Occidentalism
Occidentalism

1. Stereotyped views of the Western world, which may include North America and Europe.

2. They can be ideas of the West developed in either the West or non-West.
Occidentalism
The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies
Ian Buruma & Avishai Margalit

Occidentalism
Images of the West
EDITED BY JAMES G. CARRIER
OXFORD
Key concepts in Occidentalism:

1. *Hostility toward the City.*

The city is full of sin: excess, secularism, sex, individualism, and money.

The city is a giant marketplace; everything and everyone is for sale.
Occidentalism

THE CITY

• Represents mass consumption

• Represents industrialization, which changes peasants into factory workers

• The West is a *machine civilization*
Occidentalism

2. *The Merchant and Bourgeoisie*

The west is soft, sickly, and only wants pleasure.

People in business only want money.

Comfort and pleasure is all that bourgeois people want.
Gentilhomme à la mode de 1695, jeune homme de la bourgeoisie en 1710,
d'après des gravures du temps.
Occidentalism

Anti-Semitism:

Jews historically were/are all seen as capitalists and interested only in money, power and pleasure.

Jews control politics by using capitalism and anti-capitalist ideas (communism) to keep control over people.
Der Jude

GROSSE POLITISCHE SCHAU IM BIBLIOTHEKSBAU DES DEUTSCHEN MUSEUMS
ZU MÜNCHEN, A. 8. NOVEMBER 1931, TÄGLICH GEÖFFNET VON 10 UHR
Occidentalism

3. Mind of the West:

Western people have no soul

The West can invent great technology and offer a good material life, but westerners cannot see that there are higher things in life;

Westerners have lost their intuition and instincts
4. *Rejection of the Enlightenment* – ideas that developed in Europe 1650 to 1800. The belief was that science and human reason would lead to progress. Philosophers of the Enlightenment rejected tradition.
PHILOSOPHIAE
NATURALIS
PRINCIPIA
MATHEMATICA

GIANTS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT
TWO TREATISES OF
GOVERNMENT
JOHN LOCKE

read by Craig Deitschmann
Historical Foundations of Occidentalism
Western Occidentalism:

Romanticism, Modernism, Revolutionary Conservatism and the Slavophile Movement
Romanticism

Literary, artistic, and philosophical movement that began in Europe in the 18th century and lasted roughly until the mid-19th century.

In part, it was a revolt against the Age of Enlightenment.

Romanticism believed in all that is irrational, imaginative, mystical, spontaneous, and emotional.

Romanticism had a deep appreciation of the beauty of nature; put emotion over reason and the senses over the intellect.
Revolutionary Conservativism

A German national conservative movement, in the years following the First World War.

The Conservative Revolutionaries believed in the idea of a Volksgemeinschaft ("folk-community"). They believed in a superior German cultural and political life. They did not like the liberalism and egalitarianism that came from the Enlightenment. They rejected the commercial culture of industrial and urban civilization.
American society and material culture were seen as a threat to European, and especially German culture.

Their hero was Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Nietzsche became the anti-liberal philosopher of the XX century. His writings represent a powerful critique of bourgeois society.
Nietzsche described America as a radical extension of Enlightenment Europe. He saw Americans as:

- Thinking only about material things
- Looking to systematize all work and production;
- Search only for profit and financial gain
- Reducing everything to efficiency
Modernism
Modernism:

An artistic experiment from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following World War I.

Modernists rejected the effects of industrialization, rapid social change, advances in science and the social sciences (e.g., Darwinism, Freudian theory).

Most modernists rejected the Enlightenment and also the idea of a compassionate, all-powerful Creator.
Modernism rejects bourgeois, or middle class material life.

• Bourgeois life is seen as trivial.
• Bourgeois life is a cowardice of imagination.
• Bourgeois life is spiritual emptiness.
Russian political thought (Occidentalism) Mid 19th century:

Slavophilism

(developed between 1830’s and the 1850’s).
Slavophiles reject western civilization; they see it as a betrayal of Russian tradition.

• Slavophiles believe that Russia possesses its own historical, cultural and moral traditions.

• Russia is seen as Christian and communal; American society is unchristian and egoistic.

• Russian society is seen as peaceful with social solidarity; American society is seen as violent and driven by crude individualism.

Slavic Peoples are an ethnic and linguistic branch of Indo-European peoples living mainly in central and eastern Europe. Over half of Europe's territory is inhabited by Slavic-speaking communities.
Eastern Occidentalism: Islamism and China
Islamism
Islamism

A set of ideas that sees Islam not only a religion but also a political system, and that modern Muslims must return to their roots of their religion, and unite politically.
Islamism sees western civilization as idolatrous barbarism.

Western barbarism is seen by some to be corrupting the spirituality of the East.
West needs to be destroyed in order to restore the Muslim world to God or, more specifically in the case of extreme Islamists, the Arab world back to the time of Muhammed.

Some Islamist scholars see/saw Western life as the lowest form of existence possible, a pit of idolatry that needed to be eradicated to make way for pure Islam.
Religious Occidentalists despise western treatment of women, which they see as unholy.

Western women are seen as “selling” their bodies to men’s desires which shows western materialism and an obsession with physical beauty and pleasure.

Muslims traditionally consider women to be a man’s “protected jewel,” which bestows honour on a man by the way he protects her.

Western men can be seen by their failure to protect women, as without even basic honour.
Chinese Occidentalism
Chinese Occidentalism

Only Chinese can understand China; no foreigner, however well versed in language and culture, can ever understand what it means to be Chinese—Chinese cultural exclusivism.

As a result of western imperialism, Chinese nationalists reject many aspects of western culture as corrupt and degenerate.

"Edward Said: Orientalism and Occidentalism"

Diana Lary
Chinese Occidentalism

The West may have the rule of law (fazhi), but China has the rule of man (renzhi).

This means that China can never become democratic in the bourgeois western sense and must rely on the rule of autocrats, ideally benevolent ones.

"Edward Said: Orientalism and Occidentalism"

Diana Lary
Chinese Occidentalism

The West is uncaring and hypocritical.

The U.S. cites human rights violations in China yet China easily responds with examples of inhumane treatment of disadvantaged people in the United States.

China is very critical of the West’s supposed lack of social responsibility.

One of the Chinese values most strongly promoted is respect for the elderly. Residences for the elderly are considered an anathema, a way of disposing senior citizens.

"Edward Said: Orientalism and Occidentalism"

Diana Lary
Chinese Occidentalism

Western values are a variety of “spiritual pollution”, which contribute to “disharmony” and “chaos”.

"Edward Said: Orientalism and Occidentalism"

Diana Lary
Chinese Counter-Occidentalism?

Signs of an unqualified admiration for the West are everywhere: clothing, fast food, English language courses, and music.

The West is now associated for many Chinese, especially young ones, with economic growth, comfortable, and even lavish life-styles for those who succeed.

Modernization in China uses a distinctly western model or definition

"Edward Said: Orientalism and Occidentalism"

Diana Lary
Liu Xiang: Chinese track star, 2004 Olympic gold medal winner
THE RISE OF THE
CHINESE
CONSUMER
THEORY AND EVIDENCE

JONATHAN GARNER

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