

# *WitnessKit 3 God and Religions*

## Class 4

Civilization and Culture,  
Architecture,  
Tenets of Postmodernism,  
Rorty, Gramsci and Fish

# An Important Bible Verse

Romans 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

(We renew our minds through reading God’s word regularly. Notice that this says **MINDS**—our minds are important to God.)

# Why?

- Why is it important to God that we renew our minds? What factors influence the way we think? How is it possible that an ancient book like the Bible would help the way we think?
- Part of the answer: Human wisdom has limitations. The best of human reasoning only can go as far as its assumptions take it. God's wisdom knows the true assumptions to make. Because the Bible reveals those assumptions, it helps us stay on course in our thoughts.

John 8:31b-32 Jesus said,

---

**“If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.**

"You can observe a lot just by watching."

--Yogi Berra

If objective truth exists

Then Postmodernism is a lie.

# If we only look at the surface

## Of Postmodernism

- It looks FUN, DIVERSE, HELPFUL, PLAYFUL, CREATIVE, STYLISH, and TOLERANT.
- When we dig deeper and see the logical consequences of its basic beliefs, Postmodernism starts to look SCARY.

# Anyone can see that postmodernism holds peril

## Historical Belief Systems

By contrasting it with

1. German beliefs leading up to World War II.
2. Western Civilization's strengths and weaknesses.



# Friedrich Nietzsche was an inspiration to the Reich...

- His view of language... "To use the same words is not a sufficient guarantee of understanding; one must use the same words for the same genus of inward experience; ultimately, one must have one's experiences in **common**."
- You can see the trend toward postmodernism in his thoughts.

# *Modern Times* by Paul Johnson

Describes the attitudes in Germany leading up to World War II. So also, the movie, *Expelled, No Intelligence Allowed*, describes the beliefs of the scientists who destroyed handicapped people in the name of progress for the human race.

The leaders in Germany defined people

- by their ethnic group and
- by their productivity for society
  - in an evolutionary manner.

# People were defined by group identity.

- The German people developed **suspicion toward civilization**, seeing it as decadent, and they became very approving of what they called **culture**, meaning **ethnic** heritage, **and including neo-paganism**. Over all this, they held to an **evolutionary view** of progress, so that the **“survival of the fittest”** allowed genocide of those deemed **“sub-human.”**
- Many of the factors that led to disaster are present in Postmodernism, including **an evolutionary view of biological identity**.

There are serious risks within any worldview that cannot define good and evil--

Or any worldview that defines it in **evolutionary terms.**

Hannah Arendt, in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, where the Nazi war criminal was executed, described the ultimate results of the German experiment in group identity and genocide as “**A lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying BANALITY OF EVIL.**”

Because the worldview in Germany shifted, evil became commonplace, routine.



Let's

Contrast the 1930s shift in worldview in Germany with Postmodernism.

# Postmodernism's View of the Individual

- **Culture defines the individual.** He has no independent identity. His culture PROGRAMS him—his life decisions, his thinking, his morals.
- **Western Civilization is suspect** as the source of marginalization, phobias of differences, racism, sexism, “imperialism” and homophobia and Islamophobia. The writings of great thinkers of Western Civilization are dismissed because those thinkers are “dead white males.” Dead white males reflected the oppression of their dominant culture, and cannot speak to us today.

# Postmodernism's View of the Individual

- **Culture defines the individual.**
- **Western Civilization is suspect.**
- Postmodernism **differs** from the 1930s German approach in that it claims to see **all cultures as equal**, and the Germans thought their own was superior and that others should be dominated.

# This is still a problem, though.

- If Postmodernism cannot find any universals, it has ***no way to counter*** a culture that claims superiority. It fails to recognize the problem, *because* it asserts its own belief that all cultures are equal **without considering facts.**
- Denial of truth's objective existence *makes facts elusive.*
- If someone mentions the fact that fanatic Islam claims the right to dominate, he is accused of *Islamophobia* and then marginalized.



# Let's compare Postmodernism

To Western Civilization's strengths and weaknesses.

# When Western Civilization was seen as a good thing...

- It accepted certain tenets as universals: *inherent human worth*, *equality of individuals before the law*, *equality of individual economic opportunity*.
- Much of the blame Western Civilization receives was due to individuals' failure to accept those universals. Members of dominant groups viewed members of other groups as being defined by their group.

# In other words

- Western Civilization gets blamed for problems that took place under an operational method of Postmodernism rather than under the universal principles of Western Civilization.
- The universal principles of **individual equality before the law** stem from the Judeo-Christian idea of **human equality before God**.

# The Universal Principles

- Are written on our hearts. They are real.
- Even in the worst of times, people cry out “That’s not fair!” when they are treated as a stereotype and denied their individual rights.
- The Judeo-Christian view of individual worth before God has always been both counter-cultural and universal, both an annoyance to pragmatists and a cry of the heart.

# Review: Common Themes in Pre-WWII Germany and Postmodernism

Germany 1930s	Postmodernism
Reliance on theories of Nietzsche	Reliance on theories of Nietzsche
Distrust of “Civilization”	Distrust of “Western Civilization”
An evolutionary view of humanity	An evolutionary view of humanity
Defined people by “Culture—ethnicity”	Defines people by “Culture—language group”
No sense of moral universals applying to all individuals equally—rejection of opposing Christian Traditions	No sense of moral universals applying to all individuals equally—Rejection of opposing Christian Traditions
Openness to Neo-Paganism	Openness to Neo-Paganism

# At this moment in history

Postmodernism looks **superficially appealing** and superficially very **different** from 1930s Germany. However, under the surface, the belief system itself has **many similarities**.

- It has significant **differences** as well, **such as the belief that all cultures are equal**. This belief is less helpful than one would think, because Postmodernism denies objective truth and denies facts as being real. So it has no strength to counter supremacists if their culture demands supremacy. It cannot say they are wrong. It has no help for oppressed minorities within cultural groups, because each group defines its own right and wrong.

# This shows us an important truth.

The belief that **all cultures are equal** is very different **in practice** from the belief that **all INDIVIDUALS** are equal and should be equal before the law.

- Cultural groups have wildly varying beliefs about individual equality within and outside their own group. If the **group** holds all the moral authority to set the rules, nobody has the moral authority to reform those rules.

# So at this moment in history

- We see a POSTMODERN belief system gaining political clout based on superficially appealing sentiments.
- How will that belief system work over the long term, especially if it gains ascendancy in Western political systems? Will it act as an enabler of supremacists? Will it tear down individual equality before the law?



# Postmodernism is complex.

Is it all good or all bad? No.

Is it going the right direction, or should we be tenacious about the idea of universals, and resist Postmodernism?

# We can see strengths and weaknesses in postmodernism

## Characteristics of Postmodern Architecture

By looking at characteristics of postmodern architecture

1. Diversity is fun and humanly appealing.
2. History without truth becomes style.
3. Function requires a tie to reality, and thus falsifies the theory, even when the architecture plays with conventions.

# Postmodern architecture

- is the best part of postmodernism—especially since it falsifies the theory.
- Modern architecture tended to be cold and impersonal, focusing on efficiency and minimal decoration. It's decorating style was Danish modern, with lots of cold chrome and minimal stuffing. It is actually making a comeback in design circles—“mid-century modern.” It looks cool but does not look “homelike.”

# Postmodern architecture is fun and usually human.

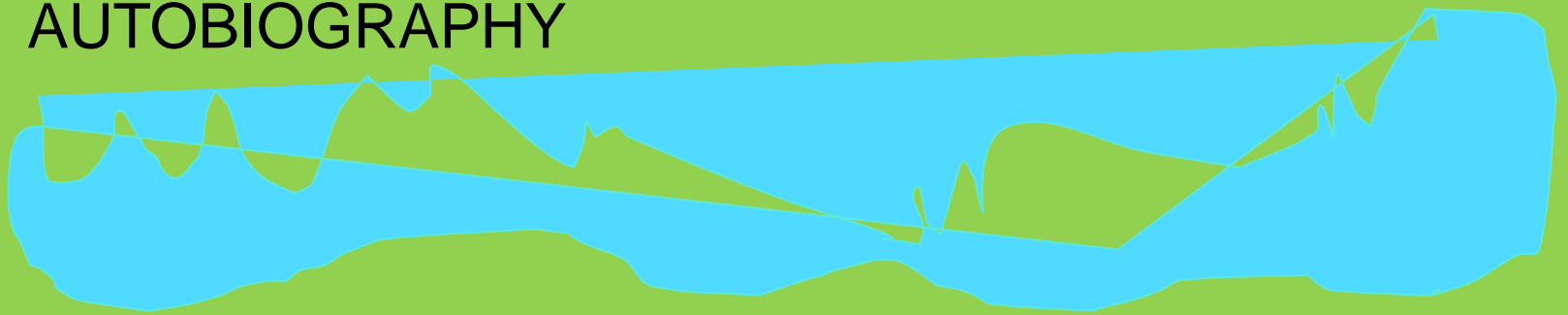
- It likes to collect details from all kinds of styles and put them together. It's decorating style is eclectic. It likes diversity. It likes curves and antiques and comfortable chairs.
- Postmodern architecture is often warm and inviting, or full of playful contrasts, such as the building in Austin with a giant mock-grand piano for an entrance. You enter the building where the piano bench would be.

# Because Postmodernism denies the existence of universal truth

- It views history as mere story. Postmodern architecture borrows from that idea to re-create **historic architecture**, often with a playful twist. It may borrow from several different historic periods to make a playful contrast.
- It also tries to settle into its environment, such as the homes described on PBS programs with rooms near the garden whose walls open to nature.

Frank Lloyd Wright was an early advocate of that kind of architecture.

- "No house should ever be built ON a hill or ON anything. It should be OF the hill. Belonging to it. Hill and house should live together each the happier for the other."—  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY



# Radical Postmodern Architecture

- **Tries to make buildings that change all the “rules,” such as “inside-out” buildings with the pipes and ducts showing on the outside of the walls, or stores that have fallen brickwork as though the building is falling down.**

# Postmodern Architecture Falsifies Postmodern Theory.

- This idea, that all the rules are just conventions which can be violated, is proved false by the engineering constraints on the building.
- It is only the **superficial rules** that **can** be violated. The pipes and ducts still must be sized correctly for proper flow rates and pressure drops.
- The walls still must meet engineering standards so they don't REALLY fall down.



# Postmodern Architecture

Proves that OBJECTIVE REALITY  
EXISTS, no matter what the  
Postmodern theory says!

# Postmodernism is not uniform.

- The next section describes the theoretical beliefs upon which Postmodernism was built.
- But MANY people are Postmodernists with only a vague awareness of these beliefs, because they have absorbed their beliefs in bits and pieces. Their beliefs are a mosaic of their experiences, rather than being connected. They may have been taught some of these beliefs directly in university classes.
- So the next section helps us understand the way Postmodernism developed, but it may not describe the individual Postmodernist.

# Everyone can understand Postmodernism better by learning Its major tenets.

## Tenets of Postmodernism

1. **Social Constructivism**
2. **Cultural Determinism**
3. **Rejection of Individual Identity**
4. **Rejection of Humanism**
5. **Denial of the Transcendent**
6. **Power Reductionism**
7. **Rejection of Reason**

# Social Constructivism

**Social Constructivism** assumes that meaning, morality, and truth are not objective realities, but are constructed by the language group.

Here is a counter question posed by Stanislaw Lec in *Unkempt Thoughts*: "Is it **progress** if a cannibal uses knife and fork?"

# Cultural Determinism

Cultural Determinism assumes individuals are programmed by their language of origin and by their biology.

Culture is a product of language, which is arbitrary and is given meaning by the group. Individuals are said to be “in a prison house of language.” Language **determines** how they think.

Cultural determinism **denies free will.**

# Rejection of Individual Identity

“Identity is primarily collective.”

*“The phenomenon of American individualism is itself a construction of American culture with its middle-class values of independence and introspection, but it remains an illusion.”*

One’s identity is determined by the web of groups to which he or she belongs, and is fluid rather than fixed.

(How can an individual have any rights if he/she has **no identity?**)

# Rejection of Individual Identity

- (Rejection of individual identity counters biological fact. A child learns that he or she is an individual before learning to talk. If you give a child a face painting and later he or she looks in the mirror, sees the painting, and touches his or her own face where it is painted, that demonstrates a knowledge of self. The word “*mine*” usually happens early in the development of language, and the idea of grammatical forms to show possession is common across languages.)

# Denial of the Transcendent

Postmodernism says *“There are no universals, and even if there were, we could not know them since we are bound in a prison house of language.”*

(This assumes that no God exists who is capable of communicating universals to us, and that our language is an airtight compartment.)



# Power Reductionism

- *"All institutions, all human relationships, all moral values, and all human creations—from works of art to religious ideologies—are all expressions and masks of the primal will to power."*
- (Notice that in this belief system, the **will to power** is assumed real, but **love** is not.)

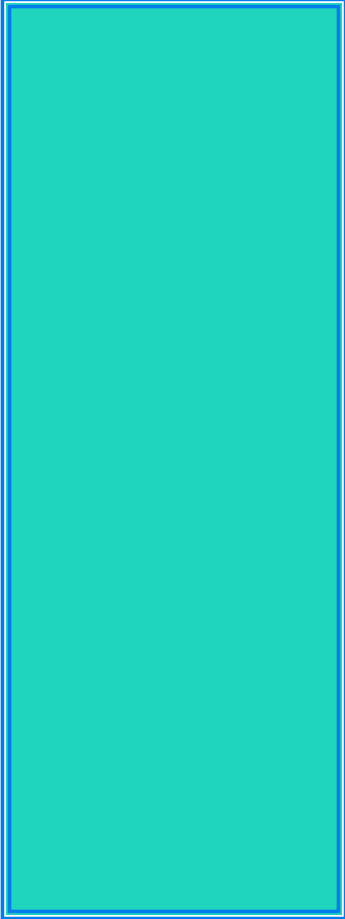
# Rejection of Reason

- *Reason and objectivity are illusory masks for cultural power. Authenticity and fulfillment come from submerging self into the group, and thereby releasing emotions. Submergence in the group is supposed to produce subjectivity and an openness to existence by refusing to impose order on life.*

# How can this belief system fight oppression?

- Oppression appears to be a group phenomenon, but it really occurs one individual at a time. It is the individuals who get hurt, even if the group survives.
- Therefore, rights must be protected on an **INDIVIDUAL** basis, not a group basis.
- The denial of individual identity, and all these similar tenets, threaten individual rights.

# Everyone can learn more about Postmodernism by understanding

- 
- What these men are saying:
    1. Rorty
    2. Gramsci
    3. Fish

# Richard Rorty

(described in *Reason in the Balance*, by Phillip Johnson)

- A philosopher at the University of Virginia, Rorty was unable to discover universals without God. He, therefore, claimed a belief in **constructivist reality** rather than objective reality. He determined that *the purpose of a university education was to **politically transform** students*. He advocated compulsory wealth redistribution, while denying the existence of any moral universals that would obligate someone to help the poor. He defines *liberalism* as “aversion to cruelty,” thereby marginalizing conservatives.

# Antonio Gramsci

- An Italian Communist, Gramsci claims that cultural change must precede socialism. *Changing America's values is seen as a way of ushering in a socialist economic utopia.* Traditional family values are seen as needing changing.
- The approach is to apply Marxist theory to oppressed cultural groups versus privileged groups, rather than oppressed proletariat versus privileged bourgeoisie.

# Why is this a problem? Marxism threatens individual rights.

- Marxism has no standards to use to limit the scale of conflict, or to limit the actions of those in power. It has no way of defining when “fairness” has been reached. It has no standards for feedback, to see if it is moving toward more or LESS fairness. Whether it is applied to economic groups or cultural groups, it has no boundaries against evil.
- Because it has no inherent boundaries, it tends toward extremes of oppression when it gains power.
- Western Civilizations’ universals acted as restraints on the abuse of power.
- Marxism has no restraints.

# Stanley Fish

- A literary theorist and administrator at Duke University, Stanley Fish is an advocate of speech codes and political correctness. *He thinks principles do not exist—only preferences.* He thinks free speech does not exist, and that power struggle should be engaged to silence opponents and to make sure the next person restricted is not you.



# According to the author of POSTMODERNIST CULTURE

- Revolutions tend to follow a predictable order. At first the revolutionaries renounce current authority and structures, and then overthrow them. Then they impose new authorities and new structures.
- Without a coherent understanding of the way governments and economies work and with a belief in power struggle, the postmodernists are likely to create **unworkable, arbitrary structures** when they achieve power.

# Postmodernism is

A Worldview that is immune to facts. It cannot tell that communism in practice was evil AND a failure. It fails to learn from the demise of the Soviet Union, because it views facts as mere opinions or as attempts to assert power. It cannot logically follow a proof of the failure of communist theory and the reasons it failed.

# Postmodernism's Influence

- It is a symptom of Postmodernism's widespread influence that students in universities elevate Che Guevara, rather than despising him as a mass-murdering wicked man.
- For that matter, it is symptom of Postmodernism's influence in this country that Elian Gonzales was sent back to Cuba, when his mother lost her life trying to give him freedom, and when his father had deserted his mother before Elian was even born.

# This brings us to the question

- Of how someone can find his way out of Postmodernism?
- In some ways this is a multi-part question, because Postmodernism is so diverse, and people tend to absorb it in incoherent ways. So how can you define where friends are along the winding path of Postmodernism, in order to bring them back to truth?

# It may be that probing questions

Can help, both to define the philosophical location of your friend and to open a pathway back toward God. Philosophical questions like, “How do you define truth?” or “How do you define right and wrong?” may open a helpful conversation.

- How have your views changed over time?
- What do you think about the idea of majority rule?
- Do you mostly use logic for making decisions or follow your heart or use some other method?

In all of this, it is important to keep a kind attitude, and to avoid the impression of intolerance.

# Finding a path back...

- Perhaps a description of Rorty's journey into Postmodernism can show the path out of it. Since Rorty abandoned the idea of objective truth BECAUSE Modernism had no source for universals, then a Source for universals can remove that objection. The way back to objective reality hinges on the existence of God.

# The way back to objective reality

- Is not a question of secularism versus religion, but of Postmodernism's inadequacies in the real world. If Postmodernism cannot tell that a Soviet regime which murdered 50 million of its own people was oppressive and evil, then Postmodernism is **reality challenged**.
- Postmodernism **is** the logical consequence of Modernism **without** God. To have a return to logic, and to the sanity and reasonableness that go with logic, Modernism without God will not work. Realism **WITH** God will work.

# Universals do exist because God DOES exist.

---

- Universals do exist because a GOOD God exists. The religious text that gives us a view of God as GOOD is the Bible. No other text meets the ***two part challenge*** of a totally GOOD God and the existence of logic which applies to religion.
- The Bible gives us the Ten Commandments as reasonable moral universals. It also gives us the existence of objective reality and a universe which makes sense because God's mind is reasonable.



# Modernism's Universals

- Came right out of the Bible. Human equality before God is a Judeo-Christian concept, and did not develop anywhere else.
- If you are trying to reach someone who has gone down the path of Postmodernism, be aware that God is with you. Seek His help.
- And listen to your friend to find out what they think, and what their questions are.

# Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

Thus says the LORD God,  
“I Myself  
Will search for My sheep.  
I will deliver them  
From all the places  
Where they were scattered  
On a cloudy, gloomy day.

# Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

I will bring them out.

I will gather them.

I will bring them home.

I will feed them--

in good pasture

by streams of water.

I will lead them to rest....

# Promises From the Good Shepherd, Ezekiel 34:11-31

I will seek the lost.

I will bring back the scattered.

I will bandage the broken.

I will strengthen the sick.

I will feed the wicked—with judgment.

I will remove the trampers who cause harm.

My flock will no longer be in danger.

My Son will be their Shepherd.

I will make them a blessing.

I am with them and they are Mine.

# Homework

3 sets

# Homework Class 4 Set 1

Read Romans 1:1-17. This passage mentions various cultures and some overarching truths that are helpful to all. Where modernism favors unity at the price of diversity, and postmodernism favors diversity to the detriment of unity, what does God favor?

- Read I John 1-7. What does fellowship with God produce among individuals?
- Read POSTMODERN TIMES pages 148-156.

# Homework Class 4 Set 1

- Contrast “civilization” and “culture” in postmodern thought. In the book, *Modern Times*, the attitudes in Germany in the 1930s, define people by their ethnicity alone, and “civilization” was seen as corrupting and decadent. Traditional “Aryan” culture was seen as good, including old pagan religious practice. How does this description compare to Postmodernism’s treatment of civilization and culture?

# Homework Class 4 Set 1

- How does abandonment of the idea of universal principles produce fragmentation in society?
- How does Marxist theory enter the postmodern picture?
- How is multiculturalism prone to stereotyping and intolerance?
- What is the difference between “good multiculturalism” and “bad multiculturalism?” How does this form a “utilitarian” apologetic for universal morals?



# Homework Class 4 Set 2

Read Proverbs 22:17-21. Does this passage assume that truth can be known?

- If God is the one who sent you, and you need to correctly answer to Him, does this passage teach that truth is important for having those answers?

Read POSTMODERN TIMES pages 157-174

- List the tenets of postmodernism.
- How does this list undergird totalitarianism?

# Homework Class 4 Set 2

- How is abandonment of universal principles related to political power struggles?
- Who is Antonio Gramsci, and what does he advocate?
- Who is Stanley Fish, and what does he advocate?
- On page 164, what is described as a predictable order which produces revolution?
- Where did the tenets of postmodernism already produce a revolution? What kind of revolution?

# Homework Class 4 Set 2

- How does our true knowledge that Nazism was EVIL undercut the postmodern belief in relativism?
- How is the “bureaucracy” proving the same point?
- How is the media packaging of elections proving the same point?
- How does postmodernism treat evidence faking and lying?

# Homework Class 4 Set 2

- Can the rule of law endure if faked evidence and perjury are acceptable in legal matters?
- How are the courts making democracy vulnerable?
- How does one refute the connection commonly made by postmodernists that a belief in moral universals produces tyranny?
- Try to create a sound bite that refutes the idea that moral absolutes are tyrannical.

# Homework Class 4 Set 3

Read Deuteronomy 6: 1-25. Why did God give His law, according to verse 24?

- Read POSTMODERN TIMES pages 176-188.
- How does postmodernism affect persuasion?
- What is the “new class?” How extensive is their influence?

# Homework Class 4 Set 3

- How is postmodernism affecting medicine?
- How is postmodernism affecting education?
- How has it influenced social policy?
- How has it influenced world geography?
- How has it led to terrorism?