

21Church

Course Workbook

Sessions One & Two—A Past but no Present

Some ages have a clear sense of identity and purpose. Others seem to be always in transition. Western culture in the 21st century is one of the latter. We tend to define things in terms of a lost past: post-industrial, post-imperial, post-modern, post-Christendom, and so on. In this sense we can speak of contemporary Western culture as having a past but no present—though the future seems to be rushing in on us at an ever-increasing rate.

Contemporary Western culture is a maelstrom of contradictory influences and neuroses with few fixed points. It is pluralist and individualistic; faithless and multi-faith; complacent and searching; self-satisfied and yearning; idealistic and fashion-driven; voyeuristic and exhibitionist; and so much more. (And then, within this, there are islands of stability; groups of people who cling to a past that seems to offer the promise of a golden age. They, too, are part of contemporary society, even though we will not pay them much attention in this course.)

It is into this multifaceted cauldron of conflicting perspectives that we are called as Christians to serve the world, proclaim the good news of Jesus and live the kingdom life. We cannot do this unless we understand the culture in which we are working. In these opening sessions we will look at some of the trends and influences which underpin Western culture's current understandings of life, the universe and everything.

The fall of classical science

Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid in Night

God said, Let Newton be! and all was Light.—Alexander Pope, 1730.

We start with science because the *modern* age was built on the intellectual foundations supplied by science, Newtonian physics in particular. Science became the cornerstone because of its success in helping us to make sense of the world and also because it seems to enable us to gain a greater degree of control over our environment. From the time of Newton (1642-1727) until the end of the 19th century it was possible to consider the universe as a great machine with God as the great clockmaker who wound up the universe at its beginning.

As the notion of 'scientific proof' became more widespread the very existence of God was called into question since if he could not be proved to exist there was, as Pierre Simon de Laplace (1749-1827) is said to have remarked, no need for the 'God hypothesis'. Darwin's development of the mechanisms of evolution through natural selection and random mutation seemed to offer the possibility of discarding God altogether from any serious rational thought.

Yet even at its moment of greatest triumph, some of the key principles which underpin modernist thought were being challenged and overthrown. Four of the most important were:

Linearity

In classical science simple linear arithmetic was universal, in other words, one and one always equalled two. For instance, if two cars are approaching each other, one at 50 mph and the other at 40 mph, their relative speed must be 90 (=50+40) mph. It seemed so obvious that no even thought of questioning it. But the theory of relativity changed all that. Albert Einstein (1879-1955) showed in 1905 that if two objects are approaching each other,

the sum of their speeds is always less than simple linear arithmetic predicts. The faster you go, the greater the difference. For instance, if each car is travelling at 90% of the speed of light, the relative velocity will not be 180% of the speed of light but a mere 95% (i.e., $0.9+0.9=0.95$)!

Continuity

In the Newtonian worldview, space and time are also seen as continuous and infinite; no matter where you are it will always be possible to travel an infinitely small amount in any direction. Qualities such as force and energy are also continuous and capable of increasing or decreasing by any amount you care to choose.

The introduction, in 1900, of quantum theory by Max Planck (1858-1947) blew this notion out of the water. Energy, it was discovered, was not continuous, but existed in discrete 'chunks' known as quanta. Thus you could have one quantum of energy, or two quanta of energy, but not one and a half quanta or any other fraction.

Duality

The Newtonian world is a world with clear divisions—either a thing *is* or it *is not*. In the quantum universe existence is not so black and white. For instance, light can be thought of as particles called photons. Experiments show that if photons approach a sheet with two small holes in it they behave exactly as if each photon goes through each hole at the same time. Similarly it appears that electrons sometimes behave as if they are going in two different directions simultaneously. This change, from *either/or* to *both/and* has affected the way we see the world and has influenced much contemporary thought.

Predictability

If the universe is linear and continuous it will always be possible to predict the future—in theory, at least. The advent of what is often known as chaos theory has led us to see that most systems in the universe are actually unpredictable by their very nature (see complexity theory below for more information).

Perfect observer

At the heart of the Newtonian world view was the notion of the perfect observer: the scientist who could observe the world without influencing it. This idea was probably influential in developing an instrumental attitude towards creation. Instead of seeing people as an integral part of creation, the modern worldview saw nature as something apart, able to be acted upon without affecting us. The environmental consequences of this way of imagining reality are now clear to us all (though the world view is still powerful and prevents many of us from fully accepting and acting upon the implications of climate change, pollution, species extinction and so on).

In physics, it was Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) who challenged the notion of the perfect observer. He showed that the very act of observation affects the object being observed. If you measure the position of an electron very exactly, you cannot know its velocity (and vice versa).

Complexity and Emergence

I think the next century will be the century of complexity.—Stephen Hawking
January 2000.

Until the invention of fast computers it was necessary to pretend that the universe was simple and more or less Newtonian, even though an increasing number of scientists had begun to realise that it is actually complex and not very Newtonian at all.

The advent of computer modelling meant that many problems could be looked at in a new light. The result was the still-developing discipline of complexity science. Complexity applies to many disciplines from physics to biology, from meteorology to sociology and from chemistry to organisation theory. Below is a table indicating some of the differences between simple systems and complex systems:

Simple Systems	Complex Systems
● Interchangeable parts	● Individual parts
● Each part has specific purpose	● Each part can adapt
● Each part is unchanging	● Each part changes as others change
● A change in a part usually leads to break down	● A change in a part may lead to growth
● Programmed externally	● Self-organising
● Theoretically predictable	● Unpredictable but patterned
● Whole equals sum of parts	● Whole greater than sum of parts
● Little adaptation to environment	● Very adaptive to environment

Emergence

One of the key characteristics of complex systems is that they display *emergent* behaviour. Emergent change in a system (weather, chemical reactions, groups of people, etc.) is characterised by a creation of patterns at the level of the system which arise simply as a result of interactions between individual elements in the system (pressure and temperature gradients in the atmosphere, molecular interactions, conversations and stories exchanged between people).

Emergent patterns cannot be forced or predicted yet they are not random either. A simple example might be the little whirlpool formed as water drains from a bath. As long as the water flow is great enough we can see a fairly stable vortex at the plug hole. As the flow diminishes, the pattern collapses. It would be impossible to predict the exact path of any given water molecule through the vortex, yet the pattern itself is instantly recognisable.

Co-creation

A traditional, modernist, view of creation sees the creative act as the result of the will and actions of the individual. An emergent perspective suggests that creation is actually *co-creation*—it is the result of collaborative action between many people.

Traditionally we have read the creation stories in Genesis 1 & 2 as accounts (whether ‘factual’ or not) of God’s sole sovereign activity in bringing the universe into being out of nothing. Yet, with the possibility of co-creation in mind, there are other possible readings. Many commentators have noted God’s plural self-description in the first creation story: “Let us make man...”. This could be read as an acknowledgement of the reality of co-creation, even within the Godhead.

More particularly, in Genesis 2:18-20 God makes animals and brings them to Adam to name. Given the importance of names in Hebrew culture, naming can be seen as a creative act in itself. Here we have God and Adam in active co-creation.

The Nature of Culture

Organisation culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organisation and with its environment. (Seel, 2000:3)

A complexity view of culture would lead us to a definition similar to that given above—that Western culture has not been deliberately created by a few powerful or influential people (a modernist view) but rather has simply come about as the result of *all* of the interactions between *everyone* in the West.

It is the stories we tell about values, the conversations we have about life, the negotiations about the 'correct' way to do things—these are the ways in which we co-create the culture in which we live. This is one reason why it is so hard to be fully aware of our own culture—we live it and breathe it and take it for granted just because it is so mundane and everyday. Yet our culture shapes our ability to perceive and to act; it is the filter through which we experience daily living.

Social Constructionism

We must be the change we wish to see in the world.—Gandhi

Social constructionism argues that world around us is, to a large extent, socially constructed—we decide (consciously or unconsciously) how things are. As an example, the prevailing modernist paradigm has been one of problem-solving; if we want things to change we look for the problems and work out how to fix them. Appreciative Inquiry, an approach to change based on constructionist principles, says that if you look for problems you will always find problems. Instead, it argues, let us look for the positive and imagine how we can build a future based on doing more of the things that are good. So effective has this approach been that it is now used by many major multinationals and is the change approach of choice for the US Navy!

Postmodernism

The ONLY ABSOLUTE TRUTH is that there are NO ABSOLUTE TRUTHS—Feyerabend.

Postmodernism is both a philosophical position and a slogan. The philosophical position, particularly associated with French philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), argues that the certainties of the Enlightenment are merely one perspective on reality—and a very blinkered one at that.

Lyotard was especially concerned with the notion of the 'grand narrative' (also known as a metanarrative)—an overarching story which purports to convey some absolute truth about the universe. Grand narratives imply a degree of uniformity and shared belief which flies in the face of the diversity we see around us. Instead we should value the small stories told by each individual. In other words there is no *Truth* (with a capital T) but simply *my* truth and *your* truth and *her* truth and *his* truth and...

Derrida introduced the notion of *deconstruction*. Deconstruction is an attempt to show that any given text is open to several meanings or interpretations. The notion has become quite commonplace today where we are used to 'reframing' a story about a half-empty glass as a story about a half-full glass (or vice versa). 'Spin' is deconstruction writ into the political domain and advertising offers us a multitude of stories about ourselves.

Foucault, who often refused to be identified with postmodernism, emphasised the importance of power in determining which stories could be told and which had to be kept

secret. These ideas have become very influential; for instance, one of the key achievements of feminism has been to point out that the grand narratives of traditional *history* can (and must?) be countered by narratives of *herstory*.

As a slogan, postmodernism (sometimes abbreviated to PoMo) is used as a vague descriptive term for a sceptical, multi-perspective, playful way of looking at the world which is increasingly common in contemporary western culture.

Technology

The number of transistors on an integrated circuit for minimum component cost doubles every 24 months ('Moore's Law')—Gordon Moore, 1965.

Technology has had a huge impact on both lifestyle and worldview. Labour-saving gadgets have revolutionised domestic life, automation has transformed industry, electronic toys have redefined leisure, improved transport has shortened distances between communities and the internet has created instant access to a global community of relationship and information.

Perhaps even more importantly, technology change has driven, and is driven by, an ever-increasing rate of social and economic change. One result of this is the widespread belief that technology will be able to solve any problem, from health care to climate change, without the need for people to change their behaviours. On the other hand, technology has also opened up opportunities for new kinds of collective activism.

Mass Media

The medium is the message—Marshall McLuhan, 1964.

The influence of mass media, especially television, on contemporary culture cannot be overestimated. McLuhan's dictum, that the nature of a medium enables some kinds of message and disables others, can be seen as Western society becomes increasingly visual and less auditory.

Changes of style in television have mirrored changes in society. Editing is now much faster, continuity is often ignored and the lines between drama and documentary become increasingly blurred. Soap operas have become modern morality tales, dispensing their own brand of ethics and propriety.

Music, too, has a huge part to play in contemporary life. Sony's Walkman and its modern counterpart, the iPod, have led to music being 'consumed' in times and places hitherto impossible and inconceivable.

Most recently we have seen the trend towards what is often known as Web 2.0 which encourages the democratisation of creativity with sites such as YouTube and Flickr where people can post their own video clips and images; and the creation of virtual social spaces such as MySpace, Bebo or Facebook. MMOGs (massively multi-player online games) such as *World of Warcraft*, with 7.7 million subscribers and *Second Life*—a virtual world rather than a game—which has over 2 million subscribers, now offer the chance to interact with people from across the world in new ways. They also raise big questions about the nature of 'reality'.

Globalisation

The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village—Marshall McLuhan, 1962.

Improvements in transport and communications have led to a softening of national boundaries and identities. The growth of global capitalism, with its emphasis on 'the bottom line' has led to the development of multinational companies whose interests are focused on shareholder return rather than adding value to the countries in which they operate. This phenomenon is hardly new; imperial powers have been doing the same in their colonies and subject possessions for centuries. What is newer is the power of private corporations and the influence they can have on even the largest governments (the role of firms like Exxon and Haliburton in US foreign policy has been debated at length, for instance.)

Nationality has also become strained. Norman Tebbit's cricket test, set in 1990, tried to impose a narrow view of national identity. It has not succeeded and today we are still trying to come to terms with the issues which come with a multi-faith, multi-ethnic pluralistic society. Many people are now happy to live away from their country of birth; their reasons are many, ranging from a desire for more sun or a more prosperous life to flight from persecution.

Individualism

There is no such thing as society—Margaret Thatcher, 1987.

Individualism is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, it can be seen as a characteristic of the Enlightenment, and the Reformation before it. The Protestant emphases on the salvation of the individual's soul and the relationship between the individual and God were in sharp distinction to Catholic doctrines of the church and its salvific role.

For much of the last century debates rage about the relative importance of nature and nurture. A key work was Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (2001)—she argued that we are not biologically programmed but can make ourselves whatever we want. Her work was taken up enthusiastically in the 1960s when she was seen as a prophet of free love and a new way of living. (For a different view on her Samoan material and the whole debate, see Freeman 1999.)

An ever increasing emphasis on the role of the individual in contemporary society leads to an emphasis on *rights* rather than *duties*; a proliferation of self-help books and courses; a breakdown of extended family; relationships made through personal networks rather than membership of formal groups; and an increasing anxiety about self-image.

Feminism

A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle—Anon.

Feminism is both a key component of western culture and also a symptom of a wider set of values pertaining to equality and justice. The old patriarchal hierarchies (still hanging on to their power) represent a world view which has persisted since medieval times.

Feminism—and gay liberation, disability rights and similar movements—argue for a world view which is less rigid and stratified. They argue for a meritocracy, where achievement is based on talent, not social position or a 'contingent' feature such as gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Along with the concern for natural justice and fairness is the postmodern assumption that, 'all lifestyles are valid'—if there is no metanarrative, then no individual story should be privileged over others. To deny my lifestyle story then becomes an act of political violence against me.

Consumerism

Tesco ergo sum (I shop therefore I exist)—Anon.

Conspicuous consumption has been a feature of many societies. For instance, the potlatch ceremonies of the North West coast of America, where rich men destroy vast amounts of wealth, was used as an exemplar of the term by the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen in his classic *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Other examples include competitive feasting in New Guinea, medieval banquets and the gifts exchanged between the Queen of Sheba (“never again did spices come in such quantity as that which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon”) and King Solomon (“Meanwhile King Solomon granted the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed, well beyond what she had brought to the king.” 2Chr 9:12). Note that, according to the author of Chronicles, Solomon’s gifts to the Queen were greater than her gifts to him—thus confirming his greater status.

In all these cases conspicuous consumption is used to mark power and status; it is necessarily the preserve of an elite few. Contemporary western culture is unique in mutating conspicuous consumption into consumerism. Consumption is now the duty of the many: shop till you drop; live now, pay later; spend, spend, spend; retail therapy—the clichés say it all.

Perhaps one of the greatest triumphs of consumerism is that manufacturers can now get consumers to advertise their products for free while also charging a premium price for the privilege of so doing. The desire for the designer label, especially when coupled with the cult of celebrity is a powerful way of achieving an acceptable identity in contemporary culture.

Indeed, consumerism seems to undermine the notion that all lifestyles are equivalent. In theory, they might be; in practice, only those sanctioned by the celebrity market are worth celebrating. So the fragile self-constructed identity story which characterises so many postmodern people is always challenged by the lifestyle of the rich and famous; in order to validate my identity I must follow what they say, do, wear, and believe.

Conspiracy culture

The truth is out there—The X Files

If someone in authority tells you that something is true, then a) they are lying, b) they are covering up a conspiracy, or c) they are engaging in ‘spin’. As a consequence, perhaps, of postmodern deconstruction of the power structures inherent in any reading of a text, especially of privileged reading, there is a widespread scepticism in society which manifests itself most clearly in the number of conspiracy theorists who now exist.

Neil Armstrong did not land on the moon—it was all staged in a big air force hangar at a secret base in the Nevada desert. The Two Towers were not demolished by Muslim extremists following the precepts of Osama bin Laden—they were demolished by CIA operatives so that the Republican administration could introduce swingeing security laws. Jesus did not die on the cross...

In an age where Dan Brown can score a best-seller by rehashing some thirty-year-old ideas, any appeal to ‘authority’ is likely to be suspect. Indeed, the greater the efforts to discredit the conspiracy theorists, the more likely they are to see these attempts as ‘evidence’ of a cover-up.

Steve Hollinghurst (2006) reports some of the reactions to a programme on ITV about *The Da Vinci Code*. The programme showed that most of Dan Brown’s controversial assertions

were simply factually incorrect. Nevertheless, many of those who saw the programme remained unconvinced. The response of a man from Dudley in the West Midlands was typical of many:

The facts speaks for themselves; as the saying goes, there's no smoke without fire.

Sex

Sex. In America an obsession. In other parts of the world a fact. Marlene Dietrich

Contemporary society says that the church is obsessed with sex. The church says that contemporary society is obsessed with sex. The legacy of the sixties with its emphasis on free love and self-actualisation is still with us. This is not the first age to be obsessed with explicit sexual behaviour and it may well not be the last.

What is perhaps different is the ease of access to pornographic material. It is said that the success of VHS over Betamax was down to the fact that you couldn't get a full pornographic film on the early Betamax tapes. It is similarly argued that pornography has provided the 'killer app' (critical application) for the growth of the internet—a crude estimate would be that there are at least 350,000,000 pages with pornographic content on the internet.

Not surprisingly, in a consumerist individualistic society, sex has become a commodity and everyone has a right to have as much as they want/need. Notions of abstinence are seen as 'quaint' at best and perverted at worst.

Compensation culture

I didn't do it!—Bart Simpson.

One final factor: the rise of an emphasis on rights as opposed to duties has led to the notion that nothing is ever 'my' fault. But the notion of fault has not been abolished; it has been transferred to the 'other'. Indeed, the notion of causality is so strong that there must be a 'reason' for everything. So, if something bad has happened to me, it happened for a reason and that reason must be that someone else is at fault. In which case it is might 'right' to be compensated.

As we will see issues surrounding personal fault (sin) and cause (if there was a God he wouldn't let earthquakes, etc. happen) are key when engaging with people in contemporary society.

Conclusion

This is not exhaustive and it would be easy to add more dimensions of contemporary culture to the ones offered here. Perhaps more important is to remember that all of them are actually inter-related and co-evolving with one another.

If we are to engage with contemporary Western culture then we need to understand, and to some extent empathise with, the forces that are driving the people we meet every day.

Sessions One & Two Notes—A Past but no Present

Fall of Classical Science

The Newton quote is from Alexander Pope, *Epitaph: Intended for Sir Isaac Newton*, 1730. In 1926 Sir John Squire countered, "It did not last: the Devil, howling 'Ho! Let Einstein be! restored the status quo".

I have no need of that hypothesis

"According to a story commonly told, Laplace presented Napoleon with a copy of his book on the System of the World; Napoleon notes that Laplace did not mention God in it; Laplace replies, "I have no need of that hypothesis."

I have come across several occasions on which people have claimed this story is apocryphal. This is not quite true; it is fictionalized history. The real story, which happened in August of 1802, is given by Sir William Herschel (among other things, the discoverer of Uranus, binary star systems, the first asteroid, and infrared rays):

"The first Consul then asked a few questions relating to Astronomy and the construction of the heavens to which I made such answers as seemed to give him great satisfaction. He also addressed himself to Mr. Laplace on the same subject, and held a considerable argument with him in which he differed from that eminent mathematician. The difference was occasioned by an exclamation of the first Consul, who asked in a tone of exclamation or admiration (when we were speaking of the extent of the sidereal heavens): 'And who is the author of all this!' Mons. de la Place wished to shew that a chain of natural causes would account for the construction and preservation of the wonderful system. This the first Consul rather opposed. Much may be said on the subject; by joining the arguments of both we shall be led to 'Nature and nature's God'."

[Source: Herschel's diary of his visit to Paris in 1802, as found in C. Lubbock's *The Herschel Chronicle*, p. 310.]

From Bandon Watson's site: <http://branemrys.org/archives/2004/08/i-have-no-need-of-that-hypothesis/>

Quantum theory

Although Max Planck is often thought of as the founder of quantum theory it actually came about through the work of many (including Bohr, de Broglie, Dirac, Einstein, Heisenberg and Schrödinger) who built on Planck's foundations. Relativity theory, on the other hand, is almost exclusively the work of one man—Albert Einstein.

Although it is old and out of print, one of the best explanations of the rise of quantum theory is Banesh Hoffman's *The Strange Story of the Quantum*. Copies can still be found on Amazon and Abebooks.com

For a video on the double slit experiment see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfPeprQ7oGc>

Chaos theory

Chaos by James Gleick is a good readable introduction to notions of chaos. Ian Stewart's *Does God Play Dice* is a bit more technical but still accessible for most people.

Complexity & Emergence

The Hawking quote appeared on 23rd January 2000 in the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Complexity by Mitchell Waldrop is a good introduction to notions of complexity, especially as associated with the Santa Fe institute.

Social Constructionism

There is some debate about the difference between constructionism and constructivism; consult the internet if you really want to know more.

One of the seminal texts in social constructionism is *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter Berger (1929-) & Thomas Luckman (1927-). Berger is Professor of Sociology and Theology at Boston University, and director of the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs. A fascinating article by him on the decline of mainstream protestant Christianity in the USA can be found at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=232>

Appreciative Inquiry was developed by David Cooperrider at Case Western University in the USA. For more information see <http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/appreciative.htm>

Postmodernism

The “absolute truth” quote is from Paul Feyerabend (1924-1994), an Austrian philosopher of science. He denied the possibility of absolute truth in science.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment is the name given to both an historical period (basically the 18th century) and a way of thinking about the world. Enlightenment thinking raised *reason* to new heights. Its leaders saw themselves as liberating the world (i.e. Europe) from the tyranny of the superstition and anarchy of the Dark Ages. Religion was often seen as oppressor rather than victim and atheism and Deism (a rationalistic approach to religion which rejected revelation, ‘superstition’, and claims of Jesus’ divinity) became more common.

Liotard

The first five chapters of Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester University Press 1984) can be found online at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/liotard.htm>

Postmodernism criticised

Postmodernism has its critics. For instance, Pauline Rosenau (1992) identifies seven contradictions in Postmodernism:

1. Its anti-theoretical position is essentially a theoretical stand.
2. While Postmodernism stresses the irrational, instruments of reason are freely employed to advance its perspective.
3. The Postmodern prescription to focus on the marginal is itself an evaluative emphasis of precisely the sort that it otherwise attacks.
4. Postmodernism stress intertextuality but often treats text in isolation.
5. By adamantly rejecting modern criteria for assessing theory, Postmodernists cannot argue that there are no valid criteria for judgement.
6. Postmodernism criticizes the inconsistency of modernism, but refuses to be held to norms of consistency itself.

7. Postmodernists contradict themselves by relinquishing truth claims in their own writings.

The above list from <http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/pomo.htm>

Power and story-telling

David Boje (1995) has written an interesting and readable article about power and stories in Disney Corp.

Technology

Gordon Moore (1929-) was one of the co-founders, with Robert Noyce (1927-1990) of the Intel Corporation. More on his famous 'law', including a video of him explaining it, can be found at <http://www.intel.com/technology/mooreslaw/index.htm>

Mass Media

The quote by Marshall McLuhan comes from his book *Understanding Media*.

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com>

MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com>

Bebo: <http://www.bebo.com/>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com>

World of Warcraft: <http://www.worldofwarcraft.com>

Second Life: <http://secondlife.com>

Globalisation

Global village is a term coined by Herbert Marshall McLuhan (1911-1908) in his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962:32). (Though Wyndham Lewis in his book *America and Cosmic Man* (1948) came up with something similar: "...now that the earth has become one big village, with telephones laid on from one end to the other, and air transport, both speedy and safe...". McLuhan's book describes how electronic mass media collapse space and time barriers in human communication, enabling people to interact and live on a global scale.

The 'Tebbit Test' comes from a statement made by Lord Tebbit (1931-) in an interview with the Los Angeles Times in 1990. He said, "A large proportion of Britain's Asian population fail to pass the cricket test. Which side do they cheer for? It's an interesting test. Are you still harking back to where you came from or where you are?"

An estimated 5.5m British people live permanently abroad—almost one in 10 of the UK population. In 2005 approximately 2,000 British citizens moved permanently away from the UK every week.

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/brits_abroad/html/default.stm)

According to official UK government estimates, approximately 1,500 migrants arrived to live in the UK every day during 2005. The same figures suggest that 185,000 more people immigrated into the UK than emigrated to another country, yielding a net population gain of 500 per day.

(http://www.workpermit.com/news/2006_11_21/uk/2-year_immigration_statistics.htm)

Individualism

The “no such thing as society” quote is by Prime minister Margaret Thatcher, talking to *Women’s Own* magazine, 31st October 1987. See her website for further elucidation: <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106689>

The best-known argument of this sort is made by Robert Putnam in his article “Bowling Alone.”

Feminism

The “fish on a bicycle” quote is often attributed to Gloria Steinem in the 1970s.

Consumerism

“Tesco ergo sum” has been variously attributed. (The earliest reference I have been able to find is in text of a meditation given by Brian Draper at the Alternative Worship Gathering in London, 9th May 1998:

<http://seaspray.trinity-bris.ac.uk/~robertsp/altworship/altworship/new.html>)

The term ‘conspicuous consumption’ was coined by Thorstein Veblen in his classic *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, first published in 1899. An e-text of the book can be found at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/833>

Conspiracy culture

A place to start exploring the moon landing conspiracy is

<http://www.redzero.demon.co.uk/moonhoax/>

There are a number of well-made documentaries about the twin towers conspiracy. You can see some on YouTube at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_q6j6BZkHQ or

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMWn-bQYfSc> or

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUnLHAuNAZw>.

It’s also worth looking at the comments from viewers of the videos.

Sex

It is hardly necessary to offer any internet resources! Typing ‘sex’ into Google finds 26,700,000 pages with ‘moderate safe search’ on. With safe search off it finds 390,000,000 pages! (Google image search finds 1,400,00 and 2,730,00 images, respectively.)

Note: the above was written in May 2007. In June 2008 there were 786,000,000 pages with safe search off. Google image search found 81,800,000 pages with moderate safe search on and 127,000,000 pages with safe search off, implying that the number of pages with a sexual content have dramatically increased in a year or that Google is now more efficient than it was—probably a combination of the two. More significantly it implies that that in June 2008 there were at least 135,000,000 pages containing serious pornographic images (i.e. the difference between the two image search figures).

Compensation culture

The Bart Simpson quote is from *Bart Gets Famous*, written by John Swartzwelder, directed by Susie Diether; production code: 1F11; original transmission 03-02-94.