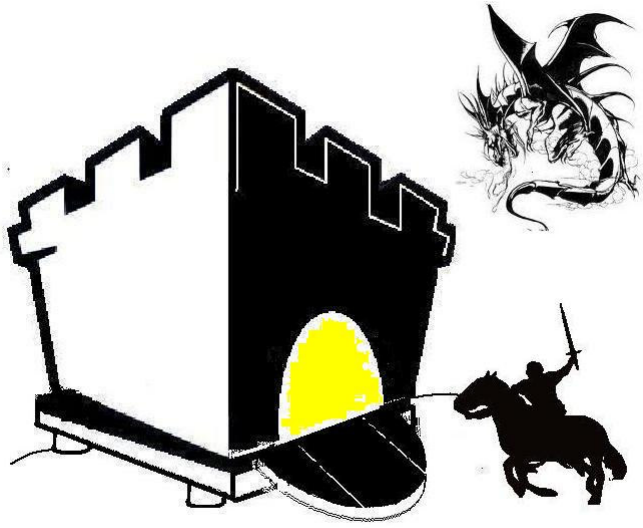
Fortress Living



Three Solutions for Your Greatest Problems in Life

Fortress Living: Three Solutions for your Greatest Problems in Life

Lesson Ten *Scientific Solutions to the Greatest Problems in Life*

Seven Historical Periods

PERIOD	YEARS	Normative Solutions (Philosophy and Theology)	Situational Solutions (Arts and Culture)	Relational Solutions (Ethics and Spirituality)
Ancient	5th Century BC to 5th Century AD	The State Gives Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Rationalism*	Classicism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Stauary	* Ethical Hedonism * Bad: religious persecution * Good: religious purification
Medieval	500 AD to 1400	The Church Gives Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Scholasticism*	Mysticism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Byzantine	* Ethical Legalism * Bad: Biblical illiteracy * Good: Piety and Devotion
Renaissance	1400 to 1600	Reason Gives Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Humanism*	Naturalism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Giotto	* Ethical Dualism * Bad: compartmentalization * Good: helpful inventions
Enlightenment	1600 to 1800	Subjective Mind Gives Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Rational Idealism*	Neoclassicism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Beethoven and J.L David	* Ethical Utopianism * Bad: idolatry of the state * Good: religious liberty
Scientific	1800 to 1900	Science Gives Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Empiricism*	Romanticism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ R. Wagner *Ring Cycle*	* Ethical Positivism * Bad: reason over revelation * Good: reasons to believe
Modern	1900 to 2000	Self Gives Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Pragmatism*	Impressionism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Monet *Poplars at Giverney*	* Ethical Individualism * Bad: social isolation * Good: inner spirituality
Post-modern	2000 and Beyond	No Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Nihilism*	Deconstructionism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Picasso *Le Demoiselles*	* Ethical Relativism * Bad: reject tradition * Good: truth alone

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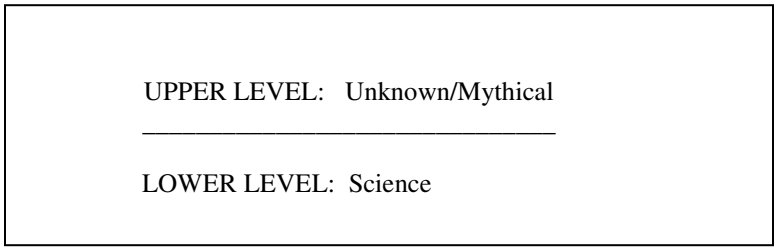
Scientific	1800 to 1900	Science Gives Norms _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ *Empiricism*	Romanticism _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ R. Wagner *Ring Cycle*	* Ethical Positivism * Bad: reason over revelation * Good: reasons to believe

The Period: 1800 to 1900

The end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th marked major power shifts in European and New World society. In the Americas, the new century heralded the dawn of a new republic—the United States of America—a nation founded squarely on a combination of Enlightenment political ideals and Christian views of morality. This was the first such experiment in history and, from the beginning, proved very successful. The engine of growth and development during this period combined these "new" views of liberty and virtue with significant advances in technology. If the Gutenberg moveable type printing press made possible the Renaissance, the invention of steam power was the gateway for the Scientific Period.

Dominant Normative Solutions: Empiricism

It would be incorrect to assume science began in 1800! The word "science" itself simply refers to knowledge (Latin word, "scio" means "know.") Even the ancient Egyptians had a kind of science, as did the Greeks and Romans and every nation since. Even so, there was something radically new about the science of the 19th century. Copernicus opened the door a crack to this new understanding of the world when, three hundred years before, he challenged the conventional wisdom of an earth-centered cosmos. As we saw in the last lesson, Immanuel Kant opened it even further when he proposed a "Copernican Revolution of Knowledge" taking objective reality out of the center of knowledge and putting the mind of man. All of these developments combined to usher in a "brave new world" in which the dominant normative solutions to the greatest problems of life would be found primarily in scientific discovery rather than the speculations of academics and churchmen. If the "upper level" existed at all (and many scientists rejected it) it was irrelevant. What mattered is the "lower level."



If we call the old normative approach "rationalism" (in its many permutations) the new could be called "empiricism." Whereas rationalism looks to the mind for its source of data and tries to prove it with logic, empiricism looks at the objects and seeks to prove or disprove them with evidence. If you're carefully following some of the developments of normative solutions over the centuries you may find this curious, particularly since in the last period philosophers like Immanuel Kant minimized the importance of objective reality in his emphasis on subjective perception. If you wondered about this, that's good. For what began as a little hairline fracture would eventually turn into a cataclysmic gulf. I'll say more about that breech later.

There were so many important theorists and philosophers during the Scientific Period it is difficult to focus on one. John Locke, though living in the previous century made significant contributions to the development of empiricism, as did George Berkeley and David Hume. However, there is another man whose influence, particularly in the realm of science, exceeded all of them together: Charles Darwin. Darwin was not a philosopher, in the sense of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. He was first and foremost a scientist. However, his scientific proposals had such a far reaching impact that we are still dealing with it today.

As a method of learning and knowing, Empiricism claims to rely solely on evidence. The so called "scientific method" involves an ongoing process of creating hypotheses (possible solutions to the problems in life) and testing those solutions repeatedly to see if they work. Darwin sought to use this method in his study of human origins. His most famous work was called the *On the Origin of Species*, and was written in 1859. To this day it remains one of the most controversial and influential works of all time.

In December of 1831, the young Charles Darwin joined a crew of fellow scientists aboard the research vessel, H.M.S. Beagle. It is a long story and we cannot go into great detail here, but in brief, Darwin returned from the five year voyage with a boat load of artifacts and a mindful of speculation on how they got there. Because many of the exotic birds and beetles he found seemed to just appear on isolated and separate locations, he hypothesized that they "evolved" from lower life forms, adapting to their environment in unique ways. He called the process "transmutation" believing that creatures could "mutate" from one species to another. Today his theory is commonly called "evolution."

How did a species "decide" whether to mutate? Darwin believed it occurred through a process called "natural selection" in which only the "fittest" (strongest) "survive." Nature is a wild and dangerous place. It is filled with competition for limited resources like food and shelter. It is therefore logical to conclude that if there are limited resources, only those who overpower other creatures competing for them would survive. It was these survivors who are "selected" to continue in the evolutionary development. As he continued to catalog and analyze the natural artifacts collected on his journeys it became increasingly clear to him that the evidence for natural selection and "evolutionary theory" was compelling. His voice was joined by many other

scientists. For example, Thomas Huxley was an anatomist and pursued evolutionary views of human development, concluding that man evolved from apes. In the new field of social science, Thomas Malthus, argued that limited global resources and survival of the fittest required population control to insure the survival of the human race. Meanwhile, in Venice, Sigmund Freud applied the hypothesis in humans, attempting to detail the process of natural selection and survival and how it unfolds in the human mind.

As you can imagine, many orthodox churchmen and people of faith found much in Darwin and the new science to resist. Darwin never fully rejected his Christian profession, however, he grew increasingly suspicious of traditional interpretations of the Bible, particularly in passages describing the supernatural world and how it interfaces with the natural. Darwin rejected much of the Bible because of these kinds of conflicts. "Miracles" were, for him, the stuff of legend and myth, not history. Thus, Darwin's writings and lectures provided even more evidence to the world of the irrelevance of traditional Christian ideas and morality.

As his evolutionary views gained prominence in Europe and America, some churchmen decided that if you can't beat him, it would be best to join him! Growing numbers of professing Christians, particularly in universities and theological schools, attempted to combine Darwinian viewpoints with the Bible. This, in turn, resulted in the rise of a movement called "theological liberalism." Theological liberalism sought to modernize the Bible and Christian ideas by reinterpreting traditional understandings. One of the most notable proponents of this movement was Friedrich Schliermacher, a German theologian who set out to "demythologize" the Bible, ridding it of supernatural elements (like the miracles of Jesus) and changing the traditional meaning of the "gospel" (Jesus died on the Cross to pay the penalty for sin) to a "social gospel" in which Jesus was a misunderstood teacher calling everyone to love and good works. Most of the progressive and liberal ideas in religion and politics today trace their modern origin to these views.

Dominant Situational Solutions: Romanticism

Situational solutions have always been an effort to arrange and organize the facts (situations) of life into meaningful and significant patterns. As we've seen, the artists and craftsmen of each period take the normative solutions proposed by the philosophers and theologians and put them on canvas, in stone or on the stage. Ironically, the situational solutions proposed by many in this period seemed to diverge dramatically from the empiricism espoused by the philosophers. I'll explain why in a moment. But the dominant situational solution of the 19th century is captured in the term "Romanticism."

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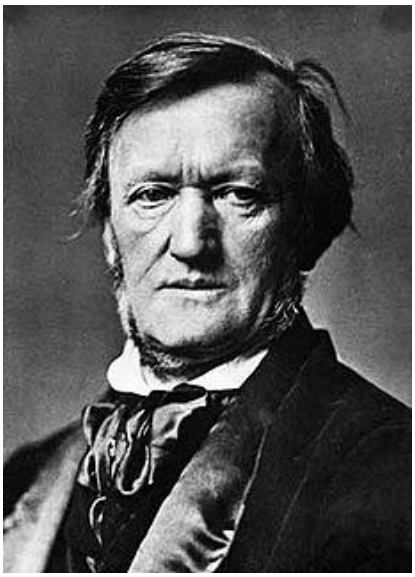
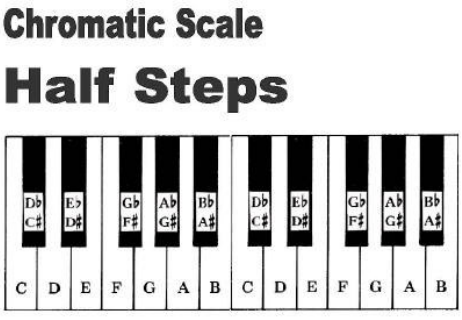


The only way to understand Romanticism in the arts is as a reaction to the Enlightenment Period before. Only when we grasp the disappointment and disenchantment of Enlightenment artists can we appreciate what came after. Recall that Enlightenment artists like Jacques-Louis David and Ludwig von Beethoven had high hopes for utopia—for a perfect world. Those hopes were dashed and shattered by their own personal tragedies and by the political revolution and terror that swept through Europe in the latter years of the period.

By the 19th century, composers, painters and authors were longing for something different. That's what the term "romantic" means. Though we often use it to describe the intimacy and affection between a man and woman, when used in this context it means a sentimental desire, especially the unleashing of emotions, regardless of the consequences. We saw hints of this in Rousseau's ideal of freedom. Freedom was for him an unrestrained personal autonomy to do whatever we please. Romanticists recaptured this ideal and translated it into art.

In music, the Romantic ideal is evident in the operas of Richard Wagner. In his philosophy of life, Wagner clung to older Enlightenment utopian views. There was a powerful nationalistic component in his German operas in which he attempted to glamorize the ancient past in order to stir patriotism and love of country in his audience. It is no coincidence that in the 20th century, Adolph Hitler, another German nationalist, used Wagner's compositions for the same purpose. He was also convinced in the power of the State to bring all this to pass—he was an ardent socialist.

From an artistic standpoint, however, Wagner did more than write about heroes from the past to inspire nationalism in the present. His musical style introduced audiences to rhythms, melodies and harmonies unlike anything ever heard before, unleashing passions and emotions seemingly without regard for the consequences. Classical artistic expression has always looked to the past for its inspiration and required restraint and self-control. Romanticism, by contrast, looks to the future and abandons restraint and self-control if it can accomplish its purpose. For example, Wagner relied on a musical form called "chromaticism." A "chromatic scale" includes all the notes on the piano—not just the white keys but the black. A chromatic scale goes by half steps, not full ones and so it sounds very different to our ears. Wagner began utilizing chromatic scales in his works. This meant a certain amount of "dissonance"—an apparent clashing of notes and "disharmony." He used this technique to create tension and emotional unrest so that eventually he could resolve the tension at the end of the opera (when the "fat lady sang") through consonance and harmony.



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Wagner's most famous composition was his "Ring Cycle"—a series of four operas describing ancient German legends about heroic figures competing for golden rings of power. Wagner's purpose in the Ring Cycle are many, but three were overarching:

- Nationalism – Still basking in the glow of Enlightenment utopianism, Wagner believed that if man were given enough time and resources, he could create a perfect world. He also believed it should begin in Germany.

- Socialism – As with many of his contemporaries, Wagner believed in the necessity of government control to solve the greatest problems in life. When combined with his Darwinian views on survival of the fittest, that translated into political socialism where the State owns and controls everything.

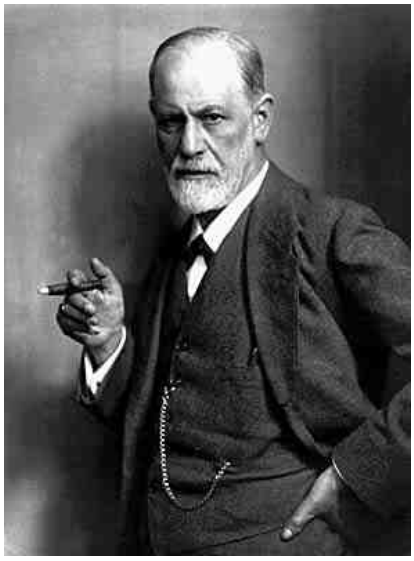
- Apotheosis – "Apotheosis" describes a man becoming godlike. Another philosopher of the period, Friedrich Nietzsche, invented a term to describe the product of an apotheosis: ubermensch. We would say, "super man." More than a hero, an ubermensch is a man who overcomes all odds and becomes god. It was a familiar theme in ancient Greece and Rome and continued to curry favor in post-Enlightenment times. However, during the Romantic Period, ubermensch tended toward more individual expression. Apotheosis meant that a hero broke with restraint and tradition so he could pursue his own pleasure and success. In past generations, heroes were more likely those who used their greatness to serve their fellow man. The Romantic ideal was a hero who ultimately served himself.

Dominant Relational Solutions: Ethical Positivism

Relational Solutions to the greatest problems in life are lived out in the daily press of marriages, families, friendships and communities. And the way we handle the inevitable challenges in these relationships is what ethics is about. Not surprisingly, the most voluminous solutions to relational issues during the Scientific Period came from the scientific community. As empiricists they conducted experiments and research and sought peer review of their hypotheses. They were relentless in their desire for "proof." Truth was important. But they understood truth quite differently from previous generations. After Kant, thinkers increasingly rejected any kind of absolute moral values. Recall that the "upper story" of transcendent, eternal truth could not be known. So it's not surprising that ethics and morality was understood not as a God-given moral order but simply as a scientific experiment in what works.

When you combine this zeal for proof with man's perennial need for moral direction, you end up with a system of ethics I call Ethical Positivism. As a theory, "positivism" claims to rely completely on evidence to reach its conclusions. In ethics it means refusing to rely on traditional sources of morality like the Bible or social norms because they don't really exist anyway or if they do, we cannot know them with any degree of certainty. If a scientific study cannot verify and prove it, it must not exist.

Ethical positivism provides the theoretical context to understand one of the most significant contributors to the ethics of the modern era: Sigmund Freud.



I doubt very much that Freud would have thought of himself as an ethicist or his psychoanalytic theory of human development as a system of morality. And yet it has been used that way for over a hundred years now. Over the next generations, Freud's assumptions about human nature and development, and the nature of problems, were used to devise normative, situational and relational solutions to the greatest problems in life. Freudian theories about how children relate to their mothers, or how adults relate to each other, became extremely influential in virtually every field of inquiry. I'm not going to go into detail about his theories. There are many excellent summaries of them. Rather, I want to examine how his focus on Ethical Positivism brought about a shift in ethics. In past generations, ethics was always about *personal responsibility* for our thoughts, feelings and actions. How that responsibility was implemented was what morality and ethics was all about. By personal responsibility I mean that, when confronted with the three greatest problems in life—danger, pain and failure—I am responsible for what I do about them.

Ethical Positivism—demanding scientific proof for a moral decision—eventually lead proponents *away* from this emphasis on personal responsibility. Scientific research and experimentation has its place and produced good things. However, it increasingly became an excuse for personal *irresponsibility.* And what has become known as the "Culture of Victimization."

If a man is an angry drunkard who beats his wife and children, whose fault is it? Who is responsible for the wreckage and destruction he has caused? In previous generations, the man himself would be held responsible and would most likely be punished by society. However, the Scientific Period saw a shift away from this ethic. Ultimately it wasn't the man's fault that he did these things. It was the situation around him. Freud and the psychoanalytic establishment viewed the man as a *victim* of early childhood experiences and unresolved fears from his past.

Closely aligned to this culture of victimization was the rapid rise of disease-based medicine. No one from the past would deny the existence of diseases in the human body. Even in ancient times physicians studied them. However, during the Scientific Period the number of recognized diseases expanded exponentially as did the search for cures. Empiricists that they were, doctors began looking to the disease-model to explain conditions in the mind and in relationships also. Thus, after Freud, a condition like schizophrenia (today called Dissociative Identity Disorder or Multiple Personalities Disorder) was not simply a breakdown or breakup of personality resulting in damaged relationships. Scientists viewed it as just another disease. And just as a cancer victim is not responsible for getting cancer, neither is someone with schizophrenia responsible for the consequences of his condition.

The Limits of Scientific Empiricism

- **The Empirical Foundation –The Norms of Life**

For normative solutions to the greatest problems of life—danger, pain and failure—the Scientific Period wanted proof. In the days since Kant's Copernican Revolution of Knowledge, the possibility of some kind of "upper level" of absolute, transcendent truth seemed less and less likely. So man was left with his senses. The phrase "seeing is believing" became the dominant rule of life. So, normative solutions were those that could be proven in a scientific experiment. In an earlier lesson I talked about the three forms of logical reasoning: deduction, induction and abduction. In this period, inductive logic was used with fervor by the experts proposing their normative solutions of life. Researchers and theorists like Darwin and Freud were confident they were men of science not predisposed to conclusions. They simply followed the evidence wherever it went.

But did they really? In their zeal for aposteriori reasoning—making judgments *after* gathering evidence—they imagined they could avoid all apriori assumptions. But they were gravely mistaken (intentionally or otherwise).

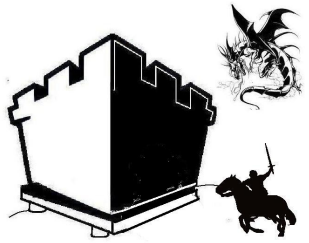
In the 20th century philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn wrote a piercing work called The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. It traced the development of modern science from the days of Galileo and Copernicus, but, specifically, it pulled back the stage curtain to show what was going on "behind the scenes" in all of this quest for knowledge.

Kuhn emphasized that scientific inquiry and practice is not conducted in an intellectual/historical vacuum. It takes place within paradigms, or accepted theoretical frameworks. These theoretical frameworks may pay lip service to rational proof or evidence, but more often than not, they are been driven by the political, social and theological agendas of those in positions of power. Thus, the competition between various scientific theories is more often than not a contest not of ideas but of agendas. Thus, Kuhn said, "The competition between paradigms is not the sort of battle that can be resolved by proof".

Though the scientists of this era scarcely realized it, they too were products of their past. A good example of this is what I said about Darwin's rejection of much of the Bible. Having been educated in universities that disputed the possibility of miracles and supernatural interventions in history, Darwin had trouble reconciling the biblical accounts of origins with what he was discovering in his research. For example, if it was impossible that God created all these things, how did it happen?

It may seem like Darwin was simply following the evidence wherever it led him, but that's not true at all. He brought with him into his research specific apriori assumptions about what was and wasn't possible. In this way, Darwin and his peers refused to be true men of science. Thomas Kuhn once mused that the battle for scientific dominance in history is not a battle of competing evidence but a battle of competing faiths.

- **The Scientific Structure –The Situations of Life**



Situational solutions to the great problems of danger, pain and fear are offered by artists and craftsmen who, looking at the normative solutions of philosophers, express them in various artistic media. Furthermore, situational solutions try to maintain balance and equilibrium in the social order. In this period, Romanticism was thought to be the way to do that. Romanticism meant the pursuit of passion and emotion, untethered by the social constraints of the past. We saw how Richard Wagner did this in his opera, utilizing musical forms unheard by audiences before—chromaticism, dissonance and theatricism that aimed to sweep the audience into a frenzy and lead them to his goals of nationalism, socialism and apotheosis.

We can certainly enjoy the emotions of life. In previous ages, the denial or submersion of emotion was not necessarily a good thing. When Romantic composers, poets and painters gave expression to their deepest joys and sorrows it often provided a kind of cathartic (cleansing) effect by allowing them to be displayed—kind of like the healing power of a "good cry" when your sad or lonely.

Unfortunately, unbridled passion—especially when it becomes and end in itself—usually leads to self-destruction. While Wagner may have naively imagined that nationalistic sentiments were wholesome and good in themselves, and that his music could make them flourish, evil men are always waiting to take good things and exploit them for evil purposes. Such was the case with Wagner's art. In the employ of Adolph Hitler, a hundred years later, it became the rallying call for tyranny and terror throughout both Germany and the world.

The lesson for us is this: emotions, passions and the situational solutions of life must always take second place to the normative solutions. If the three solutions were viewed as a train, norms must be the engine. And, while we're at it, we have to make sure our norms accurately reflect the truth. Many of the scientists and artists of this period failed miserably in doing this.

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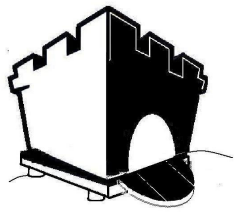
- **The Scientific Access – The Relationships of Life**



During the Scientific Period, as in every other, the bridge between the situations and norms of life was relationships: marriages and families, neighbors, employers and friends. Ethics is the study of how those relationships work. We saw that the ethic of this period was characterized by "positivism." Positivism is the belief that only actions and decisions proven in a laboratory have value. There are no moral absolutes or transcendent values. There is nothing in the "upper level" of reality—if such a place exists at all. This means that positivists don't look to the Bible or to the past for ethical guidance. They look for a scientific study. Ethical positivism continues to exert enormous influence on the way we view morality and ethics in our day.

As we saw, the door opened by Freud's "disease model" of mental and emotional distress resulted in a growing Culture of Victimization. Thus, when a husband and wife don't get along, or when a child disobeys his parents, Freud and his contemporaries looked for answers not in the personal choices and decisions they make but but in the psychological and social forces at work around them. And for Ethical Positivists like Freud, the bottom line is, it's not their fault. They can't be held responsible for their actions because they are victims of circumstances and forces beyond their control.

What happens when the Culture of Victimization gains a large foothold in society? What happens to marriages, families and communities when individuals who do bad things are not held personally responsible for their actions? We see the results all around us.

Several years ago, cultural researcher Charles Sykes wrote *A Nation of Victims* in which he decried the loss of personal responsibility in our day. Sykes mused that if you add up all the individuals who claim to be victims of social exploitation it totals four times as many people as really exist! In other words, there are more victims than there are individuals. How can this be? Because victim groups compete with each other for scarce resources (government and philanthropic grants). So they must prove that their victimization is worse than the next group. If a victim has one cause for victimization that's bad. But if he has two or a dozen it's even better. Much of the political and regulatory activity of our day is grounded in this Culture of Victimization. Some observers argue that the psycho-therapeutic movement, begun by Freud during the end of the 19th century, has become the greatest contributor and benefactor of the Culture of Victimization. Thus, when a patron of McDonalds spills her hot coffee on herself and sues the giant restaurant chain for damages, viewing herself as a "victim", ultimately, we can thank the ethical positivists of the last hundred years for the forced regulations on all coffee cups warning that "these contents are hot."

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Quiz 10 Questions

1.The Scientific Period discussed in this lesson covers

a. 1600 to 1800
b. 1800 to 1900
c. 1900 to 2000

2. The dominant normative solutions to the greatest problems in life during this period are summarized in the philosophy of

a. Idealism
b. Rationalism
c. Empiricism

3. Charles Darwin most influential book was titled

a. On the Origin of Species
b. On the HMS Beagle
c. On Human Evolution

4. In order to express his Romanticism, Richard Wagner explored the use of a musical style we called

a. Harmonism
b. Dissonancism
c. Chromaticism

5. The ethical system that insists on scientific validation for all decisions in life is called

a. Ethical Positivism
b. Ethical Legalism
c. Ethical Utopianism