

“There is always a before and an after in the history of civilization”

The **ethos** of an epoch

1789 – **French Revolution** Liberty/Equality/Fraternity
Human Rights
U N (1945)

1840's → **Industrial Revolution:** Urbanization
Mechanization
Materialism

↙ ↘

Capitalism
Liberalism
Colonization
Imperialism

Marxism, Communist Manifesto 1848
Class struggle
Communist Revolution 1917
Lenin
Stalin

Darwin, The Origin of Species Creationists vs. Evolutionists

1927 Heisenberg, Quantum Physics
Uncertainty principle

1970's Increasing development of theoretical astro-physics

1988 Hawking, A Brief History of Time
Scientists aim at discovering a complete theory which would bring together Relativity
and Quantum Physics: “We would know then the mind of God”. (p. 175)

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II. Twentieth Century Political Scene

1914 – 18	World War I
1937	Guernica- Spain
1939 – 44	World War II
	The Holocaust
1945	Hiroshima

Fascism Nazism Stalinism Maoism Totalitarianism, Concentration Camps,
Gulags, millions of people killed.

In the West

1945–90	Cold War – USA/USSR
1989	Fall of the Berlin Wall
1990	Break down of Communist Russia
	Gorbachev's <u>glasnost</u> (transparency); Perestroika (restructuring; reconstructing)

In the Arab World

1948 Creation of Israel

“The dispossession of a people”: exodus, alienation, despair:

I have witnessed the massacre
I am a victim of a map
...will/you accept my name
My only code-name-
Mahmoud Darwish?
The police and Carmel's pines
Have whipped my real name
Off my skin

1953 Abdel-Nasser; the dream of a great Arab nation revived.

1961 The process of decolonization reaches a peak with the Algerian independence.

1967 Six-day-war. Utter Arab defeat. The end of the dream.

1975 – 1990 “Civil War” in Lebanon.

1996 Arafat, President of a mini-Palestinian State.

2006 July war (Lebanon VS Israel)

A CVSP QUESTION

How have men and women reacted to such an acceleration of inventions and catastrophes?
A bird's eye view on our readings.

A. Western Man/Woman

1. Breakdown of faith, reason, and truth with Nietzsche and Freud. Man/Woman in the grip of drives, passions. For Nietzsche there is no Truth but only personal perspective. For Freud, truths, morals, are sublimations of the sexual drive.
2. Faustian man as encountered in Hawking. (The desire to be master of the universe at whatever cost).
3. Twilight of the world in Thomas Mann.

4. Feminist revolution in Simone de Beauvoir → **Existentialism** → Lucidity, courage, responsibility; the “freedom to be”; anguish accepted as the price to be paid for liberty.
5. Beckett’s Nihilism → the absurdist sensibility → Malraux, Camus, Sartre...etc.
6. Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag.

B. **Arab Man/Woman**

1. Naguib Mahfouz: Poverty as absolute evil.
2. Tayeb Salih: Colonization/Decolonization, a lethal game, Faustian man as carrier of death vs. a common humanity.
The East – West bind
3. Edward Said: distorted representations of the Other vs. mutual respect. The need to build bridges between nations, between I and the Other.

III. **CONCLUSION:** Some food for thought.
Some issues facing us today; a quick view.

- Globalization as a process vs. Globalism as a state of being, a condition which would make human beings and nations interact justly. A planetary citizenship?
- Scientific progress: Longer life span
Better hygiene
Better medical care...etc.
Rapid transportation...etc.
but no progress in ethics, in moral awareness; the problems posed by bio-ethics (genetic manipulation, cloning...etc).

Technology: is it dehumanizing man/woman?

- The Environment. Excessive abuse of natural resources (water, oil, forests...etc.) nature humbles man/woman: Tsunamis, Katrinas...etc. Roughly 6 million people today as against 1 million at the beginning of the 20th c.
- The Media: information vs. misinformation
- The Brains Business, Knowledge Economy replacing physical resources. Knowledge based industries → Most important agents of knowledge economy are the universities. Number of students at universities in the world has doubled in the last 20 years (see The Economist, Sept. 10-16, 2005)
- The 3rd World War: Terrorism → advanced technology used to terrorize, to kill in the most “fluid” style. Globalization vs. Manichaeism
- **The climate, the mood of our epoch:**

Exhilaration of human power (hybris?) vs Disenchantment. The ambiguities of the concept of Progress. Man/Woman consumer machines without a soul?
Post-modern creatures? What vision? What direction?