

07 Romanticism

Romanticism is the dominant stance in the West, and, thanks to pop media, likely the world. Briefly: it glamorizes the world and it gets people to trust emotion, ideology, attitude, role, and crusades rather than reason. Romanticism gets people active in mid-level causes such as against abortion and thus stops us from dealing with deep issues such as chronic unemployment. Romanticism began in the middle 1700s and replaced the Enlightenment. Almost all of us now look through biased Romantic eyes. Romanticism is one of the most powerful of “systems that eat the world”. I disagree with Romanticism. I regret that it replaced the Enlightenment. I write more about Romanticism outside this book.

From about 1700 through 1850, the rise of capitalism, industrialism, machines, science, and democracy, overwhelmed old institutions and opened the door to new ideas. Traditional religion did not catch up with changes soon enough to offer ideas and institutions for the new world. Romanticism did, and it “set in”. After it had set in, no alternative has been able to displace Romanticism. The cure for Romanticism is to know deep issues and to offer realistic ideas and institutions for dealing with deep issues. Until we can offer that to people in general, we should expect middle level issues to recur, people to run around “acting out”, dogma, attitude, demagogues, fads, and glamour. Neither the left nor right is close to facing deep issues and to offering realistic solutions.

PART 1: Introductory Notes

What Romanticism is Not.

Romanticism is not the romantic imagination and is not romance in novels, movies, and TV. Romanticism is not necessarily charging against canons, “Valentine’s Day” writ large, chivalry, dark “Gothic” stories, or TV shows about the grandeur of the universe. I like romantic imagination; I try to be romantic but fail; and I dislike Romanticism. Romanticism as a culture system is related to Romanticism in the arts from about 1780 to 1930, but it is more than art, and Romanticism thrived after Romantic art faded. Nearly all “art” or “classical” music from Beethoven after 1800 to at least Rachmaninoff in the 1920s is Romantic.

During Romanticism, the West has had other movements. In academia recently, the most familiar might be post-modernism. In pop culture, there is no big movement that is not basically Romantic. All “space epic” movies at least since “Forbidden Planet” are Romantic, as are crime movies since “Public Enemy”. Romantic music influenced rock-and-roll, pop, country, and hip-hop. Even revivals in traditional religion, such as fundamentalism, are as Romantic as they are orthodox. I see nearly all modern movements as variants of Romanticism. Romanticism can make and subsume them even when they are not compatible with each other. They cannot overcome Romanticism, and Romanticism always returns after a variant has had its run. Lesser movements can be interesting, fun, and have value just as “art” jazz and movies about fairy tales are interesting, fun, and have value; but we don’t have to take lesser movements nearly as seriously as mainline Romanticism. We are still in Romanticism. So I ignore variants.

Romanticism can seem like a gigantic pouting whining adolescent carried on into adult life. It might have roots in pouting childhood, as did Anakin Skywalker, but is more than that, as Darth Vader became more. To a righty, Romanticism seems like the typical lefty who sticks his-her nose into everything and always has a plan based on dogma; but Romanticism is more. Romanticism infects people of the left and right equally. Romanticism might be more obvious in lefties but it is as active in righties. The Tea Party is a Romantic movement. Republicans since Goldwater, and especially since Reagan, are Romantics. You can be a Romantic as much by always saying “small government”, “unleash the market”, and “tradition” as by shoveling money at minorities. To self-styled practical hardheads, Romanticism of the left or right seems like airy-fairy silliness; but it is more. The ideas of supposedly practical people are as much off-the-mark and unrealistic as leftie fantasies. Refusing to see real capitalism, denying the pain of nature, constant economic develop as the cure for all ills, militarism, and calling for “the market alone” are as airy-fairy and selfish as communes of the 1960s. America as the new Israel bringing “the American way” to the world and restoring law-and-order at home, are Romantic. The business person’s dream of being a great innovator and empire builder is Romantic. I do not on purpose show how Romanticism infects righties as much as lefties but I do try to offer examples from both sides.

Method.

Romanticism shares almost all its features, such as seeking adventure, with other stances, the greater Indo-European culture, and with other cultures. Some features of Romanticism seem to come right out of evolved human nature, such as upwelling emotion, although features are always shaped by conditions. Romanticism stands out by how it selects and uses features. I don’t define how Romanticism is unique. You will get a feel for it. Romanticism is like Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism. All three are Indo-European and express general tendencies in human nature. Despite similarities, it is wrong to see all as variations on one, for instance, as variations of Hinduism. Romanticism interacts with ethnicity, religion, gender, and socio-economic class. In a Romantic system, all socio-economic classes are Romantic but in different ways. I can’t sort out all these topics here.

I write as if ideas in Romanticism caused behavior. Most of the time, it is probably the other way around: people want to act in some ways, and Romanticism provides a good rationale. I can’t sort out how ideas and behavior interact, so I take the typical stance in anthropology and continue to explain by reference to socially shared ideas. Terms that begin with big letters (“Spirit”) show ideas that were raised to a high level in Romanticism, and often began with capital letters in Romantic writing.

To explain Romanticism, it is useful to write as if it were an ideal culture-social-formal system (much as what Max Weber made), and compare it with other ideal systems such as slash-and-burn horticulture, feudalism, capitalism, orthodox Christianity, and Hinduism. To do this, for reasons of brevity in a chapter that is already huge, I have to overlook many problems in social science. If you know of the problems in working with idealized systems, then good, but don’t hold it against what I say here if I do not take care of apparent problems.

Romanticism is a mixture of human nature; Indo-European culture; social patterns caused by the rise of nation states, industrialism, and capitalism; and particular historical trends. A book on Romanticism might try to tease apart these forces. This chapter cannot. It would be fun to show how the human need to see the world as lively contributes, and how it meshes with the feeling that something is wrong even under

apparently successful capitalism, to lead to ideas of Empires and rebels; but that fun adventure cannot be part of this chapter. Try working it out for yourself.

A Bit on What Romanticism Is.

The major deistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have always wanted people to go out and act on the world. Jesus wanted to usher in the Kingdom of God, wanted people to act as if they lived in the Kingdom of God, wanted us to work hard to make a better world, and wanted his followers to “talk up” other people. I follow Jesus in urging us to work hard to make the world better. Romanticism is a bad distortion of this good activism. While people in Romanticism might not intend badness, the results of its distortion often are wicked.

These days, even people who hold to traditional religion often are as much Romantic as they are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or Taoist. In this section, I do not discuss the relation of Romanticism to standard religions. I do not assume simply that the decline of traditional faith led to Romanticism or the other way around. I do assume the decline of traditional faith and rise of Romanticism are related.

Modern people want to feel Justified and Saved as much as any traditional Jews, Christians, or Muslims. We want Faith. We want to feel that our daily lives are sacred enough. We want to feel our lives matter and we have added to the world. We want our lives to have a feeling of adventure. We want feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment. We want to feel as if we have contributed to a grand cause, and that our contribution made a permanent difference for the better. We want our inner nature to match the bigger nature of the world and for that match to make a difference for ourselves and the world. We want all this to add up to having Faith and feeling Justified and Saved.

Not often can people really contribute to a grand cause in a way that makes an obvious difference and still live normal satisfying family lives and professional lives. Romanticism is a system that gives people a sense of success in their normal lives and spiritual lives, for the modern world.

Romanticism might have begun around the time of big causes such as the American Revolution, French Revolution, and socialist communes, and it still tries to work through big causes such as Communism, Fascism, the Great Society, and Saving Nature. But most of those big causes failed, succeed only in minor ways far behind schedule, or had unforeseen bad effects.

Romanticism might have begun in part to deal with big problems such as the good and bad of capitalism, political changes such as democracy, relations between business and the state, race relations, relations between major religions, and the need to save nature. But so far we have not cured any. Our attempts to cure them have created unforeseen bad effects and created additional bad problems.

Within the big causes and big problems are problems that are still big enough but “littler” in comparison such as Voting Rights, Civil Rights, Gender Rights, education, pollution in one particular place, bad race relations, religious conflict, abortion, prayer in schools, immigration, guns, etc.

People did not give up the need for Faith, Justification, and Salvation and the need to work in a cause so as to get Faith, Justification, and Salvation. People use alternative ways to see them, and use substitutes to get them.

One substitute was to put emotion above reason and to sanctify emotion. People use in emotion the way that traditional religions use Faith. Emotion is the new faith. If people feel the right emotion strongly then they are “with God”, Justified, and so Saved. Along with sanctifying emotion, people denigrate reason, including science.

People turn to “littler” causes for substitutes. “Littler” causes can still be important. People treat “little” causes with as much fervor as big causes, and hope for as much Justification, Salvation, and Satisfaction from little causes as from big causes. Commitment to any is a kind of special kind of emotion and so is the same as Faith. If you throw yourself into a cause, then you have Faith. We treat a battle over a bus stop like World War Three. A victory over the toilet seat is the same as the victory of Michael over Satan. We treat the argument over abortion like Armageddon.

People use dogmas for substitutes as long as the dogmas don't get at basic deep issues. They cling to these ideas as dogma: the sanctity of all life all the time; “choice” both in personal arenas and as a dogma of false capitalism; heaven or hell only; pure total populist democracy only; rule by the rich for the public good; materialism; determinism; the soul is eternal; back to religious fundamentals; liberty, equality, and fraternity; moral relativism; moral absolutism; moral subjectivism causes all problems; the market cures all problems; etc.

People use glamour as a substitute. They glamorize standard things such as movie stars and fashions but they also glamorize ideas, dogmas, causes, and all the other substitutes below.

People take attitudes as substitutes. An attitude also is a kind of emotion, and so also is equivalent to traditional Faith. People hold an attitude as a substitute for connecting their small self to the bigger-than-me, for acting naturally, and for Justification, and Salvation. Attitude includes willingness to jump into causes and to intrude. Left or right, the attitude comes first and pushes people into causes. Causes enact the attitude and so make the attitude real and effective. Causes are not chosen for their merits but for their ability to make us feel good as we push our attitude onto the world. Having an attitude makes you into an embodied angel, that is, a mix of spiritual and material who does the will of God and who has good results on the world. People “act out”.

People take on roles and poses, with attitudes. The most common roles are “Rebel” and “Remnant”; for which see the chapters on issues and see below. People divide up ideas, attitudes, causes, poses, and roles into “real” and “fake” much as people used to divide up religion into belief in orthodox religion and belief in heresies or divide faith from works. A real attitude, role, etc. is rooted in genuine connection to spirituality and a helpful cause.

People want their lives to feel adventurous, somewhat dangerous, and somewhat thrilling. To feel this way makes us feel Passion and makes us feel as if we are doing something important.

People want to act naturally and spontaneously. They want their attitude, works, and the effects of their works to flow naturally from their deep selves. They want life and good effects to come naturally as golf, baseball, or tennis come naturally to some gifted athletes or math came naturally to Isaac Newton and Leonard Euler. This makes them feel connected from the small to the big. It validates what they do and makes serves as a substitute for Faith.

People turn to belief with a strong emotional component whether within traditional faith or on its own. The standard examples are cults, Beats, hippies, New Age, Indian religions, and punks. People also take this stance of Passion in revivals within traditional religions, fundamentalism of all kinds, seeking spiritual gifts as in charismatic groups, and in movements within major religions such as Methodism and Mormonism. People conduct political causes as if the causes were a religious cult; a common example is Marxism and Communism in Russia (Soviet Union) and China. People even throw themselves into abstruse academic movements such as post-modernism.

People learn how susceptible people-in-general are to Romantic ideas, and the first people use the ideas as dogmas to get what they want for other reasons. People use emotion, take attitudes, act out, put on glamour, take on the image of rebel, moral remnant, victimized minority group, victimized business group, and victimized middle class, to gain special consideration.

As part of this complex, modern people excuse and enable far too much bad behavior and bad people. The worst of the bad behavior and bad people I discuss in the chapter on decency. Badness includes thugs, criminals, rudeness, strident political correctness of the left and right, pushiness, holier than thou, cults, hypocrisy, and anti-hypocrisy. Bad Romantic behavior includes terrorism, including evil done by Christians and by non-Christians such as by Muslim terrorists.

The underlying big problems are still there. Because the big problems are still there, many of the "littler" problems cannot be solved such as gender relations and race relations. We can take steps to deal with some little manifestations, such as by securing voting rights in the 1960s, but the root problem keeps shooting up in other places in other ways.

The fact that we won't deal with root problems puts us into a self-supporting "system that eats the world". Because we don't deal with the root problems, and the symptoms recur, we always have "little" issues to work on. Because we always have little issues to work on, we don't have to deal with the big problems. We can keep our complex of emotion, attitude, causes, roles, and bad roles.

For a "littler" cause to serve us this way the cause does not have to succeed fully. If it did succeed fully, we would move on to another cause. It is better if the cause keeps us busy, like the never-ending search for good race relations or gender relations. Causes that seem worthwhile but never succeed are more useful than causes that do succeed fully. So it is fortunate for the system that people can work on never-ending little causes that keep them from solving big problems.

Despite taking attitudes and working tirelessly on causes, modern people seem selfish, materialistic, and trendy. People are restless but forever dissatisfied. Their dissatisfaction makes them more restless, and that fuels the complex.

The worst effects of Romanticism are to blind us to what really needs doing and to keep us from using our energy, time, and talent most usefully.

We refuse to look at the big problems. Through the work of scholars and thinkers, we now understand the big problems better and might be able to do real work on controlling them – as with climate change. But we are so used to overlooking big problems, taking an attitude, seizing one little issue after another, and finding satisfaction this way, that we can't see real solutions, keep perspective, or work on problems in the order of their real effects and real need. We can't order the little problems under the big problems, and so cannot deal with everything most effectively. We would rather run around like headless chickens and get little satisfactions for short times.

Romanticism gives people a lot of energy. Romantic energy is not all wasted on projects that can't be completed. People have accomplished much using Romantic energy. Without Romantic energy, we would not have movements such as for civil rights, gender rights, saving nature, the Conservative revival, and research cure cancer. For all that, I am thankful.

Romanticism also has hurt us, and it has blinded many able people who should have seen better and had better lives. I have seen a lot of suffering from Romanticism; "the needle and the damage done". It has kept us from dealing with the root issues so that now it is too late to deal with some root issues such as saving the abundance and diversity of nature.

Romanticism always fails. In a longer work on Romantic logic, I would show how its apparent failure really supports its ability to persist as a system even while its long-term failure makes it less able to serve deep human needs. Here I only say that Romanticism does not solve deep problems or littler issues. Romanticism does not give people long-term satisfaction. Romanticism leads to conniving, confusion, contortion, and bad dogma. Still people continue to hope emotion and commitment lead to Justification and Salvation.

In practice, on the state level, Romanticism is another level of control. Acting according to Romantic guidelines, people can think they are fighting the machines when really they are reinforcing a more subtle and pervasive machine. Groups in power learned to let subordinates agitate along Romantic lines so the subordinates would think they are doing something important but really they change nothing or they help groups in power. Examples include anti-abortion, women's empowerment, widespread welfare and other entitlement, small-scale national medical care, gun rights, gun control, hug a tree, rock-and-roll, hip-hop, Black Lives Matter, White Lives Matter, and most trends in the social sciences. People in power did not invent Romanticism as another level of control. They are not that gifted. They are astute enough to use an ideology when it arises and can help them keep power. If you want to escape this level of control, you have to think for yourself, see real issues and real solutions, and then act accordingly.

Almost everyone wants some magic in the world, but not for everybody, only for some special people. The large majority of us cannot control magic even if we can see magic, like Bottom in "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Almost everybody wants to be one of the special people who can really feel magic and use it. People embrace an ideology that lets them be a magician. Most people want to be a good magician, like Merlin or Yoda. If there are good magicians, there have to be bad magicians, like Morgan Le Fay or the misguided Prospero in "The Tempest" and "Forbidden Planet". But that is alright because

then good magicians have something to do to feel useful and justified. They can defeat bad magicians. They have to protect ordinary people who are not adept with magic. They can protect goodness-truth-light-and-love, and help in the advance of goodness etc. In the end, it works out. In the modern world, bad magicians always ally with the King and Queen, the “system”, which also is bad, not like good King Arthur. Bad magicians and bad powers thwart the Spirit moving through the world creatively beneficially reshaping it. Magicians are prime tools of the Spirit. They help the Spirit creatively beneficially reshape the world. In the modern world, bad magic consists of knowing how to succeed in business, applied science, politics, nasty glamour, or systematic religion – mostly all that rational, technical, and impersonal stuff. Good magic shows itself to most people first through art such as pop music and through good emotions such as caring, true patriotism, and love for nature. Just as bad magic can feign goodness, so good magic always has a touch of naughtiness; often that is how you tell it is good magic. When good magicians defeat bad magicians and power, they also unite the goodness of good magic with its naughtiness and with the power of bad magic, of course always in a good way. Good magicians always go to Heaven.

If you want two people who exemplify Romanticism, begin with the Frenchman Jean Jacques Rousseau from the middle 1700s, and commentaries on him. Second, read the German Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (G.W.F.) Hegel’s “Phenomenology of the Spirit” and early writings on Christianity, from the early 1800s. For a contrast, read Edmund Burke’s work on the American and French Revolutions from around 1800. Burke is the founder of the sensible conservative movement. For more contrast, but which shows the growing internalization of Romanticism, read: Gilbert Keith (G.K.) Chesterton “Everlasting Man”; Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis “Abolition of Man”; Russell Kirk “America’s British Culture”, “Roots of American Order”, and “Conservative Mind: From Burke To Santayana”; a collection that Kirk edited called “Portable Conservative Reader”; and a collection of Kirk’s essays called “Essential Russell Kirk”. For the best critique of Romanticism, of all flavors, in a short wonderful novel, read “The Warden” by Anthony Trollope. The novels of E.L. Doctorow are a fun commentary on Romanticism in America. “Ragtime” describes well the maturation of modern Romanticism in the early 1900s as primarily a political tool.

I repeat that the best cure for Romanticism is to better know deep issues and to offer realistic practical solutions based on sound principles. Neither the Left nor Right has done this or accepted the situation. Until we do this, Romanticism and “acting out” will reign.

God to Fill the Void and Good Sense to Fill the Void.

Briefly, I say that people face a void at the center of their lives; instead of filling the void by dealing with deep issues, people run around; and the running around sustains the void. People are caught in a self-sustaining system around a void. A traditional religious person would say that people can fill the void with God and can fill the void only with God – or Dharma, Tao, Heaven, Love, etc. The lack of God is the root of all problems.

I don’t dispute that finding God can fill a big void in human life. I don’t dispute that not having a sense of bigger-than-me makes it hard to fill the void. If that were enough, I would refer people to religious tracts or New Age makeover books instead of writing this. The problem is that the deep problems still remain after you find God. You feel good knowing God loves you but that does not find a job for everyone who is qualified and energetic. Finding God does not save nature, turn people into adept citizens, stop terrorists,

and save us from bad policy. Church announcements don't cure worldly problems. You still have to work on the world, and working on the world can make the void return fast. Unless we also get clear about deep issues in the practical world, we risk Romanticism. We can love God truly and still act like Romantic idiots or other idiots. We can love God truly and carry out projects not because it is part of God's plan but because we need to feel good about our self. Besides loving God, we need good sense. To get it, we need to get over Romanticism. Thinking by itself won't fill the void that only God can fill but you need to think about what to do after you find God or if you don't find God.

I do not say all emotion, causes, activities, ideologies, attitudes, and roles are simply Romantic foolery. Nearly all activities etc. have a lump of truth and usefulness to them or we wouldn't do them. Activities etc. can have value even when people do them for wrong reasons or fool themselves.

I am saying that we can fool ourselves even in a good cause. Even people who feel God strongly can be mistaken about abortion or fight abortion for the wrong reasons. People who feel the unity of nature can fight to save the salmon for the wrong reasons. People who think God made everybody in his image, everyone should be free and equal, and the state should not stick its nose into our private business, still can fight for gay rights for the wrong reasons. People who achieve real good in activities can do it for the wrong reasons. We still need to think. We still need to step back to assess what we do and why. We still need to mistrust causes, etc. We still need to seek deep issues vigorously and still need to assess our time, talents, energy, and other graces in that perspective.

I am not asking that people have perfect motives or be perfect. I am asking that people look at what they do in light of what I say here. The people on this planet are not doing well enough despite huge amounts of energy, a thunder of sermons, and sea of ink. We need to ask ourselves why and do better.

Few people on their own can even recognize deep issues. Fewer can see through to the bottom of deep issues. Fewer can see the relation of deep issues to other issues. Fewer still can figure out what to do. We need guides. I have had adept guides even when they disagreed. Hopefully this book helps. You are not expected to do it all for yourself. You are allowed to ask for help; and I think you will get it. After you have gotten what you can from this book, go to other guides for help.

PART 2: Background Ideas for the Romantic Attitude.

We can see all of the points above as in the Romantic attitude. Romantics take the attitude with them to relations with people, nature, institutions, and society, and to issues. This part of the chapter goes into ideas that lie behind the attitude. I do not say that people have to clearly say they believe in any ideas described here. People only have to act as though they believe in these ideas, and they do that.

Selfishness, Isolation, Materialism, and Trendiness.

It is useful to begin by pulling on what might seem a small thread. Religious critics of modern life say our life is ruined because people are isolated individuals, selfish, materialistic, and craven slaves to trends. Modern people can't get real satisfaction in life. They feel bad. They feel modern "angst". Selfishness etc. is a treadmill that modern people can't get off of.

To explain selfishness etc., religious critics say modern people are moral subjectivists and relativists; for definitions of those, see below. Modern people lack a sense of objective morality; they assume they each personally are the final arbiter in all issues including all issues of morality; they do what suits them and call that moral or useful. They assume that whatever their group does is moral. They allow that whatever another groups does is moral for that other group as long as it does not harm me-us, and expect other groups to have the same attitude for us. If they don't like what other groups do, they can call that immoral without too much need for justification.

To explain selfishness etc. and moral subjectivism, critics say modern people lack faith and a relation to God. Christians lament the end of Christian civilization based on the Church. Hindus might say people lack appreciation for the total Dharma including how it structures society while Chinese might lament the lack of ritual ties to Heaven. Without God, we cannot have an objective view of the world. Without God, we make ourselves the center of the world and make ourselves kings and queens of the world. We must be selfish and must seek satisfaction in material goods and trends.

To explain lack of faith in God, traditional religious people say modern people took up ideas that were new after about 1700 or 1750 and turned the ideas into bad dogmas. Not all the ideas are compatible, and that is part of the point. The ideas-dogmas make us "kind of crazy" because they are un-natural, un-Godly, and hyper-rational. You do not have to fully get the ideas to succumb to their bad effects. To turn the ideas into dogmas, it helps not to get the ideas deeply. The new ideas include: "liberty, equality, and fraternity"; the individual person as the basic unit of thinking, society, family, and life; the individual person as a separate autonomous agent in all spheres; the individual as isolated moral agent; the individual as an isolated economic agent; deriving family from the individual; deriving society from the individual; rights rather than responsibilities; absolute freedom; absolute equality in all aspects of life including political, religious, social, family, and sex; lack of feeling responsible for our fellows; absolute sameness between genders; society has a "general will" about what is right and wrong and about what is practically good; we should bow to society in all affairs because society has general will and knows general good; using "the greater good for the greater number" or "utility" as the highest goal; putting society above moral action by individuals; making society the basic unit of thought, acts, and institutions; capitalism; being wealthy makes one correct; being powerful makes one correct; the free market; no government regulation; much government regulation; strong populist democracy; and rule by a small group who knows the general will and general good better than the people, knows how to get things done, and represents the people.

Bad dogmas displace good ideas, good morality, and good institutions from Christianity. Bad dogmas inevitably lead us down dark paths to wickedness.

According to critics from traditional religions, these bad ideas came from science and-or from naughty philosophers from about 1750 to 1850. I do not explain in this section what features of science led to these ideas. I do not explain why people began to believe scientists and philosophers after about 1750 when people had hardly paid attention to them for many millennia before.

Recall from the chapters on issues that we can derive any nonsense from contradictory statements, and much nonsense has been supported by using mutually incompatible ideas from above.

Non-religious critics of modern life, especially leftist critics, also say people are selfish, materialistic, and trend slaves; but blame capitalism. You will see below how. Non-religious critics approve lack of faith in traditional religion. The critics encourage many ideas above. They do not see the ideas as bad dogma but as intriguing insights and good guides. In their view, problems come because society, or sometimes the individual, cannot reach full potential, that is, full utility. The individual and-or society are stymied by capitalism and traditional religion. Capitalism causes people to select among ideas those that are bad for society and themselves and causes people to actually follow the bad ideas.

Most sensible non-dogmatic people see that we have to compromise among these ideas, as for example, between rights and responsibilities and between individual and society. Righties and lefties each have their own ideas of what a compromise is and how to find it. So they are unable to compromise among themselves; American politics since Reagan is an example. Each side picks the ideas that suit its goals and claims the other side picks dogmas that do the most damage.

Populist democracy is a difficult case because people both want to have it and want to blame it. I say a bit about it below.

Some Terms.

“Materialism” or “materialistic” can mean either-or-both of two ideas. Writers are not always clear which they mean. First, (1) materialism means a drive to buy a lot of stuff and seek happiness in stuff (including material goods such as smart phones and services such as a concert). It implies people are unhappy with buying as a life, but pursue it harder because they see no alternatives. Second, (2) materialism is the idea that the world is made of nothing but matter, and everything is only a re-arrangement of matter, including plants, animals, processes such as storms, feelings such as love, and sensations such as the scent of roses. In terms of high school physics, everything is an arrangement of electrons, protons, and neutrons (or quarks). (I omit the difference between matter and energy. I omit considering the status of the forms that matter takes.) For now, I care only about the first meaning. Sometimes critics blame the first kind of materialism on the second but (2) does not cause (1) very often.

“Consumerism” has two meanings. First, (A) people seek satisfaction from buying stuff. It implies that people can’t get satisfaction from buying, but have no choice, buy more, and are stuck. This meaning is like the first meaning of “materialistic”. The second meaning is almost opposite. (B) People are at risk in capitalism from bad business firms that offer poor goods and conniving terms, including financial firms. Consumers need help. “Consumerism” is helping consumers. Good versions of consumerism are the journal “Consumer Reports”, product reviews on TV and the Net, and stories against scams. Champions of consumerism include Ralph Nader and Senator Elizabeth Warren. When people blame materialism (1) on materialism (2), they also blame consumerism (A) on materialism (2). Because of how rightist thought works, people who dislike materialism and consumerism (A) rarely support consumerism (B).

Moral subjectivism says that each isolated individual, or each isolated group, can judge morality for him-herself or itself, and is the final judge of right and wrong. Nobody else can judge right or wrong; no other group can judge right or wrong. Moral subjectivism is rarely clear on the relation of groups to individuals. People and groups who claim to be final arbiters are rarely clear on relations of groups and individuals.

Moral subjectivism and doctrinal subjectivism go together. Moral subjectivism and doctrinal subjectivism lead to fracturing of groups, denominations, sects, and cults. They fractured Hinduism and Christianity. They constantly fracture the left wing so the left wing often defeats itself, or, if it does not, allows the right wing to defeat it easily.

Moral subjectivism leads to both moral absolutism and moral relativism. On the one hand, we have a plethora of groups each of which insists it is dead right and all the others are dead wrong. On the other hand, not all of them can be right, and they all have to get along somehow. It is easy to say they are all right in their own way for themselves and there is no one overall objective right and wrong. It is hard to compromise. Which horn of this dilemma wins out depends on particular histories and situations. Both extremes hurt democracy.

Romanticism is able to use moral subjectivity, doctrinal subjectivity, moral absolutism, and moral relativity all at the same time to strengthen itself.

The Complex-System-Syndrome of Romanticism.

I do not minimize the bad effects of isolation, selfishness, materialism, and trends. I hate people walking around with ear buds oblivious to the human world and traffic. As a motorcycle and bicycle rider, I hate people who drive and use phones. But I don't think explaining entirely by moral subjectivity, pride, lack of God, science, capitalism, weird philosophy, or populist democracy is satisfying. I look for deeper relations that might tie all this together better.

Regardless of ideology, evolved human nature tends to self-interest, using material goods for success and fun, and paying attention to what other people do. The extent of self-interest, etc. varies. Whether self-interest etc. become selfishness etc. depends on way of life and on particular conditions within a way of life. Our evolved nature has not changed even if our acts are more aimed at selfishness etc. now. Even if our acts are more aimed at selfishness etc. now, it is not clear how much – I think not much. We have more toys and trends now than in Medieval England, and we can hide in apartments clicking on the Net, but that does not mean we are vastly more selfish etc. Read the satirists of Classical Rome, and read Chaucer or Boccaccio; they are still funny and accurate, and people do not sound much different. Individualism is a part of Hebrew-Jewish Law, and Western heritage, and has been a key value since the rise of democracy in the 1700s. It is integral to democracy. I doubt critics would like to blame selfishness etc. mostly on the rise of democracy.

Ideas of strong individualism, social domination, moral subjectivism, moral relativity, etc., and the ideas of science that might support them, are more common now than they were in the middle ages but the ideas have appeared before and did not cause chaos. They were known in ancient Greece and Rome and did not cause chaos. When they arose before, they came in times when people had many ideas of God and no one idea dominated. It is not clear that not-having-a-clear-dominant-idea-of-God alone caused moral subjectivism etc. in those times and so I doubt is the only cause in our times. It makes more sense to say that great turmoil in any times cause confusion in faith etc, and then to look for turmoil and the reasons for turmoil. It is interesting that selfishness etc. are more common now but we need to see if deeper reasons cause selfishness etc.

Science, capitalism, and widespread populist democracy are almost unique to our times, and they are part of large changes that began in the early 1700s. Antecedents for capitalism, science, and populist democracy all have appeared before but none developed into a full-blown socio-economic system as now, and at no time before did they all appear together strongly enough to reinforce each other as now. None alone caused selfishness etc. But coming together in times of turmoil, with ideas in Romanticism, likely did. I cannot prove my view. I have to offer a plausible account of how it might have happened, how it relates to Romanticism, and how Romanticism relates to selfishness etc.

I am less saddened by selfishness etc. than by the Romantic complex, by the fact that we obsess over a plethora of “littler” issues and do not think through to the root. Some self-interest etc. are part of human nature but they do not have to be part of a complex that keeps us from dealing with the real problems of our world. Not even selfishness etc. have to be part of that kind of complex.

Briefly, what happened is what I mentioned above: Changes had been building since at least 1600, got faster after 1700, and much faster after 1789. The changes included capitalism, science, a mechanistic reductionist style in science, individualism that went along with capitalism, individualism that went along with populist democracy, populist democracy, religious divisions that undermined the natural authority of traditional religion, new religious ideas, and new ideas in philosophy that I don't go into. Old institutions could not cope with the new situation. Traditional religions did not adapt fast enough to give people ideas and institutions that would allow them to live decently in modern life and to keep the old ideas of God, decency, responsibility etc. At the same time, the ideas in Romanticism came to the fore. The ideas in Romanticism blended with capitalism, science, populist democracy, new forms of authoritarianism, and other new ideas and institutions, to form a system. It is a strong system that “eats the world”. Once in that system, we have a hard time getting out. The system even absorbs and shapes traditional religion and conservative ideas to serve it. The extent to which we are selfish etc. and moral subjectivists etc. varies with conditions within Romanticism but the variation never takes us out of Romanticism. That is where we are now.

Whether ideas in Romanticism were latent in the culture and only came up again after 1750, or developed new in response to the period, I don't go into. I believe they were latent in old Indo-European culture.

Contrary to what critics and old people say, modern life is not all that bad. Contrary to what I say, even Romanticism is not all that bad. It can be a lot of fun. We get a lot of good work done on middle level issues such as gender relations and clean air. I love gadgets and pop culture. How selfish etc. life is under Romanticism depends. In America in the 1960s, people were not too selfish; in the 1970s and 1980s “me generation”, more so; less in the 1990s; more so again in the Republican 2000s; and maybe less again in the early days of the Obama Presidency.

Romanticism works best when people are always a bit skeptical of their institutions, as they have been since the rise of populist democracy. Yet, even in Romanticism, especially in it, people always see the ideals of service and selflessness, and gladly act well when they believe enough in their institutions and think their actions do lasting good. People act more selfish etc. when they feel their institutions fail them much and that good acts toward other people do no good or even backfire. Regardless of how selfish or selfless, what people do serves to reinforce Romanticism.

People distrusted their institutions, even democracy, during the time when Romanticism consolidated its power, in the early 1800s, and that distrust led people to adopt Romanticism. After they had adopted Romanticism, the extent that people trusted or distrusted their institutions varied but never undermined Romanticism. Romanticism is compatible with both distrust and modest faith in institutions as long as some distrust remains. The modicum of distrust in institutions helps keep us from looking clearly at deep issues and fixing them. Romanticism feeds the distrust that keeps it alive. Our times always lead us to distrust our institutions enough to provide a solid base for Romanticism.

To repeat: the real problem under Romanticism is that we do not pay attention to deep issues and that, as a result, we are sliding into a world where life is like what we find in “Third World” cities such as Manila, Lagos, Mexico City, Mumbai, Bangkok, Los Angeles, and Oakland, CA; and where people will always act a bit too selfish, materialistic, and trendy.

It is too much to look at all the factors that fed development of the Romantic system-complex-syndrome, and at all the factors that feed it now. I focus on capitalism and the ideas about the Spirit that lie behind Romanticism, with passing comments on other factors. I explain how Romanticism works to support itself and to keep us in it.

Why Not Populist Democracy?

I said in Chapter Two on political values that populist democracy is failing largely because we will not face deep issues; clearly Romanticism plays a role in that failure and so populist democracy and Romanticism are linked. Populist democracy lets people think they are acting on deep issues when they are not. It lets people think they are heroes when they are not. Under democracy, people feel the failure of institutions because they create the institutions; only the people who made the institutions can fix them; but won't. All the dogmas listed above are part of democracy. During the era of democracy, I think Romanticism became stronger, if we can judge by how it pervades pop culture, how it has fueled the American culture wars, and how it has shaped American politics.

Why, then, go at the problem of Romanticism from capitalism rather than from populist democracy? A good answer involves a lot of social science, which I avoid. Briefly: Capitalism came before democracy and enabled democracy. Without capitalism, there would be no modern populist democracy. We can't know modern democracy well without knowing capitalism. The same ideas about individual, selfishness, subjectivism, moral relativism etc. are evident in capitalism as in democracy. If I use capitalism as one way to explain them, then I might as well simplify and get what I need from one approach. Despite its failures, people don't want to see anything bad about democracy. Only a few conservatives are skeptical about populist democracy as I am, so, if I use democracy, then I will get little support and much resistance. Since 1980, after several recessions, and after gaps in wealth became obvious, people are more skeptical of capitalism now than when Reagan gave it as the dogma of God. It is easier to explain the categories of analysis with capitalism than with democracy. I can use capitalism with fewer problems.

Idealized Good Community Subsistence Agriculture.

To begin, it helps to contrast idealized capitalism with idealized self-sufficient farming. Although idealized self-sufficient farming never existed, we think it did, and we use it as the model for how we want life to be

and how we think life really would be if only bad things did not stand in our way. We find things to blame when life does not turn out like this.

Imagine a large area of farming families, all families nearly all the food they need, and, amazingly, also produce nearly all they need such as wagons, lanterns, books, and computers. While the Amish are not nearly this self-sufficient, still, imagine along those lines. Particular families can specialize in some goods that they make well, and trade among each other, such as cakes for candles. Specialization and trade do not undermine self-subsistence. The families can produce a surplus above what they need, which they sell on a market to buy goods such as computers. If the market suddenly disappeared, they would feel inconvenienced but they would still get along fine.

Because each family is an independent unit, we might think each family acts as an isolate by itself but this is not the case in real life. In fact, just because families don't need each other, and they do specialize and trade, they interact and form a community.

The end result is something like the ideal farming communities and small towns of American lore or the idealized peasant communities of social science lore before about 1990: Smallville the home of the Kents and Superman; or the birthplace in Iowa of Captain Kirk. People trust because they have nothing to gain from stealing or otherwise hurting, and they have enough to lose by cutting ties through bad behavior. They need not all go to church (temple, mosque, etc.), or to the same one, but, in fact, people do go to some church, and usually the community has only a couple. The children go to a few small schools. They play on sports teams and in sports leagues together, and against the teams of other similar places. Life is interesting. They all help each other out in emergencies. Not everybody is equally wealthy but everybody gets along and everybody succeeds enough. A teacher of mine used the term "warm puppy school of anthropology" for the social scientists who really thought rural social life was like this. Middle class people, especially in suburbs but also in some urban neighborhoods, think of themselves and their community in these terms.

It might seem that subsistence supports isolation, moral subjectivism, etc. but it does not. Ideally, it is the other way around. People in communities share the same morality, and that morality closely approaches to the one real objective morality. People need to hold similar morality to trade, marry, and not to hurt each other; and they settle on the one best true morality. The fact that economic and social relations drive people to one morality, the one true morality, does not mean we can reduce morality, or the one true morality, merely to economic and social relations. It just means, that, in this case, society and morality happily coincide.

In their own eyes, the biggest reason that a population of self-sufficient farmers can be self-sufficient, autonomous, yet not isolated, and tied into one moral-economic community is because the basic unit of social life is the family rather than the individual or any big subgroup. Families are made of several generations. Family members learn the best balance between individual and group, and they teach it automatically. Families learn about division of labor, and learn about the need for everybody to pitch in. They teach responsibilities more than rights. They teach taking care of people who can't take care for themselves. Because families can't marry within, each one family has to consider relations with several other families. The relations overlap so that, in a few steps, nearly all families are tied to all others. The same is true of participation in the market economy. Few families have a member who is adept at every

skills, so some other families are better at some other skills, so it is useful to let another more adept family make wagons while we make lanterns to trade for wagons. In this way, the population is tied through a few steps altogether as well. The “family” becomes an important idea in morality and social relations. The family takes on an almost-mythic status. People have idealized visions of what a family should be like, work to make their families like that, want other families to be like that, and prefer relations only with other families that are as close to the ideal as possible.

Of course, the reality is in between. Where people don’t compete directly, the success of one person-or-family does not detract from the success of others, and where people can gain from mutual help, relations can be good. Relations are rarely communal. People always compete. People are never as friendly and helpful as the ideal. People cheat, lie, gossip, connive, backbite, and swindle. People flaunt wealth and use it for comparative advantage such as to get better marriages for their children. Some kind of socio-economic class system often develops. People share much of the same morality but still differ and still have moral disputes – not just disputes about economics, marriages, and self-interest but real moral disputes about right and wrong. The community might approach the one true morality but it rarely closely, and two different communities made of self-sufficient people might have different moralities that approach the one true morality in different ways. Judgment is still needed and still a skill to cultivate.

The actual conditions that prevail in any place depend on all the factors that I usually list: geography, climate, ecology, economy, technology, culture, history, and previous social organization. Some rural places are nice and some are mean.

People use the idealized rural community not just to contrast with capitalism and to explain the changes in capitalism but as a subconscious model of all aspects of how we wish life was but is not. It is like the way that early movies imagined that Native Americans used the idea of the “happy hunting ground” or like I imagine our hunter-gatherers ancestors dreamed of happy hunting-and-gathering grounds. People want their family, office, business, factory, labor union, school, academic department, sports team, community center, country club, and community to be like the idealized rural community. People use the fact that these arenas in their lives are not like the idealized rural community as way to indict modern life and to blame what they want to blame. We would be better off if we could see these arenas as they really are and work to make them better as what they really are. One of the tragedies of Romanticism is that it does not let us see these arenas as they really are and make them better that way but keeps pushing us to see them as unreal ideals and keeps us dissatisfied and active as a result.

Idealized Bad Selfish Capitalism.

Here briefly is the idealized nasty capitalism of simplistic social science. This picture has more than a grain of truth to it no matter how much you dislike simplistic social science and lefties.

Every person and business firm is in it for him-herself or itself and only for the isolated self. We are all isolated selves and only isolated selves. All isolated persons and firms interact with any other isolated self, person or firm, only for narrow personal gain. The rest of the badness necessarily follows.

Each person has wants. He-she uses available resources to fill wants as efficiently as he-she can. If you live in the forest, you use a gun and ax to hunt and gather what that particular forest gives. If you have a

job in the city, you use your salary to buy what you want in the order and amounts that give you the most gain. Business firms make goods for people, and do so efficiently, but only for profit. Whatever makes a profit happens; whatever does not make a profit, no matter how morally good, does not happen. People get jobs at firms; with their salaries, people buy the goods that firms produce.

Together people and firms make a closed system. The system provides for material wants and for trends to chase but it does not offer any more and it actively deletes any more. Rather than church or saints, people take the business firm as their model. Just as business firms seek profit and nothing else, people grimly seek personal satisfactions and nothing else. Just as business firms do not help any community unless it serves their particular narrow desires, people do not. More than merely self-interested, people are isolated, selfish, cold, and coldly efficient. They don't help others. People think that the success of everyone else detracts from their own success, so they view everyone as a serious competitor and treat everyone that way. They can be superficially polite as a means to an end but there is nothing to it other than that. The only human bonds are based on the model of a contract among business firms. Parents, children, and spouses all begin to see even each other that way. Nobody can form real bonds. Nobody can think that there might be something more to this closed system such as God or morality except when they use God or morality as a tool to manipulate other susceptible people.

People are selfish rather than merely self-interested. People can't get satisfaction from human relations because they don't have the ability and because other people don't have it either. So, instead, people seek satisfaction from buying stuff, usually material good such as cars and smart phones. People can't get satisfaction in the long run that way either but can in the short run, so they keep doing it. Trendiness is an extension of selfishness, materialism, and the first kind of consumerism. People can't get long run satisfaction from knowing all about the latest fad but they can get short run "kicks" so they keep doing it. The lack of long-term satisfaction does not make the system break down; it makes the system all the stronger.

Capitalism generates some serious problems such as unemployment and unemployment, adds to socio-economic class conflict, and adds to other conflicts such as racial strife. It is a strong force in destroying nature. Capitalism does generate wealth and eventually improves the lives of most people but the very wealth that it generates can be a problem in itself. Wealth corrupts. Wealthy people jealously guard their wealth. Even middle class people use wealth to distort politics. People believe in wealth rather than God, Dharma, or Tao. I go into the problems of capitalism more elsewhere in the book so I don't go into them anymore here.

Most of us are familiar with the syndrome that I label "just get mine first". In social science, one common example is called "the Tragedy of the Commons" and the syndrome is often modeled by a game called "Prisoner's Dilemma". When a big problem looms, especially if people share resources, people often do NOT respond by pooling resources-and risk and rationally communally fighting the problem to get the most for all. Instead, people grab what they can for themselves, hoping to get enough to weather the problem, and then come out alright at the end – or at least better than their fellows. Everybody trying to grab what he-she can makes the problem worse, but that is not the concern of most people. We can see this syndrome now in the demise of nature. People buy their own plot out in the forest hoping to get away from it all, and then, when enough people have bought enough plots, the forest is gone, and the "get mine" people get landslides and fires instead. Usually market "bubbles" such as the housing crisis and

“Great Recession” after 2006 have “get mine first” as a strong contributor when the bubble builds and when it collapses. Financial firms and their human operatives certainly are astute at getting their loot first on either swing of the pendulum.

Capitalism makes this syndrome worse. Capitalism generates, or enables, problems that people try to get away from such as the end of nature, class strife, and market bubbles. Capitalism gives the average person enough wealth so he-she thinks he-she can get ahead of the problem, get his or hers, and then get out “sitting pretty”. In fact, people are wrong and make the problem worse, so the wealth of capitalism works against people rather than for people.

Economically isolated individuals are almost inevitably moral subjectivists. Although it might appear that they are like self-sufficient farmers, the end result is quite different. For each economically isolated individual, only that person knows what he-she likes; nobody else can decide for him-her; and he-she cannot decide for anybody else. This attitude transfers directly over to morality. They know what is right and wrong, and only they know. Other people may hold opinions as long as their actions don't impinge badly on me; when their actions do impinge badly on me, then they are necessarily wrong and I am necessarily right. If a lot of opinions about morality happen to coincide, then that is a happy accident but no more than a happy accident. It is not the basis for a community. We might use it as the basis to form a group but our group is not cohesive in the same way as a community. When our opinions no longer coincide, we part company.

Reality differs from lore. Evolution gave us a desire for relations with family, people, community, morality, and spirits. People do not usually see everybody as a grim competitor for the same job; a mid-level clerk in a chemical factory is not competing with a mid-level clerk in a university. Because of modern travel, apartment life, and the isolation of jobs in a big bureaucracy, people do feel isolated. But people reach across boundaries to interact with co-workers, go to churches, go to recreation centers, experience art, listen to music, work in causes, and start families. People can get real satisfaction from material goods and activities. Firms can provide the means to get some of this real satisfaction, both by providing people with jobs and by providing them with the goods and services that people but with their salaried. Some job-and-living situations are nice and some are mean.

People do pursue careers as individuals and people sometimes do feel they are in a “zero sum game” where they gain only at someone else's expense and someone else gains only at their expense. But people also feel they are in it together as when a whole firm succeeds or the capitalist system as a whole delivers the jobs and goods that people need. People do not pursue a career in a vacuum but almost always have a career in a firm, government unit, or academic unit. Business firms cannot produce goods willy-nilly and force people to buy the goods. Firms need customers; they have to please their customers. Business firms even need other firms such as suppliers and consultants. Where competition is not head-to-head, people have feelings of cooperation and achievement. I have seen competition between business people that is friendly like sports as long as the business people are not in direct competition for a very limited market.

I am not sure if “get mine first” is worse in capitalism than in other socio-economic systems. I doubt the underlying natural propensity is much worse among people in capitalism than other systems; I have seen selfish conniving people in rural areas and non-capitalist markets. If the syndrome is worse in capitalism,

then it is not much worse. It is bad because it has worse results in capitalism than in other systems. The fact that it can have worse results in capitalism is not the fault of people in capitalism and does not mean they are more selfish, materialistic, or trendy but is a fault of how the whole system works, especially within nature.

Capitalism is important not because it forces people into selfishness, materialism, and trendiness, even if it does push people in those directions sometimes. Capitalism is important because it generates some of the deep problems, such as unemployment, that support other problems, such as bad relations among ethnic groups and genders. Capitalism generates some of the deep problems that we won't deal with and it reinforces some of the lesser problems that keep us busy flitting among causes and so keep us from dealing with deep issues. Capitalism supports Romanticism and can seem to be a big cause of it. But I doubt capitalism alone could cause Romanticism. Once Romanticism is in place with capitalism, then it pushes tendencies in capitalism toward selfishness, isolation, materialism, and trendiness; and it is a bigger force for those bad feelings than capitalism. If we would face up to the big issues then capitalism alone would not fuel other issues and we could avoid Romanticism.

Individuals and Teams.

In lore, people in capitalism are necessarily narrowly selfish, mean, and grasping. Natural selection made sure we are self-interested but not necessarily mean and selfish. Usually the most successful people in our evolutionary past learned to reach out to, and work with, other people around them so as to promote everybody's self-interest and mutual interests. The degree of cooperation or selfishness depended on circumstances and here is not the place to go into how that works. In my experience, unless people are locked into a bad system, they do find ways to connect with other people.

In lore, people in capitalism are isolated individuals who cooperate with other people only as a means to their own success. People rarely require other people for success in capitalism (or not the full range of humanity but only some aspects of a person such as his-her math skills). Because people in capitalism see everybody else as a competitor, people act as isolated individuals and never cooperate. They never form teams except to the small extent that a team directly helps individuals to make short-term goals.

Again, reality differs. Except in bad situations, people like to act in little teams. The team is usually the unit of action, not the lone-wolf isolated individual of tough guy movies and the villains such as Tom Little (Voldemort). People leave teams when they get cheated and when they do worse than if they struck out on their own or formed another team, but people will put up with a lot from the present team before they go. Americans are supposed to be the most individualist of all peoples but, in fact, they insist on teams as the unit of action. Most of the sports that Americans care about are team sports. We won World War Two through team action. Guerillas have prevailed against America because they formed good teams. The Japanese learned to emulate American teams and did really well in business. Super heroes make teams such as the Justice League. Batman and Superman were a team. Americans like to think of their families as teams, and to think of teams as families.

All team members do not have to hold exactly the same morality but their morality has to be similar. The members of the Justice League are heroes, and do not join the bad guys, because they share the same morality. For a sports team, it might be enough all to want to win a title but for most human teams more is

required. Even people on sports teams need camaraderie. That “more” appears in the common goals and morality of teams.

A team is like a small community. The ideal of a community is like a big team. A community is looser than a team. I don’t want to draw the distinctions now; I do want to point you to the similarities.

We have three possibilities: isolated individual, team, and communal-honeybee-like society. Reality can lie anywhere on a continuum between the extremes but very rarely at the extremes. People can want all three at the same time. People have ideas about all three. In the same life, people can be in different situations that require a different response. Ideas can differ from the situations that people are in. All this leads to conflict. We will see examples of the conflict in Romanticism. How Romanticism handles ideas about the individual, team, and community, and handles conflict, shows its nature as an ideology system.

“The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”.

In a book of the title above, Max Weber, in the late 1800s, explained capitalism partly as the result of ideas that Protestants earlier had developed for religion and then applied to the new commercial life that grew up after about 1650. The ideas that helped make Protestantism and capitalism also helped make Romanticism. The ideas that Weber describes reinforce the image of capitalism as only selfish and materialistic, and, ironically, they help explain how traditional faith in God dwindled. The ideas are not all consistent. I do not point out inconsistencies. The inconsistencies in the Protestant ideas also are in Romanticism but I don’t usually point that out either. I have one quibble with Weber that is worth noting: the ideas were typical not only of some Protestants but of many Roman Catholics too. People accepted the ideas where people gathered for commerce almost regardless of their faith. The ideas helped people succeed in the new commercial life of the time. If the ideas had not helped with the new commercial life, people would not have adopted them as quickly and deeply as they did.

People seek Salvation. To be Saved, people need to be Justified. People cannot earn Salvation or Justification. People have Faith in God. God then grants people with Faith Justification and Salvation. It is not a matter of enough Faith, although having only a little Faith will not do. You cannot force God’s hand through quantity of Faith. It is through God’s Grace, and only through His Grace, that you can get Justification and Salvation. You cannot do anything to earn Justification, Grace, and Salvation. Not good works, power, wealth, piety, acts of piety, giving to the Church, being an official of the Church, or anything else can earn you Grace, Justification, and Salvation. To think they might earn Justification and Salvation through works would be to think a human can compel the Will of God – a serious blunder. The keystone is Faith. You must have Faith. If you do not have Faith, you can have nothing else. If you do have Faith, then likely all else will follow. Exact relations between works, Faith, Grace, Justification, and Salvation were never clear.

Protestants sought Grace, Justification, and Salvation as individuals. You could not get these from any institution, not even the Church. You must have a direct relation with Jesus (or God). A group of Christians gathered together might help each other but, in the end, these were matters between the individual and God (Jesus). The individual had to develop the best ways of seeking God, opening the way for God’s Grace, and so getting Justification and Salvation. People actively sought a personal relation with God (Jesus).

People went on a Spiritual Quest to find Faith and to open their hearts to God. The Spiritual Quest first required people to give up themselves, their selfishness. After giving up yourself, then you can find Faith. Then you can find everything else. When people could get away from themselves, then eventually they could return to themselves and to God, and find everything, more than they had lost, that is, find Grace, Justification, and Salvation.

Protestants seek to dedicate their lives to God. Protestants feel Called by God. They answer a Calling. In following their Calling, they Profess God, they are Professors or Professionals. In the past, a calling to God usually was a calling to service and-or a church office such as pastor. However, a person could now dedicate his-her occupation, and his-her life in his-her occupation, to God. One could be a “tin smith for God” or a “banker for God”. To do so, a person had to follow the occupation by strict moral standards, as recommended by John the Baptist.

Because Protestants who felt a Calling to God through their occupation and were supposed to be honest, they were good to do business with. Especially Protestants who did business with each other often did quite well at business. They were materially successful and had social standing.

Protestants began to see material wealth and social standing as Signs of Grace, Justification, Salvation, and going to Heaven. People respected successful Protestants not just as successful in affairs of the world but in affairs of the Spirit. People began to seek wealth, power, and standing not only for their intrinsic value but as Signs of God’s Grace. People began to emulate the manners, wealth, power, and social standing of Protestants so as to signal God’s Grace and so as to gain the benefits of wealth etc. and of God’s Grace.

Although each individual was responsible for his-her own Salvation, people could help each other. Even in the Spiritual Quest, people always did better when they worked with other people as part of a team. Protestants formed tight-knit often closed communities, and communities could be large, as they were in Switzerland, Scotland, and the American Midwest. People found success not as isolated individuals but as part of teams (Professions, Occupations, Firms) and as part of communities.

In doctrine, each Protestant is an individual responsible for his-her own salvation but I personally have seen Protestants take pretty much the opposite attitude. They get quite concerned about the quality of another Protestant’s conversion and his-her personal relation with Jesus. They don’t only question each other, they grill each other. A person does not have an authentic conversion and authentic personal relation with Jesus unless the rest of the community ratifies the experience and relation. One group disparages the experiences, relations, and institutions of another. I do not here judge. I do point out that this situation is confusing and can allow people to emphasize different things according to the group and according to their needs.

When it suits their needs and they can get away with it, Protestants emphasize individual autonomy in religion, business, politics, and life. When it is forced up on them, when they can gain from it, or when they can use it to control other people, Protestants emphasize the group. There is no resolution to this tension and it shows up in all aspects of their lives. I don’t know what Roman Catholics do but I have seen something like this among these as well, probably not as severe.

In seeking all this, forming communities, and acting honestly in business, Protestants created the ideal social background for capitalism. Protestants transferred their ideas of God, morality, person, and church from religion-and-church to commerce-and-firm. They saw their occupations, and later business firms, as Professions of seeking God. They saw their firms as another Quest for God in which they had to give up first in order to get more later on. They saw the success of their firms as signs of God's Grace. They carried out their Professions, their businesses, with ruthless efficiency so as to increase the Glory of God. They acted in teams and communities. People who act like this are likely to succeed in business. They see business in ways that leads to the creation of business firms and the development of individual people dedicated to success. What began as the withdrawal of the individual into poverty to let God find him-her ended as a community of dedicated business people seeking wealth, power, and standing.

We have two shifts. The first is from the Protestant Ethic to the Spirit of Capitalism. What caused the morality that is pertinent to community to become the morality of hard-nosed business? Mostly because it worked. People that did this succeeded. People imitated the people who succeeded. Later apologists for business and religion then offered rationales. A good account would require more but here we don't need more here. I do note that this kind of shift is common in successful religions and in successful ventures of all kinds.

The second shift is from the Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism to Romanticism. In Romanticism, Faith became emotion and emotional commitment to a cause. The profession became the project, especially the cause. Commitment has to be strong. The cause has to be about the world and had to have real effects in the world just as the business enterprise had to be in the world and had to have real effects in the world. People are individuals but they are part of teams who together do God's work. A cause can fail as a business can fail but that does not mean the cause was in vain or that the overall work of God will fail. We all still have to keep working despite our individual failures and the failure of any one particular cause. Acting honestly toward God became acting as a real person and not in a role or as a poser. Other particulars fall into place.

What caused the shift from seeing in terms of the Protestant ethic etc. to seeing in terms of Romanticism? I explain the history a bit below. To see clearer, we need to know two other parts of Romantic ideology, the Spirit and Creative Chaos.

PART 3: Cultural and Mythological Background to Romanticism.

The Spirit.

In a time when religious leaders fear widespread atheism and amorality, it might seem odd to insist that few people are really non-religious. People try to find the beliefs that allow them to pursue success and that make their daily lives seem sacred enough. People seek beliefs that allow them to avoid hard issues while they still work toward success. That is what Romanticism does for our world. That is why people believe in Romanticism even when they don't say so. People are not a-religious, they are religious in a new way rather than as in traditional medieval Christianity. This is a reason why I do not blame modern angst on lack of faith alone.

The core idea of Romanticism is “the Spirit” and a chief helper idea is “Creative Chaos”. I do not say all people openly profess the Spirit and Creative Chaos. I only say people act as if they believed. The end result is the same and it reinforces the system just as well.

The Spirit is like God but is not the God of Christianity or any major religion. The Spirit is like the energy (mind, self, spirituality, consciousness, love, or dharma) that infuses the world and makes the world what it is but also stands above the world. The Spirit is both the form of the world at any particular time and the evolution of particular forms. The Spirit is the form of the whole world over time as the world takes on particular forms at given times. Most Christians who think they worship the official correct God of formal Christianity really think of God more in terms of the Romantic Spirit. When people say they are “spiritual but not religious” there is a good chance they reject formal religions but embrace the Spirit that I describe here even if they cannot say in detail that is what they believe.

The Spirit made the world. The world is the playground of the Spirit. The Spirit unfolds itself in the world over time. The Spirit does what it does through particular material and spiritual conditions including us as material-spiritual beings. Although the Spirit is non-material, it uses material stuff for its ends such as biological organisms; and it uses material-based stuff for its own ends such as cultures, ideologies, and science.

We are the Spirit acting through the world. The Spirit plays out its desires through us. Sometimes we are the agents of the Spirit in this world.

As the world goes along, the Spirit reveals more of itself. The Spirit is never entirely revealed at any one time. Yet, to people who can see, the Spirit is partially revealed at all times. At any one time, one nation, religion, race, mind set, world view, culture, business, moral movement, culture, political movement, art, or any institution might embody the Spirit and might best embody the Spirit.

The unfolding of the Spirit through the world is done as a series of projects: the Big Bang, the making of stars and planet systems, the evolution of life, the evolution of sentient beings, invention of agriculture, Classical Greek and Roman civilization, Judaism, Christianity, science, various art, nations such as Egypt and China in their times, and various kinds of political institutions such as divine kingship and populist democracy. The Spirit shows itself in the world through its projects. It is not always clear to me which projects are of the Spirit and which not. Usually at any one time, there is only one leading project of the Spirit, and the lead project shows up in several ways at once including art, nation, and government type. During its time, the leading project guides the whole world. At one time Israel was the guiding nation of the world because it taught belief in one ethical and powerful God. Americans think America is now the leading nation teaching American pop culture and American style democracy. The projects of the Spirit became the causes of Romanticism.

It is good to do the work of the Spirit. People feel good when they do the work of the Spirit. The Spirit likes when people help unfold its work. The Spirit likes when people contribute to the culture, business firm, labor union, etc. that is the vanguard of the Spirit in our times; people know that; and people feel good when they do contribute. People seek the vanguard of the Spirit and to do its work. The Spirit is more tolerant of opposition to its plans than most human people are but, after all, the Spirit has to move, the Spirit will win (“Thy will be done”), and opposition to the Spirit must be cleared away. People dislike

opposition to the Spirit, actively fight opposition, and put it down. If an old order opposes the Spirit, it must be overcome. To oppose an old order in this case is to actively do the positive progressive work of the Spirit, and it makes people feel good to know they do this. It feels being a good rebel to do the work of the Spirit. The Spirit is like the idea of “Dharma” in Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism.

The situation is as if the Spirit were a playwright writing a never-ending series of plays. Each play is a work of art in itself. Each play has to be known in its own terms. No play can be reduced to any other play. No play can be reduced to any set of themes although, of course, the plays show themes and teach us how to act. We are the characters in the plays. It is not clear if we are actors who show up in more than one play, as in reincarnation, and I don't need to settle that issue here. The Spirit works his-her art through us. We are the means by which the Spirit works his-her art, and likely the only means by which the Spirit could work his-her art in this world. We have some leeway in how we interpret roles but we do a lot better when we perform our role in accord with the spirit of the play we are in at the time. Other lesser playwrights, mere nature or mere humans, write some plays, those plays might be great in their ways, and we might act in them; but, in the end, none can rival the plays of the Spirit.

Some people think the Spirit is Love that infuses and drives the world at all times through various forms of the world, each form is a local modification of the same underlying Love, Love makes particular forms in their time, and Love breaks forms when their time is over. Some people think Spirit is Power, Progress, Justice, Complexity, Self-Awareness, Art, Creativity, or Emotion. A philosopher might say the Spirit is none of these exactly but can show itself as any of them either in a particular project-episode or through several project-episodes. We can only know the Spirit fully when it reveals itself to us fully for its own ends, that is, when the Spirit extends its grace to us.

The Spirit is closely tied to Creativity, Life, Being, and Being Genuine. What is of the Spirit is Creative, supports Life, has greater Being (is more Real), and is Genuine; what is Creative, Living, Real, and Genuine is of the Spirit. What opposes the Spirit is fake, imitative, empty, and deadly; what is fake, empty, imitative, and deadly opposes the Spirit. The apparent creations of bad beings are only imitations of the much greater creations of the Spirit. The best people are those who participate in the Creation, Life, Being, and Genuine-ness of the Spirit; the worst are those who merely imitate the Spirit and so fool people in to Bad Destruction, Emptiness, Unreality, and Bad Death. Artists and Rebels are good people of the Spirit. Politicians and the advocates of outmoded and-or false religions are bad. Unfortunately, I cannot take up these major themes of Romanticism, how they play out in daily life, and how they support Romanticism as a system that eats the world.

Creative Chaos.

I introduced Creative Chaos in earlier chapters about issues. Creative Chaos is the disorder that prevails before something new and better arises. It is the headache that artists get before they suddenly see the light. It is the trees before we see the forest. It is the free market that brings what people want to people, and provides raw materials and workers to business firms. The Spirit uses Creative Chaos to build new forms and destroy old forms before building new forms. Sometimes Creative Chaos is called “underlying vitality”, “underlying force of life”, or “spark of life”. Before it was politically incorrect, people identified it with “the brown races” or the lower classes.

Because the Spirit uses Creative Chaos to do its work, people also feel good when they can find Creative Chaos and when they can identify with Creative Chaos. They like to be the blender that stirs up the new tasty drink. They like their group to be the embodiment of Creative Chaos for our times. They like their movement to be the movement that stirs things up, sets things right, and starts a new pattern. Rebels think of themselves not as simply destructive but as Creative Chaos. People think of marginal groups such as the criminals, artists, ethnic groups, the underbelly of society, and small religions as the Creative Chaos in the vanguard. They think the ideas for a new society come from these groups. They like to think of themselves as in one of these groups, or like to identify with one of these groups, because then they have an excuse to be a little rebellious and destructive and because they think of themselves as creative as well. People take on the airs of one of these groups so they can think of themselves as destructive in a good way and so creative. It is also an excuse to be bad-ass and selfish.

People who want to preserve aspects of the socio-economic-political order can also see themselves in the vanguard of the Spirit and as agents of Creative Chaos. Newness does not arise from out of the blue without any background. Newness usually rearranges old parts that were already there. Newness is re-order, not entirely new stuff in new order. At one time, the old order was the vanguard of the Spirit, did serve the Spirit, and was good. It hardly makes sense to throw away entirely what was once the tool of the Spirit and was good. It makes sense to preserve it and use it in a new better way. People who do this are the real rebels and the real vanguard of the Spirit.

Romanticism and Some Judeo-Christian Themes.

Romanticism borrowed from Christianity and re-cast Christian themes into its own terms. Most themes originated earlier in Judaism. Please see the story of David, to Creative Chaos, rebels, and the Remnant in the chapters on issues. We now see themes primarily in Romantic rather than Christian terms, and we even see Christianity in Romantic terms. The "Spirit" is God (Yahweh) recast, or, as Romantic thinkers might say: "the Spirit revealed itself to Hegel after it had hidden in the Jewish-Christian idea of God for a long time". I think the Church Fathers would see Romanticism as yet another heresy built from Christian ideas and they would condemn it. In its time, Christianity borrowed ideas from Judaism and recast them in its terms. Medieval Christianity did the same to early Christianity. Here, I note only three themes. These themes are so successful because they also come from human nature and not only because they began in Judaism and were developed by Christianity and Romanticism.

God works through rebels. At any given time, only a small group can see the impending work of the Spirit clearly enough and so do the work of the Spirit on Earth as it should be done (nobody ever sees all the work of the Spirit in perfect clarity). The rebels must overthrow the old outmoded order. The rebels have to lead those willing to following into the future, into the new anticipated (promised) order. Abraham was the first such rebel. Moses might have been the biggest rebel and set the mold. David continued when he overthrew Saul and set the stage for the building of the Temple and for Temple Judaism. Jesus was a rebel and led a band of rebels to a new order. People who are called to be rebels for the Spirit should never ever give up

God does not only work through rebels. Sometimes the most important work of the Spirit is to maintain what was built painfully in the past, and to use tried-and-true features (ideas) to keep people in touch with the Spirit and so ready to do more work of the Spirit. Sometimes the Spirit needs conservatives. The

mass of people eventually forget about the Spirit. Then the true rebels of the Spirit are the people who remind everyone else about the Spirit and bring everyone else back to doing the true work of the Spirit. Then, the true workers of the Spirit are the Remnant. They are the Jews who returned from the Exile in Babylon to restore true worship of Yahweh to the fallen Jews. They are moral revivalists. People outside the Rastafarian movement think of them as simple destructive rebels but they saw themselves as the Remnant coming to restore the true just order of God. Blacks in America see themselves the same way; half the sermons in Black churches on TV are about the return of the Jews from Babylon and how they took their rightful place at the head of the nation. Jesus said he did not come to undo any Tanakh (Old Testament) scriptures but to fulfill every single one.

God chooses nations to work through. The Spirit chooses nations, cultures, art, philosophy, religion, socio-economic classes, economic systems, criminals, law-abiding citizens, etc. At any one time, one such institution represents the best work of the Spirit now. In particular, nations succeeded Israel when Israel refused to accept Greek rationalism and Christianity. Then Christianity and a parade of Christian nations became the New Israel. America thinks of itself as the present New Israel. Islam thinks of itself as the present New Israel.

The people who did the work of God in the past succeeded. The work of the Spirit will always succeed in one way or another. The people who do the work of the Spirit will always succeed in many ways.

The people who did the work of God in the past were entitled. Abraham founded many nations. Moses led his people out of Egypt, assumed the leadership of Israel, and saw the Promised Land. David got to be King. He and his descendants were judges over all the people of Israel. He and his descendants will judge all the peoples of all the world. When Nathan returned to Israel from Babylon, he got to judge the people and was rewarded with a place in the government. Jesus will be the king of everybody and will judge everybody. Peter was the rock upon which the Church was built, and, along with Jesus, he decides if a person goes to heaven or hell. People who do the work of the Spirit are entitled to feel special and be treated special.

Anticipation: My Ideas, Dogma, Romanticism, and Conservative Ideas.

I have said often that I dislike dogma. I say Romanticism keeps us flitting from one dogma to the other so that we cannot attack real issues. Conservatives also complain that modern people live by bad dogmas. I overlap with conservatives and I don't mind the overlap but I also differ. I see conservatives as caught up in Romanticism and dogmas as much as anyone; and conservatives would dislike that view of them. I mention this issue now so readers do not think what follows is just another conservative attack on modern life. I bring up the issue again later after we know more about Romanticism.

PART 4: The Romantic Attitude in More Detail

Again: People do not have to openly espouse the ideas in the Romantic attitude; they only have to act as if they hold the ideas; and they do. Romanticism is not consistent nor seeks it. One of America's leading Romantics, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in the early to middle 1800s, wrote something like "consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds". I neither point out nor try to resolve inconsistencies. Often they are fun.

I do not point out how Romantic ideas merge with ideas from capitalism, the Protestant Ethic, the Spirit of Capitalism, or anywhere else, to make modern attitudes of selfishness, materialism, and trendiness. I hope it is obvious from what I said above about capitalism etc. and say below. Sometimes I do make a specific point.

Lack of Good Clear Ideas about God and Morality.

It is easy to say Romantic-like ideas spring up when people do not have good formal ideas of God and morality; Romantic ideas are poor substitutes for God and objective morality. Partly that is true. Lack of clear formal ideas of God and morality from traditional religion helped Romanticism get going. But, once Romanticism did get going, formal ideas from traditional religions were irrelevant. They would not stop Romanticism unless they told us clearly what to do in the modern world to compete comparatively. They would not be able to displace Romantic activity.

Besides, traditional religions are hardly clearer about God and morality and they do not address what people need to do now to succeed while feeling good about themselves. It misses the point to criticize the people-in-general as if they should all be educated priests. Under Romanticism, ideas about God and objective morality are not as clear as the ideas that a traditional priest might have (not always) but the ideas under Romanticism are about as clear as ideas people had in the past under traditional religion. "Jesus Saves" and "the Dharma" are not clear. The lack of clarity in traditional religions helped them to succeed in their times. Sharpness on some issues, such as abortion, might help recruit and hold some believers but do not sustain the religion as a whole. Ideas of the Spirit and spiritual life in Romanticism seem to be enough for people to pursue success and to feel their lives are in tune with God, especially when Romantic ideas merge with traditional religion.

If a traditional religious person insists people now don't have clear ideas of God and objective morality, why don't we? If the people in general ever held clear ideas from traditional religion, then why have we seemingly abandoned those ideas? Why don't we adapt traditional ideas of God and objective morality? What keeps those ideas out? Why do Romantic ideas "stay in our heads" better than clear ideas of God and objective morality from traditional religion? Why are Romantic ideas more satisfying in the modern world than traditional supposedly clear ideas of God and morality?

The lack of clear ideas of God and objective morality is the counterpart to not seeing deep issues and not seeking practical lasting solutions. The lack of clear ideas about God and morality goes along with not seeking deep issues and lasting solutions, to keep Romanticism going. It worked with traditional religions in their day too.

Causes and Activities.

Because of when I first saw the Romantic complex, mid-1960s to early 1970s, I think in terms of political causes such as Civil Rights, feminism, repealing Social Security, and the Tea Party. A better term might be "activities" except "activities" does not get across the semi-religious fervor in Romanticism. People not only bomb abortion clinics but also go to aerobics, do yoga, do Tai Chi, diet, buy exercise equipment, watch football, learn the Macarena, wear penny loafers, take kids to soccer, go to flash mobs, condemn economic equality, attend mega-churches, and go to concerts. People do not merely engage in activities,

they immerse in causes. “Activities” does not get across the flavor of rabid PC. To keep the feeling, I use “causes” but please apply the same feel to all activities. I first saw Romanticism as much in Goldwater and Nixon Republicans, and in Christian revivals, as in the Civil Rights and Feminist Movements and New Age silliness. I participated too.

In using the terms “causes” and “activities” I do not necessarily imply any shallowness or that no good or harm comes. Seeking ethnic justice has been shaped by Romanticism quite a bit but it is a deep cause from which both good and bad has come. The New Deal was Romantic. Nazism was Romantic. Both major political parties in the United States operate as Romantic enterprises. I do not imply that people always-and-only “dabble” in causes although people do dabble. People can live by their causes, and do great good and great harm through living in their causes. In what follows, I use examples from American pop culture because they are vivid in the minds of readers. I do not entirely avoid strong examples such as the Tea Party and Black-ism but I try to work around them because they stir such emotion that people stop reading objectively. See the assessment at the end of the chapter.

Projects.

“Project” literally means something like “positive going out from”. The Spirit goes out from itself into the world of material stuff, ideas, culture, and history to create real things.

No one project every entirely captures all of the Spirit. Each project is only a finite selection from what is likely an infinite Spirit. There is always more to the Spirit than we find in any one project or any collection of projects. Not even the total historical progression of all projects is as much as the Spirit.

Each project is a thing in itself. Each project has its own logic (logos), reasons, order, goals (if any), feelings, method, ways, rhythm, structure, process, language, vision, art, etc.

No project can be fully understood in terms of any other project. Certainly no project should be judged in terms of any other project. A project should be understood and judged only in terms of itself, in the terms provided by itself. America should be judge by American standards; China by Chinese standards. White alternative progressive independent rock-and-roll should be judged by its standards; Black hip-hop by its standards.

To a large extent, projects are isolated from each other and insulated from each other. To the extent that individual people make their projects, and make their lives into projects, one individual cannot fully know and judge another individual, and individuals too are isolated from each other.

In particular, we cannot use Reason to bridge the gaps between projects.

Still, projects are of the Spirit, and, properly appreciated, lead back to the Spirit. So there is a way to get between projects: Passion. We can use Passion to appreciate, and participate in, various projects. It is not clear how much Passion allows us to participate in more than one project at once. If we are naturally in one project, such as rock-and-roll, it is not clear how much Passion can allow us to fully participate in another project, such as hip-hop. It is not clear how much we can use Passion to bridge the gap between individuals but Romantics seem to think we can use Passion to connect us fully.

Over history, it appears that projects of the Spirit get deeper and deeper. It appears the Spirit puts more of itself into successive projects, and reveals more of itself. Whether this is true or only an illusion of our times, is not clear. G.W.F. Hegel thought it was true. If it is true, the end result is a “culmination” of the Spirit in our time; for which, see below.

Faith, Emotion, Reason, Intuition, and Wit.

Emotion is more important than Reason to the Spirit, and for relations of people with the Spirit, the world, and other people. Reason can be a useful tool of emotion but it is not as important. Sometimes I call emotion by the technical term “Passion”. Passion puts us in touch with ourselves, with others, the world, the projects of the Spirit, and the Spirit. Nothing else can. The Passion has to be real and honest but still it is Passion and not Reason. Passion is the Faith of Romanticism. If we have Passion, then we can get the other gifts of the Spirit. If we don’t have Passion, we can get nothing.

We can understand the projects of the Spirit as the Spirit using Reason to bestow its Passion onto the world. Passion uses Reason to act. Each project is a combination of Reason and Passion with Passion dominating. Each project has a typical Passion, or feel, that is the key to that Project. We feel French culture or the Renaissance as much as we can find specific criteria in logic.

True emotion can show up as anger against the enemies of the Spirit. If an economic development feels wrong, it is wrong, and don’t do it. If abortion feels wrong, it is wrong, and don’t do it. If capitalism feels wrong, it is wrong, and you should fight it. If this-or-that ethnic group or business group is holding back the nation, then we have a right to feel angry, deny help, and cut them out of mainstream life. Anger can lead to bad emotions and to working against the Spirit but that is a worthwhile risk.

Passion is not only obvious emotion such as love and not only obviously bad emotion such as bitterness. It is also the actions that go with love such as sex and with bitterness such as revenge.

Passion is not only stereotyped emotions but includes Intuition and Wit. Intuition is what we sense about a situation but might not be able to put into words. Intuition is our best guide. This idea of Romanticism was made famous in the Star Wars movies by the line “Trust your feelings”.

Wit is a combination of Passion, Reason, and Will with Passion leading the way (I cannot write about Will here). Here Passion definitely includes Intuition. Wit is “thinking out of the box” led by Intuition. Looking back after action, Wit can seem like Reason but it is more than that. Reason can understand what Wit did in retrospect but it could never have figured out beforehand to do that. It is Passion using Reason to achieve higher ends. It is not mere wittiness as in fun with words.

The best way to see the relations of Reason, Intuition, and Wit is through the acts of heroes. In Star Trek, Mr. Spock is Reason, Dr. McCoy is maudlin Passion and sometimes vague Intuition, and Captain Kirk is Intuition, Wit, and Will. More accurately, Captain Kirk is the right blend of all. In “The Odyssey”, Ulysses wins not by his considerable physical skills but by his Wit. Surprisingly often, super heroes win more by Wit than by their physical skills. Hercules won more by Wit than brawn. Superman often faces enemies who hold an advantage and still defeats them by Wit. James Bond is a walking bundle of Wit, and he

combines Wit with Passion through his relations to women and his love for country, freedom, and honor. Spiderman is always outmatched and he wins by Wit. All the toys of Batman are a material manifestation of Wit.

To me personally, modern times seem awash in emotional excess and superstition based on the needs for emotional gratification and Justification through Passion. This is not just emotion but bad dedicated irrationality. Even academics are mired in bad emotion. Below, I criticize the bad effects of irrationality on science. I like emotion. I like not being repressed, especially because my parents came from repressed Greek culture. I like Witty heroes and heroines. Still, Romanticism has gone way too far. People not only hold Reason below Passion and use Reason as a tool, they disparage Reason and reasonableness. They think any emotion is justified and any emotion is good for the emoting person and for everybody around. I have tried to see if other big eras in the West were like this, and I can't find any, although I am not a good historian.

Individual Projects.

People like to be part of the projects of the Spirit but they can also have their own projects. Each of our projects is a combination of Reason and Passion with Passion guiding Reason to best results. Each of our projects has its own feel about it. The feel is the key to the project. Our projects identify who we are as unique individuals just as the projects of the Spirit identify its unique character at any one time.

People can have a few projects, one central project in their lifetimes, or many projects. Why people might have few or many projects, and the relation of their projects to projects of the Spirit, are good questions but not ones I can address here.

People want their projects to be like the projects of the Spirit. They want to feel as if their projects serve the projects of the Spirit even if they personally do not succeed in each project. People spiritualize and glamorize their projects. A success for an individual is not a success merely for an individual but for the Spirit as well. Anything that is not a success for the Spirit is not really a success for the individual even if it satisfies mundane wants such as family and career. People need more and seek more.

Life is an Adventure.

The Spirit has an adventure in projecting itself out through the world. It might not be theologically correct to say the Spirit has fun, but it is close enough. Even if the activity of the Spirit never ends, but it always seems to be moving to a resolution, and, no matter how many and hard the hardships along the way, at key points it always turns out well. If there is a final end, that promises to turn out well too.

Likewise, our lives should be an adventure no matter how hard or frustrating at times. Our lives should turn out well, if not for us personally, then for the people we care about and for the good people of the world. The system is good even if not every particular life in it is happy. If things have not turned out well yet, then they are not over yet for everybody even if they are over for us. If it is not glamorous adventure then something is wrong and we are "out of tune". In Christian terms, life should be full of grace and charisma. Even if the world has fallen and some people go to hell, many other people can still receive grace and go to heaven. To have grace is to serve the Lord in whatever tasks he gives us. Adventure is

what ratifies our lives, tells us that we have the Grace of the Spirit and that we are Justified in the Spirit. If we feel the adventure, then we can feel confident we are on the right track.

The Road Goes Ever On and On.

Even when particular projects fail, goodness, love, etc. cannot be stopped and must succeed in the end. The resistance encountered along the way makes the eventual progress forward all the more fun. It is more fun to overcome obstacles than simply to sail in.

Life is a series of projects in service to the Spirit. We might fail at any one project. When we enter a project, the project might not be ready to succeed yet, as with early workers in Civil Rights, Feminism, and the Right Wing Renaissance, so it might seem as if we fail. Our failures don't matter. Eventually good causes succeed, and we succeed because our heart is in the right place. What matters is that we keep working for goodness etc.

Emotion Justifies Projects.

Commitment is a big part of emotion. They are inseparable. From now on, one term implies the other.

When you take the right attitude of emotional commitment to a project, you make that project worthwhile, and at least partially right, even if that project is not the central project now and even if it fails. Even if you switch projects later, that project was worthwhile while you were doing it. If you decide that saving the whales or saving American business is the right thing to do, and throw your emotional commitment into it, then it is the right thing to do now even if later you switch to something else. Emotional commitment is more important than thinking through to the best right thing to do.

Attitude about Attitude.

If you have the right attitude, the right emotion, felt strong enough, then you have Faith, are Justified, and Saved. Attitude is the key. You don't have to have right beliefs as in formal Christianity or any formal religion. You don't need right beliefs as in a political program. You have to have the right attitude. If you have that, the Spirit is with you, and details don't matter. If you have the right attitude, then you have a personal relation with the Spirit. In Christian terms, if you have a personal relation with Jesus, you don't need anything else, and a personal relation with Jesus is self-validating.

If you have the right attitude, then you will succeed even if you are not prepared, don't have an education, have not done your homework, and don't really know what is going on.

It is a small step from having the right attitude to having "an attitude", that is, feeling bad ass and getting up in people's faces. Any bad ass attitude will do. If you have "an attitude" then you will succeed even if you are not prepared, don't have an education, etc. "An attitude" is faith; "an attitude" is the right kind of faith; "an attitude" is faith enough.

People have always known that changing your outlook on a situation can change the outcome of the situation even if everything else remains the same. People also have always known that there are better

and worse attitudes for particular situations. If somebody pushes you on the subway, then, if you get angry things will go one way, but if you say “that’s alright” things will go another. If somebody repeatedly pushes you, in the days to come, if you continue to say “that’s alright” things will go one way while if you say “knock it off” things will go another way. This is nothing new.

The following attitude about attitude has been around for at least 2300 years but the modern version is distinct and it is part of Romanticism: All that matters is your attitude. The situation doesn’t matter. We can change any situation any way we want by having the right attitude. We can get whatever we want by having the right attitude. Women can “have it all” if they have the right attitude. Men can be the boss if they have the right attitude. You can succeed with any member of the opposite sex if you have the right attitude. With every decade, every new soft drink, and every new daytime talk show, supposedly comes a new generation with a new attitude. You don’t have to change the world. You don’t have to understand the world. You don’t have to work on big problems or little ones. All you have to change is you, change your attitude. To make sure you change your attitude, and to make sure other people don’t impede you, you should hang around only with other people with the same attitude. Try to make all your friends have the same attitude, or at least give in to your attitude.

A Kind of Materialism Higher than the Angels.

Sometime in early Christianity, and definitely in medieval Christianity, Christians developed the idea that a combination of a material body with a spirit (soul) is better than a spiritual body alone. Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity have always stressed the importance of sacraments and how the material and spiritual come together only in sacraments such as the Eucharist and Baptism. Humans are better than pure-spirit angels. That is why God loves us and why angels feel jealous of us. That is one reason Lucifer rejected God to set up his own order. Although long, Milton’s epic “Paradise Lost” is fun to read, and you can find out about the idea there. God is better than humans and angels even if, in our limited view, God is pure Spirit; it is better to think of God as beyond either spirit or matter.

Likewise the Spirit is beyond matter and beyond what we think of as spirit although the Spirit uses both. Here, the most important point is that the Spirit does use both, especially including matter. All projects of the Spirit are combinations of matter and spirit (ideas). The best way to think about it might be as art, which always has to use a medium such as sound or paint. We don’t want to look down on matter or to exalt spirit too much, especially as humans are a combination of both, and much of our good work gets done through the use of both. Our ecology and our economic system is, hopefully, the right use of both. In order to be like the Spirit and to work with the Spirit, we have to use both.

Reason is too much like pure spirit alone without the right mixture of matter – too much like angels who are jealous of God and humans. Passion is the right mixture of matter and Reason. Projects of the Spirit are always the right mixture of matter and Reason. Art, some science, and some technology show the right mixtures for humans. The weapons of good super heroes are the right mixture. We seek the right mixture in our lives with the right mixture of love and sex and with the right mixture of gadgets as a means to intrinsic satisfaction but not as an end in themselves. Usually Wit uses both. We seek the right mixture when we carry out the projects of the Spirit.

Rebels.

Rebel bad boys and bad girls are representatives of Creative Chaos and the Spirit. Rebels show correct emotion and emotional commitment. They have one of the right attitudes. They take their right attitude to Life and to various projects in Life. It does not matter exactly what you do as a rebel, exactly what cause you push, as long as it is not wildly immoral. What matters is that you apply your rebel attitude to life. You can even be a “rebel without a cause” because the attitude itself ties you to the Spirit and to the next advance of the Spirit. What is good now is doomed to pass and therefore bad. It cannot pass without some rebellion to tear it down. Rebellion is good in itself.

If you apply rebellion to a cause, you don't have to worry much about the intrinsic validity, truth, or value. You don't have to think if rebellion is the best way to achieve the cause. You don't have to assess your personal time, energy, and talents to see if they are best used that way or are best used by acting as a rebel. The fact that you are a rebel Justifies whatever you apply your attitude to. Applying your rebel attitude to a cause Justifies you and the cause. Going around with a rebel chip on your shoulder is simply “leading with Spiritual emotions”; it is not irrational; it means that you follow the Spirit; it means that the Spirit is with you and your cause. Rebels can be the standard unkempt Lefty hero or can be inventors, innovators, legal innovators, business entrepreneurs, or political strategists.

Rebels excel in the right use of both matter and spirit; rebels excel in the right use of Wit; rebels excel in the right use of weapons. Rebels can combine rebellion with guarding the social order as the remnant. I suggest watching the movie “The Avengers”.

Other Roles Etc.

Rebel is only one role among many that can serve as a vehicle for you to do the work of the Spirit and as cover for confused thinking. Almost any attitude can generate roles; and vice versa. Almost any dogma can generate attitudes and roles. Almost any role can find a dogma for justification. All roles, attitudes, and dogmas come with a set of approved and disapproved causes and activities. Use your imagination for examples of what you both like and dislike. Posers are bad role users.

Reason, Passion, and Cunning.

Reason is subordinate to Passion and is the tool of Passion. When Reason and Passion get along well together, they are a powerful team. They serve goodness. They do good things. Only good Passions prevail and lead Reason, Passions such as kindness, generosity, a spirit of kinship, and the feeling of the Golden Rule. This is a Graceful union. A graceful union excludes bad Passions such as fear, revenge, guilt, and desire for power.

Much as we would like good Passions to dominate always, they don't. Then both Passion and Reason change. I don't describe bad Passions; I suggest a good dose of daytime and nighttime soap operas. Reason changes into Cunning. Cunning uses the same tools as Reason but uses them in a different way and uses them for the ends of bad Passion. It is the difference between good White magic and bad Black magic. Cunning is the bad versions of Intuition and Wit. I am totally inept at Cunning; I can never see it coming; I have no idea of what to do about it at the time; and I have no idea how to fix the bad effects of it after. So I don't try to describe it more.

Bad people have Bad Passion and Bad Wit. Evil villains in modern “epics” usually have a devious plan for conquering the world, and the “bad woman” on soap operas has a devious plan for ruining the name, spirit, and life of the heroine. The weapons of the villains are the material manifestation of their bad Wit as the weapons of the heroes are the material manifestation of their good Wit.

The Spirit can use indirect means and “fakes” in its projects. G.W.F. Hegel calls this “Cunning” but I think he has in mind a style of thinking more benign than what I have in mind. I am not sure if the Spirit can use Cunning in the sense that I have in mind. The Spirit can use what appears to be badness in the short run to gain greater good in the long run, and so the Spirit might use Cunning in the short run. I don’t know if the Spirit can use Cunning in the long run or overall.

More on the Correct Passion (Emotion).

Imagine three conditions embodied by three kinds of people. All the people are with the Spirit, and have great powers as a result of being with the Spirit. All have a role to play in the adventure of the Spirit but not all are equally good and equally desirable.

First is the Jedi, who is rational, that is, Reasonable. He-she represents Reason and everything we can get done with Reason. The scientist or good lawyer is like this. The Jedi Council, or the league of peer-reviewed journals, are the community of Rational people.

Second is the right combination of Reason and Passion. These are the people who I described above. They follow their Passion and use Reason to get the job done in a good cause. This is like a good White magician, like most people see Merlin.

Third is a person who has fallen into bad Passion and uses Cunning. This is like a bad Black magician, like most people see Morgan Le Fay, Mordred, and the Devil. This is like a Sith, more like a Sith Master, and more especially like Darth Sidious (Emperor Palpatine), whose name reflects (means) “insidious” or “devious, cunning, and able to infiltrate without our knowing”.

Romantics all want to be like the second person, the good White magician. Nobody wants to be a stodgy rational Enlightenment Jedi. People think they can lead with their emotions, their emotions are always accurate and morally good, and that they use Reason totally without Cunning. If they use something like Cunning, it is only Reason in the service of a good cause.

In reality, when people try to be like person two they usually end up like person three, like a bad Sith apprentice. Romanticism is filled with bad Passion and Cunning. It is not full of the happy union of Reason and Passion. This is part of the general failure of Romanticism. I return to this failure below.

The Loneliness of the Long Time Spirit.

Robert Frost: “And miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep”

The issue of this section impacts all major religions but I think it is most acute in Romanticism. It also shows how Romanticism “co-opts” ideas to make them its own. The lines from Robert Frost are true and beautiful in their own right but, when seen through the eyes of Romanticism, they are something else, and not what they should be. This issue here is equivalent to asking why God does what he does, why God does this thing rather than another, why God does anything rather than nothing at all, and what benefit God gets from doing some particular thing rather than nothing. It is another way of seeing the issue of individual versus community.

The Spirit embarks on many projects. The whole Spirit is never in any given project; only part of the Spirit can be in any given project. What is in any given project is not the Spirit but is something a bit different from the Spirit. What is in the project is of the Spirit but also not the Spirit and not of the Spirit. To use a little jargon, a project is of the Spirit somewhat but it is also “other” than the Spirit.

We know the Spirit only through its projects. Only some mystics, philosophers, and artists can know the Spirit in anything like its wholeness. The Spirit is never itself in any time that people can know. We know the Spirit not just by the small part of it that is revealed to us in particular projects but also by what it is other than the Spirit, especially also as revealed in projects. It is a curious problem.

In any given project, at the least, the Spirit forgets itself. At a little worse, in any given project, the Spirit is alienated from itself, cannot be its full self, cannot know itself, and does not know itself. The Spirit is alone and isolated. The isolation of the Spirit is reinforced by the qualitative distinction of each project. As long as the Spirit resides in any one project, it cannot know itself in other projects, and cannot know itself as a whole.

The Spirit has been out on projects for a long time, well before humans, and all the time humans have been around. That is a long time not to be one with yourself and not to know yourself fully. That is long enough so it might seem like the natural condition of the Spirit, at least to human beings who can know the Spirit only through the fractured incomplete projects of the Spirit. Even if the Spirit does not reckon time as humans do, and the Spirit will eventually reunite with itself, that time is still long.

Doesn't the Spirit feel lonely? Isn't being one whole integrated thing better than dividing up yourself, often into disreputable parts, and questing all the time? If the Spirit can never be whole, or can't be whole for a long time, and the Spirit is anything like a human person, the Spirit must feel bad. It feels bad to be at odds with yourself.

Why doesn't the Spirit bring itself into a community of itself? Sometimes the Spirit does, but I cannot go into that subject much here. We are more concerned with the isolation of the Spirit. Even when the Spirit does form a community, even that project is never the wholeness of the Spirit all at once, and even that project suffers from isolation.

As the Spirit is, so are its people. Individuals in Romanticism feel the call of Passions and projects but they also feel the loneliness of projects and of being stretched out in projects. They feel a part of all that the Spirit is, a part of the community of the Spirit; but they also feel separated from their own parts, their selves, and separated from the community. They are always in pieces, an individual, yet never a whole

individual; they are part of a community, but a community that is never completed. They can get some solace by feeling they are doing the work of the Spirit but they must also always feel pain.

When Romanticism becomes a system with capitalism and modern issues, these forces are accentuated to feed the isolation of modern life.

The Loneliness of the Fractured Qualitatively Distinct Spirit and Its People.

The Spirit goes out on many distinct projects. If the projects were pretty much the same thing dressed up in different clothes, there would be no point. The projects have to be qualitatively distinct. Nobody except maybe the Spirit can directly fully compare one project to another. Each project is its own measure, its own standard. Each project has its own feel, Passion, Reason, art, morality, etc. No project can be seen or evaluated in terms of another project. The distinctly different projects add variety and fun to the world. They make it fun to go out into the world and to come back from a project to the Spirit self. Without the qualitatively distinction, the world would not be a playground.

As individual people, we are like particular projects of the Spirit. We are distinct, qualitatively different, and unique. We know what we like and dislike. We have our own standards, including morality, and we don't like other people to impose theirs on us. We know of general principles, and might adopt some, but we don't have to adopt all and we don't have to let them rule all aspects of our lives. This individuality makes our lives fun, interesting, and worthwhile. It makes life more interesting when distinct people can reach across the boundaries of their distinctions to really connect, often seeing similarities to help us get along but never surrendering our distinctive uniqueness.

Uniqueness sounds great when you get your own way but uniqueness has drawbacks. "Solipsism" is the technical term for absolute uniqueness, usually bad, in which no individual gets across to another. Totally unique individuals have not enough in common around which to relate. They are alone. They are lonely. They can't communicate or share. They are sad demons trapped in isolation hell, not happy agents of the Spirit. Even when they are in the same activity supposedly together, such as sex, they cannot know how the other person feels, if the other person really feels good, or is just "faking it". They don't share interests; their interests overlap. When interests stop overlapping, people part. People end up sitting alone in their apartments or walking down the street "plugged in" to their own mix oblivious. Even when people join a cause, they do it not for the sake of the cause but to feel good themselves.

Critics of modern life blame this situation on lack of religion or on capitalism depending on their ideology. Critics seem unable to talk to each other any better than the people they criticize.

Luckily, evolved human nature helps us somewhat. People are different just like faces are different but they share a lot in common just like faces do. People can stand on what they have in common as people or as members of the same culture-society and work their way toward how they are unique. In that case, how they are unique can unite them rather than separate them. We evolved to be self-interested but not necessarily selfish. We evolved to be social. People like groups. We expect a certain amount and kind of sociability in ourselves and others and we can build on that. Evolved human nature cannot bridge all gaps. People are still lonely. But it can provide a base.

How isolated people are depends on all the usual factors and might tend to more in some conditions than others. Sometimes close group life is not satisfying but oppressive. When my wife and I lived in the American Midwest with people who shared our interests and backgrounds, and could relate to us outside of defined groups, we were not lonely. In the South, where nobody shares our interests and everybody relates through church, family, race, or hunting, we are lonely despite our best efforts. Peasants in old-style villages often were packed together and everybody knew everyone else's business but people still felt lonely and isolated. Some people are happy with Internet friends.

Capitalism, Romanticism, most modern technology, modern populist democracy, modern legal ideas and the modern legal system, bureaucracy, and Protestant ideas about the individual and God, all reinforce individual isolation. I don't know which is the strongest. Romanticism is a powerful enabler of glamorized isolation. When the other forces help push people into isolation, Romanticism then can lock people in and push them down a deep well. That is what happened in the West after about 1780.

Just Me and the Spirit Alone Together.

This section is optional. Romanticism, in the 1900s in particular, is famous for isolated tormented souls spending years alone with God, Art, Philosophy, Science, etc. The first great Romantic musician, Ludwig van Beethoven, set the pattern. Rock-and-roll artists have to spend time brooding alone or they are not real. Rap (hip hop) musicians are lonely tortured souls even in the midst of their "posse". An interesting version is the Protestant alone with Jesus. All you need is Jesus. If you have him, nothing else matters. If you have Jesus, the Church and "all that" are not important. If you don't have Jesus, you have nothing. Some people always have had this personality. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox mystics, monks, and saints spent time alone with Jesus, God, or demons. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness alone with his alter ego the Father – until Satan came along to spoil it. But this attitude did not become a wide cultural type until the 1600s, about the time the Protestant Ethic was laying the base for capitalism and Romanticism. This stance did not become a common type, almost necessary among intellectuals and artists, until Romanticism. This stance makes more sense from a Romantic view than from a traditional Christian view in which relations with God, Holy Spirit, Jesus, Church, community of Christians, and even non-Christians, play a role in life. In Romanticism, it makes sense to be a solitary soldier for the isolated Spirit, seeking a project of the Spirit, or the project of the Spirit, and devoting yourself as a project to the project of the Spirit. If you have that, you have it all. If you don't, you have nothing. If you have that, then you are Justified before the Spirit and before all humans, so your lonely brooding makes sense. Lonely brooding is a sign that you do have that, so are Justified before the Spirit, and Justified before all people. Lonely brooding with the Spirit, Jesus, or an equivalent, makes sense, and it attracts the appropriate gender. The lonely brooder alone with Spirit-Jesus is a reason why often I see people who publically hold to a traditional religion as Romantic and why I see supposedly non-religious people just as religious as most Christians.

Moral Relativity and Moral Absolutism.

Each project is a thing in itself. It has its own goals, its own rules, its own way of proceeding, and its own kinds of people. It also has its own morality. The right-and-wrong of one project cannot be used to judge the right or wrong of any other project. Each project offers its own morality by which to judge itself. The morality for urban hipster pseudo-nouveau-Bohemians can't be used to judge the morality of traditional

Christians, and vice versa. This attitude is clearly one small step away from moral relativity, easily takes the step, is easily used to justify moral relativity, and often is. I don't go through the details.

Morality is about relations and strongly implies groups. Projects are about the Spirit in the world, often changing the whole world, so projects most often are group efforts. So it might seem the moral relativity of Romanticism puts the group ahead of the individual. One group cannot impose its morality on another group but the group can impose its morality on the individual. This is usually what happens.

But, as in the section above, there is also the relation between the Spirit and the isolated individual. The Spirit has used prophets, lawmakers, politicians, scientists, and artists to change the world. As if these people were a species (group) unto themselves, they cannot be judged by the standards of other people and groups. So the moral relativity of Romanticism can also be used to support moral subjectivism and moral relativity of individuals. It can reinforce individual isolation. This tension persists through all of group and individual relations in Romanticism. I can't say more about it here than to point it out.

It might seem Romanticism is morally relative on the level of both groups and individuals but that is not so. When a project is clearly a project of the Spirit and the project needs individuals, the group has the right to dominate individuals morally. The morality of the group appears as absolute morality to the single individual. This is how individuals feel when they are caught in a strong church or a cult.

In the same way, from the point of the view of a particular group, not all groups are equal, and this group, our group, is best. Our morality is best. It is the only real true morality. We have the right to impose our morality on other groups. Not all projects are equal to the Spirit. At any given time, usually only one, or a very few, project is the vanguard of the Spirit leading the world. That is what the world will become. If our group represents the Spirit in its lead project, then our group has the duty to impose its morality on the whole world, all the groups in it, and all the people in all the groups.

The tension between relativism and absolutism also runs through Romanticism. It might seem Romanticism should settle into a comfortable attitude of "live and let live" along with some principles by which to relate to everybody, it does not. It bounces between subjectivism and objectivism, between relativism and absolutism. It reinforces strong emotions on all sides. It reinforces excuses and enabling on all sides.

Love is All We Need.

Each project is a thing in itself with no necessary connection to any other project. Each individual is a thing in itself with no necessary connection to any other individual except through their roles in a shared project that subsumes them both. The Spirit travels a long way before going home. The Spirit is never quite fully at home in this world. We can be alone together with the Spirit and should be.

All this adds up to a lot of isolation, seemingly unbridgeable. Using logic, reason, or any kind of traditional faith, the isolation is unbridgeable. But it is not entirely unbridgeable. Each person, no matter whether in the current main project of the Spirit, and no matter how seemingly at odds with the Spirit, still is in the Spirit and of the Spirit. Recall that morality cannot be reduced to logic; it is a kind of Passion. The Spirit feels Passion when pouring itself into projects. Each project has its own Passions. Passion is the new

Faith. We can bridge the gap between individuals, and even across projects, with Passion. People differ on which particular Passion they think is most effective in bridging the unbridgeable gaps but most people in modern Europe and America seem to have settled on Love as the dominant Passion that can bridge all gaps. This idea of Love rises, falls, and rises again on parts of the world outside Europe and America as pop culture spreads the idea. I don't go into the details of how Love does the trick, and I don't offer much criticism here because I assume most criticism is fairly evident.

I have nothing against Love and I wish we had more of it. I wish we could live up to Jesus' teaching to love even our enemies, and I wish we could live up to the compassion taught in Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. I wish we could live up to the spontaneous affection taught by Taoism. I regret that Love does not do the job all by itself.

Here I only point out the tension between Love, different moralities, and different projects. What if Love does not fit into a project, or fits in only as a relation between members and not as a relation between individuals of different projects? What if we can Love the people in our group but should hate the people in other groups as part of the Spirit-given project of our group? Love can serve as a bridge only when it is in accord with the rules of the project. It cannot bridge when it contradicts the rules of the project. And, so, in the end, love is not any addition to the project and it cannot serve as a universal bridge. Yet, if this is true, we need Love all the more. And so on. Whether other systems offer a solution to this dilemma, I do not guess here; but Romanticism does not. So Love becomes part of the bouncing around between subjectivism and objectivism, relativism and absolutism. That is not how I see Love.

I avoid almost all issues of relations between Romantic Passion love and romantic love.

For Love to serve as a universal bridge, it must be above all mere Reason. Even Christians tend to see Love this way. If Love has no Reason, then it could seem capricious to mere humans. We don't want the Love of the Spirit (God) to be capricious, and we don't want the deep compassionate Love that we could extend even to our enemies to be capricious. This raises a problem. To get at the problem, I work with the idea of romantic love. Assume romantic love reflects Romantic Love; for ease, I call "romantic love" "affectionate love". At least Americans do take affectionate love to be capricious in that we are free to fall in love with anyone we want, and love seems to come on us out of nowhere; and now other parts of the world seem to do the same as Western pop culture expands.

Affectionate love should be entirely capricious in that anybody could fall in love with anybody else. But that is not what happens. When one person falls in love with another person, the other person should fall in love with the first one too; otherwise we get awful awkward scenes when the "L bomb" drops. There should be barriers of class, race, or creed to affectionate love, but, in fact, people fall in love within their class, race, and creed. There should be no barriers of number, so that one man could fall in love with six women or one woman with six men; but we don't want that. There should be no barriers of gender but people also fall in love in a pattern of man-and-woman. We are willing to bend the edges a bit to keep the dogma of affectionate love: we now accept homosexual love. But bending the edges brings the problem back. As right wingers say: if we allow that two men can fall in love the way that a man and woman can, then why not a woman and a dog or a man and a cow? If we limit affectionate love to a man and woman, then why should men and women fall in love at all? If we limit love partly, why can we restrict it to those two categories? Why not do away with love entirely? If we don't want to do away with love entirely, then

how can we restrict it to something between the categories “man” and “woman” and limit it to one man and one woman? Why does the Spirit Love everybody, and, if the Spirit does, why can't we see it? Why does the Spirit seem to Love some people more? Why do some people Love some other people more and Love some other people less?

Modern Darwinism certainly gives some good reasonable answers to these questions but Romanticism, and traditional religions too, don't want to go that way. Within Romanticism, there are no good answers. Love should cross boundaries but can't cross all boundaries. If Love can't cross all boundaries, then Love is bound by logic, and then it isn't Love. This tension in Love mixes in with tensions in morality and persons too. I don't think there are any good answers within traditional religion either, and this vacancy supports Romanticism.

Busy Bodies.

On this world, the Spirit is never quite whole. No project entirely captures the Spirit but each project tries in its way. While any particular task might end, the succession of tasks never ends until maybe the grand end. We want to do right by doing the work of the Spirit, but know we will never quite be one with yourself and the Spirit. This all lead us to feel restless. Restlessness pushes us into working for causes, leads us to jump into trends, and leads to what I call “flitting”. It adds to the tendency of Romantics to be busy bodies and busybodies.

If you are not involved in this project, you should be involved in that project. Always be involved. Always be emotional. Always be committed. Always be emotionally committed. Have faith. Stay busy. Stay busy working on issues with people, society, religion, politics, nature, or all of them together. Always be working on a cause. If you are busy working this way, you are one with the Spirit. If you are not busy working this way, then you are not one with the Spirit. People flit from activity to activity, like “channel surfing” with the remote control on TV. The flitting helps people not feel isolation and not feel the fact that most activities are empty; but it never quite makes the feeling go away entirely.

When I lived with peasants, I saw that they also keep themselves busy, but in a different way, and the difference is telling. Peasants kept busy weaving roof thatch, sewing, making little things to sell, making food items to sell, tending animals, etc. These were not activities in the Romantic sense. They were tasks that people could to make some money or at least to help along the family farm. Even in the United States, I saw the same. People from Central America moved in below my wife and I in our apartment complex. Somehow they got paid for weaving wires and for other tasks for the construction industry, so they never just sat idly but always did one of those tasks.

Modern people are not busy in the same way. They do not do tasks for economic gain though they think of activities as “for the family” or “intrinsically worthwhile” in many ways. People go from task to task in the same way that people “channel surf” on TV. You have to be watching something all the time, and you seek the activity that is most “spiritually” satisfying.

Western people, and modern people, tend not to do tasks, they attack activities. They are furious in what they do. I can't blame this attitude entirely on Romanticism but it seems to intensify under Romanticism. I once saw a good illustration on TV. A Native American and a White man were chopping down trees,

each working on his own tree. The White man chopped furiously and did chop his trees in a little less time than the Native American but he also wore out quickly and had to take many breaks. At the end of the day, he was useless. The Native American swung rhythmically, always finished his task, and never got so tired that he had to stop. At the end of the day, he could sleep well. The Native American pointed out this difference to the White man but the White man could not change his habits. People even pursue leisure with the same fury so the leisure hardly helps.

Besides being busy, Romantics tend to be busybodies, always to have a scheme, and be intrusive, Left or Right. People who act this way are Romantics whether they think of themselves as Conservatives, Liberals, Gay Activists, Anti-abortionists, Christians, or Muslims. Romanticism brings out the part of our personalities that is like this even when we know better.

Glamorize to Romanticize.

I cannot explain here what glamour is. It is not just “high fashion”, which, ironically, is one of the lowest forms of glamour. Marlon Brando on a motorcycle is glamorous, even in a silly outfit, and even though his bike was not a Harley. While fad foods are still a fad, they are glamorous. Sometimes duck hunting is glamorous; sometimes not.

I can give a quick sense of some glamour with a little jargon. We glamorize by putting things a distance; we have to use the right distance; we can't make them too far or they would be so strange that we can't relate; we can't make them close or we wouldn't be awed and interested. “Distance” is reckoned in terms of “like us” rather than meters or minutes. We glamorize by “making other” in the right ways. Americans like clothes from Europe; the most glamorous are from France or Italy. Americans don't wear clothes from New Guinea or Toronto. It helps if the thing glamorized shows intrinsic power as well, such as kung fu, shows intrinsic wealth such as a Ferrari, or shows intrinsic connection to spirituality such as E.T. We can more easily glamorize some animals such as a Phoenix than other animals such as dung beetles. A skilled artist can make almost anything the right distance with the right attributes, and glamorous, such as Fargo, North Dakota.

All stances glamorize projects, causes, groups, and types of people according to what the stance values and to what sustains the stance. Christianity glamorizes priests, and Buddhism glamorizes monks, even beyond their considerable intrinsic value. Christianity glamorizes the Church.

I think glamorizing is more important in Romanticism than in most other stances. In Romanticism, we can never completely know the Spirit or its projects, but we are part of the Spirit, and we want to participate in its projects. The Spirit and its projects are “out there”, somewhat connected to us, not fully accessible by us, yet highly desirable, shiny, alluring, powerful, and often wealthy. The projects and things of the Spirit are glamorous because they are “other”, partly like us but different from us, and so likely better than us. If we can be part of a project, we are important. If we can be glamorous and “other”, then we are likely part of a project and therefore important.

Glamour is the sanctity of Romanticism. People want to feel glamorous so they can feel in touch with the Spirit and can feel sacred. Glamour is the new sanctity. To glamorize is to spiritualize. Something made spiritual is also made glamorous, and most things made glamorous are also made spiritual. I do not here

distinguish between true spirituality as defined by any traditional religion and the glamour of Romanticism that they would call false spirituality and false sanctity. Even the supposedly spiritual acts of traditional religion would not really be spiritual if they were done more in the spirit of Romanticism.

So we look for what is desired by other people, shiny, alluring, powerful, and wealthy. We assume that thing is of the Spirit. We try to “hook up” with that thing so we can be important too. If we hook up with something that is glamorous, then we have succeed spiritually, not just materially. If we succeed, then we are glamorous too.

People take advantage of glamour. If one person wants to make something appealing to other people, the first person makes that thing glamorous by making it seem to be linked to the Spirit and-or making it alluring, shiny, appear to be desired, etc. This is a key to advertising. Whether a thing is actually tied to the Spirit doesn't matter as long as the purveyor can make people think it is. I don't go into how “ad men” and other purveyors do this.

Glamour is an important part of trying to be unique and connected at the same time, and it suffers from the same contradictions. This conundrum is obvious in the car and beauty industries where every car really is just a car and all women are women first but car makers and women go to great lengths to try to make themselves unique.

Some glamour in Romanticism is fairly persistent, as, for example, the glamour of artists, rebels, playboys and playgirls, underbelly of society, and some criminals. Safe middle class people glamorize non-White lower-class semi-dangerous marginalized people, including some criminals. That is one reason why we have so many movies and TV shows about marginal people who are really human after all. Even acts that do not seem very glamorous to an outsider seem glamorous to an insider such as trudging through a slimy bog to save a toad or trudging the mean streets outside clinics to save unborn babies.

The pursuit of glamour likely is the largest task in Romanticism, taking up the most time and energy. It is never done. It is never completely achieved. There is always more glamour to be harvested, and there is always some other activity that is more glamorous than the one right now.

More on Marginal, Glamorous, Dogma, and “of the Spirit”.

Marginal people are more like Creative Chaos and thus more likely to be the tools of the Spirit and more likely to be close to the Spirit. They are more real. Artists are creative and alive, and thus close to the Spirit in those ways, and closer to Creative Chaos and so closer to the Spirit in that way too. Artists are closer to the Spirit in at least three ways. Romantics like to think of themselves as creative and alive like artists, and they like to emulate artists, or to think of themselves as artists.

Romantics tend to get more of their ideas about what to do, what causes to join, from popular media and art than from traditional sources such as the Church. Even when Romantics act in causes sanctioned by some church, such as anti-abortion, they still likely get most of their cues from popular media such as TV shows on religion. Left wing Romantics get much of their ideas from rock, hip-hop, and movies.

The Romantic view of Life and Art as glamorous adventure, with artist rebels leading the way and always correct, is not true. It never works out. Even when Romantics win, as in the French Revolution, it never works out. It can work out partially but it never works out with as much satisfaction as Romantics hoped, and it always causes more problems. If anti-abortion activists ever get their way and ban abortions in the United States, it will not work out, and we will be worse off. Rock-and-roll might have built this country but this country could never run according to rock-and-roll. Why this happens, I do not explain here. It is important to see that it does happen, and to see the results.

Romanticism glamorizes ideas and so turns them into dogmas; Romanticism glamorizes its dogmas. A dogma can't be a dogma unless it is glamorous; whatever idea is glamorous either is a dogma or part of a dogma. In Romanticism, people not only have an idea of a project, they heavily glamorize it. In one of its glamorous forms, the next project of the Spirit is "the next big thing" in music, fashion, TV, or fad foods. In Romanticism, Creativity is not just an idea and an attribute of the Spirit, it is heavily glamorous as one of the most sacred things that people can do and it leads to artists as one of the most powerful sacred kinds of people. Intoxication is the same because it is non-rational super-rational and so leads us closer to the Spirit. Romantic glamour is part of the power of dogmas of both liberals and conservatives. That is a big way in which their ideas become dogmas. The idea of Tradition is sensible by itself but that is not enough for conservatives who turn it into sacred dogma. The sensible idea of political freedom becomes dogma in different ways for both sides, and they invest it heavily with the glamour of soldiers dying and of Civil Rights marches. The idea of fairness for the genders in the workplace is sensible but the idea of absolute sameness of the genders is a glamorous misleading dogma. Because I dislike dogmas of all kinds from any source, I return to the subject later in the chapter.

Inversions and Doubling Down.

Ideally, Romantics should define themselves through the positive contributions they make by being in the vanguard of the Spirit and doing the work of the Spirit in creating a new order. Sometimes this is the case as when Gay people brought a positive new image of "gay-ness". Often, Romantics define themselves by what they oppose, especially against other groups. They present their cause positively but the real fervor underneath comes from opposing. They have a sense of opposition as Creative Chaos but really below it is just anger and bitterness. Two examples from our times are "Pro Life" and "Pro Choice". The "just say 'NO'" of Republican Congresses is a clear example. People who are "pro family" rarely have thought out what forms a family might take in the modern world but really are against gays, single mothers, and the family style of ethnic groups they dislike. The stereotype of feminists as frustrated "man haters" was cruel but had more than a grain of truth.

Thwarted Romantics do not become rational. They "double down". They get stubborn. They attack their enemies rather than fight for goodness. Thus we get the "culture wars".

The Romantic attitude is crusader, rebel, zealot, busy body, self-styled saint, self-styled expert, guardian of a "cause territory" such as saving the US from do-gooders, constant chip on the shoulder, feeling that nobody "gets it", feeling everybody is against you and your group, and minor cosmic visionary.

“The problems that I care about are the relevant ones even if you show me other issues that are deeper and that cause the problems I care about. The problems that I care about are the ones that working on will bring my group most, and that is what really matters.”

Groups with Special Appeal.

People want to be close to the Spirit so they want to be close to groups that are close to the Spirit. In traditional religion, they want to be close to priests; in most systems, they want to be close to people who are wealthy, powerful, successful, and glamorous. In Romanticism, they want to be close to those people too but some groups have particular appeal. People want to be close to rebels, the Remnant, artists, entrepreneurs, and marginal people such as some criminals, some losers, and the underbelly of society. These groups are most likely to be seen in glamorous terms although not all Romantics would understand that they see these in glamorous terms; Americans really do see losers in glamorous terms but don't like to admit they see losers that way even when they admit they feel sympathy toward losers and admire tough guy losers or big-hearted losers.

Supporting Special Groups.

I can understand some sympathy toward downtrodden, marginal, excluded, and unlucky people such as people with cancer or people who get stuck unemployed and underemployed in capitalism. In the West, before Romanticism, small groups of Christians would minister to the downtrodden but, despite the clear teachings of Jesus, people in general were not much sympathetic to the downtrodden, and rich people were scornful. The character of “Scrooge” is no aberration. With Romanticism, people are sympathetic and are inclined to give marginal groups power, money, and state support. People seem to feel guiltier about the relative plight of others and more inclined to help not only on a case-by-case basis but through permanent institutions such as welfare, Social Security, the Farm Bill, and tax breaks for business firms. Americans are often surprised to learn that Social Security was originally the idea of the powerful German Chancellor Bismarck in the 1870s, one of the peaks of German Romanticism.

One reason that people are more inclined to support the downtrodden is that some downtrodden have a close link to the Spirit, as, for example, we attribute Creative Chaos to the poor and to ethnic groups that differ from the dominant ethnic group. A second related reason is that taking care of the children of the Spirit makes people feel close to the Spirit and feel good. It is a cause, a project. Another reason is that distrust of traditional institutions is an intrinsic part of how Romanticism works; see below. People did not trust the old ways of taking care of the downtrodden, such as church charity or poor houses, so people wanted to take care of the children of the Spirit in newer better ways. So people devised new institutions to take care of the poor and to make themselves feel good.

Likely the biggest reason why people support marginalized groups through institutions has little to do directly with Romanticism. Except for a few Christians, comfortable people don't want to deal directly with marginal people if the marginal people are not a glamorized group. Even then, people don't want to deal directly with real marginalized people, such as real criminals, but with glamorized versions of them such as small time drug dealers. Instead, people set up institutions to deal with the symptoms of marginal people. Rather than deal with the problems of capitalism that generate unemployment, we can set up unemployment insurance. Rather than deal with the fact that farms should be turned into business firms

just like every other mom-and-pop operation, we set up farm welfare through the farm bill. I can tie this attitude into Romanticism but it is better just to let it lie openly as it is.

Getting back on track: Problems arise when we deal with marginalized people through new institutions because we don't trust old institutions. New institutions become old institutions quickly enough, and then we don't trust the solution that we made ourselves. This dilemma is now true of almost all the institutions we created to deal with marginal people. The old institutions didn't work for the good reason that almost no institutions can deal with problems such as poverty. The new institutions can't ultimately deal either. The response depends on which side of the fence you sit and whether you like the group and institution. If you like the people who receive help, then you push for more institution and more money, as President Obama suggested that community college be free for everybody, and as Republicans push for tax breaks for oil producers. Otherwise, you hate it, as many people hate welfare and some people hate "defense" spending. People "double down" as explained above. Any way you see it, you can think of yourself as on the side of the Spirit.

Using Romanticism.

In any stance, once people have figured it out, and see that people in general are susceptible to some ideas of the stance, these clever people use the stance to manipulate other people. Glamour shows how this tactic can work in Romanticism. People manipulate Romanticism by taking on the airs of a group that can ask for special privileges such as artists, rebels, racial minorities, business people, entrepreneurs, farmers, small business owners, women, the underbelly of society, and victims of overseas disaster. I am amazed at how susceptible people in general are to claims. People in general automatically give groups special status and privileges so as to feel they participate in the Spirit themselves. Clever people take on the airs of a marginalized group so they can get respect, wealth, and sex from other people. The longest running standard dodge has been the rock-and-roll rebel artiste but that game is mostly fun and does little harm other than a few misplaced lives. More harmful, since the rise of Reagan-ism, has been the ability of business people to present themselves as besieged marginalized victims in dire need of state help even while they attack a big state and attack others for getting help. I am shocked that business people can portray entrepreneurs as marginalized beleaguered victims trying to act as agents of Creative Chaos and the Spirit, as "job creators". I am amazed that people in general buy this crap along with buying all the claims of Blacks, Hispanics, and White thugs. I am amazed the people like the Tea Party can rail against the benefits that other people get while overlooking all the benefits received by the middle class, especially in Republican states. Manipulating Romanticism for the gain of self and group is a serious danger to democracy. We will see more at the end of the chapter.

Culmination.

If we believe German Romantic philosophers such as Hegel and pop artists such as Bob Dylan, nobody really knew the Spirit well before they came along. On purpose, the Spirit didn't even really know itself. All projects of the Spirit before modern times were done without the Spirit really being aware what it was doing, or that it was doing, including even such grand projects as Buddhism and Classical Greece. Only now is the Spirit aware that it has been doing it all along. Romanticism is the Spirit aware of itself at last. In words that I learned from California New Agers, Romanticism is nature aware of itself just as people (sentient beings) are nature's way of being aware of itself. Nobody talked about the Spirit unfolding itself

until recently; but now we do. It is not clear why the Spirit chose to reveal itself to itself through us at this time, but it has, and we have to assess the results.

The self-awareness of the Spirit is like other great culminations. It is like the second coming of Jesus the Christ, from which Romantics likely borrowed the idea. It is like end times. It is like the bodhisattva who finally sees how the world works and chooses to save all sentient beings. It is like a great Buddha or like great avatar such as Krishna who do the same. It is like political utopias such as Communist heaven, Fascist heaven, free market heaven, or PC heaven.

Most of this belief would be charming except it has bad effects on attitude. It intensifies attitude. If this is the time of the Spirit, if this is the last project of the Spirit, then we had better be on board. We had better be doing the work of the Spirit. We had better be children of the Spirit. If we are not actively working in one of the important projects of the Spirit, then we are "left behind". To paraphrase Bob Dylan, "He not busy being born is busy dying". Whatever good comes at the revealing of the Spirit will not be good for us. This belief intensifies seeking for projects and makes even stronger the already strong commitment to some projects. It leads Romantics to oppose people on the other side harshly and even denigrate people who are not with them.

The Romantic attitude from culmination is much like the attitude of other end-of-this-world-start-of-the-next-world crazies although most Romantics do not see it consciously in those terms. I think that kind of feeling has been more common in the West since the Renaissance, and more common in the last three hundred years with the rise of Romanticism. I am not sure which caused which. I am sure they support each other even when the people in one branch disdain the people in another branch.

If it makes you feel better, academics are not immune. It is unlikely any one paradigm can explain the whole human experience, not even my favorite evolution. Academics who study people usually are Romantics like other people. They see their work as part of the work of the Spirit although they don't usually say so and don't like to think of themselves as like other religious people. Academics seize on fads such as structuralism, post-structuralism, and modernism as if the fads were dewdrops from the brows of the Spirit, and work with as much zeal on their project in these final days of the Spirit as any religious fanatic preparing for Jesus, the victory of Islam, the coming of Krishna, or the coming of the Jewish Messiah.

Some Synthesis; Mostly Bad News; Some Good News.

The individual in Romanticism can be isolated, part of a group as part of a project, or have a mystical feeling of union with the Spirit. Few people choose mystical union although modern times have more than their share of lost seekers. Most people want to be in a group that is like a community and want to feel that their community is part of a project of the Spirit. In social science jargon, people seek a church.

Capitalism does not have to drive people toward isolation but it has that tendency more than to lead people to a healthy community (unless people belong to a healthy business firm; when I wrote this, Apple and Google were used as examples). The isolation of capitalism can be overcome by the group-and-project tendency of Romanticism as when people get off work to work on a common cause such as Pro-Life, Pro-Choice, or Save Trees. Isolation can be overcome when people join a common-interest group

such as Tai Chi Chuan or when they join a religious church. Far too often, the isolation inherent and the isolation inherent in Romanticism combine to make people feel really alone – alone to the point of wacky. Which tendency wins out depends on all kinds of factors that I leave to sociologists and anthropologists.

Capitalism does not have to drive people to moral subjectivism at the individual level or group level but that tendency is stronger in capitalism than any tendency to drive people to seek the one true objective morality. Romanticism also has a drive to subjective morality because each project is its own world and own standard, including morality. The drives to moral subjectivity can combine with the drives toward isolation at the individual or group level. When the two drives toward moral subjectivity combine, then we see many isolated individuals each his-her own little moral demon. These people suffer. More often, we see small bands of individuals united in small groups, each group having its own morality. We get cults, 30,000 Protestant denominations, fundamentalists, terrorists, zealots, and I-don't-know-how-many political causes. I doubt this could happen without the combination of Capitalism and Romanticism, plus a few other changes such as mobile fractured families that I can't go into here. But it does happen.

The good news is when the ability to share interests in capitalism combines with the ability to join projects in Romanticism, and with a good sense of morality descended from the morality that is common to all the great religions, to give us useful healthy groups and useful healthy people. These are the dedicated but not crazy groups that do community service or provide beneficial activities.

One very big task of critics of modern life, of citizens, religious leaders, and politicians, is to swing the balance from isolated moral subjectivity of individuals and small groups to modest communal useful groups without killing our sense of democratic individualism. To do this, our leaders have to see big deep problems, have to understand why we avoid dealing with them, have to see how to deal with them, and have to explain it all clearly to us. I see little evidence this is happening.

Romanticism and Some Big Bad Groups.

To overcome the potential for feeling isolated and morally adrift, people join groups. The trend is strong in times of trouble with the economy, politics, and the family. Moral subjectivity as a political theory does not alone cause this tendency. The tendency comes out of economic and social conditions far more than out of philosophy, theology, or social science. When people join good groups, and the groups can help with the problems (or at least the symptoms), then there is little problem.

Sometimes people join good groups in bad times and help the times get better. These groups tend to have good ideologies. Examples include the community action wing of the Black Panthers, many church groups, Red Cross, Red Crescent, Doctors without Borders, and people within the major political parties who want to really understand modern problems and do something about them.

Problems come when people join groups that have a bad morality or bad ideology. Critics say that the bad ideology-morality turns the people in the group bad and turns the group bad but I think this view is much too simple. More often, people join groups with a bad morality because they feel bad and think they will feel better in the group. That is why people join gangs. The bad dogma can further shape people after they join but it does not alone make them bad. People are not bad in modern times because

of philosophical ideas about the supremacy of the individual and moral subjectivism but people gravitate toward groups that use those ideas to justify bad acts.

A little bad group is a cult or a gang. I don't dwell on them anymore. Sometimes they grow up to be big bad groups.

The real problem comes when people join big bad groups, especially when Romanticism ratifies a big bad group. Almost any big bad group can find ratification by interpreting Romanticism. Romanticism is well suited to supporting big bad groups. I don't know if it is better suited than other ideologies such as pro-capitalism, Christianity, or Islam; but I think so; I don't argue the question now. Romanticism supports such groups by allowing them to believe they are rebels or the Remnant. They are the force of the Spirit even if they do a few bad things. They are the spearhead of the Spirit. They do not need a relation to any major religion for or against; they can ignore standard religion if they want; or they can accept any endorsement that suits their needs.

For reasons that I don't go into here, often big bad groups have a racist base. Examples include Black and White gangs, and Black and White Supremacists.

Sometimes they combine race and religion. The religion does not have to be a standard religion or even a religion that people recognize as a religion. The most famous example of modern times is Nazism. The Nazis actually did use a religion as a base, a religion that took features from Spiritualism and from other religions such as Celtic mythology, Norse mythology, and Egyptian religion. The "Indiana Jones" movies make fun of this aspect of Nazism. Nazism was a quintessential Romantic movement gone bad. Against modern critics, it was not caused primarily by moral subjectivism or other bad ideologies although it used those ideologies-emotions to recruit and hold members.

The first two big bad Romantic groups-and-movements were the French Revolution and the sweep of Napoleon Bonaparte across Europe. I mention those later in this chapter.

The third big Romantic group-movement was Communism. I cannot go into the differences among the groups in Communism to show which were more or less Romantic. Marx was a student of Hegel, and Hegel was a founder of Romanticism. Although Marx tried to get away from Hegel, he could not get away from prevailing Romanticism. People do not think of Communism as a religion but it is. Communists like to play fast-and-loose with moral relativity but, in fact, they have their own morality that comes from life in a collectivity and from grasping power. Communists use the progress of the human race as their project; they conceive of this project in terms that can only make sense if we think of it as the biggest project of the World Spirit in our times. Marxists are the rebels, Remnant, and chosen people serving as the tools of the Spirit to create the form of the Spirit for our times.

In fairness, both the major political parties in the United States, and their offshoots such as the Tea Party, and allied groups such as feminists, think in much the same terms but are less nasty. Major churches, especially when they actively proselytize, also think in the same terms. This is where we can see the combination of Romanticism with traditional religion. Watch the Protestant and Roman Catholic TV channels. If you can get it, listen to a Muslim broadcast.

To channel people into good groups and away from bad groups, we have to have a good grasp on the conditions that make people seek groups, seek good groups, seek bad groups, on good morality, and on bad morality. We have to see deep problems and be willing to address them in ways that people think will lead to good results. Again, I don't think we have done this and I don't think we will soon. I do not push the idea that we all must inevitably fall into bad groups; I just think it will be all the harder to form and find good groups.

PART 5: The Failure of Romanticism.

Romanticism does not fail as a system that supports itself and that eats the world. At that, it is a great success, one of the greatest in the history of the world as far as I can tell. I don't go into Romanticism that way here.

Romanticism always fails because it does not deliver much satisfaction unless people happen to be in a triumphant group or a good little group – and that is usually short-lived. It does not give people access to the Spirit. In the end, it does not make them feel as if they are contributing to a project that will lead to the triumph of the Spirit for the whole world.

In fairness, I repeat that Romanticism does a lot of good along the way. It gives people commitment and energy. It focuses people on real short term problems that need work. It has contributed greatly to the success of important movements such as Civil Rights, gender equality, saving nature, pro life, pro choice, and the conservative revival.

Romanticism also contributes energy to bad movements such as bombing abortion clinics, the nasty self-righteous versions of PC, terrorism, and glamorizing of thugs. Romanticism does not fail mostly because those movements are more important than the good movements. All good religions also contribute to bad ideas and bad movements, and that does not make the religions bad. These bad movements contribute to the failure of Romanticism but they do not alone cause the failure. These movements are what most people think about when they think of the failure of modern ideology but we could deal with this crap if we could think straight otherwise.

To fully explain how Romanticism fails, I would have to explain how bad systems that eat the world work, and what life is like in such a system. I can't explain here; I do explain in other writing. Think of living as a real gangster or living in Stalinism.

Romanticism fails because it does not solve deep problems but instead keeps people busy on lesser problems and deliberately steers people away from deep root problems. If people could solve most deep root problems, or even see them clearly, Romanticism would not be useful and would disappear. Seeing exactly how Romanticism avoids deep problems would require going into the logic of Romanticism more than I can in this chapter but I go into it enough so you get the idea.

Romanticism fails because, ultimately, it does not rest on any deep true morality. Romanticism is not an idea; it is a process. A process does not need a particular idea. If a process did rest on an idea, it would be in danger of failing when the idea was not right enough, or too wrong, or when a better idea came up.

As long as a process does not rest on a particular idea but can pretend it rests on a lot of little ideas, then it can keep going indefinitely.

Just because Romanticism does not espouse any particular morality does not mean it espouses moral relativity, moral subjectivism, or the morality of power. It can use them but it does not base itself on them any more than on traditional Christian morality. Romanticism simply uses whatever morality works best in keeping itself going. That might sound like moral relativity or subjectivism but is not. I cannot pursue this topic anymore without pursuing it a lot more, so I drop it here.

Romanticism fails because emotion and commitment alone cannot solve our problems. When we rely on emotion and commitment alone or even predominantly, we do not get good white wizards who combine Reason with Passion. We always get dark wizards who mix bitterness, jealousy, anger, and revenge with Cunning. We never get Luke Skywalker or Obiwan Kenobe; we never get the Jedi after they are allowed to marry and have families; we always get the Emperor Palatine the Sith Darth Sidious. We don't get the Three Musketeers; we get Cardinal Richelieu, the one-eyed swordsman, and Madame De Winter. We rarely get Washington, Jefferson, or Lincoln; we get Stalin or Hitler. We rarely get the good American Revolution. We get the bad French, Russian, Chinese, and North Korean Revolutions. We don't get a sensible right or left; we get the culture wars, huge debt, stagnating wages, and widening wealth gaps.

Recall that systems-that-eat-the world usually have a big hole in the center onto which people can project whatever they need. That is how the system keeps going. Romanticism has that in the Spirit and in the things that we do in the name of the Spirit but that really serve us. Like Jesus, God, Allah, the Dharma, or the bodhisattva at the center, Romanticism has the Spirit, on which people project whatever they need but which is ultimately empty itself. That is a source of great strength if you want to succeed as a system but a failure if you want to give people a real moral meaningful useful godly life.

Romanticism fails because it overlooks real problems and distracts us with short-term problems. We feel Passionate, Justified, and Saved when we accuse a co-worker or racism, sexism, or coddling terrorists and forget about what causes racism, sexism, or terrorism.

Romanticism skips the square-meal diet to give us a diet of yogurt with a lot of sugar, "power bars", and honey-glued oat bran, or nothing but pizza, fried chicken, burgers, and barbecue, all while convincing us that this is healthy. Romanticism leads us to self-induced diabetes while it convinces us this is how we should eat. For our self-induced diabetes, we take pills rather than find out what ails us, find out what is a good diet, eat a good diet, and exercise well.

The effects of the failure of Romanticism are the same as the effects of Culmination. We feel more alone and isolated even in the middle of causes. The failure does not lead us to re-evaluate, quit what we are doing wrong, and change. The failure leads us to "double down". We accentuate the bad tendencies in capitalism. We become more selfish, materialistic, and trendy. We jump from cause to cause. We seek God in some really strange ways. We try really hard not to think too deeply. To escape isolation, we hold to Romanticism even more. The effects of the failure cause us to embrace Romanticism all the more, and so we live in a bad system that eats the world.

PART 6: Brief History A: Real Problems and Self-Made Institutions

Romanticism derives much of its strength because we feel that our institutions don't work well enough, so we should connect to something else, something deeper. Romanticism solidified in a climate of distrust. At the same time, Romanticism gives us mid-level issues that we use to avoid deep issues. Not seeing deep issues perpetuates our distrust of institutions.

The Insoluble Issues.

For a list of insoluble issues, see Chapter Two on my political stance.

Ourselves to Blame Makes it Worse.

Traditional religious people say people in general believed in the Church and Christendom before about 1600. I am not sure Romanticism would disappear if people believed in their institutions now as in that ideal past. Romanticism does better when people are skeptical enough about institutions but have to keep them. Romanticism doesn't take much skepticism; we have more than enough in democracy no matter how well things are going.

Conservatives say that institutions that develop on their own almost always are better than the institutions that people make deliberately, especially in Christendom where conservatives say the Holy Spirit had a hand in developing institutions. We distrust our institutions now because we made them; we did not allow enough space for the Holy Spirit to guide the natural growth of our institutions.

We distrust institutions enough to foster Romanticism and it is not likely we will grow to trust them much more in the near future. I think we distrust them because they do not succeed well enough, regardless of the Holy Spirit. They do not succeed well enough because they are not up to the problems of the modern world. Democracy is not up to the modern world. Democracy is not up to the modern world partly due to Romanticism. Romanticism, the failure of democracy, distrust of democracy, and more Romanticism, feed on each other. It is easier to see this dilemma in historical context and in light of democracy as an institution that we make for ourselves.

Until about 1700, people did not consciously make their own institutions. Institutions grew in conditions; and institutions dealt with local conditions well enough. Two examples might be Medieval England and town-level America in the 1950s. People believed in the leaders, ideas, and institutions even if nobody consciously made them into a rational system. In fact, people believed more just because ideas and institutions were not the obvious products of the human mind but seem to come on us like God setting things right.

By 1600 in England, and certainly after 1776 and the American Revolution, people deliberately did make their own political institutions. That is a large part of what democracy is: people making their own social and political lives. By the standards then and for the next 150 years, Americans made their institutions pretty well. We took into account human nature, nature, and good ideas from the past. Yet American people-made institutions did eventually fail then and still fail. Even when we adjust them to make up for failures and for new conditions, they still fail. We have not had institutions that grow on their own, and that work, to replace the institutions that we made ourselves, that don't work. We are stuck in our own

self-made, ideology-based, rational, systematic, as-good-as-we-can-do institutions that still fail. Although capitalism did evolve on its own somewhat, I include it among the institutions that we mostly made for ourselves, for reasons I don't defend here.

The facts that institutions that we made failed, we can't come up with anything better, and we can't adjust them to work, forms a problem that compounds itself. We made the institutions to solve other problems, and now the institutions have become among the most serious of problems. What institutions do we now make to solve the problem that we can't make institutions that work?

Because we will live in some version of democracy for the near future, all the institutions to come will be made by people. Even if the stems come up on their own, as with the Internet and social media, still, institutions will be shaped by deliberate planning. All the institutions will be made by people in the sense that the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution were made by us. Such people-made institutions have failed in the past and likely will fail in the near future. Our institutions are pretty good but they are not good enough.

Institutions that evolved on their own before 1600 succeeded because they had to deal only with simpler problems – invading barbarians, how much to tax whiskey - than after the Revolution: industrialization, capitalism, big business, worker poverty, cities, and issues listed in Chapter Two. It is hard to imagine self-arising institutions that could deal with international capitalism or the demise of nature. We should not fault people-made institutions hard for not being able to deal with the world. No institutions that we have now, or are likely to have in the near future, can deal well with the problems that we face now. We are likely to need a bigger dose of inspired individual people.

PART 7: Brief History B: How Romanticism Came Together

Old History.

Something like Romanticism has arisen several times in the West. In the time of Augustus Caesar in Rome, about the time of Jesus, old patterns did not work; Augustus pushed through new patterns. At the same time, Neo-Platonism mixed with yearnings of uniting ecstatically with "the One". People indulged many cults, believed belonging to a cult was doing the work of the Spirit and coming closer to the Spirit, and believed cults deserved special privilege. Saint Augustine was a Christian Neo-Platonist. His use of God and the City in history is like the Romantic use of the Spirit, nations, and material stuff in history. In the middle ages, the Albigensian movement gave France and England minstrel culture with ideals of love – I think it is a parent of opera, blues, pop song, rock, and even hip hop. The Christian Church killed it. Celtic and Norse mythology seem more similar to Romanticism than Greek-Latin-Christian rationality is similar to Romanticism, and, I think, they contributed to Romanticism.

The Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment lasted from about 1600 to 1850 in northwestern Europe and the parts of the Americas under the control of Northwestern Europe. Not all people in Enlightenment areas were wise because people still burned witches. The Enlightenment thrived where people of different classes, cultures, and religions mixed in an orderly place, usually in towns for commerce. Nearly all the major people in the

American Revolution were of the Enlightenment. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution are Enlightenment texts. Although it no longer guides America, Americans know Enlightenment ideals: decency, reason, rationality, thoughtful belief in God, natural morality, universal morality, distrust of raw emotion, moderate emotion, comfort in moderate emotion, science, natural laws, rule of man-made law in government, stewardship of nature, progress, seeking greater good, individual freedom, individual responsibility, democracy, not simplistic populism, representational democracy, naturally gifted people (natural elites) as leaders, compromise, and distrust of class society.

Collapse and Romantic Rebuild.

Traditionalists and conservatives blame science, philosophy, and new political ideas for the collapse of the old social-religious order and the rise of modern angst, particularly after the French Revolution of 1789. They blame those forces for modern isolation, selfishness, materialism, trendiness, lack of faith, cultish dogmatism, power struggles, populist democracy despotism, and bad feelings. Traditionalists and conservatives are partly right but mostly wrong. Changing economic and social conditions were more important factors although people always used ideas to justify what they wanted to do and to intensify changes that were made possible for other reasons.

Capitalism changed the social order beginning in the early 1600s. Industrialism and science changed the social order quickly after about 1750. A new group of people arose with wealth and power. Often they were at odds with the old order, old aristocracy, and old religion. Along with them had come another new group of workers who were poor and isolated. These are the conditions that Dickens relates in his books and that form the basis for the stereotyped view of bad capitalism.

The new business people saw themselves as self-made and individualistic men (rarely women). They adapted the Protestant Ethic to Capitalism. They wanted justification for their new way of life. When they adopted the Protestant Ethic, at first they secularized it because traditional religion and institutions could not provide them with the ratification they needed. A good example is the Autobiography of Ben Franklin. Better examples are Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Jeremy Bentham. This is what modern traditionalists and conservatives see in philosophy of the time and wrongly blame for changes. The situation in Europe and the United States around 1800 was like the situation around Nepal at the time of the Buddha when the rising warrior class rejected Brahmin religion for the individualism and self-determination taught by the young Buddha.

While the new people rose and the old social order fell into disarray, two important events shaped how people thought about the changes. The American Revolution succeeded and seemed to validate the idea that people could rationally make their own institutions and their institutions could succeed. At first, the American Revolution brought about only a modest rational version of the new ideas. The Americans kept historical context, especially their legacy from England, and they changed only what they needed. Then the French Revolution of 1789 erupted and failed. It brought stronger versions of the ideas divorced from any historical context. It brought chaos and death. People did not stop pushing the new ideas because it was hard to go back to the past, especially when past institutions clearly could not deal with modern life. People did stop believing humans could rationally make their own successful institutions based on human reason. People sought order in something other than rationality. They turned to the spiritualized emotion and irrationality of Romanticism. New thinkers believed Passion could give them new institutions just as

old thinkers said the Holy Spirit had given them old institutions. Passion could guide the new ideas to the needed new institutions. If reasoning with the enemy won't work, then out-yell the enemy or out-connive the enemy. The work G.W.F. Hegel clearly shows this new direction.

In Europe and the Americas, if traditional religion had assessed the new situation and responded quickly, the new capitalists and workers might have kept traditional religion strong. But traditional religion was too slow, so the people turned to something else. They turned to Romanticism, in behavior if not in name. It is important to see that people could be Romantic and hold to the forms of traditional religion at the same time. Like Hinduism, Romanticism does not demand you reject your old religion, at least in outward form. Like Hinduism, it does change your inner view.

Romanticism offered people ratification through working on projects of the Spirit and through working on your own projects that you could think of as of the Spirit. Projects had to use rationality to the extent that they used Wit and Reason but projects were ultimately based on Passion, that is, Faith. You could be both rational and emotional at the same time or more in particular situations as needed. You could base institutions on the faith (Passion) that they were projects of the Spirit and use Reason to carry them out. You could use old traditional ideas as useful and discard otherwise. People could take the role of rebel or Remnant, or both, as desired. Romanticism could apply to individuals, middle-sized groups, or the whole society. Romanticism fused the Spirit with the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

When Romanticism arose, capitalism and traditional religion were at odds. Also, capitalism had not yet served society in general and had not yet raised the standards of living for everybody. It did give many individual people enough wealth and independence so they could think of themselves as self-made men and see in their wealth the basis for their autonomy, power, and social position. It served as the material basis for rising new democracies. Yet people then had no simple single ideology they could turn to, and they faced a plethora of new confusing Protestant groups. Again, the old religions and institutions had failed. Under those conditions, the combination of Romanticism and capitalism, stressed the tendencies in both toward individualism, isolation, selfishness, trends, dogmas, and irrationality under the guise of rationality in projects. The idea of Progress from the Enlightenment became, in Romanticism, the dogma of the perpetual unfolding of the Spirit, always going on in various particular projects, never complete in any particular project or in the parade of projects.

After about 1850 in Europe and after the Civil War in the United States, capitalists had consolidated their power, wealth, and hold on politics; and workers began to be better off. Capitalists and workers began to see themselves in terms of groups rather than only as isolated individuals. Capitalists wanted to make sense of the new world and their new dominance as kings had done in the late middle ages with Divine Right. Capitalists and workers sought ratification in traditional religion, and traditional religion sought to lean on their power and wealth. Thinkers arose to interpret traditional religion in terms to make capitalists and workers feel better, or feel better about forming groups and doing battle. We get modern American versions of Methodism, Baptists, Lutheranism, and eventually Roman Catholicism. We get the success of new Christian religions such as Latter Day Saints, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the fundamentalism that arose after 1910 in Los Angeles. We get moderate middle class socialism as in the "Fabians" and the "Bloomsbury Group" in England. Selfishness, materialism, and trendiness did not go away – Protestant sects of all kinds and Roman Catholic specialist groups still sprung up like weeds – but selfishness etc. took other forms and might have abated somewhat. Materialism and trendiness held up

pretty well in the “Gilded Age” of the late 1800s and “Jazz Age” of the 1920s. Yet just because capitalists, workers, dogmas, selfishness, materialism, trendiness, and traditional religion all adjusted to each other, Romanticism emerged stronger and more entrenched. Rather than traditional religion, Romanticism lay beneath it all. That is where we still live now.

We can get back to the thread that we pulled to begin with, selfishness, materialism, and trendiness, to see how they fit into the history, after we look at modern life in Romanticism.

PART 8: Modern Life in Romanticism.

Because most of us live in Romanticism, trying to see Romanticism objectively is like a fish trying to get out of the water to see water objectively. I know of the similarities between my stance and Romanticism but I don't bring out the points to defend my stance. The best way to get out of any bad stance is to have a better stance that you can adopt. Even then, it is hard. If you don't like my stance, make an alternative yourself. If you think your Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, atheism, mechanistic philosophy, or academic trend is not Romantic, and is a real alternative, you might be right, but I think you should think more deeply.

Romanticism Is a Process.

Romanticism is a process more than it is a set of ideas, symbols, attitudes, or a world view although it has all those and uses them. It has some typical content but it does not require any particular content. It is a way of keeping people engaged in particular affairs while leading them to think they are engaged in affairs more important. It is a way of keeping people from seeing whether what they do makes a difference and instead to keep them focused on gratification from the situation right now.

Romanticism is a process in which people can feel heroic, spiritual, hip, cool, justified, and important, by indulging emotions, taking attitudes, keeping busy, joining causes, opposing bad guys, feeling entitled, sampling exotic other lives, fighting as rebels, fighting as a small remnant band to save the correct way of life, living the good life, or, sometimes, just getting rich. Romanticism glamorizes the world rather than shows the native beauty and value of the world. In glamorizing, it takes away from true beauty and value. Romanticism makes people dissatisfied with the merely real, true, and worthwhile. Romanticism makes things other than they simply are, to glamorize them and spiritualize them, so people can feel distracted fooling around with otherwise mundane and boring life. Romanticism co-opts other dogmas (ideologies, ideas, and religions) to serve it even when another dogma thinks it has nothing to do with Romanticism or opposes it. Romanticism expands to use up much of our minds and lives. It is a way of getting what we want while seeming to work for something bigger and better. Romanticism is the “drama queen” and “reality TV queen” of Western stances. It is a never-ending series of engaging episodes in which nothing ever really changes much. It is a sanctified mix of romantic comedy, action movie, video game, and endless show about nothing. Rarely do people feel indulgent when they follow Romanticism to indulge themselves; they feel correct, justified, heroic, they represent everybody's deep rights, and entitled.

Hopefully a Short Way to Get a Feel for Romanticism.

The best way to get a feel for Romanticism is to sample the social world around us, including social ideas of nature. It is all mostly Romantic.

One shortcut is to intensively sample hyper-Romantic views. Watch a lot of TV for a week. Just because you have watched a lot of TV your whole life doesn't mean you noticed the right things. Watch everything including especially what you don't like. You will get a feel for how it all presents a world to you, a world that is created from a bigger world. That smaller created world will be one version of the Romantic world. If you can't sample a lot of different TV, try this: if you don't like country music or hip-hop, then watch the Country channel and Black channels. If you don't like romantic comedies, watch those. If you don't like sci-fi or adventure, watch those. If you can't stand religious channels, try those. Watch only children's TV. If you have watched any of these before as a member of a social group, watch alone. Any of this watching will shock you out of some parts of Romanticism even if not all the way out. If you can't stand that much TV, try books that you would not usually read such as romance novels or sci-fi novels. Until you have seen a lot of pop culture, avoid "serious" media and literature. The bias is just as strong on "classy" shows such as "Downton Abbey", but is more clever, hidden, woven into deeper themes, does not stand alone, and easier to miss. Video games are heavily Romantic but I don't know enough about them to make many suggestions. Even the childish sexist games with scantily clad women with huge teats are heavily Romantic.

If you feel brave enough, go to a series of religious or political meetings from groups not your own. If you are a lefty, go to at least half-a-dozen meetings of the young Republicans. If you are a Republican, go to at least half-a-dozen meetings of the local "save nature" or feminist group. If you are a Roman Catholic, find charismatic Protestants. If a Protestant, find a Roman Catholic Church in which the members are active and follow the traditional liturgy and offices.

Then go back to what you usually like and try to see it as a variation of what you didn't like. Try to see yourself as a variation of some of the characters that you just saw.

A Brief but Hard Way to See; and the Implications.

After you read this chapter, pick one problem of modern life, such as capitalism, and think it all the way through to the bottom in human nature, technology, human social life, and as a system. Don't rely on what experts say or on textbooks, although you should consult them. Then read about the problem, from all sides, and think it through again. Think it through completely yourself. Think until you are sure you know how to solve the problem in a way consistent with human nature and human social life, a way that would work if it could be put in place. Think about what your ideas say for Romanticism. Think about what you believed all along before you thought it out.

As a citizen of a democracy, regardless of Romanticism, and apart from any mental exercises, you are responsible for doing this task, not just to know capitalism, but for all the issues facing your nation and the world. You, personally, individually, without allowing anybody to think for you, must think through all the issues that your democracy faces. If you do not, you are not entitled to be a citizen. If you cannot, then you should think about what the implications are for democracy. How is democracy supposed to work if you, a smart citizen, cannot think through the issues? How do you expect to be able to elect people to

think out the issues for you, your representatives, if you cannot think out the issues yourself? How does your failure support Romanticism?

Keep Romantic Failure in Mind.

In the end, Romanticism fails as a way for many people to find a good life and fails as a way to organize society so that most people in the society find a good life. The Dark Side wins. Even when experienced people try to unite the Light Side and Dark Side, the Dark Side prevails. Romanticism always goes bad. We cannot unite the Dark Side and Light Side into a good way. We cannot unite reason and emotion in a good way that merges them both in a bigger better unity. Romanticism does not necessarily fail for some minority of people, some minority of people can do quite well, but it fails generally.

Romanticism goes bad in the same way the French Revolution went bad, Lefties always squabble until they fall apart, Fascism failed, raw capitalism fails, marriages go sour, politicians sell out, young people age, and zealotry never delivers the shiny new world that we hope for. It is not just that reality can never live up to our ideals, and our ideals are far away from real human nature, but, more, there is something about the process of pushing dreams that insures they go bad. In particular, there is something about relying on emotion to be always good and always to lead us to the best outcome that insures it will turn nasty and lead to a bad place instead. Something about trusting raw emotion turns reason into cunning. When we rely on emotion, it always turns into nastiness and cunning. I can't explain entirely why this happens here; see the additional material on the logic of Romanticism. For here, accept that it happens.

Suited to Our Times.

Romanticism is suited to our times in the same way rock-and-roll is suited to middle class kids who, in a few years, have to give their lives over to work but don't have to work for their lives yet, might have a job now, have free time and money, and glamorize the unknown lifestyles of other socio-economic classes, races, cultures, and nations to make their own lives tolerable. It is suited to our times in the same way Black kids, and White kids who have never seen a gangster, stupidly glamorize "gangstas". Romanticism fits the way White kids in America used to glamorize working class rockers, the way Black kids think all Black people are put down by "the man" and think Black people could solve all problems for themselves by overcoming "the man". It fits the way Black people think White people have everything and are in a giant secret cabal to keep it. Romanticism fits the same way urban half-educated college grads in the Third World glamorize peasants in their own country. It fits the same way business people glamorize entrepreneurs, "job creators", and anyone richer than they are. It fits the same way college professors want to appear on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart and wanted to appear the defunct Colbert Report. It helps individual people and business firms rationalize their entitlement check.

The movie "Travels of Sullivan" by Frank Capra shows the kind of flitting and seeking after the Spirit that is typical of our times, and the harm that comes. It shows what good comes of giving up Romantic flitting and instead working as a useful person by doing what you do well. It shows how to escape Romanticism for people of our times. It is really fun to watch.

Some Allusions.

Living in Romanticism is like living in the movies "Rear Window" and "Vertigo" by Alfred Hitchcock; the TV show "Castle" did a fun version of "Rear Window". Living in Romanticism is like being trapped in the TV show "I Love Lucy" when Lucy runs a scheme - always. The famous episode in which Lucy and Ethyl try to eat their way out of a chocolate assembly line is pretty much life in Romanticism. Rather than accept the reality of our abilities and of the task at hand, we stuff our mouths with sweets that should be a great delight but only make us sick. Each piece of chocolate is a dogma, cause, attitude, or role. Rather than Lucy "splaining" to Ricky, we have to explain to ourselves.

We live not only in one episode, we live in a never-ending series of episodes like a never-ending story. Rather than think it through, we "just know" that we know more than other people. What we know could avert disaster. Other people should help us but instead they scoff and hinder. We are rebels out to help people who should help themselves but don't know enough. We are rebels out to save a situation that many people don't even know needs saving. Despite the resistance of others, we cling to our beliefs. Finally a few people believe us enough to go along for awhile. Little clues begin to add up. We are right. Last minute action saves the day. We don't expect a reward but are gratified by gratitude. The political versions are commitment to dogma such as "freedom", "justice", "equality", and "save the unborn". Then it all begins again. The academic version is commitment to an ideology such as, in anthropology, "social facts", culture, structure, contextualization, deconstruction, process, evolution, Darwinian psychology, commodity theory, power, etc.

Modern stories about detectives, ghosts, bizarrely crazy people, aberrant mindsets that make their own kind of sense, criminal masterminds, people who want to take over the world, serial killers, and dedicated men-and-women who stop them, all arose in the early 1800s with Romanticism. Americans know Edgar Allen Poe and give him the honor of inventing the detective story and modern horror story but the honor likely belongs to the German Ernst Theodor Amadeus (Wilhelm) (E.T.A.) Hoffman a decade before Poe. He wrote the story that became "The Nutcracker". To show links between Romanticism and these forms is another book but here I can point out a few ties between Romanticism and detective stories. The detective story depends on a secret, usually about a crime that happened in the past, often because of an aberrant mindset or deed. The story needs a social misfit rebel to uncover the secret. Usually the secret is about a family that seems normal outside but grew from a twisted root. When the detective uncovers the secret, the family, and society, comes to a resolution and a new better order begins. Then the detective goes on to solve the next crime in an unending process. Think how the other kinds of stories match the Romantic pattern.

In some fairy stores and other Celtic stories: this world would be the best heaven we could have if it didn't suffer the troubles artificially made by people and especially by lords. If the world were well run, then the normal life of romantic love, marriage, family, work, crafts, kin, farming, drinking, eating, and celebrating would be as good as a sentient-moral-aesthetic being could want. Squabbles would not ruin this world and actually would enhance it. This kind of world could go on forever and nobody would get bored. Time does not pass in this world as in ours. For charming modern variations on this vision, read the short stories of J.R.R. Tolkien or think about Hobbit land after the War. Then something always undercuts paradise. This motif might be more widespread in Indo-European culture than fairy and Celtic stories. Something like it also shows up in Taoist stories from China.

Romanticism promises something like the never-ending heaven-like joy of normal life. Then the world of Romanticism goes wrong not in a small way that enhances the world but in a big way that ruins the world. Romanticism does not account for how it goes wrong. Romanticism never sees that what goes wrong is in Romanticism itself. Trying to glamorize never-ending-normal-life forces life to go wrong. Glamorizing this life is what both makes Romanticism possible and makes sure it will fail.

Most people have had situations in their lives that feel like home and to which they want to return: finding your music, hunting with buddies, seeing the whole Star Wars saga, have a great run of parties, etc. This is the modern equivalent of a fairy land that goes on and on in its own time, a world much like our world and that is better than heaven. This is what Romanticism offers but cannot deliver. The yearning for this kind of fairy land can be deep and not getting it can be as painful as any drug withdrawal. We would do a lot to live in it always.

Some Pop Song.

The musician Lou Reed both promoted and satirized Romanticism. Below are excerpts from his song “Heroin” – maybe excerpts will promote sales and so I can avoid a lawsuit. “Smack” is heroin. The Spirit tries to use sticky material stuff (“smack”) as a means to spiritual ends. The eyedropper is a particular project of the Spirit. The movement of the Spirit that should end in the fusion of the material and the Spirit ends in the sadness of bad Passion and Cunning. The final worst is politics. Compare Reed’s “Heroin” with Tennyson’s poem “Ulysses” – it is easy and fun to read. Van Dyke Parks’ album “Jump” shows: going out from self, forgetting self, dividing into self and other, excluding other, alienation, anger, blaming, sin, class struggle, and inevitable politics. It is also fun and has catchy tunes. The duet that Parks sings with his son about God not forsaking us is chilling. Van Morrison in all of his phases is Romantic, romantic, and always charming. Like Reed, David Bowie both used and satirized Romanticism. Some is biting and funny, such as “Young Americans”. His work shows the role of attitude, such as “Fame”. All Bob Dylan’s work is Romantic. I like him through “Self Portrait”. Then, bad glamorizing wins out. Dylan’s albums of the 1970s are paradigms of how the bored American middle class uses Romanticism to fool itself, self-indulge, feel heroic, identify with a fantasy rebel underbelly, and evade reality, in particular the album “Blood on the Tracks” and the hit songs “Tangled Up in Blue” and “Hurricane”.

From “Heroin” by Lou Reed:

I have made a big decision
 I’m gonna try to nullify my life
 ‘Cause when the smack begins to flow
 When it shoots up the dropper’s neck
 When I’m closing in on death
 I wish that
 I was born a thousand years ago
 I wish that
 I’d sailed the darkened seas
 On a great big clipper ship
 Going from this land here to that
 In a sailor’s suit and cap

Away from big cities
Where a man cannot be free
Of all the evils in this town
Of himself and those around
Everybody putting everybody else down
All the politicians making crazy sounds
All the dead bodies piled up in mounds
And I guess but I just don't know
And I guess but I just don't know

Romanticism has shaped pop ideas of journeys of discovery, artists, vampires, werewolves, zombies, evil geniuses who want the world, heroes who fight evil geniuses, heroic archaeologists, bad ass daughters of archaeologists, luminal suspension, death, living on in death, in-between shadow lands, suicide, serial killers, people who hunt serial killers, religion, religious conflict, and politics.

Detectives, Mad World Conquerors, and Serial Killers.

Particular projects of the Spirit are qualitatively distinct; one project cannot measure another; and often one project cannot even understand another: Hindus cannot understand Taoists, and Protestants cannot judge Roman Catholics. Individual people are like projects. We are unique. One person cannot judge another; and often one person cannot understand another.

This view forces a gap between projects, cultures, societies, mindsets, art, and persons. While the Spirit is unfolding, as long as the Spirit revels in particular projects, and as long as we are satisfied with our role in particular projects, this gap is not so important. But if we really want to understand the Spirit, especially as the Culmination of the Spirit is upon us, and we really want to be in the mainline of the Spirit, then this gap can be a problem. We have to be able to read across mindsets and people. We have to be able to see into people. We have to see how their mindset makes them do what they do, how they "tick". We have to be able to infer a mindset, even a complex convoluted mindset with motives unlike ours, from what people do and the clues that they leave.

We have to become mental detectives. We have to expect odd criminals with elaborate mindsets, and we have to be able to unravel even an odd perverted mindset. To do this, we have to be able to put ourselves in the heads of even demented criminals. We have to use the clues they leave, and their acts, as evidence to get inside their heads. Thus is born the modern detective. I add nothing here.

The Spirit is the spirit of the whole world. The Spirit does work through particular projects but some of them are really big. In the end, in the Culmination, the Spirit will reveal itself to the whole world as the Spirit. "In the end, there can be only one". This is already happening.

It is good if we work with the Spirit and know it, but not everyone works with the Spirit. The world is full of leftover projects of the Spirit and leftover persons; in modern terms, of leftover programs as in the movie series "The Matrix". Like the Spirit, and like Satan the Adversary in Christianity, these people want to be the world. Because they cannot be the world in the same sense as the Spirit unfolds into the world and is the world, they do the next best thing for them: they conquer the world. Villains always want to conquer

the world. They are not satisfied with sex, money, sensual gratification, or artistic achievement. They are not satisfied to be as powerful as other villains, and as free from harm as anybody on Earth including free from the harm of other such villains. They want it all. They want to impose their will. Rather than unfold themselves by helping other persons act, as the Spirit does with persons, these villains want to impose their will and make their will the only will. To defeat them, we cannot use force alone, as Jesus would not use force alone against the Devil. To defeat them, we must do what the Spirit does, like James Bond, we must use our wits and we have to enlist the aid of friends and other good people. We have to get into their heads. We have to be detectives and fighters. Thus is born the agent of good against evil, even if he-she doesn't know that is what he-she is.

The Spirit and Life have a close relation. I do not go into the logic or the history of this link from Judaism and Christianity. The Spirit promotes life. The birth of a new project is like the birth of a new life. While the Spirit also takes away projects and life, the Spirit does it in the right time, with the right emotion, and with the right reasons. Who imitates the Spirit but is not the Spirit and so interjects the wrong time, bad emotion, and Cunning? A serial killer is like this. The killing is part of a scenario, that is, a project. It has reasons like a work of art but it has bad cunning reasons. Because the killing is only an imitation of the Spirit, it can never give satisfaction as does the work of the Spirit even if the killer gets a temporary thrill and thinks he-she is satisfied. New killings are not new projects like the projects of the Spirit. They do not make anything new even if they are conducted like dramas. To stop all this, we need someone who can get into the mind of the serial killer. We need the mental detective again.

In daily life before the modern world, most people lived in one mindset, culture, society, or paradigm. I do not say they had no hardship or confusion, only that most people lived in one world. In daily life in the modern world, we face many projects, worlds, mindsets, cultures, societies, groups, paradigms, and kinds of persons. These "others" want things, often things we don't understand. We have to give them what they want or deny them. Even in one family in one culture, life can seem like this because parents are not children, children are not of the same age, and boys are not girls. We have to be mental detectives whether we like it or not. We are not always sure we are on the right side, and we can drift into dark bad thoughts. It is comforting to see on TV or in movies, people similar to us but maybe smarter than us, who have to deal with the same problems but on a vastly larger scale. It is comforting to see them win almost all the time even when they undergo hardships and have to pay a price. It is comforting to see a good guy take on the mindset of a bad guy, become a bad guy, and emerge on the other side still sane and good. That is one reason why we find mental detectives so appealing even when they fight serial killers and villains who want to take over the world.

Economics as Romanticism.

It helps to look at something that we think is un-Romantic as Romantic. Because of its important role, capitalism is a good choice. To describe capitalism as Romantic does not mean economics is not a solid social science or capitalism is a plot that does no good. I like economics and capitalism. Still, cultural ideologies intrude into our lives where we least expect. Ironically, most critics of economics attack it from a Romantic point of view, thus showing how Romanticism really does "get us coming and going".

In economics, people are made of Passion and Reason. Passion comes out in all the desires for goods that people want, including material goods (bread, cars, TV sets), services (manicure, watching sports on

TV), social relations (friendship, gossiping), deeper social relations (spouse, children), and even choice of religion (Lutheran or Methodist). Reason is how people go about satisfying their Passions. Reason serves Passion. Under the right conditions, that is under a fair economy, Passion is overwhelmingly good. Passion and Reason is rational strategic thinking. In economics, Reason in the service of Passion is smart shopping. Economists don't usually stress this aspect, but a person can be "chaotic". Passions are irrational in that they are not necessarily rational. They just are. People want what they want, and that is that. This is a kind of chaos. Yet, in the right situations, the chaos of each person can be creative. The right situations are when Passion guides Reason to smart shopping in a fair economy. Then people are Creative Chaos using Reason to serve Passion to create themselves and recreate the economy.

We need food, clothing, shelter, and raw materials from the material world but the material world is not rational, it is chaotic. The material world acts on us, too often hurting us. We need to tame the material world and to get out of the material world what we need. That is what business firms do. They impose Reason on the chaos of the material world to make chaos creative. They impose scientific production processes on the material world to create stuff. They use Creative Chaos to make stuff that we consumers want. They are smart producers as consumers are smart shoppers.

Business firms do have a Passion, and that is Profit. They pursue their Passion with complete rational Reason. Passion guides their Reason. The Reason of scientific production and the Reason of pursuing profit are aspects of the same Reason that serves the Passion of firms. Thus Reason serves Passion, that is, Profit, even among business firms. Whether the drive for Profit is an example of Creative Chaos, I do not go into here, but the simple answer is "yes".

In pursuing Profit with their Reason, business firms make the goods that consumers want. That is how firms and consumers get together. They get together on the free market, they get together best there, and that is the only place they get together best. So, in the right situations, a fair economy, this relation harnesses chaos to make it creative and to serve the Passion of consumers. It is Reason in the service of good Passion. The free market is the "good family arena" of capitalism.

In a fair economy, the Passion of consumers united with Reason of Consumers meets with the Passion of business firms united with the Reason of business firms, to harness chaos, make chaos creative, and find the good Passion needs of consumers and firms. People get what they want and firms make a proper profit. Smart shopping and smart producing are good Passion united with Reason to create a beneficial economy. This is the ideal free enterprise fair competition capitalist economy.

As long as the economy is fair, the union of good Passion with Reason (the smart shopping of consumers and smart production of business firms) results in the greatest welfare for all consumers (most happiness, satisfaction, and goodness). This is truly good Passion guiding Reason.

Business firms meet consumers in the free fair market. The free fair market is where good Passion unites with reason to tame chaos, make chaos creative, and find the greatest welfare for everybody. The free market is where the new order is forged (synthesized) and re-forged from potential chaos and potential opposites. The free market is where the proper order overcomes disorder and avoids hyper-order. The term "the free market" is shorthand for all of this.

When consumers act as smart shoppers to choose goods (and services), and business firms act as smart producers to make goods, both use their Wit to unify Passion and Reason in a higher movement and higher form.

The role of Intuition and Wit shows up best in new ideas, inventions, products, marketing, shows, and movies. Business firms show Intuition and Wit when they dream up and develop new products. Looking at the life of Steve Jobs, can anyone doubt the role of Intuition and Wit? Not only firms but consumers show some Intuition and Wit when they respond to new products or develop new technology in the areas that please them. The development of social media and Internet videos is the expression of consumer Intuition and Wit, and one of the most important new forms of the Spirit.

Like almost all human products, nearly everything sold in the market combines both material and idea or material and spiritual. A smart phone isn't just a device; it is a way of life. You don't just eat a fast food lunch; you give yourself what you deserve. You don't just drive a car; you drive a wild strong animal or a classy luxury name from the days of car glory. You don't buy insurance; you buy peace of mind. You don't watch a TV show; you watch what your guys watch. The modern economy combines the material and spiritual. The modern economy is an extension of the essential human combination of the material and spiritual that the Spirit likes so much. The modern economy is project of the Spirit that is realized through the combination of producers and consumers, material and spiritual.

Bad chaos intrudes partly in the acts of business firms who are "crooked" and make bad products or offer bad services. Economists use the term "deliberate unfair competition" or deliberate "market structuring" for what people call the Cunning of bad business firms. As long as the economy is fair, the union of good Passion with Reason suppresses bad chaos, bad Passion, and Cunning. Bad business firms and bad products go away automatically. Because consumers are smart shoppers, they unite good Passion with Reason, they are able to keep track of good and bad firms over the long run, they shop exclusively with good firms over the long run, and thus they drive out bad firms over the long run.

Creative Chaos, good Passion, and the Reason of the economy is best represented by business people, innovators, entrepreneurs, and "job creators". When the economy is running smoothly, these people are its Reason-based Jedi, like the old Jedi council. When the economy is "out of whack" and threatened by bad Passion and Disorder (bad Reason), then these people naturally arise to set things right again. They are the rebels that unite Sith Passion and Jedi Reason into a system that is better than either. Then they are like Jedi united with good Sith to make something even better.

Sometimes, the actions of bad firms call attention to the system, and we want to intervene in the system. In this case, bad hyper-order comes from an interventionist state that seeks to take over our Passion (our demand). Bad hyper-order is like chaos that has not yet been made creative. These interventionists are like the hyper-ordered non-creative sterile Jedi council before the Jedi united with the Sith. They are the misguided Liberal state that seeks to force all the people into one seemingly rational, but wrong, ideal of what is best. They tell us what we want, what to make, and how to make it. In this situation, Cunning is collectivist policy. The best antidote is a freer fairer economy that again makes chaos creative and unites good Passion with smart shopping and smart producing.

Hyper-Reason interventionist policies actually serve to invite the bad Passion and Cunning of bad firms and bad people. Bad policies turn Creative Chaos into simple chaos. They invite bad Sith to arise as bad business people, products, or political leaders. They invite bad people to institute their own hyper-order as fascism, and to do so in the name of a false free market. Cunning is the kind of cooperation between business and government that we see in the classic Fascist states of World War Two, in China, and in the pro-business policies of the Republican Party. It is what economists used to call “mercantilism”. Bad interventionist policies invite bad Passion and Cunning. Economists say business firms and people arise who “seek rent” from the government. The correct antidote is taming chaos to make it creative through Reason in the service of good Passion, and so to create the proper new order based on smart shopping from consumers and smart producing from business firms.

This picture is closer to reality than naïve critics of the free market know. Regardless of how realistic all this is, we do think this way. If you believe this story is a fantasy tale with no effect on how people think or what they do, or no effect on state policy, then talk to a free market economist, politician, or right wing TV commentator. Read the classical texts of economics. That does not mean it is false.

Back to Selfishness, Materialism, and Trendiness.

Recall that the Spirit is alone even in wholeness, and is fractured, isolated, and alone when it is out on its many projects. We are like small versions of the Spirit. We drift into isolation, unable to connect to other people. They are unable to connect to us. We “do our own thing”, carry out our own projects, convinced that we can gain satisfaction that way, but failing. When we fail, we do not assess our situation but instead embark on another project hoping that will give us satisfaction where the previous project failed. This is not yet selfishness but it is easy to see how it can lead to selfishness in the right conditions.

In ideology, capitalism thinks in terms of isolated strategic individuals and isolated strategic competing business firms. Firms that do not pursue profit, and only profit, with ruthless efficiency, disappear. The satisfaction, or “utility”, of one individual cannot be compared to the satisfaction of another. The only thing people want, and the only thing that people can get, is satisfaction. We can only know what we want and we can only go after what we want. We cannot help anybody find satisfaction and we can't really get our own satisfaction from the happiness of anybody else. In reality, this is not true, but it can be true enough so that people do feel alone.

When Romanticism and capitalism combine under the right conditions, then people can feel the isolation and selfishness that critics of modern times complain about. On the other hand, people do not have to feel this as much as critics complain about. I am not sure if Romanticism-plus-capitalism leads people to feel more isolated and selfish than other systems; as I said before, I have seen selfish isolated farmers, and ideally they are supposed to be happy community members. Probably when we feel our institutions are not working properly and that our actions are useless, then we probably also feel alone and turn to selfish behavior and selfish buying. That might be easier to do under Romanticism. It seems to happen enough for it to be a chronic problem but not so strongly that we can't fight it.

The Spirit uses the material world for spiritual ends. Christianity teaches that we are a blend of material and spiritual, the material can serve the spiritual, and the blend is superior to either pure extreme (except with God who is a pure spirit but superior to us). We can only get at the spiritual through the material. So

I can imagine Romanticism that is not crassly materialistic. I can imagine materialism that deliberately seeks a good blend of the spiritual and material in proper projects, such as, feeding the poor, making a discovery in science, or even helping to feed and house your own family. Yet, when conditions thwart spiritual work, when the institutions that we made ourselves don't work as they should, and, at the same time, institutions such as the capitalist market give us a lot of toys to play with such as TV sets, smart phones, "phablets", cars, and drones, then it is easy to seek in material stuff the satisfaction that we do not get in spiritual work. It is easy to see in toys minor projects of the Spirit and to seek in them what we should seek in greater projects of the Spirit. It is Spiritual to be on the cutting edge of technology. It is spiritual to be a smart shopper and to buy a lot. We can't get real satisfaction that way but we can chase a Spirit substitute in the form of another material-semi-spiritual toy. We can see another movie, buy a nice car, or buy clothes that just look and feel really good.

The Spirit always has a project and never runs out of projects. The Spirit never settles into one project for all time. Each project must end, and another project must begin. On the other hand, projects of the Spirit are amazing and can last hundreds, thousands, or millions of years. The Earth is a project of the Spirit, and it has been going for at least four billion years. Humanity is a project of the Spirit, and is at least five million years old. Even projects that the Spirit uses people to do, such as Classical Greece and Rome, India, or democracy, are big and take hundreds of years. Even with human projects, the Spirit has only a few big ones going at once. So, if we imitate the Spirit, we keep busy, but we keep busy on projects that make a real difference, and we have only one or two at a time.

By now, you should see where this is going. A project can be a trend and a trend can be a project. If we do not feel deep satisfaction with any activity (cause etc.) then we can feel it is not really of the Spirit, and we should drop it. Because we never settle deep issues, we can never really deeply feel that our actions are of the Spirit. The capitalist market is tremendously successful not only at giving us material goods but at giving us trends. Instead of settling the question of chronic unemployment, we can listen to another piece of hip-hip, rock, or hip-hop culture or watch another movie. We can figure out the latest big thing. We can find the latest quality must-see TV before anybody else. When other institutions and nor working well, trendiness is not only a cure for boredom but is positively spiritual.

Where the actual balance falls, how trendy anyone is, depends on the personality of that person and on how that person can find real activities to get interested in other than trends. Because our institutions are not working as they should, we always feel a little off-center and willing to dip into trends. It is only natural to do wonder what others are doing and to do it too. What is the latest academic idea from Europe? So nobody except a dedicated monk ever totally avoids trends, or should. If our institutions are working well and we feel that our actions have real good results, then we don't waste our life in trends, we only have some natural fun with them. I don't know how to compare recent America because no other place in the history of the world has had so many opportunities for trends. Even if we felt tremendously satisfied with our institutions and our contributions, we would still have more opportunities than the most unhappy peon in Medieval Europe and would play with more trends than the Czars of the 1700s. Every minor league "foody" in America eats better than most French kings until about 1600. Marketers and our friends are amazingly clever at getting us involved in trends. As a wild guess, I would say that Americans are a bit less satisfied with their lives and a bit more trendy, especially more than I dream about, but they are ready to put down trends and so some hard un-fashionable work when called on and when they think it will help.

I leave it to you to assess how much blame should fall on Romanticism alone without other conditions. The real point is to see the overall pattern and to seek ways out while still having some fun.

Dogma.

This section is an introduction to a larger issue that I can't go into here. For fun, see the movie "Dogma" by Kevin Smith, who also did "Mall Rats", "Clerks", and "Jersey Girl". I think he is a good sincere Roman Catholic Christian who, through his movies, tries to interpret Roman Catholic ideas so they are relevant to our world and not mere dogmas. Contrasts between noise and silence in the movie, especially by God, comment on dogma. His idea of forgiveness in "Clerks" is far beyond any forgiving that I can muster, and, I think, what Jesus had in mind.

I have said that I dislike dogma. Dogma differs from principles mixed with practicality; and the teachings of Jesus are not dogma. Some conservatives dislike dogma. They see nearly all the ideas of the left as dogma, and blame that dogma for all modern malaise. I agree a bit but disagree more. As they are used, conservative ideas are as much dogma as ideas of the left. Conservatives cannot offer a program based only on old traditions, without using ideas, without using new ideas, and then those ideas turn into bad dogma. If it were used correctly, the idea of the free market would be good but in conservative practice it turns into a bad dogma, and could be used by them no other way. To show how I see dogma and how I compare to conservatives would require looking into how ideas turn into dogma under any system and then especially under conservative practice. That is too much for here.

Consider the idea of "freedom". As people commonly understand the idea, it does more good than harm. Who wants to live under political, social, or cultural tyranny? If we do not hold the idea strongly enough, then we lapse into slavery. We have all heard "freedom is not free", and it is true. Now consider absolute freedom. Everybody gets to do what he-she wants with little regard for any other person or thing; and everybody expects the state to back him-her. Obviously this has become right without responsibility and is wicked. That is typical of ideas turning into dogma. Consider the idea of "equality". Gross inequality of wealth or rank is disgusting, morally disgusting, hurts society, and hurts the economy. On the other hand, it is not true that everybody has equal ability and equal drive. We want people to be rewarded according to ability and drive, and we want people to be able to give to their families according to what they have earned with their talent and work. We cannot make sure that everybody has the same income or wealth. We cannot make sure everybody has a good job, nice house, excellent schools, state-of-the-art medical care throughout an un-naturally prolonged life, and absolutely the same say in all political affairs. We cannot make everybody just as smart and just as talented. Trying to force too much equality turns into collectivist tyranny and another form of even-worse inequality; that is the lesson of "Animal Farm" and of the short-story-turned-into-movie "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut.

Ideas tend to turn into dogmas under systems like liberalism, conservatism, traditional religion, and Romanticism. Sometimes, as in good Buddhism, the middle path is the best way to see an idea and use an idea, and the best way to keep it from turning into a dogma. But the middle way is not always best. What we need is experience and good thinking. That is just what dogma blocks. Dogma sustains itself. Dogma is often part of a system that eats the world. Both lefties and righties are equally blameworthy.

How this happens, and to what ideas it happens, varies with the socio-economic-cultural system, and it varies with particular conditions of the system at particular times. There is no good short analysis of this effect to refer to.

So, the questions for here should be:

- Is dogma more prevalent in modern life than before?
- Do people live more by dogma in modern life than they lived by good ideas before?
- What kind of dogmas are most prevalent, and why?
- Does Romanticism turn ideas into dogma?
- Is glamorization of dogma under Romanticism distinct from the spiritualization of dogma in traditional religion?
- Do the common dogmas in modern life serve Romanticism?
- When does Romanticism lead to more or less dogma?
- How does trust in institutions and belief in the good effects of our acts influence how good ideas turn into bad dogmas, and which ideas turn into dogmas?
- How does the Romantic idea of the project lie behind the Romantic treatment of ideas and dogma?
- Does the Romantic use of ideas and dogmas favor moral relativity and moral absolutism?
- What roles do capitalism and populist democracy play? How do they interact with Romanticism? Which system takes the lead?

The brief answers are: Modern life has more ideas than previous periods. We do tend to turn ideas into dogmas, and we stick with them enough to cause harm. We also hop between dogmas like trends when that suits us. We treat dogmas like projects. I cannot go into which ideas we tend to treat as dogmas. I think Romanticism is more prone to dogmas than some other systems; I don't know how it compares to traditional Christianity or to ideal liberalism. The Romantic use of dogma leads to both moral relativity and absolutism. Romantic glamorization is much like spiritualization in traditional religion. The Romantic use of dogma reinforces Romanticism. Capitalism and populist democracy started carrying the ball but not Romanticism has picked it up and controls the game. Capitalism and populist democracy continue to play big roles helping Romanticism.

PART 9: Assessment of Romanticism.

Recall that Romanticism always fails for people in general and for society as a whole, at least in the ways that matter. The institutions that we make to serve the Spirit in democracy don't work out. The labor we

should do as part of the Spirit doesn't work out. Failure creates anxiety. We can't alleviate the anxiety by quitting on democracy or the Spirit. We find other reasons for failure. We look for people to blame other than us. Rich people blame poor. Poor people blame rich. Black people blame Whites, and vice versa. And so on.

The people who get blamed, even the rich, conservatives, and Republicans, can now claim status as a marginalized group, part of the underbelly, the rebel vanguard of the Spirit, and entitled. They have even more right to blame other groups and to receive benefits.

So a strange self-sustaining vibration develops between many groups, all claiming to be the vanguard of the Spirit, to represent creativity and life, to be at the center of democracy and the Spirit and marginalized at the same time, and all claiming entitlement. Sometimes this situation is funny but mostly it is sad.

So Much Spirituality.

Almost everybody likes to think of him-herself as spiritual and likes to think of his-her life as in tune with the Spirit and adding to the work of the Spirit. Before Romanticism, people wanted this but not everybody thought he-she really was holy and working for the Spirit. People might have thought they were part of a social body and the social body was sanctified but they did not think they in particular were sanctified. In Medieval Europe, a bishop was sanctified but not a cobbler. A king might have thought he was sanctified but a peasant thought he-she was sanctified only through playing a good part in the kingdom. People did not think they were participating in God if they joined a movement such as peasant revolt. I doubt Lady Godiva thought not paying taxes was holy even if justified.

Now, whether we admit it or not, we hope we often participate in the Spirit, and that our projects, if not our jobs, are of the Spirit. We seek movements that link us to the Spirit. "Pro Life" and "Pro Choice" are not just movements, not just about women, and not even just about morality, but about the work of the Spirit in our time. The sociologist Max Weber might have said this is a natural extension of the Protestant idea of the "calling" to God and of our life and occupation as a "profession" of God. I would not dispute Weber but I think this desire to see of our lives spiritually also is a tendency that has roots in human nature and Indo-European culture, and comes out strongly with Romanticism.

All this might be merely one of the charming features of Romanticism except that it has a couple of strong results, two bad and one good.

First, we want to think our occupations are part of the work of the Spirit. In fact, a lowly clerk actually is an important part of a big system and he-she helps other people more than he-she knows. But we don't feel that way. We feel tiny in our jobs. We feel our jobs hinder the work of the Spirit. That feeling makes us restless. It contributes to the search for projects to make us feel holy. It contributes to confusion over our relation to the Spirit and the play of the Spirit in the world.

Second, except for Robin Hood (Wood) and his Band of Merry Men (and women), people did not think bandits were doing the work of the Spirit until about the same time Romanticism arose, about the middle 1700s. Then we get the romantic and Romantic "highwayman". Even Robin Hood in his modern form does not date to the middle ages but to Walter Scott in the late 1700s in novel "Ivanhoe". Peasants have

long glamorized bandits as rebels against lords but nobody saw bandits and nasty people as more sacred than a farmer or worker. Nobody would have glamorized gamblers and thieves as we now do the lower classes and some criminals. Think of they appear in many movies after about 1980, including a couple of really good movies such as "The Grifters". All "film noire" glamorizes the underbelly of society even if the characters "get theirs" in the end. Glamorizing the underbelly and bad people has had bad results, the least of which is that our minds are foggy.

The Sherlock Holmes saga, especially the recent movies with Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law, is an exercise in heroes joining the underbelly while trying not to lose themselves in it. Moriarty and Holmes take on aspects of the lower classes and use them. Yet both also draw a clear line between themselves and the lower classes and make a point of being able to jump out of the lower classes. Watson remains aloof although he often has more human sympathy toward poor people than either Holmes or Moriarty. Charles Dickens is drawn to the lower classes and criminals, and sees their humanity, but does not make the mistake of trusting them or wanting to be them. His heroes (and heroines) want to get out of the typical crime-ridden lower class. Fagin was not a good guy. Oliver Twist had to betray Fagin. Modern people are not as good at getting into and out of the lower classes as Holmes, Moriarty, Watson, or the man characters of Dickens.

Sometime after Dickens and Doyle, we stepped over the line into glamorizing the underbelly without also seeing its faults. We have fallen into our own trap of glamorizing the lower classes and non-White ethnic groups. We want to be the glamorous version of them, not the real one. Movies such as "Donnie Brasco" and movies about soldiers who do "questionable things" in battle, such as "American Sniper", show what happens when we cross the line and struggle getting back. The "Spaghetti Western" series starring Clint Eastwood, and his movie "Grand Torino", show people straddling the line more than Holmes but finally drawing a line and staying on the good side. Some Bond movies push this theme. Revenge movies such as "The Losers" show what happens when some good guys do lose their way.

Especially since World War Two, we have let bad people get away with a lot of bad crap because they put on the Romantic mantle of the downtrodden lower classes and non-White ethnics. We do a lot of silly things because we take on our own made-up role of the glamorized lower class rebel. I take up this topic again in the chapter on decency and indecency.

One of the bad mistakes we make is to demonize the police, especially in their relations to Blacks and other non-White ethnic groups. I am not trying to "whitewash the cops". I know about mistakes and bad attitudes. The police do far more good than bad and they are not the agents of the devil oppressing the Spirit as the Spirit tries to rise out of the Creative Chaos of non-White ethnicity and the social underbelly. Romantic glamorization makes us unable to assess correctly and do the right thing. We need to get rid of Romantic blinders so we can see clearly and figure out the right thing.

Glamorizing the lower classes and identifying with them goes with demonizing rich people and business firms and wanting to reject them. It goes along with seeing the police as simply tools of the rich. How socio-economic class and Romanticism fit together is beyond the scope of this book. It is a mistake to think one simply makes the other but they do interact.

Third, on the good side, allowing that people other than aristocrats might be doing the work of the Spirit has gone a long way toward extending human kindness beyond the usual limits of our group and our lords. Modern people are good at seeing the human side of other people even if we glamorize it and make it unrealistic. Glamorizing the humanity of other people is better than refusing to see it at all and so making an excuse to hurt them. Extending the Spirit to other people is doing the work of Jesus even if we have to glamorize it. Without being able to see other people as children of the Spirit and as doing the Work of the Spirit, we would not have had the Civil Rights movement, Gay rights, feminism, or the labor movement. We would not have helped poor people in the Third World. We would not have sent food and medical care.

(1) Assessing Bad Effects.

All the numbered sections in this sequence belong to my assessment of Romanticism.

It is hard to assess Romanticism briefly. First, it includes features that are found in other stances but it uses the features differently. Second, when we find a dominant stance that we don't like, we blame all problems on it. So, when people are selfish, entitled, zealous, or overly herd-like, I can say Romanticism did it even when it didn't. I would guess that Romanticism causes about half the pain while particular faults and other stances cause the other half.

One way to assess a stance is to list effects, find what effects have in common, find what makes an effect distinct, and trace it all back to themes in the stance. I can do that with Romanticism but don't have the space. Instead, first I state a few assessments and then focus on one relation: how Romanticism adds to the problems in democracy.

I prefer the stodgy Jedi Council to dramatic Sith and glorious rebels. The Enlightenment view, relying on a good mix of reason and emotion, is true enough while the Romantic view is more than false enough. I know reason cannot give us all we need. I enjoy passion and think it is an integral part of our lives. But I prefer the mix of passion and reason not be a glamorized mystical union, not be ruled entirely by passion, and not be awash in bad passions and cunning. Passion alone cannot save us. The union of Passion and Reason, supposedly led by good Passion, cannot save us. When we indulge our passions, inevitably we fall into bad passion and cunning. I am not at all cunning and I don't want to develop that skill. I want to keep good and bad. I want to enjoy good passions and control bad passions. I prefer that the mix of reason and passion lie closer to the feeling that comes with simple acts of decency and goodness. I prefer that the mix actually includes a big helping of reason by way of principles. Principles are one big correct way to mix reason, passion, creativity, and goodness.

(2) Romanticism Helps Erode Democracy.

After the Great Depression, the rise of big government and big business, the rise of one world economy, and the oil shocks of the 1970s, democracy could not handle most international problems and many domestic problems. The people will not support political parties that tell the full truth and will not elect officials who tell the full truth and really do something. Each subgroup insists on a minimum of power and prosperity and is willing to diminish the total power and prosperity of the nation to get it. We are happy to destroy nature for power and prosperity now. We would rather indulge in short term acts that make us

feel good now than deal with big problems over the long term. We willingly hurt our own nation so much that eventually it must diminish and our own group suffers too.

This behavior is not limited to democracy, or to democracy under Romanticism, but Romanticism makes it worse in democracy. When world conditions got bad enough, Romanticism made this kind of behavior so bad under democracy that democracy started failing. This is where we stand now.

In describing how Romanticism hurts democracy, I don't describe all the problems of democracy or the worst problems. I choose among problems to convey an idea. I don't describe simply seeking power as when political parties curry favor with ethnic groups, immigrants, and the military. I disparage Left and Right equally. I repeat from Chapter Two on my political values. The causes that serve as the focus of bad Romantic action are not necessarily bad in themselves. In fact, usually they are good and quite worthwhile. The people who pursue them for Romantic reasons do not help the causes and sometimes hurt the cause. They pursue the causes out of proportion (irrationally) so that they do not get at the roots of problems and they neglect other more pressing issues.

=> People learn how to use Romantic ideology for their gain even when they don't know it is ideology or Romantic. The fact that anybody does this, along with the specific things people do, undermine self-government and undermine relations between groups in democracy. People, and groups including ethnic, gender, religious, and socio-economic class, present themselves not only as disadvantaged and entitled but also as people who have a special relation with the Spirit and are specially entitled. They present themselves as rebels or as the Remnant. They present themselves as lively, creative, artistic, and the embodiment of Creative Chaos. Blacks have rhythm while Whites have harmony and melody and so both are the Creative Chaos of the Spirit and entitled. Blacks are rebels while Whites are the Remnant preserving order. Blacks are the holy Remnant who bring back to us ideas of humanity and kindness. Whites are the creative rebels who drive business and science, and so bring a better life to everybody. All these special claims hurt everybody.

=> As I wrote this, a flood of women and children were coming into the United States illegally from Central America. They said they were coming to avoid the drug gangs that had arisen along new drug routes in Central America after the U.S. slowed smuggling through the Caribbean. Allow that what "illegals" say about drug gangs is true. What will happen if we let them stay? In three years, or five, another wave will come using the same reason. Along with them will come many tens of thousands who do not flee drug gangs but take advantage of the situation to seek jobs in the United States. It will happen over and over again. We cannot deal with this issue until we deal with the drug market in the United States. In the meantime, we cannot allow hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants into the U.S. annually. Yet the Left, including Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, supports allowing these people in. As far as I can tell, the Left gives no thought as to the root problem in the drug wars, does not say how to solve that problem, and ignores that waves of illegal immigration will recur and recur. It cannot separate fleeing for safety from coming to the U.S. for economic gain. Why does the Left champion these "illegals" but gives no thought to the causes and the future? Because to do so allows middle and upper class people on the Left to feel good about themselves. The typically middle class families of the Left will suffer little in the short run while the working class families of the Republican Right will take the biggest hit. The Left can feel like rebels against the heartless Republican power structure. They put their feelings before the true needs of the nation, the countries that are being hurt by drug gangs, and the world. Illegal immigrants, and some

of their supporters here, know that Americans are susceptible to this kind of argument and so cast themselves in light of this predicament regardless of reality.

=> The spending habits of the United States federal government are insane, and the spending of the states is not saner. The Right blames personal entitlement while the Left blames military spending. Because I just criticized the Left, here I criticize the Right. Ignore the dubious benefits of heavy military spending. If the United States dominated the world economy as it did from after World War Two until about 1970, then the United States could afford to play world police officer and it might even gain more than it lost. The world has changed. We cannot spend our enemies into defeat now. We must have help dealing with Russia and China, and fighting Muslim extremists yet we get help only from a handful of long-term allies. No matter how much a country badmouthed us in the past, when any country needs help, they call on the United States, they expect to get it, and we do give it. America leads the fight against Ebola. We can't afford this and it is not bringing us more than it costs, not even in goodwill. Despite what Vladimir Putin did to the Ukraine, we will not fight a tank war in Europe. We do not need tens of thousands of American soldiers now in South Korea. We do not need even half the military bases we have. We could end half the weapons systems we have and stop development of half the systems that are in the works. A smaller military that worked better with global partners would be more effective. Yet any attempt to scale down meets a Republican chorus for more military, soldiers, missions, bases, and weapons. The defenders of the military think they are patriots and are the rebel minority crusaders against the liberals who would sell out America. They are a small band of heroes keeping the dream of a godly kingdom alive. They are the small hard kernel of resistance against bad chaos. They are both rebels and the remnant. They are the only ones able to harness Creative Chaos. If America can keep the peace on its terms long enough, eventually world capitalism will triumph, there will be a new synthesis, and their order will be the right new order. Running around helping countries is part of the price the Right Wing pays for being the moral leading edge and keeping the moral leading edge.

=> As I wrote this, fast food workers around the United States were calling for a raise in the minimum wage from about \$7 per hour to at least \$10 per hour. They hoped for about \$15 per hour. I don't know what the leaders had in mind for benefits. If we accept that the minimum wage defines how Americans should live at the least, then activists had a point. Compared to average wages and to the buying power of wages, the minimum wage in 2014 is the lowest since the 1970s, maybe ever. In contrast to before 1990 when most fast food workers were young people without families, now many, likely most, fast food workers are full adults with families. The minimum wage will not support a family and will not even make a significant contribution to a group of adult earners trying to support a family together. Republicans allowed the erosion of the minimum wage despite inflation and changes in the work force as their way of eliminating the minimum wage altogether – if the official minimum wage is below the market minimum wage, then, in effect, there is no official minimum wage. The Left was solidly behind workers and against Republicans. Again, the Left did not think it through but jumped on a rebel train instead.

Much as I dislike giving Republicans credit for any sense, they are right about some things. Here is what the Left overlooked in its crusade to be the small band of rebel working class heroes representing the aching masses who cannot represent themselves: Most jobs that would fall under a raise in the minimum wage could easily be mechanized. Look at the register at a fast food place. It does not have numerals; it has little icons of food. It is easy to replace a register operated by an employee with a touch-pad in which customers directly enter orders, even at the drive-through. It is easy to replace a janitor with a small robot

that cleans floors. Even if a job cannot be mechanized, employers will simply do without positions that do not pay for themselves. If the minimum wage rises, many people will be out of a job entirely, and the rate of unemployment will rise. Many people are not smart enough, and do not have enough real education (not a phony piece of paper) to get a decent job. If crappy jobs are not available to them, they will not find a job at all. If they are displaced from a crappy job, they will not find another crappy job. Who says that all jobs in the United States must pay enough so that one person holding that job, that is, a single parent, can raise a family, all by him-herself? It is unreasonable to think this. Only if we had few single parents and a lot of other people who held good jobs and could afford to support the single parents through their taxes can we think this. Now, we have a lot of single parents and few people who can afford to help them through paying taxes. If a person thinks he-she might be a single parent then he-she should make sure he-she can support a family on whatever job he-she gets. He-she should not expect the state to be the other parent or to take over in case of an emergency or in cases inflation overtakes borderline wages. If he-she can only get a crappy job (as long as the market is fairly fair), then he-she should not expect help from the state to support his-her desire to reproduce. If he-she cannot get a job good enough to support a family then he-she should not have a family. The people of the United States have to think about the world economy, the place of the United States in the world economy, what kind of jobs the U.S. can have for a variety of people with a variety of skill levels, if all those jobs can provide enough to raise a family, what to do about people who cannot get jobs, and what to do about people who can only get jobs that are not enough to raise a family. What role will education play? Can we make phony paper education into real education? We have to think about why there are so many single parents with crappy jobs out there, and why they expect the state to raise their family for them. We won't do any of this as long as we act primarily on the basis of being rebel crusaders for our favorite dogma.

=> The Tea Party arose after about 2008 and it was behind a couple of shut-downs of the government. At first, Republican leaders drove the shutdowns because they mistook the situation. The Tea Party sees itself as the rebel band leading the next coming of the Spirit. The Republicans thought they could play rebels too, play magicians, or both. That only works if your guys win. When the last big shutdown lost heavily in the eyes of the American people, the Republican Party had a setback until it swore that it would never shut down the government again. The shutdown of the state cost the whole nation, not just the government, dearly both in terms of business now and in terms of reputation and business in the long run. We need to be clear why the Tea Party and Republicans did what they did. A few Tea Party members thought they were helping America but not many Republicans were that foolish. The vast majority of Republicans did this as a dogma stunt. They were setting up the Romantic scenario and their part in it. They were willing to do this regardless of how it hurt the country. Fortunately, the American people saw through this drama and made some good decisions.

=> In 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, the young Black man Michael Brown assaulted a police officer, and then the police officer shot and killed him. I don't give details. As I wrote this, a grand jury decided not to indict the police officer for any crime. For weeks after the shooting, protests, violence, riots, and looting occurred around Ferguson. With the grand jury decision, they resumed more intensely. The majority of the activists were Blacks but a few Whites joined. Most Blacks were young; the Whites ranged in age. They complained that White people still look down on Blacks, and White police officers stop more Blacks, search more Blacks, hurt more Blacks, and kill more Blacks than police officers of any color do to Whites. Statistically, in some ways, this is true. We have to ask: Are police officers largely justified? Blacks and supporters say officers are not. I believe police officers are largely justified. But that is not the main

point here. Assume Blacks are correct, so that racial prejudice distorts how police officers treat Blacks. While a big point, that is not the main point that should be taken. The fact that protesters made a big deal out of police prejudice and violence toward Blacks covered up a more important point. The covering up is only possible because of the Romantic mindset that lets protestors think they are rebels against “the man” and fighters for a new order when really what protestors are doing is making themselves feel good while avoiding a worse problem. I am not blaming the victim here but I will be blamed.

The real problem is violence among Blacks and what creates violence among Blacks. I cannot go into detail about what lies behind Black crime and Black-on-Black violence. Structural forces play a role such as lack of good jobs and the abysmal Black schools. Cultural forces play a role such as a generally high tolerance for violence and the belief that violence solves problems well. Unless Blacks take care of Black crime and Black-on-Black violence, then protests against police violence against Blacks are a token at best. They are a criminal self-delusion at worst because they cover up the real problems.

Every year in America, a couple hundred Blacks, nearly all criminals, are killed by police officers. I don't know how many of the officers are what ethnic group. Every year, thousands of Blacks kill Blacks. The murder rate among Blacks is higher than for any other major ethnic group. The crime rate among Blacks is higher. As long as crime and murder rates among Blacks are so high, the police must be suspicious and must be ready to respond to violence. Even Blacks need wariness by the police to keep order within the Black community. Some police officers might use wariness as an excuse to vent prejudice but the underlying problem of Black violence is still there. Until underlying Black crime and violence diminish, then, even if police act out of prejudice, police still must act. When police act, some Blacks will die. If police could totally eliminate prejudice, then the rate at which Blacks died would lessen by a small amount but only a small amount. White people are only a small part of the problem. The police are only a small part of the problem. The damage done to the Black community would lessen far more if Blacks would diminish crime and violence among Blacks. Energy spent fighting crime and violence in the Black community would do far more good than energy spent fighting prejudice among Whites even if the police are badly prejudiced. Blacks do stage token rallies against crime and violence – to which Whites almost never come – but the rallies do nothing to stop crime and violence.

Blacks know all this. If Blacks know all this, then why do they spend so much energy against police and so little energy fighting Black violence and crime? By the same logic that a Black person might use to blame a White person, I must say Blacks do it because it makes them feel good, not because it really helps. The same is true of Whites who join protests. When I see a Black leader protest police violence, I know he-she has not faced up to Black crime and violence. I see a Romantic hypocrite using and hurting his-her own people. Blacks won't face up to, and deal with, the real issues.

Blacks can't afford this anymore. Other ethnic groups can't afford it. Democracy can't afford it.

=> Everybody knows that America has the highest murder rate among developed countries and that murder is done by guns. Both sides of the gun issue are self-deluded Romantics, and their delusion allows them to feel good about themselves while pushing focus off the main issue. We might not be able to do much about the main issue but we can face what is going on and stop fooling ourselves. Fooling ourselves about issues like this shows how we fool ourselves in general. For example, take assault weapons and background checks. Despite the use of assault weapons in some truly horrible mass

murders, assault weapons are used in less than 1% of gun murders in the United States. I don't know what percentage of gun murders are done by mentally deranged people but I doubt it is 10%. The vast majority of gun murders are done by people at home or in the neighborhood; who get into an argument over sex, booze, or drugs; and grab a handy pistol. I am not sure since the rise of the 9mm, but, a few years ago, most murders were done with 22 caliber pistols that would not be stopped by current laws. We would stop only a few murders if we forced background checks and banned assault weapons. Checks are costly and they annoy decent gun users. Still, it would not be much trouble to have some checks. Likewise, assault weapons have almost no practical purpose. They are not good hunting weapons. They are not good for home defense. You can't carry them for self-defense. Their main purpose is to let a small group of silly grim guys shoot up the range. It is not a great hardship to ban assault weapons. People against guns would do more good if they forgot about background checks and assault weapons to instead focus on cheap available handguns. Gun lovers would protect rights better and do more good if they allowed checks and they stopped touting assault weapons. So why do people argue about background checks and assault weapons while overlooking the problem with cheap readily available handguns? That would be a hard problem to solve. People who defend gun rights fear that background checks and banning assault weapons is the first step in getting rid of all handguns. People who want to control handguns see that gun lovers will never face the greater issue of gun crime. Both sides say they are the small band of rebel crusaders for the true rights of Americans. They are the rebels fighting for the true order against a horrible oppressive other. Both insist they are on the side of life; I don't explain their arguments for how they are on the side of life. They keep themselves busy fighting over non-issues so that they can feel good and so they can avoid the real issues.

=> Is "we hate all abortions and all people who have abortions" really "pro life"? Is "please just let me alone to have my abortion in private and to get on with my life" really "pro choice"? Then why do the groups present themselves as "pro this or that"? I have written about abortion elsewhere (see website) where I explain that the state must allow some acts that particular groups hold against their private morality. A modern pluralistic democracy likely has to allow some abortion even if many citizens believe abortion is immoral. It is not necessary to accept my stance to get what I say here but I like readers to know my stance. The key insight here comes not from the "pro" part of the positions because everybody wants to be pro something. The key insight here comes from "life" and "choice". While not only Romantic buzzwords, these are Romantic buzzwords. They are used by a group of people to present themselves as those who know better intellectually and spiritually, and who safeguard morality and life from the large clumsy current state (government) that is anti-life and anti-choice. They are rebels of the Spirit. They are the better new order. They defend the downtrodden innocent who can't defend themselves. They are the voice of Creative Chaos. Especially in the "pro life" movement, the real force seems to me less love for life than dislike for some people and the desire to control the families and reproductive lives of young women. The force behind "choice" is most obvious not among the Left but among the Right who use "choice" as a Romantic buzzword to confuse people and gain power for business groups and politicians. Women of the Left have adopted the Right use of the word and so have adopted the Right ploy of confusion and control. When we get confused about something as basic as "choice" and "life", we are really confused.

=> Women need to get past general feelings of dissatisfaction and rebellion instead to focus on a few issues that can really make a difference for them and everyone. I suggest focusing on equal pay for equal work. Despite some solid gains, crusading as sisters in the vanguard of the new world has not

helped them to reach what they need. The leadership of the movement need to stop seeing themselves as rebels for the new order, see themselves as something else, and see the whole picture. Women in general need to reject leaders who sell themselves primarily as rebels and who want them to act mostly as rebels. Figure out what you want most, figure out how to get it, and then do it.

I think Sigmund Freud said “What do women want?”, and I now throw myself into the despised camp of mere men. In the 1970s, I saw a TV show in which a man about sixty years old, an old activist, was trying to talk with a young woman activist. The two talked past each other. Eventually the woman insisted that men were pigs because they wouldn’t put the toilet seat down. The man looked sheepish and said “Why should the toilet seat be down?” The woman got angry. Clearly he meant: in an equal society, neither men nor women are privileged; people have to take responsibility for themselves; to demand that the seat always be down is to demand a social order in which one gender is publicly privileged over the other; and that is exactly what women should NOT want; to insist men guard the toilet seat is to say women can’t take care of themselves, men have to take care of women, so men are superior to women; and we have to get beyond simple chivalry to talk human to human. Toilet seats are not the great symbols of respect and equality. The woman missed the point. Women have been asking for chivalry for tens of thousands of years. If all women get is chivalry, then we all have lost ground. It was painful to watch.

In the 1960s, women burned bras. In the 1970s, women poured into the workforce, wore combat boots, and bought clothes from Diane Von Furstenberg. In the 1980s, women moved into professions, wore big shoulders and big hair, or wore their stockings outside their dress. In the 1990s, women invaded the arts, wore bad shoes again, and got tattoos. In the 2000s, women ran up against the world economy, and rediscovered fashions from the 1960s before about 1967. I am not sure what happened after about 2010. In each wave, women saw themselves as rebels. In each decade big business firms were able to sell products by appealing to women as rebels, empowered, and in charge of your life; if you buy the right toilet cleaner, you are an empowered rebel in charge of your life.

At this point, I was going to provide a list of all the causes that women have take as “women’s causes” but the list got so long that the exercise pooped out. I invite you to make a list. There are three points. First, women could not possibly go after all these causes to the extent that they cause deserves or needs if it is to be solved. Women have to choose. When each woman chooses her own, no cause is well supported and adequately achieved. Women feel guilty about all the causes they don’t support, especially if a cause they don’t support fails badly or succeeds despite their absence. Second, the vast majority of causes are what were stereotyped “women’s causes” long before the women’s movement, such as daycare for working mothers or getting men to stop telling sex jokes in the workplace. There is nothing wrong with these causes but they have little to do with women as humans rather than as female family leaders. Third, some of these causes are not really women’s causes but causes for the whole society, and benefit the whole society rather than just women, such as good education and good healthcare for children. They should be pursued in that way rather than as part of the women’s movement. The women’s movement can take up these causes after it has achieved the goals that pertain to it specifically. These uses of the women’s movement misuse the movement and detract from the focus that is needed for success.

About 1970, women got about 65% of what a man got for comparable work; in 2014, women get about 70% of what a man gets for comparable work. Before about 2000, in a recession, women lost their jobs;

since 2000, in a depression, men lose their jobs. Now women have to support families on their 70%. At the same time, the cost of raising a family has increased tremendously, primarily because we won't deal with the problem of getting a good education (mostly for your children) and the effect that the search for a good education has on housing, job, and credit markets. None of this is enough progress. Buying the right stuff so you can be an empowered rebel taking charge of your life is not working out as it should. I suggest focusing on equal pay, and letting bras, toilet seats, and sex jokes take care of themselves. If women need a couple of causes at a time, they might add day care and paternity leave into the mix, but not much more.

Why do I as a man have to tell women all this? Because the women's movement was run as a Romantic movement, so it did not often enough focus on issues that really mattered and it fizzled when its thrill as a rebel cause ran out.

If women are mired in symbolic rebellion, and are easily manipulated by advertising, while women make up most of the voters, then democracy is not representing what women, men, children, and everyone really needs. I am not saying men would do a better job; they haven't; and wouldn't. I am saying nobody does a good enough job because we all see ourselves in ways that don't do enough real good, wander off into activities that use our energy uselessly, and don't let us focus on the right moves. Women are not magically more adept citizens and better people because their cause is just.

I am not trying to make women feel guilty. If they fail utterly, that will not by itself cause America to fail. If they succeed completely, that will not by itself save America. Every big part helps. To contribute as much as they can, it would help women to get past Romantic mistakes.

(3) Other Romantic Problems.

In the modern world, rebellion does make some sense. But most modern rebellion is silly self-serving posing even when it costs posers dearly. When rebellion is useful, it is best not to think of it in cosmic heroic terms but instead simply to get the job done. When rebels think of themselves in cosmic terms, they rarely do a job that lasts a long time. The Chinese Communist rebels did not get very far until they in effect gave up cosmic Communist ideology for practical export-driven capitalism.

Romanticism supports ideologies that seem incompatible and it supports ideologies that can only be called bad. I cannot think of any good ideologies that rely on Romanticism for their primary support. It is not clear what the ideologies have to have in common for Romanticism to support them but might be that the social whole dominates the individual or that one socio-economic class dominates society. Fascism and Communism both were Romantic ideologies with the same roots in German Romanticism. German Fascism was a racist ideology where the people of Northern Europe represented the Spirit in its current rise. Communism was supposed to be a class-based ideology although it too had ethnic roots and it was seen along ethnic lines in Russia, Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, and Latin America. In accepted Communist ideology, if not official ideology, the rise of Communism is the rise of the Spirit now. Marx borrowed the process of Communist ascent from Hegel's ideas on the rise of the Spirit in our times and from general Indo-European Christian culture. American business ideology is in the same mold, with a mix of racism and religious parochialism. In its view, American business comes from Northern European

Christians and only them. Capitalism, and only it, promotes Progress. Progress is the rise of the Spirit in our times.

The Spirit can make use of individual prominent people such as Napoleon or Darwin but really a rise of the Spirit is a social event. What counts are movements, cultures, art, religion, etc. not the particular passing people who are their instruments. This attitude leads to the stress on collectivism, herds, trends, “the next big thing”, and the social whole dominating the individual.

Along with the rise of Romanticism came the rise of capitalism and the ideology of the individual. At first, this seems like a contradiction but it is not. In fact, the ideology of capitalism does not stress individual much. It stresses individuals in service to business firms, labor unions, schools, socio-economic class, technology, enterprise, etc. Individuals are interesting for their contributions to these causes.

The stress on the individual comes through the Romantic storyline and the rebel. Rebels by definition are apart from the current obvious social form even if they are the vanguard of the next dominant social form. If the rebel really represents the next big thing, then to be a rebel is to fight for the Spirit and so to be sure of being a good guy. People like to see themselves as rebels even when they are solidly on the side of the dominant social group, as with business entrepreneurs and lawyers who recall law school.

Eventually the tension between the rebel and society has to be resolved. It is almost always resolved in favor of the social group. Steve Jobs spent his life inventing gadgets for the middle class no matter how cool the gadgets looked and worked and no matter how much the gadgets made the middle class feel it was distinct and in the vanguard. The resolution in favor of society is much like the end in “rom coms” where the bad boy has to grow up and learn responsibility. Also as in rom coms, rebels never quite give up believing they are staunch individuals but hang on to their rebel clothes and rebel manners well into old age. Hans Solo always keeps the blaster handy and ghetto gangsters carry their “9”. Every hipster rebel looks exactly like every other hipster rebel. Every hard guy and hard girl individualist has tattoos just like all the other individualists.

In Romanticism, the Spirit works through Creative Chaos. The old order is too much order while the new order, as it rises, seems like chaos to the old order. In democracy, the people are chaos but out of them arises order, justice, and prosperity. In economic dogma, the market is like chaos but out of it arises satisfaction for people who are willing to work or are clever, and general prosperity for all. The order arises not through anybody’s plan but simply out of interaction. These are all fine myths and are even partly true but they are not all true. Sometimes chaos is just chaos. Sometimes it is bad and supports other bad things. Not every revolution leads to the American Constitution. The revolutions in Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, and North Korea led to hell. Not every biker bar is a bastion of free souls who have interesting ideas. The free market sometimes leads to housing bubbles, collapses, and recession. Democracy sometimes supports bad leaders and bad ideas such as Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. Sometimes they are bad enough to drive a country to ruin.

Creativity is more than upwelling passion. It is not something that comes of its own unbidden and brings us goodness without further work. As Thomas Edison famously said, genius is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. We don’t do the ground work for true creativity and true advances unless we understand how much we need the groundwork and how hard it is both before and after the ideas.

Acting naturally can't save us. Art can't save us. Smart shopping can't save us. Entrepreneurs and business people can't save us. Charismatic spiritual rebels can't save us. Soldiers can't save us, not even if we call every soldier a hero. I want to keep science.

Different episodes of the Spirit each have value but they are also qualitatively distinct and one order cannot be assessed by the standards of another order. The order of machines and humans before Neo, while humans still had Zion, was valuable. The order after Neo will be valuable but different. The order of the Jedi before Sidious, Vader, and Luke had value but it is not the order after Luke defeats Sidious. The Middle Ages had value, and set the stage for modern democracy, but the two orders are qualitatively distinct.

We can look at each person as a manifestation of the Spirit. Thus each person has value, each person is distinct, and people are not comparable in the same way that a pound of apples is comparable to a pound of potatoes. Like people, ways of life are also valuable and qualitatively distinct. A movie star might make more money than a computer programmer but movie stars are not really better. Business is not necessarily a better way of life than teacher, or vice versa. So far, this way of looking is not so bad, and has had some good effects. Everybody likes to be a unique valuable individual and everybody wants the teacher to see his-her kids' particular abilities and needs.

Problems arise when we push it too far. What if everybody really is totally unique and not comparable? How do we make laws for everybody? How do we judge court cases? What if every way of life really is unique and not comparable? How do we decide if it is better to be a plumber or a brain surgeon, not for people in general but for us in particular? How do we decide how much to pay anybody? Taking it too far is what Romanticism naturally does. Taking it too far allows people to use the ideology to get what they want. Taking it too far leads naturally to feelings of entitlement.

Making everybody and every way of life strictly unique and not comparable has its funny sides. It leads to reality TV shows starring Paris Hilton and then to some really fun ads starring her. But funny reality shows are really just the happy tip of an otherwise bad iceberg. Romanticism resolves the individual-social dichotomy for the social so it seems it should pull people together. But, if people are really qualitatively distinct, and ways of life are qualitatively distinct, then people cannot be completely pulled together. Rather than draw similar people together in a common enterprise, Romanticism puts up an insurmountable wall. People become the gods of their own kingdoms but the kingdoms are sparsely populated and bleak.

People flit from way of life to way of life like the proverbial never-ending college students who goes from major to major (see the first "Librarian" movie). People wonder if another life would be better. The grass is always greener. Nobody is ever satisfied. Nobody knows how to be satisfied and nobody can know how to be satisfied. People who are dissatisfied with their own lives cannot see there is some satisfaction in the world even if they are not satisfied. They see only their own situation, which, inevitably, is a big chunk of dissatisfaction: "I Can't Get No Satisfaction", neither can anybody else, and so there cannot be any satisfaction. When everybody is unique and valuable, we can't assess in general. Where everybody has unique value, it is not that everybody has equal high value. Everybody has the same low value or non-value. People become chronically jealous. They cause problems for neighbors. They magnify their

sense of entitlement as a way to go after a satisfaction they can never reach. This is all the results of what philosophers used to call “solipsism” and what modern religious teachers bemoan as an excess of individualism and selfishness.

(4) The Worst Damage.

The worst damage done by Romanticism is to shape other ideas in its own image. It steals thoughts and so poisons them. All of the above cases are examples of Romanticism perverting otherwise good ideas from other frames of reference. Romanticism took its idea of the Spirit from the idea of God and its idea of the movement of the Spirit from Progress. It gets much of its force from the desire of people to build a better world as Jesus taught. We would be better off directly thinking about those ideas rather than the Romantic remake. We see everything in terms of the basic Romantic plot and characters. We miss other real and interesting kinds of people and storylines. Romanticism is bad relativism. It sees other thoughts only as lesser versions of itself and thus it denies their own distinct validity.

Romanticism extols creativity, passion, and life but really stifles them by discrediting creativity, passion, and life that don't serve it or fit its mold. Rather than see the simple beauty, awe, fearfulness, and truth of nature, we see all of nature now as the Spirit. Romanticism glamorizes nature and so takes away from the better bigger reality that nature is – in the same way that glamorizing women or young men takes away from the better that they really are. By glamorizing nature, Romanticism makes sure that we can't steward nature as we should.

Romanticism took away our ability to see true strength and weakness in America. Sometimes we need a small group of people to recall basic principles of humanity and American life, and return America to its principles – but if they see themselves in Romantic terms they will cause more harm than good and will divert us from the principles they seek to recover. Romanticism subverted true useful needed justifiable rebellion with silly glamorized ineffectual rebellion. It replaced social protest with hooliganism. It glamorized socio-economic class and so kept us from seeing the real basis for class and how to deal with problems of class. Not all chaos is creative; some chaos causes damage. The People are not simply the embodiment of Creative Chaos; they are less than and more than that. Non-White ethnic groups are not a purer form of Creative Chaos and so a purer form of the People. We need some Creative Chaos and some of it has to come from the people in general and from people outside the mainstream. We also need order and to suppress bad chaos. We won't get the right balance as long as we let Romanticism tell us what social life and social changes are all about. Romanticism put causing mischief in place of working for true better changes.

Romanticism allows people to avoid reality while rationalizing what they want. Romanticism blocks better understanding of the real world. It keeps us from doing what we need to do to make our world better. It wastes energy in acts that do no lasting good, and too often make things worse. It makes us vulnerable to ideological hucksters such as “rebel” conservatives and liberals who enable. Romanticism enables an indulgent self, enables self-serving, lets people pursue foolish mistaken codes while thinking they are true and noble, and allows people to do bad things in the service of ideologies.

Romanticism is well-suited to various groups of disaffected modern people that, at first glance, seem to have little in common. People do well when they spice up their lives with a little fantasy. Romanticism

takes advantage of normal human need by putting its own fantasies into people's minds. Bored people can pretend their lives are interesting by taking drugs and having mildly kinky sex and-or by working for a cause. Marginalized people who want "a piece of the pie" can blame "the man" or "the Liberals", and can avoid seeing their own fault in their own problems. People who wish to be free of a self they don't like can invent a heroic beautiful self that secretly swims in a deeper truer cosmic current. People who wish to be free of a society they don't like can condemn the obvious social system as an evil anti-spiritual gang even while they live in a wannabe imitation parody of what they condemn. Romanticism goes well with the "beautiful loser" flawed demon-haunted morally pure outsider who can't save society-as-a-whole but sacrifices to help particular people. Romanticism fueled both pop culture and fundamentalist religion. As much as any adolescent rebellion, Romanticism powered rock and roll. Romanticism helps rulers keep the people in line by giving potential trouble makers a bit of rebel ideology that makes no difference or that even indirectly supports the power structure. Romanticism is so mixed with modern ideas of bad boys, bad girls, and rebels that it is not possible to think of these people except in Romantic terms.

(5) Romanticism, Emotion, and Irrationality.

People who like the Enlightenment with its ideal of Reason, such as me, also complain that modern life suffers from a mass indulgent return to emotion, superstition, simplistic religion, and habits that come of emotion such as buying stuff and trendiness. Much as it would be easy to blame any unhappiness of life by faulting emotion, that assessment is not true. Only a few people in the Enlightenment really pursued Reason vigorously. Most people were content to act like normal human beings and to use the findings of Enlightenment Reason when it suited them in our own lives. Even Isaac Newton was far from rational in the sense we wrongly see in Mr. Spock or Dr. Sheldon Cooper.

We don't have any dogmas and institutions that we really trust to serve as the Light and Reason of our lives. If people could still trust well-thought-out religion such as formal Christianity or Buddhism, then people would seem reasonable even if they were not more reasonable than average or than people in other religions. If modern institutions were really well thought out, and people really trusted populist democracy, simplistic capitalism, mass education, and formal religion, then people would seem more reasonable even though really they would only be more trusting.

Modern people don't trust their institutions. Our institutions are not as well thought out as we would hope, not even when we had really good thinkers such as Franklin, Jefferson, and Madison to start them for us. Without a foundation in reasonable institutions, people have to turn to emotion and their emotion is more obvious. If you don't trust democracy or capitalism, turn to religion and spiritualism, or, better yet, forge an alliance between religion and capitalism or spiritualism and populist democracy. To an outsider, your acts seem irrational, but they are not flagrantly irrational, or at least not much more than for most people in most situations in human history.

Which brings us back to Reason versus Passion and the role of Passion in Romanticism. Passion is above Reason in Romanticism. Passion is the way to the truth and the Spirit. There are few other ways, and none better for most people. We get lost when we don't trust our Passion, that is, when we don't indulge our Passion. Romanticism enables indulgence in emotion.

But Romanticism does not alone by itself cause indulgence in emotion and rejection of reason. People are always about the same mix of reason and emotion and emotion almost always leads the mix. Faith in Jesus and faith in the Buddha are emotions even when highly rationalized. Sometimes conditions mixed with the right stance lead reason to be more stressed than usual, as in the Enlightenment, but that usually doesn't last long. Sometimes conditions allow the right stance to stress emotions as modern times do with Romanticism. Then it seems the stance caused emotional indulgence to explode but that is not so. We need a correct view because we don't want to mistakenly think that debunking Romanticism will alone lead people to adopt reason. The correct hope is that we can lead people to put their emotions behind good causes and not put them behind bad causes, and that we can allow some unusually level-headed people to find their good mix of reason and emotion.

If the baseline modern conditions stayed the same, I am sure people would find another ideology like Romanticism to take the place of Romanticism. It might even be Romanticism with another name. It might be Mahayana Buddhism or Hinduism.

If people could get rid of Romanticism, think out their institutions, and adopt well thought out institutions, then we could say they were more rational in our times than in other times. We could even call it the Enlightenment returning. That is not likely to happen.

When people can't rely on the rationality of their institutions, and turn to emotion as a result, usually they don't go overboard but sometimes they do go overboard. That is when we get the profound irrationality that makes trouble. We get Communism, Fascism, Jonestown type cults, psycho-babble, Republican spiritualism, knee-jerk patriotism, Muslim terrorism, etc. That is what we see in the news. When that is what we see, we think we live in times besotted by irrational emotion and nothing else. Because our times are not guided by reasonable well thought out institutions, we do live in times guided by emotions but probably not too much more than in other periods of confusion in human history. We are distinct because we live in times in which emotion and Romanticism have allied. I don't know if there were other times of confusion in which emotion allied with a dogma like Romanticism to produce times like our times. I could guess, and I hope other smart people do guess, but here is not the place.

(6) Saving Science.

One aspect of the return to emotional irrationality deserves attention because it does a lot of harm and we can't afford to put up with it anymore: denigration of science and abandonment of science. I include math and logic in science. When I was in school, most "social scientists" did not include social science as science; but I did; I leave it up to you. I was shocked and dismayed by the bad attitude of Americans in general, and academics in particular, to science after about 1970. I know what bad patronizing attitudes scientists can take, and I know how politicians and business people have misused science, but none of that justifies the stupid irrational "dumping on" science after 1970. To understand, it helps to listen to an album by an old comedy group called "Fire Sign Theater". They narrated a day at "More Science High School" so they could criticize the 1950s stress on simplistic technological fixes and the thinking that goes along with it. Their problem is they throw out the baby with the bathwater. Their solution is typical of the 1970s and Romanticism: better personal relations and relations with the Spirit.

Science has never been fully accepted by “the masses”. They tolerate it because it brings improvement to their lives. Contrary to the fear of scientists, the masses are not against science any more than they are necessarily against anything else they can’t understand. Science is magic done by magicians. As long as it doesn’t come too fast, and it is white magic, it is fine. Nerds are lovable now. But after about 1955, science did come too fast and changes were too deep. For example, advances in science allowed both safe abortion and allowed protecting fetuses, and so underlay the abortion issue. Fast deep change was how we got into Romanticism to begin with and it tends to bring bad resurgences.

In the 1950s, people began to use science as the scapegoat for the ills of modern life, as some people use emotion as the scapegoat, and some religious people use selfishness, materialism, and trendiness. Science is rational, emotion is better than rationality, so we have to promote emotion over rationality, have to oppose rationality when it opposes emotion, and so we have to oppose science.

Regardless of whether you put any stock in that line of reasoning (!), we can’t afford the attitude. First, we have dug ourselves into a deep hole. We have hurt nature badly. A simple dose of science won’t fix the problem but we can’t know the problem well enough to fix it without big doses of science. We need research, and need to believe it. To apply science in big doses, we need the right attitude, which means we need to change our attitude from what it is now. We cannot afford idiots who deny global climate change. Second, the world economy is now based on competition between nations and between big business firms. Recall that there has been, and will be, a clear relation between investment in science and later economic gain. (This relation is not true among little nations and small firms but the exception doesn’t matter.) Ironically, the more the investment is done in “pure” science that does not pay attention to immediate gains, the bigger the eventual gains. The more investment is done with immediate gains in mind, as with Reagan-ism, the less the eventual gains. To do pure science with little thought for eventual gains, we cannot hate science or rationality. We have to trust, value, enjoy, and promote pure science. For that, we cannot simply oppose reason to emotion and take the side of emotion or reason.

I doubt people could have “dumped on” science after about 1970 if we were not living in Romanticism. Romanticism certainly enabled dumping on science. But, after the 1970s, supposedly rational business people also tried to denigrate science in the issue of global climate change when science got in the way of profits. We have had Romanticism since about 1800 yet people did not hate science until after about 1970. So Romanticism helped but it is not the only reason why people dumped on science. How we can live in an emotional Romantic world and still value science, I do not speculate on here.