



21世纪英语专业系列教材



A Concise Textbook of Western Cultural Studies

简明西方文化史

张晓立 编著

北京大学出版社



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Two Prologue Poems

Essay on Man

By Alexander Pope^①

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;
And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear,
Whatever is, is right.

A World in a Flower

By William Blake^②

To see a world in a flower,
And a heaven in a sand;
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

① Alexander Pope (21 May 1688–30 May 1744) was an 18th-century English poet, best known for his satirical verse and for his translation of Homer. Famous for his use of the heroic couplet, he is the third-most frequently quoted writer in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, after Shakespeare and Tennyson. This poem is taken from his famous series poem entitled *The Essay on Man*. *The Essay on Man* is a philosophical poem, written in heroic couplets and published between 1732 and 1734. Pope intended this poem to be the centerpiece of a proposed system of ethics that was to be put forth in poetic form. It was a piece of work that Pope intended to make into a larger work; however, he did not live to complete it.

② William Blake (28 November 1757–12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of both the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. His prophetic poetry has been said to form “what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language”. His visual artistry has led one contemporary art critic to proclaim him “far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced”. Although he lived in London his entire life except for three years spent in Felpham he produced a diverse and symbolically rich corpus, which embraced the imagination as “the body of God”, or “Human existence itself”.

Preface

I am honoured and delighted to have this opportunity to write a short Preface to *A Concise Textbook of western Cultural Studies*. This is Professor Zhang Xiaoli's first book published in English and its fame has been much enhanced for the fact that the book was published by such a prestigious publisher in China as Peking University Press, which definitely underscores its academic significance. Like all the best textbooks it has its origins in teaching and learning and was first conceived while Professor Zhang Xiaoli was teaching a course on the history of western culture at the China Foreign Affairs University.

Although the book's title refers to western Cultural Studies, its subject matter is much broader than this; offering, as it does, a fascinating survey of the development of key aspects of western culture. The range and significance of the material will be of immense interest and use to students and academics working in this area.

I think it is very important that books of this nature are published. Besides their academic value, they also have the essential function of increasing intellectual exchanges between China and the West. There can be little doubt that this book will make a valuable and important contribution to an increase in mutual understanding.

Professor John Storey
Director of the Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies
University of Sunderland
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Introduction

This concise textbook of western cultural studies of introductory nature is prepared for the course of the same title in an attempt to provide the course participants and interested readers with a handbook simple and concise enough to present a learning guidance for this field so that they can read something very basic, yet essential to the topic under discussion. The history of western civilization is a huge and magnificent topic as the time period it covers is so long and the contents it includes are so rich and diverse. It is almost impossible even to browse such a huge topic within such a short period of time as is allowed by this course. Therefore, the conductor of this course has compiled the following brief textbook in the form of an anthology of the history of western civilization with an attempt to provide the learner with an *effective and facilitating vehicle* to learn something about western civilization with a clearer orientation. The history of western civilization can be summed up in a numerical order from one to ten as follows, which can provide a concise and panoramic picture of the outline of western civilization evolution. Moreover, some 30 odd articles are presented within this textbook so that the readers can read them to form a rough idea of the key concepts and vital issues concerning the history of western civilization and some of the current issues related to the West. It must be admitted that in terms of culture, the influence of the West chiefly represented by American pop culture is quite powerful nowadays with its cultural products extending to and even occupying much of the global market in many *developing countries* and has exerted tremendous impact upon younger generation of different countries. The West has occupied and firmly consolidated the commanding heights of culture with its economic power and military strength to promulgate an idea that the western culture represents the orientation of a global culture. The world is still very diverse culturally and it still remains to be seen if one culture of a region (the West) can replace cultures of other regions (the West versus the rest). For sure, it is human nature to see something diverse and colorful rather than something homogeneous and monotonous. No doubt, the western culture has made its *remarkable contributions* to the human civilization with scientific inventions, *organizational ideas* and institutional designs, which, however, does not qualify it fully as a flagship or beacon for global cultural development. Cultural diversity must be maintained and cultural dominance should be shunned. If tolerance is one of western cultural traditions, this tradition should be carried out in the cultural exchanges between the East and West to establish a harmonious and tolerant world in which strong cultures and weak ones, mainstream cultures and marginalized ones should co-exist in peace and in mutual respect.

The following part of this textbook is compiled in a way so as to provide a precise and concise account of the major themes, features, figures and events of the western culture as arranged in a numerical order from one to ten. The themes and events are not necessarily listed or arranged according to their chronological order therein mentioned or discussed.

ONE dominant and persistent tradition: Judo-Christian Tradition that has sketched and highlighted the very core value and cultural feature of the West

It can be safely claimed that the whole development and evolution of history of western civilization is chiefly based upon the Judo-Christian tradition, without which it definitely has lost its religious validity and spiritual buttress. Judo-Christian tradition has exerted tremendous and unparalleled influence upon the metamorphosis of the western culture both at religious and secular levels. Almost every big historic event has something to do with this religious tradition.

In a sense, the history of the West as a whole is one of Christianity amplified, verified, modified and justified or even nullified. Many of the core values of the West can find their ancestral roots in the Bible. An in-depth and thorough analysis of western civilization would be impossible without some basic understanding of Judo-Christian tradition in general.

TWO chief propelling and guiding ideological ISMs: Capitalism and Colonialism that have heralded and strengthened the global expansive basis of the West

The rise, expansion and flourishing of the West has been propelled and pushed by these two key ISMs to a great extent. What happened in 1492 (Columbus Ocean Voyage and Christian seize of Granada) heralded the beginning of the rise of the West by opening an age of colonialism which very much facilitated and consolidated the overseas expansion of the West, which in turn decisively guaranteed and secured its global hegemonic position it still has held up till now. Capitalism, rising hand in hand with colonialism, which defines and governs its political, social and economic structure, has replaced feudalism to become a dominant ideology of the West. As a fundamental and legitimate social system of a new ruling class, capitalism is in a sense an ideological and cultural symbol and synonym of the West. Although colonialism is already gone in form as one of the propelling forces, economic globalization is said to have appeared as a new type of colonialism for the western expansion or even occupation of the global market. In this process, capitalism remains a driving force of the West in maintaining its global dominance.

THREE milestone and historical movements: Renaissance Movement, the Reformation and Enlightenment Movement that have shaped or defined the nature and the course of the West

It is indisputably argued that three major movements have significantly and decisively shaped the developmental course of the West and their argument is largely true. These three movements have presented some milestone significance for the orientation of the western civilization. First of all, the significance of Renaissance signaled the departure from the Medieval Ages of the West, marking the beginning of a historic shift from theological rule and religious dominance over the society to a more humanistic approach in people's life attitude and way of thinking. By breaking down the hegemonic rule of the Church in people's daily behavior and acts, Renaissance did so much in freeing people from theological bondage to aspire for personal expression and individual liberation. Renaissance had dawn an age in which people began to be concerned with more of their life for today than after-world. It is with the age of Renaissance that equal, if not more attention, was given to people's secular happiness and dignity than to divine pursuit. Human power and glory were promoted and promulgated. It is an age in which giants were needed and produced. It is from the age of Renaissance that the idea that Man, instead of God, became a center of the universe began to prevail.

The Religious Reformation Movement, through coherent and concise logical rationalization of capitalist behavior in terms of religious explanations, provides divine justification for the secular progress of capitalistic spirit, once and for all removing the religious barrier and block for the rapid and massive development of capitalism and greatly enhancing its social and economic influence in the West. For the first time, the pursuit of material wealth, hereto despised and shunned for religious reasons, became a glorious goal of human beings. Furthermore, one's material status became a sign of divine grace and one's wealth, a symbol of faith. Material pursuit and religious piety have been perfectly and adeptly combined through Protestant Reformation of traditional Christianity. Capitalism, under the coat of religious belief, has embarked upon the world arena with full religious glorification and justification. Unlike traditional Christianity that greatly blocked the development of capitalism, Protestant

Reformation eased and smoothed the way for the world-wide expansion of capitalism under the holy name of God, spreading God's gospels and acquiring as much wealth as it is able to at the same time.

The Enlightenment Movement is by nature an intellectual and cultural movement aimed at expanding and promoting humanistic traditions initiated by Renaissance Movement and eliminating ignorance, intolerance and lack of scientific awareness. By and large, it is a continuation of the previous two movements in a way that it has held high the flag of rationalism, humanism and liberalism, providing the ideological and cultural framework for the budding capitalistic social structure and paving the way for the smooth and upward development of industrialization that served as an economic basis for the rise of capitalism as a new dominant class on a global stage. Enlightenment as a movement is historically significant in that strongly influenced by the rise of modern science and by the aftermath of the long religious conflict that followed the Reformation, the thinkers of the Enlightenment were faithfully devoted and fervently committed to secular views based on reason or human understanding only, which enlightenment representative figures hoped would provide a strong basis for beneficial changes affecting every area of life and thought. The enlightened understanding of human nature was one that emphasized the right to self-expression and human fulfillment, the right to think freely and express one's views publicly without censorship or fear of repression from any authority. The slogan of the Enlightenment Movement is to think freely and independently, regardless of any authority or institution, religious or secular alike. The Enlightenment Movement has created an intellectual and cultural tradition in the West that final judgment of truths lies in the hand of science and reason instead of mighty power of God alone as was the case before.

FOUR epoch-making revolutions: Commercial, Industrial, Scientific and Information Revolutions that have chartered the course of the western Civilization

It goes without saying that something that can rightly and justifiably be called a revolution must be revolutionary by nature or in essence, which can cause fundamental and structural change in the field it has affected. This definition of revolution applies to these four revolutions in the history of the West as each of these four revolutions not only heralded a new epoch, but also brought fundamentally structural changes to human society. The Commercial Revolution responded to the basic desires of human beings for material wealth through commercial activity made possible by free trade first within a region and then extended to global scale. The Commercial Revolution is on the one hand the pure manifestation of human material desires massively released and on the other prompted by the previous great geographical discovery that opened and chartered a new ocean trade and commercial route between the East and West, rapidly enhancing the global influence of capitalism and greatly facilitating material accumulation worldwide. The Commercial Revolution, according to historians, preceded or rather was succeeded by yet another epoch-making revolution, the Industrial Revolution. The process of the Industrial Revolution, which first began in England and culminated in the USA in the West, spanning about two century, is still going on nowadays worldwide. Many emerging economies today like China, India, etc. are being industrialized now. Industrialization is a revolution that has led human society to an industrial age in which driving force for productive progress is propelled by a new mode of production based on machinery, factory system, technology and economy of scale. The Industrial Revolution would have been impossible without scientific breakthroughs that have witnessed a revolution in science itself. Spirit of science is one of the outstanding features of western culture, which defies authority and verifies truth through experiments. The Scientific Revolution, represented by such scientific giants as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin,

Kepler and Bohr, to name only a few, broadened horizon of humans about the nature and world around them. Scientists regard as their life purpose to explore and discover natural law and secrets to bring their benefits to human daily life. From religious superstition to scientific way of thinking, human beings experienced a great leap forward in their mental reasoning, thus opening another field for human beings to understand this world and beyond. The latest revolution that first occurred in the West and that is taking place in some other regions in the world is what is precisely labeled as Information Revolution prominently characterized by the breakthroughs and improvement of information technology based upon telecommunication and micro-electronic technology, which have led to the wide and massive use of computers and the Internet. The Information Revolution is thus called as it has brought revolutionary changes to the way people live and work. For the first time in human history, information can be transmitted instantly to almost every corner of the world and geographical distance has been made irrelevant. People's life and work have been arranged accurately and arbitrarily via digital control and computerized management. In sum, these four revolutions, which all occurred first in the West, have once and for all changed the way people think, work, live and entertain. Their significance can never be overestimated.

FIVE distinctive periods of human social evolution in the West: the Age of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Pre-modern Period, the Modern Period and the Post-modern Period

This division of social developmental stages into five distinctive periods are manifested by the outstanding characteristics each of them demonstrated. Until the end of Antiquity, human society was largely one by nature of nomads and agriculture with people relying on nature for basic subsistence in terms of material well-being. Due to backward means of production, people were subordinated to natural power and their life quality was at the mercy of nature. The mode of production during this period of time was primitive and low-efficient with people being unable to shake off the bonds of natural disasters and adverse climate elements. The advent of the Middle Ages witnessed the dominance of theological power governing human activities in the West. The Middle Ages, also called "the Dark Ages", was a period of time in the West in which ignorance, religious intolerance, prejudice and spiritual oppression were rampant, marking a pretty bleak chapter in the history of the western culture. The darkness of the Medieval Ages was cleared by the dawn of a new idea that human beings, instead of God, should occupy the central stage of human society, posing great challenge to the then theological authority represented by the Church with a strong inclination of admiration of the ancient Greco-Roman cultural heritages that glorified the creativity of human beings rather than the splendor of a divine power. A epoch-making movement called Renaissance ended the Middle Ages and brought the West into a new period hereto referred to as Pre-modern Age. It was during this period of time that many significant historic events took place that prompted a process in which the establishment of Europe as a center of political and economic influence for human civilization began. With capitalism and colonialism starting to develop in full swing around the end of 17th century, the Modern Age began, which lasted for about two centuries until the end of 19th century when capitalist class took hold over the society in the West. The modern era in the West was a period of time full of conflicts, changes, transitions and transformations, in which the West experienced the completion of industrialization and urbanization and in which the whole world suffered from the two world wars. The most significant historical change is the establishment and consolidation of western influence and to some extent hegemony on the development course of human beings with the rise and fall of British Empire to be finally replaced by the United States of America whose dominance over the global affairs has still continued. In the post modern age, the United

States of America has led the world by entering so-called the post-industrial age or information age based upon knowledge economy. In terms of cultural as well as social evolution, the present-day world is faced with different social types. Some countries, especially countries in the West are already in the post-modern age while some other countries like emerging economies are still in the process of industrialization and urbanization. Still some other countries like African countries in particular have not yet embarked upon the journey toward industrialization. The gap between the rich and poor countries, between so-called advanced and backward countries has highlighted the very diverse features of social and economic development in today's world. Development gap in economic growth and social structural transformation reflects the true reality of international community. The sense of superiority amplified by this gap is a clear manifestation of the West to a very large extent that economic globalization currently in full swing around the world implies cultural westernization that holds Americanization as its final and singular standard. The division of social development into these five periods is marked by a constant and continuous shift from nomadic civilization through agrarian civilization and industrial civilization to current information civilization with transformations taking place one after another in economic, social and cultural fields respectively.

SIX pillar and core concepts/themes: Representative Democracy, Market Economy, Rule of Law, Secularism (separation of church and state), Rationalism and Constitutionalism

Throughout the history of the West, some concepts or themes have stood out as being so influential and pervasive that they have governed the mentality and social behavior of the westerners. The early form of democracy can find its ancestral tradition in classical Hellenistic civilization in the political pattern of city-states. Although the connotation of democracy has changed over its evolution, its core idea remains unvaried and basic, which has been reaffirmed through famous remarks made Abraham Lincoln when he expressed his famous statement of establishing a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Market in the first place is product of commercial revolution and its functions go far beyond a marketplace where people engage in trading business. Market has become an economic mechanism that governs economic activities through some basic laws such as supply and demand, competition and valuation. An economic institution based on market principles has become a prevailing and dominant system that has been adopted by almost every country now in the world, albeit with different forms. As one of the three pillars in American political culture (and in some degree in western political culture), **rule of law** is an antithetical political ideal or idea to absolutism or autocracy featured by rule of man. Rule of law is both procedural and substantial through an iron principle and lofty ideal that all is equal before law regardless of one's social status or material wealth. Given the long history of ecclesiastical rule and dominance in the West, it is very significant that **secularism** as reflected by the separation of church and state has eventually prevailed in the West so that capitalism as an emerging ideology can get rid of the bondage of religion to advance without obstacles to become a propelling force for social and economic progress in the West. Secularism has made it possible for people in the West to pursue material wealth without abandoning their spiritual and religious beliefs. Secularism has also freed secular political entity or governance from intervention from any religious force, eliminating the possible appearance of a theocratic state in the West as a modern state institution. **Rationalism**, as opposes to empiricism, in western philosophical tradition, represents the view that regards and stresses reason as the chief source and final test of knowledge and truth. Strongly holding that reality itself has an inherently logical structure, the rationalist asserts that a class of truths exists that the intellect can grasp directly. There are, according to the rationalists, certain rational

principles—especially in logic and mathematics, and even in ethics and metaphysics—that are so fundamental that to deny them is to fall into contradiction and confusion of thought. Rationalism is a pillar of scientific spirit which has led the West out of the Medieval ignorance toward an age of reason, which in turn boosted the liberation of productive force. The final result of the long evolutionary process of political system in the West is found in constitutionalism, which is also one of the three pillars in American political culture and of western political culture at large. As a major political form of government in the West, constitutionalism sets the pattern for political rule based upon the supremacy of constitution, which guarantees that governors can't execute their power without the consent of the governed.

SEVEN pioneering and enduring ideas or ideals: Innovation, Competition, Efficiency, Equality, Justice, Freedom (Liberty) and Social Progress

The West has made its own political, economic and social advancement propelled by these seven pioneering ideas. **Innovation** has been a strong driving force for the West in its scientific, technological and organizational breakthroughs. The current West has found the source of strengths from innovation which is key part of its culture. **Competition** is key element in market economy, a dominant economic form of the West. It is through fair, free and open competition that the best of everything can be produced. In economics, competition can optimize the allocation of productive factors and natural and human resources. **Efficiency**, as one of the core values of capitalism, aims at acquiring maximum output or benefits with minimum input or costs. The most prominent merit of capitalistic mode of production is economy of scale based upon the idea of efficiency that highlights the advantage of capitalism over other types of social and economic system. **Equality** is a long-time ideal of the West given the long period of time of feudalistic rule in Europe with a strong hierarchical social and power order. As the Declaration of American Independence clearly expresses, equality is among the inalienable rights of human beings that can never be deprived or violated. Equality is also one of the three ideals expressed as the motto of French Revolution. **Justice** as part of natural rights of man is a product of modern age and has appeared as an antithetical ideal to some social ills and evils in the early stage of primitive capital accumulation of capitalism. Justice is inherent in natural law principle, which is the foundation of western legal ideas and system. Justice has been upheld as a core value as well as the holy goal of social reform and progress in the West, especially in modern time and it is a continuation of equality which, if strongly promoted through legal procedure, should produce social order and harmony as a logical result. No any social progress can be counted as real progress without element of justice strongly advocated and protected in a society through legal procedures. **Freedom** including personal freedom, political and economic freedom, is basic human nature that should be guaranteed by law. No government, nor any institution, nor any authority shall have any right to infringe upon personal freedom without any legal ground. Political and economic freedom has been written into Universal Declaration of Human Rights as basic conditions for a civilized society. The history of western Civilization is one filled with fierce struggle for individual liberty against totalitarian and autocratic regimes like feudalistic monarchies and arbitrary church authority. **Progress** has been a deeply-rooted idea in the West since early Greco-Roman culture. To every problem, there must be a solution. This is the basic tenet of social progress based upon optimism for human progress at large. The West has had a long tradition of looking to the future and of taking overall social progress as a final judgment of the validity of any human institution. The Progressive Movement in the United States in late 19th century and early 20th century demonstrated this spirit of the West in that it eradicated social ills and evils of any type through political, social and legal measures, paving the way for the coming

of a civil society. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States in the 1960's is another clear manifestation of this progressive tradition, *eliminating racial prejudice and discrimination and enhancing the holy principle that everyone is equal regardless of their races and ethnic backgrounds.*

EIGHT unique history-making events: the Birth, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; the Crusades; the East-West Schism; Constantine the Great and his Conversion to Christianity; Columbus Discovery of the New World; the Black Death; the Independence of the United States of America and the Explosion of A-Bomb

The birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ may be or should be viewed as the single most important series of events not only in the West, but also the whole world. Without Jesus Christ, there would have been no Christianity, of which there are about two billion adherents worldwide now although they are divided into different denominations. Most of the countries now in the world adopt the **Gregorian calendar**, also called the **western calendar** and the **Christian calendar**. The influence of Christianity upon the West is immense and immeasurable. No wonder some people claim that the western culture is in essence a Christian culture. Christian influence upon political structure, economic system and legal institution is pervasive, persistent and prevailing.

The **Crusades** were a series of religious expeditionary wars blessed by Pope Urban II and the Catholic Church, with the stated goal of restoring Christian access to the holy places in and near Jerusalem. Jerusalem was and is a sacred city and symbol of all three Abrahamic religious faiths, Jews, Christians and Muslims and it is still a contending point and hot spot in today's world. The aftermath of the Crusades sowed the seeds of religious confrontation between Christianity and Islam and a lot of clashes in the name of civilization are in reality religious conflicts that can trace back to the period of the Crusades.

Constantine the Great and his Conversion to Christianity demonstrates its significance by the fact that after his conversion to Christianity, Christianity became a dominant religion in the Mediterranean region, establishing its legal status in Roman Empire. Since this event, Christianity has become a para-official state religion in many countries in the West, consolidating theological control over secular affairs in Europe in general and in Roman Empire in particular. For a long time after that, Christianity remained in this status and its influence extended to almost every corner of a society. With Constantine's Conversion, Christianity completed its own transformation of status from a suppressed religion to a legally official religion in Roman Empire. It is not until the beginning of the Reformation that Christianity began to experience a radical and fundamental metamorphosis. With the Religious Reformation, Christianity as a dominant religion in the West became further divided into traditional Christianity and new protestant denomination that first appeared in Europe and then flourished in North America. Protestant Christianity began to influence some major countries in terms of political and economic development.

The East-West Schism, sometimes known as the **Great Schism**, is the medieval division of Chalcedonian Christianity into eastern (Greek) and western (Latin) branches, which later became known as the eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church respectively. Relations between East and West had long been embittered by political and ecclesiastical differences and theological disputes. Prominent among these were the issues of "filioque", whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used in the Eucharist, the Pope's claim to universal jurisdiction, and the place of Constantinople in relation to the Pentarchy. This Great Schism divided Christianity into two major parts, establishing the current religious pattern in Europe or in the West in general that are still valid today.