

How Sexual Liberation Came to Corrupt the Free Person



Bathers at Moritzburg, Ernst Ludwig, Kirchner, 1909–26

It was Edmund Burke who posited, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, society demands that “the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done by a power out of themselves ... In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.” This is one of the most cited justifications of religious freedom, framed as a right to civil instinct control by self suppression as the road to serving higher, common puposes. Being the precondition for the use of moral autonomy it describes precisely what collectivist states or tyrannies are lacking. This is also true, if to a

lesser degree, for racial and sexual identity politics because rather than on personal morals and restraint they thrive on sexual expressionism, group think promoting anti-social self-realization. It is in this sense that identity politics, in particular of the sexual variety, embrace impulse and sensuality rather than self-discipline, responsibility for others—over the millennia an indispensable source of morality.

In the millennial perspective, this anomaly seems to be an unintended and dismal consequence of the visualisation of monotheism through Christ's incarnation. For the Christian church founded its humanitarian appeal on Jesus as proxy for personal guilt and repentance, taking atonement out of the hand of the pious person. Thus the rationale for self-suppression was removed by Christian civilizations and it should surprise nobody that it shifted back from advanced guilt culture to its primitive predecessor, the shame- and- revenge culture which increasingly dominates postmodernity just as it did late antiquity. This is what has happened after the demise of the Victorians in the Belle Epoque, resulting in the inner and lonely "fight against shame" that afflicted Nietzsche and many of his followers. The Christian penchant for visualization of repentance inspires self harm and all kinds of masochism, the earliest promoter of which was of course Marquis de Sade. His Sado-Masochism appears to be but a visualization of Christian repentance turned into rituals of shaming.

SM seems to be the closest thing Western modernity has come up with for reenacting its Hellenistic roots and the slavery that was essential to Athens in antiquity. To be sure, de Sade did not suppress his dependents by hard work but rather turned them into slaves of their own appetites. He in fact set up one of the first laboratories for civilizational break down where almost everything was to be allowed. This explains the recent hype with de Sade in the Western fine arts community. It also uniquely revealed the bestiality of humanity under the

circumstances of shame-and-revenge culture, dominated as it is by a mix of sex and violence as means of exchanging mutual harm. It proved that any civilization unassisted by religion, conscience and forgiveness, turns human beings into slaves of their passions as a result of surrendering them to their own bestiality. Postmodernity in its wholesale embrace of addictions keeps sanctioning unrestrained human appetites. This renders consumerism to little more than a way of internalising dependancy and imprisonment that the enlightenment promised to leave behind for good.

It is for this reason that the endless varieties of modern addictions became the Achilles heel of impulse-driven, postmodern societies which continue to be inspired by Freudianism. For it is Freud's very own failure to overcome his addiction to smoking, that stands out and exposes the psychoanalytic guru and his followers as mere imposters of autonomy. Rather Freud became the embodiment for the normalization of addictions of all kind which in hindsight turns out to be the postmodern nemesis. Unlimited consumerism has overwhelmed the majority of Western humanity by turning them into slaves of their appetites. Secular prophet that he is, Freud made a martyr of his passion when late in his life his throat was eaten up by a malign cancer due to lifelong heavy smoking. This begs the question as to how he could ever become a show case for personal autonomy?

In the first half of the 20th century, Freudian psychology and Heideggerian philosophy gave a boost to primitivism simply by dismanteling the power of religion. Until then—and over two millennia—religion had succesfully neutralized the destructive impact of human animal instincts. Freud famously argued that we are no longer “masters of our own house” and Heidegger concieved Western humanity as creatures thrown into their natural environment. Both conveyed apologetics for the postmodern emancipatory paradox: the dialectics of self-indulgence and self-enslavement. On a mass scale this

happened in the decadent period of the *Fin de siècle* Europe. This epochal turnaround concerned the cultural transition from ascendent modernity, still grounded as it was on the Judaeo-Christian personality, toward the empowerment of instincts framed as the sexual typologies of postmodernity. In the event it was radical feminism at the turn of the 20th century, that prompted the reactionary sexual identity campaigning. Today censure of public speech and intolerance of traditional values originate from the dogmatic wings of the gender rights movement.

Simplifying only slightly with regard to the economic drivers of this cultural turnaround we note that, since the Renaissance, modernity roughly depended on the exploitation of workers in what is known as a producer economy. It was only with the domestic turn of Victorian postcolonial economics at the end of the 19th century that exploitation became firmly implemented in the consumer economy. In the process, objective or outer repression of human instincts would be ideally substituted by inner control or self-repression but, in reality, this failed more often than it succeeded. Misleadingly labeled as individual emancipation, this cultural transformation gave rise not only to free-wheeling instincts but predictably to dangerous totalitarian responses. It did not take long for these ideologies to embrace sexual liberation as a means to seize control over the un-conscious instincts. In this manner, liberal emancipation would be easily transmogrified into racial improvement and, in many Western democracies, the state came to seize control of the inner life of their subjects.

Why did the late Alexander Solschenizyn return to his native Russia after he had emigrated to the "free world" as a Soviet dissident? Did he realize that his spiritual freedom was being eaten away in the conformist Western media world controlled by "liberals?" Tom Wolfe's *Back to Blood*, published in 2012, is a show case for liberal depravity or what he conceived of as a

fully sexualized Western "conditio humana." He described the overwhelming influence of unhealthy physical dependencies driving the degradation of personal autonomy. Wolf choose as his protagonist a Florida dermatologist, a physician almost deprived of higher human faculties, who gradually succumbed to utter selfindulgence by masturbating almost around the clock. Wolfe's parable sums up the quintessence of postmodernity as humanity chained to the visual and haptic paradigm by consumerism. The sense of touch got too strong for the dermatologist to be controlled. This has been mainly brought about by the disproportionate power of the visual sense and images in the postmodern media which came to dwarf verbal language skills. If vision combines with touch and feeling overtakes language and speech, we can easily become victims of all sorts of addictions: food, sex, drugs, games, and medicine.

We are talking here about nothing less than the inversion of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt around 1300 BCE, which gave Western civilization "personal self restraint" as the bedrock of monotheism and the foundational accomplishment of Christianity. By contrast, limitless freedom for self realization first embraced by feminism and expanded greatly by identity politics is about to ruin the integrity and resilience of Western civilization. For over the last deacades the adversarial and nihilist rainbow coalition produced a seemingly unbridgeable split in many Western societies. Over more than a century now peculiar rights were conferred to expressions of sexual preferences and identities. Based on mere feelings as these identities are, they keep undermining the principles of Western equality under the law for all its citizens.

How did this come about? A trace can be detected in the emergence of the twin totalitarian powers of the 200th century, Stalinism and Hitlerism. Both ensconced themselves in monumental architecture after the example of the ancient

Pharaohs from Egypt. It seems that identity politics and the gospel of limitless personal growth emerged alongside the cult of megalomania right before the turn of the 20th century, when Europe became enthralled by exhibitions on Egyptian antiquities. The revolutionary Pharaoh Akhenaton, by some experts linked to the Jewish Exodus, would be later celebrated by Sigmund Freud as the inventor of monotheism. It was Sigmund Freud who tried to tame megalomania by internalizing it in the Protestant manner by creating the Super-Phallus as a product of organic megalomania. At the same time, when antisemitism peaked during the time of the Dreyfus Affair, the Egyptian golden scarab became popular as an affirmative symbol for mass society that belittled Jewish emancipation. The scarab represented the last and perhaps most primitive animal godhead in ancient Egypt. The funny thing is, though, that Freud rediscovered the human animal instincts exactly at the time of the reappearance of the scarab during the Egyptian Renaissance in Europe. Just last year a special exhibition has been devoted to motives around "Freud & Egypt" by the Freud Museum in London.

As we noted before, at the time of the Jewish Exodus, the scarab was also signalling the decline of archaic animal worship that, for obvious reasons, went hand in hand with slave-holding in the ancient world. It is barely a coincidence that Freud's return to the animal drives was paralleled by the Nazi return to human slavery. It even found an echo in Hitler's exclusive love for his shepherd dog. The Egyptian scarab as a symbol for human belittlement arose from the overwhelming size of dead matter in stone monuments—like the pyramids on the one hand and the minuscule size of thousands of unnamed living things building them up on the other. Like scarabs, guardians, in the rapidly modernizing Imperial Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm, needed to be heavily armoured for their own protection, visible in the Prussian steel helmet or "Pickel Haube." By contrast, the famous British "beafoaters," the guardians of the Tower in London, sported extremely hairy

and soft head gear.

The take home message: while in ancient Egypt animals were worshipped, human beings counted for very little. The Jewish slaves in Egypt woke up to this humiliating reality when confronted with the cult of Akhenaten, the sun deity represented in the netherworld by the scarab. The discovery of Hebrew gave them words liberating them from the power of images. It would set them up for their never ending journey of withstanding the powers of reification, also known as idol worship. As many times before in the millennia after the Exodus the Jews met with a particular dangerous brand of antisemitism at the end of the 19th century which, like the Spanish inquisition, was supported by a racist ideology. In addition, racial antisemitism was echoed in the death cult of reification originating in an Egyptian renaissance.

Just like the intimidating spatial expansionism of Richard Wagner's music preceding it, the celebration of monumental architecture at the turn of the century did not bode well for democracy in Europe. It's devotion to the subhuman animal instincts, symbolized in the scarab, would become a premonition of the Great War. Out of the youth cult emerging in decadent *fin de siècle* Germany, eventually came the Hitler Youth followed, after WW II, by the anti-authoritarian student revolt. In fact, the sexist demotion of parenthood and the Christian person by identity politics survived the Nazi Regime, as did the bug motive of mass culture. It persisted in pop symbols like the "Beetles." The pop culture emerging in the Cold War period was soon weaponized and spread globally. For example, the millennial Christian concept of adolescent vulnerability was brutalized in the megalomaniac symbolism of Niki St. Phalle in the 1960s.

Like Freud, many decadent thinkers fell for the undemocratic fashion of dehumanized masses of unconscious creatures. Their overall effect would be to belittle and demean human beings by producing animalistic underlings and malleable types which in

effect were replacing the uniquely virtuous person of Judaeo-Christianity. This paved the way for totalitarian concepts, eventually succeeding politically in the 1930s. More than anything it was the unleashing of uncontrollable populist envy and Antisemitism that became part and parcel of the postmodern condition: mass beings enslaved by visualized feelings. The political role of symbolism was to evoke emotions in order to replace reason as the driver of human action. The result more often than not was the mass enslavement by human appetites and bodily cravings. Hans Jonas once described this calamity as a return of Gnosticism or tyranny by the visual paradigm, which had ruined classical Greek culture in late antiquity.

Wikipedia does calculate the begin of postmodernism in the 1940s. This narrative seems to account for the early childhood of the generation that set off the sexual revolt of the 1960s. It overlooks the fact that the sexualization of Europe not only predated but also survived the Nazi Regime. Surely, a continuity can be traced back to the waves of sexual liberation from the Renaissance onwards through the French Revolution and the *Belle Epoque* with notable excesses by the Suffragettes and sexual debauchery that saw the rest of Europe flocking to Weimar Berlin. The continuation of this revolt is maintained today by a misreading of the concept of political equity, which, properly understood, is about equal opportunity rather than equal outcome—the latest fad of reification. It substitutes moral self restraint with permissive self-realisation. Ontologically speaking, this reflects the vanishing of religious freedom premised on the postponement of pleasure. Monotheism traditionally implied the distinction between inner and outer self on which self discipline depends. It is precisely this distinction, based on responsible personhood, which is being blurred by sexual identity politics. The dire result of this kopernican turn toward postmodernity would be in the words of the late Rabbi Sacks that emotions rather than conferring rewards for ethical action became the driver of unreflected and irresponsible

deeds.