



Age of Cant: Science, Identity and the War on Truth Kim Bryan

The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep ... but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience

CS Lewis

While the term cultural marxism is growing in popularity among opinion leaders in the West, we should not be seduced into thinking it real. It is a contrivance of today's new, and distinctly anti Marxian, political discourse in which almost any reality is contested and may be described in terms which are the precise opposite of its original meaning.

The philosophical movement they are describing, postmodernism, or the idea that truth is subservient to ideals, is, in reality, a product of the liberal humanities, for centuries the dominant model of thinking in capitalist 'democracies'. Today, its influence can be seen across the spectrum of established political life.

In contrast to the Marxian analysis of society in which all social consciousness outside of class is false, postmodernism treats identity as the subjective truth of the unconscious person. It's great idea - that truths exist to be found beyond the facts - is drawn from capitalism's liberal tradition with social injustice perceived as the result of poor social modelling. Rather than a revolution in the means of production and exchange, postmodern thinkers postulate that oppression can be amended by the very process Marx described as reactionary social control; the restructuring of consciousness primarily through the medium of language. In practice postmodernism has orchestrated an assault not only on the physical laws of nature but on the application of scientific principles to the understanding of society.

In its scepticism postmodernism may appear progressive. It promises to expose outmoded social conventions. In reality it is a rebellion against the natural, social and moral laws which explain how we have evolved and lived including those which protect us from harm. Understanding abusive power relies upon what Marx called political consciousness, an assessment rooted in scientific principles. When we no longer recognise the economic roots of structural hierarchies, the control of dominant groups over our lives is reinforced.

Old identity politics - monarch, nation, church and family - romanticised social hierarchies to justify the exploitation of 'inferior' cultures and classes. In denying the absolutist nature of economic power, postmodern identity politics is the same old deception but expressed publicly in 'special pleading' - competition between elite groups for political, commercial or social advantage. Practised by both liberal and conservative tendencies, special pleading is not contrived to expose real or discernible patterns of discrimination or oppression; it's practitioners simply appropriate its 'experience'.

In its progress from leftish sexual rights movements to the charade of elite identity politics, this ultimate 'false consciousness' is following the personal journey of its philosophical father, Michel Foucault. In the assessment of his biographer, Didier Eribon, Foucault's undulating relationship with the Marxist left ended in 'violent anticommunism'.

The postmodern man subordinates his intelligence to his senses, choosing facts like fashions on the basis of whichever aesthetic is more pleasing, rewarding or convenient. In a world that doubts its existence, it is no longer necessary for those at the highest levels of power to merely manipulate or misrepresent truth. In a market that is unrestrained, the commodity known as facts is no longer, in any meaningful sense, an impediment in the moulding of the public discourse.

Fake Science

The culture and ideology fostered in this globalization process relate largely to 'lifestyle' themes and goods and their acquisition; and they tend to weaken any sense of community helpful to civic life

Noam Chomsky

Incorporating what Fredric Jameson called the 'cultural logic of late capitalism', the open approach to truth is tuned to the neo liberal economic model in a shared preoccupation with personal choice. In its alternative science framed to open new markets, postmodern thinking elevates socially constructed ideals of perfection, what is 'desirable', over the correctives built into the laws of nature. Scepticism towards the role of nature, the superstitious idea that Mankind can tame its powers, is the driver of the new undialectical materialism. The path is laid for laws rooted in biology, history and society to be denied simply because they do not suit us.

'An expert' Henry Kissinger famously said, 'is someone who articulates the needs of those in power'. In today's world evidence of that truth is discerned in the subordination of real science to the power of the expert. Since the public good is framed as adherence to values rather than facts, excellence in a field of study consigns free thinkers to the ultra margins of society. Rather than aspiring to the independence which, in a science lead setting, would legitimise confidence in the product, today's experts are the opposite - stakeholders in a favoured doctrine or policy which it is their duty to protect, if necessary, at the expense of the facts. It's not that they are wicked, on the contrary they are idealists. But their role is that of political commissars not scientists, driven by the postmodern alternative truth that science is understood not through laws but the power of belief.

The transition of scientific opinion to a form of stakeholder investment in which status grows from ideological purity, has produced an absolutist anti science which refuses to give up on the idea that biology can be reoriented. The truth that good medicine is predicated upon harmony with the laws of nature is gone in favour of an unworldly pursuit of perfection tied in reality to the need of the new technology led economy to appeal to its market. From each according to his

needs, today's market seeks to supply us with what we do not need but are simply persuaded to want.

In light of their direct appeal to the integrity of the person, health panics are today's gold standard in the more general war to legitimise the idea that science is less about truth than intent. At the heart of every anxiety insinuated into our lives is a denial of the laws of nature, a process re-imagined in the Orwellian language of the postmodern as the product of 'intelligence'. Far from being problematic the threats targeted by the new bio capitalists - food and fellowship - are the cornerstones of a healthy life. The health of the market, on the other hand, depends upon our belief that we are sick.

The Food Problem

It is simply no longer possible to believe much of the clinical research that is published, or to rely on the judgment of trusted physicians or authoritative medical guidelines. I take no pleasure in this conclusion which I reached slowly and reluctantly over my two decades as an editor of the New England Journal of Medicine

Dr Marcia Angell

As a result of today's expert opinion, and its stubborn refusal to bow to empirical data on morbidity and mortality, the gulf between the public's perception of its condition and the truth is a yawning chasm; while we may well think it the product of our 'excesses', nearly all diet related disease is malnutrition in the elderly, mortality based on body size varies hardly at all except at the margins and 75% of the NHS budget is spent on people aged 85+.

'Obesity' and the food/lifestyle panics it has spawned, is perhaps the first example in the modern era of an aggressive new 'health' doctrine in which socially constructed concepts are materialised over the realities of biology. Since the 1980s the biological laws that govern our relationship with food have given way to a powerful social model predicated on the idea that reality can be subordinated to make people 'better'.

Before the era of commercially driven stakeholder science the healthy nature of intuitive eating would have been largely undisputed. The science hasn't changed. Policies designed to enforce changes in behaviour produce marginal, usually short term, effects with no impact on our relationship with food generally which continues to defer to the messages coming from our bodies rather than our doctors. In full knowledge of the core biology that compels our bodies to fight us when we diet and of the identical twin studies showing strong predisposition in body size, stakeholders refuse to give up on the idea that nature, the reality of what we are, can be beaten by 'willpower', the desire to become what we wish.

Instead of being led by the evidence today's researchers assume that their role is to reinforce public health messages. No matter how robust it may appear to be, real science is routinely interpreted by today's stakeholders as controversial or insufficient. It is re-examined not because it deviates from its laws but because it has failed to reveal what stakeholders believe to be the hidden truth. While science can rarely be regarded as settled, established truths should never be revisited by people whose motive and method is buried in ideology. In reality attempts to modify body size with malnutrition produces a failure rate of 90-95% and an increased rather than reduced overall mortality. It is a truth that accords with what we learn when we do diets but subordinate to our inner feeling that 'ugliness' is somehow wrongness.

Anyone who read the news reports in July 2016 of a 'definitive' study that said obesity was the second biggest cause of preventable death after smoking likely believed they were reading new, improved science. In fact, in the words of the Guardian, the 'study of studies' was an attempt 'to overcome the problems of previous studies'. In other words, it was a reexamination of an existing body of data, in this case research suggesting weight is passive in mortality except at the margins where co morbidities are more likely to be found. It's likely that, to this point, most readers will have been unaware that such a body of data existed; it's likely too that by the time they got down to the disclaimers, that this new study does not in fact establish a link between above average weight and higher mortality, they were already convinced.

The researchers, keen to 'settle' the matter, chose to exclude controls which might 'mediate associations between BMI and mortality'. Accordingly the 2016 study excluded smokers, who are more likely to be lean, and ignored race, class and disability, all independent major causes of inequalities in mortality. If polling published in October 2018 by the British Liver Trust is to be believed, that weight has overtaken race as the UK's 'most common form of discrimination', the failure of the study to address the impact of social exclusion is likely to be significant. In ignoring conditions that are independent causes of higher mortality, the researchers were, in effect, treating them as symptoms of obesity. In addition, the study engages in 'extrapolation' another wholly unscientific but these days common 'standard' which assumes 'lives saved' based on outcomes which do not exist independently of other factors which would be compounded by the changes extrapolated.

A similar pattern of behaviour is discernible in the attitude of stakeholders to foods or food groups which, through assumptions about the character of larger people, they link to 'obesity' and by extension to 'lifestyle'. Harm associated with the low fat diet craze of the eighties is just, after forty years, becoming recognised: 'overenthusiastic scientists, massive conflicts of interest, and politically driven policy makers can make deeply damaging mistakes' admits the former editor of the BMJ, Richard Smith, before concluding, naturally, that practitioners had simply opted for the wrong kind of diet. When starved, our bodies, it seems, compensate; in the case of low fat diets, they do so by stocking up on carbohydrates. Given the power of the ideological framework, it's unlikely that practitioners will draw the logical conclusion, that experimenting with the natural cycles of our diet is contraindicated. Ignoring the greater threat posed by malnutrition, even at lower levels, stakeholders simply refuse to give up on the idea that if we adopt restrictive models of eating with 'problem' foods such as meat, dairy or sugar either reduced or removed, lives will be saved.

In contrast to the obsessions that pre occupy market driven health policy, a large body of policy grade evidence, including the 2006 US 'Changing Lives' study, suggests inequality of outcome in mortality is a 'function primarily of socioeconomic disparities' which outweigh behavioural and even genetic factors by some distance. It is here, in the degrading life experiences aligned with poverty and powerlessness that excess disease can be usefully understood and addressed. In denying civil rights, including treatment, to those failing to conform, morally driven health interventions are the outward sign of those deadly socioeconomic disparities, functioning, in practice, as another instrument of the avoidable ill health they create. It is a truth which, thus far, has failed to inhibit the determination of our practitioners to blame or shame us onto a life path overwhelmed by needless anxiety, indifferent to the real lives and needs of those at the bottom of society.

The Germ Problem

Man has lost the sense of himself as a limited point in the universe, albeit one possessed of free will. He began to deem himself the center of his surroundings, adapting not himself to the world but the world to himself. And then, of course, the thought of death becomes unbearable

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

If the ability of relativism to subordinate truth to economic interests was in any doubt, the current war on the coronavirus has surely settled the argument. With the high street retail and hospitality sectors in danger of following manufacturing into oblivion, measures taken to stop the virus appear to have merged with 'progress' to a new virtual economy. In an astonishingly short space of time the science, which placed Covid 19 firmly in the manageable not the pandemic category, migrated to a universal adherence, not to the laws of virology, but to a new ideal of citizenship.

Nine months into the war the policy of spreading the infection over longer periods has been successful. While the virus remains undefeated, the mindset of the population has shifted towards a 'new normal' in which the sociability of old society is viewed suspiciously as a spreader of death. Employing a concept of safe which almost weekly expanded in scope before landing at 'the virus must be gone', the wagers of this particular war appear to have succeeded in transferring our perception of Covid 19 from the realm of science to the realm of values in which the triumph of good over evil depends on what we do. Mostly, we have become persuaded that the laws of virology will respond to our good behaviour and that our leaders will reward us with a return to normality.

What many people saw as 'the science' was really opinion canvassed by political leaders tied, structurally, to monopoly economic interests. Those who go into quarantine rely still upon the spread of immunity in others. In the case of common viruses, science has never previously understood this to mean the elimination of all risk. Distancing and mask wearing are indeed small sacrifices to make for the 'protection of others' but, set against the power of a virus, they are a mouse fighting an elephant. Over the long term, a policy of isolating as opposed to treating a virus of this type would likely result in significant social harm not to mention higher overall mortality.

When, in support of its impact spreading policy, the UK government needed to override the data advising against the wearing of facemasks in public spaces - dozens of controlled trials in fact - it had no trouble finding public spirited scientists to provide it with different answers. Regardless of regional waves, shifts or pre existing immunity, the University of Oxford felt entitled to extrapolate positive correlations with mask wearing cultures while Edinburgh University concluded that since they inhibit the dispersal of droplets face coverings must inhibit transmission. Many facemask wearers may well believe the mask is keeping them and their loved ones alive. Others, seduced by the cry that the answer lies in our hands, will defer to the moral case, associating it with decency and care for others.

In effect, the new social modelling based 'science' treats the virus as if it were the result of man's rather than nature's 'failings' in which case it follows that dangers inherent in the political response will be ignored. If, through mass testing, the focus of medical attention is redirected towards covid, the danger that the integrity of diagnosis and treatment will be undermined is prescient. The effects of the isolate policy - stay home messaging, shutting medical services and

the denial of treatment to thousands of old, sick or infected people have been documented already by Amnesty, Turning Point, Cancer Research UK, the Alzheimer's Society and even the ONS. Invariably, where harms result from policy, the failure to treat sick people appropriately, it is nature - 'the pandemic' - that gets the blame.

While 'abandoning people to die' - described by Amnesty as a 'scandal of monumental proportions' - was treated as an honest mistake, for the rest of us mostly the media followed the shaming pathway of lifestyle panics, overplaying the rare at the expense of the common and encouraging a blaming, snitching culture. Ignoring the natural curve of infectious diseases, advocates on all sides played to the moral narrative rather than the science, seeking correlations to explain outbreaks or vindicate their policy positions, correlations which the global picture suggests do not exist.

In spite of the resilience over many centuries of similar mutating viruses such as rhino, RSV and influenza, the idea that coronaviruses could or must be eliminated triumphed because stakeholders in vaccination programmes overpowered those invested in the treatment options. At time of writing, precedents from recent history, the overuse of drug remedies for minor ailments, admitted by JAMA and the BMA to be 'massive' and 'widespread', as well as the antibiotic resistance created by routine over prescribing, are about to be repeated as world leaders prepare to instigate a radical new programme of mass rather than targeted vaccination for a virus not harmful to the vast majority.

In light of our strange blindness to its historic record of complicity and error, the medical establishment remains the interest group trusted most by those in power to convey its messages. If we succumb, finally, to the notion that science is no longer determined by laws but by the opinion of 'experts', the final surrender of our collective agency and intelligence will follow.

Fake Politics

It is not only in the sphere of social care that special pleading has found a milieu but also in the sphere of politics, the merits of the case judged less on facts than the quality or utility of the performance.

Through the medium of self identification, high profile groups and individuals pursuing political goals are redefining oppression, representing their feelings of anger or frustration as morally equivalent to abuses of human rights. Two contemporary cases - the 'new antisemitism' and 'trans rights' - show how the theatrical medium of postmodern identity politics is driving abuses of power by high profile individuals and groups.

The 'New Antisemitism'

Rhetoric about the 1 per cent and economic inequality has the same underlying theme - a small group of very rich people who cleverly manipulate others to defend their interests. So anti-capitalism masks and normalises anti-semitism.

John McTernan, March 2019

The 'new antisemitism' is the most explicit example of a political intrigue which is succeeding, and dramatically, through pretending to be something else, in this case the voice of a bullied or ignored minority. With concerns focused on foreign policy, where, ideologically, the ranks are

pretty much closed, its meanings were understood at the very highest levels of power.

The idea, advocated by supporters of western foreign policy, that a new antisemitism explains opposition to the state of Israel, has been growing in influence here for decades, allied to the generic doctrine that opposition to western leadership is based on hatred of our 'democracy'. It was the threat of an outlier leading the Labour Party however which spawned the lurch by the pro war political class to its extremes, rebranding its interests as a besieged Jewish community.

Under the 'new' antisemitism old right wing antisemitic narratives blaming powerful Jews for the crimes of capitalism (or finance) are reclaimed and applied instead to the anti imperialist, anti war left. Following the self serving perception model ... 'I feel that when you talk about elites, bankers, corporations, billionaires, media you really mean Jews' ... it uses the subjective language of identity to protect what is in fact class based privilege.

Because it views power as class based, Marxist theory specifically does not target ruling class interests on the basis of identity, regarding the 'Jewish' character of power as a 'false consciousness'. In treating the 'Jewish money' narrative as an expression of the class politics of the left rather than the anti communism of the right, the concept of the new antisemitism implies that 'Jewish control' is real, a bizarre affectation in which today's antisemitism is understood through the mindset of the old. This redefinition is allied to a more general rewriting, by the right, of twentieth century history, in which the appeasement of fascism by western capitalism is denied and the sacrifices of the left, particularly the Jewish left, purged from the record. In September 2019, two years after it adopted 'full IHRA' - in effect the new antisemitism doctrine - the European Parliament adopted a resolution which apportioned blame for World War II to Communism equally with Nazism.

Until the eighties most mainstream historians explained the origin of Nazi atrocities in Nazism's racially oriented world view and hatred of weakness, ideas resting on the far right of the political spectrum. In shifting the focus of the threat to the left, including an inclination to rebrand the Nazis left wing, the new moral equivalence of 'totalitarianisms' enables blame for both the war, and present ills, to be shifted from fascism onto a generic evil; invariably the evil, branded the 'real' fascism, is found in critics of western power.

Claims of a left wing antisemitism overwhelmed media space very quickly, being escalated systematically, using the panic model, beyond initial concerns to a wholesale revision of meaning. In less than a year, anti imperialist, anti racist, anti war and even social justice doctrines or values generally began to be understood or portrayed as expressions of antisemitism. A significant body of empirical evidence, provided by Amnesty International, the Community Security Trust, You Gov, the Institute of Policy Review and the Economist existed already in contradiction of its claims; these studies found online abuse generally, including antisemitic abuse, targeted far more commonly at the left by the right. The alternative model, promoted by pro war politicians, celebrities and journalists was preferred, relying almost entirely on the perceptions of alleged victims and their allies.

Making inevitable its adoption into law and common practice, western institutions are being 'encouraged' to incorporate into their anti racist policies the full International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. In its examples IHRA accepts the 'right' of Israel to share in the privileged status of 'democracies' by which it means western states. This includes its right to immunity from the judgements meted out to others and its right to self

determine as an ethnic state. In its embrace of western supremacy and the subordination of non Jews living in or displaced from Palestine, the IHRA definition could never be accepted by anyone on the anti imperialist left. In light of its Orwellian rebranding of hatred to mean denial by the oppressed of the rights of the oppressor, the full IHRA definition is not accepted by the Palestinian community or by anti Zionist Jews nor is it adopted by any nation outside the western sphere of influence. Its status as 'international standard' reflects only the disregard of elite powers for the principles of sovereign equality as they are enshrined in the UN Charter and understood by everyone else.

With global concerns tuned almost spiritually to the aims of western foreign policy, the players of this particular parody revelled in a loud but wholly spurious victimisation which elevated feelings of offence at the politics of others to equivalence with historical experiences of genocide or persecution. Their targets, mostly hard working, grassroots activists, disproportionately Jewish or Black, were shut out of political spaces, losing friends, jobs and reputations. Social media searches not reliant on self reporting (AI and CST) exposed what was, in effect, a pattern, by their high profile accusers, of exaggeration, misrepresentation and fabrication. Once identity, the voice of a minority community, was invoked, the accusers right to interpret the words or actions of what were, in reality, political adversaries, was never challenged or reciprocated. Nor was it compromised by the evidence which was secondary to the obligation on all of us to 'validate' the accusers 'experience'. In the case of Louise Ellman, this extended to her right to repeat publicly claims about her local party discredited in court.

As you might expect the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report into the Labour Party's 'handling' of antisemitism allegations found transgressions of procedure and propriety, the majority breaches of the rights of those accused of antisemitism. Naturally, the 'damning' report's failure to substantiate the priori claim of institutional antisemitism made no impact on the narrative with no self reflection expected of the accusers who continued to demand apology and redress from their victims.

Rather than being disproved, the truth of hundreds of years of history has been vindicated by this campaign, that antisemitism is the tool of reactionaries. In understanding the power of today's special pleading, alarms should sound at the ease with which ideas drawn from far right revisionism and the fringes of the Zionist movement have become assimilated into the western leadership narrative.

'Trans Rights'

I do think it's important that we experiment with new vocabularies. That new words help us conceptualize our social existence in a different way

Judith Butler

Another alarming sign of the growing influence of the postmodern ideal of liberating us from all knowledge of how the world actually works is a piece of academic quackery called 'queer theory'. In the purity of its ambition - the queering of all experiences related to human sexuality - queer theory is waging a war on sexual norms using a model constructed entirely from unquantifiable relative meanings. Two movements modelled from queer theory are currently active in the public domain; 'trans rights' denies the biological divide between men and women while the second, 'minor attracted persons', the divide between adult and child.

Rejecting the biological roots of human sexuality, trans rights is a break with decades of campaigning by feminists and LGBs which relied upon the biological binary to argue for women's equality with men and the right of same sex attracted people to be accepted as real men and women. Masculine and feminine gender roles, viewed by old school feminism as artificial, are regarded by trans ideologists as essential truth, the signpost of the authentic self.

Like the 'new antisemitism' transgender ideology is not interested in quantifiable measures of civil, economic, cultural or political disadvantage. As in all instances of special pleading (including commercially driven health panics) values or ideals are the chosen milieu, surrendering the interpretation of meaning to stakeholders. Since the internal reality of the individual is freed, by the ideology, from accountability to laws or common standards, the 'idealism' being sold is entitlement, the fulfilment of dreams.

Given the absence of the necessary collective identity - people reject their sex for a myriad of differing, entirely individual reasons - it's no surprise that transactivists opted to create one by appropriating the cultural mystique of past and present movements. In its aim of subjugating civil society to the needs of the individual, however, transgenderism is the philosophical opposite of the gay liberation it infiltrated. Under the trans doctrine it is the duty of the community to accept the right of individuals to escape or transcend collective experience, including the limitations placed on all of us by the laws of nature.

The ability of capitalism to absorb liberation movements, altering their direction, is well documented except now it happens in days not decades. Last year's 'Black Lives Matter' uprising originated in the hard experience of people at the bottom of US society, its focus shifting quickly to abuses of power across the world. In deference to the new identity politics however, its leaders subordinated its anti imperialist manifesto and public sympathy for Palestine to a 'broader' more parochial appeal. In mass media the dumbed down BLM was played out as a 'culture war' between elite groups fighting for ownership of the 'matter' moniker; while liberals adopted the BLM meme, the besieged and forgotten white worker was the chosen motif of their conservative rivals.

Diverted from its potential as a grassroots movement of the global poor, BLM was transitioned almost seamlessly to a marketing opportunity for the global rich, one not missed by the imitative trans lobby which, during June 2020, staged well publicised 'Black Trans Lives Matter' marches in London, New York and, naturally, Hollywood. Assembling its vocabularies from the lived experience of every oppressed group, transgenderism is a masquerade, a parody created in postmodern universities to accommodate the desire of elite groups to control and market meaning. While its critics will find themselves outside the public discourse this will not be the real life experience of its advocates who are a pastiche of special pleading by rising stakeholder interests. Like the fat panic, trans 'affirmation' is rooted in the malign influence of empires, notably but not exclusively, the medical-pharmaceutical deep state. For the multiple industries feeding off body dysphoria what Jennifer Bilek called Transgenderism™ is the great leap forward.

It is a denial of the realities of power and precedent, as well as the philosophical outlook of the original theorists themselves, to believe that ideas derived from queer theory can be limited to honest campaigning for political rights. In reality queerism will follow the bandwagon journey of other crusades. Initial reasonable sounding aims, focused on the pain of individuals, will clear a path in which escalation is established towards a new orthodoxy. Initially, the long term plan is

always denied - until recently many trans activists were keen to tell us they weren't seeking to replace sex based rights or activities - but, once accepted, the new normal is fed by a rapacious market. In addition to replacing the biological sex binary, queer theorists favour the removal of laws rooted in what Judith Butler called 'gendered subjectivities', including the age of consent and sex within the family. If you don't believe you can be persuaded that some children can consent to sexual relations, ask yourself what you have been persuaded already to believe, that they can know they are living in the wrong body.

In order to achieve orthodoxy, trans activists are utilising the understanding of hatred favoured by the ruling classes, definitions which deny their political agency. Trans activists assume rights - the right for instance to appropriate other people's territory or identities - which subvert rather than materialise solidarity. It is a strategy understood philosophically as 'queering'. In the creation of privileged spaces the role of stakeholders recruited to the ideology is central. Across mainstream media, the power of the expert, a trope for elite self interest, is used to invalidate dissidents, removing their right to a hearing. The Wikipedia entry for journalist Abigail Shrier is typical. It opens with a reminder to readers that her 'unproven' hypothesis about the marketing of transition to young girls is 'rejected' by every established US psychiatric and paediatric institution which it then goes on to list.

Rights movements focused on the individual do not expose the origins of social inequality. If they did we would see how 'choice' is cultivated or exploited to open markets, we would recognise the misselling of individualism as collectivism. The marketing opportunity created by transgender ideology is open ended, inciting discordance in people by telling them their 'wrongness' can be put 'right' or their desires materialised. In January 2021, three months after losing the Keira Bell court case, the performance of the Tavistock and Portman 'Gender Identity Development Service' (GIDS) was rated 'inadequate' by the Care Quality Commission, a fall from its previous 'good' rating. The CQC found that underlying disorders such as autism and anorexia were not fully addressed before patients were referred for transition, a 'flawed' process exacerbated by staff fears of being branded bigots.

When unfulfilled, human desires can be a source of pain in our lives, fuelled by the restrictive social roles which, perversely, trans ideology treats as signposts of true identity. If the assessment of a human right is stretched to encompass desires or needs conceived arbitrarily or reconstructed from social norms, the term is stripped of all meaning, functioning, in effect, as a meme. While the idea that social meanings can be 're-conceptualised' may sound radical, forward thinking even, any ideology which denies the power over our lives of economic hierarchies, will, in practice, subordinate us to those hierarchies. Not reared in the socialisation patterns of women, which include placating the needs of men, the males demanding ownership of women's pronouns or access to women's spaces are likely to get what they want, and to overwhelm those spaces even where they are few in number.

In Conclusion

As a result of the shift from realism towards idealism, we are drowning under a tsunami of commercially generated cant, unable to identify the interests that are leading public opinion or understand the direction of travel. In their subversion of our human spaces, today's stakeholders have occupied our perceptual world to the extent that the further from reason their ideas reside, the more intensely we believe them. Those who should have been immune, radicals and socialists, have proved to be postmodernism's greatest conquest. Having lost consciousness of

the economic dynamics of power, most 'progressives' appear to have been seduced into adopting positions based on the aesthetic appeal of the message or the 'imagery' through which it is 'materialised'. In common with reactionaries, the politically illiterate postmodern left believes that through messaging (equality, health, diversity) corporations, powerful institutions and imperialist politicians are a theatre in which change can be performed. Rather than class war, the green left is fighting the populist right in a 'culture' war for the control and marketing of identity.

If, in its denial of the supremacy of Kings and Church, the Protestant reformation was the ideological voice of an ambitious mercantile class, the new philosophy knocking on the doors of the academy, 'transhumanism' - the idea that through technology we can achieve a semi mechanised state of physical and mental perfection - is the voice of the new corporate class of technocrats and philanthropists. For multi millionaire 'transwoman', Martine Rothblatt, the top earning CEO in the biopharmaceutical industry, transgenderism is 'the onramp to transhumanism' and the end of 'fleshism'. Since reality is a matter only of terminology, according to Rothblatt 'denying' a man's 'right' to be a woman is akin to South African apartheid (Bilek, 2020)

In shifting social need from the arena of fact to fantasy, postmodernism has laid the foundations of what Zygmunt Bauman called the 'consumer playground' economy in which services fill the void left by our dissociation from reality. Through decades of social engineering marketed as science we have been groomed for our own personal journey into a sanitised, solitary space branded to meet our needs.

In this cowardly new world, the pursuit of enlightenment, expressed honestly in the spheres of philosophy, music, poetry and theology, will find no home. Postmodern man will have no more need for art, literature or faith than he does for science or politics. In 'victory' over nature, answers to the frustrations of life, even death, will be provided.

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