

ONE STEP BACK, TWO STEPS FORWARD:

Dialectical birthpangs of the
modern Western worldview,
as reflected in the works of
Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon
and Gerrard Winstanley

Master's thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan modernin länsimaisen ajattelun syntyä Englannin 1500-1600 -lukujen vaihteen kulttuurisen ja poliittisen murroksen peilissä. Tarkastelen modernin edistysuskon läpimurtoa aatehistoriallisesti, kirjallisuuden ja poliittisen ajattelun kolmen keskeisen hahmon kautta: Christopher Marlowen näytelmä tohtori Faustuksesta, Sir Francis Baconin Uusi Atlantis -utopia sekä yhteisomistukseen pohjautuva Gerrard Winstanleyn poliittinen ohjelma heijastavat uuden ajattelun keskeisimpiä vallankumouksellisia ulottuvuuksia koko kulttuuriin ja länsimaiseen ajattelutapaan.</p> <p>Osoitan tutkielmassani, että kaikki nämä radikaalia edistysuskoa heijastavat läpimurrot pohjasivat keskeisesti nykyaikaisessa irratioidiselta vaikuttaviin, idealisoiuuihin käsityksiin kuvitellusta menneisyydestä, joiden innoittamana kirjoittajat loivat utooppiset tulevaisuuden visionsa. Alkemistiset ja okkultiset aatteet sekä myyttiset historiantulkinnat ruokkivat aikakauden vaikutusvaltaisia visioita yhtä suuressa määrin kuin rationalistisesti ja eettisesti perustellut ohjelmat. Edistysuskon tai puhtaan järjen käsitteet, joko niiden rahvaanomaisissa tai akateemisen mahtipontisissa muodoissaan, selittävät vain kapeasti todellisia aatehistoriallisia ilmiöitä.</p> <p>Länsimaisen edistysuskon unohdetut tai vailetu irratioidaliset perustat ovat heijastuneet seuraavina vuosisatoina yhä uusina inkarnaatioina – joskus lievempinä, eksentrisen harmittomina ilmiöinä, joskus vaikutusvaltaisina liikkeinä, jotka ovat järjisyttäneet maailmaa. Kommunismine ja kapitalistinen maailmanjärjestys voivat esimerkiksi löytää itselleen eksoottisia ennaltakävijöitä ja ennakkotapauksia. Amerikan Yhdysvallat luotiin laajalti vapaamuurarillisen mytologian innoittamana, ja ”tieteellisen sosialismin” eräänä perusideana oli ihanne omistusyhteiskuntaa edeltäneestä, enemmän tai vähemmän paratiisinomaisesta primitiivisestä kommunismista.</p> <p>Voimme vielä internet-aikakautenaakin – tai kenties erityisesti juuri nyt – havaita, että myyttiset inspiraation lähteet ovat edelleen kanssamme, niin hyvässä kuin pahassakin. Fantasian innoittamat roolipelaajat voivat olla pelkkä huvin lähde niin itselleen kuin ulkopuolisillekin, kun taas ISIS-terrorijärjestö voi ottaa itsensä kirjaimellisen kuolemanvakavasti ja pakottaa muunkin maailman tekemään niin. Se joka ymmärtää menneisyyttä, voi hallita tulevaisuutta, tai ainakin elää tyydyttävämpää elämää nykyhetkessä.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Enlightenment and the concept of progress form the backbone of modern Western civilization, and often this ideology takes the form of over-simplified faith in linear, clear-cut process from ignorance and obscurity to brighter and better things. In this thesis, I will approach the birth of modernity through the prism of three English sources of early modern era – the famous play about Doctor Faustus by Christopher Marlowe, the utopian vision of Sir Francis Bacon, and the political program of Gerrard Winstanley. Through this three-fold approach, via the fields of art, science and politics, I study the roots of modern world, its sometimes not very “enlightened” ingredients, and the way the past dialectically influences us; sometimes we apparently have to draw inspiration from the past to be able to proceed further. These works show us the modern Western worldview as if in its eager childhood or adolescence, when the pre-rational whims and enthusiasms were not yet separated from a calm methodical approach. We today seem to be living in the resigned old age of Western culture, notably lacking such youthful idealism. It is a worthwhile endeavor to visit the original sources of our present notions to refresh our viewpoints.

1.1. Origins of the Modern Era – visions of progress and alchemy

In a certain sense, the Renaissance Era (ca. 1350–1600) was like a "Coming of Age" time period for the modern Western civilization that we are now living in. Whether consciously or unconsciously, what most people today associate with the concept of "Western civilization" is a product of the so-called Enlightenment Era that began in the late 17th century, and grew to a fully articulated worldview in the 18th century. It emphasized rationalism, progress, secularism, and well-organized societies. But the Age of Enlightenment did not just suddenly appear out of nowhere. It was preceded by the Renaissance period, when Western European countries moved away from the medieval world, experienced the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, and set the stage for the coming "scientific revolution".

I have decided to choose England as the focal point of my study because it has long been widely perceived that Britain played a central role in the birth of the modern Western civilization (Buruma 1999, Porter 2000). During the time period I will be examining – circa 1590–1660, roughly from the defeat of the Spanish Great Armada to the end of the great English Revolution – England surpassed its southern European rivals and set the stage for development that made it the leading country in economic and cultural growth as well as political development in the 18th century, inspiring "Anglomania" among continental Enlightenment intellectuals. Still later on, the Industrial Revolution made Britain an even more prominent leader of world progress.

But all that was yet in the future in the early part of the 17th century. England was a relatively small-scale country that was still strongly influenced by pre-modern modes of thought, in spite of traumatic religious upheavals. I seek to show the cultural transition that made England the standard-bearer of radical progress via the life and work of three individual actors, playwright Christopher Marlowe, politician and author Francis Bacon, and revolutionary Gerrard Winstanley. These people are figures who represent the transitional time period in the fields of popular culture, socio-economic as well as scientific speculation and radical politics.

Faith in *progress*, as understood in the sense of the Enlightenment narrative, still very powerfully influences the public discourse and thinking in our First World cultures, even though some caveats to this self-confident worldview are expressed in academic circles (e.g. Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 94-136). Opposition to scientific rationalism is often dismissed as mere irrationalism, associated to phenomena like the hippie movement, occultism, or religious fundamentalism. There is a certain notion of vulgar positivism – as differentiated from the more sophisticated forms of Enlightenment thinking – that sees in the rise of the modern worldview a simple triumph of reason over superstition and ignorance.

What do I mean with the term "Enlightenment", or the Enlightenment ideology? For one thing, it could stand for a belief in almost godlike reasoning abilities of human beings, or at least their elites, the philosophers (McKnight 1989, Coudert 1999, Israel 2001). It can also mean the sense of alienation from Nature – thinking as if humans had been emancipated from their natural, animal roots, and were able to direct their behaviour with the sheer power of abstract reason and the technology it provides (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 26). The

Enlightenment also had a sense of "growing up," leaving childish and immature things behind.

This thesis thus deals with the History of Western Thought. I aim to show that the birth of "modern" worldview, as represented by the Enlightenment ideology, was not such a tidy and linear process, a simple triumph of rationality (Comte 1975, Gay 1977), but involved even things that are looked down in today's rationalist discourse, like occultism (Yates 1964, 2002, Coudert 1999). Take Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727), for example – the justly famous scientific genius who has even been given the honour of being the first real scientist. But he has also been called as the last magician, who wrote as enthusiastically about various topics of religion and alchemy as upon scientific subjects (Gayle 2012). Newton had one foot in the pre-modern world and another in this "modern" world of ours. My thesis will delve into three characters who resemble Newton in that regard, comparing and contrasting their worldviews with each other, and interpreting what their legacies of thought might be for the modern Internet era. There has never been such a strict sense of duality between reason and superstition as vulgar readings of Enlightenment would have people believe.

Furthermore, my thesis seeks demonstrate with literary examples from the dawn of our modern worldview that progress is not a simple, linear process; such a naively optimistic viewpoint can make modern laymen puzzled and even frightened when they then observe some startlingly reactionary phenomena like the ISIS movement, for example. One should realize that historical progress can have sudden violent spurts of expansion, but at times also regression, even conscious return to the past that is understood through the lens of nostalgia or exotic fascination. I have discovered that even nostalgia for more or less illusory primeval past can serve as an inspiration for further progress – sometimes it is necessary to take one step back in order to be able to take two steps forward. This can be a way to avoid ending up in civilizational and philosophical dead ends.

Finally I aim to dwell upon the intellectual crisis of modernity, or the ideology of modern era – postmodern thinking has issued challenges to the modernist narrative, and even though it itself is clearly a product of modernity itself, postmodern qualms at least show a certain amount of healthy self-criticism among proponents of Western rationalism. There have of course been self-doubts of this kind before as well, like in the early 19th century during the Romantic reaction (McMahon 2002). Works like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (Shelley 1818) dealt with the fears that enlightened scientists were

"playing God", and this fear is not exactly dated in our era of genetic engineering and nuclear power.

I will finally suggest that postmodernists and other critics of uncritical modernity (see Cahoon 1996) would benefit from knowing more about the "irrational" or less conventional origins and inspirations of that modern worldview they criticize. Only by maintaining a lively awareness of our past can we plan for our future and deal with problems.

1.2. The Structure of the Thesis

In the second chapter, I provide a short biography of Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593), who is considered to be the second most famous English playwright of the late Elizabethan era, after William Shakespeare (Ridley 1965). Marlowe died young and his most famous plays are noted for their sense of romantic rebellion against old authorities. He was the first to set out a well-known artistic depiction of the "Faustus" legend (*The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*). After dealing with the possible origins of this archetypal story about a man reaching out for forbidden things, I show how Faustus was in some ways a typical Renaissance figure, and examine Marlowe's possible real-life inspirations in creating the character of this alchemist and sorcerer who sells his soul to devil for forbidden knowledge. Alchemy played its part in the rise of modern science, and was understood, or propagated itself, as a return to primordial wisdom of the ancients that had been lost but was now about to be re-discovered.

The third chapter is devoted to Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626), who, unlike my other two main characters, was a notable establishment figure, serving as both the Attorney General and the Lord Chancellor of England in the Jacobean era (1603–1625). He, however, ended his career in disgrace after being overthrown by his political enemies and being convicted of taking bribes. He devoted his last years to literary works, which nowadays are his greatest claim to fame. He has been even touted as a pioneer of the modern scientific method, and even though more recent scholarship has had a somewhat less adulatory view of him, there is no doubt that he represents a transition to more utopian and optimistic view of human capabilities in wielding technology. I present Bacon in the historical context as a man of his own times. I will dwell upon his famous piece of utopian literature, *New Atlantis*, published in 1627. This work was written at the time when England was beginning its great colonization

process in the New World, and I will show how the Americas were seen as an opportunity as if to return to a state of primal innocence before Adam's fatal fall. Bacon's proto-scientific utopia had clear political overtones – its writer being a highly active politician himself – and I will consider how “tabula rasa”, or the possibility of starting all over again from a clean slate, was an essential part of Bacon's much-touted modernistic mind, and which can also be seen as a typical attitude of radical social reformers of modern times.

The fourth chapter deals with the English revolutionary Gerrard Winstanley (1609–1676), who was perhaps the most radical of England's 17th century revolutionaries and wrote various pieces of radical literature at the height of the English Revolution. He has been seen by some as the forerunner of Karl Marx in his views on private property and metaphysics, presented via his highly original, mystical, and yet quite materialistic theology. Until now, Winstanley has been best known among experts of Political Science who have tended to see in him a sort of proto-Communist (Berens 1906, Hill 2006). Winstanley represented his revolutionary program also as a return to the ways of a distant past that the Norman Conquest had supposedly overthrown. A summary of the concept of "Primitive Communism", resembling Winstanley's own myth of returning to the past where modern forms of corruption had not yet been known, is given, and some of Winstanley's connections to modern Marxist thought and the idea of progress in history are analysed.

In the final chapter, I contemplate on whether the "life span" of the Modern Era might be drawing to a close. I have already compared the Renaissance Era as the equivalent of the adolescence of modern mentality – could the so-called "postmodernism" be seen as its old age, when self-doubts start creeping in? I propose that by looking back to the birth period of the rationalist Western worldview that now dominates the world in spite of various challenges, we can learn what might be coming next in its development. Like the founders of the modern worldview, we too may have to take some steps back to get a better view of things.

To take just one example from modern 20th century history: the United States and the Soviet Union were widely seen as two antipodes of the modernist ideology – certainly opponents and enemies in one sense, but in another sense just two sides of the same coin. In their own ways, they both represented the ideology of "modern progress" at its most self-confident and overpowering, but on a closer inspection we can see that they both have their own nostalgic, backward-looking elements in the foundational state-mythology. America was originally

founded as almost a "Back to Eden" -like sanctuary for righteousness that was free from the blemishes, sins and inequities of the Old World (Hutchins 2014: 6). This notion, even though in its secularized form, has remained a part of the Americanist ideology to our days, the idea that America represents a form of newfound purity that older cultures cannot comprehend. It is just this faith in the primordial goodness of man that only needs a proper environment – America – to burst out that has empowered popular American-supremacist narrative in modern times.

On the other hand, I would argue that the ideology of Marxist Communism that the USSR was built upon is more reliant on the notion of "Primitive Communism" than is usually acknowledged. Karl Marx, and especially Friedrich Engels, argued that there had been a time when mankind did not yet know the very concept of private property, and that humans only gradually became alienated from the state of primordial communal unity. Marxism specifically set out to be the ultimate cure for this alienation, basically suggesting that mankind could have the best of both worlds – both the spiritual unity of ancient primitive communism, but also all the fruits of progress that had been invented since then, like modern technology. The Communist utopia would be like a Hegelian synthesis of extreme antiquity and extreme modernity.

Since the end of the Cold War, this model of dogmatically assertive modernity, available in two basic forms, has become largely discredited with the Soviet Union's fall, and as even America no longer has the same cultural self-confidence it once possessed. Into this vacuum, many forms of alternative thought have appeared, like the Green movement, various schools of New Age thought, anti-Western or anti-colonial ideologies like fundamentalist Islam. All these draw inspiration from ancient or primordial past, and intend to use them as their compass in navigating through the troubled waters of our modern times. I intend to show in my thesis that such goals, reactionary now as they might seem, were intimately present at the birthpangs of modern Western worldview.

2. DOCTOR FAUSTUS BY CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

In Chapter 2, I will deal with the famous play “The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus”, by Elizabethan-era poet Christopher Marlowe, who first made this Promethean figure famous. I shall demonstrate how this imaginary alchemist and sorcerer is based on real-life characters, and how his dissatisfaction with traditional forms of learning plays a decisive part in the way sells his soul to the Devil. I will furthermore briefly describe the background that alchemy played the rise of modern science, and was understood, or propagated itself, as a return to primordial ancient wisdom that had been lost but was now about to re-discovered.

2.1. Life of Marlowe

The playwright Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) could be called as the angry young man of the cultural scene of Elizabethan England (Downie 2000: 2). He was murdered in a tavern fight before William Shakespeare's career had really taken off. Marlowe's main characters were brazen individuals like he himself was. He had not been a well-born person himself, being a son of a shoemaker and a grandson of a tanner. He however managed to get a rudimentary education at the King's School, Canterbury, and later was able to enter Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Here he was for a few months a fellow student of Francis Kett, who went on to become an Anglican clergyman and ended up being burned at the stake for heresy in 1589, just at the time when Marlowe's short writing career was beginning. Kett's fate is a reminder that expression of unorthodox or iconoclastic opinions was not just some harmless sport in those days.

After he had graduated and entered the life of showmanship in London, Marlowe lived a fast life, being acquainted with many important figures of the Elizabethan era, like Sir Walter Raleigh who was also accused by his enemies of entertaining unorthodox opinions. The company he kept was generally reputed to be of scandalous or at least of unconventional variety, and he himself was accused of living a life of sin and crime, like for example making counterfeit coins, which back then carried death penalty. Atheistical opinions and sodomy were the most serious kind of accusations that were rumoured about Marlowe (Downie 2000: 22, 28-29).

On the other hand, scholars like Kuriyama are of the opinion that scandalous iniquity of Marlowe's life may have been exaggerated or misrepresented – that he was simply part of the general avant-garde intelligentsia of the time, nothing more and nothing less. It is noteworthy that occult speculations also played their part in these circles that Marlowe moved in:

By surrounding himself with scientists, poets, a superb library, and men like Raleigh who shared his enthusiasms, Northumberland effectively created his own university, one which fostered lines of thought and inquiry that were not openly pursued at Oxford or Cambridge. The activities he harbored and encouraged evidently included informal gatherings and freewheeling discussions of topics that interested Northumberland, Raleigh, and others in the group, including questions that may well have seemed, like those proposed by Marlowe's unfortunate Cambridge contemporary Evance, "scandalous, foolish and opprobrious" to more conventional thinkers. These discussions were probably not radically different from many others that occurred privately among students and faculty in Renaissance universities, or among other intellectuals throughout Europe. They may have included "lectures" in which a member of the group presented arguments, which the rest responded to, or discussions of occult science and magic, or even experimental conjurations (Kuriyama 2010: 92-93).

And yet, Marlowe might have himself been a bit more radical than his companions, and in some way deserving a more edgy reputation. J.B. Steane remarked that "it seems absurd to dismiss all of these Elizabethan rumours and accusations as 'the Marlowe myth'" (Steane 1969: 15).

It might not be entirely fair to simply consider Marlowe as a stereotypical "bad boy" who ended up killed in a knife-fight. Back in those days, even the accusation of "atheism" could be employed with great imprecision, and might be used to describe almost any unconventional religious belief – the Reformation had inaugurated the golden age of theological name-calling:

We really do not know the circumstances of Marlowe's death. The probability is he was killed in a brawl, and his atheism must be interpreted not according to the ex parte accusation of one Richard Baines, a professional informer (among the Privy Council records), but as a species of rationalistic antinomianism, dialectic in character, and closely related to the deflection from conventional orthodoxy for which Kett was burnt at Norwich in 1589 (Swinburne 1910: 744).

Marlowe's most famous play is *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, which was originally published in 1604, eleven years after Marlowe's violent death. I shall now summarize this play in detail, using the classical edition by Rev. Alexander Dyce (Dyce n.d.), based on the first four quartos of the work (1604, 1616, 1624, 1631). The play is famous for introducing into Western literary canon the powerful archetype of Faustian rebel, who has appeared since in so many forms of art and popular culture – a renegade who is no longer satisfied with the old order of things and reaches towards perilous unknown in his search for deeper wisdom.

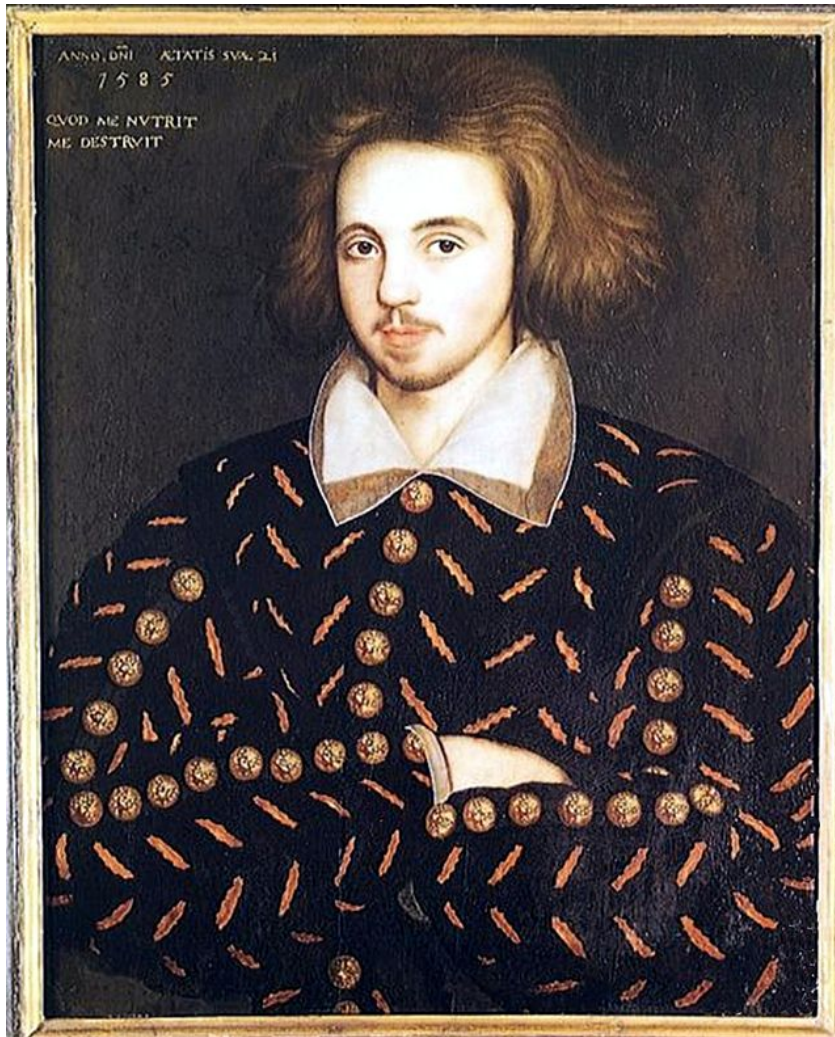


Figure 1: 21-year old man, supposed to be Christopher Marlowe. Artist and title unknown, Date 1585. Current location Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. [online] <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marlowe-Portrait-1585.jpg> (26 December 2014)

2.2. Synopsis of the Faustus play

The play opens with an introductory chorus informing us that Faustus is a German who has earned the title of Doctor – Doctor of Divinity that is, as it was originally a clerical title. Then follows a significant opening monologue by Faustus, who tells the audience how he had grown to be disappointed with all traditional forms of learning. Aristotelian logic, Galenian medicine, Justinian's science of law, and finally also Christian theology (represented by Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible) are weighed and found wanting. Faustus proclaims:

These metaphysics of magicians,
 And necromantic books are heavenly;
 Lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters;
 Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.
 O, what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
 Is promis'd to the studious artizan!
 All things that move between the quiet poles
 Shall be at my command: emperors and kings
 Are but obeyed in their several provinces,
 Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds;
 But his dominion that exceeds in this,
 Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man;
 A sound magician is a mighty god:
 Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity.

In other words, Faustus has adopted a radical Renaissance viewpoint of making himself divine with magic. Then follows a classical juxtaposition, as both Good Angel and Evil Angel come to offer their advice – the good one telling Faustus to "lay that damned book aside", and the evil one telling him to go forward in his path of self-deification: "be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky".

Faustus then talks to two of his fellow practitioners of black arts, Valdes and Cornelius, and tells them once more that

Philosophy is odious and obscure;
 Both law and physic are for petty wits;
 Divinity is basest of the three,
 Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile:
 'Tis magic, magic, that hath ravish'd me.

Valdes tells Faustus that among other glorious things, the black arts will make them richer than all the gold of the New World has made Philip II, the powerful monarch of Spain:

From Venice shall they drag huge argosies,
 And from America the golden fleece
 That yearly stuffs old Philip's treasury;
 If learned Faustus will be resolute.

Cornelius for his part gives Faustus the basic knowledge needed for conjuring spirits, suggesting that Faustus himself will then be able to proceed further if he wishes.

Meanwhile, Faustus' servant Wagner is inquired on the whereabouts of his master by two scholars. Wagner gives them mocking evasions, and finally his character (in spite of being

supposedly German) parodies the speech mannerisms of pious English Puritans, who were called derisively as "precisians" at that time period:

Thus having triumphed over you, I will set my countenance like a precisian, and begin to speak thus:—

Truly, my dear brethren, my master is within at dinner, with Valdes and Cornelius, as this wine, if it could speak, would inform your worships: and so, the Lord bless you, preserve you, and keep you, my dear brethren, my dear brethren!

Wagner departs, and the scholars express their worry that Faustus might have fallen into "that damned art." They plan to inform the Rector about the matter.

Then follows the scene of Faustus' first act of conjuration. He chants magical pig-Latin:

Sintmihidei Acherontispropitii! Valeat numen triplex Jehovoe!
 Ignei, aerii, aquatani spiritus, salvete! Orientis princeps
 Belzebub, inferni ardentis monarcha, et Demogorgon, propitiamus
 vos, ut appareat et surgat Mephistophilis, quod tumeraris:
 per Jehovam, Gehennam, et consecratam aquam quam nunc spargo,
 signum que crucis quod nunc facio, et per vota nostra, ipse nunc
 surgat nobis dicatus Mephistophilis!

The devil Mephistophilis appears. Faustus considers his first form of appearance too terrible, and commands him to *"return an old Franciscan friar; That holy shape becomes a devil best."* Mephistophilis obeys, and now Faustus is delighted with the power of his spells and the devil's new, improved looks. He demands the demon to serve him, but Mephistophilis informs him that the devils obey only their lord Lucifer, and will obey him only so far as Lucifer allows it. When Faustus inquires why Mephistophilis is able to leave Hell to appear to him, he insinuates that Hell is more a state of mind than an actual place, something that the devils carry around with them.

Faustus acts in a haughty manner, and tells Mephistophilis that he does not fear Hell so much as the devil does, bidding him to go to Lucifer to convey his terms of selling his soul:

What, is great Mephistophilis so passionate
 For being deprived of the joys of heaven?
 Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,
 And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.
 Go bear these tidings to great Lucifer:
 Seeing Faustus hath incurr'd eternal death
 By desperate thoughts against Jove's deity,
 Say, he surrenders up to him his soul,
 So he will spare him four and twenty years,
 Letting him live in all voluptuousness;
 Having thee ever to attend on me,

To give me whatsoever I shall ask,
 To tell me whatsoever I demand,
 To slay mine enemies, and aid my friends,
 And always be obedient to my will.

Before the second infernal visitation to Faustus, a comic interlude follows, as the "Clown" (a term that originally meant a peasant or a crude rustic type ("Clown", Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2015) converses with Faustus' servant Wagner. This poor simpleton shows his willingness to sell his soul for a well-roasted shoulder of mutton with some good sauce, and is frightened when Wagner threatens to have two devils to fetch him away. The two devils, Baliol and Belcher, indeed appear for a moment and after getting over his fright, the Clown says he would like to learn the skill of summoning such beings himself. One could say that the atmosphere of this whole scene jars with the brooding seriousness of the rest of the play.

Next we see Faustus alone at his study, contemplating the radical step he is about to take. He cynically tells himself:

The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite,
 Wherein is fix'd the love of Belzebub:
 To him I'll build an altar and a church,
 And offer lukewarm blood of new-born babes.

Good Angel and Evil Angel appear again, and while the former urges Faustus to remember heavenly things, he rather listens to the latter, being enchanted by the idea of boundless wealth. At midnight, Mephistophilis appears again, and now demands from Faustus a blood-oath to hand over his soul. Faustus stabs his own arm, but his wound miraculously heals – a sign that Heaven is giving him a chance to turn back. Mephistophilis brings a burning coal that re-opens the wound and now Faustus can sign the pact. But Latin words "Homo, fuge!" (Man, flee!) now appear on Faustus' arm; yet another miraculous sign to turn him back from the path he has chosen. But Faustus has become hardened, telling himself that he has gone already too far and is now damned in any case, and Mephistophilis provides him with theatrical distractions to dazzle him, as dancing devils appear, giving "crowns and rich apparel" to Faustus.

Faustus finally seals the agreement and the first thing he inquires from Mephistophilis is the location of Hell. He answers:

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd
 In one self place; for where we are is hell,
 And where hell is, there must we ever be:
 And, to conclude, when all the world dissolves,
 And every creature shall be purified,
 All places shall be hell that are not heaven.

Again, we see something that modern people might consider a jarring contradiction; right after selling his soul the devil, Faustus is acting like a modern sceptic, thinking that "hell's a fable," while Mephistophilis ominously insist that he himself is presently damned and in hell.

Next Faustus asks for "the fairest maid in Germany". It follows, as is said in the stage instructions:

Re-enter MEPHISTOPHILIS with a DEVIL drest like a WOMAN,
 with fire-works.

Faustus however is not pleased with this display, expecting more from his ideal woman. Next he asks and receives the books that deal with raising spirits, the movements of the planets and also book where he might "see all plants, herbs, and trees, that grow upon the earth". We can see how closely magical and scientific endeavours were intertwined at this time.

Beholding the heavens, Faustus again begins to entertain thoughts of repentance, and Good Angel and Evil Angel appear again. Faustus monologues in an indecisive manner, but ends up again considering himself already too hardened.

Faustus tries to ply some more detailed or useful information about "divine astrology" – and the following conversation shows that he would rather mean "astronomy" in the modern sense of the word, but a clear distinction on that subject had not yet been formed back in Marlowe's days. Mephistophilis provides somewhat evasive and trivial information, and Faustus begins to wonder: "Hath Mephistophilis no greater skill?"

Finally Faustus says:

FAUSTUS. Well, I am answered. Tell me who made the world?
 MEPHIST. I will not.
 FAUSTUS. Sweet Mephistophilis, tell me.
 MEPHIST. Move me not, for I will not tell thee.
 FAUSTUS. Villain, have I not bound thee to tell me any thing?
 MEPHIST. Ay, that is not against our kingdom; but this is. Think thou on hell, Faustus, for thou art damned.
 FAUSTUS. Think, Faustus, upon God that made the world.

MEPHIST. Remember this.
[Exit.]

Faustus begins again to regret his pact, and calls upon the name of Christ. Then two mightier demons, Lucifer and Belzebub, appear along with Mephistophilis and warn him not to mention Christ's name, as it causes them great injury. He again promptly reverses his position and asks their pardon, promising to

Never to name God, or to pray to him,
To burn his Scriptures, slay his ministers,
And make my spirits pull his churches down.

Lucifer is satisfied, and promises to provide some entertainment for Faustus, showing him the Seven Deadly Sins in their "proper shapes". Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery all parade before Faustus. This apparently manages to whet his appetite for perverse amusements, for then he says:

O, might I see hell, and return again,
How happy were I then!

Lucifer says that this will be so, and then he and Belzebub leave, leaving the small devil Mephistophilis to accompany Faustus as he engages in a magical mystery tour around the world, so to speak. It is not entirely clear whether the following scenes are "really happening", or just inside the mind of Faustus. After some wondrous sight-seeing, Faustus ends up in Rome, where he visits the private quarters of the pope, and as Mephistophilis turns him invisible, he enjoys having some pranks at the expense of the pope, like insulting him, stealing his food and drink, and finally hitting in the ear. As the pope then prepares to have this invisible fiend exorcized, Faustus is full of iconoclastic glee:

Come on, Mephistophilis; what shall we do?

MEPHIST. Nay, I know not: we shall be cursed with bell, book,
and candle.

FAUSTUS. How! bell, book, and candle,—candle, book, and bell,—
Forward and backward, to curse Faustus to hell!
Anon you shall hear a hog grunt, a calf bleat, and an ass bray,
Because it is Saint Peter's holiday.

After this scene that resembles a comedy where a naughty student makes mockery of official authority figures, a chorus enters to explain how magical wisdom made Faustus a great man:

Now is his fame spread forth in every land:
 Amongst the rest the Emperor is one,
 Carolus the Fifth, at whose palace now
 Faustus is feasted 'mongst his noblemen.
 What there he did, in trial of his art,
 I leave untold; your eyes shall see['t] perform'd.

Another comic scene follows, as few other low-class characters try to dabble in magic on their own, being jealous of Faustus' success. One fellow named Robin has stolen one of his magic books, and tries to use it to summon Mephistophilis to get his petty wishes fulfilled. The devil indeed appears, frustrated that such low people ask for his services:

Monarch of Hell, under whose black survey
 Great potentates do kneel with awful fear,
 Upon whose altars thousand souls do lie,
 How am I vexed with these villains' charms?
 From Constantinople am I hither come,
 Only for pleasure of these damned slaves.

More serious matters are returned to as the German Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire himself is interested in Faustus, and seeks him to make a display of his powers. The emperor promises immunity for this conjurer – for after all, as a Christian ruler, it would be his duty to punish severely any heretical or diabolical activities. Faustus acts humble, saying that his reputation has been exaggerated, but as a loyal subject, he is ready to comply with his majesty's wishes. The emperor therefore asks Faustus to summon forth the spirit of Alexander the Great and "his beauteous paramour".

Faustus replies that it is not in his power to bring forth "the true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes", but says that "such spirits as can lively resemble Alexander and his paramour shall appear before your grace". In other words, Faustus indirectly admits that he is going to present more or less unreal fantasies to the emperor.

Mephistophilis and "Spirits" appear in the form of Alexander and his Paramour. After inspecting these things, the credulous emperor declares that "these are no spirits, but the true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes", in spite of having been told the contrary by Faustus just before.

Faustus is now sensing that the appointed time of his life is drawing to a close, and wishes to hasten towards his home in Wertenberg. On the journey there, the illusionary nature of magic is yet further demonstrated, as one Horse-Courser offers to buy the "horse" of Faustus – he agrees, but warns him not to ride his steed into the water. He however ends up doing so, and then the horse turns into a bale of hay.

Meanwhile, Faustus is pondering on his impending doom, and tries to convince himself that there will be enough time for him to repent in the last moment, like the robber of the cross in the Gospels:

Despair doth drive distrust into my thoughts:
 Confound these passions with a quiet sleep:
 Tush, Christ did call the thief upon the Cross;
 Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit.

Next we find that Faustus is being approached by the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt. The wizard seeks to please them, and fulfills their wish to have a dish of ripe grapes in the middle of the winter. Faustus' servant Wagner is now wondering:

I think my master means to die shortly,
 For he hath given to me all his goods:
 And yet, methinks, if that death were near,
 He would not banquet, and carouse, and swill
 Amongst the students, as even now he doth,
 Who are at supper with such belly-cheer
 As Wagner ne'er beheld in all his life.

Faustus is seen returning from another academic revelry with some scholars. These tell him that in their opinion, Helen of Greece was the most beautiful woman to have ever lived, and they ask him to conjure up Helen for them to behold. This is done, and Faustus' fellow scholars sing his praises.

Next Faustus is approached by an Old Man who once again implores him to repent and rely on the mercy of Christ. Faustus has yet another bout of despair, and becomes suicidal – and his guardian devil shows himself ready to comply with his self-destructive wishes:

FAUSTUS. Where art thou, Faustus? wretch, what hast thou done?
 Damn'd art thou, Faustus, damn'd; despair and die!
 Hell calls for right, and with a roaring voice
 Says, "Faustus, come; thine hour is almost come;"

And Faustus now will come to do thee right.
[MEPHISTOPHILIS gives him a dagger.]

OLD MAN. Ah, stay, good Faustus, stay thy desperate steps!
I see an angel hovers o'er thy head,
And, with a vial full of precious grace,
Offers to pour the same into thy soul:
Then call for mercy, and avoid despair.

Faustus does feel repentance at this point, but also despair, and Mephistophilis who guards his moves tells him fiercely that he will "in piece-meal tear thy flesh" if he should try to revolt against Lucifer. Faustus continues his spiritual see-sawing and humbly begs Mephistophilis to assure his master that he does not intend to break their bargain. But the devil is not convinced, and demands stronger commitment from Faustus. The wizard says he wants one more pleasure:

FAUSTUS. One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,
To glut the longing of my heart's desire,—
That I might have unto my paramour
That heavenly Helen which I saw of late,
Whose sweet embracings may extinguish clean
Those thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow,
And keep mine oath I made to Lucifer.

This apparition is granted to Faustus, and the most famous lines of this play follow:

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium—
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—

The Old Man expresses his dismay that Faustus, inspired by this ecstatic vision, has one more time scorned the mercy of Heaven. Now begins the dramatic final scene.

Faustus is seen talking fatalistically with his fellow scholars about his coming damnation; now for the first time, he reveals to them the infernal pact he has made:

FAUSTUS. God forbade it, indeed; but Faustus hath done it: for
vain pleasure of twenty-four years hath Faustus lost eternal joy
and felicity. I writ them a bill with mine own blood: the date
is expired; the time will come, and he will fetch me.

FIRST SCHOLAR. Why did not Faustus tell us of this before,
that divines might have prayed for thee?

FAUSTUS. Oft have I thought to have done so; but the devil

threatened to tear me in pieces, if I named God, to fetch both body and soul, if I once gave ear to divinity: and now 'tis too late. Gentlemen, away, lest you perish with me.

The three fellow scholars of Faustus go to the next room to pray for him, while he himself is waiting for the midnight hour in desperation. He still thinks of calling to Christ for mercy, but somehow feels incapable of doing so:

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
O, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ!—
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
Yet will I call on him: O, spare me, Lucifer!—

In final desperation, Faustus would prefer either atheistic evaporation of the soul, or pantheistic transmigration of the soul, to the eternal Hell that now awaits him:

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true,
This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
Unto some brutish beast! all beasts are happy,
For, when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;
But mine must live still to be plagu'd in hell.

The shocking end comes with Faustus' last desperate promise to "burn his books", but to no avail; the chorus intones the stern final moralizing judgment of overly confident avant-garde intellectuals - the "forward wits" of the Renaissance era:

My God, my god, look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!—Ah, Mephistophilis!
[Exeunt DEVILS with FAUSTUS.]

Enter CHORUS.

CHORUS. Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,
That sometime grew within this learned man.
Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,
Only to wonder at unlawful things,
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
To practice more than heavenly power permits.

2.3. Real-life models of Faustus

The earliest roots of the Faustus legend, a man who sells his soul to dark forces, have been theorized to reach up all the way to a famous ancient Gnostic heretic, the so-called Simon the Magician or "Simon Magus". Simon is mentioned in the New Testament, in the book of the Acts of Apostles, chapter 8. He is depicted as a Samaritan sorcerer who is reputed to be a "mighty power" (*Dynamis Megale* in Greek) by his followers, but who is overawed by the true miraculous powers demonstrated by the apostles. He asks himself to be baptized, in the mercenary hope of acquiring these strange powers for his personal use. Apostle Peter strongly denounces his unworthy motives, and the last thing we hear in the Bible about Simon the Sorcerer is that he asks that the bad things predicted by Peter would not befall upon him:

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,
 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.
 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.
 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.
 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.
 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.
 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the LORD for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

(Acts 8:18-24, the King James Version).

In the traditions of early Christian church, there grew a flourishing apocryphal literature around the figure of Simon the Sorcerer. Two most significant details about him; the first is that he teamed up with a woman whom he claimed to be a re-incarnation of the famous Helen of Troy, whose beauty was said to have been the cause of the Trojan War. The 4th century church father Epiphanius wrote in *Panarion*, a catalogue of heresies (Epiphanius n.d.), about Simon thus:

2:2 Since the tramp was naturally lecherous, and was encouraged by the respect that had been shown to his professions, he trumped up a phoney allegory for his dupes. He had gotten hold of a female vagabond from Tyre named Helen, and he took her without letting his relationship with her be known.

2:3 And while privately having an unnatural relationship with his paramour, the charlatan was teaching his disciples stories for their amusement and calling himself the supreme power of God, if you please! And he had the nerve to call the whore who was his partner the Holy Spirit, and said that he had come down on her account.

2:4 He said, 'I was transformed in each heaven in accordance with the appearance of the inhabitants of each, so as to pass my angelic powers by unnoticed and descend to Ennoia—to this woman, likewise called Prunicus and Holy Spirit, through whom I created the angels. But the angels created the world and men. But this woman is the ancient Helen on whose account the Trojans and Greeks went to war.'

Secondly, Simon appeared in legends as a sort of anti-Peter, ending up in the city of Rome like him and there trying to rival Peter's legitimate miracles with his own conjuring tricks. He flies or levitates himself over the Roman forum, but Apostle Peter causes him to fall down again with his prayers. In this story-cycle Simon appears as an archetypal "false apostle" juxtaposed with the genuine article, represented by Peter. Simon is cut down from his metaphorical and also literal "flights of fancy", as this image shows:



Figure 2. *The death of Simon Magus, from the Nuremberg Chronicle or Liber Chronicarum, 1493. Artist unknown. [online] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Death_of_simon_magus.jpg (23 November 2014)*

Dante Alighieri mentioned Simon in his Canto XIX of *Inferno* (Dante 1884: 137, 143-144):

O Simon Magus! ye his wretched crew!
 The gifts of God, ordained to be the bride
 Of righteousness, ye prostitute that you
 With gold and silver may be satisfied;

(...)

Twas you, O Pastors, the Evangelist bore
 In mind what time he saw her on the flood
 Of waters set, who played with kings the whore;
 Who with seven heads was born; and as she would
 By the ten horns to her was service done,
 Long as her spouse rejoiced in what was good.
 Now gold and silver are your god alone:
 What difference 'twixt the idolater and you,
 Save that ye pray a hundred for his one?
 Ah, Constantine, how many evils grew—
 Not from thy change of faith, but from the gift
 Wherewith thou didst the first rich Pope endue!

Ioan P. Couliano points out the connection between Simon the arch-heretic and Faustus, the summoner of demons (Couliano 1987). He believes that the name of “Faust” was borrowed from Simon’s surname *Faustus*. Simon was understood to be the earliest of gnostic heretics, claimed to be divine and capable of producing a seemingly living image of Helen of Troy. Faustus was conflated in different stories with one Cyprian of Antioch:

Going beyond its numerous variations, the legend relates that Cyprian, a magician from Antioch - or a friend of his, Aglaidas - yearns for the beautiful Justina, unaware that she is a Christian and has taken a vow of chastity before God. Of course, he is haughtily rejected. All that is left for him to do is to make a pact with the devil, who promises to give him Justina in exchange for his soul. Lacking power over Christians, however, the devil cannot fulfill Cyprian's desire; he tries to deceive him, furnishing him with a simulacrum which, at a distance, resembles Justina but is actually only a diabolic apparition. Deeply impressed by the strength of Justina and her God, Cyprian himself is converted and follows her to martyrdom.

Apart from its conclusion, the structure of Faust's *Volksbuch* is quite similar; and in the form of drama, shorn of its many moralistic digressions of the prose version, it must resemble still more closely the legend of Cyprian and Justina: it deals with a magician who has recourse to a pact with the devil to obtain, among other favors, those of a young girl and the simulacrum of the beautiful Helen of Troy (Couliano 1987: 216).

It is almost like a symbolical co-incidence that the name of Faust is connected to one of the most decisively important inventions that paved way for the modern times – the printing. It so happens that the name of the most important partner of Johann Gutenberg, the famous German inventor of printing, was "Johann Fust" (Burke 1913). It is said that Fust fell under suspicion of diabolical connections after he broke off his partnership with Gutenberg and moved his business to France; it was rumoured that jealous Frenchmen, who were dependent in their livelihood for old-fashioned scribal ways of making books, brought accusations of witchcraft against him; on the other hand, those who could benefit from the new technology

had another, more optimistic kind of viewpoint; in either case, it is no wonder it was seen as a groundbreaking development:

The adverse reaction [of people who suspected printing press of black magic] should not be taken as typical; many early references were at worst ambivalent. The ones that are most frequently cited associate printing with divine rather than diabolic powers. But then the most familiar references come either from the blurbs and prefaces composed by early printers themselves or from editors and authors who were employed in printing shops. (...) Whether the new art was considered a blessing or a curse, whether it was consigned to the Devil or attributed to God, the fact remains that the initial increase in output did strike the contemporary observers as sufficiently remarkable to suggest supernatural intervention. Even incredulous modern scholars may be troubled by trying to calculate the number of calves required to supply enough skins for vellum copies of Gutenberg's Bible (Eisenstein 2012: 21-22).

One should not wonder that the co-founder of such an important innovation should have aroused the suspicions of conservative people. Also in the Islamic Ottoman Empire, the introduction of the printing press was resisted for centuries, partly because it would have brought unemployment for all the sophisticated calligraphers who copied books in Turkey.

But one could find it at least plausible that the pioneering printer Johann Fust, whose name is so close to Johann Faust, played a part in forming the Renaissance-era folk legend about Dr. Faustus whom Marlowe then took under his artistic treatment. The direct source of inspiration for Marlowe's muse was *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, the first "Faust book", a chapbook of stories concerning the life of Johann Georg Faust written by an anonymous German author (English translation: *Historia & Tale of Doctor Johannes Faustus* (n.d.)). It was published at Frankfurt am Main in 1587, and originally translated into English in 1592 under the title *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*. It was this version that became accessible to Marlowe (Couliano 1987: 215).

2.4. The Avant-garde spirit of Renaissance Magic

Some anthropologists and experts of mythology have drawn a clear difference between magic and religion. They believe that in certain sense, magic is closer to science than religion. Sir James George Frazer was the "grand old man" of this school of thought, put forward in his classic opus *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 1922). From this point of view, the difference is that in religion, spiritual forces give orders to men, but in magic, man gives orders to spirits. Popular audience may know this position best from the quip of famous science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke:

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." (Clarke 1968)

The exact boundaries of magic and science are blurring, and not just in the minds of uneducated laypersons but even in the abstract theories of most advanced physical theorists. The subjective and objective, or reason and faith, may not be quite so easily separable and obvious counterparts as the former rationalist philosophers used to believe. Here is the polemical view of physicist Paul Davies on the subject:

SCIENCE, we are repeatedly told, is the most reliable form of knowledge about the world because it is based on testable hypotheses. Religion, by contrast, is based on faith. The term “doubting Thomas” well illustrates the difference. In science, a healthy skepticism is a professional necessity, whereas in religion, having belief without evidence is regarded as a virtue.

The problem with this neat separation into “non-overlapping magisteria,” as Stephen Jay Gould described science and religion, is that science has its own faith-based belief system. All science proceeds on the assumption that nature is ordered in a rational and intelligible way.

(...)

Over the years I have often asked my physicist colleagues why the laws of physics are what they are. The answers vary from “that’s not a scientific question” to “nobody knows.” The favorite reply is, “There is no reason they are what they are — they just are.” The idea that the laws exist reasonlessly is deeply anti-rational. After all, the very essence of a scientific explanation of some phenomenon is that the world is ordered logically and that there are reasons things are as they are (Davies 2007).

One could probably say that the magician is a considerably more "autonomous" person than a priest. He is not nearly so bound by former traditions, being able to make up his own rules, so to speak. The "higher-level" magicians, respectable magicians as if it were, of the Renaissance era could present God himself as a supreme magician who had spoken the world into existence with certain mysterious formula.

Thus the concern for autonomous power or influence, wielded over divine forces or forces of nature, would seem to be the connecting factor between magic and humanism. But what does “humanism” exactly mean, and how did this term originate? It has gotten today strong connotations of anti-clericalism, but in the Renaissance times, a person like Sir Thomas More (1478–1535) could consider himself a humanist of high standing. More was an English scholar and statesman whom pope John Paul II declared in 2000 to be a "heavenly Patron of Statesmen and Politicians” (John Paul II 2000); he was executed for his Roman Catholic religious scruples, essentially for not conceding the supremacy of the church to an earthly monarch, the king of England Henry VIII (Marius 1984). And this position would be the very opposite of anti-clericalism. And yet, More had displayed, especially at the beginning of his career, a more conventional kind of humanism, being an important follower of Erasmus, the Flemish leader of Northern (non-Italian) Humanism. For example, he had allowed himself a liberty to joke about the immoral behaviour of the Catholic clergymen, promoting for a moral

reformation that yet would not shake the foundations of the church. His *Utopia* was written at this time period. But when radical, doctrinal reformation began with Martin Luther's movement, More seemed to have been frightened into a reactionary position, and as he served as the Lord Chancellor of England in the early 1530s, this distinguished humanist acted like a good medieval inquisitor, sending missionaries of the Protestant cause to be burned on a stake.

It could be stated that Humanism can find growth-soil within Christianity itself, although it has often been skirting the realms of heresy. For example, it has been argued (e.g. Horton n.d.) that Pelagianism, a doctrine that denied the Original Sin and promoted the concept of moral independence of man and mankind was as much an origin of modern humanism as the Greco-Roman worldview or philosophy:

A rival heresy was promoted by the fourth century theologian Pelagius, an opponent of Augustine who denied original sin while strongly affirming free will, and believed that human beings could be good without divine intervention. More than any of the ancient Greek philosophers, Pelagius put an idea of human autonomy at the centre of his thinking. Though he is now almost forgotten, this heretical Christian theologian has a good claim to be seen as the true father of modern liberal humanism (Gray 2014).

2.5. *Prisca theologia, primordial wisdom*

It would be easy to think, reading orthodox Christian literature with its strict moral absolutism and overall sense of discriminating exclusion, that Christianity has always been hostile to the idea that other religions might contain some elements of beneficial truth. This simplistic stereotype has of course been very extensively challenged in modern times by liberal Christian theologians (FitzGerald 2004), but in counter-reaction, Christian conservatives for their part have seen such a broad-minded approach as virtual apostasy, or giving up genuinely exclusive Christian vision of salvation (e.g. North 1996). In this modern quarrel one can often miss the fact that since the days of the church fathers, not only liberal-minded Christian inter-faith ecumenicists, but also writers with strong conservative reputation, have been ready to concede that non-Christian worldviews had perceived many things correctly, although as if through a distorted prism. Already Apostle Paul himself had a famous episode of preaching to Greek pagan philosophers in Athens in the New Testament book of the "Acts of Apostles", and the famous early Christian writer Eusebius wrote a book that could be considered a classic of comparative mythology – *Praeparatio Evangelica* (Eusebius of Caesarea 1903).

Besides pagan myths, Christians of antiquity and the Middle Ages believed that natural world itself was like a "second book of God" that had been given to all people, both Christian and non-Christian, to discover God's hidden will in. This idea of the hidden book of Nature plays a great part in the worldview of Alchemy.

But interest towards possible universal truths hidden within mysterious past was not confined to just strictly Christian areas of concern. Many avant-garde intellectuals in early modern-era Europe were seeking some convenient way to comprehend new alien cultures that had lately appeared in Europe's sight. For example, Gottfried Leibniz, whose genius was shown in many different fields, sought throughout his career to find some kind of universal system for the benefit of mankind, and among other things, he was fascinated by the idea that the Chinese alphabet, as seen in the Taoist classic *I Ching*, could be a reflection of *Characteristica universalis*, the sought-for universal alphabet that could unite all men of the world (Perkins 2004: 141). Leibniz, who received his information about China from the Jesuit missionaries, wrote the first European commentary of the *I Ching* in 1703. In it, he made the argument that it proved the universality of binary numbers and theism, since the broken lines, the "0" or "nothingness", cannot become solid lines, the "1" or "oneness", without the intervention of God (Nelson 2011: 379, Smith 2008: 204).

These kinds of searches for mysterious primordial wisdom were influential at this time period: as I will discuss further in Chapter 5.1, Leibniz's great contemporary and rival, Isaac Newton, was even more intrigued by them than Leibniz himself. But the concept of primordial alphabet was taken still further by a character who was Christopher Marlowe's contemporary, and who might have given him inspiration for the character of Faustus. John Dee, the leading magus and occult expert of the Elizabethan England, a multi-talented Renaissance genius type who, besides all his spiritual and philosophical pursuits, also participated in the political building of the foundations of the British Empire (French 1972), which legacy would be continued by types like Sir Francis Bacon, whom I shall deal with in Chapter 3.

John Dee was a highly learned man who yet boasted of connections with higher powers; like fictional Faustus, he turned to occult forces after being disappointed by common worldly wisdom, and worldly politics (French 1972, Woolley 2001). In the early decades of Queen Elizabeth's reign, he played a significant part in the development of legitimate sciences like mathematics and navigation; he counted such great names as cartographer Gerardus Mercator

and astronomer Tycho Brahe as his friends and acquaintances. And yet, science of his day did not progress rapidly enough to satisfy his great ambition, and his influence waned due to intrigues in English court as well.

Like Faustus in Marlowe's play begins his fateful spiritual quest after being disappointed with traditional forms of learning, Dee began to seek communion with supernatural powers, mainly through angelic powers that supposedly dictates several books to him (Harkness 1999: 39-41). (Needless to say, Dee's numerous enemies did not consider these mysterious forces to be benevolent angels, but rather demonic powers. Here he clearly differs from Marlowe's Faustus, who is almost comically aware of the evil nature of his magical quest.) These angel-dictated books were written in the so-called "Enochian language" that, according to Dee's journals, God had used when speaking the world into existence (DeSalvo 2010: 8-9). Then Adam had used it, to name all things in existence. But as a result of the Fall, knowledge of this glorious language, hiding all treasures of both spiritual and worldly knowledge, had eroded away, with modern languages being just its poor degraded descendants (see Eco 1995: 7-18). However, the dream of recovering this once lost vehicle of perfect knowledge was, naturally enough, tempting to all ambitious thinkers of the Renaissance era. I would argue that we moderns are still enchanted with the basic idea of finding truth, and the meaning for our future, from the mysterious and hidden past. In the Discussion section, I will talk more about one of the creators of modern rationalist worldview who was still very much into such a mindset – Sir Isaac Newton.

The dream of perfect original language was closely connected to alchemy for various reasons, but perhaps the most important one was that one of the fundamental ideas of alchemistic worldview was the notion of *prima materia*, the ubiquitous starting material of this world of ours. Any alchemist who hoped to achieve his ambitious chemical or magical reactions or results had to comprehend and reach out for this original quintessence in order to succeed. One could say that any advance called for a radical step back first. *Theatrum Chemicum*, a compendium of alchemical writings that was put together around 1600, roughly at the time when Marlowe's play had been written, described thus the alchemical understanding of *prima materia*, expressing in startling terms the yearning for the kind of primordial, womb-like state of origin from which one could reach for refreshing strength and wisdom:

They have compared the "prima materia" to everything, to male and female, to the hermaphroditic monster, to heaven and earth, to body and spirit, chaos, microcosm, and the confused mass; it contains in itself all colors and potentially all metals; there is nothing more wonderful in the world, for it begets itself, conceives itself, and gives birth to itself. (Kugler 2002: 112)

But it was not only in the field of science where the ideal of returning for the sake of advancing was strong. As following chapters will show, they were possibly even stronger in the field of politics, empowering modern ideologies that helped to give birth to utopian societies in the United States and the Soviet Union alike.

3. *NEW ATLANTIS BY SIR FRANCIS BACON*

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the famous specimen of utopian literature, New Atlantis by Sir Francis Bacon. This work was written at the time when England was beginning its great colonization process in the New World, and I will show how Americas were seen as an opportunity as if to return to a state of primal innocence before Adam's fatal fall. Bacon's proto-scientific utopia had clear political overtones - its writer being a highly active politician himself - and I will consider how 'tabula rasa' or the possibility of starting all over again from a clean slate was part of Bacon's much-touted modernistic mind.

3.1. *The life of Sir Francis Bacon*

Bacon was born in 1561 at London (Adamson and Mitchell 1911: 135-152). He was a son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England; a position that according to a 1562 act of Parliament was "entitled to like place, pre-eminence, jurisdiction, execution of laws, and all other customs, commodities, and advantages as the Lord Chancellor" (The Lord Keeper Act 1562, 5 Eliz 1 c 18). His mother was Anne (Cooke) Bacon, the daughter of one of the pioneering humanist scholars of England, Sir Anthony Cooke (1504–1576), tutor to King Edward VI and a politician, who was a great-grandson of Sir Thomas Cooke, the Lord Mayor of London in 1462 (Lee 1885: 76-77).

Thus from both sides of his parentage, Bacon had roots in the pioneers of bourgeois class reaching positions of great power and high culture.

Young Francis Bacon received his first higher education in the University of Cambridge, where he was taught according to old-fashioned, medieval Latin curriculum. This training left Bacon dissatisfied with traditional methods of instruction and scientific research; even though he still venerated Aristotle, the medieval Aristotelian philosophy was discredited in his eyes. He spent few years in the continent (France, Italy and Spain), educating himself in more modern knowledge. Then, for the remaining decades of the 16th century, he became involved in politics, serving as an MP for various locations in the Parliament of England, becoming known as a liberal-minded reformer, which in that time period meant opposing old feudal privileges and usages.

Bacon's political career reached its heights during the reign of King James I (1603–1625). He was appointed in March 1617 as the temporary Regent of England (for a period of a month), and in 1618 as Lord Chancellor. On 12 July 1618 the king created Bacon Baron Verulam, of Verulam, in the Peerage of England (Adamson and Mitchell 1911). He had, however, made

many enemies during his rise to power, and was not innocent in the matters of corruption that were very widespread back then, and practically expected from people with profitable positions. There is no proof, however, that Bacon would have been an "exceptionally" corrupt politician or administrator. In any case, he was overthrown from his position in 1621, largely through the instigation of his old enemy Sir Edward Coke, who was himself one of the most celebrated jurists in English history. Bacon was spared from total humiliation; for example, he was not officially degraded and stripped from his titles of nobility. It was largely due to this change of fortune that during the last few years of his life, Bacon was thus relieved from his former pressing state duties, and could therefore spare time on his flights of fancy and intellect.



Figure 3. *Portrait of Sir Francis Bacon. Date 1617. Artist: Frans Pourbus the younger* [online] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pourbus_Francis_Bacon.jpg (30 April 2015)

Bacon was something of a "new man" – his father had been one of the bourgeois experts of the generation that saw the decisive downfall of old feudal order in the Tudor England. The famous Whig historian T.B. Macaulay explained the social significance of Bacon family background thus:

It is hardly necessary to say that Francis Bacon was the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, who held the great seal of England during the first twenty years of the reign of Elizabeth. The fame of the father

has been thrown into shade by that of the son. But Sir Nicholas was no ordinary man. He belonged to a set of men whom it is easier to describe collectively than separately, whose minds were formed by one system of discipline, who belonged to one rank in society, to one university, to one party, to one sect, to one administration, and who resembled each other so much in talents, in opinions, in habits, in fortunes, that one character, we had almost said one life, may, to a considerable extent, serve for them all. They were the first generation of statesmen by profession that England produced.

(...)

These men came from neither of the classes which had, till then, almost exclusively furnished ministers of state. They were all laymen; yet they were all men of learning; and they were all men of peace. They were not members of the aristocracy. They inherited no titles, no large domains, no armies of retainers, no fortified castles. Yet they were not low men, such as those whom princes, jealous of the power of a nobility, have sometimes raised from forges and cobblers' stalls to the highest situations. They were all gentlemen by birth. They had all received a liberal education (Macaulay 1880: 145-146).

In other words, Bacon was like a quintessential representative of an upwards-mobile middle class. His mind was not very strongly tied to the past, and thus he could dream without inhibitions about new worlds to conquer.

3.2. Outline of the novel

Bacon never actually finished the book he is today perhaps best known for in non-scientific circles – *New Atlantis*, subtitled as "Worke Unfinished" in the original 1627 edition that was published after his death (1626) by Dr. William Rawley, Bacon's literary executor. It was probably written around 1623, soon after Bacon had experienced the great disgrace in his public career.

Bacon's most important literary predecessors, whom he both refers to anonymously in the text, were the Greek philosopher Plato (427–347 BCE), from whom he borrowed the legend of Atlantis, and the Renaissance humanist Thomas More (1478–1535), whose 1516 book *Utopia* pioneered the birth of modern utopian literature. In my opinion, Bacon's novel is not a very harmonious whole compared to More's book – for example, it does not delve deeply into the political system of its ideal society of Bensalem, nor does it go into much detail concerning the island's geography and infrastructure. In spite of being himself well acquainted with the brutal realities of worldly power-struggle, Bacon consciously turned his utopia into a sort of isolated world of its own that did not have to struggle against hostile outsiders, so he did not have to dwell on the importance of martial courage like Thomas More often did.

New Atlantis (NA from now on) begins in a quite conventional manner for an utopian novel, depicting how the protagonist – who remains unnamed and undepicted, basically just a passive observer who does not even make much commentary on what he sees – starts sailing from Peru towards China and Japan through the South Sea. This actually seems to be one of the first times in Western literature that the South Seas were seen as a location of an earthly paradise, although there is not any Polynesian "local color" – or any truly exotic local color whatsoever – in Bacon's depiction of Bensalem's happy inhabitants. The sailors in distress reach an island with a good harbour and beautiful city. They are first put under a quarantine, but a friendly official in a priestly costume permits them to land on the condition of swearing that they are not pirates and have not "shed blood, lawfully, nor unlawfully within forty days past" (Bacon 1852: 272) they are allowed to come ashore.

After swearing that they do not have a sinister background or purposes, the crew is provided with healthy, exotic fruits. As they offer money in return, they are politely told that an official who takes rewards is considered as "twice paid" in their country. We might add that Bacon had personal experience at being a high-level official, and also at taking bribes. Eventually the narrator and his companions are fully permitted to land ashore, and then they are offered a meal that is said to be "better than any collegiate diet" in Europe (Bacon 1852: 274). The narrator implores his crew to remember the perilous situation from which they have been saved, and exhorts the men to refrain from revealing their vices and unworthiness, seeing what excellent people they have now encountered.

After three days' waiting period, a new official approaches them, wearing a white turban that bears a small red cross. He informs the crew that he is a Christian priest by profession, specially responsible for the House of Strangers, and that they are welcome as guests to this country, called "Bensalem", for an indefinite period time and with generous welfare benefits, to use a contemporary expression. The men are deeply moved and gratified and express their admiration for this wonderful generosity.

Next day this generous host again visits the crew and then begins the exposition of the utopian system of the Bensalem country. He first points out that Bensalem, because of its laws of secrecy, knows a lot more about the outside world than what outsiders know about it. The first thing that narrator and his friends would like to know is how the people of Bensalem came to be Christians. What follows is a somewhat convoluted story, a classic example of *deus ex machina* literary vehicle, of how through a miraculous apparition, a casket containing all the

books of the Bible ended up on the shores of Bensalem through the agency of apostle Bartholomew.

The next day the priest continues his lecture of the history of Bensalem. Here Bacon references in anonymous third person to his famous predecessor in utopian literature, the Greek philosopher Plato. His notion of the continent Atlantis is explained to have referred to America, and that ancient American Atlantean civilizations were eventually destroyed in the great flood. The priest-narrator explains that the primitive nature of America's inhabitants is due to them being about a thousand years younger than the rest of the world, slowly recovering from this disaster. Bensalem eventually lost its contact with American peoples, and become an isolated culture.

The great turning-point in the history of Bensalem was the reign of king Solamona, whom his people came to worship as an instrument of God and their lawgiver. This king did not imitate the example of Chinese in completely shutting out all foreign influences, which according to Bacon has made them "a curious, ignorant, fearful, foolish nation" (Bacon 1852: 285). In his system, foreigners were allowed to arrive into Bensalem, but to leave only under special conditions, and only few people wanted to leave such a paradise anyway. But the greatest deed of this ruler was the foundation of the "Solamona's House," which the people however came to call as "Salomon's House" according to the famous ancient king of Israel.

Then the priest goes on to describe how the Bensalemites engage in systematic spying or intelligence-work by searching out all that is worthwhile in the outside world and bringing the fruits to their own country. He ends his story with this comment:

But thus you see we maintain a trade not for gold, silver, or jewels, nor for silks, nor for spices, nor any other commodity of matter, but only for God's first creature, which was Light; to have light, I say, of the growth of all parts of the world (Bacon 1852: 287).

After this exposition, the crew members are free to wander around in the main city of Bensalem and its close environment, and make many observations about the ideal society they see. For example, they describe the festivities arranged in honor of good citizens who have had many offspring and promoted healthy family values and piety.

After a week has passed, the narrator meets a merchant who turns out to be a Jew named Joabin. We are told that unlike other Jews, the Jews of Bensalem are respectful towards Christianity and loyal to the country. The narrator discusses the family festivities with Joabin,

who points out that there are no broken homes or prostitution in Bensalem, and dwells on the sacred, mystical character of marriage. The narrator ends up recognizing that the righteousness of Bensalem is greater than that of Europe.

Next we are introduced to one of Fathers of the House of Salomon, who wears gorgeous, highly symbolic robes of honor. He begins a long narration which forms the final part of the NA, ending abruptly. It might be said that NA ends just when it should really be starting, as the new official begins to dwell in detail on the mysterious experiments of the House of Salomon. He begins by saying that

The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes, and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible (Bacon 1852: 297).

The following descriptions could be probably described as primitively scientific or proto-scientific. The House is not a pure laboratory, but is also engaged in hymns and services amidst their more worldly activities. Some discoveries of the House are also kept as esoteric secrets, and are not divulged to outsiders.

The text ends as this catalogue of experiments and activities of the House of Salomon is concluded.

3.3. The beginning of English New World colonization

Bacon wrote his utopian visions just at the time when England was beginning to join in the colonization of the New World. The atmosphere of the time period was ripe for bold innovations, while also recalling and being inspired by things of the mysterious past, like Plato's Atlantis (Platon 1982). Even cold-blooded matters like business ventures and imperial conquest became easily associated with sentiments of romantic adventure, and moreover, with an openly religious quest for a new and better world.

The discovery and colonization of the Americas had been almost entirely monopolized by Roman Catholic Iberian nations until the beginning of the 17th century. Already during their expansion, one can observe that the unprecedented invasion of entirely new continents inspired peoples' religious and utopian tendencies. Christopher Columbus himself composed towards the end of his life a "Book of Prophecies" (*El Libro de las Profecías*) showing that he too felt that the world as it then existed was about to end, or at least to be fundamentally

transformed. He had these kind of expectations of what should happen before the end of the world and the second coming of Christ:

1. Christianity must be spread throughout the world (Delaney 2012: xv).
2. The Garden of Eden must be found; it was a common belief in the Middle Ages that the Biblical Garden of Eden must have been on the top of a crag or mountaintop so that it would not have been affected by the first destruction of the world by flood. Upon arriving in Venezuela in 1498, Columbus may have thought that the verdant crags he encountered there bore resemblance to the Garden of the Old Testament (Delaney 2012: 172-173).
3. A Last Crusade must take back the Holy Land from the Muslims, and that when Christ comes, he will come back in the place he lived and died: Jerusalem (Delaney 2012: xvi).
4. A Last World Emperor must be chosen - Columbus had chosen, at least in his mind, that the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, would fulfill this position due to the vast imperial power and religious conviction these Spanish rulers claimed. A last world emperor would be necessary to lead the aforementioned crusade against the Muslims and to greet Christ at Jerusalem once the previous steps had been completed (Delaney 2012: 70).

Clearly Columbus saw himself playing an important role in this positive-minded apocalyptic scheme. This conviction, both in its purely religious and secularized forms, has been perhaps the most potent part of the ideology of “American exceptionalism”, to the point of being criticized for showing messianic fanaticism in earthly politics.

The Spanish conquests in the new world, by the famous *Conquistadors*, are today largely seen as mere cynical plundering excursions – brutal colonialism committed under the pretence of spreading the Catholic faith – and undoubtedly this element was often present. But one should not fall into the opposite extreme and assume that this conquest-justified narrative was entirely spurious either. For example, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of the veterans of the army of Hernán Cortés that had conquered the Aztec Empire in Mexico, wrote as an old man in his memoirs decades later, defending the legitimacy of the conquistador cause:

Since the destruction of idolatry, by the will of God, and with his holy aid, and the good fortune and sacred christianity of the most christian Emperor Don Carlos of glorious memory, and of our monarch and most fortunate sovereign, the invincible King of Spain, our lord Don Philip his dear and much beloved son, to whom may God grant years, and much increase of dominion, to be enjoyed by him during his fortunate and holy life, and to be transmitted from him to his posterity, there have been baptized in this country, all the natives, whose souls formerly were sunk and lost in the infernal pit. At

present also as there are here many reverend fathers of the different orders, they go through the country preaching and baptizing, whereby the holy Evangelists are firmly planted in the hearts of the natives, who confess every year, and those sufficiently advanced in the knowledge of the faith comulgate.

(...)

Let it be also remembered, that in Mexico there is a university wherein are studied and learned grammar, theology, rhetoric, logic, philosophy, and other sciences. There is also a printing press for books both in Latin and Romance, and in this college they graduate as licentiates and doctors; to which I might add many other instances to enhance the value of these countries, such as the mines of silver, and other discoveries, whereby prosperity and grandeur redound to the mother country. (Díaz del Castillo 1800: 497, 501).

Usually this kind of apologetic for imperialism is associated with the Protestant North America and its narrative of "manifest destiny" (Burns, 1957), but one can see that the Roman Catholic culture was also capable of such sentiments. They too had the idea of creating a new glorious civilization in the new world, but they largely lost the political struggle to the Protestant Anglo powers, and their ambition was thus largely discredited in the Western public imagination, at least in the sense that it did not create such an alluring story of irresistibly forward-marching progress and success as in the United States.

The English colonization of North America proceeded in two basic forms; the first started in Jamestown (named after King James, the sovereign who Bacon was serving), in the modern state of Virginia. From the Virginian settlement, the southern slave-states of the future United States were born. They too had a great sense of pioneering conquest and enthusiastic settlement, but in some ways this Cavalier civilization always remained more "secular" than its great Yankee rival that was founded in the north. In the Puritan colonies of New England, the religious, and afterwards pseudo-religious or crypto-religious sense of Americanism could be seen in its most open or blatant form (Williams 1987: 11-12, Fischer 1991: 23-24, 897-898).

The English Puritans who settled in the new world originally departed from their homeland because they were dissatisfied with the state of Britain's Anglican state church. This outfit did not have the exalted sense of idealism that these radical reformers would have wanted to see - originally founded by secular royal power, under Henry VIII, largely to provide a divorce to His Majesty. The Anglican Church always had a strongly practical sense of morality, and it also was very loyal to the old earthly order, being very dependent on state support. The Puritan sectarians, on the other hand, had risen in the late 16th and early 17th century without any official state support; in fact, they were often persecuted. But still they grew in earthly power as well as in spiritual enthusiasm, for they attracted predominantly the most

enterprising elements of English society, like urban bourgeoisie. This has caused some reductionist-minded Marxist writers consider the Puritan movement to be, more or less, just a vehicle for the ambitions of the new rising commercial middle class (Hill 1964), but one might note that no such Puritan movement was born in the Renaissance Italy that pioneered that kind of social transformation.

And yet, there is a clear parallel between the English social conflict and the Puritan emigration; royal supremacy and the supremacy of the official Anglican Church went hand in hand. So as King Charles I Stuart began to assume absolutist powers in the late 1620s, and to force the Puritan sectarians to conform to the Anglican church discipline, the more fanatical, or morally committed, elements of the Puritan movements decided to head for the unknown wilderness to build a new society there that would be more to their liking, and better suited to glorify God.

The term "shining city on the hill," which has later become an almost cliché-like depiction of the American secular-messianist ideal, comes originally from the New Testament, where Jesus Christ addresses His disciples:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house (Matthew 5:14, NIV version).

This describes how true Christian disciples are meant to be a glorious example for the whole world to behold and imitate. America's history shows that this notion was very susceptible to secularizing re-interpretation, where America itself invested in with semi-messianic moral aura – that even apart from its Christian heritage, it is somehow an exceptional country that the rest of the world could and should find special inspiration from. The Puritan leader John Winthrop first invoked this trope in 1630, in a sermon he composed while on board of a ship carrying Puritan immigrants into the new Massachusetts Bay Colony:

For wee must consider that wee shall be as a citty upon a hill. The eies of all people are upon us. Soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our God in this worke wee haue undertaken, and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a by-word through the world (Winthrop 1838: 47).

Moreover, the Old Testament narrative of Israel's exodus to the new Promised Land was taken quite seriously indeed by the early Puritans, to the point of sometimes considering the

Indian natives of America as equivalents of the pagan Canaanites whom God had ordered the Israelites to conquer and destroy.

3.4. Americas as a "world before the fall"

It would seem that the cultural or literary trope of "Noble Savage" was largely born in the context of American exploration and colonization. Even though there had been some precedents for this genre in ancient writers, who could occasionally idolize barbarians in order to indirectly criticize their own societies, like the Roman historian Tacitus did with the German tribes, the discovery of America brought a whole new spectrum to the view of European writers, who could project their hopes and dreams into this tabula rasa -kind of continent.

For example, a 17th century Dutch radical and pioneer of republicanism, Franciscus van den Enden, who started out his intellectual career as a Jesuit and ended up dying on a scaffold in the 1670s at Paris after having been involved in a revolutionary conspiracy against the "Sun King" Louis XIV, projected quite directly, even naively, his own ideals on the natives of the New World:

That Van den Enden also influenced Ploekhoy emerges from the latter's *Short and Clear Project* (1662), written to advertise the attractions of the new society, a text echoing much of the Van den Enden's pamphlet. The foundation of Ploekhoy's new commonwealth was to be 'equality for all' firmly anchored in democratic decision-making based on voting, with major decisions requiring a two-thirds majority of free male citizens (Ploekhoy 1659). Furthermore, this was equality which dissolved not only confessional but also racial barriers, for Van den Enden and Ploekhoy held decidedly radical views regarding the Indians of New Netherland, a noble people, they insisted, without affectation, who eschew utterly 'telling lies, swearing, slandering and other such like unrestrained passions' and are thoroughly worthy of emulation by Europeans (Klever 1992). Here again, Van den Enden foreshadows Lahontan and Rousseau (Mertens 1994). Indeed, there can be no clearer instance of the revolutionary resonance of the cult of the 'noble savage' which, from Van den Enden on, was to be one of the *leitmotifs* of Europe's radical philosophical tradition. In his *Free Political Institutions*, Van den Enden weaves this into a general theory of the rationality and equality of all peoples - except only for the Hottentots of South Africa, should it prove true as alleged, he says, that they lack human reason (Van Den Enden 1665). As for the Indians of North America, Van den Enden, undeterred by his never having laid eyes on them, confidently attributes to them an indomitable and exemplary love of naturalness, freedom and equality (Israel 2001: 179-180).

3.5. Bacon's proto-Masonic utopia

Francis Bacon was a "renaissance genius" who was involved in many different areas of culture – there have even been eccentric legends about the plays of Shakespeare having been

written by him. One could say that he represented the social strata that nourished the rise of Freemasonry afterwards. The Masonic movement, in spite of its early royal and aristocratic connotations, saw its greatest historical significance as the avant-garde or vanguard of rising middle class in the early modern era. Freemasonry upheld egalitarian ideals within circle of its adherents, or at least the ideal of meritocracy – personal merits of a man being more important than his hereditary rank or title.

Bacon's mention of the "Solomon's House" in the *New Atlantis*, naturally connects to the temple-mysticism that the Freemasons are famous for. Masonry inculcates a strongly optimistic worldview where mankind is like a temple that is built one block at the time. The alchemistic speculations that Bacon also indulged in have the same symbolical import: the famous concept of turning a base metal like lead into gold was a metaphor for turning the human beings in their base condition into golden spiritual perfection.

Freemasonry also displays strong faith in modern technology, and actually the whole movement itself represents a quite brazen mixture of ancient, or at least pseudo-archaic, mythology and faith in progress. In Masonic theology, progress and change are not feared but welcomed - indeed, those theological traditions that emphasize the sinfulness and limitations of man and mankind have been labelled by it as "clericalism" or other similar hostile labels.

The presence of the Jew Joabin in Bacon's utopia is significant as well. Marsha Schuchard has speculated on the possible real-life inspirations of this character. Bacon might have modelled Joabin after a brilliant mining engineer Joachim Gaunse, who had great influence on England's copper mining industry, but was faced with anti-Jewish prejudices (Schuchard 2002: 384).

One could argue that there is a "proto-Masonic" atmosphere in Bacon's utopia. Most modern people, having been so used to religious ecumenism and tolerance (that actually became perceived virtues largely through Masonic activism) may not even realize how radical a step it was even to allow open Jews to participate in the society of Bensalem. In England, the Jews were not allowed to be openly present until the late 17th century – long after Bacon's death.

It was typical of Masonic theology to emphasize the "Fatherhood of God" of the whole mankind, to the extent that it soon began to clash with the bounds of Christian orthodoxy. Masonic piety was constantly seeking to bring theological doctrines to a manageable or handy minimum that good people of all cultures could mutually agree upon; the sort of intolerance,

or sense of distinction, that traditional or Biblical Christianity inevitably brings along with it – the separation of men into Christians and non-Christians – was inevitably clashing with the optimistic and ecumenical Masonic viewpoint that there was some kind of positive light to be found in almost all religions of the world (Perkins 1960: 54-55). I would venture to suggest, in a more cynical spirit, that Masonry could also be seen as a convenient ideology for the ambitious bourgeoisie that did not want religious restrictions to interfere with the commerce and other transactions between nations – modern people may not realize how much religious differences hampered the development of money-making in pre-modern times; trading with infidels and heretics could be strictly forbidden, to mention just one example.

We could say that America, as a vision of technologically perfected and religiously tolerant material utopia, was in the eyes of its admirers like a fulfilment of Bacon's New Atlantis. In Chapter 5.3 I will discuss the connections between the Americana mythos, Freemasonry, and similar Baconian elements further.

4. REVOLUTIONARY THEORIES OF GERRARD WINSTANLEY

In Chapter 4, I examine the thought of perhaps the most radical of England's 17th century revolutionaries, Gerrard Winstanley, who wrote various piece of mystical radical literature at the height of the English Revolution. Winstanley has been seen by some as the forerunner of Karl Marx in his views on private property and metaphysics, and I will show how he also had his own myth of returning to the past where modern forms of corruption had not yet been known, suggesting possible similarities between the Marxist view on the existence of mankind's original state of "Primitive Communism".

4.1. Life and writings of Winstanley

We know only little about the early life of Gerrard Winstanley, but he has been identified with a person who was baptized in 1609 at Wigan in Lancashire. Winstanley later wrote that he was ‘never brought up to beg or work for day wages.’ He had some amount of literary education, but did not follow the usual course of clever middle-class boys by entering the universities or clerical career. In the early 1640s, he tried to make his living as a merchant, trading in articles like linen cloth, but the chaos of the Civil War era bankrupted him, and left him soured at the cheating ways of merchant world. He was forced to seek more and more menial forms of labour to sustain himself; thus the social background of his radicalism was that of an educated person who could not find his place in the system of privilege (Hill 2006: 10-12).

In 1648–1649, the English Revolution entered its most radical phase. Oliver Cromwell’s New Model Army and its Independent soldiers took control over the Long Parliament of England in the so-called “Pride’s Purge” (the only military coup d’état in the English history) and forced the remaining so-called Rump Parliament to sign the death warrant of king Charles I at the beginning of 1649. The dispersal of the House of Lords and the proclamation of the republic followed (Underdown 1971, Carpenter 2007).

At this time period, when the most radical elements of the English Revolution were at power, before Oliver Cromwell’s formal assumption of dictatorial powers, Gerrard Winstanley too had personally reached the turning point of ideological radicalization. He had once enjoyed certain bourgeois respectability, but now he had been thrust down by social chaos into the humble position of an agricultural worker. After the king had been executed, time seemed ripe for even bolder social experiments, and Winstanley considered the abolition of private land ownership to be a logical continuation of the abolition of kingship.

In April 1649, Winstanley was a prominent member of a group of people who called themselves “True Levellers” or “Diggers.” At St. George’s Hill in the Surrey County, the Diggers entered an uncultivated common land and began to grow vegetables there. In confident utopian spirit, they called people to join them and claimed that within ten days, there would be several thousands of them. The Diggers published a manifesto, partly authored by Winstanley, that was entitled “*The True Levellers Standard ADVANCED: OR, The State of Community opened, and Presented to the Sons of Men*” (Winstanley et al. 1649). Here is an example of that manifesto’s rhetoric that was typical in its heavy use of Biblical metaphors and jargon to describe the present-day social conflict:

Therefore, if thou wilt find Mercy, *Let Israel go Free*; break in pieces quickly the Band of particular Propriety, dis-own this oppressing Murder, Oppression and Thievery of Buying and Selling of Land, owning of landlords, and paying of Rents, and give thy Free Consent to make the Earth a Common Treasury, without grumbling; That the yonger Brethren may live comfortably upon Earth, as well as the Elder: That all may enjoy the benefit of their Creation (Winstanley *et al.* 1649).

The English Revolution, however, never reached such levels of violent radicalization as the French Revolution, let alone the Russian Revolution, did. Even though free-church Independents had acquired considerable amount of power via the New Model Army, the English society was still, even after the overthrow of the royal power, largely controlled by the landowning elite (Underdown 1971). Local landowners first sought to employ the New Model Army to evict the Diggers, but its commander, Sir Thomas Fairfax, did not consider the Diggers to constitute a danger, and advised the landowners to resort to courts instead. (This in spite of Fairfax not having great popular sympathies; he later played a significant part in the Restoration of royal power in England.)

The landowners indeed next resorted to legal, and less than legal harassment. The Lord of the Manor Francis Drake (not related to the famous pirate-privateer of the Elizabethan era) had gangs of men target the Diggers with beatings and arson attempts. Finally in August 1649, the Diggers were brought to court, where they were not allowed to speak in their own defence, and were found guilty of being “Ranters,” a mysterious pantheistic sect that seems to have hold antinomian or anarchistic ideas. Having lost the court case, the Diggers were now again threatened with the eviction by the army, and therefore evacuated St. George’s Hill, and local freeholders were quite relieved to see them leave. This unpleasant experience probably influenced Winstanley’s hatred of the legal profession – in his utopian society, the lawyer profession is abolished.

The following few years Winstanley spent writing political pamphlets that he is today best known for, culminating in the 1652 that was aimed to the Lord Protector Cromwell himself. After this final effort, Winstanley disappears from known history, and the circumstances of the end of his life are not clear. It is generally assumed that after the royal Restoration, Winstanley joined the Quakers (Hill 2006: 33), who themselves were originally quite militantly egalitarian or levelling sect that then adopted a more quietist and "respectable" image to avoid persecution.

4.2. His background in the antinomian Ranter-Digger movement

The great Protestant Reformation of the 16th century was a revolutionary, transformative period of time for the European culture. And as usual in such times of radical upheaval, there arose sects that defied common mores and dreamed of re-making the world more into their liking. "Mainstream reformers" like Martin Luther or John Calvin were, while struggling against the Roman Catholic Church, quite worried about the appearance of various sects whose ideology seemed to well surpass the boundaries of godly and orderly reformation they themselves sought – in other words, enthusiasts who would take this religious revolution further than they themselves would have wanted.

It is a common viewpoint that Western European civilization underwent decisive secularization in the time period that roughly spans from the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia to the beginning of the 18th century. During this time period, European thought began to change to a more and more "rational" direction, less dependent on theology and more openly worldly in its interests (Israel 2001: 3-5, Hazard 2013: xiii-xiv). This change of attitude applied to both defenders and critics of the social order. For example, rational arguments for maintaining the state religion, like the coldly pragmatic reasons presented by philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his famous book *Leviathan*, gradually took the place of the former, unabashedly theocratic justifications for the existence of state churches. And the social critics, for their part, no longer presented themselves literally as religious prophets crying in the wilderness, but began to resort to more sober philosophical argumentation (Shafarevich 1980: 80-81).

It has been argued that at least in a certain sense, the English Revolution was not the first modern political revolution but the last "war of religion" (Collinson 1988: 127-134). Decidedly pre-modern phenomena, like street preachers demanding to the re-arranging of the

society according to their private spiritual visions, were last seen on a large scale in the 1640s and 1650s revolutionary England. Winstanley was a significant representative of this "last hurrah" of revolution wearing the grab of the prophet, even as he also symbolized transition to more secular and utilitarian approach of progressive politics.

Norman Cohn argued in his book *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* that during the upheavals of the English Revolution, the world saw the last great flourishing of such mystical revolutionary cults that had been present strongly in the underground culture of the Late Middle Ages. Back then, sects like the Brethren of the Free Spirit had presented an unorthodox challenge to the mainstream religion – i.e., the Roman Catholic Church – and also the secular powers that were thoroughly mixed with ecclesiastical institutions (Cohn 1957: 163-176). In the 1640s England, these kind of underground sects had the opportunity to employ modern technology like printing press, which means that we have the "own words" of these radical sectarians – in the Middle Ages, all information we have about such types are the words of their enemies, establishment writers who sought to destroy them and often erase the very memory of their existence. But the printed works of English radicals like Winstanley have remained for us to study (Cohn 1957: 289).

If the Diggers sect that Winstanley belonged to could be considered as a proto-Communist movement, the Ranters might perhaps be seen as a proto-Anarchist one. Instead of having systematic visions of properly ordered new society like Winstanley did, the Ranters were apparently mostly occupied, or best known for, in violating social conventions with unruly behavior, thinking that the power of Law (both divine law and earthly law) had been abolished for truly enlightened saints such as themselves. They had no proper leaders, and were overall too individualistic to organize themselves for effective collective action (Hawes 1996: 25-50).

4.3. Winstanley's primitivist vision

In 1066, the Norman forces of William the Conqueror had conquered Saxon England. This was a great change in the British history, as one can readily see already the transformation of the English language; it changed from almost purely Germanic Old English into Middle English that already much resembled the English language of today, adopting great amounts

of Romance words from French and Latin (Emerson 1915). The Norman occupation of England, so to speak – it would be anachronistic to talk about "French occupation" – could be said to have lasted for roughly three centuries; it was not until 1362 that "Pleading in English Act" made English, instead of French, as the official language of England's legal system. Still today, one can observe that more lower-class one's English dialect is, the more one uses purely Saxon words – the use of words of French or Latin origin, on the other hand, gives connotation of upper-class sophistication. The Normans largely formed the nobility that ruled England's destinies, even forming in Scotland and Ireland further branches of Norman nobility, and it was typical for the oldest and most prestigious British families to draw their roots to William the Conqueror's late 11th century "Domesday Book" that was composed to help the Normans authorities properly tax the conquered realm of England (Wood 2011: 146). The folk legends about a Saxon resistance hero Robin Hood, whom one could consider to have been a "social bandit" in the Hobsbawmian sense, are today known all over the world. Mythical Robin Hood was like a defender of the dispossessed English people toiling under the Norman Yoke that had been imposed upon their unwilling backs.

The Norman lords of England long felt culturally closer to France, and continental Latin higher civilization in general, than relatively primitive Saxon England. The famous Whig historian T.B. Macaulay described eloquently this lack of English identification among the first generations of Anglo-Norman ruling class:

The Conqueror and his descendants to the fourth generation were not Englishmen: most of them were born in France: they spent the greater part of their lives in France: their ordinary speech was French: almost every high office in their gift was filled by a Frenchman: every acquisition which they made on the Continent estranged them more and more from the population of our island. (...) Had the Plantagenets, as at one time seemed likely, succeeded in uniting all France under their government, it is probable that England would never have had an independent existence. Her princes, her lords, her prelates, would have been men differing in race and language from the artisans and the tillers of the earth. The revenues of her great proprietors would have been spent in festivities and diversions on the banks of the Seine. The noble language of Milton and Burke would have remained a rustic dialect, without a literature, a fixed grammar, or a fixed orthography, and would have been contemptuously abandoned to the use of boors. No man of English extraction would have risen to eminence, except by becoming in speech and habits a Frenchman (Macaulay 1906: 15).

But the lords of Normandy eventually lost the contest with the Capetian dynasty for the crown of France, and were gradually driven away from the continent. Thus they were forced more and more to rely on their possessions in England as a source of their power. The decisive period in the Anglicization of the formerly Norman ruling class might have been the era of the Hundred Years War between England and France (1337–1453). Leading Saxon soldiers into

battle against the Frenchmen, the Norman lords began to more and more identify as Englishmen themselves (Thomas 2005).

During the 1640s English Revolution, the idea of Norman Yoke became a powerful ideological tool for radical revolutionaries. It was imagined that the pre-1066 Saxon England had been free of the feudal system of hierarchy and oppression that had been imposed upon it afterwards (Hill 2006: 123-124). While it is true that the Normans represented the feudal organization of society in its "purest" or most efficient form, the reality of primitive Saxon times was not quite so rosy as the 17th century radicals fancied. This, however, did not matter very much as the Saxon times were merely of antiquarian interest for the political activists of the Caroline era, whereas the Norman legacy was still very strong in the society surrounding them. It was surely tempting to think that all the unjust and pernicious things that troubled English society could be solved with one strike of repudiating the Norman Yoke.

Employing theological language was a practically unavoidable method for the revolutionaries of the early modern era, for that was the only language that broad masses of the people could readily understand and support. Any higher secular learning would have been jarringly alien to their everyday experience, whereas Biblical imagery, with more or less creative twisting, could be readily applied to their grievances – without even mentioning the personal religious convictions of the revolutionaries themselves (Hill 2006: 35).

Christopher Hill sought to make us appreciate Winstanley's apocalyptic style of rhetoric by comparing him to poets like William Blake; that Winstanley's words should not be regarded with wooden literalism, but understood as flexible metaphors for current events (Hill 2006). For example, "elder brothers" like Cain and Esau function as symbols for members of the oppressive ruling class, while younger brothers like Abel and Jacob symbolize the oppressed low people. In Hill's opinion, "It is worth taking a little trouble to break down the barriers of Winstanley's biblical language, just as it is worth penetrating through the mists of Hegelian jargon to understand the writings of the early Marx." (Hill 2006: 54-55). The figure of Christ represents the fullness of human potential – such perfection that could be reached here on earth, and not in the hereafter. Hill basically believes that Winstanley did not take Biblical figures much more seriously than his supposed rationalistic modern critics. This, however, could be Hill reading his own scepticism onto Winstanley.

Whatever the case might have been, Winstanley did radically re-interpret Biblical prophecies, in a manner that orthodox Christians might well consider as blasphemous, as Winstanley

basically made the "Second Coming of Christ" to symbolize the rising of common people, who were collectively like Christ, or a manifestation of divine Christ-spirit.

The following excerpt is from Winstanley's propaganda pamphlet *A New-year's Gift for the Parliament and Army*, and in it we can observe that he seems to regard "Jesus Christ" not so much as a historical person but as the "spirit of love" *within* the revolutionary Levellers themselves, threatening their enemies:

The time is very near that the people generally shall loathe and be ashamed of your kingly power, in your preaching, in your laws, in your counsels, as now you are ashamed of the Levellers. I tell you Jesus Christ who is that powerful spirit of love is the head Leveller: and *as he is lifted up, he will draw all men after him*, and leave you naked and bare, and make you ashamed in yourselves. His appearance will be with power; therefore kiss the son, O ye rulers of the earth, lest his anger fall upon you. The wounds of conscience within you from him shall be sharper than the wounds made by your sword, he shook heaven and earth when Moses's law was cast out, but he will shake up heaven and earth now to purpose much more, and nothing shall stand but what is lovely. Be wise, scorn not the counsel of the poor, lest you be whipped with your own rod.

This great Leveller, Christ our King of righteousness in us, shall cause men to beat their swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, and nations shall learn war no more; and every one shall delight to let each other enjoy the pleasures of the earth, and shall hold each other no more in bondage: then what will become of your power? (Hill 2006: 204).

4.4. Forerunner of Marx and Engels

It is not very clear what the fundamental character of the 1640s and 1650s English Revolution exactly was. Some have seen it as the first modern social revolution, the others as the last "War of Religion." Many thinkers have indeed argued that the English Revolution has its one foot in the pre-modern past and another in the modern world. In his book *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, Patrick Collinson argued that there were three main factors that caused the English Civil War; 1) the clash between different factions of the English ruling class that were represented by the King and by the Parliament, 2) by conflicts of local nature and 3) the impact of religion, which was represented by the radical Puritan party on the one hand, and the autocratic High Church Anglican party that supported royal autocracy. According to Collinson, the more "earthly" issues of social conflict in the 17th century English society might have been solved without bloodshed and institutional upheaval, but the presence of religion made even the attitude towards more secular issues more fanatical, unbending and serious-minded (Collinson 1988: 132-136).

Like the great French Revolution in the 1790s, the English revolution in the 1640s got started with relative moderation and then got steadily more radical and militant; and then after

reaching the high-pitch of revolutionary enthusiasm or fanaticism, it experienced its "Thermidor" phase as the moderates re-asserted themselves. Like Napoleon later ended the radical phase of the French Revolution, Oliver Cromwell imposed his military power over the more radical elements (Gardiner 1901: 228-229).

According to a widespread Marxist idea, great revolutions are possible only when the ruling classes have become divided – like for example, the imperialist powers were during the First World War, making the Bolshevik takeover in Russia possible. In England around 1640, the two main branches of British ruling class – King Charles I and the aristocratic or oligarchic Parliament of England – had ended up on a collision course, as the Parliament refused to provide the money the king needed for putting down an uprising in Scotland before the monarch would address their various grievances, that were mostly connected to his attempt to rule alone as an absolute Monarch (Carpenter 2007).

The English Parliament first sought to starve the absolutist strivings of King Charles by refusing to grant him the money needed to wage war against his rebelling Scottish subjects – Scotland had risen in the late 1630s, largely inspired by religious fanaticism, against the attempts of King Charles and William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the head of the Anglican Church of England, to impose their supremacy on the Church of Scotland. The radical Puritans of England largely sympathized with this Scottish resistance against autocratic royal interference, and took full advantage of the King's troubles to force him share power with the Parliament. The King was forced to summon the so-called "Long Parliament", with which he performed increasingly bitter negotiations.

The most radical elements of Puritan parliamentarians in the House of Commons, who represented Presbyterian middle-class interests, presented the so-called "Root and Branch petition" to demand the abolition of Episcopal system of church government:

The humble petition of many of his majesty's subjects in and about the city of London, and several counties of the kingdom. Sheweth,

That whereas the government of archbishops and lord bishops, deans, and archdeacons, &c., with their courts and ministrations in them, have proved prejudicial and very dangerous both to the Church and Commonwealth, they themselves having formerly held that they have their jurisdiction or authority of human authority, till of these later times, being further pressed about the unlawfulness, that they have claimed their calling immediately from the Lord Jesus Christ, which is against the laws of this kingdom, and derogatory to his majesty and his state royal. (...) We therefore most humbly pray, and beseech this honourable assembly, the premises considered, that the said government with all its dependencies, roots and branches, may be abolished, and all laws in their behalf made void, and the government according to God's word may be rightly placed amongst us (Gee and Hardy 1896: 537-538).

In effect, they demanded that the Church of England should become much more democratic, or at least less aristocratic, in its fundamental structure. Until that time, since the Middle Ages, high church officials had been as good as noblemen, and were strongly represented in the House of Lords. By demanding the abolition of Bishops, the Puritan opposition sought to remove one of the strongest spiritual or ideological supports of the absolute kingship.

The Root and Branch Petition could be seen as the ultimate form of resistance that Presbyterian "respectable Puritans" were prepared to go for, within the bounds of peacetime conditions and formal legal restrictions. The coming civil conflict paved way for much more radical proposals, the ultimate example of which could be seen in Winstanley's writings.

In the Discussion section (5.5), I will delve deeper into what kind of revolutionary radicalism Winstanley promoted, with comparisons to its ancient and modern counterparts.

5. ECHOES OF THE PAST AMONG THE PIONEERS OF THE FUTURE

In this Discussion section, I seek to elaborate upon the views presented in previous chapters; my goal is to show how these phenomena that were forming the basis of this modern world we are today living in, are still operating and giving birth to new cultural mutations in the age of interactive social media, and to offer some psychological insights that this topic has given me. The more I have pondered about these issues, the more aware I have become that this “modern” worldview of ours is a sometimes unstable mixture of things old and new, instead of simple linear development to better or worse condition. The ancient past can often serve as a springboard to further leap into the future, for better or worse.

5.1. Alchemy and the birth of modern science

Still a century after the age of Christopher Marlowe and John Dee, as described in the Chapter 2, nostalgic yearning for the past could still be a strongly creative ideology, inspiring futuristic advancements of learning and social progress. Quest for primordial wisdom had not yet been dismissed as popular superstition, or condescendingly regarded as merely primitive, and thus crudely deficient, form of understanding the world.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1726) is one of the iconic figures of the modernity and Enlightenment era. He is appreciated as the scientist who "created" firm Laws of Nature that illuminated the seeming chaos that reigned before him. As the famous English poet Alexander Pope wrote for his grave as an epitaph:

*Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light.*

Newton's lifetime co-incided with the aforementioned fundamental transition period in the intellectual history of mankind that eventually transformed all cultures of the earth, as a well-organized scientific worldview pushed away the more or less superstitious former traditional world of ideas that included things like witch-burnings. (Sweden and Finland experienced their worst witch-craze as late as the latter half of the 17th century (Guillou 2004).) 18th century Enlightenment propagandists like Voltaire sang the praises of Newton as a man who

perhaps more than any other individual else had made possible the advent of new glorious reign of reason (Shank 2008).

And yet, the ironic fact remains that Isaac Newton was deeply interested in such metaphysical subjects that superficial modern rationalists would scoff at, like the Biblical eschatological speculations and occultist alchemy; one area where these two fields of interest met each other was in the study of the "sacred geometry" of king Solomon's temple – how this complex was supposedly deliberately built as a symbolic miniature model of the physical universe, reflecting its dimensions and chronological phases. Freemasonry, a movement that somehow managed to combine archaic mysteries and avant-garde progressivism in politics, was very interested in the symbolism of Jerusalem temple, even though there is no evidence that Newton would have been a Freemason. The brotherhood was still in the process of formation during his lifetime, and its ideas were simply "in the air", forming a part of the intellectual atmosphere of the time period.

In 1936, Isaac Newton's unpublished works were auctioned off and bought by the famous economist John Maynard Keynes. They had been deemed unfit to publish in Newton's own times, and caused something of a sensation when re-surfaced in the 1930s. According to the Newtonian scholar Sarah Dry, out of about ten million words in the papers left by him, about one million dealt with alchemical materials (Mann 2014). Moreover, at the time of his death, Isaac Newton had 169 books on the topic of alchemy in his personal library, which for its time was considered one of the finest alchemical libraries in the world (White 1999: 117).

Thus we can observe that even the quintessential scientist Newton was indeed a true transitional figure, sharing the historical and cultural landscape with Marlowe, Bacon and Winstanley, who had one foot in the old world and another in the new, without seeming like a schizophrenically dysfunctional person, to put it mildly. Furthermore, Jonathan I. Israel has argued that Newton was not such a radical Enlightenment activist to begin with, and that the basic nature of his system amounted to a respectable centrist compromise; according to him, Newtonianism was promoted after the 1720s and 1730s, following the collapse of the Cartesian paradigm, as a tidy alternative to the most radical kind of Enlightenment that was represented by irreligious Spinozian philosophy (Israel 2001: 519-520).

5.2. Freemasonry as the first self-made virtual community

The United States of America was the first modern state – perhaps the first state in the world history – that officially separated religion and state in its 1787 Constitution that is still in force today. One might not easily conceive just how radical and unprecedented a step this was, largely because the Liberal revolutionaries who were the "Founding Fathers" of America did not openly assault organized religion, like the fiery anti-clericalists of continental Europe did. Instead, they systematically turned religion into a private matter that was not supposed to have effect on the public policies; for example, federal officials were not required to take religious oaths to be eligible. At the same time, the American founders (among whom Freemasons were numerous) could, and often did, speak about the beneficial effects of religion, but they did so in a quite non-specific way that did not commit their listeners into supporting some detailed dogmas. I would argue that we can see early forms of this consciously non-denominational approach in Bacon's text.

Bacon was an intellectual representative of the new boldly pioneering and colonizing spirit that had arisen in Europe by the 17th century. This can be seen, in a symbolic form, on the title page of one of his more "serious" or scholarly works, *Novum Organum*, that advocated new methods of science. Here are depicted the "Pillars of Hercules," the Gibraltar Straits, that symbolized the boundary of the known civilized world to the ancient and medieval peoples. Still in the *Divine Comedy*, the grand medieval epic of Dante Alighieri, these pillars had represented divinely appointed border that one could not pass without punishment; the Greek traveller Ulysses, whom Dante considered to have been an evil person, sought in a legend to reach the Mountain of Purgatory by sailing to the Atlantic waters, but drowns with his crew and ends up in the 8th Circle of the Inferno:

Venturi refers to Pliny and Solinus for the opinion that Ulysses was the founder of Lisbon, from whence he thinks it was easy for the fancy of a poet to send him on yet further enterprises. The story (which it is not unlikely that our author borrowed from some legend of the Middle Ages) may have taken its rise partly from the obscure oracle returned by the ghost of Tiresias to Ulysses (eleventh book of the *Odyssey*), and partly from the fate which there was reason to suppose had befallen some adventurous explorers of the Atlantic Ocean (Dante 1909-14: Note 7).



Figure 4. Frontispiece of Bacon's *Novum Organum* [online]
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Novum_Organum.jpg (6 February 2015)

But in the image presented by Bacon, the ship is instead sailing boldly through the dreaded pillars, heading for new lands and new knowledge – and with divine approval as well, as the title-page cites the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, from the Book of Daniel 12:4: *Multi pertransibunt et augebitur scientia* ("Many will pass through and knowledge will be the greater").

Francis Bacon was an accomplished man of the world, (mostly) successful in both the fields of *realpolitik* and concrete scientific development. He self-consciously promoted precisely the kind of science or knowledge that could bring forth tangible material benefits, criticizing the ancient Greeks for their overtly abstract, self-indulgent theorizing habits. But his vision of Bensalem utopia is itself sufficient to prove that he had capacity for whimsy as well – he was no dry scientific automaton, but was also capable of using his imagination to create new

things. In my opinion, the role of even seemingly naïve, whimsical use of imagination should not be underestimated when looking for the roots of modern progress; various fantasies have often provided great persons important inspiration to go forward, and have even helped to create powerful social movements.

For example, I have found the phenomenon of Freemasonry interesting quite apart from the question of just how much influence this organization has actually had in modern politics and culture. I think there is something impressively quixotic about the success of this secret society that more or less created a new mythology out of scratch. It proclaimed itself as the guardian of most ancient mysterious wisdom, and at the same time the vanguard of most advanced social progress. But the dry scholarly estimation of these grandiose claims is thus expressed by Walter Burkert:

With the imperial decrees of 391/92 A.D. prohibiting all pagan cults and with the forceful destruction of the sanctuaries, the mysteries simply and suddenly disappeared. There is not much to be said for either the Masons' or modern witches' claim that they are perpetuating ancient mysteries through continuous tradition (Burkert 1987: 53).

So the Masonic claims of ancient genealogy are more or less made up. But in a certain sense, this makes them sociologically more interesting; somehow, at the dawn of modern times, large numbers of people who certainly did not consider themselves very credulous or superstitious, the very opposite in fact, invented for themselves an identity as progressive torchbearers of ancient myths. I cannot help seeing some similarity in the Masonic phenomenon to the Live Action Role Playing, or LARPing as it is more commonly known, that enthusiastic young people with vivid imaginations have been practicing in recent times. Imagine if LARPers would organize themselves into a powerful political party or movement! Is that possibility really totally unrealistic, one wonders?

The Millennial generation that has grown up in a world where Internet is something self-evident and taken for granted may, quite naturally, find it hard to grasp how exhilarating the idea, let alone reality, of international connections must have been to the ambitious minds among those who lived in pre-industrial world. Most human beings, being peasants, never wandered far off, in the course of their entire lives, from their own small village. It must have been an intoxicating experience to grasp the idea of international brotherhood for the first time; nowadays that concept has suffered much inflation via its current omnipresence.

The Western notions of universality, that now are considered such obvious elements of our culture, were originally laid down by Greco-Roman imperial system on one hand, and the Christian religion on another. In the Hellenistic civilization, started by Alexander the Great, the concept of the whole civilized world, *oikouménē* in Greek, turning into one integrated sphere of activity, became for the first time something approaching a workable hypothesis. Afterwards, the Romans slowly built more solid foundations for the “ecumenical” civilization that theoretically at least did not have any limits.

Meanwhile, the rise of Christianity provided a whole new spiritual basis for the idea of global unity, turning it from abstract speculations of philosophers into a vision that even simple uneducated believers were at least supposed to accept and promote. According to the Roman Catholic confessional of faith, all Christians were supposed to believe in “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church” (*unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*) that theoretically comprised the whole universe, and this ideal seeped deeply into the European mind in the course of medieval centuries. At the same time, survivals of secular globalism from the ancient Greco-Roman civilization, like the Roman Civil Law, also lived on in the mind of literate European intelligentsia, becoming easily mingled with Christian eschatological globalism in the process.

In the early modern era, globalist ideology began to change its form as the seemingly firm unity formerly upheld by the Roman Catholic Church, and the imperial Latin order it stood for, eroded under the challenge of the Protestant Reformation. The ideal of universalism certainly lived on, but the rising middle class increasingly began to look for some other form of global unity than the strictly collectivistic Roman-Christian models that had formerly supplied the ideal. Whatever the ideological basis of Freemasonry might be, it seems obvious that its social basis at least was provided by the rising bourgeoisie that sought the possibility of international brotherhood that would not rely on either dogmatic Christian theology or autocratic Roman monarchy. Freemasonry represented the ideals of “Third Estate,” the middle-class progressives who were determined to take over the dominating position formerly held by the priests and noblemen. Masonic movement taught that all decent men everywhere could form a strong unified brotherhood, whatever their different religious beliefs and nationalities might be.

And yet, Freemasonry contained a powerful paradox; even while proclaiming radical inclusivity in various areas, especially theology, it was radically exclusive in other ways. It

did resemble more the ancient mystery cults than the universal Christian church in the sense that it had strict criteria for entry, as not just every applicant would be allowed to enter the brotherhood. Masonry had its own fanciful hierarchy and degree-system, and furthermore, it intentionally cultivated an air of secrecy – the outsiders were not allowed to share the supposed mysteries of the craft. One might again suppose that this selective elitism, with its meritocratic implications, again fit well with the bourgeois culture that was, after all, based on competition.

In the big picture, one might see Freemasonry, with its universal aspirations, as a transitional phase between medieval Christian universalism and fully modern, self-consciously secular humanist forms of universalism. Among the latter, one could readily mention the Marxist ideal of Communist internationalism, and indeed one could argue that in the course of the 19th century, Freemasonry gradually transformed from being a revolutionary order that struck fear into the hearts of reactionary monarchs, into a respectable middle-class club system that upheld the new bourgeois order. Marxism and its anti-mystical worldview took over the revolutionary “scene” as Masonry turned into the more or less inoffensive entity it is today.

In section 5.7, I will share few more thoughts on today’s social phenomena that might be seen as similar to the self-inventing Masonic movement at least in spirit, if not in influence.

5.3. Echoes of the past in the Western worldview

Without unduly exaggerating the importance of Freemasonry, one could yet make the case that like the Hippie movement gave a strong cultural touch to the 1960s, in spite of not counting for much in crudely material terms like infrastructure, the Masonic movement gave its own distinctive cultural touch to the European culture of early modern era, drawing many great artists within its fold. The building of great overseas empires could find their symbolic representations through Masonic imagery. Unlike the Masonic movement in continental Europe, which became strongly associated with republican revolutionary ideas and agitation, the Masonry in the British Empire behaved in a more “respectable” manner, forming close connections with the throne of England and acting as a smooth part of conservative establishment. Rudyard Kipling, one of the greatest (and last) cultural spokesmen of British imperialism, was a noted Freemason who could also tout the ideals of Masonic universalism in spite of being today commonly associated with bigoted ethnic chauvinism.

But the greatest flourishing of respectable mainstream Masonry was clearly in the United States. The famous Statue of Liberty in the New York harbor for example, which illustrated the ideals of enlightenment with its uplifted torch, was designed by the French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi. He was an enthusiastic Freemason (Khan 2010); having created the statue "Liberty Enlightening the World" that served as a model for the final work, Bartholdi convened his Lodge to review it, even before the statue was shown to the U.S. committee. Furthermore, the Masonic Grand Master of New York, William Brodie, laid in 1884 the foundation stone of the Statue of Liberty. When he was inquired why the Freemasons were asked to place the foundation stone he replied "No other organization has done more to promote liberty and to liberate men from the chains of ignorance and tyranny than Freemasonry" (Berenson 2012: 91). This could be seen as the most visible example of how Freemasonry helped the young American civilization to find means of confident self-assertion.

But the mythos of Americana naturally goes much wider and deeper than mere Masonic cultural connections. Probably the most powerful factor that created the sense of American exceptionalism was simply a local transmutation of the basic cultural assertion that every great and prosperous (or even not-so-prosperous) Christian civilization had at least implied since Constantine the Great converted the Roman Empire into Christian culture; namely, that their country was a new and improved form of Israel, the sacred commonwealth that God had blessed. Medieval kings widely had their court poets praise themselves as functional successors of Israelite monarchs like king David, and even with the rise of republicanism in the early modern era, such ideals did not wither off; on the contrary, the republican revolutionaries who took over England in the 1640s were perhaps more convinced than any others that they were creating New Israel in their country that could usher in a new, glorious era for mankind. And those Englishmen who were most idealistic of all in such expectations, and disappointed by the consequent triumph of monarchical counter-revolution, moved into exile in the New World, hoping to create the sought-for sacred commonwealth in the deserts of North America. For a long time, the idea of creating "New Israel" gave spiritual inspiration for the settlers of New England, and was through them transferred in a milder form to also non-Puritan settler groups than followed them.

As time passed and American society became more settled, prosperous, and gradually more secular-minded, the basic idea of American exceptionalism, the idea that this radically new pioneer society had a world-historical role to fulfill, still kept on having a strong hold on

America's public mind, but now in a more ecumenical, vaguely spiritual manner. President John F. Kennedy echoed it in his inaugural speech in 1961:

...I have been guided by the standard John Winthrop set before his shipmates on the flagship Arbella three hundred and thirty-one years ago, as they, too, faced the task of building a new government on a perilous frontier. "We must always consider", he said, "that we shall be as a city upon a hill—the eyes of all people are upon us". Today the eyes of all people are truly upon us—and our governments, in every branch, at every level, national, state and local, must be as a city upon a hill — constructed and inhabited by men aware of their great trust and their great responsibilities. For we are setting out upon a voyage in 1961 no less hazardous than that undertaken by the Arbella in 1630 (Kennedy, 1961).

We can observe how in this passage, there are no longer any references to distinct Puritan doctrines that had been so important to John Winthrop's original listeners; for example, the Puritans were fiercely opposed to Roman Catholicism, whereas Kennedy for his part was the first Catholic president of America. But the notion of America being an exemplary nation like Israel that was to inspire, and by implication lead, the rest of the world remained intact; actually it would be even stronger as the United States in the days of JFK was so much more important in world politics than the modest colony that Winthrop's people had been founding.

For a long time, the concept of American exceptionalism was specifically associated with the Protestant theological tradition, and Roman Catholicism could be seen even as antithetical to true American values – a reminder of the oppressive authoritarian ways of the Old World that the new continent was supposed to leave behind. And the official Roman Catholic authorities themselves did not necessarily entirely disagree with the notion that the Catholic dogma contradicted the ethos of "Americanism"; for example, in 1899 a conservative pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae* that reprimanded the idea that America was some kind of special case of a country where the universal Catholic rules would not apply (Leo XIII 1899). Separation of church and state, for instance, was unacceptable to the pope. And yet, as decades rolled by in the 20th century, American Catholics too were strongly swept along with the ethos of this condemned but seductive Americanism, giving birth to what are colloquially known as "Cafeteria Catholics"; that is, Catholics that give lip service to their theoretically strong allegiance to the Vatican, but in reality take considerable liberty to pick and choose what official ecclesiastical guidelines they follow in their everyday life. The secular-messianic vision of Americanism turned out to be very ecumenical, transcending the theological boundaries of original Anglo-Saxon Protestant settlers.

And yet, even among strictly orthodox Protestants American ideology did not go without criticism. The original Puritans had been representatives of an especially strict, Reformed Calvinist school of theology that had emphasized, among other things, "Total Depravity" of fallen mankind and human beings. This meant that humans, being very deficient sinners, had no chance whatsoever of raising themselves up spiritually by their own strength, but would rather have to be specifically lifted up by God's sovereign intervention. The competing theological school of Arminianism that tried to somewhat modify this scheme was cried down by militant Calvinists as outright heretics – people who were on a slippery slope to the heresy of Pelagianism, which was perceived as the opposite of the pessimistic Augustinian worldview that strongly influenced Puritanism and all other forms of Christianity, emphasizing the importance of hereditary Original Sin and corruption of man (Keech 2012: 70, 106).

Relatively soon after the Puritan civilization had been firmly planted in the New World, its former strictness began to erode away. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the gradual disappearance of the old orthodox Puritan pessimism; it was as if hardy pioneering spirit and almost relentless material success made the descendants of sour Calvinists optimistic even against their own will. It is a well-known phenomenon that the classic Ivy League universities of New England, originally founded by Puritans, turned theologically Unitarian. The Unitarians, regarded as non-Trinitarian heretics by orthodox Christians, were not theologically exclusive like the old Puritans had been, emphasizing rather the unity of mankind under the common Fatherhood of God.

The Unitarianism represented a much more optimistic view of mankind's condition, encouraging bustling can-do spirit that might have seemed as mere worldliness from the old Puritan perspective. And the Freemasonic movement, that was officially founded in 1717 and spread rapidly in the English-speaking world, took the reformation of the classic Reformed Calvinist position even further, and especially so in America. It was helped in this task by the presence of radical sects like the Quakers, who were survivals of the so-called "Radical Reformation", and characterized by freedom of theological interpretation compared to Puritanism that was strictly bound to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures.

But we can observe, perhaps ironically, that many writers of the Early Modern Era used the Bible or Biblical ideas themselves to serve as vehicles of secularization. In some cases, this might have been an unconscious change of perspective from a strict sense of religiosity for

more "worldly" concerns, but there is also basis for thinking that some early Enlightenment writers were deliberately "writing in code", formally adhering to orthodox Christian ideas while simultaneously undermining them with their other hand, so to speak.

This raises another question: Was Blackstone in fact deliberately lying? In a perceptive essay by David Berman, we learn of a strategy that had been in use for over a century: combating a position by supporting it with arguments that are so weak that they in fact prove the opposite. This was a tactic used by those who did not believe in immortality to promote their skepticism. Berman makes a very shrewd observation regarding academic historians and scholars: "Most of us do not like liars or lying; nor are we inclined to accept conspiracy theories or explanations that postulate secret codes or cabals. These aversions may explain why the art of theological lying has been so generally ignored. . . ." (Berman 1987: 61) There is at least reasonable suspicion that Blackstone was lying. If he was not lying, then he was naive beyond description, for his lame defense of biblical revelation greatly assisted the political triumph of the enemies of Christianity in the American colonies (North 2004: 23-24).

Thus the original proponents of the ideology of Americanism, the 18th century "Founding Fathers" of America, who largely associated with Freemasonry, could use the Biblical figure of Noah to promote a concept of "general revelation" that was practically independent from specific and exclusive Biblical revelation. Reading this, we can understand why many fundamentalist Protestant Christians, and the Roman Catholic Church, have seen the Masonic worldview as a threat to their dogmas, in spite of the Masonry often using seemingly pious language in its lodge rituals and general rhetoric:

Mathematics is a universal language, just as Latin was among educated men until the 1880's, when Harvard University began its pace-setting curriculum revision. (There are two other such languages: music and international money.) It was this quest for universal laws of nature and society that undergirded speculative Freemasonry. This quest included universal moral law. (...) A Noachide is a son of Noah who possesses the knowledge of geometry and also a common morality. Just as the Bible is not needed in order to grasp the logical principles of geometry, so it is not needed to grasp the principles of morality (North 2004: 239-240).

I believe that Gary North could be considered a "modern-day Puritan" – a writer who is not ashamed of his intolerance, as he seeks to maintain his own brand of strict Reformed Calvinist doctrinal orthodoxy. And in that sense, he succeeds in showing what unreconstructed 17th Puritans might have thought about their Yankee descendants who watered down their fierce intolerance. Even though North provides us with a fringe viewpoint, I believe it is all the more intriguing, since it departs from the standard American national narrative that sees the Deistic-Masonic "founding fathers" as some kind of natural followers and successors of the Puritan "pilgrim fathers", rather than as usurpers who supplanted their original vision with something else.

North considers the famous Constitution of the United States, in 1787, to have been a crowning achievement of Masonic scheming to overthrow or displace the original theocratic vision of the Puritan settlers of America. From this point onwards, the Puritan ethos still remained powerful in the American public mind, but it had been drained of its exclusive and intolerant dogmatic basis that inspired the original Puritans (Stavely 1987: 201-219). The modern Americans could pursue materialistic goals – or at least goals that were more or less worldly in spite of their potential idealistic aspect – with almost religious zeal. This of course accords with what sociologist Max Weber famously theorized about the impact of Puritanism on the origins of capitalism (Weber 1958), secularized Calvinism forming a big part of bourgeois ethics.

But compared to other modern Western countries, the US is indeed “exceptional” in the sense that still today, Americanism and Christian fundamentalism are there often mixed in a downright syncretistic fashion in the minds of many Christian believers; and this in spite of both secularist Liberals and theological purists being opposed to such a promiscuous mixture of religion and matters of the state. And any sceptical or cynical person could easily wonder whether the enthusiasm for messianic improvement of the world is all that sincere, or whether it serves as a useful cover for the interests of the American empire. As the Washington elite widely sees the US as an indispensable nation to maintain order in the globalized world, serving as its policeman so to speak, it is rather obvious how conveniently American exceptionalism could serve as an excuse for de facto American domination, especially when explaining to the American voters themselves why they should allow such huge military investment in the rest of the world.

I think these things are not so clear-cut; there may exist lots of genuine sentiment for “making the world a better place” by making it more American, among the US elites, and if that ideal should happen to co-incide with the growth of their own power and wealth, then that would be just a welcome co-incidence. The original Puritans themselves were already accused by their enemies of making piety and profit to go smoothly together, and human capacity for self-deception is considerable. Healing the world while profiting from it personally can be a very welcome combination, and make one convinced that the enthusiasm you feel for the cause is genuine enough. Self-identity can be a tricky thing.

5.4. Echoes of the past in the Communistic worldview

The concept of "Primitive Communism" was originally coined by Marx and Engels, but the concept they thus sought to define has been known in world literature from very early on. Ancient poets around the world had a mentality distinctly different from modern one in the sense that they did not believe in "progress", that the things in this world are steadily getting better. One could say that they instead believed in degeneration – that things had been good in the primordial beginning, but then steadily gotten worse. The Greek poet Hesiod, who was the greatest of myth-creators among ancient Greeks (besides Homer), expressed this notion with his famous idea of "Four Ages" of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron. The original Golden Age had gradually transformed into the sorry age of Iron that he considered himself to live in.

The connection to Winstanley is that in the popular imagination, the Golden Age of Greco-Roman mythology was considered to have no sense of private property, or at least no painful toil. Hesiod wrote:

First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things; for the fruitful earth unforced bare them fruit abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods (Hesiod 1914: 11).

The equally famous Roman poet Virgil, for his part, described the Golden Age, the age of Saturn that came before the reign of Jupiter, in this manner:

Before Jove reigned no busy husbandmen
Subdued the ground; there was no usage then
Of landmarks, lines and severance of the fields;
All goods were common, and the liberal earth
Gave every gift unsued. (Virgil 1915: 28).

This same Virgil expressed in his another work, the famous Fourth Eclogue, the praise for coming "New Golden Age" that the offspring of emperor Augustus was supposed to introduce. It became famous as medieval Christians considered it almost as a prophecy of Jesus Christ and the following messianic reign. On its own, however, it could serve as a prototype for the modern utopian thought that began to consider that it would be possible for

the Golden Age in some sense return on the earth, or for men to return to the primitive paradise once more:

Now come the world's last days, the age foretold
 By Cumae's prophetess in sacred song.
 The vast world-process brings a new-born time.
 Once more the Virgin comes and Saturn's reign.
 Behold a heaven-born offspring earthward lies!
 Holy Lucina, lend thy light and aid
 The while this child is born before whose power
 The iron race of mortals shall away,
 And o'er this earth a golden people reign.
 For blest Apollo is at last their king. (Virgil 1915: 138)

Traditions about the primordial social harmony existing before the formation of organized human societies can be found around the world, suggesting a rather strong universal tendency in human nature to think about the distant past in a nostalgic manner.

To provide a context to the comparison of modern revolutionary doctrines like Communism and the radical sects of the English Revolution era (roughly the 1640s and 1650s), I will here compare the worldview of Ismaili Muslim sectarians, better known in the West as the famous or infamous “Assassins,” and Marxism. My aim here is to show that if we are able to look beneath or beyond the theological doctrines that superficial modern reader might find as fantastical, simply irrational, we can see some genuine and powerful metaphysical similarities. Were ancient sectarians proto-rationalists, or modern Marxists crypto-mystics? Or are questions like these mere pointless labelling? Let us observe the example at hand before studying the content of Winstanley’s theories (boldened emphasis mine):

Sevener Ismāīlī doctrine holds that divine revelation had been given in six periods (*daur*) entrusted to six prophets, who they also call *Natiq* (Speaker), who were commissioned to preach a religion of law to their respective communities.

Whereas the *Natiq* was concerned with the rites and outward shape of religion, the inner meaning is entrusted to a *Wasi* (Representative). The *Wasi* would know the secret meaning of all rites and rules and would reveal them to a small circles of initiates.

The *Natiq* and the *Wasi* are in turn succeeded by a line of seven Imāms, who guard what they received. The seventh and last Imām in any period becomes the *Natiq* of the next period. **The last Imām of the sixth period, however, would not bring about a new religion of law but rather supersede all previous religions, abrogate the law and introduce *din Adama al-awwal* ("the original religion of Adam") practised by Adam and the Angels in paradise before the fall, which would be without ritual or law but consist merely in all creatures praising the creator and recognizing his unity.** This final stage was called Qiyamah. (Halm 1988: 202-204).

If we secularize or rationalize this vision, we can see that it resembles the way what the victorious proletariat does in the Marxist eschatology – abolishing all the (false) religions along with the "alienation" inherent in exploitative systems, returning mentally to the primordial state of Primitive Communism, but keeping the positive fruits of human progress, like modern technology, thus combining all the good things past and present in a grand synthesis. The state and its laws would "wither away" and mankind would live together in harmony and spiritual unity, like terrestrial angels.

The semi-religious character of Marxism has been noted or asserted by many learned critics of Communism (North 1968, Billington 1980). This perhaps should not be wondered, as Marxist theory was originally based upon or at least heavily influenced by the Hegelian philosophy, which was a quite openly religious worldview that boasted of having reconciled faith and reason; a typical Hegelian synthesis. Lately, scholars like Glenn Magee have drawn attention to the way Hegel drew inspiration from various ancient mystical ideas (Magee 2008: 223-224).

Seeing Winstanley as a proto-Communist or at least Socialist theoretician is not a very controversial proposition. I have already cited Christopher Hill, a Marxist historian and an expert of Early Modern Era English radicalism, who sees Winstanley in a highly positive light (Chapter 4), and now I shall provide a more critical viewpoint from Igor Shafarevich, a Russian mathematician and anti-Communist writer who authored an opus *The Socialist Phenomenon* that Alexander Solzhenitsyn provided a foreword to.

"The Law of Freedom" was published in 1652. It begins with a salutation to "His Excellency Oliver Cromwell, General of the Commonwealth's Army in England, Scotland and Ireland." Winstanley points out to Cromwell that despite the victory of the revolution and the execution of the king, the position of the common folk has not improved.

(...)

The main part of the work begins with an attempt "to find out where true freedom lies." Winstanley believes that it resides in the free use of the fruits of the earth. "A man had better to have had no body than to have no food for it." (Hill 1973: 295) More specifically, true freedom consists of the free use of land. For the sake of land, kings declare wars, ministers preach, and the rich oppress the poor. And this "outer bondage" engenders "inner bondage": "the inward bondages of the mind, as covetousness, pride, hypocrisy, envy, sorrow, fears, desperation and madness, are all occasioned by the outward bondage that one sort of people lay upon another." (Hill 1973: 295)

Proceeding from this materialist view of society, Winstanley develops a plan for a new social structure in which private land use is abolished and where "external" and "internal" bondage disappear as a result. Subordination of private interests to common interests is put forward as the basic principle of social organization. "There is but bondage and freedom, particular interest or common interest; and he who pleads to bring in particular interest into a free commonwealth will

presently be seen and cast out, as one bringing in kingly slavery again." (Hill 1973: 342) (Shafarevich 1980: 95)

Winstanley could be seen as a quintessential transitional figure – a figure like Sir Isaac Newton, who was intensely interested in alchemy and Biblical prophecies besides pioneering modern mechanical scientific worldview. There were also many other enthusiasts like Winstanley and Newton in Western Europe in the latter half of the 17th century, paving way for the Enlightenment while holding some notions that we might hastily label as quite "un-enlightened". In such radical circles, progressive politics could make strange bedfellows, as one can often observe zealous sectarians advocating avant-garde science. According to Margaret Jacob, the radical reformers who repudiated the old Aristotelian science wanted to place in its stead “Paracelsus and the naturalism and magic associated with the Hermetic tradition.”

In the words of John Webster, a surgeon and for a time chaplain in the New Model Army, the radicals wanted "the philosophy of Hermes, revived by the Paracelsian schools"; he would have installed in the universities "true Natural Magicians that walk not in the external circumstance, but in the center of nature's hidden secrets" (Jacob 1988: 77).

This sort of plebeian assertiveness raised the hostility and scorn of the old upper classes. A Restoration era royalist poet, Samuel Butler, depicted in his satirical epic *Hudibras* the sectarian mentality in the person of "Ralpho", a manservant of Presbyterian Puritan Hudibras, who represents the Independent elements who dominated the ranks of the New Model Army. Butler is here scornfully depicting the lower-class radical type like Winstanley, who has pretensions to higher learning, and learning of quite unconventional kind, reaching back to the mystical “primitive tradition” going back to the first man Adam:

Thus Ralph became infallible,
As three or four-legged oracle,
The ancient cup, or modern chair;
Spoke truth point-blank, though unaware.
For mystic learning wondrous able
In magic, talisman, and cabal,
Whose primitive tradition reaches
As far as Adam's first green breeches;
Deep-sighted in intelligences,
Ideas, atoms, influences,
And much of *Terra Incognita*,
Th' intelligible world, could say;
A deep occult philosopher.
As learned as the wild Irish are,
Or Sir Agrippa, for profound

And solid lying much renowned:
 He Anthroposophus, and Floud,
 And Jacob Behmen, understood;
 Knew many an amulet and charm,
 That would do neither good nor harm;
 In Rosicrucian lore as learned,
 As he that *Vére adeptus* earned.

(Butler 1886: 22).

Christopher Hill noted that after the era of English Revolution, the very term "enthusiasm" became a sort of dirty word in the language of upper-class English writers, having connotations to dangerous lower-class movements (Hill 2006). Even more progressive-minded writers were not friendly towards bursts of irrationality in the Enlightenment "Age of Reason," and thus "enthusiast" was for a long time a synonym for a silly or mindless fanatic. Only in the early 19th century, in the age of Romantic thought that followed the French Revolution (whose shocks largely erased the memory of the English Revolution in the mind of British elites, as there were more recent serious threats to repel), did "enthusiasm" become rehabilitated, acquiring once more a neutral or positive meaning. In another instance of word changing its meaning, Winstanley had used the term *imagination* in a derogatory manner, standing for "vain imaginings" that opposed the true Reason that he considered himself representing (Hill 2006: 52). In his vocabulary, imagination did not mean creativity but empty and misleading imagery.

One should not overly exaggerate the similarities between a 17th century lower-class enthusiast and a 19th century German academic, educated in hair-splitting Hegelian dialectics. Winstanley was still a man of his own times, and would have been probably classified as a more or less naive "Utopian Socialist" by the hardened Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries of modern times. Karl Marx expressed from the very beginning the disdain of an educated man towards those simple-minded "apostles" of Utopian Socialism that were still around in his days. One of the last of these kind of Socialists who assumed a prophetic mantle and sense of divine calling was Wilhelm Weitling, a journeyman tailor by trade, who pioneered the introduction of Communist ideas to Germany in the late 1830s. He ended up clashing with the representatives of new "Scientific Socialism":

In conformity with the work of the Christian radical Felicité de Lamennais, Weitling urged installing communism by physical force with the help of a 40,000-strong army of ex-convicts. A prelapsarian community of goods, fellowship, and societal harmony would then ensue, directed by Weitling himself. While Marx and Engels struggled with the intricacies of industrial capitalism and modern modes of production, Weitling revived the apocalyptic politics of the sixteenth-

century Münster Anabaptists and their gory attempts to usher in the Second Coming. Much to Marx and Engels's annoyance, Weitling's giddy blend of evangelism and protocommunism attracted thousands of dedicated disciples across the Continent (Hunt 2009: 131-132).

In 1846, Weitling had a furious quarrel with Marx, who expressed the class-pride of an intellectual towards a simple plebeian who tried to dispute his mastery of revolutionary theory. The position of Marx won and that of Weitling lost, and from that point on, "Scientific Socialism" decisively supplanted "Prophetic Socialism."

Josef Stalin expressed his sentiments on this topic (in an interview with a journalist-author Emil Ludwig in 1931) that clearly differed from the romantic visions of simple social harmony, explicitly referring to the radical sectarians of Cromwellian England like Winstanley:

Equalitarianism owes its origin to the individual peasant type of mentality, the psychology of share and share alike, the psychology of primitive peasant "communism." Equalitarianism has nothing in common with Marxist socialism. Only people who are unacquainted with Marxism can have the primitive notion that the Russian Bolsheviks want to pool all wealth and then share it out equally. That is the notion of people who have nothing in common with Marxism. That is how such people as the primitive "Communists" of the time of Cromwell and the French Revolution pictured communism to themselves. But Marxism and the Russian Bolsheviks have nothing in common with such equalitarian "Communists" (Stalin 1931).

Stalin might have been theoretically justified in making such remarks, and yet one can hardly avoid recalling George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*, where the naive enthusiasm that fed the original revolution gets replaced with sophisticated doctrines that finally declare that "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (Orwell 2003: 80).

But in any case, the concept of "Progress" that has been so thoroughly important and central to modern egalitarian revolutionaries, was largely absent from the worldview of Winstanley, who, to take just one example, naturally could not imagine how powerfully modern technology might change societies and ways of living. Winstanley was fundamentally still looking backwards, to the once-lost utopia, and his vision of the coming utopia was largely just a secularized version of Christian eschatology, with the Kingdom of God coming to earth in the form of communitarian justice.

5.5. *Tabula Rasa; the appeal of beginning again from the clean slate*

If we were to look for factors that separate "genuine revolution" from mere political upheaval, or counter-revolution, the most important one might be that in a "real" revolution, something radically new is presented. Modern popular consciousness has grown used to constantly expecting new and improved things, and thus might regard a revolution that does not lead to anything new as almost no real revolution at all, or a failed revolution.

The very notion that something new is supposed to be, almost automatically, better than what had preceded it, is one of the most important traits of modern mentality. Back in antiquity, newness or "novelty" often had sinister connotations; pre-modern peoples like the Romans or the Chinese usually took pride in being very punctual in following the ways of their forefathers, who were instinctively honored and looked upon as role models. Instead of modern ideology of evolution (through revolution), the ancient peoples believe in degrading *devolution* – how they had fallen away from the golden age that had once existed. It was kind of axiomatic that their fathers had known things better, or had been more virtuous, than they themselves were.

One of the things that made the ancient Greek culture so exceptional, so pioneering, was that among a small sub-set of Greeks, the so-called "philosophers," this premise began to be seriously challenged. The Greeks made the patricidal myth of Oedipus famous, and the Sophist movement was like an intellectual form of such rebellion against patriarchal authority. In the play *The Clouds* by the famous comedy writer Aristophanes, the great philosopher Socrates is represented as an arch-sophist who teaches his pupil to ignore the opinions of his father (who is seen as a quite dull-witted type indeed, having sent his son to the philosophical den of subversion in the hopes that he might learn to become a cunning rhetorician), and even beat him up.

Besides the Oedipal myth, the Greek culture is also imbued with another important mental archetype that Friedrich Nietzsche made famous, namely the tension between Apollonian and Dionysian ideals. There is a certain connection between them; whereas the Apollonian ideal upholds serene order and reasonable authority, the Dionysian ideal is connected to fruitful chaos – in order for new things to grow, the old withered forms must disappear, so to speak (Nietzsche 2012: 3-4). Whereas Apollo is an ouranic deity, a heavenly god who rules over the aethereal abstract world of ideas, Dionysus is a chthonic god of earthy things that grow from the ground. Dionysian approach often prefers simplicity to sophisticated Apollonian schemes,

and thus it can stand for literally “returning to roots” – abandoning the overly civilized forms of culture and starting anew with new growth.

Corresponding elements to the Apollonian-Dionysian duality, or dialectic, can be seen in other cultures as well. Dionysus has been associated with the Indian god of “creative destruction”, Shiva. According to Alain Daniélou, Dionysus and Shiva both are considered protectors of those who are not part of the conventional, “normal” society. They symbolize the divinity of the laws of nature, contrasting with the city religions that aimed at the divinisation of man-made laws, based on civic conformity and the repression of natural instincts (Daniélou 1992: 15-16).

One cultural tradition that would seem to have direct connection to the concept of “Tabula Rasa” is the central Buddhist ideal of Emptiness, or *Śūnyatā* in Sanskrit. Emptying one’s mind of all thought may not strike Westerners, who are so proud of their use of reason, as a very admirable goal – they are prone to value activity as something positive in itself. But from the viewpoint of those who seek Nirvana, cessation of activity is a positive goal in itself. One could almost say that a pious Buddhist seeks return to the ultimate tabula rasa, mystical assimilation to the most fundamental essence of the world; or even more, something that lies beneath this world of material illusions. This could be considered as the extreme form of opposing all novelties, as everything that exists in this world of appearances is vain illusion, *maya*, that alienates us from the Ultimate Reality.

On the other hand, the Westerners with their busy minds, even when idealizing tabula rasa, usually regard it as a means to other ends, not as a goal in itself. The logic of a Western seeker of primitive simplicity and emptiness goes that the old, rotten, or artificial structures of the world need to be erased so that new, better things can grow out of the cleansed earth. This is the idealized justification for the Oedipal patricide, the presumption that the son can do things better than his father.

5.6. Primordial connection in modern youthful rebellion

The concept of “progress” has inevitably certain Oedipal connotations. In order for something truly new to appear, the old has to die to make way for it. And in all likelihood there is lots of brutal truth in this notion. But humans are capable of abstract thought, and thus it is not only their own immediate parents that matter to them. We may indeed often feel suffocated by our

own parents – but what about our grandparents, and still more distant ancestors, whom we have never personally known? Even though such forefathers have not, in a concrete manner, told us what to do, we still have to consider whether we are ready to do things differently than they are said to have done. Furthermore, it has sometimes been noted that grandparents may be more indulging towards a child than his or her own parents – whereas the actual parents have to be present in the messy and prosaic everyday life of their children, grandparents can often have quality-time with them, where they can show their best side to the toddlers.

In a roughly similar manner, men can often think that even though their own current leaders, or authority-figures that correspond to the parents, are unfit for their role and should be replaced, that does not necessarily mean that all authorities are bad *per se*. In fact, preceding models that we do not personally know all that well, can serve as a useful counterpoint or alternative to the current ones that we know all too well – if our elders accuse us of disobedience and betrayal of tradition, one way to respond is that they themselves have done so, and that you are returning to the correct path that was once abandoned.

And so, appeal to mysterious primordial antiquity can thus paradoxically serve the purposes of very defiant modern rebellion; if you are accused of presenting unheard-of, untested novelties, what could be more efficient retort than to argue that you are actually applying the very oldest wisdom of all to modern situations and problems? In such a manner, the Protestant reformers appealed to the Bible as an authority even older and more venerable than the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. And in such a manner (we of course must avoid too simplistic comparisons), the Communist revolutionaries could say to the outraged bourgeoisie, who accused them of undoing whole civilization in the name of untested theories, that they were reaching back to antiquity much older than the whole modern culture: that in the days of “Primitive Communism,” the whole concept of private property had been unknown; that is, for the most of mankind’s existence. It is easy to see how convenient such theories are in discrediting the present authorities; they are trumped by precedents even more ancient than themselves. And they themselves lose their traditionalist moral high ground if they begin to argue that they represent a higher form of progress than those older models; for then what would logically forbid the present-day radicals from continuing the progress still further? In such manner, small children whom their parents scold for disobedience could respond that their grandparents approve whatever they are doing – thus turning the accusation of filial rebellion on the parents themselves.

This is just example of how extreme antiquity can be used to discredit the present, and thus be used in the service of modernist progress.

5.7. Dangers and possibilities of the electronic global village

Probably the most publicized outbreak of retro-nostalgia with real political significance that the world has seen lately has been the rise of so-called ISIS movement in the Middle East. This seems to be exemplifying just the sort of combination of antiquity and modernity that I have been describing in this thesis; on one hand, they idealize the conditions that supposedly existed during the reign of first few caliphs in the 7th century (successors of prophet Muhammad as leaders of Muslim faithful), before the schism between Sunni and Shia factions of Islam. For many centuries already, this era of early caliphs has been like a utopian dream for pious Muslims, a time when leaders were not corrupt but lived modestly and administered pure justice. Revival of the “Caliphate”, in other words, is intimately connected to the notion of returning to the simple virtues that existed in the beginning, under primitive conditions. And that idea can clearly still inspire many Muslims, although only a small portion of them followed the dramatic call of restoring the caliphate that was issued last year by one of the militant Jihadist leaders in Iraq:

On June 29, 2014—or the first of Ramadan, 1435, for those who prefer the Islamic calendar to the Gregorian—the leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) publicly uttered for the first time a word that means little to the average Westerner, but everything to some pious Muslims. The word is “caliph.” ISIS’s proclamation that day formally hacked the last two letters from its acronym (it’s now just “The Islamic State”) and declared Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, born Ibrahim ibn Awwad ibn Ibrahim ibn Ali ibn Muhammad al-Badri al-Samarrai, the Caliph of all Muslims and the Prince of the Believers (Wood 2014).

This militantly nostalgic attitude partly explains the fierce attitude that the ISIS has become so notorious for – public beheadings, burning people alive and so forth. If such practices were good enough for the righteous 7th century caliphs, then surely they suit them as well, the logic goes. But on the other hand, the ISIS has become perhaps even more notorious by its ability to recruit baffling numbers of people of Western origin – both men and women who often seemed to have assimilated well into modern Western society, but for some reason decided to join this grotesque throwback militant organization instead. And the Western youths have been recruited by the means of most modern technology – sometimes eloquently persuaded on the Internet on the righteousness of the ISIS cause, but also seduced by the vision of

cathartic violent action that the tame Western life with its lame rational and utilitarian ways cannot offer. The ISIS recruiters have even appealed to youth by adopting cultural memes associated with popular video games:

The online messaging is slick -- far broader and more subtle than the vicious beheading videos the public is too familiar with, according to Scott Talan, a social media and marketing professor at American University. Talan viewed about a dozen ISIS propaganda videos with ABC News' Pierre Thomas, and said he is shocked by the quality of the messaging the terror group is putting out.

"This is sophisticated. It is Madison Avenue meets documentary film making meets news channel with sensibilities and marketing value," Talan said.

In one video, ISIS produces its own, twisted version of the popular "Grand Theft Auto" video game. While ISIS fighters gun down victims on the screen, the message flashes, "Your games -- We do the same actions on the battlefield."

"So it's the reverse of our culture, where we say 'escape real life and play a game.' They're saying, 'escape your life, come play a real game with real consequences,'" Talan said. "They are using products from American culture -- video games -- for their purposes, and taking and making a message that works for them" (Cloherty *et al.* 2015).



Figure 5. ISIS propaganda that employs the imagery associated with popular video war game "Call of Duty" (Islam Media Analysis 2015)

And yet, for all its propaganda coups it has gained in the Western mind, both by shocking the majority and by impressing the small minority, the cold fact remains that the ISIS is still highly dependent on prosaic factors like the support of Sunni Arab population in Syria and Iraq; outside their territories it has no real power. Furthermore, material support from countries like Saudi Arabia has been vital in making the ISIS from mere role-playing into a

political reality that the greatest superpowers now have to take into account in their plans. I would argue that this shows that self-inventing enthusiasm without *Realpolitik* basis is doomed to remain just an impotent fantasy, but on the other hand, crude politics without spiritual inspiration can also be doomed to be just a small and messy affair. Without its grandiose neo-traditionalist image, would the ISIS be anything more than a little-known Sunni militia? Now it is able to recruit members of Muslim *ummah* from all over the world, like the medieval Christian crusaders, who also mixed genuine fanatical devotion with grimy political intrigues, were able to recruit fighters from all over Latin Christendom.

We might recall that Gerrard Winstanley tried to win over Oliver Cromwell for his utopian Socialist scheme, but failed. Who knows – if he had succeeded in getting influential supporters for his vision, could he also have become, comparatively speaking, as influential as the ISIS militants now are, with the backing of Saudi Arabians and other shadowy interests? Even though it might seem that comparing Winstanley and the ISIS is far-fetched, seeing how outwardly “benevolent” and peaceful the former was compared to the latter, one should remember that good purposes can lead to bad things, and on the other hand, the ISIS supporters do not see themselves as cartoonish bad guys. In their internal propaganda, they too have sought to project a benevolent image:

In the West, ISIS’ propaganda seems focused on war and intimidation. Their primary messages are simply videos of brutality: firing squads, beheadings, even the burning alive of a captured Jordanian pilot. But a Vocativ analysis of the group’s online propaganda overall shows that, in the areas it already controls or is fighting to take over, almost half of what it broadcasts has a positive theme to it. *Come to the Islamic State*, is the message. *There is fun here, and food, and services.*

“They’re the first terrorist group that aren’t interested in [just] fighters, they want families to come,” said Patrick Skinner, director of special projects at The Soufan Group. “They need women and children, they believe they have a state, they now need a future. A lot of people are going there just to live in the caliphate” (Tarabay 2015)

Once again we can observe that this group, idealizing the archaic conditions of the 7th century caliphs, also pays attention to the sort of public relations campaigning one could see in Western welfare states.

The last century has provided us Westerners also enough examples of how primitive ruthlessness can be combined with modern ideas of progress. Take the German Nazis for example – it is well known how they combined superstitious beliefs about Jewish conspiracies, that medieval peasants could have believed, with the most up-to-date methods of disposing the remains of those whom they saw fit to remove as the final end result of those

superstitions; after all, the use of cremation was a very “modern” phenomenon in Europe, that the Christian churches had opposed on a theological basis.

Nazi Germany also deliberately encouraged archaic elements like German paganism – to the point that it was seriously suggested that the state would formally drop the legal system deriving from the Roman Civil Law, and adopt rather methods deriving from Germanic tribal laws – and occult aficionados still enjoy studying this display of state-sponsored retro lifestyle. But what is less known is that it also promoted many “progressive” ideas that were, and are, shared by tolerant Scandinavian liberal democracies. For example, The Nazis pioneered such things as anti-smoking campaigns and environmental protection. And according to a recent scholarly polemic by Götz Aly, they also supported generous welfare state, although largely at the expense of other peoples:

“The Nazi leadership did not transform the majority of Germans into ideological fanatics who were convinced that they were the master race,” Aly concludes. “Instead it succeeded in making them well-fed parasites.” Aly notes that food was readily available throughout the war, and that it was not until 1945 that Berliners noticed a scarcity of rations. Thus, he argues, the people were generally well looked after and, until the bitter end, pliant subjects of the Reich (Moynihan 2007).

That is not to say that extreme movements like the ISIS or German Nazism could appear just anywhere, out of sheer normality of social conditions. They almost always require a sense of powerful external threats or inner chaos, like Nazism was born in the aftermath of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, and the ISIS after the American invasion of Iraq and the Syrian civil war. Under panic, the society can be persuaded to rush into former social arrangements in counter-revolutionary spirit, but under such rabid conditions the extremes can meld together.

One of the most radical examples available of combined primitivism and progressive radicalism could be seen when the so-called Khmer Rouge movement took over Cambodia in the 1970s, in the aftermath of the social shocks of the Vietnam War. It is fascinating to observe how the Khmers mingled old Cambodian traditions with their ultra-radicalism – they drew inspiration from the ancient Angkor Empire that once ruled most of Indo-China territories, and yet, once they had taken over in 1975, they imitated the 1790s radical French Jacobins in celebrating the Year Zero (*chhnam saun*) of their accession, clearly asserting that all that had preceded them was more or less bad or meaningless, and that they were starting a glorious new society out of scratch, from social tabula rasa.

While theoretically heeding to international Marxist ideology, in practice the Khmer Rouge were rabidly xenophobic towards their Thai and Vietnamese neighbours, and actually even the ordinary Khmers themselves fell short of their nativist standards; the Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot was reportedly impressed by the aboriginal mountain tribes of Cambodia, whose lifestyle the party interpreted as a form of Primitive Communism; these tribes received more lenient treatment than the urbanized "bourgeois" Chinese and Vietnamese (Weitz 2003: 144-189). The infamous de-urbanization of Cambodian cities, with the population driven back into the countryside, seemingly went completely against the principles of orthodox Marxism that had consistently extolled the urban lifestyle as more progressive than the isolated rural peasant existence. Even on a verbal level one could see how the Khmer Rouge combined old and new things, as their public propaganda rhetoric was influenced both by Maoist jargon and traditional Cambodian flowery language that had once been used to praise god-kings:

The Khmer Rouge used adjectives and adverbs heavily, and translators will be hard pressed to find their equivalents in English. For example, 'feliculously welcome the second anniversary of national independence: The super-fantastic 17th of April'; 'eliminate absolutely immaculately the ideology of individual and personal property rights'; 'sweep cleanly away'; and 'let's congratulate super-excellently the glorious Communist Party of Kampuchea' (Sour 2006).

We might perhaps say that Gerrard Winstanley lived in a somewhat equivalent position in his own society (the 1650s England) that Pol Pot and his followers lived in the 1960s Cambodia – countries that were going through the profound culture shock of living in the midst of erosion of the poor but stable pre-modern agrarian society, and moving towards the first steps of industrialization. In such a transitional phase, people can easily get wild ideas. Could an enthusiast like Winstanley have started anything resembling the Khmer Rouge movement, if he only had had proper political connections? We can never know. For there are always more positive, or neutral, scenarios available. For example, the radical sect of the Quakers, that was born at the same time and under same conditions as Winstanley's Digger followers, was in its early decades reviled as anarchistic fanatics, but eventually they became a model example of a formerly radical people becoming "respectable" – formerly lower-class Quakers became wealthy through their diligent work-ethics and networking, and adopted thoroughly bourgeois manners, along with liberal ideals of charity. They actually resemble the Freemasons in that regard. One could easily imagine Winstanley's movement ending up in the same mild-mannered philanthropic manner.

Christopher Marlowe was not a person with grand collective ambitions, like the Lord Chancellor Bacon or agitator Winstanley were. His radicalism was of strictly individualistic or bohemian variety, and his end resembled it, dying in a tavern brawl as a young man. He was living at the dawn of professional, secular Western mass entertainment that now pervades our entire lives, in the London theatre world in the days of Shakespeare. The Western popular culture that gradually developed from such origins into things like the Hollywood media juggernaut or the do-it-yourself Internet entertainment, has made possible for smaller and smaller players to perform star role in the eyes of the whole world – a feat that sorcerer Faustus considered possible only by forming a pact with the Devil.

There has always been certain duality in leaping to the unknown that the Faustus mythos embodies. We can still see it today, for example, in the different tendencies of two genres of literature, sci-fi and horror. We might consider Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* to be an early forerunner of sci-fi literature, with its fascinating catalogue of new inventions. Especially in its earlier "classical" forms, science fiction portrayed an optimistic view of mankind and its future, with shows like *Star Trek* being essentially like projections of Americanist pioneering mythos into the galaxies far away; in such a universe, there may well be various serious threats, but they can be overcome with human ingenuity and some American pluck. On the other hand, horror genre has traditionally been associated with great caution towards the idea of careless progress. Already in ancient folktales, the hubris of foolhardy humans is punished by jealous deities or malevolent beings whom they may have offended. It has been theorized that "modern" horror genre came into existence after the French Revolution era partly as a conservative reaction towards revolutionary excesses – for example, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* tale is a classic case of "man playing God" by trying to create new life on his own (Jones 2002: 59).

Overall, horror stories are fundamentally based on the fear of the unknown, and in them curiosity often kills the cat, so to speak, as film viewers can yell to the doomed character, "do not enter that room!" or similar gut reactions against making risky or careless moves. Compared to sci-fi, horror genre also has a much darker view of mankind itself. With such views, we might call science fiction as essentially liberal-progressive and horror as instinctively conservative genre. Marlowe's *Faustus* play is at first almost like primitive science fiction, as the diabolical pact brings the magician fascinating new powers over his environment, but the play turns towards the end literally horrible, as the Devil begins to demand his dues, and the limits, costs, and dangers of progress become apparent.

One archetypal idea in the mythological depictions of superhuman deeds is that people can achieve miraculous feats, like flying, as long as they do not “lose their happy thoughts”, as in Peter Pan stories. Here we have a downright superstitious notion that still seems to have considerable hold even on modern people; like a person falls down if he loses his happy thoughts, totalitarian movements in places like Nazi Germany or Maoist China have put great emphasis on the concept of will-power – if the people were allowed to doubt, even to a modest degree, the fanatically pushed official policy, they might soon reject it altogether. Thus the officially mandated need for “happy thoughts,” for otherwise the system might not fly gloriously as planned, but fall down and crumble. We see a reflection of this in the apocryphal stories about Simon the Magus, who (as mentioned in Chapter 2) was one of the models for the magician Faustus. Simon was said to have competed with Apostle Peter (the representative of righteousness) on the Forum at Rome, setting out to prove his godhood. Simon levitated in the air over the forum, but Peter caused him to fall down again with his prayers. Here it is not so much the loss of self-confidence as a direct divine intervention that causes the downfall of human megalomania.

The world-wide electronic network commonly known as “Internet” has made it possible for so many human beings to be, or act like, wizards who can in a sovereign manner choose our personalities, or even our very identities. Like Faustus was able to summon Homer himself to perform music for him, we can conjure out of YouTube our favourite musicians perform for our pleasure. Thanks to the Net, we can feel ourselves as if floating above the world, enjoying the illusion of omnipresence and even sort of omniscience, being able to find information with such seeming ease. The Internet and its additional technologies can turn us into little aspiring modern sorcerers ourselves.

Like the great “Faustian” characters, we have a great potential for both positive and negative things. Yet, most net posters do not apparently reach either extreme, but sink into comfortable, invisible mediocrity in the electronic jungle. There is something “primitive” about the whole Internet culture, as it can easily make us succumb to its verdant overgrowth. We can also begin to take its fruits as something self-evident and to be taken as granted, which the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset saw as the typical attitude of a neo-savage that cannot appreciate all the hard work that goes into maintaining civilization (Ortega y Gasset 1963: 63-64). But such neo-primitivism can also provide us positive fruits that we need to be able to proceed into the future. One step back, two steps forward...

I would posit that the Internet, that I consider to be a quintessentially modern phenomenon, has itself also had a two-sided effect; it certainly has promoted atomistic individualism that is one of the main traits of modernity. No longer can traditional authority-figures, from parents to governments, so easily control or ban things that they would not like their impressionable members to see. But on the other hand, the Net has indeed turned the world into a “global village” (McLuhan and Powers 1989), comparable to the small villages of pre-modern rural civilizations, as people can easily learn all the interesting details about their fellow men or women. This, in its turn, provides means for stricter spontaneous controls of behaviour, like peer pressure in virtual places and forums like Facebook, as the escape to anonymity becomes harder and harder.

Marlowe, Bacon, and Winstanley lived in a much rougher world than we first-world citizens of Finland presently do. They were, on both micro and macro levels, probably much more used to gruesome things happening to people around them than us soft humanitarians. And yet they were not hardened into brutal indifference, but dreamed about some kind of better world – Marlowe about wild adventures and empowerment through magic (which of course would have its price), Bacon through science that was not yet strictly separated from magic at that point, and Winstanley through social transformation that according to him would be a miracle of God, but would lead to something much more ordered and rational than what he saw in the unjust society he was struggling against.

The common attitude for all of them was the conviction that mere material misery did not make them lose their hope for something better; the suffocation of spirit, or misuse of its gifts, gave them greater anguish. Marlowe disdained the petty mediocrity of the traditional scholastic forms of knowledge of his times, and yet was aware of the threat that selling one’s soul for worldly gains could literally lead from off the frying pan into the fire. Bacon polemicized in his writings against those sterile forms of knowledge that did not produce any tangible benefits for mankind, and Winstanley felt prophetic disdain, if not outright hatred, for those reactionary moulders of minds and souls whom he saw as keeping the people in spiritual bondage, unable to enjoy their just birthrights as free people of God. They all had their notions of utopia that could be reached through half-magical means, but one wonders, would they have been entirely happy, if they could see the material comforts of modern people, who pay for it with spiritual bondage?

The mankind is hard to please, and it seems to take various forms of material pleasure soon for granted, which in turn forge powerful chains of dependency. All the utopias that deal with this imperfect, wormy world, and seek to immanentize the eschaton, so to speak, bringing the Kingdom of God of justice and well-being into existence among ordinary mortals, inevitably set themselves up for at least partial disappointment in the ultimate outcome of their quest. Modern people may not be quite so naive about the potential dangers of utopias these days, after the bitter experiences of the 20th century, but it would still be shame and pity if utopian impulse would entirely disappear for our hearts. One thing that I firmly believe is that the current state of affairs, the *status quo* of Western liberalism, in the naively utopian 1990s Fukuyaman sense of the term, is not the “The End of History.” The past still lives among us and in us, powerfully shifting and shaping us constantly, whether we like it or not, and we just have to find the correct way of dealing with that reality.

6. EPILOGUE

In some 20th century fantasy-dystopian depictions of huge cities of the future, like in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), the lower classes look like anonymous ant-people who cannot express their individuality. Likewise in Orwell's famous novel *1984*, suffocating collective control from above seems to make individuality meaningless. But now, in the age of Internet, Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* actually seems to be a more accurate depiction of the dystopian future than Orwell's work. (The ironic name of Huxley's novel was, by the way, inspired by a line in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. Its main character, magician Prospero, is said to have been inspired by the Elizabethan magus John Dee (Yates 1975: 97) treated in Chapter 2). Instead of our individual choice being crushed, it is rather cheapened into countless trivial choices of consumption (Figure 6).

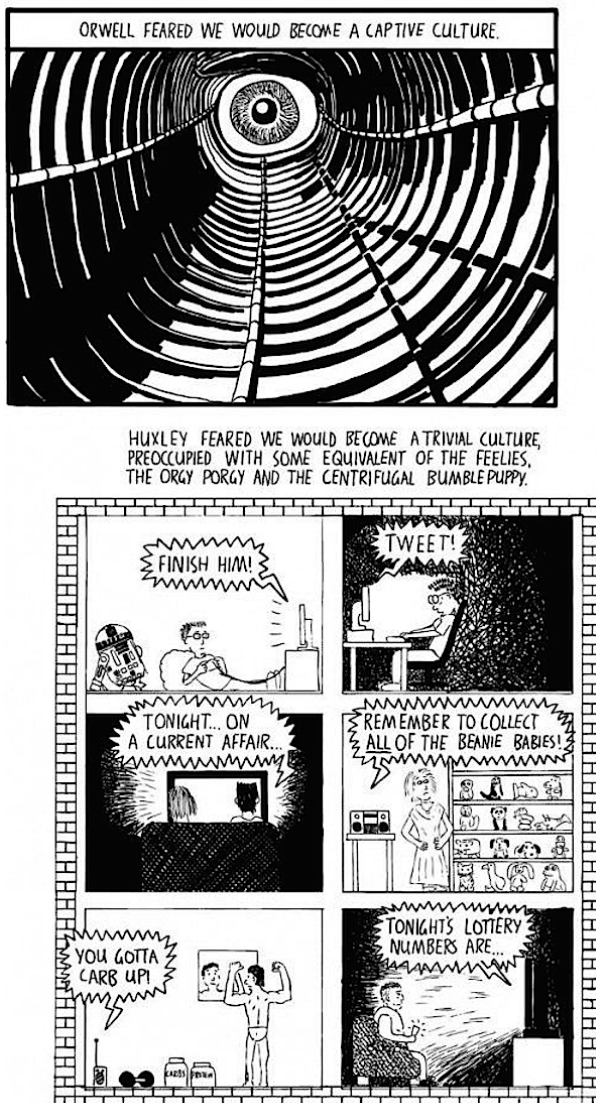


Figure 6. Part of comparative depiction of Orwellian and Huxleyan dystopias. (Technological Dystopia 2011).

But of course social media have its brighter and more constructive sides as well. It would seem that as if by instinct, the Internet world is creating its own electronic natural habitat where different groups can create their own little worlds. In a sense it seems like a combination of ancient small-scale village where everybody minds each other's business but also provides sympathy and assistance, and the highly abstract, almost god-like perspective where we can observe people from the other side of the world as if we were floating above them, and yet they remain somehow alien to us.

Moreover, many Internet communities serve the functional purposes that were formerly fulfilled by exclusive secret societies like the Freemasons, whom I have already so much talked about as archaic pioneers of modernity. Even the discussion forums, for example, that are quite open to the public in theory tend to develop their own *lingua franca*, their own peculiar jargon or quirky expressions. I am seeing here the same kind of process that has in the past created new languages; like in the days of old, group of people who moved beyond some mountain chain eventually began to diverge in their language from the population group they originated from, so in the Internet world a group of people who are expelled from some forum and start their own forum elsewhere can literally begin to talk in a bit different language. The "memes" that the Net is now full of seem like clear cases of new semiotic language being born, as some images that are incomprehensible hieroglyphs to outsiders can be tremendously amusing and insightful to insiders.

Marlowe's Faustus took a huge gamble to reach a god-like knowledge and ability. We moderns may not quite agree with the idea that selling our soul to the Devil is needed to enter the dazzling but also deeply puzzling world of possibilities that the open and uncensored Internet offers us, but we can still have great misgivings about its risks. And the principle "no pain, no gain" applies to social progress as well; what is debatable is just what risks are worth taking. Furthermore, people have differing views on what kind of progress is desirable and what is not.

In my opinion, we should not scorn the potentially beneficial effects of "irrational" motivations. Who knows whether Isaac Newton had been such a driven person, accomplishing great scientific things, without his colourful superstitions and apocalyptic beliefs to prod him forwards? According to some eccentric or iconoclastic thinkers like Paul Feyerabend, we should not necessarily give Western rationalism – as we today understand it –

a privileged position compared to other, rivalling worldviews that challenge its imperious, hegemonic claim for universal validity (Feyerabend *et al.* 2000: xiii-xvi).

Even today, we can see that in countries like Russia and Turkey, rulers are challenging the cosmopolitan ideas of the European Union. Russia is hearkening back to the legacies of pre-Communist Tsarist Empire; for example, in his public address in 4 December 2014, president Putin claimed that the Crimean peninsula that his forces had seized months earlier had a “sacred meaning” to Russia (Loiko 2014), namely because Vladimir the Great, the king of Kievan Rus who converted his people to Orthodox Christianity, was baptized there. And in Turkey, president Erdoğan who recently triumphed in elections is in open social conflict with those segments of Turkish population who support the westernizing reforms of Kemal Atatürk and his successors. According to these rivals of Erdoğan, he would like to eventually officially resurrect the institution of the Caliphate that Atatürk abolished, and the ISIS would like to resurrect.

And yet, neither case represents a simple reactionary sentiment, but according to their supporters, the appreciation for ancient roots is needed for making further progress in the future. After all, Russia also has currently a strong official cult of the Great Patriotic War that was fought under the banner of Stalinist Communism, and also in other ways it seeks to maintain what was positive and admirable about the Communist era – while yet appreciating pre-Communist Russia as well. And in Turkey, the pre-Kemalist Ottoman era is likewise seen as something that should be selectively imitated, and not blindly copied like the ISIS does.

Praising the historic bonds that connected the peoples of Turkey over the "new identities that were thrust upon us in the modern era," [Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet] Davutoglu maintained that the road to Turkey's progress lies in its past - an assertion that has terrified the government's detractors enough for them to make it a losing political platform each new election (Kiper 2013).

Thus we can see that the subjects that this thesis has dwelt upon are as relevant as ever in today's politics. In all likelihood, the backward-looking kind of attitude is inevitable among normally functioning human beings: the only question is to what degree it is taken. Even the most progressive societies are to some extent dependent on their past, drawing inspiration from people who are long since dead.

I am not seeking to make simplistic comparison between past phenomena and modern affairs. The historical persons whom I have been describing were inevitably bound to the conditions of their own time and place; Marlowe's most pressing concern, when writing his innovative

plays, was not to provide fodder for modern critics to gush over, but to provide himself a living in the hard streets of Elizabethan London. He lived fast and died young, however, as a rebellious youth idol is supposed to do. Lord Bacon, for his part, did not set out to change the world when he wrote his utopia; as a politician who was convicted of corruption, he knew all too well the sordid limitations of real-world transactions. He did die in a manner appropriate for a pioneer of experimental science; he died of the fever he acquired after the experiment that sought to conserve animal substance in the cold, personally burying a fowl in snow on a cold winter day.

Winstanley was, out of these three, perhaps most convinced of the messianic role he himself was destined to play, setting an example for the rest of the world to follow, as he was filled with apocalyptic zeal and awaited radical transformation of the world within his own lifetime. But of all of them, his career also ended the most anticlimactically, as first the “Thermidorian” Cromwellian reaction suppressed the wild dreams of fringe radicals of the English Revolution, and the Restoration era of the Stuart monarchy made it seem as if nothing had happened at all. Trying to make his living after the revolution had died down, Winstanley ended his life in a petty-bourgeois style that must have been depressing to a former firebrand like him; he ended up accepting the job as a churchwarden in the 1660s (Alsop 1979).

It is said that history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes. Perhaps a bit like the music of Maurice Ravel’s “Bolero,” it can return in spiraling circles that yet add new nuances and dimensions. We cannot learn history by merely blindly following a rote method, in either positive or negative manner. Whether we see in the past glorious examples to be faithfully imitated, or terrible “warnings of history” to be avoided at all costs, we cannot assume that phenomena that just vaguely resemble those of the past will actually be like them. Our ability to make true progress depends on our creative ability to properly apply historical lessons to modern context, without undue prejudices for either antiquity or modernity, neither of which should be blindly followed.

But overall, I would say that only a completely abstract philosopher could even theoretically free himself completely from the earthly bounds, so to speak, and be fully free to choose his or her own identity as one pleases. We cannot be sovereign wizards, and short of making some kind of diabolical pact I am afraid that at least to some extent, we need to be content of following traditions, taking one step back, to be able to proceed further into the future, two steps forward.

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