

Addicted to Distraction

Psychological consequences of the modern Mass Media

Bruce G Charlton

Like Plato in his Myth of the Cave, he calls for each of us to turn away from flickering images and toward realities. We need to heed that call.

James Kalb

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The medium is the message

Marshal McLuhan, 1964

Although more than 99% of what he wrote was (in my opinion) either wrong or nonsense, Marshal McLuhan (1911-1980) was nevertheless the first to see clearly that the key fact, the primary reality about the Mass Media is not the vast multitude of its specific contents; but rather its form as a whole, its unifying nature as a phenomenon, its underlying operating-principles.

McLuhan therefore defined the subject of the Mass Media, drew a line around it, made it an object for study.

This whole book can be seen as, in a sense, an unpacking and elaboration of McLuhan's pregnant phrase: "The medium is the message" – therefore it seems appropriate that it be dedicated to the memory of that maddeningly-inconsistent volcano of creativity.

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Introduction

Stimulated by the horrific revelations of the Jimmy Savile affair at the BBC, with its implications of wholesale Establishment corruption and a sustained Media cover-up; this book diagnoses the fundamental problem of the modern world as addiction to the distractions of the Mass Media.

The Media just grows and grows, and progressively takes-over control of all the functionally useful social systems from politics to religion, from education to the arts.

Yet the Mass Media is a system like no other – it has no function of its own, so it can just keep growing. It has no positive aim for society, and regards all knowledge just a matter of opinion. Therefore the Mass Media subverts all that is useful, and everything that gives meaning and purpose to life.

Since the Media works like a drug, the first step is withdrawal, and a ‘detox’ programme. Having escaped addiction, we may become free of the lies and lunacies of life in the Media bubble, and return to the realities of direct personal knowledge, actual experience and common sense.

Mass Media – Singular or Plural?

I will refer to the Mass Media (capital letters) as *singular* when I mean the inter-linked communication system of all the media – including print, broadcast and internet media considered as a whole.

For example, when saying the Mass Media *has* grown, I mean the system as a unified network of communications both within and between each of the specific media.

And I will refer to the mass media (lower case letters) as a *plural* when referring to several or many different types of media as a group of different modes of communication.

For example, when saying the mass media *have* grown I would mean that each of the specific components has grown – that newspapers, radio and TV have grown in their own right, in terms of their specific internal communications.

So I mean the whole system if the ‘Mass Media’ is written as the singular and with capitals; versus meaning a collection of specific type of medium when using plural and in lower case – ‘mass media’.

You are deluded

How can I convince you that you are deluded?

Well, it won't be easy because you are not alone; you are a part of a *folie a billion*, a mass delusion, induced by the Mass Media.

You are, in fact, subject to the most pervasive and effective propaganda in the history of humanity; a propaganda which has people not noticing the evidence of their eyes and ignoring the evidence of their own experience.

We allow, we encourage, we demand for this to happen because we are *inside* the Mass Media and addicted to it; and although it destroys all that makes meaning, purpose, and relationship possible; the Mass Media then takes our alienated, adrift, self-loathing and lonely selves and offers distraction, consolation, absorption, fragments and glimmerings of pleasure and self-forgetfulness...

And yet the Mass Media has no person in-control, no group of persons, not even an interest group. The destructiveness of the Mass Media operates equally – or more – against the participants: the journalists, broadcasters, editors, hype-ers and spinners, public relation professionals and advertisers and propagandists... All are dragged-down just like everybody else by their own destructiveness.

We live in the grip of delusion

Most thoughtful people would acknowledge that they may have been misled by the Mass Media, and some of them have the insight that the Media has some kind of overall tendency or trend – but hardly anybody recognizes the sheer depth and inter-connected comprehensiveness of the falsehoods they themselves live within.

Because once inside the Mass media (and almost everybody is inside it nowadays, in the West) then wherever they turn the delusions are confirmed – the only consistency available is the consistency of delusion – and the Mass Media provides the ‘facts’ and the ‘reasoning’ by which we talk with other people.

Step outside the Mass Media bubble and there isn’t much space to stand; and you find you have little to say to anybody – and little to do but disagree and argue with them.

Step outside the Mass Media and you become boring, annoying, crazy – because we live in a world where common sense and personal experience are regarded as having not just zero validity; but are dangerous, and evidence of wickedness – evidence of a mass killer/ vigilante mentality: because outside the media bubble is perceived to be the domain of wild, solitary sadists, muttering lunatics, and populist, redneck lynch mobs.

So I don’t suppose I shall persuade you of the reality of the Mass Media, and it would do you little good if you *were* persuaded; indeed the only people who would benefit are religious people, and among them mostly Christians (because the Western Mass Media is built on anti-Christian foundations).

If you do recognize the problem and come to acknowledge that you personally suffer the disease of Media Addiction that I describe, and that your mind has been subverted and hijacked – then the situation is not

hopeless: I have some constructive suggestions near the end of this book about how to cure yourself.

And it will need to be a self-initiated self-cure. Because you won't find many people who will want to or be prepared to assist your cure; and, at least, until you are self-diagnosed and at least partly-cured and moving in the right direction, you would not be likely to recognize real help – even if or when it was offered to you.

What is the Mass Media?

A mass medium is any mode of communication in which there is a *uni-directional amplification* from one (or few) to many.

Of course there is a grey area between small scale and mass communication – perhaps a very large arena – such as the Greek or (especially) Roman amphitheatres where an orator could be heard by thousands, could be regarded as a type of mass medium.

Later there were written communications, manuscripts, books; then printing and advances in transportation – there are now postal systems, newspapers and magazines; electronic media such as the telegraph, telephone and television; the internet with a proliferation of personal computers; and most recently social media whereby ever-more have a mobile phone and communicate ever-more of the time with open-ended numbers of other people.

Modern life in developed countries therefore is ever-more focused upon mass media – they take up more time, more energy and more attention. Indeed the Mass Media is the focus of life for most people; it provides the material which is discussed, which is reacted to; and it provides the framework within and by which this vast potential volume of material is filtered, prioritized and interpreted.

So this is, and these are, the Mass Media.

In practice the many mass media are one ‘mass medium’: a single vast and vastly interconnected *system* of communications.

(Those who wish to understand more of what I mean by ‘system’ are referred to the ‘Technical Appendix’ at the end of this book.)

And the modern internet-based and social media (such as Blogs, Facebook, Twitter) are participative – so the information-processing of the Mass

Media now includes as many human brains as are at any point involved in any of the communications which flow back and forth among the nodes of the Mass Media.

In effect, the mass media have over the past few decades greatly amplified themselves by *co-opting human minds* to expand memory and processing power, and to provide more communications.

Clearly – by all appearances – the mass media dominate modern societies; yet because the mass media are the water in which we swim, they are almost invisible to us as a medium, and we only notice the specific ‘informational’ content of the messages.

Yet aside from specific content, the *medium* – in other words the single, inter-connected, densely communicating *system* of the Mass Media – is *itself* the main message.

The medium is the main message in the sense that the reality of such a vast communication system, and the principles of its operations, is overwhelmingly more important than the distinctions and differentiations between the informational content of the communications.

The overall fact of this massive communications system is more important than the details of the communications.

The fact and the size and the pervasiveness of the Mass Media in modern society has an intrinsically subversive effect – especially on religion, on all transcendental values (‘goodness’ – including truth, beauty, virtue), and indeed *the Mass Media intrinsically and regardless of its specific content is subversive of all values*.

So, the modern Mass Media is *destructive of Good*; or, to put it another way: the modern Mass Media is intrinsically evil

In a nutshell, the Mass Media is of its essence a distraction from... everything. A distraction from all *reality* – except for the reality of the process of distraction.

Thus the Mass Media is intrinsically an agent of *nihilism* – the erosion of all belief to the point of belief in nothing.

Or, to be exact, belief in almost-nothing – the media creates a framework through which no-thing being viewed is really real; and only the frame itself is unchallenged; and yet that frame is unchallenged only for as long as that frame is being actively used.

So the frame itself can be and often is regarded at one time as a way of evaluating other things, and at another time as a thing to be evaluated: back and forth.

So a newspaper might at one time run an article arguing that marriage is obsolete, another about how marriage is so important that the legal concept should be extended beyond traditional bounds, another about how a rigid institution of marriage produces great misery, another on how lack of strong marriages cause societal breakdown, another documenting some celebrity's betrayal of marriage, and another about the judgemental smugness of those in traditional marriages...

Behind such apparent contradictions are real contradictions – or, the only unity and consistency is destructive: the Mass Media will use any stick to club its target; and then will attack the remnants of that club with other sticks – picking-up and putting down sticks such that there is no coherence in the use of sticks but only in the act and actions of clubbing.

At any moment, the particular Mass Media frame may itself be discarded and replaced by another frame, without explanation or justification except the imperative to maintain effective distraction.

In a world dominated by the Mass Media, everything is *grist* to the media mill, everything is up for exploitation, for hyping or for destruction, for building-up and tearing-down – and in the long run there will be more destruction than creation because destruction is so much quicker, easier, simpler and has more scope.

So, on this ground also – the Mass Media is evil in tendency.

And since everybody is addicted to the Mass Media such awareness is unbearable – we yearn for escape from awareness of nihilism and into distraction; which is to say we ‘escape’ back-into the Mass Media; deeper and deeper into that which caused the nihilism in the first place!

What is the problem?

It may seem all-too-obvious that the Mass Media has an agenda, and that it manipulates us.

Because the amount is so vast, everybody is necessarily selective with respect to the media they attend to; and, in being selective, they try to take only what is good (or, at least, accept what they *like*) and reject the rest.

But the modern Mass Media is something new under the sun – it is the ruling social institution in the modern world, yet it does not rule in the same way or with the same kind of objectives as did previously dominant social systems like The King, The Church, The Dictator, The Party...

The problem of the modern Mass Media cannot be solved by being more selective because it is the *nature* of the Mass Media that is by far the main problem – its quantity and its rules and practices – not its specific contents.

The Mass Media affects us by its ‘system properties’ – that is by its attention-grabbing ability, its addictiveness, its pervasiveness; its whole way of evaluating and presenting stimuli to which, by continual practice, we become assimilated...

So, selecting-among the content of the Mass Media does not work in solving the problem; the only thing that works is radically to *cut-down our exposure*.

As shall be seen, the Mass Media rules by default: by distraction, by addiction, by filling our minds – unrelentingly pouring-in ever-more media-selected *stuff*.

It is the effect of the media on minds; the way that minds are engaged by media, but passively dominated by media – it is this expanding colonization of the mind which is significant.

The constant turn-over, the flow of content, the mechanism of input and replacement – this is the special and new aspect of the modern Mass Media. Perpetual motion and the expectation of motion in perpetuity... *That* is the message

So the Mass Media rules without any positive strategy; *taken as a whole* it not only lacks direction but by its actions the Mass Media subverts then demolishes any long-term directionality.

But this negative agenda is not to be mistaken for a ‘neutral’ agenda – because the negative agenda displaces any possible positive agenda.

The long-term objective of the Mass Media is therefore almost-wholly *destructive* – indeed, it is hard to see how it could be otherwise. The Mass Media acts only to react, creates only in order to dissolve, builds only to tear-down.

What follows, then, is a description and an evaluation of this unprecedented entity that is the modern Mass Media: this everyday paradox – the dominant ruling form of social organization which nonetheless functions as the primary agent of dismantling all forms of dominance – the only cross-system and cross-societal mode of communication; which is yet, intrinsically, a mechanism of societal disintegration.

Opinionated Relativism

I need to devise a name, a term, for the ‘disintegrating’ ideology of the Mass Media.

The first and primary name is Relativism; because the primary fact of Mass Media evaluations is that they are *in practice* relativist: nothing is regarded as fixed or sure over the long term, no fact, opinion or interpretation is allowed to stand for long unchallenged.

The Mass Media operates on the basis that there is no fixed, objective reality but instead only approximate or personal realities, or that ‘what counts as truth’ changes or differs between times, groups and individual persons. This might be *supposed* to mean that the Mass Media is relaxed about differences in opinions (since these are just expressions of something which is labile).

But, almost the opposite is the case. Although the Mass Media is Relativist in practice – its ‘theory’ (its implicit assumption) *at any given moment of time* is absolutist. Indeed, to challenge, to argue-against the over-powering reality of any particular Media evaluation – such as the guilt of somebody the Media currently wants to depict as guilty, or the saintliness of someone the Media wants to depict as a saint – is to be revealed as objectively evil.

Therefore, in the Mass Media world where everything is Relative; nonetheless Opinion becomes everything (for the time being, at least...). Because, instead of there being an underlying reality – above or beyond or behind personal opinion – relativism is left with *only* opinion: therefore opinion is everything.

In the Mass Media, Opinion takes the place of Reality. Opinion is treated as Reality; yet because Opinion is not reality, Opinion can be – and is – changed whenever it is expedient to change it.

Thus all Mass Media evaluations are absolute *while they are being expressed*; but fickle – and may be held briefly or for long periods – but subject to revision or reversal at any time.

Like the legendarily-moody actress Elizabeth Taylor, the Mass Media has *a whim of iron*.

In the Mass Media, therefore, anything – *anything* – can be treated as overwhelmingly important, urgent, desperate, demanding of action NOW – *while it is being put forward*.

The need for: famine relief in an African country; sacking of a celebrity for making a ‘gaffe’; honouring a sports hero; celebrating of a Royal Wedding or the Olympics or a pop star funeral; imprisoning a sexual offender or alternatively awarding him a knighthood; the wonderfulness of a particular new car or computer; taxing ‘carbon’; or subsidizing an opera house...

The Mass Media can whip-up a frenzy of absolute imperative ‘objective’ necessity over anything or nothing; then discard it in a moment and move on; perhaps never again to mention it, or perhaps to harp on the matter recurrently for years and years...

Anything is possible, nothing is fixed in value, the calibration of value is arbitrary, value is disconnected from importance.

So the Mass Media is almost-always opinionated; but, over a remarkably short time-span, *any* ‘Fact’ may become reframed as merely an Opinion, and that Opinion may therefore be abandoned.

Permanent Revolution

Opinionated Relativism is – in essence – just one way of achieving that old Communist idea of Permanent Revolution – which evolved into a populist or anarchist Leftist notion of ‘perpetual opposition’.

In other words, the idea that that the *true revolutionary* – such as the *avant garde* artist or radical intellectual – was intrinsically *subversive*; and would always be in revolt against whoever was in power, changing sides as necessary to achieve this.

(This is how the word ‘subversive’ came to have its current positive and approving meaning for modern intellectuals.)

The ideology of the Mass Media is therefore simply a modern type of Leftism: more specifically *New Leftism*.

By New Left I mean that the ideology of the Media is that of the post-1960s evolution and development of communism, socialism, progressivism and (US) Liberalism – the Leftism of Political Correctness.

The *Old Left* was mostly focused on the economy – Marxism was mostly an economic theory. Thus its analysis was based on an economic category of Class; and its tools were economic things like nationalization and redistribution of wealth. The most favoured group was The Proletariat, which was in practice essentially the native male working class of manual labourers, especially as represented by Trades Unions.

But the New Left is *in practice* almost indifferent to the economy; and instead focuses on a rainbow of identity politics, ‘Human Rights’, ‘the environment’, anti-racism, feminism and (most of all) promoting the sexual revolution.

Consequently, the New Left has ‘switched sides’, and turned-against the native class of male manual labourers; and now strongly favours women,

other ethnicities, the unemployed and economically inactive, and newly arrived immigrants.

The qualitative transition from Old to New Left demonstrates that there is no stable, long-term positive ideology to the Mass Media – and even the most fundamental values and principles may at some point be discarded or reversed.

And although relativistic, the Mass Media ideology is *not* tolerant. Whatever is being asserted *now* is absolute, and opposition is not considered reasonable.

Yet, despite this totalitarian intolerance of dissent at any given point in time; what has been treated in this absolute manner can very rapidly be dropped and replaced with some other, equally ‘absolute’, priority.

So in practice strong opinions are cycled and re-cycled, promoted then vilified, suppressed then revived, turned upside-down, combined and split into fragments...

This *churning* is not just typical of the Mass Media – which has been well known for many decades; but is also characteristic of modern mainstream (Leftist) politics; demonstrating that it is currently the Mass Media which dominate politics, and not the other way around.

As said before, over the long-run, all is grist to the Mass Media mill; no topic is sacred or fundamental; everything is up-for challenge, discussion, mockery, analysis, criticism – anything may be discarded and replaced with something else, or not replaced at all.

This behaviour is, of course, profoundly negative and subversive – in particular the relativistic ideology of the Mass Media has been subversive of traditional and orthodox forms of religion (especially Christianity – since this has been dominant in the West); and also subversive of ‘tradition’ – in all its forms: subversive of traditional socio-political order (traditional hierarchies and specialisms); subversive of traditional concepts of truth,

beauty and virtue; and perhaps especially, subversive of traditional sexuality including marriage and the family.

Furthermore, the Mass Media has been subversive of the Old Left values and institutions – of Trades Unions and Labour Parties, of rational central planning and nationalization, and especially subversive of the tradition of Christian and Ethical socialists characterized by modesty, frugality, earnest toil and puritanical sexual ethics.

It should therefore be emphasized that despite its fanatically-opinionated campaigns in favour of this, that or the other; relativism is indeed, *over time*, a profoundly *negative* ideology –indeed relativism sooner-or-later undermines any positive agenda which may emerge – even its own ideas such as the dictatorship of the proletariat which at one time seemed so terribly important to such a lot of people in the Mass Media.

In sum, the Mass Media is an agent of Permanent Revolution. And the Mass Media dominates modernity. Consequently our society is in a permanent state of revolution.

Permanent revolution means that the Mass Media has no positive goal or aim – there is no long-term plan to structure society in some permanently-sustainable way; indeed *whatever* is was or may in future be achieved, exists only to be dismantled and replaced when expedient.

This is, indeed, the primary and essential difference between the Old and New Left – the Old Left intended to make Heaven on Earth – Utopia. And then stop – and maintain utopia (because who would want to change utopia?). And this justified the humanly unprecedented ruthlessness of the Old Left – the End was so wonderful that any Means were justifiable in trying to reach it.

But when utopia showed no signs of arriving, the revolutionary impulse began to feed off itself; and revolution succeeded revolution in an iterative cycle aimed at destroying the forces opposed to revolution – but without any genuine or stable long term purpose.

This is precisely how the modern Mass Media works. Over time, it identifies, mocks, subverts, weakens, destroys and finally inverts and reverses any group or person that opposes revolution – but with no goal. No stable, explicit, long-term aimed-for state of affairs which is being implemented.

And this is done via the Mass Media ideology I have called Opinionated Relativism: a relativism which at any specific moment and on any specific topic denies its own relativism – but over time keeps on discarding its previous convictions as mere opinions.

Thus the Mass Media truly is a negative, destructive, meaningless, purposeless *thing*.

Yet the modern world is utterly dominated by this thing: this Mass Media thing is, indeed, the most powerful thing in the whole world.

Does the Mass media have a Leftist bias?

When people ask whether the Mass Media has a Leftist bias; the only rational response is to suggest that they un-ask the question: because that question contains false assumptions, implies a false framework.

Properly understood the Mass Media *is* Leftist bias, it is the core of Leftism, and has been since the mid-1960s at least, and is ever-more-so.

The standard model by which people try to understand media bias is a government which tells the media what to say and vets what it says in all minute particulars: something like Stalin and The Party dictating what got written, and what was not written, in *Pravda*.

That obviously isn't what happens in the modern world – it would of course be impossible, such is the utterly vast volume of material being generated; and stupid people suppose this means that the media and government are independent the one of the other.

Ha!

The Mass Media is not biased to Leftism, it *is* Leftism; so of course, Leftism must come from within the media: the bias is generated *by* the Mass Media.

What we have is (almost) the *opposite* of Stalin and *Pravda*.

Indeed, the power of government, and government officials, is now essentially the power of informers: they can 'shop' people to the Mass Media; and the government role is to enforce punishments on people chosen by the Mass Media.

But government cannot go against the Mass Media, because anyone who does will be picked-off for exemplary punishment.

If no specific person is responsible, then somebody will nonetheless be picked by the media for public punishment, to serve as an example (this is happening at present, all the time, all through the world, in large and in small).

Nobody is immune – everybody in public life who wants to stay in public life is afraid of the Mass Media.

(Well, everybody within the system of worldly modernity, anyway; but this now has an extensive reach. The state of deferential terror towards the Mass Media notably includes the heads of the *major Western ostensibly-Christian churches*, who very obviously fear to depart from the media Leftist agenda, and live in continual trepidation about having a target painted on them by the Mass Media. This has eliminated traditional Christianity – that is, *real* Christianity – from the leadership of all the major denominations.)

The Mass Media choose and label the targets for exemplary punishment, and various groups (judges, tax officials, police, officials, astroturf mobs, real mobs... it does not much matter which) will enforce punishments of one sort or another – from harassment via investigations, up to vandalism, violence, prison and murder; and the media gives the whole process a positive interpretation.

That which happens outside this and/ or against the agenda of the Mass Media loop is ignored, mentioned then flushed down the memory hole, reframed, vilified, distorted, lied about, subjected to invented slurs...

Oh! the possibilities are endless!

Leftism is the Mass Media, and the Mass Media is Leftism, inseparable, the same thing: this of course means that Leftism (in its modern form) depends utterly on the continuation of the Mass Media (depends on itself!), stands or falls with the Mass Media.

The Mass Media is the enemy of reaction, and cannot – as a whole – be subverted or exploited for reactionary purposes.

While the Mass Media is growing, the forces of 'reaction' can sometimes win a battle on a micro-issue, but overall and over-time will lose the war.

Conversely, anything which significantly damages the reach or grip of the Mass Media net damages Leftism – even if restrictions go against freedom, democracy, balance; even if directed against reaction; all things which tend to limit the Mass Media will ultimately tend towards reaction...

The intrinsic function is just... to grow

The mega-large and growing Mass Media system therefore is an irresistible drive towards Leftism.

But what constrains, what limits the rate and extent of growth of the Mass Media? The answer relates to the functionality of social systems.

The modern world is full of social systems with a variety of functions; for example government, the military, police, religion, the legal system, education, the health service and so on.

All systems resemble living things in that – in order to survive – they must have the property of maintaining their own existence, and as such they have a potential to grow. This applies to social systems – they act like creatures that seek the resources they need to stay alive, to grow, to reproduce. They do this because if they do *not* do this, then they soon disappear, get displaced – because the rest of the world is filled with systems that are tending-to, ‘wanting-to’ expand; pressing-upon, displacing, adjacent social systems.

The Mass Media is a social system *like no other*; and the difference accounts for its intrinsic evil: that is to say its intrinsic tendency towards destruction of Good (destruction of truth, beauty and virtue).

The Mass Media is a social system of communications – indeed, *all* systems (as systems) can be regarded as being made of communications: communications between processing *units*. These units are what process the information in the communications – and for the Mass Media, the main processing units are humans minds – although some processing is nowadays done by computers.

But the other social systems have a basic, core, extrinsic and unifying social function that is clearly useful: the police and military are for maintaining the distinctness and cohesion of society by use of intra-social and inter-

societal coercive force; the legal system is about arbitrating disputes by formal mechanisms, the health services are about alleviating suffering, promoting health and increasing life expectancy; the educational system about transmission of knowledge and so on.

Whether these systems actually do what they purport to do, is another matter. But all the social systems have a relatively clear and valuable and well understood social *aim*.

However, the Mass Media does not have a specific social function; and therefore its default function is merely that of all systems (and living things) namely to survive, grow, reproduce... to expand itself. That is, to expand its own system of communications; because it seems that the Mass Media does not have any extrinsic goal, nor any unifying useful function (since 'amplification' is not an intrinsic function, not an *end* – merely a means to the end of *other* social systems).

Therefore, the Mass Media succeeds by growing its own system of communications – and fails when this growth fails to happen, as when expansion reverses into contraction, shrinkage, reduction of the volume of Mass Media communications.

But why is the growth of the Mass Media intrinsically, on the whole, evil? Surely the balanced understanding is that some aspects of the Mass Media are good and others are not? Surely the sensible way to think about the Mass Media is to say that even if the mass of it is bad, even if 99% of it is bad, then that still means that 1% is good, and that is a lot of stuff! The conclusion from this would be that (somehow) the proportion of the good stuff in the Mass Media should be increased, at the expense of bad...

In other words, it seems like good sense to consume plenty of mass media (to take advantage of the increase in available knowledge, and to stay *au fait* with current affairs) but to filter the Mass Media more effectively: to keep the good and discard the bad.

This superficially seems sensible, and has a grain of truth – yet it fails to capture the reality of the situation. The Mass Media has been around long

enough for us to know by experience how it actually works and what actually happens (in contrast to what we might assert could and should work and happen). The fact is that hopes to filter, and plans to discriminate between good and bad, are soon swept-away by sheer volume; and then the Mass Media exerts its own effect – it distracts from good intentions, and the addictiveness of the Mass Media weakens the ability to discard.

The Mass Media is like alcohol – if consumed in large enough quantities it becomes the focus of life, and gets a grip on the mind and the body so that ever more is wanted to maintain the stimulus, and ever more is required to avoid withdrawal effects. At some point cravings push aside all good intentions of selectivity, restraint and limitation.

Because *there are no functional constraints on Mass Media growth*; so the Mass Media lacks a purpose, and therefore tends to take the short-term-beneficial line of least resistance; and grow and grow as far as it can, in whatever direction it is growing. Why not? Since the Mass Media isn't trying to achieve anything nor fulfilling any necessary role, then there is no rationale for its eschewing short-term expediency in favour of longer-term goals – so the Mass Media *doe not* eschew short-term expediency and the Mass Media 'long-term' is measured in hours and days rather than years or decades.

Differential growth of any system is intrinsically destructive in a zero sum world, because beyond a certain point, growth of one system can only be at the price of another. This applies especially to 'cognitive processing time and effort' in the human mind (there is only so much concentration, so much thinking time, to go-around).

In the earliest times of the Mass Media the other social systems supposed that they could *use* the various mass media simply in order to amplify their own communications: for example, government could amplify its propaganda – and reach and influence more of the public, science could popularize its results, the arts could 'reach' a much wider audience, and so on.

But pretty soon, the Mass Media began to dominate all the other social systems; its own internal logic of growth in communications began to invade and to dominate the other social systems; and this penetration inevitably was destructive of whatever functions these other systems had previously done – it had to be: anything other than the core function of a social system is a corruption.

Deviation from the social function is a corruption except for adhesion to those ‘higher laws and principles’ necessary for social cohesion. This is typically a religion. All social systems thus – for the functional cohesion of society – ought to adhere to the over-arching religion, as well as to their own internal aim.

For example, if a student was admitted to university because of a bribe then this is a corruption away from the educational function; but if a student is expelled from university because of immoral behaviour according to the prevailing religion then this is not corruption, but simply putting religion hierarchically above education – in effect a social assertion that there are things more important than educational considerations.

The Mass Media has now displaced religion as the over-arching, all-including system. But while a religion potentially unifies society, overall the Mass Media attacks its components and subverts society.

Thus the whole world is subject to the all-embracing, all-including attention of the Mass Media. But not to any aim, not in pursuit of any positive purpose, not for cohesion nor for any higher good or goal – merely for the Mass Media to fuel its own expansion.

The paradox of Mass Media control

The paradox of Mass Media control/ lack of control is that on the one hand:

1. The Mass Media is Leftist

The Mass Media is the source and enforcement of Leftism in modern societies; as the Mass Media has expanded in a nation, so that Nation has moved Leftward; in modern societies the degree of religious devoutness correlates with degree of detachment from the Mass Media (the most devout religions and denominations being those most insulated from the Mass Media); and thus the Mass Media is overall and overwhelmingly Leftist in both its form and content: its biases, omissions, inclusions, selections, emphases, distortions, inventions and lies.

(Leftism is in the first place anti-Christian and pro-secular, secondly destructive of tradition and the *status quo* ; and by this account *all* mainstream modern political parties are parties of the Left, in varying degrees; including ‘conservatives’ and libertarians and free marketeers and parties of business.)

2. Nobody controls the Mass Media.

That nobody (no particular, identifiable human or group) controls the Mass Media is clear from the fact that it is not the kind of thing that can be controlled: it is un-control-able.

This has become undeniable since the advent of 24 hour media, and then the internet, and then social media – so that most people now carry the always-active Mass Media with them as a mobile phone; accessible and demanding at any and at all times.

Such changes expanded the Mass Media by (who knows...) a thousandfold? over the space of two decades – and yet the Leftism of the media has become both 1. more extreme and 2. more pervasive and comprehensive.

It is surely inconceivable that any control system could have been both scaled-up a thousand-fold, while at the same time becoming more effective in its blanket enforcement of an ever-more-extreme monolithic Leftism.

So there is indeed a paradox – if the Mass Media is assumed to be the expression of a Left world view that is located outwith the Mass Media. Because in this case as the Media expands then you would expect Leftism to be diluted, or that the Left would lose control of the growing Mass Media.

However, there is no paradox if the Mass Media itself intrinsically and spontaneously generates the Leftist world view; because then as the Media expands, so does Leftism.

Any other kind of pan-societal, pan-national institution would require an identifiable, indeed explicit, command and control system (management) in order to fulfil its function; any other institution would require a set of formal regulations and procedures to enforce conformity.

But since the Mass Media is intrinsically Leftist, then the bigger and more influential the Mass Media becomes, the more Leftist the Mass Media becomes.

Growth of the Mass Media = Leftward political trend.

The Mass Media will destroy social cohesion

The Mass Media is the set of interconnected communication systems that link-together the atomic, individualistic, alienated populations of modern nations; and the nations of the world.

Indeed the Mass Media is the *only* thing which links people in the modern world (in The West religion is banished from the public sphere).

But communication is not cohesion; not necessarily so – or else wars and conflict would have become extinct as the Mass Media grew through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – when in fact the opposite happened.

The Mass Media is therefore a form of communication which operates to destroy cohesion.

Thus there can be only one possible end-point for Mass Media expansion, which is the destruction of society itself.

The Mass Media is the cake which bakes and eats itself: a cancer which grows and grows to kill the host who sustains it.

Opinionated Relativism v communism

Because the Mass Media is short-termist and non-functional, it is necessarily a road to social ruin; yet the 'opinionated relativistic' way of thinking which is inculcated by the Mass Media is itself unable to perceive this happening.

And if understanding does happen to emerge nowadays, it will be swept away and replaced by some other 'opinion' long before it could have any beneficial effect...

Therefore the destructiveness of the Mass Media includes destruction of the ability to perceive the reality and cause of that very same destruction!

In the world of the modern Mass Media we have entered and become entrapped-by a very advanced state of nihilism (nihilism = denial of reality = belief that 'reality' is unreal): and a nihilism far beyond anything achieved by communism.

Communists tried their best to remake Man by propaganda, regarding Man as a Blank Slate to be written over anew; to redefine language to enforce current priorities (Orwell's 'Newspeak'), crudely to airbrush from photographs and erase from historical records the 'disgraced' former leaders so they became Non-Persons.

But the world of communism had, by our standards, a minuscule Mass Media; they simply could not *continuously colonize* the minds of the population – in the way achieved by the modern Mass Media.

Old style communism could not overcome the *solidity* of people's minds; could not overcome their basic motivations, hopes and memories.

But the modern Mass Media has achieved this!

The modern Mass Media achieve more totally than communism, and barely perceptibly, what communism savagely but inefficiently attempted.

On a daily basis, almost effortlessly, the modern Mass Media successfully implements: Airbrushing of (i.e. eliminating all reference to) disapproved facts and persons; Potemkin Villages (i.e. fake-functional facades in front of shambolic hovels – most modern bureaucracies, NGOs, charities, universities and scientific projects are *nothing but* Potemkin villages); manufactured Stakhanovite pseudo-heroes (but now most typically women or ethnic minorities); Shows Trials (of the politically incorrect) with biased procedures to generate pre-determined guilty verdicts; invented enemies analogous to Emmanuel Goldstein and The Brotherhood from Orwell's *1984* – such as the Media-constructed White Supremacist conspiracies; Guilty-until-proven-innocent one-sided legislation such as Hate Crimes and causing Offence to 'minorities'; differentially-applied-or-exempted taxes and laws; massive over-proliferation of unknown regulations so everybody is in breach all the time, and exemption is by grace and favour of politically-zealous officials; ideologically-loaded Newspeak such as attaching '-phobia' or 'denialist' to opposition; forced self-incriminating confessions as the price for retaining one's livelihood or personal safety... and so on and on.

A thoroughly Leftist society is now accomplished more effectively, more comprehensively and with much less resistance by Mass Media rule than under the heavy hand of communist government.

Especially so since the spontaneous or self-organized forms of human civil society (family, church, locality, union, guild, profession... all potential organized sources of resistance, all dissident groupings) have been dismantled and de-fanged by subsidies, regulations, infiltration and co-option far more comprehensively than ever was achieved by confiscations, suppressions and violence.

For as long as communism initially maintained a residual positive and constructive agenda, aiming at an ideal society, it was constrained. But the modern Mass Media have the luxury and freedom of no strategy except destruction.

Any positive agenda articulated by the Mass Media is merely an expedient; temporary, manipulative; an increasingly-cynical pose and ploy.

Where are the Masterminds?

But where are the Mass media theorists and intellectuals?

Where is the Mass media organization, the Party, commissars, the secret police?

If we are being oppressed, then who or what *exactly* is doing the oppressing?

We may tend to *assume* that *somewhere*, above and behind the confusions and delusions propagated by the Mass Media, are some clear heads, some calculating intelligences – or at least some gangsters who are manipulating the rest of us for their selfish-short-termist ends – yet themselves being un-manipulated...

We may tend to *assume* that no matter how full of meaningless mush may be the minds of the Mass Media audience; the minds of the creators remain lucid, above the fray. A case of hard-nuts leading mush-heads...

But the Mass Media is *not* some kind of an old-style management system, in which the managers manipulate the rest of us into doing things that benefit the managers' ideology as well as gratifying their personal desires. No, the minds of the Mass Media creators are even mushier than the minds of those whose heads they daily fill with mush.

The Mass Media managers are not hard-nuts, they are mush-heads like everyone else; but in the managers the mush is *rotten*. It is therefore a case of mushheads leading mushheads – the difference being that it is rotting-mushheads (the elite) who are doing the leading – and it is the rot which ramifies through the mush like fungal *hyphae*.

(That is, indeed, the nature of modern management: not to manipulate the masses, but to *infect* the masses.)

So the modern Mass Media achieves pan-national communication – but it is not cohesion that is the result; it is the communication of a pandemic; the

cohesion of shared sickness – a universal *plague*.

Chaos begets chaos

The plague is Opinionated Relativism, and the rot is inversion of The Good.

The Mass Media retains morality, indeed the Mass Media becomes more and more moral in the sense that nothing matters to it *except* moral issues.

But not one cohesive morality, not even an explicit morality (because to be explicit would be to reveal incoherence); rather multiple moralities – the one being used to attack the other, until all are subverted and weakened, and each regarded as only relatively and contextually and temporarily true and therefore prone to overthrow at any moment – and therefore easily eroded by mere expediency, short-term advantage.

The whole of the Mass Media becomes consumed by goodies and baddies, churning morality games with evil – building-up and breaking-down, switching identities; at one moment accepting traditional morality, then inverting it, then pointing to that inversion then denying it...

Anything you can get-away-with for the moment is acceptable – and inconsistency is disregarded, because whatever *is* fills the mind here and now, and whatever *was* is displaced by what *is*.

The great insight is that this characteristic media generated-and-sustained state of un-patterned churning *is not strategic* – not, that is, some kind of clever ploy leading to some particular and planned state of affairs.

The purpose of the morally-focused and morally chaotic maelstrom of the modern Mass Media is *more of the same*; ever-more, and ever-more of the same – which is growth in communication, engagement of people with this growth of communication, filling-up and absorbing the minds of as many people as possible, by whatever means ‘works’.

The Old Leftists (Labour parties, Socialists, Fabians, Communists), aimed at a particular social organization (especially State ownership and control

with egalitarian goals).

My impression is that the few Old Leftists who still exist, are operating on the belief that the lunacies of Opinionated Relativism and political correctness will eventually subside, so that they can take-over. The socialist and communist parties suppose that they will, sooner or later, hijack the Mass Media and run it to benefit themselves. In the mean time they patiently wait...

The revolutionists imagine that they can *use* the Mass Media to gain specific societal ends, which – once achieved – will be stable.

Such beliefs are grossly mistaken.

Evidence? What group could have been more favoured by the Left over a whole century or more than that various described as The Workers, the Proletariat, The People?

Yet in the Mass Media dominated Opinionated Relativism of modernity, what group could have been more comprehensively made into Non-Persons than The Workers?

By ‘workers’, I mean the specific types of person who were in the past being referred to by The Workers – which were the native, male manual labourers that grew, built and made the essentials of life.

That group who are now – mostly-covertly but increasingly overtly – just-about the most ignored or *despised*, attacked and exploited group of people in modern Western nations – under the Media-dominated world of New Opinionated Relativism.

Insofar as they get any consideration, the male working class are lined-up behind (but in practice seen in opposition to): women; immigrants; people of colour; and those who do not work but are unemployed or beggars; ‘liberal’ middle class welfare bureaucrats and poverty professionals; and upper class ‘activists’ in the Media, national and local government; journalism; education; the arts and so on...

(Instead, and for the past several decades, probably the single most valorized group among the revolutionary Leftist parties of the UK have been... religious terrorists based in the Middle East whose primary motivation is the extermination of Israel! A more extreme inversion of Old Left priorities could scarcely be imagined!)

And clearly, whatever they may believe or imagine about themselves, the Old Left have *in fact* been infiltrated, subverted and ‘turned’ to become something utterly different – something the *old* Old Left would have loathed and rejected!

Such is the fate of all who try to *use* systematic subversion, inversion and destruction of social institutions to create some solid and lasting benefit for themselves and their cause. The same fate as awaited legions of Party officials in the Soviet Union – to be consumed by the raging revolutionary fires which they themselves ignited and fuelled.

In a world of moral inversion, there are, indeed, no winners – there are only the losers of today *versus* the losers of tomorrow.

Participation is primary

The *modern* Mass Media is not in its essence propaganda: it is participation.

It is engagement with the Mass Media that is pernicious; engagement is what fuels and sustains the Mass Media; and engagement is primarily what the modern Mass Media *does*. It grabs and holds attention; and provokes strong reactions which are shared; and in their turn provoke more engagement and more reaction.

Those who suppose they are manipulating the Mass media for their own ends (such as the Old Left) will be the biggest losers. They are indeed 'hopeless cases', since they refuse to acknowledge their own addiction, and therefore live in an intractable state of delusion.

Engagement with the Mass Media leads to more engagement – which is dependence; dependence on the Mass Media confers power on the Mass Media; and power confers authority.

It is being subject to the *authority* of the Mass Media which is the prime evil.

Propaganda is secondary – because Mass Media propaganda is on behalf of some other social system – with the Mass Media (merely) serving as an amplifier. But even with propaganda, all forms of effective Mass Media propaganda ultimately depend-on dependence; or else propaganda is simply ignored or avoided.

Nowadays, the propaganda is so objectively absurd, trivial, false – so obviously *contrived*, so obviously manufactured and laboriously squeezed-out – that it would be expected that such surely *would* be ignored or avoided – yet not so!

This crude and incoherent modern Mass Media propaganda is more effective than ever propaganda was before; for the simple reason that

dependence on the Mass Media is greater than ever before. The public mind is colonized and shaped apparently regardless of content.

To show that the Mass Media is evil is therefore not so much a matter of pointing at the specific content – although indeed most of that content is objectively evil, in that it attacks truth, beauty and virtue; propagates lies, ugliness and vice – but that the modern media is primarily evil in terms of its *vast capacity to engage and enforce cognitive participation*.

(And by so doing, forcibly to empty the mind of other things – as any thing that occupies space and expands, pushes-out another thing.)

The psychology of the Mass Media is such that consumption is perceived as participation – at a psychological level (and no matter what the objective facts of the matter): consumption *feels like* engagement; and if it is perceived and feels like engagement, then it *is* therefore, cognitively-speaking, engagement.

Thus the Mass Media affects human psychology just as if it was real social engagement with real people.

(The reality of the individual consumer having negligible impact on the provider – which is a necessary predicate and consequence of media being ‘mass’ – is therefore psychologically irrelevant.)

In this respect, the Mass Media is like modern democracy – it is intrinsically manipulative since it creates fake engagement – a low reward, low cost, high volume (near-ubiquitous in the population) engagement.

The kind of dependence is harder to notice and just as difficult to cure (and to stay cured-from) as the kind of high reward, high cost, low volume (rare in the population) addiction characteristic of the major drugs.

So, how do we resist? ...Or rather, the proper question is: *what* do we resist?

And the answer is resist engagement.

We need to cut-down on the volume and the participation of Mass Media consumption, *to the point that we are so much less dependent upon it that we can begin to perceive it from the outside.*

Most people are inside the Mass Media, as a fish is inside the ocean – the typical citizen swims in the water of the Mass Media, drinks it and extracts oxygen from it, and cannot perceive it. The media has become his ‘reality’.

He prefers some parts of the water over others, of course, and therefore prefers to swim in some places and avoid others – but that is the sum of his choices. His preferences have all become within-media preferences.

But he is unaware-of, forgets-in-practice, that it is *all* water he is now living-in; it is all the Mass Media; and that he has been spending so much time in the water that he has ceased to recognize, or ever return to, the dry land of real reality; or even to remember that it exists distinct from Media representations which purport to be reality.

Perhaps only in his dreams does he do this; but then dreams may themselves become permeated by the Mass Media.

We need – we must – cut-down our participation in the Mass Media to at least that point where the dry land of real-not-media reality is again recognized as the *primary* reality – when we again become aware that in entering the Mass Media we are leaving real reality behind and taking a swim.

Mass Media addiction

To summarize so far; Mass Media addiction has been bad for many decades and continues to get worse since the advent of the internet and social media (these having amplified the Mass Media by orders of magnitude, rather than displacing it as some commentators and pundits once assumed or hoped). The Mass Media controls society, but nobody (no person or specific group of people) controls the Mass Media.

Most people in modern societies cannot *completely* stop their exposure to the Mass Media, because the Mass Media is unavoidable.

Most people *must* use the Mass Media for work, for education, for family organization... it shouts for attention from every computer screen and communication device, from posters and bill boards, in the conversational topics of the people around us.

Therefore people cannot kick their addiction to the Mass Media as they might kick an addiction to heroin or cocaine – by never touching the drug again.

Rather people must do as they would in a *diet*; they cannot stop eating food altogether, but they must reduce their consumption of food and eat different food. Likewise, modern people must reduce their consumption of Media and selectively-consume different Media.

But diets are very hard to stick-to, because we must eat, and therefore are tempted at every meal to break the diet.

Likewise, to diet our consumption of the Mass Media is to continue to use but to limit and select Mass Media; and this exposes people to temptation at every engagement. It is difficult to stick to this rule, and easy to lapse.

All we can do is cut-back and cut-back until (with luck) a point is reached when we begin to emerge from under the cloud, become somewhat

independent again – but even this is a constant fight against being distracted, attracted, drawn-in and again addicted.

Withdrawal must begin again, and again.

The most profound truths, the most lasting experiences, our most precious memories are swept away like a drop of crystal water in a daily torrent of polluted outflow. If you unresistingly, enthusiastically *consume* the Mass Media – it is like standing in the path of a massive effluent pipe with your mouth wide open.

But the fact that most of the output of the Mass Media is a pollutant is not the *worst* problem; the worst problem is that the *mode* by which the Mass Media communicates become *habitual* – until it becomes very difficult to think in any other fashion.

Even if the Mass Media was emanating the purest springwater – the sheer volume would drown-us.

The worst problem is that by consuming such a lot of the Mass Media for such a lot of our lives, we are *entrained* to its cognitive mode: the mode of permanent revolution; that mode becomes habitual, normal – and eventually unavoidable.

It becomes our engrained practice – as individuals – to be absolutist in our opinions, intolerant of opposition and dissent; yet to swap and change and invert our opinions in line with fashion and expediency, on the basis that we regard nothing as permanent and true; and ‘reality’ as something manufactured, not discovered.

Ultimately, such is his state of dependence; modern Man cannot think otherwise, but only in the way that the Mass Media thinks.

System-language of the Mass Media

How the Mass media ‘thinks’ is a product of its operation *as a system* (for further explanation concerning the meaning of ‘system’, see the Technical Appendix to this book).

The Mass Media is a system, and each system has a distinctive language with a vocabulary (lexicon) and grammatical rules (syntax); its names have connotations (positive or negative) such as equality and democracy (positive) or prejudice and authority (negative).

Languages have selection criteria – with inclusions and exclusions. In the Mass Media the exclusions include all possibility of fixed objectivity – such that everything is in practice and sooner or later a matter of opinion, a personal point of view; and the rules are those of emotions – attention, excitement, interest, boredom, happy and sadness, admiration and disgust, hatred...

Truth *versus* falsehood have been substituted by that which makes me feel good *versus* feel bad – about myself, or about my situation.

The Mass Media is therefore necessarily a flickering kaleidoscope of impressions that provoke interest and evoke feelings; the Mass Media is therefore *essentially* relativistic – but not in terms of philosophically *asserting* the validity of relativism. Indeed, the Media actually does the opposite; it treats whatever is the topic of the moment as being of total and permanent and overwhelming reality.

But relative in terms of the expectation built-into its cognitive style. We know that however supposedly important something may be, we will very soon get fed-up of thinking about it, will welcome a change of theme, will soon be thinking of something else entirely – and quite likely have forgotten that we ever pretended to care about whatever it is that is obsessing us as-of-now...

Even when the Mass Media is *asserting* objectivity, then in practice (and without any justifying theory) it can be, and usually will, in a moment be undercut by simply stating something else.

(Those amazing words “Now this...” were noted by Neil Postman as being used to join-up anything and everything; whatever happens to be featured ‘news’ on any particular day! Indeed, the phrase can be reduced to just ‘now’: *And now: an earthquake in Indonesia; and now: a religious leader protests against a raunchy dance; and now: inflation hits double figures; and now: a football manager is sacked; and now: a miracle cure for cancer; and now: a dog who drinks beer...*)

Every statement – no matter how apparently serious, important and significant for action – is thereby retrospectively re-framed as opinion – and confronted by another opinion. The Mass Media presents only opinion, and everything is treated by it as opinion – as and when necessary.

Opinions can – in principle – be ranked by the hierarchical authority of the opinionator; then re-ranked by another criterion; and again and again.

While being presented, each and any opinion displaces all alternatives; then something else is presented, and *that* overwhelms all alternatives.

Every-thing is absolute, total – *and then it isn't*; and something else altogether is now dominant – completely. Then something else.

No proportion but apparently total conviction; no rational linear cohesion, no over-arching cohesive unification – but only arbitrary linear sequence.

Oppositional ideology of PC

Yet although lacking the power (or will) to generate social cohesion, and indeed doing the opposite and promoting social disintegration; the media is not without its over-arching principle of operation.

As already described, that over-arching principle is Opinionated Relativism which is, in practice, the same thing as New Leftism or Political Correctness; and this is not a centripetal (centre-seeking) system but a centrifugal (centre-fleeing) *anti*-system.

In other words, the ideology which connects (but does not bind) all the strands of the media is the ideology of permanent revolution, of *perpetual opposition*.

Perpetual opposition to what? Opposition *ultimately* to reality itself, to the categories of the natural, spontaneous, traditional, common-sensical, legitimate and authoritative. Opposition, indeed, to any other actually-existent principle.

Thus the very cognitive structure of the Mass Media makes any concept of reality meaningless – because reality becomes an object to be discussed, rather than the structure of existence.

‘Reality’ is put into quotation marks: made into an object for examination, discussion, challenge, using and discarding – then maybe taking-up again.

The modern Western Mass Media, as it now operates, is not a tool which could, in principle, be used to propagate a specific desired political state of affairs; rather the modern Mass Media is of its essence a Leftist phenomenon, *the* Leftist phenomenon – a phenomenon, that is to say, of opposition.

Reality is, properly, something we may have opinions *about*; but reality is not itself a matter of opinion.

Once our cognitive processes have been entrained into the habit of entertaining opinions about whether reality is really real, or ‘really’ something else – then we are in the state of nihilism.

Acknowledgement of reality

If modernity believes in nothing; and if modernity has lost any sense of the reality of the real; then what would it take to restore a sense of *reality* to mainstream public discourse?

What would it take to restore the conviction that there is a reality; that reality is really *real* whatever we may *say or think* about it.

What would it take – bearing in mind that some pretty extreme things have happened, such as two world wars and the vast conquests and mass exterminations of communism; yet the reality of reality is still denied (denied, not least, concerning communism).

Is *anything* big enough to shock us out of our state of delusion?

The answer is no, nothing is big enough that the modern Mass Media could not absorb it and normal unreality be resumed within an obscenely-short number of days.

Reality cannot be restored at a population level unless and until the Mass Media has collapsed.

In the meantime, we must work with individuals: with souls.

At a personal level, for some people, sometimes something happens (it need not be nasty, it could be something joyous like marriage or the birth of your child, but often is nasty) such that reality becomes undeniable; and that individual may make a decision to acknowledge reality.

Reality is not a revelation – it is a grasp of the human condition as something *given* (not made by humans or human minds, not a framing device). The condition of reality is what it is, but our response to it is a matter of will and choice. And recognition of reality, involves recognizing that our will and choice are being shaped and corrupted by the Mass Media.

Product of, and therapy for, modernity

Since modernity denies the reality of the real, then to live now is to experience *alienation* – the psychological state of being cut-off from reality.

To be alienated is to have no *relation* with nature; to be alone in the world as an isolated, merely subjective and contingent conscientiousness.

The Mass Media makes us alienated; and the Mass Media also provides the two main answers to alienation: escape into distraction and desensitization to the situation.

In this the Mass media acts exactly like an addictive drug: a drug that itself creates a state of distress for which the drug itself is the only answer.

The Mass Media *first* distracts with deliberate inversions of the Good: ugliness, depravity and lies, which keeps our minds off the overwhelming fact that modernity presents life as meaningless, purposeless and (briefly) existing in an uncaring universe.

Then the Mass Media desensitizes us to the hideous, the immoral and the dishonest.

The ratchet turns another notch. The Media addict is drawn deeper into dependence, and into sin.

Blind the people...

How are we drawn into Mass Media addiction?

Imagine the situation as if the Mass Media was a purposive entity, aiming at the ruin of humanity...

What might it say?

First blind the people by teaching them to disregard their own experience, the evidence of their senses and observations; *then* when they are cut-off from any direct relationship with *life* – tell them what they *ought* to know.

Tell people what they *ought* to know by the authority of specialists and professionals; *then* tell them that there is actually no reality, only sensation; and ‘therefore’ they should collude in their own manipulation by viewing life only through the Mass Media.

Or rather, to be more accurate, their subjective ‘life’ becomes a thing *wholly-constructed* by the Mass Media. A tissue, paper-thin, blocking a view of all else: a tissue of lies.

And people know that this is happening, yet do nothing to stop it happening, because to irreligious people (and almost everybody is irreligious in modern societies – including most of those who self-identify and profess a religion) to tear-aside the obscuring tissue and be confronted by the real, would be to find oneself alone and insignificant in a meaningless universe.

In such a situation, blinding by the Mass Media is seen as perhaps the best available option: in a sense people have been brought to the point of *agreeing* to its happening.

This is a definition of hell.

Once people have ceased to be rooted in experience, the devil's work is done; it matters little what specific brand of nonsense is fed to them via the Mass Media.

It is the un-realism of this content which is key... No, it is the *reality-blocking* nature of this content which is key.

Once the centrality of experience is abandoned, the scope for error, distortion and partiality is indeed infinite in all directions. There is just one way of being right, but no end to the number of ways of being wrong.

Best of all for those who seek ruin and misery, once this Mass Media bubble has been made and evolved to perpetuate itself – although there are a few temporary beneficiaries – *everybody* loses in the long term.

First-strike framing

First-strike framing is a name for what the Mass Media does all the time with big visceral-impact (that is, gut level impact) news stories – e.g. stories about atrocities or particularly-nasty crimes: they ensure that the *first* report is such as to structure the long-term memory of the story (regardless of the real facts, as they may or may not emerge).

This, I call *first-strike framing*. Because the Mass Media aggressively gets in its first strike to set-up and interpret the story along with the first news report which people hear.

This operates on the well-understood principle that strong emotions tend to become firmly linked by human memory to the specific circumstances in which those emotions are experienced – then, when a memory of the specific circumstances is recalled, so too is the emotion: that emotion affects the cognitive-processing of the memory.

For example, the first report of a terrorist bombing atrocity will create a strong emotion – a visceral response – that will both tend to be remembered enduringly; and furthermore will tend to become psychologically-attached to specific circumstance surrounding that visceral response.

The media may therefore *link the visceral response to the atrocity with something of which they disapprove*: Christians or Right-wingers, usually.

This link may be made either by speculating in detail about the implications of a “probable” guess, or else simply by spatio-temporal association of ideas; for example simply mentioning the causal possibility in close temporal or spatial relation to the report that evokes strong emotion.

The memory laid-down will then contain both the strong negative emotion, and the specific linked circumstance – i.e. the concept of Christian or Right-winger.

Then recalling memory of the atrocity will evoke Christians or Right wingers; while the evoking of Christians or Right wingers will often evoke the emotions associated with the atrocity.

And all of this happens without need for conscious awareness. An example – which I heard for myself – was the BBC gratuitously saying during the first report that the Norwegian mass child murderer Anders Brevik was a Christian. He wasn't in reality a Christian; but from that point the idea was irrevocably established. Whatever the reality, people 'knew' at a gut level that Brevik was in some way a Christian, and that mass child murder was the kind of thing Christians do.

This manipulative method was pioneered by the Nazi minister of Propaganda – Joseph Goebbels, who developed the technique of juxtaposing pictures of Jews with rats to create a visceral association.

Conversely, when the event is exceptionally shocking, the Mass Media will 'refrain from speculating' and on those grounds (with that excuse) often omit mentioning the name of any Leftist association or Leftist-designated 'victim' groups in the first (and most shocking) news report (and for as long as possible) – so that this specific circumstance is *not* then linked by memory to the bad feelings evoked by the atrocity.

For example, on the rare occasions in which an approved group cannot avoid being mentioned, it is spatio-temporally separated from the nasty stuff, or padded-around with boring stuff – or indeed the whole report may be made unclear and boring (perhaps by usage of extreme bureaucratic language), so the specific circumstance is not remembered, or the visceral impact of the actual event is played-down (in a context where the Mass Media *usually* exploits such events to the limit and beyond).

So the London looting and arson Race riots of 2011 were filmed and discussed by the Mass Media such as to eliminate any visual racial association and confuse (problematize) any possible spoken or written racial association – with the consequence that most British people never grasped that simple fact. (And indeed the worst and most sustained episode

of civil disorder since 1945 has been all-but forgotten – flushed down the toilet by the Mass Media.)

Another Mass Media first-strike framing strategy is to ‘problematize’ obvious links between bad news and Leftist causes by treating common sense causality as weird, mysterious, incomprehensible; something that (supposedly) people ‘just can’t understand’.

All this is in line with basic psychological theory regarding memory and how it works – stuff I teach to first year students. Once the frame is established – or once people have been made confused – then they are resistant to change.

Insidiously, people exposed to the Mass Media do not necessarily know *why* thinking about certain groups evokes nasty emotions, they typically do not remember where or how they made this association – and because they do not know where this association came from – such links, once made, are very difficult to undo even if the issue is specifically addressed.

It seems that we are very attached to our first impressions; and the Mass Media know this, and get in hard and fast with the first-strike, manipulate our first impressions; and that is all they really need to do. (Even when there are later ‘corrections’, ‘withdrawals’ or even ‘apologies’ – these are emotionally insignificant.)

In practice first-strike framing is almost impossible to detect or to resist. If we consume mass media, we *will* be manipulated. .

From hero to antihero

Another Mass media ‘ploy’ – and perhaps the most effective way in which the Mass Media operates to shape human minds – is not by overt or didactic propaganda, but by means of its background assumptions.

In marketing terms this is known as ‘the soft sell’ – a method which simply *assumes* superiority of that being marketed, or feeds selected ‘evidence’ so the buyer will draw his own (predetermined) conclusions.

The soft sell is used when the *hard* sell (“Our product is the best!”) seems likely to evoke ‘sales resistance’ – such as mistrust, disbelief or argument. And the assumptions which are most potent are perhaps those in which the audience is induced to identify-with, and thereby to empathize-with, a *character* – a human being; whether someone ‘real’ in the news or current affairs or ‘history’; or someone fictional in a story (or some combination of supposedly-real with covertly-fictional).

To empathize with someone is to see as they see, feel as they feel, be motivated as they are motivated: to identify with them. (It is the same as the old meaning of *sympathy*, which can refer ‘to resonating in harmony with’ some thing, as well as some-one.)

There has been, in the Mass Media over the past several decades, a ‘turn’ from stories typically focusing on the essentially-*Good* hero, to stories in which the essentially *anti*-Good antihero is the protagonist. Indeed most modern Mass Media have all-but deleted all genuine (i.e. essentially-Good) heroes from their narratives.

What used-to happen was that the reader or watcher would be invited or induced to empathize with a Good character.

If it was a straightforward hero then the reader or watcher was drawn to experience his pressures, temptations, sins; perhaps to endure with courage,

to resist with single-mindedness, and to triumph – or to be defeated but still heroic.

Or, if this was a flawed hero or a growing hero, then perhaps to experience the hero's errors and weaknesses, and his sins – but finally to experience repentance, and to learn from the experiences – to become truly heroic at, or before, the end.

The 'moral' would be that Goodness is difficult, maybe very difficult – but possible.

However, what most often happens nowadays is that the protagonist is someone who is – at least superficially – *bad*, or bad by 'conventional' (traditional) standards (which may well be subverted during the course of narrative): someone like a thief or terrorist, an assassin or bounty-hunter, an aggressively promiscuous or sexually unorthodox practitioner – in sum a selfish, transgressive and pleasure-seeking kind of person.

The antiheroic story invites the reader or viewer to participate in this 'bad' person's world; and the moral is typically that this person turns-out to be not-wholly-bad after all; to have some redeeming feature; indeed (surprise, surprise!) to be in actuality a *better person* than the superficially-Good characters or initially-apparent-heroes (which are generally revealed to be nothing-but *hypocrites*).

The message is that overtly Good people are actually bad, and the obvious villain is the genuine hero.

The Mass Media have always featured characters who were basically evil (or at least primarily sinful and dominated by selfishness, sensuality, greed, etc.) but with some Good aspects; such that they would often attract considerable interest and sympathy; and indeed the villain may seem a more appealing character, at least dramatically, than the one presumed to be the hero – for instance, the clever and witty but evil antiheroic Iago is (in most productions) more enjoyable to watch than Shakespeare's dumb, ranting 'good' hero Othello.

But Iago has now displaced Othello to become the modern protagonist; so that instead of a tragic flawed-hero there is an ironic, not-*entirely*-bad anti-hero; instead of a good (but not wholly good) protagonist, there is a bad (but not *wholly* bad) protagonist.

This 'turn' in the Mass Media is (implicitly) addressed to a world in which the main moral problem is one of *excessively-good behaviour*, and where Good people are *excessively unforgiving and intolerant of the sins of others*.

While this may be a problem in some times and places (perhaps in strict 'puritan' societies); this means in actuality, here and now, the antiheroic narrative is addressed to a world that *bears no resemblance whatsoever to the actual world of unprecedented license and openly advocated sin in which we actually live!*

So, bearing in mind that all virtues may become vices when pursued narrowly or to excess – and as often happens – the main thrust of the antiheroic morality being inculcated by the Mass Media is precisely what we *least need* and is most likely to *harm* and further corrupt us.

Also, considering that the Mass Media *purports* to be teaching us – via empathy – that there is good even in the worst of people; there is a revelatory cynicism about the highly-selective kind of people with whom we are induced to empathize.

Empathy is routine for some kinds of bad people but not others – yes for murderers, terrorists, thieves and liars, cowards and drug addicts; but not for the likes of white racists. Yet – for any historical society and for most of the modern world, murder is a far, *far* worse sin than 'bigotry'.

And by this selectivity the mass media implicitly reveal their hidden (but correct) belief that *empathy leads to tolerance and even approval*.

Therefore, a Mass Media world in which artistic depictions and 'news' reportage focuses on inducing us to empathize with antiheroes, is actually a world which in practice encourages sin and vice and suppresses real goodness and heroism.

In a nutshell, the dominant modern antiheroic narrative generally *encourages us to be basically-evil*; but with some politically correct redeeming feature such as kindness or a passion for 'social justice'...

Pervasive demonic perspective

When first strike framing, and the soft sell of the antihero are recognized, this adds to a suspicion that nearly all (but not all) of the mass media output – and also what passes for serious narrative High Art in recent literature, drama, the movies, TV – is written from what could reasonably be termed a *demonic* perspective.

That is to say, the perspective of a demon – a creature who is wholly in service to evil itself; in other words, the perspective of one dedicated to the destruction of everything that is true, beautiful and virtuous.

(Although in practice and in the short term, some good things will always be retained, at least temporarily, as a base for attacking other good things. Therefore, good-as-a-whole is almost always attacked on the basis of promoting some specific good. As when the supposed need for kindness *in all circumstances* is used to attack other virtues such as prudence or courage; or when mercy is applied in defiance of all justice.)

Indeed, the demonic perspective could be taken as a brief definition of ‘modernity’ in the media – that phenomenon which got a grip in the first decades of the twentieth century, and which finished-off the centuries long traditions of visual arts, classical music and poetry.

I have always been aware of this demonic perspective, and always disliked it – but for many years I pushed-down this dislike and forced myself to swallow large doses of demonic modernism, because this was supposed to be ‘the truth’ about the human condition; and because much of the best work in recent art and prestige media was in this style, had this content.

(‘Best’ from an artistic perspective. For example the highly-rated novels of Joyce, poems of Pound, paintings of Picasso and plays of Beckett share this demonic perspective.)

In demonic art, the standard by which the characters are judged is worldly: status, power, and pleasure. The successful characters are evil predators and parasites; manipulators, selfish, cruel, insensitive.

Sometimes the whole narrative is peopled by evil characters trying to exploit one another; some succeeding, while others fail and are crushed.

Sometimes there are also ‘good’ characters, whose typical virtue is altruism or kindness – these are depicted as weak and self-deluded individuals. They are the ‘prey’, or the ‘hosts’, on-whom the evil characters feed.

We feel sorry for these ‘goodies’, perhaps. Generally we despise them, sometimes they disgust us – certainly we do not envy them.

The ‘good’ characters are the people who cannot see reality, who refuse to see reality, who live (and die) by illusions.

Thus the demonic perspective: the world as predators and prey; parasites and hosts; realists and the self-deluded.

The message? You are *either* an envied predator *or* one of the mass of despised prey.

Therefore, be a successful predator and glory in your success; and if you can’t then *despair*.

The sub-text? We are all prey, ultimately.

Because, even if you succeed as a predator, glorious in your exploitation of others for your own gratification; you too will become prey in your turn, you too will become weak and pitiful – *and so despair*.

The ideal of success is (presumably) to die at the height of your predatory success, unconscious of the future, when at your most envied and most loathed – therefore, if you have achieved predator-hood then *despair*: make sure you die soon, before you too suffer, before you too become prey.

The sub-sub text – Life is only about predators and prey, but ultimately it makes no difference because life is short, vile, and everybody dies.

So despair.

This is the demonic perspective in which modern Man swims, which underpins media news and soap operas, prize winning novels and award winning movies, which fills the theatres and the galleries.

Is the demonic perspective honest? Is it the product of years of seeking the truth, of exhausting all possible avenues of enquiry?

Of course not! It is merely a miasma breathed-in during adolescence; it is a pose, a lifestyle. It is the *end* of seeking the truth, giving-up on seeking reality, not the *product* of truth-seeking.

Yet the demonic perspective rules the public arena, it is what we are taught and what we consume: it is our catechism: it is pervasive, sophisticated, encouraged – and *alternatives* to the demonic perspective are low status, dumb, wicked, forbidden, punished...

And this milieu is induced not by argument or demonstration, but by *multiply-reiterated depiction*: by millions and billions of instances of the demonic perspective, iterated day by day, minute by minute, apparently each confirming and confirmed by the innumerable others, all drilling us in the ultimate lie that this is the truth: seek no further: suck it up and despair.

Negativism – a tool for self-cure

But if we are *not* to despair, then in the politically correct era of ethical inversion, ‘disbelieving’ the Mass Media is not enough.

It is a necessary skill for modern reactionaries to have a ‘negativistic’ attitude to the major stories: to believe *the opposite* of whatever are the main stories of the day.

Negativism is a psychological description for a behaviour pattern characteristic of two year old toddlers and some psychiatric patients with the condition called catatonia. Reflexly, and without needing to think about it, they *do the opposite of whatever they are told to do*.

Those who wish to escape from domination by the Mass Media need to adopt a similar attitude of negativism towards its major stories. We need to believe the opposite of whatever message is being pushed. The tough matter is knowing what ‘the opposite’ actually means...

Media negativism for reactionaries is based on the insight that the international Mass Media is *primarily* an instrument of evil, and the major such instrument.

While the great bulk of Mass Media content is mere distraction, and only evil because it is easiest to distract with evil; all of the major, high impact, multi-national Media stories – those that run for days and everywhere – are primarily propaganda, of a Leftist type – whatever else they may be in addition to this.

If a media story was not already, or could not be made-into an instrument of Leftist propaganda, then it simply will not become a major story.

Or if something already is (accidentally) a major story but is not amenable to usage in the Leftist agenda; then it will be killed as rapidly as possible,

by dropping it, distorting it, replacing it with something else, and ceasing to refer to it.

My favourite example of this was the 2000 fuel disruption (a protest against the price of diesel, where lorries blocked access to filling stations), which caused days of road chaos and petrol shortages across Britain and France and even into Germany – but which is now apparently forgotten.

The disruption was *not* organized by Trades Unions, but seemed to arise by spontaneous mass action from self-employed heavy-goods drivers and hauliers – and the Left was therefore hostile to the protesters, and all collective memory of the event disappeared within months.

The modern Mass Media only unleashes hype for *bad* things – for things *destructive of traditional values* (of truth, beauty or – especially – virtue).

From the Mass Media perspective, therefore, that which is traditionally Good is re-presented as bad; and *vice versa*.

People and events presented by the media as Good are always in reality bad; and people or events presented by the media as bad are usually (but not always) Good – and when bad people or events are not presented as Good, then they are condemned as bad *for the wrong reasons*.

Also, if genuinely Good things happen to be presented as Good by the Mass Media; then it will invariably be the case that they also are said to be Good for the wrong reasons.

Thus, the major output of the modern international Mass Media consists of only four categories:

1. Good presented as bad
2. Bad presented as Good
(That is to say simple inversion)
3. Good presented as Good for a bad reason
4. Bad presented as bad for a bad reason

(That is to say explanatory inversion)

These four categories, which can be summarized as either simple or explanatory inversion, account for all sustained and high impact modern major Mass Media stories *without any exceptions*.

Therefore those who want to free their minds from the Mass Media must first avoid as much Mass Media output as possible, and secondly develop automatic negativistic behaviour towards the Mass Media output which they cannot avoid.

Usually simple disbelief will suffice, and is most efficient: after all, the Mass Media generates vast numbers of false stories all the time.

Media stories cannot all, individually, be evaluated. But if a more precise reaction is required, then the non-politically correct observer merely needs to decide whether a specific story is a simple inversion, or whether it is the explanation or ‘framing’ of the story which is inverted – it will be one or the other.

Of course, there is seldom sufficient time or information to infer what (if anything) actually *is* going-on behind the Media distortion, hype and suppression. Also, making such inferences sounds like, and may easily become, conspiracy theorizing.

This is why I recommend sheer negativistic disbelief as the default; and stop at that.

The modern Luddite

Anyone who strenuously avoids the Mass Media, and consequently develops some immunity to the propaganda of modernity, may find themselves termed a 'Luddite'.

The original Luddites (followers of one semi-mythical Ned Ludd) opposed – and destroyed – modern technology because it threw them out of work to face starvation; but the term now refers to almost any resistance to any change.

Luddism is thus the *active extension of negativism*. Disbelief is the first step; resistance to change is the second.

(Anyone who resists change, no matter how damaging that change would be, will get called a Luddite by those who want change - and this will happen regardless of whether opponents to change really deserve the name or not – so why not embrace the term?)

Being a Luddite is in fact the rational, default, response to any proposal for change in the modern world – since almost all change turns-out bad, and almost all modern change is not even well-motivated.

But Luddism is especially to be recommended when a change is proposed or supported by the Mass Media. As the focus and origin of Leftism, it is extremely unlikely that the modern Mass Media would unite and sustain support for anything Good; and highly likely that whatever they supported would be destructive of truth, beauty, virtue, and traditional sexuality (continence, marriage, family, stability etc.).

Is it rational and prudent to oppose new measures simply because of their provenance – simply because the Left are so keen on them? Experience says: Yes. Opposition is a reasonable, sensible, default position (pending further evaluation or being convinced to the contrary).

Indeed, it is not just reasonable but *necessary* in some circumstances.

Political correctness is led from the Mass Media, but implemented via bureaucracy.

And ever since the era of economic central planning (nationalization, five year plans and the like) bureaucracy has intrinsically been of the Left.

What modern bureaucrats do is to *make changes* (necessary or not, helpful or harmful) – indeed, it is making changes which distinguishes the modern bureaucrat from the old style administrator (who never wanted to change anything!).

Change is what managers do – change is their job, that on the basis of which they are appointed, retained and promoted.

Yet, in complex functional systems there are but few ways to *improve* the system, but many ways (indeed an infinite number) to *damage* the system.

For example, almost all random genetic mutations are harmful to a complex organism – and they are often lethal; and it is only very rarely that a mutation is adaptive and improves survival or reproduction.

Therefore change *as such* is almost-certain to be harmful, except when there are strong specific reasons to assume it will be beneficial.

Because most change is harmful and yet *change is what they do*, politicians, bureaucrats, managers and the like are systematically resistant to evaluating the results of change. Indeed they are far more likely to want consequential harm to be hidden than they are desirous of learning from experience.

In advanced bureaucratic systems the officially sanctioned consequences of change are therefore *managed*: pre-decided, manufactured and imposed; certainly not discovered by observation and experience.

Therefore the rational, prudent, default attitude for people concerned with the function of a social system must be *no change*, and the rational prudent default action must be to *resist change*.

In other words, in the modern world, it necessary and proper to be a Luddite – unless or until persuaded otherwise by strong evidence in support of a specific proposal.

It should never be necessary to prove ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ that a proposal for change will certainly lead to harm: *the proper default assumption is that nearly all significant change to a complex system is likely to harm that system’s functionality*.

Indeed we see this is not just correct on theoretical grounds, but as a matter of common observation.

From the perspective of one who is outwith the bubble of the Mass Media mentality and who is primarily concerned by the real-world functioning of social systems such as law, education, medicine, science, the military or the police; it is crystal-clear that *almost all social changes proposed or implemented over recent decades have been and currently are bad*.

(This damage to functionality is, of course, disguised by re-labelling and inversion – for example the police are nowadays more likely to be evaluated by their success in providing employment for women and ethnic minorities than in solving crimes and suppressing riots.)

Some good things have happened – but despite the Mass Media; while Mass Media advocated changes has almost always been bad for almost everybody.

Therefore, *this* change, currently being proposed, under consideration *now*; is very unlikely (statistically speaking) to be good, and will very likely be bad.

In conclusion: Ned Ludd for King!

How the Mass Media learns to do harm

Negativism and Luddism are necessary because the Mass Media acts with implicit intent to do harm; to damage religion and tradition.

In ‘deciding’ how best to damage religion and tradition (which is its intrinsic and spontaneous aim) and destroy traditional society, the modern Mass Media is continually floating ideas – every day hundreds, thousands of new ideas.

But the Mass Media needs to detect which of these ideas to pick-up and run with, to emphasize and elaborate, to spread and sustain.

This is the work of the human minds in the elite media; the ideological experts of the Left. And the opponents of the Left often unwittingly assist the Left in this process.

When an idea emerges that traditionalists can show to be *almost-certainly damaging to those things which traditionalists value* – then the sharp minds of the Mass Media (the lead writers, columnists and commentators) will notice the fact, and will pick-up this particular idea and press it very hard indeed, with full force of the modern Mass Media, in a sustained campaign.

The reciprocity between Left and Right means that by the time the Left has chosen its big theme, and is pressing for implementation of key policies – the process of evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy in pursuit of Leftist goals is well advanced: by the time the Left has decided on its Big Issue of the day – extra-marital sex, unconstrained promiscuity, mass welfare, easy no-fault divorce, feminism, the environment, diversity, mass immigration, redefining marriage, whatever it may be – *by the time of incipient formal implementation, the Left is sure that the chosen policy will inflict enormous and ramifying damage on its enemies.*

And also, by this time, the counter-rational *assumption* of the necessity of (this) change has become first un-shocking then habitual via multiple

reiterations in multiple media – the default rational assumption of ‘no change’ has been inverted – and the Mass Media has by then established that the change they advocate is the default, and that resistance to this change is irrational or evil.

Very swiftly the onus of proof has been reversed; and in practice no amount of evidence for likely harm is ever deemed sufficient to justify opposing the current Left-approved change.

To introduce radical Left-approved change it is sufficient to demonstrate merely that harm will not *necessarily* happen *absolutely immediately*.

And, once a Left-approved changes has been implemented, anything short-of instant social collapse is taken as evidence of its success (“See, the world has not ended! – We told you it was a good idea!”).

The most recent example of this is Same Sex ‘Marriage’ – which the Mass Media floated, and soon Left-intellectuals in the Media found that the idea evoked strong resistance from traditionalists. This resistance was taken as evidence that SSM would be very damaging to traditional values and life, and thus identified the issue as a suitable policy for Mass Media support.

So the Left doubled-down on SSM, advocacy of which was positively-depicted by multiple media channels (dramas, soap operas, movies, novels, in polemical journalism, news reports); resistance to which was confined to the dumb, crazed or hate-filled.

This continued until what was – in world-historical terms – an ultra-radical, unprecedented policy with considerable potential for subversive harm, was first normalized then made into a positively good-thing; such that within less than a generation the issue of SSM went from being fringe, eccentric, ridiculous, unthinkable – to a *fait accompli*.

This strategy has been repeated many times with many issues over the past century – especially in the area of the sexual revolution. Whatever happens to be the Left’s latest proposed change is therefore not arbitrary nor a mere matter of fashion; but a policy that has been carefully pre-selected to

represent *the next step down a 'slippery slope'* to victory in the culture wars: an entry point into a positive feedback cycle of damage to religion and traditional values.

Mega-revolutionary social change is therefore presented by the Mass Media as if it were merely sensible and logical; while any resistance to societal transformation is painted as confined to knuckle-dragging Neanderthals.

Social Media = Mass Media

As I write in 2014 AD, it seems obvious that the spread in usage of mobile phones and internet social networking websites of the *Facebook* type and messaging systems such as *Twitter* and the many other ‘sharing’ media, has been an expansion, a continuation of the growth-trend, of the Mass Media which had already been given a really tremendous boost by the invention of the internet.

Hence, the social media have turned-out to generate, extend and exacerbate the already-established psychopathologies of secular hedonism and atomistic alienation.

The interpersonal media are extremely addictive and distracting; and are therefore amplifying the psychological consequences of the modern Mass Media: i.e. addiction and distraction.

Yet, in principle, if we had not already experienced the opposite, it might have been predicted that, by keeping people in touch more of the time, the influence of the Mass Media would be held-back by social media – that by people-interacting-with-people for more of the time, and with more people, the ideology of the Mass Media would be blocked.

(Rather as many people – myself included! – used to predict that the internet would combat the domination by ‘official’ news media, to facilitate an *informed* society where everybody discovered the *real facts* behind the selection, distortion and propaganda; and *formed their own opinions*... Ha! How wrong can anyone be!)

In theory, the new interpersonal media should strengthen friendship, marriage and family relations by keeping the members in-touch; and of course this can be done and sometimes is indeed done. Yet, in practice these media are at the heart of a society ever more zealously engaged in the coercive destruction of marriage and families.

In so many ways the possibilities of the Mass Media to do good, while genuine, are in practice and on average utterly overwhelmed by the actuality of doing evil. The overall direction of flow of the Mass Media is *downward*, even while it supports swirls and back-flow and eddies in the opposite direction.

The main consequence of pervasive social communication media is therefore seen to be that people are out of touch with their environment for more of the time, that they downgrade the actual people they are with, and the actual environment that they inhabit; that they never *self-remember* (Me! Here! Now!); that they are prevented from experiencing in real-time the life they are *in*.

In the recent past, a person sitting or walking alone might be stimulated to look around, listen, smell, feel the air flowing past them – be where they are. Not now. They are on their mobile phones and inside the Media bubble. And they can and do avoid experiencing the here and the now.

The vast scale of interpersonal mass media has an effect which quite overwhelms the specifics of interpersonal information exchange *via* these media. It hardly matters what is said, or heard, or seen *via* these media – nor who says it; the major consequence of *the fact of the medium* is vastly more powerful than the specifics of communication. Form dominates content. (Hence McLuhan's slogan: the medium is the message.)

This fact of such a high degree of content-indifference, explains how it is that our society has been able to absorb such incredible changes as the internet and ubiquitous mobile phones and vast social networking websites while – at a fundamental level – the functional effect is so trivial; indeed the net effect is trivial-izing.

We do not control these media; they control us; they reshape our minds in the direction of the ideology of opinionated relativism; we have instant and strong opinions on everything and everybody which is current – and then, tomorrow, another set of strong and ubiquitous opinions, mostly on other subjects.

So interpersonal communications media are merely an increase in the volume of the Mass Media; they are indeed an expansion of the Mass Media; mostly by means of adding to electronic communications and processes the additional processing power of many millions of human brains to generate more content and reactions; and thus to extend Mass Media communications to occupy the non-electronic world.

So that when people do, rarely, turn away from the Mass Media, they are likely to exchange opinions on agenda items, and from a set of stock responses, that have been set by the Mass Media.

The Mass Media versus religion

The modern Mass Media sets the agenda: it is the dominant societal system by far: the Mass Media is the primary medium for public evaluation of all the outputs of all other social systems.

Each medium is a message: the Mass Media – the whole thing – is a message. And as the Mass Media has grown and grown, with the advent of internet and social media technologies – the message has become ever-louder and more invasive.

The whole entity of the Mass Media includes all few-to-many modes of communicating such as print media (books, newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (radio, TV, movies) and the internet media (blogs, socialnetworking, interpersonal communications and messaging media) – all these form a unified, vast, interconnected web of engagement...

Engagement that stands in opposition to religion, that *occupies the same ground* as religion.

And that ground is the social, public, shared *system of evaluation*.

The Mass Media thus occupies the ground previously inhabited by religion, and *necessarily* displaces religion as the primary social, public system of evaluation for *all transcendental Goods*: the Goods of truth, beauty and virtue.

The basic insight is that the Mass Media displaces religion. The bigger and stronger the Mass Media in a person or a society – the smaller and weaker is religion: the one displaces the other.

And the Mass Media ideology of ephemeral Opinionated Relativism has displaced the various doctrines of religions (excepting those religions whose adherents are sufficiently isolated and sheltered from the full blast of the Mass Media).

If we accept Marshall McLuhan's insight that *the medium is the message* – this means that it is not the content or subject matter, but the *fact* of the Mass Media as a set of communications which is primary. Specifically, the fact that so many people are so fully-engaged by the Mass Media for so many hours of each day.

The anti-Good effect of the Mass Media therefore essentially comes from the fact that it displaces religion as the social evaluation system – and replaces a positive morality with a negative ideology that, over time and in the long-run, sweeps away any Good – because Good must be real and lasting, and that which is arbitrary and contingent cannot be Good.

The specific evaluations of the Mass Media are usually pro-evil, but even when they are pro-Good it is the fact that the Mass Media has become the major societal evaluation system which is primary. And once the Mass Media has become the primary system of evaluation, then *a line has been crossed*.

The crux is that in the modern West it is the Mass Media which makes and communicates all significant moral and social evaluations: and *that* is why the nature of the Mass Media is intrinsically to be anti-religious.

The purpose of modern life: to feed the Media

The fundamental nature of the Mass Media can be seen in its overall effect on the human condition; its constant, underlying, net-tendency is by now far advanced and readily observable...

The purpose of the Mass Media, what it 'wants' from humans, is not just wholesale passive consumption, but *active participation in media processing*; psychological participation in the evaluations of the Mass Media, which participation itself enlarges and expands the Mass Media.

So, the near-perfection of the Mass Media (which is also the point of inevitable societal destruction, hence Media self-destruction) would be when all humans were always plugged-into the system of communications; and receiving inputs, processing information, and generating outputs, the tendency of which was to generate ever-more inputs... A positive feedback cycle.

The perfection of the Mass Media is not to have as many as possible passive consumers of the media, but to *use the sensory apparatus and brains of active consumers as information processors to generate more and ever-more Mass Media*.

In other words, the tendency of the Mass Media is to *co-opt the human mind*, to make each mind a part of the Mass Media; to expand the communication volume of the system that is the Mass Media.

It is happening at this moment, to me and to you...

Take blogging for an example (since I am a blogger). A blogger reads other blogs, and draws on the experience of the Mass Media and of his life and experience to make blog posts which grab attention and tend to stimulate the writing of *further* communications such as comments and postings on

other blogs – which are then read by the blogger and stimulate further blogging and so on.

The blog network operates to co-opt more and more human brains, and serves as the system of evaluation for... anything and potentially everything.

The blogosphere can become and has become for some the centre of life; such that the rest of life becomes implicitly subordinated to sustaining engagement with the blogosphere – earning money to feed oneself, doing things of blog interest, all so as to blog, read, comment – blog some more...

But of course blogs are only a tiny part of the Mass Media, and the more recent social media such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* do the same kind of thing as blogs, but faster and with a wider inclusion of participants.

The diversity of the Mass Media serves to disguise what is going so – so that we feel that reading a newspaper is different from attending a musical concert is different from visiting a beauty spot or from having a human relationship – yet in the Mass Media world all these are merely grist to the mill.

The media world is one in which religion and holidays and other people and work and leisure and everything else has become *primarily* something to contribute to the Mass Media; in which peoples' primary motivation in doing anything other than *consume* the mass media is that they have something 'interesting' to *contribute* to the Mass Media – photos and videos to share, opinions to share, news to share, triumphs and disasters to share. Those with nothing to *share* on these social media (or with no wish to share) are out-of-the-loop – boring, uncool, lame, unpopular...

This is a world in which the *evaluations* that people make concerning truth, beauty and virtue are themselves calibrated to promote engagement with the Mass Media.

So whatever people do *apart from* the Mass Media is increasingly done on the basis of evaluations from the Mass Media, since these things are being done (implicitly) in order (or in hope) that they may be contributed to the

Mass Media. Much of what people do now is done so they have things suitable to contribute to the network of other mobile phone users.

As of 2014; modern living is subdivided into tweetable-thoughts and tweetable acts.

This is a world in which religion is grist to the Mass Media mill, marriage and family are grist to the media mill, our surface opinions and deepest convictions are grist... To a shocking extent, we are *all* hack journalists now; thinking the thoughts and living the lives of hacks.

Can you handle it?

The world of hack journalism, the world in which we now live, is not just unpleasant – it is deliberately nasty.

A lot of modern life is about rubbing people's noses in stuff that they find disgusting, repellent, sickening – this sometimes seem like the main activity and underlying purpose of the Mass Media, solidly-backed by the highbrow artistic establishment.

And this activity is regarded as morally-admirable: Samuel Beckett got a Nobel literature prize for doing it better than anyone else.

Indeed, the whole thing originated in high art in the 19th century French-centred decadent period which developed into the disgust expressed and evoked by James Joyce's *Ulysses*; TS Eliot's *The Wasteland*; Picasso's Cubism, and the pathological distortions of painters such as Stanley Spencer, Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud; the poisonous dissonant elements in Mahler, Stravinsky and Kurt Weill, and innumerable seamy and sordid movies and Art photography since the 1960s.

The strategy is, it seems, to *shock* us so frequently as to *desensitize* us to the point that *nothing* can shock us; so that we will neither 'judge', nor prohibit, nor reject evil – because then we will get-used-to evil, and then eventually to accept and promote evil (since we have long since ceased to *feel* evil as evil).

The end of it all is finally to regard evil as the only Good – since we now reflexly, and dishonestly, *unmask* all virtue as hypocritical, all beauty as Kitsch; and have become so jaded with simplicity and wholesomeness that we find Good insipid and crave the sharp stimulus of sin.

A secondary purpose is to de-sacralize that which was sacred, so it will cease to command our loyalty. Hence the endemic parody, mockery and subversion of religion in general but Christianity in particular.

As a doctor I have been through a very thorough training in desensitization with respect to disease – I had to overcome my revulsion for dead bodies, gross skin rashes, and overpowering smells in order that I could work with patients.

Part of this was – by practice – to learn control of one's facial expression and vocal tone so as to prevent any observable disgust; and since the body and emotions are linked, such habitual impassivity also reduced the strength of feeling of disgust.

I was learning an *imperturbable* manner. It was necessary.

But that practice and those habits extracted a price in terms of *hardening* of my personality, especially when combined with the gruelling long hours, and even more especially in psychiatry – where the hardening was applied to psychological (rather than physical) factors that seemed to spill over into other relationships.

I began to dislike the person I had become – and that was a major reason why I stopped doing clinical work.

(This was a defect in me personally – not all doctors suffer this excessive hardening; and good doctors develop the necessary imperturbability while retaining empathy – my wife being a prime example. But the *difficulty* of achieving this combination of imperturbability without loss of empathy is one reason – among several – why most people cannot practice medicine well, why the medical profession ought to be selective with respect to personality.)

Our culture has now gone far down this path of psychological hardening. The good reason (i.e. the legitimate excuse) for hardening is that many people, through no fault of their own (for instance disease, accident or other misfortune) are disgusting; and by reacting to them with disgust, we increase their suffering.

So, blunting of the spontaneous responses to disgust could be a defensible therapeutic attitude to society.

However, modern society is *not* defensible – because, instead of training imperturbability, we practice (albeit selectively – and mostly in relation to sexual morality) an *inversion* such that whatever spontaneously evokes negative feelings such as disgust is valorized – regarded as *better than* that which is spontaneously regarded as wholesome.

Spontaneous disgust is not so much controlled as reversed: we are trained that a feeling of disgust (above all in relation to sex) should be followed by, suppressed by, eventually overwhelmed by a positive evaluation. We have been trained to love disgust.

Modern culture is therefore as-if medical students were trained to regard sickening smells as fragrant, skin lesions as beautiful and dead bodies as in a better state than alive ones.

That is the difference between desensitization and inversion – desensitization may be necessary and may even be desirable, although there is a significant price to pay; but inversion is intrinsically insane and evil.

Nowadays, mainstream culture rubs our noses in the disgusting stuff of life, of which there is an endless supply; but we are not supposed to notice that it is disgusting, instead we are supposed to find it admirable and praiseworthy.

Mainstream modern culture does not merely ‘tolerate’ the disgusting, it seeks-out the disgusting, in order to celebrate and reward it; behaving like an anti-therapeutic ‘doctor’ who poisons his patients and spreads diseases from the twisted rationale that sickness and death are preferable to health and life.

Environmental overload makes simple minds

On top of the Media tendency to shock, desensitize then invert valuations; there is a related tendency for the sheer volume and complexity of the Mass Media to cause a reciprocal shrinkage and simplification of the human mind.

Over the past decades, people have often supposed that the rapid expansion of the Mass Media, and the vast informational availability made possible by the internet, would lead to increased complexity of human thinking: there was an idea that the human mind was being constrained by the insufficient availability of relevant information.

Yet – so far as we can see – the opposite has happened, and human discourse has become greatly simplified over the past several decades.

It is primarily when our brains are ‘offline’, including asleep, that complexity is generated – in other words complexity of ideas does not come from the external environment but from *inside the head* – from the internal workings of the mind.

(See “The Sleep Elaboration–Awake Pruning (SEAP) theory of memory”, by Bruce G. Charlton and Peter Andras; published in the journal *Medical Hypotheses*; 2009; Volume 73: pages 1-4.)

This is not the whole story, of course, since such relationships are reciprocal, and our minds certainly need input – but the *usual* idea is wrong that human ideas ‘come into the brain’ from the environment, and complex thoughts therefore derive from a complex environment. By this account old-time rural dwellers necessarily had simple thoughts since they lived in simple environments; while modern city dwellers have complex thoughts to reflect their complex environment.

If complexity of cognition is something put-into the mind from outside; then the extravert, the sociable, the widely read, the culture vulture, the traveller – one who draws stimulus from his environment is therefore the paradigm of complex thinking.

Yet I suggest that in reality almost the opposite is the case – so long as we compare like-with-like (that is, compare people with similar psychological characteristics, but in different environments).

It makes more sense to see *complexity as coming from within*, and this complexity being typically *constrained* by the environment.

So a complex, information-rich, and highly-stimulating environment actually causes the mind to simplify, by the environment ‘culling’ more innately-generated complexity. Thus those most engaged with other people and with the Mass Media would be expected to have *simpler* cognitive processes than they would-have; if they had been more solitary, detached, autonomous individuals.

The paradigm of mental complexity, and real-creativity, would then be someone who is introverted, self-sufficient, thoughtful and contemplative; deep-not-wide-reading – narrowly selective rather than widely experienced.

I think this can be confirmed by observation. A clear example would be Mass Media journalism. When smart people work in journalism (which must be the most information-dense environment in human history) their evaluation processes become greatly simplified, down to a level of gross stereotypy.

With sufficient ability, relevant training and suitable experience; any amount of information of any type can effortlessly be selected and filtered to generate a predetermined, simple output. The greater the complexity of the input, the more relatively stereotyped is the output – necessarily.

And when the information flow slows or stops temporarily, and they are thrown back onto their own resources, such people are at a loss – and their terrible simplicity is exposed.

I first noticed this among highly intelligent, socially-engaged academic Marxists. Whatever quantity and variety of stimuli was fed-in, and whatever the issue or question – what came-out was always... The Class Struggle.

This model of complexity being internally-generated, and simplicity being a selection effect of the environment, may explain why the exponential increase in the availability of information with the vast growth in Mass Media has been associated with an obvious, qualitative collapse in the complexity of personal thought, private conversation and public discourse.

More is less – when it comes to complexity.

The savage triviality of Mass Media morality

So, the Mass Media is desensitizing, inverting, and simplifying human thinking; but that is not the end of it!

The Media also manufactures steroid-pumped emotional hyper-reactions to trivial stimuli.

It is now impossible to exaggerate the *mismatch* between some alleged (non-) offence or taboo-hate-fact; and the resulting scale, scope and zeal of Mass Media condemnation.

In a perverse variant of the butterfly-causing-a-hurricane parable of chaos theory, it is apparently believed that *any* remark on *any* topic from *anybody* which may (perhaps, in some way) offend some other person or groups; *can be* extrapolated to being regarded as having-caused some (possibly) catastrophic outcome – and therefore deserves unrestrained condemnation and punishment.

On the one side, nothing is too trivial to dominate world Media discussion for days or weeks; yet on the other no truly abhorrent moral offense is so serious that it cannot be ignored, hidden or re-framed into victim-hood, or even a virtue.

Literally nothing is too trivial to become *the most important thing in the world*. Perhaps a few words from an obscure teenager communicated on *Twitter* – then being discussed by heads of state, government officials, highbrow journalists, senior academics and in a million social interactions worldwide.

Literally nothing is too trivial to lead to a firestorm of frenzied mob hatred, court cases, fines, deliberate financial ruin, sacking, even prison.

While on the other hand, people who certainly have done, and are known for sure to have done, horrific acts of brutal violence – rape, torture, maiming, terrorism, murder – can be and *are* made into victims of oppression, deserving of sympathy; or heroes, fighting for justice; or ordinary decent folk who are being harshly judged for some momentary aberration under stress... or in fact anything the media wants.

This combination reveals the utter evil of modern morality as initiated, orchestrated and sustained by the Mass Media *and those who consume it and allow it to dictate their world view* (which is, in practice, almost everyone).

This is what it is to live in a world without God, a world therefore of moral relativism and without a conception of objective truth. A world which has not abolished morality; but uprooted and twisted it; such that matters of degree and proportion are now *ad hoc* and arbitrary.

A world where Opinion has displaced God; and where opinions are generated and disseminated 24/7 by the Mass Media.

The need for eternal vigilance

So, the psychological damage inflicted by the modern Mass Media includes desensitization to that which ought to shock; a perverse appetite for that which spontaneously evokes disgust; a simplification and routinization of thinking processes; and a near-universal over-reactivity to arbitrary stimuli which is both gullible and hysterical.

Yet, total resistance to the deadly influences of the modern Mass Media is impossible in The West – because the Mass Media is pervasive and omniselective.

So powerful, so all-encompassing, so alluring, so addictive that nobody who is compelled to remain within the modern situation ever could be sufficiently firm, conscientious, wholly unflagging and well-motivated to avoid each and every one of its almost infinite temptations.

Fighting the enticements of the modern Mass Media is a constant battle; and constant battle first makes us jaded, then desperate, finally leaves us exhausted – and when our resistance has thereby been broken-down, *then* the Mass Media will get us.

Resistance to assimilation by the Mass Media, hence to the forces of darkness, requires unceasing vigilance, un-resting alertness, unpunctuated strength of will... in other words requires super-human will power and resolution – therefore, since we are *not* supermen, all our best efforts must in practice inevitably be backed-up by recurrent repentance.

The total success of total resistance is an impossibility; but perpetual resistance is necessary – indeed resistance makes *all the difference*: all the difference between losing and keeping our souls.

Only by refusing to give-up the resistance, *despite the inevitable demoralisation of our innumerable failures*, will we be able to gain any significant freedom.

However armoured you may be, you will have chinks of weakness – if not now, then at some time or another, sooner or later.

And the Mass Media is omni-potently set-up to penetrate all possible chinks of weakness.

And however tiny the initial penetration of your armour; the Mass Media has the capability (and purpose) to enlarge that breach; and like a parasitic wasp laying eggs inside a worm, where they may hatch and devour it utterly from within, so the Mass Media can enlarge and grow within you until it has consumed your soul – even starting from the smallest of beginnings.

Is the situation then hopeless?

No – at least, not for a Christian. For a Christian this is merely a quantitative amplification of normal life, life as it always has been.

But – whether Christian or something else – the situation does need continual vigilance, frequent prayer, sustained attempts to restrict and minimize exposure, and an open-ended willingness to acknowledge and repent your own multitudinous failures to resist the Mass Media; and the renewing resolve – despite this – to try again, starting *now*.

This capacity to perceive and acknowledge one's own faults and failures, to take responsibility and repent, is surely near the core of the Christian life, and far, far more important than the strength of armour or will-power.

Christianity is not, ever, under any circumstances, *only* a matter of following rules with perfect obedience – and even if this were possible (and in the case of the modern Mass Media for most people most of the time it is *not* possible perfectly to follow the rules of righteousness) – then to follow the right rules for the wrong reasons or in the wrong (un-loving) spirit is also utterly worthless.

Our recidivism, our endless failures, ought to make us ever-more humble and grateful for the forgiveness consequent upon Christ's atonement.

In general, so long as we acknowledge and repent – and do *not* defend, nor justify, nor rationalize – our failures, either to ourselves or to others; the number and frequency of our inevitable failures is immaterial, and we will not be – we *cannot* be – corrupted by the Mass Media beyond prospect of rescue at the last.

How to cure an addicted society

Modern society is addicted to distraction – to the Mass Media: also and related, addicted to sex, drugs, news, soaps, fashion and celebrity.

Withdrawal from these makes people feel bad, makes them feel (sometimes) that life is hardly worth living, that they are lonely, that people are bored-by and disrespect them.

So is there any incentive to give-up the addictions, and go through an unpleasant withdrawal? *Only if* what awaits you on the other side of withdrawal is better than being an addict.

Only if there is *hope*.

To give-up addiction to distractions entails believing that if you were *not* distracted from reality, and became aware of reality; then reality would be better than the distractions.

But if a person believes that reality is dull or horrible, and distraction is better than reality – or if he believes that the reality actually is *itself* and properly one or another life of distraction (and so life is just a choice between distractions, then total extinction) – then he will not attempt to give-up his addiction.

So, to give up addiction to distraction, a person must believe that real reality is better than the virtual realities of a life of distraction.

People need know that reality is not a bitter pill (nor is it a ‘red pill’!) – that reality is a deep joy.

It is not that there is ‘nothing to be afraid of’ from reality – there is plenty to be afraid of. But reality is, despite all, a deep joy – *the* deep joy: reality is the deep joy which makes-real all other joys (and without-which all other joys are subverted into virtual realities).

In sum, although we can escape domination by the Mass Media by withdrawal, staying free of its clutches entails having hope of somewhere to escape to – belief in the reality of a haven; and that ‘somewhere’ *must be*, in the end, religion.

However, *the first step* is to escape.

Escaping the colonization of small talk

The domination of the Mass Media in modern society is seen in the fact that it has *colonized* casual interaction; and typically provides the material for ‘small talk’ between strangers and slight acquaintances – and in this respect small talk presents some of the greatest difficulties for anyone who has made significant progress toward curing his own media addiction.

Small talk interactions are casual, easy, reassuring bonding-experiences precisely because they assume (without having to argue or justify) a common basis of fact and interpretation – we can flag-up a topic in a phrase, and then have a common basis for complaint, praise, concern or whatever, as the theme of conversation.

Yet – because all the major Mass Media stories suitable for casual conversation have been polluted at source (indeed these are precisely those Mass Media stories which are most rigorously and coercively selected, filtered and seeded with lies) – casual small talk has become *the most saturated with secular Leftism of all societal discourse*.

And this situation is irremediable, at the micro-level – because to attempt to correct the Mass Media perspective destroys the fact of small talk.

Such that, if someone introduces a topic for small talk with a stranger or semi-stranger, then they do not want, and will be bored, offended or repelled by, any attempt to ‘correct’ the bias, selectivity and lies which they have been fed and which they now believe.

If you have ever tried to do this, you will know what I mean; and how counter-productive this generally is; the way that people – perfectly understandably and naturally – shrink away from ‘correction’ by a stranger, and are irritated by what they perceive to be subversion of the friendliness of small talk by ‘preaching’.

And yet, despite its poor reception – and despite its being often counter-productive, Christians are *tempted* to correct others in the context of small talk, since it seems so wrong to allow people to persist in dangerous or sinful misunderstandings and belief in lies.

My feeling is that small talk simply *is indeed* a major arena of political correctness, and a major mechanism for spreading the sexual revolution, and the locus for the evaluation system of secular hedonic nihilism – but that all this bad stuff *cannot be tackled by direct correction* but only by exclusion of topics.

I think we simply have to *refrain* from discussions of Mass Media stories in small talk; and that this is best done by genuine ignorance – but if (as is usual) we have indeed picked-up some awareness of current Mass Media big stories; then we must confess the truth that we *don't really know* anything about them and *mistrust the sources* – then (if possible) we try to *deflect the small talk into the here-and-now*: the weather, harmless gossip about friends and family, health, sports, travel experiences and holiday plans... the usual barber's shop/ hairdresser's stuff.

There is, of course, an indirect (and more or less subtle) point being-made by gently but firmly *refusing to participate in the ritual celebration/condemnation stances approved by the Mass Media* – and perhaps this point may be communicated to some people?

Most likely, however, most people will either be mildly and temporarily irritated, or else will-not-notice that the conversation has been deflected away-from the Mass Media.

But some good has been done, however small, by each and every individual refusal personally to participate in the propagation and expansion of major Mass Media stories, and their always-evil-tending perspective and implications.

Withdrawal and detox programme

Actually, there is really *no need* for anything complex in this endeavour to cure ourselves of Mass Media addiction; since withdrawal from the Mass Media is more like going ‘cold turkey’ from heroin (feels very bad, but won’t kill you) than it is like *suddenly* stopping alcohol consumption (which is extremely dangerous, often fatal).

Breaking-out from Mass Media addiction and the accompanying indoctrination, (manipulation into evil) is for many people the vital first step in recovering from the nihilistic psychosis of modern life.

Therefore, media detox may be a necessary preliminary to becoming a Christian; for someone who is seeking God, but finds the way forward blocked by the own media-inculcated prejudices and habits.

But, as well as not killing you; the good news is that the process of withdrawal is simple and the healing is spontaneous; because it is only the continuous high volume consumption of mass media that is keeping us sick. So, at root, the detox programme is merely a matter of *Just. Say. No.*

1. Do not seek out mass media.
2. Develop mental ‘blinkers’ so as not to notice or be distracted by mass media.
3. Turn away (physically and or mentally) when you do notice and are distracted by mass media.
4. When you fail or mess-up (and you will); then fully acknowledge the fact of your failure; repent and start again.

Positive treatment entails:

1. Filling your mind with good things (so bad things have a harder time getting-in)
2. Living in the present moment (self- remembering Me! Here! Now!), take notice of experience as it happens.

3. Ensuring unstructured, undistracted solitary time – sitting, walking, travelling, contemplating etc.

A new evaluation system:

1. Attitudes – treat the Mass Media as you would a conference of con-men; people you know are out to exploit you, trick you: somehow, anyhow.
2. Knowledge – Recognise that the Mass Media is so dishonest that you learn nothing true from it: there is biased reporting, gross selection within reports, and there are made-up lies and falsehoods seeded throughout.

Thus the Mass Media is misleading in its general trend, its specific framing, and in its fine detail. Nothing about it can be assumed correct. And it is in practice very seldom possible to detect and discount all of the ongoing dishonesties: the *most dangerous delusion* is that you personally can filter the Mass Media, decode and see through its biases, selections and lies to discern the truth of the situation.

So there is no programme for quitting the Mass Media, and indeed no ‘antidote’ is required; rather the de-programming begins to happen as soon as you begin significantly to cut yourself off from the Mass Media.

Of course, you will still be wrong about many things – probably about most things – but you will no longer be believing incoherent, manipulative, nihilistic nonsense.

This is not about trying to be right about everything but about trying to avoid the common state of being crazily and incurably wrong about all the most important things of life.

Only after you have escaped from the toils of the Mass Media can you, will you, begin again to think-straight – to see what is going-on in yourself, your life and the world around you.

For many, Mass Media withdrawal is a necessary first step in pursuit of anything better. Because so long as someone is addicted to the Mass Media,

all potential gains are swept-away by unrelenting distraction; by recurrent episodes of amnesia or intoxication.

Who needs withdrawal and detox?

I have suggested that the Mass Media is an addictive drug for modern Man, and that it is necessary to undergo withdrawal and detoxification.

But why? Withdrawal and detox are unpleasant experiences, and to be a non-addict in an addicted world – a world of dedicated drug-pushers, drug-seekers and drug-users – is socially isolating.

What benefits lie on the other side of the costly process of curing Mass Media addiction?

The major benefit is to become psychologically independent of the drug pushers. An addict needs his fix; and Mass Media addicts need ever larger and more frequent doses of their drug which makes them utterly dependent on the media providers.

It is not good for you to be dependent on drug pushers such as the Mass Media, because *they do not have your best interests at heart*; they will say or do whatever is required to sell more of their drug; creating new addicts and expanding the consumption of existing addicts. Pushers *exploit* their clients; to be an addict, is to be exploited.

The exploitation involves extraction of your money (as with advertising), of your attention, of your time... It involves shaping your mind by social, political and ideological propaganda. It involves filling your mind with lies, and suppressing truths; promoting Media-approved (i.e. inverted) morals, and demonizing Media-disapproved (i.e. Good) morals.

And there are all kinds of other exploitations: both short-term, tactical, individual-level exploitations (such as wholesale sexual manipulation and vulnerability to predation by media celebrities); and long-termist, strategic, socially-attitudinal Media manipulations (such as creating a public climate in which successful sexual predators are admired and rewarded with honours, prizes and praise).

In a nutshell, for you to be dependent on the media is for you to be exploited by the media; in so many possible ways that they cannot all simultaneously be defended against.

Any media addict such as you are is therefore being manipulated – whether you realize it or not; and being induced into attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that advantage the manipulators – whether they realize it or not.

And that is why *everybody without exception including yourself* – absolutely needs to undergo the painful process of Mass Media withdrawal and detox.

* The End *

Postscript: the Jimmy Savile affair

A significant stimulus to write this book came from the explosive revelations of the Jimmy Savile affair during 2012 and after – and my developing understanding of the implications.

The Savile affair reveals the leading controllers of the Mass Media in particular, and public leaders in general, as being disgustingly corrupt in terms of what they tolerate and excuse.

Thus, I regard as *a major national event* the un-masking of the late Sir Jimmy Savile (1926-2011) as a chronic, serial, wholesale, aggressively-predatory sexual aggressor, abuser and rapist of boys and girls, men and women (including mentally handicapped, disabled, ill and hospitalized juveniles) over a timescale of more than half a century, and in reported numbers running into many hundreds (with actual numbers in all likelihood being in thousands, since many victims were incapable of understanding and reporting incidents).

The Savile affair constitutes, in my opinion, in its totality; one of the most horrifying – and horrifically-revealing – events in the history of England. And as a nation, the English have hardly yet begun to digest the implications – that is, assuming we are capable of doing-so, in such a nihilistic, shallow and distractible society as we have become.

The intense interest of this case is that Savile was, for several decades but especially in the 1970s and 80s, *massively* promoted by the UK Mass Media as nothing short of a lay saint, mostly due to his raising lots of money ‘for charity’ and his work in ‘helping people’.

Jimmy Savile was essentially a creation of the BBC – which is the British Broadcasting Corporation, the state-funded radio and television network and focus of the UK Mass Media. Initially Savile was promoted as a teen idol, as radio DJ and also presenter of the TV flagship *Top of the Pops*.

Later Savile was promoted in connection with young children; and was, for instance, featured visiting children's hospitals on Christmas day. Later still, the BBC created a long-running Saturday evening prime time family TV series called *Jim'll Fix It* (1975-1994) for Savile's glorification as a patron of boys and girls, the sick, the crippled and the handicapped - all of which categories are noted among Savile's known sexual victims. The purported aim of the series was to arrange for a stream of young people to come to the studios and have their daydreams fulfilled by Savile and his 'team'. In practice, it seems that – all too often – the opposite actually occurred.

Jimmy Savile was, indeed, one of the earliest people to recognize the vast career possibilities of becoming personally very rich, famous, powerful and *protected from prosecution* by well-publicized charitable 'giving'. The more Savile gave, the wealthier and more prestigious he became. Until finally 'Sir Jimmy' was, apparently, everybody's friend or favourite Uncle; and his depredations were unstoppable: he was, and openly boasted of being, a-law-unto-himself.

The media, and especially the BBC, thus made Savile into the leading British representative of what it was to be a 'good' person, held-up as an example to others.

And not just the media. Savile was awarded a Papal knighthood to go with his British knighthood (Savile was one of the best-known Roman Catholics in public life – despite, as we discovered, openly practising assembly-line sex in the BBC studio dressing rooms with under-age-looking girls); he was also apparently a close personal friend and guest of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher; and also of the Queen and Royal Family. In other words Savile was (so far as the masses could see) *unanimously endorsed* by the establishment *at the highest possible level*.

Despite being aware of his behind-the-scenes reputation, these establishment idiots nonetheless invited Savile *into their own homes to meet their own families*; because now we discover that many of these establishment figures had heard multiple reports and complaints, and persistent and plausible rumours of his activities; and did nothing, did not investigate, took no precautions; or else denied, and in sum certainly

covered-up what was *really* going-on. It seems that the Establishment did not even use their insider knowledge to safeguard their own loved ones!

(It is typical of the insanity of modernity that the politically correct elite believe their own lies – even when contradicted by personal knowledge and their own experience.)

And yet, to the unbiased eye Savile was *very obviously* a cold-eyed, self-promoting, self-enriching, egotistical weirdo – with an embarrassingly inept persona; a man who never conversed but spoke *entirely* in clichés, and deflected enquiries with strange stereotypical noises and displacement activities.

The only people whom I know who had actually met Savile disliked him intensely; one knew him from their schooldays as being a nasty teenager; a woman friend reported that on meeting Savile he made an immediate, crude and sexually aggressive approach (i.e. groping) – as if it was his habit and right to do so.

A very obviously untrustworthy person.

So, on the one hand there was one's own instinctive reaction backed by personal contacts, which said Savile was nasty; and on the other hand the Mass Media, especially the BBC, the government, the Royal Family, numerous hospitals and prison services, and (for goodness sake!) the *Vatican* – all united in telling us that Sir Jimmy was the nearest British equivalent to Mother Teresa (and I am not exaggerating this in the slightest).

Add to this people in the police, the legal system health service officials, educational officials who seemed to endorse Savile despite (as we have heard) *numerous* reports, complaints, incidents...

An outsider might ask if there was any major group that was not involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in covering-up and thereby promoting Savile's crimes?

And there we have it, in a nutshell. The necessary relationship between Media reality and real reality is not just zero, but potentially *negative*: the worse the reality, the more the ‘establishment’ ruling elite, promoted it. The ‘lack of discernment’ displayed by the Queen, the politicians, the Media moguls and the Pope could not have been more extreme.

This is a perverse perfection of inversion: one of the most (covertly) evil people that could be imagined, yet aggressively promoted as being one of the best. And this situation continuing for decade after decade; as the number of his victims accumulated through Savile’s long and active life...

As I said, Sir Jimmy Savile was a creature created and sustained by the Mass Media, and most specifically the state funded British Broadcasting Corporation which was the primary source.

From the late 1960s, therefore, the premier UK Mass Media organization was the origin, focus, energy, defender of the phenomenon of Savile – which can be taken as merely the most egregious example currently known of a general inversion of moral (and also aesthetic) values. The BBC, the Mass Media, took this grotesquely-unpromising raw material, and made him into the prime national moral hero, and kept this going, on-and-on, despite all they suspected, heard, had seen and knew.

So we now *know* (we no longer merely suspect the fact) that the Mass Media will take a truly evil person (or it could be an evil organization, or an evil set of ideas) and make him admired, dominant and invulnerable.

It has always been said, in excusing Savile (both before and after the revelations) for his boring, inept and embarrassing persona that he ‘gave’ millions of pounds to charity – some say forty million.

We now see that this charitable contribution was more in the nature of a *bribe* than a gift; money paid to ensure sexual access to the vulnerable children he preyed upon, and protection money to prevent him being prosecuted (just one of the hundreds of instances that have emerged would have meant Savile’s ruin and probably jail time).

If we divide forty million pounds by the constantly expanding number of probable sexual assaults over several decades; the charitable contributions may eventually work-out to be something like a few hundred pounds per sexual attack.

In other words, Savile's charitable 'giving' functioned as a pay-off for Establishment status, a high salary, and political protection; also sometimes as a kind of entrance fee to get access to establishments where (as a patron) he could molest with impunity. It is likely that Savile regarded this exchange as being good value for money...

Such 'charity' – rewarded by depraved and criminal sexual gratification, personal wealth, and lavish official prestige is revealed as *licensed evil on the cheap*.

But *why* did this happen. Why was this all this done for somebody so wicked and dangerous as Savile? Why was so much done to enable and facilitate vice on such a vast scale? What *reason* could the Mass Media establishment have for doing this apparently arbitrary thing? – what did they stand to *gain* from it – why not be more *cautious*?

The immediate cause of Savile's licence to abuse seems to have been the probable fact that in the BBC (and presumably elsewhere in the Mass Media) with respect to sexual license *almost everybody was at it*, to a greater or lesser extent; too many people had something to hide – and, quite likely, it was calculated that bringing down Savile would be to bring down the whole house of cards of Establishment sexual corruption.

Because, following the Jimmy Saville affair and a series of prominent prosecutions, convictions and confessions, it has become apparent that there was what would be considered by religious traditionalists a varied and widespread culture of endemic sexual transgression at the BBC.

The once exemplary British Broadcasting Corporation in London had, from about the mid-1960s, seemingly become a moral cesspool, and at times a criminal environment; involving not just the most obviously strange and sinister Savile, but also other media personalities who were more generally

popular, and seemed to me and many others as if they were decent characters.

The fact that the most influential centre of UK Mass Media was quite widely known (among those in the know) as a dangerous place for children, implies that this had been an accepted fact; indeed it looks as if sexual access is likely to have been, maybe still is, a major motivational factor in those who work there.

I assume the same applies to other major media institutions, who have at least tolerated – perhaps approved of this; since otherwise the whistle would have been blown long, long ago.

The lessons I have learned from the Savile affair are that:

1. We are unable to judge the moral worth of people in public life from what we see on our screens. We think we can judge this, but we cannot. Our instincts tell us we can, but we cannot. And this applies even, or perhaps especially, to those put forward as *moral exemplars*. We must therefore resist reassurances that things are alright, simply because we – the public – have not been allowed to learn how bad they are. We now know things may be horrifically bad, and we are allowed to know nothing about it.

2. The moral worth of people in public life is much, much lower than we had previously supposed. Think again of all the major Establishment figures and institutions who were complicit in endorsing and protecting Savile... They knew, but did *nothing*.

We must therefore *assume the worst* of many, or most, people in public life – unless specifically proven otherwise.

3. The evils consequent upon the sexual revolution have been systematically-hidden, excused on multiple grounds, indulged, even applauded. There *must* surely be a lot of the same kind of things we do not know about in many other people, circumstances and institutions; especially those most subject to the changes in *ethos* dictated by the enforcement of the sexual revolution. It is reasonable – indeed prudent – to assume the worst until proven otherwise.

But those who do not want to learn from the Savile Affair – including the many who were complicit – will not learn from it. And they do not want the public to learn, either.

Already I detect that the whole business is going down the memory hole – because in the modern world it is only the Mass Media that keeps an issue alive, and the Mass Media has no interest in allowing the implications and ramifications of the Savile Affair to be worked-through and kept in mind

But there *are* lessons; and we *ought* to learn them. We should acknowledge the profound foolishness and danger of immersing ourselves in the multiple influences from those depraved individuals in the Mass Media and the Establishment who control and sustain public discourse.

And, having reflected, we must each of us resolve to change our attitudes and practices in relation to the Mass Media.

To encourage such reflection, and toughen such resolution, has been the main purpose of this book.

Technical Appendix

The Mass Media as a system

The Mass Media, as an autonomous social system, is a relatively new thing; and (although already in existence) was only recognized as an entity in its own right (The Media) from about the nineteen fifties, and initially by Marshal McLuhan.

McLuhan's catch phrase that 'The Media is the Message' is the key insight here: that the *form* of the Mass media, its processes, its evaluations, how it works – these are in fact *the main fact* about the Mass Media above and beyond its specific content (which is, of course, *extremely* various).

The various mass media are defined by communications which go from one to many persons (or from a small group to a much larger one). In sum, a mass medium is therefore at root *a system of amplification for communications*: such as a printed book or newspaper, a radio or TV program, an internet blog or the social networking media such as (written in 2014) *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

Before the Mass Media, there were several mass media – and even in antiquity some of these reached quite a massive scale of amplification such as the lecture, the play or gladiatorial and sport spectacles including chariot racing. These in Roman times had reached an amplification rate of one-to-many-thousands – thanks to the 'technology' of the amphitheatre or hippodrome.

Any kind of durable writing is potentially a system of amplification since it allows for multiple readers and copying; but the most famous mass medium is the printed page – generally credited to Gutenberg's invention of moveable type around 1450.

But in these early times, the Mass Media was simply a range of technologies for amplifying communications – and the communications

originated from social systems that had specific social functions; systems such as government, the military, the legal system, the various arts, and scholarship (such as theology, philosophy and science).

Early media took their functions from the social systems they served. There was no single Mass Media, and the functions were as diverse as informing and entertaining – for example when mass media amplified government communications by transmitting them in writing by pamphlets or through newspapers, they might provide information, or provide a conduit for propaganda (i.e. communications primarily intended to shape behaviour), or perhaps provide some kind of ethical inspiration or guidance. The mass medium thus merely amplified the message of a functional system.

When a mass medium amplified science it was perhaps educating via a textbook, informing via a scientific paper, or maybe popular science (for entertainment or moral edification) in a newspaper or radio broadcast.

When a mass medium amplified the arts (e.g. by printing a novel or poem, by performing a play in a theatre, or broadcasting that play on radio or television) it could be providing entertainment, or an aesthetic experience, or moral reflection and teaching.

At this point, therefore, the various mass media had no unified function – they were merely multiple mechanisms for amplifying the communications of functional social systems – so it could be summarized that they served to do something along the lines of conveying information, aesthetic experience, entertainment or propaganda.

However, once the various mass media reached a certain size and their communications began to cross-link; then the systems of mass media communications began to communicate *with each other*; that is to refer to, and to react to, each other. From the many separate mass media, the unity of the Mass Media was born.

From this point the Mass Media could be considered a separate system. It was no longer just a mechanism for amplifying the communications from

other systems, but in the Mass Media the various media reacted to stimuli from each other – and the output from these was... more reactions.

The Mass Media was a system of amplified and cross-linked stimuli and reactions, and reactions which became stimuli. The system was now *autonomous* – in the sense that a new system is considered to have separated-off when there are more within-system communications than between-system communications.

So, now a newspaper runs a story – and this story could originate from almost anywhere; discovered by the Mass Media's own 'reporters', from a press release, from a rumour; it does not really matter. And this story is repeated in the broadcast media and across the internet and evokes reactions from all these sources – leading to stories about the story; and any or several of these stories about stories may lead to further reactions – and so on.

Thus while the old mass media were merely amplifiers of a functional social system; the modern Mass Media is substantially independent of the other social systems. Whereas the old mass media would typically serve a social function – because it was simply telling more people what other social systems had generated; the modern Mass Media select, re-shape and just plain invent outputs which are 'designed' (intended) merely to evoke reactions from itself.

Therefore while the old mass media had no intrinsic function because they were not 'a system', but instead merely a set of amplifiers; the modern Mass Media also has no intrinsic function but for the very different reason that it generates outputs mainly to evoke reactions *from itself*.

All this is not, of course, purely technological: humans are necessarily involved.

The constraint upon the growth of the Mass Media is that *people* must be induced to participate cognitively in this process of reacting. The system of the modern Mass Media must therefore include *human minds*, as well as technologies. Somebody must read some of the newspapers and react in

some way – whether by buying, or gossiping, or voting, or rioting – and thus provide both resources and feedback stimuli thereby to close the loop and re-fuel the Mass Media

The point is that it may at one time have been reasonable to summarize the mass media's functions as (say) informing and entertaining – since the mass media took information perhaps from science and amplified it and got people to attend to it; now the Mass Media generates stories which it references to science, but these stories do not have to be true – certainly the stories do not need to be true according to *scientific* criteria.

Modern Media science stories are therefore simply references and reactions to 'science', and may variously be true or selected, distorted or invented as seems most likely to provoke Mass Media responses some of which will lead on to further Mass Media responses – of a type that engages sufficient people in such a way as to fuel further communications (buying more newspapers, generating advertising revenue or subscriptions or buying more equipment or whatever).

But there is now no reason why a science story should be *true*; so, of course, they seldom are true. Indeed, they are *not even trying* to be true.

Similarly with entertainment. For traditional mass media to amplify entertainments the communications generally had to be *enjoyable* – to sell a lot of copies of a novel, people generally had to enjoy that novel; to get a lot of people to watch something on TV, it needed to make people happy, or excited or make them laugh *or something...*

But in the modern Mass Media, entertainment does not need to entertain; since almost everybody is addicted to the Mass Media, just so long as a communication *compels some kind of attention*, then this works just as well as providing entertainment; and since it is difficult to entertain people *en masse* and for long periods, in the modern Mass Media there is not much entertaining going-on...

So although there remains an element of entertainment, the modern Mass Media attract attention by any and every means: by evoking disgust, horror,

fear, lust, repulsion, self-satisfaction, pity for others, self-pity, hero-worship, scape-goating... and then reacting to these responses, and reacting to the reactions.

The most representative modern Mass Media event is therefore some kind of staged pseudo-'reality' TV show, consisting of people who evoke strong reactions, engineered into situations designed to evoke responses – which may then be displayed to elicit further responses; all this ramifying through and cross-referenced in the print, internet and social messaging media.

In the UK, these include various “Big Brother” and “I’m a Celebrity” TV series; each of which is treated by the Mass Media as a major national event, and accorded saturation coverage.

These ‘reality TV’ shows neither entertain nor inform; but are calculated simply to attract and engage attention by whatever means, and evoke opinions and behavioural feedback which may be harvested and channelled into an iterative process which serves nothing beyond its own growth in communications.

An iterative process which serves nothing beyond its own growth in communications – this phrase is a reasonable summary of the essence of the modern Mass Media.

What makes the Mass Media, overall, an evil influence on individuals and on society is firstly that these self-serving and futile communications displace functional communications; secondly, that the form of the Mass Media trains people in the nihilistic mode of thinking I term Opinionated Relativism, and thirdly that forces of evil *use* the Mass Media as a weapon against the Good: so the larger the Mass Media grows, the more it destroys of the true, the beautiful and the virtuous.

Notes and references

This book is written from a small number of sources, and a great deal of brooding on them in light of the Mass Media addiction I share with nearly everybody in Britain – and from which I struggle to escape; fail, then try again.

The key figure in Mass Media studies is of course Marshal McLuhan – and of his (mostly wrong or silly!) books the two with most influence on me were *The Gutenberg Galaxy: the making of typographic man* of 1962, and *McLuhan: Hot and Cool* – a 1968 Penguin paperback of excerpts, essays and interviews edited by GE Stearn.

I also read and pondered a strange and difficult book of systems theory by Niklas Luhmann called *The reality of the mass media* in the Polity Press translation of 2000; which led to my own reflections published in *The Modernization Imperative* (Bruce Charlton and Peter Andras, Imprint Academic, 2003); and a paper on the ‘paradoxical’ aspects of the Mass Media:

Charlton BG. The paradox of the modern mass media: probably the major source of social cohesion in liberal democracies, even though its content is often socially divisive. *Medical Hypotheses*. 2006; 67: 205-8.

These earlier ideas provided some insights to which I still adhere – but their basic idea that the Mass Media communications generate cohesion in modern societies I now regard as *completely wrong!*

The ideas in this present book are a product of the past half-decade when I have been a Christian; and especially of my blog Bruce Charlton’s Miscellany where I have floated notions to gather feedback and criticism from a small, engaged group (changing over time) who generously read the things I write, and make stimulating and sometimes important comments.

In general terms, this book itself exemplifies the opposite of the Mass Media method. Whereas life in the Mass Media world is about exposing oneself to vastly greater quantities of perceptual data than can possibly be reflected-upon; this book derives from a relatively low proportion of informational input in relation to the amount of cognitive processing.

In other words, for what it's worth, this book represents the result of an awful lot of thinking-about a relatively small amount of stuff!



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