

# **The Enlightenment as the Ideology of the Beast: Light, Darkness and Shadow in European Political Life**

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## **Introduction: The Enlightenment Idea in History**

The Enlightenment in Europe, roughly from 1500 to the French Revolution in 1789, was an era that stressed, most of all, the rationalist basis of science, and its application to all elements of life. This, however, is not sufficient, since there is no real separation between rationalism and the obsession with the "liberation" of the ego.

This essay argues that much of this rhetoric is a mystification, and that the basic structure of the Enlightenment was about the rationalization of power and domination. Both right and left reacted against the mystifications of Enlightenment "science," and modern societies, entirely heirs to that tradition, cannot make peace with that history and continue to maintain their present standard of living.

Immanuel Kant wrote "What is Enlightenment?" in 1784. It is the chief work in this rhetorical style of mystification. This is a piece that is easily accessible for the laymen—rare for Kant—and lays out the basic concepts of Enlightenment in the "freeing" of the mind from the shackles of tradition and religion. This sort of "freeing" is purely rhetorical, since the "free ego" is the last thing the enlightenment idea sought to accomplish. The ego was incapable of "freedom" regardless, at last among the more material minded writers of the 17th century, especially in France.

Kant then holds that moral virtue, particularly courage, is necessary for true Enlightenment, since that courage is needed to go against received opinion. The truly enlightened individual needs to think for himself, develop their own conclusions, and hence, take nothing from authority. This movement is little more than a move from immaturity to adulthood; from the infantile life of the middle ages to the adult life of modern times. The formal properties of this motion is the release of the understanding from the prison of authority and received opinion.

Hence, from this view of Kant, the Enlightenment and its scientific consequences have been associated with the rhetoric of liberation. The Enlightenment defines itself in the negative terms of the destruction of feudal relations based on religion and received opinion. The positive side (derive largely from Bacon and Descartes) is based on the concept that the release of the understanding can be done through the rigorous application of scientific methods to all areas of life, reaching an era of complete and true knowledge based on rational methods and principles.

Hence, from Kant, science and its resultant technology is seen as liberation, and the creation of a new, Utopian social order based on mechanization of all labor and the love of knowledge deriving from true principles. This rhetoric still dominates discourses about the

Enlightenment and its negation of the “barbaric middle ages.”

These changes are a regression for European society. The Renaissance and enlightenment were the destruction of the unity of man and nature, the secularization of culture, and the excuse for a rise of a powerful oligarchy with powers that no ancient warlord could dream of. Nominalism and empiricism destroyed any chance at certainty. Matter was gradually seen as perpetually and randomly in motion, which justified the radical changes in society.

These movements made promises that its founders had no intention of keeping. Little in the Italian renaissance was not financed by the Medici clan. The “republican” system of government is a form of pure oligarchy, and the Medici control over Florence was hidden – a shadow, the negation of their promises. Savonarola, the voice of medieval mind against Florentine alchemy, stated: “Rethink you well, O ye rich, for affliction shall smite ye. This city shall no more be Florence, but a den of thieves, of turpitude and bloodshed. The shall ye all be poverty-stricken, all wretched, and your name, O priests, shall be changed into a terror. . . . Know that unheard-of times are at hand.”

Alchemy was about more than the exoteric transmutation of lead to gold. These, according to Ficino, Bruno, Pico della Mirandola, patronized by the Medici, were symbols for people. The leaden were the Catholics, medievalists and populists, the golden were the initiated. This era saw the distinction between esoteric and exoteric. The elites such as the Medici clan spoke to the population in an exoteric, or publish fashion. Among themselves, they spoke in a symbolic and arcane, esoteric fashion. The entire edifice was based on deceit.

Machiavelli, unheard of wealth, and the total control of politics by money was what Savonarola meant by “unheard-of-times.” The renaissance was not a resurrection of classical learning (every medieval scholar was familiar with that), but the rediscovery of Greek and Egyptian alchemy. The fact that the Medici ruled precisely as Machiavelli had advocated shows that Machiavelli was not original, but purely reflective of the decay of his time.

The Reformation, a godsend for the merchant classes in England and Holland, blessed the world with relativism, individualism, and the natural result, the overpowering centralized state that decided what truth was. Soon, the money powers would tell us what was important. While these people railed at “superstition,” it was a selective and rehearsed indignation. Money, alchemy, random motion, the omni-state, colonialism and the evils of industrialization, on the other hand, were seen, not as totems, but as identical with “progress.”

Martin Luther would have been just another sectarian crank if the German princes had not found his message congenial. Removal from the authority of Rome, the theft of monastic lands and the valuable objects of Catholic worship were too much of a temptation. Yet, in order to keep the support of the princes, Luther was forced to demand the extermination of peasants that took Luther far too literally. To the princes against the peasant rebellion, Luther writes,

Stab, smite and slay, all ye that can. If you die in battle you could never have a more blessed end, for you die obedient to God’s Word in Romans 13, and in the service of love to free your neighbor from the bands of hell and the devil. I implore every one who can to avoid the peasants as he would the devil himself.

Why does he mention Romans 13? because this is the chapter where Paul states that humanity is subject to princes as if it were God. Roman Catholic theology preached conditional obedience. Absolutism and “divine right” were modern, not medieval, developments. For all

Luther's concern with individual interpretation of scripture, his mission was purely to the elites and, in the end, Luther found himself advocating for the total state in lieu of the church and monasteries.

In Britain, the rise of empiricism, parliamentary absolutism and proto-capitalism came from the rape of Ireland and India. Ireland is the “dark side” of progress. It is mythical to claim that colonialism and slavery were somehow justified through “Christianity.” The far more common justification was “progress.” These were backward savages who needed tutelage in order to grasp the rational nature of progress from savage to civilized.

The Puritans in England, a group of Calvinists, held that it was God's work to exterminate the Catholics of Ireland. The Commons in 1644 issued a Proclamation that said, among other things, that “no quarter shall be given to any Irishman, nor any papist born in Ireland.” As Cromwell landed in Ireland in 1649, he declared that the Irish Catholics will “be dealt with as the Canaanites in Joshua's time.” He also repeated the earlier Proclamation that no quarter will be given regardless of age, sex or status. All that mattered was that they were Irish. At the end of the slaughter, Irish rebels were sold into slavery in the Caribbean. The issue is that these massacres were accomplished in the name of liberty, freedom and progress. Individualism and “rights” were essential to the Puritan mentality (see the Moran book for the citation, p 26ff). While this was being uttered, Cromwell established a dictatorship over England. But since we are entering the age of absolutism, this was consistent with the elimination of all ties among human beings, nature and God. The nominalism of Protestantism saw to that.

Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* is one of the fundamental books justifying this point of view. He writes:

And we make (by art) in the same orchards and gardens, trees and flowers to come earlier or later than their seasons; and to come up and bear more speedily than by their natural course they do. We make them also by art greater much than their nature; and their fruit greater and sweeter and of different taste, smell, colour, and figure, from their nature. And many of them we so order, as they become of medicinal use.

Bacon is here describing the utopian society of Atlantis. This society was believed to have been highly advanced in the technical arts, but do to their arrogance, they were destroyed by God in the flood. This is the famed antediluvian wisdom that Bacon elsewhere says has been “lost,” and that modernity exists to recover it. In the passage above, not only is nature mastered, but then manipulated. What divides this era from the medieval and ancient is that, previously, technology worked with nature. Now, Bacon and his successors sought to replace nature. Nature was assumed to be mechanical, atomistic, and completely predictable. Like the alchemists, all substances could be broken down into pieces, and then put back together into whatever the elite wanted.

We have promises of freedom, peace and plenty. What do we get? Colonialism, the absolute state, endless wars with higher casualties than ever before, progress as an excuse for massacre slavery and foreign occupation. All of this progress was paid for by slave labor, foreign conquest, American silver and low wages in the growing cities. As English peasants were thrown off their land in the enclosure movement, Ireland was parceled out to the Elizabethan elites (then afterward, the Parliamentary elite). Extraction from such colonies had everything to do with the development of empiricism, industry and its final justification in Darwin.

### **Solomon's Temple as the Archetype of the Enlightenment**

The history of the Enlightenment, especially in terms of the origin of capitalism, egocentrism and industrialization, has been poorly described and understood in the west. Professorial historians parrot the official line that, for reasons unknown, the Black Death and Hundred Years War brought about the end of the medieval order. Regardless of the millions of published papers on the topic, the birth of modernity is almost designed to cover over the major players and ideologies. However, the pioneering work of E. Michael Jones, Michael Hoffman II, Nicholas Elipolous and, in Russian, Vladimir Katasonov have filled in the blanks left by court historians in America's universities.

In the era of early capitalism its purely usurious nature was revealed and intensified. Interest takes the place of equity and the fractional system was taken from being seen as the scam of unimaginative hucksters to a respected financial device. Writers such as Hilferding lay out the rule of usury in the development of the “corporation” or the joint stock companies. Banks are in charge and the actual entrepreneur is repressed. He no longer has control since any extension of credit means the control of finance over investment decisions. The greater the rule of finance, the greater the bureaucratization of society, the “hierarchy of salaried managers” takes the place of creative work (Katasonov, *Capitalism. Studies in Russian Civilization*).

Under the rule of Basil II, the growth of Byzantine prosperity, outside the rules and assumptions of capitalism or markets, reached a major high point. Merchants in southern Italy that were granted the right to freely export precious metals, but the Republic of Genoa began building a smuggling regime that led to mass riots in Constantinople as more and more specie was leaving the country. In 1204, the Crusaders, already financed to a largely Jewish elite of moneylenders, let loose what today would be trillions of dollars in wealth from a plundered and conquered Byzantium. This is the origin of “primitive accumulation” of capitalism that led to the rise of the Italian republics.

The Reformation created a utopia for usurers, though Luther personally was tremendously insightful as to the real purpose of usury – for man to become like God. While usury was developing in Italy and the Medici clan elected popes, Luther had an easy target. The murder of Savonarola sealed the total lack of grace in the Roman church, though Luther's reaction was as problematic as the evil it replaced.

Jews were at the center of it all. The old saw about Jews being “Christ killers” was rarely a reason for this loathing. That is an invention of Jewish propagandists and is designed to cover over the actual accusations made against Jews from Roman times until today: usury, egocentrism, dissimulation, immorality and prostitution, all brought into Christian areas by Jews and the “Christian Cabbalists” in Italy.

For these reasons, the Jews were expelled from Switzerland in 1298, then again in 1616, 1634, 1655, 1701. From France, they were expelled in 1080, 1147, 1180, 1306, and 1394. However, after the expulsion in 1394 Jews were not allowed in France for four centuries, but their re-admittance was quickly turned into the revolution in 1791. From England, they were removed in 1188, 1198, 1290, 1510. From Spain, Jews were expelled in 1391, 1492, 1629 while from Portugal: 1496, 1516, 1555, 1629. Europe was crowded with minorities of faith and ethnicity. Only Jews have this record and the accusations against them have a stone-solid consistency over time. The Jewish, materialist idea in all its forms created modernity and the Enlightenment. Jewish writers such as Lyukimson state that “the Jews have fundamentally

changed the attitude of humanity to money” and served as a catalyst for the “spirit of capitalism.”

Vladimir Katasonov, writing in Russian, argues that Protestantism is the Judiazation of theology. Sombart and others argue that thousands of Jews fleeing to Britain quickly were “baptized” as Puritans. Vyacheslav Makartsev suggests that the backbone of the first generation of Protestants in Holland and England were not indigenous Europeans, but converted Jews who had fled from Spain. The concentration of Jews in Amsterdam earned the city the name “the New Jerusalem” with all the eschatological ideas that implies. Puritanism was Judaism for the gentiles. Marx stated in his “Jewish Question” that the new capitalist ethic was a “Jewish” Christianity.

Calvin, most likely Jewish ethnically, specifically argued for “cooperation” in finance with Jewish groups for the sake of advantage. In Makartsev, the denial of Christ for 30 pieces of silver meant that Judas converted to the worship of Mammon.

The Church of Rome fell away from the universal Orthodox faith due to a similar compromise with mammon. The growth of the northern Italian states was earth-shattering for Rome and her doctrine. The church as an institution, including her monasteries, were drowning against the tremendous acumen of the Medici's and the alchemists, leading to the total capture (or purchase) of the papacy by that clan.

Further, to the extent that Florence, Genoa and Venice were bringing kings under their sway through credit and debt, the papacy could not look idly upon this assault on their temporal power. Indulgences, though an abuse, was an unofficial and crude response to this.

Usury was connected to the sin of sodomy, since it was something naturally infertile growing through artificial means. Metal does not grow, it is “barren.” Roman Catholics, sticklers for papal power, simply refused to abide by the 1139 “conciliar decision” at the Second Lateran that not only condemned and excommunicated all taking of interest on money, those doing so are taken back only after a lengthy period of penance and with the greatest care. This is later extended by Alexander III, then again by Gregory X and finally, Clement V in 1311, each time with greater and greater penalties. There is probably no other more severely and repetitively condemned heresy and sin than usury.

The essence of all arcana is the notion that God is jealous of civilization. Lucifer created Cain through the rape of Eve. Adonairam is coequal with Adam and is the real primal Man. Adam was innocent and hence, useless. Adonairam is the builder of the new world after Noah. God expelled Adam and Eve due to the progress of science.

Adomiram is Nietzsche's superman, the “shepherd” of the “herd of Adam.” Only the Promethean “free men,” coming from Cain, are true builders. This science, in its ideal form, was perfected in the design of Solomon's temple.

Solomon summoned all workers from around the world to imitate the initial civilization of Nimrod. Chemistry and alchemy. Lucifer speaks to Adoniram to eat from the Tree since God is jealous of science and its power. It was Tubal-Cain that was the first repository of his secrets. Geometry and mathematics is the root of all science, so any ideal must have this has a root.

**Vico's Cycle of History:  
The Death of the Primordial Father  
as the Conceptual Origin of the Enlightenment**

The history of a nation begins with the story of the first kings, the legislators, who laid the foundations of statehood. Such, for example, the first seven kings of Rome. Then, in

accordance with Vico's scheme, only the overthrow of the last of them led to the formation of the republic, and therefore, the aristocracy ruled the second form of government. One problem is that the first kings were not absolute monarchs or autocrats. These were the first among equals, the most notable leaders of the Patriarchs in who fought rebellious slaves and external wars. Such is the state of affairs in Homer's Iliad. Achilles kept his equality with Agamemnon, and he can not force the hero to his duties before the Achaeans. Similarly, other kings just ask (rather than order) Achilles to temper justice with mercy. This suggests that the kings there were many, with each of them considered himself equal to another (Vico, 2002: 576-579).

There is nothing in Vico that suggests that the patriarchs had to be absolute rulers, as even the most purely despotic rule was forced to see reality. Constant force against a resisting family would destroy, not enhance, the ruler's power. The ideal is patriarchal autocracy, but this does not speak to the reality.

Thus, the general historical scheme of Vico allows him to catch the common thread in the chaotic phenomena of social change. Developing the idea of the recurrence of historical events, Vico believes that the feudal era is a return to antiquity, since there was a clear distinction between plebeians and patricians. Hence, feudalism turns into a historical category, indicating a form of relationship between "commoners" and "rulers" which is based on personal dependence.

The patriarch lays out the "constitution" of the civilization based on his role as head of the family. All political developments are hence derivatives of this initial "state of nature." The sons soon fight over the spoils of the dead patriarch. This is forever preserved at its essence in the antagonistic split into classes roughly termed "noble" versus "vulgar." This struggle became the core of urban life, the formation of which coincided with the emergence of states. In this way the first city was founded on noble estates over and against the crowd of plebeians. Vico remarks:

Hence we say that the first gentile fathers, passing from the bestial life to the human, retained, in the religious times in the state of nature under the divine governments, much of the savagery and cruelty of their recent origins (so that Plato recognizes in the Cyclopes of Homer the first family fathers of the world); and that likewise in the formation of the first aristocratic commonwealths the private sovereign powers remained intact in the hands of the family fathers, just as they had held them in the previous state of nature (Vico, 2002: 338).

Thus, the city is found on two opposite eternal properties arising from the nature of the civil association: that plebeians seek equality, while the noble retain the ideology of class-based estates. However, the wisdom of the "Folk" is manifest in the beginnings of Folklore. In his *New Science*, we read:

I shall now briefly explain why the art of fable telling was devised. Because fearful slaves did not dare to express their minds openly, they translated their true feelings into fables. The mere footpaths of the famous Aesop I have widened into a highway (Vico, 1963: 425).

Keep in mind that the "dead" fathers is merely a symbol. Vico is stressing that the children all seek to replace the father, and hence, all act like him. To band together against

enemies both internal and external is the origin of the aristocratic and military republic, or the poetic society. This society held slaves and servants, and fables or “folklore” are really the lower orders encoding their protests in these forms.

Continuous confrontation between the revolutionary and conservative elements of social life entails a change of state forms themselves, and with it the economic, legal, political institutions and moral precepts. Vico understands the inevitability and necessity of the existence of social inequality, but not under all conditions and at all times. Thus, the first state to be fixed with the already existing at the time of their formation inequality.

In Part IV of the *New Science*, Vico describes the three sorts of social wholes created in history. The first was the “theocratic” order where God was present in all things. Law was the unreflective belief in the commands of the gods. This was the projection of the natural patriarchs of the first extended families.

In this stage, the world was ruled by universals: metaphysical entities of a general nature, that brought all particulars of its class under its sway. This was a direct rule of the definition of a concepts over all specific, observable manifestations of it.

The second was the aristocratic or heroic ethos. These were men who were not gods, but descended from them. It was not theocratic in that God did not directly command, but noble because God commanded through intermediaries, the strongest. This created two orders: one of the divinely birthed and the other plebeian, or lower orders sired by beasts. Vico states,

The third and most debased of the societies are the republics of “men,” that is, that Gods are not important in establishing legitimacy because it is human people that are gods. There are several means whereby this can occur. First, these are the plebeians asserting a moral and intellectual equality with the patricians. It derives in this case from a standardized conception of human nature and logic that is universal and not divided into orders. The second means is by a monarchy. This is not the same as the primordial rule of the fathers, but rather the rule of one of the noble that is used to create unity against enemies. By breaking down all orders that are not of the royal house itself, it creates equality directly (Vico, 2002: 180-185)

Interestingly, this is the realm of the practical. This is the realm of demystification. Vico writes,

The latter [the vulgar language] are composed of words, which are genera as it were of the particulars previously employed by the heroic languages; as, to repeat an example cited above, from the heroic phrase “the blood boils in my heart” they made the word “I am angry.” In like fashion, of a hundred and twenty thousand hieroglyphic characters (the number still used, for example, by the Chinese) they made a few letters, to which, as to genera, they reduced the hundred and twenty thousand words (of which the Chinese vulgar spoken language is composed) (Vico, 1963: 307)

To the extent that the popular will rules, the lowest common denominator is the chief standard. The rejection of the aristocratic ethos means that practicality and efficiency become virtues. The rejection of the poetic image above means that the mass society is a debased one, where metaphor are rejected as being beyond the ken of the average. It is an intellectual leveling.

In the realm of law, the vulgar is also motivated by efficiency. Openness and conviction rule just as much as truth. Utility and speed are the most important aspects of the vulgar system. This is the origin of philosophy and legal science as a exoteric, or popular and literal, science.

The elite that remain use an esoteric, or arcane, language designed to keep the secrets of the ancients from the vulgar, that will do little but inject their own demands into them (Vico, 2002: 324).

This process is not only Roman, but has a universal character. Vico finds its reflection in Greek mythology, and the Homeric epics. Thus, the myth of the apple of discord symbolizes the struggle for land by the plebeians, seeking to control the land so as to cultivate it for themselves. The grooms who act like besiegers for Penelope in the absence of Ulysses is likewise the plebs seeking to achieve the right to celebrations of marriages that have long been the privilege of the noble class alone. Many myths about the birth of monsters after the cohabitation of people with animals is a reference to the condemnation of the “heroic” way of thinking that marriages between patricians and plebeians is monstrous.<sup>1</sup>

To summarize this section, Vico's scheme of universal history has its origin with the patriarchs, heads of extended families, decaying at his death into heroic, or poetic, societies. Finally, the state of formal equality is reached in the “republic of men” or the prosaic society based on utility only. This is a scheme of decay, saved only by the monarch (or the emperor in Vico's concept) that imitates the earlier rule of the family patriarch. If the emperor fails, anarchy sets in and the state of nature again reached. Each era has its own myths and style, with the poetic being associated with the heroic and the prosaic with the rule of “titans,” or the republic of men.

The “state of nature” theories try to get to the root of what mankind really is. For Rousseau, it's a process: it begins with people as totally free and equal, living alone or in small groups. Then, private property is founded and classes appear. Then governments. Soon, all persons are at war with one another. The founding of government and states is really because of natural disasters and the problems of life without structure. Vico agrees with Rousseau but says that his description is not pre-historical, but the meaning of actual historical events. Rousseau's version came before civilizations did. Vico says it is the very substance of world history. This is why the promises of civilization and modernity did not come true.<sup>2</sup> Man lived as hunters and gatherers and slowly became civilized. This led to powerful empires, a class of idle rich and masses of the working poor. It was a disaster for humanity. So what Rousseau places in the state of nature, Vico places in actual historical development (Goetsch, 1995: 97-100).

After the fall, however, the first “state” was what more closely manifest the rule of God, still fresh in the minds of Adam's descendants:

Vico's state of nature consists, therefore, of two' classes of inhabitants; the fathers and their families and the famuli. The former were induced to' band together into a sedentary state by “divine force,” i.e. by superstitious fear of the angry gods, and the natural instinct to propagate the species.<sup>16</sup> The latter were driven by the base motive of survival. The coming of the famuli marks, Vico claims, the beginning of society in the proper sense of the term. "The families with their famuli preceded the cities, and without which the cities could not have been born (Vaughn, 1972: 56).

The fall of man is in the revolt against the divine father or the “killing of the king” ritual. This was made more famous later by Freud, but that reason and logic – the sciences – come from

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<sup>1</sup>Vico, 2002, 576-615 for his analysis of Ulysses.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Marshall, 26-28 for his comparison of Vico with Rousseau.



this revolt. Civilization itself comes from it, since it is the drive for power. That this is an error and has led to the continued decay of those affected by it is the purpose here.

The myth of the father symbolizes unity, power, authority, moral norms. The “children” are rebels, individualists. In killing the father, they take from it his power. Of course, being immature, they screw it up. For Vico, this myth (its also in Freud) is the foundation for modernism, liberalism and science. This is the error of the “children.” It is not reason, but Hobbes' passion and anger that drive the elites to more and more power. The natural order is exhausted by this constant mechanization and humanity becomes dependent on them. It was never about freedom.

Men in history projected their own sense of self, their knowledge and self-interest onto entities that can be seen in the natural order. They created these deities to manifest and understand the moral truths behind natural events. So in the time of the father-kings, the chief of the gods, Jupiter, or Jove, manifest the singularity of social power in the patriarch. Jove was the sustainer of all things, not specialized into compartments of life or nature that was typical of the later gods. Jove ruled by fear, and his bolts of lightning were the projection of the fear of violent death. As Hobbes made this the single engine of his system, the connection here is not a coincidence (Vico, 2001: 157).

The main thing is for Vico – and Hobbes – is the lack of internal turmoil and the ability of the monarchy to keep the noble's desire for power. The crown might maneuver between opposing class forces and thus secure the freedom of action in domestic and foreign policy. The crown is the one power that can keep the very unpopular elite from overstepping their bounds.

Philosophy, reason and the sciences derive from the murder of the divine father because the mind seeks to create a philosophical system that is all inclusive. It is a “man-centered” system in that it deliberately seeks to understand the created order without any reference to God. There is no inherent scientific reason to begin this way, and no warrant to end this way. So the question arises why is it so important that God be removed from the equation? It is because modern man especially, but humanity in general, seeks primarily the domination and control over nature, which of course includes human nature. God is a power that cannot be so controlled, so talk about him is not useful.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of his *New Science*, Vico says that the law of the father's is manifest in three different ways:

[First], The hieroglyphic or sacred or secret language, by means of mute acts. This is suited to the uses of religion, which it is more important to attend to than to talk about. (2) The symbolic, by means of similitudes, such as we have just seen the heroic language to have been. (3) The epistolary or vulgar, which served the common uses of life. These three types of language are found among the Chaldeans, Scythians, Egyptians, Germans, and all the other ancient gentile nations. . . We find that the principle of these origins both of languages and of letters lies in the fact that the early gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters. This discovery, which is the master key of this Science, has cost us the persistent research of almost all our literary life, because with our civilized natures we cannot at all imagine and can only understand by great toil the poetic nature of these first men (Vico, 2002: 18-

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<sup>3</sup>For the connection between rhetoric, the plebeian and the use of technology, cf Marshall, 17-19 and again at 196

19).

Great civilizations, in other words, are governed at the most basic level by these myths and stories and thus, in grasping Vico's interpretation of them we can reach a conclusion as to how the inhabitants of these civilizations thought of his world. Therefore, as a clear consequence of that, history becomes a science understandable because human beings have created it. However, it is built on a form of Realism that decays into nominalism through ideology and the over-simplification of ontology (Marshall, 258ff).

In sum, this section provides more detail on the "father" and the nature of their rule. It is preserved in folk memory and the very mental memory of human beings generally. Further, it also adds more detail to the concept of the historical process as a descent from the patriarchal golden age to the iron age of the prosaic anti-hero.

The death of the Divine Father is the beginning of decay. From the Divine life of the family, the "children" become the elite of the empires. The elimination of the paternal rule leads to the heroic, Promethean individual at war with the enemies of his land. Soon, those working for the hero will demand that this land is, in fact, theirs. This decay comprises all aspects of life from language to religion to economics.

In his *Autobiography*, Vico speaks of his own conception of this descent. The language (broadly speaking) used during the age of the gods is that of powerful, patriarchal families. Here, the father is supreme. His symbolic "death" leads to the rule of civil governments, or the heroic stage. This is the age of the empires, militarization and the glorification of conquest. It is the third stage, where "human nature completely developed and hence recognized as identical in all men" (Vico, 1963: 171). He summarizes like this:

Governments began with the one, in the family monarchies; passed to the few in the heroic aristocracies; went on to the many and the all in the popular commonwealths, in which all or the majority make up the body politic; and finally in civil monarchies return again to the one ... And thus, the history of humanity is all contained between the family monarchies and the civil monarchies (Vico, 1963: 171).

The patriarchal families, in addition to kinship, evolved purely social relations of rule. This relationship grew stronger as people sought protection from violence that prevailed in the primeval forests. These people were in relations of personal dependence on the Patriarchs, and the word "hero" or "king" meant the leader of a number of people dependent on it.

Heroes find themselves fugitives on their lands, originally it was personal agricultural feuds and accordingly they are vassals were the first rulers and personally obligated to follow their heroes wherever they are neither sent to handle their fields. Mention of the field is not accidental, since agriculture was the main occupation of the people in the initial phase of human history. The first heroes of humanity were agricultural workers, not military men.

The history of the labors of Hercules reflects this, according to Vico. It is the symbol of the heroic age. His exploits were all about mastering the elements: defeating the lion and hydra were symbolizes the land which had to win from virgin forest to plant grain. The Golden Apples of the Hesperides that Hercules cultivated on the edge of the earth with the help of Atlas is a crop of golden wheat. The myth of Cadmus, the legendary founder of Thebes, is that he kills a

huge snake, brings it to a great ancient forest and sows its teeth. This is the creation of the first plowed field (Vico, 2002: 540-546).

From this, the armed band is formed, since settlement requires defense. Heroes go out from their lands to ensure their safety. These are heroes and hence, gentlemen. These are armed against the enemy and against the mass – the plebeians who live for desire alone. The settled life is agricultural, and this implies heroism in defense of the land – now our land. These new city-states required this idea of self-sacrificing bravery and diligence, but had no illusions as to its universal applicability.

Vico's genius was that, at a very early stage, he understood that Europe and the Americas was heading into a new iron age, an age of ignorance and decay. The heroes cultivated a whole legal order, a civilization. Once the plebeians want to take part in it (after others have created it), a new degenerate age is at hand. Vico is thus interpreted here as one of the most conservative political theorists and historians in the western tradition, relying on Plato and the Realist tradition for his ontological foundation (Vico, 1963: 122-123).

The summary of this is the nature of the heroic ruling class. There are two standards of law, and the heroes are dependent on the serving people under them. Being a small minority, it is easy for anyone to organize against them with populist slogans. Monarchy, the most stable form, follows from the decay of the heroes. Obedience decays under the nobility because the system is seen as inherently hierarchical. In democracy, that those in power are no different than the ruled, hence obedience is conceptually problematic. This is the nature of the descent into the chaotic anarchy of the new barbarism.

The end of the “heroic” epoch was also the end of the ancient aristocracy and the transition to the “people's freedom.” The milestone was the “second agrarian law” which became part of the law of XII Tables. According to this law the plebeians can occupy the land they work as owners. This contributed to strengthening the economic activity of the plebeians as many of them began to accumulate considerable wealth. They could compete with the patricians in all walks of life.

Over time, the plebeians sought rights, first in the field of private law, and then in the field of civil law. The latter is manifest in the Roman laws of 339 BC and 326 BC as the plebeian magistrate had veto power over the patrician one – and vice versa. The temporary condition was one of equality. The latter law banned debt slavery. From this point on all qualifications for office became payable directly to the state treasury and has become a mainstay of the democratic system. This completed the process of changing social values.<sup>4</sup>

Listing the twelve main inhabitants of the Roman pagan pantheon, Vico indicates that it's really twelve main social and cultural forces of the growing empire. This is the Almighty Jupiter using fear to link families together. Representing marriage itself he has Juno as his wife and Diana as the ideal chaste young woman. The arts and culture from any civilization are represented by Apollo, including horsemanship, represented by Pegasus. Vulcan, Saturn and Cybele symbolize the importance of agriculture in the organization of ancient societies (Croce, 1913: 199-204).

Mars is god of war that any settled society makes inevitable, Venus is the goddess of “civil Beauty” (rather than physical beauty) in that she is the archetype of normative social behavior. The aristocratic estates are signified by Minerva, while Mercury is the hierophantic element. As sea raids and naval power developed, so did the youngest of the gods, Neptune.

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<sup>4</sup>In Vico's *New Science*, 2002, the analysis of these Roman-era legal ideas is summarized from page 26-52, and again at 904-906.

Soon, these foundational elements are replaced by humans, the heroes, usually with some divine ancestry. Examples are the well known Minos and Jason, the wandering of Ulysses and the Trojan war are examples of the human. These heroes take the foundation of the gods and use it to chart their own path, often tragically. Vico argues that it's the introduction of Neptune that leads to the heroic, as the sea opens up a whole world of travel.

The age of the gods established a settled way of life, the formation of large patriarchal families which were headed by very powerful fathers who ruled on behalf of the gods. From all of this come the cults of marriage, harvest, family and burial. Those interested in the "state of nature" should not rely on speculation, but see how the gods and goddesses fought one another using their human and semi-human pawns.

The mythological stories about the battle of the gods with the Titans have, in Vico, a double meaning: they are, firstly, it is the taming of people mired in their wild passions as a result of faith in the supernatural power (such iron rings, used to chain Prometheus to a rock) but also, tell us about the disorder that helps bring about the new, lower age of history (ibid).

The qualifications, which originally appeared as a support system and aristocratic men only. But during the centuries-long struggle for equality, the plebeians turned it into a legal institution for popular rule. Plebeians were now free from personal dependence, and finally, wealth took priority over one's origin. It is clear that again, equality of condition was never the goal, but the rule of a more "popular" form of rule. Birth cannot be granted to all or anybody. Money or land can, since anyone can possess it. Though the trappings of an aristocratic republic continued to exist, these are now filled with new content which rejects their heroic origins. The aristocracy had a social system dependent on it, as does democracy. "Aristocracy" did not continue, but their offices did (Vaughn, 52).

The Patriarchs ruled in military ruling class partly based on bloody customs and violence. This could not disappear with a wave of the hand from an exemplary ruler. On the contrary, it is much more natural to assume that the constant recurrence of bloody strife after the establishment of the initial state slowly changed how people viewed rule and virtue.

Historians often fail to properly understand words such as "people," "king" or "freedom." They naively invest them with the meaning that has become normal to their own era. In those days, the word "people" referred only to the "noble" and on the freedom in question it existed only in relation to them. It seems that the removal of the aristocratic order only created a society based upon private interests.

Thus, the driving force of social change, for Vico is the struggle of the oppressed masses, the plebeians, symbolized by Mercury, also the god of commerce. That commerce was considered the most vulgar of occupations concerned only with passionate drives is not a coincidence (Vico, 2002: 656). The problem is that the concept of law is removed slowly from its universal roots. The drive to "practicality" sees universals only as guidelines rather than actual realities. This is the essence of tyranny since it is a world without law. One means to this end is the development of "absolutism." This is a modern phenomenon where the unified state is born from the will of a monarch, one that, significantly, is no longer associated with the aristocracy. Because the nobles threaten him and are articular, legally connected and strong, they are the first to fall.

The absolutist monarchy is the transition from the aristocratic to the democratic. It is a leveling institution and stresses its ties to the lower nobles and plebeians. What will happen after the reign of monarchs? Rome disappeared from the face of the earth. This is the actual sequence of events. While Vico is often misinterpreted, claiming that this form of state is the highest

expression of the mind's development, he quickly rejects that idea, showing its ironic use. As the highest form of statehood, anything after it must mean the destruction of society (Mali, 1992: 177).

After the qualities of leaders begin to level, passion comes to control all. Falling back to the beginning, men become savages. Actually, it is worse, since the stupid, foolish and horrible animals that existed in the earliest forms of human society have been transformed into fairly rational creatures, the severance of law from its transcendent root means that an educated people now functions like animals. They ignore the customs and laws of human society in the pursuit of the satisfaction of personal interests. Illness manic self-satisfaction erodes social body from top to bottom and makes it an easy prey of the conqueror. The treasures of civilization and culture are destroyed, so men retreat back into the caves. This dark night of vegetating people lasts for centuries, leaving no trace for future historians, until finally, the light glimmer of new altars gather around themselves a group of people united by a new law with its taboos similar to the patriarchal society. Vaughn strongly supports this view in his statement, "Vico seems to imply that the degeneracy of popular Commonwealths cannot be arrested since men are by nature incurably prone to self-interest" (Vaughn, 63)

Without the heroic, society has no orders and no standards. It is our modern society. Everything goes to the lowest common denominator: money, power, sex: this is what motivates the modern man. The old nobility was motivated by service and virtue. Liberalism and individualism lead to the destruction of all values, "massification." From the "mass man." There are no abstract truths. There are civilizations that articulate themselves through myth. What they have in common is "natural law."

In the descent of popular government from the aristocratic, Vico states in the *New Science*:

At first men desire to be free of subjection and attain equality; witness the plebs in the aristocratic commonwealths, which finally turn popular. Then they attempt to surpass their equals; witness the plebs in the popular commonwealths, later corrupted into commonwealths of the powerful. . . [The vulgar] ... wish to put themselves above the laws, witness the anarchies or unlimited popular commonwealths, than which there is no greater tyranny, for in them there are as many tyrants as there are bold and dissolute men in the cities (Vico, 2002: 292).

See the trajectory of this ideal descent. First, this is a matter of will, of desire. They seek equality as a negative reaction of their own condition of dependence. It is not that this dependence is bad or unjust, but only that the subjects desire it broken. The term "equality" is a vague one. It is not the aim of the plebeians, but is a weapon against those who hold them in subjection. It is only a negative desire to not be in subjection to others. It is the rule of the egotistical will.

As they do not desire equality, but domination. All seek to become the father, as this is the inborn goal of all politicians. Equality is created in the state of nature as a compromise of utility, not a goal of itself. The "mass man" is what is created when those seeking power tell the world that their own breaking of family taboos is legitimate because "we're all kings" or populist rhetoric to that effect. The "rule of law" has always been a chimera: no one will die for this abstract state. They might die for an ideology that places them in a position of power and remove responsibility from their character.

Democracy is organically linked to the development of any science since the belief in the substantial equality of people is a natural product of intelligence and prosperity taking the form of philosophical dissolution of traditional beliefs. The criticism inherent in the scientific method cannot be accomplished without it being aimed at social institutions as well. Vico says that many feudal “heroes” claim descent from a god. This can also be seen in most aristocracies as well. Yet, critical thought can easily make short work of this, leading to its own destruction.

Morality, worked out by the culture itself, as a rule, leads to its own denigration. It can quickly justify egotistical self-satisfaction. Ultimately moral degradation captures science, creating a spirit of sophistry and cynical skepticism. Gradually degradation becomes universal, and culture finally dies or in the “war of all against all,” or under the heel of the conqueror. It happens that interrupts the conquest of the natural course of a fairly early stage. It happened with the peoples of the New World, when they were conquered by Europeans.

To summarize this section, it should be made clear that the descent of historical consciousness is identical with the development of equality. The more equal rights and duties are stressed, the worse off society becomes. The death of the heroes means the rise of nominalism, science and commerce. Soon, an oligarchy is formed that can only be dislodged by the emperor. Yet, this is not inevitable, but very probable. The best form of rule is royal for Vico, but that is only manifest once the fraud of equality is manifest in oligarchy (Vaughn, 63-65).

### **From Technocracy to Colonization: The Global Consequences of Enlightenment**

Given both the elementary understanding of the Enlightenment and its more contemporary criticism, this paper can now deal with the Enlightenment as a form of global domination through colonialism. The literature on the connection between western science and colonialism is immense, but this essay will deal with only a few recent offerings from major sources.

The basic structure of the relationship between colonialism and the European Enlightenment is provided by a (1997) essay by Peter Pels. The basic idea is that the expansion of European powers into the third world is the direct result of modernization, and is actually a part of the inner dynamic of scientific modernization (Pels, 1990: 164). As mentioned above, the famed dictum “knowledge is power” is a literal truth: the domination of scientific techniques led to the expansion of European trading and navigational prowess to the developing world.

In some ways, the development of anthropology as a discipline is a part of the Enlightenment, and it was originally used by these same external adventurers of the newly dominant European colonial powers. Anthropology itself, in other words, was developed within the Enlightenment mentality with the purpose of applying science to basically unknown peoples. But this approach, since it is target at peoples who are considered “unscientific” has its own builtin mechanism of judgment. This mechanism has become known as the distinction between “progressive” and “backward” societies that itself became a justification for colonialism.

The domination of the European powers over nature came to be known in these backward societies as the “white man’s magic,” and itself gave the victims of colonialism a basis to hold the European adventurers in awe. Magic was associated with western science not so much in that it held knowledge, but that it could dominate the natural world and force the European’s imprint on it (170-171).

The most violent, inhuman and totalist genocide based exclusively on Enlightenment ideals can be found in the Irish Penal Laws. After the victory of the usurper William of Orange,

Ireland, where James had his base, was slated to be, yet again, depopulated. Mercantile Protestantism, based on Calvin and Knox, was the ideological coating to the slaughter, while the interests of the English nobility was the material core. The Penal Laws, reaching their apogee in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was the collective decree of Catholic Irish chattel slavery.<sup>5</sup>

In essence, the Penal Code deprived the Catholic Gael of all political, property and personal rights. What was left for the Irish was the official status of slaves; the the Protestant Plantation began to provide a replenishment of a new Calvinist overclass. Cromwell believed himself to be the reincarnation of David, with the Catholic Gaels conveniently labeled as Amalek. Mass slaughter was seen as a sign of election, since it always meant the confiscation of the property the unfortunate natives left behind.

The most important element of this total disenfranchisement was its complete concordance with Republican and liberal doctrines. There was no contradiction between the absurd determinism of Calvin and Knox and the republican concept of the “community of the elect.” The papist was not capable of liberty by definition, since tyranny was identified with popery. Republicanism could only center around the domination of an oligarchy, whose elect status had no relation to merit or action. Modernity found its theology and its political expression.

The Gael was deprived of legal protection, property, education, a trade, bank accounts, weapons, horses, industry, trade, or any sign of wealth accumulation. Any child of a Catholic family who converted to Protestantism was legally entitled to take the whole estate at any time. Catholic children from families deemed to fertile were taken from their parents and fostered to a Protestant family. Needless to say, before the advent of the modern state, enforcing these strictures was expensive. Part of the solution was to stress the savage nature of previous rebellions, thereby providing a spur to greater militancy in local and vigilante enforcement.

As the English legal system became more Enlightened, the worse off the Irish savages became. Arguing that this was an anomaly misses the ideological and theological concept of the republican community. In addition, to dismiss the theological roots of modernity and Enlightenment is also an error, since the doctrines of the Reformation motivated rich and poor alike. It was a belief system redefining pathological, but regardless, one that was accepted by millions in northern Europe. Rulers confiscated monastic lands, parish valuables, vestments and other sources of wealth, and in so doing, rebuilt the modern economy and state.

The Irish tenant slave suffered from chronic malnutrition, but their famed fertility always permitted plenty of replacements. Unlike the southern slaveholder, Irish chattels were not expensive. Even more, the Calvinist overclass, sure of their merit-less salvation, had no obligation to care for their human tools and hence, some peasants were granted small garden plots to keep them alive. Starvation and malnutrition is also the likely reason for the lack of rebellion in this period. An exhausted and disabled population was incapable of rational thought, as the diet of the Irish slaves (mostly starch) did not contain sources of B-vitamins or electrolytes. Since this negatively affects the brain, a kind of involuntary policy of artificial retardation began to bear fruit by 1710. Protestant historians such as James Godkin, writing in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, made reference to the affect of chronic malnutrition on the morals and social behavior of the Irish, holding this as responsible for the lack of will the slaves showed, which only encouraged the English to see them as natural slaves (Godkin, 1870).

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<sup>5</sup>cf. the Irish Race, by Augustine Thebaud, 1879 and The Story of the Irish, S. McManus, 1921 and, of course, the work of Edmund Burke and J. Lecky.

Population control entered into enlightenment discourse as the English settlers, seeking the maximum return on their “investment” avoid large families. Starvation policies, issued strategically, were an early form of contraception. They were explicitly designed to control a population quite fertile. The English ascendancy balanced the requirement for labor with the need to maintain a fairly small population that would never consider power in numbers.<sup>6</sup>

All people living in Ireland were required to attend Protestant churches. Many Catholics, refusing to attend, had whatever possessions they might have on hand taken from them. Protestantism became a mechanism for a massive wealth transfer. In addition, the decrees of William and his supporters, beginning in 1698, required the immediate exile of all Catholic clergy on penalty of death. This was made more explicit in the Registry Law of 1704. Here, “transportation” was substituted for exile. This euphemism was the more explicit definition of chattel slavery in the sugar plantations of Barbados.<sup>7</sup> It was reaffirmed and clarified in 1710. Once enforcement fell off by the 1730s, a new law of 1744 gave inducements that included a percentage of all confiscated land.

This is not the worst. These decrees placed a price on the head of any and all Catholic clergy, graduated according to rank. From this developed an entire profession of “priest hunters.” The Protestant Parliament encouraged Jewish investment in this enterprise, and soon, it became their prerogative, led by the infamous Sephardic Jew Garzia of Lisbon, who made it into an investment opportunity for the Iberian Sephardim.

The Protestant and Jewish population of Ireland was small, and enforcement, done locally, could only be haphazard. Yet, this imperfection was compensated for by constant rigor and vigilance, since action against the church meant political capital and economic benefits. Remote areas of Munster became the poverty-stricken revival of Latin and Greek learning as the “hedge movement” continued to function against the most violent of persecutions. In the 1710 law, these hedge schools were included in that list of crimes that led to deportation to Barbados and certain death from sunstroke.

Even more, as far as the European adventurers were concerned, the enlightened science provided them not only with navigational dominance, but also the economic power and scientific regimentation to dominate the external world militarily. Hence, the consequences of the Enlightenment according to Piers is both the scientific organization of military forces, but also the domination of the capitalist and merchant interests. Piers holds that it is this latter interest that developed the European sense of the outlying world as undeveloped and unscientific, and hence, ripe for control.

David Washbrook (1990) also takes the relationship between the enlightenment and colonialism seriously. For him, the enlightenment in Europe brought about the situation where science could be brought to bear on social relations, and hence, on forms of external control. In

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<sup>6</sup>In 1741, Irish Protestant Matthew O'Connor wrote at length on the starvation tactics and slave status of the Gaels. Since it was not a moral problem to behave in this way, English writings of the period speak quite openly about the destruction of the “idolaters.” He makes reference to the planned destruction of entire villages and the rampant disease which accompanied the British refusal to permit burial. Generally, the travel writings of O'Connor and Dr. Doyle, Protestant Bishop of Kildare and French traveler Duvergier de Hauranne spoke in identical terms of depopulation, slaughter and starvation.

<sup>7</sup>This policy has been exhaustively documented. More recent work includes *To Hell or Barbados: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ireland*, by S. O'Callaghan (Brandon, 2001); and importantly, *The Irish Slaves: Slavery, indenture and Contract labor Among Irish Immigrants*, by Rhetta Akamatsu (Platform Pub, 2010). Dozens of other books have reprinted the primary source materials that have yet to become part of the American consciousness.



his case, he deals with southeast Asia, and holds that European dominance over this area was assisted by the deliberate creation of a middle class among natives, since the newly developing “social sciences” had long been preaching that a strong middle class was necessary to social stability. Hence, the European powers took this insight and then went about making sure that large and middle landowners were subsidized and brought into the realm of the “middle classes” (Washbrook, 480ff).

But this is not all. The basic idea that links the enlightenment, science and colonialism together he terms “the ideology of hegemonic universalism.” The idea is very simple: the western powers have a sense of superiority that seems to be justified given the large amount of accumulated wealth and scientific technique that has made them masters of the globe. Given this, these same European elites hold that the justification of their domination over their colonies is based not merely on “might is right” or on self interest, but on an educational role as bringing the non-whites to a realization of the truths of science. What might have been justified by missionaries in an earlier time is now justified by spreading, not Christianity or Islam, but scientific knowledge and hence, “enlightenment” to the world. Hence, in this case, colonial empires are justified in the establishment of an enlightened world order created by the European powers. Therefore, spreading progress throughout the globe becomes the main justification for colonial exploitation (481).

However, Washbrook also speaks about the other side of enlightenment rationality. While it is true that scientific acumen replaced religion as a drive towards exploitation, the scientific methods of dealing with social relations could and would be used against their colonial overlords. If it is true that western powers (and later, the Japanese) use “scientific universalism” as a justification for their domination, then, to be consistent, it is also true that, once these “middle class” natives learn western ways, the rationale of colonialism is gone. This is precisely the mentality of the middle class, nationalist intellectuals throughout southern and eastern Asia. If science justified colonialism, then it also justifies anti-colonialism once the natives learn enough European science and liberalism/nationalism to develop their own sense of hegemony. In other words, the enlightenment was a tool of domination, it was also a tool of non-western liberation.

But it also needs to be stressed that the Enlightenment, long seen as a destructive force by third world leaders, has also been met by the ideology of “anti-colonialism.” This particular approach begins with the concept of post-modern critiques of Enlightenment rationality as itself part of European domination. If science itself is part of the language of domination, then postmodernism broadens its epistemological base to hold that rationality is a localized and elastic term that cannot merely be associated with the French or British Enlightenment. This has created an entirely new form of discourse nicely summarized in Xu (2001). This work, from a Chinese point of view, deals with the description of the post-modern and anti-Enlightenment mentality that exists in certain circles throughout the formerly colonial world (Xu, 117-125).

This approach is typified by seeking to deconstruct scientific reason as a specific construct of European domination. Here, capitalist relations, liberal democracy and “hegemonic universalism” are all related, three sides of the very same triangle. Hence, the post-colonial criticism is based on attacking science as “western” and hence, liberation does not come from science or the enlightenment, but a conservative turn inward, to the old values and ideas that were destroyed in the name of the European scientific revolution. Hence, where the “pro-Democracy” movement, as Xu describes, seeks to apply western science to the third world in developing a sense of liberation and self-determination, the post-colonialists hold that this would

merely perpetuate domination by the maintenance of a violent, hegemonic and power-hungry ideology onto people that have seen enough of such European and Japanese greed.

### **The Dialectics of Enlightenment: Adorno, Heidegger and Horkheimer**

It does not take long to get from Kant to Nietzsche. In fact, the amoral world of the infamous German is a mere brief step from the hyper individualism of Kant and his followers. Nietzsche took the Baconian dictum seriously that knowledge is power and of course, power is domination. The Kantian mystification of the Enlightenment had been exposed for generations in European letters from the conservative reaction against modern science to the leftist agitation of the above authors.

In their 1944 work, Adorno and Horkheimer seek to eliminate the mystification that Kant had ushered in as the basic sense of Enlightenment self-definition. Their argument is a complex one, but it can easily be taken apart into eight specific movements or moments. The Enlightenment, with its stress on science and hence technology, has not led to liberation, but to a hyper-centralization of power and technical authority. The knowledge necessary for specialized science and its administration are, by definition, available only to a few specialists. This means that Enlightenment individualism has led to a Nietzschean stress on the will to power of science. This will to power has resolved itself into a fetishization with central power and authority, and an esoteric sense of science as the new priesthood, available only to a few specialist and the moneyed powers who finance them (Horkheimer, 2002: 94-137).

This centralization of power and the domination of a scientific and technocratic elite has led to the creation of a uniform ideology: a sense of the power of science and the moneyed powers who control them. The issue here is that the scientific ideology is the only one, and that all problems can be solved by the judicious application of the scientific method, only if they receive enough money and power to do it. Science, at first a limited method of solving problem, has resolved itself into the domination of materialism and the creation of a scientific establishment, a set of institutions that identifies itself with “science” proper. In other words, the scientific establishment has taken the name of science and pinned it to themselves.

The domination of science and enlightenment capital relations has led to new forms of scientific consciousness like sociology, which has led to the standardization of society, and this standardization of social life has taken the form of labeling consumers. Creating consuming pockets of people who are seen not as people but as machines that buy the products that the capitalist technocracy has created. Citizenship has been replaced by consumption and being a part of the great chain of capitalist relations (Horkheimer and Adorno, 77-95).

Even more than this, not only has political and economic power been tightly centralized, but even the very ideas of the population and their perceptions of the world are created and maintained by the “culture industry” that complex of capital and modern science that has sought to entertain the masses for profit, but have also replaced their own perceptions with that of the “cultural elite.” From the individualism of Kant, science and Enlightenment has created a new kind of human being: the slave that does not know he’s a slave. The entertainment industry that is so often a target of both left and right has taken upon itself, in the name of both profit and Enlightenment, to recreate the very perceptual matrix of the population as a whole. Replacing actual perception with their own, and hence, dictating music, dress, even cuisine according to its taste, quickly adopted by the masses who think they are thinking for themselves.

The movies, as well as the mass production entertainment industry of the technocracy, has recreated the person according to its own will. Reality itself is the creation of the “illusion industry” and has destroyed the last vestiges of individuality. Kant is exposed as a naive writer at best.

The creation of genre is part of the cultural domination of the technocracy. Genre is a pseudo-intellectual method of both standardizing production, but more importantly, the standardization of consumer taste. Genre is the destruction of culture for this reason.

This destruction of culture by forcing it into the standardization of genre means that art has been taken from the realm of the individual or the culture and placed into the realm of the machine: the culture machine that seeks to standardize art so as to make it amenable to scientifically planned consumption and production. Art is merely another commodity.

Finally, the culture itself becomes a single, commodified and standardized reality: the creation of the scientific technique as applied to film, entertainment and art. What has begun as a drive to liberate consciousness and the intellect has led to a scientific dystopia of enslavement to a series of media illusions, themselves based around profit and a centralized technocratic apparatus that has stamped out all free thought and has even commodified dissent from its own order.

Proponents of technology do not fail to point out that technology is value neutral. It is not good or bad in itself, but take on those qualities given the intention of their user. A substantial body of criticism, beginning with the conservative and agrarian revolt against the Enlightenment and finding new life within the Frankfurt school, developed to challenge the very nature of technology. Not only does technology assume a distorted view of the world, it is inherently destructive, centralized and totalitarianism.

Technology cannot merely be defined as the creation of a machine. The machine is as old as humanity. Technology, as a philosophic concept, is really technocracy. Technocracy is the rule of the machine. In this case, the machine controls all aspects of human life in the name of efficiency or increased production. But both the preliminary ideology that undergirds its development and the later justifications for its rule are anything but value neutral – they are an aspect of the “commodification of the fact” so common among anti-positivist writers.

Technology presents a puzzle. This is not just a matter of “re-creating” nature, but the very ideological content of “replacing” nature. Ancient and medieval concepts of technology were not totalitarian since the older idea of a machine was quite specific – they were connected to a set of skills possessed by an artisan. For Heidegger, the artisan's use of the machine has no relation to the much later development of the “ideology” of technics. For Heidegger, the artisan took each object to be fashioned and submitted it to the famous “Four Causes” of Aristotle.

These Four Causes were interlocking and integral in the creation of meaning. The machine was merely an adjunct to the process (rather than actually *being* the process). The Four Causes, the efficient, final, formal and material all were the multidimensional approach to artifacts – they were never separated from the society at large or the skill of the artisan class. These were “embedded” artifacts rather than the creation of a mechanized process. There is a specific purpose and end to the use of the object that is not radically separated from either the work of the artisan nor the use of the society that demands it. This is very different from the modern concept of mass production.

Urbanization, colonial competition, economic competition, and “free thought” have all been trotted out at different times to explain why technology and technocracy developed when it did, roughly at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The old causal structure of the artisan was rapidly

overthrown, placing the machine at the center of production. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the machine was well on its way to becoming technocratic.

The problem is that all the above “causes” of technocracy have existed in many other historical contexts and did not lead to technocracy. Urbanization, brisk trade and economic competition has always existed. Yet, they did not develop technocratic structures of control. They developed usable machines for specific purposes. “Technology” seems to be a value-neutral term that sounds a bit like “labor-saving.” Who could be against that? “Technocracy,” on the other hand, is a term denoting a dystopia deriving from elite drives to replace nature and, in its stead, place themselves (or their employees). Technocracy is about replacing or “fixing” nature; nature is brought under the supervision and discipline of mechanized capital.

This is a area of thought where the royalist and agrarian conservatives of the 19<sup>th</sup> century agree fully with the radical leftists of the 1960s in America. In both cases, the promises of modernity, that is, the promises of the Enlightenment, not only did not come to pass, but the opposite developed. Dystopia and technocracy was born on the ashes of the noble-peasant struggle of the middle ages. World Wars I and II saw the slaughter of tens of millions, and, immediately afterward, the nuclear arms race frightened humanity to distraction. And yet, in 2012, the apostles of “scientific reason” remain on the offensive. This fact alone cries out for resolution.

So there are two puzzles: the first is why it was only the Enlightenment that created an industrial revolution on the one hand, and, on the other, how is it that, no matter how horrid and unspeakable the results of technology are, the disciples of technology's open and unchallenged rule remain at the top of the social heap, easily able to relegate their opponents to being “backward” and “ignorant.” The two questions, of course, are related.

Some progress in answering these questions might be found in M. Horkheimer's concept of “instrumental reason.” Echoing the criticism of Romantic agrarians a century earlier, Horkheimer, with a different agenda, centers his argument around the notion of “emptying” natural objects of “reason.” Reason here becomes a state of affairs rather than a mental process. For those versed in the immense literature doing battle with the claims and assumptions of the Enlightenment, the argument can be reduced to three elements:

1. Reason as objective: “Objective reason” in Horkheimer's account is something more akin to Plato and the Stoics than the modern world. The modern world prides itself on reason, and yet, it has seen the most institutionalized irrationality in global history. Objective reason is the imminence of rational “concepts” in the natural order. Men are not rational (in themselves), but the natural order is. The natural “order” is just that – a manifestation of reason. The development of secular and materialist thinking destroyed this concept. The mentality might be the necessary variable in the historiography of technology.
2. Reason as subjective: Subjective reason is really the same as reason seen as “instrumental.” Or at least, they implies each other. Subjective reason is the relegation of rational concepts to the human brain. It need not lead to Instrumental reason, but it is necessary for it to develop. Subjective reason implies that the human brain (really the elite brain), confronts an irrational and hostile universe. The human brain is the sole locus of reason.
3. Reason as instrumental: this sort of reason can, but does not of necessity, derive from subjectivity in that sense. Instrumental reason is the center of the critique, and it holds

that modernity has removed all rational content from the natural world. This has led to a ruling class whose interest was served by imposing a technological grid on “nature,” (really, the external world) creating a new order in place of the old. The Stoic and medieval Christian view of *Logos* in the universe was called “superstitious.” the new order saw nature as hostile and in desperate need of replacing. It needed to be “fixed.”

These three concepts of reason are at the center of Horkheimer criticism of modernity and the Enlightenment. The move from reason as *Logos* to reason as a subjective, personal process was one of the most lasting and negative aspects of the 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalist. The single main element is that, when reason is moved from external to “internal,” all that remains are means. The ends are not found in the natural order, as the Aristotelian concept of the artisan implies, but are purely internal and subjective. Reason, in this case, can provide means and justifications but cannot supply the desire and its end. The Humeian rejection of taking an “ought” from an “is” is the most pithy expression of this. The “is” has no inherent qualities. Therefore, we cannot take any ethical content from them. The “is” has no real content at all.

Heidegger claims that the way one views the “outside” world reveals as much about us as about the objects external to us. The problem with modern technology and the mentality that undergirds it is that it places the brain, again, in a confrontational position against the “dead” world of matter. To “enframe” (*Gestell*) something is to provide it with its own identity, to impose a mode of thought upon it. The German word is closely related to a skeleton or scaffolding. In this case, it is the intellectual apparatus imposed on the natural world, which is no longer a natural “order.”

His “Question Concerning Technology” (1954) might be summarized in his own words:

It remains true nonetheless that man in the technological age is, in a particularly striking way, challenged forth into revealing. Such revealing concerns nature, above all, as the chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve. Accordingly, man's ordering attitude and behavior display themselves first in the rise of modern physics as an exact science. Modern science's way of representing pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces.

This means that nature, formerly seen as a diverse forest of symbols saturated with meaning, now is seen as a purely abstract “energy reserve.” Energy and power are now entirely fungible and standardized. Nature exists exclusively as a set of forces. It has no intrinsic purpose, so the elite may harness as much of this force as possible to serve its ends. Nature is a complex of relations, but these relations are based only on force. Force here is an abstract concept that is the same wherever it is found in nature. This approach to the world is dangerous, according to Heidegger. He writes,

This danger attests itself to us in two ways. As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing—reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile, man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself and postures as lord of the earth. In this way

the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself.

Without using the term, both Horkheimer and Heidegger are speaking of alchemy. Alchemy held that the universe is reducible to one prime matter. This prime matter can be arranged and rearranged as the adept sees fit. In both cases here, alchemy is the idea, though one that remains unspoken. The difference between the technics of the Roman or Persian empire and the technics of 2012 is in this epistemological difference. Stoicism posited that *Logos* is manifest in the natural order. The technocrat sees the world as inherently dead, just waiting to be given meaning by a scientific elite. This, of course, begs the question.

Horkheimer, to oversimplify, shifts the location of “reason.” It has gone from being a market of the natural order to a means of reaching specific personal goals. In the Platonic realm (dominant until the rise of nominalism in the Renaissance) reason was a state of affairs. Reason was something underlying all relations of the natural order, including our own human nature. It was *Logos*, or the structure of reality that existed regardless of one's subjective disposition.

In Horkheimer's *The Eclipse of Reason*, he writes of the movement from the Romanesque to the Gothic as exemplifying this approach to the world. Plato and Aristotle, despite their differences, saw the immaterial essence as giving intrinsic meaning and intelligibility to all natural objects. Taking the Greek idea and baptizing it, the Platonic and Aristotelian world view became the presence of God in the universe. Natural law could not, by its very structure, be the result of chance force and equilibrium.

The Gothic immanentized *Logos*, giving it an explicit “material coating” that manifested the divine order. Reason was a) in the mind of God, but also b) manifest imminently as *Logos*, or the second person of the Trinity. The significance here is that natural order was a given – it was rational in itself, and therefore, any political or ethnic doctrine could only conform itself to this order as closely as possible. It is the epistemological foundation of the natural law school.

In Heidegger's essay, on the other hand, the critique is similar, but it derives from a different starting point. Heidegger argues that the concept of “enframing” is about alchemically dissolving the universe into a single item – force. The same force can be found in every single natural function of any type. Nature, again in an alchemical fashion, is dissolved into a single element. It is an element that, in itself, is not even visible. Heidegger writes,

The essence of technology lies in enframing. Its holding sway belongs within destining. Since destining at any given time starts man on a way of revealing, man, thus under way, is continually approaching the brink of the possibility of pursuing and promulgating nothing but what is revealed in ordering, and of deriving all his standards on this basis. Through this the other possibility is blocked—that man might rather be admitted sooner and ever more primally to the essence of what is unconcealed and to its unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence the requisite belonging to revealing.

Heidegger becomes clear once this verbiage is properly defined. “Enframing” is the imposition of a human-centered order upon nature. It is a set of a priori categories imposed on all

experience.<sup>8</sup> This masquerades as the “natural world.” Of course, it is the elite mind imposing itself on the “manifold” of sense data. The results of this enframing are “destinizing.” That is, once you reduce nature to force (a standing reserve of energy), you then both define what science is to do, as well as defining what nature both is and is to become.

Heidegger is arguing that the scientific elite have “enframed” the natural world as a totally fungible force. It then imposes a “destiny” on nature, including human nature. Nature, in itself possesses no intrinsic meaning. It is aimless and random. It is force without purpose. Man, of course, must give it its purpose. Here, Heidegger and Horkheimer are identical.

It is easy to envisage the removal of reason from the natural world as the same as to “enframe” it. This relocation of reason is itself an act of enframing and therefore, of creating a destiny as the subject of scientific manipulation.<sup>9</sup> Nature has no intrinsic purpose, so the elite must give it one. Horkheimer writes,

Having given up autonomy, reason has become an instrument. In the formalistic aspect of subjective reason, stressed by positivism, its unrelatedness to objective content is emphasized. Its instrumental aspect, stressed by pragmatism, its surrender to heteronomous elements is emphasized. Reason has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion. [Ideas] are considered things, machines. Language has been reduced to just another tool in the gigantic apparatus of production in modern society (Horkheimer, 1947: 22-23).

This brief quotation summarizes the entire book. In fact, it summarizes the entire critical approach to technology from both the existentialist and “Leftist” point of view. Oddly, enough, its origin is in the “rightist” Romantic and ethnic movement of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it also found resonance among those fighting industrial capitalism and its bloody wars.

The point is that in the removal of reason from the universe, modernity has segregated it in the human mind. It is located there and there alone. But even this is a mystification: it is not in the “human” mind, but the positivist mind of the scientific establishment. Horkheimer and the empire Frankfurt school want to great pains to speak of the nature of modern science, positivism and nominalism as three sides of the identical triangle. Science too, is a mystification, since it actually refers to a large and powerful establishment with its own bureaucratic imperatives and professional interests to protect.

Why the “alchemical” mode of thought occurred when it did is beyond both the scope of this paper and the writers in it. Both Horkheimer and Heidegger seem to skirt the entire question of alchemy, yet, it is implied in both approaches.<sup>10</sup> In both cases, the “external” world is reduced to a single entity. For Horkheimer, it is the “dead” realm of matter, inert and merely waiting to be altered into “usable” objects. On the other hand, Heidegger goes in the opposite direction: the

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<sup>8</sup>This is most definitely not Kantianism. The difference here is that while Kant argued that the a priori categories were objectively an aspect of the human mind, the modern technocratic idea is subjective. The categories are not, in other words, inherent to the human psyche.

<sup>9</sup>There are two mystifications at work. First, “man” or “humanity” actually refers to a small elite. Second, “nature” conjures up landscapes and grassland, but it is as much about human nature as all that. “Controlling nature” means controlling human nature.

<sup>10</sup>It was clearly an important element in Galileo and Newton, and for that reason alone, alchemy cannot be ignored in any history of the scientific method.

“deadness” of matter is imposed on it by a scientific elite. In both cases, nature is reduced to unreality, and there is the crux of the argument.

In dealing with modern economics, Horkheimer writes, “As for the ideal of productivity, it must be observed that economic significant today is measured in terms of usefulness with respect to the structure of power, not with respect to the needs of all” (Horkheimer, 1947: 154). This is a direct consequence of the redefinition of the natural world.

And again, “Modern science, as positivists understand it, refers essentially to statements about facts and therefore presupposes the reification of life in general and of perception in particular. It looks upon the world as a world of facts and things, and fails to connect the transformation of the world into facts and things with the social process. The very concept of “fact” is a product—a product of social alienation (Horkheimer, 1947: 82).

### **Conclusion:**

#### **The Enlightenment as a Cultural Product**

For the post-colonial idea, what Enlightenment writers would call “universal reason,” they would call the creation of knowledge oligarchies. What Kant might call “liberation,” they might call colonial hegemony, what the Enlightenment might call “subjective freedom,” the colonized peoples might call the destruction of native institutions. In other words, the main issue here is that the western Enlightenment, in its scientific and economic manifestation in technology and capitalism, succeeded in dominating western Europe precisely because it led to European supremacy, the creation of a native middle class and permitted rulers to govern more tyrannically, from a centralized bureaucracy.

There is no separation of one from the other: in the name of liberation and rationality, states becomes totalist, centralized and highly militarized. Technology meant domination both at home and abroad. For every liberatory use of technology, there is a totalitarian use. There is no progress here, since technology contains its own moral problems. However, since local and foreign elites clearly benefited from the development of the scientific technique in technological advances, the Enlightenment dominated over its rivals, then and now. Whether this knowledge can be made liberatory remains to be seen.



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