



L'homme est une invention dont  
l'archéologie de notre pensée  
montre aisément la date récente  
et peut-être la fin prochaine.

# Postmodernism

At the same time as the social upheaval of the 60's, a rift was developing between popular and "high" culture. The avant-garde intellectuals seemed to be running at pace downhill on that old wide road, unable and unwilling to stop their wild career. They seemed to press onward without a care for public taste. Philosophy became more elitist as well. The Marxist existentialism of Satre had less influence after, what seemed like, his betrayal of the 'cause', and his death.

In the 70's and 80's a movement emerged that was to dominate continental philosophy. This was Structuralism, or more strictly, Post-Structuralism. It came from French philosophy, which was always more language based, following on from the ideas of textual analysis. The central epistemological question had always been "How can we find knowledge and truth". The road that this earthly kingdom, of human wisdom, had taken had led further and further from a sure way to know anything at all. Now philosophy seemed to cast doubt on the written word as a stable source of understanding. Post-Structuralism contained the idea of 'deconstructing' texts to show that they contained a plethora of contradictions in meaning, and therefore one couldn't be sure what was meant by them. The principal philosophers behind these ideas were Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault and Louis Althusser. Like Satre, their politics were left wing, and had a great effect on the neo-Marxist 'Critical Theory' movement that was to come. Jacques Lacan, meanwhile, harked back to psychoanalytic viewpoints, and linked his structuralism to that type of analysis.

Their ideas were taken up under the collective term 'Postmodernism', first coined by Jean Francois Lytard. It was the final triumph of Satan in the branch of epistemology and ethics. Neitzsche had claimed to have killed the idea of God, and now, because of the wholesale acceptance of this, philosophy had nowhere to go when it came to fixed absolutes. Any notion of overarching 'meta-narratives', like the Biblical account of history and its metaphysics, was met with incredulity. German 'higher criticism' had been used to attack the authoritative truth of scripture, and, although its ideas had been proved false and the Bible vindicated, its claims seemed to stick in the memory. The memory of a world anxious to grasp at anything that meant it didn't have to sit underneath Biblical authority over them.

So the philosophical world was now primed to accept that there can be no single objective truth or viewpoint. When it came to ethics, the conclusion must be that morality was relative. When it came to society, it must now be pluralistic.

In Britain and the US this philosophy was treated with suspicion and proud derision; they were less ready to receive such a conclusion. They were slow to realise that philosophy had nowhere else to go when it came to knowledge and morality. This was the inescapable outcome of centuries of travel down the wide road of

philosophical human wisdom. A road, chosen for its human autonomy, had to lead to this epistemological and ethical dead end. Literally dead, when it comes to the soul!

In the book of Revelation 16.3 it says "*And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.*" The wrath of God against humanity's rebellion against Him, after many 'trumpet' warnings, would lead to Him leaving people to the consequences of their choice to turn their backs upon Him. The 'sea' of nations in this worldly kingdom would be full of spiritually dead souls.

The general public were ignorant and unaware of these squabbles in philosophy, between the English speaking world and the continent. This was because of that gap that had opened between popular and 'high' culture, and because postmodernism was incomprehensible. It didn't make itself clear because it couldn't - what truth could it give? What the world couldn't understand, or wasn't ready to accept, with the mind, it saw with the eyes. Postmodern, conceptual art began to exhibit these ideas. It was full of playful, knowing references by an intellectual elite. Like a laughing man in an asylum who had sadly lost his reason. Postmodern art said nothing and everything at the same time - "This is all we can say... nothing". It was seen as deliberately exclusive, and willfully attempting to evade the possibility of mass appreciation. However, the artists and professional academics were just reflecting the ideas of western philosophy which had ultimately run its course, and left humanity empty of ideas. The epistemological outcome was clear- WITHOUT GOD YOU CAN'T KNOW ANYTHING! Philosophy had reached its terrible conclusion, but mainstream society couldn't understand it.

The public, business and government, weren't ready to accept this and wanted more practical answers from philosophy. So, like a revived zombie, philosophy stumbled back to life in a more political guise once again. People, ever ready to feel proud of themselves, wanted to focus on their own ability to solve ethical questions.

## Critical Theory

Critical theory is an umbrella term encapsulating a number of sub sets, such as critical race theory, queer theory, post colonialism etc. Frantz Fanon and Henry Odera Oruka examined race and identity in post colonial Africa. In France Simone de Beauvoir's ideas were built upon by Feminist philosophers such as Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, who gave it a postmodern take. John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas examined concepts of justice and communication. However, maybe the postmodern ideas of Jaques Derrida and Micheal Foucault have had the most influence. What started in a philosopher's study, once again, would end up in society. Foucault's rewriting of history, his rejection of sexual, and gender norms, and ideas of the 'power plays' of the oppressive, would form the basis of much in this new wave of practical philosophy.

As we have seen, existentialism, and later, postmodernism, have a quest for supposed 'freedom' at their core. Unfortunately, postmodernism ended up with freedom from objective truth. Postmodernism, as expressed in Critical Theory, shows the outcome of this in social-political consequences. It is very similar to Marxism, but, instead of economic forces oppressing the poor, it is concerned with social, cultural, societal and scientific 'power plays' (taken from Foucault). Those in positions of power are seen to use knowledge detrimentally, often in micro situations, in order to oppress a minority group. The key quest is for freedom, but ironically, it only brings further bondage; with 'Critical Theory' eventually becoming the oppressor. This is where the rejection of objective truth leads. Conversely, the Bible says "The truth will make you free" John 8.32 - that is, *objective Truth*.

These ideas trickled down as terms in the media like; *Social justice/ the Culture wars/ Identity politics* etc. Postmodernism has now, in its social-political guise, branched off into something which will no longer tolerate dissent. The rejection of meta-narratives has led to a neo-liberal left movement, which forces people to accept its new 'truth' - that anyone can identify as anything (within CT's favoured groups) and must be accepted and not oppressed. This, of course, in actuality, is a meta-narrative in itself. Two things are in tension: firstly, that there is no objective truth apart from what one makes for oneself; secondly, in contradiction, there is a truth that mustn't be questioned. This is the freedom of the 'oppressed' and marginalised groups by those in powerful positions, especially with regards to minority groups of race, gender, sexuality, religion etc. Although Christianity seems to be rather less defended! We should know why by now. This liberal movement seems to defend freedom of speech and religion only if they agree with you.

There is no interest in debate, in fact, to 'muddy the waters' or 'queer' the issue is encouraged. The quest is for freedom to *be*, and *do*, whatever their new commandments allow. Free from the oppression of outwardly imposed definitions. There is no ultimate truth, just the individual's 'lived experience' within the group, and that can't be questioned by anyone outside.

The great danger is that a member of those favourite marginalised groups of Critical Theory (Critical race theory for example), will feel righteousness merely by being part of that oppressed group, and the oppressors are the 'sinful' group. This oversimplified view of human nature, essentially concludes that there are 'good' people and 'bad' people. Just like the proletariat and bourgeoisie in Marxism. The oppressed are almost beyond criticism, and will feel any real sin on their part is certainly not as bad as others, and probably has been caused by their oppression. In short, the victim feels vindicated, and justified in a self righteous state. This leads to statements such as "I will never apologise for who I am!". This of course is counter to the message of the Christian Gospel, which declares all men unrighteous in state and condition, and in need of the justification of God.

## Cancel culture

From the 50's to the early 90's youth culture was fed a diet of curated mass media and entertainment with certain restraints from TV and radio. This, although becoming progressively worse morally from a Christian perspective, was often mediocre to the young mind craving 'edgy' content. They had to go to the world of movies, music and the avant-garde to obtain such 'forbidden fruit'. The teenager often felt that they could have more fun and edgy conversation and interaction with each other than was available in the media, and the natural adolescent desire for individually (within 'tribal' groups) was satisfied, going as far as outright Nihilism. However, with the advent of the internet and smartphones, with which anyone can create content and post it online without any type of meaningful curation or censorship, the floodgates were open. The successive generations of teenagers, still with the desire to be different from that which has gone before, but seeing the usual progress of immorality and 'edgy' behaviour was already adopted wholesale, instead have lurched in the other direction and engaged in a kind of self-righteous self-censorship.

As we have seen, driven by the ideas of postmodernism, they adapted it in the social-political sphere, and are engaging in a neo-Marxist influenced push against perceived 'power plays', not economic this time, but post-colonial, racial and sexual. One of the outcomes of this is 'cancel culture', where celebrities, public figures and others are ostracised and 'non-platformed', all under the broad banner of 'social justice' - The secular attempt at implementation of a new ethic, which is largely just 'virtue signalling'.

With the postmodern mindset, all is true and nothing is true. The only thing that is forbidden is to claim that there is an objective overarching truth. Therefore, Christianity (which does exactly this) is to be considered the ideology to be opposed and destroyed, by labelling many of its teachings 'hate speech'. Wrong is made right and right wrong.

This Critical Theory, disguised under the term 'social justice', will 'non-platform' in universities, or 'cancel' anyone who disagrees with it, subjecting them to a modern form of the stocks. Of course, many of the victims deserve all they get (for being genuinely racist for example), but many have innocently fallen into the 'woke' culture's language traps, or have taken a legitimate stand of conscience against these new secular 'commandments' (such as asserting the biblical belief in the fixity of being either male and female, or that sexual preference is not like racial identity). Although there is a rejection of the traditional definition of what an individual can be, there is certainly a clear definition of the moral standards of this new movement. What is right - is to back it without question. What is wrong - is to question or disagree with its central tenets; the freedom of the marginalised group, to be whoever they decide they are, in terms of gender, sexuality, race etc. Self-truth is the only truth, and to question it is to be wrong (even if you are a member of the marginalised group- so the individual is effectively sidelined).

This generation advocates things that bolster this self-righteousness in activism that keeps a complaining conscience at bay. Various causes, right or wrong, like 'Clean'

eating, Climate change activism, LGBTQ rights, 'Black lives Matter', are all examples of things which can be used to replace the worship and service to God.

The Enemy had switched his strategy again, after the 60's permissive society, having used the familiar tactic of tempting, alluring and advocating immorality and worldliness, until it is suspected by people to be detrimental; and then switching to self-righteousness and pride in a 'new morality' in recent generations. Having degraded the adherence to the seventh commandment, he would then seek to wage war on the fact that God created them "Male and Female".

So there was a swing from the symbol of '*Babylon*', on the one hand, to the '*beast from the earth*' otherwise known as the '*false prophet*', on the other. The false prophet - not with false religion this time, but secular ideology. It's a new 'morality', but an old self-righteousness. Just as intolerant as the Pharisees of old. The cancelling of an individual seems paralleled in the Biblical account of the woman taken in adultery. Satan knows he can get people to do worse things when they think they're justified in their actions, thinking they're doing what is righteous. Critical Theory seeks to justify an individual by being either a member of the oppressed group, or a defender of it. Therefore stones can be easily thrown, and 'eye planks' can be ignored! We now live amongst a young 'graveyard generation' of whitewashed tombs. The history of western philosophy is one of the blind leading the blind, and, in the end, they have both fallen into the grave.

But...God is not dead. It's true, the Bible reveals, Christ did die, but He is risen. The truth about that focal point in all history, still gives humanity hope. How can this be known personally, given all we have understood? The answer to this will be our task going forward. The answer lies in God being, not a silent, passive concept, but a speaking, and active, Quickener. It has to do with the true, biblical understanding of a humble little word, philosophy never understood - **faith**.