

The Rise of Absurdity in Western Philosophical and Political Views

Thesis: Classical liberalism failed when philosophical thought turned away from the Scottish School toward the German school. The solution is to look back, not to Kant as a starting point in an effort to move forward, but to some of Kant's contemporaries, those that the criticisms of Kant and other German school philosophers eventually silenced and banished from consideration. I propose that the Enlightenment went wrong when we eventually abandoned the Scottish School for the German School. Over the last two hundred plus years philosophy has progressively elaborated upon ideas that were flawed, slightly at first, at the start into what now might be simply called absurdity.

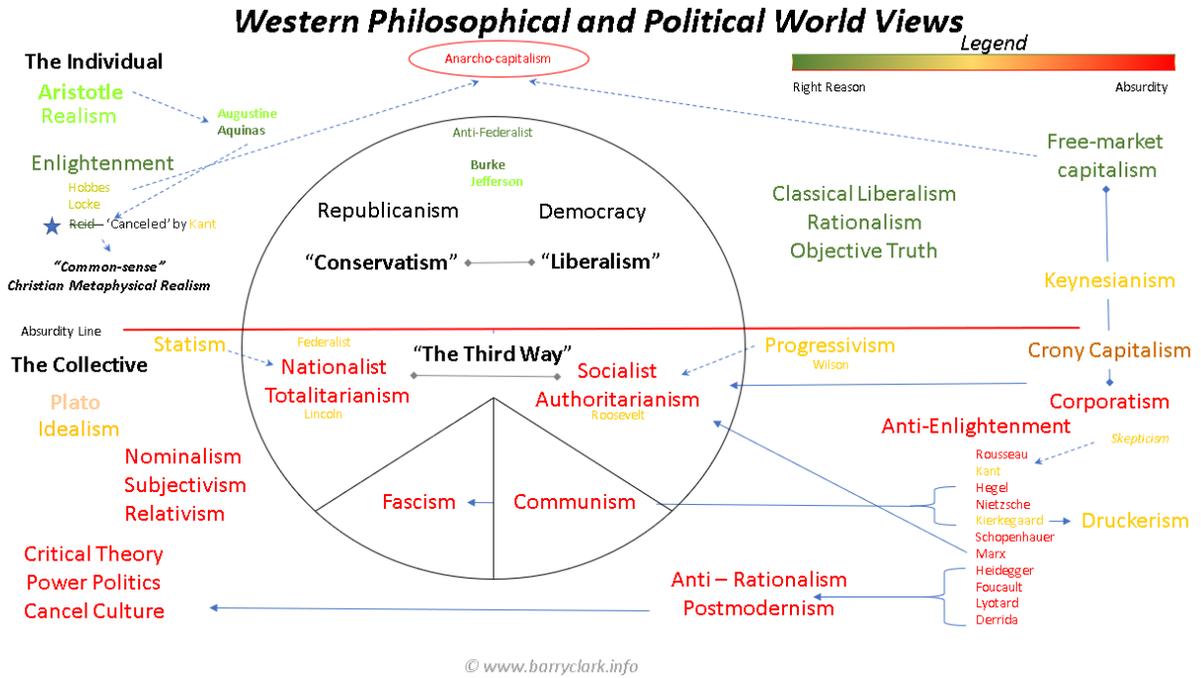
Furthermore, I propose that the acceptance of Neoplatonic ideas of Thomas Hobbes by the Federalist, and their eventual total victory in United States domestic politics and interpretation of law, combined with other factors such as passions of the Transcendental generation and a progressive increase in bad philosophical ideas in the form of ideologies, completed the destruction of Classical Liberalism/Republicanism and lead to absurdity in economic thought and policy, as well as political theory and politics. These factors affect not only policy and history in the United States but have come to shape geopolitics and history.

Absurdity: The chart below (figure 1) depicts how philosophical ideas have morphed and formed into ideologies, schools, disciplines and theories that deny the individual, deny truth, deny reality and in the end, rely only upon emotion and passion. I define this as Absurdity. On the other end of the spectrum Absurdity also exists, represented as anarcho-capitalism, the notion that mankind, through markets and self-government might rule himself without governments. This fails to account for human nature and is also Absurd.

Various terms are highlighted on the chart with what I propose is their alignment with either Right-Reason or Absurdity, with Right-Reason being green and Absurdity being red and variation and degrees being gradient colors between.

Anarcho-capitalism, being so absurd and unlikely to ever be seriously considered, sits alone atop the chart. The horizontal red 'Absurdity Line' bisecting the middle of the chart represents what has been and what has a likely chance of becoming.

From a postmodernist's perspective, absurdity is a term than can have no meaning, as it must measure some axiomatic principle against observed. The notion that absurdity itself cannot be defined and nothing can ever truly be called abused is absurd itself. The contents herein provide a brief overview of how we have arrived at this juncture of rational dysphoria and logical dissonance.



Western Philosophical and Political Worldviews *Figure 1*

All terms from the diagram are highlighted in bold in the text below for ease of reference.

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Introduction

Philosophy, both of ideas and of political theory might be said to divide neatly between an Aristotelian and Platonic view. This is simplistic, yet essentially true. Plato wrote brilliantly and his works were maintained sufficiently for him to exert great influence. Much of Aristotle's writing was lost to antiquity, he writes less eloquently, and he is perhaps more complex to understand. Obviously, neither man was correct about every position they posited, and obviously, philosophers and thinkers have not neatly lined up in separate camps, ignoring the one while deifying the other. It is more complex than all that. However, it is fair to say that the gulf between Aristotle and Plato is so great that much of the intellectual and even political difference in the last three thousand years can be placed in one camp or the other. This is true even while acknowledging that thinkers and theories often pull fruit from both trees to form thoughts, ultimately however, the difference in world view ('other'-ism versus Realism) defines most differences.

Stated simply and very broadly.

Aristotle believed the universe and cosmos to be that which we can deduce, reason, see and touch. He was a realist. Aristotle believed in universal truths (essentially), truths we could know as individuals. In the Aristotelian view, the individual is key and central. Taken overall, and simply, the Aristotelian holds much closer to right reason.

Plato, on the other hand, believed that what we see and perceive may or may not be correct, all depending upon our understanding of the form of the thing we are observing or thinking about. Thus, Plato assumed that man needed a philosopher-king, someone that understood the forms. Re-read *The Republic* and you will find a prescription for political affairs that sees mankind ruled by elites and the poor existing as slaves. The individual in the Platonic view is much less important than the whole. Take to extreme one could imagine all of humanity living in a Platonic cave watching shadows on the wall, never knowing truth or being capable of self-governance. Plato's ideas, unchecked by [right-reason](#), therefore lead to absurdity, authoritarianism, and collectivism.

It is this great gulf, not so neatly delineated because philosophers and thinkers as mentioned have dabbled in both camps over time as they posited new ideas, that we might define as the first great gulf in worldview. The Aristotelian view leads to anarcho-capitalism, extreme libertarianism and perhaps even a view that government is not required at all. This is a form of Absurdity not depicted on the chart above. An extreme Platonic view ends in authoritarianism and totalitarianism as we have seen in fascism and communism.

The only way human might mitigate these extreme outcomes is to temper ideas with realism, rationality, some pragmatism, and a metaphysical world view that points to a common

existence of truth. [Christian metaphysical realism](#) and common-sense have traditionally served as this balancing tool.

A note on philosophy: It is not a new idea among philosophers that philosophy itself, right thinking, reason and logic can serve mankind as a guide. All those things are important, critically important, but I contend they are insufficient alone. That is perhaps a different argument than the message the image above is intended to make. The central argument of contained above is not how much good, good philosophy might do but rather how much bad, bad philosophy can do. Good philosophy might debate and argue the nature of truth for eternity, but bad philosophy can and does transform into dangerous ideology that leads to bad ends.

[A Brief History of Philosophical Thought](#) (broad, simplified version)

Aristotle was taught by Plato but rebuked most of Plato's ideas in his own thinking and writing. Plato was significant in his influence in throughout the medieval era because he wrote so well and his works were well preserved. Aristotle was not serious considered again until Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas stood on the shoulders of Augustine (a Neoplatonist), but like Aristotle, he quickly separated himself from the master in significant ways. It was Aquinas that brought the philosophy of Aristotle to the fore in shaping a Christian metaphysics. This view held through the 16th century with medieval philosophers and scholastics.

Thomas Hobbes and Rene Descartes. Hobbes, having been scholastically educated, differentiated himself from Aristotle, yet it might be said that along the pendulum between Platonism and Aristotelian, specifically in political thought, he skews Neoplatonic in his view of the human individual and government. Hobbes was a nominalist and an empiricist, his concept of universal truth much less secure than previous philosophical generations. Hobbes played a central role in what would become Classical Liberalism/Republicanism in the West but it is perhaps the foundation of empiricism versus rationalism combined with Neoplatonism that laid the groundwork for the eventual failure of Classical Liberalism/Republicanism right from the start. (B. Clark, 2019) Hobbes' ideas had a heavy influence on the Federalist ideology in the creation of the US Constitution and in the events that redefined, reshaped, and remade the United States in the 80 years that followed.

Rene Descartes was much more Aristotelian. Descartes laid the foundation for rationalism, from which good and bad philosophy arose. Both Spinoza and Leibniz were influenced by Descartes and rationalism. Spinoza was a key influence in the anti-enlightenment philosophers on the bottom left of the above chart.

John Locke was influenced by the dialogue Hobbes began but was decidedly Aristotelian in his political writings. (Maloy, 2009) Loke is complex, his *A Essay Concerning Human Understanding* might have been ripped apart by Aristotle, while *Two Treaties of Government* would have been

well received. It is the complexity of Locke's departure with rational and realist philosophical points on one hand mixed with his Aristotelian writing on political theory that confound many. It is perhaps also this that caused Locke to become the 'father' of such widely different camps of political theory.

Scottish School of Common Sense

In response to Locke, enlightenment philosophers in Scotland such as **Thomas Reid**, Adam Ferguson, James Beattie, and Dugald Stewart. It was this philosophical school that first, or perhaps most famously, used the term absurd to describe the idealism of Locke, Descartes, and Hume. The Scottish school had great influence, particularly in America in the 19th century and much of the thought and political debate in that time can be explained as one of idealism versus realism, rationalist versus empiricist and ultimately a Platonic view versus an Aristotelian one. The Federalist, a concept that has slowly morphed into a Statist view, opposed the Anti-Federalist view and that drove debate, controversy, war and expansion.

Adam Smith might be included in this group, a contemporary of Hume and a student of Aristotle, Burke, and Locke, Smith is the father of the theories of free-market capitalism.

If the Scottish school philosophers had influence in the 19th century, the school itself was essentially destined to the trash heap of history early on because of criticism by the likes of **Immanuel Kant**, a man whose idea became more fashionable and whose voice of condemnation held sway in generations to come. This was perhaps the first example of 'canceling' so prevalent today.

Voltaire and Rousseau: In Voltaire, we see the theories of Locke turned through sophistry, eloquent and prolific writing and passion to hatred, violence, and tyranny. Voltaire was intent on destroying the existing order and power structures. He attacked traditional symbols and the notion of common sense itself. In Rousseau's *General Will* we see the emergence of collectivism, a denigration of the individual and rights while paying great lip service to liberty. Robespierre and Saint-Just, during the Reign of Terror, justified their actions against the individual and viewed themselves as egalitarian republicans charged with protecting and executing the common will, along with executing thousands of citizens one might add.

Anti-Enlightenment

Rousseau is regarded by many as the founder of the counter-enlightenment or anti-enlightenment. (Everdell, 1987) It took form first in the German school which manifested itself into transcendentalism, socialism and fascism. Transcendentalism played a large role in inflaming passions leading to the American Civil War. Fascism and Communism were the catalysts for World War II.

The German School

The German School held sway in the continental Europe from the 1800s to 1946. Its influence across the entire west expanded greatly after 1846, through progressivism, socialism, fascism, and communism.

Immanuel Kant's criticism of Scottish common-sense and that school eventually falling from favor was not his only contribution to philosophy. He gave the world transcendental idealism and vigorously attacked reason, rationality and ultimate truth. He stands astride the history of philosophy and has influenced nearly all subsequent philosophical thought. Yet, taken from a realist, common-sense metaphysical view, much of what Kant proposed was absurd. He is the father of the absurd thought that followed him.

Kant's greatest influence was on Beck, Beneke, Bolzano, Carnap, Fichte, Frege, Guyer, Habermas, **Hegel**, **Heidegger**, Herder, Jacobi, Jaspers, Maimon, Peirce, Popper, Reinhold, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Schlegel, **Schopenhauer**, Spir, Zeller.

Hegel heavily influenced **Derrida**, Engels, **Kierkegaard**, **Marx**, Lenin, and **Nietzsche** as well as many of the mid-20th century Postmodern philosophers.

Kierkegaard gave us existentialism and **Nietzsche** nihilism. Existentialism eventually morphs into the current phenomenon of "lived experience" trumping facts. Nihilism makes the world, truth, and traditions meaningless. **Martin Heidegger** a Nazi philosophy was influenced by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and most of the German school tradition. Nihilism, combined with a collectivist Neoplatonic view combined in Germany to make the Nazi a reality and the Holocaust possible.

Marx Engels and **Lenin** gave us scientific socialism, socialism, communism and to a large degree progressivism in the 19th and early 20th century US.

The French School and the rise of Postmodernism

By 1950 many truths about the world had become unavoidable. None of Marx' predictions about capitalism and socialist revolution had come true. The world was getting its first glimpse into the Soviet Union and the failures and tyranny there. Capitalism and Classical Liberalism appeared to have won, wealth was increasing after WWII, advances in science and technology was abundant. People seemed happy and the world seemed to work.

Instead of acquiescing to facts, young intellectuals, schooled in the German school and seeing political experiments deriving from that school looked for something new. Postmodernism was

born, not to refine, improve or add to what came before but to reject it, burn it down and build something new.

Postmodernist took from **Heidegger** and **Nietzsche** the most absurd notions distilled from centuries of Western philosophy and essentially began anew, occasionally reaching back to cherry-pick ideas here and there but eventually arriving at the notion that it is unreasonable to reason, the only truth is there is no truth and experiences are all that matter.

Postmodern Philosophy is substantially Continental philosopher's criticism of modern philosophy. It has taken on a life separate from philosophy and criticism of philosophical methods to form something of an ideology. This has manifested as deconstruction, where what one person says or writes has various meaning based upon the experience of the reader. This concept has been taken at face value fact in other areas of culture, facts are less important than perception. Critical Theory derives from deconstruction, essentially stating the world made up only of power and experiences. Rationality, reason, and truth are incompatible and irrelevant concepts. Emotions, experiences and passions matter. Groups, group identity and the collective are more important than the individual. Postmodernism is the antithesis of logic, reason, tradition and common-sense, and to a postmodernist, they would say 'just fine' those things have no meaning other than elements of power and control used by others.

The Analytic–Continental Divide

Continental Philosophy, the descendant of the German school, and the home of Postmodern Philosophy, is defined by the movements it gave birth to such as German idealism, phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, structuralism, post-structuralism, French feminism, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and some other branches of Western Marxism. (Critchley, 2001)

Analytical Philosophy accepted Western philosophy up to Kant but differed in approach thereafter, emerging around the turn of the 19th century. It was a rebellion against idealism. It was an approach that focused the study of philosophical questions from the broad to the specific and attempted to apply a more rigorous logical methodology. (Glock, 2008) Analytical philosophy has generally, and traditionally, avoided questions of ethics and metaphysics. It is considered the dominant form of philosophy in the West, particularly if one counts University departments that claim Analytical positions. However, beginning in the 1970s some analytical philosophers began exploring applied ethics. (Adams, 1987) A school of Reformed epistemology, a continuation of John Calvin's work, began to develop in the late 1960s, taking form in 1993 with the publication of Alvin Plantinga's third book describing the epistemology. (Plantinga, 2000)

However, I contend that no matter how encouraging some elements of Analytical philosophy might seem, and no matter the apparent claim that analytical philosophy dominates by sheer number of academic departments, something else is at play. Good philosophy cannot save the world, but bad philosophy can do a lot of damage. Not all analytical philosophy is good, some is bad, other portions just mediocre but if it were all good it would have to fight the zeitgeist of postmodern ideology. Fight and win it cannot, not in terms of logic or methodology, nor of truth or rationality, for that language is meaningless and incomprehensible to the ordinary adherent.

The above is, of course, simplistic, general, broad and incomplete. It is not my intent to lay out the specifics, deviations, divergent arguments and conceptions of all branches of current, modern philosophical thought. Analytic philosophy, because it has stepped back, descoped and attempted to add methodology and rigor is currently incapable of truly addressing large real-world problems. Continental philosophy, because it followed flawed paths upstream and lack a cohesive system that might be called knowledge can never provide such solutions.

Modern philosophy is in a bad place. When it gets some things right it cannot be understood, and it seldom gets many things exactly right. When it gets things wrong, it adds fuel to bad and dangerous ideologies.

History of Philosophy as a school

There are some contemporary philosophers, looking at the state of current philosophy and of the effects of philosophy in the 20th century, that seek to essentially look backward to find a way forward. This is less of a formal school and perhaps more a theme that occasionally arises in all the current flavors of contemporary. There is some general sense that something is amiss. Logic, reason and knowledge have been so deconstructed, and bad ideas are so present even in good thinkers that it is a difficult process to reconstruct good philosophy from a couple of centuries of progressively bad ideas.

I contend, that looking back is the absolute correct perspective, not to Kant as a starting point in an effort to move forward but to some of Kant's contemporaries, those that the criticisms of Kant and other German school philosophers eventually silenced and banished from consideration. I propose that the Enlightenment went wrong when we eventually abandoned the Scottish School for the German School.

Implications

I suggest we have entered a post-philosophy era, perhaps the end of philosophy. Francis Fukuyama argued in his 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* that the spread of

liberal democracies and capitalism may spell the end of socioeconomic and cultural change for mankind, essentially, we may have progressed to the pinnacle of our achievements. (Fukuyama, 1992) Fukuyama assumed a very humanistic, progressive and neoconservative position in proposing such. His views were directly opposed to that of Samuel Huntington in *Clash of Civilizations*. (Huntington, 1993) Hans-Hermann Hoppe argued in 2001 in *Democracy the God that Failed*, from a socioeconomic standpoint, that classical liberalism had failed. (Hoppe, 2018) A reasonable conclusion from a rational standpoint, his solution anarcho-capitalism is infeasible, improbable and therefore absurd. Strauss and Howe predict that our era will experience a crisis much like many before, our being most closely aligned with Civil War Saeculum, the Transcendental Generation of that era having so much in common with the Boomers and their impassioned idealism of the 1960s. (Strauss & Howe, 2009) I have proposed that a synthesis of Huntington, Hoppe and Strauss-Howe combined with an analysis of how bad philosophy (Continental Postmodernism) explains why we may be at the end of history, but not as Fukuyama suggested. Classical liberalism has failed, it failed when we discarded Scottish common-sense realism for Kantian idealism. (B. Clark, 2019) Whether this is an era or an epoch remains to be seen. An analysis of the history or ideas, things and people indicate that our information level has increased, our technology has increased and with it populations. However, knowledge has decreased and with it understanding. Civility has decreased, dialogue has become difficult, the public square is no longer for reasoned debate but rather shouting matches.

A 2011 study, *Social Consensus Through the Influence of Committed Minorities*, found that when 10% of a population hold an unshakable belief their view will always be adopted by the majority. (J. Xie, S. Sreenivasan, G. Korniss, W. Zhang, C. Lim, 2011) Polls show that a third of millennials support communism, (Langlois, 2019) and support restricting free speech. (McCann, 2019) I do not have facts, but anecdotal observation would seem to indicate that at least 10% of the population supports elements of the postmodern suite of ideologies (critical theory, social justice, socialism, etc.) If Continental Philosophy is not in ascendance nor in a dominant position it still has postmodern philosophers, many that are tech-savvy accomplished sophists. These voices are heard and understood, because they speak the emotional language of the culture, far more than a man like Plantinga. The theories, particularly Critical Theory have found their way into numerous unlikely organizations. The family of postmodern ideologies have an inertia not found in competing ideas.

Academia and Education

In 1998 Daniel Subotnik published *What's Wrong with Critical Race Theory* in *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*. (Subotnik, 1998) In 2020 a search for "Critical Theory" or "Critical Race Theory" on Google Scholar returns page after page of papers with titles like "Implementing Critical Theory...", "Toward a better Critical Theory Approach for..", and "Implementing Critical

Theory in...". Gone are the days when a scholarly article might be found questioning the methodology or even the foundational axioms. No academic wants to become Jordan Peterson. 'Canceling' is a real thing, a tactic right out of Saul Alinsky's 1971 book, *Rules for Radicals*. (Alinsky, 2010)

Literature is polluted with deconstruction and postmodern literature. History is muddled with critical theory methodologies. Sociology and Psychology is riddled with critical. Entire postmodern "identity" majors exist, so segment of students spend a full four years immersed in that absurdity. The ideology may not own the academy, but it has its tentacles into every facet. Postmodern demagogues control the public square through protest, eliminating free speech that opposes their ideology. (Lindsay, 2019) This is not limited to higher education. Textbooks, methodology, and approaches to K-12 education are equally affected.

Political

Political discourse is nearly impossible as the very language spoken by each side has little meaning to the other. America is more divided than at any time since 1850. (Barry Clark, 2018) Social media, the tool that should provide a mechanism for dialogue across the spectrum of political leanings and for information sharing that enables knowledge formation and understanding. Instead, it has become both a vile and toxic environment and an endless echo chamber where one can enter and never hear or see anything that does not comport to preconceived notions and ideas. The fourth estate, journalist and news outlets, cater to perspectives and biases, each outlet has a demographic. One need only sample various media outlets during a specific event to observe vastly different presentations. Left and right news organizations are guilty of this. Debates between candidates for office are never actual debates about principles and ideas, they are instead a jockey match for sound bites and zingers. Lastly, and perhaps as dangerous as all of the above, Americans are perhaps now more educated, in terms of years sitting in a classroom, but as a people, we are less educated than perhaps any previous time, in terms of real knowledge of concepts, principles and history. Unfortunate, this dearth of real education is present in the most 'educated' among us. There is perhaps nothing more dangerous than a man that is wrong and yet is convinced of his correctness. Compounding the issues above is the incompatibility very language of the three prevailing world views in America, realism, empiricism, and idealism. On the extreme of postmodern ideology, facts and reason do not matter nearly as much and sometimes not at all compared to the lived experience and emotions of those that hear or see those facts. Without some standard of truth other than how a piece of information makes a person feel, there can be no conversation between a realist or empiricist and a postmodernist.

Cultural

Christianity, or perhaps more accurately stated a Christian inspired worldview by which law, justice, and morality are measured, has been traditionally and historically a key tenet, perhaps the defining factor, of Western Civilization and culture. In the West, Christianity is a Permanent Thing. (B. L. Clark, 2019) One cannot separate Western civilization and the various cultures that have traditionally comprised it from the impact of a Christian worldview.

Russel Kirk described permanent things as:

BY "THE PERMANENT THINGS" [T. S. ELIOT] MEANT THOSE ELEMENTS IN THE HUMAN CONDITION THAT GIVE US OUR NATURE, WITHOUT WHICH WE ARE AS THE BEASTS THAT PERISH. THEY WORK UPON US ALL IN THE SENSE THAT BOTH THEY AND WE ARE BOUND UP IN THAT CONTINUITY OF BELIEF AND INSTITUTION CALLED THE GREAT MYSTERIOUS INCORPORATION OF THE HUMAN RACE. (Kirk, 1969)

The reasons for the decline of Christianity's, or at least Christian inspired worldview's, influence upon culture, political thought and public policy are multifaceted. However, the impact of flawed philosophy and the resulting derivative ideologies cannot be understated in evaluating the causality.

The complexity of the reasons for the decline notwithstanding, it is a reasonable augment to state the influence of Christianity and a Christian inspired worldview is currently incapable of adding much, influencing much, in cultural debates in the public square. The demise of the notion that Truth exists, and a system by which truth might be defined and defended, has led to discord, confusion, and division. Postmodern ideology and critical theory have added only division, angst and confusion to the conversation. This ideology has denied and attacked all facets of everything that sprang from, was created by or existed in traditional culture.

Without the anchor of Permanent Things, culturally, we have begun to demonstrate traits of "beast that will perish".

Economics

Flawed philosophical concepts have invariably manifested into bad economic theories. These theories have formed bad socioeconomic and political ideologies. There is great diffusion between these theories and idea, they borrow from each other, all having a common flaw at the core. Free-market capitalism was slowly corrupted by inputs from socialism, via progressivism, and **statism** (Neoplatonism) in the form of Keynesianism. These changes have led to crony capitalism and will likely lead to corporatism. Corporatism will readily serve totalitarianism as either fascism or communism. The Chinese model of state capitalism is a shining example of how such could eventually work. (Samuelson, 2019)

Religious

The Reformation, partly a result of a resurgence in rationality brought about by the Renaissance and in part, rightly so, because of absurdity within the Catholic Church set in motion a series of events that have led to greater levels of Antinomianism. This is not to say the protestant reformation itself was Antinomianism, the development of creeds and confessions of faith brought about the Age of Orthodoxy in the Protestant church and Antinomianism was specifically named as a heresy. However, Luther's act of protest and the resulting schism paved the way for eventual dissent and further schism. The Christian religion in the West is plagued by an inability to set and agree to foundational tenets of doctrine. Bad philosophy has slipped in, in the 19th century and beginning again in the mid to late 20th. The very definition of Christianity is imperiled.

The Transcendental Generation and the Second Great Awakening

The 19th century in America saw revivals, increased church attendance and the creation of new denominations and theological positions. The effect of the awakening was different in different sections. It had different societal and cultural impacts in different places. It was influenced by outside ideas, ideas that at times were not Christian in origin. Across America, the rival movement had in common a postmillennial theological position. Postmillennials and restorationists came to believe that society had to be improved before Christ returned.

At the same time, many northern intellectuals began to either hold or at least be partially influenced by Transcendentalism, a world view and ideology that derived from **Kant** and the Unitarian church. In the north the fervor of the Awakening combined with nascent transcendentalist ideology and an increasing postmillennial belief that society must be improved manifested as the antebellum reform, this phenomenon included reforms in against the consumption of alcohol, for women's rights and abolition of slavery. (Tyler, 1962) Neil Strauss and William Howe attribute the Transcendental Awakening and that saeculum's idealist generation as self-absorbed young crusaders of an Awakening, focused on morals and principles in midlife, that guided the country into crisis in 1850 and 1860. (Strauss & Howe, 2009)

Beyond, if one accepts Strauss and Howe's theory, pushing America into a war that was not necessary the Great Awakening had other negative impacts. It tied the Christian religion to progressivism. It further splintered Christendom with more separate and diverse denominations and differing definitions and interpretations of doctrine. It saw a decline in orthodoxy. It paved the way for social gospel, apostasy, and heresy in the Third Great Awakening from 1855-1930.

Social Gospel

The Social Gospel movement began in earnest with the Third Awakening. It was theologically liberal, focused on union and labor issues, temperance, suffering, and poverty. It was the religion of the Progressive movement before WWI. Prohibition, a result of temperance gave rise to organized crime in America. Social gospel preachers supported **Woodrow Wilson's** income tax and the creation of the Federal Reserve. They supported the socialist programs of **Franklin Roosevelt's** New Deal.

American was fundamentally changed, for the worse, by combining bad theology and bad ideology into a political movement.

Social gospel theology is still present in mainline protestant and Catholic churches. It is still theologically liberal and doctrinally weak and increasingly tied to bad ideology that derives from bad philosophy. Churches that adhere to the social gospel, necessarily adhere to a weak and liberal theology. This creates paradoxes where Christian metaphysical realist truths must be ignored. A good-hearted social gospel church cannot speak against abortion or consider it murder. It cannot argue that more than two sexes can exist, and we are born as we are, you have to accept the postmodern version, a version that conflicts with realism. It creates the paradox where the socially and liberally minded Methodist are about to kick out the conservative-minded African churches because the 'Africans are younger in their Christianity and do not understand the nuances of homosexuality' - that is absurd. The paradoxes continue to the point where there is little that such a church can hold as true other than perhaps the Beatitudes.

Once adopted, social gospel sets a timer on the Christian status of a church (denomination) and eventually converts it to nothing but a well-intentioned service organization.

Critical Race Theory

Since the conservative resurgence of the 1970s and 80s, the Baptist have stood alone in resisting postmodern ideology, for the most part. There are two exceptions to this of course, there has been some defection from mainline Presbyterianism to form more conservative denominations. And, the South Baptist Convention itself, considered the bulwark of fundamental belief has not been entirely immune to invasion. Rick Warren, a Drucker protégé, and perhaps more of a social activist, ecumenicalist and therapist than pastor published books that swept through churches and Sunday school groups. There are other instances of invasion, but the SBC, mostly stood firm among all major protestant denominations. That is, until May 2019, when the executive committee by fiat adopted Critical Race Theory as a fundamental tool. This is a Marxist idea that denies the humanity of the individual and replaces it with their class, in this case, race.

The SBC will likely splinter on this issue into smaller groups or independent churches. Without the bonds to help check one another for apostasy and heresy, in the years to come, independent churches will find their way into error while those that remain with a fallen denomination will become like the present-day Methodist.

Druckerism and the Megachurch

Peter Drucker, essentially the key founder of the megachurch movement, grew up exposed to the great thinkers of the German school (Continental Philosophy) during his youth in Austria. In his own writing, he expressed a view that community was more important than the individual (Neoplatonism) and an affinity for **Schopenhauer** and **Kierkegaard**. He expressed ideas about the failures of capitalism and communism and suggested a third way, in words that echoed that of Italian Fascist Giovanni Gentile. The creation of a new “noneconomic society” was Drucker’s lifelong project. His life’s work was focused on finding a way to build community structures, focused on the common good that could change society. Part of his plan was based upon the leadership principle, taken from the German model of the *fuhrer* principle, one leader cast the vision and subordinate leaders ensure the community executes it. Essentially Drucker found both capitalism and socialism to be flawed, they could not solve poverty. He thought Fascism had gone wrong because it ignored the spiritual. He believed a noneconomic system built upon communities within communities accountable to a leader who was accountable to a leader was the answer, an improved version of Fascism.

Drucker tried to implement his ideas in industry in America. He is perhaps most famous for being the creator of modern management. He found that factories were insufficient to implement his community of communities plan as people simply moved too often.

In 1990 he wrote *Managing the Nonprofit Organization: Practices and Principles* and changed his focus from business to nonprofits, specifically churches and more specifically what he called pastoral churches. In a *Forbes* interview in the 90’s, he said, "The community ... needs a community center. ... I'm not talking religion now, I'm talking society. There is no other institution in the American community that could be the center." he told *Forbes* that pastoral megachurches are "surely the most important social phenomenon in American society in the last thirty years." Drucker advised “you must change the primary role of pastor from minister to leader”, harkening back to the leadership (*fuhrer*) principle. (Rosebrough)

The Leadership Network, an organization that claims to mentor thousands of pastors and hundreds of churches states on their website, “Leadership Network would not be the same—in fact, might not exist at all - were it not for Peter Drucker”. (Network, 2005) A quick search of their site, conference attendees and participants demonstrates it is difficult to find any randomly selected megachurch pastor that has not participated in some way. (Steinfels, 2005)

The corporate, business model of 'doing church' was created by Peter Drucker, because he saw it as a way to implement his vision.

The next time your megachurch pastor or one of his underlings relays the story of how it all started with just a handful in someone's house or a bar, remember Drucker. A few of them probably did start it, and maybe they met in a bar or a house, but it was much more like a board meeting than a very small church hoping to grow to thousands in a few years. That little groups read Drucker, participated in The Leadership Network, did market research and bought a mailing list. It was a lot less authentic, much more programmatic and planned than the organic story people recall so fondly.

So, what of these churches that the Drukerites have helped build, what are they really all about. Firstly, they are anti-rational, emotional rather than reasoned. Heart-knowledge over head-knowledge. Deeds over creeds. There is no messy theology or doctrine to scare you away or confuse, two thousand years of Christian thought and writing out the window. Secondly, but perhaps most importantly, it is about the collective, not you. Everything is done in community, decisions, confession, service, discipline. Everything follows the plan, the plan from the guy on the big screen you probably have never met.

Community, service to the community, a leadership plan and everyone on board with the plan. For many it begins in the parking lot during a visit, there are people there to tell you exactly where to park - getting people on board with the plan early in the experience. If you join you will be assigned to a small group, so will your kids. The small group is where small *furthers* help ensure the plan and the community are taken care of. Your small group is, of course, a member of a larger community, the satellite campus, with another underling leader. You see your main leader on the large screen but he never ministers to anyone, most never meet him. To join, you were probably required to sign a membership covenant, one that says you will submit to disciple and follow the leaders. Major life choices must be brought to the community. Your children will be pulled away from you as they are forced to talk about 'parent wound' in their small group to their leader that is barely past being a kid themselves. The family is an impediment to the collective, it will be praised and talked about but in reality, it is subordinate. You may come to believe that service to the community somehow relates to your salvation. You will notice that everyone speaks in code, peppering sentences with authentic, intentional and relational, and of course community. Basically, once you join you become part of the collective and give up being part of yourself.

If you leave the church, you will be shamed and ostracized. Most the leave never say anything bad publicly about the church or their experience. The community still has a hold and still instills fear of shunning on them.

None of that meshes very well with authentic, orthodox, genuine Christianity and that is because it does not. Very little of what megachurches focus most of their efforts on is biblical Christianity. This is not to say that many Christians do not attend these churches, nor that the leaders did not have good intentions when they started out. However, power corrupts, and the power from a community focused on the community, with leaders accountable to nobody is pretty intoxicating. In the last few years some notable megachurch leaders have fallen, and some entire churches of thousands have collapsed overnight.

In some few cases, megachurches have slipped into outright and atrocious heresy. The December 2019 Bethel, raise Olive from the dead tragedy comes to mind. Oddly enough, even after outright heresy and apostasy like that groups like The Gospel Coalition, the 9s, 9Mark and the Leadership Network fail to disavow them. Every megachurch still associated with the Drukerites is guilty by association with that tragic heresy related to that little dead girl and her family.

Megachurches in Drukerite model are the fastest-growing segment of Christianity in America. The leaders of these churches are accountable to nobody but their small hand-picked boards. Nobody is there to ensure they maintain any sort of orthodoxy in doctrine or theology - they have dispensed with all that just as the Postmoderns have gotten rid of all the parts of modernity and history that confound them.

Drucker thought a better, more spiritual version of fascism, with communities of communities, was the future for mankind and he worked to see that through, churches, megachurches were his vehicle. One does not have to be around one of these operations long, not with your eyes open, looking past the fog machine and disco lights, to see authoritarian behavior. Reason tells anyone that walks in that something is not right - they keep you by suspending reason and playing to emotion.

Left unchecked, particularly considering the collapse of all the other protestant denominations, it is not hard to see, absent divine intervention, how within ten years there will be much Christianity left in any of these churches if they can hold out 10 years, without accountability and built upon bad ideology, there is no way they can survive 20.

About

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Part of:

Fourth Turning Clash of Inter-Civilization Cultures Thesis. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337828285_Fourth_Turning_Clash_of_Inter-Civilization_Cultures_Thesis

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