

Lecture 10

New Religion

Passages from Nietzsche Lecture of 1980 appear in a different type face.

A. Introduction

1. Having seen the outward progress of the Revolution of modern times, now we turn to deeper spiritual-philosophical causes of it -- what happened in the human soul to make it want Revolution that seems to make so little sense, be so impossible? What is theology of Revolution?

2. End of 18th century is end of Old Order -- age of stability, human institutions and art and culture based on at least remnant of Christianity and Christian feeling. Outbreak of Revolution coincides with end of civilization. For 200 years we have been in a new age, a seeking for a new order.

B. Crisis of knowledge -- end of rationalism

1. Since Middle Ages, Rationalism reduces sphere of knowledge as it criticizes every tradition, spiritual realm, myth except outward world.

2. With Hume, reason goes as far as it can go -- destroys all certain knowledge even of outward world. He said we can know only what we experience. Thus, against miracles; then, even natural religion: Randall 300.

ôThat the divinity may possibly be endowed with attributes which we have never seen exerted; may be governed by principles of action, which we cannot discover to be satisfied: all this will freely be allowed. But still this is mere possibility and hypothesis. We never can have reason to infer any attributes, or any principles of action in him, but so far as we know them to have been exerted and satisfied. æAre there any marks of a distributive justice in the world?Æ If you answer in the affirmative, I answer that, since justice here exerts itself, it is satisfied. If you reply in the negative, I conclude, that you have then no reason to ascribe justice, in our sense of it, to the gods. If you hold a medium between affirmation and negation, by saying, that the justice of the gods, at present, exerts itself in part, but not in its full extent: I answer, that you have no reason to give it particular extent, but only so far as you see it at present exert itself.ö^{cliii}

No argument for the existence of God: 301.

ô[Randall, p. 310] Having thus disposed of the rational basis for faith in the moral governance of the world, Hume went on, in his *Dialogues*, to show that there could not even be any argument for the existence of an all-wise and all-good Creator. There is no necessity of the universe having had a first cause. It is as easy to conceive of it as self-existent and eternal as to assume an external cause with those qualities. There is no analogy between an object in the world, like a watch, and the entire world; we have seen watches made, but not worlds. Order may be as natural as chaos, and hence harmony and universal law need no further reason for their existence, other than that we find them to obtain. From a finite world as effect we could assume at the most only a finite cause. If the universe did indeed have an author, he may have been an incompetent workman, or he may have long since died after completing his work, or he may have been a male and a female god, or a great number of gods. He may have been entirely good, or entirely evil, or both, or neither -- probably the last.ö^{cliv}

Holbach went further: materialism 302.

ôIs it not more natural and more intelligible to derive everything which exists from the bosom of matter, whose existence is demonstrated by every one of our senses, whose effects we each instant experience, which we see acting, moving, communicating motion and generation ceaselessly, than to attribute the formation of things to an unknown force, to a spiritual being which cannot develop from its nature what it is not itself, and which, by the spiritual essence attributed to it is incapable of doing anything and of setting anything in motion?ö^{clv}

3. But Hume goes further: undermine even knowledge of facts. Brinton paper 2-6; then p. 1 on ôchill.ö

ôMan has two sorts of perceptions...distinguishable by their varying liveliness and forcibleness; and there are two sorts of knowledge which correspond to them. On the one hand there is immediate sensation, present experience -- what he calls *impressions*; from these we obtain knowledge of *matters of fact*. Then, there are our less lively impressions -- our *ideas* -- from which we come to know the *relations of ideas*. Our ideas are without exception derived from our impressions, and the only power of our minds is in æcompounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience.Æ^{clvi} Our ideas, then, are more feeble, decidedly secondary -- certainly not a source of knowledge in the practical affairs of ethics, politics, economics, which, in a secular outlook such as that prevailing in the eighteenth century, are the principle concerns of man. (No more, of course, can they tell us anything about God or any other such transcendental object beyond the experience of man.) Knowledge of the relations of ideas tells us only about those ideas, not about the primary impressions from which they are derived. Knowledge here is certain -- because it is subjective. If we examine the way in which our mind works we can discover how it orders and relates the ideas presented to it; but the subjective working of our mind has nothing to do with that external ærealityÆ which we seek most of all to know.

ôOur inquiry, then, into æusefulÆ knowledge, must have to do exclusively with our impressions,...ö

[Transcript text begins in middle of Fr. Seraphim's "Brinton paper" quote]

"...what we can know about the outer world, ...deal only with what he called impressions, "matters of fact."

"First of all," we must acknowledge that we cannot know what things are "in themselves." We do not have knowledge of the "external entities which are presented to our senses, but only of the *images* of those things. All we can know is what we perceive and since all external objects must be seen through our senses, all we can know are those objects" not as they are in themselves, but as they are "*seen through our senses*. What we see is not a tree, but" only "the image of a tree as our sense of sight modifies it in taking it up into its perception. When we back away from it, it is not the tree that becomes smaller but the perception of it in our minds. And when we press our eyeballs in a certain way, it is not the tree that becomes double, but the image of it" which "is all we can know of it."

So "to begin with...we must realize that even our knowledge of matters of fact has a great deal of subjectivity in it." But now we must look to see if there's any objectivity at all in our knowledge.

"...The next question we will ask" about these impressions "is how do we come to know them? Beyond the evidence of the immediate sense-testimony and the memory" of this sense testimony, "there is only" one thing, one "relation,"

which is “cause and effect. When confronted with a certain cause, we expect a certain effect; and much of our daily experience is based upon the regularity of this relationship” between causes and effects. “But here again, if we search for certainty we are bound to be disappointed: there is no necessary connection between cause and effect; we *infer* such a connection through experience of constant conjunction of two events. Thus, whenever I put my hand into a flame, I experience pain; but this will not *necessarily* happen each...time I do” it, because we have no knowledge that there’s a certain connection between these two events.

And so he says, “The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and” it “is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality.”^{clvii} That is, it could happen as far as we know, that I put my hand in the flame and it will not experience pain. “But how then do we infer this necessary connection between cause and effect?” And he says that it’s only “by custom or habit. ‘All inferences from experience[, therefore,] are effects of custom, not of reasoning. Custom, then, is the great guide of human life. It is that principle alone which renders our experiences useful to us and makes us expect, for the future, a similar train of events with those which have appeared in the past.’”^{clviii}

“But what, then, is left” of knowledge and “of the certain, absolute knowledge” which the philosophers of the eighteenth century thought they had? The answer according to Hume: “Nothing,” whatsoever. “Reason is a subjective faculty which has no necessary relation with the ‘facts’ we seek to know. It is limited to tracing the relations of our ideas”, which “themselves” are already twice “removed from ‘reality.’ And our senses are equally subjective, for they can never know the ‘thing in itself,’ only an image of it which has in it no element of necessity and certainty -- ‘the contrary of every matter of fact is still possible.’”

So he says, “Do you follow the instincts and propensities of nature in ascending to the veracity, the truthfulness of sense? But these lead you to believe that the very perception or sensible image is the external object.” Which, of course, is not true; it is not. It’s only an image in our mind. “Do you disclaim this principle, in order to embrace a more rational opinion that the perceptions are only representations of something external?” But here you “depart from your natural propensities and more obvious sentiments; and” still you “are not able to satisfy your reason, which can never find any convincing argument from experience to prove, that these perceptions are connected with any external objects.”^{clix} And so, knowledge is dissolved.

And what, then, is the answer? How do we live, according to Hume? And here’s his answer: “The great subverter of...the excessive principles of skepticism is action, and employment, and the occupations of common life. These principles may flourish and triumph in the schools,... But as soon as they leave the shade, and by the presence of the real objects, which actuate our passions, and sentiments, are put into opposition to the more powerful principles of our nature, they vanish like smoke, and leave the most determined skeptic in the same condition as other mortals.”^{clx-clxi}

Well, it’s very nice for him to say because he was a very comfortable English gentleman. He had his fireplace, cozy warm nook, country house. And in fact wrote his history of England and was concerned about practical things; and this philosophy did not upset him terribly. But the poor people who read this and take it seriously and have a real sort of passion to know what they can know and they believe in reason, for them the whole universe is destroyed. In fact, that’s one deep thing in our modern thinkers for the last two hundred years, this sort of despair at ever being able to know anything, which sort of dissolves the fabric of their

life....

You’re going to believe in philosophy and sort of start reasoning things through, you want to come to the truth, and you get up against Hume and thinkers like that.

[From Nietzsche 1980 lecture:]...this change which occurred between eighteenth century and, that is, from the time when Hume criticized reality, that reality is not quite as secure as we thought. [end of addition]

And all of a sudden the whole world sort of dissolves and the next thing you know, you are wondering, “Do I, do I exist? Does the world exist?” “What is what?” And you can actually kill yourself if you start thinking like that and take it really seriously. And, of course, people have killed themselves over that. Others have overthrown philosophy and gone up to start burning down buildings because that’s something *real*, you know, action. He says “Action.” For him action means sitting around, and smoking his pipe and writing English history. Somebody else, that is, if they don’t have that education, that desire, for them action means revolution, burning things up, killing people.

And so, with justice, one of the writers on the philosophy of the Enlightenment has the following thing to say about Hume. Carl Becker is his name. He wrote a book called *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*. And this Carl Becker describes all these philosophers and progress and so forth, and then he comes to Hume. And he says when you read Hume, after reading all the other philosophers, it’s as though at high noon of the great age of Enlightenment, all of a sudden there’s a cloud, a chill, some kind of a strange thing comes to, you begin to wonder what, I thought everything was just fine, it’s all sunny and warm.

“To read Hume’s *Dialogues* after having read, with sympathetic understanding, the earnest deists and optimistic philosophers of the early century, is to experience a slight chill, a feeling of apprehension. It is as if, at high noon of the Enlightenment, at the hour of the siesta when everything seems to be so quiet and secure all about, one were suddenly aware of the short, sharp slipping of the foundations, a faint far-off tremor running underneath the solid ground of common sense.”^{clxii}

All of a sudden you feel this chill. There’s something cold and dark on the horizon about to come up, because the ideas of Hume destroyed reality. No more is it possible to believe, that is, can we simply accept reality the way it is. Throw God out and we will have indefinite progress in this world. And Hume destroyed the idea that the world is stable. He said we can never know the world the way it is because cause and effect is only a part of the custom. And there’s no law in science. All you have is custom. There’s nothing objective or absolute about it. He himself didn’t become a prophet of any new religion, but he has left his ideas there. Of course, this would later produce a great earthquake in our own times.

There’re a lot of now modern academic historians who like eighteenth century a lot because it’s full of optimism. It was the time of great music, Bach and Handel, and the philosophy was also very optimistic. The poetry was very upbeat and everything was very positive. There was nothing but good to come from the future, indefinite progress.

And so this revolutionary age of the eighteenth century preceding the Revolution begins with great optimism and even the people who make the Revolution also begin with great optimism, not realizing that by the end of the century, the most advanced philosophers have just destroyed any possibility for any real knowledge of the external world. And it takes time for deep ideas like that to filter down into the people, but when they do, we’ll see it produces disastrous effects.

Kant

Now we'll come to the thinker who is at this very time, the beginning of the revolutionary age, who stands between this old world of rationalistic philosophy when philosophers still thought they could reason to certain conclusions, even though they kept changing conclusions, and our new age when all of knowledge becomes uncertain. And this thinker has a very key place because he performed what he called, what has been called, the Copernican Revolution of philosophy. And his name is Immanuel Kant, who lived 1724 to 1804.

We already saw that the very beginning of modern philosophy with Descartes had begun not with some kind of outward observation or revelation; it began already with some kind of subjectivism. That is, when Descartes said: "I think, therefore I am," this is the first clear idea and from this, he deduces everything else -- the outward world, God and absolutely everything because if there is something, then the world is real. If there's a real world, then there must be a God who created it. And he has clear, distinct ideas about all these realities and thinks he has a nice, tight philosophical system. But it all begins with his own observation of *himself*, which of course shows how far away he is from Christianity, which starts with God Who created the world and created us. But since they trust reason as the only faculty which can give us knowledge, they cannot start with God because you do not *see* God.

And so it happens that when these rationalists, particularly Hume, succeed in destroying our knowledge of God, of religion, of the spiritual world and then even of the material world, what is left? And the answer: what is left is the same, some kind of self-awareness. And so the last hope that man has that there is some kind of knowledge rests in his own awareness of himself. And this is what Kant did. He made a Copernican revolution by saying that it is not the mind which revolves around the world, in order to know what it is; it is rather the world which revolves around me, around the mind. We can never know what is out there, the thing in itself, the *noumenon* he calls it, but we can only know it as it appears to us; and such categories of reality as space and time are not categories of outward reality, but rather, of *my* mind; that is, I must see them in terms of space and mind. These are the categories which my mind organizes a reality with. And of course, if this is true, there is some kind of knowledge left. Not as reality as it is in itself, but reality as it must appear to me because I have that kind of mind. And so, knowledge is possible. And even knowledge of God is possible because he says that it's based on inward feeling, subjective feeling, which shows how much he was under the influence of the Pietist movement of his time which was reacting against the Enlightenment rationalism, the deadness of it. But reality in itself is absolutely unknowable. Only what I see is knowable.

We have here observations on this by Heinrich Heine, a German Jew, who came to France because it was too dangerous in Germany and wrote this book on *Religion and Philosophy in Germany* in 1833 or 4, and got ahold of the feeling behind these thinkers very nicely and communicated what their meaning is. He was trying to interpret German philosophy to the French. And this is what he has to say about Kant:

"I am about to speak of a man whose mere name has the might of an exorcism; I speak of Immanuel Kant.

"It is said that night-wandering spirits are filled with terror at sight of the headman's axe. With what mighty fear, then, must they be stricken when there is held up to them Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. This is the sword that slew Deism in Germany.

"To speak frankly, you French have been tame and moderate compared with us Germans. At most you could but kill a king, and he had already lost his head before you guillotined him. For accompaniment to such deeds you must needs cause

such a drumming and shrieking and stamping of feet that the whole universe trembled. To compare Maximilian Robespierre with Immanuel Kant is to confer too high an honor upon the former. Maximilian Robespierre, the great citizen of the Rue Saint Honoré, had, it is true, his sudden attacks of destructiveness when it was a question of the monarchy, and his frame was violently convulsed when the fit of regicidal epilepsy was on; but as soon as it came to be a question about the Supreme Being, he wiped the white froth from his lips, washed the blood from his hands, donned his blue Sunday coat with silver buttons, and stuck a nosegay into the bosom of his broad vest." clxiii

He went to Notre Dame to worship Reason and God and even to burn the image of atheism.

"The history of Immanuel Kant's life is difficult to portray, for he had neither life nor history. He led a mechanical, regular, almost abstract bachelor existence in a little retired street of Königsberg, an old town on the northeastern frontier of Germany. I do not believe that the great clock of the cathedral performed in a more passionless and methodical manner its daily routine, than did its townsman Immanuel Kant. Rising in the morning, coffee-drinking, writing, reading lectures, dining, walking, everything had its appointed time, and the neighbors knew that it was exactly half-past three o'clock when Immanuel Kant stepped forth from his house in his grey tight-fitting coat with his Spanish cane in his hand, and betook himself to the little linden avenue called after him to this day the "Philosopher's Walk." Summer and winter he walked up and down it eight times, and when the weather was dull or heavy clouds prognosticated rain, the townspeople beheld his servant, the old Lampe, trudging anxiously behind him with a big umbrella under his arm, like an image of Providence.

"What a strange contrast did this man's outward life present to his destructive world-annihilating thoughts! In sooth, had the citizens of Königsberg had the least presentiment of the full significance of his ideas, they would have felt a far more awful dread at the presence of this man than at the sight of an executioner, who can but kill the body. But the worthy folk saw in him nothing more than a Professor of Philosophy, and as he passed at his customary hour, they greeted him in a friendly manner and set their watches by him.

"But though Immanuel Kant, the arch-destroyer in the realm of thought, far surpassed in terrorism Maximilian Robespierre, he had many similarities with the latter, which induce a comparison between the two men. In the first place, we find in both the same inexorable, keen, poesyless, sober integrity. We likewise find in both the same talent of suspicion, only that in the one it manifested itself in the direction of thought and was called criticism, whilst in the other it was directly against mankind and was styled republican virtue. But both presented in the highest degree the type of the narrow-minded citizen. Nature had destined them for weighing out coffee and sugar, but fate decided they should weigh out other things, and into the scales of the one it laid a king, into the scales of the other, a God.... And they both gave the correct weight!" clxiv

"Kant proves to us that we know nothing about things as they are in and by themselves, but that we have a knowledge of them only in so far as they are reflected in our minds...." clxv

"Not without reason, therefore, did he compare his philosophy to the method of Copernicus. Formerly, when men conceived the world as standing still and the sun as revolving around it, astronomical calculations failed to agree accurately, but when Copernicus made the sun stand still and the earth revolve around it, behold! everything accorded admirably. So formerly reason, like the sun, moved round the universe of phenomena, and sought to throw light upon it. But Kant bade reason, the sun, stand still, and the universe of phenomena now turns round, and is illuminated the moment it comes within the

region of the intellectual orb.”clxvi

“God, according to Kant, is a noumen. As a result of his argument, this ideal and transcendental being, hitherto called God, is a mere fiction. It has arisen from a natural illusion. Kant shows that we can know nothing regarding this noumen, regarding God, and that all reasonable proof of His existence is impossible. The words of Dante, ‘Leave all hope behind!’ may be inscribed over this portion of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.”clxvii

But in the end “Immanuel Kant relents and shows that he is not merely a great philosopher but also a good man; he reflects, and half good-naturedly, half ironically, he says: ‘Old Lampe must have a God, otherwise the poor fellow can never be happy. Now, man ought to be happy in this world; practical reason says so; -- well, I am quite willing that practical reason should also guarantee the existence of God.’ As the result of this argument, Kant distinguishes between the *theoretical reason* and the *practical reason*, and by means of the latter, as with a magician’s wand, he revivifies Deism which theoretical reason had killed.”clxviii

Well, the function of Kant is to make systematic what Hume had done with his criticism, that is, to do away with knowledge of the outer world and with God -- in fact, to do away with God entirely. And he restores God only on the basis of our subjective feeling. And that is why all the religious movements from this time on have a new character. Because previously the idea of God is something which different people think they know by various kinds of revelations, even when they are wrong; but it’s about some Being who is *out there*.

From this time on, a new kind of subjectivism enters into philosophy and religious currents. And now we begin to think about, well, later in this century we have new thought: positive thinking, science of mind, mind over matter -- all these things which are to come direct from this philosopher, not because his philosophy itself sort of had direct influence -- of course, it did in many places -- but because he was expressing what was going through the mind of people at that time: that is, if you accept reason, you must follow him this far that we have no knowledge at all of outward things, and the only knowledge comes through some kind of subjectivism.

And as a result of this, the nineteenth century issues forth in a tremendous outburst of new subjective philosophies. We will look at just one of these which in itself is not particularly important, but it shows what happens when a philosopher takes seriously what this Kant says.

Fichte

This philosopher is Fichte who lived about the same time as Kant, who died a little bit later. F-I-C-H-T-E. This is what Heinrich Heine has to say about him.

“The question proposed by Fichte is: What grounds have we for assuming that our conceptions of objects correspond with objects external to us? And to this question he offers the solution: All things have reality only in our mind.”clxix

“That idealism pursued to its ultimate consequences should end by denying even the reality of matter,” as Fichte did, “seemed, to the great mass of the public, to be carrying the joke too far. We” Germans “grew rather merry over the Fichtean Ego.” His whole philosophy is concerning the Ego and what it, how it makes reality for itself. “We grew rather merry over the Fichtean Ego, which produced by its mere thinking the whole external world. The laughter of our wits was increased through a misapprehension that became too popular to permit my passing over it in silence. The great mass really supposed that the *Ego* of Fichte was the Ego of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and that this individual Ego implied a negation of all other existences. What an

impertinence! exclaimed the worthy folk; this fellow does not believe that we exist, we who are much more corpulent than himself, and who, as burgomasters and bailiffs, are actually his superiors! The ladies inquired, Does he not at least believe in the existence of his wife? No! And Madame Fichte suffers this!

“The Ego of Fichte, however, is not the individual but the universal Ego, the world-Ego awakened to self-consciousness. The Fichtean process of thought is not the thinking act of an individual, of a certain person called Johann Gottlieb Fichte; it is rather the universal thought manifesting itself to an individual. As we say, ‘It rains,’ ‘It lightens,’ and so on; so Fichte ought not to say, ‘I think,’ but ‘it thinks,’ ‘the universal world-thought thinks in me.’

“In a parallel between the French Revolution and German philosophy I once compared, more in jest than in earnest, Fichte to Napoleon. But there are, in fact, certain remarkable analogies between them. After the Kantists had accomplished their work of terrorism and destruction, Fichte appeared, as Napoleon appeared after the Convention had demolished the whole past by the help of another sort of *Critique of Pure Reason*. Napoleon and Fichte represent the great inexorable Ego for which thought and action are one; and the colossal structures raised by both men testify to a colossal will. But through the boundlessness of this will their structures soon fall to the ground, and both the ‘Theory of Knowledge’ and the Empire crumble to pieces and disappear as quickly as they were reared.

“The Empire is now nothing more than matter of history, but the commotion caused by the emperor in the world has not yet calmed down and from this commotion our present Europe draws its vitality. It is the same with the philosophy of Fichte; it has completely perished, but men’s minds are still agitated by the thoughts that found a voice in Fichte, and the after-effect of his teaching is incalculable.”clxx Why? Because now this subjectivism has entered into the mainstream of Western thought.

Worship of Self

From this time on, a person who wished to remain in this mainstream of thought, cannot think of anything, he cannot begin with anything but *himself*. And as we’ve already seen, this is the age of fantastic egotism in all spheres: the artists, the poets, the philosophers, the political people -- they come up with fantastic claims for themselves, as though men had really come to believe that only *I* exist and everything else is uncertain.

For example, even at the end of the century Gustave Courbet, the painter, could say, “I have no master; my master is myself. There is not, and never has been any other painter other than myself.”clxxi And you can talk to any modern painter and he’ll tell you very similar things. He’s all so preoccupied with his own genius, with what he can say, that he just has no, nothing else exists for him. It’s all bound up with his own, his own conception of art and reality. A lot of artists think that way now; they’re very proud. And he sort of expressed it in that way; it’s in accordance with these ideals of Kant: he was the center of the universe. And so you can say that once God has been dethroned in the eighteenth century, they look for a new god and Kant gave the new god, the new god is...

Student: Demonic?

Fr. S: No, well, just myself. Myself.

And so, in the mainstream of Western thought, we see the beginning of the formation of a new deity, the Self. The world previously went around God, and now the world begins to go around the self. And this idea will go very deep into Western man. Therefore we come to this problem, if there’s a new god, what happens to the old God? But if there is this new deity being

formed, what happens to the old deity, that is, the God of Christianity, Who lived on in some form even in Protestantism and the sects?

“God is Dead”

And we see in the early nineteenth century first appears this idea that “God is dead.” And here we come to what we can call the first dogma of the new religion that is being formed, the religion underlying this revolutionary dream, and this dogma is called “The Death of God.” This phrase that “God is dead,” is a very important concept; it’s used by all existentialists nowadays. The phrase “death of God”^{clxxii} appears first, as far as we can tell, in the writings of Josef DeMaistre, the great conservative who was defending Catholicism against the revolution, in the early years of the nineteenth century. And he used this phrase to express the idea [the enormity of the] of the rebellion against God in the French Revolution; and he said that the people who are rebelling against society, against Christianity, against the monarchy, against God -- they are actually based upon the philosophy that “God is dead,” and want to make a new god. In other words, Christianity is dying and the new religion is coming to birth. No one even particularly read this phrase. It was not an influential page of his [DeMaistre’s] writings. So it’s not because they read him, but they weren’t talking about it. Because this idea now begins to enter into the consciousness of European man, the man of the apostasy. The idea that God they used to have is now going away. They were being deprived of God.

And we’ll see in this same Heine who was a sort of romantic revolutionist how he used -- this is about 1833 -- this very phenomenon, which he sees still as a process going on. “A peculiar awe, a mysterious piety,” he writes, “forbids our writing more today. Our heart is full of shuddering compassion: it is the old Jehovah himself that is preparing for death. We have known Him so well from His cradle in Egypt, where He was reared among the divine calves and crocodiles, the sacred onions, ibises and cats. We have seen Him bid farewell to these companions of his childhood and to the obelisks and sphinxes of his native Nile, to become in Palestine a little god-king amidst a poor shepherd people, and to inhabit a temple-palace of his own. We have seen him later coming into contact with Assyrian-Babylonian civilization, renouncing his all-too-human passions, no longer giving vent to fierce wrath and vengeance, at least no longer thundering at every trifle. We have seen him migrate to Rome, the capital, where he abjures all national prejudices and proclaims the celestial equality of all nations, and with such fine phrases establishes an opposition to the old Jupiter, and intrigues ceaselessly till he attains supreme authority, and from the Capitol rules the city and the world, *urban et orbam*. We have seen how, growing still more spiritualized, he becomes a loving father, a universal friend of man, a benefactor of the world, a philanthropist; but all this could avail him nothing!

“Hear ye not the bells resounding? Kneel down. They are bringing the sacraments to a dying god!”^{clxxiii}

Of course, this is the idea that enters now into these advanced minds who sense very quickly the spirit of the times. What they mean to say is Christianity is dying; a new religion is being born; and, to symbolize a new religion, of course, a new god is being born. But the old God now must die; that is, Christianity, the whole idea of Christianity, centering around the God of Christianity, is now dying off.

Nietzsche

Later in the century this very idea attained its most powerful [maximum] expression in a very important thinker for us whose name is Friedrich Nietzsche. N-I-E-T-Z-S-C-H-E, who lived 18, I think, 54 to 1900. The last ten years of his life he was insane, [and] finally was found in the streets of Naples, I believe, crying, “I am Antichrist.”^{clxxiv} And they finally had to put him

away. His sister and his mother took care of him.

Nietzsche [had] a very romantic temperament very open to all kinds of higher ideas, struggle, sentimental. In his youth he was a Protestant seminary student and came to hate Christianity because he saw in it the principle of weakness which, of course, was true because Luther had taken out of Christianity the idea of struggle and left it something very weak which does not satisfy either the mind or the heart, something which could be totally dry and rational on the one hand, or totally sentimental on the other hand. Nietzsche could see no one who was struggling, no great ascetics, no heroes of Christianity; and from that he concluded that the whole of Christianity was a monstrous farce, a deception practiced upon humanity that does not satisfy the reason which wants Truth; and this is full of superstition because he is full of the idea you can only know what is rational and therefore he rejects everything above the rational; on the other hand, it says nothing to the heart because it becomes so watered down that it is feeble. And he saw it was simply a way of keeping people quiet and satisfied with their lot and he said that was for the herds.

And out of his rejection of Christianity he developed the idea that there are going to be strong people who are going to be ruthless and barbarous and who are going to take over whole countries and rule the world. Of course, Hitler deliberately said, “I am the Superman.”^{clxxv} [H]e brought out the sister of Nietzsche, who was still alive 1933, and even got [her] to pose with him and to say, “Yes, you are the Superman my brother was talking about.” And Hitler made her one of the honored members of his realm because he was the Superman that Nietzsche prophesied.

Of course, Nietzsche would have admired his ruthlessness, but would have considered him also part of this same herd mentality because he was looking for some real, tremendous figure, some world leader who was completely ruthless, completely strong, totally removed from all superstitions but a very noble person, because Nietzsche himself was filled with the highest natural instincts for nobility and struggle. He was a great student of Greek literature and one of his first books talks about the Dionysian element in Greece -- because until his time people regarded Greece as the home of the classical tradition of the Apollo -- and he said no, that Greece was also filled with this striving, this romantic feeling which he symbolized by Dionysius. And that was what he wanted, to be like Dionysius, constantly striving, struggling for something higher.

Here he mentions the changing human institutions, the rise of capitalism, different ideas in morality, enforce the faith you have in evolution. “The concept that an organism reacting to and acting upon a complex environment evolves is now basic. All ideas and institutions are today thought to be primarily social products functioning in social groups and spring from some necessity of effecting some kind of adaptation between human nature and its environment. All the fields of human interest have undergone this general sociologizing and psychologizing tendency. The example of religion and theology will be a sufficient illustration. Whereas the eighteenth century thought of religion and theology as a deductive and demonstrable set of propositions, men now consider religion as primarily a social product, a way of life springing from a social organization of men’s religious experiences, and theology as a rationalization of certain fundamental feelings and experiences of human nature. We no longer prove the existence of God. We talk rather of the meaning of God in human experience. We no longer demonstrate the future life, we investigate the effect of the belief in immortality upon human conduct.”^{clxxvi}

We see here very clearly that this is the next stage beyond Hume who destroyed all these things; you can no longer believe in those old ideas and this is the next stage which has nothing to do with scientific discovery -- this is simply what is in the air. Once reason continues its march, it will end at its own

suicide.

But his [Nietzsche's] ideas are extremely powerful because he *caught* the spirit of the times and proclaimed a new gospel which he puts in various forms but most powerfully in his book called *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. It was after Zoroaster, that is, a pagan and all this religion of fire-worship, based upon the teaching of Zoroaster, who's the eighth century B.C or so. He uses this just as a literary device to express a new prophet, who is speaking to the new mankind. He wrote a book called *Thus Spake Zarathustra* which is, Zarathustra, he takes this ancient pagan, actually he was a man who lived and became like a god with this religion, Zoroasterism. And he used him like a "prophet" for this new religion of his. And he was the one who took up this phrase that DeMaistre earlier had used that "God is dead."clxxvii

He says in this book, Nietzsche, N-I-E-T-Z-S-C-H-E, in his book *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, this prophet, so-called "prophet" says, "There is no truth. There is no absolute state of affairs, no thing in itself."clxxviii And this is what he calls Nihilism.

Here we see quite clearly this idea, "God is dead."clxxix He expressed this in two ways: one by saying, "God is dead," and one by saying, "There is no truth." These are two aspects of the same thing. And we see Hume and Kant destroyed both God and the very idea of truth. Now there must be a new god, a new idea of truth. He even says in one place, "You talk always about truth, but what if there is no truth? Then what sweet forbidden flowers grow beside the highway of life."clxxx Which, of course, in our time we've tasted those sweet flowers. If there is no God, there's no death, and it is no immortality, this is what happens. As Nietzsche says, "There is no truth. There is no absolute state of affairs, no thing in itself. This alone is nihilism and of most extreme kind."clxxxi

Again he says, (asks the question) "What does Nihilism mean? -- That the highest values are losing their value. There is no goal. There is no answer to the question 'Why?'"clxxxii All the questions which the human mind asks, "Why am I here?", "Where does it all come from?", "What's this life about?", "What does it end in?", "Is there life after death?" And he says there's no answer. There's nothing out there. There's no absolute. There's no God. There's no answer to your questions.

Nihilism is this very spirit which animates the revolutionaries: turn everything to nothing. Destroy; let nothing be left. Wipe it all out. And Nietzsche is the philosopher of this. He expresses quite poetically this phenomenon of the "death of God." Kant was very a rationalist, abstract and simply expressed what was in the minds of people at that time, what you must think like if you are to be in the main tradition of Europe. Remember what Kant said? The thing in itself, we can't know what it is, that reality out there. And he says there simply is no thing in itself. There is no truth. There is no absolute. In other words, he's totally influenced by Hume. And he [Nietzsche] sees that Kant does not solve the problem. But Nietzsche was a poet. In fact, he wrote some very lovely poems; these are on the dark side of life, deep mittern, midnight, and this loneliness, and so forth. And he expressed very poetically this new reality in human life, in the life of the people of this apostasy.

He says, "The 'death of God' had begun 'to cast its first shadows over Europe'; and though 'the event itself is far too great, too remote, too much beyond most people's power of apprehension, for one to suppose it so much as the report of it could have reached them, still'"clxxxiii it is coming. And Nietzsche called himself "the firstlings," that is, he and others like him, "the firstlings and premature children of the coming century,"clxxxiv which as he said was to be the century of the triumph of nihilism."clxxxv

He says, in another place -- because then most people were living ordinary lives, they're going to work in factories, and literature was flourishing and art and music -- he said but this idea what he is describing, the "death of God," when it filters down to the common people, there will be an upheaval in the world such as was never seen from the beginning until now, because the whole of society will be overthrown."clxxxvi

He puts in the mouth of one of his characters, a mad man, this idea of the universe becoming upside down. The madman proclaims to the people in *The Joyful Wisdom*, "Nihilism, p. 72n: *The Joyful Wisdom*, #125] We have killed him (God), you and I. We are all His murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker?"clxxxvii

[The rest is from the Nietzsche lecture and the Question and Answer lecture]

The thought was, he said, that the earth up until now has revolved around the sun and all of a sudden it's got loose and it begins to go out into outer space. And people look around and they see that things begin to get darker and darker, and begin to wonder where is up and where is down, what's right and what's wrong. They begin to lose their moorings, and begin to get all mixed up. Then you see that everything begins to get darker, as though the world is going out. That's the concept. Henceforth if there's no more God, then life becomes entirely different. And frightful possibilities open up.

This is the world of today's mankind, that is, the ones who are still trying to retain the main tradition of European history and thought.

Kafka

This can be very well seen in much of contemporary art. [Franz] Kafka's an interesting person. There've been movies of his stories, but his stories are very powerful because they're understated, and they're such very clear, very nice German -- I started to read it in German -- very simple, straightforward presented. No complicated language, in very clear language to present a fact which is absolutely horrible. This Kafka's a very interesting writer because he writes all these things in a very matter-of-fact way. It's not as though it's something unusual.

For example, in Kafka's *The Trial*, someone is brought up for trial for a crime he doesn't know what it is; He's not guilty, he doesn't know whether he is guilty or innocent. He's announced to be, "You go on trial tomorrow at 10 o'clock." "On trial? What did I do?" "We don't know. Just show up." And he goes and he finds these very shadowy figures. It's all very mysterious. He doesn't know who his judges are. He doesn't know what his crime is, who his witnesses against him are, what he did. And this is presented in such a matter of fact way that it is as though he is living in a nightmare. And it turns out that apparently just for existing he's guilty. He doesn't know quite how to answer it and they kill him off someplace. And it's just this idea that there's no sense any more, no logic, just that, because there's no more God, you're in a state of being hounded.

Or again, his story called "Metamorphosis," it's a autobiography of this young man lives [who] with his mother, and he wakes up one morning and discovers that he is a big brown bug, you know -- six foot high, a big beetle. His mother comes in and sees him and says, "Oh, my, can't let you outside in that shape." And this story is about how he is suffering because he

has become a beetle, and he's not bitter about it -- that's just the way it is: he's become a beetle, and it's very difficult to get along with his family.

And his mother, his family's sort of just hushing up the matter. "Shhh. Don't tell anybody." "Where's your son?" "Oh, he's resting today. Don't disturb him." And so they're all so embarrassed as they come and discover he's turned into a beetle. And I think he finally ends up crawling and dying on the floor or something. And it's presented in such a matter-of-fact way that, and it's so horrible, this whole idea.

And you say, what's the point? The point is that, just like Nietzsche says, reality became different now; now we don't know whether, are we human, are we not human? Start teaching we come from apes and you begin to say that we have ape-like nature in us; if we have an ape-like nature, we might have beetle-like nature too. Before anything this lower animal thing begins to enter into our human nature. If there's no more God, then our whole outlook on life becomes free. You can be a beetle, you can be a man going to the stars. You can have advanced civilization. There's all kinds of new possibilities open up. This is what the more recent writers, in the last twenty years or so, call the "art of the absurd."

We also see someone like Eugene Ionesco, the Romanian playwright who lived in Paris, who writes about people turning into rhinoceroses and this whole surrealist atmosphere. It's all laid, like parodies, sort of allegories expressing how silly the human situation becomes because there's no more God -- that life is ridiculous.

Or Beckett even: the whole play takes place in a garbage pail and they're "Waiting for Godot," and they're waiting for some kind of new revelation, and sit there talking about how God is gone and so forth. Also Camus who talks about rebellion as the only thing in (dawn?, doing?) leads to the reality of life and the most logical thing for a man to do is to commit suicide.^{clxxxviii} And he finally dies by running his car into a tree.

And this whole world of contemporary art which is full of loneliness, absurdity, we do not even know what's up, what's down, what Nietzsche says, we become very cold and lonely. One man can be lost in an infinite universe. We don't know what's going on, because the sun has gone out. God is gone. And of course, if you don't believe in God, the world becomes a very miserable place. Indeed, you don't know where you're going, what you're doing, because God gives meaning to everything else in life.

"Everything is Permitted"

This first dogma introduced from the new religion -- it's actually preparing for the new religion, that is, the "death of God," there is no God, there is no truth -- has several consequences, corollaries. The first consequence is, as Nietzsche says: "There is no God: therefore everything is permitted." The same thing is said by Ivan Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's novel, "If there is no immortality, everything is permitted."^{clxxxix} In fact we'll see that Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky were thinking exactly on the same wave-length, had exactly the same ideas because they were very, they were both in tune with the spirit of the times. But Dostoyevsky approached it from the point of view of someone who knows Orthodoxy, and Nietzsche approached it as the prophet of this new teaching, because he did not know Christianity. And he considered Christianity to be a doctrine of weakness, the herd mentality.

So, this is all bound up by: if God is gone, there is no truth, there is no eternal life, all that Christian civilization lived on is now gone. It's only a matter of time until it's, because if faith is gone, everything built from that faith will disappear. And therefore the revolution becomes logical.

So the first consequence is: everything is permitted, that

is, revolution, any kind of experiment in morality, government, art. In fact, we'll see in a later [lecture] how the very concept of art suddenly starts to crumble. What is art becomes filled with these very revolutionary, nihilistic ideas.

A New Age

The second consequence of the death of God is that there begins to be a *new age*. Nietzsche says in 1884, "It may be that I am *the first* to light upon an idea which will divide the history of mankind in two." As a result, "all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto."^{cxc} Of course, this is the age when God was still meaningful, when Christianity was still alive to some degree. There's some remnant of Christianity. And the "new age" when God is removed as the center, when Christianity is no longer accepted, that is the age of normal humanity and the age of revolution.

But as a matter of fact he wasn't so original as he thought because twelve years before this Dostoyevsky already expressed exactly the same idea in the thought of this Kirillov in *The Possessed* who said in one of his prophetic moments: "Everything will be new... then they will divide history into two parts: from the gorilla to the annihilation of God, and from the annihilation of God to the transformation of the earth, and of man physically."^{cxc} This is the idea of a new paradise coming up. This is Kirillov, the one who thought he had to become god in *The Possessed*.

Superman

And finally we come to this third consequence of this idea "God is dead," that is, there shall be annihilation of God, shall be the total transformation of the earth and man physically. Which means Superman, the coming of the Superman. Man is only something which is temporary and has to be superseded because he's too weak. He's going to become a Superman.

And what he means by Superman is someone who does not care about Christian morality. If you feel like killing someone, you kill. If you feel like doing anything you please, you do it. If you want to [go] conquering the world, you conquer the world, blow people up, however you please, because there's now a new morality. Of course, Communists did it even more so.

And you can say, "That's anti-Christian," but they say we're beyond Christians: we have new morality, we have the morality of Nietzsche, that everything in the past belongs to past history. Now there's a new transformation in human nature and we are the ones who are first-fruits of this new transformation. Therefore we can do whatever we want to. In order to challenge that, if they have the power, they will squash it. If you want to challenge it, you have to convert them to Christianity, and then they will see their mistake, repent, and a whole new history begins.

And this is how Nietzsche expresses it: "Shall we not ourselves have to become gods merely to seem worthy of it (the death of God)?"^{cxcii} That is, the fact that man has killed God.

...[I]f the old God is [dead, the] idea is that there must be a new God. Again Zarathustra says, in Nietzsche's book, "Dead are all the gods. Now do we desire the Superman to live."^{cxciii} And Kirillov in *The Possessed* says: "If there is no God, then I am God."^{cxciv} And Dostoyevsky distinguishes between the God-man Jesus Christ and the man-god, the new being who is coming up from the earth to become god. Zarathustra says again:

"-I bring you a goal; I preach to you the Superman. Man is something to be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All things before you have produced something beyond themselves, and would you be the ebb of this great flood? Would you rather go back to the animal than transcend man? What is

the ape to man? A jest or a bitter shame. And just that shall man be to the Superman, a jest or a bitter shame. You have traveled the way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm.... Lo, I preach to you the Superman. The Superman is the meaning of the earth.”cxcv

At first this seems a fantastic idea. What does it mean, “Superman”? You probably recall what Marx had to say about mankind being changed by means of violence, that is, man himself will be changed to [be] made fit for the new kingdom of Communism.

Contemporary writers such as Erich Kahler -talk about all the changes of modern society, both physically and in ideas, are producing what he calls a mutation, some kind of new man. And if, on top of that, we bear in mind the so-called “scientific” idea of evolution which in fact Nietzsche already believed in, we see that this idea of the coming of a new kind of man, of Superman, is not at all some kind of fantasy. It is a real idea which has been arrived at naturally, logically, by Western man in his falling away from God and trying to find the new religion.cxcvi

And the next generation comes along and because these ideas are not in a vacuum, someone hears them they begin to act according to them. And of course the answer to all these questions can be found in one writer, which is Dostoyevsky. He was thinking about the exactly the same things as Nietzsche, at the same time but a little ahead of him, and he had already the answer. Therefore, if you want to understand these problems very deeply, you read his books. First one is *Crime and Punishment* which describes how someone thought he was going to become Superman by killing off these two useless old ladies, or rather killing off one, and taking money and making himself into a person who’s preparing for the future. And he discovers that he has a conscience, that it’s not so easy to do something like that. But this is all a fantasy, it’s a fantasy world he’s living in. The same thing was done in 1920 or so, the famous case where two students....[Leopold and Loeb]

...[no?]vely and they began to live by it. And if you look at the kinds of crimes which are being performed now, you will see that in the last twenty years especially there’s been a great increase in crimes which don’t make any sense. That is, people usually in the old days, they could solve murders, almost all murders were solved in the old days because either there was a jealousy a man killing his wife or vice-versa or a lover, or anger, or a fit or a fight in a bar. And now the murders make no sense. There’s a few of the old kind, but now there’s a new kind of murder, and people are just killing because for the fun of it. And that is very difficult to trace them down. Now most murders are unsolved. They can’t find who did it because there’s no connection, there’s no logical connection. It’s not a family member, it’s not somebody who got mad at you, just somebody who felt like killing. And this kind of crime is shockingly increasing, it shows society’s in a very bad shape. And some make a point of killing a whole set of people, twenty people or more.

So this is the new morality, *Beyond Good and Evil*. That’s one of Nietzsche’s works. There’re several ideas here, one is beyond good and evil because there’s no more morality. The other one is the Superman. Since there’s no God, there must be a new man, a new god which is man. And Dostoyevsky wrote about these questions also in his book called *The Possessed* or *The Demons* in which he describes the mentality of people who were preparing to make the Revolution in Russia. And some of them have very profound ideas. He comes up with the idea that to make mankind happy, you must kill most people, because there’s too many people to make everybody happy. Therefore he calculated in Russia, to make Russia a happy country you have to kill a hundred million people. Solzhenitsyn figured out that that was exactly the number of people that were killed because the Revolution lasts 65 years.

That’s what was happening in Cambodia when they

killed off right away in the first six months, they killed off two million people because there’re too many people, too many smart people. Therefore everybody who had been past highschool had to be killed. Therefore all doctors, lawyers, advanced people like that were all killed, except a few who escaped.

Student: Then once these ideas get in the air, it’s, it’s like a poison.

Fr. S: That’s right. That’s right. You can see from this Raskolnikov. It’s very realistic description Dostoyevsky makes in *Crime and Punishment*. This person is *possessed* by these ideas. And he doesn’t have any, any -- he’s not his own man. He’s pushed from one idea to the next, and every time he comes across, all of a sudden he has a good impulse to give somebody some money -- it’s just out of what’s ever left of Christianity in him, because he had a pious mother and pious sister, some kind of Christianity in his background. And he gives some money to somebody and later on he says, “Oh, you fool, you could have used that money to help your project and kill that old lady” or something, get an axe to kill the old lady. He’s always reproaching himself because he has some good impulses. He’s possessed by these ideas, and has no rest until he finally goes and performs the murder.

And that’s [what happens] when we get someone like Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment* who reads all these ideas, someone like Nietzsche says the Superman is to come. We have to be overcoming mankind, mankind is too weak.

Actually if you compare -- today’s the day of St. Anthony the Great [1980]-- the answer to Nietzsche is Anthony the Great because Anthony the Great did overcome mankind, his own human nature. He was like an angel on earth, and these people, thinkers totally lost contact, because they lost Christianity, they lost contact with these saints. And therefore they didn’t realize that there is a whole family of people who are in this process of overcoming human nature with the grace of God. Not knowing that, he saw that men, human nature by itself is so small and weak, that it’s not worth fighting for. Therefore it has to overcome but by some other, some kind of external thing.

And they jumped upon this idea of evolution because that shows you man was once a ape-like creature who is going to become something else. He’s going to come to something higher. And therefore the present stage is only intermediary stage, nothing particularly important. Therefore if you kill a hundred million people, there’s no particular thing wrong with that. Or in Cambodia when the Communists took over, they killed one third of the population. Nothing particularly wrong, it’s just an experiment. And we’re heading for some higher state, therefore it’s justified. And the only measuring stick is Christianity.

And with the doctrine of evolution, there is found what seems to be a scientific foundation. This very complex question of evolution, which has many aspects: scientific, philosophical, religious, and is one of the key ideas of our times, which requires a great deal of concentration to get all the aspects of it straightened out. We’ll have to examine precisely this *doctrine* of evolution to see what it gives to modern man and give enough to criticize it quite thoroughly so as to see what part it might place in the philosophy of the apostasy? Because this idea is, as it were, a key to understanding the whole revolution, the whole idea of a new age which is coming about through the chiliastic expectations of all these writers we’ve been talking about. [In our next lecture] we’ll talk about it in general terms and also we’ll talk about more specifically the one great prophet of evolutionism of our times: who is Teilhard de Chardin, who is most symptomatic of all these chiliastic currents which are going out in the world now.