

Paradigms of Freedom,
By Robert Ignatius Letellier
Nova Science Publishers, NY

The Imbalance

This is an exciting book. It makes the reader think. The author takes the reader through the modern history of Europe from early modern times to the 20th century in just five chapters. Conventionally, he commences the early modern period with the 16th century and the Age of Reformation. Each subsequent chapter takes the reader through time, century by century: Religion and the Age of Science (17th century); Justice and the Age of Enlightenment (18th century); Romanticism and Aspiration (19th century); Conflict, depression and sorrow (20th century). Chronologically there is an overlap in time with long and short centuries, but few would disagree with the author's broad summary of each century.

The chapters are not of equal length. Over 40% of Paradigm (chapter 4) is devoted to the Romantic period. When the impact of the French Revolution in chapter 3 is added to this figure, the coverage of both the combined periods is well over 50% of the content of Paradigm. In comparison the latter half of the 19th century and interwar period is considerably slimmer.

The Genre

It is difficult to place the book within any particular genre. In his preface the author admits: 'This not a history but a consideration of mankind's search to be free, and how this striving is embodied in the poetry of liberation.' This aphorism is not confined to poets.

Perhaps that is why Nova has published the work in its World Philosophy series. Yet this is not a conventional philosophy book which at a scholarly level would separately consider each philosopher and ignore art.

The author hopes the book will become 'a type of sourcebook' for the themes and artists considered. Clearly, the number of artists considered are too many to list outside an index, especially as many command extensive bibliographies. The author is a polymath, clearly comfortable in many languages. He embraces selectively a huge artistic range: from literature, poetry, music and philosophy to history. The book contains 135 figures, almost all in colour, so that some portraiture of the artists and their subjects is available. Sculpture unsurprisingly is not well covered. Music and literature are the basic content of the artists considered. Subsequent development by other artists of a theme is recorded, facilitating comparisons and the translation of artists across mediums. This is not an arid sourcebook. The writing reflects the emotions and values of the artistic themes.

This reviewer offers some flavours of the content of Paradigm but, almost by definition, the sourcebook cannot be summarised. He has followed the author's praise of Schiller and his conclusion to assess whether Romanticism is validly equated to liberalism, without defining that latter vague 'ism'. Preferring liberalism to nationalism he boldly submits this agrees with the author's preference.

Paradigm

Rarely does a reviewer have to consider the meaning of a book title. In physics, a paradigm is a quantity that has both magnitude and direction but not a specific position: a range. The author defines freedom positively as 'the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants. Liberty is the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behaviour, or religious/political views'. Letellier does not construct a Maslow hierarchy of needs: exposition of freedoms is based on the structure of his Paradigms:

- the freedom to follow one's own religion
- the freedom from superstition
- the right to justice; a say in how one is governed; the right to be a nation
- the right to be free in body and spirit.

The most basic freedom is the freedom from really basic want—food and drink: the petition in the Our Father--"Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt 6:11). The writer prefers to concentrate on the higher values of the human spirit. This, perhaps, explains why Nova have published the book as philosophy. Readers should ponder whether these values can conflict.

Human Western Progress

The opening chapter must make every contemporary reader delight in human progress to date. The Black Death with its massive population loss caused wages to rise and undermined the control of the lords of the feudal system. The Church was challenged by Martin Luther and the subsequent 'original' Reformers. Printing and Luther's use of the German vernacular transformed and disseminated the language. Great fun can be had in ridiculing the Inquisition and persecution of many innocent witches. Voltaire's *Candide* sarcastically observed how an *auto da fe* and the whipping of the hero was seen as a remedy against the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755: a wonderful example of the triumph of reason over torture. Keith Thomas' still influential *Religion and the Decline of Magic* is supplemented here under the title 'witchcraft and the demythologisation of faith'.

Freedom of Religion

The Reformation beginning with Luther's 95 theses on 31 October 1517, broke the concept of a united Christendom. Contemporary secular Europe has now to deal with a religious diversity far greater than 500 years ago, including those who deny any religious affiliation. Yet freedom of worship is a first level freedom for the author who has a great empathy with the Jews and their persecution over the centuries. This reviewer finds more interesting than the history of the Reformation and the Wars of Religion, Letellier's record of the *conversio* who went to the new world: Luis de Carvajal and his *Memorias: Freedom of the Spirit in the Face of Death*. Luis was a *conversio*, a Jew who remained privately constant to his faith, whilst publicly conforming to Catholicism. Following the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain Jews had to leave Spain or conform to Catholicism. Luis went to New Mexico in the 1580s where he secretly conformed but practiced his faith within a circle of other *conversios*. There he and his family were executed under the local Inquisition in 1596. His personal writing of faith is

recorded in the *Memorias* which takes the form of a manuscript of tiny pages written in a script which is so small as to be almost indecipherable. The manuscript was in Mexico's national archives until 1932 when it vanished but has been restored after its recovery in a London auction room in 2015. Digital copies are now with Princeton University and the Manhattan Spanish-Portuguese synagogue. This account is accompanied by a modern version of the discovery of Jewish roots by Doreen Carvajal accompanied by a conversion from her Catholic faith. Such nuggets make *Paradigm* fascinating.

Also interesting on the same theme is the author's consideration of Napoleon's intent when he confirmed the Revolution's emancipation of the Jews in his Empire. It is only comparatively recently that the *nones*, or religiously unaffiliated, have become so many. Therefore, most of the artists in the first four chapters of *Paradigm* have an interest in religion, although the horrors of religious intolerance and persecution are recognised. Western secular law continues to respect freedom of worship as a fundamental human right. In the UK this is enacted as article 9 of the Human Rights Act 1998, which implements the European Community's Human Rights Act. Yet, increasingly, many *nones* regard Christian, and particularly Catholic, affirmations of this right as contrary to individual freedom.

Personal Liberty

The other fundamental human right the author insists on is personal liberty. It is perhaps surprising that it took Christianity so long to condemn slavery, an extreme offensive example of loss of liberty and dignity. Readers require a conservative interpretation of the historical discipline, when they recognise that Christianity promoted the idea of an individual person within in a society, but then failed to condemn with vigour the rejection of slavery. From the slaves perspective it would be idle to contrast 'classical' slavery to the viciousness of the Atlantic slave trade.

The three way, or triangular, trade: manufactures/weapons for African slaves, their transportation (the Middle Passage) to the West Indies and Americas, returning with sugar and rum is well known. The author's estimate of 7m Africans being transported over the 18th century may be an underestimate. An attractive feature of *Paradigm* is references to matters often neglected by historians not writing a major study. An instance is the Valladolid Debate 1550-1 between Bartolome de las Casas and Sepulveda--a moral debate over slavery and the relationship between the colonists and native peoples.

Two political heroes the writer believes worthy of reference are Toussaint L'Overture (1743-1803), and Tsar Alexander II (r 1855-81). Toussaint led the successful slave revolt in Hispaniola, now set in that part of the island called Haiti. There are a number of recent histories which examine his life but there can be little doubt that the Declaration of the Rights of man inspired this fascinating man. British West Indian interests were hostile and again recent historical literature explains how these interests resisted after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 until the Slavery Abolition Act effective 1834. Needless to say, slaves were not compensated but slave owners were richly compensated. It took even longer for consumers to change their spending power to help instigate changes in the way that slavery was practised. The other political hero is Tsar Alexander: the greatest liberator of all in emancipating 23m serfs in 1861/1866.

As a sourcebook the work is very useful. It may provoke readers to go further such as a reassessment of Napoleon's character. Letellier discusses his ambiguity in the emancipation of the Jews. Following his cruel treatment of Toussaint a valid question is whether the emperor was racist, as that term is deployed today. Why have Haiti and Saint Domingue had such fraught relations? Simon Bolivar (1783-1830) was intensely influenced by the Revolution and was an immensely successful military leader. Yet he died with a sense of failure as great (gran) Columbia fragmented. Consider the depth of the failure of serf emancipation in preventing the Russian revolution and why.

The French Revolution

None can deny the importance of the French Revolution. The historians will debate the extent that the American War of Independence (1775-83) influenced the Revolution or whether it was a home grown development of thought and circumstance. Certainly, some British philosophical thinking contributed the French philosophes, but probably this was of but secondary importance. Then its influence on the Russian Revolution, via Marx and Lenin, is almost undeniable. Socialists, ignoring what may be termed 'state capitalism', thought that the workers' revolution would take place in the industrial west.

Two selections from the source book greatly appeal. The first is Letellier's account of Struensee and the second his translations of the Marseillaise and Ode to Joy. As a prelude to the French Revolution the reader is introduced to the Prussian born Danish statesman Johann Friedrich Struensee (1737-72). He was a court physician to the mentally ill Danish King Christian VII and briefly *de facto* regent of Denmark 1770-2. His liberal reforms by executive order included the abolition of torture, the corvee (labour tax), noble privileges and reform of judicial institutions—broadly the vaunted achievements of the Revolution. However, abolition of press censorship had to be restricted to counter gossip and serious allegations as a result of his affair with the king's wife, Queen Caroline Matilda. Aristocratic opposition headed by count Rantzau, the Dowager queen Juliana Maria and her son Frederick led to the arrest and execution of Struensee. The author continues the history through the artistic approaches to the subject by the liberal dramatist Michael Beer (1800-35), who wrote the play Struensee. Beer was the youngest brother of Giacomo Meyerbeer who contributed music to the play. The Visit of the Royal Physician (1999) by the Swedish historical novelist Per Olov Enquist and a 2012 film are also referred to. The film, A Royal Affair, was by the Danish director Nikolaj Arcel. Further searching on the net shows that popular culture continues to find this affair of interest and readers might consider parallels with the treatment of Marie Antoinette and the Diamond Necklace affair (1784-5).

The second contribution which appealed was the origin of the Marseillaise which was written to inspire the French against the invasion of the emigres. It is a celebration of 'nationalism', which is typically aggressive. Schiller's Ode to Joy, or Freedom (*An die Freude*) written in 1785, is difficult not to enjoy. Its subsequent usage perhaps indicates how an artist can be a vector for transcendence. Schiller died thinking the Ode to have been a failure but it was republished posthumously in 1808. The words used are truly inspiring. Beethoven (1770-1827) with but minor changes deployed them for the 4th movement of his 9th (choral) Symphony. Readers

will be familiar with the fact that Beethoven was deaf when he wrote the words. His genius was inspired. The Ode has been adopted as an Anthem for Europe by the EU.

Most readers will be familiar with the rousing quality of the Marseillaise which Europe started to know when the volunteers from Marseille entered Paris in 1792. It was composed by Claude Riuget de Lisle, (1760-1836) serving on the army of the Rhine to resist the émigré invasion of France with Austrian and Prussian support. Paradigm sets out the ferocity of the wording in both French and English. It became France's national anthem in 1795 but politics caused its displacement at times until its intended permanent adoption, in 1879. All Anglo-French sports fans will be familiar with the music, if not the words.

The Philosophy of Freedom: Schiller

Two of Letellier's heroes specifically referred to in the preface are Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). Schiller was a dramatist with a republican mindset. His *Robbers*, *William Tell* and *Don Carlos* provided sources for many of the artists of the Romantic age but his philosophy is a key to Romanticism. Scholarship on Schiller is discordant. A personal view is that Kant (1724-1804) sets a theology and philosophy necessary to understand Schiller's unique contribution. Kant is firmly set in rationalism but, to avoid human perdition, places freedom under the moral despotism of the will: the categorical imperative.

Contemporary thinking finds it difficult to accept Kant, not just because of his theology. The social and medical sciences would argue that humanity is not driven by reason alone. The law accepts the plea of 'diminished responsibility.' Parental familial experience recognises the different decisions of their offspring which are far from rational—to their parents.

It would be inappropriate to present German idealism as a single source. Some ignore Schiller and present Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Friedrich Willem Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)—as key. Thankfully, the Jena Institute will protect his reputation. Schiller is said to have synthesised the thought of Kant with the German idealist philosopher Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1727-1823). What this reviewer finds particularly attractive about Schiller's thought is not only his emphasis on freedom—but the freedom of the will as heautonomy. Like St Augustine, Schiller loved beauty. He looked at the whole person. When doing so emotion could not be ignored. Schiller recognised a sensuous quality or drive in the very nature of humankind, which sets it within a time and place. There was also a form or material drive, which conveyed dignity to the human person and gave rise to abstract principles. Schiller also conceived a development theory of human freedom on the basis of nature: "The sensuous drive awakens with our experience of life (with the beginning of our individuality); the rational drive, with our experience of law (with the beginning of our personality); and only at this point, when both have come into existence, is the basis of man's humanity established". They were brought together by the play drive. The play of the game, or life, is 'an expansion of man', set in the dictum: 'man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays'.

The will should aspire to beautiful actions. Schiller used the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) to place the beautiful soul in harmony with the sublime soul. The beautiful soul

in refusing to give into pain becomes heroic and is transformed into a sublime soul. Beauty was given an *a priori* objective value. Nevertheless, by giving the will an autonomy, humanity can damn itself. Beauty as an ideal brings the rational and sensuous drives together. Schiller set a redemptive value to the arts and beauty in human existence. But if the will is contrarian or deformed, anarchy can result.

Sir Walter Scott

The importance of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) in European cultural history cannot be denied, but his historical novels are not to the taste of this reviewer. In music alone, Scott was used by over 60 operas in their themes. Paradigm provides an excellent summary of his life, poetry and literature. The author claims he defined 'Scottishness' in cultural rather than political terms. Many modern commentators are repulsed by his 'Tory' unionism. It was not Scott's fault that Dundas and Pitt had reduced Scotland's parliamentary representation to a government ticket. Scott looked backwards to a vast oral tradition which he drew on and brought to literary life and success. He created the genre of the historical novel so heroes, such as Ivanhoe (1820) abound in his writings. This requires imagination. The author shows how Scott had a comprehensive impact on the Continent, particularly on the romantic nationalists in Eastern Europe (including Russia).

Transcendence

Together Schiller and Scott explain the author's expression that the artists, who are the heroes of this book, can be 'vectors of transcendence'. Transcendence is a rising above something, say self, to a superior state. Letellier refers to the Orthodox tradition as espousing a change from the image of the Creator in which the Bible says we are made (Gn1:26) to a likeness, as found in Christ. Jacob's ladder (Gn 28:10-17) where Scripture recounts Jacob's dream of a ladder from earth to heaven, 'with the angels ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it'. This image is true transcendence as many hope for supernatural life with God in heaven. The text is illustrated by Gustave Dore's (1832-1883) picture of the Ladder. This reviewer personally, prefers the image of The Ladder of Divine Ascent (Jacob's Ladder) from St Catherine's monastery in Sinai. There not only does humanity seek to ascend the ladder to God and his angels but devils seek to pull the climbers off with hooks and other devices. It is doubtful that the human person has changed despite art which appears to respond to humanity's different aspirations varied over time.

Billions of people find music and art uplifting, but fewer will regard it as 'transcendental'. Letellier comes nearest to making his case in the final chapter of Paradigm, which is intended to show how the promise of freedom in creativity creates 'a meta-culture in music'. The chapter concentrates on operetta—a cross between opera and a musical—in its various forms, which now is often shown on film. Few will disagree that modern technology has allowed the common person to access music on a massive scale at very reasonable prices, or even free.

Starting with the Beggar's Opera 1728 by John Pepusch and John Gay the book progresses with consideration of the Belle Epoque, generally placed around 1880 to the commencement of the First World War. The European capital cities became cultural showcases. The historical

development and 'The Americanisation' of operetta into comic social escape with jazz, the rise of the songwriter, film and popular music is accompanied by many names and titles which are not familiar to this reviewer. Readers will almost certainly be aware of the impact of the American dream with its materialism and hope on their culture.

The author accepts that the music of Grand Opera has been displaced by operetta which has been dominated by Jews. An interesting aside is that Hitler's favourite opera was not Wagnerian. Rather it was Franz Lehar's *Die Instige Witwe The Merry Widow*. Lehar (1870-1948) was an Austro-Hungarian composer, mainly famous for operettas.

Particularly touching is the narrative of how Yiddish song was used in the Nazi concentration camps to save souls. Initially tolerated by their captors, the medium was eventually commanded to help keep order. The human spirit of the predominantly Jewish captives, but also including romanes, homosexuals and other 'criminals' was 'uplifted' by music. The word uplifting is better than a transcendental vector. It answers many of the questions that the writer raises towards the end of the chapter. Music was one of the means by which the crushed aspirations of many after the Great Depression and the many widows and others who lost loved ones found comfort after the world wars. Music (and art) is now extensively available to everyone, at least in the West, and not just the bourgeoisie who could afford the grand opera.

The case for transcendence is summarised in the author's affirmation of the ideal over the realism of popular culture. Music should be a life affirming essence, raising the human spirit upwards. Popular culture prefers the grim, gritty, harsh depiction of life which is a struggle, dreary and problematic. There can be little doubt that popular culture espouses much gratuitous sex without much of a concern for real love and relationship. Violence can be added to this critique. Perhaps my preference for the Ladder of Divine Ascent at Sinai over Dore is better.

Conclusion

This book has a totally different approach to modern European history from conventional political history. I admit that my ambivalence towards the French revolution, which almost inevitably lead to Napoleon, has been overcome. My reservations were due to the attack on religion and the heavy loss of life over more than 20 years. Increasingly, the change in mindset as a product of the Enlightenment is placed as the primary cause of the revolution, without ignoring the importance of the crowd and empty bellies. However, if Romanticism is a reaction to the Enlightenment, I can but share Schiller's excitement at the freedom it offered. The Revolution had to happen.

Whilst many look back at pre-modern European history as medieval in a disparaging sense, a united Christendom can also be seen, wistfully, as an exemplary understanding of the common good. Schiller pointed to a beautiful future. In German romantic and philosophical terms that future pointed to a German nation. Germany did not exist when Schiller lived. With his fellow idealists they formed an historical nucleus to a German nationalism, to promote the German language against the European elite who spoke French. Inclined to republican principles, Schiller was given honorary French citizenship by the Republic, but he was horrified at the Terror. The way Napoleon ruled his Empire and fought his wars inspired an anti-French

'German' nationalism. Many histories have been written on the unification of Germany, or rather expansion of the Prussian state, following the wars of 1864, 1867 and 1870. The histories narrate how Bismarck the 'helmsman' was 'let go' by the Kaiser and increasingly aggressive nationalism led to both world wars.

A problem with nationalism is that it defines itself against 'the other'. Thus there is an underlying aggressiveness. Schiller wanted both personal liberty and German nationalism. There is a tension between the two as the nation limits personal freedoms, such as the right to dissent, to command resources to fulfil its dreams. I suggest that the author would agree with me. He espouses Schiller's proclamation of human fulfilment in play and is the leading English language writer on Grand Opera. As the 19th century ideal gave way to aggressive nationalism he prefers to adopt a broad sweep towards the century we live in.

An important final point is that the author does not prescribe freedom as licence. The author probably would subscribe to a freedom to live by one's conscience, even if it is not 'properly formed', provided it strives for virtue. Thus it is admitted that not all paths to freedom are valid. 'Only some can be transcendent; others may be utilitarian, and others even dystopian'. The reader should have enjoyed the writer's musical excursions, but he warns that Deutschland uber alles, Horst Wessels Lied, the Internationale, the Sash my father wore, lead to 'darker paths'. This is an insightful book worthy of reading and reflection.

Ian Rogers