

## SETTING THE FLEECE.

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Cao Zuyoa was a young Red Guard in Mao's China. She wrote a book called "Out of the Crucible" to describe her experience of the ideologically driven Cultural Revolution. She was profoundly shocked by the moral bankruptcy of the rustification campaign which divided families and rubbished everything human. Members of her generation were radically disavowed of their Communist utopian dream. Utopia had been tried in the furnace and found wanting. Significantly, however, the heirs of the 'apparatchiks' who launched the Revolution are still in charge of the tiller.

It is a properly human pursuit to bury utopias, founded as they are on false ideologies. I am particularly concerned to bury the pernicious utopian dream which has been endemic in the west but which springs from the same source as Mao's mania, viz. eighteenth and nineteenth century Idealism. I refer to the belief structure that Science with a capital S is the salvation of the world; that it is only a matter of time before Science will have all the answers we need. I am referring to the entrenched philosophy called scientism and, in the eyes of its founder, the religion/philosophy of positivism. This founder, August Comte, (1798-1857) wrote, in 1851: "I am convinced that before the year 1860 I shall be preaching positivism at Notre Dame as the only real and complete religion".

Indeed, after the French Revolution the 'philosophes' were quick to take over the recently completed Church of St. Genevieve, rename it the Pantheon, and prepare it as a mausoleum for the canonisation of worthies, the elite scientists. For Comte the proletariat could be kept quiescent by recourse to "feminine salons". Comte deliberately copied the structures of the Catholic Church, making the transpositions to his religious creed. It was, of course, necessary to bury God. It was left to Friederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) to pontificate with finality that "God is Dead". Nietzsche was also a devotee of Darwin, and notwithstanding the objections of many Darwinians, Darwinian evolutionary theory had a profound influence on Hitler. The link of Nietzsche's thought to Hitler is now well established. It was left to Feodor Dostoevsky to point out that if God is dead, man is king on earth. Thereafter we have to accept that some men are wolves to other men.

It was the positivist legacy which held sway as the philosophy of science right up till the 1950's. It is this lingering legacy which gives us the current Great Science which must be obeyed. "I am Sir Oracle, and when I open my lips let no dog

bark". It seems that the entire Western world is jumping through hoops, trying to obey the utterance that global warming is caused by man made pollution of the atmosphere. All of which adds up to catastrophic climate change. The language is "do you believe or not?" If not you will be ostracised by the hallelujah chorus of scientists who believe in their articles of faith, the "laws of physics", the compliant media and the little green men. I submit that this is a betrayal of the true spirit of science. In such a many factored complex matter is it reasonable to ignore counter indications from physicists like Ian Plimer, astrophysicists, historians and even climate scholars who have to wait for retirement before they can say their piece? If the real object is to give us clean air and clean water is it necessary to manipulate us with fear? Great Science demands sacrifice!

It is important to make a clear distinction. I am not talking about science itself which has a much earlier provenance. Science became viable as a valuable human enterprise when it met the accommodating worldview of medieval Christendom. Notwithstanding promising beginnings in several ancient contexts it floundered in worldviews which preached the Great Escape from the world. This has been shown conclusively by Stanley Jaki and many others. Viable science began as a work of charity. By rational means, it was to prepare the earthly future of mankind, to eliminate risks, and to foster properly human choices; freedom in other words. It was a much wider conception than that of the present, allowing for a variety of methodologies. In its modern conception it has narrowed to a mechanistic, materialist model of the real which, nevertheless, has been extremely successful. It has nothing to do with attaining absolute truth as Henri Poincaré has pointed out. It is about what can be done to improve the human condition. It has pragmatic sanction.

Indeed I would not be alive to write this piece if it were not for the sheer brilliance of various surgeons and physicians who have valiantly pressed on with the scientific and technological enterprise and kept up to date with a rapidly developing context. To borrow a metaphor from St. Paul, the 'outer man' in today's world has been superbly catered for, even if the global distribution of this success leaves much to be desired.

But what about the 'inner man'? Increased life expectancy is a great positive, but materialism is totally inadequate for dealing with the current personal and social upheaval. Imagine what would happen if pharmacists were to withdraw all medication from sale. Control is not cure, especially in the realm of human behaviour. Are we in the 'television depression' which McLuhan spoke of? What about youth suicide, drugs, paedophilia, confusion, disunity, destruction,

mimetic desire, anguish, fanaticism, sadness, loneliness, fears and phobias? “We have had a hundred years of psychotherapy and things are getting worse”.

What is endemic in ideologies, particularly the nineteenth century examples like Darwinism and Freudianism (with its dozen or so variations) is that facts are secondary to the ideology. There must be a force fit of fact to thought. Everything that happens becomes a verification of the ideology, even contradictory events. These days, credulity has been stretched to the point of breakdown. This state of affairs has been brought about by recent developments in science itself. A couple of examples will suffice.

Living things are alive! But the mechanistic model was out to show that material genes strung out along the Double Helix could account for the living. Similarly the human mind, consciousness, could be accounted for by the electrochemistry of the brain. Great hope was invested in the Genome Project. But why are the number and types of human genes not much different than those of the cockroach (a matter which a previous editor of “Nature” noted with glee). As Evelyn Fox Keller says: “... now there is at least a tacit acknowledgement of how large the gap between genetic ‘information’ and biological meaning really is.” The same applies to neuroscience of the brain. Every question answered reveals a hundred more questions unanswered. Likewise Neo-Darwinism with its fundamental premise that natural selection acting on a random mutation of genes is sufficient to explain life in all its complexity is in grave doubt. How does one form of life transform into another? Darwinians now have to await a new paradigm.

As for the ‘innermost man’ there is almost complete silence. Yet the most serious problem of all, violence, is a very deep spiritual problem.

There is a serious need for a way of knowing more appropriate for phenomena which actually occur in human experience. This would be a basis on which an explanation of all aspects of human consciousness can be mounted. It would have to use subjective experience as primary data. Appeal to ‘basic scientific laws’ would need to be suspended since there is a profound mystery as to how these belief patterns came into the world. Science cannot explain itself. It proposes models and metaphors to represent certain aspects of reality so that scientific concepts are necessarily of a partial nature. To rise above adolescence a unity of holistic experience is needed. Observer and observed will be in symbiotic relationship. Downward causation is just as valid as upward causation starting from the bits. In short, a revolution in science is called for. It would become a search for Truth in a dimension from which materialism is excluded. Hardly

anyone in science has seen a link between moral integrity and wellbeing but this is a commonplace in Alcoholics Anonymous! On the other hand, chairs in ethics depend on the adoption of the mechanistic worldview. In human experience, however, God is very much alive!

There is much interest in the work of Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. He has been very persistent in showing experimentally that there are phenomena in nature which cannot be explained using the mechanistic metaphor, viz. mental telepathy and strange phenomena in the animal kingdom. His recent presentation at the British Association for the Advancement of Science almost caused apoplexy among some blinkered diehards in the establishment.

Quite the most important development has been in anthropology through the grand opus of mimetic theory established by René Girard. The most remarkable aspect of this scientific theory is that it has arisen from the Canon of Western Literature through close observation of the characters and their authors. We can now speak of 'mirror neurons' in the brain whereby humans copy one another in the pattern of their desires. This is revolutionary material. In one bold move Girard has freed us both from Freud on the one hand and Hegel (or Marx) on the other. The net result is to show that the Judeo-Christian scriptures are the most important anthropological documents of all time.