

Raymond J. Jirran

A. Introduction

The readings for this lecture include "The Wider Influence of Scientific Thought". The readings deal with a time-period ending about fifty years before the Enlightenment began. The problem is that Dr. Jirran wants to deliver two lectures on the first part of the chapter, but wants the students to read the whole chapter. More of an explanation appears in the supplement. The course goal for this topic is **to evaluate the intellectual life** according to a criteria of the people, places, and times involved and the degree of certitude warranted. This topic assumes that not only those engaged in the literature and arts have a valid intellectual life, but so do the common people.

B. Religion

Not all, but certainly many, human beings have a felt-need to understand the structure and purpose of the universe, as well as their place and prospects in that universe. Christianity has customarily solved these riddles in Western society. When things began to fall apart in the late Seventeenth Century, what Craine Brinton called a new religion, the Enlightenment, arose. Craine Brinton is a highly respected historian, whose argument Dr. Jirran accepts, without fully understanding. What Christianity identified as good, the Enlightenment labeled natural. The Christian bad, became the Enlightenment unnatural.

Although the Marxists denied that they had a religion, Marxists were part of the tradition of the Enlightenment. Marxism was Communism without the Soviet Union. The capitalist took the place of Satan; the classless society took the place of heaven. Since Marx was the first theoretician of Communism, understanding Marxism was vital to understanding contemporary affairs. Dr. Jirran fears neo-Marxist assumptions may underlie much of the mainstream history of Western civilization. Students have already been invited to note anywhere that capitalism is presented as a positive value.

The opposite of capitalism, socialism, is presented in a positive way. The people are not capitalists, but are manipulated by the capitalists. Such a historical presentation is what is offered and does result in a positive presentation of socialism. Religion at worst is an opiate of the masses, at best something silly concerning God, a figment of the imagination. At least, that is how Dr. Jirran sees mainstream historiography.

C. Voltaire

Dr. Jirran calls Voltaire "Mr. Acid Tongue." Voltaire attacked the Roman Catholic Church and all of institutional Christianity. In this, he attacked the legitimation of secular as well as non-secular authority. His recognition of injustice within the established order was fundamental to the various so-called revolutions the readings explored in the last topic.

A revolution is a sudden, radical, or complete change. One can argue that something like the Industrial Revolution was gradual, rather than sudden; moderate, rather than radical; and incomplete, rather than complete. The Industrial Revolution in the readings exemplifies reservations by Dr. Jirran about the way in which the readings use the term revolution.

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The transition from the Seventeenth to the Eighteenth Century does not seem like a revolution. Just as Louis XIV dominated the culture of the late Seventeenth Century, so did Voltaire come to dominate the culture of the Eighteenth Century. The likes of such Seventeenth Century figures as Francis Bacon, Descartes, and Pascal planted the intellectual seeds which grew into the Enlightenment.

Voltaire actually based his thinking upon the Seventeenth Century Locke, who is more carefully treated in Topic Eight of the next course, HIS 102, "The Enlightenment." The significance of the Enlightenment is what is developed in this topic. Locke and his followers believed that the careful use of reason could explain how everything in man and nature functioned. Reason would, thus, put the lie to all of those dark mysteries and grotesque fairy tales which went by the names of theology, metaphysics, and other brands of concealed dogma or superstition--which are rarely formally taught in community colleges.

D. Criminal Justice

Man's inhumanity to man was an ongoing phenomena of history. Attention to prisons was made in the January 10 rendition of Topic 35--Exploration, at page 0477 and in the January 12, 2000 rendition of Topic 38--Spain in Section L. Spanish Inquisitions. Research suggests that there was a gradual erosion of the spectacle of public punishment, rather than the sudden late Eighteenth Century change in penal practices usually assumed. The key turning point for such erosion lay between 1650 and 1750, with the basic research being done concerning Amsterdam. One explanation was that Europeans became more sensitive to human degradation. The following scenario seems to have taken place.¹

In the Twelfth Century, when the state was unstable, executions and suffering was quite public as the state repressed dissent. As the modern state developed, greater stability meant that the public spectacle of suffering was no longer necessary. Greater sensitivity resulted. Modern convention displayed suffering in order to alleviate suffering, not in order to cow the public. Suffering of which modern convention approved, such as natural birthing and dying, was hidden from view.

E. Conclusion

Religion combined the common people and the elite, Voltaire focused on the elite, Criminal Justice on the common people. All were about evaluating the intellectual life in Western civilization. Students are reminded to read, study, think, and prepare a comment.

Supplement

F. Introduction (continued)

Faith was still honored as a legitimate way to truth. The Enlightenment proposed a world-view which denied reality to that which reason does not know. The Enlightenment is important for academia, it seems to Dr. Jirran, because the basic philosophy of contemporary college education is that of the Enlightenment. College is about the use of reason, rather than upon the so highly esteemed personal testing of hypotheses. To exemplify: few members of the college community have ever had a first hand experience of Africa, yet everyone accepts the fact that Africa exists. This acceptance is based upon faith.

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Faith is a viaduct for legitimate knowledge. Both faith and reason, and the senses too, rather than just reason alone, are appropriate for intellectual life. All knowledge begins with sensual knowledge.

The readings in Chambers are setting up the Enlightenment, which is treated more carefully in Western Civilization II. This lecture may more properly be appended to the previous lecture, because this lecture is truly a development of "The Scientific Revolution" readings in the previous topic. Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and Blaise Pascal, who are treated in those earlier readings, did lay much of the foundation upon which the Enlightenment is based.

This lecture is presented despite the fact that Dr. Jirran is uneasy with the presentation. Because students seem to have profited from the lecture in its present format is the reason. This whole course is about the Antecedents to Western civilization, Politicization within Western civilization, and the Conceptualization of Western civilization. That conceptualization of what Western identity means calls for a final bringing together of science and religion.

G. *Voltaire (continued)*

Reservations about how Chambers uses the term *revolution* had been especially so in "Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," Chapter Twenty, pages 769-820, in the fifth edition of Chambers, treated in Western Civilization II. The equivalent chapter in the sixth edition is Chapter Eighteen, "The Wealth of Nations," pages 574-605; in the seventh edition, pages 624-655, also treated in Western Civilization II. Evidently the approach has been revised. "Industrial Revolution" is not indexed in the sixth or seventh editions, although Industrial Revolution was indexed with twenty-four lines in the fifth edition.

Comments on the Seventh Edition of Chambers, pages 551-577

In the opinion of the professor, Chambers is the most scholarly textbook on the market. Chambers well represents mainstream thinking in the history profession. The professor, however, disagrees in many significant ways with mainstream thinking. Some of these disagreements are set forth above and others in the following comments.

Page Column

Paragraph

Line

0551 2 last 7-8 "... irrelevant criteria, such as the teaching of the Bible ..."

Rather than regard the teaching of the Bible as irrelevant, the professor would prefer to the applications of the teaching of the Bible as irrelevant in this case.

0552 2 3 13 "... ever since."

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Following Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, (London: Sheed and Ward (also Scribner), 1938), the Professor would prefer to regard the basic dichotomy as between Plato and Aristotle, rather than as beginning with Descartes.

0553 2 2nd last-last line "In intellectual matters as in politics, turmoil was gradually giving way to assurance."

In other words, politics was giving way to truth.

0554 1 2 15 "... a link with political authority ..."

0554 2 2 2 "... Louis XIV gave his blessing ..."

That is truth linked with politics, to determine politics, or, at least, not to be determined by politics.

0557 1 3 11 "... close to a morality without theology ..."

Mongaigne is also close to insisting that theology is better determined by truth than by religious politics.

0557 2 3 12-13 "Cervantes avoided politics ..."

Don Quixote, tilting at windmills, was isolating and disengaging truth from politics.

0563 caption "... the huge dome Michelangelo had designed."

See page 403 for the dome of the Florence Cathedral.

0571 2 *Magic* heading a similar heading appears on page 544.

0573 heading Witchcraft

For the Professor there are two types of witchcraft, the supernatural and the natural. While the Professor accepts supernatural witchcraft as real, the Professor is relatively uninterested in this aspect. What does intrigue the Professor is the notion that witchcraft is a means for women to object to sexism.

To move from the ridiculous to the sublime, Jo Ann Kay McNamara has written *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* as a battle with males for survival. This idea is common among current historians.

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The problem is that the reviewer of her book, Professor Patricia Ranft of Central Michigan University, disagrees with the main thesis of the book and with mainstream historians.²

Endnotes

¹Julius R. Ruff, review of Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience*, *The American Historical Review* 91 (June 1986): 652. Students are invited to note how Chambers treats this matter.

²Patricia Ranft, review of Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5 (December 1997), pages ??