

# GRASPING FOR THE WIND™

**A Television Series for the Millennium**



“The ideas that have shaped our present world were first gradually developed in the minds of philosophers and later popularized through the works of artists and entertainers.”

*by John W. Whitehead*

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**GRASPING FOR THE WIND**  
**STUDY GUIDE**

**BY**  
**JOHN W. WHITEHEAD**

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# Episode One

## Breaking With The Past

“Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life.”

- Oscar Wilde

### Summary

The Twentieth Century has been marked by unprecedented upheaval in every area of life. The traditional religious principles that once gave Western society a sense of moral stability have been abandoned. The Eighteenth to early Twentieth Centuries show us a series of revolutions against tradition, leading not to some new moral order but instead to more revolution and dehumanization. The thinkers of the Enlightenment rejected traditional values in favor of Reason. This was, in turn, followed by the Romantic Movement's rejection of Reason in favor of a worship of nature and primitive man. This was eventually replaced by stark realism and, finally, pessimism. Just as the ideals of the Enlightenment spawned the violence of the French Revolution, so the failure of the Romantic Movement has led, in part, to the dehumanized and brutal society of the late Twentieth Century.

### I. Introduction

#### A. A pre-Twentieth Century view of human nature

1. Most Western societies believed that human beings possessed an inherent value.
2. Because the value was inherent, it could not be taken away or destroyed by individuals, groups or governments.

#### B. A Twentieth Century view of human nature

1. Only the ability to reason gives dignity to human beings.
  - a) Originated in the philosophies of Seventeenth Century writers, thinkers, politicians and artists.

- b) Attempted to redefine humanity in the absence of the traditional notion of God.
2. The denial of absolute truth led to a diminished faith in the absolute value of each human being.
    - a) One clear result has been the dehumanization of people.
    - b) This has contributed, in part, to extreme cruelty such as that, for example, faced by the Jews in the 1930s and 1940s which has been the hallmark of the Twentieth Century.

## II. A Summary of Humanity's Search for Meaning in the Modern Era

### A. Rembrandt's painting, *The Shepherds Worship the Child* (1646)

1. Illustrates the point that life has meaning because God has given each human being a divine purpose for existence.
2. Conveys a message that undergirds almost all of classical Western art up to the modern age.

### B. Morton Schamberg's sculpture, *God* (1917)

1. Portrayed God as impersonal and disconnected—only a concept.
2. Suggested that God exerts no personal influence on humankind or society or provides any intrinsic value to people.

### C. Francis Bacon's painting, *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944)

1. Portrayed modern humanity's complete sense of isolation from both God and fellow human beings.
2. Showed humanity in despair.

## III. The Enlightenment and the French Revolution

### A. Enlightenment philosophers affected culture and philosophy.

1. Rejected faith in church, Bible and monarchy

2. Believed humanity could create its own values and political ideas without reference to the supernatural
3. Were committed to creating a man-made utopia
4. Began "Age of Reason"
5. Enlightenment philosophy, in part, resulted in the French Revolution

B. Philosophers of the Enlightenment

1. François Voltaire (1694-1778)
  - a) Criticized Bible and organized religion.
  - b) Saw biblical God as cruel and homicidal.
2. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
  - a) Believed man could create own truth.
  - b) Viewed nature as a biological machine.
  - c) Viewed God as merely mechanism for maintenance of nature.
  - d) Believed only reality was experience and reason.
3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)
  - a) Promoted freedom from all traditional or religious morality.
  - b) Rejected faith in reason and civilization.
  - c) Viewed individual as center of universe.
  - d) Believed "Noble Savage" is superior to civilized man.
  - e) Taught that individual freedoms should be preserved through the "general will" of the people.
    - (1) Eventual consequence was nothing more than state-enforced tyranny
    - (2) Enforced through process of cultural engineering, indoctrination and coercion

## IV. The Romantic Movement

### A. Primary ideas

1. Rejected reason and traditional religion, in part a reaction to the French Revolution
2. Turned to faith in nature and mysticism for inspiration
3. Like Rousseau, held that people are naturally good until corrupted by society
4. Wanted to create reality without constraints of religion, family or church

### B. Philosophers, writers, composers and artists of the Romantic Movement

1. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
  - a) Used music to promote faith in the natural goodness of common man.
  - b) Promoted faith in the goodness of nature.
2. Lord Byron (1788-1824)
  - a) Promoted faith in autonomous self rather than traditional moral values.
  - b) Saw no essential difference between good and evil.
  - c) Believed all knowledge is good.
3. Francisco Goya (1746-1828)
  - a) Satirized daily life, depicting fantastic events.
  - b) Reintroduced mythology and mysticism to Western man's consciousness.

## V. The Realist Period

### A. Primary ideas

1. Reacted to sentimental romantic views.



2. Produced unromantic, starkly realistic, even mundane work.
- B. Artists and poets
1. Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)
    - a) Produced art devoid of heroic, romantic or beautiful themes.
    - b) Portrayed people without heroic or symbolic worth.
  2. Édouard Manet (1832-1883)
    - a) Used unadorned, rather than sentimental, subject matter.
    - b) Chose ordinary themes.
  3. Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891)
    - a) Used personal lifestyle as a demonstration of rebellion against society.
    - b) Demonstrated hatred toward religion.
    - c) Influenced modern artists, writers, poets and musicians.
      - (1) Allen Ginsberg
      - (2) Jack Kerouac
      - (3) Bob Dylan
      - (4) Beat poets of 1950s
      - (5) Sex Pistols

## VI. Conclusion

- A. When a culture abandons religious traditions, it must replace them with something strong enough to give people meaning and purpose.
- B. Each successive revolt against tradition has led only to more revolution and dehumanization.

1. Enlightenment replaced traditional religious faith with faith in reason.
2. Romantic movement replaced faith in reason with faith in nature and primitive man.
3. Faith in primitive man was then replaced by stark realism.
4. Realism was replaced by pessimism and the dehumanization evident in modern culture.

### Questions for Thought

1. What effect do philosophers, artists and entertainers have upon a culture's views of man?
2. How do the works of Rembrandt, Schamberg and Bacon show the shift from traditional values to the dehumanization of man?
3. How did the philosophers of the Enlightenment affect the French Revolution?
4. How was *Oath of the Horatii* political propaganda?
5. Why did the French Revolution turn into a bloodbath?
6. How did the Romantics differ from the philosophers of the Enlightenment?
7. What was the Romantic view of man and nature?
8. How does Lord Byron's "Byronic hero" illustrate the Romantic view of knowledge?
9. How and why did Francisco Goya reintroduce mythology to Western consciousness?
10. What qualities identify the art of the Realist period? What was this a reaction to?
11. How did the artists and poets of the Realist period view mankind?
12. Which French poet used his lifestyle to illustrate rebellion against society? What effect has he had upon modern writers?

13. Trace the changing view of the value of the human being from the Enlightenment to modern day.

# Episode Two

## Where Are We Going?

“The human being who has become free—and how much more the spirit who has become free—spits on the contemptible type of well-being dreamed of by shopkeepers, Christians, cows, females, Englishmen, and other Democrats. The free man is a warrior.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche

### Summary

As we look at the fragmentation of modern society, we realize that this chaos is the result of a change in ideas about the basis of life. As our culture has continued to abandon the traditional religious principles that formed the basis for Western society, we have been influenced by such people as Charles Darwin, Karl Marx and others. One result is a society growing consistently more dehumanized and despairing.

#### I. Introduction

- A. The chaos in the Twentieth Century did not arise from a vacuum but instead resulted from the change of ideas about the origin and meaning of life.
- B. The revolution in ideas begun by the Enlightenment continues to manifest itself today.

#### II. Darwin - Questioning the Created Order

- A. Charles Darwin (1809-1882)
  - 1. Wrote *The Origin of Species* (1859) about the theory of natural selection.
  - 2. Suggested that all plants, humans and animals developed through an inevitable, brutal process of selection of the fittest.

3. Laid foundation for renewed faith in science.
4. Rejected traditional concept that human beings are created in image of God.
5. Relegated people to the animal world and brought into question the inherent worth and dignity of human beings.

B. Resulting influence

1. Many accepted theory as unchallenged truth.
2. J. D. Rockefeller used theory to justify industrial monopoly.
3. Adolf Hitler used theory to justify killing people he regarded as undesirable.

III. Marxist Socialism - Questioning the Social Order

A. Karl Marx (1818-1883)

1. Was influenced by Darwin.
2. Authored *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).

B. Primary beliefs

1. Man is not solely responsible for his actions.
2. History and nature shape mankind.
3. Man is only a reflection of his material possessions and economic status.

IV. Impressionists - Questioning the Nature of Reality

A. Art style

1. Portrayed subjective impressions rather than objective reality.
2. Portrayed a world with no absolutes.

B. Artists

1. Claude Monet (1840-1926)
2. Auguste Renoir (1841-1919)

C. Purpose

1. Questioned the existence of objective reality.
2. Questioned humanity's ability to determine reality.
3. Presented reality as only a series of subjective impressions.

V. Pointillism - Turning Art into Science

A. Georges Seurat (1859-1891)

1. Attempted to paint reality by depicting order and structure.
2. Imitated how the eye perceives the world.
3. In trying to turn art—and reality—into science, lost human dimension.

VI. A Return to Mysticism

A. Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)

1. Turned to non-traditional art to produce new mysticism in a search for more human, less calculated form of art.
2. Believed art was an abstraction to be inspired by nature.
3. Saw technology and modern life as a form of evil, a kind of enemy of pure living.
4. Looked for meaning in life in primitive, pre-Christian societies.

B. *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*

1. Suggested confrontation and merging of the supernatural and human life.

2. Portrayed despair at the lack of answers to the major uncertainties of life.

## VII. A Vacuum of Uncertainties

### A. Communism and Fascism

1. Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) justified racism and genocide on basis of theory of survival of the fittest.
2. Inherited ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900).
  - a) Rejected Judeo-Christian morality
  - b) Created a new moral order based upon power and intelligence
  - c) Sought a race of supermen
3. Was influenced by Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
  - a) Believed Christianity's teachings concerning virtue and sexual abstinence would eventually sweep human race from earth
  - b) Thought love possible only in sexual context
  - c) Held strong, anti-Semitic view

### B. The legacy

1. Jim Morrison, lead singer of "The Doors" (1943-1971)
  - a) Was fascinated by rebellious themes in Nietzsche's writings.
  - b) Thought artists and performers should be unrestricted in choice of expression.
2. Ridley Scott, director of film *Blade Runner*
  - a) Film questioned meaning of life.
  - b) Portrayed a futuristic, dehumanized world.
  - c) Asked basic questions about life.

## VIII. Conclusion

- A. The Twentieth Century has been a century of social experimentation based upon Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century ideas.
- B. In spite of the many ideas concerning morality and the nature of reality, the desperate questions still have no answers.

### Questions for Thought

1. What are some of the primary reasons for the chaos that we see in society today?
2. Why did Darwin's theory of natural selection have such a far-reaching effect? Explain how the theory affected such leaders as Adolf Hitler.
3. How did Karl Marx view man? What effect did this have?
4. Explain how the Impressionists viewed reality. How do you think this has affected modern society?
5. What did Georges Seurat's paintings seem to be saying about human beings?
6. What eventually brought Paul Gauguin to complete despair?
7. What was it in Nietzsche's philosophy that had such an effect upon Jim Morrison?
8. Why did Adolf Hitler revere Richard Wagner?
9. Have the ideas of Marx, Seurat and Gauguin affected other art forms such as modern film? What films? What other art forms have been affected?



# Episode Three

## Children Of The Machine

“We are at the dead season of our fortunes.... We have been moved beyond endurance, and need rest. Never in the lifetime of men now living has the universal element in the soul of man burnt so dimly.”

- John Maynard Keynes

### Summary

The Twentieth Century ushered in the era of the machine. People began to look toward technology to give meaning to life. Instead of solving the problems of life, the Machine Age has, in many respects, reduced people to faceless, insignificant creatures. Artists such as the Cubists portrayed humans as soulless creatures, while the aftermath of World War I caused others to look for new answers to the soldiers' psychological problems. Expressionists and psychologists began to look to the subconscious for answers, finding instead a dark side of humanity. The Surrealists conveyed the message that there is no certain reality and challenged established religion. All these perspectives have coalesced into the pessimism that has marred the Twentieth Century.

#### I. Introduction

- A. The Twentieth Century is the era of the machine.
- B. Modern technology challenged humanity's concept of itself as significant.
- C. Machines do not need a particular person to operate them.
- D. Human beings increasingly become faceless as technological advances continue.

#### II. Technological Breakthroughs Become Sacred Events

- A. At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, technological breakthroughs were almost sacred events.

1. 1889 Paris World's Fair
  2. Louis Bleriot
  3. Charles Lindbergh
- B. Some felt that technology might replace traditional religion and give life new meaning.

### III. Cubism

#### A. Perspectives

1. Offered first real artistic attempt to find humanity's place in a world dominated by machines and modern science.
2. Tried to reduce everything to its essential geometric structure.
3. Made art a series of technical images.
4. Reality—as seen in nature—was irrelevant.

#### B. Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

1. Foremost artist of Cubist movement.
2. Reduced human images to mere architecture.
3. Evidenced subtle hostility toward women in his work.
4. Challenged perceptions of reality.

#### C. Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)

1. His work questioned humanity's free will.
2. Suggested that human beings are nothing but absurd machines in an absurd world.
3. Eventually abandoned painting to create an anti-art.

### IV. World War I

A. Assisted in the physical and psychological destruction of Western culture

1. Was caused by horror of mechanized warfare.
2. Destroyed ideals, confidence and good will.
3. Left a spiritual vacuum.

B. The generation gap

1. In part, caused by an inability of combatants to communicate the horrors of the war to non-combatants.
2. Caused in part by anger of soldiers toward authorities who had initiated the war.

V. Expressionism

A. Fueled by an anti-war movement

1. Identified by a hatred of authority and traditional beliefs
2. Motivated by a desire for escape from madness of the war

B. An art style

1. Turned inward to examine passions of the soul.
2. Searched for some universal truth.
3. Tried to capture the meaning behind the oppressive appearance of reality.
4. *Fate of the Animals* by Franz Marc (1880-1916)

C. Expressionist film style

1. Robert Wiene (1880-1938)
  - a) *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (1919) showed psychological terror on screen.
  - b) Film used unreal environment.

- c) Centered on psychological nature of characters.
  - d) *Caligari* illustrated the alienation and horror of existence that became the hallmark of modern Western society.
2. Fritz Lang (1890-1976)
    - a) *Metropolis* (1927) reflected a world dominated by machines.
    - b) Film depicted the rise of uncertain political elements.
  3. Tim Burton (b. 1958)
    - a) Portrayed pessimism and psychological nuances in *Batman* (1989).
    - b) *Edward Scissorhands* (1990).

#### D. Inconsistencies

1. Celebrated need for love and universal brotherhood.
2. Often encouraged grotesque dramatization of brutality and sensuality.

### VI. Modern Psychology

#### A. World War I

1. Prolonged trench fighting caused stress-induced mental disturbance in soldiers called "shell shock."
2. Alternative methods of treatment were developed to meet needs of traumatized soldiers.

#### B. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

1. Tried to replace traditional morality and choice with an idea of psychological conditioning.
2. Applied concept of acquired characteristics to psychology.
3. Rejected idea of guilt as a reaction to sin.

4. Tried to find acceptable outlets for expression of dark side of human nature.

## VII. Surrealism

### A. Perspectives

1. Sought a way to openly express man's dark side.
2. Conveyed a message that there is no fixed or certain reality.
3. Portrayed a world in which dreams and subconscious are all one can be certain of.
4. Abandoned reality for a world of nightmare.

### B. Salvador Dali (1904-1989)

1. *Persistence of Memory* (1931) erased line between reality and subconscious.
2. Was influenced greatly by Freud.

### C. Surrealist films

1. Luis Buñuel (1900-1983)
  - a) *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) tried to shock the conscious mind with images drawn from the dark side of the subconscious mind.
  - b) Blatantly challenged religion.
2. Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) directed *Psycho* (1960) and others.
3. David Lynch directed *Eraserhead* (1977) and others.

## VIII. Modern Pessimism

### A. A result of

1. Faith in technology.
2. Expressionism and Surrealism.

3. World War I.
- B. Captured by T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) in his classic poem *The Waste Land* (1922)
1. Expressed futility of modern culture.
  2. Believed modern thought destroyed modern humanity and caused intellectual and emotional suicide of Western culture.
  3. Turned to Christianity and believed this transcended the despair and cynicism of modern existence.
  4. Believed experiment of a civilized but non-Christian society will ultimately fail and Christians must preserve the faith so as to renew and rebuild civilization.

### Questions for Thought

1. Why could the Twentieth Century be considered the era of the machine?
2. How did Cubists such as Pablo Picasso view reality? What effect did his work have on modern man's view of his own value?
3. Discuss Picasso's view of women and how it was manifested in his art.
4. How did Marcel Duchamp view human free will and the significance of human beings?
5. What effect did World War I have upon the American culture? Why?
6. How did Expressionist Franz Marc portray humanity?
7. Give several examples of Expressionist films. What do they illustrate about Western culture?
8. Why is Expressionism inherently inconsistent?

9. What caused the rise of modern psychology? How did Freud view the dark side of human nature?
10. What is the relationship between Surrealism and Freud?
11. Explain why filmmakers such as Luis Buñuel used horrific images to shock their viewers.
12. How are people called to “redeem the time” as Eliot describes it?
13. Why is there such a difference between T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and his later hopeful attitude toward life?

# Episode Four

## The Lost Generation

Those who have crossed  
With direct eyes, to death's other kingdom  
Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men.

- T. S. Eliot

### Summary

By breaking with the past and discarding their connections with traditional religion, modern humanity turned to technology for meaning. The introduction of the theory of relativity led to the acceptance of relativism, and this brought alienation and despair to the Twentieth Century. As people tried to understand their alienation and loss of hope, many learned that the artists and philosophers had no answers either. As of the mid-Twentieth Century, Western culture seemed to have lost its way.

#### I. Introduction

- A. At the dawn of the Twentieth Century, modern Western humanity increasingly turned to technology to find meaning.
- B. A sense of futility developed when technology failed to provide ultimate answers. This was coupled with the belief that there are no certainties in life and that everything is relative.

#### II. Scientific Revolution

- A. Albert Einstein (1879-1955) proposed *Special Theory of Relativity* (1905).
  - 1. Confirmed there was no basis for concept of absolute motion.
  - 2. Replaced the idea that time and space are absolute with



idea that observations of time and space depend on the position of the observer.

3. Relativity became confused with relativism, replacing moral absolutes with moral uncertainties.
4. To some, the theory seemed to scientifically reduce concept of moral absolutes to irrelevance.

### III. Sexual Revolution

#### A. Margaret Sanger (1883-1966)

1. Sought to eradicate traditional ideas of morality as they concerned sexual relationships.
2. Championed contraception and sex education.
3. Promoted sexual freedom for women as well as men.
4. Promoted theory of eugenics which had racist undertones.

### IV. Rebellion in music

#### A. Jazz

1. Emerged as a spontaneous form, free from preceding musical tradition.
2. Challenged traditional music.
3. Was thought to be creative expression of primitive people free from constraints.
4. Liberated individual from ensemble music.
5. Introduced by musicians such as jazz soloist Louis Armstrong (1901-1971).

#### B. Rock n' Roll

1. Emerged as an even more uninhibited form of music.
2. Talented African-American musicians, such as the "Harlem

Hamfats,” provided the musical bridge from jazz.

3. Provided an ultimate feel-good beat for a generation hooked on the materialistic values of Hollywood.

## V. Rebellion in Art

### A. José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955)

1. Wrote *The Dehumanization of Art* (1948).
2. Argued that rebellion against older forms of art was the only way to create new forms.
3. Believed that modern artists should dehumanize their work.
4. Predicted a separation of society into elite and masses.

### B. Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

1. Empathized with the suffering of people brought on by the inhumanity of modern society.
2. Painted *Guernica* (1937) which became a symbol of bitter wartime affliction and the conscience of a horrified humanity.

### C. The Bauhaus art movement

1. Originated in Germany.
2. Became major leader in art of design and architecture.
3. Was reminiscent of medieval craft guilds and dedicated to idealistic projects.
4. Attempted to create a new consciousness through innovative design.
5. Hoped to construct the new structures of the future.

### D. Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)

1. Used art and architecture to convey political ideas.
  2. Used massive, impenetrable buildings to convey centralized power of state over individual.
  3. Closed the Bauhaus because he sensed its power.
- E. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945)
1. Funded art as part of program to put people back to work during and after the Depression.
  2. Gave America the nobility of working-class socialism and patriotism.
- F. Orson Welles (1915-1985)
1. Portrayed American anxiety about World War II in his film *Citizen Kane* (1941).
  2. Expressed his concern over America's isolationism.
- G. Edward Hopper (1882-1967)
1. Painted *Nighthawks* (1942).
  2. Expressed alienation and loneliness of modern American life.
- H. Sloan Wilson (b. 1920)
1. Wrote *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955).
  2. Portrayed modern life as absurd and confusing and modern man as disconnected from the world around him.
- I. Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)
1. Became one of the most prominent Abstract Expressionists.
  2. Painted *Autumn Rhythm Number 30* (1950).
  3. Was pivotal in introducing random and chance creation into art process.

4. Developed drip method.
5. Portrayed alienation from reality.

J. Francis Bacon (1909-1992)

1. Painted the alienation and dehumanization of culture.
2. Illustrated humanity's lonely cry for his lost values and for humanity deprived of freedom, love and rationale.
3. Painted *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944).
4. Paintings seemed to present the absolute mortality of people with no hope of redemption.
5. Depicted the despair of the generations of the mid-Twentieth Century.
6. Combined themes of alienation, dehumanization and pessimism.

Questions for Thought

1. How did Albert Einstein's theory of relativity influence modern man's acceptance of moral relativism?
2. What effect did Margaret Sanger have upon traditional ideas of morality?
3. How did jazz and rock'n'roll express the spirit of the age?
4. What did José Ortega y Gasset believe about modern art? What effect did this have upon the way humanity viewed itself?
5. Explain the effect of Picasso's painting *Guernica*.
6. What was the purpose of the Bauhaus movement? Why did Hitler discourage it, and what did he put in its place?
7. How did Franklin Delano Roosevelt use art as propaganda? How

did this affect America's view of the church?

8. Explain the purposes of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*.
9. Explain the relationship between *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and *Nighthawks*.
10. What painter introduced complete random creation into his art process? How did this describe the state of American culture?
11. Although an atheist, Francis Bacon was one of the most deeply religious painters of the century. Why? Explain how his work epitomizes Twentieth Century humanity.

# Episode Five

## The Fat Dream

“They were like the man with the dungeon stone and the gloom, rising, from the underground, the sordid hipsters of America, a new beat generation that I was slowly joining.”

- Jack Kerouac

### Summary

A philosophical climate with roots as far back as the Enlightenment transformed American society from a conservative, middle-class culture to a society at war with its own traditions. World War II made death seem indiscriminate and abstract, and Americans sought diversions in gambling, sex, drugs and alcohol. The question of life's absurdness raised by Existentialism, the aura of governmental control and rising pessimism all influenced society through popular films and books. Television moved from simple entertainment to a medium with which to influence society. The “Beat” generation portrayed the rebellious lifestyle of the alienated youth culture. A cultural rebellion, fired by rock music and popular actors and musicians, challenged the old order. American sex symbols captured the growing sexual obsession and insecurity. The feminist movement and the civil rights movement further altered society. This opened the door for the revolution of America's young people against the traditions of their parents.

### I. Introduction

- A. World War II profoundly disturbed both the human psyche and Western man's understanding of life itself.
- B. The atomic bomb made death invisible, abstract and indiscriminate.
- C. Unable to make sense of the new reality, many began to look for escape and diversion.
- D. Pessimism began creeping across Western society.

## II. Existentialism

### A. Basic ideas

1. Taught there are no fixed and eternal truths.
2. Human meaning is found only in day-to-day choices.

### B. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980)

1. Seemed to offer hope by stressing uniqueness of each individual's experience.
2. Believed one's choices define oneself. No choices are more moral than others.

### C. Governmental control and the absurdity of life in the post-World War II culture

1. Resulted in governmental manipulation and deception.
2. George Orwell (1903-1950)
  - a) Wrote *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949).
  - b) Argued that successful totalitarian states must appeal to the emotions of their subjects.
  - c) Portrayed truth as that which the power elites desired.
  - d) Illustrated how people can be manipulated once they are taught to ignore truth.
3. Stanley Kubrick (b. 1928)
  - a) *Doctor Strangelove* (1964) dealt with themes of control and absurdity in the context of global nuclear war.
  - b) Asked whether modern humanity can control its destructive urges.
  - c) Immortalized anxieties about nuclear disaster.

## III. Television

- A. Began as a mix of cultural programming and entertainment.

## B. Politics

1. Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965)
  - a) Discredited Joseph McCarthy's investigations of alleged communists.
  - b) Brought a new level of investigative reporting to the screen.
2. Television political campaigning
  - a) Began with promise of greater accountability.
  - b) Eventually supplanted meaningful public debate.

## IV. The Beat Generation

### A. Revolutionized popular culture.

1. Provided clear commentary on alienation and pessimism of Western culture.
2. Laid foundation for anti-establishment upheavals of the 1960s.

### B. Jack Kerouac (1923-1969)

1. Wrote *On the Road* (1957).
2. Explored theme of personal freedom.
3. Challenged the concept of the American dream.
4. Provided a cultural bridge between Beat generation and 60s generation.

### C. Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)

1. Became poet laureate of Beat generation.
2. Rejected traditional values of Western culture.
3. Led the way for a movement of anti-establishment activists.



4. Admired Rimbaud's rebellion against societal constraints.

D. J. D. Salinger (b. 1919)

1. Although not part of Beat movement, espoused similar message of alienation.
2. *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) prophesied coming rebellion of youth culture.
3. Seemed to portray a world with no absolute good or reality.

V. The Cultural Rebellion

A. Evan Hunter, author (b. 1926)

1. Hunter's novel, *Blackboard Jungle* (1954), portrayed a distinctive, grim youth culture.
2. Film version (1954) by Richard Brooks popularized emerging rock'n'roll music such as Bill Haley's *Rock Around the Clock* (1954).

B. Rock n'roll music

1. Reflected the cultural rebellion of the youth.
2. Shocked many because of loud and sexual nature.
3. Encouraged an undefined lifestyle.

C. Alternative lifestyle

1. Youth rebelled against parents' affluent lifestyle.
2. Sought sensuality and freedom as they asserted independence.
3. James Dean, actor (1931-1955)
  - a) Became image of youthful rebellion.
  - b) Identified adolescent turmoil as psychological.

- c) Portrayed loneliness and alienation of the youth from the family unit and adult society.
- 4. Elvis Presley, musician (1935-1977)
  - a) Challenged old order with his image and music.
  - b) Eventually became a parody of himself and a materialistic culture.

## VI. Vulgarity in American culture

### A. Willem de Kooning, painter (1904-1997)

- 1. Caught on canvas the modern exploitation of women as sex objects.
- 2. Captured vulgarity of wealth amidst moral decline.

### B. Andy Warhol, artist (1928-1987)

- 1. Represented theme of sex symbols in his *Marilyn Monroe Diptych* (1962).
- 2. Seemed to portray women as sex objects who cannot operate in the real world.

### C. Hugh Hefner, publisher (b. 1926)

- 1. Through his *Playboy* magazine, capitalized on growing sexual obsession and insecurity.
- 2. Advocated sexual indulgence and frivolity.
- 3. Believed that Americans were hypocritical about sex.
- 4. Sought to legitimize a sexual revolution for men.

## VII. The Feminist Movement

### A. Traditional ideas

- 1. Portrayed women primarily as homemakers.
- 2. Promoted by popular women's magazines such as *Redbook*.

B. Betty Friedan, feminist advocate (b. 1921)

1. Wrote *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).
2. Challenged traditional notions of femininity.
3. Founded the National Organization for Women.
  - a) Worked to obtain rights for women equal to rights of men.
  - b) Helped win the legalization of abortion.

VIII. The Civil Rights Movement

A. Emergence

1. Galvanized American conscience.
2. Developed into a national cause.

B. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

1. Used nonviolent tactics to achieve peaceful change.
2. Received Nobel Peace Prize in 1963.
3. Joined by musicians and actors, both white and black, in his civil rights campaigns.

Questions for Thought

1. What effect did World War II have upon America's view of death? Why?
2. What effect did Existentialism have on Western culture? Explain Sartre's view of moral choices and hope in a senseless world.
3. What were George Orwell's views of human nature and a successful totalitarian state?
4. Explain the effect that television had upon politics. Why was it heralded as a medium for greater political accountability? Did it actually have this effect?

5. How did Allen Ginsberg represent the attitudes of the Beat generation?
6. Explain the effect of *Catcher in the Rye*.
7. How did rock music reflect the cultural rebellion of the youth?
8. How did actor James Dean and singer Elvis Presley personify the youth culture?
9. What attitude toward women did DeKooning, Warhol and Hefner portray through their work? How does this square with earlier artists such as Picasso?
10. Describe the emergence of the feminist movement. What influence did it have politically?
11. Discuss the Civil Rights Movement and King's leadership. How did this affect American culture?

# Episode Six

## The Winds Of Revolution

“You say you want a revolution. We all want to change the world.”

- John Lennon

### Summary

In the 1960s, the rebellious youth movement of the 1950s escalated from personal rebellion against parents and traditional values to outright revolution against traditional institutions and the state. Much of this rebellion against the status quo began on university campuses, and was ushered in with a sense of idealism and possibility for social and political change. The student rebels used activist techniques to call attention to moral dimensions of local issues and protested such activities as the Vietnam War. The rebellion was fueled by artists and musicians such as Bob Dylan, John Cage and The Beatles, as well as films that emerged before and during the era. Artists began to stage “happenings” as a new form of expression. The hippie movement began to grow, celebrating sex, drugs and rock’n’roll. Eventually, however, the student leaders and hippies returned to the conventional lifestyle of American consumerism after unleashing a spirit of moral anarchy and political chaos that has shaped western society ever since.

### I. Introduction

- A. In the 1950s, a youth culture of rebellion began to take shape.
- B. In the 1960s, this movement escalated into outright rebellion against the establishment.

### II. Politics and the Student Rebellion

- A. Students for a Democratic Society
  - 1. Students and others produced the Port Huron statement in 1961.
  - 2. Student leaders such as Tom Hayden (b. 1939) expressed

dissatisfaction with society.

## B. Attitudes

1. Began with idealism and a sense of possibility for political and social change.
2. Ended with pessimism.

## C. University of California at Berkeley Riots

1. Attempts to suppress anti-discrimination and anti-segregation riots in 1964 spawned campus-wide rebellion.
2. Resulted in Free Speech Movement
  - a) Established model for protests nationwide.
  - b) Were led by rebels, student and otherwise, called the New Left.
  - c) Called attention to larger moral dimensions of a local issue.
  - d) Protested the Vietnam War.
  - e) Illustrated the growing generation gap.
    - (1) Many parents no longer understood their children.
    - (2) The new generation lost faith in their parents' ideals.

## III. Art and Rebellion

### A. Bob Dylan (b. 1941)

1. Used lyrics with political, social and spiritual messages.
2. Questioned middle-class values and parodied hypocrisy of the establishment.
3. Influenced by Arthur Rimbaud and Allen Ginsberg.

### B. Films

1. Films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Easy Rider* became personal, political and social statements.
2. Addressed public disillusionment with corrupt government, racial disharmony and the oppressiveness of the military-industrial complex.
3. Some wholeheartedly joined counterculture.
4. Set a trend to dismantle traditional values, attack remaining taboos, expand what was sexually acceptable and expand the growing social consciousness of their audiences.

C. John Cage (b. 1912)

1. Undermined the majesty and uniqueness of art itself.
2. Objected to music's traditional limitations.
3. Believed an artist must avoid using reason to create patterns.
4. Invented music as a collection of unintentional sounds.
5. Tried to avoid any absolute reference for melody, harmony or rhythm.

D. Pop Art

1. Attempted to give everyday images a new and often absurd meaning.
  - a) Anything could be turned into art.
  - b) Art became a parody of itself.
2. Artists
  - a) Robert Rauschenberg (b. 1925) produced *Bed* (1955).
  - b) Andy Warhol (1928-1987)
    - (1) Attempted to deal with America's repetitive culture.

(2) Mocked advertising.

c) The Beatles

(1) Evolved to become art objects themselves.

(2) Became most popular media figures of 1960s.

#### E. Happenings

1. Resulted as artists sought new ways to communicate ideas.

2. Used audience participation in outrageous public events.

3. Blurred the line between reality and fantasy.

4. Allan Kaprow (b. 1927)

a) Designed *Calling* (1965).

b) Reduced people to mere props.

c) His work symbolized that the line between art and life, craft and trivia was being erased.

#### F. Pop Music

1. Expressed same message of confusion between fantasy and reality.

2. The Beatles

a) Shaped an entire generation by giving them a universal link through music.

b) Radicalized social content of their songs.

c) Eventually had a serious social, political and religious viewpoint in their music and philosophy.

d) 1967 album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts*, fused pop art, counterculture and rock music culture as it raised rock music to the level of an art form.

### IV. The Hippie Movement

A. Inspired by Beatles, Beats and others.



- B. Had faith in the power of drugs and rock music to expand the mind and lead to new insights about the meaning of life.
- C. Human Be-In (1967)
  - 1. Massive happening that included popular artists and musicians.
  - 2. Supported by anarchist group and drug czars.
- D. Woodstock (1969)
  - 1. Celebrated sex, drugs, rock'n'roll and peace.
  - 2. Included 400,000 hippies and others.
  - 3. Bridged idealism of 1960s with drug culture of 1970s.
  - 4. Eventually became part of American consumerism.
  - 5. Marked the end of the hippie subculture.

## V. The Finish

- A. Hippies of 1960s became yuppie entrepreneurs of materialistic 1970s and 1980s.
- B. New Left rebels became Establishment professors with their own repressive culture.
- C. The 1960s unleashed a spirit of moral anarchy and political chaos that has shaped society ever since.
- D. America has become a nation of competing interest groups.
- E. Idealism has given way to raw competition.
- F. Terrorism may now be the face of the new revolution.

## Questions for Thought

1. How did the students feel about their culture, as expressed in the 1961 Port Huron Statement?
2. Describe the techniques used by the New Left to express their disapproval of society. How did they view the Vietnam War?
3. What caused the “generation gap” between parents and students?
4. How did Bob Dylan use his work to promote the cultural movement?
5. Describe how film directors took advantage of court rulings. How did they express a sense of artistic ownership?
6. What did John Cage express about the uniqueness of art?
7. Describe Pop Art and explain how it expressed the artists’ views of culture.
8. What is a “happening”? How did happenings affect society’s view of reality?
9. Describe the effect of The Beatles on the youth movements.
10. Although John Lennon was severely castigated for stating that The Beatles were more popular than Jesus Christ, many agreed that in modern culture, religion does take a back seat to much else in life. Do you agree or disagree? Give examples to support your viewpoint.
11. How does religion’s role today differ from the role it occupied even 100 years ago?
12. In what did the hippies put their faith? How did Woodstock bridge the gap between the 1960s and 1970s?
13. Describe the ironic return of the hippies and the student left into American society.
14. The Sixties generation was considered to be revolutionaries overthrowing the establishment. How does this compare to Christ and his disciples, considered to be the revolutionaries of their own time?

15. What was the long-term effect of the 1960s generation on American society? Describe how the white supremacy movement and terrorism have their roots in the 1960s.

# Episode Seven

## The Narcissistic Culture

“We now live in an age in which science is a court from which there is no appeal. And the issue this time around, at the end of the twentieth century, is not the evolution of the species...but the nature of our own precious inner selves.”

- Tom Wolfe

### Summary

The Woodstock generation did not replace the old moral order it had undermined and, in some ways, destroyed. Instead, a narcissistic culture came into being, emphasizing personal liberation from all restraints. The sexual revolution continued to challenge the traditional ordering of human relations, while artists continued to seek a better society through artistic enlightenment. Gay and feminist themes emerged in the works of artists such as Judy Chicago and Robert Mapplethorpe. A reaction to modernism set in, attempting to use elements of traditional design, yet based on self-centeredness. While society became increasingly introspective, it began to splinter. The punk movement continued to push the limits of appropriate behavior, and today's generation of youth have been significantly shaped by MTV and its offshoots. Confusion over sexuality, fear of technology and a mistrust of the government resulted as people began to feel they had lost control over their lives.

### I. Introduction

- A. By the 1970s, the Judeo-Christian world view was no longer accepted by many in the West.
- B. The Woodstock generation was shaping Western culture, but it did not replace the destroyed moral order.
- C. Personal liberation became the goal of society.

### II. Modernism

A. The sexual revolution

1. Was a political gesture as well as a sexual preference.
2. Challenged established order of human relations.
3. Became an issue of politics and power.

B. Woodstock generation

1. Came to realize that hedonism was not a sufficient basis for a just society.
2. Director Lawrence Kasdan (b. 1949) depicted the loss of ideals in the film *The Big Chill* (1983).
  - a) The film portrayed the remnants of the Woodstock generation as eventually becoming the yuppies of the middle class.
  - b) Idealism dissolved into greed and materialism.

C. Artistic enlightenment

1. Joseph Beuys (1921-1986)
  - a) Tried to transform society through art.
  - b) Illustrated the declining American culture through his performance "Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me" (1974).
2. Other contemporary artists
  - a) Sought new reference points such as politics and eroticism.
  - b) Broke taboos to outrage public.
3. Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989)
  - a) Projected male homosexual images.
  - b) Underscored homosexual art movement.
4. Judy Chicago (b. 1939)

- a) Painting *The Dinner Party* (1979) presented deity as feminine.
- b) Produced feminist art that was sometimes dependent upon a refurbished form of Christian theology.
- c) Politicized art of sex and gender.

### III. Postmodernism

- A. In 1980s, a reaction set in to what was perceived as the ugliness of modernism.
- B. International style
  1. Architecture incorporated more traditional themes of beauty and detail.
  2. Viewed past as a mine from which to extract bits of decorative style, to lend some beauty to what seemed an ugly, over-politicized age.
- C. Blatantly self-centered works
  1. Produced how-to books such as Thomas Harris' *I'm O.K. You're O.K.* (1969).
  2. Developed emphasis on weight loss, relationship advice and religious TV in order to fill void left by the loss of universal truth.
- D. Built industry on self-gratification and greed.
- E. Had a sexual and mystical preoccupation.

### IV. The Punk Movement

- A. Began to push limits of acceptable behavior even further than hippies had.
- B. Introduced new form of racism.
- C. Developed as an anti-design movement.

D. Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)

1. Helped establish punk style.
2. Portrays an out-of-control world of lost hope.
3. Shows police using violence and psychological conditioning to keep the peace.

E. The Sex Pistols

1. This 70s rock group had the greatest effect on British rock music since The Beatles.
2. Stood for pure negativity toward establishment.
3. Influenced entire rock music scene.
4. Used sex and shock to create anarchy.

F. MTV

1. Turned punk into money.
2. Saturated young people with exhibitionism and surrealism.
3. Contained many acts of aggression, especially sexual aggression.
4. Helped shape the view of reality for Generation X.

V. Sexual Permissiveness

- A. Was somewhat slowed by AIDS epidemic and re-emphasis on traditional values during Reagan era.
- B. Resurged in 1990s.
  1. Began defining gender by choice.
  2. Resulted in confusion over sexuality.

VI. Transforming Technologies

- A. Distinguish Twentieth Century America.
- B. Advances such as voice-activated programming, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and gender research
  - 1. Blur the distinction between human and machine.
  - 2. Have become increasingly Orwellian in character.
  - 3. Caused controversy over value of human life.
  - 4. Helped support a calculation of human life based on economics and so-called liberty.
  - 5. Pushed doctors to redefine death and the usefulness of human beings.
- C. View of government
  - 1. Seen as an unstoppable, faceless machine.
  - 2. Intuitive despair as people felt they could not control technology and government.
- D. Paranoia
  - 1. Resulted from fear of government and the general uneasiness of uncertainty of modern life.
  - 2. Fear of diseases, technology and social engineering have fueled paranoia.
  - 3. Illustrated by film *Falling Down* (1993) by director Joel Schumacher (b. 1939).

## VII. Search for Meaning

- A. The anarchy and chaos of the present age have caused a crisis in ultimate meaning.
- B. Sought for meaning in religious television, the occult or even politics.
- C. Illustrated by film *Forrest Gump* (1994) by director Robert



Zemeckis (b. 1952).

1. Capitalized on people's longing for a happy ending in spite of moral depravity in society.
2. Underlines pseudo-spiritual nature of American civil religion.
  - a) Happy endings without moral rebirth.
  - b) Salvation without repentance.
  - c) Achievement without struggle.

#### VIII. Conclusion

- A. Democratic society may be unable to survive the absence of the internal restraints provided by traditional Judeo-Christian ethics.
- B. Western culture has become increasingly fragmented.
- C. If there is to be any hope, society must recover the uniqueness of human beings and their consequent worth and dignity.

#### Questions for Thought

1. Were the gay and lesbian movements simply fueled by personal preference? Why or why not?
2. What was the purpose of Joseph Beuys' "Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me"? Describe the work.
3. Explain the influence of Robert Mapplethorpe and Judy Chicago.
4. What caused the reaction of the postmodernists? How was their work different from modernism? How did their views affect society?
5. What filled a vacuum of universal absolutes?
6. Describe the purpose and effect of the punk movement.
7. How has the confusion over sex and gender roles affected American culture?

8. Describe how modern technology has affected society's view of human and machine.
9. How has paranoia gripped American society? What are people afraid of?
10. Explain how *Forrest Gump* underlines the true nature of American civil religion.

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John W. Whitehead embarked on a fascinating journey to understand the modern culture when he began researching and writing *Grasping for the Wind*. As founder and president of Gadfly Productions, a multimedia organization, as well as The Rutherford Institute, an international human rights organization he established in 1982, Whitehead produces commentary and provides analyses of cultural events and trends to help diminish the geographic, racial, ethnic, cultural and generational boundaries that divide modern Western society at the dawn of the 21st Century. While there are no easy answers to today's cultural ills, *Grasping* examines the age-old question of what gives human beings intrinsic worth and dignity.

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