

Architects of the Culture of Death

by Donald DeMarco and Benjamin Wiker
Reviewed by Fr. Bill Mc Carthy, M.S.A.

The Spirit and the Flesh

Ever since St. Paul in his Epistles described the great dichotomy within man to be between the spirit and the flesh, philosophers have been struggling with what today we call Christian anthropology. Pope John Paul II has enriched the notion of person with what is now called Lublin Personalism. Man, according to Christian anthropology, is tripartite – body, soul and spirit. He is the temple in which the spirit of God dwells, and as such, he is made into the image and likeness of God.

In Christ, he is empowered to think and love and act like Jesus. He is fearfully and wonderfully made: a one of a kind, unique, incomparable miracle and masterpiece of nature and grace. Like Christ, he is endowed with a new nature, that of God Himself. He has a new identity, he is another Christ. He is enlightened to have a new mind so that he may think as Jesus thinks. Through the Eucharist, he is inflamed with a new love, that of Christ, Himself. Through his openness to the Spirit he is empowered to continue across his time and space the redemptive, healing and sanctifying work of Jesus.

A Divided Self

Yet he remains a divided self. His lower, carnal, adamic nature fights against his higher Christian or spiritual nature. Therefore, St. Paul encourages us, "Walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. By the flesh (the self-life), lust against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh ... now the works of the flesh are manifest: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy: drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you as I did before that those who live like this shall not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal 5:16-21). We will call this the Culture of Death.

The Culture of Life

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with his passions and desires" (Gal 5:22-24). This we will call the Culture of Life.

Every Building Has an Architect

Not only does every building have an architect but so does every culture. Every culture has some human beings who have formed it in a particular way. For over 2,000 years now, we have been forming a Christian culture, the source of which is the person and gospel of Jesus Christ fully human and fully divine. The architects of this culture are nearly uncountable – Mary the Mother of Jesus, Paul, Peter, Isadore, Cyprian, Basil the Great, Augustine, Benedict, Leo, Francis, Dominic, Aquinas, Mother Teresa, and John Paul II, to name a few.

Added to these, we have the 20 ecumenical councils of the one, true Church, the many religious orders, the brilliant theologians, the great Catholic artists, the gifted Christian writers, composers, builders of churches, and lawmakers.

The Evil Empire

Over against this culture has been forming an evil culture based upon self and sin; a culture antagonistic to Christianity and to God and His laws. Back in the Didache, one of the earliest non-New Testament documents, we have the words, "There are two roads, one of life and one of death." The Didache warns, "You shall not kill, commit adultery, corrupt boys, or commit fornication. You shall not steal nor use magic, nor administer magic potions. You shall not slaughter a child in an abortion or slay a begotten one. (The Didache I.I, pp. 16-163)

Not Much Change

Looking over the list it becomes quite clear that many of the pagan and sinful practices of Rome have become part of contemporary culture. Homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, interest in the occult, contraception, abortion, euthanasia, infanticide are still with us. We have embraced them all, and even added incest and bestiality to the list.

Causes for the Decline

Who or what accounts for the historical return to such dark pagan moral practices after so many centuries of Christian culture? What caused a new image of humanity to arise, a new kind of paganism worst than the first? In the old paganism, they at least had belief in the gods and practiced pietas (piety). In the new paganism, we talk about the separation of God from culture completely. In the old paganism, they had a belief in the law. The new paganism is lawless. In the old paganism, family was considered sacred. In the new paganism, nothing is sacred.

The Architects of the New Culture of Death

Who are the architects of this new culture of death? We shall look at seven categories of them.

1. The ego worshippers - Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Ayn Rand.
2. The Eugenic Evolutionists - Darwin, Galton and Haeckel
3. The Secular Utopians - Marx, Conte and Judith Jarvis Thompson
4. The Atheistic Existentialists - Sartre, de Beauvoir and Elizabeth Badinter
5. The Hedonists - Freud, Reich and Helen Gurley Brown
6. The Sex Planners - Mead, Kinsey, Sanger, Gamble, and Guttmacher
7. The Death Peddlers - Humphrey, Kevorkian, and Peter Singer

Individually, these categories touch the heart of each figure's main contribution to the culture of death; collectively, they well represent the spectrum of their contributions to it: the act of the will in rebellion against God (*The Will Worshipers*); the conviction that human nature is not created by God, but is a mere accident of nature that may be purged, pruned, and transformed by our own efforts (*The Eugenic Evolutionists*); the attempt to set up an earthly paradise through force (*The Secular Utopianists*); the denial that human existence has any God-intended meaning (*The Atheistic Existentialists*); the redefinition of

the meaning of human life in terms of sexual pleasures (*The Pleasure Seekers*); the grandiose project to enlist government coercion in redefining and manipulating sexuality and family (*The Sex Planners*); and the attempt to define the limits of meaningful life and the time and terms of death (*The Death Peddlers*).

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

Schopenhauer believed that mankind is above all conditioned and ruled by Will – a raging, blind, naked, suffocating, godless Will. He calls this the thing – in – itself and describes it as “a blind, incessant impulse.” This will is “the primordial being and the primordial source, the prime mover of all activity.” Having no goal outside of itself, its action is completely gratuitous. You find this will in the pull of gravitation, the movement of the stars and planets, the appetites of the animals, and the volition of man. This unwieldy and pervasive force manifests itself as nature. It is futile for an individual to fight against this force since it has no regard for him and is bent upon his ultimate destruction. It is what St. Paul described as “the flesh” or the ego run wild.

Schopenhauer was an atheist. He stated, “We begin in the madness of carnal desire and the desire of voluptuousness, we end in the dissolution of all of our parts and the musty stench of corpses. And the road from one to the other too goes, in regard to our well-being and enjoyment of life, steadily downhill: happily dreaming childhood, exultant youth, toil-filled years of manhood, infirm and often wretched old age, the torment of the last illness and finally the throes of death – does it not look as if existence were an error the consequences of which gradually grow more and more manifest?” (*Essays and Aphorisms*, pgs. 51 & 54).

Schopenhauer unleashed the notion of nature as blind Will into the modern world where it continues to play a significant role in philosophy. For Nietzsche, who read Schopenhauer avidly, it becomes a will to power. For Freud it becomes the libido. For Wilhelm Reich, it becomes the irrational core of sexual desire. For Jean-Paul Sartre it becomes nausea. For Simone de Beauvoir, it becomes the sickening way that suffocates women and makes them easy prey. Elizabeth Badinter seeks to escape from the wills oppressiveness by escaping into an absolutized Ego.

Schopenhauer is the father of a legacy known as vitalistic irrationality. Manichean in essence, it reacts with horror with the presence of nature. It becomes a monster cut loose from God-endowed capacities for reason and self-control. It produces a pessimism that only in death is there hope for death releases us from the madness and suffering of life. Evil is more powerful than good. His father drowned when he was a boy and his mother took to free love. When she remarried, bitter quarrels ensued between mother and son. This led him to degrade all women. He said that women have never produced a single achievement in the fine arts that is either genuine or original. He regards women as either shrews or sinners. He said, “When the laws gave women equal rights, they ought also to have endowed them with masculine intellects.” It is interesting to note that this father of what will later become radical feminism had no respect for women at all.

Friedrich Nietzsche

In 1870, at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, Friedrich Nietzsche, then a 25-year-old philologist observed a Calvary battalion exhibiting excessive pomp as it passed through the town of Frankfurt. Taken by this vision, he said, "I felt for the first time that the strongest and highest will to life does not find expression in a miserable struggle for existence, but in Will to War, a Will to Power, a Will to Overpower." From this vision, he was to develop his entire philosophy. This grandiose vision called for the emergence of a "superman" who would have the steel courage to attempt things that would cause less sturdy souls to tremble. Bad eyesight and a fall from a horse disqualified him from being an active soldier. He went into ambulance service, but the sight of blood made him ill. He contracted diphtheria and dysentery. If he ever was to become the "superman", it would not be on the battlefield but in the classroom of the publishing world.

His Childhood

Born in 1844 to a Lutheran minister, he himself was called the little minister. When he was four years old, his father died in a fall. He would be raised by a quartet of women – mother, grandmother and two maiden aunts. In addition, he had a sister. The women petted him into feminine delicacy. He made up his mind not to be a minister.

As a Youth

In 1865, he read Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*. He found it "a mirror in which I espied the world, life and my own nature depicted with frightful grandeur." He accepted Schopenhauer's concept of an instinctive, irrational will and used it as the centerpiece of his philosophy. He also adopted his "unashamed atheism." He accepted the notion that atheism is a necessary precondition for the advance of philosophical thought. He rejected the Christianity of his ancestors, and embraced "the will to life" as his new god. In his first book, *The Book of Tragedy*, he stated, "My vital instinct turned against ethics and founded a radical counter-doctrine, to oppose the Christian libel on life." He christened this with the name of a Greek god, Dionysos.

Dionysos

Dionysos was Bacchus, that is life, instinctive and undiluted. Christianity was nothing but a will to deny life, a secret instinct of destruction, a principle of calumny, a reductive agent, the beginning of the end, and for that reason the supreme danger. Christianity was preoccupied with self-loathing. It hated this world, feared beauty and sexuality, and deflected its followers from life by threatening their real, natural interests toward their neighbor and toward an afterlife. In birth of tragedy, he tells of two gods – Dionysos was the Greek god of song and music, dance and drama, wine and revelry, instinct and adventure. Apollo was the god of peace, leisure, repose, logic, contemplation and philosophic calm. Nietzsche described a restless masculine power to Dionysos and a quiet feminine quality to Apollo. The arrival of Socrates and Plato on the Greek scene signaled the cooling of the Dionysian spirit and the domination of Apollo – in short, intellect replace instinct and science replaced art. He would learn to hate Socrates. "Socrates represents a moment of the most profound perversity in the history of values." For him, Socrates was a moral mania, a buffoon, a tyrant. And the Socratic method was self-derision. Nietzsche Dionysian temper had little patience for the calm, inquiring

minds of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. He saw philosophy not so much as a harmony of Dionysian and Apollonian tempers, but exclusively in terms of the former. In *The Will to Power*, he states that "philosophy as I have understood it and lived up to the present, is the voluntary quest of the repulsive and atrocious aspects of existence." He states, "All kinds of intoxication have the power to do this; above all the intoxication of sexual excitement. Likewise the intoxication of feasting, of contest, of the brave deed, of victory, and all agitation; intoxication of cruelty, the intoxication of destruction; finally the intoxication of the will."

Richard Wagner

For a while he found a new springtime for Germany and the Dionysian spirit in the music of Richard Wagner. However, he never forgave Wagner for creating Parsifal, an opera exhaling Christianity and paid solemn homage to the spear that pierced Christ's side as well as the cup of the last supper. Parsifal is a pure soul who is able to resist all sexual temptation, and is rewarded for his purity when he is made king. Nietzsche was fatherless for a second time. The god of his parents was dead and Wagner had proved unworthy. He found his new god in the Persian deity, Zoroaster. He wrote *Thus Spake Zarathustra* but nobody praised it. His thesis was: live dangerously, erect a city beside Vesuvius, send your ships to unexplored seas, and live in a state of war. Life is never more lively than when it is on the brink of death. He said, "I advise you not to neighbor-love; I advise you to a furthest-love." He emphasized the heroic and the self. He tried to be his own god and his own hero. In 1889, he suffered a stroke. He stumbled blindly in his attic room and was taken to an asylum. He had become mad. In 1900 he quietly passed away as one of the loneliest men in attempting to be his own god, he severed all lines of communication with anyone who would keep him normal. He ended as a woman-hater.

His Influence Boundless

To rebellious university students, heavy metal rockers, and radical feminists, he was a hero. How much influence he had in influencing Hitler is a matter of continuing discussion. Nazism would adopt his will to power, the duty of the strong to dominate, the sole right of great states to exist, the rebirth of German society. Nazism believed in him. Ideas can be more deadly than their creators. The man who thought of himself as dynamite, was weak, lonely and ineffectual, but his ideas were dynamite. By exalting the human will above all else and declaring the death of God, Nietzsche provides a culture of death with a passionate and enticing anti-philosophy to be used as his foundation. It is a culture bent on its own self-destruction.

Ayn Rand

Ayn Rand followed Nietzsche. She stated, "The only real virtue is selfishness. The only real vice is altruism. Selfishness leads to life, to becoming a self-made soul." To her, the right to life is the right to do whatever you want, to do whatever you need to sustain your own existence. Existence is sustained by selfishness. Non-existence is the result of altruism. Making sacrifices for ones born or unborn children, one's elderly parents or other family members becomes anathema to Ayn. She wants a cultural life which she envisions solely in terms of individuals selfishly choosing the private goods of their own

existence. She summed up her philosophy by saying, "Metaphysics: objective reality; epistemology: reason; ethics: self-interest; politics: capitalism." She was a dedicated enemy of Christianity and an enemy of love. Many view her *Atlas Shrugged* as arrogant, without reprieve. Nevertheless, her 13 books have sold over 20 million copies. There is an Ayn Rand Society that flourishes, as well as the Objectivist newsletter, which she founded. She was born Alice Rosenbaum in Petrograd Russia in 1905. In 1938, she wrote *Anthem*, a science fiction novelette. In 1943, she wrote *The Fountainhead* that was made into a movie starring Gary Cooper. In 1957, she produced her greatest work, *Atlas Shrugged*, in which she canonizes her code of self-interest. She uses her main character, John Galt, to articulate her own philosophy: "I swear that I will never live for the sake of another man nor ask another man to live for mine." *The New York Times* book review said it was a book written out of hate and bound to infuriate Christians. She died lonely and forsaken in 1982.

Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin was born in 1809 into wealth and the privileges of wealth. His father was a freethinker; his mother, a Unitarian dissenter. From earliest years he was a collector of every kind of specimen, and spent hours in his makeshift lab. His physician father tried to make him into a physician; but Charles was unfit for medical education. In his second year of medical school, Charles was mentored by Robert Grant, a brilliant iconoclast, an expert on sponges and a strong believer in evolution. He met William Brown, a radical materialist, who held that the soul did not exist. He left medical school for good in 1827, after having been immersed in all the fundamentals of evolutionary theory. He next squeaked out a B.A. degree in theology, but his love for science by this time was boundless. He went on a trip to the South American coast in 1831 where he found giant fossils of extinct animals, and read and accepted Charles Lyell's arguments that the world was not 6,000 years old but millions of years old.

In October 1836, he arrived home and was greeted as a young scientific hero. Evolution at that time was a theory championed by atheists, democrats and radical dissenters from Anglican orthodoxy. His real views were radical, but he lived a double intellectual life moving in aristocratic, anti-evolutionary circles but privately working feverishly on his account of evolution. He was by now convinced that the human life was entirely material, that human beings had indeed evolved from some ape-like ancestors and that morality itself was one more evolutionary artifact. In 1859 he published *Origin of Species*, in which he first made his evolutionary views public. In 1838, he married his cousin Emma. Together they had 10 children, only 7 of whom lived. All of his children were quite sickly.

In 1871 he published *The Descent of Man*. In *The Descent of Man*, he sought to explain how existing moral values could have evolved by natural selection. Thus, he tried to replace the Christian natural law, with a new moral relativism founded on evolution. In contrast to the natural law account, he stated, "The moral faculties of man were not original and inherent but evolved from social qualities and these social qualities were likewise not original but acquired through natural selection. Just as life came from the nonliving, so the moral came from the non-moral." Man first had to become social