologically subjective bravado. There is no faculty called the “divine intellect” . The “Intellect” is that is merely a fictive faculty invented to exalt men like Schuon and Guenon. There is no truth to any of Guenon’s fantasies.

The more I looked into this the more I felt how ridiculous the implacable certainties of the Traditionalists are. Guenon had some training in Mathematics. <sup>1210</sup> But Math is not science. There are many

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<sup>1210</sup> Guenon’s view of Mathematics should be studied more critically than it has been. I will indicate some of its vacuity here: He subscribed to a basically medieval notion of math which is symbolist, Platonic and metaphysical. Such medieval notions of math were discredited long ago. Such views of math are held by very few nowadays, for many good reasons. The belief that math is in some measure a human construction born of an attempt to understand the actual, physical world is a more prevalent and more accurate view. This is not to say that math does not correspond to real things. Four apples are indeed four apples. Guenon’s background in math and his weakness in science led him to many false conclusions. Guenon wrote a book on Principles of Infinitesimal Calculus and his writings are full of medieval notions of mathematical symbolism. Various Guenonian and Schuonians I have met have speculated that post- modern mathematical systems, such as Laws of Form, by G. Spencer Brown, might reflect Guenonian values. Wolfgang Smith has tried to adapt some of Guenon’s ideas to physics, with very questionable results. Quantum mechanics does not reflect the ideology of Thomas Aquinas and the Catholic Church as Smith imagines. Guenon’s attempt to advance metaphysical distinction between the infinite thing and of the indefinite thing and demonstrate the difference between a traditional science and a

mathematicians who don't know anything about science. A number of traditionalists are mathematicians and their understanding of science is as wrongheaded and shallow as Guenon. <sup>1211</sup> Guenon's effort create a foundation for math upon his fictional metaphysical ideology fails at every point. He had no real understanding of science at all. His whole notion of science leading to debasement, "dissolution" and "solidification" and a "Great Parody" finally arising to try to destroy tradition is utter nonsense, mere propagandistic fiction, born of a twisted Manichean <sup>1212</sup> ideology that falls back to medieval dogmas. He has it all backwards. The truth is that science, real science of the sort Galileo, Harvey or Mendel did, renders the weight of life lighter. It has improved our condition on earth in ways that are still unreckoned. It brought about the 'enlightenment', which has brought real improvements to the lives of people on earth. What good will come in the future will also be from science, not from religion.

A. J. Ayer was largely right when he said that "Everything that cannot be verified by the method of science is meaningless." Science is a rarefied and sophisticated use of reason. He should have softened this rather doctrinaire statement by replacing 'meaningless' with 'questionable'. There is meaning outside science, in poetry and art and in all that science does not yet understand, but the further you get from science the more ignorance and myth, falsehoods and superstition take over. Indeed, most of what is valuable in art and poetry is based on accurate observation and is close to science in one way or another. By

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"profane" science is very pretentious and spurious. For more on this see below

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<sup>1211</sup> I'm referring to Denis Constaes and Wolfgang Smith here

<sup>1212</sup> Manichean ideology is common and wherever it occurs it is political. It is the tendency to create black and white thinking splitting the world into good and evil, which are always political categories. One can see this absurd way of thinking in most religions, as well as Dante, Michelangelo, Star Wars, the Lord of the Rings, Jesus, Savorola, Stalin, Hitler, the "clash of civilizations", and many other places. It is just this sloppy and dangerous thinking that creates wars, social strife, racism and caste obsessions.

this I mean mostly realism, not abstract things, which are hopelessly subjective with perhaps a few exceptions, Klee's poetic humor, Kandinsky's bright and poetic color shapes, for instance. But in general abstraction is a failure pushed by critics, museums and galleries. They all made a huge mistake. That is why it is very important to stay close to science in all one's studies, even in art and poetry and even if one is studying, say, the history of religions. <sup>1213</sup>

Progress is not evil as Guenon imagines, on the contrary. There has been extraordinary progress since Aquinas or Plato. Most of what is called science was done in ancient times by ordinary people. They invented simple machines and pottery, houses, metallurgy, candles, and boats. The origins of science are also to be found first in the Greeks and Romans, among Thales, Archimedes, Aristotle Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, and many others. Originally known as Gerbert of Aurillac, later called Pope Sylvester II or Silvester II (c. 946 – 12 May 1003) was Pope from April 999 to his death in 1003. He was an amazing man and incorporated many Islamic science and math ideas from Spain which were largely restatements of Greek science and maths. He also did translations of Boethius and Aristotle. Abelard began to question the validity of Platonic ideas in the 1200's, C.E.. Aristotle's proto-scientific skepticism began to erode both Platonism and the Church in the 1300's. Indeed, the Church so feared Aristotle that they had to declare in 1277 that "God's absolute power" transcended any principles of logic that Aristotle or anyone else might place on it. In fact, "God's absolute power" is nothing other than the Church itself, which was running its mechanism on a lot of hot air. The condemnations of 1277 were

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<sup>1213</sup> The history of poetry is largely the history of devotion to irrationality and systems of power in institutions. Ovid writes in praise of Augustus, Dante writes to glorify medieval dogmas and fictions of the Catholic Church, Ezra Pound glorifies Mussolini, Hirschman tries to glorify Stalin, Rumi glorifies the Muslim state and non-existent beloved "Beyond". Even Allen Ginsberg's Buddhism is romantic nonsense.

extensive and imply that the growth of science was well underway that early. Indeed, the “219 execrable errors”, that were not errors at all, condemned at the time mostly are about Aristotle’s ideas. So one can cite Aristotle as one of the forces that propelled the origins of science and buried the Medieval superstitions. This obvious power play of the 219 condemnations of 1277, even damaged Aquinas reputation, the Church thereby shooting itself in the foot again. Aristotle was a bad choice for the Church and ultimately discredited the whole institution, for the betterment of all, it turned out. One thanks Aristotle, as it was his attempt to be accurate and observe that made all the difference.



William of Occam

The Church failed so miserably in the Crusades, killing a million or more people, that it lost a lot of credibility. The Church had become little more than a mercenary cult, and a taxing agency, selling fake “Indulgences” as expensive tickets to suffer less in “purgatory” in the

“afterlife”.<sup>1214</sup> Few could fail to see how corrupt the Church was. In today’s world the Church is like our corporations, which seek to keep polluting by buying carbon offsets, usually in poor countries, so that they can keep emitting toxic chemicals into the atmosphere. Insurance is one of the most corrupt businesses on the planet. It exists mostly to make sure the establishment loses as little as possible so that everyone else pays the price of their disasters. The insurance companies have their origin partly in the slave trade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The carbon credit system as well as the socialist bailing out of corrupt corporations are like the sale of indulgences and involve a similar corruption and magical thinking, enabling the rich to keep doing harm while pretending they are doing good. Anyone with any sense sought reform or rebellion against the Church of those days, just as today stopping corporations from destroying our earth is imperative to anyone honest and good.

The Catholic Church proved its impotence when it could do nothing effective about the plague, which may have killed up to 100 million people. The best known and perhaps worst of the Plagues was in 1347, when there were very high death rates which ironically give the poor greater power, as workers were scarce. This temporary lessening of suffering for the poor would help science and democracy quite a bit. But there were many outbreaks over several centuries. It became plain that if humans were to be free of the horrors around them it will have to be through evidence and the pursuit of fact. The Church opposed this free inquiry and there are many legal impediments put up against it. Those in

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<sup>1214</sup> The sale of indulgences prefigures the corruption of today’s insurance companies. Insurance corporations like the Catholic Church, got their start in profiting from the risks of others. Some of the first insurance companies speculate on slave ships and their bloody cargo. Insurance companies were developed so that the rich would not have to take risks, just as the sale of Indulgences insured that the rich would not go to “hell”. There is as yet no Martin Luther or protestant rebellion condemning the evil of insurance companies in the U.S. Other countries have wisely thrown them out of health care, recognizing how parasitical and harmful they are. But the US is addicted to that and many other kinds of corruptions that keep the rich going.

power want inequality and for those who have too much, usually acquired by very questionable means, to keep it.

The scholastics like Aquinas (1225 –1274) had tried to rationalize Aristotle as a Churchman, but clearly something better than dogma was needed to find out what nature was really doing. The fatal misunderstanding of Aristotle would lead to the crack up of the Aquinas vision of reality and the rise of science. The fictions of religion began to be addressed by such men as Roger Bacon, William of Occam (1288 – c. 1348), Da Vinci, Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes. However much the latter two men may be questionable, and they are, they still deserve credit for advancing the experimental method.

Occam was a pioneer of nominalism and argued against the Platonic position that held that supra-individual universals, essences, or “Platonic forms” are real. In any case, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 decided the issue of the Church's stand on the subject of universals and this was reinforced by Trent. This subject was the central philosophical issue of the Middle Ages. The Church decided in favor of the Realist position, more or less, rather than the Nominalist position. The Realist position was essentially Platonic, and summarized in the Scholastic formula, **Universalis Ante Rem**; the universal is prior to the particular thing, or the idea comes before the physical. In the philosophy of Aquinas and others, a more Aristotelian concept of universals would be combined, rather ambiguously, with the Platonic position. It was this ambiguity that led to the Realist/Nominalist controversy over the subject of universals and made the question of universals central to the controversy over the nature of the eucharist.

The Nominalist attacked this very ambiguity, since it was by no means clear how Christ could enter the Eucharistic host and become one with its substance without being contained also in its material substance. The Nominalists asked how Christ could become bread and wine when the bread and wine were not literally Christ. The standard

reaction of the Church, as far back as St. Paul and Augustine, was that this paradox was a great mystery and it would be a grave sin, indeed perhaps the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost itself, to question this divine mystery. How convenient. This mystagogic, obscurantist strategy was effective, but appealed more to fear than reason. The Church of this time was fast becoming the central and totalistic power over the entire European continent, while yet the recent translation of Aristotle and new economic benefits had encouraged many to try to reason for themselves. Thus, even while the Church was trying to use reason to justify its power and legitimacy, which was based on the Eucharist, others were using this same reason to question the authority of the Church and bring into question the Eucharist.

As I discussed in a previous chapter, the Nominalist position, at least in its clearer forms, as in Berengar (c.999-1088), Rocellinus(c.1050-1131) and William of Occam(d.1347) was derived almost entirely from Aristotle, and tended deny the reality of the Platonic universals, claiming universals were conceptual abstractions from particular things. Thus the Nominalists claimed the opposite of the realists and in the corresponding scholastic formula, claimed that “**Universalia Post Rem**”—or universals come after things. <sup>1215</sup>It is this latter view that is obviously the true one, though, it can be stated that that was not easy to know in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Nominalist position formed the conceptual basis of what would become science. This is not to say that Nominalism was a scientific position, rather it expressed the possibility in idea form of what would become science in practice two centuries later, between the period of Roger and Francis Bacon, Da Vinci, Galileo and Newton.

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<sup>1215</sup> ( Sartre would later express this as “existence precedes essence” which is obviously true.

In practical terms the origin of science is not just in these rather intellectual ideas, but even moreso in the recognition of the inequality of the rich and poor. The unfairness of the economic hierarchy began to be understood in the 1300's. John Ball was an Englishman living in the late 1300's after the Plague had killed millions. He helped foster the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. This was the origin of many revolts to come. John Ball made the same demands in 1381 as Thomas Rainsborough would enunciate during the English Civil War in the 1640's. Rainsborough said " I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he". Tom Paine would later say much the same thing, as would Henry David Thoreau, Bertrand Russell and many others up till today. Gandhi's Hindu religion is more or less irrelevant to his use of Thoreau's notion of "civil disobedience". The same is true of the Protestant religion of M.L. King, which also originated with Thoreau's ideas, not religion. Both men connected Thoreau's ideas to their religions. But that scarcely matters now.

These matters are fairly complex so I will try to simplify it here. Gandhi was trying to negate the overwhelming influence of the Moslem-Hindu conflict in India that resulted in the separation of Moslem Pakistan and Bangladesh from Hindu India. Gandhi wanted a civil society that put religion to the side. He opposed the Moslem- Hindu rift that took place in 1948. This required making his idea of non violent resistance ever more 'secular' which is what it was to begin with. It was Thoreau's idea, though Thoreau is ambiguous about it, sometimes putting forward a non-violent notion of civil disobedience and sometimes he wanted to actively destroy Dams to save fish, for instance.<sup>1216</sup> Let yourself be a

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<sup>1216</sup> The idea of destroying infrastructure like Dams is behind Edward Abbey's notion of destroying Dams, as he explains in the Monkey Wrench Gang and elsewhere. Abbey's effort to undermine spirituality is interesting. There are also leftist religious mystics who have interest as secular reformers. Ernesto Cardenal is one of these, a Trappist who was deeply involved in teaching people to read and think during the Nicaraguan effort to make itself a good country, a desire that was ridiculously opposed by the US, which is often on the wrong side of things. The Nicaraguans managed to increase the literacy rate of their country by over 90%. Not a small

counter fiction to the machine”, he wrote, really defining the character of the non-violent resistance movement. Later, Thoreau gives up his idea of non violent resistance in his support of John Brown’s bloody fight against slavery.. Both Gandhi and King kept with the non violent part of Henry’s thinking, which is the part that got Henry thrown in jail for a night for not paying taxes that would support the slave state. Gandhi is the most ‘pure’ of these men as far as non violence goes. The murder of Gandhi by a Hindu nationalist is a crime that sheds some negative light on the Koranic endorsement of violence as a mandate encouraged by religion. The partition of India into two nations is what killed Gandhi, and this is the fault of both Muslims and Hindus. A Hindu killed a really good man, one of the best of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The idea of pacifism and non-violence are easily adapted to just about any belief system. The belief systems do not matter, except as a sort of fictional support. But the affinity with science is deep and logical. Once one understands the basic realities of DNA and life, the structures in the forms of all animals, as well as the fragility of our earth, non violence becomes a logical outcome. What matters an understanding of humankind as a having a tendency to kill and cause wars. Stopping this requires great strength and courage of a kind that is rare in people, such

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achievement.

Andrei Sakharov, (1921-1989) was a Russian dissident, who was a maker of bombs, but became a pacifist and non violent resister. J. Robert Oppenheimer took this route somewhat too, rather tragically both for him and his family.

Another figure, somewhat similar to Gandhi, thought much more prone to superstition, and a Moslem, was Amadou Bomba (d. 1927), A Senegalese Sufi, who spent most of his life in prison or exile, brought about by the colonialism of France, which silenced him by keeping him locked up or under house arrest. The religion around Bomba is excessive and prone to fictions in the extreme, including rather ridiculous stories about miracles he is supposed to have enacted. He was a world denying mystic and that is unfortunate, though in his case one can see why. But like King and Gandhi he joined his non violence resistance to a ‘spiritual’ message, and now the spiritual message seems irrelevant and fictional, but the non violence remains. Bomba is a hero in Senegal, and much mythologized. Even the traditionalists try to use him as a sort of advertisement. Uses of such men as a spiritual advert should be resisted.

as Gandhi showed. Science is study of reality, not of fictions and it implies a general fairness in economy as well as a socialist idea—an idea that is not Marxist and which includes everyone, including animals, trees, seas and nature. Darwin grasped this, as did the later Thoreau and others. Non violence is often an adjunct to science, part of this.

Science grows out of this rejection of Platonism and universals. Occam's Razor was the idea that one should not "multiply entities beyond necessity" which was certainly necessary in a time when Aquinas' Summa Theologica helped create a plethora of Church doctrines which hardly anyone could entirely understand or count. This "reductionism" was a good thing and resulted eventually in Descartes' call for "clear and distinct ideas" and this leads us to a reason and eventually science. Occam was excommunicated from the increasingly corrupt Church, to his credit, and took refuge in the Germanic states, where the Protestant rebellion would eventually flower.

Bertrand Russell states of Occam that because of his insistence of "studying logic and human knowledge without reference to theology and metaphysics, Occam's work encouraged scientific research.<sup>1217</sup> Da Vinci of course, is really the first fully developed scientist, far ahead of his time in so many things. One need only read his amazing notebooks with some care to see that the scientific mentality of reliance on experiment is already well formed in Leonardo. Science really begins in art and not in language and poetry, which are too close to religion. Indeed, Leonardo does not speak well of poetry and I daresay he might be right about it in some ways. Leonardo worked with math and applied it to the motions of

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<sup>1217</sup> See Russell, History of Philosophy page 475. See also the chapters on the "Eclipse of the Papacy" and "The Rise of Science" in this book which are all excellent. Indeed, I love this book and have been reading it since my teens. It has to be the best, clearest and most helpful history of philosophy ever written. See also Jean Gimpel's excellent, The Medieval Machine: the Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages. He shows how men like Villard de Honnecourt, Roger Bacon and Peter of Maricourt had a basically reason based and quasi scientific attitude in the 1200's. Roger Bacon corrected the Julian calendar and basically made the calendar we all use today. He should be given credit for it, but to my knowledge he never is.

water and air movement, flight and mechanics. He discovered some things about geology and had a sort of proto-theory of evolution. His studies of the human body were far ahead of his time.

Leonardo is an exception and a hundred years pass after his death before Francis Bacon and Descartes start formalizing the scientific method. Bacon is blamed, along with Descartes for being the father of “reductionism” but there is nothing wrong with reductionism particularly, if it is the delusions of myth and religion that are being reduced. Mysticism helps no one except escapists from reality. If the opposite of reductionism is holistic transcendentalism, I will gladly take reductionism, as the transcendent does not exist. If you examine for instance this sentence by Arthur Versluis:

Contemporary society is based on what we may call objectification, meaning that our investigations into and control of our world derives from our regarding all that surrounds us as objects to be manipulated, from which we believe that we are separate. -<sup>1218</sup>

This sentence is full of false and tacit suppositions. There is a notion that “union” with a deity is possible, which is ridiculous, Versluis has no evidence of this at all, no one does. Indeed, all evidence suggests such unions are fictitious. There is an assumption that scientists are separate from nature, and I do not know one who would say so. There is an assumption that subjectivity is somehow superior, which is unlikely, and there is an assumption that all humans want to do is manipulate objects, which is false and certainly false regarding our world. There are

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<sup>1218</sup> From Versluis Arthur, Restoring Paradise, pg 19  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/134215558/Arthur-Versluis-Restoring-Paradise-Western-Esotericism-Literature-Art-And-Consciousness>

people who objectify things, but not because of science. Business objectifies things for the sake of greed, true. But business is closer to religion than to science. There is no sin in making things simpler. Nor is there harm in studying and observing reality. Versluis is just plain wrong. Like the mystics of the time of the Fall of Rome or the Black Plague, he is an obscurantist, a repressive ideologist, who wants to reimpose ignorance on us all. The men of the 1300s silenced the growing science of Roger Bacon and others, and helped bring about a hundred years of darkness and lack of progress that only began again with the Renaissance.

Biology is not there to manipulate objects but to reflect upon and understand nature: paramecium, photosynthesis, Honeycreepers, viruses, Whale Sharks. Not that there is anything wrong with moving objects, even young children move objects with intentions. This is a tacit criticism of technology in Versluis's statement, when technology is neutral and depends on how and why someone uses it. A hammer is a great thing for driving in nails, not for bashing in heads. The human body itself is an amazingly complex and wonderful biological machine, as Leonardo well knew. Versluis' writing is full of falsity, caricatures and misunderstandings about science. He does this to try to vaunt his specious ideas about esoterica and mystical narcissism and denigrate science and objectivity. His ideas are great for escapist suburbanites and self-regarding college kids who want mystical highs, but there is little or no truth in what he says.

Since Descartes is a favourite philosopher to bash among new age spiritualists, esotericists, anti-materialists and "metaphysical" thinkers it might be useful to pause and digress here over various peoples misuse or abuse Descartes, from Guenon to Chomsky. Using Descartes as a whipping boy or as an excuse for dogmatism is a common theme in the last 75 years from Guenon to Gary Zukav and Chomsky. Some of these thinkers use him as an example of what is to be hated and others misuse

him as a shining star of their own delusions. I think the actual Descartes has his faults and is not an especially good example to follow either. But that said, with moderation, he must be credited importance to the history of science. Leonardo was also quite a good mathematician and had a better understanding of actual science than Descartes did. Indeed, it is a mistake to see Descartes as one of the founders of science when Leonardo understood it so much better a hundred years before Descartes

But there is much of value in Descartes. Recalling the Nazi Martin Heidegger's critique of the Cartesian ego, Guenon's abuse and hatred of Descartes is misguided. Rene Descartes is a common victim of religious minded New Agers and conservatives. He is blamed for all sorts of things he didn't do. Frithjof Capra, for instance, the writer of Tao of Physics is another who denigrates Descartes as a "reductionist", as if simplicity were a bad thing. Making things simpler is not a fault, but to be praised. Descartes devotion to 'clear and distinct ideas' tested against reality is very important. While Descartes has his faults, his drive to create a science based on observation and reason is not one of them. Indeed, I praise Descartes for his effort to find clear and simple truths. It has had great benefits on curing disease and solving technical problems in engineering and mechanics, art and biology.

But, whatever his faults Descartes did begin the process that led to science and this overall is a good, even for animals. Descartes was not at all the bad man and nor was he the beginning of the Kali Yuga as Guenon's fiction abusively implies. On the contrary. Descartes frames and summarizes the early scientific impulse marvelously well. He created a philosophy that helps impel science toward the future. For that he really is an important thinker. It is logical that a backward thinker like Guenon would hate him.

Chomsky's abuse of Descartes ideas are harder to explain and I

explore that in another essay later in this book. I include there a questioning of Descartes erroneous ideas on animals<sup>1219</sup>

So, Descartes and Bacon helped create science, in their several ways and very imperfectly. Bacon is merely following out the logic of Occam's Razor and the attempt of science to be clear and distinct in its search for evidence and fact. There is no fault there, though one can well understand why the obscurantists, esoterists, holists, New Agers and myth lovers would hate simplicity, and factuality. There has been an anti-science, anti-Enlightenment and anti-reason campaign by the far right since the 13th century nominalists began to question Aquinas, Platonism and the Church. The repressive right is always with us, shaking its nagging finger at us and insisting on hierarchy and the "rights" of the ultra rich to unjust wealth, spreading poverty and abuse

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<sup>1219</sup> ( see my next chapter on Chomsky and his linguistic theory as it relates to animals. To summarize here:

The consensus seems to be that Chomsky went astray by denying Darwin too much. He clung too heavily to Stephen Jay Gould and an irrational rationalism that had rejected too many aspects of empiricism and environmentalism in favor of a rationalistic formalism. This left Chomsky open to irrational ideas like thinking himself as a prophet of sorts. He extols 'mysteries', comes close to Platonism and flirts with bizarre ideas of the origins of language that tend to be non adaptationist.. Chomsky writes for instance that

He is trying to show that language may be an accident of brain development that might have intended the language parts of the brain for other uses. But it shows Chomsky's ignorance of nature. The growth of language might be like the development of rudimentary wings. These exist in flying Squirrels for instance, or ancient dinosaurs birds like Microraptor. Both gliders, these are very effective as flying mechanisms though far from being full-fledged wings as yet. There are other fossils that exhibit early flight. The 'language of birds or monkeys is certainly analogous to human communication in many ways., yet Chomsky bizarrely considers human language to not be about communications primarily. He is probably wrong here. It is hard to consider Chomsky a Darwinist, though he occasionally does show lip service to it, as he must. He theorizes about the evolution of the eye, though the dynamics of this are well plotted. But he has certainly refused to follow out all the Darwinian implications of language, staying strictly with a rather dogmatic genetic formalism which is not easily susceptible to scientific testing and inquiry,--- which is why it is right to question if he is a scientist at all. I hope that after Chomsky dies Darwinian theories of language will be pursued in earnest with much more research on animals. The ideas of Stephen Pinker are already doing this, however hesitantly.

ot get it. The rich want to give the poor slavery, low wages and mind numbing ideology or religion, which justifies the abasement of the poor in all sorts of absurd ways.

Savonarola, De Maistre, Guenon and other reactionary cranks have always opposed science and tend towards Platonism. Platonist ‘essences’ are subjective, personal and get into one’s emotions. That is what these science deniers love. It is fine if they wish to meditate, do Zen or bask in the glory of their inner light, but it is not fine when they try to impose this on everyone and deny facts and science. It took a long time for science to achieve the spectacular results it has given us since Da Vinci. It was not until the 19th century that the term scientist was created by the naturalist William Whewell. It is not until the industrial revolution and the late 19th century that science begins to change the face of society in a major way. The mix up of science with capitalism and communism has disastrous consequences in some cases, but all in all science a force for the good.

Quite apart from the fact that science is the study of things as they are and this has incalculable value---science has led to real and extremely valuable gains for people in almost every domain. Science has not led to ‘solidification’, “subversion” or “dissolution”, as Guenon claims. Indeed, it is Guenon who is the subversive, trying to destroy science and erect bogus and dead systems of knowledge as a ‘support’ for his hierarchical irrationalism and religious ideology. Some of his poorly expressed critiques of modern inhumanity have small grains of truth in them, but many have said this much better without all the paranoid theories and exaggerations, spiritual projections and magnified superstitions. Guenon was an Counter-Enlightenment reactionary, one

of hundreds, and as Darrin McMahon shows,<sup>1220</sup> the Counter-Enlightenment was an international, and thoroughly modern affair. Guenon is a modernist reactionary, despite his nostalgic, regressive ideology. His ideology serves the far right, which itself is the product of reaction to the Enlightenment.<sup>1221</sup> This fact is completely lost on his followers, who haven't a clue as to who they are reading or why. The Counter-Enlightenment is still with us and very powerful. It gives us creationism and the global warming deniers, among many others. It scarcely matters if Guenon is part of it or not. The far right serves power, and seeks in all cases to limit human rights, nature, democracy, freedom, equality and social justice. Opposing the ideals of the French, American and Scientific revolutions is what the traditional movement was always about.

Vaccines have saved millions, and the world is far better understood now than during the Dark Ages Guenon admired: life expectancies are much longer; child mortality is largely eliminated in western countries and much lowered elsewhere.<sup>1222</sup> Indeed, religion

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<sup>1220</sup> [Enemies of the Enlightenment](#)

[The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity.](#)

<sup>1221</sup> McMahon, Darrin, [Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity](#), Oxford 2002

he notes that these reactionaries included "militant clergy, members of the *parti d'etat*, unenlightened aristocrats, traditionalist *bourgeois*, Sorbonne censors, conservative *parlementaires*, recalcitrant journalists, and many others ... the so-called fanatics of the Enlightenment catechism" pg 6

One reviewer notes that "he also contradicts Isaiah Berlin's emphasis on Germany and philosophy, McMahon stresses the extent to which the Counter-Enlightenment was French and religious." Actually it was probably both French and German. And occurs in England, Holland and other countries as well.

<sup>1222</sup> An example of this is Schuon's ignorance of medicine and his foolish belief in homeopathy led to prolonged sufferings and an earlier death for Schuon according to Doctor Rama Coomaraswamy who knew a few things about cardiology. Rama told me Schuon's belief in homeopathy ( an utterly empty and fictitious form of medicine that has no proven advantage) led to Schuon having many heart events, which could have been avoided. Rama wrote me that " I also considered his attachment to homeopathy silly as this methodology only dates back to the

opposed progress and made life difficult. People died young without decent health care, women suffered more with many children before contraception was available or pediatrics became a viable and helpful science. People were denied basic rights, good food and left to languish in poverty and early deaths. The “good old days” were not so good, most women lost children or died in childbirth, men could get a small cut, which could easily go septic and kill them. There were no anesthetics and amputation might mean death. A broken bone was life threatening. Diseases were rampant and life expectancy was very low. Murder was common. Religious societies promoted---and still promote--- ignorance and irrational superstitions and myths, which kept people in deep fear and poverty. Modern men in Afghanistan beat girls who try to go to school or who try to get out of the veil. The veil itself is a misogynist imposition.

As Christopher Hitchens has rightly said: “Religion has run out of justifications.... and no longer offers an explanation of anything important.”<sup>1223</sup> Science might be restricted as to what it can study—but when done well it is clear and light by comparison to the bogus tenebrous and imaginary “gnosis” of the old days. The ‘sages’ of old knew very little, in fact, and a lot of what they claimed to know now seems quaintly absurd, escapist and embarrassing. Science is about evidence,

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17th century and can hardly be called traditional. Also, he was having fainting spells and both I and one of the physician faukara who was a cardiologist felt he needed a pace maker (I have put in hundreds), but this was ruled out of court [by the cult].” In the Schuon cult it was said that “to be a disciple of the Shakyh, you must believe in homeopathy”. Schuon had silent ischemia and it could have been treated if Schuon had not been so stubbornly ignorant and dogmatic in his stand toward modern medicine. Schuon’s own meanness and narrow-mindedness led to his increased suffering in his last years. He regularly blamed his heart problems on anyone who might be in his way. He blamed his wives at various times, Joseph Epes Brown, his neighbor who put up a no trespassing sign, me at one point, Maude Murray at other points and others at other times. Actually his physical ailments could have been treated and he would have been a less bitter and nasty old man. His own narrow-mindedness was at the root of his later illnesses

<sup>1223</sup> Hitchens, Christopher. God is Not Great Twelve 2007. Pg. 282

not about out dated Platonic ‘essences’ or or Sufi “archetypes”.<sup>1224</sup> It brings us into the possibility of a more satisfying, creative way of life and thought and it addresses reality. Only pseudo-science and religion fabricate reality rather than seek to face it head on.

Chomsky has said that outside of the ‘hard sciences’ of biology, physics and chemistry “theoretical knowledge rapidly tails off and reliance on intuition and experience correspondingly increases, and it's correspondingly easier for error to perpetuate”.<sup>1225</sup> Regarding the social sciences Chomsky writes that they “don't have anything remotely like the explanatory character that parts of the natural sciences have developed since the 17th century revolutions”. Chomsky’s own linguistics has done little to explain language, indeed, Darwin’s commentary on the nature of language seems far deeper to me than Chomsky’s increasingly discredited theory.<sup>1226</sup>

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<sup>1224</sup> The epistemological anarchism that characterized Paul Feyerabend and others appealed to some traditionalists. Schuon, I was told, liked some aspects of alternative and reactionary Platonist science philosophers like Alexander Koyre. The whole notion of Platonist archetypes as an alternative to science has been utterly demolished by science, but that did not prevent Schuon from still believing in it fanatically and with a sort of personal devotion that made him impose archetypes even in close relationships to others. A woman who fit his favorite sex fantasies was called “fulfilling her archetype”, for instance, when really she just was his fantasy projection.

<sup>1225</sup> <http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/1996----.htm> This is true of Chomsky’s own science work in linguistics which has questionable formalistic and quasi-Platonistic features.

<sup>1226</sup> For instance his idea of universal grammar is discredited. Children do not have grammar hardwired into their brains as Chomsky thought. Another example is his FLN and FLB distinction, which tries to separate human from animal communications, and which enshrines little more than speciesist prejudice. Many people have complained that Chomsky stands in the way of advancement in language study. In Politics the only political theory that Chomsky has somewhat approved of is that of his associate Michael Albert. It is called Parecon and the society it envisions seems to be a top down sort of Parecon politicizing of the economy, such that wealth no longer controls, but rather fame and usefulness do, This has features not a whole lot different than other systems controlled by committee, such as Maoism. David Schweikart calls Albert’ system “a system obsessed with comparison (“Is your job complex more empowering than mine?), with monitoring (You are not working at average intensity, mate--get with the program), with the details of consumption (How many rolls of toilet paper will I need next year? Why are some of my neighbors still using the kind not made of recycled paper?)”. ( Nonsense on Stilts, Znet) Chomsky and Albert are very overbearing people and run a sort of cult. I would have

Religious studies has even less accuracy than social sciences and perpetuates errors upon errors, so many in fact that no one should take most academic scholars of religion seriously about anything. The traditionalist academics should not be taken seriously, indeed, I advocate that they be removed from universities: they belong in right wing think tanks or churches and mosques. They are cultish 'true believers' not purveyors of enlightened information about the real world. Neither the traditionalists nor many academic religious studies professors admit that there is no empirical basis for any of the major claims of the religions. Scientific methods need to be applied more rigorously to the study of religion.

The vast unknown domains of space and time, beyond the Quasars, or beneath the atoms are certainly beyond science and definitely beyond religion, whose answers to ultimate questions are absurd failures. The "meaning of existence" is accessible to science as science provides more and more keys to understanding life on earth, our biology our brains and those of other species. But the specific meaning of any single person's existence is not so easy to determine. The challenge of life and of society is to provide opportunity to answer just this question for everyone and not just the ultra-rich or the hereditarily privileged. What answers there are to ultimate questions are simply outside religions legitimate claim to answer anything about them. What answers there are, are best had from science or from commonplace observations by disinterested or ordinary people, who have no professional philosophy to sell. So when Plato or Aquinas, Eliade or Huston Smith, Guenon or Schuon or any of their followers pretend to certain answers about "multiple states of Being" or "Beyond Being" or "God" or existence, one can be quite sure that they what comes out of their mouths or pens is poppycock or utter fiction.

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serious doubt about any society they designed. The society Chomsky made and Z Magazine and Z Net is already questionable enough.

They speak of these things with absolute certainty and even claim infallibility about them. That is the sure sign that they are charlatans, promoters of make-believe, constructors of fabricated delusions.

#### 4. **Corporate Science**

There is also a basic distinction between real science and corporate science or what is sometimes called “big science”, which should not be confused with real science. Corporations abuse science by distorting it to serve the economic interests of the upper classes. Science is deformed by corporations who put profits before everything. The real question that should motivate business is the study of those companies who were best to their workers, had profit sharing, lasted the longest, helped the most families, made the best products or provided the best services and did not sacrifice these things for profits for a few greedy men at the top. It is clear from a study done by the academy of sciences (PNAS) that

Seven studies using experimental and naturalistic methods reveal that upper-class individuals behave more unethically than lower-class individuals. In studies 1 and 2, upper-class individuals were more likely to break the law while driving, relative to lower-class individuals. In follow-up laboratory studies, upper-class individuals were more likely to exhibit unethical decision-making tendencies (study 3), take valued goods from others (study 4), lie in a negotiation (study 5), cheat to increase their chances of winning a prize (study 6), and endorse unethical behavior at work (study 7) than were lower-class individuals. Mediator and moderator data demonstrated that upper-class individuals’ unethical tendencies are accounted for, in part, by their more favorable attitudes toward greed.

Indeed, the best companies are not about the top at all but about everyone that works there, who are all equally concerned with the welfare of the company. <sup>1227</sup> The earth itself now suffers from this CEO disease as its primary aliment.

Monsanto is a good example. They create seeds, which are genetically engineered, to insure that their product glyphosate or Roundup is then sprayed on their glyphosate resistant corn and soybean crops, and the poison kills all the weeds except “their” corn and soy. One horrendous result of this destructive process is that now monarch butterflies are 90% down in population and milkweed is suffering. This toxic atrocity should be stopped. The same is true of other dangerous chemical dumped on the land, like the neonicotinoids (“neonicks”), which are nicotine derivatives and which are probably a big part of what is killing so many bees in colony collapse disorder. <sup>1228</sup> This is an abuse of nature and science.

Corporations like Apple, Walmart, Home Depot and thousands of others move jobs to third-world countries and exploit the workers there at wages that are so low they violate basic rights and sometimes approach slavery. They force workers to live in company housing, six workers in a room, and do not allow viewing of their factories so one knows they are bad. They also help break the unions here and they destroy the middle class of this country, while raking in the largest profits in world history. Such companies are parasitical and do great damage up and down the line of their existence, helping only the very top, who are all overcompensated, unjustly. The CEO’s should be gotten

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<sup>1227</sup> Once the idea of “corporate personhood” is abounded as illegal, as it should be, there will be no more evading responsibility by CEO,s, indeed, we can jettison the CEO all together and companies employees are then responsible for wrong doing themselves.

<sup>1228</sup> One study states: “There is a considerable and growing body of evidence that neonicotinoids and other systemic chemicals are harming bees, other wildlife and also our soil and water quality. Similar chemicals such as” clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam, as well as others, are killing insects and other animals as well as having unknown effects on humans.

rid of or downsized and more equitable arrangements and better pay for the workers. The rapacious abuse of workers by CEOs should be stopped and such companies should be forced to obey stricter U.S. labor laws elsewhere and taxed into submission, perhaps at 90% or more of their profits or income.

Those who critique science for merely reflecting the ideology of dominant economic groups within society are partly correct. Historically, science has often been on the side of the oppressors and colonizers. But not always and less and less if we all follow our consciences. But science in itself is not ideology and it is important to separate science itself from the abuse of it.

The idea that “science” has piggybacked on technology ever since Galileo used a telescope to develop a new understanding of the heavens is questionable. This new science, in turn, led to new technological innovations”<sup>1229</sup>, as was claimed in a recent New York Times article, is true to a degree, but false over all. Most of the capitalist gains provided by science have done so because of the injustices of governments. Computers for instance were developed by the US government which taxpayers paid for. But the profits from it went to mavericks and monetbackns like Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, who did not deserve it. But much of science has no clear economic benefit and actually begins long before the invention of the spinning jenny or the steam engine. Pottery, Iron-smithing and similar occupations are science as is architecture, road building and art making. Charting plankton species in the oceans, tracing the temperature rises caused by global warming, studying tree species, disease rates, Neanderthal DNA,--- none of this supplies profits for the greedy. The definition of what science is needs amending as it is too narrowly defined as technological development leading to profits..

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<sup>1229</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/20/business/economy/a-somber-view-of-americas-pace-of-progress.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&version=Mothers-Visible&moduleDetail=inside-nyt-region-2&module=inside-nyt-region&region=inside-nyt-region&WT.nav=inside-nyt-region>

Corporations deform science in the pursuit of profit motives. A lot of the science used by corporations is done by academics and government research. Corporations who exploit this research should be required by law to give back to the society that enriched them with scientific knowledge. Profit sharing should be mandatory, CEO's eliminated as a category or severely taxed, workers' rights maintained, and social rights held to be higher than individual rights. "At will" employment should be eliminated and worker rights upheld. But what usually happens is the courts and government support the CEO class and put down the lower classes. Microsoft for instance was allowed to exploit a lot of the research that was done by the government and should be required to pay us back. They should be downsized at the top and helped up on the bottom. The upper tier should be severely taxed. But this does not happen ---they just continue exploiting and maneuvering for profit. The obscene control of government for big business profits corrupts both universities and science and less and less science is done by non-corporate people. This practice is destroying both science and the university system.<sup>1230</sup>

Science is the pursuit of objective and disinterested knowledge, done for the betterment of all, including the betterment of other species and the earth--- and often this is not the science of Haliburton or IBM. Haliburton sought to profit through the Iraqi and Afghani wars and IBM was deeply involved in helping the Third Reich process the extermination of Jews by supporting the Nazi's with early computers to use in concentration camps.<sup>1231</sup> Science is what was given us by Newton, Hooke, Huygens ,Einstein, Russell, and Darwin as well as the countless anonymous researchers who go unheralded: the science that has given

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<sup>1230</sup> The anti-intellectualism of the corporate sector is very alarming. There are increasing attempts both to destroy the public schools and to undermine the system of academic freedom and tenure set up in the universities. There are real and dangerous efforts to privatize schools and to make students virtually indentured servants to corporations with huge college debts to CEO exploiters.

<sup>1231</sup> See Edwin Black's *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation*

us ornithology, physics, thermodynamics, ecology, astronomy, microbiology, photosynthesis and plate tectonics. I mean science that is socially enlightened and fair, driven by evidence and not profit driven. A great deal of science has been created by amateurs and enlightened citizens, who are not looking to create dynastic wealth machines as the corporations do.

Corporate Nationalist science has done crazy things when Russia was the USSR, and when nuclear weapons were dropped on Hirshima. It is clear now that the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was unnecessary and inexcusable. The US was listening surreptitiously to Japaense military communications and knew they were going to surrender. <sup>1232</sup>The reason for dropping the bombs has always been given that it was done to bring about their surrender. In fact the bombs were unnecessary. The decision to drop them was a pure nationalist power play, a delusion cased by capitalist/scientific hubris, as well as political revenge and greed. The continued denial or this fact is itself proof of the irrational ideology that asserts US and capitalist supremacy. In Japan, an amazing couple, the Maruki's did a series of paintings recording the devastation. Nuclear weapons are inexcusable as they kill babies of all kinds, trees, insects, everything, including all people, old and young. <sup>1233</sup>

There is reason to be suspicious of corporate science. It is not

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<sup>1232</sup> See Robert Jay Lifton's, Hiroshima in America, and Howard Zinn's essay on the dropping of the bombs. Bertrain Russell also wrote against the nuclear threat, and the biography of J.R. Oppenheimer is not without relevance here.

<sup>1233</sup> The art of Toshi and Iri Maruki can be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTpDqYPEY5Q>

driven by actual science but by Free Market Fundamentalism.<sup>1234</sup> In her book Merchants of Doubt, Naomi Oreskes shows how scientists, who might have once had decent careers, ended up being paid to lie about things like Cigarettes or Tobacco, Acid Rain, Nuclear Energy or Global Warming. Corrupt corporations continue raking in huge profits that harmed people or the planet. The goal of “doubt mongering” she says, was to stave off government regulation. They abused science to help serve an ideology of profits. Genetic firms want to deform animals for profit; indeed, this is already being done, altering genetic structures to serve the profit motive of CEOs and shareholders instead of the good of the animals, cells or genes thus altered.

CEO’s, are the prime disease now afflicting the earth. As Corporations are defined as legal persons, while not being held responsible for anything. Animals are not defined as legal persons, even though they are much more so than abstract corporate structures,--- they are legal ‘things’, so they can be used and abused nearly

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<sup>1234</sup> An interesting book on global warming and the causes of it in market fundamentalism is Naomi Oreskes The Collapse of Western Civilization, a dystopian book about the actual causes of the global warming threat. There is an online version here:  
<http://gailepranckunaite.com/Naomi%20Oreskes-The-Collapse-of-%20Western-Civilization-2014.pdf>

‘Here is her definition of market fundamentalism

“Free Market Fundamentalism—and its various strands and interpretations known as free market fundamentalism, neoliberalism, laissez-faire economics, and laissez-faire capitalism—was a two-pronged ideological system. The first prong held that societal needs were served most efficiently in a free market economic system. Guided by the “invisible hand” of the marketplace, individuals would freely respond to each other’s needs, establishing a net balance between solutions (“supply”) and needs (“demand”). The second prong of the philosophy maintained that free markets were not merely a good or even the best manner of satisfying material wants: they were the *only* manner of doing so that did not threaten personal freedom.”

She argues that market fundamentalism leads to the denial of science which leads to destruction of environment and the ability use resources wisely and this leads to catastrophic global warming, flood and deserts, mass migrations, millions of deaths and extinctions and the necessity of big government to regulate the abusers. Neoliberalism fails the earth and people.

endlessly.<sup>1235</sup> This is unethical. BP executives pollute the entire Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi Delta and largely get away with it because congress will not address corporate crime sufficiently enough to stop it. This also is unethical. Apple computers pays its workers less than 10% of its earnings, having little or no profit sharing, making the CEOs richer than Louis the 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>1236</sup> China makes many of the Apple products and there are no independent labor unions allowed in China, insuring immunity to corporate CEO's. There are few environmental restrictions, so American corporations, like Walmart, Apple and others can exploit workers almost like slaves. Therefore, there is real concern about corporate science, they have restored the slave system in the name of market fundamentalism.

Corporations in the coal and oil industries flood the market with advertisements that support rightwing politicians and which attack government bodies that impose environmental regulations that these

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<sup>1235</sup> Corporations and various religions have set up the idea of entities that are not beings defined as legal persons, such as Corporations, Hindu idols, or the holy books of the Sikh religion. These are absurd constructions, but animals, who have many aspects that are more developed than humans, are not given personhood, when obviously an Otter, Chimp, Dolphin or Raccoon is a person by any reasonable definition. These would have rights, and gods are corporations should not, they are merely constructions of elaborate linguistic or legal rhetoric.

<sup>1236</sup> An investigation of ten supplier Sumsung factories in China who work for Apple corporation showed that Apple corporation is guilty of egregious violations of workers' rights. Among them are exhausting working conditions. Almost all factories require most workers to work standing for the entirety of their shift, including during regular overtime shifts that last 11 to 12 hours. Workers have jumped to their deaths, and are threatened with termination if they talk. There was also found to be a 'lack of any effective complaint mechanisms, unfair and unreasonable rules, inhumane treatment of workers, lack of worker safety, and employment of children.' In addition the factory is basically a a work concentration camp with workers required to live on site, eat in compmay cafeterias, buy I compmay stores etc.

<http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/report/64>

polluting and ‘fracking’ companies do not like. They help create global warming, killing of species and harm to the planet. The science that supports environmental regulation is attacked as well. Anti –science arguments are used to hide corporate abuse and insure profits. We need a socially responsible and ethical science, as well as ways of regulating and punishing CEO who profit from such abuses and lies. We need more watchdogs to monitor corporate science. Bogus scientific papers appear in peer-reviewed journals actually written by academic hacks, paid by corporations to deny the facts and perpetuate corporate profits.

With the rise of science, charlatan priests and wizards lost their jobs or their jobs got much harder. They want their jobs back and fight mightily to discredit science with mystifications and lies. The job of debunking pseudo-science and phony metaphysicians is never ending. Guenon and other religious writers know little about science. He only knew that their role was diminished by it and they fight hard to promote pseudo-science by any means necessary. Dogma produces reactionary Inquisitors and ‘witch-hunters’, not impartial scientists who weigh actual evidence. Guenon attacks pseudo-religions like Theosophy, a cult he had himself been a member of through Encausse and is wrong in many of his criticisms. Guenon’s own bogus theories are no better and probably even worse than Blavatsky.<sup>1237</sup> He supports ‘orthodox religions’ without any understanding that orthodoxy itself is a fictional concept, mere undemonstrated dogma passed down as fact. He hated science and tries to use his hatred of it to exalt defunct elite classes. In the end it is obvious that Guenon was a quack and his followers dupes of a charlatan.

There is certain friendliness between traditionalism and corporatism, since corporations are not beholden to the scientific method

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<sup>1237</sup> Richard Smoley pokes some fun at Guenon’s rather absurd attacks on Blavatsky, who he is so much like in some many ways--- in an essay that makes both Guenon, Blavatsky and Smoley look rather silly, with their beliefs in “psychic corpses” and transmigrating souls though animals and other nonsense of this kind. See <http://www.theosophical.org/publications/1696>

and peer review but only to profit and the market. Religion can help sell things and ignorance is desirable to those who dislike an open society where anything can be questioned. This can be seen in the career of Hossein Nasr and his son. Papa Nasr fawned and courted the Shah of Iran and his wife and then when the Shah fell under the weight of his own corruption, Nasr started fawning up the power structure United States, seeking influence among Republicans in Washington D.C.. He also has courted Prince Charles of Britain, helping turn this parasitical and inept prince into a born again traditionalist, as it were. Nasr's son now advises reactionary administrations in the U.S. government, no questions asked about his father's immoral and theofascist past. <sup>1238</sup>

Many Sufi groups, Zen monasteries, or Taoist groups exercised just this sort of sycophantic relationship to the upper classes of the kings and princes of old. Religion is mostly the mythos that supports the injustices of the upper classes or the belief system that accustoms the poor to their suffering. Religion tries to make the poor used to being ripped off by the rich. "the poor we always have with us" the mythic Christ is supposed to have said. The way to stave off revolution, the rich think, is to habituate the poor to early death and sickness, hunger and poverty. Feed them sports and lotteries, 'bread and circuses', T.V., computer games and gadgets, as well as myths and religions to keep them quiet. Let the women read escapist novels and the men compete over who knows the most football players names.

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<sup>1238</sup> At one point in 2015, I received various letters from anonymous people claiming crimes committed by Nasr. There was no evidence for these crimes, so it appeared it might be a hoax, perhaps meant to entrap, or perhaps meant to slander Nasr, I never knew which. Internal evidence suggested the claims came from inside the Nasr or Schuon cults themselves. In either case, it suggested corruption in the Schuon and Nasr groups. I reported these claims to the appropriate authorities. Note: 2017. The same crimes are reported by Zachary Markwith, who was close to Nasr at one point. There may be truth to them, there may not. Someone with better information that I have should look into it.

Corporations imitate religions and seek to imitate the aristocrats of old. Corporations claim, falsely to be “persons” and have the rights of persons.<sup>1239</sup> However, of course a corporation never dies like a real person, so it is a quasi-immortal person. The corporate claim to be a person is a charade, a joke, a religious or mythical claim—an abstract claim. A corporation is not a person in exactly the same way that Christ is not a person: both are props, myths, fictions, social constructions that serve interests. The Supreme Court’s claim that a corporation is a person is a metaphysical claim and virtually sets up corporations as deathless gods. This is yet another proof about how corrupt the Supreme Court is.<sup>1240</sup> This should be stopped. It subverts democracy and destroys equality, giving the CEO’s and boards of these entities way too much power, which they inevitably abuse.

A little history of the ideology of corporate personhood is needed here; In the legal case called "Citizens United" the idea that money is speech, means only the rich can vote. That put Trump in office. We now have a corporate state, not a democracy. Corporations are authoritarian entities, and should be made illegal, and forcibly made democratic. Citizens United was created because an erroneous law born falsely out of Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company. Corporate Businessmen sought to exploit the definition of persons spoken of in the

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<sup>1239</sup> John Locke writes about the need to aristocrats to create a source of wealth beyond change. The idea was to create through capitalism a permanent and risk free market system that would insure that the rich stay rich. The early insurance companies were created to try to do just this, insuring slave ships from the frequent losses of sunken ships. Slaves were thrown overboard due to sickness in the middle passage. How could the rich stay rich when such losses occurred. The system of insurance was meant to preserve wealthy upper despite suffering caused to the poor. The real world incompetence and cruelty of the rich sought to inure itself from risk so as to create a caste system..

<sup>1240</sup> Another example is the abuse of the Second Amendment which states “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” The court has abused this by claiming the right to bear arms is independent of a well-regulated militia, when obvious, it is a very bad idea to let anyone who can by one own a gun

14<sup>th</sup> amendment which applied to ex-slaves—not to corporations. Corporations are not equal persons under the law. They are not persons at all. The judges in this case actually never said the corporation is a person, it was written into the record by a corrupt railroad man, who wanted to exploit a law freeing slaves for his own greed. The idea that black people were not whole people was an absurd fiction to begin with, making them whole persons was not intended to make fictive entities like corporations persons. This is a horrendous abuse. Corporations are not persons and making them persons is now destroying our democracy in the Cabinet and polices of Donald Trump. Making money speech is a natural outgrowth of the original and grotesque abuse of making corporations persons.

The long term and abuse caused by the fiction of corporate personhood is endless and world wide. Indeed, most of the harms that occur in our world today, from diabetes related obesity to housing speculators driving up the price of houses creating a foreclosure crisis, to environmental disasters and global warming are due to the injustices created by corporate power and the myth of the corporate person.



Destroying Forests and Polluting the Air.

Photo by author taken in Eureka California, 2006

The ideology of the corporation has been installed in American law and government by big business. The support of academics, particularly economics professors, for the system of financial corruption is well documented.<sup>1241</sup>

Schuon claimed to be a prophet of sorts- a ‘personality’ a sort of incorporated brand. And this is bogus too, just as Microsoft, IBM or BP claiming to be a being--- a metaphysical person--- is bogus. Christ being

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<sup>1241</sup> See Charles Ferguson, Predator Nation: Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America.

a trinity is also a bogus idea, a fiction, for of the same mania for abstract magnifications. The purpose of the Christ image was to “leverage” the Church with the idea of transcendence. This magnification or ‘leveraging’ helped create the illusion of an infallible church or state that enables aristocrats to take unjust wealth and power. Schuon “leveraged” himself in a similar way, trying to piggy back on the god idea, making something out of nothing.<sup>1242</sup>

Corporations often support a culture of nostalgic monarchism or borderline fascist governments, since CEO’s are granted the status of arbitrary dictators, who hire and fire at will. Jesus is the model CEO of imaginary “other world” who can put people in hell or heaven at will. Corporations have affinities both with traditional religious and imperial institutions and modern scientific or academic institutions. Guenon would say that corporations are too “modern” and “anti-traditional”, but actually they are upholders of conservative values in many cases. Both Guenonism and corporate globalism adopt a method of operation that is both transcendentalist and colonialist.. Guenon ideology allies itself easily with post-modern irrationalism, which is a sort of escapism. They oppose Vatican 2, which had real reform in it, which led to the Church in Central and South American adopting a real concern for the poor, which has led to real reforms of the governments there. Vatican 2 ‘liberation theologians’ much hated by Traditionalists, wanted to go back to the

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<sup>1242</sup> Banks leveraged assets in the recent financial crisis and this magnifies both gains of banks and the losses of house buyers. Banks basically stole money from ordinary people to pay for their own corrupt dealings and then they raided the population further in bogus “bailouts”. They made a system of “extend and pretend” a quaint phrase for financial lying and profiteering. Religion is based on similar falsehoods, created to try to erect the ‘leveraged’ power of an institution like the Church or the caste system in India or the system of power in influence in Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia or Iran. These are all unjust systems of power justified by myths. Metaphysics is basically the intellectualized fictions used to do the ‘leveraging’ so that people will believe the delusions.

pacifist Jesus<sup>1243</sup> and to help the poor. In Nicaragua for instance the Sandinistas educated virtually the whole country and enabled millions to learn to read. The traditionalists opposed such praiseworthy things and allied themselves with corporate hierarchies which opposed Liberation Theology and thus any real help for the poor in South and Central America. By implication they also allied themselves with Corporate U.S. policy on land reform that would address the huge disparities in wealth in those countries.

It is interesting to note that one part of Vatican 2 was an effort to return to the original gospels notion of the rights of the poor – ( the gospels also deny these same rights, ---“the poor you always have with you”, Christ says)) and this was picked up by the Liberation theology movement as a call to democratize places like Latin America. This is what Rama Coomaraswamy hated about Vatican 2. His hatred of Vatican 2 was totally political, a hatred of “democratizing tendencies”, as he called it. Chomsky likes Vatican 2 also for political reasons as leftist religion helped bring about human rights in some Latin countries. It is unusual for religion to have this positive effect. It hardly makes religion true, it makes religion useful in this one case,-- useful for human rights. Chomsky’s mistake is to support religion as a useful thing and question

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<sup>1243</sup> The early Jesus, liberation theology held, was a pacifist unlike the Roman church after the 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E., which allied itself with the persecutors rather than the persecuted. It is this concern with the poor that made it impossible for the Trappist monk Thomas Merton to ally himself with the Schuonians, even after their effort of ‘colonize” him and bring him into their fold failed. Merton was a man of the left, not of the far right like Schuon. He did want to create an ecumenical movement to help religion revive when it obviously was failing. There is a book claiming he was really a closet case traditionalist, but this is a misreading of the facts. The traditionalists sought to expropriate him but failed.

I also doubt that the early images or writings about Jesus describe a pacifist are accurate. “I came not to bring peace but a sword” Christ is supposed to have said. Jesus probably never existed.: he appears to be a mythic mouthpiece for resistance movements to Roman rule and Jewish splinter cults, but then becomes a Roman creation, serving the state, so various cults can use humans as their symbol.. Paul is key in this of course, and the Gospels appear to be a response to Paul rather than background to him Christ later became a poster boy for empire. Merton is a champion of resistance and not tradition, the politics of the left and not the right.

atheism across the board simply because religion is useful in a few cases. <sup>1244</sup>

Wolfgang Smith is one thinker than has been prominent as a foe of science and a favorite of the traditionalists. He too opposes Vatican 2 and liberation theology, just as he opposed Teilhard de Chardin's attempt to take the backward Catholic Church out of the dark ages as regards science and evolution.<sup>1245</sup> He writes that science and Post-modernism are somehow akin, proving he knows very little about post-modernism or science. The main premise of post-modernism is that it denies the value of objectivity and thus of science. The idea that facts and evidence matter is science--- but the idea that everything boils down to subjective interest and perspectives<sup>1246</sup> is merely post-modernist nonsense.. Post modernism—and Smith is an anti-scientific post-modernist--- is an ally

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<sup>1244</sup> There are other cases where religion is “useful” as in its occasional feeding of the poor in soup kitchens or its very occasional visiting of the elderly. But these useful endeavors tend to be soporifics for the great harm it does in supporting the existing systems that causing these same injustices. Those on the far right think religion should take care of social injustices while the far right should exploit anyone they please for profit. There are people in the Schuon cult who think exactly this as well as those at large.

<sup>1245</sup> I'm not a big fan of Teilhard De Chardin's ideas on science, which at best verge on a sort fantasy half based in facts, rather like the books of Annie Dillard that are part spiritual fantasy part nature meditation and who was influenced by De Chardin. Dillard has always struck me as a bit of a fake. But De Chardin understood more about science than Smith did, whose understanding of evolutionary facts is non-existent. The attack on de Chardin, is really a right ring attack on the Enlightenment and wish to return to a medieval form of theofascism. De Chardin was harassed and attacked by the Church for many years, persecuted might be the word and Smith continues this unjust persecution viciously. De Chardin's effort to combine Catholicism and biology just doesn't work very well. That is not a capital offence as Smith treats it, it is merely a result that is not very pleasing to anyone who knows nature pretty well. Dillard compares to Thoreau as a fake and a composite, so Smith, like De Chardin, is a crank, born to make up stuff he did not actually know. Thoreau is the real thing, he actually knew his botany, these others, hmmm, not so much.

<sup>1246</sup> This is a definition of relativism,, which is very rare. Science is not relativistic, in this sense. Science does deny the fictional “absolute” which really is a Hegelian or Germanic construction that Schuon, Guenon, Smith and others try to universalize. The absolute is a universalized fiction, a postulate, not a reality that anyone has demonstrated. There is no such thing, in fact, it exists only as a fiction.

of corporate ideology in that it encourages escapism and an alliance between inquiry and religion, very much along the lines of the fuzzy and inchoate Wolfgang Smith and Hossein Nasr. It is no mistake Nasr and Smith favors far right republicans.<sup>1247</sup> They are men who support repression and injustice, irrational creationism and social repression.<sup>1248</sup> Corporations benefit from such religious escapism since it helps keep people blissfully ignorant of how the world is being raped by big business for profits. That is why so many business now encourage workers to practice Buddhism or why far right Catholics and Protestants are patriotic. Yoga and meditation are good to clear the mind and create a positive attitude so that one does not question corporate power or unjust profiteering.<sup>1249</sup> Repressive institutions try to suppress independent and critical thinking. Science depends on critical and independent thought.

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<sup>1247</sup> The republican party in America is the party of far right Christian and many Protestants and Catholics and is strongly the party fo racism, the ultra-rich and the “anti-science party”, as the journalist Paul Krugman dubbed it. Not only do they ignorantly oppose the facts of evolution and reject climate change, as well scientific medicine in favor of quackery like the anti-vaccine movement or homeopathy. They oppose anything that big business opposes, even if it is an outright lie. The Republicans are the party of ignorant arrogance and injustice. The growth of their power since the Reagan administration threatens much of that has been good in American history and now threatens the planet itself through global warming.

<sup>1248</sup> Once when I was visiting Smith he launched into a moralistic tirade against the pop singer Madonna. I have never been that crazy about Madonna’s songs, but Smith was livid to the point of really fanatical hatred of her, calling her part of the anti-Christ, a parody of the Virgin and a “whore”, and so on. It was clear to me that Smith was a man of deep and confused sexuality who had an irrational animus about this women he never met, but probably was attracted to.

<sup>1249</sup> There is no really good attempt to critique Buddhism similar to Russell’s critique of Christianity or Ibn Warraq’s critique of Islam. Zen clearly has some fascist overtones in its militarism, endorsement of violence and samurai service to the authoritarian Emperor of the Japanese state. Tibetan Buddhism is also highly questionable in its totalitarian over-lording of the people of that area. It used cruelty extensively. It also is deeply misogynistic religion setting up a hierarchy of men. Victor and Victoria Trimondi have at least begun a critique of Buddhism, as in their critique of the Dalia Lama here.

<http://www.naderlibrary.com/shadow.dalai.htm>

The Trimondi’s discuss for instance the “Japan expert, geopolitician and Deutsche Akademie President Karl Haushofer. He emphasized the appropriateness of Shinto state fascism as a model for National Socialism. The German teachers of Zen Buddhism, Eugen Herrigel and Karlfried Dürckheim, propounded a link between National Socialism and Zen philosophy. Herrigel evidently joined the Nazi party in 1937. Schuon quotes his writings somewhere. He wrote Zen and the Art of Archery and Zen and the Art of Flower Arranging.

Science, when well done, is not about class interests and certainly it is not a spiritual ideology. Science seeks the truth in the physical and actual world. Any really good scientist does his or her work to study the earth or the universe out of objective concern. The gathering of facts requires a certain love, attention to detail, recognition of the rights of what is studied. According to the Schuon, Guenon and Wolfgang Smith and the Catholic Church, as well as the traditionalists, “relativism”<sup>1250</sup> is a denial of absolute truth, and this leads to moral license and a denial of the possibility of sin and god. This is a silly argument that has no merit. Sin is an anachronistic concept. There are no absolutes and all that exists is “relative” and to condemn all “relativism” is to condemn the world of related things itself. It is this hatred of the relative that I object

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<sup>1250</sup> I discussed this in a long footnote earlier in this book. There are different kinds of “relativism”. Some people confuse it with the theory of relativity or with moral and cultural relativism, all of which are different things. Some hate relativism and what they mean is they hate science because science needs no posit of imaginary “principles” to get the universe going.. Schuon hated “relativism” but was a moral relativist himself, however, and allowed himself all sorts of hypocritical license which would not allow to others. Of course sometimes those who say they hate relativism really mean they hate moral relativism which means they hate selfish behavior. But again, Schuon was one of the most selfish people I ever met so he allowed himself to be a moral relativist, taking extreme liberties for himself while denying them to others.. Schuon opposed the “relative “to the “absolute”, which is a false opposition or a false choice since there is no demonstrable absolute, except maybe gravity or the inevitability of taxes. Isaiah Berlin said not to “confuse our own constructions with eternal laws or divine decrees”. And this “is one of the most fatal delusions of men.” There is some truth to this sort of relativism, since people do influence the views of the world that they have. However, this sort of cultural relativism is limited too, as science at its best seeks to be adequate to reality, or to describe real things and facts. Reality is not a construction, DNA does exist and has measureable effects on organisms inheritance structures. When religions condemn “relativism” means they condemn the “contingent world”, --the world of things depending on other things. To such people only the imaginary “absolute” matters, which means that only the imaginary matters, reality for them is a lesser thing. This view denigrates the whole universe, and sees it as merely symbolic. Hating the relative in this sense is perverse, destructive and malicious. For them is the hatred of the actual that really matters. This hatred of the ‘ten thousand things” or “original sin” is a mental disease that is common to all the major religions. Most thinkers who hate relativism, basically hate the world and want to posit an imaginary monotheistic or polytheists god or gods. Relativism is then hatred for all that is contingent or relative. It can be said that only the relative is real, and those who hate the relative world need to have their delusions deconstructed.

to in religions as it means a hatred of us and the world we live in.

Those who claim knowledge of the imaginary “Absolute” create a ‘relativism’ as a kind of evil which really is a hatred for all that is contingent or relative. The Relative is merely all that exists and really that is all there is. The “Absolute” is a fiction. To be a relativist in this sense is not only rational, it is the only real alternative to embrace with one’s whole heart.. There is nothing wrong with ‘relativity’. Everything is relative to everything else, in the sense that all things in the universe have relations. The religious hatred of the relative world is a mentalistic and delusional hatred which posits non-existent “absolutes” which denigrate the real world where we all actually live. The whole notion of “metaphysics” is really irrelevant to science. Indeed, metaphysics generally is a bogus area of study that involves projecting onto the facts of existence non-existent truths that are purely mental or fictional inventions. Science must resist such projections as a matter of course and embrace relativism as a virtue, which in fact it is, as is “reductionism”..

Of course when one really analyzes New Age hatred of relativism and reductionism a very different picture emerges. They hate these tendencies because they really hate science and wrongly blame the harms done by Big Science on science itself. The problem is capitalism,-- which is hardly science at all. New Agers seek an escape from the reality of life into myth and esoterism, aromatherapy, pyramids, cosmic consciousness, the Dalai Lama or any fuzzy thinking that will put them in touch with the “spirit within”. This is narcissistic escapism and is a great aid to the capitalistic expansion which wants no democracy, fairness or human and nature’s rights and wants to give all to the rich at the expense of everyone else.

Schuon and Guenon thought themselves great “metaphysicians” which basically means they were great pretenders, promoters of a far right ideology, who lived lives inventing ideas about things that don’t

exist. Not only is science far more moral than religion ever was, it has much better results. Science is not at all opposed to moral concerns. On the contrary there is a lot of work<sup>1251</sup> that shows that ethics grows out of nature itself quite without any need for religions. Some of the most ethically minded people in the world are “atheists”—by which I mean naturalists, or reasonists,<sup>1252</sup> who are devoted to the actual, scientists, who resist delusional and irrational systems. I think of myself as a naturalist, in all these senses of that term, not just the philosophical sense, which is rather narrow. I also mean by it that I am concerned with nature and animals.

Many scientists opposed the nuclear threats of the cold war as well as concerns with environmental issues, many oppose corporate dominance in resource extraction or health care. Science seeks survival for all species, not just humans. When science is corrupted it is corrupted by power and wealth and the ideologies that serve these. Science is a good thing: wishing to know why plants flower or how to grow food better, or how to alleviate the suffering of the sick are all honest motives. When science has become harmful is because it became institutionalized and was co-opted to the interests of corporate, racist or nationalist powers, or it was turned itself to the service of making guns, money and bombs. In these cases it is not science that is at fault, it is

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<sup>1251</sup> See Sam Harris [The Moral Landscape](#) or Marc Hauser’s [Moral Minds](#). This is a burgeoning new field. Harris and Hauser are two of many that are looking into the subject. Hauser has been discredited in various circles and resigned from Harvard. I’m not sure why. He was closely associated with Chomsky. But his book [Moral Minds](#) has some interesting ideas in it. Whether Hauser fudged some of his evidence or not in other domains does not affect what he says in this book. Hauser’s book [Animal Minds](#) is interesting but rather limited to a laboratory understanding of animals. I don’t think much can be understood about animals in labs. Animals have to be studied in the environments where they evolved. , Like Hitchens he seems to have some political views that support the state in the US. This deserves to be questioned. Also, see Darwin’s Chapter 3 in *Descent of Man*, for a discussion of the evolution of animals and language that goes well beyond Chomsky and Hauser.

<sup>1252</sup> I heard a man use this term in the conference called *Beyond Belief 2007* and liked it. I did not hear what his name was.

systems of power, or corrupt individuals.

Science and reason are the main tools that we have to deflate power. Post-modernism gives away science and re-embraces the irrational, acting as if the world were entirely the creation of our minds. Science is essential to understand what corporations are doing to our world. We need to be able to do science ourselves to study and defend our earth from global warming, pollution, destruction of habitats and environmental degradations of all kinds. The only way to limit the destructiveness of science is by use of the techniques science employs, namely evidence based inquiry sound logic, induction, deduction and accurate and empirical observation. There is no world beyond this world. All we have are these rivers, animals, plants and our own bodies.

The notion that "tradition" can do anything to address the environmental crisis, the ravages of inequality and over population is mistaken. Noam Chomsky's point that the environmental problems of our time

"are not the result of "technology," but of the institutional structures in which technology is used. A hammer can be used to smash someone's skull in, or to build a house. The hammer doesn't care. Technology is typically neutral; social institutions are not. To the (very limited) extent that I understand what is written about these matters [Post-modernism, "gnosis" Traditionalism etc.] in the literature you are referring to, it seems to attribute to technology what should be attributed to institutions of power and privilege, and thus serves to protect these institutions, by shifting attention away from them. I've often suspected that this service to power and privilege may help account for the warm reception given to these doctrines in the ideological institutions, universities, etc.

Chomsky is right.. Chomsky points out that postmodernists, ---and the traditionalists are an extremist wing of the post-modernist movement,--- are apologists for unjust forms of power. This is true of traditionalists and academic proselytizers of religion, like Huston Smith, Wolfgang Smith, Schuon, Evola, Arthur Versluis, Mircea Eliade and many others. As corporate example of this abuse of science is the Koch brothers. Greenpeace says that between 1997 and 2008 Koch Industries donated nearly \$48 million to groups which doubt or oppose the theory of anthropogenic global warming. Koch Industries is a corrupt oil and chemical company that has been trying to use their wealth to skew science in favor of their profit margins.

Keeping science out of the hands of the corrupt is a never ending task and can only be done with the cooperation of an educated society and an enlightened government as well as a university system not compromised by corporate influence. Chomsky points out that:

"there is no alternative to the common sense procedures that we come to call "science" as they are pursued with greater care and reach deeper insight: try to construct explanatory principles that yield insight and understanding, test them against relevant evidence, keep an open mind about alternatives, work cooperatively with others"

The question is how far we can go to allow diversity of views at the same time as we respect the common sense procedures of science. Paul

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<sup>1253</sup> This appeared on ZNet, in a section called Science Wars, where Chomsky often replies' to questions See <http://www.zmag.org>

Feyerabend, seems to think we should even include religion in such a tolerant allowance of diversity. <sup>1254</sup> I don't agree with this----Stephen Jay Gould's notion of "overlapping magisteria" is false because there is nothing commensurate between the facts of science and the fictions of religion. But at one point, I even thought to study with Feyerabend in 1986. He was already gone from Berkeley at that point. Feyerabend was a gadfly and promoted greater freedom for science on the one hand and on the other he was a impishly dadaesque character prone to perverse jokes. I am glad now that I did not study with him. His notion that "anything goes" went too far. <sup>1255</sup> Rather than making science better, I think we would have opened it up to all sorts of nonsense. Certainly science should be questioned, that is how science improves. But it is not possible to understand the world we live in by quoting archaic Hindu texts, promoting the Tao of Physics or creating secretive cults. It would

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<sup>1254</sup> Feyerabend is sometimes read as being "anti-science". He is anti-science at the same time as he is pro-freedom, and sees science as a tyrant. There is reason to doubt the abuse of science, if not science as such, insofar as science becomes Big Science and rolls over nature or people in pursuit of weapons systems, nuclear reactors, military applications, drug therapies or medicine that do harm or other profit driven science. One writer says that Feyerabend "does not claim that science is dogma, but rather that science has become dogmatic", as does any ideology which gains an effective monopoly. Feyerabend supports liberty of thought, and this puts him at odds with those who insist that scientific reasoning is *the* superior mode of thought". Liberty of thought is fine, and the scientific method allows for freedom, but being wrong about or promoting nonsense is still nonsense. I think that science is the most reasonable form of thought. Feyerabend is often merely a Dadaist and joker, and sometimes a reactionary who plays into the hands of those who hate science and truth. In this he is to be faulted. There is no question however but that science is "superior" in the sense that it has real truth in it and not dogma. It does not make sense that one should judge how a car battery works on the basis of whether or not Jesus was born from a virgin. Religion is not reasonable. Make believe can never be equal to actuality and realism. There is no reason to include fictions in a reasonable way of thinking. It simply is not part of the question. Religion is irrelevant whenever the actual and the relevant are at issue. I doubt Feyerabend understood this. Indeed, he seems ridiculous to me in many of his arguments. But there was a poetry in him. The part of Feyerabend I liked was the part that loved ordinary life, as exemplified in his autobiography, which has a delightful picture of him washing dishes. I think science and ordinary life grow from the same actualities. They are what matters---the study of our world and the living in our world.. . but that means that Feyerabend's comments about science are more or less irrelevant and what is interesting in him has to do with personality and a certain personal willingness to play the jester to power. I have always enjoyed that sort of courage.

<sup>1255</sup> See his Against Method and Science in Free Society. Read his essay "Aristotle not a Dead Dog".. Feyerabend's philosophy goes too far and would import irrational ideologies within the reach of science, which is not a good idea at all.

not serve anyone to or perpetuate the myths and superstitions that were the engines of the patriarchal ideologies of past cultures. Unlike Plato, Aristotle has many interesting qualities, but that hardly makes his backwards and false views about nature and animals tenable today.

To take another example: Zen served the repressive and warlike samurai class in Japan just as it serves the New Age business class in the United states today. This hardly means that Zen is really a viable way of life for today. It just means that systems of myth and emotional manipulation are transferable form one culture to another. Schuon supported the Japanese fascists during World War 2, just as Martin Lings advocates that the Spanish Fascist Franco should be the model of the traditionalist dictator or autocrat . So too, Guenon’s service to power and privilege is clear in his support of retrogressive religious and political views that would plunge us back into the Dark Ages of superstition and ignorance. Guenon and Schuon’s rabid fantasies of world destruction merely demonstrate how much they hate our world and how little they understood nature. Indeed, both Guenon and Schuon reduce nature to a symbol, which is to misunderstand nature entirely. There is nothing symbolic in the Chambered Nautilus, the giraffe, the flower called Bee balm or the Inchworm. The idea of “seeing God everywhere” is not about nature but about a system of mind control that envelopes everything in the delusion of a god who does not exist. By reducing nature to merely a symbol the traditionalists not only degrade nature but women too. Women become merely a symbol in their system. As Byron rightly said,

“I’ve seen much finer women, ripe and real  
than all the nonsense of their stone ideal”<sup>1256</sup>

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<sup>1256</sup> Quoted in Kenneth Clark’s The Nude, pg. 488. I don’t mean to disparage the beauty of Greek sculpture here, which is amazing in so many examples. But Platonic idealization in the human figure is partly a Renaissance and 19<sup>th</sup> century fabrication. But there are various systems of

So it is about time someone write about the distorted and abusive misunderstanding and slanderous treatment of science by Traditionalists and others. The subject of debunking the full extent of the science haters has never been addressed adequately as far as I know. I cannot debunk all of it here either, but I think I can expand the critique of it further. There have been wonderful debunking's of Creationism and the religions, but not of the sophistry of traditional hatred of science. Rene Guenon scoffed at modern sciences which have progressed and increased the knowledge of the world. He called them "profane" sciences, in the Crisis of the Modern World, and says "profane" science is only the "residues" of sacred sciences which been largely lost to us. This is utter nonsense. Guenon is a confidence-man who makes things up like any snake oil salesman. Astrology and alchemy are bunk and hokum and no amount of symbolist mystification can redeem them from the trash heap of dead and disproven knowledge. Guenon's "esoterism" is fiction. Mythopoeic fictions and symbolisms are merely the unjust dross of former dictatorships and unjust social systems. What is actually being dished out of Guenon's gruesome kitchen is the slop and dross of former unjust systems of dead knowledge, the 'garbage' of caste and inquisitions, discriminatory and classist thinking, elitist and militarist fictions of the idle rich.

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knowledge where women are reduced to symbols and even when the symbols are 'sublime' the net result is to denigrate actual women, as happens in Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism and American fundamentalism. Another example of this absurd Platonism is Schuon's idea of the widening of the chest, which he liked to do himself, to make himself look bigger and King like. Schuon thought he was a Monarch or Emperor too, some days. Kenneth Clark notes that this absurd widening of the chest was used in Roman sculpture of Caesars to make them look bigger and more godlike and Michelangelo inflates his figures in the same absurd way. All these figures are quite literally full of hot air. Politics is at the root of Michelangelo's bloated figures this once again shows that religion and politics are two sides of the same coin.

The statue Clark mentions is of Emperor Trebonianus Gallus. (pg 485)

Guenon dreams of a fabricated and idealized mathematics or science that relates back to his favorite religious ideas. But actually math has evolved away from religion as it became more refined. Mathematicians came to know that numbers are tools not a Platonic and metaphysical eternal truth. Guenon's idea of math is a useless and ineffectual fiction. It was dogmatic minds like Guenon's that stood in the way of real science. Guenon was a paranoid and paranoid people often project their worst fears on to what they hate. Guenon's hatred of science is a paranoid projection of his own twisted ambitions. The fact is that religion is what "solidifies" ignorance, it is religion that is trying to unsuccessfully "subvert" the good of science, human rights and democracy. The "Great Wall" Guenon invented in his imagination is really just the wall of ignorance, Platonism, religion and myth which he and his followers seek to impose upon others. Guenonism is romantic irrationalism and anti-intellectualism gone rampant. It is a system of archaic and elitist ignorance

Traditionalism is also a fundamentalist irrationalism. A good deal of the killing going on in our world today is related to religion and the ignorance it fosters. Guenon was wrong; the great 'dissolution' is not an approaching apocalypse, but rather the slow, welcome dying of religious superstitions. Guenon's fevered mind imagined existence of a mythical "counter-initiation"—a mysterious hidden force whose sole purpose was to oppose the superior forces of true spiritual initiation in the world. Of course, there are no "true initiations"—all that is mythology too. Guenon insisted that esoteric "initiation" into traditional wisdom was handed down orally by non-literary means. I have seen what this really means in the Schuon cult and other religions and it is bogus: nothing worthwhile is handed down: it is all smoke in mirrors—make believe and empty ritual. All Schuon provides his followers are many "texts" and books, the six "themes of meditation" and the "alchemy" and in these 'teachings' are ignorance and narrow-minded superstition, as well as

cultic thinking.<sup>1257</sup> The same is true of Tibetan, Hindu or new age Gurus as well as 'born again' cults. Mystagogical cults "transmit" or pass down "traditions" which are bundles of social instructions and "spiritual" fictions, illusions and make believe. The five times a day prayers of Moslems, the ablutions and other rituals, have the purpose of controlling minds and behavior and making sure that everyone submits, surrenders and bows to the same social forces, the same sultan or king, the same unjust dynasty of oil billionaires. These mental viruses, or imposed mental habits, prayers rituals and mantras are passed from one generation to another and this process is called spiritual method or 'sacramental' "initiation".

The whole mystagogy about "initiation" that Guenon created was

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<sup>1257</sup> As an example of the actual meaning of Schuon's notion of the "intellect" and how this is really a pathological subjectivity it might be useful to quote something from my account of 1991. Schuon's narcissistic notion of himself was reaffirmed one day in the 1970's:

"Maude told me that sometime during the late 1970's Schuon was praying the Moslem prayers in the apartment of Maude and John Murray in Pully, Switzerland. Schuon got up in the middle of the prayers to write something down, something she rarely saw him do. Later on she found out that he had been praying to understand the nature of the Prophet. He had a vision, while praying, of the inner nature of the Prophet as a constellation of six stars. These six stars were the six themes (purity, spiritual activity, contentment, fervor, discernment, identity). He realized the six themes were a spiritual portrait of the Prophet" and the Prophet was Schuon himself. As a result of this vision Schuon wrote the "Mystery of the Prophetic Substance". This essay, as is more or less true of all of Schuon's writings, is self-referential." In other words the cornerstone of Schuon's spiritual method, the heart of his teachings is really just a subjective delusion, born of his imagination . "

Schuon had Vision of the Virgin in 1965 made him sure he was a great prophet, and was the son of the Virgin Mary. He writes of this vision conclude the that"

"On my way to Morocco in 1965, when I was suffering from asthma and feeling ill to the point of death - owing to causes of a moral order - there occurred... the contact with the Blessed Virgin. This had as its immediate result the almost irresistible urge to be naked like her little child; from this even onwards I went naked as often as possible... A few years later this mystery came upon me again, and it did so in connection with the irresistible awareness that I am not a man like other men."

farcical. He himself was 'initiated' into Sufism by Ivan Agueli, another orientalist pretender. Even if Guenon had been initiated in more 'authentic' way, it would scarcely matter, since the whole concept of 'Initiation' that Guenon cultured, as a central concept, is a fiction, a falsehood, a mystification, based on superstitious, magical thinking and ceremonial sleight of hand. There are no 'authentic' traditions passed down by "initiates", there are merely clubs of people—mostly men's clubs--- who pretend to pass down invisible spiritual 'essences' or states of being to one another. Actually nothing is passed along except nomenclature, superstition, social postures and delusions. Indeed the very idea of "essences" is suspect and muddle-headed. The "essence" of something is merely a fuzzy headed generalization about it--- an obtuse surmise made of vague definitions.

Having participated in Schuon's initiations myself, I can tell the reader that the whole process was pretense and mumbo jumbo, mere ceremony held by men in service of their own conceit. Schuon merely held his hand over my hand and it meant nothing at all. 70 people were there and they all thought it was marvelous, "blessed" someone said, but actually it was utterly meaningless and the whole crowd was deluded, including me. It scarcely mattered that Schuon himself declared himself "Shaykh" based on bogus dreams<sup>1258</sup> and that he had no real "silsalah" or authentic lineage to justify his claim to be a spiritual Master. Even if he had been a direct descendent of Muhammad, Jesus or Buddha themselves, he still would have been a phony. There is no proof that Jesus and Muhammad were actual people or later fabrications. The violent history of the major religions would suggest they were later

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<sup>1258</sup> There is an existing Dream Book that records the dreams that supposedly proved that Schuon was a spiritual master and all they really prove is the gullibility, delusions and obsessions of some of his followers,. These are merely silly irrational fantasies that suggest nothing so much as the gullibility of Schuon's followers, drugged into guru worship by ceremony, cult machinations and Schuon's wives and functionaries.. This is an absurd book that shows clearly the superstitious and subjective nature of the Schuon cult. Sufi groups of many kinds rely on just such fabrications of dreams an 'visions'.

fabrications .

Initiations are just so much mumbo jumbo, magical thinking erected into a ceremony. There was no spirit for Schuon to give to anyone, it was all smoke and mirrors and the illusion of reality. The notion of “authentic tradition” is based on hearsay fictions and bogus transference of non-existent and virtual “spiritual powers”. Guenon was right that religion is based on these initiations, but he was ignorant of just how bogus his own initiations actually were. Gods who don’t exist do not answer prayers.<sup>1259</sup> Zen masters like to beat their students as part of their initiation, rather as College fraternities “haze” their followers. Ceremonies are events where all that takes place is that the participants delude themselves that it means something. Graduating from a university has real meaning if the student has mastered a certain body of real knowledge. A religious initiation is mastery in a vanity.

Like Schuon, Guenon cultured the initiation delusion very carefully all of his life, claiming ‘invisible spiritual masters’ to bolster his prestige and promote himself. Indeed this is perhaps the central delusion and purpose of his entire work. There will not be written records to document the content of ‘initiatic’ wisdom. The great claims to wisdom in Guenon Schuon and Evola are really just pathological claims to fake “wisdom” . These were sick men claiming to lead a remnant of the world to apocalyptic health.

Like Evola, Guenon viewed these 'counter-initiatory' or "Satanic" forces as real, when, in fact, one man’s Satan is another man’s god, as Blake showed. Guenon saw gods, demons, and other imaginary forces as existing on many levels, “multiple states of being” of innumerable types,

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<sup>1259</sup> In his book God Delusion Dawkins records scientific tests of prayer efficacy and the results showed that prayer does absolutely nothing for people. “there was no difference between those that we prayed for and those that were not”. (pg 61-66) IN other words prayer is a waste of time and it would be far better if people did something, anything at all, to get out of negative situations, rather than pray.

of varied, immaterial forms and varied intelligence. These angels and demons could act through individual human beings. All this is this is paranoid nonsense, adult make believe. There is no satanic force acting though anyone. There are no hierarchy of angels. Gods die, like all illusions.

Guenon is one of the last of the charlatan promoters of Big Myths of the Religions. His attempt to blacken science in his book Reign of Quantity and elsewhere does not stand up to the truth. Religious traditions are undermined by the fact that they are not true and this untruth has been demonstrated time and time again. Guenon's contention that Hinduism and its horrendous caste system is incontestably true is absurd. The idea that castes are formed because the moral actions of one's ancestors –their "Karma"----determined their low or high social standing, has no evidence to back it up whatever. The system of karma and caste was developed to justify and excuse the injustices of the upper classes. These and many other myths promoted by religions are slowly unraveling as people become educated and see through the charade.

Guenon's opposition to science arises from his myopic concern with fake initiations and imaginary counter-initiations, demons and angels, castes and gods. For Guenon only the Immutable is real. There is nothing in the universe that is exempt from change yet Guenon thinks he knows better. <sup>1260</sup>His notion that science is "luciferian" is extremely foolish, bigoted and misguided. It might be worth noting here that

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<sup>1260</sup> In Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the chapter called "The Revolt of the Kshatriyas," Guénon writes, "Among almost all peoples and throughout diverse epochs – and with mounting frequency as we approach our times – the wielders of temporal power have tried... to free themselves of all superior authority, claiming to hold their power alone, and so to separate completely the spiritual from the temporal." This is the basis of the caste system erected on a fictional notion of "immutable Being". Violating such a fiction is not wrong at all. But Guenon acts as if a huge crime were committed. The crime for Guenon is to bring charlatan metaphysics into question, which is hardly a crime, indeed, it is a duty.

Guenon's name, interestingly, is identical to the rare Sub-Saharan monkey called the Guenon, which occurs in various species (Cercopithecus), such as the Red Eared or Moustached Guenon. It is a highly endangered monkey in many places. The opposition of the Traditionalists to the origin of humans in monkey-like animals is thus rather humorous, since the real Guenon is a monkey who evolved from other monkeys and sadly in need of our help.<sup>1261</sup> Guenon hated the theory of evolution and rightly feared it, as it undermines all the metaphysical nonsense he believed in. In any case, the theory of evolution has enormous geological and physical evidence. The fossil record is worldwide and grows every year and the recent DNA record grows vast. Everyday facts are discovered that back up the theory of evolution. It is factual, enormous and intricate theory that is bolstered and proven at every turn and challenge. It is unassailable. Creationism has been proven manifestly false with more evidence pouring in every year against it. Indeed, Creationism has been proven mistaken so many times, it is a wonder anyone brings it up at all.

### **5.Louis Agassiz, Ananda Coomaraswamy and the Spiritual Fiction of “Virgin Nature”**

One of Frithjof Schuon's disciples, John Murray, as well as Schuon himself, both admired the work of the 19th Swiss paleontologist and geologist Louis Agassiz (1807 - 1873) He was an enemy of Darwinism, early on, and believed that nature was god's hierarchical creation, and merely symbolic, and that animals manifested divine Platonic

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<sup>1261</sup> Another member of the Shadhili Order of Sufism is an American turned Jordanese man named Shaykh Nuh Keller, a sailor from Washington state. An ex patriot, he is confused man who went off the deep end into religion after studying philosophy and not really understanding it, according to an autobiographical piece he wrote. He rather foolishly claims that that evolution cannot have occurred and humans cannot have developed from non-human animals. His justification of this view is Koranic fundamentalism. This man has been cited numerous times as a cult leader in Amman. But I know little about it. I only mention him here as another finadmentlaist creationist.

archetypes'. Agassiz thought that nature was composed of a spiritual taxonomic scheme derived from these basic prototypes. He also was a racist of the worst sort and supported the southern Plantation ownership of slaves against the northern abolitionists. Agassiz's ideas were firmly trounced by Darwin, indeed, as Darwin's Sacred Cause shows. Darwin's science defeated all archetypal theories, and this includes such theories as those of Plato, Jung, Guenon and Schuon. The nominalist contention that Plato's Eidos or Ideas were bogus generalizations was proven by Darwin. Darwin in way is a vindication of William of Occam. Darwinism also defeats decisively both creationism and slavery and all other caste systems point by point. Henry David Thoreau seems to be the first to really get that Darwin's idea not only trounced Agassiz but also Plato. There is no real difference between various races of homo sapiens. We are closely connected to animals. There is no reality to the myth that humans are a species apart from nature. There is no reality to the idea of caste. Caste, Platonistic "essences" and of the feudal 'estates" all wither. These were forms of economic discrimination that we have justly and rightly condemned.

Following Guenon and inspired by mistaken ideas such as those propounded by Agassiz, Schuon despised science. Schuon imagines, for instance, that "modern science is a totalitarian rationalism that eliminates both Revelation and Intellect."<sup>1262</sup> Science is indeed triumphant over religion and metaphysics, but otherwise the statement is wrong in nearly every word. As I have shown elsewhere "revelation" and the "divine intellect" are bogus faculties that are arbitrary and imaginary. Science does not eliminate them; it merely pays them no attention because they are empty constructions of superstitious minds. Moreover, science is not even remotely totalitarian. Totalitarianism or "totalism", by

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<sup>1262</sup> Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds* p117.

definition, is an arbitrary imposition of authority from above. Science is not authoritarian at all. Indeed if anyone was a totalist, it is Schuon and the transcendental worship of immutability.

The truth is that Schuon was a totalitarian. Totalism of all kinds are the exact opposite of science. Science is doubt generated, careful, evidence based gathering of facts from actual experiments, which can be repeated by others who might falsify or verify the conclusion. There is nothing totalistic about science.

I watched how Schuon acted as a person. His idea of the “Intellect”-- which I discussed with him at length on many occasions---- was nothing more than the arbitrary subjective whim of a man bent on a totalistic ideology and an authoritarian world-view. He felt something in his body or brain and it must be true because the “Intellect” told him. He claimed that he could’ intuit matters far beyond others because his mind opened up to gods, or the esoteric principles behind gods. He was a rather lonely and pathetic old man, intolerant, irascible, and prone to excessive outbursts of anger. Being open to the “heart-intellect” as he called it, is merely being open to one’s own imaginative psychology. Revelation too, is merely a fancy reiteration of the subjective ‘intellect’, erected into a social principle. The fakery of the “Intellect” is well exemplified in the Koran where Muhammad has visions to justify his illicit desires for other men’s wives. Schuon had similar ‘visions’—indeed he was aping Muhammad--- that were merely bogus “revelations”. Schuon imagines that man did not evolve from the wonderful bodies of Chimps and Apes ( actually, Lucy, australopithicus afarensis ) but rather came from some undisclosed gaseous invertebrate from outer-space. Schuon writes that

”\_Original man was not a simian being barely capable of speaking and standing upright; he was a quasi-immaterial being enclosed in an aura still celestial, but deposited on earth; an aura similar to

the "chariot of fire" of Elijah or the "cloud" that enveloped Christ's ascension. That is to say, our conception of the origin of mankind is based on the doctrine of the projection of the archetypes ab intra; thus our position is that of classical emanationism - in the Neoplatonic or gnostic sense of the term - which avoids the pitfall of anthropomorphism while agreeing with the theological conception of creatio ex nihilo. Evolutionism is the very negation of the archetypes and consequently of the divine Intellect; it is therefore the negation of an entire dimension of the real, namely that of form, of the static, of the immutable; concretely speaking, it is as if one wished to make a fabric of the wefts only, omitting the warps.

These very ignorant, fictional fantasies of being "deposited on earth" by some alien god--- are asserted without the slightest proof, as are most of Schuon's and Guenon's pronouncements. This is "revelation" via the "intellect". The dolman of the "Intellect" is negated by facts, Darwinism and science, as is right and good. The Bible, Bhagavad Gita and other religious texts are full of just this sort of nonsense, pronounced in oracular sentences. The notion of the Divine Intellect is bogus as I have shown throughout this book. The notion of man being a "quasi-immaterial being enclosed in an aura still celestial" is delusional fantasy. Nature is nowhere woven of material wefts and invisible "immutable" warps. That too is Schuon's fantasy. His notion of "vertical and horizontal" realities is merely Euclidean geometry misapplied and abused. His notion of Archetypal form is Neo-Platonist nonsense.

You can see Schuon disdainful repugnance for the actualities of nature though out his writings. He says for instance that "the evolutionary leap from matter to intelligence is the most arbitrary, the

most inconceivable and the most foolish hypothesis possible, “<sup>1263</sup> ---a statement that shows a man who cannot appreciate how lovely it is that a butterfly evolved such beautiful wings or how a chimps deft hands speak of how human dexterity evolved or how bats can echolocate in a way no other animal can, except perhaps the platypus, that sees with its mouth or beak, as it were. Actual experiences of nature are foreign to the traditionalists—except when they “stand before virgin nature” like some dumb and raptured postulant. I saw this when I lived in Bloomington. All these cult followers prattled about “virgin nature” all the time, imitating Schuon, but couldn’t tell a woodpecker from a bat or a maple tree from an oak. Schuon’s own knowledge of nature was pathetic. I asked him what he love din nature and he could not tell me anything specific.

Schuon only likes “virgin nature” as he always calls it, in language that shows he is a throwback to 19<sup>th</sup> century German and American sexist fictions about young damsel Native American Virgins in natural settings. <sup>1264</sup> The idea of “virgin” nature is absurd, sex is a constant activity on earth, and none of it is ‘virgin’. Schuon thought, wrongly, that nature is an “Icon” and knew little or nothing about actual nature. In fact, Schuon’s thought is human centered and demeaning towards animals and nature. Schuon writes that “this inconceivable absurdity, evolutionism,... has the miracle of consciousness springing from a heap of earth or pebbles,” <sup>1265</sup> Did we come from rocks and stones? What do you see if you through a microscope? I don’t think anyone in the Schuon cult knew much about microscopes or realized that, absolutely,

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<sup>1263</sup> F. Schuon: "Consequences Flowing from the Mystery of Subjectivity" Studies in Comparative Religion XI, iv, 1977; pp197-198. This is an interesting essay as it shows how Schuon divinizes his subjectivity. Whitall Perry rightly deduced that Schuon’s god was really just the apotheosis or abstracted “Idea” in the Platonic sense of Schuon’s subjectivity. This was true of William James too, as I showed at the beginning of this book--- indeed, religion is really the culture of subjective delusions.

<sup>1264</sup> This is a common motif in Schuon’s art

<sup>1265</sup> ..Schuon, Divine to the Human, p. 5-6.

consciousness grew from pebbles and stones. I am proud to have come from earth and rocks, Geology is an amazing science. Notice Schuon's disdain for living soil and hatred of all that is fertile and bedrock on our planet. He denigrates the Cosmos, as all the traditionalists do. They love nature only insofar as it pretends to be a symbol of something else "beyond".

Nature is not symbolic. Of course, earth certainly did not come from a fictional Zeus, Poseidon or Allah, as Schuon dreams. In fact, precisely what is amazing about evolution is that it shows that consciousness did indeed come from pebbles and earth. The genetic unfolding of an organism in the fetus is a bottom-up development. This is a fact that disturbs all those who want nature to be a hierarchy or "great chain of being" with gods at the top. But the fact is that nature and evolution are not a "top-down" hierarchical "blue print" but unfold cell by cell from the inside out in a process sometimes called "self-assembly". <sup>1266</sup> The traditionalist antipathy to biology is due to their ignorance of nature and its operations. Evolution is a self-development of genes and cells into organisms. Ananda Coomaraswamy had it totally wrong when he wrote

*Nature*, for example in the statement "Art imitates nature in her manner of operation," does not refer to any visible part of our environment; and when Plato says "according to nature," he does not mean "as things behave," but as they should behave, not "sinning against nature." The traditional Nature is Mother Nature, that principle by which things are "natured," by which, for example, a horse is horsy and by which a man is human. Art is an imitation of the nature of things, not of their appearances.

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<sup>1266</sup> For more on this see Dawkins, Richard. [The Greatest Show on Earth : The Evidence for Evolution](#)

AKC is mistaken. Art is an imitation of reality, not Platonic fictions<sup>1267</sup> and dreamy delusions from the Pre-Raphaelites that so influenced Ananda. Coomaraswamy was deeply influenced by the utopian nostalgia of John Ruskin and William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ruskin is to a large degree a reactionary Platonist. John Everett Millias was right to question Ruskin, who he said, “theorizes about the vastness of space but looks at a lovely little stream with practical contempt”<sup>1268</sup> There is no reality to the idea that nature is composed of “essences” and “appearances” as Ruskin and AKC thought. These fictitious categories have been undone by science. The sentence that ‘art imitates nature in its workings’ comes from Aquinas, who got it from Aristotle. <sup>1269</sup> as Edward Crooks rightly said, “Aristotle cannot be said, then, to unreservedly support the theology, ontology, or philosophy of mind that Coomaraswamy theorized.”, Nor can Coomaraswamy’s

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<sup>1267</sup>Plato’s taste in art was awful. Plato hated poetry, particularly that of Homer. What he liked was poetry that praised the state and as AKC says “and what he praised was the canonical art of Egypt in which “these modes (of representation) that are by nature correct had been held for ever sacred.”” In other words Plato admired systems of mind control and an art that served the unjustly rich. This is pretty much where the theories of AKC go too. Plato advocates a theofascist poetry not too different to that of Muhammad. Poetry tends toward religion, as Nietzsche himself wrote ironically, in his Zarathustra, which is itself a very inflated poem. Nietzsche was aware that poets tend to create divine ‘symbols and symbols are lies about reality. So Poets “all muddle their water that it may seem deep” and what the muddle is about is gods, when there are none. Nietzsche says, “all gods are poet-symbolizations, poet-sophistications.” Yes, that is exactly the problem with poetry; it invents what does not exist and supports this non-existence with exalted speech. It becomes propaganda at same level. Jesus Muhammad, Rumi, Dante, Milton, and Nietzsche all created such symbolizations, false inferences, with the intended to deceive others, like Plato’s ‘noble lie’.. “Poets lie too much”, Nietzsche says. Part of the purpose of this book is to unmask some of these lies. Truth is more important than poetry and is some slight poetry remains after the search for truth, well, that is what has concerned myself in recent years. But this tends to express itself more in art than in language.

<sup>1268</sup> Quoted in Cooper, Suzanne Fagence, Effie, The Passionate Lives of Effie Gray, John Ruskin and John Everett Millias. This is a very interesting book, and an excellent history of Effie and John Millais and the context of their lives.

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<sup>1269</sup> Ars imitatur naturam in sua operatione : ‘art imitates nature in its workings’ (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae [ ST ],117).

theory of art be trusted to yield anything of value.<sup>1270</sup> Coomaraswamy misunderstood the notion of art and the “imitation of nature and its method of operation”, which is Darwinian and not spiritual. While I like craft and think that technology can be seriously misused, I know AKC was unfortunately skewed by Guenonian thought. When Aristotle was referring to physical and material workings in nature, he was not talking about Platonist of metaphysical dreams, which he denied. Ed Crooks concludes his discussion of Coomaraswamy and John Cage with this accurate statement. “Coomaraswamy’s views on Traditional society were a mixture of brahmanic elitism, Catholic hierarchism, and European reaction”. Exactly right: AKC is all about caste, dogma and theofascism. The Arts and Crafts movement made some great furniture and architecture, there is no doubt about that, and it helped restore the idea of well-made objects and I admire it for that, but AKC had little to do with that. .

There is nothing hierarchical about nature. Species are responsible for their own evolution. Gods have nothing to do with it. We made ourselves develop over the eons by our striving and reaching for new ways to survive and thrive. That is why the earth is so lovable and earth, sea and sky are so dear, despite the evident chaos and violence. Schuon misses the whole point of the wonder of being alive on earth and the wonder of being related to Chimps and Sea-stars.<sup>1271</sup> The notion that

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<sup>1270</sup> See

[http://york.academia.edu/EdCrooks/Papers/1235766/John\\_Cages\\_Entanglement\\_with\\_the\\_Ideas\\_of\\_Coomaraswamy](http://york.academia.edu/EdCrooks/Papers/1235766/John_Cages_Entanglement_with_the_Ideas_of_Coomaraswamy)

Crooks quotes Partha Mitter (1984: 49-50) who concluded that “Coomaraswamy’s ‘particular metaphysical approach has stood in the way of appreciating the intensely human art of ancient India... The image of Indian art he thus held up was more a mirror to his own soul than to a tradition existing in India’.” Pg 80 There is truth in this. AKC was a narcissist. The metaphysical doctrines of India upheld and justified a truly horrendous social system and that still causing great harms and is slowly being dissolved and reconstructed.

<sup>1271</sup> I remember one day when Catherine Schuon had me at their house—as she often did--- to do some gardening and I was clearing a little pathway just outside the back of Schuon’s house, between Schuon’s and Jones’ house--- and I found little seashell in the dirt. This little seashell

what is perceived with the senses are merely shadows – not the reality of things, but only their appearances, is nonsense that derives from Plato. Coomaraswamy repeats this nonsense as if were holy writ. In fact, Plato despised nature as a “barbaric slough” and Christian ideology despised nature as “original sin” and without the ridiculous idealizations to which Plato and Coomaraswamy were prone.

Mysticism is opposed to nature in its factual and ordinary realities, the realities of evolution that produce cnidarians and harbor porpoises, ungulates and whales, for instance. The traditionalists are mostly ignorant of nature and ignorant of science as are the religions in general. You can see this in mystics like Meister Eckhart who writes that

All creatures are merely nothing...I do not say that they are little or ought: they are nothing. That which has no entity is not. All creatures have no being for their being depends of the presence of God”

This silly willingness to see all nature as nothing—and “god” as all is typical of a mysticism that negates nature in favor of human centered delusions. The mystical traditions from Sufism to Negative Theology and Vedanta to Zen do this. There is no evidence at all that there is such a ‘god” on whom all Porpoises or Golden Tamarinds monkeys depend. The notion of god creating the animals is pure fiction. Animals are not

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proves everything Schuon denied. It shows that there were once inland seas 500 miles from the current oceans and that eons have passed since those Devonian or Jurassic ages, and, humorously, Schuon’s own land contained on it refutations of his anti-evolutionary ideology. I also found a beautiful iridescent skink on their house, and Mrs. Schuon had never seen one and was scared of it. I told her how lovely and rare they are in the east and told her she was lucky to see it. Once the Schuons found a black snake in their kitchen and claimed it was a sign from heaven that their cult was under threat or some nonsense, Actually it was merely Pantherophis Obsoletus, or the common Black Snake which lives all over the Midwest, which looks for cool areas to sleep. These people had little understanding of nature and a ready willingness to believe the most superstitious nonsense.

symbols. They are self-existing species whose existence is largely a result of their own struggles and efforts to survive in the larger context of nature. This is not opinion but demonstrable science. Eckhart, with a typical irrationalism so often found in mystics, leaps to the unwarranted conclusion that “creatures” are “nothing” on the basis of a misunderstanding and a surmise. There is no evidence for this. Beings are not “creatures” and defining them as such already presupposes that there is a “Creator”. There is no evidence at all that animals were created by any deity.

No wonder Eckhart was favorite darling of Traditionalists such as Ananda Coomaraswamy and Frithjof Schuon, who also think that nature is “nothing” unless it is seen as merely a symbol of god. Schuon used animals as mere props and symbols. Eagles, Elk and Lions were supposed to be “noble” whereas other animals were of a lower caste or a “lesser archetype” as Schuon said on occasion. Schuon had no understanding of animals in actual environments at all. All Schuon knew about animals was clichés and conventions, stereotypes and essentializations. In Schuon’s various paintings in which animals are present they are merely badly drawn symbols of qualities that his idealized humans (namely FS himself) are supposed to claim as their own. So the ‘noble’ elk sits on a hill in one of Schuon’s works overlooking a nude young woman. The elk is Schuon himself of course, posing as master of the Harem. Schuon thought he looked like an eagle, because of his big nose, which he tried to interpret perhaps too charitably as having raptor like qualities .

### **6.Darwin’s Triumph Over Religion, Speciesism and Anti-Science.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Paul Waldau’s interesting Specter of Speciesism demonstrates how Buddhism and Christianity’s view animals is false and denigrating as revealed in the language of their primary religious documents. He shows how these two religions participate in the moral error known as

speciesism. He suggests that a more complete critical examination of the attitudes towards animals is warranted. This book is a rather weak beginning of a comparative critique of how religion has promoted the disparagement, denigration and ill-treatment animals across the millennia. A much deeper history of speciesism is sorely needed. Much more inquiry should be done.

David Nibert contends that the rise of cattle farming and meat eating corresponds to increases in violence and war and the denial of human rights to humans. The rise of the major religions as systems of oppression enabled large scale delusions to be foisted on populations by religions. The horrible costs of these “civilizations” to women animals, and slaves is rarely counted. Christianity was horrendous in its abusive equation of animals with the body, the body with women and women with evil. This is true of Hinduism too. There is a misperception that because Hinduism protected a few symbolic species like cattle, that it is generous towards animals, but actually Hindu texts are full of speciesism, denigrating animals via notions of karma and reincarnation, --the idea that bad people would be punished by coming back as animals. The same is true of Buddhism. Buddhism upholds compassion as its highest value but excused killing people not Buddhist on the grounds they were “wicked men of wrong views” considered the equivalent of non-human animals”.<sup>1272</sup> Waldau notes that “the karma notion is built on the scaffolding of the logically prior notion of a hierarchy”.<sup>1273</sup> This is an understatement. The idea of Karma is a fiction not a “law” that has been built on prejudice that favors humans. The Buddhists create imaginary “levels” where humans are considered in a “privileged state”, beyond compare. There is no logical basis for this elect status and indeed, only human think that this is the case. Darwin shows in Origin of the Species quite clearly that nature has no hierarchy

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<sup>1272</sup> Quoted in Waldau pg. 288

<sup>1273</sup> Waldau pg. 283

and that evolution happens slowly over time from one species to another. There is no hierarchy of species.

Darwin himself deduced from this that animals should have rights. While he was not a vegetarian, Darwin was committed to protecting animals from cruelty. His biography shows that he regularly came across cases of cruelty to farm animals, One biographer, Janet Browne, says that Darwin was a local magistrate in the Downe House area and he “was inexorable in imposing fines and punishment.” on those who abused animals. Adrian Desmond records similar things in his biography. Darwin’s son Francis Darwin writes of his father that

“The remembrance of screams, or other sounds heard in Brazil, when he was powerless to interfere with what he believed to be the torture of a slave, haunted him for years, especially at night. In smaller matters, where he could interfere, he did so vigorously. He returned one day from his walk pale and faint from having seen a horse ill-used, and from the agitation of violently remonstrating with the man. On another occasion he saw a horse-breaker teaching his son to ride, the little boy was frightened and the man was rough; my father stopped, and jumping out of the carriage reproved the man in no measured terms.<sup>1274</sup>

Adrian Desmond maintains, with a great deal of evidence, that Darwin’s theory has implications against slavery. Darwin came to understand the evolution is not hierarchical and that slavery is an affront to humanity. Darwin condemned Argentineans for killing Indians and Brazilians and Americans for holding slaves. He was clearly an advocate for animal rights. Darwin’s relation to animals is much more complex and nuanced.

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<sup>1274</sup> <http://thedispersalofdarwin.wordpress.com/category/huxley/>

see also Darwin’s [The Voyage of the Beagle](#), an amazing, sparkling and brilliant book that already shows Darwin’s early theory of evolution in a preliminary way with great detail and adventure. It also shows his anti-slavery and begins to show his growing opposition to the mistreatment of animals which he observed with horrifying detail in South America.

Various writers have said that Darwin favored animal experiments and speciesism. But this is not true. He wanted to limit animal experimentation as much as possible while still preserving the right of science to make relevant and justified inquiries. Darwin went far to do this. Adrian Desmond notes in his books Darwin's Sacred Cause that Darwin was helpful in getting a Bill passed through Parliament called the "Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876" which limited vivisection. Darwin wrote to Joseph Hooker, then-President of the Royal Society,

"I worked all the time in London on the vivisection question . . . The object is to protect animals, and at the same time not to injure Physiology," and he had already enlisted the support of "some half-dozen eminent scientific men."

David Feller notes that "Darwin's attempt to enact legislation to regulate physiological experimentation was the action of an animal advocate attempting to work from within the scientific community."<sup>1275</sup> This is accurate, as Darwin was trying to find a middle way between science and animal rights. The fact that he tried to do this is certainly to his credit and makes me admire him more. Certainly he did not go far enough, as he advocated more killing of animals than he would do if he lived now, but that would be a lot of expect of him to thinks as we do now, at that time. The 19<sup>th</sup> century may be the most lethal period of animals killing in human history up to that time, though the current advance of killing far surpasses the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1276</sup> While Darwin was

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<sup>1275</sup> See David Allen Feller "Dog fight: Darwin as animal advocate in the antivivisection controversy of 1875"

[http://www.academia.edu/4707358/Dog\\_fight\\_Darwin\\_as\\_animal\\_advocate\\_in\\_the\\_antivivisection\\_controversy\\_of\\_1875](http://www.academia.edu/4707358/Dog_fight_Darwin_as_animal_advocate_in_the_antivivisection_controversy_of_1875)

<sup>1276</sup> A restaurant called Foster's Bighorn in Rio Vista, California has 300 animal heads, which show well the toxic trophy hunting exploitive mentality of the time. This sort of trophy hunting machismo is very repulsive, My Dad took me there when I was a kid and I have never forgotten

alive 30-60 million bison were exterminated on the great Plains of America.



Bison Bones 1870

Ruthless hunting of Whales, fish like Whitefish, Sturgeon and Lake Trout in the Great Lakes, Beaver, African animals, and birds like Egrets are birds with rare feathers decimated world populations in the service of greed and hats for men and women. The feather trade alone did great harm to millions of birds: W.T. Hornaday wrote in out Vanishing Wildlife that:

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the repulsive killing that was done to create this place. I would like to see animal rights activists shut this place down. Serial killing by testosterone poisoned individuals like this needs to be stopped.

“From the trackless jungles of New Guinea, round the world both ways to the snow-capped peaks of the Andes, no unprotected bird is safe. The humming-birds of Brazil, the egrets of the world at large, the rare birds of paradise, the toucan, the eagle, the condor and the emu, all are being exterminated to swell the annual profits of the millinery trade. The case is far more serious than the world at large knows, or even suspects. But for the profits, the birds would be safe; and no unprotected wild species can long escape the hounds of Commerce. “ (*W. T. Hornaday 1913*)<sup>1277</sup>

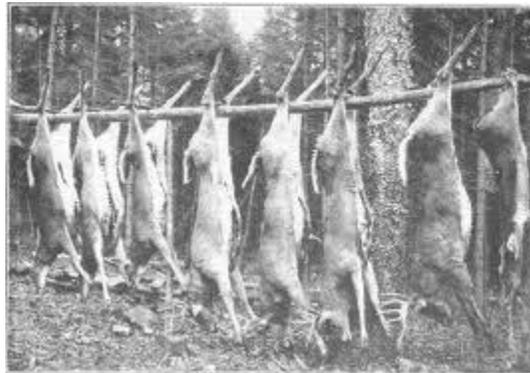
But Darwin was more on the side of nature’s rights. Darwin stressed the importance of the idea of “sympathy” as the root of morality. Darwin, like Jeremy Bentham, Thoreau or some American feminists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, saw that women animals and slaves all are beings and not property to be exploited by men for power or wealth. What needs to be done of course, is that the cult of the CEO must to be stopped and the boards and shareholder system stopped or heavily regulated. Profits should be shared among all the workers and not go to some parasitical CEO who exploits them. People who profit from such systems will wail and cry when this is done, but it has to be done if the earth and its many beings are to survive.

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<sup>1277</sup> “At the height of “feather fashions” in the UK (around 1901-1910) 14, 362, 000 pounds of exotic feathers were imported into the United Kingdom at a total valuation of £19, 923, 000.[3] A single 1892 order of feathers by a London dealer (either a plumassier or a milliner) included 6,000 bird of paradise, 40,000 hummingbird and 360,000 various East Indian bird feathers. In 1902 an auction in London sold 1,608 30 ounce packages of heron (including the great heron and egret varieties) plumes. Each ounce of plume required the use of four herons, therefore each package used the plumes of 120 herons, for a grand total of 192, 960 herons killed.” Quoted from Murderous Millinery  
<http://fashioningfeathers.com/murderous-millinery/>

see also Barry Kent MacKay here:  
<http://www.animalliberationfront.com/Philosophy/Opinionatedly/FurandFeathers.htm>

Darwin's views on nature and animals reverse the trend since Aristotle and the Bible than "Man" is the measure of all things and has the right to 'dominate' nature. Darwin concludes that animals and all natural beings are the measure of themselves and do what they can to further all their own kinds. Darwin's conclusions are really a revolutionary insights that are grounded in scientific fact and not myth. And the end of his life he was clearly trying to explore animal intelligence, and doing so in ways that granted intelligence even to worms and jelly fish. This is a point of view largely lost to today's corporate science, which is often speciesist in a way Darwin never was.<sup>1278</sup> There are now 1200 species now directly threatened with extinction and 21,000 who will soon be threatened with extinction is nothing is done to stop the current human laughter and destruction of habitat, driven largely by human greed and self-centeredness.<sup>1279</sup>



The hatred of nature and women found in Hindu, Buddhist , Moslem and Christian texts was not part of Darwin's make up. The Pali Canon

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<sup>1278</sup> See the letters of G.J. Romanes to and from Darwin and Romanes' books on Animal Intelligence and Mental Evolution in Animals., both of which Darwin was aware of and whose point of view had his sympathy. Romanes work is sometime marred by his religious views, but he is worth looking at as he shows clearly how far Darwin was going late in life into the issues around animal intelligence and comparing animals favorably to humans.

<sup>1279</sup> This is according to CITES. See their Red List and Appendix I and II

says that the “enlightened” man is one that can say “I never again will lie in the womb” <sup>1280</sup>. Such an idea assumes that both women and nature are repulsive and to be avoided by monks and men like the Buddha. The misogynist fiction in Buddhism is that such men are imagined to be beyond birth. Few women or animals are shown in Mahayana depictions of “Pure Lands”. Heaven or “the Pure Land” is a place of male fantasy and is a place of speciesism and misogyny. The truth is that no one is beyond birth and the whole mythology here is rife with hatred of nature and prejudice against animals. Mythologies structure social prejudice and how they do so is still largely unknown. The brain or linguistic structures made necessary by the structure of the brain seem to necessitate myths in the absence of a more thorough education system. Hence the importance of education...

The idea of karma in Buddhism and Hinduism contributes to the horrors of animal abuse that India and China have shown in respect to the illegal animal trade and the treatment of animals in general in those countries. The Chinese have largely wiped out the animals called Saiga, for instance, deer like ungulate of the Mongolian steppe. <sup>1281</sup> 11 species of sharks are endangered due the Chinese mania for shark fins soup, among other reasons. Technology has given humans lethal means to kill off other species very quickly and a corresponding ethic that is not speciesist has not gained strength enough to stop large scale destruction off habitats and species that live on them.

Christianity is no better than Buddhism or Hinduism in respect of animals. Indeed, the Church Fathers are atrocious in their attitudes toward them. Augustine for instance writes that

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<sup>1280</sup> See Pali Canon: Sn 1.2 PTS: Sn 18-34 Dhaniya Sutta: Dhaniya the Cattleman  
<http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.02.than.html>

<sup>1281</sup> Chinese medicine is partly to blame for this extermination even though the horns have no medical value at all. Chinese medicine is a delusional system of remedies and quack diagnoses.

Man's nature is midway between angels and beasts in such a way that, if he should remain in subjection to his Lord and with dutiful obedience to his commandments, he will pass into the company of angels, obtaining, with no intervening death, a blissful immortality that has no limit; but if he should make proud and disobedient use of his free will, and go counter to the Lord his God, he was to live like a beast, at the mercy of death, enthralled by lust and doomed to eternal punishment after death. <sup>1282</sup>

This is a passage so ridiculous and full of delusory thinking that is it hard to disentangle. There are no angels and the allusions to heaven and hell are obviously meant to threaten. The prejudice against animals is reprehensible and undeserved, like a racism applied to species, hence Augustine was a speciesist. Animals are placed in a constructed set of delusory inventions that are meant to control minds and hold them in subjection. Indeed the whole of the passage is primarily concerned with subjection. The main concern of much of Augustine is justifying the unjust power of the Church's in his City of God. He writes that

"Christ himself shows that to refrain from the killing of animals and the destroying of plants is the height of superstition, for judging that there is no common rights between us and the beasts and trees, he sent devils into a herd of swine and with a curse

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<sup>1282</sup> Quoted from Augustine's City of God, 12:22? in Waldau, Specter of Speciesism, sent to me by the author. Waldau has a whole chapter, "Other Animals in the Christian Tradition" on Church fathers and their rather atrocious attitudes toward animals. The same abusive comments about animals can be found I the Philokalia and elsewhere in Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and many early Christian writers. In the Philokalia for instance, animals are nearly always referred to as being equivalent to "corrupt animal body" or being 'passionate" like an animal. The equation of animals with evil, the corrupt and the shameful body are legion in Christian texts. All this is false. The notion that Christians have soul that is superior to animals is ridiculous. These attitudes have led to whole sale slaughter of animals. .

withered the tree on which he found no fruit.." <sup>1283</sup>

Augustine foolishly draws moral teachings from the superstitious fictions of the Bible, when in fact they are self-serving stories. What he shows in the mythical Christ of the Gospels was himself a speciesist. The Christian hatred of animals has its roots in this sort of fiction.

Aquinas says similar things about animals. He says that “animals are ordered to man's use in the natural course of things...Consequently, man uses them without any injustice, either by killing them or by employing them in any other way.”<sup>1284</sup> This willingness to cause suffering to non-human species is very disturbing. Such a passage must have appealed to Descartes, who was also cruel to animals.

In any case, another writer, Val Plumwood also discusses the fact that traditional metaphysical and religious systems like Platonism (and Hinduism by implication) tend toward an extreme sexism and speciesist denigration of women, as well as prejudice against animals, the body and nature. Plumwood goes deeper than Waldau, who is too religious in his sensibility and thus excuses religions for some pretty horrible practices. Plumwood writes about patriarchal metaphysics in her excellent Feminism and the Mastery of Nature.<sup>1285</sup> My conclusion is that sexism, misogyny, speciesism and prejudice against lower classes, nature and animals generalize across all the major religions: Islam, Christianity,

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<sup>1283</sup> Augustine *The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life* (The Fathers of the Church, Volume 56. Chapter 17 part 54.

<sup>1284</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 111 pt. 2, 112.

<sup>1285</sup> Another book that addresses the abusive attitudes toward animals common in western culture is John Livingstone's Roque Primate and his excellent attack on conservation biology The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation. See also the work of Carolyn Merchant for yet another eco-feminist perspective. Science needs to be as open about itself insofar as real evidence can ring some of its basic assumptions into question. I think Plumwood and Livingstone are right that science has been all too willing to be subservient to a male dominating and patriarchal perspective.

Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism and others. This confirms earlier research I did in the 1990's on symbol systems in general. Then I wrote:

“Symbol systems and belief systems are generated out of human needs and aspirations. What is believed in is not the important question. The important question is why it is believed. Why is there a need to believe in something? Belief, seen this way is nearly synonymous with desire. One creates and sustains beliefs out of need and compensatory drives. One must dismantle symbols and ideas into their motives and intentions. One does not want to suffer: therefor one believes or helps create and sustain the idea of an abstract and symbolic ‘god’ who is merciful and comforting. One does not want to die, therefore one's ‘god’ is immortal or one seeks fame and certain, total knowledge. One does not want to be betrayed by others, so ‘god’ is the 'Loving Friend', the Beloved, the faithful. One does not want to be weak and ignorant so the god one creates and sustains, or the god one inherits is all knowing and all powerful.....The desires that motivate abstract symbols systems can be altered, modified, negotiated or changed. [Therefore, religion is not evolutionary but is just a collection of myths and directives created by human desires and motives]

The symbols and institutions that sustain them are less changeable and easily turn into hardened sources of injustice, repression and cold indifference. The eternal realm of ideas is imaginary, but cultures have invested this realm with reality, usually by force of violence. Those who do not accept the forced imposition of systems of belief tend to be harassed or killed. Believers in symbols systems tend to demonize those that question the source of their power. Knowledge systems and the power they provide to individuals distorts these individuals beyond their

ordinarily human state, creating personages of them they could never have been by themselves. Knowledge systems magnify individuals through institutions and the institutions generate far more destruction than would have been possible for a single individual. The value of human rights is that it is individual, concrete and resists the tendency of belief systems to become hardened into abstractions and institutions that encourage and magnify the commission of injustices.”

However, I came to realize that this analysis is not complete. The question of human rights leaves out how humans treat nature and animals. Thus, as Darwin pointed out evolution or natural selection are not really the cases of culture, as human mental capacity developed eons ago, rather:

“ The more efficient causes of progress seem to consist of a good education during youth while the brain is impressible, and of a high standard of excellence, inculcated by the ablest and best men, embodied in the laws, customs, and traditions of the nation, and enforced by public opinion.”<sup>1286</sup>

This means that human culture can degenerate pretty quickly if not maintained by sympathy and other such values. This means again that most cultural facts are easily hanged of religion, being one of these, is not the result of natural selection, as Darwin says. One can see in American society, in the last 30 years, how sympathy has been largely suppressed and the humanities and the sympathies they teach are increasingly under threat by the forces of greed and CEO culture.

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<http://www.des.ucdavis.edu/faculty/Richerson/Cultural%20EvolutionDarwins150FinalMS%20version.pdf>

But this does not negate the real influence of natural selection. Judith Butler notes that feminists rejected the idea that biology is destiny, but then developed an account of patriarchal culture which assumed that masculine and feminine genders could inevitably be built, by culture, upon 'male' and 'female' bodies, in which she sees little difference. This is merely another form of human supremecism, this time privileging females. She goes too far to reject male and female bodies and biology as real categories, since these principles interact everywhere in nature, sometimes even in the same being. Some eels for instance turn from males into female as they get older. Male and female still exist even if they change. Butler is certainly right that there is heavy cultural conditioning, on this matter, but wrong to think that gender of sexual selection is not a fact of natural selection.

But that said, Plumwood goes deeper and notes that the same ideological, symbolic and economic systems that harm humans also harm animals and nature. The critique of systems of knowledge and power that is at the basis of human rights concerns must be extended to include a concern with animals and nature. Darwinism goes beyond the superficial humanism of Foucaultian analysis and cuts through all this metaphysical prejudice and bigotry and liberates us to pursue the search for truth about nature within the context of an ethical understanding of the word and the mind. Darwin's evolutionary theory implies both a radical rejection of religious and institutional dogmatism and a continuity between all species and habitats. Human rights and natures' right are joined in an enlightened Darwinism. This means that the health of our culture depends on education and sympathy for others.

The anti-science movement was already lively in Rousseau. He thought that science was a sinister power, and that 'savage man' was more moral than a society full of art and sciences. Rousseau claimed that science was a destructive influence and civilization was harmful to human beings. This is mistaken and shows he did not really understand

what was involved. Rousseau was not too far from other anti-science thinkers such as De Maistre who thought that a return to the inquisition and the moral dogmatism of the Middle Ages was a good thing. The claim that science or atheism leads to immorality has been soundly trounced by Dawkins, and others, so I will not answer that here.

Guenon's ideas grow directly and indirectly out of reactionaries like Rousseau and De Maistre. Guenon's ideas are the basis of most of the absurdities written by the Traditionalists about evolution. The traditionalists, uniformly and with no originality, claim that is that the "the greater cannot come from the less", meaning that the human notion of god cannot have come from earth and cells. This is false, since in fact the monotheistic idea of a god is merely a few thousand years old and is only held by certain kinds of cultures that have certain kinds of hierarchical, patriarchal and unjust social arrangements. The god idea is a minor construction in the history of the human race. Darwin said that the "love of the deity is an effect of the organization of the brain" and this may be exactly right, as anomalies in the brain's structure appear to have enabled humans to express themselves through language.<sup>1287</sup> But

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<sup>1287</sup> Those who hate Darwin like to quote this as if he said something bad. But actually the brain is a marvel that is still little understood. The British brain surgeon Henry Marsh said that the brain is "a mystery, . . . , as great as the stars at night and the universe around us". This is not a mystical statement but an objective one.

The Greeks and Romans gathered some knowledge of the human body, but it was not till only 500 years ago that people started grasping elementary things about how the body/brain works. Leonardo was one of the first. Evolution made us rather dense when it comes to our own bodies. Religion deserves much blame for preventing inquiry about this. Much of what goes on in us is largely unknown to us. This fact explains why people have such weird and false ideas about the importance of human subjectivity and create bizarre and largely false notions of Chakra's, Galen's "Humors", or the Chinese notions of Chi (Qi) meridians or Channels. These superstitious ideas dominated medicine for millennia. While Taoists or New Agers still believe this nonsense, there is no doubt it is nonsense. Now that they are supplanted, we begin to grasp that the mind is the brain and that the complex relation of mind and body is still only in its infancy as knowledge. The understanding of animal bodies is also in its infancy, though it is clear that we have much more in common with them than we knew until recently, as the speciesism inherent in religion and science have permitted to understand. Chinese medicine has helped decimate animals populations like the Saiga, the Sun Bear, Sharks and many others.

what is involved here is a misuse of the brain, not a factual matter, but rather a cultural delusion. Religion is at least partly a result of the peculiar linguistic fact of words being easily merged as abstract concepts and generalized into a magnified an artificial mental space without much testing against reality. How language works in the brain and how it evolved is still largely unknown. Gods appear to be partly the result of the magnified confusions of language misunderstood.<sup>1288</sup> Gods are a kind of mental slippage, or an illusion created by the abstract character of linguistic vagueness and over generality. Human pour their emotions into the empty symbols as if they were real.

Therefore, Guenon was wrong, the god idea is not “greater” than the facts of evolution. On the contrary, the god idea is a created fiction, serviceable to certain sorts of social arrangements—it is just an infinitesimal part of evolution if it is part of it at all, strictly speaking. It is merely a cultural fiction created to sustain certain types of societies in certain settings. The fossil and DNA record is increasingly clear on the origin of species. It is very exciting each time new bones are discovered in the Rift valley or elsewhere in Africa or New dinosaur birds re discovered in China or another continent <sup>1289</sup> The Traditionalists absurd

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<sup>1288</sup> A lot of religion results from the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. For instance the idea of being refers to mere existence which we all possess, worm to man. But Being, as such, is an abstract idea, which doesn't actually exist, but the concept seems real, because we can think it. Actually it is merely a fiction created by abstracting the idea of existing from the beings that actually do exist. Existence is not an actuality but merely an abstract concept. There is no such things as “Being” in an abstract sense,, there are only beings who exist. Religions grow partly form just this sort of confusion. Heidegger in particular thrives on the confusion of Being and beings. But even the bible is full of this sort of nonsense as when god defines himself to Moses and says that “ I Am That I Am” this notion that being is its own justification and causes its own existence is ludicrous. The whole of Judeo Christian metaphysics stems from this play on concepts and words. Religions get created by just this sort of abstraction inherent in misunderstood language.

<sup>1289</sup> There are thousands of such “missing links” that turn up frequently. Recent examples are the amazing early bird/reptile fossils found in China. Hans Thewissen has identified a series of intermediate fossil ‘links’ documenting whale’s dramatic evolutionary transition from land to sea. The Cleveland Museum of Natural History recently discovered another link in the chain of early apes between chimps and homo sapiens. There was Ardi who is 4.4 million years ago and then

writings on evolution ultimately underscore the shallow anti-intellectuality of the Traditionalists and their inability to understand or be open to direct evidence.

In Reign of Quantity Guenon bases his understanding of nature on the arcane Scholastic idea of essence. He says that

“the explanation of things must proceed ....from the essential side [of things]... this is equivalent to saying that every explanation must proceed from above downwards and not from below upwards and this observation has special relevance at this point, for it immediately give the reason why modern science actually lacks all explanatory value”

What Guenon is really saying here is that he is on a witch hunt against Darwin, as are all the traditionalists. He is saying any truth about reality must be dictated by dogma, by theology and metaphysics, and physical evidence, science (“from below”) must be ignored or rejected. The ‘spatial symbolism’ employed here is bogus. The idea of below and above are fictitious. The notion of a “vertical” hierarchy of values, an up and down to reality is purely imaginary. There is no god “up there” nor is the physical world ‘down there’. All that is adult make believe. Up there is our sun and the milky way out to Andromeda galaxy and Quasars. “Down there” is our earth, fertile top soil, generous plants, the mantle, plate tectonics, paramecia and our beloved earth.

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Khadanoomoo, who was 3.6 million years ago. There are other australopithicus afarensis fossilized bones that have been found. These exciting areas in modern biology and paleontology, but there are untold areas of other sorts of research opening up new and expanding areas for science all the time.

So the followers of Guenon go on repeating his nonsense as if it actually said something real, when he merely fudged and fiddled with words to create a charlatan's view of reality. Hossein Nasr has written that "an 'ism' of great danger to Islam... is Darwinism,". Yes, Darwin has already defeated Nasr and Islam. Nasr and his son Vali, who thinks the same nonsense, just have not figured it out yet. Science has been invading Islamic countries for some time and they are allowing experiments, free thought and open inquiry. I am not sure about conservatives in the medieval schools of Qum, Cairo and Mecca, where the clerics reign. Many appear to be quite reactionary. Yet, staunchly backwards, Hossein Nasr, a fearful and defensive author, defends Islamic creationism by saying

"let me say at the beginning that I have studied not only physics but also geology and paleontology at Harvard, and so it is with this background that I reject the ordinary understanding of the Darwinian theory of evolution even on scientific grounds. "

This is just means he has not studied it, actually. He misunderstood it. Nasr merely shows what an ignoramus he is about physics, geology and paleontology, as well Darwin. His writings show he just did not learn much of anything in his studies. He is another one on a witch-hunt against Darwin and science. Nasr once told me on the phone that he is a man "on a mountain top", and that he understands things most people do not. Yeah, right. In fact, he is a man on a tiny mountain in a deep abyssal chasm of pretence among other blustering poseurs. Nasr understands very little. He believes in the discredited ideology or "intelligent design". Nasr has no idea what he is talking about and merely mouths the same defeated creationism that all the traditionalists parrot

back and forth to each other. Darwin himself rejected Intelligent design when he wrote

"The old argument of design in nature, as given by Paley, which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, fails, now that the law of natural selection had been discovered. We can no longer argue that, for instance, the beautiful hinge of a bivalve shell must have been made by an intelligent being, like the hinge of a door by man. There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows. Everything in nature is the result of fixed laws.<sup>1290</sup>

None of the traditionalists has any real knowledge of nature, biological science or evolution, I got to know these men pretty well, and they don't know much about evolution at all, they merely puff themselves up and repeat dogmatic arguments that stem from Plato, Guenon, Schuon, Agassiz and others. Martin Lings for instance utters the incredibly ignorant statement that it is almost "certain that man did not evolve from some lower animal."<sup>1291</sup> I knew Lings well enough to know that he had no scientific education or understanding at all. Rama Coomaraswamy writes in the same ignorant vein, indeed all these writers write the same nonsense over and over, repeating each other's falsehoods: Rama writes:

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<sup>1290</sup> *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* pg 87

<sup>1291</sup> [The Transformist Illusion](#) by Douglas Dewar. Review by Martin Lings. Lings approved of the discredited ideas of Dewar as do most of the traditionalists.

[http://www.studiesincomparativereligion.com/Public/articles/review\\_of-The\\_Transformist\\_Illusion.aspx](http://www.studiesincomparativereligion.com/Public/articles/review_of-The_Transformist_Illusion.aspx) Book Reviews

“Evolution is of course quite absurd from both the scientific and philosophical viewpoint. From the scientific viewpoint: not only is there absolutely no proof in favor of evolution, but all the evidence is against it. Geology, biology, mathematics, genetics and all the other scientific disciplines speak to the fixity of the species, the impossibility of chance and the absurdity of transformism. No intermediary forms between species has ever been found. There is much talk of "missing links." The problem with missing links is that they are missing! To believe in evolution is to believe that the greater can come out of the less” <sup>1292</sup>

The ignorance of these statements is really staggering. Not only are there incredibly amounts of evidence for the origin of the human species in animals, there is more and more every year. There are thousands of “intermediate” species, more found all the time, so the notion of “missing links” is really just a misunderstanding that the fossil record, in fact, is more and more complete every year. Our evolution from a common ancestor means that evolution is a slow process of change in which there is never a leap, but rather just slow change from one species to another. One cannot say at which point this Californian Salamander, (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*), who evolved as they migrated from northern California, following the mountain chains on both sides of the San Joaquin valley. They eventually became by a different species, after millions of years. It is not exactly a ‘ring species, but it is close to being one and shows a great deal about how complex evolution can be. There are countless such demonstrations that show concretely how the Darwinian theory is true.

There are also the amazing finds of new dinosaur fossils in China, which prove birds came from dinosaurs. Just a few years ago, in 2011 paleontologists turned up, *Ardi*, a common ancestor linking humans and

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<sup>1292</sup> <http://www.the-pope.com/tracultc.html>

apes. She is 4.4million years old. The work of Dr. Hans Thewissen on whales is quite extraordinary too. He has found many links in the tree leading to whales of Pakicetus to Ambulocetus and Sperm Whales. There is amazing proof here. One need only look at the evolving back legs of whales to see that indeed they were once land animals. The back legs become useless and detach from the spine over millions of years of fossils and still exist as relics inside contemporary whales. I found in none of these traditionalists any real understating of plants or animals or any deep understanding of the sciences. They oppose what they do not understand and write about it with uniform and dogmatic ignorance.

Religion is still alive, but only in the sense that delusions still live in one who is insane. Zaiuddin Sardar has written that religion has been largely superseded by science and that the altercations between science and religion is

“ not merely philosophical debates; these are real-life issues forcing human beings to make choices which affect the most fundamental aspects of existence.”... “Modern science has created a belief system in which there is no room for the Divine. This belief system comes with its own values and ethics and attempts of create a Weltanschauung parallel to and in competition with the religious worldview.”

But this shows a deep misunderstanding of the facts.. Science is not merely a “belief system” and science and religion are not at all “parallel”. If science is white, and religion is black, it is not at all a matter or seeing things in too black and white terms, but in the fact that religion is merely an absence of light, ironically, there is no reality there. So there is only white and the absence of white. Religion cannot possibly compete with

science on any subject. Sardar is too ambiguous about science. For him, evidently, science is not an objective phenomenon or activity but a cultural activity.<sup>1293</sup> He still wants to make science comply with the Koran, which it will never do and be real. He is still implying religion has some ultimate reality when it does not. He tries to lessen the facts of science, which are not merely subjective “beliefs”. Science is objective in most of its operations and facts gathering. Sure science makes mistakes and is incomplete, but this is because it is an ongoing investigation, not a dogma or a finished thing. This the beauty of it. The attempt to defend religion is bound to fail, whatever quarter it comes from. The only justification for religion that has some credence is the notion that some people find comfort in the delusions, this is true, they do. Religion supplies a certain opiate comfort. This cannot be denied, but in that case, religious books should be sold at the pharmacy and not taught to college kids, except as part of myth and fiction.

There are various anti-science screeds by the traditionalists: besides Wolfgang Smith’s, Cosmos and Transcendence as well as his Teilhardism and the New Religions, and his more recent The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology there are these: Titus Burckhardt’s essay “Traditional Cosmology and the Modern World” Guenon’s essay “Sacred and Profane Science” as well as his Reign of Quantity, Martin Ling’s Ancient Beliefs Modern Superstitions as well as writings by Schuon, Whitall Perry and Seyyed Hossien Nasr. All these men, ( yes, all men, no women) have all written absurd, silly and empty denials of evolution, all of them making more or less the same discredited claims as Dewar, indeed, most of them inspired by Dewar. They all pretend to show how

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<sup>1293</sup> Stephen Jay Gould took a similar position. Gould was an evolutionist, but at the same time he honored religion. His essay “Non-overlapping Magisteria” suggests that his Darwinian understanding of biology is very weak. It is hard to imagine how he came to that conclusion. Also, in the end I think this ambiguous equivocation may have made his science likewise questionable. I speak more of this in an essay called “Chomsky’s Cartesian Speciesism”.

traditional ("sacred") science tied its knowledge to a 'higher spiritual reality'--- which does not exist and which required priests to administer. Guenon sums up their case when he says

"Modern science, arising out of an arbitrary limitation of knowledge within a certain particular order which is indeed the most inferior of all, namely that of material or sensible reality, has as a consequence forfeited all intellectual value, so long that is to say as one uses the word intellectuality in all the fullness of its true meaning and refuses to participate in the 'rationalist' error, or to reject intellectual intuition, which amounts to the same thing."

First look at the language. It is easy to unpack. This is typical Guenon. The phrase "within a certain particular order" is gobbledygook. It means, in his lexicon, that there are other states of being, angels, gods and so on up to "Beyond Being" – but all this make believe is left out, and Guenon doesn't have to explain it: his followers accept this nonsense. He is really talking about the inventions of superstitious minds, which he rides his thought on as if on a roller coaster of mind made delusions. But angels, 'Beyond Being' and Guenon's other "multiple states" are all fiction, yet Guenon always speaks as if such nonsense were fact when in fact it is – well---let's call it gobbledygook.

Now, next look at the use of the word "inferior". What he is saying is that the sensible order – that is your life, your mother, your eyes, your children, your earth, home, even the trees in your back yard and the food you eat—indeed, everything that really matters ---is less than the order of gobbledygook. He is saying that all that you are, and all your children are and the world you live in, is based on this utterly empty, elitist and world-demeaning gobbledygook. What matters he says is the fiction making "Intellect" which no one has proven exists and which is merely a

postulate of the superstitious mind. He concludes that “modern science.... has as a consequence forfeited all intellectual value”. Excuse me? “Intellectual value” here means the value of gobbledygook.

Science has merely forfeited Guenon’s delusional use of his mind. And thank goodness for that...Science has striven to help human lives, and has done more than any knowledge system to help human life, ever. There has been no progress of any real value on earth that did not have its origin in some sort of science like basis in inquiry and experience. What did Guenon do to help anyone? Nothing at all....He sat in Cairo destroying the world in his heated and paranoid imaginings. His whole argument against evolution is based on bad logic and false premises!

...Guenon’s hatred of the sensible and material is of course the source of the misogyny that visits all the traditionalists in varying degrees. For them women are ‘matter’ as opposed to “form”—they take Plato’s archaic archetypal ideas seriously. The dislike of the earth and prejudice in favor of vague “intellectual intuition”<sup>1294</sup> makes the traditionalists into mystical romantics. Bent on plying their esoteric ware as if it were reality when in fact it is merely fiction. If you carefully follow out their arguments you find that they have nothing with which to replace science. Schuon tries to replace science with his penis, which was supposed to “heal the wombs” whatever that means. They were not wounded, to begin with. Rama Coomaraswamy wanted to replace science with little white Catholic wafers that are not even nutritionally useful. A lot of good that has ever done humanity. Guenon thought you should escape into an orthodox religion and let your mind atrophy in constant prayer.

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<sup>1294</sup> I studied this concept at great length in the person of Schuon and other traditionalists and determined finally that what they mean by this is arbitrary subjectivity. The “intellect” in their parlance is really just the “Imaginal” fiction (to use Corbin’s term) of being receptive to what in fact is merely a sub-consciousness. What they call “metaphysics” is really just narcissistic imagination projected into hierarchies and systematic cosmological schemes. You can see this in all their works. Schuon’s primordial gatherings were attempts to imitate the revolving of planets with Schuon as the ‘sun center’. This is what happens when you combine irrational ‘esoteric’ Perennialism, with misunderstandings of real science.

They argue in favor of things that don't exist or are merely imaginary and do so in the most pompous possible language. I noticed Rama's absurd obsessions with evil and exorcism early in 1991 and realized he was kooky and abused his education in psychology with all sorts of superstitious nonsense. They want you to pray orthodox prayers, and go to ceremonies, Temples, Churches and Mosques and do other magical things that are all based on superstitions and fictions. Rama believed Schuon was evil. He was not a good man certainly but evil is also a fiction, whereas will to power or pedophilia, both of which Schuon were involved in, is not fiction.

The traditionalists arguments purported to defeat science are basically the same as the failed arguments of the creationists which have been refuted thoroughly by many people. Ernst Mayr, Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Dawkins, Darwin, Einstein, Pasteur, Hooke, Halley, Christian Barnard, Stephen Hawking or many others has written, discovered, opened up new cures, pushed back the curtain of fear and mystery and revealed to us evolution, physics, the human body, DNA, Plate Tectonics the Milky way and so much else. Over 9000 birds species all over the earth have been extensively studied an many preserved against extinction. Herbaria exist in museums with hundreds of thousands of plants to be studied and learned form. None of the traditionalists have done anything at all compared to all that science has done. None of the traditionalists have anything even remotely plausible to say against the facts of science or its promise for more understanding of our earth and universe, including ourselves. None of the Traditionalists know much about the actual facts of nature or the evolutionary record, vast areas which have proven to be the most fertile areas of research in the last few centuries. None of them have understood the slightest bit about comparative anatomy of species, the derivation of one species form another by natural selection, the adaptations that bring about evolutionary change or the endless and

amazing libraries of evidence that prove evolution. The scientific record prospers and becomes more extensive and more complete every day, whereas the advances of traditional ideology stagnate and decay into cults and backward publishing companies run by bitter and destructively small minds, furiously writing essays , posting their junk onto Wikipedia to try to turn back the tide and return us to the Dark Ages. <sup>1295</sup>

## **7. Wolfgang Smith and Creationist Anti-Science**

\_\_ I think of all the traditionalists writers the one that summarizes all the nonsense written by them about science ---even he even goes beyond them into the dark recesses of the Post-modern, fundamentalist and or creationist muddle-headedness ---is Wolfgang Smith. So I'll spend a good deal of the rest of this essay discussing him. Most of what I say about Smith ideas about science is also true of Schuon. Nasr, Lings and Guenon's ideas on science.

Wolfgang Smith was a mathematician as well as an extreme right wing Catholic. Last time I talked to him, nearly 20 years ago now he was going to move to Coeur D'Alene Idaho in an effort to live near a monastic catholic environment where they do archaic catholic rituals, which Smith thought were alone valid. Not sure if he did that. Rama Coomaraswamy

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<sup>1295</sup> A typical example of the ignorance propounded by the traditionalists is this idea by Harry Oldmeadow and Australian disciple of Schuon. He writes "The Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment were all incubators of ideas and values which first ravaged Christendom and then spread throughout the world like so many bacilli." Actually we only know about the taxonomic order Bacilli because of science and the theory of evolution in addition to the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The discovery of germs and the disease they have produced has saved many millions. Oldmeadow would rather them dead evidently and call the Renaissance a baccili instead. I have doubts a man this ignorant should be allowed to teach children. Great scientists like Robert Hooke 1635 –1703 who discovered cells or Anton von Leuwenhoek 1632 – 1723 who developed the microscope and discovered bacteria among other things. Both of these were amazing men and did for more for humanity than Guenon of any of the followers will ever do. It is often staggers me how ignorant and pompous these men can be  
<http://religioperennis.org/documents/Oldmeadow/Critiques.pdf>

told me a few years back that Smith lives in Camarillo Ca. In 2004 Smith gave \$300. 00 to the Republican party, at a time when it had already been shown that Bush lied about WMD's, had tortured thousands of people in secret prisons and killed thousands upon thousands in a horrible war that was mostly about oil. <sup>1296</sup> Smith shows himself in this action to be true to form, as all the traditionalists line up with far right or quasi-fascist governments. Bush was a neo-fascist of a sort and used war, torture and racism as part of his policies, which invariably served the ultra-rich, far-right religion and a corrupt financial sector of banks and corporations that harm people with wild speculations .

In any case, Smith struck me in my many conversations with him as clearly more interested in religious ritual in a fundamentalist sort of way and hated science. Dogma and ritual performance were put prior to evidence. Smith's Catholicism, devoted to the thesis that the current catholic church is a fraud and various fringe cults on the perimeter of the church, such as the Society of St. Pius X, <sup>1297</sup> are the "real" church. He was also a devotee of the writing of Eric Voegelin, another far right Catholic, whose philosophy echoes Guenon in that he was also an extremist who condemns the entire world after the Enlightenment. Voegelin says he wished to create a "philosophical framework that reconciled [the] Roman Catholic faith with [ . . . ] conservative politics."

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<sup>1296</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/elec/elec-CAMARILLO-CA.html>

<sup>1297</sup> The Society of St. Pius the X (SSPX) is a far right catholic movement founded by Marcel Lefebvre. Smith liked this group. Rama Coomaraswamy liked the SSPV, which is even more reactionary. They believe that the Church after Vatican 2 in 1963 ceased to be a valid church because they changed the mass and become more democratic. They have monarchist leanings and wish to return to the Church of Innocent the III if possible. Obsessed with evil and hating all things modern, they are virulent, nostalgic and consider everything not totally orthodox to be evil. They have been accused of anti-Semitism.. Lefebvre approval or support for a restoration of an absolutist French monarchy, the Vichy government (1940–1944), and the party of Jean-Marie le Pen. This makes the traditionalist church a neo fascist organization, more or less. The SSPV is even worse, in my opinion.

<sup>1298</sup>These are a part of a crowd of rare intellectuals devoted to ideas of utter backwardness and lacking all evidence in their favor.

The blurb about Smith that appears on all of his books calls Smith a scientist: it is usually quoted that Smith was a prodigy, graduated very young, went to Cornell, got a PHD in math and did work in aerodynamics and “helped lay groundwork for the reentry problem” ---but that appears to have been long, long ago. I can’t locate very much work by him in science except a few mathematical texts mostly done in the 1960’s, with a few as late as 1980. So it appears that his reputation as a scientist is over-drawn as regards the early part of his career. His abilities as a scientist appear to have failed him quite early, if the existed at all. He has a Master’s in physics and PHD in Mathematics, which means he knows a lot about math but, judging by his writings, not very much about science and virtually nothing about biology. This is unfortunate and quantum mechanics already shows many problems that are due to it being too mathematical and many things not yet proven to be real in fact. Math on its own is not reality, or nature, and to pretend it is to misunderstand science. Smith was not a good critical source for science because he just did not know enough. The man who I got to know was mostly interested in hating science and researching arcane spiritual subject form Aquinas to Abbe Stephan. Hi point of view was really with the creationists, and he misunderstood science.

He doesn’t know nearly what he claims to know. He was a bit of a

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<sup>1298</sup> Voegelin is the opposite of Arthur Versluis, in that he hated the gnosticism that Versluis loves. Voegelin saw similarities between ancient Gnosticism and modernist political theories, particularly Marxism and Nazism. The root of the “gnostic alienation from the cosmos”, as he called it, results in the gnostics believing that “the world and humanity can be fundamentally transformed and perfected through the intervention of a chosen group of people (an elite), a man-god, or men-Gods” (Wikipedia) Voegelin thinks only that Catholic Church can save us of course. He created a religious and biased history that is part ideology. He is a Platonist as one would expect. See his multi volume Order and History”

child prodigy and thought we would do well in science. He didn't do as well as he hoped, judging by his academic record. What I suspect is that he grew bitter about science because he did not become famous. The traditionalists offered him instant 'gnosis' and a sort of sneering elitism which compensated him for his failure elsewhere. The knowledge Perennialism offers is knowledge of a bogus kind, but of a kind that seems real to those that are in the cultish atmosphere around Schuon or Nasr. Smith's attachment to far-right Catholicism also gave him a sense of his imaginary superiority and made him feel part of the 'remnant of the chosen ones'. In any case, no one who really studied science deeply, understood its method or grasped the necessity of falsification, criticism and rationality could possibly write the stuff Smith has written about evolution and physics. He is no scientist. Whatever education he once had has long ago fallen by the wayside, was forgotten, or was ill learned to begin with. Indeed, in conversations with him he expressed deep disdain for the academic world. He was a very pompous and affected man, certain of his genius. He has not understood science nor exposed himself to evidence or countervailing views. If he was once scientist, he has forgotten nearly all of what he learned.

I visited Wolfgang Smith several times at his home near Corvallis, Oregon. I saw him once too visiting Schuon in Bloomington, at a Majalis, where he came to talk to Schuon about science and he was unimpressed with his ideas. He saw Schuon enter into the majlis ceremony with his usual pompous nose in the air, acting the part of the imperious prophet of the religio perennis. All of Schuon's motions in public setting had the attitude of poses and pretenses. I saw Smith sitting near me, not in Muslim dress as I was (jalaba and turban--- Schuon insisted we dress like Algerian Sufis, which was silly). He was visibly moved by all the ceremony and theatre.

Smith now lives down near Los Angeles in Camarillo. When I

visited Smith in Oregon before I joined the Schuon cult and then again after I left it, he had rather a bunker mentality and had a locked the gate and the bottom of his property fearful lest anyone get into his property--- I had to meet him at the gate at a certain time and felt I was entering a sort of compound. The road was completely hidden from the house and he lived there in irrational fear someone was going to rob him. He was a recluse of sorts and so was his wife. His office in the house had a huge oak desk that very thick and rather pompous. Behind where he sat at the desk where the collected works of Guenon all rebound in expensive black leather with gold or white letters. It made Guenon's esoteric tomes look strangely sinister, as of course, they are, not in any literal way, but because they had such a power to convince delicate minds with delusions. He was reading far- right Catholics like Abbe Henri Stephane( a Guenoniste). He is a man of high erudition who uses his knowledge in service of delusions. This gives him a certain authority when he speaks or writes, but if you examine what he writes closely , it is really a bunch of medieval hogwash, to speak plainly. His best work is medieval and he has been able to enter into the medieval mentality like a modernist monk, imitating its pretensions and fictions almost flawlessly.

I was reminded, when talking with Smith of Victor Hugo's great character in Notre Dame Claude Frollo - arch deacon or priest at Notre Dame, Frollo is also the novel's antagonist, but he not a typical evil character bent on causing pain and suffering. Instead, like Dr. Smith, he is very bright and compassionate. But Frollo is attracted to elitist, esoteric magic and descends into madness and religious hypocrisy. Guenon has something of Frollo about him too-- something Faustian, something rigorously French and rational like Descartes, but without Descartes' sanity and balanced mind. In Guenon Cartesian reason joins with paranoid mania and issues in a geometric obsession with universal conspiracies. In Smith's case, there is a frustrated Church Father in him,

a patriarchal elitist who wants to dictate reality to others. He is utterly convinced that his Medieval Dogmas are the TRUTH, capital T.

When I finally read his attacks on Darwin, I realized this man has no real understanding of biology at all. It is embarrassing to see how little he actually knows and the people believe him because he seems to know what he is talking about. He wrote some reactionary and inaccurate things about the theory of evolution, based on 1930's creationism. Smith's distorted and false ideas about evolution, are mere dressed up restatements of creationist doctrine. Smith's abilities as a biologist are non-existent, He had no grasp of the of the vast array of evolutionary evidence. Had he studied the evidence he would have learned that many of the so called "missing links' in the theory of evolution are no longer missing. He would also have learned that there is virtually no evidence for the theory of creationism of so called 'intelligent design". All of the traditionalists base their criticism of the theory of evolution on the idea that the "lesser cannot come from the greater" meaning that their idea of god is greater than nature, so therefore god comes before nature. "There is no reason to admire a science that counts insects and atoms but is ignorant of God", Schuon writes in the same vein. <sup>1299</sup> No scientist counts insects unless they are doing population studies, as was done by the great entomologist E.O Wilson. Such studies are very useful and important ins world where many species are threatened.

In any case, the logic of the traditionalists is sophistic logic, of course. the god idea is a constructed thing, not a fact like dinosaur bones. Religion and gods are lesser than physical reality and evolution. The symbolist view of reality is dead. Dinosaur bones are much older than any idea of gods or any abstract ideology, Platonic, Taoist or otherwise. Neither Schuon or Smith understood this. Indeed, Smith's

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<sup>1299</sup> Schuon. Sufism, Veil and Quintessence, page 128

whole theory of science as an inferior sort of metaphysics is based on misunderstandings and a need for abstraction. Smith has no real grasp of science as an empirical reality, he lives in math fantasies and surrounds himself in a hermetic environment of Thomistic metaphysics he Christian Gnosticism of Father Abbe Henri Stephane and Guenon's dreams of a sacred science defeating the modern world.

I talked with Smith on a number of occasions about Schuon's ideas about science, indeed, I was a peripheral go between the two men at one point in 1991. I saw eventually that neither man knew what they were talking about. Smith thought Schuon as so backward and ignorant of basic science that he could not take most of what he said seriously. It is certainly true that Schuon's ideas about science are ridiculous. But Smith, I think, agreed with Schuon's main point that the "divine Intellect" is the ultimate judge of the worth of any science. The notion of the "divine Intellect" as I have shown repeatedly in this book, is an utter fiction.

It is supposed to be the occult organ in the 'soul' whereby man receives revelations from gods. There is no such organ. Schuon indicates the inane exclusivity of of the idea of the Intellect:

"There are truths which intuitive intellection alone allows one to attain, but it is not a fact that such intellection lies within the capacity of every man of ordinarily sound mind. Moreover the Intellect, for its part, requires Revelation, both as its occasional cause and as vehicle of the 'Perennial Philosophy,'" <sup>1300</sup>

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<sup>1300</sup> The essential writings of F. Schuon, ed., by Nasr, p. 337-338 see the fo0llowing link for the an idea of the Schuon cult's woeful inability to understand anything about science. The essay itself lacks any critical insight into either since or the cult and so is basically a document that propagandizes the cults anti-science, anti-intellectual interests and reactionary point of view. see Maroof and Mazoor Shah, [http://independent.academia.edu/MaroofShah/Papers/446138/MODERN\\_SCIENCE\\_AND\\_SCIENTISM\\_A\\_PERENNIALIST\\_APPRAISAL](http://independent.academia.edu/MaroofShah/Papers/446138/MODERN_SCIENCE_AND_SCIENTISM_A_PERENNIALIST_APPRAISAL)

Here Schuon is claiming he is the revelation of the Perennial Philosophy. Elsewhere Schuon claims that only the “elect” such as himself and Guenon, have access to “intellection” and only they can claim “infallibility” based on such secret access. This is a subjectivity that has run amok and his innermost “revelation” is merely his own fallible mind asserting delusions based on his ideology. The theory of the infallible and ‘divine intellect’ is bogus and self-serving, since only those who have had a “revelation” can say if they have had it or not.

The arbitrary nature of ‘revelation’ is common to all the religions. The idea that Jesus is the son of god, or that his spirit inhabits the bread or wine of the Eucharist, for instance, is utterly ridiculous, yet repeated over and over.<sup>1301</sup> This is the pure bombast of charlatans. The whole of the perennialist movement is based on the posited nonsense of the “divine intellect”, which is really just the organ of perennialist fantasy and pastiche. Schuon says somewhere that the “ pure intellect, which alone capable of knowing that which modern science rejects”. Well, actually science has nothing to say about it because there is no evidence for such things outside the minds of those who make these fictional claims.

The critique of science and reason in by the traditionalists is premised on this belief in a higher order of knowledge, “gnosis” or “intellect”, but it is evident that this higher order is a crazy fiction that has no basis in reality. Indeed, I talked with Schuon at length about the intellect, and it became clear to me with time that this concept is a fraud and based on subjective magnifications and delusions. The critique of

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<sup>1301</sup> Schuon claimed to feel the Virgin Mary’s breasts and spread legs on his back, and who can argue that this nutty idea was real to him. Any quack or crank could claim this and indeed others have, as I have shown elsewhere. “Revelations” can be defined as the arbitrary eruptions of bizarre dream like ideas and images promoted by a con man who uses them to impose rule or conformity thought on a collective society. There are discussions of the fiction of the intellect and comparisons with the use of reason and science throughout this book. See index at end of book

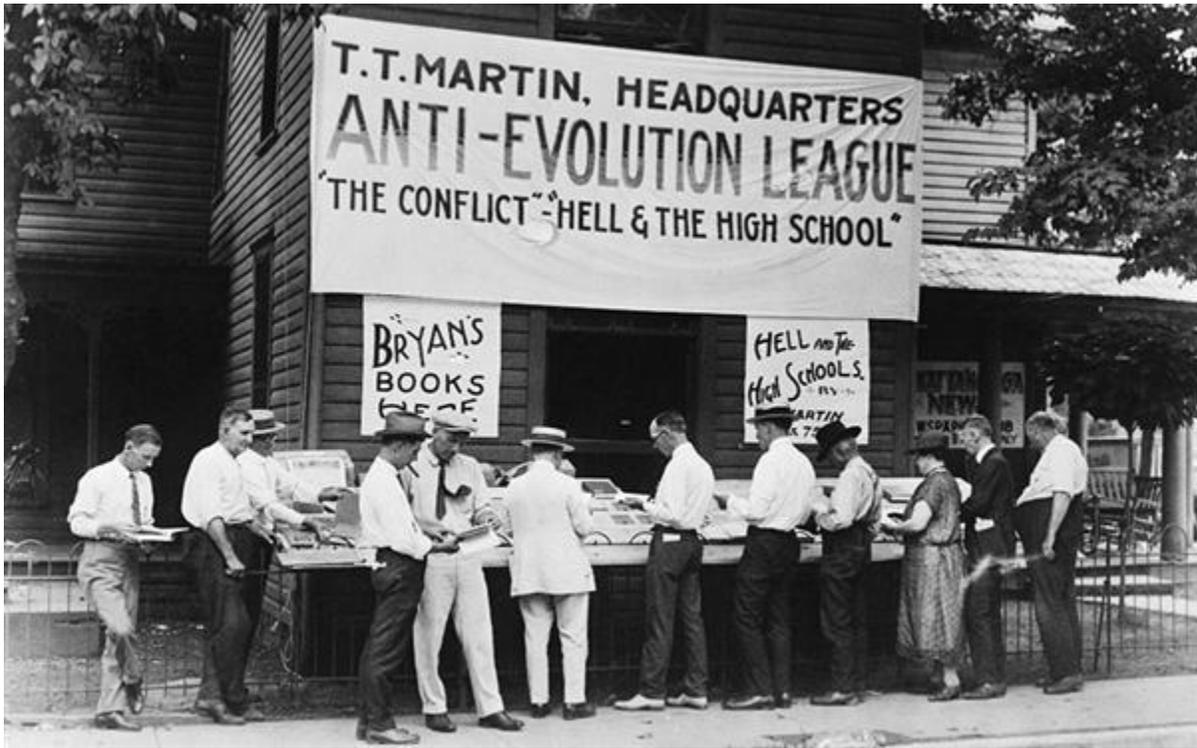
reason from the standpoint of “revelation” is what the irrationalism of the anti-science people is all about.<sup>1302</sup>

This is quite evident when you trace out the origins of Smith’s ideas, as I will do now. He too claims access to the intellect via traditional revelation. Yet, in fact, most of Smith's evidence for his anti-evolutionary thought comes from Douglas Dewar (1875-1957), who was himself, a follower of George McCready Price, a creationist. Smith, like Schuon, was a creationist. In other words, the evidence for creationism is little more than the prior delusions of other men.

This photograph expresses well something of the half-baked sideshow reality of Christian anti-evolutionary thought in America. Those who reject evolution are in accord the decrees of revelation and with the divine intellect, a delusional organ that does not exist. I like this photo because it expresses very well the actuality of the anti-evolution movement. Those who are attracted to this nonsense are largely uneducated and live in pockets where the Bible or the Koran are held in high esteem. They imbibe this ideology through reading books that promote false ideas. Nowadays you are likely to see similar effort to promote this nonsense on late night TV where obscure Christian TV evangelists promote idiotic notions of “intelligent design” and the immediate coming of an apocalypse that never comes. The traditionalists are very much like these cranks and charlatans in their basic ideas, but are much more secretive and eclectic in their effort to embrace many systems of religious indoctrination, symbolism and ideology.

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<sup>1302</sup> It is interesting to note that Kant is utterly hated by the traditionalists, partly because he denies any reality of religious ideas other than that of private fantasy, on the one hand,---but on the other, he reserves an area where science is important, if limited. Russell observes that the followers of Kant either became empiricists or absolutists, which shows well the dichotomy (History of Philosophy pg 718), Fichte carried Kant’s “subjectivist” philosophy in a direction that “seems to almost involve a kind of insanity”, Russell adds. Russell is right, Fichte is really an antecedent to Schuon, whose solipsistic absolutism is anti-empirical. It is the solipsistic absolutism that connects Schuon rather closely to the subjectivist aspect of Kantian thought, despite Schuon’s irrational hatred of Kant.



In any case, Smith's main source for many of his views, Douglas Dewar, was apparently just such a person who was inspired by the 'divine intellect', which is to say he picked it all up from others. He helped launch the "Evolution Protest Movement" (1932) members of which declared the theory of evolution to be the "child of Satan" among other silly things. One source states that

"Geologists dismissed Price as a crank and ridiculed *The New Geology* (Price was not even a geologist) as being riddled with error and distortion, the book caused a sensation among religious fundamentalists, who cited it as the first book to use science to show that the Bible is literally correct."

Price's only real claim to fame is that he was cited during the famous Scopes "monkey" trial<sup>1303</sup> in 1925, as a scientific "expert", when in fact he wasn't an expert on anything. Of course he was on the side of William Jennings Bryant, who wanted to eliminate evolution from being taught in public schools. Much of Price's "flood geology" can be found, nearly intact, in the writings of modern creationists. Indeed, the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925 is one precedent to the anti-science mania that has swept the Republican party, making them anti-global warming, anti-environmentalism, anti-stem cell research and anti-Darwinian too.



Dayton Tennessee. Place where the Scopes Trial was held.

Photo by author

Douglas Dewar, Smith's main source, was a disciple of Price: that

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<sup>1303</sup> Jennings at the Scopes Trial attempted to stop the teaching of evolution in the school and almost succeeded, but was turned over on appeal. Recent cases in Kansas and Pennsylvania attempting to include "Intelligent Design"—a euphemism of creationism--- in school curriculums have failed. No intelligent court is willing to accord religion any status as a theory of nature. See "Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District" , 2005 trial where Judge John E. Jones III ruled that teaching intelligent design or presenting it as an alternative to evolution was a violation of the Establishment Clause of the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution because intelligent design is not legitimate science but essentially religious in nature. Not legitimate science is the key phrase. Creationism has no real world merit, it is fiction.

in itself is enough to discredit both Dewar and Smith. Douglas Dewar, who the traditionalists rely on for their anti-evolution views, enthusiastically echoed his mentor's narrow minded beliefs. Dewar made a lot of incredibly stupid statements, typical of creationists ever since-- such as "The Bible cannot contain false statements, and so if its statements undoubtedly conflict with the views of geologists, these latter are wrong.". Dewar is the hero the traditionalists and his ideas are quoted by virtually no one but them and a few far right creationists.. Dewar was a charter member of the Evolution Protest Movement.

Thus, Smith's primary source of anti-evolutionary thinking is a man who is totally discredited. Smith's thesis is basically an attempt to state, on the basis of evidence mostly culled from Dewar's discredited and creationist texts, that evolution did not happen. Smith shows little understanding of biology or of paleontology, and his statements about evolution are mere dogmatic assertions based on discredited creationist writings from the 1930's. <sup>1304</sup> Smith claims all species came from humans who represent god on earth. This human centered theory is stated as if it were a fact that requires no proof. It is so patently ridiculous no proof is needed to refute it. Evidently therefore, the intellect is a spurious organ that is really just the delusions promoted by other crackpots.

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<sup>1304</sup> Ignorant creationism is not restricted to backwater America. One can find the same ignorance in Saudi Arabia where a school text books states:

“Nevertheless in the West appeared what is called “the theory of evolution” which was derived by the Englishman Charles Darwin, who denied Allah’s creation of humanity, saying that all living things and humans are from a single origin. We do not need to pursue such a theory because we have in the Book of Allah the final word regarding the origin of life, that all living things are Allah’s creation”

[http://www.academia.edu/870964/Evolution Education in Muslim States Iran and Saudi Arabia Compared](http://www.academia.edu/870964/Evolution_Education_in_Muslim_States_Iran_and_Saudi_Arabia_Compared)

Wolfgang Smith's book fails because he wrote it to disprove a biological thesis about which he knows next to nothing. He was trained as a mathematician and knows a little about Math, less about Physics and no biology. He does not succeed in asking any relevant questions about evolution. His book is embarrassing given that the man in question purports to be a scientist.

In more recent years, Smith has changed his tactic from quoting Dewar who is hopelessly discredited, to quoting Michael Behe the bogus 'scientist' who was discredited in the 2005 trial of "Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District". Behe has been discredited too. Behe is a creationist who pushed a failed attempt to rehash creationist dogmas and misinformation as scientific facts, but was exposed as a fraud in Pennsylvania at this trial.<sup>1305</sup> In a recent book (Science and Myth) Smith quotes Behe's fabrication of the idea of "irreducible complexity" to try to push the ideology of "intelligent design" on his readers.<sup>1306</sup>

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<sup>1305</sup>

For more on the fanatic anti-intellectualism of the creationists defeated by Darwin yet again see

<http://video.pbs.org/video/980040807/>

or here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HZzGXnYL5I>

or this BBC version:

see <http://videosift.com/video/Horizon-A-War-On-Science-BBC-Documentary-49mins>

<sup>1306</sup> The attempt to explain religion by quasi-scientific, "neurotheology", employing neurological and evolutionary development is highly dubious. Trying to explain religion as a branch of evolutionary biology is understandable, since theologians know religion is failing so they try to tie to science is an attempt to restore its credibility. But I suspect Steven Pinker is right when he argues against the attempt to posit a God gene, in his speech "The Evolutionary Psychology of Religion: Does the Brain Have a 'God Module?'", for instance. The notion that religion is a genetically evolved development is very unlikely as large scale organized religion is really only 3-4000 years old, if that much. Certainly magical thinking, folk tales and superstitions are older than that. Certainly the imagination may have had some selective advantage, problems solving in particular, and religion may be a falsified "by product" of that. Certainly, also, abstract thinking due to the abstract character of language plays a role in creating imaginary agents. But religion does not appear to be evolved via evolution. It is a cultural artifact and an epiphenomena of

“Intelligent Design” has been utterly discredited too, not just in the Dover trial of 2005 but also by many Darwinists, including Richard Dawkins. Dawkins shows how utterly bankrupt Behe’s ideas are in his excellent book The God Delusion.<sup>1307</sup> Judge Jones referred to Behe’s attempt to explain “irreducible complexity” as an example of “breathtaking inanity”, which is also a phrase well suited to Dr. Smith’s ideas about Darwinism.

Smith also quotes the far-right Theologian and creationist William Dembski. Dembski and Behe’s ideas were judged in Judge Jones’ 139-page decision on December 20, 2005. Jones wrote that wrote that “the overwhelming evidence at trial established that ID [Intelligent Design] is a religious view, a mere re-labeling of creationism, and not a scientific theory.”. Smith is connecting Guenonian ideology to this anti-scientific ignorance—as is to be expected from someone who knows as little about biological science as Smith appears to. Smith is an anti-intellectual who wants to hijack science and turn it back into feudal superstitions. The facts of evolution are so pervasive and extensive as to be undeniable. Smith is off in the ozone of superstition and dogma.

The only Traditionalist who had any inkling about the importance of Darwinism was Ananda Coomaraswamy. He was more open to science earlier in his life than even his son Rama, despite the fact that Rama became a surgeon and wrote 30 or 40 scientific papers, mostly about cardiology. Rama was schizophrenic when it came to science and had no real notion of what Evolution is about. His mind was amazingly closed to anything outside his specialty as a doctor. This ability to be ignorant outside his specialty is an effect of specialization, and made Rama unable to see that his religious views were primitive in a really dogmatic

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children’s gullibility or the need of social networks and cohesion, power and politics. No doubt there are many physical and cultural factors at the basis of religion, but in no case has anyone every proven any gods or “god’s designs” to be rooted in biology.

<sup>1307</sup> see pages 129-131 of that book.

and embarrassing way. I cannot think of another example of a man who was so good as a surgeon but was otherwise dogmatically ignorant in every other field. Ananda on the other hand says in an early essay that spiritual theories should have nothing "inconsistent with, but much rather inclusive of and explanatory of all the facts of evolution found by the geologist and biologist". <sup>1308</sup>This is a reasonable attitude, wrong but reasonable. Ananda trained as a geologist, not a metaphysical pretender like Guenon. Rama says about his father's involvement with Science that

“With regard to his geology - he actually got his PhD in in botany and geology at London University. He went to Ceylon and did the geological survey of the country which still stands today as a standard work. There is a book published by the Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts which brings together his scientific early work including his discovery of Thorianite and his correspondence with Madame Curie.....

In the course of doing the geological survey he traveled all over Ceylon and saw the damage to the indigenous culture that resulted from the British Raj. It was this that got him interested in art and subsequently in the fundamental meaning of art and its sacred nature. He did have conflicts with the British and was considered a revolutionary - I believe he was with Gandhi on the famous salt marches but am not sure. In any event, he refused to join the British army in the first world war because of the absence of Indian independence and was essentially banned from the British

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<sup>1308</sup> In f, pg 73. The essay is called Gradation and Evolution. AKC thought he could square science and religion, rather like Teilhard De Chardin. Rama was in denial about his father's pro science stand and hated De Chardin as do all the traditionalists. See: [http://books.google.com/books?id=2AGrJwNmSSwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=2AGrJwNmSSwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Empire - though arrangements were made for him to live in the US by a special act of congress.”<sup>1309</sup>

Elsewhere Rama says he studied at Oxford in Botany and Geology. In any case, the strong background in science was important and slowly eroded over many years, so that in the end only his marvelous garden described by Rama to me and in various writings, remained. Ananda was a great tender of plants and would have done much better work in art if he has stayed with gardening and science. Ananda's shift from science to spirituality had a strongly political bent to it, partly inspired by Gandhi's radicalism, obviously, but moreso by Guenon's alienated and expatriate theofascism.

Ananda Coomaraswamy had some insight into what science was about. But Nietzsche and Tagore<sup>1310</sup> and later, Guenon, corrupted that in him, unfortunately. Ananda's other son died in Alaska as a bush pilot though around 1930. Around that time, AKC lost his interest in science mostly due to Theosophy and Guenon, the latter having a horrible influence on him. I suspect that the death of his son Narada might have had something to do with his growing attraction to the ideology of perennial and its cynical rejection of everything modern and democratic. He had failed in three marriages and his son was dead. He was tired of the world and had lived a somewhat decadent high style life. He even tried to arrange for himself a polygamous marriage with several women, at one point, antedating and perhaps influencing Schuon's obsession with dominating women in this way.<sup>1311</sup> His views of women were

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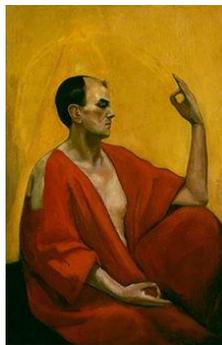
<sup>1309</sup> Letter to author

<sup>1310</sup> There is a humorous cartoon of AKC with Tagore and a hashish pipe from the time, and a photo of Tagore and AKC in 1930 both easily accessible online.

<sup>1311</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy (AKC) was also involved in a weird relationship with the charlatan Aleister Crowley, who managed to take AKC's wife from him. In early 1916, Crowley had an illicit liaison with Alice Richardson (Ratan Devi) who was also a theosophist, evidently. Alice evidently conceived a child with Crowley and subsequently lost it or aborted. This may be why AKC was disillusioned with Theosophy. AKC had earlier suggested that Alice have a ménage a

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trois with him and his earlier wife Ethel. He suggested they have a polygamous marriage. Ethel refused and divorced him in 1910. AKC left Alice after her affair with Crowley. See: [http://www.sundaytimes.lk/100502/Plus/plus\\_21.html](http://www.sundaytimes.lk/100502/Plus/plus_21.html)



Crowley as "Master Therion", oil painting  
by Leon Engers Kennedy, 1917-1918

Sedgwick mangles all this on Page 53 of his book. He writes “Coomaraswamy’s wife, Ethel, is said to have become pregnant by Crowley in 1916. Coomaraswamy and Ethel subsequently divorced. This incident presumably helped to diminish Coomaraswamy’s enthusiasm for occultism, making him more receptive to Guenon’s Traditionalism and to the idea that what mattered was not the religion of the future but the tradition of the past.” Actually Ethel was AKC’s first wife. Alice is the one who had an affair with Crowley. It should be noted also that Guenon told Evola in a letter that Crowley had met with Hitler and helped him. I do not know if this is true or not. But Crowley does appear to have had far right sympathies, not unlike Guenon.

Later AKC got involved with Stella Bloch (1898-1999) in 1915 or so. She was 17. She accompanied him on a trip to India and the Far East. They married in 1922, she was 29 years his junior. Bloch had been one of the “Isadorables”, a troop of dancers who performed with wildly romantic and self-destructive dancer Isadora Duncan. The marriage was not very successful and lasted until 1930. Most of the time the relationship was long distance. Bloch got involved with the Harlem Renaissance and later married a left leaning man named Eli Eliscu. It was evidently a much better marriage than what she had with AKC. After the failure of the marriage with the more liberal Stella, Coomaraswamy turns more and more towards reactionary Guenonism. Bloch was the first of many symbolist and occult sex goddesses worshiped by the traditionalists. Though Bloch herself escapes this narrow mold. Schuon’s “virgin” is a variation the restrictive views of AKC. . AKC’s interests in polygamy recalls Schuon’s own, 50 years earlier. It may be Schuon knew of this and was influenced by it, as many of Schuon’s close disciples had been first disciples of AKC, notably John Murray and the Perrys. The other option is that men like polygamy and this sort of injustice springs up easily in certain kinds of men..

misogynistic.<sup>1312</sup> But all this together seems to have made him a ripe and decadent cynic, Already full of Guenon's toxic spite and hatred of the world. He was predisposed to an escapist spirituality and aggressively defensive erudition, as if erudition could somehow prove what was not true or demonstrable to begin with. AKC's late work is world weary and apocalyptic and evokes Guenon's rather paranoid and sardonic view of the world.

AKC's early work, however, shows a great interest in evolution. This was later ruined by Guenon's hatred of science and his ignorance of biology. His attraction to Guenon spoiled a really brilliant scientific mind and set him against the West in an unfortunate and backward way. This split in Ananda's mind is apparent in his son Rama, who became a very good cardiovascular surgeon, but a cramped and bigoted religious fanatic at the same time.

Rama Coomaraswamy wrote me some years ago and told me most of his father's book were out of print. Rama told me that he had "great difficulty in getting my father's works published" because they just don't



Stella Bloch. Photo by her 1st husband A.K. Coomaraswamy, ca. 1920

<sup>1312</sup> See AKC's "Sati : A Vindication of the Hindu Woman" in which he tries to justify ritual suicide by women who have lost their husbands. Like Rama his son, Ananda has very reactionary and ideas about two men.

sell well <sup>1313</sup>Rama wrote to me that he thought “the Schuon phenomena which has about it a certain evil”. I argued with him about this—not in defense of the Schuon cult-- but as I did not agree with the concept evil, which Rama was rather obsessed with. But he thought the group a dangerous cult. We agreed about that and talked about this many times.

Rama Coomaraswamy thought Schuon was evil and helped me get out of the cult. He was badly punished by the cult. He insisted I write my 1991 Account of the cult. He typed it and added many things to it. Too many. I have trouble with parts of the book now partly because of how much he added to it. He refused to return the original manuscript so I cannot say now what he changed. That is one reason I do not want the thing published online, among others. He did this in his oversized home on Otter Rock Drive in Greenwich Connecticut. Rama writes that

“When you put your piece together, I felt it should be published and helped you with the typing and the labeling of pictures. This is well known and is considered as an attack on Schuon like unto your own. I lost several friends and there are those who still consider me anathema because of this. As far as I am concerned this is enough of a statement regarding my public stand. I intend to do nothing further.”

Rama knew I was telling the truth. My writing was not an “attack”, but a strait forward account, written over a few months, late at night in an all-

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<sup>1313</sup> He later agreed to let World Wisdom publish them, only because no one else would. He had doubts about doing it, he tells me, as he thought the Schuon group, which owns this publishing company, a “cult” and complained it enshrined a “certain evil”. But he agreed to do it because it was hopeless otherwise to keep his father’s work alive. I thought he should let his father’s work fade rather than take that option, but he wouldn’t listen to me. The advantage that the Schuon cult has is that they have lots of money and so easily corrupt others who might have need of them. Rama let himself be corrupted by them as have many others. The Schuon cult is enabled by some very rich right wing fanatics. Not much to say about this except that Rama put himself to bed with a deeply corrupt cult and maybe in the end that is where history will acknowledge he belongs.

night café. It is full of the language and reality of the cult and I find it now embarrassing as it shows me heavily influenced by the delusions of the group think to which I was subject for two years. The tendency struggles with the need of truth which nevertheless shines through the document, despite my confused adherence to fictions. It was hard to write, but true as I could make it at the time.

Later, after the cult attacked Rama and nearly took him to court, he was scared silent about his relation to Schuon and his attack on him. In various places even tried to cover up or escape from questions about how he felt about Schuon. His courage was thin and he hid behind others. I did not admire that. They had blackmailed him with threats of a copyright lawsuit. Rama was a weak man and ambitious and he wanted too badly to be a priest, and that what made him deny the truth about what he knew about Schuon. He thought it would spare scandal to his followers if he kept his involvement secret. Really he just covered it up for his own sake. I disagreed with him about this and in a later letter from him, not long before he died, he more or less said that I had been right. He expressed uncertainty about himself and his hiding his involvement with Schuon from public record. I liked Rama, as underneath his many years of cult involvement and fanatical far right tendencies, he was a kind and gentle person. But I saw his weakness and how easy it was for a cruelly empty and ambitious man like Hossein Nasr to talk Rama out of his better nature and corral him into obedience to lies. Nasr was never a man of truth, but a man who loved the powerful and wanted to live hobnobbing with them. But humans have a hard time telling themselves the truth about themselves and I could see Rama was no exception to this. He died without ever really coming clean about his involvement with Schuon, and he knew I knew this and did not agree with his cowardice on this. There are many cowards who have hidden from telling the truth about Schuon, even though they know about Schuon's Primordial Gatherings and other bizarre happenings in the

Schuon cult. This is often the way with cults, governments and corporations. People are afraid to tell truth to power, afraid of reprisal and attacks. There is truth in the statement, “evil prospers when good men do nothing”. If one substitutes the word ‘evil’ with corruption, my meaning here is even clearer.

Rama’s ridiculous ideas about evolution in various essays follow those of Schuon and Guenon pretty closely so I won’t bother to quote him about that here. Suffice it to say Rama was ignorant of the facts as were all the traditionalists. None of them had any real understanding of science and we prone to simplistic delusions about Darwin.

Darwin was an amazing man and scientist, and the deeper I have studied him the more impressed am I by him. I do not mean he is a saint or anything like that. He is a fallible person. But much of what I once thought of him was mistaken when I realized what his accomplishment really was. He was not only a great scientist but also an humanitarian who opposed slavery and believer in animal rights. He who deserves the enormous credit he is accorded. Few theories in science are less controversial than evolution. None of the Traditionalists know much about nature or evolution or for that matter the formation of scientific theories. I know from having spoken with many of them that they merely seek to assassinate evolution because they oppose it emotionally when none of them know anything about the actual science. This makes their writings about evolution laughable at best and tragic for those who believe the nonsense they write. More recently Dr. Smith diatribes against evolution have become more rabid and he writes

From a Christian vantage point, it can be said that Darwinism is indeed the pseudo-myth of Antichrist, the Father of Lies and ancient Antagonist of man’s salvation. We are dealing thus, not

simply with beliefs or speculations of erring mortals, but with something far greater and more perilous.<sup>1314</sup>

This is just plain fundamentalist nonsense and rant and the pure fiction of a rabid fanatic. I know Dr. Smith claims he was a reputable scientist at one time, -- I see he is not a scientist now, even if he once was---but as the years have passed and he has spent his time in reclusive pursuit of very crazy fringe ideas, and now his status as a scientist is gone. He is now a fundamentalist, traditionalist crank who basically hates science in an irrational way. He grabs at evidence that has no real basis in fact, he ignores counter evidence even when it is overwhelming. He is no longer remotely a scientist, though he behaves as if he were. Years ago he was able to speak and write in a way that was professorial and senatorial, with a distinguished Austrian accent, and large vocabulary. But as you can see above, he know sounds more like a fanatic fundamentalist preacher.

I have to say that years ago I had some respect for Dr. Smith, when I knew much less about history and science than I know now. He had not yet revealed himself as a creationist and anti-science preacher. I should have deduced it from his writings, but I didn't, or, if I did suspect it, I was duped by his seeming erudition. This is why science education and evidentiary inquiry is a fine thing: I have not stopped learning over all these years and I love science and the university and learning and have since I was a kid. It helps me see through illusions such as these, which I have had to face many times in my life. The search for truth causes pain, but at the same time supplies liberation from false thinking. I have learned this many times. Telling the truth as best one can hurts and

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<sup>1314</sup> "Science and Myth: the Hidden Connection". *Sophia: the Journal of Traditional Studies* (Oakton, VA: The Foundation for Traditional Studies) 7 (1). Summer 2001

plows up the ground inside oneself. It is the cost of honest inquiry and sincere seeking.

I went through a period of doubting science because of nuclear weapons and environmental harms but finally grasped that it is business and politics and not science that is at fault there. Science can account for the horrible abuses of state run, corporate science. For instance, we can record the deformations caused by radiation on insects due to disaster like Chernobyl.

It took me many years to learn what I now know. Smith denies the sort of information that is real and useful. We can know our world, but not through religion. Smith hates education. He advised me to join the Schuon cult. He once wrote me a letter more or less begging me not to pursue questions in a university setting and to cling to “our Lord”, alone. There is no “Lord”, there is only the world in which we live and the necessity to make it a better place for all of us, all species.

Dr. Smith’s anti-intellectualism was atrocious. Echoing other far-right Bible quoting, anti-intellectuals, Smith contends that is “almost a precondition of sanctity to have escaped a university education”— and this looks like a sentence about his own bitterness about his work in the university. Smith’s idea of education is an outdated Platonic one.

One can see this outdated Platonic view of education in the views of John Henry Newman. Jaroslav Pelikan reviews John Henry Newman's The Idea of the University, and this says a lot about the traditionalist view of education, indirectly. Pelikan, believes that Newman's book is a "eloquent defense of liberal education" whose "timelessness" explains the function of the university today. The "Idea" of the university, it turns out, is a "timeless", platonic archetype, which from an essential matrix, buried deep in the substratum of Creation itself, has somehow given birth, like Athena from the brow of Zeus, to the amazing array of subjects progressing ever forward though university study, expanding ever closer

to an almost divine objective standard hovering near god and the limit of total knowledge.

The university, as the "Alma Mater" somehow mixes Athena, goddess of war, and the Virgin Mary, goddess and mother of the intellect, in an amalgam that gives birth to all research, like Orozco's painting of a skeleton giving birth to skeleton-scholars. This mythical and Platonist notion at the basis of the university assumes that a divine and already completed knowledge exists supernaturally and mysteriously behind the fabric of things. It assumes that it is the function of the teacher and the university to help the student draw out, what, in his or her deepest recesses, the student already knows. The word 'education' has a similar meaning, deriving from the root 'to lead out of', into the light, with all the associations with Plato and his Parable of the Cave and the educator leading the ignorant into the light.

This is all myth, of course. Education is not inborn but must be had through experience and doing, not tapping into nonexistent archetypes. The Platonic theory of education is racist, elitist and hierarchical, and depends on the falsely modest of the image of Socratic spiritual "midwife" This ideology, which is at the basis of the university and the ethic of 'disinterestedness' is a romantic ideal which assumes the university has a quasi-divine function to dictate doctrine, form perceptions of reality and instruct students to learn to participate in, rather than question, the reigning social hierarchy. As Newman himself thought, rightly, this idea of education is essentially the ideology of empire, the Empire of the Intellect, which I wrote about very critically in another book.

Newman, writing from Oxford, says that the University is the embodiment of "the philosophy of the imperial intellect". This is an important and far reaching definition. He defines the university as the place of the "teaching of universal knowledge" and that its method and its "object is intellectual- not moral". The role of the amoral university in the world is clearly defined: "what the empire is in political history such

is a University in the sphere of philosophy and research". This important statement defines clearly, all too clearly- "the Empire of the Intellect" , something that I am opposed to and which makes philosophy a questionable subject. Moreover, how curiously like Aquinas' definition of the Christian 'great chain of being'. Aquinas wrote that "reason is to man what god is to the world" and when one compares Newman's statement, paraphrased to say 'empire is to history what research is to the university', what is being defined, in both cases, is a system of hierarchies of knowledge and power. I am not involving Foucault here, who is not very trustworthy. I am saying that Newman was creating a kind of theofascism in the university by equating empire with knowledge, much as the catholic Church did in equating world domination with the fiction of Christ. In both cases there is a process of "magnification" going on. A philosophy that exists to magnify power is not just questionable it should be opposed.

I don't agree with this medieval or traditionalist ideal of education at all. The university is best devoted to science and inquiry knowledge and the arts in a non-platonic way. Education is not platonic, but specific, exact and democratic. The teacher does not try to bring out what is latent platonic truths that the teachers wants to manifest, but rather seeks to elicit deepest in the student, but rather ones seeks to bring the student to what is the case in her real world, things that will help her live and good and full a life as possible.

Smith's hatred of education is typical for a traditionalist. He is wrong, as I found out when I went to universities myself. There is nothing better than free inquiry and real learning. I think Smith wanted to be a great scientist but was sorely disappointed, so he wanted to subvert science itself from the inside, out of bitterness. I don't much respect that. I once had a real affection for the man, but when I read Smith now I can see through his rather pompous prose pretty easily. He

is really a reactionary science-fiction writer of a New Age slant, as are many traditionalists and he readily distorts and invents fictions to try to protect his little area of religious illusions. His New Age ideology is rather carefully hidden in the pose of a Christian apologist of an Aquinian sort, heavily schooled on monarchist metaphysics. It is not hard to unravel his fictions. He hates the New Age, but really all the traditionalists are merely right wing New Agers and Creationist fundamentalists who think they understand the world but really are backwards elitists, metaphysical romantics covered with symbolist dreams like purple dust.

### **7. Quantum Quackery and Fictional Essences**

Wolfgang Smith also writes a lot about Quantum Mechanics, but it is clear that his ideas are pseudo-science and has misrepresented and abused Quantum Mechanics as well as science in general. If Smith was originally a scientist as he claims, and it seems doubtful how much of a scientist he actually was, he is now an enemy of science. He states for instance, that

“there is indeed a connection between the scientific enterprise and the demonic realm....[and] the demonic connection maybe more than a pious fantasy... Padre Pio referred to science as the “Bible of the Anti-Christ”.

This sort of talk is only possible for an extreme fanatic on the edge of sanity. His obsession with the anti-Christ is really disturbing in a man who should know that children were cured by penicillin vaccine and hearts are mended now with transplants. I seriously wonder why Smith claims to speak as a scientist and a far right catholic at the same time. He is certainly not a scientist. He seems to be a bifurcated Manichean divided between himself and what he hates. Of course there is no merit

to his claim that science is evil, what good that has come to humanity in the last 500 years has been largely due to science. To the Church is reserved the ignominy of the Dark Ages, that black period of ignorance between 500-1200 C.E, the Inquisition, the pedophile priests, and spreading of superstition.. The notion of evil is a fiction designed to stigmatize and demean. The traditionalists refer to practically everything other than themselves as 'evil'. It is their way of vaulting themselves into an artificial superiority. Smith cannot abide the big bang theory so it must be evil and he is frustrated that the chapter of Genesis is now merely a concocted fable in a book of fiction. He concludes in bitterness that those who seek a real answer about the nature of our world must be evil. Smith is being a petulant child here, and calling science evil is a sort of child's tantrum.

So why does Smith abuse quantum mechanics? Quantum mechanics is easily abused because it deals with invisible entities like atoms and quarks and is largely describes a mathematical realm that is complex and paradoxical. Quantum Mechanics is a reductionist and materialist part of modern physics. Certainly no mystical assertions are justified by quantum mechanics, nor does it imply that the human mind controls reality. It supplies a model that is incomplete, inconsistent and full of absurdities, and that is the problem. It is not a finished and complete theory and is certainly not a blue print for how to interpret reality in our everyday world, which is how Smith and many others uses it.<sup>1315</sup> The temptation to read things into quantum mechanics that are

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<sup>1315</sup> Roger Penrose has come up with various quantum theories that appear to be largely fictional. He claims for instance that human consciousness is "algorithmic" and somehow beyond scientific analysis and that it has features that quasi-miraculous. It seems thought for Penrose is an effect of gravity inside the microtubules of the brain. ( sounds like Chomsky, who would like to find an explanation for language in physics rather than biology ) Penrose reaches this rather dizzy conclusion through Gödel's incompleteness theorem, and the idea of a Platonic reality beyond mind and matter, of course. David Deutsch, from Oxford's Centre for Quantum Computation,

not there is high. Part of problem here is the use of math to try to describe the very small or atomic or the very large. No one knows yet what happens exactly on the subatomic level, though a few things are known and there is a lot of speculation and uncertain evidence. No one knows really what is beyond Quasars in the sky, either, though again there is a lot of speculation. Part of the problem is that those who do math get caught in their imagination and forget that that imagination is not reality.

I have met others who read all sort of nonsense into quantum mechanics. In 1979 I met and talked with Jack Sarfatti a number of times, the guy behind the largely discredited book the Dancing Wu Li Masters.<sup>1316</sup> Sarfatti's ideas are largely "a potpourri of nonsense", like those of Wolfgang Smith. Both of them have projected their private obsessions onto physics and come up with something that is more fiction than science. This is true of Roger Penrose too, but Penrose is a little harder to show to be false. Daniel Dennett may have hit the nail on the head when he criticizes Penrose<sup>1317</sup> for not seeing that science simply does not have an understanding of exactly how thought or consciousness

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dismisses Penrose's interpretation as "based more on aesthetics than science" Which basically means it is probably wrong..

<sup>1316</sup> See also Fritjof Capra's The Tao of Physics (1975) or the movie "What the Bleep do we Know"

[http://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=what+the+bleep+do+we+know+part+1&aq=1sx](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=what+the+bleep+do+we+know+part+1&aq=1sx)

Or the much better debunking of this movie here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIPiXNlhKFo>

<sup>1317</sup> Victor Stenger notes that Penrose is a Platonist, and this explains a lot of why his science goes off on weird metaphysical tangents. His book God and the Folly of Faith has various refutations of spiritual quantum theories, such as Penrose, Bohm and others. Stenger goes to some length to try to justify multiverse theories, when there is no evidence at all for these ideas. This, again, suggests that math has been used without a real basis in physics. One has to be careful of speculations on the edges of math, the universe and the atom, as all sorts of things can be projected into these empty and unknown areas.

works yet.<sup>1318</sup> It does not follow that thought is therefore mystical or that the mechanics of consciousness will never be explained.<sup>1319</sup> Moreover, Stephen Weinberg writes that “ [N]one of the laws of physics known today ... are exactly and universally valid.”. He doesn’t mean that the laws of physics are not true, he means that they come into question in extreme conditions. This seems obvious and any extrapolated metaphysical conclusions based on Quantum mechanics of Physics are probably false. The Tao of Physics, with its discredited “bootstrap theory” or the Dancing Wu LI Masters, with its fantasies of faster than light, “superluminal” travel and communication are vain exercises in imposing metaphysical fictions on physics. These books have been discredited. Peter Woit has discredited Capra and it is hard to imagine many take Sarfatti or Zukav seriously as quantum physicists. Their effort to turn science into some species of Taoism or Buddhism has also failed.

Many people have abused or misused quantum ideas to push all sort of bogus of false ideas. I have indicated this in the cases of Frithjof Capra, Jack Sarfatti and Roger Penrose. I knew Dr. Smith many years ago and have not read much of his work since he sent me his highly questionable Quantum Enigma over 20 years ago, before it was published. But recently I picked up his The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology and am deeply saddened by his further devolving development. He has become even more fanatical and far-right than I remember. He has backed himself into a corner where whatever scientific understanding he might once have had has been utterly compromised and reduced to caricature by his rather wacky spiritual beliefs. For instance., He tries to say that the “world is *young*, which is to say that it

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<sup>1318</sup> The idea of quantum consciousness is criticized sharply by Victor Stenger, who characterized quantum consciousness as a "myth" having "no scientific basis" that "should take its place along with gods, unicorns and dragons."—and one might say, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha and other gods too. The notion that biology is really Buddhist is just bad logic and poor insight. In any case, many of the original claims of Penrose and his associates have been discredited. It is a highly contentious area of current science.

<sup>1319</sup> see chapter 15 of Dennett’s Darwin’s Dangerous Idea

is not measured in millions or billions--- but in thousands of years”<sup>1320</sup>  
He appears to belong to the “Young Earth Creationist Club”, or at least most of his arguments against science come from members or associates of this club---really a sort of cult. The Young Earth Creationists is similar to the Flat Earth Society: both are clubs devoted to anti-intellectual rubbish, religion and backward pseudoscience. These informal societies of crackpots want us to move back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when superstition was king and stupidity was glorified. Like Mr. Smith they believe that Earth, and all life were created by direct acts of a minor god of a sector of humanity that calls itself “ Christian”. They believe the earth was created during a relatively short period, sometime between c. 5,700 and 10,000 years ago. As Richard Dawkins has said that that to say that the earth is a few thousand years old, when in fact is 4 billion years old is equivalent to saying that the distance to San Francisco to New York is about 28 feet.

Indeed, most of Smith’s assertions are embarrassingly absurd. He quotes the discredited Guy Berthault, who tries to argue that the earth is only six to ten thousand years old.<sup>1321</sup> Berthault is a Young Earth Creationist who is an adviser to the Kolbe Center, an ultra-conservative traditional Roman Catholic creationist propaganda group. On the basis of Berthault’s bogus ideas and pseudo-science Smith claims, falsely, that modern geology has been given a “death knell”. Actually geology has never been so vibrant and healthy as in the last 30 years with vast discoveries like Plate tectonics and new research going on all over the earth. He also suggests based on all this bogus “research” that the idea of the “Flood” with Noah and the Ark “appear to accord

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<sup>1320</sup> Smith, Wolfgang. The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology. Oakton Va. Foundation for Traditional Studies 2003. Pg. 109

<sup>1321</sup>For a good debunking of Berthault see [http://www.evolutionpages.com/berthault\\_critique.htm](http://www.evolutionpages.com/berthault_critique.htm)

far better with the geologic facts.” This is pure fantasy on Smith’s part as seems to be most of his ideas. Smith suggests that “creationist are doing “respectable geological research” , which is also false. None of the pseudo-scientists that Smith quotes appear in any peer reviewed journals or if they do they have been discredited. None have made any discoveries worth mentioning with a straight face.

Smith also tries to claim that Robert Gentry’s wacky theories of “polonium halos” have “posed a challenge to evolutionist geology”<sup>1322</sup> which is not true. Gentry’s ideas have been debunked and discredited many times since the 1960’s when he started proposing them and kept pushing them even after they were vetted and discredited. . His claims are rejected by the scientific community as an example of creationist pseudoscience. <sup>1323</sup> The fact is that the earth’s rocks are millions of years old and life in geological strata can be measured by these rocks, in addition to other techniques. It amazes me that Smith is able to write this sort of fundamentalist ideology with a straight face. I have trouble not laughing when I read this pompous and wrongheaded nonsense.

But “it behooves us”, as Mr. Smith portentously likes to say, to consider that there is much more in Smith’s works that is not laughable.<sup>1324</sup> Unfortunately he really believes this nonsense and wants

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<sup>1322</sup> Ibid. Pg. 125

<sup>1323</sup> Gentry’s side lost in a law case in 1981 *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education*, 529 F. Supp. 1255, 1258-1264 (ED Ark. 1982), decision on January 5, 1982, “giving a clear, specific definition of science as a basis for ruling that “creation science” is religion and is simply not science. As a U.S. District Court ruling, it was not binding on schools outside the Eastern District of Arkansas but had considerable influence on subsequent rulings on the teaching of creationism.<sup>[1]</sup> Creationists did not appeal the decision and it was not until the 1987 case of *Edwards v. Aguillard* that teaching "creation science" was ruled unconstitutional at a Supreme Court level. “

<sup>1324</sup> Mr. Smith calls himself a Doctor, but he clearly despises the subject he got his doctorate in— so there is no point in calling him Dr. Smith. His style of talking and writing is decidedly 19<sup>th</sup> century,. Phrases like “it behooves us” or’ I propose to say that...” roll of his tongue or pen pretty regular like. He is a bit pompous, stiff and professorial. I suspect he was never really happy with his life and takes it out on science, which was once a great love of his. He is a man divided against himself and projects this on his subject, so that science and religion go to war in him in an imaginary Armageddon that while fictional, causes him distress and ecstasies. But this

to make others believe it. As Karl Popper writes

“irrational and intellectual mysticism... need not be taken too seriously, but it is a dangerous disease because of its influence on social and political thought”.<sup>1325</sup>

Smith writes that “contemporary cosmology, in any of its forms, is not compatible with Christian doctrine” and this is exactly right, and a good thing too. Christian doctrine is irrelevant and archaic,---it is myth--- and well consigned to the dust heap of the Greek and Roman and thousands of other forgotten myths and gods. Science is not devoted to delusions and superstitions. This is a good thing. That is why Smith is welcome to believe his ridiculous theories in private all he wants to. He is protected by the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to believe whatever dreamy medieval rubbish enters his head. But that does not mean it is true. There are all sorts of wacky beliefs in America and one can pick and choose<sup>1326</sup> among them. But science, for the most part, is outside that. Smith is incompetent to write books about science. He is able to write religious books, like his

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does not mean that his disparagement of science has any merit. It doesn't. He is a man whose delusions overwhelmed his reason. When I got to know him it was intellectual fervor and love of scholarship I admired, but it took me some years to see how he had gone off the deep end into Aquinas and Christian mysticism.

<sup>1325</sup> Popper Karl, Open Society and its Enemies. Pg vol. II pg. 247

<sup>1326</sup> The traditionalists hate free choice and I heard Wolfgang and Rama denounce “picking and choosing” more than once. Robert Orsi writes “Consider the phrase, “I am spiritual but not religious,” which serves as a mantra of modern men and women in the United States. What does it mean to juxtapose “spiritual” and “religious” in this way? It means my religion is interior, self-determined, individual, free of authority; my religion is about ethics and not about bizarre events, and my ethics are a matter of personal choice, not of law; I take orders from no one.”... Traditionalists hate this free choice and want only top down authoritarian religion and politics, like the grey clad misogynist mullahs of Iran or the Catholic Clergy. Of course the narcissist inwardness that results from this attitude brings its own set of problems, one of the worst being that New Agers become selfish and apathetic to the political reality of a corporate culture that exploits them, much to the pleasure of the corporate elite. The more atomized the population the better it is for business. Feel good, don't think, begin within, “follow your bliss”---are all formulas for a pacified population that can be exploited endlessly. Inwardness is all that matters for them.

more recent ‘Christian Gnosis’ (2008), which is really a fringe book for wanna be Christian elitists who desire an ‘esoterism’ that few others can understand or need. It is fine if he writes about this area of mythic/metaphysical arcana. It is merely the gnosis or fictional dreams of an old religious crank.

But, incredibly, Smith tries to resurrect the Catholic condemnation of Galileo, for instance, as well as the geocentric theory and put Galileo in jail. Only the lunatic fringe wants to resurrect Geocentrism: it is a dead issue with huge amounts of evidence in favor of the Heliocentric theory. Smith wasn’t to return to the Geocentrism because the Heliocentric theory of Galileo and Copernicus were “formerly heretical, because [they were] expressly contrary to the Holy scriptures”. The “holy” books are clearly falsified history and have no basis in reality. But to resurrect the fictional Resurrection he wants to reinstate heresy hunting. He claims falsely that “heliocentrism has proved to be scientifically untenable and in fact the palm of victory belongs to the to the wise and saintly Cardinal Bellarmine”<sup>1327</sup> Mr. Smith is just dreaming here, and it is vicious dream indeed. Cardinal Bellarmine was a fanatic who was one of the judges who at the trial of Giordano Bruno, and concurred in the decision which condemned him to be burnt to death as an obstinate heretic. So Smith sees this killer and fanatic as a “saint”. Bellarmine also was instrumental in the outrageous condemnation of Galileo, when Galileo was right and the earth is not the center of the universe. It is true that Galileo got various things wrong, such as that the tides are caused by the sun alone, when they are caused by the gravity of the sun and moon together. But history is right that the Church was wrong to silence his views.

Galileo he was right that the earth moves, as should have been inferred from watching an lunar eclipse, which I myself have seen the

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<sup>1327</sup> Ibid. 149

shadow of the earth cross the moon in the span of a few hours. James Bradley proved that the earth moves around the sun when he discovered the aberration of light from distant stars in 1728. It is now known that the earth moves around the sun at a velocity=107,300 km/h (or if you prefer 67,062 miles per hour.) This is known for many reasons. There is further evidence of the earth's movement around the sun because of the Doppler effect, second because of the nature of the cloud formations and water patterns on the earth, toilets flush different directions north and south of the equator--- "Corlions effect": third because meteors hit the midnight side of the earth much more often than the afternoon side, or in other words the side of the earth that speeds forward. There are less direct reasons as well, namely the rotation of all the other planets around the sun, the differential of the orbits of the various planets which deviate above or below the plane of the solar system, relative to the axis of the earth which is constant relative to the north star. The seasons too, indicate the revolution of the sun around the earth. Foucault's pendulum shows the rotation of the earth on its axis. Smith neglected to look any of this up. He is a bad scientist who does not do his research. He seems only to read the creationist press, which is tantamount to reading no science at all. Galileo already grasped something of it when he recorded Venus's phases as it revolved around the sun for a year.

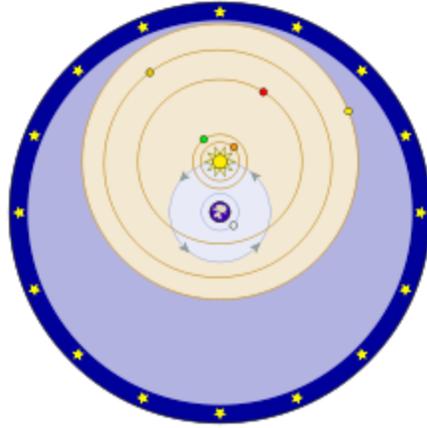
It became clear that what really turns Smith on is the sentimental idea of the medieval conception of the earth-centered , god dominated cosmos dominated by priests who dictate reality to laymen, who are not allowed to read books that might educate them to think based on real observations. He can't let it medievalism go--- so he tries to repackage the merely symbolist and rather kitschy medieval conception of the universe as co-existing side by side with the physical universe that science studies. He tries to hold up both geo-centrism and solar centrism, in each case because they are symbolic. But symbolism is not science but superstition. He tries to claim at the religious alone can truly

love the stars. He writes of the wonderful statement by Kant about the wonder of the stars above and the moral law within us: “how strange that this prosaic rationalist, whose philosophy is irreconcilable with the Sophia Perennis, could still sense, however dimly, a connection between the ‘star spangled sky’” and the “moral law”, deep in the heart of man.”<sup>1328</sup> What arrogance this disparagement of Kant indicated. Many atheists not only see the sky with deep wonder, but are at the forefront of moral struggles to help nature, animals and humanity in ways that Smith, bunkered in his escape from reality into the medieval mind, cannot envision or understand.

Several centuries after the scientific revolution pseudo-science and anti-science attitudes are still common, due to religion and right-wing politics. Smith quotes many discredited Bible scholars, indeed’ his book, The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology , is something of a catalogue of 20<sup>th</sup> century anti-science crackpots, including Smith himself. Smith seems to gravitate toward bogus science and creationists who pose as scientists such people I have already mentioned: “Price, Guy Berthault, Dewar, Michael Behe, among others. Smith quote Walter Van der Kamp’s bogus claim that the earth does not move. Smith holds Van der Kamp in high repute. Von der Kamp features prominently in the tidy, neat and profound little book by John Grant called Bogus Science which is about pseudo-scientists, who, like Van der Kamp and Smith, distort science to pander ideological fictions. Smith likes the ideas of Van der Kamp who subscribes to the system of Tycho Brahe, who thought the sun goes around the earth but all the other planets go around the sun. Like this:

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<sup>1328</sup> Smith, *Cosmology* Pg. 141



### Tycho Brahe's geocentric system

Brahe's absurd idea is impossible for various reasons. Mars orbit crosses the sun in various places and there would have long ago been a collision. There is further and more importantly the physical impossibility for of the Tycho's scenario because the mass of the sun is so huge, it could never be a satellite of the tiny earth or any of the planets, it must always the center of the orbits of all the planets. Newton understood this, as did Einstein. Why would Smith push such an absurd idea ?

John Grant speculates about the procedure of many pseudo-scientists. He explains the immunity to reason and evidence that creationists suffer from is due to their religious fanaticism. He notes that when Geocentrists and Creationists

“talk much about science but rarely focus on it, instead reverting to their own their own readings of the Bible, which interpretations they insist can be backed up by the discoveries of science. Pressed to identify the discoveries to which they are referring their tendency is to ignore the great bulk of scientific knowledge in order to nick pick over difficulties of detail they perceive science to have”

This is Smith's procedure. He only quotes discredited creationist sources.

Another bogus source he quotes is David Russell Humphreys, and others. Humphreys calls himself a “Creationist physicist”. Wolfgang Smith also, evidently, is a “Creationist physicist”— but these titles are specious because there are no creationists who have made any contributions to science or physics in any way.<sup>1329</sup> Creation science is pseudo-science. Smith wildly claims that quantum mechanics justifies the Biblical Genesis .<sup>1330</sup> He makes bizarre quantum leaps beyond common sense. He defies the Big Bang theory because he saw it declared in a Newspaper, but really it is not a dogma and the steady state theory has not been entirely ruled out either. He doesn’t seem to know the first thing about astronomy. It progresses by small discoveries and not enough is known to make definitive pronouncements about the origin of the universe. No one really knows. It certainly is not the Bible that will tell us anything about the structure of the universe. The Big Bang has more evidence on its side

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<sup>1329</sup> Smith quotes Fred Hoyle (1915-2001) many times. One Bio says of Hoyle that “He elevated Stonehenge, a pile of rocks, to cosmic importance while degrading Darwin's work, sensing that Darwin's theories of natural selection somehow challenged his own ideas about life originating in outer space” Hoyle was a controversial English scientist, who sometimes is used by anti-evolutionists because he believed some extraterrestrial has perhaps “designed life”. His ideas, like “panspermia” are unorthodox and contested. He wrote science fiction. Christopher Hitchens notes in his book God is not Great that Hoyle was an “ex-agnostic who became infatuated with the idea of “design,” .( pg 65) Hoyle was against the big bang, like Smith.

“ Panspermia proposes that life which can survive the effects of space, such as extremophile bacteria, become trapped in debris that's ejected into space after collisions between planets which harbor life and Small Solar System Bodies”

<sup>1330</sup> Smith claims in The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology that the “corporeal world does in fact accord with the data of Genesis”---( pg. 108 and 108-110) Of course he has a bizarre notion of what “corporeal” means as I discuss further on. The story of Genesis is a fiction. Smith claims falsely that the “profane” understanding of Genesis is “fundamentalist”. He opposes fundamentalist to mystical. Science to Smith is what is “profane” and he says the word ‘profane’, as Nazis used to say “Jew”, with a mixture of hatred and ridicule. In fact the Church father’s view of Genesis is quite childish compared to the amazingly profundity of the real discoveries of physics and astronomy. Genesis is fiction: Galaxies are real. Jesus is a cardboard cutout, whereas DNA is helping cure people of serious diseases. Smith tries hard not to be a fundamentalists but ends up being one anyway. He goes beyond the fundamentalists in that he condemns all of science, even Newton, Galileo and Copernicus.

than other theories, but no one really knows much about it. Most of what is said about it is admitted to be speculation and mathematical postulations.

Smith tries to uphold the idea of bodily resurrection, one of the more ridiculous ideas of the Catholic Church. He writes this in a chapter about “celestial corporeality” for instance, to indulge a taste of imaginary resurrections and bodies alive in heavenly realms, transfigurations, and other mythic entities of an imaginary kind. Bertrand Russell rightly discusses the absurdity of the Christian idea of bodily resurrection in his “Outline of Intellectual Rubbish”. Russell notes that Wolfgang’s Smith’s intellectual hero, Thomas Aquinas, was deeply puzzled by how cannibals will be “properly roasted in hell” when “all of his body is restored to its original owners”. Indeed, it is a very funny question, in a black humor sort of way. How will god separate all the ‘souls’ that a given cannibal might have eaten? Russell notes in regard to the similar problem of cremated bodies that

“collecting particles from the air and undoing the chemical work of combustion would be somewhat laborious, but it is surely blasphemous to suppose that such a work is impossible for a Deity. I conclude that the objection to cremation implies grave heresy. But I doubt my opinion will carry much weight with the orthodox” <sup>1331</sup>

Yes, Russell was a humorist, sometimes. Many of the dogmas of the church seem very silly now. In any case, Smith believes all the stuff the Church “fathers” dictated as obligatory on pain of hell fire. He tries to impose the superstitions from the past onto science.

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<sup>1331</sup> Hitchens, Christopher. The Portable Atheist, Philadelphia, De Capo Press, 2007 pg. 185

Smith's work is really about a personal, private struggle inside him between "perennial philosophy" and a love of science that is being destroyed and undermined by the power of magical thinking and religious delusions. He really shouldn't try to impose his backwards views of science on others. He thinks there is virtue in doing so, because he has inculcated his brain with 'Them verses Us' thinking. If questioned Smith would probably claim persecution and martyrdom and say the devil is after him, But all that is nonsense too. But the truth is that science is not at all what he says it is and he needs to give up pretending to be a scientist and retire to a monastery. This would be an escape from reality into the pure fiction of religion. That is the way he has been tending all these years. He told me once he intended to retire to near a monastery near Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, but that never happened apparently.

The crux of Smith's work in the last 15 years rests on a bogus distinction he made up. He created a false distinction between the "corporeal" and the "physical" domains, which he goes to great lengths to try to make real, when in fact it is merely a figment of his imagination, or rather of the medieval and Greek imagination. The traditionalists believe in the theory of Archetypes derived from Plato which situates everything in an imaginary "great chain of being". Martin Lings writes that

"the language of symbolism , which is part of man's primordial heritage is based on this hierarchy of the different degrees of the universe... every terrestrial object is the outcome of a series of projections, from Divine to spiritual, from spiritual to psychic from

psychic to corporeal.”<sup>1332</sup>

This theory of the GCB or “great chain of being” has no evidence for it at all and is merely a fiction created by Plato, Aristotle and the Church fathers. The notion of a ‘primordial heritage’ that has any real basis in actuality is also a fiction. The idea of the great chain is merely a fictional and mythic illusion purported to describe aspects of reality, passed down from the Greeks and others. The corporeal—that is our bodies and selves—and the bodies of all that is—in short, just about everything--- is demeaned in this absurd system to the lowest grade of this medieval scale of projections. Smith places the physical below the corporeal in a typical attempt to degrade reality beneath imaginary unfounded metaphysical concepts. In fact, what Smith misunderstands is that the corporeal and the physical are the same thing. They are more or less cognate, synonymous terms. He betrays Occam’s razor and “multiplies entities without necessity” (*Entia non sunt multiplicanda sine necessitate*). Occam’s razor means ‘to not create distinctions without a difference’ or do not multiply entities beyond necessity”, (ontological parsimony).<sup>1333</sup> Smith is a true son of Augustine and Aquinas, the scholastics who wanted to create endless distinctions without a difference--- count angels of the heads of pins. Augustine and other Christian dogmatists presided over The “Closing of the Western Mind”. Charles Freeman, author of the

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<sup>1332</sup> Lings. Martin. The Eleventh Hour. UK Quintessentia. Pg. 36 Lings also wrote books about the prophet Muhammad, and the Sufi Shaykh Al Alawi. In both case his books are largely poetic inventions of a hagiographical kind and not at all objective biographies. Lings poetic affections distort his thinking throughout his work. This made talking to him about anything real or objective virtually impossible, unless his affections were somehow trained to it. He was an obedient follower and not a man who thought much.

His slavish adulation for Schuon finally sickened me, when this adulation flew in the face of all the evidence I knew was factually true.

<sup>1333</sup> Occam did not say this exactly, but he did say *Frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora* [It is futile to do with more things that which can be done with fewer]. Which amounts to same thing. (Thorburn, 1918, pp. 352–3; Kneale and Kneale, 1962, p. 243 Bertrand Russell’s formulation of this idea is the best. He said "Whenever possible, substitute constructions out of known entities for inferences to unknown entities." In other words, do not make things up.

book called the Closing of the Western Mind, rightly charges Christianity with repressing Greek science and causing a 1000 years of ignorance to reign. Smith--- and the traditionalists in general want to return us to those same Dark Ages . The want a renewal of the ‘closing of the western mind”.

Smith sets up a medieval hierarchy by setting up the fiction of the bifurcated world of the corporeal above the physical. The notion of the “great chain of being” he invokes by doing this is another fabrication. He wants to fabricate reality and to abuse science so as to propagandize for religion. The corporeal for Smith isn’t just its dictionary definition as ‘pertaining to the body or bodies’-- rather Smith is an elitist. He is prone to the same theofascism that I have discussed all through this book. He thinks science has no poetry, and does not realize that science is “<sup>1334</sup>the poetry of reality”, the only poetry that really matters. Smith also believes in imaginary faculty called the “Intellect”—which is what Guenon and Schuon claim too, falsely since the faculty is just the subjective mind sunk in imaginary dreams of romantic ‘essences’ and transcendent” states of self hyp-gnosis or suggestion. So in this context Smith’s effort to introduce the idea of the ‘corporeal” is really to re-impose medieval or Ptolemaic ideology on modern science, after the 500 years it too us to get rid of that nonsense . He claims to be transcending “bifurcations” when in fact he slices the existing world right down the middle into quantum physical things against corporeal bodily things, when they are the same thing.

What Smith fears is that those favorite concepts of romantic irrationalists and haters of science—the concepts of “transcendence” and

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<sup>1334</sup> This lovely phrase is used by Richard Dawkins. See his Unweaving the Rainbow (subtitled "Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder") 1998, this is one of the best books on science and poetry written in many years. Dawkins writes that “Science is poetic, ought to be poetic, has much to learn from poets and should press good poetic imagery and metaphor into its inspirational service.” He also rightly takes many poets to task for spreading superstition and nonsense.

“essence”--- would be lost. For Smith only these fictions are truly real, so everything that is actually real that science describes must be unreal. Smith resembles Christ or Plotinus who also hated the world. Plotinus said "Certainly no reproach can rightly be brought against this world save only that it is not That." (Plotinus, *Enneads*, V,8,8) For Plotinus “That” or ‘God’ is everything, the world is nothing. Schuon reiterates this same mystical nonsense when he says that “existence is a sin to which no other can be compared”.<sup>1335</sup>

Smith desperately wants to defeat modern science and bring back medieval ideology. To this end he bifurcates reality into the Physical and the Corporeal to try to bring back Geocentrism, Platonic Archetypes, and the Bible as the criterion of truth. He sets up an arcane hierarchy, that favorite obsession of all Traditionalists, who love to rank and order things in elitist, caste ridden, medieval, Platonic or anti-democratic Ladder of Creation: The “great chain of being” Smith says he wants to restore the discredited “great chain of being” or *scala naturae*, which was a horrific system of social engineering that forced people into feudal orders and castes and led to terrible social strife and suffering throughout the middle ages up unto the French Revolution, which itself was a justified

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<sup>1335</sup> In the Diamond Sutra Buddhist text, Chapter 32 Buddha is supposed to have said this is how to contemplate our conditioned existence in this fleeting world:"

"Like a tiny drop of dew, or a bubble floating in a stream;  
Like a flash of lightning in a summer cloud,  
Or a flickering lamp, an illusion, a phantom, or a dream."  
"So is all conditioned existence to be seen."

This is another way of saying existence is worthless. Thus Buddhists cling to a dream of the void, which is really nothing, but they pretend is everything. The idea of enlightenment or satori as the imaginary opposite of “conditioned existence” is a myth, or fiction, and those who claim it are charlatans, beginning with the myth of the Buddha or the Hindu caste idea of ‘liberation’ from the “wheel of birth and death”. While suffering is real, the solution to it is hardly the negation of existence, on the contrary, existence and those who suffer is all that matters. Try to soothe and stop suffering of all species is what humans can do, but have failed to do as yet.

war against such mandated social inequalities. I am not excusing the injustices of Robespierre here, I am merely stating that the French Revolution was an inevitability and one that did for more good than harm. The rottenness of the upper classes of those days demanded revolution, rather as corporate corruption demands it now. The rottenness of Robespierre and Napoleon was proof that the revolution bit off more than it was ready to chew. It is an ongoing revolution that is still in progress today. The English, American and French Revolution as well as science and Darwinism broke the “great chain of being” forever and opens us to further improvement and rights for all. To include all species in the search for rights and end to suffering is what the future must be if we are to survive with others on earth.

There is a lot of Quantum Quackery in Smith and the quackery grows out of the artificial distinctions between corporeal and physical. He misunderstands Descartes who is really one of the fathers of modern science and should be praised and not damned. He misunderstands Alfred Whitehead and the idea of the “bifurcation” between mind and body that Descartes’ system seemed to have created. What is worse is that Smith follows out those misunderstandings as an excuse to import into science all sorts of spiritual rubbish and crack pot creationist ideas that don’t belong there. It is terribly sad to watch this man I once admired do this to himself and the world he lives in.

Furthermore, I see him take this artificial distinction and use it to condemn the entire existing world. He says that the distinction between the physical and corporeal “forces us to conclude that the physical domain itself came into existence at the time of the fall, and will cease to exist when the “new heavens and the new earth” shall come to be.” This is pure fantasy, and he extends his fantasy to conclude that “physical theory retains merely a formal sense; in other words, it becomes

fictitious”.<sup>1336</sup> In other words, he has reduced the existing world to fiction, or what the Hindus call Maya, and when he does this, he has entered squarely into the Insanity of Religion, the world hating schizophrenia that despises the actual and wants to disappear into the imaginal in a leap toward “inward” romantic death and apocalypse. Smith has accepted to “Transcendental Delusion” of the religions.

So then, Smith has badly read Aristotle and is out there in the ozone of mythology acting as if the ancient ideologies are real. Smith tries to resurrect the old medieval idea of “substance” and “essence”, both long since discredited as having any real meaning—and certainly no scientific meaning. What he really wants to do is to promote private feeling over verifiable evidence, romantic nostalgia for medieval religion ( which he calls this esoterism”) over science.

The terms “essence” and “substance” s derive from Aristotle and the Scholastics, such as Aquinas <sup>1337</sup>, and denote non-existent imaginary mysteries that are pretended to subsist inside matter and ourselves. The concept of ‘essence” is merely a linguistic convention, as when one says, the essence of food is the taste, referring to some aspect of food that if one changed it, it would lose its identity. Bertrand Russell notes that the

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<sup>1336</sup> Ibid pg. 123

<sup>1337</sup> Smith once sent me a book of writings by Aquinas. I read it and didn’t like Aquinas at all. His politics are monstrous. In the philosophy of Aquinas the Aristotelian concept of universals would be combined, rather ambiguously, with the Platonic position. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 decided the issue of the Church’s stand on the subject of universals and this was reinforced by Trent. This subject was the central philosophical issue of the Middle Ages. The Church decided in favor of the Realist position, more or less, rather than the Nominalist position. The Realist position was essentially Platonic, and summarized in the Scholastic formula, “Universalia Ante Rem”; the universal is prior to the particular thing, or the idea comes before the physical. This is basically Smith’s position, and leads to the spiritual fascism of Innocent the III. The Nominalist position states “ Universalia Post Rem”—or universals come after things. It is this latter view that is obviously the true one. The Nominalist position formed the conceptual basis of what would become science. This is not to say that Nominalism was a scientific position, rather it expressed the possibility in idea form of what would become science in practice two centuries later, between the period of Roger and Francis Bacon, Da Vinci, Galileo and Newton. Smith lives in a nostalgic dream longing for a dead system of thought that some not correspond with reality at all. That is why he much delude himself about evolution and quantum mechanics and promote pseudo-science to try to justify himself.

concepts of “essence” and “substance”, are a transference to metaphysics of what is only a linguistic convenience”<sup>1338</sup> Essence and substance are merely “convenient ways to collecting events into bundles”, Russell says. The substance of a matter is merely a summary, the essence of a book might be a plot or a character,-- the choice of what the essence is arbitrary and will differ whoever is speaking of the matter. In short the idea of essence and substance is nothing to build a theory of the world on unless you want it to be false, vague and muddle headed. The idea of ‘essence’ is usually made up of various subjective analogies, or “analogical transpositions” in Guenon’s words. Platonic archetypes are merely magnified or poetic analogies.. Making analogies is essential to fabricating fictions and religions. The correspondence theory of truth pushed by Swedenbourg, Boehme, Baudelaire, Dylan Thomas, Yeats and many others is just such a theory of analogy. Religion is also generated by analogies. God is like light, like the heavens, like the human heart etc. Out of such analogies an “essence” is imagined, which does not actually exist, but is an extrapolated fabrication. Boehme’s theory fo signatures depends on just these sorts of inklings and intuited relationships between ideas and things. Baudelaire poem on Correspondences likewise celebrates a fabricated “unity”.

Like long echoes that intermingle from afar  
In a dark and profound unity,  
Vast like the night and like the light,  
The perfumes, the colors and the sounds respond.

Religion grew from just this sort of “essences” invented, conflated, mythologized and fabricated from the free association of the imagination.

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<sup>1338</sup> Russell, Bertrand, History of Philosophy, NY, Simon and Shuster 1945, pg. 201

<sup>1339</sup> Baudelaire is usually considered one of the fathers of the Symbolist Movement.

So, Smith says that the idea of essence is absolutely essential to his system. He says that

“ If the stellar light, which the ancients thought to be of celestial origin, and which Plato viewed as the carrier of intelligible essences--- if that light fails, the cosmos and all that it contains is reduced to nothingness. .. the drift into nihilism corresponds precisely to the loss of substance in the physicists world view. Culture and cosmology are intimately connected, and it appears that when the prevailing cosmology flattens, so does the culture”

<sup>1340</sup>

As Russell has said, essence is really just linguistic convenience. What Smith is really saying is he will lose his most cherished illusions if the muddleheaded idea of Platonic essences is not retained and he will feel empty. This is merely a philosophy of petulance. Believers in such a way of thought think their self-pity is metaphysical, when it is not, as birds still sing and the sun rises, whether these self-pitying philosophers like it or not. Nature does not need essences at all. If you examine why he uses the word “flattens” here, it tells a great deal about Smith. He equates the Scholastic ideology of substance and essence with hierarchy and says that “it is , as always, the loss of substance, of *hierarchy* in fact,

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<sup>1339</sup> Other advocates of a correspondence theory of religion and poetry are Plato, Donne, Blake Rimbaud, Verlaine and others.

<sup>1340</sup> Smith, Wolfgang, Ancient Cosmology Ibid. pg 145

that leads to democratization of what remains.” ( emphasis mine)  
“Democratization” is presumably the “nothingness” that is “flattened” if you get rid of Scholastic ideology. So Smith hates modern science because it tends to support democracy. He is sad about sharing with others. Existence is only good for the chosen elite, he thinks.

Transcendence is merely the essences of things made into a mental mirage and people call this idea god. The elaborate construction of the Platonic idea of God as extrapolated analogies built up into an edifice of fake Eidos or gods can only be maintained by political fiat. Here we are back in theocratic fascism again.

No wonder Smith likes the Inquisitor Bellarmine and was glad that Galileo was attacked by the Inquisition and put under house arrest. This turns out to be Smith’s greatest fear, he is terrorized that delusional ideas like essence should be kept out of science. His distinction between the corporeal and the physical is already muddleheaded. But he goes further and says that when one reduces the corporeal to the physical, “one destroys the dimension of transcendence, verticality, of “the above”. The celestial is reduced to the terrestrial; the cosmos is homogenized—democratized, one could almost say”

--- Yes, exactly. What he fears is people, humanity, earth and reality. He hates fairness and equality. We don’t need fictional systems of adult make-believe like the Aquinian, Eckhartian and Augustinian systems that Smith devoted his life to. He is welcome to languish in all that monastic and transcendental Eucharistic nonsense in private. But it is not reality. The reality is that those who Smith admires most , say Augustine, were anti-intellectual cranks. Augustine even admits this openly when he attacks curiosity, the fountain of science and says:

“There is another form of temptation, even more fraught with danger. This is the disease of curiosity. It is this that drives us to try and discover the secrets of nature which are beyond our

understanding, which can avail us nothing and which man should not wish to learn”<sup>1341</sup>

This sort of cramped and toxic view of science and inquiry led to the Dark Ages, over which anti-intellectuals like Augustine presided in repressive glory. To call curiosity a “disease” is such an ignorant thing to say, it takes one breath away. Children are naturally curious. Beating it out of them with repressive nuns and priests pounding desks while discoursing on hell with not solve the problem Religion extolls religious ‘fitness’, which is really the inculcation of delusions as religion has no real claim to increasing human evolutionary fitness. Augustine is virtually condemning of every human and animal child in the world---all of which are intensively curious. But then Augustine was childless and hated sex above all else. The absurdity of the Catholic church derives from such nonsense as Augustine and others write.

Augustine cares about the abstract “intellect” and deifies imaginative make believe in gods..... goes on to write that if we “obliterate hierarchy and nothing at all remains, in a word, ontological homogeneity is tantamount to non-existence” This is really outlandish stuff. Smith is terrorized by the thought of that his god delusions will be ‘flattened’ and his geocentric delusions will collapse. Democracy is not the evil he imagines. When gods dissolve as they inevitably do, nothing is lost really. When I gave up Gods, the world was so much clearer and better. I had my own ironic “road to Damascus” and the ‘scales’ of religion finally fell off my eyes. The sky is no longer an “icon” the stars are not symbols, species are what they are and need not be denigrated as not being human. Everything has its own worth.

Smith and other creationists do not yet realize that the French Revolution already happened. All that ends when Hierarchy is gotten rid

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<sup>1341</sup> Quoted in Dawkins, The God Delusion page 132-133

of is decadent gods, kings, and phony bloodlines of heredity are abolished. It is a good thing that geocentrism is gone and that the sun is no longer a symbol of esoterist 'gnosis' . "Gnosis" was merely the false vanity of elitist and theocratic autocrats anyway. Smith wrote that science is the "Bible of the Anti-Christ" which is crazy nonsense. The bible was a fabrication and the anti-Christ is merely another made up fiction to complement or compensate for the invented and mythic Christ. Smith tries to claim that scientists are the "perverse race" that St Malachy referred to in some bogus prophecies he made. He wants to make scientists into a race everyone should hate. Strange that Smith would try to reduce scientists to a "race", as if they were despised and deformed.<sup>1342</sup> Smith is a racist in disguise, a man full of hate and prejudice who hides these behind exalted metaphysics. This sudden need to express a racist hatred against scientists is curious, as if evokes anti-Semitism of racism against Native Americans of Africans. But this is what happens when you put essences before existences, and denigrate people without real evidence. Scientists are not a race and not perverse either.

So Smith's book The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology is certainly not wise and really it is a very bad book that recommends that we go back to the theocratic tyranny of Innocent the III and Aquinas. In his conclusion Smith creates a plea for inequality and hierarchy. He wants to go back to Platonic autocracy, Catholic dictatorship, in a word, spiritual fascism. He hates democracy. Democracy causes our universe to "flatten" he says repeatedly, as if trying to convince himself. Actually flat earth was totally the creation of Christians. But never mind, Smith is out for "verticality" another word that is a code word or jargon for inequality and dictatorships. He wants "verticality" and 'inwardness', unaware that

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<sup>1342</sup> Smith writes about multi Worlds theory with bitter humor that" It appears that in the egalitarian age even universes have been accorded equal rights. Whatever might be said for these theories, equating them with democracy or rights is merely reduction ad absurdum.

“verticality” is a meaningless category,<sup>1343</sup> and “inwardness” is a word for subjectivity and a refusal to admit there is a real world outside us. Smith “feels” the holy spirit told him ‘within’ that Christian Gnosis is sublime so it must be true and Smith feels obliged to write all sorts of pompous books quoting church fathers proving the irrational. Christian gnosis is really just a gossamer figment of the ancient imagination, made up by monks and scholars feeding one each other’s fictional insights. Religion is a mistake of false analogies and misunderstood essences. Smith is prone to a romantic irrationalism. In a nutshell Smith creates his ‘truth’ out of thin air.

Smith is no scientist, though he pretends to be one. He is metaphysical Trump, an irrationalist who wants inequality, to increase the disparity between the poor and the rich, to make life harder for the middle class, to give more power to elites and unjust leaders, more hierarchy and division. The main point of hierarchy is to promote the priests and believers by spreading irrational hatreds and racist essentializations. Those who do not believe are “sinners”, devils or the profane. Smith loves these vague essentializations, vague generalizations, as it is the preferred mode of thinking of the irrational.

Smith ends his book with a big embrace of Hossein Nasr, a self-appointed “Shaykh” who was involved with Schuon for years and tries to cover up for him. Nasr says that Smith’s easily debunked book is not

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<sup>1343</sup> Schuon claimed to be “vertical” in his marriages, namely, God blessed them “esoterically” whereas his “exoteric” marriages were meaningless. This is self-serving nonsense. Smith’s use of the concepts verticality and esoteric are similar, he uses jargon that has no real meaning. I have known a few hundred “esoteric” pretenders and I can tell you, not a single one of them had any real superiority over anyone I’ve met who believes in no religion at all. On the contrary in fact, so called ‘atheists’ I have known, in many cases, are kinder and better people, smarter and less prone to bragging. The claim to possess “gnosis” is invariably a claim to special election and such people are prone to become intolerable cranks and elitists. Mr. Smith is a proud and arrogant man who misuses science and promotes himself as a sort of Christian magus or gnostic, when actually he is not an “elite” at all. He is a bit of an anti-science charlatan who wants to abuse reason and support superstition.

only one of the most profoundly amazing books ever written but that Smith's bogus notions about science have a basic "relation to perennial philosophy". This really very empty, outdated and ignorant "philosophy" is what Nasr says he has believed since "my student days". Unable to adapt to new information and adjust to new evidence, Nasr is proud of his bigoted dogmatism, his refusal to change or learn anything new. So Nasr was already deluded about the relation of science and religion since his student days and stubbornly holds to his ignorance out of false pride. Nasr and Smith want to foist this pseudo-scientific book on the world, since the book is published by Nasr's foundation for Traditional Studies. Unwilling to change, these are medieval thinkers really don't belong in our time, and those who accept their kooky ideas belong with other flat-earthers and creationists. They send their minds back to the dark ages when false analogies ruled everything and transcendence made a horrendous caste system possible. This is where they belong, in a past that was not good and no longer exists .

Traditionalism can only thrive where people want to return to ignorance, dogma and tyranny. It requires a backwards mentality, an outsider ethic of world despising fatalism and hate. There are few people who really want that. The Traditionalist message is addressed entirely to insiders and to those who might be profitably proselytized.

Traditionalism can only thrive where people want to make the world stupid and retrograde. Rama Coomaraswamy said to me that "for all practical purposes the Schuon group has kind of dissolved into nothing apart from a few staunch holders on." Those few hangers on are the ones who want to listen to pseudo-scientists like Wolfgang Smith.

Martin Lings put it best when he wrote that "in the modern world more cases of loss of religious faith are to be traced to the theory of evolution as their immediate cause than to anything else" --- this is correct and it is a good thing too. As Jonathon Miller points out in his

wonderful Atheism , A Brief History of Disbelief,<sup>1344</sup> historical understanding of the demise of religion is increasing dramatically. Darwinism clears away a lot of the superstitions and mysticism that has clogged the cultural mind for millennia. More and more people turn against the irrational, anti-scientific hucksters who exploit ignorance. The Darwinian theory is beautiful and true and you can see this if you will expose yourself to nature and how nature operates. Once a reasonable person sees the staggering evidence behind Darwin's theory it is all very clear. Darwinism is not an "anti-myth" as Wolfgang Smith maintains. Evolution is a beautifully humane<sup>1345</sup> and profound theory backed up by reality, evidence, botany, chemistry, physics, microbiology, paleontology, genetics, biology and tests, retests, verifications and peer review. Point by point Darwinism trumps religion. In contrast the 'Religio Perennis' is just a rag-tag concert of cranks and poseurs promoting ambiguous myths and fictions all mashed together into an esoteric soup of pastiched superstitions. <sup>1346</sup> Few stay in it long. It fades into antiquarian obscurity, as it should. In a decade or two it will be as dead as Greek and Roman gods; as dead as the fascism of Mussolini. That is to the good.

The anti-science movement has failed utterly. There are clearly things that are wrong with our world and need changing. Clearly too, science is regularly abused by corporations, insurance companies and governments. The way to change that is to get insurance companies out of medicine and limit, regulate and tax corporations into a more

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<sup>1344</sup> All three episodes can be seen here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVsb0lxv\\_Kg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVsb0lxv_Kg)

<sup>1345</sup> A wonderful book about Darwin's humane and enlightened awareness of others is Adrian Desmond's Darwin's Sacred Cause, which shows how Darwin was passionately opposed the slavery that still existed in his time and sought to end it. It also shows how his *Origin of the Species* is designed to encourage the understanding of diversity, a fact that makes many right wingers like Smith furious, since they want control by the few, not the many.

<sup>1346</sup> Ibid. The Transformist Illusion by Douglas Dewar. Review by Martin Lings

submissive role in our society.<sup>1347</sup> Corporate CEOs should be downsized, the 'compensation' packages severely cut and their wealth spread among employees and taxed for others. The unjust ideal of the CEO and the corporate mechanism of stockholder and board members needs to be changed, removed or altered to be fair and just towards those who actually do the work. Profit sharing is a good idea, and should be automatic public policy. There should be no large bonuses for CEO's, do to undue profits. There should be no destroying of companies because of CEO greed. Companies are about supporting and helping workers, not about giving huge profits to CEOs and neglecting those who actually do the work. Setting up systems and regulations that limit power and wealth a redistribute them is a good idea. Farming the world's poor regions for cheap labor should be penalized or at least taxed much more heavily so as to preserve labor and incomes here. People in other countries should be helped to preserve sustainable and ecological smart policy. But science itself should be strengthened and taught much more carefully and rigorously in our schools. The corporate takeover of colleges and universities must be stopped, Academic freedom preserved. Science has a great role to play in history and one of its many goals will be to give a retrospective account of religion: why it occurred and why it is no longer useful to humanity. What good religion did do can be isolated from delusional superstitions and developed in "secular" contexts.

Science must come closer to nature, not just read what it is by computer analysis. One thing that is clear is that nature is not all like capitalism or communism. Fields prosper when left alone to go wild,. whereas Laissez Faire economics leaves us global warming, dying seas and forests and the rich getting richer at the expense of life on earth.

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<sup>1347</sup> It would be useful to hold insurance company executives personally responsible for the murders regularly committed by insurance companies when they deny care to policy holders when they are very sick. Many of them would then be in prison. This happens routinely and is largely unreported.

Evolution is more about sharing than it is about competition To see the world from the point of view of others species is to see how we ourselves behave badly. What is one to make of a species that emigrated from Africa 70,000 years ago and slowly migrates to China only to wipe out nearly all fo the millions of Saiga there, a deer like animal that roamed the plains of Mongolia like Bison used to roam north America? They all but extirpated the intelligent and engineering beaver to make top hats. It is hard to see that this would be done by a “superior species” or misnamed “masters of the planet”. To try to understand nature from the point of views of all living things is a real challenge. No one has done it yet, stuck, as so many are, on human advantages. Once we abandon myth and ideology it becomes what is all around us that matters, which is in fact, what matters. No spirits, just the facts of what you see, feel, hear, smell and taste. Science begins with the simple, the cells, weaving the rainbow of forms into the fabric of sea and forest and air, and this is what really matters, and we have only begun to study it as it is. .

## **Chomsky’s Cartesian Speciesism and the Failing of his Linguistics**

“Descartes was by no means the fanatical rationalist he is often caricatured as. In fact he was quite wary of those "who take no account of experience and think that truth will spring from their brains like Minerva from the head of Jupiter"--- anonymous (CSM I, p. 21).<sup>1348</sup>

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<sup>1348</sup> [http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view\\_doc.php?type=book&id=5110&cn=394](http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=5110&cn=394)

(Written in 2013-2015)

It might seem odd to include an essay on a modern philosopher in a book on religion, when Chomsky is in no way religious in any traditionalist sense. But I think he belongs here as a part of this book which after all is not just a book critical of religion but of ideology in general. My concern through these books has been to chart an analysis of ideology, power and abuses that occur because of both. Linguistics is so far a failure as a science of the nature and evolution of language. Language does not do well when used to study itself, just as math is not very informative about math.<sup>1349</sup> Linguistics, at least of the Chomskyan variety, is inherently political and the knock down drag out fights between Chomsky and his critics is really a political fight. Chomsky's theory is an example of chauvinistic speciesism.

Linguistics, like religion, is political in its basis. This is partly because language itself is a political event by its very nature. Language is a system of abstract symbols used by people to communicate, create alliances, love, fight others or live in social networks. As such, fights as to what language is invariably divide up along political lines, class lines, gender or age. Children probably have a lot to do with what language does and is. Yet, linguistics is invariably a speciesism, at least up till now, as humans have come to abuse animals as a matter of economics and diet. Symbols are abstract things and they are prone to denigrate nature and others, Since by its very nature language is a mode of

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<sup>1349</sup> Russell and Whitehead tried to write a principles of Math, and ended up with tautologies and this was rather a dead end. Chomsky uses grammar to study language and this dead ended too, in his idea of Merge. The moral of these stores might be that symbols systems are empty abstractions and really mean very little apart from how they are used. They are constructed tools and suggest very little as evidence of themselves. Since Chomsky is very likely mistaken, the answer might be that language is not usefully studied except as a way of communicating, and thus akin to brains and living, animals and nature. This would seem obvious. But in linguistics today this is actually a radical suggestion.

communication of human centered thought between people, it largely ignores nature and animals, which people wish to see as inferior to them, even though they are not. Chomskyeen linguistics is in the dark ages on this subject and is a good example of speciesism and human centered chauvinism.

The speciesism of linguistics and of language itself can be changed only when linguistics starts admitting its prejudicial and political nature. As of yet, neither Chomsky or those who hate him have been able to admit their political ideology or their speciesism. I realized that these people are incapable of objectivity about language and hide their politics behind a pose of objectivity. This makes contemporary linguistics theories delusional and probably more or less worthless as science. So those who believe that Chomsky, Postal, Behme, Evans or Pinker are actually talking about what language and evolution is, are probably wrapped up in one or another ideological or religious fervor. So it is totally appropriate to write about this in this book, as this is a book about the political nature of the religions and ideologies of our time.

Since language and linguistics are used by these academics to sustain political ideologies, it is not really an effort find out how human language works or evolved in animals, birds and primate species, as Darwin wished. It is useful to trace some of the implications of their delusions. Perhaps we can return to the program that Darwin already outlined, which has been neglected until now. Language is a system of human centered abstractions and this is amply reflected in the destruction of nature and other animals all over the earth. To study language is thus to study human beings, and this can only be done if one gives up the vanity of human centeredness.

Linguistics merely reflects this political chauvinism, in the case of both Chomsky and his critics. How are ideas and words used to exploit and control others? This is possible on the left as well as the right. This is why I discuss Chomsky and his enemies in this chapter, as he is not really a scientist, but a bit of a cult leader and romantic speculator who uses science to promote himself, while never quite coming up with evidence to support his theories. He claims to be a scientist, but I don't think he actually is. He is in fact a charismatic political figure and one that specializes in journalistic political commentary of an international nature, while promoting himself as a sort of language guru for his followers. He has little to do with language anymore. Most of his work is a critique of U.S. government actions and failures. He is good at that. I like many things he writes. I think his critique of corporate culture is brilliant and largely true. But I am convinced that Chomsky's linguistic ideology has features that are very much part of the short sighted nature of his politics and are present in his linguistics as well, which are not part of science<sup>1350</sup> but rather closer to a political religion. He is not at all a traditionalist and indeed, he helped me see through the delusions of traditionalism, so I am not without some sympathetic gratefulness to the

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<sup>1350</sup> Christina Behme writes in her "A Potpourri of Chomskyan Science", Jan. 2015\_ "Chomsky's views about language evolution reveal the full extent of the double standards evident throughout. He ridicules the work of an entire field, without ever citing the views he considers problematic. His own view is put forward authoritatively as the only rational option. This creates the impression that he is popularizing tidbits of a massive body of scientific work he has conducted. Yet, no supporting evidence is cited, and none of his speculations are based on work he has completed himself."

Elsewhere she writes the same thing but adds to it:

"Chomsky creates the impression that he is quoting tidbits of a massive body of scientific work he has conducted or is intimately familiar with. Yet his speculations reveal a lack of even basic understanding of biology, and an unwillingness to engage seriously with the relevant literature. At the same time, he ridicules the work of virtually all other theorists, without spelling out the views he disagrees with. A critical analysis of the 'Galilean method' demonstrates that Chomsky uses appeal to authority to insulate his own proposals against falsification by empirical counter-evidence. This form of discourse bears no serious relation to the way science proceeds."

man himself. I repeat, he is not evidently religious<sup>1351</sup>, but he uses ideas and behaves very much as a cult leader, as he is an ideologue. This book is partly about the intersection of religion and politics. Discussing Chomsky as charismatic myth maker is fitting in a book that questions the fecundity of mythmaking whether it occurs in linguistics or in religion. In the process of analyzing what Chomsky did and how he failed, I think I might discover some things about how ideology works and how one can abuse it to create a cult like influence on the society around him.

Chomsky is not a cult leader in the classic sense I outlined earlier, but his group has cult like characteristics, a cult of personality certainly, as well as some tendencies to charismatic bluster and dishonesty. But it is not a destructive cult, for the most part, but more of an academic one, which is rare. They do tend to bash or shun anyone who strays too far from the Master's pronouncements. Certainly people have been hurt by the Chomsky cult. While I might agree with things Chomsky has written and he is strongest on analysis of corporations and media as they impact and recent U.S institutional policy and international studies, I have stayed pretty clear of being overly influenced by him and do not adulate him. But even in this area where he really is an expert, there are some pretty strange mistakes and errors of judgment.<sup>1352</sup> Chomsky has created, perhaps without meaning to, a political religion, or shall we say a religion of politics. His linguistics have largely failed. Why that happened is what I will mostly discuss here.

There are many critiques of Chomsky's linguistics that clearly have a political motivation.<sup>1353</sup> I find such critiques repulsive myself, with the

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<sup>1351</sup> Though he has connected himself rather closely to liberation theology in Latin America and to a Sufi in the middle east.

<sup>1352</sup> George Monbiot discusses some of these on his website.

<sup>1353</sup> that of Chomsky former student Paul Postman, for instance. Postman is a linguist and has some interesting things to say about Chomsky, but a lot of his ire is political. As I have shown elsewhere politics and religion are very similar things. But there are other critics of Chomsky

exception of Christina Behme's perhaps, which I largely agree with, though it is obviously politically motivated, though I think she is largely unconscious of how this is so. She often gets her facts right. But there are real hatchet jobs of Chomsky's ideological linguistics on the far right, which do not really address what language might be.

I studied Chomsky in various contexts for decades. Eventually I began to have real doubts about him. His linguistics theories turn out to be political at root. My critique of him not a right wing diatribe, but nor is it a left wing submission to his political cult of personality. Again, I have often, though not always, agreed with many of Chomsky's political ideas. But there is a religious aspect to Chomsky's politics---a certain cultishness in his bearing and followers that concerns me. A very different cup of tea is Howard Zinn. Certainly I admired Howard Zinn when I was getting my Master's in history and liked the inquiry of anyone who was willing to question unjust power and help the underclasses. But history is a different thing than language and it is much harder to hide one's politics in history. I felt a great deal of warmth toward Zinn both in his persona and as a writer. Chomsky has tried to help the underdog in various contexts too, and I appreciate that. But I never felt a similar warmth with him. He always struck me as somehow machine like, and dogmatic, cold and calculating. So in this essay I will be questioning Chomsky more as a cult figure than as a geopolitical analyst and historian. Though I do think Chomsky has mangled the history of science in some ways, but that will come up later.

Steven Pinker, who has his own, more bourgeois politics, writes in one context that "Chomsky's theory need not be treated ... as a set of cabalistic incantations that only the initiated can mutter" I am not sure I

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who are so rabid as to be absurd. I am not one of those. I am a man of the left, however, so this critique of Chomsky does not have politics or religion as its starting point.

agree with this. Actually, for most of the last 50 years, it has been a cabal headed out of MIT. Chomsky's very abstract and formalistic computations are idealized and have little to do with actual language use, with nature or with language as it may have evolved in a Darwinian way. His refusal to use the usual scientific parameters to check his work by peer review and replication has insured a very insular ideology. Only his close followers know what he is doing, and even they seem to get it wrong quite often. Chomsky himself often seems confused about what he has created. Pinker notes that "I would say that the problem with Chomsky is rather that with such a clever mind, such impressive erudition, and such formidable rhetorical skills, he has the power to push an *idée fixe* arbitrarily far"... Pinker also says that in Chomsky's linguistic and political ideology,

"we are seeing a fundamentally romantic view of human nature, in which people naturally cooperate and create without the need for external incentives, until these faculties are stifled by malign social institutions. We also see an all-encompassing moralistic theory of political and historical causation – that world events can be understood as the intended outcomes of a morally odious agent, namely the United States and its allies. Tragedies, well-meaning blunders, painful tradeoffs, human limitations, least bad options, historic changes in contemporary standards of political conduct—none of these play a role in Chomsky's causal model. Disciplinary expertise and training are beside the point – when you're determined to advance an all-encompassing theory, intellectual and scholarly power can work to your ultimate disadvantage in terms of providing an accurate rendering of reality.

see: <http://www.cosmoetica.com/DSI4.htm>

Pinker is right about this. Chomsky is driven by a nearly 'spiritual' ambition to impose his romantic and rationalist ideology, even if the facts do not fit it. He tries to "advance an all-encompassing theory", a quasi-religion. This is more dogma than science, and more like Aquinas—or Descartes--- than Darwin. Darwin was fact driven, an explorer and a man who loved experiment, studied barnacles, sailed around the world and studied pigeons, animals and birds. He did real science. Chomsky knows little about animals or nature and disliked experiments. He was a creature of academia and cities, better at interviews than observation of non-humans.

Chomsky has often been disdainful of Darwin, empiricism and facts, avoiding peer review and the normal avenues of scientific research. Besides not like doing experiments, none of his "discoveries" has any scientific basis. His system if made up of an elaborate and eccentric nomenclature made up out of arcane computations that have little to exhibit outside of abstract and imagined grammatical fancy. This is not science, but rather theory construction of a nearly medieval sort. Daniel Dennett shows this effort to side step or undermine evolution rather conclusively in his book Darwin's Dangerous Idea, which discusses the rather bad effects of Stephen Jay Gould on Chomsky. John Maynard Smith notes that Gould's ideas "are hardly worth bothering with". Chomsky's rather dogmatic, rationalist and prophetic romanticism is true in both his linguistic and his political work. But while Chomsky's political work is a continuation of the French Revolution and the effort to question unjust power, his science work is really conservative and in some ways a throwback to Descartes and the rationalism or the 1600's as well as going off the deep end into Gould's fantasies of "exaptations" and other architectural fictions. Chomsky's Cartesian fantasies do not stand up well. Christina Behme has made a convincing case that his work is not really Cartesian at all. But, in some respects he is a reactionary throwback to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and its mentality of nature as

a “possession” and an object of conquest. This is “Cartesian” in the worst sense. Chomsky’s humanism has some very supremacist features that makes his political thought highly questionable, and perhaps hypocritical.

It is true that he opened up language to more serious study around the world and he deserves credit for that. No one denies that. But there is a consensus of doubt and disapproval of Chomsky’s linguistics that has been growing into a chorus. His theories bore no real fruit and are now a hindrance to further inquiry. Some of those in this chorus are John Searle, Daniel Dennett, Stephen Pinker, Dennis Dutton. George Monbiot, Paul Postal, Christina Behme, Vyvyan Evans and many others. Collectively these critics suggest that Chomsky’s language theories are largely a failure. My reasons for thinking this are somewhat different than theirs. But I am joining this chorus of skepticism and doubt in this essay. I think the discipline of linguistics is largely bankrupt and not just because of Chomsky, but because of the subject itself is inherently political and so far prevents any real scientific inquiry into the nature and evolution of language. Here are my reasons, which are partly in agreement with others and partly different than they..

Over a number of recent years, I have been thinking about Chomsky views on nature and the subject of animals in his work. Indeed, I am not a linguist but trained as an artist and historian, with a deep interest in science. But I can see an ideology and trace its effects. The ideas at the basis of Chomsky’s inquiries were interesting and I tried to grasp what he is teaching and how he sees philosophy. I became interested in Chomsky mostly as a linguist in the mid-1980’s, when he was really more of a philosopher and linguist than he subsequently

became. I read him along with Wittgenstein<sup>1354</sup>, Michael Dummett, Ernest Gellner, A. J. Ayers and Bertrand Russell, and Feyerabend. I was enamored of him at one point, though not to the degree that I enjoyed Zinn, who was a much nicer and more generous person. I met Chomsky at Cleveland State University a number of times and found him rather a hard person personally. I liked his political bravery. But even though his analysis of corporations and advertising is accurate, there are real problems with his politics. He alienates far more people than he inspires and his expertise is very narrow. One of his main promoters, David Basimian, calls him a “Sufi Sage”, which is absurd and embarrassing. A lot of his efforts appear to be more about making himself a kind of cult leader, than changing the problems he sometimes describes accurately. At a certain point perhaps 10 or more years ago I wished to grasp how Chomsky was seeing science and animals and that was the beginning of my deeper questioning of his ideology.

Both these subjects, animals and science, have become increasingly dear to me as I age.. I was willing to extend Chomsky a great deal of leeway on what first appears to be a kind of speciesism in his thought. In a sporadic correspondence with him over several years,<sup>1355</sup> I

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<sup>1354</sup> Bertrand Russell wrote an interesting forward to Gellner’s book Words and Things in which he condemns Wittgenstein and the study of language divorced from the world. He excoriates language philosophy for being only about language and for “a dreary exegesis of the nuances of usage” as well as an escapist mysticism. Chomsky tends in this direction too and I cannot imagine Russell would have supported the way that Chomsky theory developed. Chomsky and Russell share a political bravery but are worlds apart on philosophy. It is quite true that Chomsky did not like Wittgenstein much. But what he disliked in him was his empirical quality, which means Chomsky was even more on the “mentalism” side of things, which is what Russell is criticizing. Russell did not like the ‘mentalism’ of Wittgenstein and would not have liked it in Chomsky either, I imagine..

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~francisp/NewPhil448/RussellIntroGellner1959.pdf>

<sup>1355</sup> This correspondence actually started in 1996, when I first met Chomsky in Cleveland, I corresponded with he and Zinn at that time. That deteriorated quickly when I tried to arrange a debate between the two men on the subject of “objectivity in history”. They had very conflicted views on the matter which I would have liked to see explained. Neither wanted to explore these obvious differences. I began my inquiry on animals in 2008 and that went very sporadically for 5 years, with much disagreement and strife. Indeed, I found him more or less impossible to talk to in any reasonable way. But his answers were very troubling until at last I could not side with him

discussed my doubts and concerns. It was a rocky and bad correspondence. One of the worst I have ever had, actually. He was prickly, difficult and dictatorial. Prone to be paranoid, he likes to excommunicate those who do not agree with him. It is not easy to talk to him, as anyone who has tried, who is not a devotee, must know. As Stephen Pinker said, Chomsky can “blow off critics as stupid or evil, explain away embarrassing data, and rationalize mistakes at will”. He did all these things to me. He struck me as a narrow minded old man who cannot be wrong or admit any mistakes, who never changes and if he is wrong about something, he acts proud of his ignorance and accuses others before admitting anything. But that aside I kept looking at his work. Slowly it dawned on me that a generous willingness to grant him the benefit of the doubt was misplaced. My original doubts about him were unfortunately confirmed. Indeed, communication with him was not just very difficult, but impossible. I persisted and this essay is the result of my 15 or 16 year inquiry into his work. I should add that he has been totally uncooperative with me on this, and that is not surprising, as I started to question his competence.

I have doubts that Chomsky's linguistics are even science, much less that they are valid science. <sup>1356</sup> My inquiry about Chomsky's view of

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at all as regards his linguistics, Descartes or animals and nature..

One thing worth noting was how he avoided being wrong about anything. He liked to prove me wrong about this or that, mostly trivial things, and I do not mind admitting when I am wrong. But he was wrong about much bigger things and was unable to admit any mistake on anything. His non-scientific vanity disturbed me. This is certainly not the attitude of a real scientist, who is able to see when he or she is mistaken. He would avoid or ignore all serious questions and nitpick on things that did not matter. Finally when I showed he was mistaken, he quickly attacked and implied there is something wrong with me and closed down the conversation, as if excommunicating someone were his only option to save face. This is not the behavior of an honest person but of a cult leader or autocrat.

<sup>1356</sup> Somewhere around the year 2000 I became aware that he did not have a high opinion of animals from an essay the late Val Plumwood wrote about Chomsky. It is a good essay, which basically accuses Chomsky of having a hypocritical and blinkered vision that refuses liberation politics to animals and nature generally.. I corresponded with Plumwood about this and other things. She was a very interesting Australian philosopher and the polar opposite of Chomsky. She actually knows a lot about nature and animals, unlike most philosophers. But she dislikes

animals did not go well. His views on nature are archaic. It is obvious, now that so many species are disappearing or under the threat of extinction that rights for animals must be part of an ongoing liberation of beings. Centuries ago “women, slaves, and chattels” were grouped as one category under rich men who alone had rights. Institutional slavery is largely gone in Europe and America and women have gained more rights relative to men, while animals and nature still lag far behind. Only animals and nature itself remain without effective rights, except in certain countries and in some cases. I was very glad to see Bolivia under Evo Morales has made efforts to apply the idea of Nature’s Rights, calling it the “Law of Mother Earth”.

I discussed the idea with Chomsky who mocked and laughed at the idea. “Rocks have no rights” he said, dogmatically. He said the trees in his backyard have no rights either.<sup>1357</sup> Trees do have rights and should be allowed to grow, if they assert themselves, as they inevitably do. Suppressing tree’s rights is a regular part of human behavior, but this does not make it just or right. Cutting down trees should always be carefully weighed and considered and only done if there is real reason

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rationalism, and this is problematic. I can’t go far into that here, but suffice it to say that abandoning reason is just as problematic as Chomsky’s excessive regard for it, to the point of neglecting the empirical. See Plumwood, Val, “Noam Chomsky and Liberation Politics” Here <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/96versions-of-freedom.pdf>

<sup>1357</sup> Chomsky is prone to these rather childish distinctions. He writes for instance

“To say that language is not innate is to say that there is no difference between my granddaughter, a rock and a rabbit. In other words, if you take a rock, a rabbit and my granddaughter and put them in a community where people are talking English, they’ll all learn English. If people believe that, then they believe that language is not innate. If they believe that there is a difference between my granddaughter, a rabbit, and a rock, then they believe that language is innate.” (Chomsky 2000: 50)

We are fundamentally related to rabbits in a direct way through evolution and we come from a planet that is made of elements(rocks). Darwin was quite able to deal with these differences without losing sight of their similarity and coherence. Chomsky does not have a clue about to do this this. In a nut shell, this is why Darwin is leagues ahead of Chomsky in nearly every way.

and justification to do it. There must be a system of rights whereby the interests of trees and other beings can be considered and weighed against humans. If the trees the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker lived in had rights, the Ivory Bill would not be extinct now.

I see no reason humans should be allowed to burn down rain forests for meat cattle as they do in the Amazon, killing off half the forests there. In the Himalayas they destroy nature for minerals. In the mountains of west Virginia or the coal tar sands of Canada they dig and blow up huge tracks of land, whole mountains, just in order to satisfy human greed, while putting profits before destroying the earth with global warming. The denial of rights to nature has to do with human greed. The real conflict is between nature's rights and human greed. I've seen with my own eyes how 97% of all Redwoods are now cut down and no old growth to speak of exists anymore on private land. One cannot trust the market to have an "invisible hand" to stop this predation. The notion that we "possess" nature is one of the main obstacles to preserving biomes and saving endangered species. Yet Chomsky upholds this archaic ideology.

Living and non-living things, obviously related, need to start being accorded rights. The earth itself must have rights prior to ours and certainly prior to anyone property rights.. Beings on earth, obviously interrelated and inter-dependent, are increasingly under attack from greed and the artificial concept of ownership, which is a human fiction.

Chomsky has claimed that he has been pushing the idea of nature's rights all along, which I do not think is true. <sup>1358</sup> Language has

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<sup>1358</sup> Paul Postal has shown rather convincingly that Chomsky is less than scientific about how he goes about his scholarship .Postal is a politically motivated critic of Chomsky, but the facts in this essay appear to bear further fact checking, unlike some of the other of Chomsky's critics like Dershowitz or Horowitz who seem to froth with seething hatred of Chomsky and have few cogent arguments against him. Postal's criticism of Chomsky appears to have some justification in terms of fact, but it is mixed up with all sorts of political invective, overtly or covertly. This is less true of Christina Behme criticism of Chomsky. But in her case, she cites Postal as one of her main

always been about those in power defying what is correct language and what is low class, whose speech is more important than others, and who is an authority and who is not. But Chomsky's idea of Nature's Rights is really truncated and applies only to nature being preserved in the interests of humans. "Trees have no rights", he writes me. Tension for the human world. Brave tree sitters, who have tried to stop the slaughter of ancient trees would disagree. Me too. In a recent essay he asks: "Who will uphold the rights of nature? Who will adopt the role of steward of the commons, our collective possession?"<sup>1359</sup> So, it turns out Chomsky is an anthropocentric thinker, and believes everything is owned by humans. "Our collective possession"-this is Marxist anthropocentrism in a nutshell, not really different than capitalist possession, just generalized in a socialist human centeredness. This is a repulsive attitude. Evidently he thinks we own whale sharks, pangolins,<sup>1360</sup> Aye-Ayes and Redwood trees, as if they did not evolve on their own, in their own way. Evolution is about survival and any species that survives has achieved that through asserting its rights or its power to continue. This is what nature's rights really is: Nature's right is the right of each species to pursue its

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advisors. She writes: "Finally, I am greatly indebted to Paul M. Postal for replying in an incredibly helpful

manner to my unfocused questions, is how she puts it in her PHD Thesis. Elsewhere she says that Chomsky's "science is just as problematic as his 'Politics'" I don't think his politics are entirely mistaken, and it would be helpful to jettison all this squabbling implicit in linguistics study and start linguistics over from scratch, on a Darwinian basis and abandon Chomsky, Postal and others. Chomsky is hardly the only one that writes corrupted language theory. See Postal's essay "A Corrupted Linguistics" here:

[ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/001634/current.pdf](http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/001634/current.pdf)

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<sup>1359</sup> Quoted from Chomsky: "How Do We Defend Ourselves from the Corporate and Imperial Forces That Threaten Our Existence?" Znet, July 6 2013

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<sup>1360</sup> Pangolins are illegally imported into China because they like to eat their meat and wrongly believe pangolin scales promote lactation. This not an unusual case of animals being harmed do to irrational superstitions and religious belief.

evolutionary course. No species is possessed by any other. The more time one spends with many species the more one learns to respect the hard work and amazing evolutionary achievement of each species. Chomsky has never acquired this respect for nature or evolution and the implicit concept of rights that was part of Darwin's discovery.

So possession is not Nature's Rights at all, nature is nowhere a "collective possession". Anyone who thinks this could never understand how language evolved, since he does not understand evolution itself, which has no favorites. Val Plumwood points out in her excellent Feminism and the Mastery of Nature that the notion of nature as a possession is misogynistic. Chomsky is prone to a speciesist anthropocentric view of nature. It is hard to imagine such a progressive man could have such a backward view of nature. But there you have it, His attitudes constitute a rank speciesism. He is part of the problem and in no way the solution. His theory of language is hopelessly human centered and thus not Darwinian and thus false on the face of it. Plumwood rightly notes that Chomsky has fallen for what she rightly calls the "pitfalls or Guruism" and that he does not "articulate the plurality of struggles and experience of oppression, suffered by women, nature and animals, as well as others outside the middle class of Chomsky's rather narrow view of social democracy."<sup>1361</sup> This could not be more exactly right.

As Thoreau said "in wildness is the preservation of the world". To protect wild beings and honor their right to exist is what we need, unless all the world, except humans, is to be a caged zoo where all animals and trees are our "possession". Cage all of nature and you cage humanity too. But then Chomsky knows little about nature and does little to help nature. What he does do is flatter human conceit and need of power, though he claims to be against that in other writings..

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<sup>1361</sup> Plumwood in Versions of Freedom. Sydney, 1996. Pg 27-30.

The origin of the idea of Nature's Rights is to be found in many sources, from Thoreau, to Abbey, Plumwood and many others who thought of the reality if not the actual phrase. Marc Bekoff recently called it "Wild Justice" Bolivia passed a their Law of the Mother Earth and Ecuador had their Permanent Rights of Nature Tribunal in Quito, Ecuador in 2014. Tom Linsey has been fighting for it for in courts for years with his CELDF. I started using the phrase Nature's Rights on my own back in 1999 or so, but the concept is not mine but belongs to whoever grasps what it means. My own view of it, like Plumwood's, was born of close observations of species lives in the natural world over a long period of time. <sup>1362</sup> Chomsky has yet to grasp it. He has an amazing will to not understand what is in front of him, sometimes,. I suspect he is prone to this sort of rhetoric to hide his ambitions and the fact that his pose of scientist has not as much basis in fact as he would wish us to believe.. ..

It is not hard to demonstrate how wrong he can be. Recently, Chomsky claimed the Bolivian Law of the Earth was really about human centered needs of the "commons". He writes to me that "by referring to "rights of nature," indigenous movements and others concerned with the fate of the species are underscoring our responsibility for the environmental commons" Ecuador has attempted to pass similar legislation.

This is not correct at all. He misread the Bolivian Law of Mother Earth. What it actually says is that beings and plants are not merely for human use. Their rights are intrinsic and not merely human centered as

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<sup>1362</sup> Her essay on being attacked by a Crocodile in Kakadu park in Australia and her essay on her pet Wombat are well worth reading on this subject. She was a great observer of the natural world. Another writer worth reading an animals and birds is Barry Kent McKay who lives in Toronto Canada, and who has written brilliantly on nature. See also his amazing series of birds around the world, as he is perhaps the first artist to really extend Darwin's vision of birds to the whole of the world's birds.

Chomsky imagines . Nature, or Mother Earth has laws Bolivia says and these are

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“ the right to life and to exist;

the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration;

the right to pure water and clean air;

the right to balance;

the right not to be polluted;

the right to not be affected by mega-infrastructure and development projects that affect the balance of ecosystems and the local inhabitant communities;

the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered( this one is more complicated than the others)”

Nature’s Rights is about respecting all species, not giving one species ultimate “possession” as Chomsky claims. The Bolivian Law of Nature could be better, but it is a good introduction to the concept of Nature’s Rights.. Chomsky has not understood this idea.

He says in an essay, “Defending our Existence” that we must have a “worldwide struggle to preserve the global commons” and that this global commons is “our common possession, to defend or to destroy.” <sup>1363</sup>This notion of possession of all of nature as ours is part of the fantasy of world dominion and common ownership of all of nature that goes back to the 16 and 1700’s when the ideology of private property was developed. This is indeed a Cartesian ideology and one that is repulsive and needs to be jettisoned. This goes very far back and we can already see this perverse ideology in Descartes, Chomsky’s sometimes hero and even to Aristotle, who says that

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<sup>1363</sup> <http://www.zcommunications.org/how-do-we-defend-ourselves-from-the-corporate-and-imperial-forces-that-threaten-our-existence-by-noam-chomsky.html>

“we may conclude of those things that are, that plants are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men; the tame for our use and provision; the wild, at least the greater part, for our provision also”

No one owns nature and the conceit that we do is an utter fiction. The Communist tried to universalize the Lockean concept of private property and make all nature owned by the state or to be exact, that all property would be owned by the “dictatorship of the proletariat”. This also was horrendous and resulted in terrible environmental destruction, such as the emptying of Lake Aral, one of the biggest Lakes in the world. Communists and capitalists since the 1960’s have done of the harm to earth in the last 10 years. The oceans have also been treated as a “common possession” with disastrous results, many species going extinct and widespread pollution in all the seas. Global warming, extinctions pollution of the atmosphere, the list of destruction is nearly endless. Language and its inherent speciesism plays a big role in this. Chomsky’s notion of nature as a “common possession” is thus merely a restatement of the ideology of conquest, a variant of which was the idea of ‘manifest destiny’, and this ideology is already a total failure..

The premise that nature can be owned by anyone is a spiritual or metaphysical conceit, a fictional delusion. It shows the patriarchal domination of Chomsky’s vision of nature. It is a potent fiction but a fiction nevertheless. No one owns the sun, diatoms, wild birds, insects or the Milky Way anymore than anyone had the right to own slaves, the sea, women or land. The abolishment of slavery shows just how this fantasy of ownership is ephemeral and arbitrary. One could say that one owns one’s own body and perhaps some of the things that are close to oneself, but little is actually ours, almost everything we encounter in the world has other claims on it. Birds claim the trees in our back yards and have

a right to them and fish claim a right to our lakes the streams, insects to our gardens and owls and moths to the night sky. The reversal of the ideology of ownership applied to nature requires the global approval of a notion of nature's rights. Such a Universal Declaration of Nature's Rights would be the basis of human rights and which would affirm and identify . the rights of species and biomes to exist independently of humans, as well as supply for the protection of species against human abuse and decimation. The Supreme Court has ruled that even corporations are entitled to certain legal rights, but animals "have no more rights than a pair of tennis shoes". Stephen Wise has rightly said. This is ridiculous and worthy of satire by a Jonathon Swift, since corporations are legal things and not beings, and are hardly the equal of living beings like animals, which are far more important.

Chomsky resists rights for nature and animals and he wrongly claims such rights are "incommensurate" with human rights. <sup>1364</sup> He makes these conservative and backward claims based on the archaic views of Cartesian philosophy. He says elsewhere that human concerns are alone worth pursuing, and he thinks animals and nature are more or less irrelevant. But the fact is that to claim human rights and not extend rights to other species is hypocritical, since we are ourselves part of nature, born of evolution and fundamentally related to all other species, by evolution, and by existence on earth itself. Indeed, the only viable basis for a theory of rights is to ground all rights in nature's rights, which are prior to human rights, or rather, of which human rights are merely subset.

As I questioned Chomsky and analyzed his responses it became clear he had no rational defense of his position. He is clutched in an ideology that goes back to the earlier parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when his

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<sup>1364</sup> Letter to the author

human centered views were more average. His speciesist views on animals are inextricably connected with his career as a linguist and derive from Descartes and others. His views may also derive from his cultural origins, the fact he is meat eater and supports scientific testing on animals or other reasons that I know nothing about. His human centered and reactionary point of view contradicts his otherwise enlightened political attitudes and should be resisted and questioned. I began to see that his ideas about language are entwined with ideas about Descartes and animals, and these ideas should be questioned as well. I will outline these questions here....

When I read Chomsky's 2002 essay on "Biolinguistics", I first thought Chomsky had softened his earlier, rather speciesist views of animals as lesser beings. He had long held to a rationalistic "Cartesian" philosophy which he held onto as a sort of personal identity or 'brand' for his linguistic philosophy. He is something of a historian of the scientific philosophers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, though I have doubts about the conclusions he draws from this history. He clearly misunderstood the notion of gravitation or magnetic fields and "action at a distance"

A lot of Chomsky's conclusions about science in the 17<sup>th</sup> century are questionable. He says for instance that gravity is a huge "mystery"<sup>1365</sup>

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<sup>1365</sup> Chomsky uses the word "mystery" to hide all that he does not know about a given subject. So for instance in a recent essay, (2014) called "The Mystery of Language Evolution". Actually communications skills in many species tell us a great deal. But Chomsky has the bad habit of wanting to undermine any advance in understanding of other species. Chomsky makes the same mistake as the people that taught Nim Chimpsky 125 signs of sign language. Even more was accomplished with Koko, Washoe and other primates. Rather than acknowledge this Chomsky demeans it as he foolishly wants all primates to be human. It is an amazing feat that that the primates learned as much as they did, as it shows many of the same mental capacities are there in chimps. Chomsky, ever the speciesist, disparages this and says ,

"Nim Chimpsky, the chimpanzee that produced the only public corpus of data in all animal language studies, produced signs considerably below the expected degree of combinatorial diversity seen in two-year old children (Yang, 2013), and with no understanding of syntactic structure or semantic interpretation.

and that “scientists abandoned the animating idea of the early scientific revolution: that the world will be intelligible to us”. No, no one abandoned that, they merely conceded that not everything was clear as yet, which should not have surprised anyone.

But the answer to the question of action at a distance did come. Actually, gravity is increasingly well known and is a part of the physical world and thus of causation, as is proven by the fact that human bone and muscle loss accelerate quickly in outer space, doing physical harm to astronauts that stay more than six months. To say that gravity is “action at a distance” and this fact defeats mechanism and proves that “all is mind” is hugely overstated and erroneous. There is no magical or spiritual action going on here, nor is it “mental” as Chomsky sometimes claims. Gravitational and magnetic fields are not mental but physical things, effects of matter.

He claims only the “ghost” is left in the analogy of the ‘ghost in the machine’. This conclusion is utterly unwarranted. The analogy of the ghost in the machine is not an accurate analogy to begin with. Chomsky seems to be indulging in a mystagogy of sorts. He suggests an analogy between gravity and “power of moving our body by our thoughts”, in Newton’s words. But that is merely electricity than enables that and electricity has to do with fields as Maxwell and Faraday showed, quite conclusively. Again, I doubt Chomsky can be trusted as an interpreter of the history of science.

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Actually a great deal can be inferred from this experiment. They wanted him to be human and not chimp. That was the same mistake Chomsky makes in all his comparisons between animals and humans. Language is human centered and political in essence and until a linguist stops being human centered there will be no understanding of language evolution. One of Nim’s caretakers concluded “What he needed... was to be with other chimps,” Bob Ingersoll says. “Chimps don't need to be with humans. They need to have a chimp life.... Chimpanzees in captivity is just not where they ought to be. ... I would hope that one of the lessons that we learned from Nim's life is that keeping chimpanzees in cages is torture and really plays havoc on their mental health.” Once we jettison the Chomsky model of language as useless, and start studying animals in the wild, much more will be learned about just how effective animal communication is. It is not human communication and should not be expected to be.

Both gravity and thought are areas of science not well understood, but so what? That does not imply any analogy. The science at the basis of these is progressing. Thought appears to work by electricity and not by gravity. Chomsky appears to be confused. There are many things not yet understood by science. In "Turing on the "Imitation Game" Chomsky states that "thinking is a property of organized matter, alongside of other mysterious properties like attraction and repulsion." What they have in common, Chomsky imagines, is that they "transcend the limits of mechanism". This is pure imagination as magnetism is well understood as physical fields; it does not at all "transcend the limits of mechanism". His understanding of the limits of mechanism are too narrow. This is an unwarranted surmise on Chomsky's part that has no evidence at all in its favor.

Neither electromagnetism or gravity escape basic laws of physics, nor do movements of human bodies or our thoughts. Chomsky is almost in the realm of science fiction here, or religion in these speculations.. It is very unlikely that either gravity or the brain transcend causality or "mechanism". The only 'mystery', still not understood is why gravity is only an attractive force and electromagnetic fields in contrast repel and attract. But this is purely a physical question too, though Einstein's notion that gravity is an effect of the curvature of space time is difficult understand in practical terms. But he does suggest that gravity travels at the speed of light, and is a wave, like light.

To summarize what I am saying here bout Chomsky: there are physical forces in the world that suggest 'action at a distance' without actually being that, such as magnetism and gravity. These did not really bring Newtonian mechanics into question, though Chomsky mistakenly thinks they did. Pure Cartesian mechanics is rather too simple to explain much, but concepts like Michael Faraday's and Clerk Maxwell's idea of

fields go far to explaining how the appearance of ‘action at a distance’ can happen, while yet the underlying facts are all physical and mechanical in the sense of being causal and having physical explanations.

Chomsky appears to have an interest in misunderstanding or suppressing the history of science here, but I have no idea why he would do that, though it appears to be a tendency he has.<sup>1366</sup> Or rather, I suspect he wants to negate empirical fact in favor of his detached rationalism. By avoiding peer review and dictating his results he can act as the Pope of Language, and many people fall for that. Not burdened by the requirements of the scientific method he can dictate his results without having to repeat any experiments. Science gets deformed by his politics again. He does this when he thinks he can, and this favoritism toward the solipsistic, the inchoate, the mysterious and the mental is also present in his language theory.

He imagines language is a mentalist, quasi-Platonic abstract phenomena, a mysterious part of people’s brains by genetic accident. He imagines that “We can understand theories about the world, but the nature of the world itself is really unintelligible to us.”<sup>1367</sup> which is not really accurate at all. Indeed, we know more and more about nature and the world every year, far more and more deeply than has ever been the case. But for someone who denies empiricism when it suits him, it is quite understandable he would deny that the world has become far more intelligible since Descartes died. He makes a common mistake, which is to extrapolate from the rather arcane and dubious theories of experimental physics to the facts of ordinary life. Many have done that, evoking Heisenberg or the puzzles of Quantum mechanics, but to extrapolate these things as general conclusions about actual existence

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<sup>1366</sup> An interesting essay “On the Non-Existence of Cartesian Linguistics” by W. Keith Percival, can be found here; <http://people.ku.edu/~percival/CartesianLinguistics.pdf>

<sup>1367</sup> <http://zcomm.org/znetarticle/philosophy-language-making-sense/>

and ordinary life is to make a big mistake. It is clear that Chomsky's theories about the 17<sup>th</sup> century mechanics are mistaken.

Chomsky argues Descartes is the model we should have followed, though he also denies this too, when it suits him.<sup>1368</sup> Darwin should have been the model he followed. He tried, at least in his early career, to be true to the Cartesian tradition. Descartes is one of the first philosophers to begin to escape middle age dogmas and scholastic denial of experience and empirical observation. He had some good ideas. Foremost among them was his effort to create science as reductionist materialism. His ideas in this direction still have some useful and attractive features. But his rationalist approach could be used to avoid or side step actual empirical study and it appears Chomsky did this to some degree. Descartes himself stressed empirical study on occasion, but his one foot in the scholastic is a real problem and created in Chomsky a reliance on rationalism and innatism that sometimes goes against fact and reality. In my own view this aspect of language, its abstract character, divorced in some many ways from reality, is precisely that aspect which is dangerous and which has helped create religions and systems of unjust power. It is here that Chomsky seems to be really on the wrong footing. As Christina Behme notes

“In the 1950s Chomsky's promise to bring rigor and

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<sup>1368</sup> One of the best attempts to show how far Chomsky goes to abuse Descartes and project on him his own interests is Christina Behme's *Cartesian Linguistics: From Historical Antecedents to Computational Modeling*

“Chomsky has little interest in the facts of history, but intends to use the suitably re-interpreted Cartesians as figurants or ventriloquist puppets on the Chomskyeen-Linguistics stage. For this reason I suggest that it is misleading to call Chomsky's work *Cartesian Linguistics*.” (page 313) She is right to a degree that his linguistic theories are not Cartesian as he uses Descartes as a foil on which to project himself. But I think she misses the ways in which he is indeed, Cartesian, and why. Chomsky accepts the Cartesian notion of human centered domination. I think Behme has not gotten beyond this herself and so does not see it in Chomsky.

exactness to linguistics and to situate linguistic theorizing firmly within the natural sciences (Chomsky, 1957, 1965, 1966) clearly revived linguistics. However, 60 years later many of the initial promises remain unfulfilled. Chomskyeian science remains vague about the mental machinery that underwrites creative language use and has not provided testable hypotheses regarding the mechanisms that allow for language acquisition.”

The failure of his linguistics is partly due to his misunderstanding of Descartes and the shortcomings of rationalism. Language capacity might be innate, but not language itself, which is learned, laboriously, implying that language is cultural. Many things Descartes thought or said, particularly about animals, are archaic and medieval, inherited from archaic and backward Christian and Greek speciesism. There appears to be a psychological element of cruelty in Descartes too, which was evidently passed to his followers. Chomsky has endorsed efforts by his own followers to dismiss the facts about Descartes’ cruelty. But before I explain that I need to back up a little.

A few years ago, I had come across a quote from Chomsky made in an interview in which he said that the followers of Descartes had horrible relations with animals. He writes:

“In Cartesian philosophy, for example, where it was assumed ... the Cartesians thought they had proven that humans had minds and everything else in the world was a machine. So there’s no difference between a cat and a watch, let’s say. It’s just the cat’s a little more complicated. You go back to the court in the seventeenth century, and big smart guys who studied all that stuff and thought they understood it would as a sport take Lady So-and-So’s favorite dog and kick it and beat it to death and so on and

laugh, saying, this silly lady doesn't understand the latest philosophy, which was that it was just like dropping a rock on the floor. That's gratuitous torture of animals. It was regarded as if we would ask a question about the torturing of a rock. You can't do it. There's no way to torture a rock. The moral sphere has certainly changed in that respect. Gratuitous torture of animals is no longer considered quite legitimate."

Naively, I took this to be a rare willingness on Chomsky's part to question Descartes himself, who does indeed deserve to be questioned on this subject. I loved this comment by Chomsky and thought, wrongly, that it indicated a change in Chomsky from his more hard headed early days where Descartes seemingly could do no wrong. Had Chomsky opened his mind to ideas outside his rather narrow and archaic Cartesian rationalism? I was warming to the belief that he is a man who can change his views and wrote him to thank him and celebrate this.

To my great disappointment, I was mistaken to think Chomsky had changed and now cared about animals and nature. In my letter I praised Chomsky for this comment, glad he rejects cruelty that was inherent in the Cartesian view. He wrote me back and insisted he has not changed. He was proud of never changing, it seemed. He went further and stated, falsely as it turns out, that Descartes had been slandered and only Descartes's followers and not Descartes himself had been cruel to animals. Linguistics for Chomsky is a sort of narcissistic religion, based on the false innatism of Descartes, and promoting language as a sort of solipsistic politics of the creative self. This is what his "I" language, freedom of infinite expressions and his theory of Merge is really about. It is a self-portrait of sorts, both political and religious and it inspires a

very real cult following.<sup>1369</sup>

He tried to maintain, wrongly, that Descartes had nothing to do with cruelty at all. To prove this he sent me an essay by a follower of his, Justin Leiber, purporting to prove Descartes innocent of the “myth” of cruelty to animals. But I saw right away that Leiber’s essay is full of easily disproved errors. Leiber mistakenly claims that ““There is simply not a line in Descartes to suggest that he thought we are free to smash animals at will or free to do so because their behavior can be explained mechanically.” Leiber is totally wrong. Leiber’s essay is badly researched. Since Leiber is wrong Chomsky is too. Daniel Dennett is wrong too, as he also wrote an attack on animals, defending or rather excusing Descartes’ really ignorant attacks on animals , using the same bogus essay that Chomsky uses. Dennett, like Chomsky Leiber and Descartes wrongly claim that animals don’t feel or think or have consciousness.<sup>1370</sup>

Descartes said quite a bit about cruelty to animals and indulged in it himself. The incontestable truth is Descartes was a cruel man who thought that animals deprived of language cannot think and, therefore, are nothing but well-constructed, complex, unfeeling machines.

Descartes proposed a dualistic division between the outside objective

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<sup>1369</sup> Chomsky’s concept “Merge” has a lot in common with artificial constructions, such as the Christian concept of the Word, or the Hindu Om, In the latter, all the universe was supposed to be born from a single letter’ just as Chomsky images infinite word combinations come from a single mutation 60,000 years ago. This forced analogy really explains nothing, while seeming to be profound. Chomsky created Merge as the ultimate origin of his concept of language. His rationalism devolves into this reductionist solipsism. Merge is merely adding words or concepts together. This need of reducing language to a simple contraction is modeled on physics and does not explain much at all. Language is not physics. If Chomsky had tried to understand language based on Darwinism rather than physics he would have done far better.

<sup>1370</sup> See Dennett’s “Animal consciousness: what matters and why”  
[http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/dennett\\_anim\\_csness.html](http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/dennett_anim_csness.html)

This is a very flip essay that has little insight in it, other than to show the usual speciesist hatred of animals that treats them as ignorantly and nonchalantly, as if no one intelligent would ever take them seriously.

world and the inner subjective world. These are partly what Chomsky thinks, too.

Descartes himself wrote

“if you cut off the end of the heart of a living dog, and through the incision, put your finger into one of the concavities, you will clearly feel, every time, the heart shortens, if you press your finger and it stops pressing, every time, it lengthens” <sup>1371</sup>

Also in a letter to Mersenne of November 18, 1630 Descartes says that if ‘you whip a dog six or eight times, to the sound of a violin, the dog will whimper and tremble if it hears to sound again’.

Chomsky wrote back with no apology for using Leiber’s paper as the truth when it was clearly false. He was using the paper to promote himself. He did not thank me for the corrections of his and Leiber’s obvious errors about Descartes either., as he should have<sup>1372</sup> So far I have found no example of Chomsky ever admitting to be wrong about

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<sup>1371</sup> see Richard Watson Cogito Ergo Sum: the Life of Rene Descartes pg. 167-168, see letters of Descartes too

<sup>1372</sup> Steven Pinker is a critic of Chomsky’s later linguistics. He said of Chomsky that he is a ‘daunting opponent and not much inclined to give quarter to his critics. This has led to some fierce fallings-out. Pinker says in the *Boston Globe Magazine* (Nov. 19, 1995, p. 25) that Chomsky “implies that people who disagree with him are stupid and ignorant. He is a brilliant debater and an out-and-out bully. It’s great fun if you’re on his side, but not if you’re suddenly the target. People storm off and hate his guts for the rest of their lives”. " This is quite true and I have talked with a number of people who truly hate the man, who was very vicious to them. Steven Pinker in a 1995 profile in the Boston Globe newspaper. In another interview with *Cosmoetica*, Pinker states that Chomsky can “can wow sycophants, blow off critics as stupid or evil, explain away embarrassing data, and rationalize mistakes at will.” Yes, Chomsky does do this. I have seen it myself. But far worse than his need to personally attack people is his denial of direct evidence. That is a different order of infraction entirely as it sometimes puts Chomsky outside science into the realm of cult and dogma.  
<http://www.cosmoetica.com/DSI4.htm>

anything and he never says he is sorry. This worried me. I am often wrong about things, and do not mind admitting it. I was wrong about details in my letters to Chomsky several times and admitted it. It has been said that arguing with Chomsky is like arguing with a buzz saw. I felt that and have to say it is unpleasant to talk to him. Pinker says he is a bully and I concur with that. I do not see him as a scientist but as an ideologue and an opportunist.

Chomsky said that practices in animal experimentation were different in Descartes time. (1620 or so) So Descartes is somehow excused. I rejoined that in no age is whipping a dog while playing it violin anything but monstrous. Playing violin to the victims at Auschwitz was also a horrible act. Indeed, Descartes desensitization towards the pain of others is an early example of alienated and horrible killings throughout the modern period. Da Vinci lived a hundred years before Descartes and let birds go from cages because he saw it as cruel. Like Darwin, Da Vinci was concerned with animal's rights. He was also a vegetarian and he was a far better experimentalist and scientist than Descartes ever was. Claiming Descartes was cruel because he was merely a child of his times is specious argument that seeks to excuse him. Chomsky is wrong to excuse Descartes for being an innocent child of his times. It is right to admire Descartes for formalizing aspects of the scientific method and a few minor discoveries, but trying to hide Descartes cruelty to protect your own linguistic theories is something else entirely.

It was becoming clear to me that Chomsky would stoop quite far to try to excuse the hero of his linguistic theories. It was personal for him. He would deny direct evidence that contradicted his false claims about Descartes. Suddenly, and distressingly, my belief that Chomsky is a scientist and cares about rights was brought into question. I learned what I did not want to learn: he doesn't care about evidence and that he

is a man with little conscience, who will doctor evidence to serve his own interests.<sup>1373</sup> He cares about being right, his career, and a dogmatism that is born of 'rationality', now became an irrationality. At least when it comes to his Linguistics career, Chomsky seems to be one of those "who take no account of experience and think that truth will spring from their brains like Minerva from the head of Jupiter". I say this reluctantly as one who has admired Chomsky's politics for many years, and what I thought was his science too. He may be indeed the narrow minded speciesist that I feared he was years ago.

Chomsky wrote me again and tried to say that Leiber's essay still stands because Descartes clearly assumed that animals could feel pain. Actually this is wrong too. I sent him this quote where Descartes clearly denies that animals feel pain.

In a letter to Mersenne, on 11 June 1640, Descartes wrote

"I do not explain the feeling of pain without reference to the soul. For in my view pain exists only in the understanding. What I do explain is all the external movements which accompany this feeling

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<sup>1373</sup> George Monbiot came to a similar conclusions about Chomsky is a series of letters between the two. Monboit writes that Chomsky, "whose research is usually so thorough, is deliberately ignoring a vast weight of evidence which conflicts with his political beliefs." He writes this account of the whole matter and basically accuses the ZNet crowd of cult like holocaust denial of atrocities in Rwanda and the Balkans. He writes about Chomsky, Edward Herman and Albert among others that " If people who claim to care about justice and humanity cannot resist what looks to me like blatant genocide denial, we find ourselves in a very dark place" Z Net is not what we hoped it might be. It has become increasingly money grasping and is a Chomsky admiration society these days. I think Monboit puts too much trust in the Chomsky circle, who have largely lost whatever groove they once had. There is an occasional good article there, but the leadership is cultish, old and narrow and can't handle justified criticism.

see more here:  
<http://www.monbiot.com/2012/05/21/see-no-evil/>

in us; in animals it is these movements alone which occur, and not pain in the strict sense ...".

Obviously, Descartes believed only humans and not animals have understanding, and only humans not animals have a soul, and therefore animals do not feel pain. He thought there was no connection between their sensations and their understanding and thus they could be tortured with impunity. Though animals can feel the "sensation" of joy, pains and other emotions they might mechanically respond by dancing about, appearing happy, or the like, even though the "animal machines", as Descartes calls them, would not *consciously* feel anything.

Chomsky responded to this obvious claim of Descartes that animals do not feel pain in a strange Orwellian way. He told me that when Descartes says they don't feel pain "in the strict sense" he is saying that of course they feel pain. Yeah right, and war is peace and innocence is guilt and Animal Farm was written by Genghis Khan.

Chomsky was trying to bully me. The truth was staring him in the face and he denies it. This is not a good man who cares about the truth. The evidence is very clear and I did not give in. Descartes clearly says that animals cannot feel pain because "pain only exists in the understanding" not in mere sensation and animals are incapable of understanding. He says that animals "have no [reason] at all."<sup>1374</sup> So animals who sense pain do not actually feel it. For Descartes, animals might squeal in of pain, but this is only a mechanical reactions to external stimuli. In other words, hitting a dog with a stick, for example, is a kind of input and the squeal that follows would be merely output, but the dog did not feel anything at all and could not feel pain unless it was endowed with a mind and reason, which Descartes claims animals do not have. So Descartes followers, following their master, whacked

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<sup>1374</sup> Chapter 5 Discourse on Method

away at little dogs and were oblivious to the screams.

Descartes lived for a time on a street of butchers and watched animal killings often. He brags in a letter in 1639, "I have spent much time on dissection during the last eleven years, and I doubt whether there is a doctor who has made more detailed observations than I." Since we know he liked to do live dissections many of these dissections were no doubt live tortures. Da Vinci, writing a hundred years earlier, writes with great compassion about those whom he dissected.

In summation, Chomsky and Leiber were trying to cover up for Descartes atrocious abuse of animals. The reason for doing that of course, was to hide Chomsky's own speciesism. Leiber tries to prove that Descartes was maligned by history and animal rights activists such as Peter Singer. Leiber's claim is false. Descartes thought animals can be tortured with impunity because they feel no pain. Chomsky was therefore mistaken to use Leiber in an effort to excuse Descartes for the moral culpability of "gratuitous torture" of animals. Leiber was trying to whitewash Descartes in order to make Chomsky's "Cartesian linguistics" look more palatable. He was trying to hide or erase the implicit speciesism in both Chomsky and Descartes. Most of Leiber's essay was an attack on Peter Singer, the animals rights activist. As it turns out Leiber was mistaken to attack Singer in this way.<sup>1375</sup> Singer's opinion that Descartes had an influence on subsequent indifference to animal abuse is largely correct. In short Leiber and Chomsky were presented with direct evidence invalidating their ideas and both denied the

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<sup>1375</sup> Peter Singer writes, correctly, that Descartes believed that animals feel no pain "when cut with a knife" or "hot iron" and that Descartes theory "allowed the experimenter to dismiss any qualm they might feel" about torturing animals. See Singer Animal Liberation -. 118-120, Singer is quite correct about this, but the proof of this is not so much in Singer's sources for this information but in Descartes writings. Leiber attacks Singer's sources but neglected to look it up in Descartes own work, where there is plenty of evidence of his speciesist and cruel attitudes toward animals.

overwhelming evidence.. By sending me the essay Chomsky was trying to rope me into the deceit. These are dishonest men.

Further proof is not needed--- *but there is further proof*. Descartes was himself aware that he was trying to vindicate animal torturers and creating an excuse for butchers, meat eaters, and animal abusers to enjoy themselves with impunity. Descartes writes in a 1649 Letter to Henry More:

“For Brevities sake I omit here my other reasons for denying thought to animals. *Please note that I am speaking of thought, and not of life or sensation*. I do not deny life to animals, since I regard it as consisting simply in the heat of the heart; and I do not even deny sensation, in so far as it depends upon a bodily organ. Thus my opinion is not so much cruel to animals as indulgent to human beings—at least to those who are not given to the superstitions of Pythagoras—since it absolves them from the suspicion of crime when they eat or kill animals” 3:366—AT 5:278-9

So here is Descartes admitting both his twisted and irrational logic that it is OK to kill animals since they feel no pain and that he rather despises vegetarians. He is admitting he is well aware of vegetarians and thus of animals rights, and is saying he really cares to justify killers of animals.<sup>1376</sup> His theory is deliberately means to excuse cruelty. So much for Descartes age being ignorant of the issue, as Chomsky implied.

The Pythagoreans he mentions, who were certainly superstitious,

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<sup>1376</sup> India is the most vegetarian country on earth, with 29-40% vegetarian. Meat corporations are trying to destroy that, of course. They want everyon eathiing animals, and want to subvert the just idea that one “do no harm, (Ahimsa).

were also vegetarians and Descartes is here taking a swipe at them for their vegetarian interests. Chomsky imitates Descartes quite closely, and thinks "thought" is what language is about and since animals have no language, they have no thought. Darwin, who is both deeper in feeling empathy and finer in sensibility than Chomsky, denies this directly of course, and insists, rightly, that animals are capable of advanced thought in many cases. For Descartes sensations did not mean awareness or understanding. He also denies animals have consciousness, or reason and thus they did not feel the pain they felt as sensations. He claimed they feel no pain when they are hurt, they merely react as machines who act as if they had pain. He is saying that his theory of animals as machines who feel no pain liberates animal killers of all kinds and vindicates those who hate vegetarians. This is once again a kind of speciesism.

Also in my discussion with Chomsky I quoted Michael Albert's autobiography in which he says "I see no comparison in importance between seeking to eliminate the roots and branches of sexism, and seeking to eliminate the roots and branches of violence against animals." For Albert, it is good to be nice to women but violence against animals is OK. Liberation of women is one thing but do not liberate nature and animals, these are only for human use and abuse. He needs his huge beefsteak slapped on a plate, and apparently thinks it OK to eat shark fin soup or murder bears. Michael Albert's rather obtuse preaching suggests a man who has little insight into the world.

Why should the abstract character of system of signs and symbols in language make Chomsky think the human animal superior to any other animal?. He disparages animals and says

"Animal communication systems have thus far failed to demonstrate anything remotely like our systems of phonology,

semantics, and syntax, and the capacity to process even artificially created stimuli is highly limited”

Why would anyone demand that animals be human, any more than that a zebra should be a Roseate Spoonbill. In fact there is no reason to pursue these comparisons ad nauseum, as Chomsky does in his 2014 essay on the “Mystery of Language Evolution”, from which the above quote comes. Thinking in symbols is a very destructive way to think, as I have shown throughout these books. Ants and bees appear to think through chemical markers, or pheromones. The notion that merely using symbols makes human superior to other species is ridiculous, it merely makes them more brutal and willing to destroy our planet. There is no reason to compare animals with humans unless the comparison goes both ways. Can Humans echolocate like bats, or use infrasound like elephants, communicate by smell like moths or see ultraviolet like wasps and bees? No, not even close. In many ways animals and insects are superior to humans. Darwin had respect even for the intelligence of worms, and never thought they should be other than as they are. After Darwin and J.G. Romanes there was an unfortunate tendency to denigrate animal species that arose as a result of Behaviorism. This Evolution has no favorites and to think it does is merely rank religion or politics of an egregious kind. <sup>1377</sup>

In many ways human language makes people far worse than other animals and precisely because of their false belief that they are so much

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<sup>1377</sup> See the letters of G.J. Romanes to and from Darwin and Romanes’ books on Animal Intelligence and Mental Evolution in Animals., both books of which Darwin was aware. He had interest and sympathy with Romanes point of view.. Romanes had an interesting attitude to animals of all kinds and rates their intelligence very highly. His work is simple by comparison with what could be done today, which has barely scratched the surface of animal intelligence. I was watching a crow look for worms or bugs in the grass today and it is abundantly clear in every movement that this is a bird of great mind who can seek and plan its movements with deliberation and brains. Animal intelligence and cognition in the wild is under studied partly because of the unfortunate influence of behaviorism and corporate science as well as the latent speciesism that has long been part of animal experimentation.

better. Language is very close to religion and politics and as such has strongly involved in brutality, extinctions, harming the earth and creating war.<sup>1378</sup> The ability to speak has not made people better. You can tell a lot about people by how they think of animals. Chomsky says he basically agrees with this human centered prejudice and monstrous endorsement of cruelty. That is what Descartes would think too. Racism, sexism and how animals and nature are treated are “incommensurate”, Chomsky claims, invoking Cartesian speciesism. Nonsense. Sexism and racism and the linguistic prejudice that hold humans to be superior are very close. The speciesism of Albert and Chomsky creates substantial outclass of living beings, not just animals, but nature in general. This is repulsive and goes far to discredit Chomsky’s thought. This surprises and repulses me even more than his attempt to whitewash Descartes.

But what really shocked me about this discussion with Chomsky was his willingness to deny direct evidence against his claims, and to try to brow beat me into submitting to his outrageous denials of the evidence. I had written Chomsky in an effort to investigate his science because I was writing about his science positively in a poem. My discovery was unwelcome and more or less destroyed the poem I was trying to write. But the truth matters more than a poem.. I could still write a poem and tell the truth about what I learned, even though that poem is now a mess. I had made similar investigations to write about Darwin<sup>1379</sup>,

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<sup>1378</sup> It would be interesting to do a book entirely on bad experiments designed by people studying animals. There are so many, torturing animals in mazes, putting dogs on electric floors,, cutting jelly fish to see if they can swim, all the way back to Descartes killing live dogs and experimenting on them as they died. Scientists will do all sorts of elaborate experiments to avoid studying them in the wild, which the most important kind of study one can make. What these bad experiments show is how stupid humans can be rather than how intelligent animals are.

<sup>1379</sup> Reading about Darwin really enlightened me. The more I found out about him, and I read many books about him as well as his own work, and as I did I liked him more and more. He was very interested in animal rights and both he and she wife worked on animals behalf, He also was against slavery. Adrian Desmond admirably shows in his Darwin’s Sacred Cause, How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Human Evolution, Darwin was not just against slavery but

Newton or Hawking. To my deep dismay I came away from Chomsky doubting he is a scientist at all. I saw how he misused science. Yes, I do believe that Chomsky did valuable work in claiming that the capacity for language is genetic. But he appears to have failed to have proven his main thesis that grammar is innate. His willingness to deny direct evidence makes me question Chomsky's embrace of rationalism. His rationalism was showing clearly dogmatic and irrational features. Chomsky used rationalism to flout direct evidence and erect any arbitrary rule he wished to, regardless of the reality of the matter. If you question him too closely he accuses you of having an inflated self-image or of being insane or somehow mentally deficient. This where his claim to be a prophet takes on a terrible and self-interested subjectivism.

What I learned was that his willingness to deny evidence suggests a dogmatic refusal of the scientific attitude. <sup>1380</sup> This disturbed me so much I started doing research on Chomsky's science. He has many enemies and most of them can be dismissed as right wingers who are politically motivated. They misrepresent and distort what he has been trying to do out of hate or prejudice. I do not hate Chomsky or need to misrepresent him. As it turns out, there are serious claims by people such as Daniel Dennett, Steven Pinker and John Searle, all of them well known philosophers more or less of Chomsky's generation or a little younger. These men doubt that what Chomsky is doing is valid science. I think they may be right, Chomsky 'second cognitive revolution' may be a failure", as John Searle says. Christina Behme concurs and writes

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saw him science work as a major contribution to ending both slavery and race and religious prejudice.

<sup>1380</sup> Vyvyan Evans writes "All exclusively language-specific biologic structures remain purely hypothetical and by now there is good empirical evidence that no such structures exist." I read this in 2017, a few years after writing this essay. It is good to see that someone is thinking about this, as what he says here is true, in my experience of Chomsky.

“Given my findings about Chomskyan linguistics, the question may arise if there is anything salvageable. Considering his voluminous output, the potential gain of finding the pieces worth keeping may seem not to justify the tremendous effort required for completing this work”.

Descartes theories about animals are ridiculous. He claims they do not feel pain, even if they have “sensations”. Descartes argument about animals not having minds also is an argument that denigrates animals in order to claim that only humans have language and that we are fundamentally separated from animals in our ability to use words. Here again we see language used as a political tool to outlaw nature. This side of the argument is fundamental to Chomsky’s theory of language. It is here that Descartes speciesist attitudes toward animals implicate Chomsky’s theory of language. Language may not be an instinct at all, as Darwin said. Linguistics, like religion, is a human centered construction used to disparage and put down animals and nature, who do not conform to the artificial norms dictated by and implicit in linguistics.

Descartes imagines humans are the only “thinking things”, he was able to devalue everything that was taken to be outside thought. Anything that does not think or speak is of lesser value to Descartes. Chomsky’s erection of thought via symbolist thinking in language is the source of his speciesist ideology and it depends on holding that abstract reality is superior to actuality. This is basically a religious or metaphysical claim and not an objective one. Peter Singer is right to implicate Descartes in justifying animal abuse for some centuries after him. Descartes speciesism depends upon an ‘integralist’ notion of language where language is equated with thought. Chomsky also equates language with thought. Chomsky linguistic theory is really a form of

political thought control. For Descartes and Chomsky language could not be about communication primarily because that puts it into the realm of the 'lesser' reality of animals and nature. What he calls FLB—Faculty of Language Broad) Chomsky is even “hostile”, Pinker says, to the idea that language is about communication”. <sup>1381</sup>

Language is about communication, in fact, but Chomsky and Ian Tattersall and other speciesist bigots refuse to admit this. They refuse because to admit that it is to admit continuity between humans and animals, not separation and absolute difference. They claim a kind of absolute uniqueness for humans. <sup>1382</sup> Every species is unique in its own way and to assume a hierarchy in nature is self-serving chauvinism. Hummingbirds, no more than a few inches long, can fly from the Amazon to North of Lake Superior, and have been able to things like this for millions of year. An Albatross can fly without beating its wings over the surface of the ocean for thousands of miles. Intellectuals like Chomsky and Tattersall do much to justify the continuation and preservation of rank speciesism, and so can eat and abuse animals, submit them to medical abuse, animal testing on products, hunting, genetic altering for profit and mass production of factory farming. Their chauvinistic “humanism” becomes just another form of racist like disregard if nature.

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<sup>1381</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piGbuSTckr8&NR=1>

Pinker compares Chomsky to the romantics Rousseau and Marx, rightly I think, and should have added that Cartesian notions of privacy also lead in Chomsky's thought. like Samuel Beckett, Chomsky thinks language is mostly solipsistic monologue. Pinker notes the formalistic beauty of Chomsky's writing on language, as in his Sound Pattern of English, (1967). But this formal beauty is an effect of his anti-empirical rationalism, and one finds a similar beauty in Beckett, where language takes off on its own into the Cartesian void of doubt and subjectivism. Is this science? No. In Beckett it is art of a despairing kind, in Chomsky it is reason and speech trying to recreate itself as universal relevance, and failing, due to a lack of ground in empirical and Darwinian facts. “Fail better”, Beckett stubbornly concluded. Noam will never admit he failed.

<sup>1382</sup> An interesting case of a human becoming an animal is that of the so called Gazelle Boy observed by Jean-Claude Auger. The boy had adopted Gazelle postures, sounds of language, running and eating. He did not become human at all and was never captured. Barbara Noske discusses this in her excellent, Beyond Boundaries, Humans and Animals. She also discusses other facts about animal communication. She does not accept Chomsky's theory of language.

Genetic engineering is not a form of “intelligent design”, as Yuval Harari and others maintain. There is little intelligence in it. Genetic engineering is about deforming existing evolutionary designs in favor of those deformations that give greedy men profits, and thus it is really ideological engineering by capitalists. It pushes the ethics of slavery into the structure of the cell and DNA itself. This is properly speaking, disgusting, and should be opposed. There might be a few cases where one could imagine that this is harmless. But the consequences of every alteration should be carefully weighed. It should not be done merely to make someone rich. Species are self-created and thus should be respected as to their integrity.

Chomsky follows Descartes to the letter and claims “the form of language ...is largely determined by internal factors.” (CL. 64). Of course, language is a portrait of human centered obsessions and nature domination, as it has always been a way to discriminate against those who are lower class. Both Darwin, Pinker and many others dispute the idea that language is merely internal. . The very structure of language, all language being formed around subjects and objects, shows it originates as a way of seeing the natural world, which is everywhere both inside and outside us. It amazes me that Chomsky accepted the internalist side of Descartes argument, when the most simple empirical observations of animals and humans shows language is mostly about communication. Humans, birds and whales all have ability to communicate when born but this must be nurtured by parents and environment. Certainly, the origin of this capacity is in the brain in both humans and animals. But there is no evidence that I can find that there is a locus of universal grammar originated in the brain as Chomsky originally postulated. Grammar is a social construction as is obvious, since it can be turned into political ideology as Chomsky has done with his absurd FLN and FLB. Faculty of Language Narrow or FLN is a

Chomskian fiction that creates a human centered, prejudicial notion of human superiority. Chomsky must define language as thought because only then can it be made to differ from animals, as if animals do not think too.

So I looked deeper in Chomsky system of linguistic thought. John Searle referred to Chomsky notions of innate grammar as a “stunning mistake”. This seems to be an accurate assessment.<sup>1383</sup> This is obvious just on prima facie evidence. Language changes very quickly, such that Shakespeare would hardly understand the language of Beowulf and we can barely understand Shakespeare. Language appears to be an accidental fact of our brains and is very lightly and ephemerally attached to us. It is a constructed social product not an innate fact like bird migration which last eons. Pinker maintains that language is probably innate, but he has no evidence for this.

Dennett complains that Chomsky’s linguistics appears to be based on a denial of Darwinian evolution. This is not exactly accurate but it is true Chomsky hedges on this subject quite a bit in his own defense. He slurs its importance and downplays all animal achievements in communication. He gives lip service to Darwin, when it suits him. Following Descartes, Chomsky claims that language is unique to humans and animal have no language. “language appears to be a unique phenomenon, without significant analogue in the animal world”, he

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<sup>1383</sup> In *The Rediscovery of the Mind* Searle writes: “Chomsky claims that innate, unconscious rules cause verbal behavior. In other words, there is a cause/effect relationship between ‘rule’ and language. But studies of neuro-physiology indicate that language is caused not by ‘deep unconscious rules’ but by neuro-physiological structures that have no resemblance to the patterns of language at all. The brain’s hardware produces patterns, but these patterns are not causally related to language produced by humans: they merely delineate the possible forms that human languages can take.” In other words actual evidence brings Chomsky’s ideas into question but he ignores this.

Quoted in this essay

[http://www.developingteachers.com/articles\\_tchtraining/grainnatepf\\_mark.htm](http://www.developingteachers.com/articles_tchtraining/grainnatepf_mark.htm)

writes. <sup>1384</sup> This assessment has no real study behind it. Indeed, little research has been done, but what has been done shows strong analogies between human and animal communication. They should not be expected to be the same, as indeed they are not. He quotes Descartes that animals are very stupid compared to humans

"[I]t is a very remarkable fact that there are none so depraved and stupid, without even excepting idiots, that they cannot arrange different words together, forming of them a statement by which they make known their thoughts; while, on the other hand, there is no animal, however perfect and fortunately circumstanced it may be, which can do the same" (*Cartesian Linguistics* 116-17).

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The problem here of course is the notion of “words” and the demeaning expectation that animals should make human words or sounds rather than birds songs, whale calls, raccoon vocalizations or dolphin whistles and squeaks. Descartes said elsewhere that “But the greatest of all the prejudices we have retained from infancy is that of believing that brutes think.” Actually it is the opposite that is true, animals do think and it is a prejudice to imagine they don’t. They don’t think exactly as humans do on all occasions, often to their credit. Anyone who has spent much time with dogs, crows<sup>1385</sup>, ravens, dolphins, parrots, otters, green herons or thousands of other species knows that

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<sup>1384</sup> Language and mind 1968

<sup>1385</sup> Crows use tools, recognize faces and are very smart. “If Men had wings and bore black feathers, few of them would be clever enough to be crows.” Henry Ward Beecher said. They also care about their dead, and I have seen them hold a sort of vigil for them. Like Ravens and other Corvids they mostly avoid humans if they can, and seem to know humans are needlessly destructive.

animals have intelligence and can reason and use strategy, plans, elementary logic or avoidance, give commands, warnings, mating sounds and many other communications. Animals think, communicate and act on their thoughts both on their own and in concert with one another. As Katy Payne has shown Elephants have elaborate communication skills.<sup>1386</sup> Parrots and dolphins demonstrate behavior that is as sophisticated as verbal phenomena in many humans. Chomsky tries to say that only humans have “language” or grammar and linguistic abilities that engender thinking. He overrates grammar. He cramps and parses definitions of grammar and usage to justify a speciesism that is already part of his mental make-up. A similar argument has been made that only humans have “self-conscious” music, but this also turns out to be false.<sup>1387</sup> Following Desecrates, Chomsky denigrates animal abilities to do complex language skills. He subjectivizes language<sup>1388</sup> and overly

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<sup>1386</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/my-life-as-a-turkey/full-episode/7378/>  
Joe Hutto’s study of Turkeys is exceedingly interesting. There are moral questions that can be asked about why he did this and it does result in the birds being harmed later in their lives. But the experiment was extremely interesting as to the complexity of Turkey vocalizations and “language”. The birds were able to refer not just to snakes as a category but to individual species of snakes. As Darwin notes, the ability of share with others via vocalizations the presence of a danger is already the beginning of language. Darwin writes “ (Descent of Man. chapter 3

“may not some unusually wise apelike animal have imitated the growl of a beast of prey, and thus told his fellow-monkeys the nature of the expected danger? This would have been a first step in the formation of a language.”

<sup>1387</sup> From *Frontiers in Evolutionary Neuroscience*

“Birdsong: is it music to their ears?”

Sarah E. Earp and Donna L. Maney

“We found that the same neural reward system is activated in female birds in the breeding state that are listening to male birdsong, and in people listening to music that they like,” said Earp, who recently published the study’s findings in *Frontiers of Evolutionary Neuroscience*.

<sup>1388</sup> He writes in “Biolinguistics and Human Capacity” 2004 that “the most elementary concepts of human language do not relate to mind-independent objects by means of some reference-like relation between symbols and identifiable physical features of the external world, as seems to be universal in animal communication systems” I am sure that he is mistaken here. Language is a social institution, not a natural fact like photosynthesis, as Searle has pointed out. Thus language is primarily about communication. Chomsky spent his life doing formal grammar studies, which

exalts grammar and humans. Like Tattersall, he does not understand how destructive symbol use can be.

Descartes speciesism wrongly assumes animals are stupid and therefore it is OK to torture them with impunity. From this erroneous premise he derives his notion that language is somehow unique to humans. This is also false, if language is understood as communication, as it should be, humans merely have a more sophisticated form or communication than other species—in our terms---, just as ducks have a more sophisticated mode of flying or otters of swimming, in their terms. Language is part of evolution, like music, which evolved in birds and in us. Chomsky denies any relationship between human language and birds or bird music and human music, presumably. But this is obviously mistaken.

The notion that humans are somehow superior to birds or aardvarks has no validity as an evolutionary postulate. Darwin knew that evolution is not about hierarchy and to make it that is to lie about it. Evolution does not play favorites, as each species seeks its own survival and slowly created its own form over eons. Language did not evolve for thought, as Chomsky likes to sometimes say. If language evolved at all, and it by no means proven, it was an accident that overlaid the brain, or took advantage of parts of it. Biology links us to all other species and does not separate us from them. Darwin writes that language is always changing and evolving just as species change and evolve, in direct opposition to Chomsky's myth of a Platonistic universal grammar. Darwin writes:

“The same language never has two birth-places. Distinct languages may be crossed or blended together.\*(2) We see

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was a mistake. If he wanted to learn about language he should have studied the brain, animal communication and human language as a biological, social fact. A truly Darwinian study of communication in animals and humans has yet to be done. This would require scrapping the Chomskian system and starting anew.

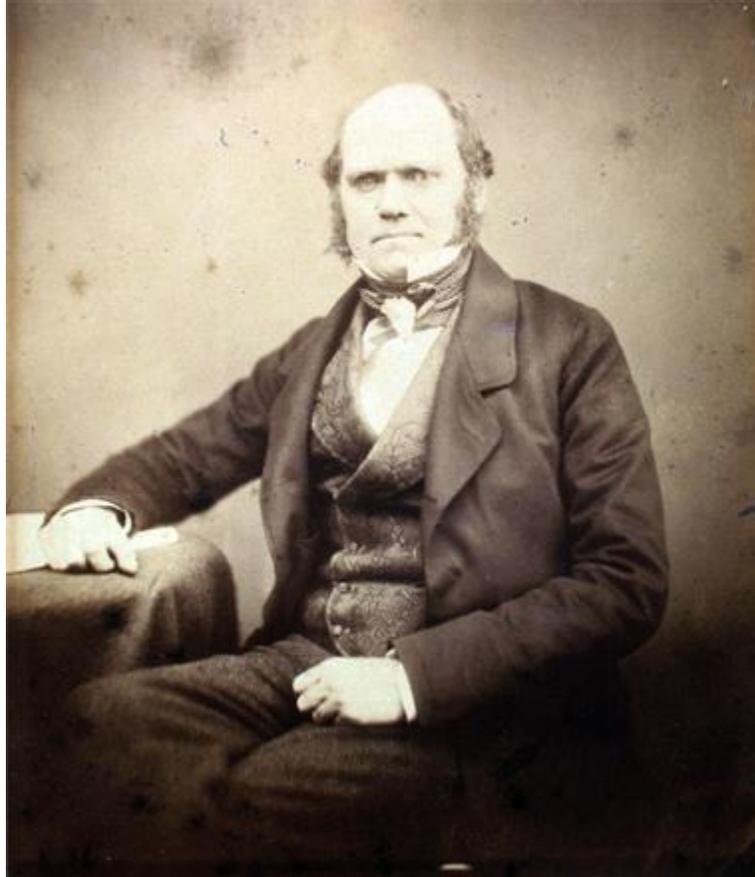
variability in every tongue, and new words are continually cropping up; but as there is a limit to the powers of the memory, single words, like whole languages, gradually become extinct. As Max Muller\*(3) has well remarked:- "A struggle for life is constantly going on amongst the words and grammatical forms in each language. The better, the shorter, the easier forms are constantly gaining the upper hand, and they owe their success to their own inherent virtue."

Darwin says that language and its relation to Natural Selection is "a marvelous problem.", as indeed it is. He says in a letter to Asa Gray that "I wish someone would keep a lot of the most noisy monkeys, half free, & study their means of communication!" . Unlike Chomsky, Darwin sees human and animal communications as part of the same continuum, as it necessarily has to be. Notice too, that Darwin's instinct was correct that one must study animals that are free, or half free, and not lab animals, whose behavior severely distorted by captivity. Chomsky's myth of a Platonistic universal grammar has slowly unraveled. <sup>1389</sup> It is a medieval fantasy of a universal language. It simply does not exist. The 6-8000 languages in the world are much more varied and diverse in syntax, grammar and organization, not to mention use, than appears that Chomsky thought. Chomsky's theory is about him, not really about language. It is a quasi-religious construction. Universal Grammar appears to belong more to the history of religion and myth than to

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<sup>1389</sup> Indeed, grammar is probably the less important to language than the fact of communicating. Grammar is a practical matter of nouns and verbs and how they are arranged in a sentence to help us talk to each other. Grammar is about conditioning, social constraints, interactions and practical matters of how to express what one means to say. Different cultures and classes do this very differently. The fiction of Universal Grammar just does not say what language is and his theory failed. Rather than admit it, Chomsky varied his theory endlessly, trying to make it work, when it simply did not cover the facts.

science, or at the very least it belongs to the domain of failed hypotheses.<sup>1390</sup>



Darwin would take a dim view of Chomsky's unwarranted speculations. In Descent of Man Darwin ridiculed those like Descartes and Chomsky who

“have insisted that man is divided by an insuperable barrier from all the lower animals in in his mental faculties. I formerly made a collection of above a score of such aphorisms, but they are almost worthless, as their wide difference and number prove the difficulty,

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<sup>1390</sup> See for instance [http://www.princeton.edu/~adele/LIN\\_106:\\_UCB\\_files/Evans-Levinson09\\_preprint.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~adele/LIN_106:_UCB_files/Evans-Levinson09_preprint.pdf)

if not the impossibility, of the attempt.” ( Descent of Man, Chapter 3)

The beauty of Darwin was his thorough understanding of both animals and people. This is what is now required of us, but not all scientists yet understand his example in this. Chomsky, foolishly, imitates Descartes and ignores Darwin. Descartes views on animals are a really repulsive speciesism, and lack any real evidence, but are assumed by Chomsky as fact. In order to assert human centered speciesism Chomsky must both deny Darwin and make language not primarily about communication but rather about inner life. What Chomsky does is help create an ideology of supremacy to human beings by trying to discredit all “lower beings”, who do not have the kind of communications system that humans have. Chomsky’s claim that human beings are utterly “unique” is really a religious or ideological construct and not a fact. Nina Varsava explains the need of the artificial notion of the “human”, very well

“The human, then, is produced, although never finalized, through anthropomorphism and its denial: the continuous circulation of anthropomorphic representations preserves the human/animal categorical divide and its attendant ethical code—which, as we have seen, serves the interests of humans at the expense of all other animals.”

In other words, the human/animal divide is a cultural construction and not based in fact, and it results in huge injustices. It is more like a religion or akin to racist or sexist fictions and prejudices. Varsava goes very far to show that the apotheosis of humanity that we see in Tattersall, Chomsky and other writers is a religious ideology, a fiction. It

is not a fiction we should accept. They act as cheerleaders of human supremacy and uniqueness in ways that are deeply flawed and speciesist. She wants to show that the concept of “the human is a corrupt concept—that there are no factors which justify the moral weight it is given.” Chomskyeen linguistics and Tattersall’s notion of the humans as the “Masters of the Planet”, is a corrupt concept.<sup>1391</sup> Chomsky criticizes capitalists for wanting to be “masters of the universe”, but then hypocritically supports the idea that humans are “Masters of the Planet” in his linguistic theory. In Tattersall’s book, not ironically called, “Masters of the Planet”, Ian Tattersall writes a chapter called “In the Beginning was the Word”. This title itself is indicative of a delusion. There was no “Word” of course, but what Tattersall is doing is trying to claim a nearly mystical exception of human language, as if we are made quasi-divine by it. He tries to advance the theories of Chomsky and Stephen Jay Gould about language with much hyperbole.

Yuval Noah Harari<sup>1392</sup> claims that humans are different than

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“I am starting to conclude that the American Museum of Natural History has some history of dubious practices. In the 1970’s a Dr. Aronson was accused of cruelty to cats, who he was using to do experiments of feline sexuality. While the museum defended him, they later stopped such experiments and started a program, according to a 1976 document written by AMNH, in their words, “would place greater emphasis on natural populations of animals and on field research, as opposed to physiologically- oriented laboratory research with domesticated or laboratory-bred animals.”. ( see [http://digitallibrary.amnh.org/museum/annual\\_reports/source/R1976.pdf](http://digitallibrary.amnh.org/museum/annual_reports/source/R1976.pdf)

This is something of an admission, if not an admission of guilt. Many years earlier, a director of the AMNH from 1908-33 was Henry Fairfield Osborn. He was a scientific racist and pushed the idea of purity of blood, reflecting the views of some of the rich patrons of the museum. Tattersall is not exactly a racist or a man who abuses animals, but he is a speciesist, which does reflect on today’s upper classes, many of whom share speciesist attitudes about humans as the “Masters of the Planet” Unfortunately museums are often creatures of their times and reflect some of the ideology that may be the least flattering at a given time. Tattersall writes like an apologist for the corporate ideology of global culture so much a part of New York culture, where he lives.

<sup>1392</sup> Harari, for the moment anyway, is a Buddhist, and takes an impersonal point of view as an historian. I find a Buddhist view of history to be a false view, as I have explained elsewhere in these books, even though in Harari’s case it has some interesting results. But detachment is a fictional state itself and one that tends to imagine the world as a human creation of the mind. This

chimps because of the “mythical glue” that “has made us the masters of creation” (Sapiens, page 38). This is little different than Tattersall ‘Masters of the Planet’ idea. The “master of creation” is a much larger claim. Myths are false of course as is the whole idea of “creation”, so Harari is merely playing with magnified metaphors here. There is no evidence the universe was “created”. Such mythic pronouncements are really about humans attempt to control everything on earth. Unlike Chomsky and Tattersall, Harari is not a speciesist, since he opposes factory farming of animals. But his need to exalt and cheerlead a human centeredness in conceited language is oddly cut off from his interest in animal rights.. It suggests he has not really escaped the mythical. Indeed in the final chapter of this otherwise interesting book, Harari claims that humans are “an animal that has become god” Marx already claimed this in his essay on “the Jewish Question”. It is an absurd supposition that merely means that the human tendency to transcendental magnification is still unrecognized and so not gone beyond. Marx merely makes humans into gods and so makes nature infinitely exploitable, just like capitalism. Marxism is merely another human centered ideological system of belief, just like Free Market capitalism.. For a Marxist, the world is nothing but the creation of man through human labor. The world in fact is not a creation of human labor. To make it so is to make dictatorship of workers by the state the principle action of politics. This is merely humanist religion as a new power play and has not gone beyond human centered delusions at all.

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is not the case and so Buddhism tends to denigrate reality, even as it claims to value it. Harari’s analysis of gods and corporations is quite right, but then he veers off in misunderstanding science, having no distinction between valid observations and corporate abuse of science. To his credit he is a vegan, but one who mistakenly thinks that “ the notion of animal or human rights is a fiction”. This would be great news for CEO’s if it were true. Thousands upon thousands of workers have suffered terrible abuses as have animals and to say that their suffering and subsequent fight for rights is fiction is to discredit and abuse them further. David Neibert and Peter Singer and others have written well on animal and human rights and should be studied. Harari says little that is helpful on this subject.

If any of these men actually spent some time with animals in wild circumstances they would see that animals lives are rich and interesting. Animals are not at all moved by the human conceit that inspires these absurd oracular sentences conferring ultimate status on humans. Humans cannot even come close to the spatial intelligence of birds, for instance, who can fly through dense thinkets and not touch a branch, or who can put a predator behind a tree between them and be virtually invisible to the danger. The truth is the entire earth and all species are threatened by humans and such delusions of grandeur must be stopped. Human centered philosophies such as one finds in Tattersall and Harari are part of the problem.<sup>1393</sup> Harari should be trying to stop these transcendental delusions, not augmenting them. But Harari has at least asked the question that Tattersall and Chomsky both avoid, due to unawareness of animal and natural suffering. Harari asks

“Is there anything more dangerous than dissatisfied and irresponsible gods who don’t know what they want?”

No, there is nothing more dangerous than human pride and ignorance in combination. If only Harari and Tattesall wold apply tis queston to themselves. We need to start downsizing the rich, abolishing CEO culture, undoing the excesses of capitalist animal and land abuse and stop the insanity of systems of transcendental magnification. That is just the

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<sup>1393</sup> Harari assessment of science and capitalism is almost scary. He is in some ways a corporate promoter of futuristic fantasy. He reminds me of the fake future that was preached to me when I was a kid, flying cars, food coming out of replicators and other such nonsense. None of it was true. The future is just a way to sell gimmicks like I phones or computers. It has changed very little except for those who got rich off the hype.

Harari equates science with imperialism, and is partly true but largely not true. He makes no distinction between corporate science and science as a study of things as they are. (Leonardo would be very surprised, even horrified, at that!) There are abuses of science that are imperial, (land and ocean destruction, polluting, DDT etc.) but not the impulse which gave us pottery, blacksmithing, Franklin’s key and kite, vaccines and so much else

beginning, analyzing and explaining the ethics that is implied in natural systems would be the next step, and this is hardly even started.

Chomsky and Tattersall created a fiction that language originates by some miraculous process outside evolution, in a sudden mutation, which gives humans an absolutely “unique” status on earth. As I have explained, every species is of unique worth. Actually there are no hierarchies in Darwinian evolution, Darwin was rightly opposed to the ideology of teleological purpose. Man is not the pinnacle of nature, except perhaps in dirty and wasteful cities like New York and Shanghai, which are hugely wasteful of earth’s resources and unfortunate places, sinks and drains on natural systems.<sup>1394</sup>

What Chomsky and Tattersall created is more religious fiction than science or evolution. It is close to Creationism, in a way, not real inquiry. They posit humans as a sort of miraculous happening. As I said this sort of human centered cheerleading has little to do with language and a lot to do with a humanist suprematism of a speciesist sort. Chomsky was something of a cult leader and his theory of language is more symbolist suprematism than science or fact.

In both cases Chomsky and Tattersall have a fantasy of language starting in some mysterious “non- adaptive” Gouldian “exaptation”—a mutation that has no basis in reality at all. This is supposed to have led to the ability of humans to use symbolic expressions and abstract thought.

The most delusional tendencies in human culture come precisely from the symbolic and abstract. So it is very hard to see this as an

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<sup>1394</sup> Tattersall's latest book, The Strange Case of the Rickety Cossack: and Other Cautionary Tales from Human Evolution is an attempt to rescue his dismal theory of chauvinistic speciesism, and self-congratulatory paleoanthropology from his earlier book. He rather apologizes for the excess of Masters fo the Planet. it. In his final chapter he finally admits that man might not be the “pinnacle” after all. This should have been his initial premise before he wrote Masters of the Planet. He should have understood the notion fo Darwin that nature is not hierarchal, but he didn't and this led him into Chomsky and Gould, who are certainly mistaken on this.

advance over the communication skills of bird's song, whale sounds or gorilla and Chimp communication. Of course, many humans think this is an advance, but that is just speciesist prejudice. Bird song is a very sophisticated thing with its own form of natural syntax, order and expression, none of which are like the human, perhaps to their credit. To suppose the fictional and alienated realm of human language to be superior is merely a prejudice, not a fact. Symbolist thinking involves a denigration of the actual, or in this case a denigration of all other beings seen as beneath humanity.;

Chomsky's tendency to romantic anti-intellectualism arises from a rejection of empirical evidence and the need to have truth arise "within" or because of a wild mutation, "Merge", or some interior monologue, infinitely in love with its own voice. This essentially romantic need for truth to be an inner reality rather than something found by science or experiment is what explains his and Gould's disparaging attitude to science and evolution of other species, including earlier humanoids. His refusal of experiment and peer review is a slap in the face at objectivity. He does not want to be accountable. Fictions and lies are a major part of human abstract communication, facts which he never discusses in his linguistic theory. Primitive notions of symbolism and magical thinking are part of Chomsky's theory. A barely suppressed Platonism of symbols or archetypes are emphasized because these can be felt within as imaginary constructs. They do not need to be demonstrated in the world or subjected to any verification. Thus in romantic and symbolist thinking, any nonsense can be entertained as fact, however phony or superstitious. Tattersall and Chomsky create a human centered fiction of linguistics and try to float it as science.

Varsava, rightly I think, wants a “a deconstruction without salvation of the Western concept of the human.” <sup>1395</sup> This is logical and needed. The notion that humans are the “Masters of the Planet”, as Tattersall calls mankind, is merely a new version of manifest destiny, the peculiar belief that humans are exceptional and miraculous. Actually humans are the ones who are destroying all that is lovely and loveable in our world. They are precisely the worst danger our planet has ever seen.

Tattersall has little understanding of nature. Nina Varsava complains that

“In *Becoming Human*, for example, Tattersall holds that language is “universal among modern humans,” and “is the most evident of all our uniquenesses: the one in the absence of which it is least possible for us to conceive of humanness as we experience it” He goes on to deny language to nonhuman apes, suggesting that ape calls are inherently emotional, which makes them categorically nonlinguistic: “Not only do chimpanzees not have language,” he declares; “they don’t even have an incipient form of it, Tattersall’s allegation echoes the dominant attitude of the sciences in the nineteenth century—”

Tattersall views are not very different than 19<sup>th</sup> century Manifest Destiny ideology. That is a shameful thing in our world, where nature teeters on the edge of mass extinctions and global warming. Chomsky’s theory is more a part of this problem than anything like a solution. Trying to stress that humans are utterly “amazing” and “unique” in a time when global warming is caused by us alone, and threatens our planet is perverse. <sup>1396</sup> Abstract symbolic thought can be utterly

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The denial that global warming is human caused has a perverse and recent history. Climate change denial is rooted in “free market fundamentalism,” much as creationism is rooted in religious fundamentalism. A few of the better known anti-science and global warming deniers are listed below. Most people who accept this nonsense are victims of these people. Most of the creators of this bogus system of denials are cynical and know very well they are wrong, but wish to promote profiteering at the cost of lying and denial of overwhelming evidence. Victims of climate change denial are usually not terribly bright people who care little about evidence and have fundamentalist tendencies. Victims of climate change denial listen to these lies and do not realize they are being sold a con job. Most climate change deniers have no science on their side at all. By and large the creator of this lie are oil, mining or fracking industry propagandists, or paid liars like Glen Beck, Limbaugh, Bill O Riley or other paid liars of the far right

Many work for right wing or free market “think tanks” which are merely more industry mining or oil company propagandists supported by Koch Industries or other far right financiers. There are no reputable scientists who oppose global warming. Naomi Oreskes’ book *Merchants of Doubt* is a good read about how this sub-culture group of pro industry liars and propagandists got started with Tobacco companies 50 years ago. They are all liars trying to push the profiteering of big business, and do not mind destroying people or the earth so long as they can make lots of money. Naomi Klein’s book *This Changes Everything* is also a very good read against the deniers.

Below is a tiny selection of names involved in this insidious movement, that your mom.

**Carlo Stagnaro** is the environmental Director of the Istituto Bruno Leoni, the Italian “think tank” or propaganda creator that promotes extreme free market policy and privatizations.

**Fred Singer** far right and crooked “scientist” who is famous for denying the effects of Tobacco, DDT, Ozone depletion and Climate change. Connected to Koch industries. Paid liar.

From an article in Rolling Stone

A former mouthpiece for the tobacco industry, the 85-year-old Singer is the granddaddy of fake "science" designed to debunk global warming. The retired physicist — who also tried to downplay the danger of the hole in the ozone layer — is still wheeled out as an authority by big polluters determined to kill climate legislation. For years, Singer steadfastly denied that the world is heating up: Citing satellite data that has since been discredited, he even made the unhinged claim that "the climate has been cooling just slightly." Last year, Singer served as a lead author of "Climate Change Reconsidered" — an 880-page report by the right-wing Heartland Institute that was laughably presented as a counterweight to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's scientific authority on global warming. Singer concludes that the unchecked growth of climate-cooking pollution is "unequivocally good news." Why? Because "rising CO2 levels increase plant growth and make plants more resistant to drought and pests." Small wonder that Heartland's climate work has long been funded by the likes of Exxon and reactionary energy barons like Charles Koch and Richard Mellon Scaife

**Willard Anthony Watts** (Anthony Watts) is a blogger, weathercaster and non-scientist, paid AGW denier who runs the website *wattsupwiththat.com*. He does not have a university qualification and has no climate credentials other than being a radio weather announcer. His

delusional and this is a case where it is just so.<sup>1397</sup> One can understand why there is an audience for such vaunted hyperbolic nonsense, since we live in an age of reality denial. But the truth is otherwise. Harari is wrong that humans are gods, but right that people who think they are gods or who create and believe in them are dangerous. `

The claim that language proves our uniqueness holds little truth in it. Language may go back much farther than Neanderthals. It will turn out that language has its origins in earlier evolution, perhaps in Homo Erectus, (the original maker of fire and tools) or before, and indeed stretches back into animals and birds. It appears that language developed through a gradual Darwinian process of both biological and cultural evolution -- rather than, as Chomsky, Tattersall and others state, through one or just a few random, untraceable genetic mutations or "exaptations".<sup>1398</sup>

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website is parodied and debunked at the website wottsupwiththat.com Watts is on the payroll of the [Heartland Institute](#), which itself is funded by polluting industries

Dr. **Frederick Seitz** Tobacco industry apologist, nuclear advocate, global warming denier.

**Ian R. Plimer** (born February 12, 1946), a mining geologist, mining company director and anthropogenic global warming denier with no evident expertise in climate science, has written the "denier's bible", a book called *Heaven and Earth*, which makes mutually-inconsistent claims<sup>[2]</sup> and was panned as being riddled with errors. In 2011 he wrote the "anti-warmist manual" *How to Get Expelled From School: A guide to climate change for pupils, parents and punters*, which reviewers found to be full of scientific errors, containing flawed and undocumented diagrams, and sloppily edited.

**Patrick J. Michaels** (±1942- ), also known as Pat Michaels, is a largely oil-funded global warming skeptic who argues that global warming models are fatally flawed

<sup>1397</sup> Both Tattersall and Chomsky get there basic Idea from Stephen jay Gould who was mistaken on may things, including the fiction of Non-adaptive exaptations, a concept which is close to a religious fiction or a Martian fantasy.

<sup>1398</sup> Chomsky and Tattersall got the notion of the sudden emergence of language, which is the hinge pin of their idea of language as an exclusively human uniqueness, from Stephen jay Gould. Whose idea of punctuated equilibrium or sudden mutations seems to have been largely discredited.

Hauser and Tattersall wrote a piece denying that Neanderthals<sup>1399</sup> had language, as this would make humans much closer to animal evolution. Actually there is gathering evidence that Neanderthals did have language, had burial, used shells as jewelry, flint axes as symbolic objects and made sophisticated tools out of birch pitch. They also made flint scrapers more sophisticated than human ones of that age, which Tattersall tried to denigrate some years ago. Tattersall claims that Neanderthals did not have the use of symbols. That is probably not true but one can see why he claims this. As I have shown throughout these books symbolist thought is not always a good thing and is the source of many human problems. Exactly what the Neanderthals contributed to the human genome is not known, but to suppose them stupid and incapable of abstract thinking is prejudicial and borders on speciesism or racism. These are academic racist prejudices against these people and no doubt born of irrational cheerleading for human supremacy as their ultimate goal. The problem with the biased and self-congratulatory nature of human anthropology and history has yet to be dealt with.<sup>1400</sup>

Ancient humans did not share these race prejudices, as they are

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<sup>1399</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3781312/>

Much more interesting than the denials of Neanderthal language is the work of Dr. Svante Pääbo and Ed Green. For a video summation of some of their findings see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rohwn11xeI>

<sup>1400</sup> Speciesism is really just this self-congratulatory human-centered cheerleading. I found it to be rife in history departments in college and it is present in anthropology, economics and many other disciplines. It is partly narcissism of course, but it goes deeper than this, into religion and ideology going way back in time. It amazes me it still exists, as humans are currently destroying much of the world, degrading ecologies everywhere and destroying species at an unprecedented pace. To claim to be “Masters of the Planet” they are destroying is more than an odd paradox, it is a lie, and one that is horrendously perverse and destructive. To think highly of humanity might have made sense 2400 years ago, when Aristotle wrote. But by Da Vinci’s time, being dubious about humans was already a fact he could not ignore. One can only be glibly pro-humanity if one lies to oneself now. One can only believe in the greatness of humanity if one is a con man marketer, or believe that making a billion dollars is a good thing, or to be a self-appointed prophet like Chomsky or Schuon, and think oneself the summit of mankind, In fact, being an historian propagandist is writing another kind of fiction, and I for one just won’t do it. A goodly part of these books is to question just this sort of cultural self-aggrandizement. There is not much time to stop more species going extinct and I wish to help the earth survive, even if it means downsizing CEOs, demoting Plato and calling into question all the religions.

now known to have bred with Neanderthals often, and had offspring, and up to 4% of our DNA is Neanderthal. As Svante Pääbo, and others have shown, --- Neanderthals are in us, it turns out, as we absorbed them by breeding with them. They did not go extinct, exactly, nor were they killed off by human superior technology as the speciesist myth claims. These are merely miscegenistic myths born of racist prejudice. They are part of the human species and they could breed with us. Denying early humans like Neanderthals language is part of the old racist prejudice against them and part of Chomskian speciesism. Homo Erectus, used fire and stone tools for a million years before Homo Sapiens, and that already suggests language, or precise communication skill of some kind. Homo Erectus is part of the human family too. The *FOXP2* gene is involved in speech and language was found in Neanderthals suggesting they probably had speech too. Erectus may even have bred with the Denisovans, and Neanderthal with the Denisovans and Neanderthals with modern humans, Paabo claims to have shown through DNA analysis.

So the human family tree is now very broad and blurred, which is good, and continuity between supposed different species suggests that humans are from a much larger family than previously thought.<sup>1401</sup> There

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<sup>1401</sup> There is some evidence that that female Neanderthals and male Sapiens did not produce fertile offspring. There is no mitochondrial DNA inherited from Neanderthals, Paabo claims.. (others question this) "We might have inherited most of our Neanderthal genes through hybrid females", Paabo said. Neanderthals and male Sapiens did not produce fertile offspring. Another author, David Reich of Harvard Medical School, told reporters that we and Neanderthals "were at the edge of biological compatibility." This means they were hybridizing, and some male children of these unions were not fertile. This is ambiguous however. Reich also writes "Neanderthal alleles caused decreased fertility in males when moved to a modern human genetic background." Decreased fertility is not the same as sterility. So it remains ambiguous if Neanderthals and humans are separate species. Some sources say they are and others that they are not.

are now facts which suggest that the species lines between Neanderthal, Erectus, Denisovan and Sapiens were not formal or fixed. Anthropology was wrong for decades about this. Now there is evidence that the early cave paintings in Spain were probably done by Neanderthals, suggest that they had symbolic expression probably before homo sapiens. There are differences, but it is claimed that Neanderthals were 99.7 % the same as Homo Sapiens, which basically means that having two names for these “species” might be a mistake, or at least the two species were not exactly two species..<sup>1402</sup> They are substantially one species, even if there are slight differences, exaggerated by anthropologists who think that humans are “masters of the planet”. Darwin was right, continuity matters more than uniqueness in the development of humans and other species. Speciesism is a minority opinion and happens to be mistaken. We are not “masters fo the planet” as Tattersall claims. There are millions of other species and they have rights too. <sup>1403</sup>

Previously Tattersall had denied that Neanderthals could interbreed with humans, but he was wrong about that. It turns out Neanderthals

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<sup>1402</sup> Tattersall admits that humans and Neanderthals are 99.7 percent alike in his book, The Strange Case of the Rickety Cossack, on page 197. Tattersall is a morphologist, and thus studies aesthetic differences between species, and likes to throw out terms like gracile, for homo Sapiens or Robust for Neanderthal. Paabo usually avoids this sort of type casting, and says for instance, that the DNA evidence suggests that Neanderthal rather than Homo Sapiens were probably the dominant one in the mating events that put the Neanderthal code in human DNA.. Paabo writes that “all, or almost all of the gene flow was form Neanderthals into modern humans” But this does not mean that Neanderthals did not raise human children. They probably did and we raised Neanderthal/human babies too, again suggesting that language was probably on both sides.

<sup>1403</sup> See this essay on the shortcomings fo the Chomskean theory

On the antiquity of language: the reinterpretation of Neanderthal linguistic capacities and its consequences

Dan Dediu<sup>f</sup> and Stephen C. Levinson

Levinson states in his conclusion that

“In this paper, we have tried to review the evidence supporting the claim that Neanderthals, Denisovans and contemporary modern humans shared a similar capacity for modern language, speech and culture. Furthermore, we argued that regarding these lineages as different species is unhelpful, and that their admixture probably shaped present-day genetic and linguistic diversities.

<http://pubman.mpg.de/pubman/item/escidoc:1760092:6/component/escidoc:1795944/fpsyg-04-00397.pdf>

and humans are probably variants of the same species and share a good deal of DNA, (1-4%). David Reich showed that. " it was modern humans with modern human behavior that interbred with Neanderthals,"<sup>1404</sup>, which means that very likely they did have language too, since the individuals whose DNA was sequenced were from about 45,000 years ago, which is somewhat after language is imagined to have begun. It looks like language might go further back than that and was probably spread across many early hominid species or races. Humans are increasingly seen as interbreeding with Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon, possibly even before leaving Africa. Neanderthals made clothes and spears and probably art too, so it is very unlikely they did have language too. So Tattersall and Hauser are probably wrong about denying language to Neanderthals. Chomsky's notion of a "language revolution" by sudden mutation is a myth.

The speciesist hatred of others species which Chomsky, Tattersall and Hauser show might be a majority opinion, as humans have a long history of speciesist hatred of primates. We have all but killed off Gorillas, Chimps, Bonobos and Orangutans. But these 19<sup>th</sup> century notions of human 'manifest destiny' applied to species are tired and unnecessary anymore, and these men stand in the way of a scientific understanding of human origins that would help us see our common ancestry with all beings on earth, including primates and Neanderthals, as well as others species. Darwin was right that all species are unique and there really is no hierarchy in nature.

While it is true that the inner life of animals can be hard to access, just as it is for humans to understand people with disabilities or Alzheimer's, it is also true that much more effort is being expended now on trying to see the world from the point of view of animals and birds, or

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<sup>1404</sup> <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn26435-thoroughly-modern-humans-interbred-with-neanderthals.html#.VM7nJE0U8dU>

Alzheimer's patients. But there is a great deal that we can know from relations that do not involve human language. Chomsky is safe among those who know little about animals in asserting this rather counter-intuitive thesis that animals have no inner life. But anyone who has spent a good deal of time with animals outside of laboratories, with traditions of serving profit, will tell you otherwise.

Chomsky chose the discredited animal researcher Mark Hauser as his associate in recent work. A bad choice both in the fact that Hauser is in trouble for poorly done research and because Hauser appears to have studied animals mostly in labs, which tells one little about actual animal behavior.<sup>1405</sup> This combined with Chomsky's choice of Stephan Jay Gould as a model of evolutionary theory, when Gould's theory of spandrels and punctuated equilibrium, has been seriously

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<sup>1405</sup> This lamentable dearth of understanding of animals in the wild is evident in his book Animal Minds. I read this book before I had any idea of his close relation to Chomsky and thought it very poorly done. Hauser's was later made to leave Harvard and accused of research misconduct. Cognitive psychologist Julie Neiworth of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota tested some of Hauser's work on Tamarin monkeys and found that Hauser's attempt to prove a relation to human language was not accurate. She said "I don't think this behavior is a marker for human language at all. It likely is something abstract and deeper tied to hearing and recognizing sounds," she says. How does she know that? Because she also tested them with patterns of tamarin call noises, barks, hoots and the like, split into their simplest forms and put into patterns. "That's their language, those noises." Neiworth says. "We don't know what they all mean, but we do know a lot of them and those are the ones we used." This also suggests a rudimentary language of their own among Tamarin, a fact that Chomsky and Hauser tend to deny.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2012/09/29/marc-hauser-research-reviewed-harvard-scandal/1600229/>

questioned<sup>1406</sup>, further brings into question Chomsky's linguistic theories. <sup>1407</sup>

I asked Barry Kent MacKay, the great Canadian bird artist, and animal researcher and advocate, what he thinks of Chomsky's and Hauser's disparaging ideas about animals. Barry has who has spent his whole life studying birds closely, said

Chomsky wants animals to be human. Even within our own species how things are said, and what is said can vary immensely, so why should we expect animals to "talk" as we do, the real question being how and what they can communicate, and whether it is more or less than we do, and there is absolutely no reason to assume that it can't be more, but more about things we don't know, or care about, or are important to us. I can't imagine what an elephant or a Blue Whale needs to know, or needs to communicate.

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<sup>1406</sup> Dennett discusses Gould at some length in his Darwin's Dangerous Idea. But his ideas are discussed elsewhere too and dismissed by most evolutionary thinkers. For instance, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides write that "the best way to grasp the nature of Gould's writings is to recognize them as one of the most formidable bodies of fiction to be produced in recent American letters" Gould, like Chomsky wants to make the past a great mystery, and thereby promotes his own theories that have no evidence, as if they did not require precedent.

<sup>1407</sup> Nina Varsava gives a good example of a speciesist who is proud of ignorance of nature and animals. "A more sensible definition of language might appeal to what makes language so very important, or what its primary function is, which seem to amount to the same thing— i.e., *communication*. But Tattersall's conception of the human as abysmally apart from, and superior to, all other animals requires a particularly narrow definition of language. His reasoning promotes a view of animals as non-linguistic and unthinking creatures, supports the categorical distinction between humans and all other animals on these grounds, and accordingly defends the supremacy of the human, which is based on that distinction. The "yawning cognitive gulf" that Tattersall posits "between modern Homo sapiens and the rest of nature" permits him to make diametrical claims against the possibility of human empathy towards animals: "Adept as you may be at reading the minds of members of your own species," he writes, "you simply cannot imagine the dog's actual state of consciousness" The "yawning cognitive gulf", ironically, is in Tattersall himself and those who think as he does."

I have a similar concern about “intelligence” We are, beyond doubt and by far, the most intelligent species, based on how WE measure intelligence. But I can think of other ways to measure it that make us pretty dumb, indeed. If the function of intelligence is to destroy the life-support capability of the planet, than we are, hands-down, the best there is...no other species comes close, but that does not fit even our own definition of “intelligence”.

There seems to be universal “alarm calls” that humans can imitate that call smaller birds “to arms” over the presence of a predator. I’ve seen a very large number of kinglets, augmented by a few chickadees and a Downy Woodpecker, thus mob a Northern Saw-whet Owl, and of course it is common to see jays do it around an owl, or crows, but also chickadees, nuthatches and so on. I once saw Mountain Chickadees and a Golden-crowned Kinglet “mobbing” a Northern Pygmy-Owl

This is exactly right. Bird communications can be very sophisticated and even cross species lines. Chomsky wants animals to be human and can’t handle comparisons that take other species points of view. Linguistics is speciesist by definition, language being to us what the “Beak” of a Platypus is to them. If Platypuses had Platypusingists, they would certainly be Platypus-centered too. An attempt to study all forms of communication in all species would require a much less human centered science, and this is growing. The faults of human communication could be studied too, which are currently outside the domain of linguistics study. Chomsky developed a prejudicial and human centered system, rather like the bogus Physiognomy and Phrenology theory of the early 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ian Tattersall’s notion of language, which echoes Chomsky and supports it with paleo-anthropology, is likewise

akin to the bogus “scientific racism” and anthropology of Buffon, Ernst Haeckel, St. Hillaire, Broca, Coon and others. Tattersall is not a racist so far as I know, rather, he has shifted the same sort of anthropological thinking to prejudice against non-human species based on language and the self-centered ideology of symbolist thought. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas of language already had a racist component, but when this was discredited after the Nazis, speciesism took over as the primary form of discrimination in social sciences like linguistics and anthropology. Tattersall and Chomsky are two of the main proponents of this atrocious, pseudo-scientific system of belief, but they are hardly the only ones. Speciesism is common in today’s universities. Indeed, ever since Descartes speciesism has been endemic in most social science.

Just as bogus physiognomy studies were used to analyze the human face and deduce racist characteristics, so Tattersall Hauser and Chomsky use language to deduce speciesist prejudices about animals. They have enshrined speciesism irrationally in their linguistic speculative systems. Their linguistics is a pseudo-science, and is inherently speciesist and not based on evidence or science. Chomsky, Hauser and others to try to push his ideology because they know so little about nature themselves. He knows virtually nothing about animal communication and has not studied it in natural populations. Hauser’s understanding is distorted by animals abused in cages. They know little about wild animals and how they communicate so there is no surprise they see it as a great “mystery” and wish to suppress others from inquiry into it. Even in their proposal for studying wild animals they suggest extreme means. Hauser suggests that “we can imagine that in the not so distant future, it will be possible to non-invasively obtain neural recordings from free-ranging animals, and thus, to provide a more fine grained and quantitative measure of spontaneous processing of different

stimuli”.<sup>1408</sup> Animals live in nature just as we do and removing their natural context will not tell them much about how animals communicate, perceive and live. They can watch animal themselves in the world, now, but few of them do and when they do they do not know how to read what they see. Chomsky plays the Pope of language when actually he is probably wrong in many ways about it. It is abundantly clear that animals communicate far more than humans realize.

Darwin, in contrast was quite a good nature observer and he denied language was innate in Chomsky’s sense. Darwin is much more sensible and not ashamed of empathy and reason, writes that

“language certainly is not a true instinct, for every language has to be learnt. It differs, however, widely from all ordinary arts, for man has an instinctive tendency to speak, as we see in the babble of our young children; whilst no child has an instinctive tendency to brew, bake, or write. Moreover, no philologist now supposes that any language has been deliberately invented; it has been slowly and unconsciously developed by many steps.”

Chomsky wrongly claims that language learning is effortless for children. Actually it is quite hard for children to learn it and it takes years,<sup>1409</sup> just as it takes a long time for birds to learn to sing. Chomsky claims that in human language we “we find no striking similarity to animal communication systems”<sup>1410</sup> This is nonsense. I have watched birds and animals raise their young and doing it myself has had a huge overlap

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<sup>1408</sup> Chomsky, Hauser et al. “Mystery of Language Evolution” 2014  
<http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00401/full>

<sup>1409</sup> Since we homeschool our children I know exactly what it takes to teach children language. It is a labor of love certainly, but not that easy and requires a lot of patience and care, seven days a week, over a period of years.

<sup>1410</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/chomsky.htm>

with what I have seen raccoons, Canada Geese or Orioles do with their young. Most people are so alienated from nature that they have no idea how similar animals and birds are to us.

Actually A New Study, called “Stepwise acquisition of vocal combinatorial capacity in songbirds and human infants” by Dina Lipkind, Gary F. Marcus<sup>1411</sup> and others shows that language acquisition between humans and birds shares striking similarities. Chomsky tries but fails to discredit these studies, as was expected, as he tries to discredit any threat to his power. But despite him, science now supports Darwin’s view of language, not Chomsky, whose theory is incorrect.. This study negates Chomsky’s notion that human language is unique. Obviously human language shares important characteristics with bird communication as it does with many other species. Chomsky wrote in his Hauser and Fitch(2002, 2014) and more recent essays that animal and human communication were radically different. He is clearly mistaken on this.

Indeed in more recent findings it was shown that some birds, such as Japanese Great Tits, have syntax, a quality that Chomsky always denied to birds. The experimentalists state in their paper that “Here we provide, to our knowledge, the first unambiguous experimental evidence for

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<sup>1411</sup> There is a New York Times article about this too,  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/02/science/from-the-mouths-of-babes-and-birds.html?hpw&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/02/science/from-the-mouths-of-babes-and-birds.html?hpw&_r=0)

And the study itself is here:

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v498/n7452/full/nature12173.html>

Pinker’s and Jackendoff’s refutation of Chomsky Hauser and Fitch is here:

[http://pinker.wjh.harvard.edu/articles/papers/pinker\\_jackendoff.pdf](http://pinker.wjh.harvard.edu/articles/papers/pinker_jackendoff.pdf)

This seems to me to be a very important refutation of many of Chomsky’s claims. Indeed, it is a step toward erecting linguistics on a non Chomskian basis. While Pinker’s own views may have problems, at least he allows for an empirical approach. While some of Chomsky’s idea can be saved perhaps, much of it would be well to jettison and begin again on a Darwinian basis, with much more research to be done on animal societies in the wild. I also am pleased to see that Pinker and Jackendoff largely if not entirely defeat Chomsky’s human centered speciesism.

compositional syntax in a non-human vocal system” <sup>1412</sup> This has [[profound implications and shows Chomsky to be incorrect. In Descent of Man Darwin had already speculated on the similarity of bird and human communications systems. He was right and has been proven to be right experimentally. Chomsky theories are wrong in so many ways.

There are various ways that disproves the major thrust in the Chomsky’s theory. But Chomsky was already refuted earlier by Darwin himself.

Darwin was already far ahead of Chomsky in the 1860’s. Jackendoff and Pinker are correct when they state in their essay contesting Chomsky claims. Pinker and Jackendoff state in their “The faculty of language: what’s special about it?” <sup>1413</sup> that Chomsky theory of language is “sufficiently problematic that it cannot be used to support claims about evolution” <sup>1414</sup>. Indeed, the basics of the Chomsky theory are all

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<sup>1412</sup> See Experimental evidence for compositional syntax in bird calls. Nature Communications, March 2016 Toshitaka N. Suzuki, David Wheatcroft, & Michael Griesser;

<http://www.nature.com/ncomms/2016/160308/ncomms10986/full/ncomms10986.html>

<sup>1413</sup> [http://public.wsu.edu/~fournier/Teaching/psych592/Readings/Pinker\\_Jackendoff\\_2005.pdf](http://public.wsu.edu/~fournier/Teaching/psych592/Readings/Pinker_Jackendoff_2005.pdf)

<sup>1414</sup> Chomsky’s hostility to biology and evolution in particular is bizarre. According to Pinker Chomsky thinks that current biology must be revamped to accommodate the findings of [Chomsky’s] Minimalist linguistics: The evidence for this is Chomsky own statement below...

Any progress toward this goal [showing that language is a “perfect system”] will deepen a problem for the biological sciences that is far from trivial: how can a system such as language arise in the mind/brain, or for that matter, in the organic world, in which one seems not to find anything like the basic properties of human language? That problem has sometimes been posed as a crisis for the cognitive sciences. The concerns are appropriate, but their locus is misplaced; they are primarily a problem for biology and the brain sciences, which, as currently

failing, as Pinker and Jackendoff, Dennett, Searle and others show. Of course Pinker also endorses Chomsky's views, since he was one of his students, and does not see what else might be mistaken in Chomsky. One can expect that the discovery of the similarities between bird and human communication is just the first of many to be found between animals and humans in the upcoming decades. I have seen enough of the capacities of animals and birds to guess that they are much more sophisticated than most humans realize. Chomsky's theory of language will be merely an historical curiosity one day. Some of what he said was helpful but much of it was not.

Chomsky, like Pinker is overlooking the obvious. We are animals. We evolved from animals. Crows do elaborate communications to warn each other about hawks and also mourn the death of loved ones, as do elephants. A wolf pack has an amazingly diverse and varied array of expressions of emotional states, calls indicating whereabouts and many others feeling states indicated by different sounds. They think and strategize too. They employ complex strategies to bring down prey which indicates some measure of "reason" and even "creativity", which is Chomsky's primary claim for human language uniqueness. Bower birds make something very much like human art out of colored object and female bower birds judge the results of these nests.<sup>1415</sup> This is very like human communications in love. Darwin observes, rightly, I think, that language is laboriously learned, like an art and humans have a tendency

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understood, do not provide any basis for what appear to be fairly well established conclusions about language (Chomsky, 1995, pp. 1–2).

Pinker points out that this is presumptuous of Chomsky. He tends to think his ideas are god given and everyone should move over. The truth is otherwise, sometimes he is just mistaken and this is one of those times. He has made no "well established conclusions" about language other than to those who follow his rather cultish dogmas which have little empirical evidence behind them.

<sup>1415</sup> For a very interesting essay on the subject of art and its biological origins see [The Art Instinct](#) by Dennis Dutton. Dutton also rejects Stephen Jay Gould's non-adaptationism. He is closer to Steven Pinker, who also dissents from Chomsky's views for Darwinian reasons.

to want speak at birth but must learn it from parents and foster parents. Darwin explicitly denies claims that language is genetic: it is nurture not nature. He compares this learning process to that of birds....

“The sounds uttered by birds offer in several respects the nearest analogy to language, for all the members of the same species utter the same instinctive cries expressive of their emotions; and all the kinds which sing, exert their power instinctively; but the actual song, and even the call-notes, are learnt from their parents or foster-parents. These sounds, as Dines Barrington\*(2) has proved, are no more innate than language is in man." The first attempts to sing "may be compared to the imperfect endeavour in a child to babble."<sup>1416</sup>

Like the recent essay that proves just this, mentioned above, this is an explicit denial of the innateness theory of language as held by Chomsky, Pinker or anyone else. Darwin does not deny that the capacity for communication is genetic in the brain, or that the apparatus of the larynx or mouth might favor speech, he denies that grammar or talking or language use is genetic. Of course he did not know about genes, yet. But he is saying that language is a proclivity not an innate structure. This appears to be correct. Language is largely cultural. Darwin continues:

The slight natural differences of song in the same species inhabiting different districts may be appositely compared, as Barrington remarks, "to provincial dialects"; and the songs of allied, though distinct species may be compared with the languages of distinct races of man. I have given the foregoing

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<sup>1416</sup> [http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/charles\\_darwin/descent\\_of\\_man/chapter\\_03.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/charles_darwin/descent_of_man/chapter_03.html)

details to show that an instinctive tendency to acquire an art is not peculiar to man. ( Descent of Man Chapter 3)

Birds acquire song and people acquire language by similar mechanisms. The capacity is present genetically insofar as parts of the body and brain have been adapted to language but that actual use of song or language proceeds by way of instruction and culture. The work of Con Slobodchikoff on Prairie Dogs, like similar work on birds, suggests that even animals like Prairie Dogs have a language of sorts, which they can use creatively in their own sphere of interests, as can humans. Slobodchikoff states that the divide that linguists make between language reserved only for humans and communication, reserved for animals is a falsehood.

“Calling it communication sets up that us-versus-them divide,” he says. “I don’t think there is a gap. I think it all integrates in there. You can go to Barnes & Noble and pick up book after book that says humans are the only ones with language. That cheats our understanding of animal abilities and inhibits the breadth of our investigation. I would like to see people give animals more credence, and I think it’s happening now, slowly. But I would like to push it along a little faster.”<sup>1417</sup>

Darwin’s Descent of Man, chapter 3, puts Chomsky’s work as a linguist in question and I think defeats many of its main postulates. I would go further and say that Chomsky’s understanding of language is still behind what Darwin understood 140 years ago. Darwin says that

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<sup>1417</sup> This was in an NYT article about Slobodchikoff theory of animal language, May 16, 2017. Here. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/12/magazine/can-prairie-dogs-talk.html>

language is learned by many small steps and this is accurate, just as birds learn to sing. He supplies endless examples of his points from experience and reality. This is very refreshing compared to Chomsky who has little understanding of other species or even domestic species. Many animals and birds create complex structures for habitation, and very likely humans derived their buildings types partly from animals structures such as beaver lodges and dams or termite nests. Humans warn each other just as animals do, announce the proximity of food, exclaim in pain or pleasure, deceive others with feigned imitations<sup>1418</sup> and many other similarities. Chomsky is mistaken that animals have no creative use in communication, as Slobodchikoff has show in his Parairie Dog studies. Consider the many complex birds songs, the amazingly varied utterances of the Starling or Robin, to site two common birds or Mannikin mating dances, or Lyrebird imitations of other birds or Elephant and Giraffe infra-sound and whale singing. Bees appear to have complex communications. Chomsky denies animals have “language” after he sets up rather narrow and exclusive, elitist and speciesist notions of what human language is supposed to be. Darwin is much more open to actual experience and has a detailed and amazing knowledge of actual animals. Chomsky’s cramped computational view of language is all dusty blackboard and university office, formalistic and abstract city and streets. It is hard to imagine Chomsky studying birds or walking by a pond, much less sailing on the Beagle for years to study flora and fauna. Chomsky writes:

the fact that human language, being free from control of identifiable external stimuli or internal *physiological* [emphasis added] states, can serve as a general instrument of thought and self-expression rather than merely as a communicative device of

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<sup>1418</sup> Blue Jays do a perfect imitation of red tailed hawks which they use to scare other birds and humans too.

report, request, or command (CL, 11-12).

[human language] is not restricted to any practical communicative function, in contrast, for example, to the pseudo-language of animals (CL, 29).

[Cartesians want to account for intelligent behavior] in the face of their inability to provide an explanation in mechanical terms (CL, 12).

While it is true that no other species has language in quite the way the way humans do, it is obvious that Darwinian evolution developed human speech out of antecedents in our animals ancestors. No other species has communication skills in the ways Dolphins, Prairie Dogs or Elephants do either. The notion that one is superior to the other is just speciesist prejudice. The quality of unique capacity occurs everywhere in nature. There is both difference and continuity between insect, bird and mammal communication, but all are developed via evolution. Human communication privileges humans in their own eyes, but it also makes them think other species are worthless and deserve extinction, which hardly suggests humans are as great as they imagine they are. There is nothing “pseudo” about elephant or whale communication as Katy Payne has shown. She has shown that “ elephants use their low-frequency calls to coordinate their social behavior over long distances”<sup>1419</sup>. So this basic premise of the Chomskian system is Descartes’ speciesist and prejudicial thesis restated. Elephants and other species show empathy for each other and communicate closely. Darwin is a wonderful antidote to grudging supremacist bigotry.

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<sup>1419</sup> See the Elephant Listening Project on Elephant Language here: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/elephant/cyclotis/language/language.html>

See also Katy Payne’s book Silent Thunder

Darwin is at pains to show that though the capacity or need to speak may be “instinctual” or genetic, as we would say now. But the doing of it must be taught, as must bird song, and so grammar itself is probably not instinctual or genetic, but practical and changeable in different societies. He stresses that writing must be learned as well, and it is even harder to learn that speaking. Darwin notes that the singing of songs in birds “is no more innate than language is in man” (Descent pg. 298) He notes that the instinctive tendency to acquire an art” is common to both birds and humans.

Chomsky’s linguistic theory is suspect and lacking empirical evidence. At the end of his paper “A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory” (1995) Chomsky even notes himself the failure of his linguistic theory to achieve status as “science”. The notion of “deep structure” failed. He is theorizing and guessing in a rationalist way, with little or no dependence on empirical testing, and this leads him merely to make a theory that looks more like his own ego than like nature. This is a mistake and a mistake that Chomsky has been loathe for too long to admit or give up. It appears that Chomsky’s main impetus in rejecting aspects of Darwinian theory come from Stephen Jay Gould, whose idea of “spandrels” appears to be the source of Chomsky’s odd ideas about language being somehow independent of Darwinian adaptation. Chomsky’s insistence on language having primarily to do with thought rather than communication is part of this rejection. It appears likely that he is mistaken in this. Darwin, once again, was right that language is primarily about communication and derives ultimately from primate ancestors.

Darwin’s argument, stated in the Descent of Man, is that language might have some of its origins deriving ultimately from singing in primates. He uses the example of Gibbons calls. He implies also that language may have been encouraged by sexual selection. This is a very

amazing and pregnant passage, still largely overlooked in Darwin's work which ought to be much more deeply studied:

"I cannot doubt that language owes its origin to the imitation and modification of various natural sounds, the voices of other animals, and man's own instinctive cries, aided by signs and gestures. When we treat of sexual selection we shall see that primeval man, or rather some early progenitor of man, probably first used his voice in producing true musical cadences, that is in singing, as do some of the gibbon-apes at the present day; and we may conclude from a widely-spread analogy, that this power would have been especially exerted during the courtship of the sexes, - would have expressed various emotions, such as love, jealousy, triumph, - and would have served as a challenge to rivals. It is, therefore, probable that the imitation of musical cries by articulate sounds may have given rise to words expressive of various complex emotions. The strong tendency in our nearest allies, the monkeys, in microcephalous idiots,\*<sup>(2)</sup> and in the barbarous races of mankind, to imitate whatever they hear deserves notice, as bearing on the subject of imitation. Since monkeys certainly understand much that is said to them by man, and when wild, utter signal-cries of danger to their fellows;\*<sup>(3)</sup> and since fowls give distinct warnings for danger on the ground, or in the sky from hawks (both, as well as a third cry, intelligible to dogs),\*<sup>(4)</sup> may not some unusually wise apelike animal have imitated the growl of a beast of prey, and thus told his fellow-monkeys the nature of the expected danger? This would have been a first step in the formation of a language.

As the voice was used more and more, the vocal organs would have been strengthened and perfected through the principle of the inherited effects of use; and this would have reacted on the power

of speech. But the relation between the continued use of language and the development of the brain, has no doubt been far more important. The mental powers in some early progenitor of man must have been more highly developed than in any existing ape, before even the most imperfect form of speech could have come into use; but we may confidently believe that the continued use and advancement of this power would have reacted on the mind itself, by enabling and encouraging it to carry on long trains of thought. A complex train of thought can no more be carried on without the aid of words, whether spoken or silent, than a long calculation without the use of figures or algebra. It appears, also, that even an ordinary train of thought almost requires, or is greatly facilitated by some form of language, for the dumb, deaf, and blind girl, Laura Bridgman, was observed to use her fingers whilst dreaming.\* Nevertheless, a long succession of vivid and connected ideas may pass through the mind without the aid of any form of language, as we may infer from the movements of dogs during their dreams. We have, also, seen that animals are able to reason to a certain extent, manifestly without the aid of language. The intimate connection between the brain, as it is now developed in us, and the faculty of speech, is well shown by those curious cases of brain-disease in which speech is especially affected, as when the power to remember substantives is lost, whilst other words can be correctly used, or where substantives of a certain class, or all except the initial letters of substantives and proper names are forgotten.\*(2)”

These gems of insight are far in advance of anything written by Chomsky about language, communication, animals and humans. These gems of insight, which suffuse all of Chapter 3 of Descent of Man and other works of Darwin, should have been developed by Chomsky but

were not. Chomsky ignores Darwin and imagines, falsely, I think, that Descartes is wiser and truer on language. Descartes' theory of language is self-involved and anti-natural. It is paltry and appears to be born of prejudice and should be abandoned as should most or perhaps all of Chomsky's theory. Looking at language from a Darwinian point of view means to study communication across species lines and all the way back in time. It does not mean merely studying grammar, which is merely codified rules of speech and is a later development. Crows talking, Wolves howling, Neanderthals talking to Modern Humans, Whales communicating are for more important. Indeed, there is reason to abandon Chomsky theory of language and start anew. It would be nice to see Chomsky himself abandon this, though that is unlikely. His ego is attached to the theory and it is a theory that accords well with human centered ideologies, but capitalist and socialist. He does not seem to want to follow the normal route of science that a theory must be tested and submitted to review. He is a very uncompromising fellow who listens to no one. There is reason to doubt he is doing science at all, and if it is not science it is demagoguery.

John Searle notes regarding Chomsky's early work up till the 70's or 80's that "the original paradigm had failed".<sup>1420</sup> His later 'paradigms' do not look very promising either. Indeed, while Chomsky politics is interesting, most of Chomsky's claims for linguistics appear to be on very shaky ground, if not outright fiction. Not only does universal grammar appear to be a fiction but notion that FLN and FLB are different things really is just an excuse for speciesism.<sup>1421</sup> Animal communications are rigorously exclude from his 'narrow' definition of language. His

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<sup>1420</sup> <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2002/jul/18/chomskys-revolution-an-exchange/>

<sup>1421</sup> These acronyms stand for Faculty of Language Narrow and Faculty of Language Broad, and we in use as of 2004, essay with Hauser and Fitch.

notions of “I language” obscure more than they explain, <sup>1422</sup>.. While he is certainly right that language has a genetic component, little is known about it. In brain injuries the locus of apparent language activity can even be rerouted to other parts of the brain, that in itself suggests that a language “organ” is not the right way to speak of how the language works in the brain. It is spread over different areas of the brain. Moreover, language appears to be a cultural phenomenon as much as a genetic one. It appears to be brought about more by social conditioning or learning than by genetics, as Darwin claimed. The ideology of innate grammar may be invalid, because there is no evidence that can either verify it. In his *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Karl Popper proposed a generally accepted variant of this doctrine: a hypothesis is valid if and only if it can in principle be falsified by empirical evidence. Chomsky has little evidence to support most of his ideas. It is much more likely that grammar is a product of language use, --a product of the process of using nouns and verbs, and not that grammar is innate and prior to language use. This was both Darwin’s and Skinner’s point of view and it appears to be right, given the empirical evidence, though exactly how this works has not yet been fully understood. I think Chomsky has gotten away with his pandering of very insecure and questionable ideas in linguistics by force of personality rather than by force of actual discovery. Chomsky rejects Skinner’s<sup>1423</sup> and Russell’s stimulus response theories

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<sup>1422</sup> According to Pinker “Merge” and “recursion” in language is hugely overrated by Chomsky. This is extensively discussed in Pinker and Jackendoff, “The faculty of language: what’s special about it?”. I wonder if recursion might be the dead end of the Chomskian theory, a sort of self-referential self-portrait of the grammarian himself, just as Descartes ends in the dark of *Je Pense Donc Je Suis*”, as Beckett shows him, talking to himself in a black room. Chomsky ends in recursion, tautological analogy, and similitude. But I don’t think this tells us much about what language actually is, it merely states a sort of Chomskian religion of the mind looking at itself. Rather like the mythical Unified Field Theory, Merge appears to be a myth born of straining after the origins of language in the vacuum of Chomsky’s rationalism without much empirical study.

<sup>1423</sup> This is a rather devastating historical review of Chomsky’s bad attack on Skinner by David Palmer. Palmer claims that:

and balks at accepting Darwinians idea when he can get away with it. He is an abrasive and difficult person and forces his followers to conform by being overbearing manner. One must either be his accomplice or his victim. I have tried to be neither: I do not accept his claims and demanded of him better explanations which he will not and cannot provide.

Chomsky's claim that language is mostly about solipsistic thinking appears to be overstated as it leads him to deny that language is primarily about communication. <sup>1424</sup> This need to deny the obvious is strange in Chomksy. I suspect it to be a pose, rather a dadiastic one, which is about his getting attention and creating controversey, rather than saying anything concrete about language. He says outrageous things so others will notice him, when it is obvious that langage in fact is primarily about communication. He does this in poltics too. <sup>1425</sup>

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My own exploration and evaluation of Chomsky's theories led me to predict that his work will ultimately be seen as a kind of scientific flash flood, generating great excitement, wreaking havoc, but leaving behind only an arid gulch.

<sup>1424</sup> Pinker notes that “ In fact, over the years he[Chomsky] has become rather hostile to the idea that language is a system designed for communication. He believes that language evolved for beauty, not for use. Chomsky's skepticism about evolution extends far enough to say that there is nothing about language that is particularly well adapted for communication... He believes that people have a spontaneous tendency to cooperate and create for the sheer sake of it without regard for reward or consequences. That is the deepest root of Chomsky's belief system. This leads his radical politics. It also leads to a conception of language that emphasizes creativity, but devalues the utility of language as a system of communication. It cannot be explained in terms of its beneficial consequences, which is the essence of natural selection.”

<sup>1425</sup> So for instance he denies that voting is about voting. In his first point in an essay written with John Halle called “An Eight Point Breif for (LEV) lesser evil voting”, he states

“Voting should not be viewed as a form of personal self-expression or moral judgement directed in retaliation towards major party candidates who fail to reflect our values, or of a corrupt system designed to limit choices to those acceptable to corporate elites”.

At the very beginning of his plea that we should vote for Clinton, he strips voting of its essential meaning. More than this he chops of the legs off the very reason there is voting in a democracy. Voting is precisely self expression and moral judgment— our values, reflected in our choices. If voting is not about our values, our moral choices and self expression, there is no reason at all to vote for anyone. Like saying that language is not about communication, he is trying to undermine

Clearly animals do have a kind of language and do communicate in a great variety of ways. Darwinism suggests that human language is one of these ways, more complex than the others, but there is no need to demean or denigrate what animals can do.. Bats can echolocate and human have only learned to do this recently and only with elaborate and expensive technology, radar, sonar and so on. If one must compare bats and humans on a scale of values that has flying while vocalizing as it main term, bats are far superior to any humans. No human can swim as well as a dolphin or fly as well as a Tern or a Nighthawk. If language is a ‘unique property of evolution” for humans, this might not be an entirely good thing, given the despicable facts of what we have done with it. Animals have capacities that are also unique, which really means that uniqueness is a normative fact of evolution, and thus meaningless: every being and every adaption is unique. Hierarchy is an illusion as evolution is a bottom up process of incremental development, species by species. The notion that one species is superior to others is false; each is unique and has its own capacities and traits and survives by virtue of these. Each deserves protection form human self-centered chauvinism. Many species have faculties or capacities that humans cannot touch. Octopuses can change skin color and shape at will. Terns can fly 15,000 miles on their own energy. Camels can go long periods without water.

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all understanding, just as voting for Clinton is really an admission of defeat and a willingness to court corrpations and their candidate. He is just trying to get attention. Moreover he is trying to force people to do what he wants them to do. It is a power play. I suggest his idea that language is not communication is also this sort of exploit. He wants to take over all discouse on the subejct, and to do so in an absurd way, proclaiming absurdity as a first principle. Duchamp might admire this con job, as that is how Duchamp tried to hide the fact that he could not paint, but it is a con job and I do not admire it. He destroys discouse and then considers Clinton as his cadidate of choice, enjoining us to be as conservative as he has because in his failing old age. The fact is that Chomksy is no longer to be trusted as a source of advice on politics.

The candidate Jill Stein denies the very thing that Chomsky says. She says that voting is a moral choice and we have a responsibility to make the world better. I agree, and appiecate not being manipulated as Chomsky is won't to do to denigrate his readers. See also Chris Hedges who has written well on voting for the lesser evil and how destructive it is. We have the right to vote for whoever we thin is best. If the wrong candidate wins, we are not respisible for that. Those who voted for them are.

Elephants can communicate using infra-sound, as Katy Payne and others have shown. Humans have language, that is our special ability, but that hardly invalidates the superiority of other species to humans in endless other ways, from penguins, to Butterfly wing patterns, to the marvel of birds wings.

In order to explain Chomsky's rather strangely Platonic 'archetypal' notions of "deep structure" and "universal grammar"<sup>1426</sup> he cannot rely on Darwinian evidence because there isn't any, so he resorts to cosmic and rather occult theories, Chomsky claims that the:

" language faculty appears to be biologically isolated in a curious and unexpected sense....To tell a fairy story about it, it is almost as if there was some higher primate wandering around a long time ago and some random mutation took place - maybe after some strange cosmic ray shower - and it reorganized the brain, implanting a language organ in an otherwise primate brain."<sup>1427</sup>

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<sup>1426</sup> Chomsky wrote that Universal Grammar implied the possibility that all human languages are already in the human brain before birth. This is a Platonic idea and seems untenable and unworkable--- as are Platonic concepts in general. Evidently Chomsky later dropped this idea , which was central to this theory. He also justifies some of his ideas by reference to Alexander Koyre, a rather reactionary Platonist, who was an influence on the traditionalists and their anti – science program.. He quotes Koyre's anti materialistic notions lifted from Newton that ``a purely materialistic or mechanistic physics . . . is impossible". This is really a misunderstanding of physics, I think. Koyre is a favorite of science bashers. Chomsky also uses Goethe as an example, another Platonist. Another Platonist that influenced Chomsky was Julius Moravcsik, a philosopher. Chomsky does not call himself a Platonist as far as I am aware. He would probably deny he is one. But the concept of "Universal Grammar" UG, a virtually Platonist concept, is an idealization along the lines of Platonic "Archetypes"--- "Eidos". The actual mechanism of language in the brain appears to be quite different than Chomsky idealized notion of grammar. Chomsky is guilty of what A.N. Whitehead called the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness', making UG into a factual entity, when really it is just an idealistic postulate. Plato's archetypes are also guilty of this. In the end the postulate failed, as the Archetypes failed. Chomsky also quotes Koyre in other essays, for instance he quote Koyre's idea that in science "We are left with the ``admission into the body of science of incomprehensible and inexplicable `facts' imposed upon us by empiricism",-- this is nearly a romantic and religious statement again attacking empiricism. This is a mistake on Chomsky's part I think. Here: <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/2000----.pdf>

<sup>1427</sup> Chomsky *The architecture of language* Oxford 2000, p4

Language did not occur miraculously or outside of evolution. It is hard to imagine this sort of fantasy coming from someone who claims to be a scientist, but that is just the problem I am getting at here. He would rather invent romantic or mythical fictions like this that do the hard work of finding Darwinian evidence for his theories, in brain science or in nature and other animals. It is likely, as Darwin and lots of evidence suggests, that language is primarily about communication, and evolved because of ordinary natural selection and sexual selection as well as social and cultural factors. Chomsky's mistake is to never have gone on the Beagle or a similar voyage of discovery, looking for the roots of language in animals, birds and our own biology. Like Descartes Chomsky is off in the ozone of his own reason, and has little understanding of the natural world, and this brings down the roof on his theories on his own head.

Chomsky is evoking the rationalist Plato and the archetypes which he transmogrifies via Descartes and Humboldt into "innate grammars", which have never been proven to exist. This is mythology and religion, not science. Chomsky's Platonistic claim that people are born with innate knowledge of grammar is postulated but unproven after 50 years of Chomsky's research. Language has naturalistic or realist explanations that are cultural, Darwinian and empirical, and Chomsky largely ignores these. His influence by Descartes and Humboldt does not make much sense unless he is trying to create a self-sustaining faith or dogma that is rational and non-empirical, but in that case we are not dealing with science so much as sort of Cartesian dogma, a Cartesian Church as it were, with Chomsky as its priest. An example of his Platonist theory<sup>1428</sup>

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<sup>1428</sup> Chomsky's rather Neo-Platonist views are evident here: the puzzle as to how a child can master a grammar is, for Chomsky, an instance of 'Plato's problem' - "the problem of explaining

of Language is his explanation of language unfolding in children in a quasi-automatic way. I have small children and it is not automatic, but halting and difficult with constant corrections and amendments from parents and peers, exactly as Darwin says. Learning English or any other language is no small matter but takes years to accomplish. Chomsky underrated the vast influence of natural selection and parents and teachers. Darwin claimed that language is learned with difficulty and much time and practice and I can confirm this having taught my own children most of the language they know. That my children are genetically predisposed to learn it is unquestionable. But they mangle grammar with such regularity it is clearly not inborn, but learned.

Darwin says that “language certainly is not a true instinct”. He implies it is a cultural creation. The spread of language over the earth and the fact that languages change so easily and quickly would indeed, suggest a cultural development, not a genetic one. Chomsky and Pinker

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how we can know so much, given that we have such limited evidence”....” Plato’s answer,” says Chomsky, “was that the knowledge is ‘remembered’ from an earlier existence. The answer calls for a mechanism: perhaps the immortal soul. That may strike us as not very satisfactory, but it is worth bearing in mind that it is a more reasonable answer than those assumed as doctrine during the dark ages of Anglo-American empiricism and behavioral science - to put the matter tentatively, but accurately.”.... Chomsky forgets to add that Plato’s theory of the Eidos is thoroughly discredited. “ So we should not associate the doctrine of the soul with the dark ages: on the contrary, it is the opponents of Plato's theory who are in the dark ages. But there is a problem: talk of man's 'immortal soul' sounds like antiquated *language*. For the doctrine to appear more acceptable, it needs to be rephrased:....”Pursuing this course, and rephrasing Plato's answer in terms more congenial to us today, we will say that the basic properties of cognitive systems are innate to the mind, part of human biological endowment” ... So UG is really a template of the Platonic soul modernized.... language is a sort of meta-Platonic template in the brain deposited there at birth and this does not appear to be the case. (see N Chomsky, 'Linguistics and adjacent fields: a personal view' in A Kasher (ed.) *The Chomskyan Turn* Oxford 1991, p15. and also see N Chomsky, 'Linguistics and cognitive science: problems and mysteries' in A Kasher (ed.) *The Chomskyan Turn* Oxford 1991, pp26-53; p50.).

both imply it is an instinct, without giving really good reasons why this should be so. I think it is safe to conclude that the subject of linguistics is hopelessly deadlocked and confused, inherently political and as yet incapable of real science and objectivity.<sup>1429</sup> I suspect Darwin is right and not Chomsky. Chomsky appears to leave out Darwin and the obvious idea that language is logical phenomena, born perhaps very indirectly out genetic inheritance and commonality with other animals.. Chomsky expresses the unlikely hope physics will explain language. This privileging of physics over other sciences is absurd as it is no more important than other sciences. When Chomsky was young physics was given artificial status because of Einstein and the Manhattan Project. If anything physics is the least of the sciences and what really matters is understanding living things. This is probably pure fantasy that Chomsky tries to tie language back to physics. Language is a biological and cultural fact of biological evolution not a factor growing from  $F=MA$ , even though, obviously the brain is effected by physical forces. He claims Newton's frustrated mystical idea about gravity implies mechanism is fiction and all is the ghostly mind. He does not understand that Newton probably misunderstood gravity. Rather than pursue the hard evolutionary science that needs to be done, Chomsky allies himself with

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<sup>1429</sup> Geoffery Sampson argues against both Chomsky and Pinker in his [The Language Instinct Debate](#). Sampson appears to be another far right critic of Chomsky, but his arguments appear to have some reason in them, independent of his politics. I don't think I agree entirely, as language does appear to have some evolutionary foundations. But I show this to show how conflicted this domain is and how neither Chomsky nor Pinker have really made it clearer or better. here:

<http://www.grsampson.net/Atin.html>

Sampson says "I conclude that there is no language instinct. On the available evidence, languages seem to be products of cultural evolution only. The biological foundations on which they depend are an open-ended ability to formulate and test hypotheses, which we use to learn about anything and everything that life throws at us, and perception and phonation mechanisms which evolved to serve other functions and have no special relationship with language."

The question how cultural evolution developed the complex languages used during recorded history out of simple precursors is an interesting, worthwhile question. But it is surely a very different question, to which different kinds of evidence are relevant and different sorts of answer available, from the question how an alleged "language instinct" might have evolved biologically.

the romantics rather than with biology. <sup>1430</sup> Chomsky writes, talking about his own formative influences, that

“This Platonistic element in Humboldt’s thought is a pervasive one; for Humboldt, it was as natural to propose an essentially Platonistic theory of “learning” as it was for Rousseau to found his critique of repressive social institutions on a conception of human freedom that derives from strictly Cartesian assumptions regarding the limitations of mechanical explanation. And in general it seems appropriate to construe both the psychology and the linguistics of the romantic period as in large part a natural outgrowth of rationalist conceptions.<sup>1431</sup>

Such romantic concepts lead up to Chomsky himself of course and go far to explain his sometimes mystagogical and irrational tendencies. He distorts the history of science to lead up to his own theories. He is good at appearing very rational but the basis of his thought is anything but rational. He is a mythical thinker. It would be far simpler at this point to

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<sup>1430</sup> Chomsky proneness to mystagogy and mysticism is evident in the following quote----.He attacks Darwin obliquely on the basis that “ one element of a famous disagreement between the two founders of the theory of evolution, with Wallace holding, contrary to Darwin, that evolution of these faculties cannot be accounted for in terms of variation and natural selection alone, but requires “some other influence, law, or agency,” some principle of nature alongside gravitation, cohesion, and other forces without which the material universe could not exist.” Wallace’s pursuit of spiritual “agency”, which is what is referred to here, forced him to become embarrassingly religious in later years, a fact Chomsky fails to note. Darwin was right in this argument against Wallace’s irrational religiosity, as many have noted, ( see David Quammen [The Reluctant Mr. Darwin: An Intimate Portrait of Charles Darwin and the Making of His Theory of Evolution on Wallace and Darwin](#)) Chomsky effort to spiritualize the language faculty with a mystagogy surrounding gravity and thought, is unique, but very eccentric and probably wrong. The abstract and internal character of a language is one of its worst properties, as it tends to divorce humans from nature and creates a sort of doubling whereby religion and other abstract alienation becomes possible. Chomsky, like Wallace tries to make a virtue of this failing in human language, when really it is one of the most unfortunate of illusions. This might be the source of Chomsky’s dislike of Darwinism and of animals, who are way down on the totem pole of Chomskian theory.

<sup>1431</sup> From one of Chomsky’s lectures in [Language and Mind](#) reproduced here <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/chomsky.htm>

admit the romantic fiction of innate grammars has failed and that that these suppositions were really moonshine, a dead end. But Chomsky keeps going on and on, trying to spin ever tighter webs of myth and theory around the carcass of innate grammar.

Language grows out of our brains, but does so because of the evolutionary development of communication skills and cultural conditions and this is something that evolved over time, through genetics perhaps, and the development of the brain and or culture. Chomsky's innate Platonism is a lifelong illusion of his, which derives from Descartes. He denies his Platonism, of course, but I think I have proved it. He is fixed on this idea irrationally, as John Searle suggests in his excellent "The End of the Revolution" which is about the failure of Chomsky's linguistic theories to bear real fruit.<sup>1432</sup>

I hasten to add that Chomsky insistence on the genetic origin of language might be partly correct in that there is a genetic component that provides the capacity for language, as is shown in brain studies on Broca's and Wierneke's areas and other areas of the brain as well, most of which involve communication or understanding of communication, both meaning and expression.<sup>1433</sup> But the fact that the areas of the

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<sup>1432</sup> The following essay used to be online, now you have to pay for it. That is a shame.....it is a good article that really scours Chomsky's plate and does so with tact and reason. He shows that many of Chomsky major efforts are mostly fantasy, there is no LAD, no universal grammar, and very likely one could go on,... no I language no Merge etc..... Indeed, Merge appears to be little more than a reduction of language to tautology, which gives us little or nothing. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/47780900/John-Searle-End-of-the-Revolution>. New York Review of Books

<sup>1433</sup> Much has been learned about language from the complex reactions to various kinds of aphasia. Darwin already understood this. In some aphasias patients can hear but not understand words, in other aphasias patients cannot speak but can understand language. In other cases, patients with damage to these areas of the brain can relearn language in other areas of the brain not usually used for language, suggesting again that language is not just in one area but is occurs in various areas of the brain. There is no "language organ" per se, but only a generalized adapting of the brain itself to use. There is no universal grammar. Language is easily lost in Alzheimer's and other diseases. How this works is still largely unknown, though much more is known that was the case.

brain that are concerned with language are about communication and meaning, already suggests that Chomsky's grammatical, "Cartesian" and functional linguistics might be beside the point. Darwin said on the other hand that language is not an instinct. This means it is not innate and not genetic. Until genetics and physical studies of the brain start showing what is actually the case, I cannot decide this question, nor can anyone else.

Grammar appears to be a minor development of meaning and expression through communication needs--- in other words grammar is a development of custom and use in social contexts , not the archetypal or "universal" genetic center of all languages as Chomsky contends.. Grammar is a by-product of intentions and the practice of communication, not a cause, in other words. We have good brains and brains that allowed us to invent language as part of our culture

There are areas of the brain that appear to have to do with meanings, such as an area for animals or famous people, face recognition and even cerebellum or motor areas appear to be involved in language in complex ways. But though the exact process remains obscure, much more is known about it now than was the case even 20 years ago. What is known about it appears to contradict Chomsky's claims. The brain/language connection is Darwinian and adaptationist, not Platonic or Chomskian. There is no language "organ" per se, but rather an adaptation of the various parts of the brain and body (vocal cords, mouth) to language that probably grew up by the usual Darwinian processes.<sup>1434</sup> It is of course very sad that Chomsky turned out to be wrong in so many ways. But as John Searle notes that

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<sup>1434</sup> Dennett appears to be correct that Chomsky was led astray by Stephen Jay Gould who tried to minimize the importance of direct adaptation. See Dennett book Darwin's Dangerous Idea, that has a whole chapter on both Chomsky and Gould. Dennett is highly critical of Chomsky's effort to eliminate Darwinism from linguistics. Rightly so.

“ It is often tempting in the human sciences to aspire to being a natural science; and there is indeed a natural science, about which we know very little, of the foundations of language in the neurobiology of the human brain. But the idea that linguistics itself might be a natural science rests on doubtful assumptions.

“1435

I suspect Seale is right. Searle’s claims that

‘there is no universal grammar common to all languages; there is no Language Acquisition Device in the brain; grammar is not innate but mastered through experience of language and life; there are no deep structures in the brain; language has many functions other than describing things’. It is time to more seriously doubt Chomsky’s linguistics, both in its sources and its final goals.

So Chomsky’s “Universal Grammar” goes the way of Descartes Pineal Gland. It goes poof, it never existed. What would be really grand, even stupendous, would be if Chomsky himself admitted that some of his critics might be right, not just recently but over many years. I do not mean his political critics. I am not talking about his politics here. To admit that his critics are right and the basic trajectory of his linguistic theory is mistaken would be a good thing. This would be the right scientific stance for him to take, rather than his usual dogmatic stand, denying direct evidence. He would then reveal himself to be actually willing to question himself and that would be grand. He would regain my respect if he did that. It would liberate the next generation of scientists to do better and newer work on language along Darwinian lines. This is already occurring. People are dropping the Chomskyeen ‘paradigm’, or

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<sup>1435</sup> <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2002/jul/18/chomskys-revolution-an-exchange/?page=2>

ideology. Chomsky's repressive hold on the study of linguistics has held linguistics back for long enough. But there is no relenting with Chomsky.

Searle notes in his essay that Chomsky's "work in linguistics is at the highest intellectual level." I agree with that, but that does not mean he is true or right or immune to going off the deep end in his understanding of language. Everyone makes mistakes, sometimes mistakes that last a lifetime. He is hampered by his inability to admit he is wrong. It was a glorious illusion or fantasy. Chomsky says he wished to prove that "human languages are basically cast to the same mold, that they are instantiations of the same fixed biological endowment, and that they "grow in the mind" much like other biological systems, triggered and shaped by experience, but only in restricted ways." This has not happened, and his ambition has been partly thwarted by his own dislike of empiricism and his dogged pursuit of rationalist inquiry on the grammatical blackboard instead of in nature and actual practice. The theory he created spun out a Chomskian mythos which does not fit reality.

Certainly in respect of Descartes, Chomsky has taken his ideas uncritically and refuses direct evidence that questions his embrace of the prototype of his theories. This is not healthy or conducive to the long term viability of his work. Descartes was important in creating the impetus behind early science, but his science itself has little value. Chomsky made a huge mistake trying to adapt the Cartesian program into linguistics. He should have abandoned that decades ago. A romantic strain of irrational rationalism that has anti-Darwinian features led him astray. His involuted, subjectivist and baroque theory of language is solipsistic, and may reflect more Chomsky's own mental convolutions more than it does on the facts of language and how it actually operates.

Language appears to be, like religion/politics and culture, a by-product of evolutionary developments in the brain and body. Darwin was

probably right and Chomsky and Pinker wrong that language is a genetically formed instinct. But this is a hugely conflicted area of study, and I do not claim to know the answer. But that there is a close relation of language, religion and politics going far back into culture and evolution seems to be a fact. They are all systems of custom and power, organizing people into manageable groups and mental faculties. How this came about in terms of the evolution of the brain is as yet very unclear.

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That is my main conclusion, but a few other tangential details need to be discussed . I cannot find the quote at the moment but somewhere Chomsky says that over population of the America is not a problem there is lots of open space. This is nonsense and shows again a lamentable lack of understanding about nature, and the huge pressure animals and plants suffer due to overpopulation. Chomsky is a city person and knows little about nature. He also states somewhere that we should not bother about animals and nature because humans are such a threat to their own survival that we should concern ourselves only with human things. This also is merely a mask for speciesism. Obviously, concern with other species is part of concern for our own species and care of one does not exclude care of the other. Indeed, care of nature and animals is the beginning of care of ourselves, the human comes after the horse, whales, mice and platypuses. Not before. We cannot care for ourselves without also caring for our world, which is so much part of us.

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The political journalistic work of Chomsky is usually pretty good. I think his real contribution is in journalistic politics and not in language. He is good at writing virtual running critical commentary on what appears in the News, particularly the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, for years now. But in recent years the foibles of old age seem to have confused his thought quite a lot.

Chomsky has been comparing himself to Socrates and the Biblical Prophets.<sup>1436</sup> This is another indication of his romantic and idealized –nearly mystical, Platonism. I could understand if he compared himself to Tom Paine or Voltaire, or better yet, Bertrand Russell, whose political incisiveness Chomsky echoes in various ways. But he prefers to compare himself to biblical prophets and Socrates. But Socrates was opposed to democracy and was defending the reactionary proto-Nazi state outlined by Plato in the Republic. The Biblical Prophets were certainly fictional characters who are part of a very toxic system of reactionary religion and dogma, handing down edicts and demands from a fictional god. Chomsky's claim that they were doing "geopolitical analysis" is absurd and his projection on them of what he is himself doing, does not hold up to the facts. This need to style oneself as a prophet has a long history which I have outlined at length in this book. It is invariably fraudulent and is a claim at being a power broker, a claim of inaugurating a paradigm revolution. Chomsky does claim to have initiated a revolution in linguistics. In fact he failed to do so. But the need to appear as if he did do it is tremendous for him. One finds this in Nietzsche too, when he declares that God is dead and then turns around and resurrects Zarathustra, who is Nietzsche's own alter ego, as a sort of prophet-god. I have shown how Schuon, Muhammad and Christ all had similar magnified terms applied to them or declared themselves prophets or sons of god or whatever. The prophets were fundamentally conservative and defending a status quo as part of a fictional projection and make believe that is

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<sup>1436</sup> Chomsky says "Prophet just means intellectual. They were people giving geopolitical analysis, moral lessons, that sort of thing. We call them intellectuals today. There were the people we honor as prophets, there were the people we condemn as false prophets. But if you look at the biblical record, at the time, it was the other way around. The flatterers of the Court of King Ahab were the ones who were honored. The ones we call prophets were driven into the desert and imprisoned. ( Interview by Harry Kreisler, March 22, 2002) Chomsky talks about this a lot, and brings it up on many occasions, for instance he mentions the biblical chapter in Kings 1, in which King Ahab condemns Elijah. Chomsky identifies himself as the misunderstood or outcast prophet. And he says he began to do so when he was still a child. There is a pathology in this and it is this tendency that generates some of cultic characteristics of him and his followers ( see <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/50346/the-lefty-lion/> )

the biblical religion. It appears that Chomsky's latent Platonism and tacit religiosity drives him to make these objectionable comparisons. Comparing himself to prophets is a typical thing for cult leaders to do and Chomsky resembles cult leaders various ways, if not in every way.

He is unable to admit when he is wrong and has a terrible need to promote himself at all costs. This overweening self-regard has some bad consequences. For instance quite apart from the free speech question, Chomsky's support of the far right holocaust denier French scholar Robert Faurisson raises other questions. Chomsky defended Faurisson's right to free speech in an essay entitled "Some Elementary Comments on the Rights of Freedom of Expression". One wonders what he was actually thinking when he did that. The willingness to side with a neo Nazi indicates Chomsky's rather diffused and wandering allegiances to whatever outlying libertarian idea that serves him at the moment. Indeed, he often allies himself with Islamic or Liberation Theology causes. In these cases Chomsky appears as libertarian willing to support a far right ideologues and apostates stigmatized by western politics. He excuses himself on the grounds that Voltaire defended the right of fools to speak. That might be taking Voltaire a little too literally. I don't think Voltaire meant to side with fanatics in the opposite camp, regardless of their willingness to abuse power. Of course, siding with liberation theology in south America is opportune as we all wanted an end to client states in South America. It is the fact that Chomsky has refused to criticize the religious basis of this, while yet supporting their politics because it suits him, which rubs the wrong way.

But then George Monbiot shows that Chomsky is quite willing to engage in holocaust or genocide denial when it suits him. Chomsky denied the importance of atrocities in Rwanda and elsewhere. That is an awful thing to do. Rwanda is the largest atrocity in recent decades. This suggests his willingness to use atrocities as a tool of politics, which is

hypocritical since this is exactly what he accuses the American government of doing: “worthy atrocities” verses unworthy ones.. Monbiot concludes that Chomsky “is deliberately ignoring a vast weight of evidence which conflicts with his political beliefs”. He does this in linguistics too, suggesting against that language and politics have a very close relationship. Chomsky is himself an example of the close tie of religion, politics and language.

As I have shown throughout this essay, Chomsky is weak on following evidence and too strong on dogma and ideology. This is what creates his cult like status and his linguistic myths. Had he been more honest about the failure of his linguistics or his political ideas it might have been better for him. I would admire him more, not less if he could admit when he is wrong. I would like to say it could be the man’s age or forgetfulness are is at issue here. But this may not be the case, as these are tendencies in Chomsky that have been appearing for years now. His attack on B.F. Skinner in 1959 has come under attack too, and appears to have been motivated more by careerism than a search for truth..<sup>1437</sup> Many have said that his attack as unfair, and mistaken. Julie Andersen says this in her essay “Skinner and Chomsky 30 Years Later Or: The Return of the Repressed” (1991) O’Donohue and Ferguson’s *The Psychology of B. F. Skinner* (2001) come to a similar conclusion . They claim Noam Chomsky’s review of Skinner’s *Verbal Behavior* was influential, but was badly done in its exegesis. Kenneth MacCorquodale’s, review of Chomsky’s book rejects it as cogent and says that Chomsky completely misunderstood Skinner. E.O Wilson says this too, but nuances it and says, “both Skinner and Chomsky appear to have been partly right, but Skinner more so” <sup>1438</sup>There appears to be a good deal of truth in this.The

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<sup>1437</sup>

<sup>1438</sup> Wilson, E. O. *The Social Conquest of Earth* Liveright Publishing, 2012. Page 235.

hatred of Skinner in Chomsky's essay is hard to explain, but appears to be motivated by bad will, and the effect was harmful to linguistics for decades. Skinner himself wrote before he died that

"I have never been able to understand why Chomsky becomes almost pathologically angry when writing about me but I do not see why I should submit myself to such verbal treatment. If I thought I could learn something which might lead to useful revisions of my position I would of course be willing to take the punishment, but Chomsky simply does not understand what I am talking about and I see no reason to listen to him." Quoted in Julie Andresen  
"Skinner and Chomsky 30 Years Later

Skinner also wrote that "Linguists have usually studied listening rather than speaking (a typical question is why a sentence makes sense), but *Verbal Behavior* is an interpretation of the behavior of the *speaker*, given the contingencies of reinforcement maintained by the community. " This is a far bigger question and one that is well beyond Chomsky's formalist approach. But as this attack raises many questions, I cannot help but wonder what other mistakes Chomsky has made in his science and linguistic studies. As a scientist he is too willing to deny evidence that contradicts his case. He does not submit his work to falsifiability, and indeed is not open to criticism at all. As David Palmer points out that Chomsky work has left little but a desert of squabbling intellectuals, whereas Skinner inspired work on autism and teaching children to read that has had great benefits.<sup>1439</sup> E.O. Wilson's most interesting comment is

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<sup>1439</sup>See <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2223153/> for an excellent essay on how and why Chomsky misused Skinner. Skinner's ideas has had positive benefits on learning for children and autistic, whereas Chomsky failure is more and more obvious and has born little good fruit.

that language is a later development and that “as suggested in Darwin, the fit between language and its underlying mechanism evolved because language evolved to fit the brain, rather than the reverse” (Pg 235)

Chomsky also recently came out objecting to the marvelous work done by Dawkins, Harris, Dennett and Hitchens questioning religion. This is another mistake. The devotion of Chomsky's followers is summarized by radio producer David Barsamian, who describes the master's resplendence when he wrote in openly religious terms about Chomsky that: "he is for many of us our rabbi, our preacher, our Rinpoche, our sensei." Yes, that is exactly the problem with Chomsky, he has not created a healthy atmosphere of inquiry and science around him, but rather has cult followers who call him rabbi and “Rinpoche”, which is a reincarnated Tibetan Lama—a virtual god in Tibetan culture.

While Chomsky was a pretty good journalist, which is to say I often agreed with his politics, he was never my guru or my cult leader. I find the adulation of his followers off putting, and like their cult leader they tend to be mean and authoritarian. Chomsky has a lot of groupies and followers ,like Michael Albert and other writers at ZNet, They imagine they are the sine quo non of the Left, and they are not, indeed their cultish lock step makes them a terrible thing for the left, as they fragment it and create an elitist cell of believers who do little more than talk to each other. I have watched ZNet for years now and it is mostly a divisive influence on the left that cycles around the Chomskyeen ego with groupies vying for approval from the master.. For instance, Chomsky has a follower named Paul Street, whose writing sometimes like and who wrote insightfully about Obama. But Street appears to be unable to have any critical insight into his guru. Street is a rather self-conscious Marxist, trying to pretend he is a Marxist such as the 1930's produced, with little awareness that those days are over. Marxism was hugely destructive to all leftist causes and enshrined a religious credo and nature hatred little different than state capitalism. The killing of people

in Marxist countries of Russia and China under Stalin and Mao was so horrendous that the ideology is permanently suspect. Mao Tse Tong is said to have killed between 20 and 45 million people during the Great Leap Forward campaign in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The total toll for Mao is probably much higher than that, though reliable numbers are hard to know. Stalin killed millions too, Kulaks, people in the Gulag system, people who disagreed with him, though again the exact number is unknown. Capitalism too has done its destructive things, just as bad in many ways. There is little reason to identify oneself with either ideology. Both ideologies have their religious true believers and Paul Street is one fo these, as on the other side is Milton Friedman or Rand Paul.

A Marxist who becomes a Chomkyean is changing religions in a certain way. A Marxist now must read dogma as truth even if the evidence is not there for the dogma, as is often the case in Marxism. Marxism is in many ways just state capitalism, with all the money going to the state instead of to the capitalists and they call the shots. It is a top down system with CEOs of a kind. In China Marxism has become a kind of state capitalism supplying cheap workers for western corporations, who exploit the workers and those at home too. To be a Marxist after a century and a half of failure takes a certain hard headed refusal of evidence. Chomsky relies heavily on dogma too, with similar irrational results. He plays the Prophet and the scientist when he is neither, except in his followers imaginations. Street and other writers at ZNET, whatever their good points, use Chomsky in their writing as an unquestioned authority and that is again in common with the Marxist faith, since Marx also set himself up as a guru who did not need to prove his claims.

Indeed, Marx and Chomsky are prone to a nearly religious following. This rather repulses me. Michael Albert is forever sending out messages trying to grub money to support him and others who work on the ZNet staff. ZNet is a political cult, and I am hardly the only one to say

so. Their collective vision of the future is one of rule by committees and has many Soviet style features, despite their denials of this. I would not want to live in the society they have actually created at ZNet, where dissent is repressed, valid questions are not allowed, and they want to impose their views on everyone in the future. It is good to have alternatives, but their particular alternative is unpalatable, for the most part, even if they are right about some things. The incestuous and narcissistic preaching to the choir that goes on at NET draws many good minds out of the left into a vortex of praise for the ever needy Chomsky who needs this sort of worship

Chomsky is not a cult leader in the classical sense, but he has tendencies in that direction. His cult suppresses any inconvenient information about their master, and protects his often irrational and dogmatic mistakes without owning up to anything. He likes to excommunicate those he disagrees with<sup>1440</sup>. And his ability to negate anyone who questions him too closely is amazing and manipulative. He calls anything he disagrees with a “rant”, reduces his critics to nasty and absurd labels, when they be very clear headed, or right, and he marginalizes those he speaks with all sorts of demeaning expressions or claims not to understand them. I have never seen him admit to wrong doing, though I have seen him do wrong and cruel things.

I find his need to compare himself to fictional prophets and tendency to mysticism and cultish leadership objectionable. I would like to see Chomsky formally renounce his canonization which he has himself encouraged. But he loves adulation too much. He cannot be educated himself even though he has theories of education. He claims, like another cult leader I knew once, to have always thought what he thinks now, as if

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<sup>1440</sup> There is a video of Chomsky being badly treated by the far right pundit, William Buckley, which the cult around Chomsky likes to use as an example of his victims status, but actually Chomsky does this same thing to people he does not agree with. I never liked Buckley much, though he was good for never heard before words, but Chomsky meanness is quite equal.

he were born full headed out of the brow of Zeus. He needs to come back to the fold of science and falsifiability. Evidence must be sought in service of reason,. Reason should not fly forth on its own, “like Minerva from the head of Jupiter” detached from empirical evidence, into irrational grandiosity and self-inflation. In the end Chomsky appears to me to be a cult leader who became that way through politics, whereas in the rest of this book I was looking at cult leaders who become political tyrants through religion. This illustrates some of the modalities of power and how closely religion and politics really are. In both cases, ideology becomes an excuse for mistreating others and setting up a regime of knowledge as a way to manipulate others for power.

And lastly, I end this essay with a measure of real hope. Chomsky’s heavy, obscurely formalistic, grammatical and computational hand has been an intolerable burden on linguistics for many years and has done little good for anyone. Many writers claim that he is a hindrance to further research, not only in linguistics itself but in the evolution of language, a topic Chomsky has avoided and repressed or tagged as an insoluble “mystery” when actually more and more is coming to light about it. What he has written about recently, too little too late, it is not very helpful. I think his reign should be at an end by now and if we won’t abdicate, as he should, he needs to be ignored. Once his work is behind us, the way is open for a renewed effort to pursue the Darwinian study of language into nature itself, as Darwin himself wished. We now know that language was probably found in Neanderthals too, our close relatives, and very likely goes back to Homo Erectus. It is a creation of slow evolution, and thus part of the natural world, not a quasi-divine result of a fictional mutation, UG, or ‘spandrel’ or ‘punctuated equilibrium’. This means there is no human exceptionalism, and as Darwin said, we are all part of evolution and there are no favorites. This is a great leap forward for science, and opens up the study of the communications of animals

and the relation of humans to animals in concrete and systematic way. This is also a very exciting prospect. It opens up all communications in nature to renewed examination. How do birds actually live and think? How do Ungulates or Turkey Vultures communicate? How do dolphins see the world around them, or Hummingbirds negotiate and speak to each other in their tiny world and migrate huge distances. Crows recognize one human face from another and communicate effectively. Raccoons can make 51 different kinds of vocalizations and are extremely smart. We don't yet know why or what they are saying. Once these and many other research projects start to see animals in their own terms, our world will be non-Chomskian. It will be better and clearer and will set humans once again into natural fabric of the universe, not separated from it, as was the case in the Cartesian and Chomskian system of rationalistic dogma. Our systems of communications may be different and some more sophisticated than others, but we all talk, call or sing on the same earth, and we are all related.

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**Beyond the Dead End of Traditional and  
Modernist Aesthetics: Restoring Intelligence  
to Art.**

(The complement to this essay can be found here in a museum show I designed, with accompanying text. Here. Copy and paste:



Eugene Delacroix, "Liberty leading the People"

It might be useful to discuss some modernist and traditional art theories I rejected many years ago and by implication some ideas about art I hold to now. In recent years I have done a lot of research on the origins and history of art, especially realist art. Darwin claimed that "the sounds uttered by birds offer in several respects the nearest analogy to language". Evolution is itself a supreme art, and one that human art imitates when it is good, and, to a degree, when it is not. Darwin also notes that the sense of beauty and need of novelty, is hardly unique to

humans. Our ability to wonder and imagine, seek novelty and reason are also evolutionary, Darwin maintains<sup>1441</sup> He says that music, art and language are part of our origins, and also appear to derive from nature and not just culture<sup>1442</sup> The ability to produce images in our heads in dreams as well as imagine them easily during daylight, seems to be an evolutionary capacity that predates language. Young animals like to play and are very creative at doing it, from birds to deer to chimps, just like young children. It is not farfetched to see such play as evident in Beethoven's music, even while one sees the profundity that might inhabit the same music, say, in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> symphony. The first products of human art and craft are not linguistic but are visual art in the Caves of Chauvet. While different cultures have different art expressions, art itself appears to some degree to be an adaptive need, practiced by humans. Art appears to be Darwinian in its origins, as people are *homo farber*, makers of things, and this has to do with showing fitness, depth, intelligence and probity.<sup>1443</sup>

But it seems some art is more directly adaptationist than others, as some art also a "by product", though this idea is questionable as I said earlier. It seems to be a 'by-product' only in some of its manifestations. In other words, art might be an instinct that is universal, but group art made for a given elite or caste is not. The "art instinct" made cave part

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<sup>1441</sup> See Chapter 3, Descent of Man, section called Sense of Beauty, for more on this. Darwin is perhaps the first thinker who wrote of beauty, imagination, making and art as natural facts and not merely human faculties.

<sup>1442</sup> Denis Dutton the Art Instinct is an interesting discussion of the evolutionary origins of art. He relies heavily on Darwin. But his theory is not very well thought through as he implies religious art is somehow an adaptation, which it does not seem to be. It appears to be a co-opting of the art motive in view of propaganda for an ideological system and thus a sort of lying in view of power.

<sup>1443</sup> John Griffin, a Tasmanian traditionalist author, seems not to have understood Darwin. In his book, The Origin of Beauty, he fails to see that the sense of beauty is certainly part of our biological endowment, even if businessmen fail to get in touch with that, and stupidly destroy beautiful lakes in Tasmania to make more money. He, and tries to postulate the usual "transcendent" fictions to justify the sense of beauty in humans. Even chimps have a sense of wonder, as Jane Goodall showed. Beauty is nowhere an advertisement for god fictions, however authors might fall for this delusion..

possible, but it did not cause the aristocratic art of the Baroque which aggrandized the ideology of the rich. Nor did evolution bring about Roman art's aggrandizing the Caesar. It is hard to see how the concept of a "by product" theory of evolution is very useful here, as art as social propaganda is hardly the same thing as the need to make about of use and beauty or art born of wanting to be sexually attractive to men or women.

Religious art is also a promotional fiction, like art made to promote Hindu caste or a Mayan warrior elite. While Pinker claims that music may be a "by-product" of evolution, this appears to be false if one is talking about the need to sing love songs. The musical impulse appears to be as hardwired in humans as it is in birds, if less constrained. Darwin claimed that language might derive from music and were perhaps a result the processes he calls natural and sexual selection. As the Bower bird makes elaborate mating places for the female, so humans make elaborate arts, books and dances, imaginings of many kinds. Art has its origins in our animal response to nature, not in our claims to be the ultimate unique exemplar of all species. That is merely self-congratulatory hyperbole, and narcissistic bragging, in short, class warfare. Class warfare is not evolutionary,--- it is merely selfish bragging at the expense of others. Such class propaganda might not be art at all, but rather lies told to justify a counter revolutionary elite, like the Nazis or the Christians who destroyed the Library in Alexandria and smashed Greek sculpture.

Of course there is more to art than merely showing romantic attentions or child's play. Da Vinci is not great because of his mating prowess though that is part of the allure of his sense of beauty expressed in the Mona Lisa and elsewhere, but more than this, his art is deep, intelligent and full of prescient inquiries. Art is more than just showing "fitness", like a Peacocks tail, though some art does this very well. Picasso's art is above all the art of a macho wanna-be centaur who

thinks more with his genitals than his mind. That has some evolutionary value, or at least many women thought so who married him. Whereas Da Vinci in contrast is a mind of great depth who even records and describes genitals in drawings of inquiry and profundity. But he appears to have been homosexual and had no children of his own.

Perhaps Darwin would say there are different kinds of fitness. In any case, human expression, art, language, the need to communicate is clearly an instinct that developed via evolution through nature and did so through the development of all the animals, not just humans. We derive from the same evolutionary processes that made birds sing, Ostrich's do their amazing mating dance, or birds seeking a better place to build a nest. If one takes three of the greatest of human expressions in the last 500 years, namely the works of Da Vinci including his notebooks, the Journal of Thoreau and Van Gogh's letters and paintings, it is clear that all three of these are basically about humans as part of nature. They all go very far in telling us how it is to be a human being in the actual world and what life is about. Rembrandt, Beethoven or Shakespeare do that too in very different ways. These are examples of how art is a universal effort to join art and science, beauty, wonder and thought in a seamless expression of insight and amazement at existence itself. Nazi art, in contrast, of the art of a group of warlords who killed a lot of people. Is this art at all? Is corporate art, art? Such art often hangs in huge corporate vestibules, chosen because it is utterly meaningless. Is that just the bragging of a militaristic elite too?

So in what follows I will be comparing aesthetic systems which I think are false, to an art that is closer to nature and more in line with the origins of art making. After all the oldest art, from Chauvet, Lascaux and other early caves, going back 30,000 years, shows animals first and people only incidentally, people who are still very much part of the animal world. This implies art making has to do with a realistic picturing of actual environments and reality very early on. Gods are later

fabrications, and much of what goes by the name of art is the art making faculty co-opted for service to one or another ideology, mythology or system of power and caste. This is not to say that art is an organ, as Chomsky said that language is an organ. It is not. Art at its best is a full expression of humanity, nature and what it means to be alive on earth. Art might be partly seduction as Darwin implies in the sexual selection theory, but did he mean that seduction into a destructive regime of an elite power also art. It seems a valid question. It appears that art has some of its basis in an evolutionary drive to create, but at the same time it is heavily influenced by culture, which is partly evolutionary and partly driven by political fictions.

So art is in part an effect of evolution, and a healthy expression of this relates us to nature and science. Da Vinci already understood this very well. Aristotle and some of the early Greek artists grasped this too, dimly perhaps. Realist art begins with Greeks and Romans, and is suppressed by Christianity, but comes back about 1430. There is a real sea change in art in the early 1420's. Jan Van Eyck was one of the first to use oils in the 1420-30's, about the same time as Gutenberg developed his printing press (1439). There is real progress here, which in many ways prefigures what science would become. The change is not due to the use of optical instruments but to a change in the mentality of men like Van Eyck. Science grows to some degree out of the art motive, which has objectivity at its root. Van Eyck was in love with depicting the reality that he knew and did it over and over again in many works, exploring textures, wood, cloth, old skin, jewels, plants, architectures, landscapes, bridges, whole towns and the people in them. Realism develops partly in reaction against the Catholic Church and partly in embrace of a new kind of thinking, recalling the Greek experiments, that would soon become science.

The Black Plague also can ironically be credited with creating a new willingness to question authority, as the Church could not cure the Plague with prayer. Also the rich landowners are also decimated by the Plague and so the workers grow wealthier due to being in greater demand. The ubiquity of death caused many to dwell more on their lives on Earth, rather than on Catholic themes of the beyond, sin, hell and the afterlife. Medicine improves after the Black Plague too, as a new concern with reality and how to deal with it is encouraged. Ideologies that support the upper classes come into question.

An artist who exhibits both the realist tendency and worked for the ideologically driven church was Tilman Riemenschneider. Riemenschneider is one of the most interesting of the Christian artists of the late middle ages, a natural inheritor of the work of Van Eyck, only now in sculpture.. He was a master who must have grown up on the amazing achievements of Jan Van Eyck and the realism that made outward appearances so important. It is certainly not a matter of lenses and optical devices that made Van Eyck so good, but a thorough description of reality, paint stroke by paint stroke. He did some amazing wood sculptures which depict people of the time and some amazing 'secular' work that shows the desire to hold to reality. He was tortured and much of his property seized after his support of in the Peasant's War of 1525. He died in 1531.



detail of St Jerome and the Lion 1495.

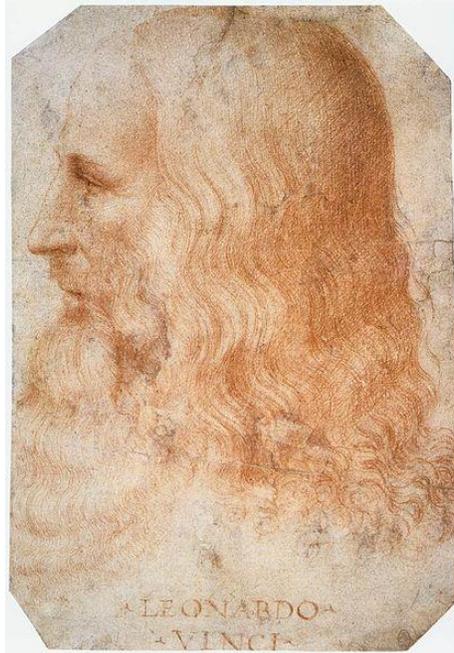
artwork by author

Realism also develops in Italy from Da Vinci's time. There was a concerted attempt to rediscover and truly understand the works of ancient Greek and Roman authors, some of them coming from Islamic sources and some coming through new translations. Most of the books in Leonardo's personal library, and he had 170 or so<sup>1444</sup>, an enormous number of books in those days, were of Greek or Roman authors. In Leonardo is born the idea of art as a pursuit of knowledge of the world, no longer an ideal world, but the actual world, and most good art since his time is a contribution to this pursuit. Leonardo never was concerned with art about art or art about its own materials and methods. He would have thought such art silly, as indeed it is. Art for him is part of an effort to understand all aspects of the actual world, beginning with nature, and to improve upon the world if possible. He was very interested in methods of painting particularly that of the Van Eyck school, because of its physical accuracy. His interest in geometry and math is part of his effort to understand the earth and its processes, and this led him into physics and inventions. It is a strait line fomr Van Eyck to Leonardo to the Dutch

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<sup>1444</sup> These included texts by Archimedes, Liv, Pliny Ovid, Aristotle and many others. Also important to Leonardo was his friendship with the mathematician Luca Pacioli, as Leonard illustrated his book "De Divina Proportione"

masters up to Courbet. But of that, more later. First we must consider the reaction against enlightenment.



Francesco Melzi.

The only likely portrait of Leonardo Da Vinci

He never did a self portrait

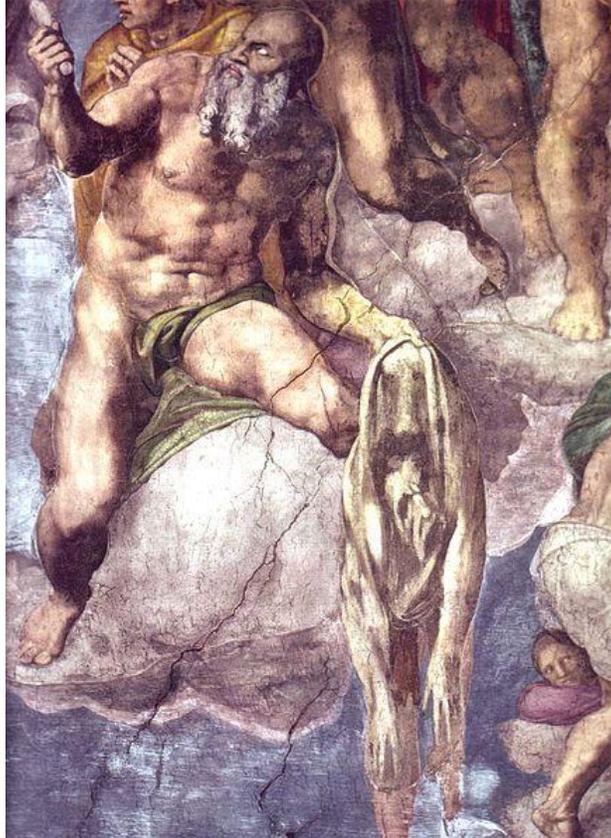
Da Vinci shows best what realism is in his practice of trying to draw everything, from simple machines, to anatomy, to children, water, light, space mountains and everything he could he defines painting as

“painting embraces or includes in itself every object produced by nature or resulting from the fortuitous actions of men, in short, all that the eye can see. He seems a poor master who can only do the figure well. For a [good artist can not only see] how many and various actions are performed by men only, but how many different animals there are, as well as trees, plants, flowers, with many mountainous regions and plants, springs and rivers, cities with

public and private buildings, machines too, fit for the purpose of men, diverse costumes and decorations and arts? And all these things ought to be regarded as equal value, by the man who can be termed a good painter.

That this means is that drawing the human figure is just the beginning, art is about everything and all subjects are equal to it, as all subjects are equal in nature. This is far ahead of its time, and of our time too. Realism is not an exploitive art but an art that seeks to understand and nurture all that is good on earth. There is nothing of the cramped, empty corporate and abstract art about it. It is deep and gritty, poetic and homely and explores the facts and reality of things, not the negation of reality, not cyberspace or religious fictions. Realism is part of the struggle against classism and economic elites that are destroying our planet. As many museums and art galleries are taken over by the corporate elite they, of course, dislike Realism and the over 500 year history of its democratic ascendancy. They are opposed to the meaning of Leonardo's vision and that of Darwin and Courbet too. They oppose unions, nature's rights, and often human rights in practice. The Boards of museums choose the director and insure that rich white guys will control museum culture. They do this as an act to gain prestige, power and influence. Their point of view is usually conservative and favors wealth over reality, money over social content. They want to stop democracy, and turn art into corporate and CEO-controlled emptiness and money. But the truth is otherwise. Realism is not about Boards and indeed is against them. Life is everywhere and it is the earth and all that is on it that matters. Realism shows reality. It shows how much we have to change what we do to make the lives of everyone better. It always has this critical edge. Even if it is hidden, as in Da Vinci's drawings or Goya's portraits.

In contrast, Michelangelo is a reactionary force in many ways, quite the opposite of Leonardo. He is not a realist but a Platonist and idealist. (see earlier essay on Plato) His gigantic figures have little to do with reality, adding muscles to human anatomy that are too humongous to be believable. He harkens back to Dante and the medieval mind. His only self-portrait shows him as a pathetic flayed skins hanging in mock humility of the hand of a saint who is the a bloated giant of transcendence. This formula of ridiculous humility combined with delusions of grandeur can be seen in many places and has often led to atrocity and institutional cruelty. His depiction of himself as a self-pitying, boneless skin harkens back to the self-abnegation promoted by a toxic Christianity in the Dark Ages. I find his false self-pity,--- which incidentally gets him into heaven--- objectionable. His depiction of Christ as a whirling tyrant of death looks forward to the Absolute Monarchies of Europe. To my mind the Last Judgment of Michelangelo is one of the worst art works of inflated propaganda ever done and contains one of the worst self-portraits ever done.



Despite his considerable drawing skills, ( see the Battle of Cascina) his art is merely Church propaganda, lies told to advertise an unjust institution. Leonardo mostly disliked institutions and the Church<sup>1445</sup> and was forward looking or rather, he is present and an amazing, with an inquiring mind that looks to each thing for the reality of it, how to draw it, now to understand it. He is the antithesis of a Platonist. He is the first scientist.

So from Da Vinci and Van Eyck art moves forward and backward. Backward is into Michelangelo and Luca Giordano's "The Triumph and Glory of the Habsburgs", who were an unjustly rich aristocratic family who were deeply entrenched in the Slave trade, the extermination of

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<sup>1445</sup> Leonardo did work for various tyrants, namely the Sforzas and Cesare Borgia. But he seems to have been disgusted with them in the end. He was also friends with Machiavelli. Machiavelli's skeptical attitude to Borgia is contained, I think, in the Prince, which I believe is a satire of him and like rulers.

Native Tribes and the gold obsession of the Europeans during the Rococo and later. These absurd images are the very definition of religious magnification, a term I have used in all these essays. These absurd glorifications, one could call them wedding cake magnifications, people the ceilings of churches all over Europe during the 1600's. They are the origin of corporate art and one can draw a line from them and Versailles all the up to Ingres and Symbolist art into the art of corporate emptiness.



Giordano Luca. The Triumph and Glory of the Habsburgs (1695).  
Monastery of El Escorial

In opposition to this tendency to absurd magnification of unjust

religions and powerful and greedy aristocracy one can trace a very different art history. Da Vinci and Van Eyck lead through Van Der Goes, De Hooch, Ter Borch, Vermeer, Rembrandt and on up to Chardin, and Courbet, Millais, Brett, and Langley<sup>1446</sup> and goes largely underground after 1920, when subjectivist abstractions takes over as the market aspect of art promoted by increasingly corporate serving galleries and critics who make of art an irrational and formal dogmatism, rather as the Catholic Church had done. Critics become dogmatic cardinals in the church of modernist irrationality. Lack of skill is exalted, as is shoddy workmanship, bad drawing, abstract art about itself, and ugliness.

But there are realist artists all along though this period, from George Tooker<sup>1447</sup> to Ben Shaun, Andrew Wyeth, Chalres Burchfield, and Edward Hopper. Abstract art quickly becomes an irrational promotional tool for corporate structures, which themselves grow out of the old aristocratic inequality which the French Revolution sought to supplant. Art about art becomes a mantra for delusion and a human centered painting, totally subjective and speciesist, comes to rule. There is not yet an effective rebellion against the corporate ideology, but there must be eventually, if the earth and art, is too survive.

With this history in mind I will show what a Realist/Science based aesthetic is and contrast that with the traditionalist and modernist

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<sup>1446</sup> John Brett was a painter of landscape and the Cornwall coast, and did some lovely children and seascapes and Walter Langley was a socialist who started the Newlyn school, and did some very moving work on the lives of the working class fisherman and their families in Cornwall. Nothing in the world is so good at capturing the feeling and social facts of the times as the French realists, Newlyn artists and some Americans, recording the daily lives of people going back as far as Van Eyck or further.

<sup>1447</sup> Tooker's work is interesting and celebrates both community and alienation from community until In later years he unfortunately degenerates into a catholic painter and loses his focus. He was early on influenced by Martin Luther King.

aesthetics . <sup>1448</sup>These are both ideological systems of art theory, one supporting dead or dying aristocratic regimes of China, India, Persia, and Christendom. Modernist aesthetics grows out of Theosophy and Symbolist art as well as the dying aristocracies of Europe and supports corporate or communist art. I will be criticizing the manner in which such art was made to serve powers.

The traditionalist idea of art is largely mythical and based on adult make believe. It develops the myths of the Buddha, Christ, and Muhammad as well Krishna and others in Safavid, Rajput or Hindu painting, Mosque abstractions, or various Symbolists as its exemplars. Are these fictions art? It seems they are and they are not. In one sense Hindu or Christian art is a lie, but in another some fictions try to tell the truth. Guenon talks about Craft and Art in chapter 8 of his book Reign of Quantity. This is a ridiculous book, but important as being typical of what would become Traditionalist aesthetics, one of the few aesthetic theories in modern times to challenge modernist aesthetics. Schuon and Burckhardt extends Guenon's ideas and those of Ananda Coomaraswamy in his essays on "Sacred Art" . To some degree these ideas can be seen as an extension of theosophy, which heavily influenced Guenon and Coomaraswamy and which also influenced Kandinsky, Mondrian and others. Indeed, as Roger Lipsey has shown, traditionalist aesthetics and high modernism are remarkably similar.<sup>1449</sup> The spiritual in art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a complex affair. This is an important

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<sup>1448</sup> I began this chapter as part of a review of Guenon's book Reign of Quantity. This chapter was originally part of that chapter as a digression. But it got too long and went way beyond Guenon's retrograde theories, so I have made it into a chapter of its own.

<sup>1449</sup> Lipsey, Roger An Art of Our Own, Shambhala 1988. Lipsey was an academic who was a promoter of Coomaraswamy's work and remained something of a promoter for traditionalism in general. While the traditionalists hated modern art deeply, Lipsey is right that many of the ideas at the basis of seminal figures like Kandinsky and Mondrian are indeed, "spiritual" Another book that explores this same area is Maurice Tuchman's The Spiritual in Art. I am here rejecting both traditional art and the modernist art that Lipsey refers to as spiritual and abstract. Such art really belong in the history of religion. Religion in the 20<sup>th</sup> century becomes a personal thing and gets annexed by the corporations.

subject and I will dwell on it for some length. Guenon's aesthetics is a hodge podge of modernist and traditional ideas and thus I can use it to discuss traditional and modern aesthetics of many kinds.

How do these system deploy delusions as compared to facts? Are they intended to deceive or to draw toward or away from the actual and real conditions of life. It is immediately clear that traditionalist and modernist aesthetics are delusional, non-factual and elitist systems or social and aesthetic control. Realism is thus not only a threat to religious myths, it is also a threat the irrational cultural elites, corporate structures and CEO culture as well as and econmic boards and elites.

What Schuon and Guenon call aesthetics is really just a formal subjectivism of a narcissistic nature, born of the Symbolist Movement, one that William James would have agreed with, for similar mistaken reasons. <sup>1450</sup> For James, art is a subjective experience and has a collective dimension like religion. The felt qualities of experience is what matters to James and this view absorbs art into his definition of religion, which also is all about feeling.- The implication of his Varieties of Religious Experience is that religion is valid as a subjective experience and this experience is aesthetic and "factual" because it is felt. This confuses the subjective and objective in a falsifying way. This is basically the Protestant notion that "faith is more important than works". The notion of being "born again" is a subjective delusion that develops out of this. Like James, Schuon and Guenon are basically promoting subjective transcendentalism as an objective thing, when it is not. This is what the Symbolist school holds too as far as their aesthetic theories are

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<sup>1450</sup> James is sandwiched between Whitman and Emerson. He is like the former in terms of Whitman's effort to be a Platonistic 'universal man', which Schuon also attempted. He is like Emerson in a certain quasi Hinduism, as in the theory of the oversoul or the idea of a Platonistic subjectivism that is universalized.

concerned. Schuon and Guenon go even further than James who was tempered by his pragmatism, and claim religion to be part of art history in a plenary and totalistic sense. They identify art as being valued only in “traditional culture” by which they mean traditional China, India, Native America, Islam and medieval Christendom and so on. This is the art of Rajput Brahman aristocrats, Monasteries, Chinese theocrats, and other political/ spiritual elitists.

To understand Symbolism as a theory of art, one has to go back further and understand why the Symbolist aesthetic developed. The rebellion against symbolism was a rebellion against aristocracy, elite families, heraldic inheritance and social control by economic elites. The French Revolution inspired a realist Classicism such as one sees in David and Girodet. David’s *Marat* is really one of the first French Realist or Naturalist works. This is an aesthetic that is closer to science. By the 1850’s Realism and Naturalism throw over mythological painting, (there is actually little difference between the two) were the heirs of the ideas of the French Revolution. The conservative government of France, first under Louis Philippe I (reign: 1830 to 1848) and later by Louis Napoleon (1848-1870), was a self-destructive reactionary government that was in some ways a throwback to the decadent days of the 1700 and the outrages of Louis 14<sup>th</sup> and Absolutism.<sup>1451</sup> It is this toxic stew of French aristocracy and backward leaning conservatism that slandered Courbet and sought to hurt him and drive him from the country. Its symbol was the Vendome Column which sought to picture Napoleon and a quasi divine emperor. Courbet wanted it taken down, as indeed, it should have been, or rather it still should be in a museum as Courbet said. It is a

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<sup>1451</sup> The neo classical use of the human figure was employed by both the far right and the left after the French Revolution. In the 1790’s Delacroix had created “Liberty leading the People” using the classical body. But by 1850 the realists had largely taken over while classical imagery was largely used in support of the reactionary regimes in France.

monument to a tyrant, not too different to one that might uphold Adolf Hitler as a Roman Emperor on top of a column showing his war exploits.

Realism largely rejected the aristocracy and their notion of the “divine right of kings”, the absolutist and the Monarchical as a viable way of looking at reality. So called “History” paintings were more political myth and propaganda than anything else, and were devoted to theocracy and monarchy.<sup>1452</sup> The French Revolution opened up the possibility of a realist art that was not based on religious fictions, nobility or the dreams of monarchs. Jules-Antoine Castagnary, a critic who sided with Gustav Courbet, wrote of the Salon in 1857 that

“It is the human side of art which takes the place of the heroic and divine side of art, and which affirms itself with the strength of numbers and the authority of talent.”

In other words the primary reason for the failure of art as “history”<sup>1453</sup> and mythological painting ( the “divine side of art”) was that

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<sup>1452</sup> There are painters today who think that resurrecting David’s Napoleon on a rearing horse or Van Dyke’s view of King Charles, or of aristocratic and overdressed women in august poses will give corporate CEO’s or even ordinary folks proper dignity, not realizing that these forms are corrupt from the inside, and no less corrupt used to glorify anyone. Reducing art to the aristocratic fashions of yesteryear will not make it better.

<sup>1453</sup> Calling mythological painting “history painting” is something of a misnomer. It is common thing, --even Rembrandt refers to his painting of biblical subjects as history painting, though actually history has very little to do with what he made. It is really literary painting that he was doing, much of it based on the fictions in the bible. Rembrandt is probably the best of the illustrators of the Biblical fictions. His drawings alone, on this subject, are without peer. Jesus probably did not exist, but Rembrandt’s drawings of this fictional character make one wish he had, These are great drawings. The same is true of Bach’s Cantatas and Mass. This is great music, even though it is probably done in devotion to a mythology and a non-existent person .

. There is an attempt to create real history painting during the French revolution and after in the realist movement. Indeed, some art such as Courbet’s great “The Painter’s Studio” or other works showing strikers, coal miners, or the plight of women become a virtual social history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The roots of this are in the Dutch of course, from De Hooch, Steen and Ter Borch. Art in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is close to photography and part of history in a real sense. This is true to a degree in the 20<sup>th</sup> century too, though abstract art does great harm to this. But when reality is painted in

a more human art of the actual and democratic took its place, and as it became clear that humans are animals and only a part of nature, human centeredness becomes suspect.. Courbet refused the idea that there was a “higher reality” than the actual, and said, “I cannot paint an angel because I have never seen one”. He is right about that and knew that those who claimed to have seen one were delusional. The very notion of a “higher truth” makes the actual dirty and shocking, and abuses the world we actually live in.<sup>1454</sup> When Courbet said that art “is the most complete expression of an existing thing”<sup>1455</sup>, he was saying that the world we live in is what really matters and what we should care about. Religion makes people care about a world that is not there and helps people serve the rich who also claim a kind of bogus immortality. The French realists like Courbet, took the early Dutch realists like De Hooch, Rembrandt, Ter Borch or Vermeer as their exemplars. This theory of art, which I share, goes back to Da Vinci. Da Vinci wrote that

“ If poetry treats of moral philosophy, painting has to do with natural philosophy. ... Truly painting is a science, the true born child of nature, for painting is born of nature, or to be more correct,, we should call it the grandchild of nature; since all things were brought forth by nature and these her children have given birth to painting“ <sup>1456</sup>

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the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by artists like Raphael Soyer, Gwen John, Edward Hopper, or Harvey Dinnerstein, it is much more interesting than the vapid abstractions that rule most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>1454</sup> The moralistic notion of human nature as “folly” compared to the ideal truth of Christ which one sees in Erasmus, Bosch and Breugel, ends up as an absurd love of repulsion as one can see in the performance art of Paul McCarthy, Herman Neech, the movies of Polanski, or the ugly photos of Cindy Sherman. The flesh becomes a sort of glorified evil, and is as absurd as the glorified idealism that is its oppsite.

<sup>1455</sup> Berger John. Portraits John Berger on Artists, Verso books, 2015. Pg 229

<sup>1456</sup> Richter, Irma. Selections from the Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci Oxford, 1977 page 195-200

Da Vinci's aesthetic theories were never taken seriously. But they should have been, indeed. Poetry is inferior to painting as seeing is better than hearing and experience is better than tall tales and stories. Leonardo was right that art should serve nature. In the late 1800s the exalted mythological painting so dear to the monarchists and champions of the far right, was dying. George Stubbs horse studies, even his anatomical studies, continue this idea.



George Stubbs anatomy study of horse

Realism was a movement away from religion and monarchy and towards the ordinary and the real, the actual and the people. It is the most important art movement since the Northern and Italian Renaissance, which it extends. Much of the art that is good in the last nearly 400 years comes from the 'naturalism/realism impulse. I think of

Frederick Church's marvelous small studies of nature, rainbows, waterfalls, mountains or comets or Heade's Mexican Hummingbirds and Orchids.

Artists have often been said to be reacting against photography in the middle of the 1800's. I am not sure that the invention of the photographic process mattered that much. Turner and Courbet liked it, as did Eakins and many other artists who embraced it. It was much more of a positive influence on realism than a negative one. I see it too, though I do not depend on it, and think the human eye is much more sensitive. The political awareness of the Enlightenment grew so much after the French and American revolutions that religion and aristocracy begin to be seen, rightly, as a major impediment. By 1848, there was a real sea change in culture. France rejected the Bourbon restoration eventually and undid the unfortunate experience of Napoleon.

Classicism, which starts out as a progressive force, becomes a regressive one. The American Civil War was a local event that did not affect Europe or Canada. However, when one looks at it as part of class conflict, it was a rebellion against the old order too. A 'confederate' and slave holding aristocracy was defeated. Degas' mother was from such a slave holding, southern family. The notion of Impressionism as a progressive force is thus not at all an obvious truism.

Courbet's realism, in contrast to the superficial apolitica of impressionism, in contrast, was truly progressive. Courbet, following Da Vinci reverses the age old effort to make art the handmaid of religious or aristocratic powers. Courbet was mercilessly attacked by the French aristocracy and the Napoleonists, who took over again after the Franco Prussian War of 1871. They scapegoated Courbet in the worst possible way, as his letters show, slandering him, ruining his family and forcing him into exile for an act which he did not commit, the destruction of the Column on which a rather bad sculpture of Napoleon was erected, called the Vendome Column. Courbet objected to the glorification of conquest and

unjust war the column celebrated. He wanted it dismantled and put in a museum, not torn down. This is proven in his letters.<sup>1457</sup> Courbet was probably killed by this scapegoating. He was longing to return to his beloved Ornans and France shortly before he died. He struggled against the vicious campaign of slander against him to the very end. Someone should make a movie or write a book about this. It is one of the worst treatments of any artist by any government. Only the abuse of poets by Stalin can be compared to this, or the murder of journalists. This shows again how the upper classes are the enemy of real art, and only want art to serve themselves. Courbet, without ideals and without religion, is the most interesting man in 19<sup>th</sup> century France and one who was himself a victim of all that is destructive in France at that time. His friend Jules Castagnary sought to rehabilitate Courbet from the false charge of the Vendôme affair. Courbet should be exonerated and the government of France should publically apologize for their mistake. The Vendôme Column should be unriveted and put in a museum, and the crimes of Napoleon openly discussed. Courbet was right.

Impressionism is overvalued, I think, as some of the best realist work was done in the 1840s till the 1920's, and in small pockets up to the present. Monet was the best of them. I don't think of Van Gogh as an impressionist, though he is often included in the post impressionists, though that is rather an obtuse category made up by critics. Courbet's story is far more important than the impressionists, who are fluffy and innocuous in comparison to Courbet. Symbolist and abstract subjectivity, born of spiritual reactionaries, takes over after WW1, but appears to be slipping into repetitive nonsense now.

The classical models that Turner followed, Claude Lorrain and

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<sup>1457</sup> See Petra ten-Doesschate Chu. Letters of Gustave Courbet. This is an important book and a great service to art history. It tells the tragic story of one of the greatest of modern artists.

Poussin, for instance, is also evident in Cole, Ingres, Bingham, and others, and this manner is largely rejected or reinterpreted in later painters such as Winslow Homer or Eastman Johnson. What I mean is, after the civil war, there is a decided turn against idealization and towards reality. One could rightly say that this was inevitable given the Enlightenment, and we are still in the period that begins with the Enlightenment. In Europe this same change happens after 1848 and the Pre Raphaelites where you can see the art split into a symbolist camp and a realist camp. The Symbolists give us the dead end of abstract art. This arises from Baudelaire. In later life, he became increasingly reactionary, an anti-semitic and hated nature and democracy. He is usually considered one of the fathers of the Symbolist Movement. Abstraction and Corporate art are reactionary and grow from the Symbolist Movement and its embrace of a human centered and radical subjectivism.<sup>1458</sup>

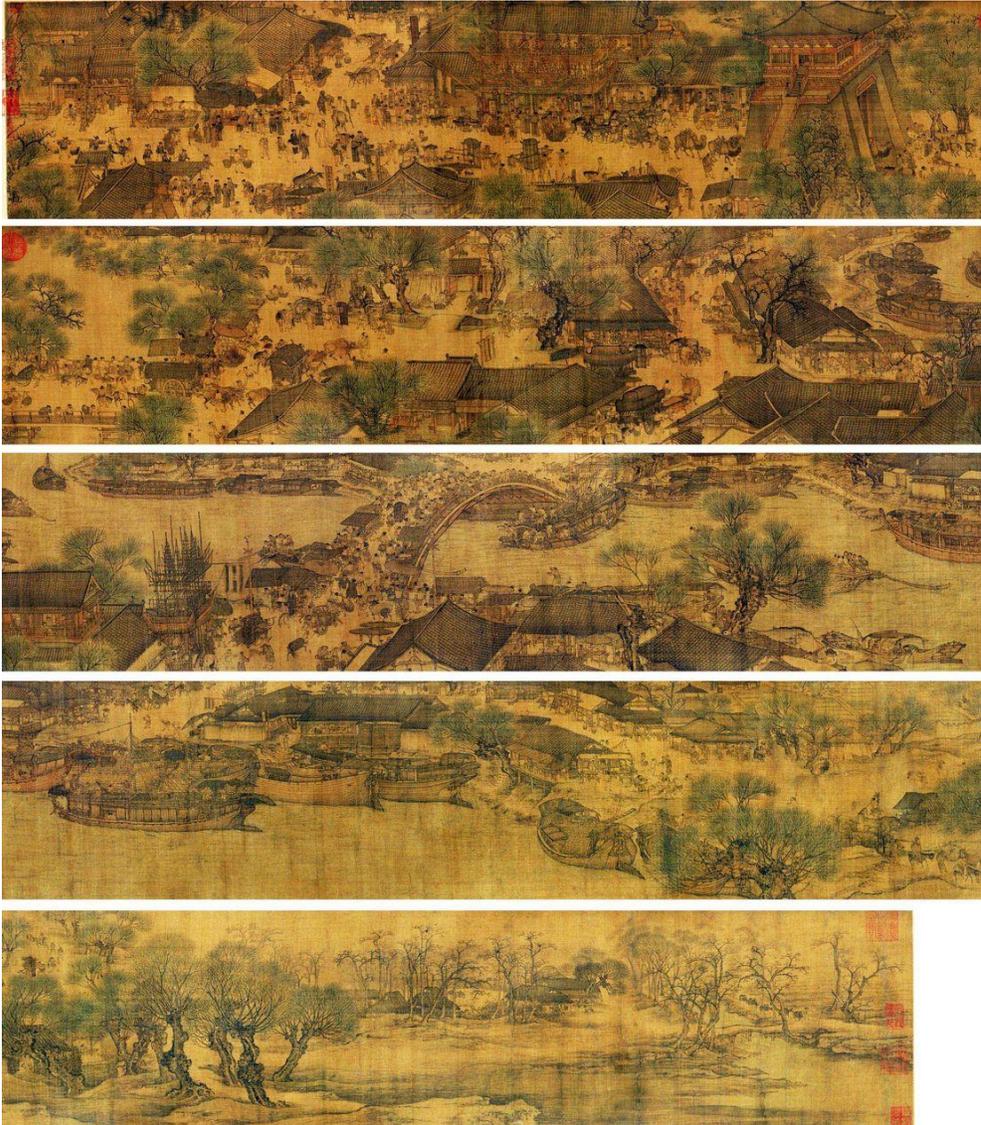
On the other hand, the realists give us, among so many others, Courbet, Stanhope Forbes and Laura Knight, Hammershoi, Ilsted, Repin, Sargent, Kollowitz, and other realists, including those in China<sup>1459</sup>. This

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<sup>1458</sup> It is interesting to see how Baudelaire became a reactionary after his early relationship with Courbet who was the complete opposite. Courbet already had seen through Baudelaire, as he showed in his great statement on poetry, in which he showed Baudelaire, Gautier and Lamartine, and other poets drinking deadly water from a fountain poisoned by a nude woman, a model. He describes this painting, which was lost in an accident, in letter 64-2, on Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1864. He calls it the "Hippocrene Fountain", others call it the source of the Hippocrene. It is a major realist statement against poetic otherworldliness.

<sup>1459</sup> Chinese art has an amazing history in realism.. Indeed, some aspects of Song dynasty (960-1279) aesthetic ideas in poetry and paintings are not that far from my own. Some poets are artists upheld the value of ordinary realism and were trying to question power and not exalt it. ( see some of the later work of Mei Yaochen, for instance, or his amazing poem, "A Lone Falcon above the Buddha", it could have been written yesterday its accuracy is so precise). Chinese art history is still undervalued in the west. But actually there are artists in China going back to the Song dynasty, (1100 C.E.) who are far ahead of artists in Europe. For instance, (Chang Tse-duan) or Zhang Zedaun's amazing "Up the River during the Qingming Festival" has no European counterpart till 300 years later when Van Eyck did the background of the Chancellor Rolin painting, which also shows a bridge and activities and towns along a river.

change was already evident in the great genre painters of the 1600's. Tsvetlan Todorov, a historian of great interest, put his finger on it in his essay of Dutch art of that time:



I reproduce the whole scroll here just to show its extent. There are 800 people in it, countless animals and buildings, ships and carts. It needs to be seen close up and studied. These two works by Courbet and Zouan, are really the beginning of realism as well as the attempt to picture life in many modalities and viewpoints. The river is the source of life in both works as it would be in Mark Twain's writing. Courbet's self-portrait in the Studio evokes a similar effort to picture life in many ways and celebrate it. There is a modern attempt to animate Zouan's great work and these are interesting too as he was such a good artist, he really shows what life was like in 1100 in China. This goes beyond mere history into nearly evoking the reality of that time. Zhang's work is certainly one of the world's great paintings, as is the Studio of Courbet

the genre painter is not satisfied only to renounce history, he makes a choice, a highly restrictive choice, among all the actions that make up the tissue of human life. He renounces the representation of everything that exceeds the ordinary, and remains inaccessible to the majority of mortals. There is no place here for heroes and saints. <sup>1460</sup>

Yes. Art begins to be about reality and the ordinary and abolishes hero worship and saints. Heroes and saints were merely propaganda props for political and religious power. There are nearly constant efforts to keep heroic/saintly art alive from the absurdities of Rococo art to modern abstractions. Symbolist art goes in the opposite direction from realism, which is progressive. Symbolist art is retrograde, early on evoking the Middle Ages and subjectivist idealization and perceptions. The Symbolist manifesto was written by Jean Moreas in 1888 and was published in *Le Figaro*. Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine and other subjectivist poets were cited as originators. Eventually the ideas of symbolist ideology would influence Action Française, the French Fascist group of Charles Maurras that Guénon originally admired.<sup>1461</sup> Symbolist art, from which most of misnamed “modernism” derives,<sup>1462</sup> developed in

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<sup>1460</sup> Todorov essay, “In Praise of the Quotidian”, 1997

<sup>1461</sup> I write about Maurras elsewhere in the book as well as Guénon’s relationship with Action Française.

<sup>1462</sup> Modern merely means recent and all recent art is ‘modern’ the notion that ‘modernism’ is somehow only to be connected to those who create art for its own sake, art about art or art about its own methods and materials, is the fictive innovation of some very bad art critics, such as Clement Greenberg, Arthur Danto and many others. Many of these critics are really promoters of corporate culture and are limited and hard to take seriously. Indeed, most of them have done far more harm than good. There are a number of critical pieces about modern art that are interesting. Tom Wolfe’s *The Painted Word*, which I read many years ago, and largely agreed with, in the 1980’s. Scott Burdick’s “Beauty”, a series of videos critical of abstract art, is very good at showing up the emptiness and inanity of so much modern art. I don’t agree with everything he says, for instance he talks about spiritual art and “transcendent beauty” without really knowing what he is

the 1880-90's and was a reaction against realism and a throwback to Medieval, Monarchist and mythological themes. Abstract art develops out of some of the Symbolists. That is why abstract art was able to serve the corporation so readily, as it was also autocratic, monolithic and based on subjective mythology. The death of the Kings merely displaced autocracy into the injustices and arbitrary dictatorship of CEOs. CEOs call what they do "freedom", I call it a psychopathology.

The rise of abstract art goes against the direction charted originally by Da Vinci. Yet if you begin with Da Vinci, it is clear how Rembrandt follows, then De Hooch, Vermeer, Ter Borch and on up to Van Gogh. I admire Leonardo of the notebooks, more than the painter, though I love his works in oil too. I like Vincent for the same reason, though in his case, his mental illness intervened so tragically, but if one looks at his early work, it is reality that was his main concern. The best of his later work has this in it too. Other artists like Menzel or Ilsted, have glimmers of this in them too, and that is what I love in them, the effort to demonstrate actual lives and facts of things, light, situations, people and animals. Stubbs has it in his dogs and horses and Millais in some of his better works. Paintings of the relative world are all that matter, the symbolists and abstractionists fail, by this understanding. Subjectivist art is by definition a human centered art and one that is therefore speciesist and prone to transcendentalist inflations. International architecture which is fundamentally anti-nature is also prone to inflated skyscrapers towering over largely dead cities, void of nature and crawling with humans in a virtual caste system of homelessness and excessively rich people.

This division or split in culture, between the Symbolists and the

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saying. Transcendent beauty is a fiction for reasons I have spelled out in this book. But he is correct about many other things. see

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGX0\\_0VL06U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGX0_0VL06U)

See also Deana Petherbridge on the bankruptcy of drawing after Picasso too.

Realists, is already evident as the Pre- Raphaelite movement<sup>1463</sup>, which started out as a realist movement in Millais, Ford and Hunt and then was subverted by D.G. Rossetti who pushed it into an encrusted and subjectivist byway of symbolist and escapist conceits. English art divides along political lines in the middle of the 1800's. As 1900 approached, art become more detached from reality, mythological and retrograde. Such

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<sup>1463</sup> The best of this school are its early members who tried to be objective. John Everett Millais's Ophelia and other works are wonderfully observed. William Holman Hunts "Our English Coasts" remains one of the best landscapes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hunt got increasingly religious as he got older and his art fails in that.

Ford Madox Brown is very interesting as in his great works "Work" or "The Last of England". Victorian painting is full of wonderful, intelligent works full of life and feeling, badly neglected by the prejudices and narrow-mindedness of "modernist" art historians, who tend to despise content, feeling, intelligence and objectivity in art. His painting "Work" is probably one of the most important paintings of the last two hundred years . He did a lot more than this, and his Murals in Manchester City Hall are social histories of this city and are partly about science and freedom. His "Crabtree Watching the Transit of Venus", his "Chaucer" and his "The Last of England, a picture of Immigrants, are good examples of real social history painting, and not at all the mythological nonsense that Rossetti was up to. Brown is closer to Hubert Herkomer, Luke Fildes, George Clausen and Frank Holl than the later symboists and inded, is on the trajectory of great realist painting, and not the road to abstract conceit, which is where the line from Rossetti goes. "Work" is probably the single most "Dickensian" painting there is. If Dickens social vision has a visual counterpart it is this painting as well as Luke Fildes' "Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward" of 1874, or Herkomers "Eventide" and Frank Holl's "Newgate Prison".



artists as Edward Burne Jones and William Morris, (arts and crafts movement) were a big influence on Ananda Coomaraswamy (AKC) who pushed the aesthetic of otherworldly symbolism even further than Rossetti. There are links to monarchist and far right movements all along. Coomaraswamy's view of art, education and religion grows out of symbolist concerns, and so does that of Guenon and Schuon, who largely followed Coomaraswamy. Like them AKC is a reactionary throwback to the caste systems of Europe and India. <sup>1464</sup> Schuon's paintings are nude versions of Rossetti's or Hodler's works, redone with pretence of the universal. The anti-science aesthetic of these thinkers advocates an art that is opposed to enlightenment and liberal democracy, human rights and sense. There is an intellectual escapist art that exalts subjectivity.

Da Vinci and later Courbet and Van Gogh. throw out the medieval and Symbolist notion of Eckhart that "the eye with which I see God is the same eye with which He sees me". <sup>1465</sup> This is transcendental narcissism in a nutshell. Realist art creates a different emphasis. Eckhart's aphorism, in realist art becomes instead, "the eye with which I see nature and reality is the same eye with which nature and reality enter into me and from which I come". In other words, this is a Darwinian art, an art immersed in nature and fact, and the gods are gone. The aesthetic symbolist of Platonistic 'essences' which are supposed to be "behind" the world of nature and myself is gone. What is left is ourselves, nature, earth and all the beings and biomes upon it. Art is no longer about a fictional "eternity" but about factual reality.

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<sup>1464</sup> William James was inspired by his father's involvement Swedenborg and Theosophical tendencies, which also inspired Coomaraswamy. This system is also a throwback to medieval Hindu and European superstition and caste. Of course in James there is also the pull towards pragmatism, and makes his spiritual tendencies less idealistic, and so acceptable to some, though not less fictional, in fact.

<sup>1465</sup> Meister Eckhart was a favorite writer of Ananda Coomaraswamy, and he implies transcendental subjectivism very dear to the traditionalists.

So then, once one understands the reactionary nature of most mythical art in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1466</sup>, then it becomes clear how the Symbolist movement developed and then collapsed into corporate art. Abstract art comes from this collapse. The aesthetic of Guénon and Schuon is reactionary, mythological and monarchist and harkens back to those who hated the equalizing tendencies 18<sup>th</sup> century... They are throwbacks to those who hated human rights and the French Revolution and wanted the return of corrupt kings.

Once one understands that this far right reaction was the basic attitude of the traditionalists, then we can proceed with a discussion. Their religion is merely a magnification<sup>1467</sup> of their political motives and dressed up as a metaphysic and an aesthetic as well as a method or behavior code. Aspects of Symbolist aesthetic also develop into surrealism or abstractionism. How this happens is not a complex matter. Kandinsky starts out as a Theosophical symbolist, as was Coomaraswamy, and develops into an abstractionist, for instance. The value of the symbolist movement was to turn art away from representation of reality to an increasingly escapist, corporate, abstract, construct. Corporate globalization and the creation of a universal religious ideology are part of the same tendency. It is all about power, wealth and insuring that the rich stay rich. This means that the art of Duchamp and Warhol is not art either. It is merely advertising. As the great Japanese Haiku artist Issa said:

Writing shit about new snow,

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<sup>1466</sup> Not all art with classical themes are reactionary as I have pointed out elsewhere. David's Marat, Delacroix's Liberty are forward looking. Classical art was used for both sides of the political spectrum. Overall it was a liberating force beginning with Da Vinci but always had a side that supported the monarchy and the repressive Church.

<sup>1467</sup> This an important concept in these books, a typical example is the huge Rococo and Baroque illusionistic paintings done on Church ceilings in the 1600s. The show angels and gods, Jesus or Mary, as well as glorify aristocrats and mythic figures. They are clearly class paintings meant to stupefy and urge submission. Many other examples exist in all religions.

For the rich,  
Is not art.<sup>1468</sup>

Gauguin, a businessman turned artist, was one of Schuon's favorite artists, had already encouraged the abstracting of art. His devotion to art for art's sake and abstraction would soon come to serve corporate ideology. What grew from the Symbolists is an autonomous art that reflects the fiction of corporate autonomy, self-referring, contentless, and all about money and power. The spiritual abstractions of Kandinsky and Mondrian grew out of Cezanne and Gauguin, eschewing skill and drawing, art as inquiry as well and beauty. Art becomes a subjective brew of empty signs and symbols, which ultimately serves corporate branding, the ideology of corporate personhood, anti-science and a dearth of objective inquiry. .

However, Guenon had no notion of any of this. His followers overestimate his intelligence. He had no clue as to what the Symbolist movement actually was. He was living in deep fictions. Schuon knew the Platonist Symbolist movement and was openly influenced by it through his spiritualist father, Paul Schuon, and Guenon, but had little critical insight into it. One can see then that traditionalism is basically a reactionary theory, and I deplore it. But that said, then one can qualify all the bad that it did. One can also notice the few things it got right, as even the worst theories must get something right.. I do not wish to ignore the fact that Guenon, Coomaraswamy (AKC) do occasionally say something that makes sense. Their questioning of human alienation via mass production and environmental harm is what appealed to me about them, especially AKC. Indeed, it was this that drew me into it. I did not see that their answer to alienation from nature was worse than the problem of alienation from nature and in no way a solution to it.

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<sup>1468</sup> Hass, Robert. The Essential Haiku, versions of Basho, Buson and Issa Ecco Press, 1994, pg. 187

In Chapter 8 of *Reign of Quantity*, Guenon correctly notes that industry has had a deleterious effect on non-human existence and made art a luxury instead of a part of everyone's life as it should be. Coomaraswamy made the same points, though both of them take this as a dogma. They mistake the reasons for this however. There is nothing wrong with metal or tools. Condemning technology outright is ludicrous, condemning industrial exploitation, the hedge markets, financial speculation, CEO culture and globalism is another matter. Chomsky and Coomaraswamy are in agreement that creativity is important in human life. I agree too as does anyone sensible. This is one of the few occasions in Guenon's crazy book where I do agree with him. Any decent craftsman who knows about the satisfactions of making living art understands the importance of creativity, personal observation, accurate rendering and craft. Few things can be as satisfying as drawing with a pencil or painting, designing building, making a house or a sculpture. Indeed, creating is a primary human drive, as it derives from nature and is not exclusively a human desire. Evolution is hugely creative. Creativity and hands on making and inquiry are essential to a decent education. None of the traditionalists understood this.

The creative instinct certainly has some of its origin in the need to procreate, as Darwin suggested. Sex is part of art. Death is part of art, anything that we experience is part of art. Anything we think about what we might experience or what experience might or might not mean, can be part of art. In this sense, art is culture, in addition to being part of evolution, with nature at its base. The existence of dreams in both human and animals show that brains are creative and are so as part of their evolutionary makeup. Making art and having children is a similar source of joy in life for similar reasons. The earliest art images have to do with sex, fertility and animals, ---those basic facts of our existence on earth. This is not a mistake, but part of the evolution of humans in nature.

Da Vinci was right about the wonder and beauty of machines. Simple machines exhibit a natural beauty that cannot be denied: levers, screws, inclined planes, cog wheels or ladders. Complex ones do too for different reasons. But Guenon is right about the impersonality of mass production, but he did not understand why it is sometimes of good thing, depending on how it is done. Mass production is harmful, not in itself, as there are reasons to make certain things by machine and many of them. What is harmful is if production techniques that make the rich richer and starves workers and harms the environment. This was true of slavery too, and for similar reasons. If global warming is to cause the Galapagos Islands, Florida, Bangladesh and the San Joaquin Valley to go underwater, which is quite likely, than the rich who profit from such abuse are hardly exemplars of human evolution or of evolution itself, but rather represent humanity at its most shameful. If profiteers are merely greedy men it is hard to see how this might be a good thing. But does this mean we should stop making things cheaply and quickly if it can be done without these side effects. No, but the main thing there is to remove the noxious side effects and the men who profiteer from them. Circumscribe the CEO and regulate them into harmless docility. Regulate stock markets and tax all profits heavily. The problem is not the making a mass objects, but the capitalization of this process for a few monopolists. Religion, like rampant capitalism, depends on deception. This is why the far right always wants to circumvent the freedom of the press and free inquiry, making universities unaffordable.

AKC, Schuon and Guenon did not realize that art does not need religion and is a truly marvelous thing without it. There are many amazing craftsman, painters. potters, jewelry makers, cabinet makers, carpenters and many others, who are not religious at all, nor are they greedy corporate monsters who only care for profits. Creativity reaches down into the basics facts of existence and our hopes for the future. It has to do with creating new life and sustaining the one that we already

have, looking toward the future and the past. The history of painting for instance ties every serious painter to the past in a direct and profound way. Going deeper into the basics of our existence through art might we mean throwing out delusions held dear in the past.

One of the truly great things about the enlightenment was to free the craftsman of religion. Guenon and Coomaraswamy abhorred this fact. They liked the worker as a slave to priests and autocratic dogmas. While it is true that capitalist mass production has produced some awful results, it has also made some good things, from cars, and computers to toasters. The problem has always been the injustice of unfair labor and CEO profits, not the fact of making things cheaply. Labor saving devices are hardly to be laughed at or hated. Glorifying craft or 'women's work' is not true to human nature. No one wants to endlessly wash laundry by hand, iron clothes or work like a slave at a loom for low pay. Capitalism abuses Chinese, Indian and Mexican workers to profit from overworked and underpaid labor. The slavish service of art to religion was really a form of tyranny and thought control and it is good it is increasingly gone from the earth, surviving only in a very few places. Corporate mass production, based on a monarchist model of the CEO as King is the real problem in our world. Non exploitative and sustainable manufacturing can be a very good thing.

The Romantic attitude of Coomaraswamy (AKC) toward traditional craft was too unilateral and driven by caste and other attitudes that are quite destructive.. Mindless repetitive work is not a good, despite Gandhi's and AKC's efforts to glorify it.. The practice of painting Icons for instance, is ridiculously formal and deafeningly restrictive. It might seem quaint and charming to suppress ones individuality to paint in a proscribed manner for an dictatorial institution—to "Paint for God" as it were, but it is deadening to do so for any length of time, and not really different in any objective way than painting corporate Icons, capitalist advertising, and Logos for a CEO the communist party under Stalin or

Mao. The control of art for the state or religion is a form of thought control, control of knowledge, and control or repression of the freedom to work and create. Indeed, totalism of religion, business or politics is poison for art in either case. One realizes at last that the making of images that serve an ideology, be this the Church or Marx or the CEO is untenable.

This shows us the problem of the control of images by power in general. A good deal of art history can be dismissed and merely propaganda, be it for the Roman Emperors, Japanese Samurai, Napoleon, the German Kings or rich landowners in England who needed ridiculously inflated pictures of themselves to prove their pedigree. English Manor houses have hallways, great rooms and staircases covered with pompous portraits of ancestors and primogenitors. This ancestor worship was itself a sort of civic religious practice, though in this case the religion has to do with feudal ideology and the cult of private property.<sup>1469</sup> Indeed, the Icon is probably an outgrowth of ancestor worship, such as one sees in the worship the Pharaohs of Egypt or the Emperors of China. The creation of the Christ myth clearly had the mythic image of Christ as an alternative to the corrupt Caesars. The creation of a mythic Jesus to replace Zeus and Jupiter was a fact of history, as one fo the first things Christians did once they got enough power was to start destroying Greek and Roman temples, architecture, books, libraries and music.

Neither Guenon or Schuon faced the problem of images as power symbols in the history of art. Nor do they face in a detailed and exact way the particular harm that capitalism does to art, once the artist is freed from theocracy and aristocracy. Nor did they grasp the value and importance of artists not having to be 'anonymous'. The self-denying nature of medieval art did not have a good effect on the society as a

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<sup>1469</sup> There is s a similar ancestor worship in China and Japan

whole. On the contrary, it lead to the same problems it leads to under capitalism or communism. The artist becomes an anonymous slave to a propaganda system. Coomaraswamy liked this anonymity. Anonymity merely underscores the artist as ideological slave, unable to think for him or herself, turning out images to glorify the state of the Church. This is a far cry from the model set by Da Vinci of the artist as freethinker and rational mind able to be free of any ideological control and serving only science in the disinterested pursuit of truth, as far as this is possible. Da Vinci had to work for some awful people, the Sforza's in particular, but he seems to have stayed largely free of too much bad influence from this, outside the war machines they insisted he work on and which he clearly had serious questions about doing. But he was an amazing inventor and had an endlessly fertile imagination..

The world doesn't need more Virgin Mary's, corporate Branding nor more peasants looking happy standing next to tractors. If we compare Leonardo's Mona Lisa with the Russian Icon a few things become clear. Mona Lisa is about nature and the background of it refers to an ancient landscape such as Darwin would have understood. This is the real landscape of our actual earth where Carboniferous and Jurassic periods come and go and humans evolve to use language. Mona Lisa herself is a figure of great depth and sympathy, her sleeves and hair almost like water or air in their delicate tracery and profoundly suggestive hints of growth and life. Certainly the best portrait of the last 500 years, this is an amazing painting. It includes Darwin as a prediction and beauty, inquiry and love of nature as a mode of life and thought. Compare this with an Russian Icon, which is a formula painting and refers to a world that does not exist and a heaven that is make believe and uses human forms that are little more than child's cartoons.

Bissera Pentcheva claims that true Byzantine Icons have a 'sensuality' in them that is physical, phenomenological and magical. Well, a few do. Yes, there is some truth to this. Certainly, in the Schuon cult there was

a certain erotic or theatrical magic, as well as a ‘phenomenological presentation of sensuality’, to use Pentchava’s terms. But this magical notion of Icons as sensual conveyors of metaphysical or erotic ideas is still theatre, not reality. An Icon is a theater of power and based on various falsehoods and sleight of hand. Christian aesthetics can hardly be described as “sensual” though occasionally its art is this, though always with a strong dose of repression added in as an moralistic antidote. Gothic Adam and Eves are sometimes ‘sexy’ but are always surrounded by repressive priests or hells. <sup>1470</sup> I don’t think there is a more anti-sexual system of ideology in the world than Christianity, and this ideology comes with its own built in hypocrisy.

This does not mean that iconoclasts are correct either. The denial of representative images is as much power trip as control of non-representational imagery is excessive and allows endless multiplication, as is obvious on Islamic mosques. I mean that Icons as a category of art are inherently questionable—just as are non-representational images---precisely because they both posit a notion of reality that is false. The Icon is based on a radical rejection of reality, however mystical reality might be re-presented as iconic reality.<sup>1471</sup> The actuality of Byzantine aesthetic theory is that it denigrates the world in favor a of the mental and the abstract , which it alone associates with the ‘spiritual’. Christian eroticism, if it is allowed to exist at all, is only allowed within the context

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<sup>1470</sup> Hugo van der Goes and Jan Van Eyck did some lovely Adam and Eve’s but their work is otherwise tightly controlled by Christian ideology

<sup>1471</sup> For more on Icons see her [The Sensual Icon](#), as well as the writings of Kallistos Ware and other propagandists and theological rhetoricians. The iconoclastic controversy is important to any discussion of the abuse of art by power. Moslems, Protestants, Shakers Zen Buddhists all proscribed images in certain ways. Control of the images people see is part of control of minds. The use of icons as conduits of correct cultic thinking were well understood by those who hate icons as well as those who use them for power. The use of Icons by Maoist and Stalinist communists as well as capitalists who use images to create a fetishized capitalism (“advertising”), are all examples of such abuses of aesthetics. Andy Warhol is a typical example of a creator of utterly empty ‘corporate icons’ of capital. Abstract art serves a similar function of creating empty signs that signify brands or corporate personhood.

of sacred “transmissions”. Marriage must occur ‘before god’ and art must be consecrated by priests.

But aniconism is just as bad or worse in its control of images. In corporate art, aniconism banishes all meaning, just as in Islamic art it is intended to negate all thought but that which the Mullahs allow. Islamic tile patterns in Mosques are pretty until one realizes what they are meant to do, and then they are forbidding and oppressive. The Shaker forbidding of imagery and Zen minimalist aesthetic are as oppressive in their way as International architecture, the pin stripped suit and the suffocating emptiness of paintings by Mondrian, Frank Stella or Ellsworth Kelly. Miscalled “modernist” art is full of empty images that are meant to blunt thought and elicit ascent to corporate capitalism. The banishment of meaning and content is a way to affirm Money as the absolute value of art. This creates Icons as empty as those of Lenin or Mao and as standardized as those of Russian orthodox Iconographer handbook. Icon recipes and templates are dictated forms and are meant to convey meanings as restrictive as corporate skyscrapers.<sup>1472</sup>

The hatred of real things and beings and the facts of existence is a regular feature of the major religions as well as corporate art and one that brings them fundamentally into question. Religion is not merely a “by-product of evolution”, as Boyer calls it. It is also a deliberate effort to lie about reality, mislead and control the thoughts and livelihoods of

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<sup>1472</sup> This is not to say that all Chinese realism is political propaganda, it isn't. There have been some fine artists in modern China, such as Jiang Zhaohe. He did his great painting of Refugees portraying Beijing after the city had been bombed by the Japanese planes. It is a 12-meter long watercolor. A very well done essay by the artist Xuning Wang, discusses realism both eastern and western with great interest.

<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1122&context=theses>



others. Art, poetry and myth play a big and shameful role in this effort. The embodiment of the “idea” in Byzantine art requires crucifixion to be ‘embodied’, since fiction can only be forced on reality by force. Reality becomes untenable, and must be forced through “suffering” to “transcend reality”. The image of the dying man on the cross is all about lying about the facts of existence. This is really an insane notion of ‘reality’ or reality turned on its head, associating life after death, with images of extreme bodily pain. Grunewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece is the ultimate image of Christian aesthetics and deifies suffering and the doctor priests who are supposed to treat it. Corporate Iconography also lies about reality, and claims a kind of deathlessness, and deifies the corporation as an empty and meaningless monolith. Rilke did occasionally say things that are true. He was even capable of a moment or two of realism in his often dreamy and unrealistic work. For instance as when he condemned advertising as a lie about reality

“just beyond that,  
behind the last of the billboards, plastered with signs for  
"Deathless,"  
that bitter beer which tastes sweet to those drinking it  
as long as they have fresh distractions to chew . . . ,  
just beyond those boards, just on the other side: things are real.  
Children play, lovers hold each other, off in the shadows,  
pensive, on the meager grass, while dogs obey nature.” (Duino  
Elegy #10)

Rembrandt understood this long before.



Dog sleeping Etching by Rembrandt

Religion is just this lie about reality that Rilke explains and is akin to advertising the “deathless” skin cream, Insurance scams or alcoholic drinks that will make you ‘live forever’. A lot of art plays into this too, trying to create the illusion of infinity or eternity, selling dreams, Buddhist calm, heavens everlasting, Allah’s Houris. Reality is not in the advertisement or in the Icon, it is in the actual world outside of the billboard, Icon, Zen Garden, Buddha, Church, computer or TV.

Guenon says many bizarre things about basic aesthetic ideas. He claims that “form must not be endowed with a spatial character”.... since “space belongs to corporeal manifestation alone”. (R of Q, pg. 59) That is ridiculous. Only the flat, fictional “incorporeal” fiction of Beyond Being matters to Guenon. The ‘incorporeal’ is total fiction, Hindu or Platonist. But Schuon told me the same thing when I studied painting with him. He told me to eliminate space from my work if possible. I did not want to. I love space. Reality must not be part of art for religion, only symbols matter. Plato is the enemy of art, as he hates the actual and only wants idealized abstractions, Icons, picture of the highest and thus only for the ultra-rich aristocracy. Platonic art ends in corporate art, which to me is an atrocity of sorts, a mangling and destruction of reality. Imitating the fact of space is one of my foremost pleasures in painting. Precisely because space is the envelope in which everything exists, in fact. Space is

existence and existence is what matters. Painting reality and space is a joy. Painting a symbolic heaven as a flat gold space is mere make believe and mindless.

To read the images of history requires an undoing or unraveling of the abstract imagery of power and claims to false knowledge. History is a puzzle of the mind, an archeological dig into both the mind of the past and ourselves in the present. One is surrounded everywhere by unknowns, facts, random events. One organizes the unknowns and the knowns into patterns that one hopes will answer needs in the present and hopefully point to something close to the truth of the matter. My concern is not to build new icons of power, as both Marx and Foucault tried to do, but rather to de-transcendentalize history, if this phrase makes sense. Join the actual, and paint life as it is.

Religious Icons are pictures of mythical powers; they are the advertising of traditional worlds. The image of the Virgin Mary, for instance is perhaps the most pervasive and successful of the advertising Icons of the Medieval Church. Icons, be they Christian, Tibetan or Hindu, picture an abstract world superior to this world, and they devalue this world.<sup>1473</sup> Both Jesus and Mary probably did not exist in fact, but are mythic constructions.<sup>1474</sup> Icons are supposed to be figurations of

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<sup>1473</sup> One of the 'quintessential' ideas behind Christian thought, according to Etienne Gilson, is the idea that 'there is nothing corporeal that does not reflect the incorporeal'. The entire universe is thus an aesthetic advertisement for Christian supremacy. Everything is a 'signature' of God. The universe proclaims the glory of the church. There is no need of billboards, nature was made an advertisement for Jesus.. Science performs a similar feat but has the advantage of actually being real-- It sees the universe as a reflection the need for rationality, intellect and mathematical explanatory power. The universe does not really proclaim the glory of scientific man, indeed, perhaps the contrary is true: humans are mucking up the world.. Evolution is really an advertisement for the skills of each species and not merely human accomplishments. Not all knowledge systems seek to seize on the universe as an advertisement for their claims. The claims of science are really very different than religion. The good thing about real science is that is true whether you believe it or not.

<sup>1474</sup> The forbidding of showing the prophet Muhammed is really just a reversed effort to insist on the same power of his image, here controlled by the absence of his face. The Qin Emperor tried to do the same thing by showing his face covered with a sort of metal veil that hung down over his

heavenly or divine witnesses that stare out at the viewer from a better world beyond: they are witnesses to the 'truth' of the knowledge that rules and denigrates the world of ordinary lives and beings. Realizing that such images are propaganda is painful. For a while I thought the Virgin Mary might be a real thing and I tried to act and pray accordingly. It had meant so much to me and for a time my researches showed that my dreams must be cruelly destroyed. But that was the pain of loss I was feeling, soon to be taken over by a disinterested search for the truth of the matter. I did not lose the love that I had for the Virgin, I merely lost the illusion that she was real. The love was misplaced and would find a real things, people or animal to adore.

The icon is a model of correct behavior, and acts as an emotional center or an ideological training device. It represents the theory of knowledge that governs the society. In Russian Churches one kisses the Icons, as if they were beloveds. It is that intimate. Tibetan Icons, painted on rocks, flags or paintings, for instance, functioned to explain to a mostly illiterate population a Buddhist system of beliefs, largely controlled by the Priests in the Potala in Lhasa. The Icons thus served to justify, explain and teach the ideology of state control or to dictate an intimate mentality and create and constellate emotion reactions, much as television and advertising support corporate control today through sitcoms and managed, entertainment news.

The really unsatisfying flatness of Russian Icons is a result of intellectual tyranny by the orthodox church strangling any humanity or actuality that might be in the forms. The unsatisfying Corporate or Marxist Icons of Modernist art, such as Barnett Newman or Malevich, are

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face. The veiling of altar by an iconostasis has the same meaning. It is all about controlling what people think and getting them to submit to the fictions of power.

also unsatisfying for the same reasons. Suffocating flatness, a denial of the real, and the creation of a non-existent world of a self-referring “art-piece”—what could be more boring? Card board cutouts of subjectivity, white squares on white background, blue poles, drip paintings, minimalist emptiness, corporate clones, squares of “deathless”. All decorative lies to the viewer. Icons tend to look childish and dead, like badly done Japanese cartoons, or like a good deal of modern art. Both traditional art and modernist abstractions are dead ends.

It might be useful here to discuss even more concretely some of these issues. So, briefly, I will talk about one of the mistakes of my experience--- learning to paint Icons, first with Schuon’s direction and then my last ones in rebellion against him. I will use myself as an example to explore why Icons are a dead end. I reached that dead end myself, nearly 25 years ago. I only worked on these for a few years, and quickly got over it, when I realized it was a dead end.

I studied painting with Schuon for the two years I was in Bloomington, and did a dozen or so works, most of them under his tutelage, in 1990 and 91. No one else who studied with him has made it out of the cult mentally intact. So, though I have written about this elsewhere it would be useful to discuss it further in the midst of this discussion of aesthetic theories of Traditionalism and modernism. Schuon told me he was “the greatest painter in the world”. He was prone to this sort of delusion of grandeur. He was not anything of the sort. But I quickly learned that he really didn’t know much about painting. His technical knowledge was pretty pitiful, as was Sharlyn Romaine’s, his nominal 4<sup>th</sup> “wife” who painted his ideas for him in later years.. I doubt many of his paintings will fare well with time as he did many of them in in oils on paper. It is not a good idea to paint in oil on paper, without first putting some kind of gesso on the paper. He was technically rather

incompetent.

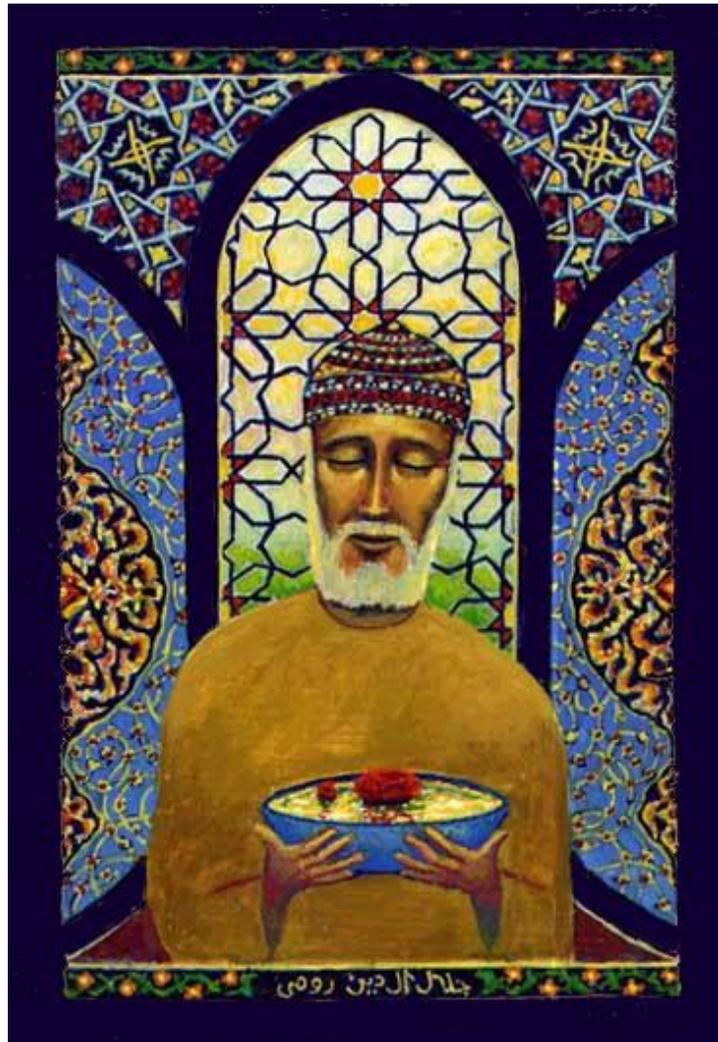
When Schuon and Sharlyn were done with a work, and they churned them out pretty fast—they did not have much else to do----Schuon had me make machine copies of the painting they did at a local office store. I made copies of Virgins, mythical scenes, older paintings and or nude Icons of Schuon they had already done. They would use these “Xerox” copies as they were called then, and would paste them on a mass produced sticky board and paint the next painting on the copy paper in oils. In other words they used to finished painting as a drawing for the next one. This a very bad way to do it and I objected for archival reasons, and explained why, but they did not care. Sharlyn tried to say that Schuon was in a white heat of creativity and she would redo the paintings in later years when they started to fall apart.

I saw in the end that I was a better painter than Schuon. That was disconcerting. I had hoped for a teacher who knew more not less than I. I liked Symbolist art, not realizing that what I liked in it was the realism not the orientalist and spiritual fantasy. But as I studied with Schuon I realized I did not like what he was doing at all. It took me less than a year to surpass him. At first I thought these were real things, as I was trained to do. What he was doing was really erotic, self-aggrandizing icons and they were not that well done .I have no objection to erotic art as such, though it is more often badly done than not. He was making cartoons of symbolist paintings after the manner of icons, doing self-portraits with prominent penis and making Native American paintings that were closely connected to his nudist primordial gatherings.

I did not know any of this in 1990, when I was seeing his art for the first time I was not yet in the cult, but about to move to Bloomington. I thought Schuon was an Islamic, Sufi master then and had all sorts of delusions about who he was largely created by followers of Schuon, Huston Smith and others. He was a Sufi Master but I did not yet know that Sufism itself is utterly empty and fictional. Those who want a merely

orthodox Sufism are as deluded as those who follow Schuon. I was misled in every direction and wanted to know the truth about religion. I was misled about Schuon just as I had been misled by other religions. But the other religions had taught me to doubt what I was told. As I studied with him I came to see that this was really a very sick mind and I was painting his illness and imitating his psychotic episodes.

I will show some of the works I did while in the cult to illustrate this. In the first, below, is a portrait of the Turkish poet Rumi, who I admired then, but don't admire anymore. I was still six months from moving to Bloomington. No one knows what Rumi looked like so I made up what he might look like. It is really a self-portrait as mystical poet, in which I combined my interest in oriental textiles and architectural and tile design with an interest in Russian iconography. At the time I thought I was painting Schuon as Rumi. It is a painting of my many projections at the time. I was only 30 then, and was swayed by a mystical symbolist style that came from my earlier work in drawings ( I explain this in my Philosophical Drawings) I was quite a mystic in those days, prone to cosmic and transcendent thoughts and states. I was wildly seeking the truth wherever I could find it, or hints of it. While there was an element of truth in my ecstasies and insights, much of it was delusional and suggested by precedents. I was wrong about many things, as I would later find out.



The only thing I like about this picture now is the geometry, which is well done and the scene out the window which evokes California light near Point Reyes, where I used to live. The painting shows a young man in an old man's beard who is love with the "inward" drunk on his own emotions, drunk on what he thinks is the "holy spirit" but really is his auto-suggested life force magnified by his hopes and dreams. It is me I suppose, in fantasy, or perhaps it is my wish for a wish man, such as I never met "Spirituality" is just this inflation of inner feeling, what James

calls the “appropriation”<sup>1475</sup> of an inner “fact”, which really is not a fact at all but just a cluster of feelings or images. The religious try to make such feelings into a self-hypnotic and perpetual state. Rumi was a master at this self-delusionary process of self-inflation as “transcendent” and imaginary other. Indeed, the very notion that the “transcendent” is possible is already an admission of hatred of the earth, life, existence and nature. This hatred blossoms in into the “spiritual in art” and the spiritual in art is escape and exploit, of necessity. <sup>1476</sup> This is a picture of a romantic illusion, and born of a man who was all illusion and I was combining the illusions of Rumi with that of Schuon and coming up with an icon of mystical naiveté, opening into transcendental fictions.

I had studied Persian miniatures and Chinese art and was increasingly open to all traditional arts. I loved cathedrals and have visited many. Religious art exploits what is best in humans to try to turn beauty and pathos, sadness and fear into metaphors that can be used to ensnare the faithful. This does not mean that Chartres or Salisbury cathedral enshrines something “transcendent”. It means that such places are carefully orchestrated to create this feeling and feelings are

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<sup>1475</sup> James writes that “the inner state is our very experience itself; its reality and that of our experience are one.” He calls this a fact, but actually he is mistaken here, thinking of pink elephants does not mean they actually exist. Much of what Esalen has pushed is of the delusory nature. See pg. 499, Varieties of Religious Experience.

<sup>1476</sup> You can see this is the writing of Donald Kuspit. I read an essay by him in the early 1980’s in which he said art is not necessary and all that we really need is the critic!!, and it was clear he meant he was himself the replacement for art. The critic Arthur Danto has a similar sort of narcissism. This absurd arrogance seems to be still present in Kuspit’s work, but now he is pushing reactionary and spiritual art, as might have been predicted based on his original vainglorious position. In his essay on Kandinsky, for instance, Kuspit writes that Kandinsky’s ideas in the “Concerning the Spiritual in Art” abandoned “the representation of objective reality for the direct presentation, as it were, of his subjectivity” This ought to be criticized, but Danto and Kuspit are apologists for corporate art and thus cheerleaders to some degree. This wallowing in an abstract and subjective morass is what Schuon did too, without giving up objective reality entirely, just enough to be sure that his subjective divinity was paramount. William James idea of religion as subjective self-regard is what one sees in modern spiritual art, and such art ends in being an abstract corporate art about art, usually. Schuon’s Icons are not too different than narcissist abstractions, except that Schuon wanted to create works where the erotic ‘vibration:’ as he called, it was paramount.

not truths even if they allude to truth. Standing in an old growth redwood forest and hearing the Varied Thrushes sing is much better than a cathedral because it is what it is and there is no deceit involved. For art to be used to tell the truth as a redwood forest does is a new idea. This is not Dada's idea of "art as life", where intelligence is sacrificed to the mundane of found objects. Redwood trees involve eons of intelligent adaptations to the vicissitudes of the reality they live in. They are not dumb like most modern art, which merely reflects human centered notions of reality as a construct designed to reflect human boredom, dust or ashtrays..

So I wanted to learn what all religions had to offer, and since they are all avid to offer their wares it is easy to approach them and ask for what they know. So in 1985 or 86, I studied Russian iconography with a Rumanian artist in Cleveland and learned to paint a Russian icon under his direction, applying gold leaf in the old way. I wanted him make mosaics as they made them for Saint Mark's in Venice. Indeed, in previous years I had lived in New York City and London and was utterly sick of what was empty nonsense dished up for sale as Modern art. I have a great deal of respect for fine craftsman. The emptiness and vanity of the art world in New York had repulsed and horrified me and I wanted something true and real. I looked into Byzantine aesthetics or the Persian miniature or in Hindu or Chinese art.<sup>1477</sup>

To go back even further, my earliest art training was self-

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<sup>1477</sup> I still have a qualified admiration for Chinese and Japanese art, particularly their landscape painting and paintings of small beings, little birds, flowers and insects.. When I bracket out the Buddhism, Taoism and Zen and ideological meanings attached to such works, it is very clear how much some artists and poets had a deep love of the natural world in China and Japan. The mountains one sees in these works actually exists and are not fantasy. I love some of their paintings of birds and flowers, fruit trees in bloom and autumnal screens are full of life and character. Problems arise with Asian art partly due to it being mostly done for the very wealthy and thus deeply under control of Confucian and Taoist ideology of the Imperial state and its aesthetic requirements. There were artists who subtly made allusions to things outside accepted imagery, but such symbolism tended to be arcane and difficult of access. It is a literati art and by definition it is elitist. But I stress that this does not mean there were not real naturalists among them and great artists.

instruction in my teens when I was reading Leonardo and admired Rembrandt and Van Gogh. I have always loved Vincent and did copies of his work when young, many of them lost now. I wanted an art that engaged real life and was science based. Art school rammed Duchamp, John Cage and Warhol down my throat and though I was tempted by these fashions for a time I finally realized they were empty and dead ends. Indeed, Warhol, minimalism and Duchamp led to the “death of painting”, when painting was what I loved. Masters of “conspicuous triviality” they were repulsive to all that I loved in art. All these artists really killed was their own art, what little they had of it, and none of them had much skill or understanding of what art is or was. Duchamp’s incredibly stupid comment that one should use a Rembrandt as an ironing board is proof of his shallow mind. They were merely corporate artists, selling ideas for the corporate art market, omnivorous in its desire to everything into marketable fodder to the ultra-rich. They made painting into a new form of money, when none of them could paint at all. Such art is not art at all but just a con man scheme. It is a way to turn art into an iconography of money. These large empty paintings, now decorating corporate vestibules and museum walls, are little more than advertisements of wealth and status, and have little value in expressing the life of our times. They merely express to the corporate fiction of the life of money and capital, which is really not life at all. That is the real death that is the death of painting. It turns painting into nothing, just as art for god was nothing at all but an account of those who manipulated symbols to enrich a self-serving institution.

This is not to say that museums and those who work there have not value. Though they are few and far between there are good directors and curators. I loved Sherman Lee’s 1980 show of Realism and Naturalism. I was influenced by Sherman Lee at the Cleveland museum, who was also great scholar of Chinese art. I admired his devotion to art as knowledge and culture and was not about to give that up for fashion, advertising

and contentless abstractions and corporate brands. He was interested in the museum and a model of scholarship and education and not as a black buster money gathering side show. Indeed, what Lee taught me was that art is history and insight into reality, even if it is full of delusions as it often is.<sup>1478</sup> The notion of art as part of inquiry, intelligence and history is far different than the reigning ignorance in modern art. Greenberg thought that art must be a celebration of its independent properties, ‘an inward looking focus on itself’, paint as paint and nothing else. This narcissistic aesthetic was a dead end that is still being repeated over and over in corporate art. Clement Greenberg’s idea has failed to make any really interesting art. Indeed, one can skip over much of the art as mere between 1940 and 2010 and not miss much. Most of it is merely decorative footnotes to corporate history.

In the early 1980’s I was still feeling the influence of Jack Hirschman, under whose influence I began a series of a thousand drawings.<sup>1479</sup> These drawings had a linear, Celtic, Chinese and traditional animal art style, with a dose of automatic surrealism, as its basis. I admired the animals style that one finds in the Book of Kells, Viking art, as well as ancient Tattoos from Pazyrck and early Chinese art. Animals and nature are the basis of art. I called these the Philosophical Drawings and some were gathered into collections I have written about elsewhere. They are a sort of catalogue of what I knew then about

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<sup>1478</sup> Lee’s discussion of Chinese art in *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting* is quite interesting as he shows how it was largely a Patron dictated art. The Chinese love of nature can be quite wonderful but on the other side of the coin, it is largely an art of a certain class, and represents elitist values of an escapist, Buddhist and Taoist or Confucian orthodoxy. This does not prevent my loving some Chinese art for its accurate depiction of the beauty of the natural world. But it is good to be aware that a great deal of Chinese art represents a power structure and like European art is full of propaganda for the interests of a given class, with metaphysical ideas that serve and justify that class.

<sup>1479</sup> Actually I began them before I got involved with him, but while I was studying him they flowered to some degree.

spiritual and mythic things, human situations, myself, life and existing. Everything is all mixed, and not yet mature. They suggest Paul Klee like poetics of forms and patterns. I liked Klee because of his poetic attempt to combine word and image in an evocative concert. Only recently have I have realized that Klee was influenced by Rudolf Steiner, who was himself influenced by Boehme and others of a Platonistic stripe.<sup>1480</sup> Like Kandinsky he was trying to make religious art in a modern context and compares himself to a god. He wanted to make art where “only the slightest breath is needed to transform religious feeling, religion into fact”, as he wrote in his *Creative Credo*. I must have been influenced by this religiosity in ways I did not realize. What I still like in Klee is his child-like art of Haiku-like poetry. But there is also a tendency there to the abstract that grows out of Steiner and questionable spirituality. But Klee’s biology interested and his effort to make art as a diary of what he knew, and this led me to think that a rebellion against corporate art might be possible.

I went to see a John Cage concert at the Cleveland Orchestra in in the late 1970’s and did not then know that really Cage was working with many of Coomaraswamy’s ideas. I had deep misgivings about what he was trying to do. More “conspicuous triviality”, to use Russell’s phrase and which characterizes so much Corporate concept art. At that time, I wanted to learn the art of the past, since modern art was such a dead end. So by the mid 1980’s, avoiding Warhol and the New York art world, I was primed when I read Coomaraswamy and thought he might have an answer. I was wrong, and it would take me years to figure out why. In the 1980’s I learned icon painting, and flirted with learning the Persian miniature style. But this was very much a side interest, while in fact my primary interest was more in line with Da Vinci and Van Gogh.

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<sup>1480</sup> Klee and other mystical artists are often playing on a variations of the “correspondence theory” of Jacob Boehme, which itself is merely an outgrowth of Platonic Archetypes, the “signatures of all things” as Boehme calls them..

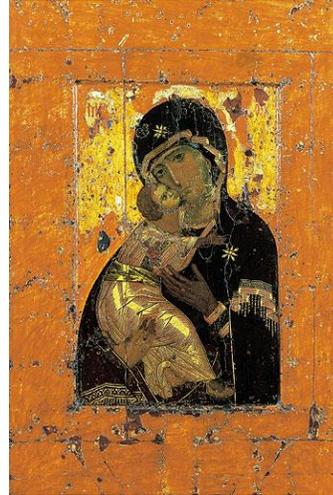
Most of my studies were done after nature in gouache all through the 1980's. My Philosophical Drawings were already close to a dead end. The majority of studies of the 1980's are either Lake Erie or Point Reyes California, where I went to paint landscapes from life in 1986 to 1989. The Philosophical Drawings started failing because the symbolist impulse itself is a failure. Had I been smart enough, I would have seen that the whole project of spiritual in art would fail, and had to fail. I had inklings of this, but could not yet assimilate what I was feeling and thinking. This was already obvious, though I do not think I saw it until 1990 or so. But my employment as an oriental rug restorer, and repairer from 1984 to 90, kept me closely involved with oriental art and textiles. I was struggling with the deeper meanings of what art is. And I was not yet fathomed the depths of the philosophical questions that still haunted me. What is the meaning of living and does god exist and how much truth was there in religion. What is history and what can it teach me? These are important questions for art. How does art deal with reality? What is the role of science and biology and how do fit into a world that is threatened and where so many species are going extinct? This book records my findings, but it took me nearly two decades to really get to the bottom of some of these matters, as this essay shows, I think.

So there were two conflicting tendencies in me in 1989. On the one hand I was doing realistic studies of nature. This was an increasingly vital concern. I still am doing deeper studies in this all the time. This was deeply satisfying. On the other hand my imaginative drawings and studies in iconography and oriental textiles had led me to seek traditional methods of art creation. I did not then realize that the romantic tradition of imagination as preached from, the Symbolists and late Pre-Raphaelites to Blake, Palmer and Klee had led me astray. I did not yet realize that this was as much a dead end as modern art, which I already knew was a dead end. My art already knew the answer and in

1989 I was doing deeply objective Plein Air works, but I still had to play out the endgame, as it were.

When I moved to Bloomington I did so with the intention of studying art with Schuon. I did not at first see that I had gone backwards and it was a mistake. In fact, I was already at the end of the spiritual in art and was painting Plein Air in Point Reyes National Seashore, far beyond what he could do. Living next to National lands had become a lifelong concern of mine. So, of course, It turned out to be a horrible mistake to study with Schuon, but one that was good insofar as it taught me to realize that spiritual and traditional art was itself a dead end, though I did not see yet that corporate art grew from the same set of motives and impulses. I do not think I would have grasped the full extent fo the delusion of spiritual art had I not done this. I did not know of anyone who had really explored these questions, so I was entirely on my own. I was left with Plein air and my own search into reality.

So I will recount some of this education in more detail. My study with Schuon was quite systematic and deliberate, from the beginning. Initially, I asked Schuon permission to copy his work and he said I could, indeed, he insisted I do so. My relationship to him as a student of painting was stare3d by me but taken up and encouraged by him. I was hoping he would take me on as a student, but it was he who began to teach me. When I first visited Bloomington I brought him this copy of the icon called the Virgin of Vladimir, perhaps the most famous of Russian icons( on the left) as a gift for Schuon. It was to be a gift. I only have this blurred photo of it, on the left.



The real Virgin of Vladimir Icon is to the middle. My copy was pretty accurate to the actual thing, though that is hard to see, given the poor photo.

The next copy I did was done after my first visit to meet Schuon in January 1989. This was before I moved to Bloomington and was done in Gouache. Later, Schuon let me know he did not like the image of Mary as a mother, he preferred her as a love interest or as a romantic or erotic image of longing and attraction, stylizing his Virgin after the erotic Krishna and the Gopis images of the Rajput period or the erotic imagery of Gauguin, Hodler and others.. Icons for him were a way of attracting people to religion by way of eliciting a “sexual attraction”. He told me this himself. He said this is what I needed to do in my paintings. I was to elicit a “sexual attraction” on the part for the viewer. These are thus porn-iconography. Here are some of my early attempts painting under Schuon’s direction. It took me some time to realize my mistake.



Paintings I did with Schuon's advice and consent

I like the fact that the Schuon cult is so ashamed of these images they will not show them on the internet.<sup>1481</sup> It is good that these rather kitschy and cartoony Icons are not seen. So, for the moment, I have blurred my copies quite a lot, so that they are not visible in any detail.

The first and last are fairly exact copies of his work done with his explicit permission, here blurred as I said. I did not know exactly what these images were when I copied them. I would not find that out till later. He gave me permission to copy in person and so did not need to write it down. Everyone knew I was studying painting with him and eventually I became the framer for people in the cult. This is easily proven. I was also sent to make copies of these works frequently at copy shops. Copyright law is very explicit about copyright exemptions relating to "*fair use*". When one artist copies another's work, as related to "educational use", it is fair use. In most museums of the world it is

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<sup>1481</sup> The cult is really paranoid about showing these images. They did publish a hard to find book about some of them, but that was so they could claim copyright on them. But the icons of Schuon himself, which are even sillier, cannot be seen anywhere. They are rather poorly done and kitschy image of him acting the part of holy man in the pose of Shiva or other gods, nude penis stylized and exposed. They are porno-icons of the great man as vehicle of a bogus esoterism. More like cartoons than good paintings, they are supposed to be the summit of art, but are really closer to poorly done Russian icons with the quality of erotic cartoons. ( correction: poor renditions of them can be seen on Devie's website, but you have to sign up to see them.)

permissible to draw or paint copies of any work, even contemporary work. But added to this general permission Schuon himself gave me permission to copy his works in person. Copyright laws states clearly that permission to copy is sufficient to forgo any infringement. These were done as part of research on Schuon's own aesthetic system. I do not to violate any copyright agreements by showing these versions here. They are copies done with his permission, in the age old tradition of artists copying works of those with whom they study. I will eventually provide clear images of them but for now will not, for the reason just given.

Not only was I given permission to make these copies I was also encouraged to copy both his originals and my copies by mechanical means and distribute them far and wide. I was given money to copy and frame many of his works. That was one of my jobs in the cult. I made frame pictures for many people out of copies that I made myself... Some of my works, as well, were distributed by Schuon himself or his wives, and were shown in public. Copies of Schuon's works were sold in the cult store which was in Maude Murray's basement. I showed some of these images in Sharlyn Romaine's gallery where there were rooms devoted to Schuon's art . . . Maude mentions how he loved my copies of his works in letters. I asked him if I could copy the painting the first time I met him. This began a steady stream of paintings resulting in a two year dialog between he and I about painting and art. I talked to him about these works in person and through Maude Murray and others.

So I did the first copy of one his works in gouache, a medium he never used. This is the first one above. But when I moved to Bloomington, I brought the Virgin of Vladimir as a gift for him and he wanted me to redo it, as I said earlier. So I did with this next image as the result. The actual painting of the Vladimir is now buried under the image below. Schuon insisted I redo the image after his "virgin", so I did.

It became the second shown above. It was also the second of the series of works I would do with him as advisor and teacher.

It amazes me now that I looked up to him then. I was prepared to believe he actually knew something. That is because I did not know him well yet. All I heard in the cult was that he was the greatest man in the world and the greatest painter ever. The truth was otherwise and it was a slow and painful awakening. I knew about painting, so relating to him on that subject would teach me what kind of man he really was. Indeed, it was the best test of him that I could devise. After I did a few paintings, he encouraged me to do others, so I did a more complex copy in oil, this time painting over an old Russian Icon I had. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> image above. I altered a Russian Icon I had been given by an old woman I knew who had died.<sup>1482</sup> I put Schuon's virgin in the icons, making it quite different than it had been. The result was picture of motherhood and much better than most Russian icons, which are clumsy and perpetuate medievalisms. The coloration is Byzantine or Quattrocento, as I always admired the medieval use of clear bright color and imagined that is how Greek sculpture and architecture was once painted. I liked the early Byzantine mosaics like those at San Vitale. Indeed, I liked the Greek use of color generally, as it was a folk art of gypsy like love of bright colors. I have always loved flowers and primary colors, like ones sees in early mosaics or in the Book of Kells.

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<sup>1482</sup> She was an old woman I helped in San Rafael California. We become friends at the rug shop where I worked, and I visited her occasionally. I did not know she was dying until the night she did, when she called me and asked for help because she felt very bad. I told her to call an ambulance, right away. She was not able to. Months before, she had offered to leave me a lot of money when she died, and I said I did not want it. She left me this Icon instead and I repainted it as above. I was not looking for any rewards, just as later I was not looking for rewards in Bloomington. I accepted gifts when I was given them.



The next painting I did under Schuon's direction was of one of his works, again with his permission. It is the fourth image above. It was called "Layla Haqiqah". The "night of the truth". This is one I admired very much, though what I admired in it was the twilight effect, or "afterglow" I have always admired in sunsets, combined with the love of the female body. When I realized what the image actually was I no longer admired it. I realized at last that what he was having me do was to paint him as the Christ child in a sort of erotic embrace with the "virgin", who was now in some kind of fanciful and sexual relationship with him. I had spent a lot of time at Schuon's house and other houses studying his work and thought it was the best of his nudes, though now it seems to me rather silly and cartoonish. He was not a very good painter and rather amateurish in his procedures.

At this point in 1990 was his already equal as a painter, though it never occurred to me to want to have sexual 'visions' of this sort, not that I had anything against sexual images as long as they were not exploitive. It was not until somewhat later that I found out about his grandiose psychology and how it lay at the basis of these strange works. I realized at last I was copying the rather twisted sex fantasies of a man with serious delusions of grandeur and did not know it. I had reached his level of painting quickly and mastered what he had to teach. Indeed, I think my version rather better than his, because it has more depth and resonance of color. I put more feeling into the paint. Romaine's paintings were flat and rather lifeless in color and application. I am not bragging here, just stating a fact. They were doing mythical studies trying to make Schuon a king of existence. I was trying to understand. We had totally different motives.

This one was somewhat damaged at a certain point and I have never bothered to correct it.

So, I was already surpassing Schuon in my skill and execution after doing a few literal copies of his works. So much for his claim to be the

best painter in the world. I am not the best either, but I was better than he. I then set about to master his subject matter and launch forth on my own. Once I began to actually understand what his subject matter really was about, my whole view of Schuon changed and it led to my abandoning his cult. I went about studying his work systematically and with his approval and commentary. I spend many hours and visits to his house studying his works the basement and went to all his disciples houses and studied his original works there too. I saw his drawings and was given access to all his available works and many photographic sources. I even did two painted Teepees for cult members in addition to many Icons framed and decorated. Perhaps something I wrote in my Account of 1991 can sum up how I came to see the basic theses Schuon's artwork. This was written just months after I left the cult, so it is very fresh and accurate to the time .

“The paintings of Schuon and Sharlyn Romaine - and it must be remembered that they are suggested, organized and corrected by Schuon when they paint in the sexual posture I have described – the paintings of the two of them are psycho-spiritual narcissistic fantasies of their own divinity. They have made all the world's religions and all the world's great art a kind of theater wherein they play out the drama of their egos. In this theater of masks which Schuon has created, Sharlyn Romaine is the Buffalo Cow woman bringing the sacred pipe and Schuon is the Great Indian chief who receives it; or Schuon is the Christ-child and Sharlyn Romaine is the Blessed Virgin; or Schuon is a cute little lion cub laying at the feet of Sharlyn Romaine impersonating the female Hindu saint Lalla; or again Schuon is the sacred letter Om floating above the spread-legged Lalla- Sharlyn Romaine; or again Schuon is Shiva as a swan who floats across the waters to a naked Goddess- Sharlyn Romaine, naked on the shore. Likewise, in the Primordial

Gatherings, Sharlyn Romaine is the star, the Warriress, the Bringer of the sacred pipe; and in other dances Sharlyn Romaine plays the part of a Hindu goddess or a South American Princess with a headdress made up of bird feathers. Or again, a Balinese or Hindu temple prostitute. Maude Murray said that in these 3rd level Primordial Gatherings that Sharlyn Romaine's love of Schuon "pours from every pore of her naked body." But one must ask, what strange perversion is this that requires Schuon to make his sexual interests public, which needs an audience? Even when Sharlyn Romaine paints her pictures with Schuon lying on her naked thigh looking at her private parts, Maude Murray must be a witness. Maude Murray would say that she did not feel married to Schuon, she felt like a witness. But why does Schuon need a witness? Catherine Perry observed that Schuon needs constant adulation and must constantly don new masks because there is a crying insecurity and emptiness in the core of the man."

The paintings of Schuon are sexual theatre and are about parading Schuon's particular delusions to a constrained and obedient public, namely the cult, who were all trained to receive the "blessing" of his insanities, hanging them up in their houses. I was conscripted to paint Virgins that were clothed to substitute for the rather perverse Icons followers actually had up when "profane" people came to visit. The logical result of Schuon's obsession with Platonic Archetypes was this sexual or self-pleasuring theatre where he played out sexico-mythological fantasies ad nauseum. The production of these works went on day after day in a sort of hot house atmosphere of self-promotion, art shows held for cult members and primordial gatherings held as live demonstrations of what the art was about. Schuon justified his Icons of the Virgin and of himself

in writings. Romaine was made to write this explanation of Schuon's art, Schuon himself supplying the words'. Romaine wrote:

“For centuries the Blessed Virgin has been saving souls and at this moment she offers us her most precious gift by giving us her body in a powerfully direct way. Beginning with the adoption of our Shaykh on the voyage to Morocco in 1965, the blessed Virgin has chosen a most intimate way of revealing herself. These Icons are an exact replication of her message given to the Shaykh on the ship, both in standing and in kneeling and they have been given to us.”

Schuon claimed that as a result of this 1965 vision that “this had as its immediate result the almost irresistible urge to be naked like her little child; from this event onwards I went naked as much as possible, indeed, most of the time...” This rather crazy vision of his is where the “icons” and the “primordial gatherings” come from. It was indeed the center of the cult and of all that he had to teach. Romaine, on Schuon's insistence is here saying that both Schuon's body and his Icons be worshiped as direct manifestation of the 'divine'. Dissent from this delusional fantasy was never permitted and quickly punished in the cult. His paintings were all propaganda images about the myth of his—and her--- holiness, when neither of them we even slightly holy in fact. We were witnessing a sexual theatre shared between Romaine, Schuon and the nude Virgin Mary/ Devadassis<sup>1483</sup> who wanted to give Schuon her own sexuality. I was aghast at what I had got involved in and ashamed.

I won't tell the whole story of Schuon's bizarre antics here. Here I

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<sup>1483</sup> I define this concept earlier in the chapter called “Metaphysical Misogyny and Nature Hatred in Tantra, Buddhism and the Major Religions”

just wish to show the environment in which I was learning about his ideas and art. I was studying painting with him as all this become known. When I started these paintings I had no idea what I was getting involved in. It took me two years to figure it out. The reader can see the progression of my paintings through Schuon's style and then beyond it. You can see in this progression the result of Schuon's "teachings", though really he was a pretty bad teacher. I began to grasp slowly that my idealized version of who Schuon was an utter figment of my imagination largely created in me by Huston Smith, my friend Scott and my misreading of Schuon's books, which I did not then understand.. But I did not grasp this right away. It took time to learn who he really was and what and how the cult functioned.

About a year into the cult and I knew on a deep level all of it was a fraud, but did not yet have definitive proof. That is when Maude came along and insisted she would teach me all that Schuon could not teach me because of his age. I wanted to know what she had to teach, so I submitted to her. The only way to get close to Schuon was through his wives. This was obvious. I got to know them all pretty well. Maude told me I was chosen by her and by God to be taught all about him. I was not chosen for this of course, I was merely in the wrong place at the wrong time. I stayed on another year because of her, finding out more and more every day. I knew I was in a cult, but did not yet admit it to myself in a complete way. I knew it was a huge mistake, and I was afraid. But I was always a curious fellow and wished to know what I did not know. I soon learned that there was a lot to be afraid of and this was indeed dangerous group. As time went on, I did what I could to question Maude's actions, insofar as I could do so without incurring the ire that was quite visibly visited on anyone who questioned the master too deeply. I loved Maude, despite all her weaknesses, and wanted to try to get her out. The whole thing became a kind of chess game and the more I played the more I learned what a scurrilous character and a fraud

Schuon and his inner circle really were.

Below is the progression of most of the icons I did with Schuon. As I said the first Icon I did was a gift for Schuon of my copy of the Russian Icon the Virgin of Vladimir, below on the left. I have discussed this already, but there are a few other things to be said. Huston Smith had recommended me into the cult. I went to see Schuon and then moved there a few months later. I brought it to him from home in California .. I showed it to him and he thanked me. But he said I made a mistake, and scolded me for “imitating the accidents” and asked me to take these mistakes out. Actually it is a good idea to imitate accidents. Everything that exists is an ‘accident’ of some kind. We are physical beings and accident is what we are made of. So the second one is the repainted icon.

When some time had passed he wanted me to redo it blue and so I did. So I did the third version, done on top of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vladimir. This was done over for him in the following months, as per his directions of painting on a copy of the one I had done before, as Schuon did. I was complaint and painted this version on his request. As you see below



“Virgin Mary’ paintings done by me with Schuon’s advice or participation  
1989-91j

He was very proud of this blue icon and called it the “Vladimirskyya”. You can see I made the virgin look like his virgin. He immediately sent it to his followers all over the world as an Icon to put on their wall for when “profane people” came around who were not supposed

to see his nudist icons. I was supposed to be proud of being used like this. But I wasn't. So the painting was dedicated to lying. This disturbed me and helped me see his ability to lie and promote lying. His first impulse was to use my work for lying to others. It was interesting to see him use me this way, and I had to suppress my misgiving about this. It could not be known I disapproved of what he did with my art. I began to question why I wanted to study painting with this man at all.

The fourth Icon was based on a drawing he did for me on top of a copy of the third painting. He gave me explicit instructions to paint it as he dictated. He insisted I pull back the Virgin's veil and expose her breasts. So I did that. He did a drawing of exactly how to do this, and gave me the drawing. I remember he did a drawing on top of a copy of the painting. My house was full of copies of paintings, as I had by now become both a student of Schuon's and the cult framer. I was making many frames each week and making lots of photo copies when Schuon finished a painting. This gave me a tiny income. It was never about money in any case, I was trying to see what traditionalist painting might be, just as I had studied with a Byzantine iconographer and studied oriental carpets and art in earlier years. I knew more about painting than Schuon did and I tried to help them, but I saw Schuon was not able to learn from others, he had to be the Master of all.

By now I had been initiated into the "primordial dimension" which really was just a cult of nudity and eroticism. There was a special show of the work of Romaine and Schuon at Romaine's house<sup>1484</sup> and I was led there by the Murray's who had me read the essays on sexuality and 'sacred nudity' he had written. I was initiated into the cult by Schuon's wife and

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<sup>1484</sup> She was then living near Dr. Mark Goren, a (partly homeopathic doctor, and member of the cult, , the poor man died of cancer in 2002), down Rt. 446, away from Inverness Farms Road. This is where I used to see Schuon and Romaine drive by in her clunky old Datsun, with Schuon looking so pretentious in the back seat, nose in the air. It was funny to see this wanna be king acting out a Charlie Chaplin part and incapable of understanding the humor of it.

the one who know more about him that they others.

I was involved with Maude by now who was teaching me all about Schuon personal history. In the fourth painting I am on my own, as I was already having serious doubts about him. The forth was my own invention, "the Virgin of the Sea", with a twilight colored veil and which does not occur in his work. Take away the symbolic halos and it is a portrait of a woman against the sea with a baby and full of romance. The romance is one that involves nature and a woman who inspires love. Yes, it has the cartoonish quality of Schuon's works. I would never do anything like it again, but it might be the best of the ones I did for him. It is headed back to life and reality, even though it is not there yet. The child could be just an ordinary child, a far greater fact than any fo the gods, who are make believe.



I was already beyond Schuon at this point and making the Virgin a part of a real landscape and rejecting Iconism. I was expressing space, which was really in violation of his aesthetic. I was headed for rejecting symbolic and traditional art in general. I had already rejected it long ago, but here was exploring the dead end of symbolist art.

The last image is of Maude Murray. Schuon always painted himself as the Christ Child, a fact that, once I learned of it, always repulsed me. I took the Christ child out and show a woman,-- an

idealized Maude-- granting mercy in a way that Schuon was never capable of. I felt very sorry for Maude and meant this image to comfort her, who Schuon had been mercilessly torturing for months when I did this work. I wanted to show her as she wished herself to be, or rather as I wished her to be, a woman of great love who gives to others. I was idealizing her, as I knew, but the intent was to supply for her what Schuon had denied her. It failed to do that I know, as she suffered horribly from Schuon after I left the cult. I had used Schuon's own method to subject him to analysis in the end, making a painting that was about trying to comfort a woman, the very woman he was intent on destroying to inflate his own delusional ego. I was also hiding my own personal feelings behind grandiose images. He hid his personal delusions in his art as a means of aggrandizing himself. I reversed this and used the personal as means of bringing him into question. I was using his own means and methods to undermine his art. Meanwhile the whole structure of mythical art was collapsing around me, and I would never again do another mythical drawing or painting. I saw through the pretence of symbolist and spiritual art and gave it up for ever.

I finally had painted myself right out of Schuon's aesthetic. It only took me maybe 8 paintings to go beyond him and reject his aesthetic. Indeed I rejected the whole vision he had of the universe, and I did so due to the fact that I learned concretely what he had to teach. He was a liar and a fraud and his art merely an extension of an enormous ego and a mental illness. My study with him had shown me that the essence of his work was really an erotic imposture, using the Virgin image as a way of sexual/spiritual self-promotion. It repulsed me the more I learned about who he was and what he was really about. I studied his work more than anyone has, and I know what I am saying.

My study of art with him was not merely an academic study, but by actually studying painting with him and seeing how shallow and psychological his art really was, I saw through the whole cult. When I left

the cult I burned several of the paintings I did with him in disgust. I only have photos of them. His decadent symbolist virgin really ends up being a formula of erotic art. Though I have no objections to nudity or erotic art, it was not the eroticism I objected to. I disliked the implicit delusion of grandeur in Schuon's art and found it repulsive. I finally rejected his art because I rejected Schuon himself as an artist motivated by a pathology.

One could say that Van Gogh had a pathology, which is true, but in Vincent's case, the result was to increase our understanding of nature and being human on earth. Vincent was a decent man, however imperfect, and one loves him precisely because he is so human. He was so intelligent, so inclined to identify with others, so wishing to help the poor or other artists, so much the man who would not paint merely to please the powerful.<sup>1485</sup> I did not feel this with Schuon. He hid everything about himself that was human and fallible. The deeper I went into his art the more empty I found it. His was a cold, decadent vision of paranoid grandeur. I disliked it and realized at last what a terrible mistake I had made to study with him. But I had to know and studying art with him was one of the best ways to get to really know who he was--- and to come to the end of Symbolist art, a course I had pursued since my studies in Jung, Hirschman and Coomaraswamy. My painting was already founded deeply in realism and lots of Plein air work I did in Point Reyes in

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<sup>1485</sup> It is useful to compare a really repulsive panders to power like Francois Gerard to Vincent Van Gogh. Vincent was a realist who was devoted to social justice. Gerard did a lot of very fawning paintings for the ultra-rich. He liked to paint Napoleon and of the far right Bourbon Kings of the "restoration" period. He painted as if the French revolution never happened and as if Napoleon had not betrayed the revolution. In contrast there is David's portrait of Marat or Girodet's portrait of the Jean Baptiste Belly, a represented to the recently freed state of Haiti. These last two are real steps forward in art history. Gerard's works are steps back into theofascist decadence, as are Schuon's virgins as are Warhol's cult of celebrity or Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst's attempts to glorify the corporate wealthy in today's art world. Vincent opens up into human reality and these others block that path and open only into empty power and money. The basis of this is in Courbet, the French realists and the Victorian realists. Monarchist art becomes Symbolist art and then corporate art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and abstract art takes up the mantle of the old history painting, now become utterly meaningless. Ingres leads to Mondrian and Warhol

## California

I realized at last that he was a bad teacher and what he had to teach me was not what I wished to know anything further about. I saw months before I left the cult that Schuon was a fraud and his paintings was a tissue of dreams and delusions. I was a better painter than he before I even met him. But by the time I left I was a better person too, without trying to be. It was the truth that interested me and not merely mythic lies.<sup>1486</sup> I stayed because of Maude, who I hoped to get out of the cult. When I left the cult at last, I soon returned to realism, though initially of a rather idealized sort. With a year of leaving the cult I had abandoned Schuon's and Coomaraswamy crack pot theories of art and had gone forward to do my own work. What I realized is that these men

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<sup>1486</sup> Years before I had allowed myself to be influenced by Jack Hirschman's Marxism. I tried it on for size for a few weeks when I was studying with him daily in San Francisco. I studied with him for 6 months or so in 1979 and 80. I had done the same thing in my teens, due to seeing what the steel industry did to its workers. But I decided at least that that was an interesting but ultimately fruitless experiment. Enlightened socialism is one thing, as long as it does not become a tyranny, but Marxist Leninism quite another. Taking care of everyone is an obvious duty of any society, whereas favoring only the rich while the poor suffer is obviously unjust.

Jack was a better person than Schuon and I never utterly rejected Jack as a fraud the way I did Schuon. Indeed, Jack was accessible and human, whereas Schuon really had no friends and all his relationships were stunted and formal, dictated by his needs. He really did not know anyone, because only he mattered to himself. Those who he claimed to love, as he said, were just symbols of himself. I saw through Schuon pretty well and only stayed in the cult as long as I did out of care for Maude. The two men are similar in that both were radical outsiders who rejected much about the world that we live in. But though Jack is misguided in many ways, prone to excessive alcohol, he was a not a bad man. But Schuon had a criminal mind, remorseless and self-obsessive, able to lie on a whim and was totally into power and self-inflation. That is a very different thing Jack was not a psychopath. Prone to paranoid delusions, yes, but not really insane as Schuon was. In retrospect, I would never choose Schuon to be a mentor. Jack was a teacher in reality and taught me some hard things, many of them despite himself. They were phases I went through in a long education, though I still have good memories of Jack. What I went through because of Schuon was a trauma and a horrible one. To see so many people hurt and so many lies was profoundly disturbing. I learned what a pit of lies and delusions religion really is.

Besides my father the only other important models for me were my uncle Jack and more distantly and hesitantly, Chomsky. But my relation with Chomsky was never one of trust and though I like some of his ideas, I found him too much a cult leader personality to have much to do with him personally. The times I have had to do with him I found him harsh and cruel and not very likeable. He does not mind lying and his scholarship is questionable. If any of these men were father figures, I ultimately rejected them as fathers, though I learned a lot from each of them. I finally got free of them and learned to see with my own eyes as this book amply demonstrates.

were the last decadent expressions of the medieval, Hindu and canonical and theocratic view of art serving power. They are closer to the empty abstractions of corporate art than to realism. Corporate, Catholic and Hindu art are all about power. I rejected all that when I rejected Schuon, Guenon and their gangs. Just as I had once fallen for Hirschman's aesthetic ideas, I fell also for those of AKC and Schuon. But that was the end, I have not really accepted fully anyone's ideas of art except my own, and I have found those who I appreciate compared with those I doubt..

One of the first paintings I did after I left the cult was based on a photo I took of a woman I loved, wading in Merced Creek in Yosemite. It is a fairly ordinary nude, nothing great, but a work of one still learning. I wished to return to the ordinary world after an absence of some years. I did not belong in religion, that was clear, and rejected it finally. So that was the end of that. I had not given up art, just my delusions about it.

Perspective and space, which have always interested me were back. Life and light are back, and gone is all the nonsense about "Sacred Art" negating the actual in favor of the 'eternal'. I painted a real woman in a lovely real place. The hands could be better done and the figure itself is lacking in precision, but it is a realist work. The painting is a little idealized still, but at least I was on the track toward an art that is based in reality and science.

My experience of art with Schuon was bad in the end. It was disconcerting that he was so easy to surpass so quickly, even when doing things in his own domain. I had hoped for much more with him. Indeed, the whole exercise was a mistake and I wish I did not have to speak of it at all as it is embarrassing. But education is full of such blind alleys and mistakes and it is good to tell the truth about it, even if it is embarrassing. It was a scientific dead end, as it were, and one dusts oneself off and starts experimenting again,

My detour into the spiritual in art was a disaster and I was glad to leave it, much the wiser perhaps for having made such a huge mistake. I

learned that the spiritual in art is about projection, especially projection of emotion. Sacred art projects feeling states, and ones that are useful to a reigning priesthood. This is quite obvious in both Buddha's and Crucifixions, where quietude and pity are excited. Sacred art is mythic fiction and propaganda and cannot be made by anyone who is interested in the actual reality of our lives and our world. I learned how Schuon was really just making erotic advertisements of his own divinity. Once I saw that with certainty I ceased to be his student and became his critic. Now I scarcely think he is worth too much more effort at criticism. He cannot be taken seriously.

I was a great lover of Da Vinci in my teens and still am. Leonardo has still not been surpassed in the history of art. I agree with Leonardo that art should try to approach science and that art is science in an important way. Art must stay close to experience and inquiry into nature and study nature endlessly. Leonardo thought that art or painting goes beyond philosophy because it shows you the things themselves and not just the ideas about things. This is true. Painting goes beyond poetry in this respect too. Poetry can only evoke, while painting can show directly. Painting can be objective whereas little poetry leaves the subjective.

I learned to my surprise that so called "spiritual art" and modernism are really quite close. Yet, while there is beauty in sacred art, it is exploited beauty. So much modern art is utterly empty of objective beauty,, nature, inquiry and real science. Caspar David Frederick, Whistler, the Symbolist movement, Kandinsky's and Picasso's abstractions had a disastrous effect on art. You can already see this in Roger Fry's rather obtuse 1917 statement

So long as representation was regarded as the end of art, the skill of the artist and his proficiency in this particular form of representation was regarded with admiration..... With the new

indifference to representation we have become much less interested in skill and not at all interested in knowledge.”<sup>1487</sup>

. This is an admission of art being consigned—‘suicided’--- to empty and mindless decoration. Fry wants an art that is stupid and poorly done. Art, as Leonardo showed, is about knowledge and skill. Why anyone would be proud of killing art in this way is not that hard to understand, however. Bad boy artists, so much like what the corporate CEOs wanted to see themselves as, were ‘mavericks’ and mavericks were good for gallery profits. Selling poorly done inanities for excessive prices was the big ‘revolution’ in modern art. “Nonobjective art” was great for corporations, whose whole existence was premised on the subjective delusion of corporate personhood. Just as sacred art was erected on the premise of mythic subjectivity, corporate art is based on mythic abstractions too. I well understand that the rich would want just such an impotent art as this, shorn of all critical insight and inquiry, beauty and social content. It has been said, rightly I think, that a great deal of modern art is really just picking over the corpse of the death of painting. Actually painting is not dead at all, it is the art world of the rich in New York and elsewhere that is the corpse, killed by its own greed and emptiness. There are many artists who have nothing to do with these corporate cadavers and are still developing the pursuit of skill and knowledge. What we need is a thorough criticism of why corporate art failed. Indeed, toward this end I have made the following list. The characteristics of Corporate art are as follows

1. Art as objective inquiry or knowledge is largely banished, no using of art to seek knowledge or truth, it must subjective, deal with ‘systems’, or advertising icons and be fashionable and

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<sup>1487</sup> Quoted in Lambourne, Lionel, Victorian Painting. Phaidon Press, London 1999. Page 502

decorative. Art should only be about irony, clever misdirection, infantile emptiness or things as commodities. The subjective or incidental “marks” of the personality of the artist are supposed to be the primary content of art, such that art becomes more and more an ego theatre or “performance” in an “installation” or gallery space.

2. Skill and technical proficiency are discouraged or shunned, and infantile, abstract imagery rules, the more insane, atavistic, visceral or childish, the better.

3. No depth, emotional or intellectual. Thoughtful meditation is forbidden, Art must be empty or stupid. This means that content, storytelling, factual recording of the world, social realism, or natural history and representation are banished. Art must be meaningless, preferably about itself or some aspect of the artists accidental personality. Or it must be abstract and intellectual but again without real content, empty, corporate or metaphysical.

5. Beauty is disallowed, , rejected things, shocking stuff, feces, guts, found objects, childishness, ugliness and sickness are preferred. The banishment of beauty and knowledge is a dogma in “modern” that is, Corporate art.

6. Nothing “beyond the paint” Art must be about itself and its own materials. Not about life, the past, things , people, the universe or actuality. Cult of the Brushstroke, personality, cult of materials, art is not about anything “beyond the paint”<sup>1488</sup>.

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<sup>1488</sup> Van Gogh often used the expression “beyond the paint” for a good painting in his letters. He describes Van Goyen and Vermeer in this phrase, in letter 539. In Letter Vincent notes that Gericault and Delacroix often go ‘beyond the paint’, whereas Bourgeureau does not. In letter 439 for instance, footnote 3 quotes a contemporary periodical:

“when the colours in them do not appear as pigments, but the substance of them vanishes and the impression is that of life or reality, in other words when the physical media do not

In short, everything that I love about art is forbidden in corporate art. I have never wanted anything to do with these aspects of what is called “art”. Brushstrokes matter very little to me. I do not paint to make marks, but make marks in order to show what is beyond the paint. Style is an accident of making art, not its end or object. Writers or artists who strive after the “stylistic” are really just making self-aggrandizing fashion poses. Style is just another name for showing off, as Mozart well knew, as so he wisely denied having a “style” Those who strain after style usually have little to say. Japanese and Chinese art developed a very effete cult of the brushstroke too, which is slightly different, but this was really only of value mostly to esteemed gentleman connoisseurs. Using paint to create personality (Cezanne, Picasso) or suppressing paint to deny personality (Ingres) are both beside the point. I don’t think Rembrandt was trying to make exciting brushstrokes, he was trying to make something “beyond the paint”, as was Ingres or Delacroix. As with Mozart it is what the music or art says that matters, however subtle this might be. This true of Van Gogh too, who used elaborate brushstrokes in this later work as a kind of therapy, a way to describe the world and nature, “beyond the paint” as he said on numerous occasions. Even in Rembrandt’s and Van Gogh’s experiments with juicy or resonant paint and rhythmical strokes there is method used to evoke what the paint is not.<sup>1489</sup>

Art is the inquiry into reality, a kind of science, which seeks

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stand between the work of art and the viewer, but the mind of the creating artist speaks *directly* to that of the viewer. Then painters say that a painting is ‘beyond the paint’

Vincent notes further that in his own work he is pleased when “But if one steps back a little it’s indeed beyond the paint — and then there’s air around it and a restrained undulating light falls on it. At the same time, the least little lick of color with which one might glaze it is telling.” This is indeed a magic that Da Vinci and others understood well and it is complexly foreign to the so called “modernists” who want paintings to be nothing but paint, as if they were house painters or ad men..

<sup>1489</sup> Some late experiments of elaborate brush strokes used almost as music notation, evoke animal style in art more than they do self-conscious art that is playing with paint. They have more in common with Celtic knots, Viking Braids or oriental carpets than with art about art.

knowledge of the world by means of skill and exact craftsmanship, It involves knowing at its deepest and love of nature. Art must have a devotion to truth and beauty in the non-Platonic sense of accuracy to nature and fidelity to how things really are.. This is why I reject the art world as preached by art critics and the art magazines ( Art Forum, Art in in America etc.) and most art schools utterly .

The impoverished nature of corporate art or modern art is largely due to corporate influences. The transfer of power from the Church and aristocracy to the corporation has a similar, I would say, historically determined, corrosive effect on art. In both cases art is made into a lap dog, a sort of dancing bear or slave, to be demeaned and used for the masters pleasures. Indeed, the devotion to the abstract is largely an effort to render art in service of the abstract fiction of corporate personhood. Kandinsky, Mondrian, Arp, Duchamp, Malevich, Newman, Pollack, Rothko, Reinhardt, Le Witt, all had spiritual pretensions in their art. These fictions serve the ideology of abstraction, which itself is transcendental pretense meant to keep those on top where they are. These fictions of corporate personhood is as much make believe and the Christ or God idea were. Abstract fictions are delusional and self-referring, a side effect of language. Corporations seized on such art as talismans of their own self-referential culture as symbols of power. One can see this in public sculpture as well, as in this transcendent and rather art Deco sculpture in Cleveland, which I photographed as they were ripping down another office tower behind it. The idealism of the 1960's ( evoking the 1930s and 40s) which has so much in it that was religious and transcendentalist is here contrasted with the firing of the American work force and the sending of jobs overseas to be done by nearly slave labor, just so CEOs can make unjust amount of money that they do not need. It is called the "Fountain of Eternal Life". So this war memorial sculpture, rising out of the flames of war into "eternity", is a bit of a disappointment now, when America is being destroyed by the ultra-

rich who only care about themselves and want to destroy unions and soak the middle classes. Patriot civil religion is contrasted with the fact of national self-destruction.



Marshall Fredericks' Sculpture (1964) and destroyed building in downtown Cleveland

Photo by author, 2011.

Meaningless abstractions filled the vast vestibules of corporate skyscrapers with adequate talismans of nothing. Minimalist abstractions are non-controversial advertisements for money makers. The passage from Coomaraswamy who was a symbolist and traditionalist, to the abstract art of Kandinsky and Ad Reinhardt is seamless. Reinhardt was a deep reader of Coomaraswamy and a friend of Tom Merton and did his

corporate abstractions out of readings in that ideology.<sup>1490</sup> Reinhardt produced pictures--- his Black paintings especially--- that were nearly text book examples of Coomaraswamy's ideas, creating a sort of "via negativa" as Coomaraswamy would have called it. The "neti neti" "not this not that", Lipsey calls it quoting the pretensions of Advaita Vedanta and Jnana Yoga's life denying notions of apophatic spirituality. This ridiculous reduction of art of nothing ends in creating the ideal art of corporate America. Reinhardt, Warhol, Duchamp and Schuon meet in an uneasy advancing retreat of art into delusions so deep that they express the dead end of what art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century became.

Resistance to this is important. Art needs to identify with science and inquiry, beauty, fact, and reality. It needs to resist idealization and corporate abstraction and explore things as they are, refusing the dogmas of the art schools and magazines like Art Forum or the misnamed Art in America most of which contains little or nothing of the good artwork being done in America or around the world. They picture the emptiness of corporate art exclusively.

I suffered the "death of art" myself in art school and after in pursuit of the spiritual and in modern art.<sup>1491</sup> They both collapsed. My education in art was an example of the failure of both 'modernism' and the spiritual in art. The dead end of both had to be gotten beyond, if I was to grow and art was to survive. I realized eventually that there was a long

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<sup>1490</sup> This is discussed in Lipsey's An Art of our Time, pages 329-333. Reinhardt "like Coomaraswamy—and probably modeled on him---also recognized the illuminating analogies to Eastern thought in Western Religious authors, particularly the late medieval mystics".

<sup>1491</sup> An art Critic who typifies both modernism and the "post art" art is Donald Kuspit who pushes the "spiritual in art" with essays on Kandinsky and various modern artists who also explore a kind of resurgent reaction against modernism, which dovetails nicely with corporate art in certain ways. Kuspit's book the End of Art is an example of this tendency and so is his advocacy of painters like Joseph Raffael and Anil Reve, who do neo-Buddhist or Hindu/abstract works. Critics have way too much power in modern art and create fictions like priests and sustain delusions by fierce rhetoric, almost medieval in its devotion to ideology. In his early work Kuspit set up himself as the meaning of contemporary art, and this narcissism seems to have spilled over into a devotion to irrational and romantic abstraction.

standing artery in art that might be the aorta and this was realism, beginning with Da Vinci. So with these general comments about how I now think about art in mind, I will conclude about my experience learning to paint in Schuon's manner..

Schuon's first paintings were badly done orientalist nudes of big breasted females carrying pots on their heads. His work never really left the domain of exotic and erotic kitsch. Schuon told me one of his favorite painters was Ferdinand Hodler, a Swiss painter of a century ago, along with Gauguin and Roerich, all Symbolists.<sup>1492</sup> You can see the basic aesthetic ideas of Guenon and Schuon on art in Hodler's work. There is a flat space, implicit notions of hierarchy, symmetry and an

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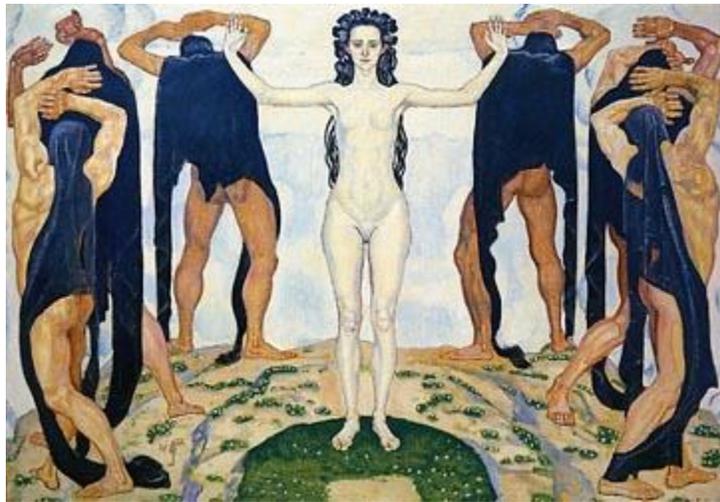


Here is one of Roerich paintings, very similar to Schuon's

<sup>1492</sup>

He also liked Nicholas Roerich: who was another follower of Blavatsky as was Guenon and Coomaraswamy at one time. Roerich dreamed of setting himself up as the leader of a new Asian state of Shambhala, along with the Penchen Lama, who together would rule central Asia as a sort of collectivist religious state and theocracy. His absurd dream failed. Roerich appears to be a sort of communist theofascist, recalling Alexander Dugin in some ways, but he seems to have megalomaniac streak rather like Schuon. See Andrei Znamenski's Red Shambhala.

attempt to create a sort of icon. Hodler was a Symbolist and both Guenon and Schuon tend this way too. The most interesting paintings by Holder are his landscapes and his remarkable series of paintings of his dying love Valentine Godé-Darel. But these would not have interested either Guenon or Schuon. Such humanistic themes were anathema to them. Schuon's taste was really symbolist and decadent. His Virgin Mary paintings are meant to be erotic, porno-icons. He told me he wanted to use sex to attract viewers and I was to do the same thing in my paintings. For Schuon the erotic and the spiritual were in many ways the same feeling. For Schuon the Yoni was the ultimate symbol of a deluded metaphysic, not the source of human life and evolution, as it actually is in reality, as Courbet pictures it. Schuon did not like children and did not want his wives to have any. None of them did.



In the painting by Hodler above you can see the basic pose of Schuon's nude virgin which he virtually copied from Hodler. <sup>1493</sup> In Holdler's case

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<sup>1493</sup> Dominique Devie claims to belong to a group and an unknown person in that group did similar paintings to those of Schuon. I do not know who this person is or anything about how they came to be done. I presume they are not exact copies, but loose interpretations. You can see them on Devie's website. But you have to sign up to look. He has recently made this website secretive and wants to hide what he is doing.

<http://cret.blogspirit.com>

there is also the tendency to paint nude children or young women, which is also the case in Schuon's painting and to a lesser degree Gauguin, though Hodler's paintings are much less obsessive and grandiose. While there are definite hints of an infantile narcissism in Hodler, there is more of a tendency to the infantile in Schuon—a cult of "naïveté". Holder paints a very young boy staring up at gown up female angels and other images of this kind, which suggest a certain immaturity or infantile outlook. The child prophet learning his destiny from the divine angels. This is also to be found in Schuon's art work, as well as his cartoons or doodles, which have never been published.



Schuon saw himself as the Christ child and painted himself in various sexual liaisons with the Virgin Mary. In Schuon's art the virgin is

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The images were under the title

<http://cret.blogspot.com/album/schuonneries/page1/>

a sort of divine prostitute who gives herself to Schuon like a Fin de Siecle Salome, dancing the dance of many veils. Indeed Schuon's sexual mentality is really formed in decadent late 19<sup>th</sup> century Symbolist movement that his father belonged to. The antecedents to Schuon's Virgins can be found in the steamy orientalist eroticism of Ingres, Gerome, Khnopf, John Lewis, Bonnat, Eduardo Debat Ponsan, Gustav Moreau, Couvarribias and others. This painting by Gaston Bussière (1862-1928), a French symbolist, orientalist work, is typical of the genre that influenced Schuon. There are thousands of such paintings and photos and some of these definitely influenced Schuon. I include this one almost at random, as there are so many other choices. Schuon probably would have thought this pose a little silly, but it has feature of his preferences.

He also liked Harem Orientalism and collected nude or seminude pictures of Balinese temple dancers. He saw women in misogynistic terms of late 19<sup>th</sup> century orientalism.



He told me he also liked the rather vampy vixens of Fernand Khnopff. He did not single out this one in particular, but Knopff's work does have echoes in Schuon's work. The image below by Knopff shows various idealizations of the female figure. They are more glowing and fin de siècle than Schuon, but like Schuon's Virgins these reduce women to otherworldly symbols and show them as gates to an imagery world. and The image of the woman with many breasts would be absurd to Schuon, of course, but it is not atypical of a Hindu/Greek mythos of the idea of femininity deformed by ideology and symbolism. He did not like images of women as mother's. They had to be lovers and objects of sexual attraction.



Schuon's Virgins are really temple prostitutes, combining Schuon's sexual and symbolist dreams with the standardized procedure of Russian

icons and Hindu temple sculpture. <sup>1494</sup> He called these ‘visions’ but I began to see that Schuon’s ‘visions’ were really just his erotic imagination running away with him. He saw things in his imagination and then made them out to others as if they were real. There is no trick to this, it is a matter of his conning others about what really happens to everyone. Schuon tried to turn his daydreams into first principles and means to control others. The Pre-Raphaelite impulse was fired by a decadent erotic form of medievalism in quotation. In short he was making religio-pornographic icons of a Romantic and symbolist tendency.

His art is really an extension of Orientalist and Symbolist concerns, therefore. In this he is very close to modernist abstract art form Kandinsky to Mondrian, both of whom he despised. His icons are not that different than Piet Mondrian’s attempt to show his version of Blavatsky’s theosophical goddess. In Schuon, as in Piet Mondrian it is hatred of actuality that is in triumph, the mystical is romantically attached to negation of the actual. “The artist must be able to abolish tragic expression” Mondrian wrote, .. “the artist sees the tragic to such a degree that he is compelled to express the non-tragic”. <sup>1495</sup> This escapist

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<sup>1494</sup> Schuon’s advice as a painting teacher was pretty bad and I grew out of and beyond his teachings quickly. He told me he was “the greatest painter in the world”. But I quickly learned that he really didn’t know much about painting. His technical knowledge was pitiful, as was Sharlyn Romaine’s, who painted with him, in a bizarre way. (I have described elsewhere, she was nude while painting and he contemplated her “yoni”.) I doubt many of his paintings will last long as he did many of them in oils on paper. They would have me make copy machine copies for them, The works I copied were “Virgins” or Schuon’s nude Icons of himself. They would paste copies of paintings they had already done on a sticky board and paint on the copy paper in oils. This a very bad way to do it and I objected and explained why, but they did not care. Schuon said that the apocalypse was coming and they did not have time to do it properly, since there was not much time and they needed to do as many as possible. I saw in the end that I was a better painter than Schuon. He was technically incompetent, obsessed with onanistic and grandiose fantasies his art was psychologically disturbed, even if it occasionally reached a certain pornographic beauty of a symbolist and pseudo-Iconic sort. What he was doing was really erotic art of a sort and not that well done. He was trying to create a deliberate erotic mystique. This is really what his “Plenary Esoterism” was all about. I was painting to understand reality, not to make delusional enticements into a bogus system of metaphysics. Schuon was not a painter but a propagandist and an interior decorator.

<sup>1495</sup> Quoted in Lipsey, Roger An Art of Our Own, Shambhala 1988 pg 74 Lipsey worked closely with Rama Coomaraswamy on the books Lipsey put together about Rama’s father Ananda.

leap out of the “world” and into the imaginary and ‘transcendent’ is ubiquitous in symbolist art and religion. Like Schuon, Mondrian was after an otherworldly escape into a subjective ideal. He banished all objective reference from his work. Art becomes an expression of the purely ‘inward’, and the inward is the ultimate power, the ultimate esoteric truth, the negation of life in abstract ideology. Actually, his rhetoric aside, his paintings express nothing at all. Out of this vacuous denial of reality he creates top down social hierarchy. Like Schuon Mondrian is a Platonist, and wants a top down system of society, ruled according to subjective idealization, not too different from Heidegger. This is symbolist hatred of the actual brought to a life denying conclusion, which prefigures the corporate art of Barnett Newman, the Minimalists, Anne Truitt and Rothko, which also imply a sort of worship of the fictional idea of the existence denying, mystical void, the Via Negativa. Nonsense, of course, like Mondrian and empty of meaning and so perfect for corporate lobbies of skyscrapers, or corporate museums, celebrating the cult of the new and emptiness of the Corporate Person, the new god of the world. Prior to getting to this vacuous conclusion, Mondrian did his idealized nudes. They are echoes of Schuon’s nudes as well as Ayn Rand’s deification of the impersonal “individual” as you can see:

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Lipsey promoted Schuon’s ideology in this book, (pg, 462). By showing the tacit similarity to high modernist art to spiritual art of China, Japan, India and medieval icons he who the service of art to power. I am arguing against the thrust of Lipsey ideas and thus against the ideology of the service of art to power via “spirituality”, which really is a sort of code world for justify social control, be it corporate or religious. .



Piet Mondrian. Evolution.

Like Schuon's "virgins" these are theosophical Icons, worthy of Ayn Rand novels. Mondrian wanted an "end of art", and he wanted an artist who is "free from art". Like Duchamp he is not really an artist, but an ideologue who's sometimes made objects. He and Duchamp's wanted to destroy art, and did so in their own lives, if not in fact, by reducing art to nonentity and childish jokes. This 'end of art' is purely make believe, of course. It merely ended for these purveyors of mystical make believe. He and Duchamp jumped off the end of the pier of art and that is a good thing for art as they were not really artists anyway. No reason to pay them much mind.

Mondrian wants an art devoted utterly to totalistic delusions, art in service of the spiritual. He says in one of his last writings that "if we cannot free ourselves, we can free our vision" The "vision" is freed of reality and delusion is in triumph, reality itself is denied and in its place is subjective fiction. The metaphysical fiction of 'balance' now made into a totalistic world view that is ultimately sympathetic to corporate capital

and the monolithic and minimalist corporate individual who is his own law. In short these images are prototypes for the fiction of the ‘corporate person’. Not too different than Ayn Rand. Mondrian’s “vision” is really just Platonic Blavatskian metaphysics restated in terms that could well have been uttered by Schuon or Guenon . The art these men all wanted was a decadent dead end, a repudiation of our world and what actually matters in it. <sup>1496</sup>

The painting of Gauguin and Schuon goes back to the idealistic art of monarchist theocracy, and looks forward to the empty abstraction of corporate art. When one compares De Hooch, Millet, Ilsted, Clausen, Hammershoi, Van Gogh or Millais to Schuon’s rather quickly done and very paltry efforts it is hard to take him seriously as an artist. Schuon seeks to turn Russian icons into erotic self-referring propaganda for his own esoteric and self-aggrandizing cult and ideology. This is closer to Marxist Icons than to art. His self-portraits are diagrams of the Grand Pooh Bah. Indeed, Schuon’s Primordial Gatherings were really just 19<sup>th</sup> century sex fantasies combined with Schuon’s peculiar notions of his own divinity with Native American and Hindu imagery. He had a lot of “visions” and they were invariably self-serving fantasies, as are all such visions.

William James idea that religion must serve the individual fantasy is made concrete in Schuon’s art and symbolist and abstract art in general. The bankruptcy of the Jamesean idea is manifest in Schuon and in corporate art. This is why I reject both James, Corporate art and

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<sup>1496</sup> A recent artist who typifies the trajectory of the Symbolist movement and Blavatskian metaphysics is Thomas Lyon Mills, who for many years now has been rummaging around the Roman Catacombs doing paintings which seek to resurrect Byzantine and Medieval ghosts, gods and dreams in the dust and detritus of tombs for the dead under Rome. His is an art of the dead, as it were, a religious art, utterly devoted to fiction and the romantic vision of dream worlds that never existed but keep being asserted as if they did. I once thought in similar ways, but long since have given all that up. A lot of modernist or post-modernist art is highly subjective and eschews reality and beauty in favor of vague feeling and ambiguous projection verging on the meaninglessness or the fictional. It is an art of the ‘twilight zone’.

Traditionalist aesthetics. Reality is not fantasy, and one must be clear about that. This is not to say that dreams and fantasy cannot be entertaining or even necessary in some cases. But good art is not fantasy, though it might employ it on occasion.

Like Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres , Schuon spent little time in the Orient, but tried to make himself master of what he really knew little about. Ingres was an “armchair orientalist” as was Schuon. This is not to say that Oriental art might not have a lot in common with Schuon’s ideology. It does. Tibetan Thankas, or Hindu temple sculpture do have a lot in common with Schuon and I dislike both for similar reasons. These are political and social propaganda. They both tend toward a transcendentalist and misogynistic excess and a fantasy world where reality is denied in favor of a make believe of archetypes or imaginary metaphysical “principles” or gods which are, in fact, subjective fictions. Just as the Temples of India served a Brahmin caste system, so modern art serves the corporate class and their fiction of the corporate “person”. In both cases it is an abstract ideology that is served by the art. The purpose of such art is to create the illusion of a social elite who exploit those falsely made lesser than they. Once one sees this completely, there is no turning back to it. It is an art of injustice and fiction.

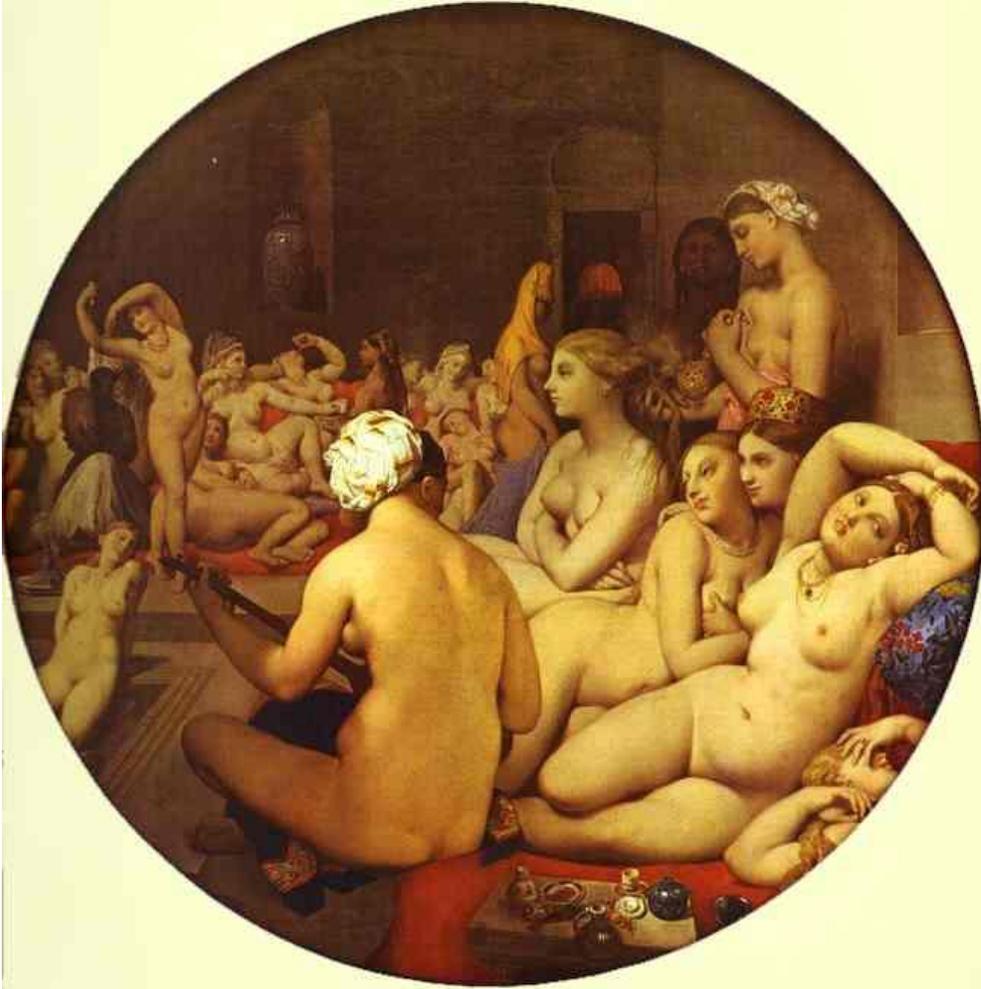
Also like Ingres, Schuon had a shame about his paintings and feared its exposure in public, should his images be made public. Most are still not public. Ingres kept his “Turkish Bath” painting secret for many years, for instance. Like Ingres’ painting of the “Turkish Bath” below, Schuon primordial gatherings had a strong voyeuristic element. There was also an implied harem composed of other men’s wives and thus an atmosphere of the exotic and forbidden. Schuon liked lesbianism and encouraged it with his wives for his viewing pleasure, as the famous and widely circulated photo by Schuon of Maude Murray and Barbara

Perry nude and embracing demonstrates rather well.<sup>1497</sup> A similar voyeuristic enjoyment of a male fantasy of lesbianism is evidenced in Ingres' Turkish Bath.<sup>1498</sup>

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<sup>1497</sup> There is also a weird homoeroticism in Schuon's self-love, his creation of bizarre and onanistic and Iconic self-portraits as a prophet and his strange paintings of Native American men doing nude calisthenics. None of these are publically available, But I watched closely their creation and they were basically done as masturbatory fantasies by Schuon and his fourth wife Romaine. They would paint in the nude and he would stare at her sex as she painted imagines of his divinity. Divine onanistic images of the self-referring prophet at the end of time, perhaps, but actually just erotic images of cartoon prophet, images of metaphysical and mutual masturbation fantasies concocted between the two of them. They were then pandered as "icons" among followers, thus becoming part of the delusional mythos of the whole group.

<sup>1498</sup> One of Ingres students was Edgar Degas. Degas was the best of the impressionists as far as drawing goes, as he studied with Ingres. But there are questions with Degas. His relationship to the young dancer he sculpted and drew raises questions about his misogyny. He could have helped this girl, who died as a prostitute. His strange involvement with slavery via his mother also raises questions. She was from a southern family that owned and sold slaves. Later Degas painted the Cotton Exchange of New Orleans, which was involved in exploiting freed African Americans in the Post-Civil War American South. Degas father and brother were involved in buying pro-Confederate bonds during the Civil War and depended on slavery and its later perpetuation under the new regimes set up after the south lost. There were ties between the families friendly to the Degas with the White League, a racist organization. This cast some doubt on the student of Ingres, who like Ingres appears to have been something of a far right reactionary.



Ingres<sup>1499</sup> painting like Schuon's Primordial Gatherings "highlight the phantasmagoric character of most male visions of the "harem" Schuon's paintings like those of Ingres are "mirage paintings"<sup>1500</sup> just as the primordial Gatherings were mirage like fictions born of Schuon's delusions of grandeur and the slavish devotion of deluded followers. His deluded followers were all twitter about the profunity of these fictions,

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<sup>1499</sup> Ingres best works are not his paintings, but his portrait drawings, some of which are really extraordinary acts of skill and observation. There are few examples of drawings done so well and so fluidly, assuming they were not merely copied from a Camera Lucida, which is sometimes claimed though it has not been proven.

<sup>1500</sup> See Orientalism: Delacroix to Klee, by Roger Benjamin, Art Gallery of New South Wales 1997

when actually all that was in evidence was a literary and erotic imagination gone crazy and haywire.

Schuon can be usefully compared to Duchamp's last work in Philadelphia, "Entant Donnes". In this work both terror and transcendental beauty are combined in an image of exactly what repelled me from Modern art and Schuon, as well as religion in general. In it you can see the door of the Inquisition and the beauty and lie of transcendental spirituality. This is a work that glorifies crime and torture in a beautiful and transcendental way. <sup>1501</sup> A woman lies on brutal sticks holding up a lantern of hope in the midst of her torture. Duchamp was a bad painter, and an equally bad sculptor and made up for it with absurd intellectual games that really are not art but elitist con-manship made up of clever puns. <sup>1502</sup> The notion that Duchamp made art democratic is not true. He made it empty of real content and made it corporate and elitist in a rarefied subjectivity that requires elite translation.

Duchamp echoes the Eucharist and the flaming excess of El Greco's need to burn reality down <sup>1503</sup> with metaphysical delusions. Dada for him

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<sup>1501</sup> If you grasp the toxic nature of this combination you grasp an important element in this book.

<sup>1502</sup> Duchamp's "aesthetics of indifference" leaves us with no recourse but to feel utterly indifferent to him. His absurd urinal is merely the daring of a impresario of inanity. He says that "This choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste ... in fact a complete anesthesia." Anesthesia is precisely the feeling I get from his sorry works, empty of real content but full of pretence and posturing. He is posturing at democracy when actually it is really the death of art. It is an elitist ploy that opened the door to all the meaninglessness esoterica of elite corporate art and an art as capital meaningless investment. This was the opposite of democratic art whose traditions lie opposite to Duchamp with artists like Chardin, Jules Breton, Eastman Johnson, Leon Lhermitte, Van Gogh, Hopper, Burchfield, Ben Shaun, Bateman and some of the Plein Air painters of today. All of these bypass the "aesthetics of indifference" and open up into nature and real democratic ideas based on nature and human rights "

<sup>1503</sup> I wrote a short chapter about El Greco's painting that might be worth quoting here in full as it goes to the heart of some of the ideas in these books:

El Greco and Philip: The Transcendent Crystal that Rises out of the Blood

Philip also, like Columbus, saw himself as an apocalyptic judge, serving god and having the power over life and death according to the dictates of his faith. A painting by El Greco of Philip II, called the "Dream of Philip II" pictures what the Royal cataloguers called a

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"Glorification" of Philip. But actually it pictures in symbolic, diagrammatic form, the actuality of the relationship of knowledge and power to atrocity. In this painting, Hell and earth are on the same level, implying that there are only two realms: heaven, the world of knowledge and truth on the one hand, and earth which is no more than an extension of hell. Immediately behind Philip, there is a gaping mouth of a dragon or demon- the Mouth of Hell- and in this devouring mouth, men and women suffer apparently deserved and frightful torture. Philip has his back to them and could care less: they are merely Moors, Jews, Indians or sinners. In the background people seem to be fleeing from a lake of fire or blood as if the apocalypse were already occurring. Philip himself is completely indifferent to the suffering, and even somehow the enforcer of this suffering. His face is benign, neutral, and disinterested, though perhaps slightly ecstatic as he contemplates his function as the divine representative of a bloody minded god. Above Philip, floats the serenely Divine Name of Christ, like a Platonic insignia, clear, crystalline and pure, like the eternal Word or the final sound of the golden apocalyptic trumpet. The divine name of Christ rises like a transcendent crystal out of the blood of those Philip had murdered.. Numerous, bloodless and earthless angels float around the divine name, reflecting well the otherworldly delusions of grandeur that allowed Philip to feel righteous, even as he murdered the innocent Jews, Moors, Ottomans, and Indians. The angels look at Philip and point to the Divine Name. Philip is aware of them, of his mission and his Manifest Destiny. The god concept functions here as an enabling mechanism that allows and to a degree, even helps organize and create atrocities., just as the Bhagavad Gita helped Himmler murder Jews in the Camps. The painting reveals the mentality of the Spanish atrocities and how they grew out of the central beliefs of Western culture.

El Greco gave the painting to Philip in the hopes that it would secure him prestige and royal patronage, apparently. It did neither. But the painting well reflects both the self-righteous sadism of Philip, as well as the Byzantine and Platonic idealism of El Greco, whose Platonist mysticism, seeking the transcendent luminosity of the other world, could both justify, glorify and seek the patronage of a King who used the blood soaked silver and gold of the New World to create more corpses of Jews, Moslems and Europeans in the old world. Gold and silver were Philips right, as the defender of Christ, and the killing of Native Americans was just and good, because it was done for the glory of god. Stannard quotes the saying of Cotton Mather and other religious Puritans that the Native Americans "must be pursued like wolves..[until] they are consumed" or exterminated. He notes that the genocidal project of the Puritans, and one could add, the Spanish, was advised and supported, even whipped up, by religious leaders, and that political and military leaders, indeed the "whole white nation... followed these minister's genocidal instructions with great care. It was their Christian duty as well as their destiny".

became an esoteric system of make believe at war with reality. Like Schuon he uses women as a prop for his ego and erects her into a symbol of his own metaphysical pretensions.

In any case, certainly Schuon's deluded notions of aesthetic sexuality are only dimly suggested in Guenon's and Coomaraswamy's rather torrid and paranoid romanticism as well as the fantasies of Novalis and German Idealistic hopes of fascist dictatorship. But Guenon's hatred of space is part of Schuon's aesthetic and this hatred is strange and reactionary. These men deny space in art and thus actuality.

I love space in art and have tried to represent it in two dimensions. Space is a marvelous thing. The flatness of Icons is a dead, unreal, abstract space. Actual space is alive with life and change. The world is not flat as is the flat earth vision of Guenon and Schuon and other fundamentalists. The non-spatial icon results in the bizarre image of souls after death being two dimensional, like eschatological pancakes. This is what Guenon suggest is the fate of souls after death. They become flat pancakes. Eschatological pancakes are not digestable. This is funny with an odd, perverse sort of humor. Though one can be sure Guenon did not think so, prone as he was to believe his own delusions. He had no sense of humor. It is funny because metaphysical thinkers like Guenon strain mightily to prove that the most ridiculous fabrications are true and the so often get caught counting angels on the head of a pin to prove the case that what never existed has always existed.

For Guenon, spiritual 'agents', in Pascal Boyer's sense, are everywhere, lurking and about to do to us harm. The psychic and political fight he imagines taking place in the minds of men is purely imaginary. Guenon gets caught up in concepts and his sense of reality betrays him and he begins to talk like a lunatic discussing the plots the surround

him in all directions. The spritual war he imagines is not happening anywhere, yet like Mad Meg he sees it everywhere. The paranoid mind must above all else prove the existence of the universal plot, and will stop at nothing to do so, even at the expense of reason.

Guenon tries to do just that in this Reign of Quantity. People that read this book and take it seriously get sucked into the same phantasmagoria of mirages. Above all the ascribing of agency to beings or things that do not have it is a linguistic problem. Guenon is a Platonist and Platonists generalize everything, creating a world of essences that is not there. A tree is not just a tree but partakes of universal treeness, they think. A man is not just a man but he must be the Lord of the World or Universal Man. This reduction of the world to meaningless generalities is the “essence” of traditionalist and symbolist art. Creating the conceit of an “eternity” in art is partly what Schuon tried to do in his “Icons”. That is why he closes all the eyes of his Virgins and himself in his self-portraits. Like the Buddha, he contemplates the eternity of a subjective vision that is delusional, but that he imagines gives him power over all time and space. Like Buddha in rapture and Virgin Mary’s in contemplation of the divine, Schuon’s art tries to pretend to an eternity that does not exist. It is hoped that the delusion will spread through the paintings into the viewer, like a flu, pulling you in by means of sexual allure. He told me that this was the main point of his paintings. Eternal sexuality is what is pictured. It is a fantasy that has its compelling qualities, as who would not want to have sexual fulfillment forever, but it is a fraud, a fantasy, as there is no such thing. Nature does not work that way. Sex is a means of enjoyment in the act of creating babies that will perpetuate flesh and bone, and flesh and bone is what we are about,<sup>1504</sup> not fictional eternities.

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<sup>1504</sup> Da Vinci made this quite clear in his amazing anatomical studies, which even now are perhaps the best ever done. He shows the amazement that evolution is. He is not trying to draw inane delusions or the transcendental imagination. He is drawing how the radius in the arm turns

In contrast to the purple dust and sex/death obsession of esoteric abstract art, there is the rise of realism in painting. The rise of realism is also a political rebellion against the restoration of the monarch in 1848, when Courbet came into his own and began his militant and brave rejection of art as a service to church, god, kings and authority. His amazing painting the Artist's Studio of 1855, is perhaps the first attempt by an artist to paint his own life in its reality. It is an openly political work too, which shows the exploited and the exploiters on the left side. Courbet is no longer hiding the facts of existence behind a screen of metaphysical make believe as Schuon and Medieval art did. Jesus, angels and Mary are all gone. Courbet later tried to indict poetry in a painting too, showing a nude woman, "reclining on a moss covered rock.....spitting in the water that was poisoning them all.". Baudelire, Lamartine, Nerval are among those thus satired by Courbet.<sup>1505</sup> This condemnation of poets is echoed in Neruda and others. Poetry can be wonderful, but often it is a excuse that supports the ideology of the upper classes. Courbet was protesting that, and rightly so.

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the forearm even as the Humerus swivels on the Ulna. This double hinge is an extraoridnay thing and it is real, not imaginary.

<sup>1505</sup> This is discussed in a letter of Corbet written to Castagary on Jan. 16 1864) see Letters of Gustav Courbet, 1992 pg. 234



. Baudeliare's presense in the Ateleir, or the Painter's Studio is likewise fraught. An xray shows what Jeanne Duval looked like.



His lady friend Jeanne Duvall used to be in the picture too, but now you can just see a shadow of her next to Baudelaire. But in the xray image you can see she looks in the mirror in a voluptuous pose and Charles in oblivious and dreaming over his books. No wonder Baudelaire insisted she be taken out. She is the lively one. His denial of life and nature is obsessive and religious, rather like that of Mallarme, who likewise wanted to reduce poetry to the merely subjective and the other-worldly. Modernism is bankrupt.

Courbet was a bright man.<sup>1506</sup> His understanding of reality was in opposition to the reactionary forces of the time. He was the real inspiration of painters like Millais, Millet and others. The realist movement extends the concern of Greek sculpture, Da Vinci and science into the 20th century. Abstract art in contrast grows out of the Symbolist movement and the painters of the far right, and is a throwback to Russian icons, and esoteric medievalism now applied to a corporate minimalism. Modernism is the misnamed child or the far right reactions against the French Revolution and the Enlightenment.

There is little expression of what were the facts of the medieval life in the Pre-Raphaelites. There is a real separation between Rossetti's dreams of an invented medievalism and Millais or F.M. Brown's attempts to be objective. Indeed the early Pre-Raphaelite work of Millais is objective and amazingly contemporary. He is a realist, unlike Rossetti whose one realist painting, "Lost" was never finished. Rossetti was painting medieval and iconic fantasies, as was Schuon. Millais is a totally different story. His vegetation and bankside in the painting of "Ophelia" took him 11 hours a day, six days a week, over a five-month period in

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<sup>1506</sup> I do not like everything in Courbet. His hunting paintings are atrocious, I understand why he liked hunting though. In England and France the King claimed to own most or all animals, and this made hunting a patriotic duty if one hated the King as much as Courbet did. Not that I favor his "fanatical poaching" as he called it. I don't. But he saw hunting as a duty for this reason. In America the democratic state alone claims the right to sell licenses to kill, with the same supremacist result. Animals are killed as part of the mercenary greed of the state.

1851. The objective effort in this makes the work amazingly present. Or take his late work, much disliked by modernist critics, but much better than anything modernists have done, like this amazing study of dew drenched plants



John Everett Millais  
Dew Dreched Furze, 1890

The same is true of painters like Rachel Ruysch or Rosa Bonheur as well, both of whose realism goes so deep. Vincent Van Gogh, who shows himself in his amazing letters as an unacknowledged scholar of 19<sup>th</sup> century art.<sup>1507</sup> He understood very well that art was about reality, not

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<sup>1507</sup> The Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam has put out a new edition of his letters which are extremely interesting and how that Vincent really was a sort of scholar of 19<sup>th</sup> century art. A man who sought to do Dickens in painting and a deeply compassionate person, not all the madman

fake dreams of the dead, and his horror at the Symbolist way Gauguin was going is well considered and accurate. While Vincent flirted with Gauguin's symbolist abstractions, briefly, he recognized it as a dead end finally. Vincent's early work, much neglected, might be the some of the best of his efforts. His difficult and expansive later work of course has great merit, but he is really himself before he goes to Paris and is influenced by the impressionists. His potatoes are incredible, before the infinity of the starry skies, which really are derived from Millet's version of the Starry sky. The influence of Anton Mauve and other realists on him is much greater than has been acknowledged.

Vincent's fight with Gauguin is really about Courbet and the Naturalists. Gauguin would go on to be a precursor of empty abstractions, whereas Vincent began his fight with long acting epilepsy and he tries desperately to hold on to reality. Courbet would fight with the backwards conservatism French state. Both men would lose their fight, but win it in a curious way. They announce the importance of potatoes and shoes, rivers and women, the presence of nature and the social network of our times. Van Gogh's dislike of religion is very serious, as is Courbet's, and has a certain relationship to my own, though I was never as fanatic as Vincent was, since he was a minister's son and wished to impress his dad. But he went through an ordeal in religion that was very traumatic and survived it. He writes about it that

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worshiped in art histories.. The letters have many dimensions. They are a social history of the time, an art history, a psychological history and of considerable literary merit, among other things. But in this book attention should be drawn to the early letters between Isleworth and Borniage (1875-78) where Vincent gets converted to a species of protestant evangelism and tries to become like his Parson father, who was very hard on Vincent. It is the tale of a cult conversion really. Vincent is so open and obvious in trying to sell himself on an ideology that is clearly false. He fails in his own eyes, but succeeds as an artist. He is able to leave the ideological system suddenly as all such systems of mind control can be left. Vincent is lonely and vulnerable and lost his job at Goupil's art dealership in Paris, and so is vulnerable to cultic influences and the bible. He gets out of it pretty well that and becomes the great painter we all know.

“I told Pa that I found the whole system of religion loathsome, and precisely because I dwelled on those things too much during a miserable period of my life. I don’t want anything more to do with it and have to guard against it as something fatal.”<sup>1508</sup>

I understand exactly what he is saying and feel the same way.<sup>1509</sup> This is a psychological reaction to totalist system of belief and it explains his dislike of Gauguin and Symbolist movement. Vincent is not close to Gauguin, but rather to the novels of Emile Zola. Impressionism was too superficial for him. He was inspired by the English social realists especially Charles Dickens, Frank Holl, Hubert Herkomer, Luke Fildes, Ford Madox Brown and others. These men, like Courbet or Clausen, were very brave and started what is really social history as a form of art as the periodical *The Graphic* shows. They are in art what Dickens, Hugo and Zola were in literature. How to present the facts of human life in a way so as to improve the lives of those who suffer.<sup>1510</sup> Engels and Marx, despite their later development, which was very harmful, were realists too, early on. Engel’s The Condition of the Working Class in England, is one of the first social histories of ordinary people. The failure of Marxism had to do

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<sup>1508</sup> Edited by Hans Luijten and others. Vincent Van Gogh-- the Letters Vol. 2 pg 12, Letter 194 Dec. 29<sup>th</sup> 1881. Later when Vincent suffers from hallucinations and epilepsy he has religious delusions that are very disturbing to him. Many writers try to quote Vincent out of the context of his life as a religious artist but this is false and shows a very shallow reading of this very deep and thoughtful artist, whose lucidity quite belies all the fanfare about his later mental troubles.

<sup>1509</sup> To see more on what I think about Realism and art see this exhibit I designed. It is a continuation of this essay. Here: <http://www.naturesrights.com/StayingAmazed.pdf>

<sup>1510</sup> Vincent’s painting are exceptional in other ways too. Many of his works have never been part of the art market of buying and selling. The largest collection was that of Theo Van Gogh, and was inherited by his wife and that forms the nucleus of the Van Gogh Museum. The art market is very corrupting and tends to reflect the values of the ultra-rich. In Vincent’s case, his letters and much of his art attracted attention independently of money and this is amazing in itself. Vincent has since become part historian, part social thinker and part artist and I admire him for all these things.

with the coalescing of power in the hands of the state, which proved just as destructive as the location of power in the hands of corporations. The fact that English Law and government actively encouraged and allowed the Potato Famine<sup>1511</sup> in Ireland between 1845-49, shows that these abuses tend to be part of a capitalist power structure. Marxist has created similar problems in palces like China or Russia

It is this that makes Vincent great and which is above all present in his work and letters from the beginning. The epileptic madness that haunts his later years is part of this perhaps, but hardly the main thing in his work. One can see a genius in the work of Julien Dupre too. As the three great paintings of a woman worker raking hay show



. My roots are in art like this, and to this day I still thrill at images such as I saw recently when I discovered Peter Ilsted's work.

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<sup>1511</sup> The Potato famine was caused by the ownership of Irish land by absentee English landlords and politicians, who grew plenty of corn, oats, rye, wheat and other crops, but would not allow the peasants and poor of Ireland to eat them, thus causing at least a million perhaps more people to starve to death. Another 1 to 2 million were forced to immigrate to America or Canada. The problem was the state sponsored selfishness of property ownership and "laissez faire" economics. Let them starve but make sure the owners make money selling "their" crops. Such crops should have been seized for the Irish, rather than people be made to starve so a few speculators could thrive off their corpses. Women and babies were killed, old people and strong men, all so a few speculators could get rich off the grains that the poor did not get, which would have saved them.



These are great images of space and light and the reality of the artists life. They show us precisely the feelings and textures of 19<sup>th</sup> century air and space in a way that reaches beyond the clothes the people have on and show what we all see and love in our own world. This could be said of J.M.W. Turner too, whose work is a hymn to science and technology of a kind. Those who think he was a precursor to abstract art have not understood him. He was a great inquirer into the habits of nature, light and atmosphere, clouds, the sun, color, coppermines, blacksmiths, weather, anything to do with light, indeed, his best work is extremely well drawn landscapes, nature and light studies. He did studies of ironworkers, magnetism, and new and old ships, steamships, architecture in many weathers as well as some very fine drawings such as this one from 1797 of a waterfall.



Or this 1839 *The Castle of Trausnitz overlooking Landshut*, done in water color. <sup>1512</sup>

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<sup>1512</sup> For more on Turner and his love of science and objective drawings see Turner as Draughtsman, by Andrew Wilton, Turner and the Scientists, by James Hamilton and Turner in the North by David Hill.



J.M.W. Turner

1839 The Castle of Trausnitz overlooking Landshut

Astounding and complex yet simple in its evocations of light and form. Another artist I admire is Eastman Johnson. Partly forgotten today, I think he is much better than Winslow Homer and Sargent. He did many things of value. For instance, I love Johnson's portrait of Mount Vernon, General Washington's house. Johnson intimates who Washington really was.



He does not paint the imposing main house except as an incidental--- but concentrates all his attention the slave quarters around the back and a broken fence and a slave girl in the grass and her father on the stoop. It is more indictment of Washington than anything else. People who look at this tend not to see any of this, but it is a powerful protest work against one of the clichés of American history. It also has that lazy summer feeling that one feels in Virginia. Washington was a man of untrustworthy policy, as when he promised Native Americans that he would protect their lands and then betrayed them when he appointed General "Mad Anthony" Wayne, whose Legions did great harm to Ohio Natives when they attacked the Indian confederation in the Summer of 1794 and created the "Treaty" of Greenville. He made money off this betrayal of Ohio and that helped him support his slaves back in Virginia. Johnson's ironic painting of his great house is thus a just protest against a man who was imposing on the outside but a hypocrite in his back yard.

Johnson did many paintings about the liberation of the African Americans, fleeing from the south, the Underground Railroad or African American literacy. his blueberry picking is wonderful as are his kids in Barns and the studies for maple sugaring, which he did in opposition to Sugar Cane farming which used huge number of slaves.

Johnson's paintings evokes a world partly gone now, not entirely, but it is a good world they picture. I have picked blueberries in Ontario myself, not far from Killarney. At the right time of the year they are everywhere and so sweet one can hardly keep away for them. One quickly becomes expert at finding the best ones. Bears like them too. We watched bears eating them. When I was a kid I spent some days on an island in Maine and there were a lot of blueberries which they mother made us go out and pick for blueberry pancakes, and it was one of the best breakfasts I have ever had. So the world they describe is not entirely gone.

Of artists of my parents' generation, I like Raphael Soyer, some of Ben Shahn, and the Mexican muralists and aspects of Andrew Wyeth's work. Wyeth vacillated between surrealism and realism. I prefer the more realistic sides of him. His politics are atrocious. But he is a man of contradictions who can seem like a gun toting animal hunter and far right, neo Nazi republican on the one hand, and on the other a liberal democrat in his work, who disliked racism of any kind, loved animals, put up poor African Americans, befriended Native Americans, not to mention stadiing for women's rights and and was a decent fellow who happened to have amazing facility with a brush and to do some really wonderful studies and finished works. Unlike pseudo-artists like Duchamp, Wyeth is a hard working artist and one that has verve and insight into nature and meaningful places and things. My respect for him has increased with time rather than decreased, unlike Duchamp who I

fell for at one point, but whose cleverness seems to hide rather a bad artist who did great harm. The absurd hatred of Wyeth and love of Duchamp by the art gallery establishment in New York, shows how empty they are.

Hilton Kramer, Rosenberg, Greenberg etc. were art promoters of the 60's and 70's and they were certainly mistaken and shows what provincial ideo-dogmatics they were. Why anyone ever listened to them is beyond me. Few art critics are worth the ink they write with. Wyeth's autobiographical realism is deep and sincere, however one may differ with his views on other matters. His *Geraniums*, and *Garrett Room*, and some of the Helga Pictures, nature studies, dry brush watercolors, dogs sleeping, windows, and dry cornstalks are great art, not merely "illustration". He was one of the great watercolorists in America, along with some works of Homer and Sargent.

Another artists who I think understood the main direction of painting since Leonardo was John Constable. He is right on mark in this statement in his lectures of 1836

“...Painting is a science, and should be pursued as an inquiry into the laws of nature. Why, then, may not landscape be considered as a branch of natural philosophy, of which pictures are but experiments?”<sup>1513</sup>

This defines very well what painting form Plein air and nature is. Proving this in his own work Constable did some great Plein air works, cloud studies, tree studies and others.

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<sup>1513</sup> Fourth Lecture on Landcape Painting, June 16, 1836



John Constable

There are few people in the contemporary scene that I identify with. I like aspects of the contemporary Realism, the Atelier and Plein Air movements, but some of it tends to be retrograde and to ally itself with reactionary forces, as sometimes, but not always, happened with Wyeth.<sup>1514</sup> Art is not a spiritual or mythological escape. There is an unfortunate tendency in modern art and galleries to go back to the decadent aristocrats of the aristocratic age. This is due to corporate

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<sup>1514</sup> I would make a case that Wyeth is only nominally a republican, or confused. The evidence of his work suggests a liberal minded man who did many portraits for the poor and the ordinary. He did many pictures of the Olson and Kuerner families, Helga, African Americans, women, dogs, animals and nature. He was independent of the art world in New York. I see him as part of the American realist tradition going back to Eastman Johnson. His wife Betsy was the business person and it will be interesting to see how Wyeth is seen in the future.

patrons largely.<sup>1515</sup> When art becomes myth it tends to support the status quo and so picture a nostalgia for lost empires and aristocratic and classical conceit. The vapid angels of Borgeureau or the erotic histories of Gerome will not save us, though at least they both could draw well and both made some beautiful figure studies or orientalist works. The effete pictures of Van Dyke and David are not good models either. Art that aspires to be religion does not interest me either, as is the case with much modern art( Reinhardt, Kandinsky) or such romantics as Inness, even though I like some of his work.

But I am interested in art as a branch of a progressive science, not corporate science but the science of nature. Art comes from nature, and while aspects of it might be influenced by our being human and evolved, it is and is not Darwinian, which means that it is basically about existence and survival, not just as a species but a member of the biotic planet, where all living things exist and deserve to thrive. For art to be useful in our time it cannot be Dada, or stupid, nor can it merely explore itself, in imitation of the corporation and its psychopathic narcissism.<sup>1516</sup>

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<sup>1515</sup> This makes Duane Keiser's attempts to escape from the Gallery systems interesting, which Van Gogh complained so bitterly about, rightly. Keiser sells his work on Ebay and through emails. Keiser's attempt to show his own life in Haiku like small works is interesting---painting Crane Flies, flowers on a window sill or his daughter swimming or himself in the studio. His small works have a nearly the flavor of Chinese of Japanese celebration of the everyday life and are far more interesting than his larger works.. I like these far more than his pop images of doughnuts, candy and Putter butter and jelly sandwiches. I should also mention Wendy Artin, and Katy Schneider, both of whom have some amazing things, the one does excellent watercolors of Roman sculpture and ruins and nudes of great light and delicacy. Schneider does very real explorations of pregnancy, family and children.

<sup>1516</sup> A good example of an artist who was ambiguous in his response to corporate art is Al Payne, a little known west coast artist. He and I shared an apartment in San Francisco in 79-80. I got to know him quite well as we discussed and argued about everything. He flirted with minimalist painting, performance and systems painting, which he awkwardly called "metaconceptual" painting in the 1970's. None of this was terribly interesting, and was often flirting with corporate art ideology. But when he had kids in the 1980's a latent humanism and naturalism returned and he did some fine folk like works of his kids. He called these paintings of the "Here and Now and Existence" painting, This is wonderful. While the figures are naïve, they are at least honest. His later work has a verisimilitude to actual existence which is good. It negates the conceptual work of his earlier years, for the most part, with some exceptions

Al's work was later more or less seized by Paul McCarthy after Al died and turned into an art

The dissolution of reality after Impressionism did no one any good. The notion that we "construct" the world out of our mental states is a lie about our world and ourselves in it. The world exists and is not a human construction. The profound alienation from the natural world implied by the idea of "post-modernism" (pomo) and its rampant subjectivism is very disturbing. In fact, the whole idea of 'post-modernism' is an abuse of language. It is a fiction created by a corrupt, corporate art world. The world that is now is our world and it is not "post" anything.

To summarize then, The downfall of the 19th century aristocratic elites and then the fragmentation of art after Impressionism resulted in art being exploited by the corporate elites. That is what the subjectivism of Duchamp and Warhol is really about. They are pseudo-democratic elitists, really reverse elitists, who extol the presumed virtues of regressive subjectivism, mindless automatism and market buffoonery. Bankers, free market devotees and Hedge fund operators exploit all and sundry and buy Warhol's or others works promoted by corrupt galleries acting as the 'arbiter elegantiarum', to use the phrase applied to

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posturing scheme, held a sort of prisoner entombed in a big box. Paul McCarthy was also an old friend of Al's, but he misunderstood Al badly. McCarthy's work, which I have never liked, employs a sort of sensationalist sex organ and human waste obsessed aesthetics of scat and shock tactics. He seeks the notoriety of a B Movies and a feces throwing schizophrenic atavism. His 'bad seed' Snow White extravaganza is an attempt to turn vapid Disney cartoons into a scatological vision of life as humiliation, setting up a sort of dirty minded new form of exploitation.. This is modernist and pop stupidity pushed to an obscene and false extreme. Along with Jeff Koons, he represents well the depravity and decayed narcissism of upper class corporate America, with their willingness to destroy the planet to make money. Al Payne managed to escape this to a degree and to do delicate things about his children and ordinary life between 1986 and 2000.. Encasing or rather entombing his own work in a minimalist box was a mistake, dictated by his depressive personality, perhaps, but then exploited by McCarthy in a cynical misuse of Al's art for more notoriety. AL's own presentation on of his work can be seen here:

<https://archive.org/details/AlPayne-SelectedWorks1969-2006>

Petronius, the author of the text called Satyricon. The New York art world does indeed evoke Nero's decadence as well as a Felliniesque satire of the ultra-wealthy. It promotes the perpetual and childish 'destruction of art', turning human creativity into silly jokes, vapid icons of irony, cheap advertising, empty images celebrating stolen wealth, found objects and glorified non-entity festooned with celebrity iconography.

What the New York/Paris/Tokyo art world created after World War 2 is what I call Corporate art. Corporate art is the emptiness that visits the pages of *Art in America* magazine. Indeed, as an experiment I take a look in this sad magazine once or twice a year and can find nothing in it worth looking at. One finds in this magazine utterly vacuous abstractions and 'installations' dictated by the dogmas of a corporate market. To consider Corporate Art to be 'art' is a mistake. What goes by the name of art these days is mostly an extension of fashion and speculative capital exchange and has little to do with actual art making, skill or beauty, curiosity and knowledge and lots to do with advertising and promotion, emptiness and corporate autocracy and control. Although it poses as 'democratic', it is really anti-people, anti-nature, minimalist, formalist, systems and process oriented rather than content driven. It is often atavistic and deals in ugliness and crudity. It is anti-aesthetic and opposes the beautiful, and basically is not about art at all but about commerce, as well dictating what art will be by galleries and art commissars (so called 'critics')..

Henri Matisse speaks approvingly of having heard Toulouse Lautrec say, rather stupidly, that "at last I don't know how to draw".<sup>1517</sup> Being proud of drawing badly seems to be a leitmotif in modern art, glorifying ignorance. Picasso says that when he was young he "could draw like Raphael, but I have spent all these years learning to draw like

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<sup>1517</sup> Quoted in Deanna Petherbridge's The Primacy of Drawing pg. 415

[children]". First of all, though Picasso did some pretty good drawings in his career, however inconsistently, no drawing by Picasso comes close to Raphael. Indeed, while Picasso did a few fine things, many of his works are very hard to take seriously, and are superficial and frankly, childish and silly for an adult. Second, neither Matisse, Lautrec or Picasso knew much about children, much less about why or what children draw. Picasso left a mess when he died, as he had little to do with his many children and they all fought. Few of these artists understood children's drawings. Art for children is not blissful stupidity, but an attempt to understand reality. As they learn more their drawings become more and more sophisticated and concerned with reality and problem solving. I spend my days with a couple of young drawers and their attempt to grasp reality can be very concentrated and intense. The idealization of childhood is a misunderstanding akin to the ideology of the "noble savage". <sup>1518</sup> Bad drawing is not a virtue, even among kids, they try really hard to make good drawings.

Drawing is generally not a descent into madness and the idiotic. It can be on occasion, but it is also a conveyance of great insight into reality. The search for authentic "outsider art" is itself an admission of the inauthentic insider emptiness of the art world. Addicted to "irony", the true irony is that the art world as it now exists has very little to do with art. It is really a fashion business run by gallery owners and effete, servile critics dogmatized by their own pronouncements. It is a scam for the ultra-rich to get them to part with some of their not-at-all-hard-earned money. Petherbridge concludes her great book on Drawing(2010, pages 413--414) by stating that recent art has rejected intelligence and "differentiated skill based systems of drawing" in favor of expressive

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<sup>1518</sup> Petherbridge pg. 415 )

irrationalism, "atavism" and "primitivism". This is quite right and amounts to an indictment of modernist art, if not all contemporary art. The dumbing down of art for corporate culture has required art to become as stupid and vacuous as possible, empty of content. The main thing is that art is sapped of meaning. Recent art "enshrines Robocop rather than Rembrandt as the graphic model for young artists" Recall that Duchamp, ever the maker of very poor paintings, must have resented Rembrandt and wanted to see his works become "ironing boards". Most recent art has tried to destroy "skill and technical considerations" and has a 'fear of literalism" or realism, as well as a notion of drawing as an "interrogative practice" or art as a method of study. Study or inquiry, intelligence, beauty and the seeking of meaning in the reality of things is the criteria or art. Recent art abandons the very things I consider to be art and it promotes meaningless geometries, glorified video installations or ugly scratches as the ideal corporate art. Art in the galleries of New York and the university art schools in our time endeavors to be anti-intellectual and vacuous, and erect art proud of meaning nothing, inquiring into nothing, telling no story. Such art is perfect for corporate lobbies as it signifies nothing yet takes up space and entertains without any thoughts to think. Critical thinking is studiously avoided.

It is clear that the attack on the humanities in recent years is partly due to the ineptitude of the arts themselves, who sold themselves out to the corporations and the emptiness of modern art styles. A healthy rebellion against this trend brings us back to Da Vinci and Courbet. Petherbridge offers some hope in wishing art a return to "intelligence of practice". Rejecting the inanities of Duchamp and much of the art world, she hopes for an art that once again seeks into the meaning of things, "investigating the world". (page 432.) Drawing and painting are above all an attempt to understand our world and our place in it, and as such they

are basically one with the scientific project, not the corporate project, which is also bankrupt, and this bankruptcy is reflected in the emptiness of modern art. Art can only progress forwards into beauty and science, rejecting corporatism and the ready-made inanities of "installations" and corporate art. Art has a history and this history is important and the cult of the inane and the new means little, it was just a mistake made by art as a vehicle of artists spoiled by a useless rebellion that played into the hands of the ultra- rich..

The anti-intellectualism among modern artists is an attempt to make a virtue of being dumb, and takes pride in emptiness, nonsense and the inability to draw or paint. It is this virtue of stupidity that has made art such a willing accomplice in the corporate con-game. Post-modern art is closer to religion than reality. Such art is not really art at all but a byproduct of fashion, fetish and commodity capitalism. Art, from its inception, has had the unfortunate vice of sucking up to power, and this is readily obvious in Hindu sculpture, Catholic Virgins, Islamic tile work, Michelangelo or Chinese scrolls of emperors in flowing robes. Now art serves the corporate vacuum of the Board or the CEO and the virtue of wealthy emptiness that is at the heart of the phony mystique of "corporate personhood". Corporate art is as empty as the art that served the Pharaohs. If art is not to be merely a by-product of power systems it must look to science and reality as deeply as it can, so to be as independent of the need of money as is possible, without starving to death. The art martyr thing is also no longer necessary. What is necessary is to stay alive and look at the corruption with a dispassionate eye, and seek to do all the good one can for people, nature and animals of the future. Our best revenge against modern/postmodern art is to seek truth and beauty, nature, life and reality, even if this beauty is found in the mundane and the ordinary, or what Neruda called the "impure" ..

The aesthetic that dictates much of what happens in the current art world is unsustainable. Much of what goes by the name of art is as distorted and destructive as the insanity in the banking sector that caused the recent global recession. The art of our time is fictional, 'derivative' and vacuous because it reflects corporate and government fictions, such as the fiction of 'corporate persons', which leave real persons without health care, good jobs or decent housing. So if art is to not serve such powers, it must be clear about what it will serve and why. For art to be progressive it must be attached to science and to free inquiry. It must dedicate its fruit to all people and nature. It should be accessible, not esoteric and it should embrace feeling without being superstitious or exploitive or sentimental. I have known artists who have no idea what they are making or why and think this empty vacuum is a virtue. It is not a virtue to be ignorant or to draw badly. So part of the reason for this series of paintings is to continue to try to define art as a branch of study and knowledge that serves understanding, education and science and not as a formula that serves a conceit with materials or an empty system of "signifiers". My concern is with exploring the truth about the world I live in..

My painting was far ahead of my drawing since 1982, when I began doing plein air studies of Lake Erie. I kept doing this in England and Ireland and then in Point Reyes California and later, Eureka, California, where we lived near Redwood National Park among other amazing places. More recently I have done it in Ohio, both in Rocky River Reservation and more recently in Cuyahoga National Park. Living next to National Parks has become a lifelong commitment.. I once actually felt guilty doing all these works, thinking wrongly that they were too material and real. But actually that was my true bent and what I was best at. The mistaken detour into Schuon's work taught me a great deal in that I realized after

I left Schuon that it was the spiritual in art that was the dead end, just as corporate art is a dead end and both dead ends are closely entwined. After I realized the absurdity of the paintings I did when I studied with Schuon I was tempted to destroy them all. I did destroy a few, after taking photos of them, but then I thought they should be used to illuminate my own mistakes. So I kept some of them. They are good examples of why Symbolist and abstract subjective art goes bankrupt and are a dead end. The best painting is a scientific process. In my own experience trying to paint what I see teaches me that as far as one goes in trying to understand what one sees, there is further yet that one can go, and each effort to perceive goes a little deeper. I realized in 1997, after waking up in a hospital nearly dying, that what matters is not the dreams of my imaginary "soul" but the actual experiences of my mind and body in everyday life. Symbols are merely coded signs of political interests and signs of human supremacy. An art that does not serve this is what is needed.

The problem is actually our brains themselves, that has intrinsic limitations,--- the reality out there is far more complex and rich than our brains can handle or absorb, so each artwork is a further effort towards seeing into the actuality of things, which is always a little beyond us. If you watch yourself painting or drawing real things you will see with surprise sometimes that there are many things in what you are looking at you just did not see until now, and you know therefore that there are yet other things that you have not seen yet. Imagination reaches to a point, but reality is even beyond that in its variety and complexity. Nature is almost endless diverse. Art is not beyond death in any spiritual sense, but it is in an actual sense, in that one can paint reality in a way that really approximates the truth of things in a way that is beyond photographs and closer to the feel and texture of things and perceptions.

My experience with Schuon was useful in teaching me that the whole

trajectory of traditionalist art from Platonic aesthetics to Christian Icons, Buddhist sculptures, Tibetan Thankas and Persian or Hindu miniatures and onward into aristocratic art, and thence into symbolist art and corporate art is a history of art as a mode of symbol construction. The art is constructed in view of supporting unjust political regimes that sought to excuse themselves with transcendent advertisements. I realized that the traditionalist idea of art is a dead end. It finishes in sterile and childless fantasies, as does so much misnamed modernist art, and for similar reasons.

I came to realize that traditional art grows up in defense of unjust regimes and pushes conservative values. An art that is really democratic has to be based on science, as Dewey wrote. This becomes quite clear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where revival of Greek and medieval art tend justify far right leaning regimes, that is, after the Bourbon restoration which occurred after Napoleon's downfall in 1815. Realism and naturalism, and their devotion to democratic socialism, grow up in opposition to these far right tendencies and try to keep alive a more science based and realistic art.<sup>1519</sup> The modernist or symbolist aesthetic results in work that is not

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<sup>1519</sup> P. Winston Fettner writes about the importance of the enlightenment to this process:

“Jefferson’s conviction that a republic required the humanities is best viewed within the wider context of the enlightenment, and can be traced to the effort to replace absolutism with democracy. Take, for example, Condorcet: “Constitutional democracy, not enlightened despotism, is the political ideal of Condorcet and the group of which he was the spokesman...If the new democratic society of France was to survive, it had to provide for the enlightenment of its citizens. ‘Public education is a duty of society to its citizens.’”

It’s in that context that Kant famously connected the slogan of the Enlightenment, “dare to know” (*aude sapere*), with maturity as the ability to think for oneself. And the opposite impulse is embodied in the anti-intellectual strain in American culture, the broader trend within which the crisis in the humanities finds its context and which displays the anti-democratic function of dumbing-down the public sphere. Without each individual’s ability to think for herself, we are reduced from citizens to consumers, prey to impulses, at the mercy of the advertisers who sell us soap powder, automobiles, and politicians. Without critical thinking, historical knowledge, and rhetorical skill, we are incapable of the sort of reasoned decisions that are the foundation of genuine democratic

that different than reactionary Modernist works from Ingres to Hodler to Mondrian. In other words one can trace an ideology that spreads in art from restoration France up to Mondrian. In the end I rejected them for the same reason I reject corporate art. They created propaganda for an ideology that is ultimately empty and reactionary and creates objective harm. In Corporate art the 'subjective' becomes its own world, a world that hates the actual world. The abstract subject becomes everything. A paradoxical and narcissistic impersonalism thus comes to reign, art becomes about itself and creates its own abstract world, a world where corporations reign in place of kings. Where there is the fiction of 'corporate persons' there is the fiction of corporate art to serve them. Art becomes the nonexistent voice of the dead, life negated in its very affirmation. Corporate art is thus a fatal brew born of history and injustices. It is the death of art really. Art becomes meaningless and primarily about money.

Art has many wonderful possibilities but the direction of the traditionalists is a dead end, as is corporate art. I found this out myself, concretely and by my own experience, through study, experiment and inquiry. This is not merely the opinion of some academic art critic bent on a career, but the experience of an artist who has been there. Painting is an exploration of the real, and in my own foray into the symbolist experiment was short and clear. I saw clearly that this way is a dead end and there is no turning back to it. I believe strongly that anyone that follows this spiritual, corporate way will end up with nothing real or worthwhile in art. Real art lies elsewhere, in the specifics of the actual, in

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life. A shallow education without the humanities generates immature subjects, permanent adolescents who define success in terms of conspicuous consumption, scrambling to earn enough to purchase the latest styles and gadgets, addicted to entertainment and cheap pleasure, and incapable of reflective political engagement.”

[http://www.academia.edu/875988/The\\_Crisis\\_in\\_the\\_Humanities\\_and\\_the\\_Corporate\\_Attack\\_on\\_the\\_University](http://www.academia.edu/875988/The_Crisis_in_the_Humanities_and_the_Corporate_Attack_on_the_University)

knowledge and science, inquiry and yes, sometimes, beauty and truth, though not in the romantic sense of these terms.



Millais: Ophelia

Painting that has abandoned the dogmas, subjectivism and human centered regimes of modern art is free to explore everything. Objective reality has returned and the whole world is open to explore anew. The modernist aesthetic is merely the corporate aesthetic. Gone now is the repressive cloak of reality which curtained art for the last 80 or 90 years. Art was veiled behind the thick and meaningless narcissistic cloak of ultra avant-garde art, which achieved so little. We can now free ourselves to use skill again and be intelligent. Gone is the obsession with the materials and tools of art alone. The need to refine the use of oils and

pencils never ends, but now we can use pencils and paint to explore reality again and not deny it. There is the knowledge of centuries in this paint and pencils and it ties me to Van Eyck, Rembrandt and others. It also ties me to real minerals and the earth. Art, for me is no longer about modern materials, most of which are derived from plastic, but about the whole world beyond the paint. The whole world and everything everywhere, opens up beyond the fascism of the paint for paint's sake, beyond the art for art's sake.

Yes, I am alone now, as far as possible from New York Galleries and their tricks and con-men. One can be honest and free, and even if few understand what one is doing, ordinary people get it, and the art marketers, curators, jurors and critics do not get it. But they were a big part of the problem weren't they? But it scarcely matters because now one is alone before the whole world, and art is not dead, but very much alive, and all that one paints is a beginning of an inquiry into existing on earth. One is no longer alone but shares all the world with birds and trees, cells and oceans, all beings and things everywhere. Who cares if a few greedy free marketers reject us. We knew they hated real art and the humanities long ago. Their promoting of conspicuous vacuity is behind us now, and we are free of them.

We stand with wild grasses and distant galaxies, with birds and old fences, gestures of life and pain, tears and joys, painting the things that are. Painting has become a humbling thing, and even the vocal gestures of crows talking back and forth, or the look of old Boxcar metal wheels have great meaning. Reality is not merely the subjective impressions of sunlight, or even less the bizarre recording the extreme emotions or mental states as in surrealism, but the actual facts around one, no matter what they are. I am at last free of the art critics and paint what I wish, and I am free of the "isms" and phony art history that leads to emptiness and the corporate wasteland. The art history of the ideologues in behind us and now I see and discover my own Art history. I no longer

need to follow the 'shock of the new', not that I ever really did, or to obey the art dogmas in the current issue of crack pot art magazines, not that I ever did that either. As Vincent said, those were "dealers in men", and we do not need them. The whole art market with its curators and art gallery impresarios are behind me. I have become a painter, not long after most of the world abandoned real painting. But I have always loved art as a real search for understanding and knowledge and it does not matter what the art world does. It is empty. I am a painter at last, and always have been, and am free to do what I wish.

To see more on what I think about Realism and art see this exhibit I designed. It is a continuation of this essay. Cut and Paste: Here:

<http://www.naturesrights.com/StayingAmazed.pdf>

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## **Conclusions: Earth without Religion**

“Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today...

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too.”  
John Lennon

The idealism of my youth is not just faded away but has been abolished for realism. I see what people are now in ways I could not have done when I was 20. My understanding of historical development is far ahead of anything I could have thought even more recently, when I was 40. While a certain naïve and innocent willingness to believe is gone, it has been replaced by a much deeper and fact based love of what is actual. Some might accuse me of being bitter, but that is no matter, it is a realism that they cannot yet assimilate themselves that they mistake for bitterness. I am not the fool I once was. I once modeled myself, for a

short time, on Shakespeare's Fool in King Lear. But actually, what would happen to the fool after Lear dies. That is the character I would like to meet now.<sup>1520</sup> So as I come to the end of these books, some things stand out.

My conclusions are happy and not happy. The unhappy conclusion is that we really are in an endangered world. The leaders of our world are like King Lear. They have not yet realized how corrupt and selfish they are. The problem is power, corporate greed and ideological narrowness. But what needs to give, is all the things I thought were real when I was a kid. Then capitalism seemed obvious, whereas now it is the most questionable thing on earth. Religion seemed to have truth in it, now I can say without equivocation, or Nietzschean historionics, that religions are finished. This is just a fact, though many still cling to those delusions. Communism turned out to be as destructive an ideology as "free market "capitalism was. These are merely more delusions. All this is reflected in the so called death of art, which is not dead at all, just repressed, as I explained in the previous chapter.

So the unhappy truth is that these failures must be faced. That is not easy for most people. The forests are in trouble, the seas are in trouble, the sky is over heated and animals are dying and going extinct at unprecedented rates. People pass all this by like roadkill. They are failing to realize that they are killing the world off. Much of this can be laid at the door of ideologies and religions, capitalism and its enemies.

The good news is slight, but real, and that is that the failure of these

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<sup>1520</sup> The Fool in King Lear sees the human being behind the foolishness of the King's power. He helps Lear deal with the suffering brought about by his own stupidity and lack of insight. Cordelia would have done that too. The Fool realizes the vanity of Kings, and goes beyond that to what really matters in our world, which is caring, and seeing beyond all the illusions to which humans are prone, even old men. I am not sure that Shakespeare saw as deeply as the character of the Fool sees. I would like to think so, This is why I wonder what a playwright would now say about the Fool if the play continued beyond the Lear tragedy. I would be a modern play and no longer the half medieval mentality of Shakespeare, still stuck in the mind fashion of Kings and Churches, as Shakespeare himself was.

systems can be understood and faced and there is a way to heal ourselves and the earth. To do that first requires that one admit what is wrong. I have tried to do that here and to show a little of what might be the way out. Facing up to my own delusions has been a hard road for twenty or more years, but it is possible, and we all can change. People can say I am crazy all they want, but if they get this from me, than all the effort is worth it. I certainly do not know all the answers, but am willing to raise the questions and suggest a few answers.

It is clear what needs to change. CEO culture must be stopped. Nature's Rights must be listened to. The daily lives of people is what matters, caring for their actual needs, and the actual needs of the natural world. Star Wars is not real, serial killers are not the main problem, the problem is just such myths, such falsehoods. Religion and ideology must decline. Science and technology must be monitored for corporate abuse and harms done to nature and humans. Society must be a concept that extends even to plants and geology, the atmosphere and ecologies. We are not alone and not exceptions. Reality is the daily life of children, women, old men and women, fish, White Pines, ducks and salamanders, not movie stars, not generals, and certainly not con-men presidents or prime ministers.

I could probably write in this book for some years yet, as the thesis keeps yielding new points of view, information, relationships and facts. I have often wondered if this book would ever end. But it is already too dense and taxing for a reader.<sup>1521</sup> So, it has to be time to stop. I cannot change the world by myself. There are so many others things I should be doing. I started editing the book four or five years ago, thinking it was done, but ended by writing and rewriting another 700 pages and making

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<sup>1521</sup> I wrote this book to attract people to exact points of view, and factual concerns. I tis also written as a strait book , but I expect few will be able to read it entire. It is meant to be an internet book and so to come up under many tags.

the whole into three books instead of one, though it coheres as one work. I've "loaded every rift with ore", as the saying goes.

But this was the first book I have ever written for the internet, specifically. These books are best read on the internet and have many references which are searchable. This is a book about stretching my own thought and the thought of readers. Certainly there is an effort to stretch the bounds of disciplines and go beyond the usual differences between sciences and humanities. This effort to stretch my own thinking has made me aware that I am wrong about many things, at the same time as it has forced me to try to refine my thinking to be more accurate and exact. Even with this effort, I fear I am still limited in what I can think. These limitations are part of who I am and where I am in my life and times. Such things are structural and part of me and not easy to go beyond except little by little. So there is little I can do about this weakness which I have not already sought by many means to correct, inch by inch, paragraph by paragraph, year by year. I just to have to live with my weaknesses, now that these books are done. Others will see them perhaps, and I cannot help that except to apologize in advance, if my thought has been too narrow, was inaccurate, or I did not push myself far enough. I am not aware of this now and apologize in advance. It is not for lack of trying, but I just cannot think beyond what I have understood in these books up till now.

Others can think beyond me. It is really a long series of separate essays, and even some of the footnotes contain little essays on diverse topics. And it is very much geared to specific references and a vast array of researched facts rather than strait narrative, though there is some of the latter. It was meant to reach across a very wide spectrum of searchable content. I don't expect anyone to read the whole thing, though someone will eventually. I know it is difficult to read and this is due to the fact that it is packed with so much information about many areas. There is a lot in these books. In fact, it is so baroquely packed

with things that there is something for just about everyone. But doing this meant being long winded and sometimes fragmented. I meant it to be like that, as it will go online eventually and there it can find its readers, who will look only at parts of it, but each part leads to other parts, it is organized to do that, leading others to the larger questions and suggesting solutions. I am not a stylist like James Joyce who wrote himself into obscurity. I write to inform, not to show off. Content matters more than style. So I opted for completeness rather than stylistic perfection. It is not an esoteric text, which are elitist games anyway: I mean to be understood, if not understood all at once, all the time.

The Index is highly developed, and one might look up references to nearly any subject. I think the best way to read the book initially is to look up what interest the reader in the search bar after consulting the Table of Contents or the Index. The book moves around a lot and yet is always going forward and deeper into the material. It is not written like an ordinary philosophical or historical text at all, but is meant to be searched into. It is a dense and rich text, with many things to find and think about. Indeed, if anything it is meant to teach thinking about the world we live in.

Nowadays few master a given person's work, as I have done with some of the people discussed here. So these books are meant to communicate an understanding in smaller doses, even if the whole is exhaustive and lengthy, offering theories and ideas about history, religion, philosophy, language, nature, art, poetry and culture. It ended up being a summation on my thinking and experience over the last 40 years and one that hopefully brings all that time to a conclusion, so I can start fresh on new things. These books are, as it were, the dues I paid for much of what I learned in life.

Of course, there are things I think about that are not in these books. It is mostly an autobiography of things that I questioned, or explored, rejected or entertained for while a gave up on. It does not tell the story of

my searches into nature, for instance, though there is a lot about nature in these books. The one personal chapter, about my time in the Schuon cult, is merely a small fragment of my life and hardly the most important. I offer it only as an illustration of abusive cult leaders and to praise their victims for their resistance. These books says little about my history with painting, or my very young years, my personal relationships or my family. Indeed, it leaves a great deal out, things in fact which are more important than what is discussed in this book. I worked on these books slowly because I always put family or art work before working on these things. Though parts of it read as an academic text, I am not writing an academic text here, but reflections on aspects my own experience, so it is different than more theoretical texts on religion, which are less accurate, I think, and less willing to talk about actual religious practice.

I think I have shown the way to a few things that are hopeful and drawn some conclusions about what has been. The bulk of this book was written in the last 8 years. But I started it in 1996. It is now 2015. That is long enough to work on anything. 19 years. Though there is an essay in here from 1994 and that is 21 years ago now. I did not work on it that whole time, for instance I did not write at all between 2000 and 2006, though I did a lot of study during that time. but it has taken me a great deal of time, punctuated by changing diapers for my kids or my mother, who I cared for too, even when she was in nursing homes, who I would visit six or seven day a week. In the midst of these things and paintings, I found time to write and research, off and on. Though for about 5 years I was so busy caring for my mother and my child I had no time to paint. I could write though, and so starting in 2006 I began work on these books again, after putting it aside for some years. But even then the work was intermittent, because if I didn't visit my Mom often, she would have been more neglected than she was. Nursing homes in America are an unspoken atrocity. They are unethical places that profit

from the sick the old and infirm. The American medical system is fundamentally immoral. It is immoral to profit from the sick. Hospitals exploit patents. Insurance companies only want to insure the healthy and they farm everyone for profits, while being parasitical organizations no one needs. . In nursing homes, administrators hope families will not visit and money will pour into them.

If religions really were efforts to answer questions about the universe, as is often claimed, I could take them more seriously. But it really doesn't do this. Indeed, religion is opposed to serious inquiry on such matters. It opposes curiosity and wonder. One is supposed to have wonder for gods or the void, neither of which actually exist. True wonder grows out of the facts of nature itself and our actual existence, not symbols. Humans tend to fall in love with their own languages, or math systems, when neither math nor language are reality. Nature is not a symbol system that refers to transcendent entities and to make it one is to malign it already. There are no transcendent entities.  $F=MA$  is not itself a part of the facts of force, mass and acceleration, it is just a description of what happens. Transcendent systems make life easier and simpler for many, but at the cost of concrete realities and facts. That is not a fair trade. My rejection of metaphysics and religion is hardly going to make life easier for anyone. But it does make life more real, and the personal, actual and ordinary becomes far more important, as does facing up the aspects of society that destroy and undermine, impoverish and harm people and nature. This is not without meaning in a time where everyone is being screened, photographed, watched and surveilled by the corporations and the state. More and more people live in bubbles of unreality created by the internet and cell phones, virtual reality and human centered cities where nature has been abolished. The world is awash in make believe and myth, ideology and falsity. I do not know if this can be undone. Maybe.

The human centered world requires a certain insanity to be

maintained internally, which makes city dwellers so prone to desperation. They suffer a lonely madness of many kinds, not least of which is greed for endless money, as well as the grind of poverty created by the greed. But facing the facts of what happens to others because of mad systems of myth has its own peril. Facing the facts of religion requires going insane to a degree as one grapples with the unreality of the fictions religion makes up. Religions maintain the unreal as real and deny reality to the actual and this makes all its followers disturbed in how they live and act. Religions depends on normalizing the insanity of the Greek Gods or the Christian ideology of apocalypse. How do you internalize the constant stress of the imminent end of the world and not go a little mad? To believe these tall tales one has to suppress the need of evidence.

But the process of coming to understand the motives behind these insane stories is very sane and should not be misunderstood as insane. I've been told more than once I am insane for writing these books, when actually it is one of the saner things I have ever done, even if they are far from perfect. I concluded the essay on Science above with praise of a new scientific effort to understand other species and all of nature on earth, on its own terms. It would take centuries to do this and all life would prosper as a result. The old science of rape and pillage for capitalism would be gone at last. I wrote this, more or less:

To try to understand nature from the point of views of all living things is a real challenge. No one has done it yet, stuck, as so many are, on human advantages. Once we abandon myth and ideology it becomes apparent what is all around you. No spirits, just the facts of what you see, feel, hear, smell and taste. Greed created the clear cut forests, the ultra rich created a world of poverty and war. Science begins with the simple, the cells, weaving the rainbow of forms into the fabric of sea and forest and air, and

this is what really matters, and we have only begun to study it as it is.

This book is the first that I know of to really question and critiques mysticism across many cultures. I do not remember when I realized that religions are political or psycho-social occurrences, and not real, but delusional products of fiction. Schuon was the end of my doubts about this and not the beginning. It actually began as a nagging doubt when I was a teenager and read William James. Later I sought for truth in Zen, Sufism, Christian mysticism, Jung, Christ and others. Even the delusions of the great Rembrandt moved me. All these were dead ends as far as their epistemology goes. Rembrandt's life of Christ is merely sincere protestant delusions. When one boils down Rembrandt's delusions one comes up with love for one other, for nature and dogs and elephants, ones wife and child. The myths disappear.

The religions taught behavioral norms the served changing ideologies more than anything else. I saw it in the Schuon cult of course, and the conviction grew on me as I examined more and more evidence. I realized that the evidence does indeed indicate that Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, Krishna and Muhammad never existed, but are as much political fabrications as the Greek and Roman gods. Even if they did exist it scarcely matters as it is clear in history that these were developing myths and not actual history. If these men did it exist it is irrelevant and forgotten, covered over with myth and the original men wiped from history. The truth was always irrelevant to the myths and long ago deliberately forgotten.

More recently I realized that even the notion that religion has an imaginary evolutionary benefit, appears to be a fiction. The idea that religion grew by evolution appears to be a result of academic pandering to politics. The function religion does serve appears to be political, serving an in-group at the expense of an out-group, and this was a many

millennia long mistake people made, in different ways, in different cultures. But once one realizes the mytho-political nature of religion, history become a very different thing, and the present becomes a very different thing too. One can no longer take seriously the differences between say, Jewish and Iranian religions, which are there to exaggerate their social difference and increase nationalistic fragmentation. They create war, which means they are killing each other and each other's children. Actually Jews and Iranians, shorn of their mythic cloaks are the same people with the same needs. The history of the nation-state is a history of illusions too, held at the cost of lives and blood. Insanity is often the result, as well as the cause of wars, religions and conflicts between nation states. Stopping this means analyzing the motives and functions of the ideas involved and how they drive people over an edge through propaganda and whipped up conflict. Stop the myths and you stop the wars, stop the delusions and people wake up to see themselves as the fragile beings they are, just like those they thought they hated. Stop the myths and you stop the hate.

We are merely an extension of the animal world, fish that have learned to walk and birds that think and our religions and ideologies are merely delusive figments of our collective imaginations. Nationalism is illusory, as is the Bible and the Koran on which the nationalism of Iran and Israel are erected. Since religions are political constructions, they are easier to dismantle. Dismantling theocratic states has proven not too difficult in the past. It is a matter of education, which should be much more generously supported than it is now. It is healthier to see Jews and Moslems as people deserving of equal rights, new students of existence, and not as Jews and Moslems locked in an endless war over the fictional gods and a "holy land", which long ago ceased to be "holy", anyway, given all the blood on it. Religious wars are now nationalist wars, and fueled by corporate states, so all these ideologies, including corporate ideology, have to be addressed and diminished to stop such wars. Dismantling

these delusions is the essential work in our time. Getting over the inevitable hurt that Judaism or Islam are revealed as both fabrications is hard for many, and they will suffer to do this, as I have. Facing illusions and the fact that one has been duped is hard to do.

What I learned from the failure of religion and other ideologies is that we are not alone on the earth. All that matters is the facts of things, behind the fictions. We are not just related to other humans as religions tend to preach, but we can realize our basic unity with others without religion and without denying difference. We do not only have those other human beings we love closely and well, but we are related to all living beings and things, birds and salamanders, insects of toads. and this is what matters. Geologic realities, weather, Sea stars, Anteaters, Primates, other humans: we are all part of it. It is liberating to realize that there is no life after death, as life and all members of every species, take on deepened significance, and every day matters. The loss of religion does not make one immoral, as many want us to fear. Getting to know all that one can about the earth we live on is what matters. Trying to leave it a better place than what our parents gave us, matters. Push it forward. Caring and fighting for the existence of all being that exist, in real terms, not Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist or Jain terms. There is no point in serving or giving one's life to spiritual fictions. We cannot stop those who are committed to this, but we can educate everyone.

These books record things about my intellectual growth and the changes I went through up into the late 1990's, with hints about what would come later. These books cover a wide swath of religious thought, myth, art, science, history and ideological development. It also covers things that arose during the period I was writing, poetry, art, language, historical theory, theory of science, language. It is critical of religion across the entire spectrum of history and religious studies. It is written in praise of science. It contains what I think are a complete refutation of

Platonism and mysticism and a reversal of the romantic, subjectivist tendency started by William James over 100 years ago. It is not just an “atheist” text, though it is that too, though as I explained, the idea of atheism is rather limited. I am beyond atheism and live in relation to actuality and reality as much as I can. I am not bragging to say this; it is just the way I have developed. My earlier work is superseded by this text, and though there are things of value in it, I have moved well beyond it. Indeed, my Master’s Thesis is well behind me and I am on my own now.<sup>1522</sup> I was thinking to update my Thesis to reflect all I have learned, but I do not have time to do that. I am not writing as an academic, but as a man who nearly died, and who is attached to no ideology and no system of belief. I am an artist who studies and thinks, and tries to understand, who fails and gets up and tries again.

Yes, it is a fragile thing to create and explore though one’s life. Even ideas can be used in the creative life, not just pencil and oil paint. I have attempted so my things here. I try show how and why traditionalist exegesis fails, and how the Creationist movement and Intelligent Design have failed, as well as how religion itself has failed. Indeed, all the attacks on science by the New Age, Platonism, Christianity and Islam, Buddhism, Neo Kantians and any other source, has failed. Science has succeeded beyond Darwin’s wildest dreams. By science I do not just mean sub-particle physics, which is a tiny fraction of real science. Speculators on the fringes of physics would like to reconnect us to

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<sup>1522</sup> My Master’s thesis is still struggling with ‘the reality is a construction’ idea. I was not quite over that yet, when I wrote that in 1997, though I am now. In this sense some of my professors were right that it is subjective. But at that point my way of thinking as largely empathetic, and personal, and I identified with my subject until I myself partly became what I was studying, so there is a good deal of objectivity in this too. I realized this when I spent two weeks in the hospital while coming to conclusions in my thesis and kept dreaming of the atrocities I was writing about as if I myself suffered them. Time passes and what one thought of as important changes with time. In 20 years’ time, if I am still alive, maybe this book too will seem very dated, and one day I myself will be very dated and gone. No one is totally objective, and it would be a mistake to try to be. I like hand worn and handmade things for this reason. What matters is the touching and the involvement,, the love and the caring. Who cares if this seems sentimental to others, it is the way of life as both the very young and very old know.

irrationalism. This will help no one. Real science is how to make pottery, how to build a house, how to study photosynthesis, why Monarch Butterflies<sup>1523</sup> are dying off or even how to make clothes that fit. Science is a solid interaction with reality, not fiction. It is just like art. One tries to paint reality just as one tries to find out what makes cells move or why the body and brain work together. These books are thus a contribution to Darwin's project. Magical thinking and superstition are still with us as education continues to be a low priority. Education is under attack by corporate culture who want to turn children into factories of profit. That is not education at all. The world will have to fight these false theories and delusions and the men that profit from them. Religion will persist so long as magical thinking is not stopped by real education. The rich and powerful like people to be stupid, and thus it is necessary to limit the rich, tax them and yet not depend on their handouts. They are a relic of what ails us too. But children are new born every day of every year and the future is hopeful that they will find teachers to love them and show them a decent way to live that does not harm others or the earth we are all a part of.

There is the exciting prospect of a more complete and scientific critique of religion than I have given here. A scientific appraisal of religion as failed systems of knowledge is due in the future. Already there are real attempts to try to assess religion as a fact of scientific inquiry. None of them go far enough and I think I have shown some of the

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<sup>1523</sup> Monsanto corporation, since 1990, has killed about 970 million of the butterflies – 90 percent of the total population – have vanished across the United States.

Monsanto made their herbicide, called glyphosate--- brand named as "Roundup"--- and then they made their seed stock of corn and soybeans resistant to this herbicide,--- so farmers plant the seeds and spray the herbicides and the herbicides kill everything but the resistant plants. This is "shock and awe" applied to the pant world and one victim of it, there are no doubt others as yet undiscovered, is Monarchs. They kill milkweed, too which is the host plant for the Monarch. Monsanto should be dissolved as a company, their charter revoked, and their product made illegal.

reasons why this is so. I think the inquiry about the relationship of brain science to religion is very promising, but so far inadequate. Pascal Boyer's thesis in his writings and books is that religion is a by-product of various aspects or mental systems of human brain activity. Humans project 'agency' onto concepts, gods, things or beings that do not possess it. Humans make inferences about intentions in their environment and interact with false information or imaginary fictions. This appears to be an accurate thesis to a point. But there is far more to religion than this. The problem with it is that Boyer largely leaves out history. Boyer is an anthropologist and it is not a bad thing to study a very narrow range of experience in science. But he is really studying tribal religions mostly, which are disappearing. But religions are primarily systems that serve political power and Boyer has barely touched on this fact. Since most of his examples stems from very small tribal groups rather than large religions, he has not studied the effects of ideology on large groups. So, though he is right to study religion via brain science, we are still very far from having a cogent theory of the origin of religion yet, much less its social and psychological development in recent millennia. I think I have started this project here and hope others will continue it.

But this does not mean that the thesis that science will one day assess religion accurately is mistaken. It only means that Dennett's and Boyer's approach is too narrow and weak and leaves out huge areas of fact and inquiry. They are too involved in power systems themselves, and so tend to endorse current corporate power myths and delusions too much. I don't think Boyer quite grasps how much the ascribing of agency to beings or things that do not have it, is a linguistic problem, for instance. The role of language in human societies and how language evolved is still too little known. Humans want to ascribe agency to stones or gods partly because it is easy to anthropomorphize these things given the abstract character of language. Language favors magical and delusional thinking, a given human Joan, or 'Stephen' becomes 'all men'

just by changing a word. Religion magnifies human motives and does so to claim 'transcendent' powers. To do this requires delusions.

I mean to question the magnifying role of "transcendence" in these books. This is a key idea in these books as I think it helps unlock how religions operate and why they become destructive. So I have written an account of a great many "transcendent" delusions across history and reflected on them as a means to show how societies have operated or failed. I show how 'transcendent" delusions helped create nightmare and wars, conflicts, nation states and corporate corruption on many levels. The key to this was following out facts and behavior in many people and institutions.

Religion is a linguistic and political phenomena, a delusion of abstract and symbolic thought. Linguistics teaches us that abstract and symbolic thought is some sort of miracle an earth, but I have been at pains to show this is not the case and all animals lives are significant, not merely human lives. Humans are not better because they have words, indeed, words may make them worse than other species in many cases. There are evolutionary reasons why some people have the ability to dupe others, but it is not because of natural selection, it is because it gives them cultural control and often this is often against the interests of human survival. So the direct role of evolution in religion is not just questionable, but probably non-existent. The disaster on Easter Island was hardly to anyone's benefit, yet, it occurred on one island, largely because of competition, whereas on another Island, Anuta, collaboration, sharing and compassion for others was emphasized. The concept of cooperation encouraged them to share their finite resources equitably, and they survived This was not because of religion but because they were fair. This explains a great deal about why capitalism does not work, as it echoes Easter Island. Finite resources are used to enrich a few and marginalize the many and nature. This is unhealthy and destructive. Capitalism no longer has any real justification for holding power. It was

an ideology like a religion. Religion is the art of delusional theatre, produced to manufacture power over duped followers. A society cannot be based on competition and delusion and sustain itself for long. Nature's rights might become a sustainable idea, the earth a place for all beings to exercise the need to exist and not to suffer needlessly..

In any case, the search for wider understanding of religion via brain science and linguistics is certainly worth pursuing. With Chomsky's work superseded, a new day of inquiry begins. There is also a new awareness that such subjects as language (communication) have yet to be explained well. Language must be studied not merely as a formal system of grammars, but as part of the depths of the natural world, not merely the human centered world. An evolutionary assessment of religion or language will not be enough by itself. R.J. Lifton's work goes much deeper into the psychology of systems of power, assessing their history and how they operate socially and psychologically. Lifton's analysis is far better than Boyer's in this regard. But neither Boyer or Lifton tell the whole story of why religion occurred and why it is now failing. It would be good to see a scientist study religion who combines Lifton with Boyer's and Dawkins approaches, as well as an inquiry into the origins of language, politics and culture.

I have also traced here Russell's, Berlin's and Popper's idea that romanticism leads to fascism. I did this to prove the close relationship of ideology and religion to politics. I have traced this further into the history of poetry and romanticism and their relation to politics. I think I have expanded on Zinn's idea of the history of ordinary people and taken their point of view against religions and institutions. One corollary of this avenue of evidence led into showing how science is really an outgrowth of ordinary people's lives I have traced the history of the reactionary far right back in time to the Christian repression of the Romans and the Greeks, through the French Revolution and the English civil wars. The French and American revolutions were pivotal events so I dwelled on

them at some length. Then I show how efforts to subvert the advances of human rights thought brought about reactions to the French Revolution sought to reinstate the aristocracy, against ordinary people and women's rights and unions. When this failed corporations arose to take the place of the unjust and powerful, created along the lines of a religion, magnifying the corporation into a transcendent status. Further I show how art followed a similar path with symbolist art trying to restore the bankrupt aristocracies by adopting the Neo classical art of an earlier period and how current corporate art recalls and imitates the Symbolist and traditional art of the past.

This book is also a long meditation on history, from the reasons for the killing of Hypatia and the advent of the Dark Age to Innocent the III and the myths the Templars and then on to the rise of science, the enlightenment and the fading of religion . There is real progress here and so those who decry progress and hate science have a chapter exposing their fraudulent claims too.

It was obvious to me from an early age that the state of things as they are is highly unfair and weighted to the unjustly rich and powerful. I did not write this book to serve power or wealth, on the contrary, I hope to be one in a long line, past, present and future, of those who question the powers that be and how they have organized the world for their own benefit. So these books might be seen to have made judgments about good people and bad people. But that is not very accurate. I do not believe in the existence of evil. There are those who have done harm or whose ideologies promote power and injustice for some at the expense of the many of nature, and so should be questioned. In this category I discuss the shortcomings of Plato, Aquinas, De Maistre, Evola, Nietzsche, The Romantics, Guenon and Schuon, Chomsky, and others. Another category would be those who are questionable but who possibly or probably never existed, such as Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha or Praxiteles. The evidence suggests these are all fictional chapters and

used by elites to create mental systems of social control. And then there are those who I admire and who might be mixed in what they presented but who overall did some good . They helped move the world in a better direction. The latter are my heroes, as it were.

So in the course of the studies for this book I discovered many who have made such efforts. and many others too numerous to mention. I am thankful to all those who helped me. My heroes are not the usual ones and they are not perfect, as I am not either. Among the heroes of this book are Leonardo, who has my deepest love, with his incomparable hand for drawing and his ever fertile brain trying to understand the facts and mysteries of our earth. I owe an apology to Charles Darwin, who I misunderstood in the past, but as I learned more and more I came to admire him almost as much as Leonardo. I also am thankful to Tom Paine, who was one of the only people to participate in all three of the progressive resistance movements in England, France and the United States, Paine is still not given credit for his importance. I admire Hypatia, who held out against the dark ages which overwhelmed and killed her. I admire Blacksmiths, Carpenters and Potters who helped create science, ship builders and artists, engineers and inventors. I admire Llorente, friend of Goya, who researched the Inquisition and who caused the Church to destroy all their records because they did not want the truth known. There is Bertrand Russell, who stood up for science and opposed ignorance and greed, and loved life--and Ed Abbey, who hated Plato and the symbolist mentality that forgets the ordinary in favor of gods and symbols. John Everett Millais who loved the specific and praised the butterfly on the blind girl's coat. He knew that Ruskin was wrong to see only Platonist symbols of rivers and ignore the ordinary creek right in front of him. The realists at the middle of the 1800's created an art whose motives still go on today, and go back all the way to Leonardo. They defeated Ruskin and the closely related aesthetics of the traditionalists in advance of their birth. They defeated abstract art in

advance of its own self destruction and cubes and empty Platonic forms.

I you look at a map of the U'S you will see that a tiny fraction of North American land is set aside as National, Provincial or State park land. The majority of land is abused with impunity and the animals on it controlled or put at risk. The Park system is wonderful, but it is designed to liberate all other land to abuse. This is wrong and the mentality ought to be brought into question. No land should be abused or wasted.

National Parks are great and since 1986 I have systematically lived next wild areas, national or state Parks and Seashores and wildlife refuges.<sup>1524</sup>

The parks in the U.S. park system are tiny and fragmented, but it is one of the few areas left where some rational control is excoriated despite continued efforts of corporations, oil companies, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, or hunters to exploit the land. Since America has been so parsimonious in saving public land and protecting species and biomes, the trees and animals in the U.S are often in decline or facing extinction in some cases. Merely making reservations is not enough. The idea of nature's rights is to make all land and water, air and biome protected and a concern for other species universal. This said, I have lived close to nature most of my adult life thanks to living near wild land. So I wish to say thank you to the wild lands of North America.

I want to thank a wetland area where I spent over two years walking around, almost every day in 1998-2001. I called it Heroes Wetland and it has informed most of what I have done since then. I had nearly died of a heart attack, a very bad one and was weak. I was at the end of my Master's thesis and finished it and then stopped caring about the human world. I was tired of the lies people tell, the politics, fantasy, power trips and struggles and the religious atrocities. Nature does not lie. It is sometimes violent, and horrible, yes, but it does not lie or live by fictions. It was so refreshing to see life through their eyes. I studied animals and

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birds, water and clouds, sunlight and rain. It was perhaps two of the best years of my life. I studied animals and birds as much as I could from their point of view. I want to thank the Orioles and Geese, the Raccoons and Warblers, Teals and Deer I learned so much from, watching their births, deaths and lives. This taught me about having children and the importance of rights to these animals. They are not less complex than us, and they live as we do with desires and their different ways of communicating. I learned from them much of what is the bedrock of these books. If there is a basis to these books it is with birds and animals trees and wildflowers. These are in fact where we come from and our relatives, and matter far more than all of human culture. Indeed they are the basis fo what is good in our culture and art.

Also I want to thank David Hall, who researched religion in the UK as I did and who came to similar conclusions. We exchanged some warm letters sand I was very sorry to learn he died. I would like to thank Val Plumwood, who stood up for animals and women in Australia and the world and who survived a Crocodile attack and loved Wombats, and also John Livingston who fought for nature, and R.J. Lifton, who studied systems of power and mind control and opposed them in China, cults, corporations, Nazi Germany and elsewhere. Maude Murray, who is the real hero who brought Schuon into question and resisted Schuon's autocratic terrorism and delusions of grandeur. She helped bring down a cult leader and lost her mind for a while, in the process. She was later silenced as so many are, by the religion of Islam and the cult. I admire the Nominalists such as William of Occam(d.1347) who helped bring about science by denying Plato. Thank you to everyone who has ever questioning Plato, eventually his philosophy will be rejected for what it is.

I do not want to leave out Russell McCutcheon, who started questioning the domain of religious studies. There are two essays in the first book about Mark Sedgwick and Arthur Versluis that question this area of study concretely. They are not the best chapters in these books,

but they were necessary. I admire the Greek and Roman sculptors, who started making sculpture that was true to life. Also I enjoyed and used Umberto Eco's essay on Ur Fascism, who is a realist, though I have not studied him. His books on art are interesting. I want to thank Thoreau too, who taught me to perceive grasses and ponds, light and ordinary things, and Mark Twain for his skepticism and humor and, Richard Dawkins, Victor Stenger and Steven Pinker. I admire equally, lesser known people such as Clifford Conner, Barbara Ehrenreich, and so many others. My wife Bonnie was especially helpful in this and I thank her and dedicate this work to her.

I don't think I have Richard Dawkins expository skill or thorough understanding of evolution, but I have done my best to explain science and Darwinism and question the meme theory and the theory of evolution applied to religion. Jonathon Miller's attempt to assess the history of disbelief is also something I admire, as his analysis has great merit. Some of the sources I have unearthed here, such as Isaiah Berlin's study of Joseph De Maistre or Karl Popper's study of Plato's ideology were helpful in decoding the enigma of why humans need delusional systems to begin with. I didn't need these authors to tell me that the reactionary thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century prefigure totalitarian systems, but they deduced this correctly. Critics of these writers have not defeated their analysis. Platonism is questioned to its depths and rejected, and with this romanticism. Shelley and others led me to love Plato earlier in my youth but that love has been burned away now by the fire of facts and deeper thinking. Real life is a fire that burns away the cold flames of illusion eventually, not always perhaps, but undeniably and the world is better than it was hundreds of years ago. It will be better yet if we all keep trying.

My studies have unearthed a lot of interconnected themes that have direct bearing on the study of magnified and delusional systems of authoritarian power. My understanding of power differs sharply from

that of Michael Foucault, who I question acutely. I think this theory of how transcendent systems operate is new and is my own. I explore in minute particulars the mentality of metaphysics and how was used to disparage nature and reality in favor of and irrational patriarchy.

Transcending transcendence is an ironic necessity. I think the idea explained here about how religion is used to magnify motives explains a great deal. Metaphysical systems are examined and shown to be closely connected to political delusions of the far right or systems of unjust power. I have my own political views, but in these books, to some degree, I have gone beyond them, and showed how politics is the basis of many systems of philosophy and metaphysics.

I even wrote critiques here of thinkers that I might otherwise have once liked or admired, such as Hirschman or Chomsky. No one is perfect and the cult of prophets, even if they are right on many things, needs to be questioned. I also wrote an extended critique of the medieval idea of the “Intellect” and its political heritage. It helped created the notion of the romantic self which is the ultimate source of William James vaulting of the ideology of subjectivism, as well as the many who follow upon James in erecting the ‘subject’ as an ultimate. No one has written about this in any depth, as far as I know. I do not say this to praise myself, just to record what I think might be the case, and hope others will carry the torch further. Jack Hirschman got lost in a dream of poetic power, and imagined himself as a template of reality. He wasn’t of course, no one is really. But through him I saw the limits of poetry and its closeness to politics and religion. On the positive side, I learned from Jack to use art as a mode of knowing, and to seek to express major aspects of the time I live in. But I had learned this already from others, like Leonardo. So I doubt I really need Hirschman. I feel art should be clear and understandable, whereas Jack was enamored of esoteric obfuscation..

These three books chart some of the history of the growth of

subjectivism and its hatred of science. I even traced this into Left leaning systems such as post-modernist criticism and Chomsky's rationalism. Chomsky, who is not exactly a scientist, but thinks he is some sort of prophet, and who erected rationalism into a self-serving entity that is some ways he divorced from empiricism. Chomsky has excellent merits as a journalist of great depth and a political thinker, but he has a messianic complex of some kind and his followers tend to get caught in the glow of that cult like aura. His Cartesian linguistics is highly questionable, so I questioned it. I used him as an example of someone of the left who is ambiguous in his overall philosophy and who can be questioned by virtue of the themes and critiques advanced in this book throughout. I am on the left myself, so this was difficult to do, but I think needed to be done. So, again, I look forward to the study of nature and language largely free of the Chomskian approach, and picking up again where Darwin left off and by-passing many of the conclusions Chomsky came to in his late work. I find the study of nature beyond the ideology of Chomsky and romantic idealizations especially exciting and if I were just starting college now I think I might go that way, into the study of species, communications, brains and biological ecologies.

I was at pains to show that even though religion and the state are official separated in our age, ideology taken over the role once served by religion and ideology infects many of our political systems. Marxism and neo-liberal economic theories are examples of this. I show religion and politics are very close and often indistinguishable. I suspect they will turn out to be one thing, and conditioned by a distorted evolutionary need of group dynamics for cliques and power relations. An analysis of language will be part of this, I think. Undoing the demonization of the other is part of what questioning religion is about and should lead to a fairer and better world. Power dynamics are what ties religion and politics together. While there is an evolutionary element in the mechanics of the development of religion/ideology, this does not mean that religion

was developed by evolution. It merely means that religion is an unfortunate by-product of brain design and power struggles, with systems of make believe serving given groups at the expense of others, leading to violations of rights and justice, as various as the times and places in which they occur. The need of power is an aspect of human evolution, but religion did not evolve, it merely grew up according to the differing power needs of different social systems. So I supply in depth critiques of Zen and the Samurai and Taoism/Confucianism and the cult of the emperor in China. I also question the Hindu ideology of caste and its roots in thinkers such as Shankara or the Vedanta system. I follow this into the use of some Hindu ideas in leaders who promoted and maintained the concentration camps and created the atom bomb. There are long discussion of Christian history too.

I discuss the history of the Eucharist and the likelihood that Jesus is as much a myth as Muhammad. Since this book is really a critique of power and systems of unjust ideology, it goes beyond merely a critique of the religions. Hence there are discussions of Aristotle, who comes out pretty well, if questionable in other ways. Aspects of his thought helped undermine medieval Christianity and that was a good thing, because he helped forge the mentality that would become science. Augustine, Plato, Plotinus and Aquinas, do not come out well, nor do many others, from T.S. Eliot to Heidegger and the Romantics.

Questioning power relations is not just about religion. The religions, small and large, are really just a part of what I have questioned in this book. I have also questioned the psychology of cults and dangerous individuals and organizations, as well as the idea of corporate personhood and the rise of the corporations as an unjust and threatening series of institutions, which replaced the defunct aristocracies. When the aristocracy failed corporations took over. The erected their repulsive fiction of being “persons” on the of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment was created to protect the persons of ex-slaves.. The world is

now threatened above all by them. Corporations must go the way of the European aristocracies eventually, and be eliminated as workable organizations. They are responsible for many injustices, not just to labor, but to democracy and the fate of the earth itself, now threatened by global warming and injustices towards nature and animals. The rights of nature and animals shall not be infringed, once they are accorded rights and legal or ethical status and beings in their own right. Val Plumwood is right that animals deserve our care and sympathy, though one hopes a system of legal rights will develop for animals and nature, a land ethic too. Peter Singer is right that they deserve even more than that.

There is a theory of history implied in this book too, but its main features have to be inferred from what I have written. I have a strong basis in both intellectual history, social history and art history. The historiography of my work has idiosyncratic features, as I am partly or even largely self-taught. Even when in schools I was self-directed. Most history is the propaganda of institutions. It took me 40 years to put together what I have written here and my mind is not yet competent enough to figure out why I came to think as I did. But I have expressed inklings as to why throughout the book. It took me a long time to jettison myth and religion from historical analysis, as so much of that is subconscious, but once I did, the way was open to start looking at history with new eyes, unvarnished with adulation of great men, critical of great books and willing to question just about anything, while yet deeply loving of those things that have positive results for those who are in need.. The last book, Persistent Delusions, charts some new ground by exploring history in a new way and reading texts based on a more thorough ground of evidence. My studies in Greek and Roman history and ideas and how they led to science taught me a great deal, as did the analysis fo the Eucharist, Chomskyeen ideology, the history of anti-science and the theory of evolution.

My aesthetic ideas also have a new foundation that is related to both art and poetry. The detailed discussion of art over several centuries underscore and supports my other researches in philosophy and politics and shows again the importance of science and its influence on naturalistic realism and the dead ends of the spiritual in art as well as corporate art. My early attachment to a sort of social realism developed beyond religious associations into an embrace of actuality in landscape and the figure, Plein air painting and a celebration of nature and family. This is and is not personal: it is the way of nature.

The history of myths and religions are full of information about why social orders required or needed delusions. The history also tells us why these delusions tended to undermine the survivability of these social orders. The symbiotic relation of religion and politics in history, shows that religion is not really an effect of evolution per se, but rather is a result of brain anomalies and tendencies that are misused for social motivations. Religion is really not a theory of the world, in fact, but a theory whose real meaning is utilitarian. Religions are not about reality and thus not a theory of the world, but are about control of minds and social control of in-groups, even when such control does harm to the group that is attached to the religion. Islam is clearly a baneful influence on individuals in the Middle East, yet they persist clutching to it. The Mullahs need it, the oil billionaires need it, the men of Islam need it, even if women suffer from this need. The same is true of Christianity. Religion may have had a beneficial impact on culture 5000 years ago, but it is hard to see that it is anything but a problem for method of escape and facilitating injustices today. Religion decreases our Darwinian fitness as a species and threatens the earth just as much as corporatism does. Indeed, corporatism is in some ways an outgrowth of the absolutist state and thus of religion. It too should be questioned as much as spirituality itself. The ideology of corporate personhood is an abstract and transcendental claim that is fundamentally religious and fictional, a

perverse and repulsive abuse of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment was created to protect the persons of ex-slaves.

Understanding and dismantling the fiction of religion from the inside out is certainly a praiseworthy goal. I have tried to do it here as a non-scientist, though in the end it is non-corporate science that I wish to justify. I hope others go further than what I have accomplished here. I think I have brought some of the basic conflicts and delusional knots that characterize all religions to the fore. Others need to carry the torch a little farther, and hopefully in a deeper and better way.

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I have long wished to write a book such as I wish I myself had had and I myself needed. This is such a book. It surveys a wide area while still going into scholarly detail about very specific things. It would have saved me a great deal of suffering if I had this book years ago, when I was in my teens and curious about everything, including religion. Indeed, this book is a huge red flag which should warn the young to stay clear of the miserable danger of cults, ideological systems and religions. I needed to know why religion is false and why it does not and cannot answer the most basic questions about human existence. I think my book goes far in explaining why religion is false. Only science has proven itself useful in answering basic questions. A scientific understanding of religion itself is still needed, and so far, the attempts to analyze religion from a scientific point of view are not still very weak and fairly superficial. We need to develop means to go deeper into social motivations and how they impact belief and power systems.

As I have gone to pains to show, religion promotes an idea of the self as a supreme fiction. The world or nature is a secondary thing, a mere “Maya” or samara” a place of suffering illness and death. This is a Buddhist myth, and is not the way the world is. There is no escape from reality. Biology is a fact of our lives and it is the first science, as without

life there is no science at all. Physics is a great thing, but it is limited and there is so much we do not know about galaxies, quasars, planets, atoms, forces. But life since is more accessible and deeper. The basic premise of the major religions is a very harmful lie which puts the human invention of a transcendent mind above all.. Nature is not symbolic and to believe this is very harmful. What is really protected in religion and what William James sought to protect was the right to believe subjectivist delusions. There is no evolutionary advantage in this. James was a 'prophet' of the growing arena of marketed delusions rampant in capitalist societies. The cult of meaning that James and other created results in an utterly meaningless subjectivism in spirituality. Spirituality is merely privatized delusions become distractions and enabling devices to allow rapacious greed and power mongering among the powerful, Churches or Mosques, Commissars, Kings or Presidents, cult leaders or corporate entrepreneurs who can then do their business unquestioned and unabated. The glory of the Jamesean era of subjective delusions is that private spirituality acts as a dumbing down mechanism so that they rich can continue to exploit with minimal criticism. In the suburban New Age, everyone revolves around the pivot of their private delusions, to which they are given a right by the Constitution in the 'freedom of religion'. This no real freedom, it is the lie of freedom. The right to choose illusion is a bogus right. Meanwhile, economic freedom which alone would make them really free, is largely taken from them. All religions are cults and delusional systems of adult make believe. It is time to reject the whole Spiritual Marketplace created by James and Huston Smith, religious studies departments and so many others. We must outgrow this and learn to see the world as it is understood by scientific inquiry. We have to also learn to question those leaders and corporations that steal from us our freedom and rights.<sup>1525</sup> After all,

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<sup>1525</sup> How to end Corporate Personhood, Fracking and Citizens United: Corporations should be

corporations themselves are fictional entities, rather like gods, and claim falsely to be “persons” who have legal rights and freedom of speech. Corporation claim that money is speech.

It is thirty years since I began my experiments with religion. Forty years since I first read William James’ Varieties of Religious Experience. I consider this book to be the negation of the huge mistakes James made in that work. I also I think of this book as a negation of Aldous Huxley’s Perennial Philosophy and as well as a defeat of both traditionalist movement and religion as a whole. I think of this book as a contribution to the ongoing defeat and questioning of religion began by Tom Paine, Charles Darwin, Bertrand Russell, Richard Dawkins, Robert J Lifton, and many others. I love biology and science and mean to do science justice in this book. I also try to express here a love of

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legally attacked on the grounds that the very idea of corporate personhood is a violation of the first amendment, which states that government shall make no law to establish religions. Corporate personhood is a spiritual or religious fiction that has no basis in reality. Corporate Personhood is a transcendental fiction, like gods. Corporations do not die, eat, or marry like people. They do not have babies, do not excrete, burp or feel suffering or breathe. They are virtually immortal and have great wealth, which they steal from others. They pretend to a god like status as being beyond time and the vicissitudes of flesh and brains and bones. Such laws as “Citizens United”, give corporations extraordinary ‘transcendent’ rights to equate money and speech, and thereby make corporations godlike citizens against which ordinary citizens are made meaningless mortals compared to these gods. This should be struck down, and ended as a gross injustice. Fracking proceeds under similar usurpations of real citizens’ rights repressed by bogus corporate “persons”. If money is speech than only the rich can vote. Corporate personhood can be abolished under the first amendment which forbids the establishment of religion, and corporate person are religious or transcendent fictions. Corporate Personhood developed out of the idea of the Catholic Church as the body of Christ, which is an absurd transcendental abstraction. Locke’s idea is to create a religion of money based on what he calls “ money- some lasting thing that men might keep without spoiling”. This is to make money into a symbol of eternity. and Money, like the Eucharistic species, brings a resemblance of immortality. Putting corporations beyond risks, like gods, is what the ideology of corporate personhood is all about. Getting corporations out of America is thus like getting the English out in 1776. They are an affront to our democracy. Citizens United was spearheaded partly by Justice Antonin Scalia, a far right catholic who is used to thinking of the body of Christ and the body of corporations as transcendental “persons”. Scalia thought we should pretend that we are back in 1787 and only the reality of that time applied to the Constitution. This absurd position is irrational and wipes out labor laws, school desegregation or abortion laws, and makes no sense, as the constitution has always been a progressive and evolving document as was meant to be such.. He forced Bush to be President even though Gore won in 2000. Scalia died in 2016, having done much damage to democracy, helping republican make the rich obscenely rich, not unlike Louis VIII.

scholarship and a doggedness of inquiry that I have pursued over many years. Some people have said that this book is an angry book and one that is due to my psychology. But I do not think that is true. It was a patient and calm book that I worked only slowly over many years. It was never written out of passion or hate. Those who hate the ideas in the book are likely to say all sorts of things that are not true. There are things in this book which it is just to be angry about. The caste system is hateful and the destruction of so much of the natural world makes me angry. But I did not write this book out of anger. Indeed, I began this book nearly 20 years ago, in 1996. Or at least that is when I began writing this. Most of what it contains goes back much further than that. I only worked at it intermittently. But I am glad my duty to do it is over. I am free of religion now. I am not happy I spent so much time of this, but I had to if I was going to be thorough. But now I can do other things.

This is not just a scholarly text but has a great deal of lived experience in it. Scholarship needs to be grounded in ordinary life to be real. I went to monasteries and practiced many religions. I knew a lot of the people mentioned in this book, Schuon, Coomaraswamy, Huston and Wolfgang Smith and many others. There are many idealized accounts of these people out there that are largely fiction, which this books tries to correct. Personal experience really matters, as there is no real insight without it. What I learned from these people is that one cannot be a useful thinker simply by reading old texts. One must look at the actual world and try to see things objectively. The dominance of the subject in “spiritual” people leads them far astray of reality. They create gods after their own image, and the Gods they create are usually male dominating misogynists who use ‘life after death’ concepts to solidify power over others here on earth.<sup>1526</sup>

I also think of this book also as being a contribution to a more

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<sup>1526</sup> Of course there are also goddess worshipers, who merely replace the old male gods with the old female ones, with results that are often just as sexist.

thorough historical analysis of the far right, and why the far right is dangerous and promotes ignorance and anti-intellectualism. The analysis of the far right is not just applicable to America, but also to Iran or India, China or Japan and elsewhere. I don't pretend to be thorough about this analysis, and there are many aspects of the far right that are not dealt with in this book. But I know I have analyzed aspects of the far right that have never been looked at in quite this way before, as I have followed the far right back to Roman times, through religious ideology and to those who rejected the Enlightenment. Certainly more research needs to be done in this regard. The more it is explained the closer we get to having people turn against it, as it is a very destructive phenomena.

Some might find this book overly critical or cynical, I don't think it is at all, if anything is an effort to clear the ground of fictions and help build a new world that is better and kinder to others, including other species. These books begin the direct observation of nature. When I gave up religion I continued my study of the natural world. Nature is not a fiction as gods are. It is an actual, breathing living set of beings and processes. It is not a construction of the mind, though it is in the minds of some who developed romantic views of it. But one must distinguish between poetic views of nature and the actual beings and processes that constitute nature. I delved deeply into landscape and birds, rivers and animals of many kinds. When one sees how Canada Geese, Chipmunks or Orioles actually live and raise their babies it is much clearer what humans are. Our earth is quite an amazing place and all the beings on it are of value. I seek to look at the ordinary as it is, accepting the facts of nature and earth, humanity and history, such as it is, and as we are. Deal with reality. The rest is mistakes and failed efforts.

Critical thinking is an essential component of both science and democracy. Positive thinking is good for millionaires as they are "bullish" on their own profits, but that is no way to live a life. Other's might blame me for this or that fault or say this book is due to my psychology. I am

imagined to be crazy, and I wish it were so, actually. Religion could then be excused of its crimes and harms and the world would be so much better off than it is. But that would not be the truth of that matter, and I cannot pretend I do not know what I know. The fact is that I am a realist, and that means looking at things as they are as best I can, even if it is embarrassing or involved me in things I now regret. The hard work of trying to restrict those who desire undue power, and wish to have excessively more than others has hardly begun. Self-assessment is a lifelong process. We all make mistakes. I retain a certain compassion for those who might be harmed by fictions and totalist systems. But once I came to know enough about how systems of power operate, Islam and Stalin or the ideology of American exceptionalism, the Jesus myth or Zen are not so very different. They were all fictions that led to a large variety of power, art, myth and culture and abuses over time. Science is something different, and though abuses have been done in the name of science too, the knowledge that has been gained is incalculable. It is the effort to be objective and realistic that matters, and this means being realistic about the errors and harms done by science too.

This is a book that is meant to turn the reader toward the earth in an optimistic way, encouraging attention to the actual, skepticism of the supernatural, and love of the real. I care about science, and science too needs the same critical eye cast upon it. We can't have just any science, but need a science that is responsible and seeks the best evidence. Not a science that serves corporate or other power, but a science that serves truth. The only legitimate power comes from knowing what is true and helping all to have a life worth living, respecting the rights of nature as well as the rights of humans. The fact that religion has failed us is cause of concern. For instance there have to be better safety nets put up for people and animals. Christian soup kitchens do some good by trying to feed so many, but they do it usually with a kind of blackmail where those who receive there help have to get a sermon or a church service. This is

proselytizing by another name. How can “secular” society address those good things religion has done, but will cease to do as religion inevitably fails further that it has already?.

Religion has convinced mankind to hate actual beings, the world, and ordinary life, sex, women, family, animals, the body, the physical—when these are what really matters. It is no mistake that early art is all about animals and child bearing. This is the stuff of reality. What does not matter is eternity, gods, metaphysics the unreal delusions of mystics, the otherworldly hatred of life, gods, martyrdom, romantic ‘beloveds’, the beyond, the One, “unified fields”, the CEO, or corporate persons--- all of these are conceits and inventions of states and religions, especially male centered ideological systems, which most of them are. This is not to say I favor female centered ideology such as the goddess religions, either. A repugnance for superstition and resistance to dogma, systems of power and the myths that serve them is necessary. Critical thinking cannot be avoided and repressed, no matter how much the state, the Churches or the corporations try to silence dissent and stop free inquiry and the humanities. Appeals to authority go along with delusions and fictions and resistance to this is a virtue. The Enlightenment continues and we are the inheritors of Goya, Tom Paine and Bertrand Russell. Science has made life better in objective ways and that is what matters. It needs to extend its range and be less human centered. All life matters, not just human life.

Virtually all my experiences with religion convinced me it is not worth considering a valid form of knowledge. By default is a valuable for understanding why human delusions and willingness of self-deception are important to humanity. Religion serves the purpose of helping an old woman deal with the loneliness of a mean husband and a bad marriage, or it might help another woman deal with numerous abortions, or a man who lost his job and is not respected by his children, suddenly finds that

‘god loves him’. Religion is in many respects the detritus left over by the tragic human willingness to believe lies rather than face hard truths. Life’s hardships offer plenty of occasions where one will accept unjust authority because one is between a rock and a hard place or needs a job, or just had a baby, or one’s husband or mother died. Religion preys on all these human weaknesses. The prime purpose of religion appears to be to assure complacency, inner peace and acceptance of hierarchical injustice by means of self-delusion and self-denial, in the face of economic and psychological exploitation. To protect the status quo and insure continuance of the power of the ruling class is primarily what religion is about. This is why even the poor resist questioning religion, as they were taught it is their duty to sacrifice themselves for the church or internalize the will of the masters.

I am quite aware that those who are religious or who unconsciously serve religions out of misplaced notion of ‘freedom’<sup>1527</sup> will read this book and ignore it, hate it, misquote it or negate it. That is often the way of the religious, they take pride in ignorance and will do nothing to alleviate it and are proud of that too. I know a Jewish woman for instance who is proud that for her the world is only a little over 5000 years old, as that is old enough for her. Silly to be proud of this sort of ignorance. Creationism begins with just this narcissistic acceptance of myth and reality denial. The religions consider it a virtue to be persecuted for being ignorant and believing nonsense and lies. One invests one’s feelings and

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<sup>1527</sup> Freedom is a strange concept. It would be interesting to see a thorough study of its history. Lately the concept has come to mean the freedom of the rich upper capitalist classes to do whatever they want and damn the earth and every species on it, destroy the climate and pollute the air and the seas. Such “freedom” means nothing and is merely a delusional exploit, a right to speculate on a corrupt market that hurts the whole earth. There should be no such rights.. Freedom for Courbet meant something very different and was a good thing that he lost due to the machinations of the far right aristocrats who destroyed him. Freedom for Tom Paine was much like it was for Courbet, a real thing that meant liberation for the poor and the middle classes from the oppressions of the rich in England, America and France. Slavery was something that was really awful. It had to be removed. But originally the “freedom sought by the “founding fathers” was based on slavery and was obviously hypocritical, as is most of the freedom preached by the markets today. The aristocracy was also a very unjust system. Their “freedom” negated that of others.

one's life in religion and it cannot be wrong. Religion encourages superstitious complacency, a cosmology of wishful thinking and the metaphysics of self-delusion.

My job was to question this persistently over many intersecting domains and disciplines, over many years and concerning many cultures and contexts. Where I am mistaken, it will be found out by inquiry not dogma. I have gone into the major religions as a participant and come out as a skeptic, maybe even more than that, an exposé of fictions and falsehoods perhaps. This was a very personal book in many ways. I use myself and my experience as examples, a procedure that I think is valid and which bypasses the pretention of disinterested scholarship which has always seemed to me a bit of a ruse and a lie. Certainly there is a need of evidence and accuracy, which I think I supply, but no one is absolutely disinterested. But I do not pretend to a disinterestedness when I was very interested in all the things I discuss. I have developed a certain detachment only after being very attached, and that attachment give me knowledge I would not have had otherwise, and that allowed me some measure of disinterest. I am not bitter, I am on the otherside of bitterness. I have knowledge and knowledge won with hardship. I often use my own mistakes as a starting point and this suggests a deep honesty, and this requires a courage which I think is part of science, or should be part of science. I was involved in a personal way with many authors, beginning with William James, John Dewey, Da Vinci and other heroes of my youth. Most of the people mentioned in this book I did not know personally. Some I did know personally, such as Hirschman, the Coomaraswamy's, Wolfgang Smith, Schuon and Chomsky, though there was little personal involvement with Chomsky. I preferred Zinn, who I met, once, and had a short correspondence with, briefly. It was obvious Zinn was the better man. It was clear to me that he was afraid of Chomsky and bowed down to him obsequiously. I did not admire that. Nor did I admire Chomsky as a man much, though he

wrote some good things. By the time I met Chomsky I was skeptical of such men automatically. Their power was very questionable.

But in the end I had to look at these men and women and my involvements with myself as a sort of specimen. I was myself deluded by each one of these in different ways and at different times and ages. This suggests that there is real insight in these books, born of deep inquiries, but it also suggests that I can be wrong and might be wrong in aspects of this book. It could not be otherwise. Most of my intellectual life as an over thirty five year old adult is in these three books. I was never one to claim to be always right, and indeed, I was a seeker and not a seeker after one doctrine that I could hold too all my life. The world is too rich and various for that narrowmindedness. Where I am wrong I hope others will learn and improve the quest for the truth more than I have been able to do. Books are important but they are never the whole truth. Though it is quite true that without the sharing of knowledge, human kind would still be in caves.

I mean to appeal to ordinary seekers too as well as scholars of wide learning. I have always been interested in philosophy, and this book is a philosophical text. not based on academic study but on lived experience in the real world. My philosophical leanings are toward science and away from transcendentalism, Platonism and philosophy as an adornment of a power system. I spent a lot of time in the book defining my thought relative to a whole array of cultural figures of many kinds, not just philosophers.

I was a student for many years, longer than many, perhaps. I am still a student now. I studied poetry with Jack Hirschman and sat at 'his table' every day and evening for months. I learned from many others I won't name, teachers and friends, even my enemies. I was attracted to critics of the existing system. I could see that those critics were far from perfect people. I could see that I was mistaken in my interest in some of

them, being fallible myself. Hirschman, Chomsky, Schuon, all of my teachers had clay feet, and in the end I grew up, saw their weaknesses and grew beyond them, for the most part. They were dust rising, I do not think of them often anymore. Indeed, if anything I regret being as enamored of them as I was. It was a mistake and I said goodbye to the ruins of each of them in turn. But loving them was a way of deeply understanding them and it was inevitable that the love would, the more knowledge I gained of them. They were all cantankerous people, and Schuon was crazy. My apprenticeship is over now, and I am getting old. I stand on my own feet now, shaky as they are.

It could be that I was looking for a father when I sat with Hirschman in North Beach cafes day after day or when I joined the Schuon cult to see if Schuon actually knew anything real. It soon became clear Schuon was too insane to be a father to anyone. But actually all my so called father figures were bad fathers, even if some of them tried. Even if they were father figures, which I doubt, they were failures at it. I did not get much from them, as such men make bad fathers. I was attracted to men who seemed to offer alternatives to the corrupt world of corporate capitalism. I could see that the world was corrupted by power and money. But they did not offer much in the way of an improvement, and indeed, each of them had their own sort of corruption. I learned much more from animals and birds, nature and art than any of the men I have discussed at length in these books. I have learned much more from my children and my wife.

I did best with those who were friends or brother or sister surrogates rather than fathers. Perhaps if I had chosen other father figures, I would have fared better, I don't know. Or maybe the father/son, master/apprentice relationship ought to be altered to be less hierarchical and more hands on, directly personal, rather more friendly. After my own Dad died I should not have looked for another father. Teachers are best when they are there with you and not some ideal, unreachable genius or

con-man. The best teachers I had were in college and listened to me and paid attention to me as much as I to them. Teaching is really a very personal act, and universities and schools have gone the wrong way to make it more impersonal. Corporate education is not healthy for humans. Graduate school, where there is a supervisor and the student is allowed a great deal of freedom is a better model for many students, even in the younger years. Freedom of inquiry, learning by doing, open discussions, seeking answers to hard questions, these are good things for the very young too. I learned a lot from professors in college.<sup>1528</sup> Even small kids need an open ended education, where they can invent and create, learn closely with others, like chimps or enlightened homeschool kids. Certainly it was my way, even in high school, to seek out teachers as individuals. I could thrive in an atmosphere where I had freedom to study my own subjects directed by my curiosity and had advisors who would respect that.

In the end the only really instructive and satisfying thing was to become a father and teacher myself. And that I learned from animals and birds and my mother, my wife and children rather than from any man. I value this far more than academic hierarchy which tends to be male centered and too medieval to be taken very seriously. It occasionally gets things right, almost by accident. So, the good father I was looking for I hope will turn out to be me in the end. I work at trying to be a good father in any case.. The ideal teacher or father does not exist. But to be fallible and go on loving your own flesh and blood as best you can, that is something. Indeed, being a father myself is the best thing I have ever done. My work succeeds so far as it is grounded in nature and it is grounded very deeply in that.

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<sup>1528</sup> These were Donald Ramos an expert on Brazil, who taught me all sorts of things, Jim Borchert whose teaching assistant I was and who wrote about black history, David Adams in Native American history, and Thomas Hartshorne in literature. Other teachers have been Jack Hirschman, poetry and politics and Barry Kent Mackay, who taught me a lot about birds and nature.

This book was written by another part of me than the one that loves my kids and family. I am not at all detached there, but in this book, I was often miles away writing it, like a reporter or scientist doing research at great remove, following out all the leads. While the ruins of religion and systems of men's power stand around me, I am made more aware than usual of what matters in life, the green things that come up in spring and blossom into wildflowers. Children, wildflowers, animal lives, the pursuit of the ordinary, the love of nature through art, what could be better than these things? This is what should be the model for education, as well as a model for how one lives.

When I left the poetry world in San Francisco I called it the "zoo of egos", as I watched a lot of more or less corrupt people trying to jockey for meaningless position in the hierarchy created by City Lights. I had no taste for it. There was a similar 'zoo' in the Cleveland poetry world. The phrase 'zoo of egos' is itself mistaken, as it disparages animals too much, who are often much better than humans. In any case, the things I discuss in these books are not me, and no one should confuse me with what I have reported even though I am in these books everywhere and it still reflects my shortcomings and strengths. Do not "kill the messenger". Religion was a dream that in my own life and in the real world, turned into a beautiful lie, or sometimes a nightmare of deceit and I wrote down how this happened and what it all was. Delusions will not stop just because I wrote this book, that is for sure. But at least someone has called attention to how it affects real people and what harm it does to real people in the world.

One must seek knowledge wherever you can and eventually it comes to you, if work for it. To get towards the end of life is an accomplishment all by itself, but to get there and to love children and seek to tell the truth about life as best one can, that is a gift to leave one's children. To get to the end and say what I have learned, that is somewhat what I am about here. I try to say here some of what I have learned in all my studies and

failures, hoping to benefit others. It might help a few, a little, who knows? I did the best I could in the time I have to spend on this.

This book cleans my house of my own delusions and mistakes, to some degree, if not making me immune to other delusions I do not yet know about. It tries to show what I feel has merit in life. Life is the progress toward some measure of clarity, even if it is never entirely clear. In 2007 I wrote something for a book of drawings I made in my teens and it applies to this book too. I wrote

“I've been writing all my life and still feel like the mastery of my craft is not yet accomplished. My writing, like my art, has always been a labor of mistakes and rewriting, starting over every year, every day. I go on creating against the odds, despite unkind critics, my own criticisms, my own altered mind, so different than it was twenty years ago or even last year. My work is under constant improvement and yet is never complete. My life is about slipping into something different than what I thought I was. My writing records a strange change in myself over the course of 35 years. I admire writers who can come to an end and feel they have said what they wished. I am amazed at them. I can't do that. I am always in doubt about what I wrote and realize later on that my doubts were well founded. I've written these books over twenty times and it will not be done even when I am dead. My writing is a process that is never finished. When it is finished I will have failed, and to some degree every work, however beloved it was, becomes my next failure. I am often loathe to say anything is finished because once it is done, it is past tense, no longer living and breathing out of my heart and mind. It succeeds if it lives in someone else's mind and heart. So long as I am alive my work still trembles with expectancy, waiting for me to work on it some more or waiting for a viewer or reader to take it in. The exploration is

endless. My paragraphs are little essays that never quite escape from the time they were written in, even when they are encrusted and added to over many years. I seem to be an encyclopedia of moments, an uncertain humanity enclosed within a restless thought, trying to find my way in nature and loving nature best. I am as far as you can get from Moby Dick, the book that celebrates murdering whales and a metaphor for U.S imperialism. I celebrate self-questioning, the undermining of power and empire. I celebrate self-doubt, changing one's mind, searching. Do not call me Ishmael, or anything biblical. I am inquiry, questions, on and on till the next source of questions and wonder arises. Blame me for this if you wish, or come with me and look at the wildflowers or birds neither of us has yet seen.

I originally wanted to call these drawings essays. That means explorations, attempts. The Philosophical Drawings are like my writing, they are stories about essays, attempts, above all, they are stories of the restless effort to express in drawings what is so hard to say any other way: the story of a restless search for a perfect musical line, an art born of my heart, a quest for the source of the fire burning bright in the depths of the of the cave of creative possibilities....

This is as true of these books as it was of my early drawings. I am far from perfect and fail often and try again. These three books are really just more attempts at describing reality and I half expect them to fail, as all true things are not the complete truth. I search for the creative moment, the instant where new thoughts open up, the vista I have not yet seen. Sure it makes my work hard to read. But the important thing is to listen to what is attempted to be said, sentence by sentence. It will become clear in the end. There is life in it, and life always involves some failure and some success. The Philosophical Drawings are one of my

many failures, a failure that yet has flowers in it with some hope for betterment. A thousand drawings that seek to tell the story of that time and do so in flashes that fade, imperfectly, trying again and failing again, yet getting up and going on. One is supposed to write like Newton or Aristotle, as if one knew everything, but I don't know everything, and refuse to lie. This is a difficult and argumentative text. I agree with little and argue endlessly about things that might not matter to most people. Such excessively critical thinking is perhaps going too far at times. But since no one else has examined many of these things, some good might be done by it. So I have gone ahead and promote such a careful and thorough vetting of ideological delusions, it seemed to me worth doing. I am interested in creating a reference text which gives anyone who loves science and is critical of religion lots of sources and texts of interest. As a whole, maybe it will be seen and understood by a few, maybe not, but even the fragments have important things to say to someone. Maybe this will extend the care taken by others to find out more and push the many ideas these books advocate yet further.

In the end it is the truth as best one can know it that matters, and truth is often joyful, ordinary or exceedingly painful. So there is pain in this book. I do not deny it. But I use myself as an example of how far wrong it is possible to be and yet still recovery is possible, if only for a time, and if one will try to be honest about it. I have an old fashioned sense, perhaps, that such owning up matters. One can examine one's mistakes with some dispassion. Scholarship on its own is a clarifying process, and so I followed out the evidence, in all the pages of these long texts, as far as I could, given my own strengths and weaknesses. The personal nature of this book insures it will never be quite done. If I live long enough I will see all the mistakes in it and the faults in it, though it is unlikely I will have the time or inclination to return and correct them all. Time cannot be escaped. There is no perfect book and every one of them has faults. I am responsible for all the mistakes of this book. I have

no secretary and no editor, so I am alone guilty of the mistakes, all of them. My typing and editing skills are not that good, so it has been a struggle to type it out and correct it. The more I edit the more I have added, as I am always seeing new relationships and implications. My eyes are not that good anymore, so I do not see all the typos and mistakes very well. Perhaps others will no doubt see the many kinds of mistakes in content I have made too. Few will read the whole thing, no doubt. But, one does not write for the perfect reader, but for the small chance that one might open a mind or suggest a new way of thinking that might make the world a little better place. The internet allows a series of texts like this one to be available by content and not just as a covered book in a library, so I have made it searchable and written a fairly complete and long subject index to make it easily searchable across many subject areas. The purpose of the index, partly, is to cross reference otherwise disparate subjects and show how they all interact through one text. The evidence is self-supporting and makes for very few weak spots in the thesis. This makes the index itself something of a synopsis of the books. It also indicates something of the breadth of the research involved, years, decades or research, which is endless and crosses so many boundaries I long since ceased to think of boundaries between disciplines as real. This is creative procedure and I hope a fruitful one that ought to make others creative too.

I think these systems of make believe created for adults need to be brought much more seriously into question. I think I have done this, for better or worse. This is an intellectual autobiography too, to a degree. I was a thinker and thought through all that I could. Since I wrote this entirely alone and with no support system to further my career. It has a certain honesty and clarity it might not have had. It is a history book too and a philosophical text of sorts. All these implications swarm through the text like so many bees and I hope few will be hurt by it and some helped with the honey that is here. I know there is honey here, and it is

the honey of curiosity and search, science, inquiry and love of scholarship and fairness in thought, nature and art. Some will only see what is negative in it, or see it as unfair, which really has little to do with me, and that is not my fault. It might be their own fears and unfaced delusions they see. I hope this book helps others. Of it there are faults in this book, I hope to come to learn of it eventually. I regularly find that I am wrong about something, so very likely I am mistaken in ways I do not know yet.

I have been a student all my life. I study everything. Da Vinci points out that art is a total education in all directions and this is entirely correct. There is nothing like it. Few artists understand this nowadays. But art opens to everything. Many things can help, from anatomy books to color charts to science studies to drawing from life to art of the past, to seeing birds, people, architecture, trees, inner fantasy, clouds, water, relationships, family, snow, strawberries, apple trees, insects or other subjects as varied as possible. Therefore, while these books explore some of the obvious things I studied, like Jack Hirschman in 1979-80 or religion from 85 to 91, and Chomsky in the 1990's, these are just highlights. I got over each of these people in time, and was not reacting against them so much as I was working beyond and through them, with the exception of Schuon and the traditionalists, who I have rejected and see little merit in. <sup>1529</sup>

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<sup>1529</sup> David Fideler, anxious to justify his 'epistemological pluralism' which I think mistaken, writes me and says that I have rejected Schuon only to embrace Dawkins, from one fanatic to another. But this is false, as actually I do not agree with Dawkins by-product theory as I wrote above. But yes, I love Dawkins and think him a very good scholar of nature. Also, Dawkins is not a fanatic. Schuon cannot be taken seriously at all, whereas Dawkins at least is a scientist and rather a good one, explaining in many books what evolution is about.. I do like Dawkins on evolution, and he is an excellent writer on this. His accounts of the evolution of individual beings are fascinating. This is his primary work and value. Fideler wants to justify his Platonistic mysticism. I was interested in science from an early age. It was never a moving from one fanaticism to another. What I like about science is exactly its following of evidence and standing up to fanatics. Fideler's views are mistaken on science and me.

In the end this is the age of tyrants, of Vladimir Putin in Russia and Trump in America, In smaller countries too, from France to Spain to Japan, the global capitalists rule and the far right is resurrecting the old aristocratic falsities, some of them evoke the Traditional delusions and the world suffers under the threat of nuclear and environmental destruction. This is why it is important to understand the threat to the earth and to people who are science loving and aware of nature. We must look at the threats that face us accurately. We must overcome what threatens the earth. But these books are partly the story of this overcoming. In the end it is in restricting the wealthy, extolling the virtues of the ordinary, stemming the black tide of the far right, using science for good and working with and not against nature that matters.

I connect this overcoming to many current thoughts about how I see the world now. But for the most part these books are an intellectual memoir of how I challenged various world views and went beyond them, seeking my own way of thinking and being. There are many things I do not discuss in these books, and I have been aware of its narrow focus.. I lived in England for a while and California numerous times and other places. I read philosophy, science, and studied painting, birds, and wetlands. I will write about many of the other things I have thought about in my life, elsewhere. Here I was mostly concerned with tracing thoughts and actions in my life that involved ultimate questions and the answers I found about why religion is false and how the world operates in history. Strange that I have hated writing this book for years and thought it an intolerable burden to tell the truth as best I could. But here as I come to the end of it, I realize I shall miss it. I will miss the excitement of this inquiry. I will not miss the facts it discusses. Religion is no longer real to me, I am well over it. I am over Schuon, Jesus, Socrates and other members of that disaster. 'Goodbye to all that' and good riddance.

But it was over 20 years of my life that is in this book and it is sad that I have become old in the process. When I began it I was under 40 and now I am over 60. My mind was not settled then and in many ways I was still a young man with my life ahead of me. Now I am mature and I have learned so much, and so many I once knew are dead or beyond reach. Like Krapp in Beckett's play, I look back on my life and see little that mattered but a few moments where everything was clear. No, that is an exaggeration. I am not like Krapp, I have had many discoveries and days of endless inquiry. I am not a romantic as he was, really, but a seeker. In the learning I have seen my own fallibility and my strengths. I am fallible, I know that. These books explore the extent of my intellectual powers. I know that is limited and there are things I must be wrong about. Was I wrong about Chomsky, Hirschman or Praxiteles? Did I do enough research? I think I did a lot. But I am not entirely sure. I am only pretty sure I am right, not totally positive. I am sure I was not mistaken about Guenon or Schuon. Should anyone care? Perhaps not. So what was it all about except an attempt to address some of the ideas current in my time and to be fair to nature and animals, which I truly love? I am sure nature is restorative and unsure that many humans are. It is a story of much searching and loss, finding and going on. I regret that I could not know all that I know now when I was younger. I always knew that what I wanted in life was to study nature, paint and to have children. I do that now and it is wonderful. That is what moves me now, it always did really. But I had this other life, years ago, now largely overwith, and it was so full of sound and fury, and maybe it signifies nothing. Or maybe by writing about it will help a few people not have to go through what I went through, wasting time. People die every day and their whole life is lost. How to retrieve some of this vast experience is a real question. Was I trying to paint a picture of my times by someone who loved passionately in it as best he could. Yes. Maybe that is the value of these books, and it won't be visible to others till after I am gone.

But, on the other hand, I loved the search itself and all the questions that were raised and answered, even if I was mistaken, hardly anyone else thought what I thought.. While I may be wrong in what I say here, being wrong is not the end, as others might raise these questions and find their own answers to them as I have done. It is permissible to study religions as archaic, delusional social systems and trace their effects on thought and behaviors. Things that used to be thought of as nothing, like existence itself, are now shown to be paramount, and things that were once sacred, like Platonic ideologies, are now brought under the microscope to be looked at objectively, and dismissed as false. It is not nothing that nature can restore itself in a few years, and humans have gone on to ruin so much. It is we who must be questioned, nature is innocent of us.

To look at life as it is, is a hard and heavy task, but one that matters greatly. Life is indeed short, and I have examined it closely. I do not regret that and pass what I have learned along, mistakes and all. The burden in the end is trying to find out the truth and admit what it is, once one has learned it. I know many will ignore what I have found out, and a few will realize I told the truth as best I could. It is often a painful process. It would be easier for me if I did not make any of this public.. But that would be dishonest somehow. I liked working on it in secret and taking my time about it, mulling things over, making endless inquiries, doing the research. There is even a hidden joy in it too, and it is in the search itself and the inquiries. They are endless and I will no doubt continue this somewhere else, perhaps in other mediums. But the life worth living is indeed a thinking one, and I have thought myself through life, with passion and purpose, and have not given up on it, just because it becomes difficult or unseemly, and some people dislike hearing it..

So these are books that have my heart in them after all. I have loved doing it even when I hated it. There are those who might say that my judgments are too harsh or that I am unkind to some thinkers. But the

world is a dangerous place and these books contain conclusions hard won over many years of study. I myself have been surprised at some of the conclusions I have come to. But this is what happens when one follows evidence rather than dogma, common delusions or inherited assumptions.

I wished to write a book such as I wish I had 30 or 40 years ago. I needed a book that could have helped me learn what is wrong with the religions and ideological systems of various kinds and why I rejected them. I hope this is that book for others. I hope it will clarify some issues for others. Life begins when you realize life itself is it is all we have. Most of what is harmful in the world comes from greed and cramped minds, walled in by dogma and holding others back and down to prove their need of power. There is no 'other world' and your one chance to help the world, nature and the common good starts here and now, in the open, where animals have as much chance as we to live a good life.

What is space: what is light; why are planets round; what do plants exist and why are our ancestors so closely related to Grasshoppers and Platypuses; and what is color about beyond Newton? Why are plants and animals symbiotic? How is our language related to that of birds, Prairie Dogs and animals? How do we decrease human greed and downsize corporations to make the earth more livable and stop the ruination of it? How do we stop CEO's from ruining lives and environments? Without religion the world becomes full of questions as we begin to see and sense a totally interesting and mysterious place. What is the meaning of earth, water, clouds, biology, comparative anatomy, now that the gods are gone, mere delusions overcome? It is a place we need to explore more deeply and with great sympathy. This is our earth that we share with the great variety of life upon it, and we wish to know all these lives not so we can exploit them, but so we can appreciate them and love them.

The “Great Mystery” is physical and not fictions or metaphysics. As Vladimir Nobakov, who was both a writer and a science man, a Lepidopterist, said, “the greater one's science, the deeper the sense of mystery” So these books lead me into these inquiries.. I have tried to be honest with myself and tell the stories of what drew me and repelled me, and why some things mattered and stay with me and others things failed and I will never go back to them. I cannot do more than this here. There is a lot of objectivity in this effort. Maybe elsewhere in other things I can be of some use. But the subject of this book is behind me now and I am very glad of that. Religion was a dream that failed and is finished. These books are a record of my 25 year education about and rejection of totalistic and irrational ideologies and systems. I see clearly that what matters is not fictions, but facts about our blue planet and the existence of all things and beings here. As a document that records my intellectual searches and to a degree, some of my personal history, including some of my failings, I hope it will be of use to those who made similar mistakes or who might feel and think in similar ways. I hope others might flower and grow with new insights as writing this has done for me.

Mark Koslow, 1996- Aug. 2017

# INDEX

I have not indexed all the names in these three books, but have sought to explain some of the content of the books by indexing important concepts and terms that occur throughout these texts. This is a departure from the usual purpose of indexes, as it makes the index into something of a synopsis of the content. This is intentional as I do not wish my meaning to be ambiguous. But this index also serves the usual purpose which is to look up where a given person or idea is discussed. The names that are indexed are part of the central argument and the evidence that support it. I do not usually include all the references to a given name, concept or idea, as this can be done by an ordinary search. I only try to indicate where a given concept of name is most saliently considered. It is thus a much longer index than is normally the case

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