

THE AGE OF PERSONAL PEACE & AFFLUENCE

I. By the Early 1960s People Were Bombarded From Every Side by Modern Man's Humanistic Thought

II. Modern Form of Humanistic Thought Leads to Pessimism Regarding a Meaning for Life and for Fixed Values

- A. General acceptance of selfish values (personal peace and affluence) accompanied rejection of Christian consensus.
 - 1. Personal peace means: I want to be left alone, and I don't care what happens to the man across the street or across the world. I want my own life-style to be undisturbed regardless of what it will mean – even to my own children and grandchildren.
 - 2. Affluence means things, things, things, always more things – and success is seen as an abundance of things.
- B. Students wish to escape meaninglessness of much of adult society.
 - 1. Watershed was Berkeley in 1964.
 - 2. Drug Taking as an ideology: “turning on” the world.
 - 3. Free Speech Movement on Sproul Plaza.
 - a) At first neither Left nor Right.
 - b) Soon became the New Left.
 - (1) Followed Marcuse.
 - (2) Paris riots.
 - 4. Student analysis of problem was right, but solution wrong.
 - 5. Woodstock, Altamont, and the end of innocence.
 - 6. Drug taking survives the death of ideology but as an escape.
 - 7. Demise of New Left: radical bombings.
 - 8. Apathy supreme. The young accept values of the older generation: their own idea of personal peace and affluence, even though adopting a different life-style.
- C. Marxism and Maoism as pseudo-ideals.
 - 1. Vogue for idealistic communism which is another form of leap into the area of non-reason.

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2. Solzhenitsyn: violence and expediency as norms of communism.
 3. Communist repression in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
 4. Communism has neither philosophic nor historic base for freedom. There is no base for “Communism with a human face.”
 5. Utopian Marxism steals its talk of human dignity from Christianity.
 6. But when it comes to power, the desire of majority has no meaning.
 7. Two streams of communism.
 - a) Those who hold it as an idealistic leap.
 - b) Old-line communists who hold orthodox communist ideology and bureaucratic structure as it exists in Russia.
 8. Many in West might accept communism if it seemed to give peace and affluence.

III. Legal and Political Results of Attempted Human Autonomy

- A. Relativistic law.
 1. Base for nonarbitrary law gone; only inertia allows a few principles to survive.
 2. Holmes and sociological (variable) law.
 3. Sociological law comes from failure of natural law (see evolution of existential from rationalistic theology).
 4. Courts are now generating law.
 5. Medical, legal, and historical arbitrariness of Supreme Court ruling on abortion and current abortion practice.
- B. Sociological law opens door to racism, abrogation of freedoms, euthanasia, and so on.

IV. Social Alternatives After Death of Christian Consensus

- A. Hedonism? But might is right when pleasures conflict.
- B. Without external absolute, majority vote is absolute. But this justifies a Hitler.

V. Conclusion

- A. If there is no absolute by which to judge society, then society is absolute.
- B. Humanist thinking—making the individual and mankind the center of all things (autonomous) — has led to death in our culture and in our political life.

Note: Social alternatives after the death of Christian consensus are continued in Episode Ten.

Questions

1. What was the basic cause of campus unrest in the sixties? What has happened to the campus scene since, and why?
2. What elements – in the life and thought of the communist and noncommunist world alike – suggest a possible base for world agreement?
3. “To prophesy doom about Western society is premature. We are, like all others who have lived in times of great change, too close to the details to see the broader picture. One thing we do know: Society has always gone on, and the most wonderful epochs have followed the greatest depressions. To suggest that our day is the exception says more about our headache than it does about our head.” Debate.
4. As Dr. Schaeffer shows, many apparently isolated events and options gain new meaning when seen in the context of the whole. How far does your own involvement in business, law, financing, and so on reveal an acquiescence to current values?

Key Events and Persons

Oliver Wendell Holmes: 1841-1935

Herbert Marcuse: 1898-1979

Alexander Solzhenitsyn: 1917-

Hungarian Revolution: 1956

Free Speech Movement: 1964

Czechoslovakian repression: 1968

Woodstock and Altamont: 1969

Radical bombings: 1970

Supreme Court abortion ruling: 1973

Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*: 1973-74

Further Study

Keeping one’s eyes and ears open is the most useful study project: the prevalence of pornographic films and books, more and more suggestive advertising and TV shows, and signs of arbitrary absolutes. The following books will repay careful reading, and Solzhenitsyn, though long and horrifying, should not be skipped.

Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death* (1973).

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*: Parts I-II (1973), Parts III-IV (1974).