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Also by Robert Howells

Inside the Priory of Sion

The Last Pope

THE ILLUMINATI
THE COUNTERCULTURE REVOLUTION
FROM SECRET SOCIETIES
TO **WIKILEAKS AND ANONYMOUS**

ROBERT HOWELLS

This book is dedicated to:

Julian Assange, a refugee for truth,
Edward Snowden, a patriot in exile,
and my friend Paul John Denham, a prisoner without guilt.

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culture.

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Ask yourself 'What is the most important thing that I could be working on in the world right now?' AARON SWARTZ (1986–2013)

The entire legal system is called into question when laws are used to persecute the innocent.

CHAPTER 1

THE COUNTERCULTURE IMPERATIVE

'Socialization is a process by which we learn to fit into our surroundings.'

This was the mantra of my social studies teacher which I learned to recite in secondary school at the tender age of 15. Even then I suspected it was the anathema of individuality and creativity, and on reflection I consider it an insidious piece of brainwashing to inflict upon young adults. Today, it is a lesson that I see taught everywhere, from the tide of mainstream media that vilifies and humiliates anyone who stands apart to religions that would imprison us with blatantly dishonest dogmas. Socialization is apparent in the words of our politicians that expect us to trust their disinformation and the actions of government agencies that imprison hackers for defacing the websites of morally corrupt corporations.

We should know better than to question the news channels that report wars as if they were the spectacle of a firework display while denying us the footage of bombed schools and hospitals filled with civilians. Nor should we call to account the economists who recommend deregulation that allows bankers to ravage the economy and walk away with huge bonuses. And there is absolutely no alternative to banks charging interest on the money they lend, which puts every country and individual in perpetual debt, making economic slaves of us all.

In all aspects of life we are told this is how it must be and we have no choice other than to conform to fit into society. But this is a lie.

Counterculture is the anathema of socialization. It is the ambiguity that undermines all forms of government and their methods of control. In counterculture there are no boundaries or social structures, just forms of evolution and revolution. The new groups that gather and disperse usually foreshadow future trends in some way, and might prove to be the catalyst for change. To embrace counterculture requires that we cease to adapt to society and begin to exert our own identity so that individuality becomes a form of expression, a way of life that escapes tradition.

We now live in an age of mass surveillance which records and reports our every electronic conversation, purchase, location and social interaction. Through this, governments can track and identify the members of any counterculture, or any party that would speak out against the

ruling powers.

Since the dawn of civilization governments and dictators have fought to take power and hold on to it by either force or manipulation. Those that stand against them risk persecution, censorship and death. Treason and heresy have always incurred the wrath of those trying to keep dominion over the masses, just as challenging religion led to heretics and scientists alike being imprisoned or put to the flame by the Inquisition. To counter this there have always been secret societies working in the shadows of every civilization to uphold an alternative view, and sometimes the truth, in the hope that one day all humanity would be free. Their ideas and philosophies were seeded into the public domain through philosophy and art, ritual and heresy. In Europe they fought to undermine the Catholic Church from the Renaissance to the Age of Reason through social engineering. During this period the controlling facade of the Church, toxic with corruption and hypocrisy, was losing control and no amount of burning corpses could hold back the revolution. By the 18th century a social upheaval was blowing through the West in the minds of philosophers, the words of poets and the civil unrest of the masses.

The secret societies of the 18th century established a philosophy that can be traced through counterculture to the online hacktivist groups of today. But we begin with the archetypal secret society and the one group that first stood in open revolt against all forms of oppression set upon humanity: the Illuminati. The term *Illuminati* belongs to three distinct groups in history.

The first is the original Bavarian Illuminati, the real secret society that appeared in 1776 among European Freemasons and academics with the intention of liberating humanity from physical, mental and spiritual bondage. During their brief incarnation they encapsulated the entire ethos of counterculture into a single system of organized dissent that is still relevant today.

Many secret societies were founded to protect and promote spiritual ideals in the face of the Inquisition, and the Illuminati drew upon these but chose to be far more politically active in shaping the world to suit their beliefs. They had emerged among the Bavarian universities and Masonic lodges with the intention of liberating Europe from the royal and religious control of education, politics and science, and eventually they would become a driving force in the dissent that culminated in the French Revolution.

As their influence began to impact society, the inevitable persecution followed and the Illuminati chose to take refuge within a myriad of other societies to continue their work from the shadows. In their absence their ideas would continue to find a voice in the many counterculture movements of Europe and America in the 18th and 19th centuries until they eventually resurfaced as a myth in the 1970s.

For the second Illuminati incarnation in 1976, authors Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea published *The Illuminatus Trilogy*, a vast work of fiction that claimed that the Illuminati were behind every major conspiracy and key event of history. The idea was perfectly timed to capture the imaginations of those who were living in the wake of the Kennedy assassinations and at a time when Nixon succumbed to corruption. A cultural idea was forming that the world was ruled by a New World Order, a hidden hand that conspiracy theorists were quick to assign to the Illuminati.

Since that time the term Illuminati has become a meme, giving a name to the shadowy architects that controlled the past, present and future of the world. They became synonymous with the idea of a New World Order devoted to control, enslavement and exploitation at the hands of banking cabals and corrupt politicians. While their name was being usurped by the conspiracy theorists, a new form of dissent was taking shape. In a climate of pranks and youthful exploration, the hacktivist collective Anonymous was born. Their ideals of freedom from censorship and the empowerment of societies against their rulers make them the idealistic

successors of the Illuminati. Groups like Anonymous and WikiLeaks shared a common loathing of injustice and corruption and would thrive by using similar tools of secrecy and social engineering. Just as the Illuminati supported the French Revolution, these groups played a key role in the Arab Spring uprisings by using the internet as a new channel for dissent.

Governments were quick to persecute and incarcerate those who took up the fight for free speech and transparency in politics, but counterculture is born out of necessity. From the first secret societies that protected spiritual truths to WikiLeaks hiding the identities of whistleblowers, the same battle has been fought on a continuous timeline, and the ideals of the Illuminati still ring true today. The political corruption and religious control that inspired the Illuminati to organize and take action are still present as a lesser evil, surpassed by the business and financial institutions that are trying to take control of the world for their own ends. A new Inquisition has shifted its focus from secret societies to wage a war on the connected communities of the internet age that form the current raft of countercultures.

These marginalized groups maintain rebellion against the establishment, with some subversively spreading progressive ideas, and others exposing government secrets. Together they drive a history of counterculture and subversion. The quote by Aaron Swartz that prefaces this book is a call to action that many now seek to fulfil but have no clear view of how to achieve. Given that the term 'Illuminati' means 'enlightened', it seems appropriate to invite the reader not just to learn about the Illuminati but to involve themselves in, and to influence others to take part in, what is the most important movement of this age. With emerging technology there is an opportunity for everyone to become an agent of change.

A war has raged for centuries between the rigid structures of society and the emerging counterculture.

This book is both the story of that war and a call to arms.

CHAPTER 2

THE DESCENT INTO DISSENT

Society is a sphere of conformity clustered around an idea of what is acceptable. There are always outsiders: those unique individuals who exist on the fringe of acceptance because some aspect of their being or beliefs excludes them from the mainstream. Many people live and die alone as maverick spirits, while others may find or form groups that share a common perspective. There are examples of these groups that have existed for centuries as heretical religions, philosophical schools and secret societies. Secrecy was often necessary for the survival of these groups as any perceived threat to what is acceptable is a threat to the ruling power, and this usually results in persecution and incarceration.

The ruling elite are rarely progressive: they fear new ideas and disruptive ideologies and will use any form of suppression to maintain their position. Historically, this caused the greatest thinkers, scientists, philosophers and theologians to lurk in the shadows and enrol in secret societies to find acceptance. For every oppressive regime that rules from a corrupt or regressive outlook there will always be a freedom fighter, a heretic or a revolutionary forging ahead in spite of them. The outsiders have to fight for a world that accepts them, and this often places them in a better position to see how power should be implemented. Where those in power try to stamp

out progress with injustice and inequality, terrorism and revolution become distinct possibilities.

Oppression has powered dissent through much of history, and today we see it in all areas of culture, politics and business. Inevitably a new idea or technology will upset the status quo and threaten to shift the balance of power away from those who cling to thrones and titles. How a society reacts to such upheavals is a measure of how civilized it is. Historically, the prevailing form of oppression has been religious in nature. That is because, as a society tries to evolve, the religious dogma that permeates it becomes increasingly incongruent. Religions become fixed in time and unable to develop, which prevents their subjects from discovering new ways to understand the world. Where they have control, religions also stifle education and science as they struggle to prevent the shadows of superstition from dispersing. Where authority is absolute, the balance is sought by heroic figures that exist to challenge the limits of society.

In response to unjust laws and oppression, we can see the earliest forms of counterculture explored in myth, religion and history. Prometheus disobeys Zeus and Adam seizes the apple symbolizing humanity's quest for knowledge. Abraham was inspired by God to leave his home and go in search of spiritual experience. Akhenaten, in Egypt, rejected polytheism and was struck from contemporary records. Moses suffered the same fate in his flight from Egypt. This urge to shun normality and strike out on one's own is a recurring theme in counterculture, as is the common experience of rejecting the past to seek a personal truth beyond existing social tropes.

Countercultures are often led by those who can rise above a stagnant society with a clear view of how humanity could be free from tyrants and religious bigots. Their dissent can range from the single cry of an angry individual to the full-blown political machinations of a coup or revolution. The empowerment of true revolutionaries comes from being free of all mindsets and structures of cultural influence. This begins with attaining some sense of truth from their environment and cultural history.

MYTHIC HISTORY

***'History is a matter of which myth you choose.'* VOLTAIRE**

The first freedom to be attained is from the past. To be born is like waking in the middle of the night without knowing what came before. The dream that evaporates and the sound that awoke you cannot clearly be remembered, and the further you look into it, the more it becomes a matter of speculation. At that moment there is no influence to distort your view of reality. Briefly, the child is connected to everything; but from the umbilical cord onwards it is all a matter of separation.

Early childhood is mythic, and this helps to allow the young mind to integrate their experiences and understanding of the world around them. Ask a child what happens at night and they will elaborately explain how the sun goes to bed beyond the clouds. They remain in this dream-like state until logic and reason take hold. But society does not always want logic and reason to rule, because society is influenced by religious and political thinking. It maintains its own myths, and these become tolerated as they justify separation, upholding a view of reality that can allow politicians to go unchallenged when advocating mass murder through war and supporting the followers of one false god against another.

Religions are so dependent on maintaining their superstitions that they are threatened by basic science. As the distant past is slowly coming back into focus from the research of impartial historians and the evidence of archaeologists, any claims of historical accuracy in

Christianity are called into question. The oral histories and parables of the Bible were merged from earlier myths to teach a simpler mind, and it would still shock many today to discover that the story of Jesus is as much a parable as his teachings. But hidden among the biblical fictions are clues to an underlying truth that once meant something of great importance, and to deny this is to deny the source of many of the major religions.

A RETURN TO THE SOURCE

It is clear that Christianity drew heavily upon earlier religions, and if the Bible were read in the context of mythological literature, the provenance of the stories therein would be revealed. Many key events that appear in the Old and New Testaments, including the Virgin Birth and the Crucifixion, are taken from religions that predate Christ and even Judaism. For the ancients the cycle of death and rebirth, which lay at the root of nature, gave rise to the image of the wheel of life and also the journey of the soul. In the Greek Eleusinian mysteries, Persephone is described as being trapped in the Underworld in winter only to escape again in spring. Her journey into the Underworld is the story of the soul descending into the material world where it incarnates; and then, on death, it ascends again. This myth explains life as a cycle of nature, like the turning of the seasons.

Nature reflects this cycle in the simple event of the rising and setting of the sun every day. Sun worship was central to early cultures partly on account of their fear of the dark but also because they recognized the sun as the bringer of light and heat that would grow crops and fruit and provide the people with food. Early civilizations would track the passing of time in the procession of the stars to know when to plant crops. Stories captured these events to transmit a people's knowledge of nature to future generations. These were the basis of all myths and formed a natural religion that is the source of all religions today.

Persephone's journey is archetypal to this natural religion, as it describes the soul's descent on the shortest day of the year, the winter solstice – 22 December. There follows a three-day period of transition when the sun is lowest until 25 December when the soul incarnates in the world. Because the soul is both spiritual and manifest, it is often depicted as being born of a virgin, to reflect the belief that the child is in part divine.

This story derives from a time prior to even the ancient Egyptians, when the constellations were used to illustrate the epic cycle of death and rebirth as the sun sets, or dies, on the Southern 'Cross' (visible from southern Egypt) at the winter solstice, and nine months later in September is reborn through the constellation of Virgo. This trajectory is also psychological, as it maps onto the process of exploring the underworld of the unconscious to redeem the lost fragments of the self in order that they may be returned to the light of the personality.

This incarnation through Virgo appears in the birth of mythological characters, gods and demi-gods. Horus, Attis, Zoroaster, Dionysus and Krishna were all born to a virgin. Mithras was born to a virgin on 25 December. Virgin birth, or parthenogenesis, is a common myth among gods of the ancients, of which the story of Jesus is just a current retelling.

Persephone, as the soul on its journey, is set to leave the Underworld and return to the gods at Easter, when the day becomes longer than the night. Again, three days mark the transition from death to resurrection. In a pre-Christian myth Attis, who died at Easter, was taken by his mother Cybele to a tomb from which he was resurrected after three days 'for the salvation of mankind'. Dionysus was crucified and pierced by a spear in his side, died and was resurrected; Osiris was resurrected having been reconstituted by the great mother, Isis.

A ritual enactment of the cycle of death and resurrection was a key teaching of the

ancients. An account of this ritual is briefly described in the New Testament when Jesus, the Son of God, raises Lazarus from the dead in the town of Bethany. This is taken from a much older myth described in ancient Egyptian texts as Horus, the Son of God, raising Osiris from the dead in the town of Beth-Anu. These narratives are identical and there is no reason to believe they are anything other than the same story repeated to preserve the ritual for future generations.

The ancient Egyptians incorporated the afterlife into every aspect of their belief as they considered their journey through death to be more important than the journey through life. They believed that we pass from the visible to the invisible and back again over many lifetimes. Like the seasons of nature, we die and revive as surely as night transitions into day. Even now we uphold the ritual of dressing the dead in their finest clothes as we endeavour to maintain the dignity of the deceased in the afterlife.

For the ancients the final secret of the mysteries was that the journey through death is a return to the source and oneness. They understood life to be a spark that separates from the divine source to manifest within matter as the soul. Through life the soul has the opportunity to become self-aware and bridge the gap between spirit and matter before eventually returning to the source. Our time of death is reflected in Easter, a day dictated by the cycle of the feminine moon, and our birth is measured by the masculine sun roughly nine months later, the gestation time of a human foetus.

By pretending that these archetypal events in the story of Jesus are factual, the Christian churches have denied their followers the underlying wisdom of the ancients. The journey through the Underworld is an incarnation into life and not death, since it is through death that the soul returns home to the divine source. Dante understood this when he wrote his masterpiece *The Divine Comedy*, which depicts a journey not through heaven and hell but through a karmic life that invokes its own judgement on those consumed by their weaknesses.

The descent into the physical world inspired the Gnostics and the Cathars to believe that the physical world was created by the demiurge, a half-god that believed itself to be the creator of all. This demiurge is the ego which denies the divine source of life and turns its back on the cycles of nature by pretending there is only the material world. The Underworld of Orpheus and Persephone, and the Inferno of Dante, depict the trials of life and the soul immersed in matter. This is the 'suffering' that Buddhists seek to escape, believing that we are imprisoned souls waiting to be awakened from the dark slumber of the needs and desires of the material world.

Like Buddhists the mystery religions believed that once karma has been resolved and the individual has found illumination, they have nothing left to redeem and the need to reincarnate will cease. The enlightened soul can choose to reincarnate in service or return to the source. This belief comes down through the ages from the mystery schools that promoted a path to awakening. It teaches those who undertake this path not to conquer death but to learn how to conquer life.

Until that happens humanity exists in a state of exile.

THE MYSTERY SCHOOLS

The earliest mystery schools of ancient Mesopotamia are now buried in the rubble of southern Iraq. They were followed by schools that formed in Egypt, Greece, China, South America and then Western Europe. The scribes of these schools assimilated a vast body of knowledge into systems of teaching that have come down to us in the West as the hermetic and alchemical traditions. In their wisdom they mapped the psychology of death and rebirth as rituals to support

the aspirant on their inner journey towards enlightenment.

Their teachings answered the spiritual calling that is present in every civilization as the personal quest for meaning. This quest must be undertaken by each person to discover for what purpose they are incarnate, as this is something that cannot be learned from others. With such knowledge comes the philosophical calling to be in the service of others, as it opens the mind to the higher functions of compassion and unconditional love that transcend the mere biology of life. In evolutionary terms this is the pinnacle of consciousness.

The current body of hermetic and occult works has become a rich and diverse stream of knowledge but the source of these documents can be traced back to some key ideas. The primary text for the hermetic arts is the Emerald Tablet attributed to the Egyptian god Thoth, which became the core text of every hermetic library. The Emerald Tablet was inscribed with the hermetic axiom, '*As above, so below*', which recognizes the cycle of life and death as written in the stars. It also taught that the path back to the divine source is through transformation, which in nature and consciousness could be accelerated through the hermetic art of alchemy.

Alchemy was used as a tool to traverse levels of consciousness through ritual and the contemplation of symbols. It is described as the 'royal art' because it is art in its highest form and confers upon the student sovereignty over oneself. It is both 'illuminated' in its view of the world and capable of manipulating that world, as a true form of magic. In a way that reminds us of Persephone, alchemy symbolically describes the archetypal stages of the journey, beginning by redeeming past traumas in the unconscious. Centuries before Jung was born, the alchemists understood that personal change happens at an emotional level and is the key to transformation.

The hermetic teachings were also communicated by creative people through the ages, since artists understood that creativity is born of something greater than the individual who experiences it. Beyond the ego, true creativity would spring from an act of co-creation with the divine. The modern world of art, in particular, falls short of this ideal because it has lost sight of its divine and pagan roots. Science too has lost sight of the symmetry and beauty of nature. Of the later mystery schools, the Pythagoreans understood maths, music and geometry to be the template of nature. Pythagoras taught his followers to seek the divine harmony in all things and to recognize the sacred geometry of nature. Harmony was central to personal development through balancing the inner and outer life. This philosophy contradicted the social conditioning to be selfish, to silence the voice of the inner wisdom and to shut out nature.

As leaders attempt to maintain order, they instil a fear of the unknown in their subjects, who become suspicious of secret groups. One of the last mystery schools was the Pythagoreans in ancient Greece, who were persecuted, Pythagoras himself being eventually hounded to death by an angry mob. The time of tolerance was coming to an end, forcing the mystery schools to hide their existence through symbolic language. Some philosophies were captured and circulated as tools such as the I Ching and the Tarot, which are still used to discover the unconscious relationships of all things. Knowledge of sacred geometry, which became central to Freemasonry, had come to Europe via ancient Greece and had informed the cathedral builders of the Middle Ages.

The growing power of the Roman Catholic Church forced the followers of the old religions to practise in secret, just as Christianity had in the 1st century. The early mystery schools became the prototypes of modern secret societies, and some historians will claim that Masonic and Rosicrucian heritage stems directly from ancient Egypt. In the absence of proof of direct lineage, all that can be said for sure is that the secret societies of today have within them symbols and philosophies that are rooted in antiquity.

REWRITING THE MYTH

At the time when Christianity was taking shape, natural religion was widespread among the pagans who would choose to enact their faith according to the set of gods with whom they could identify culturally. Temples of Isis and Mithras had followed the spread of the Roman Empire across Europe, while a few Christian sects took root in Rome where they began the succession of the popes. It would take three centuries for the Bible to be compiled in its current form when in 325, at the behest of Emperor Constantine, the Christian groups converged at the Council of Nicaea where they decided that the myth of Jesus was to be presented as truth. The challenges of other Christian perspectives, such as the dualism of Arius, conceded and sank into the shadows of history. It is likely that Constantine recognized the potential for Christianity to unite the many religious factions of the known world under his leadership. He promoted Christianity as the state religion for the Roman Empire but remained a pagan himself until his deathbed.

Once the older myths had been subsumed and the pagan deities and festivals absorbed, Christian religion cast its sacred book in stone and decreed that the contents were no longer a myth but the absolute truth. In that moment, Christianity ceased to be progressive and began the long fall towards corruption, stagnation and perversion. As society tried to evolve at a natural pace, Christianity would resort to more violence and destruction in its attempts to stifle progress. The ancient mystery religions were all but purged from history, and for those who continued to practise the old religions, conflict was inevitable.

The campaign to win over the pagans was stealthily applied at first by incorporating their symbols into the Christian story to supplant the underlying archetypes. Iconography would appropriate earlier images, like the seated figure of the Virgin Mary with the baby Jesus which is found throughout ancient Egypt as the figure of Isis. The four gospel authors of the New Testament were symbolized by the lion, bull, eagle and man, which in Babylonian astrology are the fixed signs of the zodiac.

As the Christian religion grew in popularity and power, its followers began systematically to desecrate the pagan sites of Europe and repurpose them as Christian shrines. These ancient temples had been built to mirror the stars and mark the seasons, acting as both calendars and the keys to the mysteries. Across France the Gothic cathedrals were erected upon pagan sites of goddess worship; and in Paris, the abbey church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés is situated on the ruins of a temple of Isis. Also in Paris, Notre-Dame is aligned to the winter solstice and to appease the pagans originally hosted both Christian and pagan altars. Even in Jerusalem, where Temple Mount is subject to an unholy tug of war between modern religions, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is sited on the remains of a temple dedicated to Venus.

The destruction of the sacred temples also revealed a disturbing aspect of the new religion. It sought to eradicate the feminine as an archetype of power. For organized religions to rule, they must keep their followers from being empowered to find their own spiritual path. The psychological path of Persephone to the Underworld is through the emotions and the feminine, intuitive experience of thinking with the heart. For men this is work, but for women it comes naturally; and for this reason religions fear women and prevent them from rising to positions of authority.

The Catholic Church also saw fit to distort the emancipated female archetype of Mary Magdalene and depict her as corrupt or fallen. She was an independent woman of means, a figure of empowerment and a symbol of the sacred feminine that can be found in all goddess cultures. She remains the missing archetype from the Christian paradigm of Virgin, Mother and Crone which had tried to undermine the power of feminine energy by associating it with a

whore. Her restoration would help to redress the balance of masculine and feminine in Western civilization. But to maintain power, the new Church had no choice but to deny the gnostic and pagan reality and claim to be the only path to God and salvation.

When a religion becomes dominant by being widely accepted or state-sanctioned, the first tenet of spirituality to be dispensed with is usually tolerance. The religious leaders will then attempt to fix a canon of belief, history and origins. At this point onwards, the religion ceases to develop and looks back towards a vanished Arcadia which it can never recapture. With the Bible consolidated as a canon, the Church sought to remove the alternative scriptures from circulation and eradicate the true pagan sources of Christianity. This has continued almost to the present day. In 1966 the Index of Prohibited Books ceased to be updated. Those who continued to openly practice paganism or other alternative faiths were judged as heretics and threatened with extermination.

Groups like the Cathars that flourished in France during the Middle Ages sought a simpler form of Christianity that resurrected the dualism of Arius. They accepted female priests and did not collect taxes, which added to their appeal. Their growing popularity in southern France rivalled Catholicism and prompted the Albigensian Crusade sent to 'liberate' them from their heretical leanings. At the siege of Montségur in 1244 the last of the Cathars were invited to convert back to Catholicism or face death. Every man, woman and child chose to burn rather than concede to the materialist dogma of Catholicism.

The Catholic Church could not compete with authentic spiritual experience which exposed layers of obfuscation and contrived dogma as barriers to spiritual development. It would seem that the Cathars and many heretics had transcended Christianity as they followed a path of gnosis towards illumination. For this reason, the Cathars chose martyrdom, thereby joining every nature worshipper who was burned or drowned as a witch by the Inquisition. Soon Europe was littered with the smouldering corpses of heretics who had still believed it was possible to know the divine through direct experience without the need for priests and popes.

As the lie of Christianity took hold, those in power became so entrenched in dogma that they began to deny the truth. The Catholic Church, in particular, has a long history of the suppression and incarceration of those who dare to question the infallibility of its teachings. Religions that predated Christianity were driven to ground and had little choice but to work in secret. Symbols were employed to protect their knowledge, and rituals were devised to instil their teachings into others. Many of the rituals and teachings were lost but some continued in secret or were rediscovered by later groups.

RELIGION'S END

Catholicism was not the only religion to take the wisdom of the mystery schools and corrupt it into a system of oppression. Having denied the cycle of death and rebirth, many religions would seek to exploit the void this created by offering to allay the fear of the unknown that follows death. This changed the focus of religion, as to maintain a fear of death they must greatly exaggerate the challenges of the afterlife. Religions depict a hell seething with the tortured bodies of the damned, while pretending to offer salvation ... but only to their obedient followers. There was no such finality in the pagan view of the afterlife, in which judgement never went beyond the karma of ordinary life.

The idea of judgement in the afterlife gives religions undue power to psychologically blackmail their congregations with a fear of 'hell'. It is the ultimate human sacrifice to suspend the right to think, to question, to be true to oneself and to dismiss those who cling to the belief

that Noah's ark was real and not a myth stolen from the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh. Where once the temples played host to the great discourses of the wise, now 'flock' is an appropriate title for members of a modern congregation that is willing to be subjugated by the will of others.

The rigid structures of religion lay claim to the idea of the soul but have no intention of giving it a voice in the world. They cannot give the keys to the kingdom, because those keys are already within each and every person. As the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas makes clear, heaven is within us: through exploring the inner life we can find our own unique path to an experience of the divine. This is the secret that religions try to keep from humanity as all who discover for themselves the spirit within and have no need for popes, priests, rabbis or imams.

Regardless of any claims of universality or 'chosen' status, all major religions began as a cult. As they grew in membership, they began to accumulate wealth and power, which will eventually pervert any cause. Some spiritual teachings can only become mainstream if they are diluted until palatable for those who prefer not to think for themselves. But eventually the teachings become fixed in this simplified form, and the greater the following, the less elasticity those beliefs have until they become immutable in the minds of the masses. In time, the religious ideologies move from a position of being discovered and explored to one of being defended. With the will of the people subjugated, the religious leaders inadvertently cede into corruption to maintain power.

Within Christianity the myth of Jesus began as a morality tale on the importance of love, compassion, humility, poverty and progressive thinking. These ideals have been deserted by the current clutch of churches that claim to act in his name. Like the fall from spirit into matter, religions have sunk into the mire of greed, abuse, corruption and intolerance, preferring to wallow in the wealth of ignorance than evolve.

For 20 centuries in the West we have been spiritually incarcerated by Christianity in its many guises. Regardless of religious upbringing, the limiting ideas and incomplete archetypes of Christianity permeate every level of Western culture. Their corrupt institutions prey upon the weakminded by selling myths about the afterlife to frightened children. Such generic panaceas can never speak to the individual needs of spirituality and only serve as a barrier to the divine. Organized religion is a curse against the natural order of spirituality.

To counter this tragedy, an esoteric level of religion was passed down in the shadows of history. These early figures of counterculture remained true to their understanding of the world, as their evolved minds had already experienced the world at a meta level and were capable of deriving meaning from existence without the need for religion. Their faith was the natural spirituality that children are born with and that exists in all people, all races and every civilization as an evolving part of human nature. It is the divine spark within each person.

The keepers of this knowledge saw their teachings as a sacred flame that was to be protected and passed down through the ages. By understanding the pagan mysteries at the root of Christianity and other religions, they could create rituals to guide initiates towards an authentic spiritual experience. In the East they maintained forms of religion that were tolerated. But in the West, those who adopted these gnostic leanings were forced to abandon Christianity and accept the label of heretics. For their survival they had no choice but to become secret societies.

CHAPTER 3

KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

Illumination cannot be measured in a scientific laboratory, or learned in a church or school. It is a direct experience of the divine aspect of ourselves, the path to which is unique to every individual. The major religions may claim that salvation can only be attained through them, but they are unable or unwilling to promote a direct spiritual experience in their followers. They choose instead to perpetuate ignorance by convincing others to shy away from reaching out to the divine. As spirituality is present in everyone, to deny and suppress it is the worst kind of evil. It keeps humanity in the dark and separated from its true nature as free and spiritual beings.

The mystery schools set their students on a path to liberation that would give them power over themselves and those around them. This power, without the direction of an enlightened mind, could be a destructive tool in the wrong hands. With mastery of the will it is possible to enslave the will of others, as has been the case with the Catholic Church in promoting the burning of heretics or the Nazis in inspiring ordinary people to commit atrocities.

To prevent the power of the ancients from being usurped, their rituals and secrets were scattered among a number of secret societies in the West to be hidden until a time of acceptance. Through this method of protection, no one group is in possession of the entire secret and able to claim complete control. Only those who truly sought the truth would begin to piece together the heresies before them and rediscover that which had been purposefully forgotten.

THE PASSAGE OF RITES

With Christianity becoming increasingly intolerant, the first secret societies covertly continued the teachings of the mystery schools through their own ritualistic systems of self-improvement. They taught the value of self-governance and that the rights of man can only be in place if man is free from both the control of others and his own ignorance. They also challenged those in power by teaching that only when man has learned to rule himself should he be in a position to rule others. Eventually the Illuminati would adopt this idea and externalize it as the measure of all political and religious leaders. These teachings and the remnants of the old religions were tolerated and even flourished in some areas of the Middle East, but in Europe the Catholic Church attempted to obliterate all evidence of older faiths.

By the Middle Ages, religion in Europe was dominated by the Catholic Church and with armies at its disposal the papacy turned its attention back to the Holy Land. The First Crusade in 1095 captured both Jerusalem in 1099 and the imagination of pilgrims who flocked there, but without protection these pilgrims became a target for looters. In 1119, under the direction of St Bernard of Clairvaux, the Order of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, commonly known as the Knights Templars, was formed as an army of warrior monks who would be tasked with protecting pilgrims en route to Jerusalem.

The Templars set their headquarters on Temple Mount and, according to tradition, spent many years excavating the site. They may have uncovered scriptures or artefacts of religious importance. This uncovering of knowledge is symbolically played out in the later Masonic rituals giving credence to the idea that the Templars retrieved something important from Temple Mount or in general from their time in Palestine. During their occupancy of Jerusalem, the Templars also came into contact with Sufis, Druzes, Assassins and Eastern mystics who had

preserved the mysteries and presented a different historical perspective of the biblical era. The Assassins and Sufis already had rituals in place in a structure of degrees that were adopted by later secret societies, and it is likely that these were first introduced to the West through the Templars.

The religious order of the Sufis carried the torch of mystical Islam in the same way that the Gnostics promoted the mysticism that underpinned Christianity. They too sought a direct experience of the divine. They were widespread by the time of the Crusades when, along with other sects, they encountered the learned monks of the Knights Templars. Through a transfer of knowledge, the Sufis began to influence the Templars, and this influence was passed down to all European secret societies from the Middle Ages onwards.

The mysticism of the Sufis has existed from the early Persian poets in the 7th century to the present day. They employ a number of spiritual practices that train the individual towards ecstatic states of being beyond the limits of ego and personality. Their followers commit entirely to every action, no matter how mundane, and conduct themselves in the best possible manner in every situation. Through this method they become mindful of the moment and expand their awareness towards enlightenment.

For nearly a century battles and sieges swept across Palestine until eventually Saladin's armies drove the invaders out. The Templars had become a part of Middle Eastern culture and now returned to Europe rich with donations, and knowledge that directly undermined the spiritual authority of the Catholic Church. The wealth of the Templars did not go unnoticed by the debt-ridden King Philip IV of France, who conspired to seize their riches for himself. The suppression of the Knights Templars, which was presented as an attack on heresy, was actually motivated by the king's greed. Pope Clement, all but captive in Avignon, signed a pardon for the Templars that was never delivered, presumably both to appease the king and to absolve himself of his part in the demise of the Templars.

In France the heads of the Templar order were executed but the remaining members were set free or escaped capture. Beyond the French borders the edict to destroy the Templars was not so rigorously enforced. Their wealth and lands were seized in many parts of Europe, but in Portugal and Scotland they avoided persecution and there remain active Templar lodges in those countries to this day. Even if the order was truly dispersed, it is likely that any heretical knowledge they had was passed down through the old European families, and used to inform the rituals and secret societies that manifested in later centuries.

Accusations levelled at the Templars during their trial included the trampling of crucifixes underfoot and worshipping a deity called Baphomet that would later become a symbol of the occult arts. If denial of the Crucifixion was indeed a belief of the Templars, this adds weight to the idea that they had accessed the teachings of the mystery schools and had been key in the transmission of this knowledge into Europe. These beliefs, and a more accurate understanding of the mystical roots of Christianity, were enshrined in symbols and stories and passed down through the noble families and the guilds of architects and stonemasons.

The mason's guilds in the Middle Ages acted as a trade union to protect its members by keeping a code of secrecy around their knowledge. These architects and builders were tasked with constructing Christian churches on existing pagan temples as an attempt to absorb or obliterate the earlier religions. The remains of shrines and temples that were dedicated to Isis, Athena and other manifestations of the divine feminine were demolished to make way for the masculine Jesus, but the architects and artificers employed managed to keep something of the old religions. The Gothic cathedrals built from the 13th to 16th centuries retained their feminine affiliation through their rose windows and their 'Notre-Dame' titles. Also during this time, Black Madonna statues were installed in many churches as representations of Isis.

In the 20th century, author Louis Charpentier (1905–1979) and alchemist Fulcanneli (1939–1953) both published studies that describe in detail the alchemical allegories carved into these structures for those that have eyes to see them. The alchemical tradition had travelled to Europe with the Jewish diaspora and also via the Sufi orders that continued to influence the growth of new societies. A further telling feature of the cathedrals was the pagan labyrinths which adorned the floors that have survived in Chartres and Reims. These were to be used for rituals that connected these sites back to their spiritual origins. This alchemical process and the pagan rituals portrayed by the stonemason guilds were to become the basis of the system we now know as Freemasonry.

FREEMASONRY

At its core Freemasonry is an initiatory process that uses rituals and symbols inherited from the ancient mystery schools. The primary three degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason attest to the stonemason guilds being the root of Freemasonry. Their understanding of God is described as the Grand Architect of the Universe, which can be seen in Plato's idea of God as a craftsman.

Freemasonry first took shape in the 15th century and drew upon a number of different sources when devising its system of rituals and teachings but its main influence was the Templars.

The Templars were commonly known as the Knights of the Temple of Solomon, and all Masonic temples were designed to recreate Solomon's Temple from biblical descriptions. The Freemasons also enacted the legend of the Templars excavating the foundations of Solomon's Temple on Temple Mount and discovering hidden treasures used in ritual.

The Templars and the guilds were just two of a number of influences on the creation of Freemasonry. The source of Freemasonry also harked back to the Sufis and in particular a 15th-century Persian divergence of the Sufi order, called the Roshaniya, or 'Illumined Ones', who appear to be a direct influence on many of the secret societies of that time. Having founded a city at Hashtnagar, in what is now northern Pakistan, the Roshaniya recruited both male and female missionaries and spread their ideas into the West by immersing themselves in other cultures. Their teachings included degrees of initiation that mirror some of the Masonic degrees and were used to develop candidates towards a perfected state of being.

The initiations of the Roshaniya followed a probationary period of meditation with degrees entitled Seeker, Disciple, Devotee, Enlightened One, Master, Commander, Priest and King. The same degrees, in title at least, can be found in the European secret societies in the Master Mason of Freemasonry and eventually the Priest and King degrees of the Illuminati. Having attained the final degree of King, the Roshaniya were free to act in accordance with their will in all matters and were no longer answerable to the order. This outcome is identical to the Rex, or King, degree of the Illuminati that appeared in Germany in the 18th century.

There are further similarities between Freemasons and the Roshaniya, as both orders communicated using secret signs, cyphers and encoded alphabets, and identified each other through special handshakes. Members of the Roshaniya were also organized into groups according to professions, one such group being 'builders' – a term used to describe Freemasons. The builder lineage in Islam dates back to the myth of Abraham constructing the first temple at Mecca in the same way that Freemasons claim lineage from the builders of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

For Freemasons man is symbolized by the rough stone that the masons work towards

perfection. This stone is called the ashlar, and when complete it forms the perfect cube. Within the temple the Masonic altar is a double cube, which represents the physical and its spiritual counterpart conjoined harmoniously. The early rituals were scripted to expose the neophyte to their own innate wisdom, the light of which will illuminate their thoughts and actions and allow them to progress through the higher degrees. Throughout this system the builders' tools were employed to explain the concepts of enlightenment, with the compass and square representing both the higher and lower realms working in unison. In terms of psychology, this is the divine Will of the Higher Self working with the will and the lower self of the ego and personality. To perfectly align the personal will with the higher Will is to experience humanity's transcendental nature, and is one of the secrets of the ages.

Freemasonry would also adopt existing symbols from diverse sources such as the Kabbala of the Hebrews, Babylonian astrology and Egyptian deities. They adopted the term 'Jabulon', which consists of 'Ja' for Jehovah, 'Bul' for Baal and 'On' for Osiris, indicating that these are one and the same. This method of hiding words within words is a Kabbalistic tool called notarikon. In particular, Freemasons revered ancient Egypt as a golden age of wisdom and understanding supported by the science of the temple builders and scribes. Their obsession with ancient Egypt was realized in their attempts to recreate Egyptian temples in modern cities. The transporting of Egyptian obelisks to London, Paris and New York in the 19th century was conducted at the behest of the Freemasons. Commonly known as 'Cleopatra's Needles', they each represent the phallus of Osiris, and concealed within the base of the obelisk in London is a quote from the Bible on resurrection that identifies Jesus with Osiris through the ritual of death and resurrection.

The pagan ritual of rebirth is enacted in the third degree of Freemasonry which acknowledges that the soul became trapped in the body at birth and was released at the point of death. Like the Gnostics the Freemasons viewed the soul as the seed that sleeps in the soil over winter, buried in the mundane world that overwhelms the senses. During the third degree of Freemasonry the tomb of the soul is to be transformed into a temple and can be used to manifest spirit in the world. The Master Mason ceremony is adapted from the raising of Lazarus as described in the Bible and is proof that Freemasons understood this myth as a teaching from the mystery schools. To them the Crucifixion was not an historical event but a symbol of the pagan cycle of the death and resurrection as experienced through Attis, Bacchus, Osiris and Jesus.

With its system of self-development and progressive philosophy, Freemasonry in the 16th century was gathering the greatest minds in Europe, with politicians and nobility also drawn to its ranks. Freemasons like English historian Elias Ashmole (1617–1692) and Francis Bacon (1561–1626) that were known to be associated with the occult sciences of astrology, Kabbala and alchemy had overrun the order with hermetic philosophers and actual stonemasons were now few and far between.

In the 18th century Freemasonry divided into two main jurisdictions, known as the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), formed in 1717, and the Grand Orient of France, founded in Paris in 1773. The philosophical difference behind the schism was that Grand Orient is open to women and does not require a belief in a supreme being. Grand Orient, known as European Freemasonry, has also retained a respect for the occult traditions, with lodges devoted to the hermetic arts and alchemy still in existence.

Over time the United Grand Lodge of England, whose worldwide membership currently stands at over a million men, began to downplay the occult aspects of the order and its pagan roots. It now claims that all religions are welcome, while choosing not to divulge the meanings of the symbols and rituals that would undermine them. To uphold this charade, the rituals are

now devoid of real explanation for fear that they would offend and reveal the order to be the bastion of heresy it really is. By denying its pagan heritage, the lodge becomes a temple without a god, and rituals are reduced to an inconvenience on the way to dinner.

Other groups stayed true to the Mysteries, and in parallel to the rise of Freemasonry one group would also find a way to represent the mysticism at the heart of Christianity and communicate this down through the centuries. In the 17th century Europe was gripped by talk of a new secret society that held aloft the banner of true spirituality and challenged all forms of authority. These elusive figures were known to all as the Rosicrucians.

A ROSICRUCIAN RENEWAL

According to occult historian A E Waite, the earliest form of Rosicrucianism existed in ancient Egypt. This lineage leading back to the mystery schools is unlikely to be a direct link, but more a rediscovery and embracing of the ancient teachings. As to their actual creation, the author of *The Esoteric Path*, Luc Benoist, claims that their origins are to be found in the Italian Templars- and troubadour-inspired Fedra Santa, of which Dante was a member. Dante had portrayed aspects of the alchemical path and Jungian redemption in his mid-life crisis masterpiece *The Divine Comedy* in the 14th century. An additional influence on the founding of the Rosicrucians would be the Priory of Sion, as explored in my previous book, *Inside the Priory of Sion*.

Members of the Rosicrucian order were renowned healers who travelled through Europe by adopting the language, customs, dress and behaviour of the countries they traversed. This method of infiltration was central to the Sufis and the Roshaniya but also had its origins in the Assassins, who taught a similar approach to anonymity. The intention of the Rosicrucian order and their patrons the Priory of Sion was to remain in the shadows while influencing society through art and literature or by capitalizing on opportunities to facilitate the evolution of humanity. Their attempts to make subtle interventions to steer society in the right direction could be seen as an early form of social engineering.

Having understood that each age must rediscover the secrets of nature for itself, the Rosicrucians updated the mystery plays, in their rites of initiation, as events the modern candidate would recognize. They would redraw the cave leading to Dante's Inferno as the doorway to ancient wisdom and invite all to enter. In ritual form, the Templar excavations of Jerusalem would be used to symbolize undertaking the alchemical Great Work, and the psychological exploration of the unconscious.

The early initiates claimed to have met just once a year at a designated secret location and then spread out across the globe to infiltrate and learn from other societies. At the time, Paracelsus had laid the foundation for the healing arts and the mathematics of Pythagoras was rediscovered. This resurgence of Neo-Platonism and mystical Christianity also informed the Rosicrucian worldview. Over time they gathered knowledge by creating libraries and laboratories, and this blending of science and spirituality can be found in their alchemical and astrological designs. These elucidate complex alchemical systems and cosmologies that are loaded with arcane symbols.

The Rosicrucian emblem of the rose fixed upon the cross describes a magical state whereby cosmology and mystical Christianity are revealed. It echoes the Sufi tradition of the mystical rose being a symbol of the union of spirit and matter. The rose is also shown growing up around the Cross as the blood of Christ redeems the sin of Adam, whose skull is buried in the ground beneath. This idea of spiritual regeneration is at the centre of Rosicrucianism, which was to draw upon the ancient wisdom of alchemy and mysticism to move society towards a

golden age.

To further the aims of the order, in 1615 and 1616 the Rosicrucians published their manifestos, *The Fame of the Brotherhood (Fama Fraternitatis)* and *The Confession of the Brotherhood (Confessio Fraternitatis)*. *The Fame of the Brotherhood* outlines the creation of the order by a pilgrim, Father C R C, who, like the Templars, travelled to the Holy Land to learn from the sages of the East. He returned to Europe and formed a group of nine initiates, which also references the 'nine knights of Calabria' of the initial Templar order in Jerusalem. The *Fama* goes on to explain that the fraternity would meet once per year, serve as healers, and remain secret for 100 years.

The Confession of the Brotherhood heralds the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment and advocates an authentic Christianity. The manifestos were released at that specific time in history to capitalize on changes taking place in society. The timing of release coincided with the maturing of the Renaissance, itself a resurgence in classical thought, and the growing interest in the Kabbala and alchemy. The Rosicrucians were also joining the flow of the Reformation, with the image of Luther's Cross upon a rose implanted in the minds of the public, and helping to usher in the Age of Enlightenment.

Luther's calls for the Catholic Church to reform marked the end of the Catholic monopoly on spiritual matters in Europe. He was driven to act by the greed, corruption and political machinations that he saw poisoning the Catholic Church from within. Corrupt popes, often elected for political gain, routinely awarded positions of authority and control of the Church finances to friends and family. The practice of appointing nephews as cardinals became so common that it inspired the word 'nepotism'. As political interference had already weakened the authority of the Church and schisms had created the 'anti-popes', the Reformation served to further fragment a religion too rigid to evolve.

Luther's solution was to advocate a gnostic ideal that made God accessible to all, which aptly fitted the Rosicrucian manifesto that each person should discover their own nobility. The Rosicrucian manifestos concluded with an invitation that welcomed others to join the order without describing a means to do so, which caused much controversy. The invitation was not meant to be taken in a literal manner: instead it aimed to align the psyche of the reader with the Rosicrucian ideals. The Rosicrucians' vision was the reformation of all humanity through a gnostic realization that the spirit of God was within all matter.

By the 16th century the Rosicrucians had spread across Europe and earned a reputation as healers and mystics. Their philosophies imbued the Age of Enlightenment, and their intention to replace the royal families of Europe with a single 'Grand Monarch' would see them blamed in part for instigating the French Revolution. They had played a part in evolving society and now withdrew into the shadows, but not before leaving a legacy of influence.

The Rosicrucian teachings were embraced by Freemasonry, which adopted their rituals as the higher degrees of the order. During the 19th century the occult aspects of the Rosicrucian fraternity resurfaced in the ritual magic of the Golden Dawn and the Order of the Templars of the Orient (OTO). At their peak, the Rosicrucians re-lit the lamp of ancient wisdom that still shines down through the ages for those willing to investigate its mysteries.

THE RISE OF THE ILLUMINED ONES

Across Europe others took the tenets of the Rosicrucians to heart and formed new societies. Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803) adapted the Masonic rites of Martinez de Pasqually (1727–1774) and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) to create the Martinist order, which

consisted of seven grades that culminated in the Rose Cross degree. Swedenborg would go on to promote his own vision of spirituality; and a lodge in Avignon, in the south of France, was founded in his name shortly after his death.

At the onset of the 17th century Lord Francis Bacon created reading societies as a way of gathering the intelligentsia beyond the reach of the Catholic Church and outside of political systems. He also supported the creation of the Royal Society in England, which attracted many alchemists and scientists who continued the work of the Rosicrucians by attempting to marry science and spirituality in their search for enlightenment. In Bacon's fictional publication *The New Atlantis* (1627) he describes a country founded upon Rosicrucian principles and free from religious meddling.

Other European groups appeared in Spain in the early 17th century. Among them were the Alumbrados (Illumined Ones), who spread to France as the Guerinets until falling to the Inquisition. At the same time, gatherings of like-minded individuals looking to pursue the noble interests of philosophy and science swelled the ranks of Freemasonry and other secret societies. The Knights of Malta, Knights Templar, the Priory of Sion, the Order of Lazarus, the Lodge of Illumination in Avignon and other philosophical, theosophical and magical orders were also working towards a golden age.

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century was a cultural revolution based on critical thinking, scientific enquiry and the value of the individual over the state – this last idea being the basis of every counterculture movement. The opportunity had arisen to put rational thought and individual liberty above all else and subvert the stifling superstition of religion. There were barriers to overcome in the existing power structures that would challenge progress at every opportunity, but an appetite for change had gripped Europe.

Leading philosophers like Voltaire (1694–1778) savaged religion, royalty and politics, skewering their inflated sense of power with an unmatched wit. Voltaire attended a Masonic lodge with Benjamin Franklin and also was inspired by the same dualism that caused torches to be lit under the Cathars. He concluded of Christianity that it was 'assuredly the most ridiculous, the most absurd and the bloodiest religion which has ever infected this world ... this infamous superstition'. Voltaire objected to how people used the Bible to justify their actions and condemned Judaism for its superstition. That he survived while being so outspoken illustrates the waning power of the Catholic Church.

Other philosophers also gave voice to the expanding counterculture movement, with Descartes spearheading the application of scientific and rational thought as a method of enquiry, Spinoza imbuing society with his take on ethics, and John Locke making clear the rights of man to influence the political sphere. In science Galileo, Newton and others would elevate scientific enquiry from the mire of superstition to the majesty of physics. These men were not atheists but saw God in the beauty of nature, mathematics and music.

For the leading thinkers of the age there was no greater ideal than the pursuit of truth in the service of humanity. This idea would soon travel further afield, carried to the New World by the Freemasons. The old adage that travel broadens the mind is true for two reasons. Firstly, it brings people into contact with other cultures that have a different perspective on the world; and secondly, it removes people from the group mindset of their own culture. Once Europeans had abandoned the suffocating structures of monarchy and religion for the colonies it was not long before they realized that the influence of the tyrants was empty shadows at a distance. In the

absence of oppressive regimes, free speech occurs naturally and feeds the call for emancipation.

In the Americas Thomas Paine challenged the right of kings to rule with his astute observation that they probably obtained their positions through some act of violence in tribal antiquity. Religion suffered no better, as Thomas Jefferson railed against what he saw as the mad ravings of the book of Revelation and sought to exclude religion from politics. Jefferson cited Lord Bacon's *The New Atlantis* as an influence in the drafting of the US constitution, having recognized the potential for applying the Rosicrucian ideal to the fledgling country. This liberated standpoint has since been undermined or conveniently ignored, as if the Puritans had left a stain across the minds of Americans. But revolution eventually reinstated at least the idea of America.

As the Age of Enlightenment drew to a close, the Freemasons became more passive and introspective and the Rosicrucians disappeared into the mists of time, having spoken of an order to come that would bring their philosophy to fruition. One order in particular has found a place in history as the archetypal secret society, as it attempted to apply the philosophies of Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism as a force for change. The historic rise and fall of the real Bavarian Illuminati is the stuff of legend and conspiracy theories everywhere.

What had begun with the ancient priesthood that had formulated the earliest rituals and symbolism to protect their knowledge for future generations was about to come of age. The same knowledge was carried by the Sufis, rediscovered by the Templars, and passed down to the Freemasons and Rosicrucians in the hope that one day it would lead humanity away from religion and back to the source of spirituality. Both the Templar and Rosicrucian groups faded from view, and Freemasonry now appears to be no more than a men's club with a penchant for dressing up than the vanguard for reinstating lost knowledge.

But those who wanted to apply the ancient philosophies to the real world had another option. Out of the Masonic lodges of Bavaria a secret society emerged with a view to reinstating a pure form of Christianity and divesting its members of all mindsets and superstitions. The Illuminati would secretly apply the tenets of the Freemasons and Rosicrucians to restore lost knowledge and illuminate humanity with the truth.

In doing so, the Illuminati were to become the perfect counterculture movement.

CHAPTER 4

THE BAVARIAN ILLUMINATI

***'That which is free, which exists solely by the necessity of its own nature and of which the action is determined by itself alone.'* SPINOZA**

In the above quote Spinoza defines the nature of all that is 'good', and in the eyes of the Illuminati this idea was at the heart of humanity's predicament. To be good we must be free to behave according to our own inner nature, and we cannot be free if we are limited by the actions and beliefs of others. The core belief of the Illuminati was that mankind should be happy, but when they evaluated mankind's lot they discovered the adage of Rousseau to be true: 'Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains.'

This bondage came in the form of the enforced ignorance of religious thinking, the corruption of self-serving politicians, and the selfish opulence of royalty lording it over the enslaved peasants. Faced with such extreme inequality in the imbalance of power and wealth, the founders of the Illuminati decided to do something about it.

Before we charge headlong into the joys of illumination, it must be noted that knowledge of the historic Illuminati has drawn upon contemporary accounts that were published by enemies of the society.

As with the victims of the Inquisition, sometimes the most accurate picture of a heretical movement can be drawn from the accusations of their critics, but at the time these damaged the reputation of the order in Europe and America. John Robison, author of *Proofs of a Conspiracy* (1798), was anti-Masonic and vehemently anti-Illuminati but serves as a contemporary source for the history of the order.

The history Robison presents is valid, but his opinions are woefully archaic because he perpetuates the same religious mindsets that the Illuminati sought to dispel. For example, Robison argues against gender equality by stating that it was clearly not what God wanted, because there had always been inequality. Another historian, Abbé Augustin Barruel, in his *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1797), is equally prejudiced, having been offended by the Illuminati stance on religion. Later authors would focus on the fear of the Illuminati secretly taking control of governments or conspiring to run the world from the shadows for their own ends. However, the truth of the order is something entirely different.

ORIGINS

Adam Weishaupt was born in 1748 in Ingolstadt, Bavaria. His father died when he was just six years old, and he was placed in the care of his godfather, who exposed him to a library of philosophical writings that included Rousseau and Voltaire. Weishaupt was inspired by these philosophers, whose ideas were in stark contrast to his strict Jesuit education and the strong Catholic disposition of Bavaria. An academic success, he rose to a position of Chair of Canon Law at Ingolstadt University in Bavaria and was promoted to Dean by the age of 27.

As with many people of high social standing at that time, he was initiated into the Rosicrucians and the Strict Observance Rite of Freemasonry, where he learned of the mystery schools and the esoteric path towards enlightenment. Strict Observance lodges are known today for upholding the authentic Masonic rituals and enacting them to the letter. But Freemasonry was passive and inward-looking, and the Rosicrucians were concerned mainly with health and spiritual wellbeing. Nowhere in these orders was the subjugation of society being addressed.

In Freemasonry Weishaupt recognized a philosophical and ritualistic system that had the potential to influence social change. It was the perfect environment to recruit from, as it shared the Illuminati ideals but had remained almost purely speculative, as it was forbidden to discuss politics or religion during the lodge meetings. Weishaupt wanted a more active order that was willing to take the wisdom of the ages and see it used to free society from the corrupt ruling classes and the superstitions of the Church. It was at Ingolstadt University that Weishaupt devised a secret society that would draw upon the Freemasons and Rosicrucians with a view to directly influencing the emancipation of humanity. In America the War of Independence had begun and Europe was in the wake of the Age of Enlightenment. Weishaupt wanted to reform society, and this was recognized as a noble cause that would soon attract a small band of like-

minded individuals to his enclave.

The Order of the Illuminati was founded by Adam Weishaupt on 1 May 1776. Also present at the inception was Baron Adolf von Knigge, an early supporter of Weishaupt's career and an influential Freemason. Knigge was already a member of many Masonic lodges and had connections with other secret societies including the Martinists and the Rosicrucians. Another early member of the order was Johann Bode, an eminent Freemason and student of the esoteric arts.

In 1777 their first success was to take control of the Masonic Lodge Theodore in Munich by recruiting the Grand Master of the Lodge, Anton von Thorning. Mirabeau, a leading figure in the French Revolution, would later describe members of Lodge Theodore as men who were 'zealous for the good of humanity'. The Lodge was attached to the branch of Freemasonry called the Chevaliers Bienfaissances, originating in Lyon and practising the Templar Rite of Strict Observance. Soon the entire network of the Chevaliers came under the influence of the Illuminati. The Chevaliers Bienfaissances issued permission to Lodge Theodore members to take control of their lodges in Bavaria. They were also permitted to create new lodges, and under the guise of the Chevaliers Weishaupt could expand across Europe by recruiting new members. The recruitment of senior Freemasons continued, and many lodges came under the control of the Illuminati in Switzerland and Italy.

Baron von Knigge, co-founder of the branch and Weishaupt's righthand man, also acted as chief recruiter by visiting Masonic lodges across Europe and promoting 'eclectic Freemasonry', which was intended to perfect the Masonic system. He would engage with the Grand Masters of lodges to bring them into the Illuminati. Through these Grand Masters they could monitor the lodge members to identify further recruits.

The ideals of the Illuminati weaved their way through Freemasonry's ranks and took control of many European lodges. It could almost be described as a coup but it was more likely that Masons agreed with their philosophies and were willing to take the next step of bringing about a change in society.

Freemasonry at the time was already attracting the great minds of the age. Both scientists and philosophers were drawn to the noble ideas of brotherhood and the high standards of morality that the order espoused. Nobility pervaded the ranks of Masonry, whose lodges were places to meet the artists, politicians and scientists of the day. With access to these figures of influence, the Illuminati recruited futurists Nikolai Fyodorov and Johann Herder, Duke Karl August of Weimar, Ernest II of Saxe-Gotha and the philosopher Goethe, whose *Faust* was an alchemical allegory based upon the writings of the Rosicrucians.

Membership in Bavaria quickly rose to 600 Freemasons, and a house in Munich was purchased where members could meet in secret. The new premises housed a botanical garden, a museum, a library and a laboratory similar to the Rosicrucian one in Vienna, Austria. Lodges were also known to have existed in Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, Poland, Prussia, Hungary, England, Scotland and the USA, with members including politicians, priests, university professors, bankers, barons, counts, and at least one prince, librarians, booksellers, lawyers, dukes and officials of all senior ranks of government.

The reason so many great minds and people of standing were originally attracted to Freemasonry was that its system was one of self-development through philosophical and spiritual tenets. Society had outgrown the Catholic Church and the learned were actively seeking ways to evolve spiritually, or else saw scientific progress as a means to escape the Dark Ages. The Illuminati version of Freemasonry showed that it was possible for man to improve himself and society by working towards enlightenment, and many Masons would embrace this wholeheartedly. As Masonic lodges ceded control to the council of the Illuminati,

members continued to work in secret to avoid offending those who stuck rigidly to their Christian beliefs.

To uphold this secrecy, members of the Illuminati order used pseudonyms from antiquity and renamed the countries and cities of Europe to help to encrypt their communications; and they also adapted the secret signs of Freemasonry to identify each other in public. Even the days and months were given new names, and the years were counted from AD 630 so that dates could not be easily identified. If any communications were intercepted by enemies of the order, they would be impossible to decipher.

A progress report surviving from this time reveals that a Masonic lodge in Berlin and all the lodges in Poland were under the control of the Illuminati. At least one academy was under the direct control of the council, and they claimed to have influence in all 'German schools' and benevolent societies. Members of the courts of justice were successfully recruited by the Illuminati, and a number of professors were also working under their control. A school of young clergy would provide priests that were loyal to the order, and in one location church funds were being redirected to support the Illuminati's members. Money was also being diverted from a number of Jesuit projects and groups to further their aims.

The Illuminati lodges also served to enact strategies of dissemination, seeding Illuminati propaganda and ideals in society. Their philosophies were also promoted through university professors, as well as priests at the pulpit; and they also engaged with the artists and authors of the day, and tried to win over journalists, reviewers and booksellers to support their cause. Although subversive, this early form of social engineering was successful at forging many influential ties. Members were instructed to subscribe to all literary journals and also to publish in them, making known the misdeeds of the ruling elite and constantly challenging the Church in print. The Illuminati were believed to be behind a spate of caricatures circulating in the press at the time, ridiculing leading figures. With limited access to information, the 18th-century public could have their opinions entirely formed by a single cutting observation. As modern media have discovered, character assassination is often more effective than actual assassination.

THE ILLUMINATI MANIFESTO

'Let there be light, and there shall be light.' ILLUMINATI MOTTO

Baron von Knigge left the order after four years and published an account of its workings in which he stated that the aim of the Illuminati was to rid Europe of national governments and Christianity, and supplant these with a new republic of liberty and equality. The intention of the Illuminati was to release the common people from mental and physical exploitation and free them from the prisons of superstition and prejudice. Prejudice and ignorance were recognized as the sources of evil in the world. The Illuminati believed that by disseminating the truth and valuing virtue, they could help mankind strive for enlightenment.

Alleviating the mental and physical slavery of society was a noble undertaking, and the culmination of secret societies throughout the ages. Advocating liberty, equality and universal benevolence as the rights of mankind was a fine aspiration, but to influence the common people such activists would have to be accepting of their prejudices until such a time as these could be rooted out. The Illuminati intended to lift humanity out the shadows of ignorance and lead them towards a natural state of joy and freedom through which every individual could evolve according to their own morality.

To achieve this, members of the order would work in secret to dismantle the social structures that allowed corruption to fester in politicians, nobles and religious institutions,

impeding social progress. They saw it as their duty to stand in direct opposition to those who feared losing power and wealth in the event of their workforce and subjects becoming emancipated. The ruling elite of politicians and monarchies was called into question as the Illuminati advocated the promotion of citizens according to their talents and virtues, creating a meritocracy. To undermine the power of monarchies and the aristocracy, they would challenge the false patriotism that held the ruling elite in place. To teach others that patriotism is narrow-minded and steeped in prejudice, the order developed rituals to help candidates to rid themselves of the mindset of national identity. Their process of de-programming helped to strip away the cultural, religious and social identities inflicted upon the public.

To value the individual over society is a common theme in counterculture, but the Illuminati also saw the need to infiltrate and subvert the existing organizations that inhibited the development of society as a whole. Weishaupt wrote an 'Apology for Illuminism' which railed against the superstitions and spiritual tyranny of religion. The all-pervading and perverting influence of Christianity, in the form of the Catholic Church, was singled out for attack, as it continued to obstruct the march of civilization by promoting falsehoods while stifling scientific progress. Weishaupt had identified a different message at the core of the myth of Jesus, and in his correspondence he referred to Jesus as the 'Grand Master of the Illuminati' whose attempt to guide Israel out of the dark of Roman rule illustrated the plight of the soul that needed to be liberated from the ego's subjugation. For the Illuminati the Fall and Original Sin also symbolized the conditions of subordination and oppression that had allowed the many to become the slaves of the few. Weishaupt believed that by focusing on morality, a kingdom of grace might be restored; and there would be redemption for all mankind if it could just get off its knees.

The Illuminati were transcendentalists, attempting to liberate spirituality from religion. They sought to promote happiness, joy and bliss to connect to a higher power. Through insights into personal truth, morality was seen as the path to liberty and equality, which they believed to be humanity's purest state of nature. They praised the wisdom of Socrates, who promoted equality in an entirely male-dominated society, and they saw a future in which emancipation would put women on an equal footing to men. Women were immediately welcomed into the Illuminati, whereas it would be another century before Freemasonry in Europe accepted them into its ranks.

Science offered another path of liberation as a means to understand the world and enable progress. In believing this, the Illuminati were foreshadowed by the Age of Enlightenment, which had begun to challenge blind faith using systematic investigation and the scepticism of the new philosophers. Philosophy had inspired the Illuminati founders to seek the truth in all things, but they understood that philosophy was rarely capable of bringing about actual change. The real problem of philosophy was illustrated by Plato, who failed to manifest Socrates's ideas and overthrow the arrogant elitists that doomed Greek civilization. A true and rational democracy would not be possible if the masses were ignorant and easily led, so the Illuminati would first need to steer them towards enlightenment.

ILLUMINATION

As its name Illuminati implies, the focus of the order was to support its members on the path to illumination, or enlightenment. Its rituals and teachings bestowed upon the candidate a level of self-knowledge and free will that enabled them to act with compassion and be free of the mindsets imposed on them by society. Beyond this, they were inspired to seek enlightenment

within themselves, which would enable them to better serve humanity as a whole.

The attainment of illumination created a connection with higher orders of consciousness and bridged the gap between the mortal and the divine. This bridge is what the ancients termed 'gnosis', and can be experienced as moments of exceptional clarity, or 'peak experiences' as the psychologist Abraham Maslow described them. The mystery schools of antiquity trained their members in attaining gnosis through teachings that were passed down through the cultures of ancient Egypt, Greece and Persia; but in Europe such wisdom required the protection of secret societies. Through ritual and symbolic writings, the priesthood had encapsulated an understanding of cosmology and the deeper meaning of existence as they saw it.

To set their members on the path to gnosis, the initial teachings of the Illuminati focused on self-enquiry, with the early stages directing the novice to make an honest appraisal of their personality and behaviour. This had the potential to uncover aspects of the personality that are usually shrouded from consciousness by a veil of amnesia. The breaking down of this veil occurs at an emotional level: the effect can be to unlock past experiences to reveal the disturbances that distort how the person relates to others and the world.

As the self-awareness of the individual increased, it could transform past traumas that had become rooted in the unconscious. These could take the form of irrational mindsets and repressed feelings, such as hurt or anger from early childhood. The process of identifying the psychological blocks or fears instilled in the candidate helped to release the energy of the psyche that underpinned their narcissistic tendencies. On becoming conscious of the patterns of restrictive behaviour that have limited them, they begin the process we now understand as rewriting the neural pathways these patterns had created. When the barrier between who the individual thought they were and what they suppressed was breached, they become capable of connecting to the divine source of life found in the higher levels of consciousness.

These levels of consciousness are mapped in the symbolic writings of the ancients, including the alchemical works and the mystery plays of the ancient Egyptians. The Gnostics, spiritual precursors to Christians, described them as the many heavens, which was a theme later explored by Dante and other poets. The higher levels of consciousness simplify language to the economic expression of poets such as William Blake, and then beyond to the archetypal symbols that religions continually try to claim as their own. In the symbolic realm of magic and ritual, the lower, trapped energies are represented by demonic forces and the higher qualities are seen as angels. The work here is to identify and liberate these demons to become angels by freeing the energies that they hold in check.

Through ascending to the higher levels of consciousness towards enlightenment, the individual can connect to their spiritual quality, which is known as the Higher Self. This Higher Self might also summon the attention of the personality by immersing it in a mid-life crisis, or spiritual crisis, which at first seems traumatic but is an opportunity to find meaning in their life.

***'When half way through the journey of our life
I found that I was in a gloomy wood...'*** DANTE ALIGHIERI

So begins Dante's *Divine Comedy*, with a classic mid-life crisis and the gloom of depression that requires the dark and light within to be explored in order to find resolution. While the *Divine Comedy* is considered to be a vision of the afterlife, it describes a symbolic path guided by the Higher Self to find gnosis, and also a warning that if personal karma of the unconscious is not addressed, it corrupts the soul. This call to seek enlightenment is innate for many, and begins when the material world is recognized as meaningless, without a sense of place or purpose. It is the search for meaning that invites grace and opens the individual to spirituality; whereas to

deny this is to remain asleep, and no more conscious than the rest of nature.

The journey to gnosis is personal to each individual, but there are archetypal experiences along the way that were portrayed through the rituals of the Illuminati. Like the Fool's journey through the major arcana of the Tarot deck, the spiritual quest examines every archetype from the Underworld to the heavens as the initiate progresses. The Illuminati helped to guide the initiate back to the source of spirituality by enacting rituals that had an immediate psychological impact and helped to evoke realizations from the deeper levels of being. A ritual experience could trigger an emotional reaction and bring about cathartic change in the same way that a good psychologist could delve into the psyche.

In ritual, those who administer the ceremony will take the symbolic role of the guide, but the inner journey has its own guides that manifest as seemingly independent entities. For Dante the Higher Self manifests as a guide in the form of the poet Virgil, and later as his muse Beatrice, who represents the true mind supporting the enquirer on their journey. In the occult the guide who is contacted is known as a guardian angel, while in psychology it is labelled the Higher Self or transpersonal. Through the Higher Self it is possible to make contact with the source of all that is divine, and this is the final heresy.

Once the unconscious influences and blocks have been sufficiently explored and assimilated, the candidate moves to a place of having free will. The past no longer controls them, and at this stage of development they have overcome the mindsets of society and transcended their own narcissism. Depending on their aptitude, they can remain at this level and focus on improving society or they can continue their journey of discovery towards enlightenment. This ongoing evolution of consciousness is not a contrivance or construct of religion but a natural progression that is experienced in everyday life. It occurs every morning as the candidate rises through different states of awareness from being unconscious in sleep to what passes for being awake. The extent of their awareness is like a lamp in the landscape of the unconscious as held by the Hermit in the Tarot card of the same name. To incorporate more of this landscape, they must expand the reach of the lamp by increasing awareness of their inner world. Were their awareness to encompass the whole self, they would be fully revealed, and thus illuminated.

This would transform their relationship with the world and through awareness of their wounds and the wounds of others would bring empathy and compassion as higher functions of humanity. In a way reminiscent of Aldous Huxley's 'doors of perception', they would suddenly be free of ego and of the past clouding their vision. The journey to illumination was also one of spiritual awakening, as the inner and outer life must be balanced and in harmony to allow the divine to enter. For the Illuminati, this self-development was a process of human nature that could be accelerated if understood. They recognized that people are often exposed to opportunities for awakening spirituality in the form of meaningful, or synchronistic, events that are a sign of the harmony of the inner and outer spheres of existence.

There exist in nature many transcendental qualities and potential triggers to stir feelings of spirituality: as the philosophers concluded, God is everywhere in nature but nowhere in church. For some it is enough to look up at the stars and see themselves reflected in the void. By contemplating the vastness of space, such individuals recognize that every glittering star, seemingly alone in the frozen darkness, is really a part of millions of other stars all spiralling out from the centre of a galaxy in the cosmic landscape of eternity. For others, a similar transcendence is found in the abundance of a forest, or the shifting hues of sunsets, or the ebbing tides of the sea. These vast expanses of beauty reach towards something that can resonate, and thereby reconnect people to a deeper experience of what it means to be alive. They give context to the small self and mitigate the power of the ego.

The Gothic cathedrals were designed using sacred geometry to overwhelm the ego, as the artificers attempted to make concrete the union with the divine that is denied by the separation taught in religion. The ego is a defence of the self as it will fight to keep up the pretence that the sum of who people are and what they create is limited to their personality; and in doing so the ego denies the fundamental reality of cocreation. True creativity is inspired by intuition, which is the feminine route to gnosis and the antithesis of the male-dominated religions. This is the reason followers of the old religions recognized the Goddess as the creator: they understood that they were only partly responsible for their creativity, in which they also saw the presence of a creative spirituality beyond their ego.

The secret of the ancient mysteries is that within us all there is a bridge between the mundane and the divine through which cocreation is possible. To this end it is possible to discover the noble Self and to know that we already carry the grail we are seeking on the spiritual quest. To search for the limits of human potential is to attain knowledge, beyond the ego, of the Higher Self that connects us to the source of all life.

BEING AND BECOMING

Having created an organization of illuminated individuals, it was Weishaupt's intention to lead humanity out of the shadows of superstition and towards enlightenment. With a clear understanding of what needed to be done to save Europe, Weishaupt had amassed a great many members in all walks of life. He recruited from among the Freemasons, arguing that the philosophy and morality they had learned needed to manifest in public to counter the corrupt and morally bankrupt political and religious institutions. The Illuminati offered to rid Europe of the tyranny of the ruling elite and the religious meddling in education and science that prevented individuals from reaching their true potential.

To accelerate the process of individual evolution, they built upon the rituals of Freemasonry and other groups, and over time presented a full system of degrees through which all members were to be initiated. This system allowed the heads of the order to measure progress, support development and guide the actions of their members in the world. Once the candidate had proven aptitude for spiritual and mental development, they would ascend through the ranks of teachings towards enlightenment. Through this process the Illuminati would be equipped to evolve beyond the Masonic lodges and make an impact on the challenges facing society as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

THE PATH OF THE ILLUMINATI

There is an assumption among members of many religious groups that they alone are party to teachings that link to a higher truth. Devotees choose to believe that their faith will confer some special status upon them in the eyes of the divine, and that salvation is only available to those who uphold the dogma of their chosen creed. But with teachings that lacked a psychological basis to support the personal development of their followers, Church leaders cannot expect

their subjects to evolve to meet their expectations. The mainstream institutions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism lack the tools to enlighten their followers, and their separatism helps to create the extremism and fanaticism that plague them all.

It is clear from the archetypal myths that underpin religions that they all came from a single source, but for them to reconcile they would need to strip away the dogma and politics until they were reduced to a common ground. It might be that they can barely agree on anything more than the existence of a divine power and no more, and that, no doubt, would be closer to the truth than what is on offer now. It would also be a leap forward compared with the current situation. If God existed and looked down upon Jerusalem, he would see that his followers have split into gangs and are fighting over a rock. But until they recognize this, they will go through the motions of religious practice that cannot alleviate their members of their burdens or help them to fulfil their spiritual calling.

Lost among religion's impotent routines and prayers are the seeds of earlier rituals that invoked grace and meaning and were capable of supporting the individual in their spiritual development. In the Middle East the mystical incarnations of the main religions, such as the Gnostics of Christianity, the Sufis of Islam and the Kabbalists of Judaism, held the torch for inner wisdom, but this is suppressed by their mainstream counterparts. The ancient priesthood captured and communicated the deeper meanings of existence as they saw it through initiations like the Eleusinian mysteries of the ancient Greeks. The Illuminati continued this tradition and distilled the essence of these rituals into a system of initiatory degrees to set their members on a path to personal liberation and enlightenment.

On joining the Illuminati, the candidate passed through a series of rituals and trials aimed at both teaching them the tenets of Illuminism and providing the order with a clear understanding of the candidate and their potential. By collecting as much information as possible about the character and opinions of the individual, including their physical and mental health, moral and political outlook, religious affiliations and relationships, the order could build a comprehensive picture in the same way that a good psychotherapist will build a client record over time. These accounts would be used to identify talents, skills and suitable areas of influence and to uncover the work to be done for the candidate to reach their full potential.

To enrol in the Illuminati was to support the aims of the order while embracing the challenge to awaken fully to one's true nature. To better explain how initiates immersed themselves in the underground stream of secret knowledge, the degrees are presented here with scope for the reader to involve themselves in the process. By working through these degrees we are joining those who lead a magical life, which is not the life of an observer but of someone who participates in co-creation.

THE POWER OF RITUAL

Induction into the Illuminati began with consultations and reading lists of key philosophical tracts, but the main body of their teachings was instilled using rituals that drew heavily upon the Masonic tradition. The early degrees centred around self-knowledge and spiritual awareness, while further degrees were intended to integrate the ideals of the order into everyday life. These experiential lessons were scripted to evoke true learning in the form of a revelation that came from finding inner wisdom.

The rituals were enacted in a temple, or lodge, adorned with symbols that gave gravitas to the proceedings. The environment is important for ritual, even if it consists of nothing more than a circle of trees or a spare room in a house. In keeping with Freemasonry, the Illuminati lodge

was designed to emulate Solomon's Temple, where a school of wisdom once resided to disseminate holy teachings. The Masonic interpretation of Solomon's Temple is supported by the three pillars known as wisdom, beauty and strength which correspond to the pillars of the mystical Kabbalistic tree of life.

The Illuminati also drew upon the Rosicrucian idea whereby the temple represents the sanctuary of the human body, in which the light upon the altar is the soul. The psychology of using a temple or lodge environment is highly supportive of ritual, but this is not compulsory, because the temple can also be experienced within. Inner work cannot completely replace the impact of taking part in ritual, but it is possible to visualize a temple in detail and work within that imagined space in a state of active meditation.

Those administering the rituals would wear robes of office, and the rooms were embellished appropriately with symbols that encapsulated the philosophies behind the teachings. The insignia, dress and furnishings all represent spiritual energy in different aspects. The presence of regalia helps to set the environment, to amplify the power of the ritual to create a psychological, physical and, most importantly, emotional impact. It is the emotional response that often produces real learning and healing, as the candidate is moved to insights and revelation.

The symbols used in ritual have the potential to both limit and reveal. They can be a shortcut to deeper meanings or a lazy simplification that impedes further consideration. Classical art has instilled an image within our psyche that God is an old white male with a beard and robes. This is the iconography of Zeus and Jupiter appropriated from the temples of ancient Greece and Rome, and it is difficult to exclude the image from the mind when contemplating the divine. Any real consideration of God beyond the word or image requires us to reach further and try to touch the very nature of the divine. This is 'the ineffable' that was referred to by Wittgenstein, the unspeakable truth of the soul that can never be communicated, only experienced directly in a moment of gnosis.

Masonic temples also made use of sacred geometry that has its roots in the Arabian artificers and the mystery school of Pythagoras, via the Gothic cathedral builders of the Middle Ages. These structures captured the universal harmony of the Gothic architecture that the master builders were labouring to communicate. Through the eyes, the soul seeks harmony in all things, which is why many modern environments impact negatively upon mental health. To the mind of the a peasant in the Middle Ages, the interiors of the Gothic cathedrals had the potential to overwhelm the senses, pushing the logical mind aside like a Zen koan to allow the Self to enter.

The secrets of sacred geometry were discovered in nature, where it is the measure of all that is perfect and divine. Alas, the modern world has detached us from the cycles of nature, and now progress is measured in the distance we can put between ourselves and the shadows in the forest. The archetypes have become pictures drawn on the distant night sky, while in reality all those figures are aspects of humankind's spiritual nature that have fallen into separation. Ritual can return these gifts to us and allow them to be integrated again.

A well-scripted ritual is capable of conveying many levels of meaning, and we can return to it in contemplation that reveals further layers of interpretation. The transmission of information through ritual can also allow for the passing of secrets down the ages. In the fourth degree of Freemasonry, called the Royal Arch, or Ark, in which the initiate re-enacts the excavation of Solomon's Temple by the Knights Templar during the Crusades, the candidate is shown that the knowledge discovered by the Templars has informed Freemasonry. Symbolically, the candidate is also being introduced to the idea that the Templars uncovered heretical knowledge that required the formation of the Freemasons for the purpose of its protection.

This excavation activity also enacts the archetypal return to the dark earth to search for hidden treasures. This is the exploration of psychological depths that the initiate undergoes in the first part of the Great Work in the alchemical process, dredging their own unconscious to redeem what they have lost. As a spiritual practice, they are seeking the innermost chamber of the temple with its ever-burning lamp of wisdom. Upon discovery of the divine light, the soul recognizes itself and the individual experiences a taste of who they truly are.

These are all valid interpretations of a single ritual, and depending on the stage that the candidate has reached in their training, they may revisit the scene with fresh eyes and greater knowledge to discover additional levels of meaning. Just as upon reflection we might have full insight into the purpose of an experience that at the time seemed senseless and traumatic, those deemed worthy are later given the keys to fully comprehend the secrets being communicated.

THE RITUALS AND DEGREES OF THE ILLUMINATI

The degrees of the Illuminati were continually being amended and improved upon, and for this reason accounts of them are often at variance. Their final incarnation may not be in the public domain. The degrees were constructed to suit the needs of society at a particular point in history, but in many ways they have remained universal in their purpose and appeal.

The structure of the Illuminati degrees was as follows:

The Nursery degrees:

Preparation

Novice

Minerval

Illuminati Minor (Lesser Illuminatus)

The Masonry degrees:

Symbolic

Entered Apprentice

Fellowcraft

Master Mason

Scotch

Scottish Novice (Illuminati Major)

Scottish Knight (Illuminati Dirigens)

Agape (the Love Feast)

The Mysteries degrees:

Lesser Mysteries

Priest

Prince/Regent

Greater Mysteries

Magus

Rex

To experience something of the rituals and teachings of the Illuminati, it is possible to follow a candidate through the process and learn as they learned.

APPLICATION

Initially the Illuminati recruited solely within Freemasonry. A Mason interested in the aims of the Illuminati would lodge a request with an Illuminati superior and, after consideration, would be presented to the council, who would further consider the applicant by observing them over time. By monitoring the actions and opinions of the candidate, a decision could be made on whether or not to recruit them into the order. To apply to the order, the candidate had to fill out a register with their personal details, profession and interests, and if accepted they were required to take an oath. The oath is used as a commitment to the secrecy of the order and the protection of other members of the fraternity. These oaths lacked the drama and death threats of their Masonic counterparts, being more of a social contract.

When joining the Illuminati, novices were questioned to discover their intention, the aims they were hoping to achieve, and the qualities they lacked. If the aims of the individual were deemed entirely selfish, they could not progress far within the order unless this could be rectified.

This passage of self-discovery was seen as beneficial to the order and to society as a whole, and also had the benefit of setting the candidate on a path to personal illumination.

The candidate was then required to read a concise account of the history of the order, which includes its links to Freemasonry, and its general aims. The candidate was also interviewed by a mentor at the level of Scotch Knight (Illuminati Dirigens), who would act as sole point of contact for the initial training. To his mentor the candidate presented a report stating what he would like to learn, how he might progress, how he would help the order, and anyone else he knew who might be a suitable candidate for recruitment.

THE NURSERY DEGREES

The Nursery stage contained the first four degrees of initiation and was used to assess the candidate and to set them on a path of self-knowledge. These early degrees of the Illuminati stressed the gaining of knowledge, not for its own sake, but to transform that knowledge into wisdom. This wisdom was to be achieved through self-realization. Every candidate had to contemplate how they behaved and where those behaviours originated, bringing awareness to the aspects of their personality that were detrimental. Their interactions with others were also monitored, and reflected back to them. The self-awareness they accrued was the beginning of taking full responsibility for who they were and how they conducted themselves.

PREPARATION AND NOVICE

Training in these degrees continued to emphasize learning as a path to wisdom and the importance of self-improvement in all aspects of life.

This was seen as a continuation of personal evolution and a recognition of the natural impetus inherent in humanity to evolve at a physiological, spiritual and psychological level. The Illuminati believed that this was the driving force that originally elevated humankind from its primitive state.

For them this evolutionary process through a single lifetime created a unique individual

who was the product of a journey of self-discovery. It was the opportunity for the candidate to form an authentic identity. The potential here was for finding one's own truth and expressing it in the world uniquely, and those who feared this would do well to remember that if any two people are the same, then one of them is redundant. To 'ape' is to copy, and if humanity is to be something more than 'apes', then it needs to evolve.

With insights into their potential, the candidate was free to move beyond all beliefs and superstitions. They were to place no restraints on what they might become until eventually they reached the boundaries put in place by society. Then it was up to the individual to challenge those boundaries and create a place where they could exist in their entirety. Once they understood and embraced their own pure state of being, they were set apart from common culture, and they became an expression of that urge to evolve. Those liberated from the constraints of society by the Illuminati become the embodiment of counterculture to inspire others through the ages.

MINERVAL

The Minerval class was an entry point for existing third degree Freemasons which attracted candidates by claiming to offer an accurate account of the origin, history and aims of Freemasonry. The Minerval degree was presented as the 'true' Freemasonry, and Weishaupt's lucid interpretation of its symbols and doctrines would entice many to join from existing Masonic lodges.

The emblem used by the Minerval degree was the Owl of Minerva, a symbol of wisdom that accompanied Minerva, also known as Athena, the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom. A second symbol employed in this degree would later become known as the logo of the Illuminati. The eye on the pyramid, described in Freemasonry as the 'All-seeing Eye' or the 'Eye of Providence', adorned the carpet in the Minerval lodge chamber of initiation.

At this time, Freemasonry was limited to male membership only, but Weishaupt intended to open a Minerval school for women members to mark their equality and recognize the importance and potential influence of womankind in society. He wrote that he believed that women would one day have equal standing to men and should be allowed to prove their worth.

The Minerval induction begins with the entrant signing an oath of obligation to the order, which commits them to purifying the intellect and becoming learned, but not for personal gain. Their mentor then selected specific tracts and rules from the order for them to study in support of their progress. The bespoke nature of training was geared towards the candidate's needs, and also ensured that the wider aims of the order were protected, as no single Minerval was exposed to the whole plan. The novice was then expected to make weekly progress reports and work with his mentor to temper any negative or excessive emotions, addictions or mindsets.

The aim of this work was to identify and root out all prejudice within a candidate and for him to gain insights and self-knowledge. He was also asked to give an account of times when he felt his behaviour had been less well judged than it should have been. This question was used to identify areas of the personality that required work, such as egotism or any past wrongdoing that polluted the personality. Clues to such behaviour could be found when feelings of shame or guilt are triggered or when people act unconsciously and then revert to denial. Self-awareness is central to the beginnings of illumination, and the candidate had to monitor their thoughts, opinions and feelings.

The journal was to be a brutally honest account which could be used to bring awareness to

unconscious patterns of negative behaviour. Illumination is this light of awareness that expands to reveal the unconscious material that rules from the shadows of ignorance. It is an opportunity to face one's demons and transform them into angels by releasing the trapped energies from some wound or suffering that has gained power over the individual. Many psychological wounds heal with time but some grow in power and begin to control a person. These can be hard to release, but redemption exists for those who are willing to work through the hurt and anger of the original fragmentation of their personality. It is a facet of alchemy and the purpose of psychology to make whole the individual from their parts.

The quality that the Illuminati valued most in its members was an understanding of human behaviour, and to this end the candidate was also expected to observe, study and report on those around him. The study brought insights into human nature and helped a person to develop a delicate understanding of character. Over time this gave the candidate the ability to work with, and if necessary, influence, others in their circle of acquaintances. Armed with a clear understanding of the motivations of others, they were in a position to steer society towards better ways of living.

The first degrees could take up to three years to complete, and during this time the candidate never met the superiors of the order above his mentor, but was permitted to correspond with them directly. The correspondence was private and gave an opportunity to provide direct feedback on the conduct of his mentor in a manner that has become fashionable in modern working environments as the '360-degree appraisal'. Directing the superiors was the Council, which at this point remained unaware of the existence of the candidate and their progress. When the three years came to an end, if the candidate had not made sufficient progress they remained a Minerval and could go no further. If an aptitude for the order and a willingness to progress was demonstrated, then the candidate was invited to become an Illuminatus Minor.

ILLUMINATUS MINOR (LESSER ILLUMINATUS)

This degree introduced an awareness of social and political issues. The candidate was lectured on how they have joined an organization that objects to those who lack virtue or who are consumed by greed in positions of power. The Illuminati believed that only enlightened people should hold power, and they reiterated to the candidate that the Illuminati existed for altruistic purposes, not for power or personal gain. There was no offer of power, just support towards reaching human potential and the opportunity to fight injustice. Members of the order were to unite and work towards a common goal, just as all those who are good and noble but suppressed can band together and with a grasp of human nature can become more powerful than those who would impede their progress.

The mentor continued to support the candidate as they worked to serve the aims of the order. In mentoring, they focused on strengths and never tried to resolve failings directly, unless these drastically inhibited the candidate's progress. The candidate was evaluated for goodness and inner worth and directed to undertake a path of learning from ancient wisdom to modern science. Those who wished to advance themselves through wisdom and in pursuit of truth were directed to further reading materials chosen to target their potential. They learned to serve the Illuminati by turning any situation into an opportunity to increase the happiness of humanity.

Having been taught to fight for good and answer to no one, they discovered that the supervisors exist to guide and not to command. They were now considered ready to recruit others and to present them for consideration. In recruiting, the priority was to find candidates

who displayed a good heart and the quality of compassion. They were also allocated a basic authority and were taught to supervise Minervals and provide detailed reports on their actions and character. This was a measure of diligence as well as a means to grow the order rapidly without the burden of bureaucracy resting entirely on the supervisors.

THE MASONRY DEGREES

The number of standard Masonic degrees can range from three, to 36, or to 96, depending on which branch of the order we examine, but all groups have a core of three degrees that are considered fundamental. The Illuminati originally focused on recruiting candidates from at least the third degree of Freemasonry, but this was not compulsory. Those recruited from outside Freemasonry were taken through a modified form of the three degrees, as these were deemed useful to connect the candidate to the secret mystery schools of antiquity.

The Illuminati presented the three degrees as 'eclectic Freemasonry', which allowed for the selection of the most appropriate rituals according to the needs of the candidate. These degrees were then improved upon, as Weishaupt had taken issue with how the Freemasons had debased the 'royal art' of alchemy by reducing it to the mundane pursuit of making gold. He believed alchemy to be true mastery over the self, and that the sole purpose of such sovereignty was having dominion over one's own life. Weishaupt's long-term aim was to ultimately replace the Masonic degrees within lodges with his own interpretations.

ENTERED APPRENTICE

The first degree of Freemasonry is the Entered Apprentice, and prior to embarking on this degree the candidate took a vow of secrecy and made an obligation to undertake a personal journey of self-improvement for the good of humanity. With this in place, they were invited to attend a lodge or temple to be taken through the first ritual of Freemasonry.

The ritual comprised a series of enactments, for which the candidate was prepared by removing all metals from his person to symbolize the relinquishing of wealth. Like the Hanged Man of the Tarot deck, this was a call to renounce material ambition and to embrace an authentic spiritual life. The candidate was then summoned by three loud knocks which were a call to awaken, reminding them that they have been asleep in ignorance. They were then required to approach a designated sanctuary with slow, measured steps, to teach them that they could not rush to become illuminated, as there were no shortcuts.

In the sanctuary, symbolic items were presented to the candidate in the form of the stonemason's tools that were used to focus the mind on getting the measure of one's own actions. Then the candidate was presented with a rough stone, or ashlar, which they must work to make true and perfect by means of these tools, as if it were the unenlightened spirit that was to be perfected.

Further symbols were invoked, with the shining star representing divine wisdom, and the moon embodying a reflection of this wisdom in the world. This represented the personal will, which must be aligned with the Higher Will, or Higher Self. The lesson here is that in order to do this work, one must have free will and be true to that will. When aligned with a Higher Will, a single person has the power to achieve great work in service of humanity. Once the candidate demonstrated progress towards free will, they were permitted to enter the second degree.

FELLOWCRAFT

The Fellowcraft degree concerned itself with the application of learning and self-advancement of the body, mind and soul. It prepared the individual for the receiving of spiritual truths and set them on the journey towards enlightenment. This ritual also included further emphasis on the alchemical process of transformation. The candidate was to take steps towards perfection by removing limiting patterns and self-defeating behaviours or mindsets, and by curbing excess and abolishing ignorance.

The tools employed in this part of the work were self-enquiry, contemplation and meditation, which if applied to any idea or belief would eventually reveal truth to the candidate. Similar ideas can be gleaned from contemplating the symbols of alchemy and the Tarot, which both contain the archetypal stages of spiritual progress. When the archetypes are used in symbolic form, they can speak directly from higher consciousness without getting caught up in the logic of semantics.

Further work was also required on the attaining of free will. The main barrier to progress at this stage was often mindsets that were self-inflicted. These could be dogmatic thoughts and delusions or behavioural patterns both good and bad forming neural pathways which become fixed over time. To change these pathways, the candidate must practise acting in contradiction to their typical behaviours and responses, and in every moment consider how to react before defaulting to an automatic reflex. Without free will we approach every new situation as we have always done, and in doing so, like Narcissus gazing at his reflection in the river, our view of the present is polluted by the past. We find diminishing gratification in achieving what we always achieved. Such automatic thinking must be challenged by reason. By delaying gratification and choosing a different outcome, we begin rewiring the neural pathways of the brain to potentially open up new areas of our being.

MASTER MASON

As the two previous Masonic degrees enacted stages of spiritual development, the goal of the Master Mason ritual was to finally balance inner nature and external experience. The core teaching of this degree was a re-enactment of the sacrifice and resurrection initiation – the universal experience of death and rebirth that underpins baptism in all its forms. This was known long before Freemasonry and is mentioned in the *Apologia* (AD 155) by the early Church father Justin, who describes a ritual washing called ‘illumination’, which was ‘to take place where the brethren are assembled’.

The candidate was blindfolded and laid out upon on a coffin as if dead, and then raised up and the blindfold removed. He was born into a new life, resurrected as if he were Jesus, Lazarus, Osiris or many similar figures from antiquity. Like many rituals, this experience could be interpreted through a number of levels of meaning. Primarily, it gives the candidate a direct experience of death and shows them the role they play in the process of dying and being reborn. The reincarnation motif in Christianity is supposedly exclusive to Jesus, but in Masonic terms the resurrection is available to all, both in life, as an enlightened being, and after death in keeping with the greater cycles of nature.

The use of a blindfold allowed the candidate to become like Persephone, descending on a transitional journey into the Underworld to recover that which was lost. This signified the liberation of the soul from the material world and its progress towards a spiritual life. Having been reborn among the Illuminati, the candidate was prepared for progression into the Illuminati

degrees.

SCOTTISH NOVICE (ILLUMINATI MAJOR)

The Scottish Novice was the first degree of the Illuminati that a candidate encountered if they were recruited from Master Masons within Freemasonry. As such, it returned to the Minervals territory of tasking the candidate with providing a complete account of their activities, opinions and emotions. It also established the ideals of the Illuminati and expanded upon the ideas of Masonry in the application of the philosophy of liberation to help to progress society.

The mentoring of this degree was also used to establish suitability for progress through the order and to make it clear if there was anything in the candidate's life that was incompatible with what lies ahead for him. Those deemed worthy were given tasks and instructed to apply themselves to furthering the order's aims by infiltrating other Masonic lodges. From the brethren they encounter they were to seek out and identify potential members for recruitment.

SCOTTISH KNIGHT (ILLUMINATI DIRIGENS)

This degree established the field of influence of the individual in relation to their position in society and especially among Freemasonry. They were to gravitate towards positions of power and influence and work to realize the Illuminati ideals. The oath of this degree contained a commitment to work against all corrupt systems and to resist all superstitions. Its teachings focused on improving morality and honesty by challenging vice and injustice in every area of the candidate's life. The Scottish Knight was also to temper any desires for excessive wealth. Any candidate who proved to be irredeemably corrupt or immoral at this stage was expelled from the order.

For this degree the following ideals were instilled in the candidate. They were taught that those with power and status should have no special rights and should not be immune to judgement, that governments and monarchies that fail to be of service to their subjects are to be challenged, and that ownership of land is theft, war is murder, patriotism is a misconception and pride is a disease of the mind. Of these ills, war was seen as the greatest abuse of power, used to instil fear in the masses, which could be exploited by corrupt politicians. Nationalism was also singled out as the enemy of humanity because it used tribalism to create separation.

In a detail that draws upon the Rosicrucian tradition, the candidate undertook a search for the first true King of the World: a philosopher of great wisdom and insight who would rule a united Europe. The quest was a folly but it introduced the idea of true sovereignty that could be attained by all, and also served the function of uniting the order to act as one, with a single voice and purpose to fight for the rights of mankind. To this end the candidate was expected to study and further contemplate what they were taught, so that they could improve upon the teachings and forge their own path from them. The correct path was known to higher members and the council, but the candidate could achieve personal success by striving to discover it for themselves.

Existing Masons were also expected to adhere to the belief that the Illuminati were superior to Freemasons. To improve existing Masonry, the candidate was instructed to introduce the Scottish Knight degree into any lodge they attended, and also to work secretly to control the finances of lodges. This would ensure that the money was spent in accordance with Illuminati aims. In this manner, the Illuminati infiltrated Freemasonry and positioned themselves

to oversee its development.

AGAPE (THE LOVE FEAST)

An additional event was staged at the lodge, called the 'Agape' or Love Feast. This was a ritual enactment of the Last Supper with an Illuminati Prefect taking the role of Jesus. Agape, based on an original Christian ritual, was seen as an opportunity to share and contemplate the love that dwelled within members of the order. It was also introduced to keep those still committed to Christianity engaged in the order by focusing on the qualities of love and compassion. Through love, the Illuminati saw a deeper sense of purpose emerge: their love for others, and for humanity as a whole, was to be the prime motivator of their actions. The ritual of sharing food as an expression of brotherly love can still be found among Freemasons, where it has been reduced to one of their many banquets.

THE MYSTERIES DEGREES

Before progressing, the candidate was evaluated on their religious sentiments and opinions. Depending on how deeply entrenched religion was within their psyche, they were steered towards a suitable version of the Priest's degree.

PRIEST

There were two versions of the Priest degree in operation. In the Christianized version the negative views about the Church and state were muted or expunged, so as not to offend those already deemed too rigid in their beliefs to progress, even though they were still of use to the order. The philosophy behind this was that when presenting religion to a Catholic audience, one must refrain from offending them until they have been prepared for the truth. During the early degrees and teachings, references to Christianity were tempered towards the orthodox, until it was understood that the candidate could grasp what was being presented to them.

This ruse also allowed candidates to be open and candid about any devoutly Christian leanings, marking them for additional teachings or else preventing them from making further progress within the order. For the second version of the Priest's degree the Council had compiled information to counter the myths of Christianity that were being indoctrinated as historical fact. The Church at the time of the Illuminati was still very much in control of the education syllabus, but evidence could be presented to contradict its teachings when the need arose. By maintaining a thread of alternative Christianity, the Illuminati were also in a position to leak information into the public domain anonymously to undermine the power of the Catholic Church.

In this manner the Illuminati appeared to be tolerant of Christians while secretly plotting to counteract the influence of the Catholic Church. In the modern mind it is easy to separate Catholicism from spirituality, but in the 18th century a challenge to one was perceived as a threat to the other. The same issue befell Freemasonry at that time, when Chevalier Ramsay publicly revealed the chivalric roots of the order by identifying the Knights Templars as forebears of the Masonic tradition. In response Pope Clement XII immediately issued a papal bull demanding that all Catholics refrain from joining the ranks of the Freemasons.

The repositories of information gathered by the second version of the Priest's degree were used as a basis for research groups and libraries to advance the knowledge of the order. These libraries of philosophy, science and wisdom were used to teach to other members of the order about science, the occult, philosophy and politics. A special study of medicine was made, which links the order back to the Rosicrucians, who were known as the greatest healers of the age. The intention was to give members of the order access to the sum of human knowledge.

Candidates for the lower degrees could be assessed on which new ideas they accept or reject as a further indication of how far they might rise through the ranks of the order.

In the ritual that accompanied the Priest degree, the trappings of Freemasonry were discarded in the belief that they will limit further development. The ritual opened with the candidate casting off their Masonic attire, being anointed with oil in keeping with being chosen for a spiritual purpose, and donning the priestly robes of the order. With this act they were expected to look beyond the purely philosophical aspect of Freemasonry and to become active in society.

The degree progressed in the form of a ceremonial 'reception' in which objects of power, the crown and sceptre, were shown to be symbols of corruption. Candidates were then called to answer if they believed those in power as monarchs, heads of state or religious leaders were fit for the purpose of advancing humanity. By examining current authority, the initiate was expected to discern which leaders were useful and which were detrimental to the cause of illumination. Then they were challenged to explain how they believed the situation could be improved, what they would change and how these changes could be made. Finally, they were asked directly if they would choose violent revolution or passive influence to achieve these ends.

The candidate must learn to hold power without succumbing to its allure, which can distort the personality. To illustrate this, he was reminded of the corrupt and selfish nature of the monarchs and nobles. Kings were compared to parents, and the case was made that when a nation comes of age it has no need for a parent to dictate how it should behave. Society was to become empowered by abandoning monarchs and forcing governments to relinquish as much control and choice back to the individual as was possible. Only then would the enlightened individual answer to none but his own authority, since to depend on others is to renounce the right to freedom.

The candidate was then lectured on the ills of patriotism and instructed to rally against such narrow-minded principles as if they were an affliction that restricted the love of humanity with imaginary borders. The Illuminati described the world as a single garden, with plenty for all, and mankind was to maintain this garden in a manner that was sustainable, and to share its riches equally.

Additional questions were asked to establish the candidate's willingness to replace corrupt religions with the secret doctrines, and to reinstate a pure form of mystical Christianity. For those free from Catholic indoctrination, the Priest's degree also taught that Christianity had pagan roots among the mystery schools of the ancient Egyptians. These beliefs were thought to hold more value than modern Christianity, because they are closer to the source of all religions. They included the view that spirit is trapped in matter and that individuals can choose to either devote their lives to fulfilling the needs of the physical form or seek to nourish and express the spirit within. To incarnate is to be surrounded by sensory illusion that is to be transcended in search of the truth. The tools for achieving this were to be found in the training and symbols shared by secret societies as a means to pierce the veil of the material world.

Having received the teachings of the Illuminati, the candidate learned that only

enlightenment could promote freedom and deeper insights into truth. Once he was wise to the world, the candidate must seek out influential positions in the scientific, religious and political spheres of society. He was to achieve this by forming his own secret groups and infiltrating the enemies of the order, who were to be challenged, removed or controlled. He was to endeavour to covertly influence the highest ranks of people in positions of power, but to do so in complete secrecy and without recourse to threats or force.

Having established these networks of influence, he was to unite his charges to the worthy causes of equality and liberty, inspiring them to act with benevolence, modesty, love and tolerance. To conclude this degree, the candidate was to make a choice between spirituality and power. If he chose power, he was immediately expelled from the order.

PRINCE/REGENT

The Prince degree was suited more to those who were now free of rigid views and responses and independent in their thinking. For this degree candidates had to be beyond government influence and not beholden to any political or religious cause. Coming from the Priest degree, they would have shown dissatisfaction with the abuses of power committed by aristocrats and rulers and have found all forms of fraud in financial institutions objectionable. Progress through the Prince/Regent degree required the candidate to have the strength and desire to improve the governance of society by empowering the individual.

During the initiation the candidate, with his hands shackled, was presented as a slave who seeks his freedom. He was informed that he was in this state because he has been enslaved by society, government, education and religion. The candidate was then led into the first of three rooms, where he encountered a skeleton with a sword and a crown at its feet. He was asked whether the skeleton is a king, a nobleman or a beggar, and although he does not know the answer, he is told that does not matter. From then on he must judge everyone to be equal: only the personal characteristics of the individual were important, not their social status.

The skeleton also illustrated how the candidate must revert to being a moral being, free from the vice of materialism. Then the candidate, who must commit to fighting the corruption of institutions, was presented as having proven himself worthy of the power to carry out this task. To progress to the next room he agreed to transcend materialism and be willing to devote himself to the betterment of society. The shackles were then removed and he entered the second chamber.

In the second chamber the candidate was directly challenged and asked if the order should remove corrupt monarchs from power to prevent them from doing harm. An alternative option was then presented: the idea that it is possible for members of the order to surround the monarch, preventing their nefarious acts and curtailing their more destructive behaviour. The challenge was having the wisdom to know whether to silence those in power or encourage them to change, so the candidate had to assess the motives of every ruler to establish whom they served. Only if they served their subjects, and only then with some modicum of wisdom, should they be tolerated. Failing that, the candidate was asked, would power not be safer in the hands of members of the order who have trained to deliberate over all things with wise counsel? If given power, the Illuminati would replace government with a true meritocracy based on liberty, morality and virtue.

The candidate was also asked if he considered the current form of Christianity in Europe to be close to the original, and if he believed that Christianity in its original form still existed. He was told that as people were not born with a religion, and humanity did not evolve with one

naturally, so their faith must have been either something that was imposed upon them or something that they discovered for themselves. And therefore religion can be removed if it proved to be a barrier to their progress towards enlightenment. To find liberation, the candidate was to address the problem of religious influence and recognize how his personal outlook had been tainted by its insidious corruption. This part of the ceremony concluded with the revelation that traces of a pure religion were to be found in the ancient mystery schools and in the hidden teachings of Jesus. The candidate would then consider how to best serve this higher faith and how to teach others to seek a pure religion. In discovering the sublime philosophy, he learned to govern his own spiritual path.

On entering the third and final chamber, the candidate was confronted by one of the Illuminati Superiors sat upon a throne. The Superior addressed the candidate and informed him that he was now a free man. The time had come to go out into the world and share his new-found wisdom to engender freedom in society. He could choose to leave the order and have no further obligation other than to serve humanity how he sees fit; but if he saw good in the works of the order, he may choose to continue to promote its cause. In return for his continued adherence to the order, he was given a promise of support and protection.

On choosing to stay with the order, the candidate was given to understand the true scale of the exoteric domain of the Illuminati and the scope of its influence. He was told that almost all Masonic lodges were under the direction of the Illuminati, as are some heads of state who were subject to their guidance. Those who wished to progress further in spiritual matters and in the esoteric domain of the order could apply to pass into the higher degrees.

THE GREATER MYSTERIES

These are the highest degrees of the Illuminati, and they reiterate much of what has come before but in a form that is devised to coalesce in the mind of the initiate. Once the foundation of a robust personality is in place, the candidate is ready to progress towards illumination.

MAGUS

The teachings of this degree drew the candidate towards a unity with all things. The degree invoked the philosophers of the day by examining how religion and state gave a false appearance of separation. Ritual was not necessary, as the teachings came in the form of philosophy, beginning with Spinoza who proposed that God and the world were the same thing, and that all religions were without foundation, contrived by ambitious men. The lessons of this degree illustrated how organized religions used superstition to control society and had lost their direct link to the divine, which means that any priest, pope, rabbi, sage or imam is another barrier to spiritual progress. These leaders of institutional religion are blind to the real spiritual needs of the individual, and they are too generic in their teachings to be useful in the personal quest for divine unity. The final religion must satisfy the scientific questioning and psychological needs of both the individual and the masses. It must also support all things as they evolve towards their natural conclusion.

Once the cobwebs of superstition have been swept aside and the ever-burning lamp of reason shone into every murky recess of religion, humankind will be free to traverse the higher levels of consciousness towards an evolution of spirit. The voice of spirit cannot be heard from the mouths of others or read in the books of the saints, and this is the secret that religions have

kept from lay people all through history. Spirituality in its simplest form is the search for meaning that provides people with a sense of purpose in the world, because a life without meaning is a life without grace.

REX

The Rex degree made clear the final mystery of the Illuminati. It showed that the complexities of science and philosophy fell away once the candidate understood reality. The mysteries were revealed, showing that the candidate was limited by his senses to experience the physical manifestation of the world and not the underlying harmony of the forces hidden in nature that the physical world emanates from. The candidate then discovered that everything he perceived was only the appearance of form, and that beyond this there is an inner existence. Everything we see in the physical world is a manifestation of energies that are eternal.

To witness the absolute truth required an experience of gnosis, as the curtain of nature was pulled aside to reveal the divine workings of the universe, such as William Blake described seeing within a single wild flower. Once nature was unveiled, either by revelation or gnosis, it gave insights into the essence of all things. The Illuminati taught that no religion could find the words to truly convey this experience, which must be sought uniquely by each person according to their own path. Until this connection was achieved, humankind's separation from the truth of nature remained, as evidenced in how religions interpreted the same spirituality differently.

All religions came from the same source, but were limited by their own narrow interpretation of the divine. Because of this, religions were removed from the truth, and thus they reduced the idea of God to a finite instead of an infinite concept. Any religions that portray God as having a gender can immediately be challenged by simple logic. God can only be the absolute perfect and pure energy that encompasses all. This energy is the conscious Will of the universe that contains the urge to life from which all else emanates. In a sacred spiral of growth, God is the infinite, unchanging archetype from which all nature radiates.

All things in nature are driven from the first primitive urge to evolve, and will continue to strive towards perfection. In humanity this is an impetus towards higher nature. To the illuminated even discomforts, ills and other challenges in life are a catalyst that prompts them to evolve.

With an awareness of evolution, humankind can set its purpose and priority to move towards enlightenment and the search for the true self. To be king, or Rex, as the title of degree suggests, is to have sovereignty, which is dominion over one's self and one's environment. Every person, whether they be peasant or prince, is capable of being a sovereign, and all nations must be brought to this state of self-rule, by peaceful means if possible, but by force if necessary, for all subordination must vanish from the Earth. Through enlightenment and absolute equality, humankind will discover what it is capable of achieving and eventually reach its full potential.

At the conclusion of the Rex degree the candidate was free to act upon their own initiative and work through their intuitive understanding of how to serve an evolution towards a harmonious state. The order could no longer direct them, having freed them of all forms of control, including itself. In conclusion, they were, at last, emancipated.

MANIFESTING

The Illuminati was not a perfect order, as any group is the sum of its members and can fall prey to human weaknesses. But their ideals were of the highest merit and key to the emancipation of humanity, since their goal never wavered from the evolution of all minds towards illumination. At that time, and perhaps still today, there could be no greater calling.

The path to enlightenment is always unique to the individual, so first one must be allowed to be unique in order to follow this path and not be burdened by the limitations imposed by others. The challenge for those who successfully passed the initiations of the order was to bring the fruits of this inner journey into the world. The later incarnations of the Illuminati would attempt to make this inner wisdom real, to influence society as a whole. The intention was to pave the way for an enlightened society founded on self-realization, but first it was necessary to demolish some of the corrupt structures society had put in place. The target of these enlightened initiates was the despot leaders and privileged rulers of Church and state in Europe.

CHAPTER 6

DISSOLUTION AS EVOLUTION

Having liberated members of the Illuminati from religious indoctrination and nationalistic tendencies, Weishaupt set his sights on instigating a wider social change. The Illuminati taught that it was not enough to emphasize personal progress: such developments must also be applied to the real world by making a stand for causes that mattered. With free will each individual was capable of seeking a means to take action and impress upon society a change for the better. Small changes could be made without arousing suspicion to help to undermine the power of the Church and of governments and monarchies with the long-term aim of ridding Europe of corruption and nepotism.

Those who had worked through the Illuminati degrees were instructed to be vigilant for opportunities to gain power over the institutions that ruled society by using their identity, class, fame or social standing to further the aims of the order in secret. They also learned how to hide their intentions under the names of other groups, and to infiltrate and control secret societies or any institution that had influence over law or education. These groups would provide cover for the Illuminati members and ensure the survival of the order.

Having aligned themselves to this philosophy, members of the Illuminati began to infiltrate organizations in a manner the secret services of the modern world would one day attempt to emulate. Initially, the Illuminati aimed to allow those in power to believe they were still in power, while being secretly manipulated by the order. In the long term they aimed to depose them and replace them by leaders more qualified to rule.

The embedding of members in other societies also had a secondary purpose. Weishaupt was aware that the Bavarian government was beginning to fear the power wielded by the Illuminati and he knew that the order would eventually be suppressed, so he ensured its survival by cultivating a hydra of sub-organizations and offshoots. In many of these groups even the principal members had no idea that they were working on behalf of the Illuminati.

As the growing backlash became inevitable, Weishaupt instructed members to avoid using the real name of the order. They were to hide among Freemasons and embed Illuminati ideals in their degrees or create new lodges devoted to the work of the order. The Illuminati are thought to have controlled the Lodge of Philalethes, the Amis de la Verité, the Amis Réunis and the Lodge of Illumination in Avignon. They had placed members among the Martinists, the Templars, the Grand Orient of France, the Chevaliers Bienfaisants and the Jacobin Club. Weishaupt was also a Rosicrucian and would have attempted to gain the same leverage among this group as he was achieving in Freemasonry.

SUPPRESSION

Accusations against the Illuminati were provoked almost immediately after it was created. It had caught the imagination of existing Masons, and the speed with which it grew by recruiting members was seen as a direct threat to Freemasonry. Lodge Theodore in Munich was investigated by the Grand Lodge of Freemasonry and, along with associated lodges, found to be under the direct control of members who called themselves 'Illuminati'. They were accused of plotting to overthrow Christianity and the governments of Europe, but no hard evidence could be found to support this charge. Then in 1783 four academic professors confessed to being members of the Order of the Illuminati, proving that the order had also made recruiting inroads within education. Under questioning, the academics revealed that the tenets of the order included the opinion that suicide was a right and not a sin, and that Christianity and the confessional were to be shunned.

The Illuminati teachings showed existing religions to be compiled from imperfect philosophies that had grown distorted out of a single truth. This drew inevitable criticism from established religions that felt threatened by the secret societies over which they had no control. During the 1870s the Bavarian government colluded with the Catholic Church to officially outlaw the order. This took four attempts. On account of the Illuminati's utter disdain for the authority of both the government and the Church, this only served to push them further into the shadows. Freemasonry had already been the target of a papal bull which had done nothing to hamper its appeal, and in 1777 all secret societies, including the Illuminati, were banned in Austria. It was a measure of the group's success that Illuminati members were being recognized in positions of influence and that, at the height of their power, the Illuminati were considered such a threat that King Francis of Austria ordered the closure of all Masonic lodges.

In America the rise of the Illuminati among Freemasons had not gone unnoticed. On one side there were many American Freemasons who were willing to join the emerging order; while others feared that the Illuminati taking control of Freemasonry would stir up further anti-Masonic sentiments. In *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati* (published 1918, by Columbia University) author Vernon Stauffer describes a controversial exchange of letters in 1799 between the Illuminated Freemasons in France and the Illuminated Freemasons in the United States. From this the author concluded that the Illuminati were deemed a major threat in the USA as a whole, as they were believed to be capable of taking power through secret means.

The works of Robison and Barruel also became popular in the fledgling United States and further inspired a fear of the Illuminati, while also feeding existing anti-Masonic sentiments. It took the respected Freemason George Washington to defuse the issue and make it clear that the Masonic lodges of the USA were not under the control of the Illuminati. However, the adoption of the Illuminati symbol of the eye hovering over the pyramid displayed on the US dollar bill might seem to imply otherwise.

EVOLUTION

It would have been obvious to Weishaupt that the Illuminati would fall foul of the authorities, and to counter this he devised a way to ensure that the order would survive beyond its current incarnation. As with any social movement of worth, there is a point when the ideas become more important than the group that formulated them. The Illuminati, although they were outlawed, had so embedded their members and beliefs into other orders and manoeuvred themselves into influential positions that it is unlikely that they ever really disbanded. Working in secret, members of the Illuminati would continue to influence every area of government to promote the ideals of the order.

Manly P Hall in his *Masonic Orders of Fraternity* concludes that the influence of the Illuminati was so far-reaching for its supposed 12 years of existence that it must have been but a 'fragment' of a broader movement. Certainly, among its members there were many influential people, and the society was constructed in such a way that it could take control of many other groups under a myriad of guises. Weishaupt, moreover, had stated in private correspondence that he had found a way to ensure the survival of the order even if the authorities disbanded it.

Other societies were also appearing that were either inspired by the Illuminati or had reached similar conclusions. The Dutch Society for the Protection of Princes espoused the aim of enlightening humankind and releasing it from the superstition of religion and the oppression of those who had not been democratically elected. This group was quickly suppressed, but its title evokes the Illuminati Rex degree in its promotion of personal sovereignty.

In 1780 a subgroup of the Illuminati based in Hamburg, called the Order of the Knights of the Brethren of St John the Evangelist from Asia in Europe, created lodges in Prussia, Asia and the Middle East. The exact number is unknown, but some were identified as Melchizedek Lodges. The Asian model for the Illuminati adopted local symbolism and philosophies including reincarnation, and was also credited with introducing the energetic motif of the Hindu symbol of the swastika into Germany. This method of adopting local customs and beliefs was used to gain acceptance in other cultures by the medieval Sufis and borrowed by the Templars. In this manner they could infiltrate international groups.

As the tendrils of the Illuminati continued to spread and other groups were formed in their shadow, a direct successor appeared in the form of the German Union. This organization was known to share senior members with the Illuminati, thus bringing it into a sphere of direct influence. It also held the same underlying philosophies and teachings and was perfectly positioned to continue the work of the Illuminati in secret.

THE GERMAN UNION

By early 1788 the German Union, or to give it its full name, the German Union for the Rooting out of Superstition and Prejudices and the Advancing of Free Christianity, was fully established and circulating publications to entice new members to join. Publicly it shared many tenets with the Illuminati, advocating the advancement of science and learning, valuing talents over inherited power, and promoting liberty and equality. Like those of the Illuminati, the early degrees of the Union were derived from the first three degrees of Freemasonry, but renamed as Cadets, Men and Aldermen to play down the mystical elements and appeal more to non-Freemasons.

To promote their cause to the public, the German Union distributed leaflets that railed against those who would subvert virtue and reason, or impose censorship. The leaflets also

explained how a group of 22 had gathered to fight for enlightenment and freedom from superstition for all humankind. This core of members met in the German cities of Halle and Berlin. The fixed number of 22 as an inner circle is still used today by the Priory of Sion, suggesting a group that shares more than just ideals with the Illuminati.

Those who responded with interest to this leaflet were furnished with a second leaflet requesting that they sign an oath of secrecy. Once this was signed and returned, a statement of intention was despatched outlining the group's aims. These aims, it transpires, were identical to those of the Illuminati, although couched in a more palatable form of address. The German Union claimed to follow the mission of Christ, which it defined as bringing enlightenment and freedom from superstition and fanaticism. It then described its intention to recruit people of influence in all areas of society to install truth and virtue in all forms of government. If the candidate chose to continue, they were instructed on how to identify and recruit others of a similar mind. When sufficient numbers were enlisted, the order intended to structure itself according to geographical provinces with a simple hierarchy.

The ethos of the German Union was almost identical to that of the Illuminati, but instead of using Masonic terminology and recruiting via the infiltration of Masonic lodges, its members openly appealed to the public. Having defined their target audience, the Union was likely to have been a public incarnation of the Illuminati and would have existed in parallel with them until the Illuminati went to ground. One achievement of the Union was to form literary societies and reading groups, and to establish public libraries to make available ideas that could be used to inform and influence society. They also set up publishers to disseminate 'those authors which give light to the human mind', including philosophers such as Spinoza.

The German Union was clever enough to play down their antiroyalist and anti-religious agendas so as not to deter members of the public from joining. They appeared as a school or a free-thinking benevolent society, but they were working secretly to fund the distribution of manifestos that promoted civil unrest across Europe. They also aimed to infiltrate every aspect of public office and all areas of society, just like the Illuminati. And just as with the Illuminati, their targets for influence or recruitment included the Freemasons, the Rosicrucians and the Jesuits.

Having been recruited, the new members were inducted into an order that was Masonic in all but name. It viewed Christianity as a mystical undertaking, with Jesus and his disciples serving as the archetype for the Masonic lodge gatherings. Within the lodge Jesus was identified with the role of Grand Master, while the disciples John, Peter, James and Andrew were considered the 'elect' third degree initiates. The remaining apostles were of the second degree, and the wider group of 72 followers were of the first degree. In the course of their teachings they would move pupils from Christianity towards Deism, a belief that God is absent and humanity must decide its own morality; and to further this cause they intended to set up a Deist church in Berlin. This subversion allowed them to subtly undermine the power and beliefs of the Catholic Church by offering an alternative.

The next step for all the Illuminati groups was to actively apply their philosophies for the betterment of society. As their Masonic counterparts had set their sights on creating America as the 'New Atlantis', the Illuminati saw the potential to rid Europe of the ruling aristocracy and end the suppression of science by the Catholic Church. Their belief in the struggle against inequality and corruption, once disseminated through the masses, would capitalize on the social unrest in France and give spark to what would become the raging fire of revolution.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

With the network of groups in place with a far-reaching and influential membership, all that was needed was an opportunity to make the aims of the Illuminati a reality. The growing social unrest in France was seen as a potential catalyst to rid Europe of royal influence. In 1782 the Illuminati hosted the Wilhelmsbad Congress, inviting 35 prominent leaders of secret societies and lodges including members of the Strict Observance Rite and Templar lodges to discuss the future of Europe. They excluded the main Masonic bodies in England and France, who would have objected to their radicalism. It was at this conference that the decision was reached to overthrow the French monarchy.

Public loyalty to the monarchy and parliament of France was diminished beyond repair, as the poor were being taxed to compensate for the decadence and financial mismanagement which had steeped the country in debt. Talk of escaping the clutches of the corrupt monarchy was festering in the Parisian salons and spread into public consciousness with news that the American War of Independence had wrested that country from the financial burden of the British monarchy. Soon ideas of liberty and equality abounded in the talk of philosophers, writers and artists in cities across France. For the Illuminati this was an opportunity to speed the process to a bloody conclusion.

The leading figures in the French Revolution, including the Duke of Orléans, Mirabeau, Condorcet and Rochefoucauld, were almost all highranking Freemasons and Illuminati. Mirabeau himself was initiated into the Illuminati in Berlin, and had created his own lodge in Paris to recruit members who could further the Illuminati cause. Mired in the continued social unrest of Paris, he could see the opportunity for the aims of the order to be brought to fruition. He contacted fellow members in the lodges of Germany and was instructed to seize the opportunity to put into practice their philosophy of emancipation.

The revolution was also supported by the Duke of Orléans, who was the Grand Master of Freemasonry in France with 266 lodges entirely at his command. The Duke had instilled the teachings of the Illuminati into the existing lodges and then recruited from the ranks of those who might be called upon to oppose the coming revolution, including the members of the state guard. Their intention was to overthrow the monarchy, remove the ruling nobility and replace autocracy with a democratic process. The leaders of the new republic would be appointed according to merit, morality and proven aptitude for the role.

The French Revolution could be celebrated as an Illuminati victory, as the unenlightened who were deemed unfit to rule were deposed according to plan at the hands of social unrest. Both the monarchy and Catholic priests were sacrificed to make way for a new age of reason. This outcome served as a warning to all governments and monarchies, present and future, to serve the interests of their subjects and always to be aware that real power rests with the masses.

With the French Revolution under way, plans drawn up for a similar uprising in Germany were circulated among Masonic and Illuminati lodges. In 1791 an Illuminati group called Propagandz, under the leadership of the Duke of Orléans, formed into lodges and despatched agent provocateurs to every country in the West with the aim of promoting insurrection and identifying further potential revolutions. Other heads of state were quick to react, and in 1797 the British government passed the Unlawful Oaths Acts which outlawed membership of secret societies to prevent a repeat of the events in France. Freemasonry was exempt from this, as the British monarchy had been members and patrons of the order since the mid-18th century and continues to be to this day.

In the aftermath of the revolution, with the monarchy vanquished and the Catholic Church expelled from power, an inevitable chaos ensued. Although some groups of Freemasons began to distance themselves from pro-revolution splinter groups guided by the Illuminati, it

was their tenets of equality, liberty and fraternity that became the mantra for the post-revolution French republic. The liberty sought by the visionaries who instigated the French Revolution morphed into its opposite under Robespierre's 'Reign of Terror', which saw the execution of 17,000 suspected anti-revolutionaries including the Duke of Orléans.

When the fire of revolution burned out at the borders of France, it became clear that the war against privilege would need to find other forms of expression.

THE COMING AGE

As the political upheavals and machinations of the Illuminati abated, one aspect of their belief system was gaining traction across Europe. The wisdom of the mystery schools that had surfaced in ancient Egypt had already found a footing in Freemasonry and would later become popular among the 19th-century occult groups. The adoption of ancient Egypt as an idealized source of knowledge manifested itself as the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry created by Alessandro Cagliostro, a Sicilian who had been inducted into the Illuminati. This was considered a transcendental ritual in which he sought to impart moral perfection and create an enlightened, or illuminated, individual. This ritual later became a key text in occult groups that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Ancient Egypt remained a strong influence within Freemasonry, and in the late 20th century President François Mitterrand upheld the tradition with a number of building projects including the glass pyramid at the Louvre, which is modelled on the Great Pyramid in Egypt. This unambiguous attempt to recreate ancient Egypt in Paris had been an ongoing Masonic project since before the French Revolution. The layout of the Louvre and its gardens map exactly onto the Temple of Luxor in Egypt, with an obelisk from the original temple relocated from Luxor marking the entrance. In spite of Mitterrand's renewed support for the mysteries, Freemasonry had been steadily declining since the late 19th century. New drivers for social change were capturing hearts and minds, and if secret societies could not carry the ideals of the Illuminati forwards, then other groups would follow to pick up the torch.

Historians generally downplay the role of secret societies and their influence, as it is inconvenient to accept the role of a hidden hand in major historic events. For this reason the Illuminati are absent from the records of the French Revolution, only existing as a footnote in the history of Freemasonry. Yet while history would have us believe that the Illuminati were disbanded when the name fell out of common usage, even the anti-Illuminati author Robison concedes that the suppression of the Illuminati and of the German Union failed to put an end to their cause. He admits that they were everywhere and very successful, even in distant lands where they had recruited many followers.

The various offshoots and incarnations of the Illuminati working through secret societies make it extremely difficult to fully trace the order. Added to this, it is also possible for secret societies to become dormant for a time only to be resurrected later by other groups with similar aims. They resurface, not as a living continuation with a succession of leadership but as a collective ideal that in the right hands will spark further incarnations in name only.

The brief recorded existence of the public face of the Illuminati does not detract from their importance, nor prove that they ever really went away. During the writing of my first book, *Inside the Priory of Sion*, a representative of the Priory of Sion, Nicolas Haywood, stated that Sion comes together at specific points in history when the time is deemed right for action. They reform and disband as required, depending on their agenda and on whether the social conditions are ripe for change. Like the Illuminati, they would capitalize on counterculture and

political dissent to trigger events that would progress humankind towards emancipation.

Weishaupt had known that the name of the order would become a burden, so he instilled in its members the ability to adapt and continue working. They were to survive by forming other allegiances under a myriad of guises and hiding themselves among the Freemasons and esoteric groups. Although these groups would come and go from history, the ideals would be sustained, because they serve an archetypal function to evolve towards truth and freedom.

As the physical form of the order sank back into the shadows, its philosophies became part of a new age of reason. It had always been Weishaupt's intention to broaden their influence beyond secret societies and to inspire the leading artists, writers and thinkers of the ages to come. He recognized that while political uprising served a purpose, a cultural upheaval must come from within society, driven by the popular icons of creativity. To this end the spirit of the order would endure and find a new voice in the emerging counterculture movements, and anyone who understood the aims and beliefs of the earlier order could recreate the Illuminati when society has a need for them to exist. As an embodiment of a philosophy, the Illuminati have always existed under many names and guises while forming a part of the mystery traditions that underpin Freemasonry and the Rosicrucians. Even Weishaupt's incarnation was not the first, as he taught in the Prince/Regent degree that evidence for the origins of the order were burned by the original authors. The creators of the Illuminati understood the value of anonymity and chose to prevent veneration by future generations by removing themselves from history.

The Illuminati had manifested as the archetypal secret society and seeded their wisdom among the many groups that have pushed the boundaries of society through the arts, occult thought and counterculture. To look at the movements that have emerged since the time of Illuminati is to wonder if they ever really went away.

CHAPTER 7

COUNTERCULTURE

'Society is interested only in fitting every individual into its framework and maintaining its continuity.' U G KRISHNAMURTI

Evolution is a natural state of change for both the individual and the species as a whole. The Illuminati had understood that life naturally seeks perfection, and in every age society will try to build upon what came before as it works towards a state of harmony. If the limits placed upon society were removed, so too would be the limits of the individual to reach their full potential. The evolutionary triggers in society range from extreme inequality driving revolution to the spread of philosophies through new communities. The common theme among these agents of change is that they all began as counterculture movements.

The counterculture ideas that endure usually start from the experience of being rejected, oppressed or ridiculed by society and eventually progress to a degree of social acceptance. If society fails to curtail these emerging ideals, they will eventually be absorbed into the mainstream. This process quickens if the core identity of the movement is allowed to erode and soften towards acceptability.

The defining characteristics of counterculture could be described as an anti-establishment ethos and an emphasis on the self-directed individual. To be a counterculture is to exist in opposition to society, which requires the rejection of existing values. Governments rule as much by philosophy as by law, and those who refuse to comply or collude are always vilified in some form, or even imprisoned like the heretics of old. But if there is a reason to rebel and if society is no longer a good fit for its subjects, then subcultures necessarily form. To maintain personal integrity, outsiders have to find it in their nature to provoke change by challenging the boundaries of acceptability, or else create a place where they can exist in their entirety within a satellite community.

Counterculture belongs to those who are compelled to live it, and for some that takes the form of self-imposed exile to avoid conflict. Socrates instructed his followers to question everything while choosing to remain an impoverished hermit. For others who attract a sizeable community, the crusade against orthodoxy provides an opportunity to create an alternative society that allows its members to embody alternative ideas and become an ongoing experiment of uniqueness. Many of these groups collapse within a few years, but there are examples of lasting self-sufficient communities, such as the British Findhorn Foundation in the 1960s or the American Transcendentalists in the 19th century.

Both of these communities share a connection to nature, which formed a spiritual bond between their members. The leading figures of Transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, took the gnostic view that experience of God was internal while recognizing the importance of nature in a way that was reminiscent of the pagan religions. Emerson and Thoreau were both great writers and shared their outlook with a wider audience through publishing which attracted like-minded people to their community.

These groups formed 'autonomous zones' or proto-societies outside the social mainstream which have historically taken the form of religious or spiritual communities to varying levels of success. Connectivity has greatly enabled alternative societies to be explored online in a mass of temporary autonomous zones with constantly shifting memberships, which are evolving into something more by impacting the real world. The power of these communities is that they give the individual support in the drive for acceptance.

PARIS AND THE OCCULT REVIVAL

To some extent, all social progress can be seen as the struggle between the establishment and counterculture, and it is the duty of every creative soul to push back against all forms of cultural tyranny imposed upon them. The Illuminati had wanted to fashion a new age of emancipation, and this can be seen in the ideologies of counterculture. They knew that for any group to truly succeed as a counterculture movement, it must achieve a critical mass of acceptance and become tolerated as a part of society. Proof had come with the French Revolution that this critical mass can bring about change and steer society in a new direction once a previously unacceptable idea has become acceptable. The idea of revolution had originally taken root in the minds of the progressive thinkers and then spread through all classes of French society.

Following the revolution, the success of rebellion and the new sense of liberation in France had allowed alternative cultures to flourish, and Paris began to attract thinkers, writers and artists from all over the world. Many of these individuals and the groups they joined drew on the occult knowledge and ideas of freedom that had previously been hidden within the lodges and temples of secret societies. At the same time, those secret societies proliferated across Europe as their ideologies began to find voice in the wider society.

Without the absolute power of monarchy and the oppression of the Catholic Church to keep it in check, France enjoyed a new wave of energy and creative ideas. Meanwhile, the remaining establishments of old Europe continued to try to curb the extremes of self-expression that began to encroach upon their boundaries, moving their focus from the suppression of heretics and secret societies to the conflict between counterculture and the status quo.

By the 19th century the Vatican's hold over the education and spirituality of Europeans was on the wane and the challengers to the Church were flourishing in all corners of the West. Science was forging ahead with a rational view of the universe and Darwin's unravelling of Genesis held the public imagination. The myths that had become truths in the eyes of the Church were examined and found wanting by historians and archaeologists, and the monopoly on belief also saw challenges from the translation and study of Eastern texts and the ability of Europeans to travel and discover other spiritual paths and methods. Interest in the heresies was renewed, and the circulation of non-canonical biblical texts further challenged the tenets of the Catholic Church.

The salons of Paris were still ringing with Voltaire's erudite statements against religion, and Diderot's atheism had paved the way for Nietzsche to follow. Philosophy had also come back into vogue, seeding atheism and a mechanistic view of the world that allowed people to think the unthinkable. Nietzsche, famous for his 'God is dead' aphorism, expressed an even more potent idea against the Church when he announced that 'God is a dog's bark in the street'. The former statement was easy to dismiss out of hand, but the latter carried a more subversive energy. Nietzsche had shown that the language used to describe God was meaningless: it carried no weight, no personal revelation reflecting an experience of the divine. The dogma of Catholicism was becoming the new heresy in the eyes of both scientists and philosophers who recognized that any religion or belief that stands against human nature is doomed to fail.

The philosophy of atheism was an extreme reaction to the machinations of religion, but by ignoring the beauty and wonder of life it failed to answer the spiritual needs of the people. A major influence on spiritual practice in the late 19th century came directly from secret societies in the form of Western occultism. Various enlightened groups had converged on Paris, including the latest incarnations of the Illuminati, Rosicrucians and Freemasons, which counted among their members mystics, alchemists, ritual magicians and various occultists who were gathering to learn and share ideas. Rituals were adapted from Freemasonry and merged with pagan initiations by occult groups trying to reconnect to the ancient mystery schools. Books such as the works of French author Éliphas Lévi were widely circulated, as were the Rosicrucian manifestos and the ideas of Sweden's Emanuel Swedenborg, whose advocacy of direct communion with angelic beings would influence spiritualism.

Paris had become the home of many leading occult thinkers, whose work has maintained an audience to the present day. Papus, a member of the Memphis-Misraim rite, published on the Tarot, the Comte de Saint Germain the alchemist made enigmatic appearances, Éliphas Lévi authored *Transcendental Magic* and Joséphin Péladan resurrected the Rosicrucian order. These figures would inspire the occult movements of the 20th century and each of them was a member of the Rosicrucian order that Weishaupt had joined prior to forming the Illuminati.

There had always been an underlying occult theme to the European secret societies. The Illuminati included alchemy in their rituals and teachings, and this became a staple of the occult traditions, along with the Egyptian ritualistic roots of Freemasonry. The esoteric side of Christianity found many new adherents now that the Catholic Church was powerless to persecute those who sought to revive the mystery religions. The rituals of secret societies were updated and adapted to meet the needs of the occult groups of the age, and it was in Paris that

Britain's legendary occultist Aleister Crowley was initiated into the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a group steeped in Rosicrucian symbolism.

Crowley was a revolutionary thinker and, although loathed by the establishment and branded wicked and depraved by the press, sought to find a pure source for religion through a rigorously scientific approach. He studied and tested all forms of spiritual practice, partly to satisfy his own cravings but also to explore the limits of religion. Crowley eventually became the head of a branch of the Order of the Templars of the Orient (OTO) which, like the Illuminati, worked a ritualistic system that drew upon the nine degrees of the Rites of Eleusis. Significantly, it entitled the ninth degree the 'Illuminatus Perfectus'. The OTO opened lodges across Europe and attracted Austrian mystic and author Rudolph Steiner and occultist Papus through its gates.

Crowley also publicized the secrets of spiritual attainment through sexual energy, believing that this had been a key teaching of secret societies, hidden beneath the symbol of fire or the twin serpents on the caduceus of Mercury. In the East this energy was called kundalini and was central to the tantric schools of yoga as a means to attain enlightenment. Through tantric sex, energy awakened in the root chakra at the base of the spine could climb towards the crown chakra at the top of the skull, opening the remaining six chakras along the way. This was the origin of the idea that the archetypal number seven offers a powerful path to illumination through physically manifesting spirit in matter. Kundalini is a natural phenomenon, and available to all as a direct experience of the power of spiritual energy.

THE NEW CENTURY

As the 19th century drew to a close, Paris became the centre of all European and even American counterculture. All who were on the cusp of the new wave were drawn to its cafés and bars, and for decades to come the boulevards and squares would be transformed by the creative spirit of the age. Parisian culture advanced in all areas of art, literature and philosophy. Literature, in particular, has always given a voice to counterculture – from the Libertines of the 17th century, the Paris-based moderns at the onset of the 20th century and the Beats of the 1960s. Through literature Rimbaud rallied in verse against normality, while Anaïs Nin and James Joyce expressed sexuality in the face of censorship.

Art would also embrace new forms of expression, with the works of Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Claude Monet awakening ways of seeing that transcended the past and paved the way for Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso. The Dadaists and Surrealists followed, exploring their own assimilation of the occult. In the 1920s Russian visitor Sergei Eisenstein established cinema as an art form, and then Luis Buñuel took the medium in a revolutionary new direction. Such a collective shout of aesthetic heresy would take two invasions from Germany to quell, eventually being trampled into conformity by the boot of fascism, but it remains in spirit to this day.

The Nazis had also adopted the occult, having inherited it from the Thule and Vril societies that both owed a debt to a misunderstood version of Theosophy. Hitler saw the value of pagan beliefs as a potential rival to Christianity, and also based the Third Reich on Freemasonry, which he would later outlaw as a threat to his authority. He understood that it is possible to rule by politics or by force but to truly control the will of the people you must engage with them spiritually.

While Hitler exploited Germanic heritage as a tool to evoke nationalism, Heinrich Himmler, one of his most powerful chiefs, believed that the occult could be used to gain magical powers. In pursuing this interest he was typical of the weak-minded personalities who are often drawn to

the occult because they believe it will give them power they would not otherwise deserve. This was why the Illuminati had put so much emphasis on becoming self-aware through ritual: they needed to ensure that their members had achieved some level of illumination to be worthy of having authority over others.

The relentless carnage of two world wars and the Bolshevik Revolution had shown the idea of the Christian God to be impotent. In the wake of such immense loss, many people sought alternative spiritual disciplines to fill the void. The Christian outlook was further undermined in the 1940s by the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library, a collection of alternative gospels and writings that bring us closer to an understanding of the teachings of Jesus. The archive includes scriptures that undermine the dogma passed down through the Church, indicating that true Christianity should be more concerned with inner work than with the material world of wealth and power. This principle had been taught by the Illuminati centuries before, giving credence to the idea that alternative gospels were already in circulation within secret societies and had informed the Illuminati in their anti-Catholic stance.

As the rate of new knowledge being introduced to culture was accelerating, the opportunity arose for a resurgence of secret societies, and with them a return of the occult and esoteric philosophies. The secret societies would capitalize on the post-war spiritual vacuum which established religions could no longer address, and support a search for alternative perspectives on spirituality. New secret societies and new religious movements began to form; Buddhism and Eastern philosophies were making their way from Asia; an interest in nature religions was rekindled; and even witchcraft saw a renaissance as covens took refuge in the forests.

Although religious thinking was developing, society in general was becoming more entrenched. Post-war rationing and a desperate need to return to 'normal' after the horrors of the Second World War ushered in the cultural rigidity of the 1940s. Europeans and Americans embraced the suffocating 'ideals' of social snobbery, rigid gender roles, inhibited sexuality and conservatism. Women, who had played an important role in the war, found themselves demoted to domestic duties and childrearing again. Clothes, hairstyles and interests were restricted to a collective idea of 'wholesome', and anything that appeared contrary to this was attacked as being 'Communist' or 'subversive'. Governments exploited this fear to maintain conformity.

It was a time when society retracted to the point of household appliances becoming highly prized status symbols. This type of reductionism to shallowness and pretence leaves no space for creativity and progress. However, challenges to established thinking came in many forms. During the 1950s Wilhelm Reich's forays into orgone energy and the function of the orgasm led to his research being seized and incinerated in New York by the authorities. In archaeology in the same decade Immanuel Velikovsky published his seminal work *Worlds in Collision*, which re-imagined historic epochs as a series of cataclysms. His research unravelled the entire biblical dating system and the accepted dating of early history, but he was openly vilified by other academics who later admitted that they had been 'instructed' by the government to undermine his work. Velikovsky's research has yet to make its way into the history books, but from this point onwards alternative history began to unfold for those willing to reconsider the evidence.

The more constrictive and repressed society became, the more it was doomed to be rebelled against. Now it was the youth movement that led the charge, inspired by the cultural anti-heroes of cinema. James Dean and Marlon Brando inflamed the attitudes of the next generation, while the Beat writers lent a voice that breached the puritanical façade society aspired to uphold. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S Burroughs lived what they

wrote of drugs, mysticism and sexual exploration, projecting their views onto music and culture. Burroughs in particular had his own skewed insights into human nature; and drawing on his own experiences, he built his life around dismantling the concept of reality and communicating without any personal filter.

AN OPEN MIND

Of the Beats, only Ginsberg was actively trying to influence social change, but their calling to have experiences, and to be truly alive, which in print generally made for self-indulgent drug-fuelled meanderings spiced up with sex, inspired others to explore the limits of culture. Even if the world looked flat from where they stood, these mavericks are to be honoured for having the courage to be true to themselves. By putting themselves at the centre of their stories they helped to usher in the 1960s trend of self-exploration and self-gratification. This was initially picked up by hipsters, the precursors to the hippie movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, as being the voice of the moment. Together these radicals led a wave of dissent propelled by the rising generation who demanded freedom with a 'howl'.

By the early 1960s it was clear that the strict authoritarian stance of the old guard governments and middle classes held no dreams for the young. In the music and literature of the 1960s outsiders were finding a common voice. Rock and roll was a rallying call, as music, owing to its immediacy, has the potential to mirror counterculture and capture the moment. Elvis and The Beatles pushed musical boundaries, exposing their prim white audiences to the excitement and sexual undercurrent of music that had been a part of black culture for decades. Bob Dylan the troubadour raised universal political concerns, while Leonard Cohen shone as the mystic.

Music was a revolution in itself, but fashion, art, literature and cinema were also pushing the boundaries of acceptability in all directions; and the taboos of society began to fall. Society took a step towards being inclusive when Martin Luther King put race at the centre of politics and helped to empower those fighting for equality through wisdom. Cultural movements were becoming politically aware and capable of rejecting the accepted way of life. Initially, the mainstream news, which views such eruptions of the collective psyche as something to fear and avoid, ridiculed such idealism and continued to cling to the dominant social mores of the day.

The counterculture of the 1960s rejected war and looked to create a peaceful utopia that would include all those who felt marginalized by society. Its ideals centred around freedom of the body, expansion of consciousness and pursuit of joy. Sadly, the latter was misconstrued by many to mean hedonism, but the aims were eerily similar to those of the Illuminati. The scent of the Illuminati was in the air and the bloodstream: some sheets of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) tabs in circulation had the Illuminati eye-on-the-pyramid symbol inked upon them.

Drugs had a traditional role in Western occultism, with the burning of opium a prominent feature of many rituals – which no doubt greatly enhanced the visual aspects of the experience. In shamanic religions and early faiths, the hybrid animal gods of ancient cultures illustrated aspects of the psyche that in the West would morph into the absurd demonic confections of grimoires (magical instruction books) such as the *The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King*. The use of ritual and drugs evolved from working with primitive archetypes to the early psychology experiments pioneered by R D Laing, Stanislav Grof and Aldous Huxley, who identified LSD as a tool for releasing the unconscious.

The medical trials of LSD-25 had the unforeseen side-effect of propelling test patients into

transcendental states of consciousness. The drug soon caught on among experimenters as a means of attaining a quick fix of spiritual awareness without any of the work of meditation. While psychological pioneers such as Grof were taking the first steps towards using LSD to tackle mental health issues and trauma, the American psychologist Timothy Leary began urging people to drop acid and drop out of society.

It was Leary's antics that would lead in part to a worldwide ban on research into the medicinal applications of LSD, but as a recreational drug it quickly came into vogue, broadening perspectives and challenging the strict morality of the age. In the era of space exploration, while NASA was putting man on the moon, the 'internauts' made their own journeys into the uncharted realms of the mind. The creative arts brought their findings to the masses through authors as diverse as Burroughs and Huxley. Robert Crumb, whose wild imagination and distorted artistic vision was propelled by LSD, drew comic strips to express his own psychosis as caricatures of the 1960s.

Later exponents of the psychedelic experience, such as The Beatles, would inspire many to flock to India to escape consumerism and embrace the many forms of yoga and meditation. This in turn led to a greater interest in spiritual teachers from both the East and West. George Gurdjieff's 'war against sleep' challenging those who would live unconsciously to awaken was revived, while Alan Watts, a British-born American philosopher, adapted Eastern philosophies for the Western mind to comprehend. Eckhart Tolle focused on awareness, as did many gurus from the Sai Baba incarnations to Osho, Ram Dass and Yogananda. J Krishnamurti had escaped the adoration of the Theosophists to become a teacher of wisdom, and many seekers also discovered the methods of Buddhism, Taoism and Sufism for the first time.

The interest in drugs was still paramount, and researcher Terence McKenna in the wake of the psychedelic fad would trace the use of psychoactives back to their ethnobiological origins and authentic use in indigenous cultures. For the most part, LSD had been entrenched in the psychedelic subculture of the age until the trip turned sour or its users moved on to more destructive substances. Drugs would continue to drift in and out of fashion among musicians, occasionally killing rock stars, providing amphetamine fuel for the punk rage of the 1970s and then the warm glow of the MDMA/Ecstasy rave culture of the early 1990s. But as a tool for the search for self-awareness, it had long since dissolved into hedonism and self-indulgence.

The cultural upheaval of the 1960s swept the aspirations of the previous decade aside, and within a decade youth had transformed into something unrecognizable to the older generation. Further subcultures formed within society with the revival of the ecological movement and a new political awareness fuelling anti-war and anti-imperialist movements and the civil rights protests.

What was seen during the Sixties as a student uprising can now be looked back on as a true counterculture movement, albeit without any real power to change society. Those noisy kids in the hall, the beatniks and the rebels who stood against Vietnam, eventually disappeared into a cloud of tear gas and commercialism before they could achieve real change in their time. Patience is the challenge of counterculture, as it can take generations to manifest as the mainstream.

As the Sixties drew to a close, many aspects of the hippie counterculture began to fall out of fashion, and this reached a point where the people leeching off the movement outnumbered those actually living it. The symbolic end of the 1960s is variously cited as the murders by the Manson Family in California, the shooting of unarmed students by the National Guard at Kent State University, the Hell's Angels bringing their own violent counterculture to the fore at Altamont, or The Beatles going their separate ways. However, I think the last nail in the coffin came in the early 1970s when a Coke advert on TV presented the folk band the New Seekers

in hippie garb singing 'I'd like to buy the world a Coke'. This co-opted the sharing image of the Sixties and associated it with an act of popular purchasing, thus perverting it into brand consumerism. When the 'us' generation became the 'me' generation, the lava lamp bubble of psychedelia finally imploded.

The Sixties had sown the seeds of upheaval, but the 1970s would bring further change by tearing down the taboos of old. The Seventies saw sexuality, race and disability movements all successfully fighting for equality. The civil rights movement forced the political perspective to include more of humanity, and the gay, lesbian and transgender movements all sought to further widen the parameters of society to become more accepting of human nature. In counterculture it is the groups that are aligned with nature that stand the best chance of becoming part of society, because their traits are inherent in humanity.

The greatest need to redress the lack of balance in society came from women. The rise of feminism challenged the misogyny and objectification of the Sixties and tried to regain the ground it had lost since women had played a vital role in the war effort. In the Second World War they were still denied high-ranking positions but had the opportunity to prove they were more than capable of work that had previously been the sole domain of men. From the 1960s onwards they had tried to connect back to the respect demanded by the Suffragists as they began the long battle for equality in all areas of life.

By the end of the 1970s women had a clear understanding of their self-worth and began worldwide to reclaim their right to equality. In 1979 Muslim women in Iran marched in their thousands to protest against having to wear the traditional hijab: the veil that covered head and chest. It is to the shame of religion that in the world today there are an estimated 30 million women who are denied education because they are trapped in religious societies that force them into a life of servitude. To redress the balance in the male-dominated religions new religious groups in the West revived the divine feminine of goddess worship. Assigning a gender to the 'Creator' belongs to the age that has passed, and both men and women must abandon their misogynistic religions and recognize that spirituality has no such limits.

THE ILLUMINATI MEME

The Illuminati had advocated equal rights for women and many other ideals that were boiling over into mainstream culture in the 1970s. In 1975 Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea published *The Illuminatus! Trilogy* and triggered a timely resurgence of interest in the Illuminati. It stands as a conspiratorial epic of fiction that places the order at the centre of every major event in history. The authors had identified the Illuminati as history's most successful secret society, with members infiltrating all levels of government, and portrayed them as manipulating history on a global scale while breaking the psychological blocks to promote individual freedom through elaborate pranks and social engineering.

The book was an underground success, garnering a cult following, and Wilson went on to write many other books, both fiction and nonfiction, that expand on the subject. It is here that the Illuminati surge back into social consciousness as a symbol of the chaos that erupts into society just as the unconscious erupts into our awareness. The idea of the Illuminati instantly gained traction among the conspiracy theorists who sought a grand conspiracy to solve the world's unsolved mysteries. For them the Illuminati became a meme: a name to describe the shadowy organizations that were responsible for all conspiracies, wars and major historic changes. These authors cemented the reputation of the Illuminati as a byword for the activities of every secret society in history.

The reappearance of the Illuminati came at the perfect time. When the optimism of the Sixties drained away and the ennui of the suburban Seventies took hold, the change provoked anger among disaffected youth, and from this anger came energy. The generation gap then became a chasm through which the counterculture was once more empowered. Music continued as an outlet for dissent, and mainstream culture suffered a direct assault as the rage of punk exploded. The UK punk movement was radical in its sound, politics and fashion, and openly rebelled against the staid society that was choking the hope out of the young by ignoring free expression.

The British punks attacked the dreary establishment that they refused to inherit, with Johnny Rotten repeatedly intoning the lyric 'No future' to underline the point. It was both a rejection of generational values and a class war. For the disempowered and unemployed youth all that seemed possible was a revolution to no purpose. The aristocracy had survived in England but the power of privilege was beginning to crumble, like the stately homes being forfeited to the National Trust.

Punk also signalled a celebration of self-created identity that challenged the rise of gross commercialism. The underground press movement captured the punk ideology with amateur fanzines that mixed music and politics with a bold disdain for social normalcy. Selfpublished records provided a blunt howl of dissent through the speakers of the vinyl record shops, and the punks tore up fashion in search of self-expression. The movement was as iconic in its look and attitude as it was in its music. The blatant use of body piercings inspired the modern primitives movement whose tattooed, pierced and branded flesh evoked the tribal rituals of scarification. Punk also managed to embrace gender equality and racial diversity to reflect the tolerance that it demanded of society, and then it imploded as quickly as it had appeared, rather than be absorbed into the mainstream.

As the 1970s drew to a close, hints of a new revolution surfaced in the seemingly insignificant news that the mass production of silicon chips would soon create affordable computers. At the time the actual ramifications of this could only be speculated upon by science fiction authors, but even they recognized that, for counterculture, access to a new technology would eventually change everything.

TOWARDS A GLOBAL CONSCIENCE

In the 1980s many of the nascent counterculture elements of the previous decades finally came of age, and the rate of cultural absorption began to accelerate. The gay, lesbian and transgender movement had been fighting for acceptance through activism and celebrations in a long battle with societies, institutions and religions worldwide. The low end of the British press still described gay people as 'perverts', as if expecting them to rewrite their sexual orientation so as not to offend a narrowminded readership. But now the gay movement became a political and publicly outspoken force in the battle to be accepted, which, like all counterculture movements, is really the struggle to include more of human nature in society.

The 1980s also saw greed and consumerism take hold as a set of aspirations for the older generation. Marketing teams began appearing in all corners of commerce, trying to instil consumerism into the public perception of normality. Consumerism became a business credo, and is now so rampant that any counterculture movement could almost be defined by its refusal to be merchandized. Again, it was up to music to challenge this from a humanistic perspective and shame those who mistook selfishness for capitalism.

Prior to the 1950s new cultural ideas had spread slowly, but the advent of cinema, radio

and then TV accelerated the rate of change. Music was instant in its appeal and succinct in its messages, allowing it to exist at the cutting edge of culture. A single image or song could capture the imagination of youth and change the course of fashion, but rarely had an impact on politics. Then in the mid-1980s music suddenly became a force for political activism, as seen in the challenge to Apartheid in South Africa and in the Live Aid initiative. The Band Aid single proved that music could bring worldwide awareness to social inequality and inspire people to go further than governments in trying to address poverty. It put the wealthiest nations and the richest people on Earth to shame at a time when greed was seen as a valid motivation to achievement.

While artists flexed their new-found morality, the Illuminati meme continued to manifest in popular culture in different forms. The eye in the triangle commonly appeared in music videos and featured in the film *Desperately Seeking Susan*, blazoned across Madonna's jacket. Bill Drummond, who had worked as a set designer on a 1979 stage production of *The Illuminatus! Trilogy*, was inspired to form a band with Jimmy Cauty called the KLF, a name taken from the trilogy as one of many pseudonyms for the Illuminati. Drummond mined the *Illuminatus!* books for lyrics and adapted the symbol of the eye on the pyramid for KLF record sleeves and music videos to great success.

As the 1990s hove into view, Drummond and Cauty abandoned music and became art terrorists, as the K Foundation. In 1994 they made a bonfire of a million pounds of real bank notes to make a statement. They had previously nailed the money to a wall 'to prevent it behaving like money', but knowing that it would eventually escape, they resorted to incineration. It is not known if this anarchic act of creative combustion liberated them not just from money, but also art, music and possibly sanity; but for that moment they were in control of wealth in the sense that something only belongs to a person if it is theirs to destroy. It could also be said that all commercial art should have ended here, but for others there was still money to be made from it.

The formerly disruptive youth culture had become aimless by the 1990s, but instead of rejecting the boredom youth embraced it. This 'slacker' generation stood outside of society, comprising the local misfits, geeky and smart but with no sense of purpose or direction. It was a generation in waiting, quietly expecting the void to be filled by the millennium. However, technology, in the form of the internet, arrived first. This generation X took to the copper cable networks seeking a meaningful life and a means to connect to the outside world through the squealing modems lurking under their desks.

The technologists converged in digital landscapes where they could have a voice and share their thoughts with like-minded people. This gave them a place to hang out that was beyond anything society had to offer and was completely neutral in terms of status. Distancing themselves from the greed-driven 1980s and the mythic Arcadia of the 1960s, pockets of cultural resistance took shape on the bulletin boards and chat networks. Access to early networks was limited to those with coding skills until the browser gave a user-friendly interface to the worldwide web and released the potential of the internet for everyone.

With the dawning of the 21st century, the internet rapidly became all-pervading as the source of information and communication. It was an enabling technology that soaked up society so fast that it soon reflected the extremities of humanity, both good and bad. The Situationist movement of the 1950s and 1960s had already highlighted the alienation of individuals and the obsession with consumerism that, for some, technology would exacerbate. The internet could pander to all desires, no matter how base or distorted, but it also allowed culture to evolve in all directions; and as yet we have not found the horizon.

ILLUMINATI RISING

In the present climate of digital exploration there are a number of counterculture movements that intersect with the Illuminati as a historic secret society, a meme or a philosophy. The first of these is a group for whom the online environment was a perfect breeding ground for their ideas. Up to this point, conspiracy theorists had been working in isolation with no shared outlet for their theories and beliefs. A limited supply of books and magazines were available, but often written long after the event had passed; whereas online, events could be reported as they were unfolding, and debated at length.

The range of conspiracy theorists includes the paranormal and ufology groups celebrating all things Fortean, cryptozoologists (presumed by many to be hunting yetis but actually identifying many new species), alt-historians who question the accepted version of history through research and archaeological investigation, and the rapidly growing army of fringe political theorists who try to see beyond the news and media to theorize about the hidden motivations of the ruling elite.

Now anyone could build a website or create a forum and publish their opinions, or join existing groups to share research and collectively examine evidence with a wider audience. Through this new medium the conspiracy theorists wax lyrical about how the Illuminati are the secret rulers of the world. The historic reality still found a place in popular culture when Dan Brown published *Angels and Demons* (2000), a fictional account of the battle between the Catholic Church and the Illuminati, drawing further attention to their place in history. But for the most part, the Illuminati meme became the conspiracy theorists' explanation for the endless wars and the corrupt ideals of those in power.

It was specifically in their examination of dramatic political events that conspiracy theorists blamed the Illuminati for manipulating society as the hidden rulers of the world. Linked with events almost too big to comprehend – the murder of the Kennedys, the Watergate scandal and the fall of the World Trade Center – the idea of Illuminati as secret drivers of change was now writ large in subculture. It was as if the fictional works of Robert Anton Wilson were coming true, and many believe that in the current age conspiracy is a more accurate map of reality than the media or politicians would have us believe.

CHAPTER 8

THE AGE OF CONSPIRACY

In the latter half of the 20th century a new form of counterculture sprang from a growing mistrust of politics and media. A sprawling subculture of conspiracy theorists appeared, adding to its ranks whenever coverage of historic or news events was deemed incongruent. Ranging from the mildly curious to full-blown paranoiacs, these amateur investigators would dissect the clues of any mystery and try to get a glimpse of the world as they suspected it really was.

The value of conspiracy theory in our wider society is that it questions state-sanctioned information and challenges the accepted consensus. This enables a flow of new and alternative information, which is key to undermining the dogma of all disciplines of study and all sectors of the media that prevents the progress of society towards truth. However, conspiracy

theories would have been relegated as the hobby of cranks were it not for the fact that their version of reality began to appear more likely than the propaganda and misdirection put out by politicians and media companies.

CONSPIRACY AS CULTURAL PHENOMENON

A succession of key historical events motivated the rise of conspiracy theorists in the USA, which in turn attracted followers worldwide. The first took place at Roswell in New Mexico in 1947, an apparent concealment of an alien spaceship crash that generated an entire movement of ufologists and speculation about government and military cover-ups. The second was the murder of John F Kennedy, an event so shocking and poorly accounted for that it unsettled public faith in government and made conspiracy theories palatable to a wider audience. In addition to these events, the government propaganda in the press justifying the war in Vietnam also undermined public trust in news sources.

Conspiracies might still have remained a niche interest, were it not for the fact that evidence of the Watergate scandal suddenly proved their worth. For some, every major news event was believed to be the work of a hidden force, most often named as the Illuminati or the New World Order. There are three very specific types of conspiracy that interact with the story of the Illuminati. The first is the existence of secret societies and their influence on historic events, the second is the ongoing battle for power and control in which secret societies are often implicated, and the third is the idea that secret societies exist to protect information and heretical secrets from censorship or suppression. Conspiracies have existed for as long as civilization itself, but in recent history they have added a layer of interpretation to historical events that connect with the idea that even modern history is a myth.

Online, the various types of conspiracy theories were limited to a fringe audience until the attack on the World Trade Center raised important questions that were ignored by the mainstream press but lit up the internet with feeds from alternative news sources. The events surrounding 9/11, the handling of the 'war on terror' and the search for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) fiasco have only served to deepen the growing mistrust of political motives. The emergence of outspoken individuals collectively labelled 'Truthers' began to publicly challenge the generally unquestioning support of the press. It further destabilized public trust in the establishment and fuelled a sense that people were being lied to by the media and by politicians. Some Truthers went so far as to argue that the US government were complicit in the attack on the World Trade Center.

To begin to understand the nature of modern conspiracies, we must go back to ground zero of the UFO phenomena: the small town of Roswell in New Mexico that in 1947 found itself the site of what many think was an alien vehicle crash. This might seem tangential to the Illuminati, but as an example of conspiracy the events at Roswell allow for many interpretations and can be used as a case study to understand the process of conspiracy-making in general. After initial reports, interest in the Roswell incident subsided until a flurry of conspiracy studies in the 1970s revived the idea of aliens and alien technology – a burst of activity that has since become an industry in itself.

The details of the Roswell incident are recounted in many, often conflicting or exaggerated versions. However, the basic story is clear. First, the wreckage of a crashed vehicle was discovered in the desert near Roswell. This was reported to the local US Air Force base, which mounted a search and recovery operation to cordon off Foster Ranch, where the crash site was located, and remove the wreckage and debris. Instead of returning to the US Air Force base,

the operation relocated to the town of Roswell, which was inundated with military staff who also took control of the local hospital. At the heart of the debate is the question of whether or not a crew were recovered from the wreckage; and an additional factor is that local undertaker Glenn Dennis claimed that he was called by a US Air Force officer with a request to provide hermetically sealed child-sized caskets.

The official version of events as released by the US Air Force, and reiterated on numerous occasions, is that this incident centred around a crashed weather balloon. Obviously, this fails to account for the military presence in Roswell or for the commandeering of the hospital. The remains of a weather balloon could be thrown on the back of a truck and driven back to the air base without the need for such a show of force. It is this incongruence, and the accounts of the civilian witnesses, that allowed conspiracy theorists to fill in the blanks – which they did, with some gusto.

According to author Stanton Friedman and subsequent researchers, who interviewed local townspeople, the US Air Force recovered a number of alien bodies and possibly two surviving aliens from the crash site. In a universe so vast it would be naïve to discount the idea of alien life, the issue here is not about proving the existence of aliens, but of disinformation. Other authors have since extended the story to claim that the technology from this alien craft was moved to the Area 51 Air Force Base in the Nevada Desert to be reverse-engineered for advances in technology. The aliens, if they existed, are also said to have been stored or kept in suitable habitats there. All this has become the source of countless works of film and fiction.

The one aspect of the Roswell story that piqued my interest was the account by the local undertaker that the US Air Force had requested small, sealed coffins. This not only conflicts with the official account of a weather balloon but also makes it unlikely that anyone outside of the Air Force witnessed any recovered corpses. If the existence of the child-sized coffins is a fact, a more likely explanation is that they were meant for actual children. To extrapolate from this, if the US Air Force was developing a lightweight, experimental aircraft that required a crew to fly it, the weight of the pilots would be a key issue, and the solution might be to train children for the role.

A scenario whereby children are used to pilot experimental craft requires no fantastic elements and accounts for the small coffins, the commandeering of the hospital, the level of secrecy, and subsequent acts of misdirection. There is a big question as to where such child pilots might have been sourced, but in the grounds of Montauk Air Force Base in New York State there appears to be an abandoned orphanage that dates from this era, making the explanation at least plausible. If this is the truth of the event, any news of it leaking would certainly constitute a major scandal, causing the public to turn against the military. Allowing, and indeed encouraging, UFO mythology to fester successfully would be an effective way to deflect attention from the truth.

The ufology craze would also serve another purpose in providing a cover for experimental craft being developed at Area 51, the remote annexe of Edwards Air Force Base, within the Nevada Test and Training Range, such as the Lockheed SR-71 'Blackbird' and the stealth technology of today. The appearance of experimental craft has compounded the issue that plagues the evidence for alien visitation owing to photographs of UFOs matching man-made experimental craft from the same period. The photographic evidence for UFOs begins with flying saucers in the 1950s following the German prototypes from the Second World War, the cigar-shaped craft of the 1970s, and flying triangles sighted in the 1990s prior to the stealth bomber being unveiled. It is not possible to test a prototype long-range bomber without it being seen by civilians, so sightings were recorded and photographs began circulating. Unless alien technology is developing at the same rate as the US military, it seems obvious that all of these

vehicles are either manmade or they are photographic fabrications.

To maintain this charade various forms of disinformation and unsubstantiated claims have been leaked detailing alien visitations or technology by the US military to journalists such as Linda Moulton Howe. These modern myths make for a form of social distraction and add to the propaganda of hidden enemies that justify military funding.

The story of the Roswell incident ceases to be about the existence of alien life, which cannot be concluded from these accounts, but remains important as a perpetuation of post-war paranoia, and the equally mythic Cold War. The incident has the potential to feed a number of growing fears, like the 'Red scare' of hidden Communists. Aliens, like Communists, could be used as a new threat to keep the population distracted from the real issues of politics like military spending.

The UFO craze also spawned two further cultures of interest. The first is the idea that evidence for aliens can be seen in the Bible and in other ancient myths. The search for historic evidence of visitations is a filter that reinterprets biblical accounts from the perspective of alien intervention. These include the oft-quoted account in the book of Genesis that describes the Nephilim having 'shining faces' and interbreeding with the daughters of men. As it is impossible for two different species to interbreed, the shining faces can logically be explained as pale-skinned Europeans travelling to the Middle East.

The second culture relates to the power of myth that can underpin the primal material of our unconscious. Modern accounts of alien abduction share many common factors, such as awakening into the bright lights of a medical environment and the presence of 'grey' aliens with small bodies and large heads with big eyes. As a psychological experience, the clues for interpreting this are in the foetal look of the aliens and the blinding lights, both of which can be better explained as a re-experiencing of birth trauma than as the random kidnapping of humans for perverse experiments.

We cannot know on current evidence if there are alien visitations to Earth, but ufology needs to be reclaimed from pop culture and military propaganda if it is to be part of the ongoing mythology that underpins society. Perhaps ufologists are really in search of their own alienated emotions, in the same way that some people believe that secret societies have all the power because they feel they have no power of their own. In such a scenario, power is projected onto the 'other', and the sense of disempowerment this entails is the exact opposite of what the Illuminati were trying to achieve, since it makes for a passive and distracted society.

The lack of conclusive evidence that undermines ufology can also be used by mainstream media outlets to discredit the proponents of other conspiracies by association. Those who present evidence that challenges the official explanation of the attack on the World Trade Center, or Truthers as they are labelled, can be dismissed, alongside every other conspiracy, without due consideration. These groups can also be prone to attracting members who exhibit extreme paranoia and devalue the credibility of the group as a whole because they tend to see every event as part of a conspiracy.

A CRISIS OF RELEVANCE

Those who are drawn into the mild paranoia of conspiracy theory often begin with a story or incident that they feel directly impedes their progress in life. This can trigger a sense of persecution that captures their imagination, as they begin to see patterns of a wider conspiracy in all areas of the media and politics. Their reasoning will take on an elasticity of selective facts

and conjecture to arrive at seemingly delusional ideas, such as the belief that the moon landings were faked, Elvis Presley got out of the toilet alive and the CIA ran mind control experiments on civilians using LSD.

In the search for an all-encompassing conspiracy theory, some researchers look for the hidden motive in every death and disaster, while crediting secret societies as the masterminds behind every event, both good and bad. A reality tunnel forms as a misconceived worldview, as they search for a grand theory that ties all conspiracies together. In extreme cases, it is possible to lose the ability to discern where myth ends and reality begins and to fall into paranoia by taking the idea of meaningful coincidence to the extreme. This becomes the crisis of relevance. Through their broken filter the perpetrators of such illusions focus on anything, no matter how trivial, that supports their beliefs.

There is a psychic need in some people to distrust everything – to believe that there is a hidden agenda in play at all times. They go to great lengths to find minor inconsistencies that they can exaggerate to convince others that even modern events are mythic. And now the internet allows a few people to raise questions that become memes of misguided beliefs in the same way that new religious groups spread their own distorted views as if they were widely accepted truths.

The simple answer is to disregard all conspiracy theories, but the problem with this is that some of them are later found to be true. Stories circulated for many years in America accusing the CIA of experimenting on civilians with LSD as a form of mind control. This was ignored by the press until eventually Project MKUltra (running from the early 1950s to the early 1970s) was declassified, proving that the CIA had indeed extensively experimented with psychoactive drugs on unsuspecting members of the public and that these particular conspiracy theorists had been right all along.

On closer inspection, there seems to be an ongoing hidden agenda that influences our politicians and our media. For all the accusations of paranoia there remain many questionable events and unresolved mysteries where governments and the press appear to be colluding to hide the truth, or at least to shift the public's attention to less important news items. In some cases, the public are willing to go along with the deception. For every event that is hard for the public to accept, there is a conspiracy theory to lessen the emotional impact of it, as in the belief that Elvis is still alive, or a myth concocted to protect those who might find reality too shocking to assimilate. An example of the latter is the death of Bruce Lee, who was a cultural icon and hero to many; following his demise, stories circulated that he had been the victim of various plots similar to those in his films, whereas in reality he was killed by a seizure triggered by prescription medicine.

In a climate in which governments and media are free to keep secrets and hide information, we begin to lose the truth of history.

THE UNRAVELLING OF AMERICA

Following the events at Roswell, the next conspiracy to capture the public imagination was the assassination of President John F Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, in 1963. There are many books, articles and documentaries that examine this tragic murder. As film footage and eyewitness accounts of the event emerged, the official explanation of a 'lone gunman' began to look increasingly unsustainable. In the aftermath of the event, the official account played down the relationship of the accused, Lee Harvey Oswald, with both the FBI and CIA prior to the assassination. Staff within the FBI and CIA alleged that Oswald was a paid informant of both

organizations, and following the assassination Oswald's personal notebook was found to contain the contact details of a Dallas-based FBI agent.

John F Kennedy was a favourite of the people but not so popular within the US administration, and some conspiracy theorists saw the event as an elaborate sacrifice engineered by some hidden cabal within the government; others, like Jim Garrison, were more pragmatic. Like many researchers, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison would later conclude that the CIA was directly implicated in the assassination. Kennedy had obstructed the CIA and the military in order to ensure peace at the height of the Cold War, thereby creating many enemies within the administration. The main point of contention between these parties revolved around Cuba, which was seen as a direct threat to the USA as it was both Communist and within firing range of the US mainland, even with Russian technology.

The CIA had instigated a failed coup in Cuba that had been defeated in the Bay of Pigs incident in 1961, and following the standoff of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 Kennedy signed a treaty stating that the USA would not invade Cuba without provocation. To get around this, the CIA helped to draw up plans to fabricate provocation in the form of Operation Northwood. This was a planned covert operation intended to murder a large number of American civilians on US soil through fake acts of terrorism which were to be blamed on Communists from Cuba. These incidents of the mass murder of US citizens would then be used to justify further military action, allowing the US military to invade Cuba and remove President Castro.

Operation Northwood is now recognized as a 'false flag' operation that would have exploited the massive loss of US civilian life to further the aims of the military and the CIA. Shocking though it was, it was passed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the US administration but President Kennedy rightly refused to sanction this action. Following his refusal, it comes as no surprise that his assassination was officially attributed to a Communist sympathizer.

Another false flag operation is thought to have taken place in 1993 when a bomb was detonated beneath the north tower of the World Trade Center. It was believed that an attack on the World Trade Center could be used to push through anti-terrorism legislation and justify the increase in the budgets and powers of the US security agencies. It is not clear if members of the administration had a hand in the events, but evidence later revealed that the FBI had been made aware of the planned attack a year in advance and had chosen not to intervene.

This attack consisted of an explosives-laden truck that was intended to topple the north tower of the World Trade Center into the southern tower, destroying both buildings and killing everyone inside. Although six people died, it was not deemed shocking enough to push through new legislation on anti-terrorism. A further event, the siege at Waco, Texas, in the same year, saw the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the FBI invade the compound of the religious group known as the Branch Davidians, causing the deaths of over 60 innocent people including many children. Documentary footage shows the compound flooded with tear gas and alight while under heavy gunfire that prevented anyone from escaping.

Waco, reported worldwide, was depicted as a case of an insane religious cult imploding. When the bodies of the children were recovered with their spines arched backwards, it was clear that something else had happened. These injuries were caused by cyanide gas, which is produced by burning tear gas, which will ignite in well-ventilated rooms. The FBI had used military vehicles to punch holes in the walls of the compound before flooding it with tear gas, and evidence was later found that the government agencies had used incendiary munitions.

The horror of Waco was seen by some as part of an ongoing campaign by the government to challenge the growing number of independent militia groups in Texas with excessive force.

Waco inspired Timothy McVeigh to target a government building in Oklahoma in 1995 using a fertilizer bomb which killed 168 people. The authorities placed the blame for this event on two individuals, choosing to ignore evidence of others being involved. The person responsible for providing the explosives was claimed by McVeigh's accomplice to have been an FBI informant, and further leaks suggested that informants had warned both the FBI and the ATF in advance that Oklahoma was a target, but they chose not to pursue the issue.

The Oklahoma bombing resulted in the passing of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, and succeeded in increasing the funds and powers of government agencies. It also set up terrorists, albeit domestic ones, as the new enemy to unite the public in relinquishing their civil rights to restrictive laws. This paved the way for a new Cold War in which terrorists replaced Communists. The public were also being primed with the idea of terrorism as a threat that could be exploited to justify an aggressive foreign policy in the context of the black gold rush of the Middle East.

WORLD TRADE CENTER

In an age of media saturation it should be impossible for the events surrounding the terrorist attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001 to be in question. Yet there are many who claim that the official account of this second attack on the World Trade Center and of related hijackings is shot through with inconsistencies and unanswered questions. On first consideration it is easy to conclude that, like the assassination of John F Kennedy, a tragedy of this scale is so difficult to comprehend it would inevitably attract accusations of conspiracy and cover-ups. Just as the major news outlets ignored the theories of those who claimed that some deeper conspiracy was in play, it was widely assumed that those who believed in a conspiracy were failing to integrate the event of 9/11 – they blamed hidden forces within their own society rather than face the horror of an actual terrorist attack on this scale.

But in view of Operation Northwood, in which the CIA were willing to sacrifice innocent US civilians to further their aims in Cuba, perhaps the press should have looked a little harder at the evidence being questioned. There are many unanswered questions around 9/11, and many more issues with the 'war on terror' that it was used to justify.

When the attack happened, it appeared to come as a huge surprise to the US administration, when in reality contingency plans to prevent an attack on the Twin Towers had been in place for over a decade. This was based on a number of security reports that had concluded that a terrorist attack on US soil was most likely to be from a hijacked plane being used to strike the Pentagon or the commercial sector. Some even named the World Trade Center as a possible target. Even a TV show, the *X-Files* spin-off called *The Lone Gunmen*, had aired six months before with a plot of a disgruntled government employee trying to hijack a passenger plane with the intention of flying it into the World Trade Center.

To prevent hijacked planes from reaching their intended target, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) were tasked with responding to a hijacking within less than 10 minutes to intercept any plane intended to be used as a flying bomb. Also, the risk of an aircraft crashing into a tall building is well known to engineers, and the Twin Towers were constructed to withstand a collision from a fully fuelled Boeing 747. Both of these measures spectacularly failed.

So we begin with an unfortunate synchronicity of some magnitude. NORAD did not respond to the hijacked planes within 10 minutes, allowing them to remain in flight for over 80 minutes before impact. The reason given for the lack of response was confusion, because at

the time the attack took place there happened to be a training exercise for the exact same event: a hijacked aircraft being flown towards major buildings such as the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. Coincidence does not prove conspiracy, although when the Underground rail network in London was bombed in 2005 it happened to be on the same day, and at the exact same time, that a training exercise was taking place based on simultaneous bombs being detonated at railway stations around the capital. It might be possible to conclude from this that prior warning can be used in two very different ways.

The next major sticking point for the official account of 9/11 is the collapse of both of the towers in quick succession. The buildings were constructed to withstand the impact of a 747 jetliner, so should have remained standing. The official reason given for the collapse is that the floors became dislodged from the central column of steel and concrete. If that were so, the central structure would have survived, at least up to the point of impact. It is not possible for concrete-reinforced steel beams to collapse on their own, and to bring down a building so heavily reinforced requires the use of thermite explosives. In photographs of the aftermath, the steel girders appear to have been cut off at ground floor level as if by thermite.

Excuses can be made for the collapse of the Towers, blaming the pancaking of floors or the intensity of burning air fuel, but this does not account for the fate of Building 7. Building 7 was a 47-storey building near the north tower of the World Trade Center complex that sustained damage from the collapse of the north tower and suffered a number of small fires. Admittedly the sprinkler system failed, but later that day the building collapsed. It remains the only structure of steel and concrete in history ever to collapse into a pile of rubble from being on fire, for it seems that we are expected to believe that the steel girders in Building 7 just gave up and dissolved. If that were the case, then every building in New York should be evacuated immediately.

By way of another strange coincidence, a BBC news reporter, Jane Standley, in a live broadcast announced the collapse of Building 7 while it can clearly be seen still standing behind her. Her broadcast feed cut out just a few minutes before the building actually came down. Footage of the collapse available online looks otherwise identical to any footage of a controlled demolition. For no known reason the commission investigating the attack on the World Trade Center chose to exclude Building 7 from its investigation.

Events beyond New York have also generated debate among conspiracy theorists. To this day no CCTV footage of the plane crashing into the Pentagon has been released, and in the photographs of the crash site following the impact, wreckage from the plane is strangely absent. There is not so much as a suitcase, and no sign of the two eight-tonne engines that are unlikely to have been vaporized. The impact, which took place nearly an hour after Flight 11 had struck the North Tower, resulted from an incursion into some of the most heavily guarded airspace in the world.

There is not much to trust in the account of 9/11 except that a lot of innocent people died and a lot of laws have since been passed that suspend the constitution and inflict draconian surveillance programmes across the world. Having blamed Osama Bin Laden in the immediate aftermath of the attack, the US authorities then chose to aid the escape of members of the Bin Laden family from the USA; also, they avoided confrontation with Saudi Arabia where 15 of the 19 hijackers originated. Instead, they resurrected a war started by the President's father, George Bush Sr, and managed to convince a previously sane UK Prime Minister to go along for the ride. The new Cold War had begun.

THE BUSINESS OF WAR

Retaliation for the attacks on US soil was unjustly levelled at Iraq, supported by the myth that the country was developing 'weapons of mass destruction'. Using this blatant lie, President Bush callously exploited the victims of the 9/11 attacks by using their deaths as an excuse to invade Iraq. Instead of justice for the victims and their families, all efforts went towards increasing military spending and securing oil fields in the Middle East. The war itself was a charade, as the Iraqi troops were so ill-equipped and poorly trained that they would have surrendered to the Salvation Army. Modern warfare instigated by a country as technologically advanced as the USA towards an underdeveloped country is mass murder. It also became a huge drain on the US economy, as the Western forces targeted not military installations but the Iraqi infrastructure, which they would later pay to rebuild.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were estimated by the Bush administration to cost between 100 to 200 billion dollars, which they claimed would be recouped in oil revenues. The actual cost was two trillion dollars, funded by taxpayers and adding to the national debt. The money from this publicly funded war went to private businesses such as Halliburton and The Carlyle Group, a conglomerate of arms dealers and reconstruction companies who profit from both the destruction and rebuilding of cities at the taxpayer's expense. If the oil reserves of Iraq were nationalized, this would immediately alleviate the issues of poverty in this country and help to defuse further conflict; but then there would be no justification for the extra 100 billion dollars per year being spent on the military since the war began.

The true purpose of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was to extend US business interests in the region. Money remains the root cause of war, supported by the corruption that has spread through the corridors of power like a disease. With Saudi Arabia seeking to stabilize the region and under the guise of fighting terrorism, the USA seized the opportunity to attack the Taliban and implement a pro-Western regime in Afghanistan. When the Taliban refused to cooperate, the USA deployed a military coalition that included British troops. Like the incursion into Iraq, this had little to do with ensuring peace in the region beyond protecting the business interests of the oil and gas industries.

Influence over Afghanistan would enable the creation of a gas pipeline running from the vast, untapped reserve beneath the Caspian Sea through Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan to a deep-water port in the Arabian Sea. Bribes were passed to Turkmenistan by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to ensure that the route of a pipeline would not be impeded to the border of Afghanistan. The USA has also managed to maintain a 'special relationship' with Pakistan, even when that country was discovered to be harbouring Osama Bin Laden.

The total operational cost to UK taxpayers of the Afghanistan campaign that ran from 2001 to 2014 was 19 billion pounds sterling. Over 450 British soldiers were killed and there has been no noticeable outcome, other than to increase radicalization in the region. However, plans to build the gas pipeline are forging ahead. The publicly funded military support for the looting of natural resources is a common theme in modern warfare. Following the first Gulf War of 1991, US Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney gave 8.5 million US dollars to multinational oil company Halliburton to help them reclaim the oil fields in Kuwait. In 1995, on leaving the White House, Cheney was made CEO of Halliburton, which earned an estimated 40 billion dollars from the Gulf War.

The money went to buy weapons that included those left behind, in spent form, as depleted uranium shells, which have made parts of Iraq a radioactive wasteland. As a single tank shell can contain half a kilogram of uranium, this was the equivalent of dropping a tactical nuclear bomb on the Iraqis but without the bad press. The irony is that those pretending to be searching for weapons of mass destruction were actually deploying their own.

TERRORISM

Even within Saudi Arabia the rising branch of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism, an extremist movement of anti-Western sentiment that promotes violence and intolerance, remains protected by oil revenues. Religious schools based on Wahhabism became popular across Afghanistan and gave rise to the Taliban and the current incarnation of the Islamic State (ISIL). The ideals of Wahhabism are stuck in a 17th century ultra-conservative idea of Islam whereby women are denied education and all forms of modern culture are suppressed. Members of ISIL, as well as committing atrocities against humanity, desecrate art and architecture to remove faces in accordance with Islamic belief, and demolish the sacred sites of antiquity to deny the true religious heritage of the region.

Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda also drew on Wahhabism, but he wanted to modernize Islam. He blamed the West for what he saw as corrupting the Middle East, but chose to ignore the fact that it was his own Saudi countrymen who had welcomed the USA into the region. Bin Laden's nationalism was rejected by the Saudi ruling elite, so he resorted to jihadism to shock Islam into uniting against a common enemy in the West. As Islam suffers from the same apocalyptic delusions as Christianity and Judaism and with Armageddon being the name of a hill on the border of Iran and Iraq, this appears to be a self-fulfilling prophecy in the making.

The religious background to the ongoing conflict allows for both sides to present the issues as a simplified battle of good vs evil. President George W Bush used the term 'crusade' to describe military incursions and al-Qaeda spoke of repelling the infidels. Without political dialogue and with Western businesses carving up region's resources, it is civilians who continue to pay the price for the terrorism that this situation fosters. Spurred on by a sense of injustice and zealous righteousness, the terrorists convert their religious followers into fanatics and use them as martyrs. The jihadist bombers who kill innocent people have no impact on foreign policy and business: they just bring shame upon their families, their ancestors and their faith.

Because terrorism fails to directly impact politicians or businesses, it now serves a different purpose. It has become a distraction from the internal political shortcomings of government. In the novel *1984* by George Orwell a war effort unites the people in their subservience to government although, much like the war of terror, there is no evidence that this war actually exists. As a symbolic attack on the power of the USA, 9/11 was very effective, but unfortunately the US response was to invade a country that had nothing to do with the attacks and to inflict draconian laws upon its own people. As in *1984*, the war has the potential to be an unending one.

The 'war on terror' is now being used as an excuse to bring in laws that allow governments to monitor their own people and to militarize the police. The ease with which martial law can be declared has also increased dramatically in recent years. In 2015 the Department of Homeland Security in the USA intended to purchase over 1,000 military vehicles and 1.6 billion rounds of ammunition. Considering that terrorist cells are generally not larger than 30 people, this does not bode well for civil liberties in America.

As the media barons seem intent on colluding with governments by failing to hold them accountable for war atrocities, they add credence to the idea that there is a higher power at work behind the scenes. This would be a group that controls both the media and governments, and is capable of fabricating terrorist actions to justify wars. Conspiracy theorists have pieced together the strategy of a cabal that is identified as the 'New World Order', and many of them see this as the modern incarnation of the Illuminati.

THE OLD WORLD ORDER VS THE ILLUMINATI

When President George Bush Sr publicly spoke of creating a 'New World Order' in the fight against terrorism, there was a sense that this was a party that few people were invited to. He used the term whenever US foreign policy, in the form of the military, was intent on subjugating another country to protect US interests. The phrase 'New World Order' was already well known in Europe and should have raised a public outcry, as Adolf Hitler 50 years before had also announced the creation of a New World Order in his speeches.

By evoking the 'New Order for the Ages' (*Novus Ordo Seclorum*), the motto surrounding the lower half of the pyramid design on the Great Seal of the United States, Bush's comments lit a fire under the conspiracy theorists who saw it as evidence that the Illuminati were behind his actions. Nothing could be further from the truth, as Bush and his cronies of the financial, military and industrial complexes are the antithesis of everything the Illuminati stood for. This current incarnation of the New World Order draws upon the aristocracy and ruling elite of the last thousand years, and as such the term 'Old World Order' would better describe what they really are. They exist to protect themselves and their friends by forming cabals, but they have repeatedly proven to be too corrupt and too much driven by greed to be worthy of the power they have inherited.

By the late 1970s many conspiracy theorists had absorbed Robert Anton Wilson's ideas as fact and proposed a grand theory that the Illuminati were the secret rulers of the world, orchestrating and manipulating society for their own ends. Similarly today there are those who see evidence for the Illuminati in everything, and have confused the order with the corrupt power structures that the real Illuminati sought to destroy. Unfortunately, the term 'New World Order' and the Illuminati have become synonymous in the minds of conspiracy theorists who conflate them as the culprits behind the current policies of enforced globalization. The cabals of banking, royal families and politicians are a world away from the original Illuminati, whose purpose was the emancipation of humanity. Having fought so admirably for the rights of man, it is a tragedy that the Illuminati should become associated with the New World Order: the truth is that they stand in direct opposition to any such reactionary forces.

Through a multitude of front organizations it would be possible for one group to take control of many of the institutions that dominate society. 'Synarchy' is the term we give to rule by secret society, and actual synarchist groups are known to exist. These uphold the pretence of having some influence in world affairs, but usually bereft of any real power. They also tend to harbour an undercurrent of fascism. Fascists are incapable of sharing power, as their authoritarian stance is derived from a need to believe that they are in control. As with terrorists, their only means to recruit is to prey on promises of power and the fear of others. A similar group appeared in Italy during the 1980s, as the Propaganda Due (P2) Masonic lodge was revealed to be recruiting supporters from the higher echelons of society, government and the military. Before descending into fraud and criminality, the intention of this rogue lodge was to instigate a fascist coup and take control of Italy.

A historical bond exists between the secret societies and the governments that adopted their methods and codes in the creation of secret service agencies and spy networks. It follows logically that there is also evidence for the presence of secret societies within government agencies. Senior-ranking CIA staff have been known to be members of the Knights of Malta, and numerous members of the special forces from many countries are known to have joined the Order of Lazarus. Both groups are predominantly Christian in their outlook, but like P2 and the rest of Freemasonry they are not independently monitored or policed.

In the USA there are many quasi-Masonic groups that have more to do with consolidating

business interests than promoting spirituality and individual power. Bohemian Grove, in Monte Rio, California, attracts some of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the world, including heads of state. The symbol for the Grove is an owl, the universal symbol of wisdom, inspired perhaps by the use of the owl in the Minerval degree of the Illuminati – although being so elitist in nature precludes this group from being a true continuation of the order. Artist Hieronymus Bosch used the owl as a sign of the devil, for being always present and always watching.

Another elitist group, the Skull and Crossbones, takes its name and identity from what was originally a Templar banner but is now better known as a symbol of pirates. Other groups including the Rotary Club appear to be a middle-class version of these elitist cliques. Doubtless some groups were created as fronts that serve other purposes without individual members being aware of the big picture, and this might link back to the Illuminati's centuries-old mandate to adopt other identities to achieve their aims without persecution. But for this to be a valid analysis, at some point these groups would need to make good on their original aims and wrest control from all who are deemed unworthy of holding power.

THE SHAPE OF TRUTH

Conspiracies can provide a counterpoint to the narrative of history by allowing a broader perspective of alternative views to coexist. They fulfil a need for people to speculate about a possible unspoken truth by allowing them to question the state-sanctioned view of reality. Sometimes the conspiracy theory is closer to the truth than the official line, but rarely is anything so black and white as to be perfectly understood. History remains a matter of perspective, and we learn from Michael Cremo's *Forbidden Archaeology* and the works of Immanuel Velikovsky that even the accepted timeline of history itself has been greatly truncated by ignoring archaeological finds that are far outside the accepted dating system.

At most, we can conclude that the mythologies that have built up over the ages weave in and out of the truth to create a wider reality of mythic history. This ambiguity belies the levels of meaning and motive behind the actions of those in power that probably can never be fully known. But in the fallout from the scheming and machinations, patterns are discernible of a move towards the globalization of resources, wealth and workforce. An underlying strategy can be seen to be emerging that will ensure that the rich and powerful one per cent of the population will continue to control the majority of wealth to the detriment of all others.

This implies the existence of a New World Order that perpetuates the greed of the few by keeping society and politics at the mercy of those who hold real power. These are the elite groups who believe that it is not in the best interests of the public to discover their true nature and purpose.

CHAPTER 9

THE OLD WORLD ORDER

It appears that politicians have little relative power and are at the mercy of the network of a privileged elite known collectively as the New World Order. On examination, this network might

be better described as the *Old World Order*, as it comprises old money that has worked for centuries to gain control of resources and workers all across the world. A society ruled by wealth is a plutocracy, and if the Illuminati were at work today their enemy would be the corporations and cabals that use their wealth and political influence to remain in power. To join the ethos of the Illuminati is to work against these malevolent forces of globalization and corruption; but we must first understand who they are.

In recent years the idea of an Old World Order controlling society from the shadows has moved beyond the niche of conspiracy theory publications and gained wider traction in the public domain. Society is waking up to the reality that the wealth of nations is being leeches from the multitudes of poor to the obscenely rich few. The notion of the 'one per cent', as it is known, is based on the realization that the wealthiest one per cent of the population own more than the remaining 99 per cent put together. This one per cent is maintained through the ownership of banks, business and media and through influence over complicit governments. It is the Old World Order that forms the establishment, and it is currently extending its reach into all areas of society and every country across the globe. The ideals of the Illuminati are losing the battle against the aims of the Old World Order.

THE ARISTOCRACY AND THE OLD GUARD

There is a pecking order to the power structure of the Old World Order. It is led by the status-heavy royal families and aristocratic landowners, then trickles down to the banking cartels and the faceless commissions behind politics. These are followed by the fuel magnates, media barons and multinational business owners that hoard resources and guard the wells. Religion can also be exploited to control the people in some nations, but its power to control the masses has greatly diminished in the West. Politicians are low on the list, as political parties come and go without impacting those with real power. Many politicians are also enrolled in private groups where they can be coerced into supporting the interests of the higher echelons with subsidies, laws or military force.

At the top of this food chain, and occupying a now abstract, meta level of power, are the royal families of the world. To anyone considering the origin of royal families and other privileged dynasties, it becomes apparent that this can be no more than the most violent individual brutalizing their way to becoming the chieftain of a clan. The descendants of these despots then declare themselves to be better than everyone else and born with a right to rule others. To add a layer of grandiosity to this charade, in centuries gone by the kings of Europe believed that they had been divinely chosen, or were in some ways related to the patriarchs of antiquity who walked with the gods. The idea that some divine origin must have placed the aristocracy above others has been allowed to linger in society as a long tradition, but it is based purely on superstition that has been used to cement their rule. As dynasties formed, each region was subjugated by a royal family that claimed to be of 'noble birth', although 'noble birth' is in fact an abstract term with no inherent value. As Mirabeau stated at the time of the French Revolution, the sole use for a king is to lead a pageant.

The royals create nothing in themselves, so everything they have is a matter of what was gifted to them or taken from others. The British royal family is one of the last bastions of this archaic system of servitude and has no place in an evolved society. They hoard wealth and property over generations to shore up their family names with thousands of magnificent paintings and antiques stashed in private collections. For the mere mortals beneath them, the nation's heritage is held to ransom by an endless taxation on something that they will never

own.

The Illuminati taught that once the misguided urge to patriotism is removed, then royalty can be measured not by their wealth but by their conduct. For members of the actual royal families, it might even be a relief to have the burden of ancestry and the expectation to uphold the family name removed. Secretly, they must suspect that they hold no right to the status afforded them, and that should they abdicate from privilege, they might discover their own true merit. The question to be raised for all symbolic heads of state is: whom do they serve and to what extent? If the answer is found to be wanting, then their time should come to an end.

The next group in the line of power is the aristocracy. This 'old guard' consists of the families of inherited wealth, embedded in organizations of power such as banking and real estate. Although the USA had been founded without any need for a royal family, power still fell to the old families and aristocracy to rule, and at least 34 of the presidents were related via the same aristocratic line that dates back to Charlemagne. Where serfdom is no longer possible, the aristocracy have found new ways to retain power without having to succumb to the inconvenience of democracy. The influence of the rich on governments is capable of undermining everything from education to Obamacare.

PERPETUAL RULE

Behind the façade of democracy are the secretive groups of power brokers created by the aristocratic bloodlines that learned from the secret societies of old. These groups include the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, the World Bank and the Bilderberg Group, all of which recruit the world's political leaders to perpetuate their control and influence across the globe. Members are gathered from the heads of industry, banking, politics, law and education, and through them the elite are able to further their aims.

It appears that each of these groups is tasked with working on a different aspect of a wider plan for the destiny of humanity. The Bilderberg Group was created in the 1950s to promote discussions between Europe and the USA but now takes the form of a private annual meeting of 120 of the world's leading representatives from business and politics, including presidents and prime ministers. The lack of transparency in these meetings justifiably breeds mistrust, and conspiracy theorists claim that this is now the most powerful secret society on Earth. A similar group, the Council on Foreign Relations, has nearly 5,000 members and promotes globalization, which is construed to mean the abolition of nation states to make way for a single world government. The Trilateral Commission is accused of having a similar aim: to centralize commerce into a single economic world power. The final tentacle of this insidious octopus belongs to the Club of Rome, a think-tank of leading scientists, politicians and businessmen who meet to discuss solutions for global resource issues that seem to favour only the wealthiest countries at the expense of the poor.

These groups maintain the privacy of secret societies by refusing to publish the minutes of their meetings or to allow outsiders to monitor their discussions. In modern conspiracy theory, the Illuminati are often associated with these specific cartels, but in truth they would have infiltrated them with the intention of making positive use of them or disrupting their selfish aims. It is likely that some groups have been infiltrated by enlightened minds, but it would seem from the endless wars and stark inequalities in the world that they are currently losing the battle.

There is a belief that the underlying purpose of these groups is globalization of the world's resources, and that the New World Order George Bush Sr spoke of can be considered a code for a centralized power that begins regionally with the North American Union, the EU and the

African Union, with the Asian Union eventually to follow. These regions can then be merged into a single world government controlled by a single world bank. While the dissolution of nations would seem an ideal means to rid the world of nationalism and war, the globalization model would make political self-determination at a local level an illusion. The strategic aim of a single world government is to create a world where the elite would rule like pharaohs over the masses, who will be trapped in endless servitude. This began with the control of currency moving to the privately owned Federal Reserve, and the USA having the majority influence in the World Bank, which is answerable to no one.

BANKING AND CORRUPTION

'If people knew what banks did there would be a revolution tomorrow.' HENRY FORD

The US stock market crash of 1929 was a direct result of financial deregulation, and to prevent this from happening again President Roosevelt introduced controls that stripped the banks of their power. In the 1980s the banks began investing billions in Saudi Arabia in the form of 'petro dollars', which were outside political influence, giving these investors independence from the controls that Roosevelt had placed on banking within the USA. Since that time, the banking system has been working globally to remove regulation on lending, and by 2000 the banks had clawed back enough power that in 2007 another big crash occurred.

The 2007 crash was caused by banks such as Wells Fargo whose staff targeted racial minorities for higher lending rates, driving them into debt using predatory lending practices. This involved offering very low rates of lending to high-risk customers ('subprime' borrowers) that jumped after a fixed period of time to above-standard rates. When the debts inevitably caught up with the homeowners, thousands of families lost their properties and entire communities fell into bankruptcy. Staff at Goldman Sachs, which had traded vast blocks of assets comprised of these debts, knew that the system was heading towards disaster, so they bet against their own investors and reaped billions of dollars in profit from the inevitable collapse. The lesson here is that investment banks do not have their clients' best interests at heart. They have no intention of making investors rich, but will leech off them while stringing them along as 'valued customers'.

The unregulated lending, plus property inflation due to the ease of getting a mortgage, equalled disaster, but few bankers went to prison for these destructive practices, and regulation is yet to make them accountable. Not only did governments fail to reform the banks when they proved to be corrupt, they bailed them out with taxpayers' money while refusing to bail out those taxpayers the banks had ruined. Legislation exists to stem the tide of criminality that seeps in to bolster profit margins, but rarely does the punishment outweigh the profits of corporate crime. In the same way that restaurants are rarely closed down regardless of how cockroach-infested they are, so banks that commit fraud on a massive scale are allowed to continue to trade. The ongoing failure of successive political administrations to curb the greed of banks and businesses leads to the conclusion that we now live in a plutocracy. Governments do not run the world: wealth does.

The banking system itself is a rigged game, as the financial model we have today is one of perpetual debt. We are constantly reminded of the billions our countries owe in national debt, and this debt is owed to institutions such as the Bank of England and the Federal Reserve, who decide how much money to print and how much interest to charge on borrowing. These central banks print money and lend it to governments, charging interest. In order for the interest to be

repaid, they must print more money. This new money also carries interest, and printing more money further devalues the money already in circulation. As of 2015, 97 per cent of wealth in the world was owed as debt. This downward spiral, from which we can never escape, creates an underclass of economic slavery.

Not content with holding the countries of the West to ransom, the World Bank is systematically taking control of finances across the world. With finite amounts of money being made available with interest on every cent, the only way to clear national debt is to take control of the resources of other countries. Unfortunately, this involves wars that taxpayers are expected to fund. Taxes and loans are used to pay the weapons industries, the banks that loan the money, the oil and mineral companies that take control of the natural resources, and construction companies that are paid to rebuild the infrastructure targeted during the conflict. To help a country rebuild from war, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank will step in to arrange loans that ensure that the invaded country is also steeped in debt. These loans are usually conditional and require the county to privatize its public services and export its resources at lower prices.

The recent history of Indonesia shows how the interference of the IMF and the World Bank can do irreparable damage to a country. By the mid-1960s President Sukarno had successfully balanced the power of the factions in his country for over 20 years, but he was overthrown by a coup backed by the West. He was replaced by the 'New Order' of President Suharto, who organized death squads to murder 5,000 suspected Communist sympathizers based on a list that was provided by the CIA. One million people died in Indonesia and East Timor during Suharto's rise to power, with the UK selling the weapons that were used in the massacres.

The annexing of East Timor also allowed the multinationals to carve up the resources and utilities of that country, and the banks to move in to make the entire population a slave to debt. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank had a hand in setting the terms for this. The World Bank sank an estimated eight billion dollars into Suharto's corrupt regime in loans and was followed by the IMF which offered to bail Indonesia out of debt if it agreed to drop import tax and farming subsidies that allowed multinational food companies to bankrupt local farmers and leave them without their livelihoods. The national debt of Indonesia currently stands at over 200 billion dollars.

This pattern of subjugating nations through bank loans that tie a country to perpetual national debt causes poverty, starvation and death.

GLOBALIZATION

The disenfranchised rural communities of Indonesia were forced to migrate to the cities to find work. Many now work 'long shifts' of up to 36 hours at a time in factories for 60 dollars a month while being housed in labour camps. They were once farmers working in self-sufficient villages and now have no option other than to make branded clothes for foreign companies in conditions of slave labour.

Globalization allows the wealthiest organizations to exploit poor nations with a form of economic imperialism. It promotes a growing trend of forcing agricultural and primary industry workers into becoming a cheap manufacturing resource. Kevin Bales in *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* estimates that there are currently 27 million people worldwide in some form of slavery. This is more than at any other point in history. And while it is obvious that the impossibly cheap knock-offs that fill the discount clothing stores are sourced from these environments, what is surprising is the number of luxury brands that use the same

slave labour to exact huge margins on their products. Some of the marquee brands in the fashion industry have been caught on more than one occasion sourcing their products from companies that use child labour to maximize their profits.

One result of power shifting from government to commercial interests through political lobbying and bribery is that so much of what has been passed as law has had more to do with protecting business interests than protecting the public. A recent strategy for multinational companies is to propose secretive trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). This far-reaching collection of legislation is intended to open European countries to predatory US businesses, slacken food regulations to allow US levels of obesity-inducing toxins and Monsanto's triflids to invade the food chain, and allow yet more jobs to be outsourced to cheap labour. As the contents of the TTIP were kept secret yet are known to include provisions to protect the drug industry from public scrutiny, the result is to highlight another disturbing trend in business: business regulation is moving back into the shadows.

One segment of the TTIP that has potentially disastrous far-reaching consequences is the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS). This allows foreign businesses to claim damages from governments that pass laws that impact their business model. Tobacco companies would be able to claim lost revenue for smoking bans and nuclear energy companies could sue for damages if their power stations were closed for safety reasons. Our world becomes one where corporations will compete to leech money out of the economy, prompting politicians to fear acting on behalf of the democracies that voted them into power. At the time of writing, the online petition against the TTIP reached two million signatures but the measure continues unabated towards being ratified as law. For globalization this really is the end-game.

As businesses increasingly become cyphers of self-interest and selfpreservation, they lose sight of creativity and exist solely to reap profits for their shareholders by any means possible. The demands of relentless growth dehumanize companies into outsourcing manufacturing and jobs to cheap overseas labour while sacrificing creativity and innovation in favour of short-term profit. They will destroy the environment, make children ill through obesity and withhold medicine from the poor to cling to their profit margins. The people who staff these businesses are not innately evil, but like the staff of concentration camps they are compelled to enact crimes by degrees of diminished responsibility.

This lack of corporate ethics has been a disaster for that most fundamental requirement of modern society: food production. The food industry has a long history of tampering with diet, from the simple loaf of bread that now has added fat and sugar to preserve it, to the array of chemicals contained in soft drinks. The levels of sugar in processed and fast food are so high that it cannot be assimilated by the human body, resulting in obesity and diabetes. Cereals with as much as 45 per cent sugar are advertised as a viable breakfast for children, when they are barely fit to be eaten as a dessert. This will only change if we stop buying the products that do us harm.

Public opinion is lethargic and seemingly impervious to scandals, even though it is capable of rewarding high standards and punishing failures through purchasing power. When it was discovered in the UK that the 'beef' in many ready meals was actually horse meat, the public continued to trust and buy other products from the same companies. The presence of horse meat was a scandal, not because of the beauty pageant that protects some animals while allowing others to be eaten, but because horses outside the food chain are killed by lethal injection. They are poisoned to death.

A similar situation occurred with the outbreak of the brain-eating Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as 'mad cow disease'. The press and politicians

asked the public to support the farming industry, which was struggling to sell beef products or having their cattle destroyed to prevent the spread of the disease. But their heartfelt messages of support failed to make it clear that BSE was caused by farmers feeding cows with the diseased brains and spinal cords of sheep. If forcing herbivores to eat meat isn't disturbing enough, the impact of mass cattle farming on global warming is worse than both the automobile and airline industries.

As those responsible for feeding diseased sheep's brains to cattle and selling horse meat as beef were never prosecuted, it is left to the consumer to make a choice. But this choice is removed if food is inadequately labelled. In the USA the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has begun to allow genetically modified salmon to enter the food chain without any warnings. It seems that the only people who want genetically modified organisms (GMO) on their plate are those who will get rich off the patents, but politicians are too spineless to outlaw GMO in the UK and USA. It is obvious that all food with GMO should be labelled, to at least give consumers the choice of saying 'hell no to GMO' and throwing it back on the supermarket shelf.

The food chain is not irreparable, but while there is an abundance of what humanity needs, some starve while others are being fattened like cattle bound for slaughter. Owing to unfair distribution and waste, it would appear possible that the Old World Order might convince the public that there is not enough food in the world to sustain the population: therefore drastic measures must be taken. One of the accusations levelled at the Old World Order is that it is actively engaged in reducing the population by dispensing with the poorest in society. By using the 'Malthusian catastrophe' model, a theory that the demand for food will peak and then the population will collapse as food supplies are exhausted, they could justify depopulation through war or other means.

This dark vision of the future is apparently shared by the US Congress, who actively court ideas for mass depopulation regardless of how appalling is the method involved. Providing plans for population control, Eric Pianka, a biologist at Texas University, stated before Congress that AIDS was too slow and that Ebola would be a better pandemic to reduce the population by 90 per cent. This can be taken as a warning to all who overconsume that it is time to reconsider what and how much they eat or face extinction.

POLITICS

The failure of politicians to curb wealth and protect the poor and vulnerable from corporate manipulation is dragging society into catastrophic debt. Even within democracies there seems to be no way to alleviate the exploitation of people through capitalism. One reason for this is that majority of so-called 'democracies' around the world are systems of self-perpetuation that uphold the status quo by offering no real choice for the voters. The way to maintain the illusion of choice is to create both the main party and the opposition. This is not a new idea. The Masonic founding of America created a two-part system that lasted well into the 20th century with almost interchangeable leading candidates. In the Masonic publication *The Men's House* (1924) it is stated that Henry Clay was defeated in a presidential election campaign when it was made public that he was a Freemason, but his opponent, founder of the Democratic Party, Andrew Jackson, was also secretly a Mason and became the seventh President of the United States.

While describing itself as a democracy, the USA's political machinery until the start of the Obama administration has presented presidential candidates that were white, right-wing, middle-aged, rich men. In the UK, as in many countries, once a party is voted into power, the

public have no further say, while politicians are made responsible for public services where they have no relevant experience or qualification.

Where this process can be seen to fail most lamentably is in the appointment of defence ministers who are expected to protect the realm but, instead of finding diplomatic solutions, resort to war in what appears to be an opportunist grab for natural resources. It is a strategy that will bring endless reprisals from terrorists.

Governments should have two aims. The first is to improve the quality of life of its subjects, starting with the poorest upwards. The second is ensuring the survival of the planet by moving towards sustainability in all things. One method of working towards these aims would be to replace quadrennial elections with an ongoing digital voting system whereby the public is included in votes on political issues. Another is to move to a meritocracy in which people are awarded positions in government based upon their aptitude for the role.

INJUSTICE

As the current regimes in the West ravage their economies to fund wars, they often try to make up the economic shortfall by scrapping public services or privatizing them to the detriment of the wider society. The British government cut 12 billion pounds from the National Health Service while spending 19 billion pounds on the war in Afghanistan. In the case of mental health, the 'care in the community' programmes saw the closure of many care homes for the mentally ill. In the UK and America the patients who lost their care placements were cast out and expected to take care of themselves. As a result, there are entire wings of prisons allocated to people with mental health issues who are being incarcerated instead of treated.

In the USA this is a win-win situation for private enterprise, as instead of free care for the mentally ill they can be added to the growing army of prison labour. Government-run prisons in the USA make money by hiring out prisoners to work at rates far less than the minimum wage. The war on drugs and measures such as the three-strikes rule that demands a minimum 25-year sentence for repeat offenders, even for petty crime, seem to exist solely to swell the ranks of the prison workforce. Those who have lobbied for longer prison sentences include the companies responsible for running the prisons in the private sector.

The privatization of prisons has become one of the fastest growth industries in recent years at the taxpayer's expense. In the year 2000 there were one million prisoners in the USA, but by 2015 there were 2.3 million, at a cost to the taxpayer of 60 billion dollars per year. Since privatizing the prison service, the USA has come to have the largest prison population in the world, and its legal process is often less than ethical. In 1995 my friend Paul John Denham was arrested for the murder of his partner's ex-boyfriend with no evidence, no witnesses, and with an alibi that placed him in a different city at the time the crime took place.

He was held in a crowded cell overnight before the trial, and was beaten so badly that he was incapable of speaking to defend himself. The judge ruled that the trial should continue anyway, and Paul was incarcerated for life without parole in Corcoran prison, Los Angeles.

The law only commands respect if it is enacted with honesty and integrity, but cases like Paul's, and many others like him, undermine public trust in the law and the entire legal system. As blatant miscarriages of justice come to light and incarceration for trivial crimes such as copyright infringement in music piracy cases increases, all respect for law is diminished. In response to this, the police are quietly becoming militarized, but this exchange of trust for fear only accelerates society towards becoming a police state.

TOWARDS A PASSIVE SOCIETY

The term 'New World Order', regardless of how many times President Bush used it, actually describes the Old World Order that is in the process of consolidating power and wealth through rigged systems of capitalism. The short-term, selfish outlook embodied in these systems drives much of the turmoil we see happening in the world. The invasion of countries solely for the benefit of oil companies and arms manufacturers in a modern incarnation of colonialism has done more to recruit terrorists than any delusional religious extremism ever could.

And yet this behaviour goes unchallenged by the politicians and mainstream media, whose job it is to curtail or make public any such corruption. This implicit collusion worked prior to the 21st century when it was possible to keep society immunized from the truth. The Old World Order could dictate US foreign policy in such an insidious manner that the majority of its own citizens were unaware that they were part of a corrupt plutocracy. The public's understanding of the world was erroneously based on trusting the media companies to be honest and the government to at least be working for the betterment of society. As a result of this distorted perception, our understanding of the world has become almost mythical.

However, if the American empire continues to exploit foreign nations while oppressing its own people, it is doomed to follow the British and Roman Empires that came before by entering a phase of collapse. This will not be at the hands of the Communists, religious extremists, the biblical rapture, or any other external force, but will be entirely self-inflicted. The signs can already be seen, as prior to its fall the Roman Empire saw an increase in corruption and bureaucracy, military overspending and the militarization of the police, a mistrust of its own citizens, and a glaring disparity in the distribution of wealth.

In the face of such adversity, the battle for the liberation of humankind might appear a lost cause. Dangerous political and commercial forces will try to coerce society into acting according to their goals, even if these impede the freedoms and rights of citizens. But the Old World Order has less control than it would like people to think. Its custodians lack the vision of the Illuminati or the ability to transform into something altruistic or noble in their intentions, which leaves them open to being exposed by the emerging forms of journalism and ethical activism among their ranks.

There will always be intelligent people in key positions who can be inspired to work for the greater good, and now they can communicate directly with the public. The enabling technology of the internet has released public perception from the limits of paid media and created a true freedom of the press. It has also provided a platform for insiders to reveal the secret machinations of businesses and government agencies through organizations such as WikiLeaks or the various independent forums. Lack of control over the internet has undermined the ability of the world's media and publicity machines to censor what enters the public domain. This means that for every lie they tell, someone, somewhere, holds the truth.

As the Old World Order clings to an outdated hierarchy of power, the online communities have embraced the future and taken online the battle for the liberation of humanity.

CHAPTER 10

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

‘Great endeavours are brought about by infinitely small changes.’ THE ILLUMINATI

The internet is the latest weapon in the history of disruptive technology. It undermines the control of the Old World Order by shifting the power of information away from the structures of the establishment and back to the individual. As the majority of us are online, we are free to discover and form our own countercultures, extending and mutating the idea of society in all directions. The online groups and networks map the furthest reaches of culture, but are of limited power if they remain purely virtual and do not influence the real world.

Disruptive technology is not new as an element in the dissemination of independent ideas. It has been undermining religious and statesanctioned propaganda since the 15th century. In 1476 William Caxton introduced the printing press to England and set up shop in the shadow of Westminster Abbey. The press could print a thousand books in the time it took one monk in the Abbey to copy a single volume. Not only was the rate of publishing transformed, making books affordable to a wider audience, but more importantly the control of knowledge was taken out of the hands of the Catholic Church.

Soon the Bible was published in the vernacular, and no longer required an education in Latin to fathom, and scientific works were made widely available. Martin Luther would later put the printing press to good use by publishing a German translation of the Bible in 1522 and by spreading his ideas and his demands for the Reformation. In 18th-century France, Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* attempted to compile the knowledge of the age to share with the public in the same way that Wikipedia now offers crowdsourced information beyond the control of publishers and news magnates. Mass printing elevated news from a town poster to the nationally distributed press which could inform discussions and disseminate ideas. The 18th century also saw scientific research and discoveries circulated through a fledgling journals market.

By the 20th century the press and publishing (both editorial and distribution) had been bought up, monetized and controlled, but to be commercial it still had to acquiesce to popular tastes. Some publishers remained fiercely independent, leading to the rise of the underground press in the late 20th century to support the counterculture movements and the punk music scene. The next leap in disruptive technology, the internet, would create unprecedented access to information and the ability for everyone to share knowledge and ideas. Just as the secret societies during the Age of Reason saw technology as a means to redistribute power, the internet has finally empowered the masses.

Thanks to the nature of the internet, the denizens of the Old World Order have found themselves at a disadvantage. Businesses had expected to be able to exploit the internet for consumerism and paywalled news, but technology and innovation have outpaced their narrow vision and unleashed upon the world a digital democracy. New business models are appearing, such as the user-driven content pioneered by Wikipedia, which quickly evolved beyond the limits of conventional encyclopedias and proved that a crowdsourced meritocracy can be applied to knowledge.

The internet became a gateway to all perspectives, and is the perfect tool for developing alternative communities across vast distances.

By lacking a central authority over its content, the internet brings equality to information beyond the distorted filters of global media companies, religions and governments. Online communities can form and disperse at will to share information or opinions that serve as an alternative to state-sanctioned mythologies. The internet has also helped to impose transparency upon secret government agencies, and has supported the unseating of corrupt regimes. Through this medium the voice of culture has extended to a global audience, whereas none of the traditional forms of expression or activism could encompass such reach or

penetrate with such immediacy. At the cutting edge of this new medium are those who are both the enablers and creators of information sharing. Technologists are the counterculture of today, and they use the internet as a liberator of information, and as a means of dissent and dissemination. The spirit of the Illuminati lives and breathes online.

This Illuminati philosophy for the 21st century can be found in the direct challenges to authority being disseminated across the digital spectrum. It echoes through the government corruption and crimes exposed by WikiLeaks and the attacks on the enemies of freedom by Anonymous; and also through the challenges to corporate crimes via the many online petitions or the laugh-out-loud satires on modern society on websites like The Onion (theonion.com). There are also alternative news sources such as Reddit (www.reddit.com) and communities of all kinds giving expert commentary and reviews that undermine the advertorials of the mainstream press. Bitcoin leads the charge of alternative currencies; and crowdsourced funding avoids traditional investment routes to fund things that people actually want.

There is a temptation to try to coerce the chaos of this emerging movement into a meaningful narrative, but online groups evolve like fractals in cyberspace and are impossible to fully comprehend. The communities that formed around technology began with teenagers and technologists sharing stuff they found interesting and funny while actively trying to push the boundaries of their medium. Together they realized that they could use their online anonymity to disrupt the ownership of progress. Existing industries and governments were quick to invent laws to curtail their japes, but a youth movement is a powerful thing, and these ideas had the potential to spark revolution.

THE QUIET REVOLUTION

Richard Stallman founded the Free Software Foundation in 1985 with a policy of making free software to be shared without copyright restriction, to be developed, adapted and freely distributed by anyone. This inspired other coders to form an open-source community around the free-to-use software model by devoting their time and skills towards an ethos of sharing ideas and resources for the betterment of the wider community. Among these was the equally visionary Linus Torvalds, who in 1991 developed the Linux operating system which underpins much of the server infrastructure that props up the World Wide Web.

The idea of giving something away for free and allowing others to develop it to suit their own needs makes perfect sense in the software community, but stands in stark contrast to the way the major software companies think. These copyright every line of code to keep control of their products, which stifles progress and compatibility. The open source ethos of sharing without ownership was at the heart of Tim Berners-Lee's development of protocols that form the infrastructure of the World Wide Web. This approach has prevented the web from being subjected to endless copyright and licensing battles, and has the potential to be extended across all areas of industry to promote growth and innovation.

With 'free to use' as the underlying philosophy of the internet, it was inevitable that one of the earliest forms of online dissent was piracy, the copying and sharing of copyrighted material. Abuse of copyright had been happening via the photocopier and cassette tape in every university across the world for decades, but the internet took piracy from local to global. The piracy of music was an instant success driven by the ease of sharing songs as small files acceptable within a low bandwidth, but it was also prompted by media companies failing to meet the needs of their customers. Instead of embracing the new technology, the music industry clung to their outdated business models of physical distribution, and set their lawyers on

anyone who tried to break the mould.

Corporations will do everything in their power to retain control over their market, so when a disruptive technology like the internet challenges their established business model, they will aggressively try to stifle it. In the USA the corporate giants lobby Congress for the power to protect their profits against competition or natural attrition. When Disney successfully extended copyright from 56 to 75 years, and then it was increased again to 95 years, this kept thousands of works of literature, science and medicine out of the public domain – initially to protect a cartoon mouse. Through outdated laws and judges ignorant of technology, the big media companies embarked on persecuting minor copyright issues as if they were major crimes. Record companies began to sue their customers for sharing songs which, as no money is exchanged, many people regard as no more than a trivial misdemeanour.

Even when the music industry attempted to sell songs online, they fought to control the medium by adding Digital Rights Management (DRM) software that limited use or, as with the Sony rootkit, compromised the security of their paying customers' computers without informing them. It would take someone with the vision of Steve Jobs to create Apple iTunes to sell music through the internet at a reasonable price, and, later, competition from companies like Amazon to remove DRM from tracks, before the needs of customers would be fully met.

Long before Apple Music legitimized online music, file sharing services such as Napster and LimeWire dominated the free dissemination of content. LimeWire allowed users to share files by searching for and viewing a media folder on another user's computer. This service became popular as a way to share music collections online, but for the unwary it carried a risk of downloading viruses and trojans. The makers of LimeWire were to be sued for billions of dollars, at \$150,000 per download, by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), which drove it out of business. As LimeWire did not pirate, host pirated material or sell anything, the proposed damages levelled against them have all the logic of shutting down a car manufacturer if a driver kills someone in a drink driving accident (except that no one died). The point here is not to defend piracy but to attack the outrageous response it attracts from the media companies that have the lawmakers and enforcers in their pockets.

What was a simple issue of copyright is now treated as a major crime. To take another example, The Pirate Bay provides a service of indexing files that have been made available for sharing. It continues to attract the ire of the film and music industries although, like LimeWire, it does not pirate, host or sell anything. Technically, it is a search engine, just like Google or YouTube. YouTube makes for an interesting argument, as it hosts millions of copyrighted works, but artists have discovered that if they remove their music from the site, their sales decline. This is also found to be true of file sharers in general. Those who file-share the most are often the highest spenders on traditional media. The ability to preview what you are about to part money for is as important now as pirate radio once was for discovering new music.

There is also a wider issue in the threat to the flow of information in modern society. Old media, such as journal publishers, still cling to the idea of being necessary for making research available while charging hundreds of dollars per year for access to academic papers that should be free of copyright. Currently, the taxpayer pays the salaries of academics who do the research that is given freely to journal publishers. The taxpayer then pays for the research again when tax-funded universities buy it back through expensive journal subscriptions. And if the individual taxpayer wants to read the research, they have to pay again for their own copy.

Aaron Swartz was a techno prodigy who as a teenager had been responsible for helping to create the Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed technology for sharing news and information and the Reddit news website. He saw how the reselling of research that was freely created by academics restricted new knowledge to those who could afford it, and realized that he had the

skills to challenge this injustice. Swartz hacked the JSTOR archive of journal articles in the USA and began downloading academic papers. It was not clear how he intended to use these papers, as he had previously used a similar repository for data analysis. He was caught and arrested, but the JSTOR administrators dropped charges against him and chose not to pursue the case. However, the US Attorney's office chose to make an example of Swartz and made it clear to him that he was facing one million US dollars in fines and up to 35 years in prison for what was a minor act of civil disobedience.

The intimidation tactics and the unreasonable stacking of charges based on outdated laws used against Aaron Swartz made him the first martyr of the internet age. In 2013, at just 26 years old, the stress of his impending court case drove him to suicide. The tragedy of Aaron Swartz is that he was a genius who wanted to make the world a better place. His medium was technology, which he saw as a means to share important information so that others might be able to do some good with it. Although the entire process of journal submission, peer review and publication could move online at a fraction of the cost and be free of publishers, it remains locked in by old media companies that cling to the pre-digital age. Aside from ethical questions, there is also an existing legal premise for the challenge, as Code 17 USC 105 in US law prevents the copyrighting of any works created by the US government.

HACKING

While pirates and the open source movement aim to make knowledge and media freely available, the true anti-culture pioneers of the internet are the hackers. Hackers are portrayed as pure criminals by the press and by law enforcement agencies, when in reality they are mostly kids who enjoy exploring and the challenge of defeating security systems. For their teen sensibilities everything is fair game, and many will hack just for the sheer fun of it. Hacking is also recognized by some as a new art form or as a vehicle of social protest – groups like the Electronic Disturbance Theatre, for example, attack websites to stage virtual occupations.

Hacking began with young programmers who took pleasure in penetrating forbidden networks, and from the 1990s onwards began to discover and share software and ideas with each other online. These individuals formed cliques around a single purpose, and these became the basis of the hacker collectives. Because they were wayward kids, a lot of what they did revolved around pranks and acts of social subversion, in a way reminiscent of Robert Anton Wilson's portrayal of the Illuminati. Without recognizing their own achievements, they were challenging mindsets and causing ripples of social unrest through small actions.

A simple hack would be to search for weak administration passwords and usernames to hijack a website and change its content. One hacker took control of a local TV station's live news feed and reported that zombies were attacking the city. Another took control of an epilepsy information website and replaced the home page with a flashing square. These may seem frivolous or even offensive activities, but the defacing of a website carries a similar ethos to that of graffiti artists who proclaim their own existence through spray paint.

Although seemingly trivial, pranks and humour are naturally antiauthoritarian and can be used to dissolve rigid thinking. Such approaches are used in Zen, Taoism and the crazy wisdom of the Eastern philosophers. The Sufis used humour and parody in their teachings, as shown in the medieval sayings of Mulla Nasrudin, an example of timeless anecdotes of wisdom. Troubadours, poets, folk singers and storytellers carried this tradition into the West, and now stand-up comedians, talk shows and satirical magazines prove the appetite for rebellion is still thriving.

Robert Anton Wilson's work on the Illuminati is littered with pranks and parodies, as humour can be used to undermine political regimes or to demonize the enemy in wartime propaganda. From Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* to *Charlie Hebdo's* cartoons, there is a tradition of using ridicule to disempower selected targets. For 60 years *Private Eye* magazine in the UK has been humiliating corrupt politicians and The Onion website in the USA still savages middle-class America with satire. Humour should not be underestimated as a tool for dissent.

Hackers saw their work as harmless fun until in 2002 Gary McKinnon took a stroll through the CIA's network to look for evidence of UFOs. Based in the UK, he and his family spent the next 10 years fighting extradition to the USA to face criminal charges. After a decade of legal wrangling, the House of Lords in the UK intervened to block the extradition for what was more of an embarrassment than a criminal act. McKinnon's method of intrusion was to search for military servers in the USA that did not require a password.

Like any tool, hacking can become a weapon in the wrong hands, and there will always be corrupt individuals or organizations who choose to indulge in cybercrime. These can deploy ransomware to extort money or botnets to remotely take control of thousands of computers. Such problems are compounded by poor security in software and the US government requiring backdoor access to programs for state-sanctioned monitoring. Governments also prohibit the widespread use of full encryption, which would make life online a lot more secure and private. Without this, as the famous and infamous are discovering, every site or app can be hacked and the more devices that your private content passes through, the more chance it has of being compromised.

The majority of hackers continued to explore the online landscape without purpose, but cases like that of Aaron Swartz and Gary McKinnon highlighted an injustice that others could act upon. The growing online community of hackers began to develop a conscience and to champion causes. They saw their right to disseminate information being censored by the media companies that were criminalizing the file sharers with whom many hackers had an affinity. The hacker collectives began to target the copyright enforcers of the music and film industry – specifically the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) – for online attacks. This was the beginning of the first real counterculture movement of the 21st century.

Only those who are truly skilled and well protected online should consider hacking. It now carries outrageous criminal sentences, and although it is almost impossible to prove who was using a computer at any specific time, many hackers are convicted by police pushing them into confessing. Social engineering has proven to be a far easier means of gaining access to networks, as every business and government agency is staffed by people, and people are the weakest link in any security model.

Staff at the highest levels will use default or simple passwords and are prone to telephone scams or basic manipulation. If a USB drive with 'Free air miles' printed on it, were left in a café frequented by government staff, someone would take it to work and plug it into their computer, thereby circumventing security and compromising the entire network.

THE RISE OF ANONYMOUS

No group embodies the original ethos of the Illuminati more tellingly than the hacker collective Anonymous. They began as a disparate bunch of individuals gathered around the 4Chan website to share and discuss a range of topics, including Japanese animation (anime), popular culture, technology and pornography. 4Chan, meaning 4 Channel, was light on moderation and

allowed members to post anonymously. The target audience of tech-savvy teens and students and the ability to post without recrimination meant that all aspects of life would gather comment, on a spectrum ranging from wisdom to abuse, and sometimes both at once. To post anonymously also meant not taking credit for their work, with the result that the anonymous members of the site fit perfectly into the free sharing ethos of the internet.

The 4Chan site quickly descended into an uncensored outpouring of juvenile humour, grotesque images and abusive rants, but what appeared to be the bottom of the human barrel also served to dissuade normal people from taking part. This gave 4Chan users a sense of exclusivity, as it was clearly pushing the boundaries of acceptability and tolerance. There was plenty of humour, flame wars (arguments) and trolling (baiting and harassment) – everything you would expect from a youth-centric movement that spans the extremities of human thought and behaviour.

By publishing anonymously the 4Chan crowd formed the basis of a perfect secret society, where even the members did not know each other's identities. And as an alternative society, they developed their own language, mythology and memes. The memes were images and ideas that would gain traction in the collective consciousness of the channel. This fledgling, primarily youth-based movement also attracted a lot of highly skilled coders who would carry on discussions about scripting and eventually hacking. Like-minded individuals would gather and then hive off into smaller groups using Instant Relay Chat (IRC) chatrooms to privately discuss targets and ideas.

The hacker collectives of the Chans and other groups became known by the umbrella title of Anonymous. Within Anonymous are many factions that set their own agendas and adopt disposable identities according to their latest ruse. Members of these groups would compete to hack target websites and networks, often dedicating long hours to see how far they could penetrate security systems. There is an element of power in the psychology of hacking, with kudos to be gained from individual achievements in breaching security and taking control of networks. However, money was rarely the object of the hackers' work. Their purpose was more to entertain and prove their skills.

An offshoot of Anonymous was the hacktivist group LulzSec. LulzSec stands for 'Laugh out loud Security', parodying existing security companies that claimed to have infiltrated Anonymous. Their aim was to entertain and to do good, and although there were only six people in LulzSec, that is all it takes to start an online movement. Like a true secret society, over time they would create additional groups to further their work under different names, such as Antisec.

While casting around for viable targets, LulzSec chose to challenge the hate speech of right-wing extremists. In 2006 the hackers took down the website and radio show of neo-Nazi spokesman Hal Turner. While hacking his personal files, the team discovered that he was also a paid FBI informant. Incensed that the FBI was using taxpayers' money to fund racist and homophobic hate speech, they chose to publicize their findings. The reputation of the FBI was brought into question, and Turner was exposed as a potential government agent to discredit him among his followers. This signalled a sea change in the hacker collectives, as they realized that anonymity and hacking skills gave them the power to uncover corruption and challenge unethical behaviour. It also garnered them mainstream press coverage.

Further targets were identified by the hackers, and when Gawker, an alternative news website, leaked a video of Tom Cruise speaking about Scientology, the site was immediately served take-down notices by the typically aggressive Scientology lawyers. Gawker, refusing to bow to censorship, faced the full legal might and repercussions of the sect. The Chan groups also circulated the video, and Anonymous released a video declaring war on Scientology for

the act of censorship against Gawker and other websites. They created another offshoot of LulzSec named Chanology, a parody of Scientology, to attack the Scientology website.

A religion, albeit one with a central belief that we should give control of our minds to invisible aliens that existed millions of years ago, found itself in the sights of counterculture once again. Just as the Illuminati had fought the censorship of the Catholic Church, Anonymous fought the censoring tactics of Scientology, which is notoriously litigious in silencing critics. It was a battle for freedom of speech. Publicizing the issue led to organized groups picketing the offices of Scientology worldwide. Suddenly Anonymous had moved beyond online activism and were attracting a real-world presence of protesters.

During the attack, the Scientology website was taken offline using a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack. This was a tool for overloading a website with a flood of fake visitors, making it unavailable for prolonged periods of time. Some see this as a legitimate form of protest, akin to picketing a business premises. Serious DDoS attacks are created using botnets, clusters of compromised computers that are used to coordinate attacks to overwhelm target sites. The tool immediately became popular with would-be activists, as it required almost no technical knowledge to implement.

Parallel with the rise of Anonymous, WikiLeaks had become a haven for free speech by allowing the anonymous publicizing of government and corporate crimes. When MasterCard and PayPal refused to accept donations to WikiLeaks, it was clear that government pressure was being put on these companies to help to choke WikiLeaks out of existence. Incensed by the blatant hypocrisy of credit card companies that were accepting donations from extremist websites while attempting to undermine the WikiLeaks stand for freedom of speech, the 'Anons' devised Operation Payback. A botnet-orchestrated DDoS attack took down the MasterCard website for 12 days straight. Now seeing a potential threat to business, governments rushed through new laws to hunt down and expose the members of Anonymous and persecute them.

DDoS attacks are the equivalent of clicking on a website over and over until it fails to load. Following the Scientology and MasterCard attacks, arrests were made by the FBI of DDoS users who failed to protect their identities online. Brian Mettenbrink spent a year in prison for his part in the attack on the Scientology website. Luckily, he did not impede their commerce, which carries a sentence of up to 15 years in prison and is considered a major crime. While illegal for members of the public to participate in, DDoS attacks have also been used with impunity by the Motion Picture Association of America against The Pirate Bay, and by British Intelligence (GCHQ) in an attack on Anonymous.

The members of LulzSec and Anonymous were now being targeted by government agencies, and under this initiative in 2011 Jake Davis was arrested for hacking Congress and the CIA and given a two-year sentence. He was 18 years old – the victim of an obvious overreaction. Hackers realized that the Chan networks and hacker forums were now so heavily infiltrated by undercover agents that it would be quicker to summon the FBI by posting on 4Chan than to get them on the phone. There are likely to be entire chatrooms filled with fake Anons that are actually Feds and military and private security personnel all talking to each – but no actual hackers.

Contrary to their negative portrayal in mainstream media, Anonymous are not the enemy. Anonymous, and groups like them, work to restore freedoms to the oppressed and uphold those ideals of the Illuminati that serve humanity. They embody the Illuminati meme, their anonymity echoing the way that the founders of the Illuminati were said to have burned the early records to remain anonymous, avoiding unseemly credit or veneration. There is no ego and no fame in acting anonymously, but there is a chance of survival. Anonymous is living the meme.

As the extent of Anonymous and its various offshoots remain unknown, it can never really

be dismantled. Work continues today with the promotion of online privacy, the exposure of paedophiles and the targeting of terrorist recruitment sites. Anonymous fight against Islamic State (ISIL) militants by monitoring and reporting their attempts to recruit through Twitter, yet the governments of the West continue to hunt Anons in a digital inquisition and the press treat them as selfish anarchists.

While hacking was one method of gaining access to information, governments were also beginning to realize that the biggest threat to any organization is its own staff, especially if they are blessed with morality. Prior to the internet, whistleblowers played a key role – people like Frank Serpico, who went to *The New York Times* to expose police corruption and put himself at great personal risk. For employees to challenge a corrupt organization is to risk damaging their career and personal reputation. To avoid persecution, a government insider codenamed 'Deep Throat' anonymously tipped off journalists in the first stages of uncovering the Watergate scandal and remained hidden – but such an outcome was rare. With the advent of the internet it had become possible to publish evidence of crimes online and protect the identity of the source.

WIKILEAKS

In 2006 Julian Assange and his team launched the WikiLeaks website as an online clearing house for leaked information from whistleblowers within business and government bodies. The purpose of WikiLeaks was to allow informants to expose the criminal activities of their employers without risk of persecution or imprisonment.

Assange is a true pioneer of the digital landscape and the embodiment of the new philosophy of digital emancipation. He combines advanced technical skills with astute political insight in a radical drive to publicize the corruption within governments worldwide. For all the myth-making of politicians, here is a man who, like Weishaupt before him, sees the world for what it is. When Assange launched WikiLeaks, he saw it as an opportunity to bring transparency to governments and corporations that were abusing their positions of power. His noble intention was to make governments honest and to prevent them from using intimidation and secrecy to mask their crimes.

WikiLeaks proved impeccable in its assessing and releasing of material. While protecting sources, its team of journalists would analyse and authenticate each before releasing it online and to the press. Rather than financially capitalizing on the revelations, Assange chose to reach the widest possible audience by freely sharing the information with trusted journalists to help to publicize the issues concerned. He took no credit for the work of the whistleblowers. Assange committed no crimes but acted as a conduit for information that it was in the public interest to be made available.

The group first caught the attention of mass media when they released the US government-authored operating manual for Guantánamo Bay detention camp. Already situated beyond the reach of US civil rights laws, the manual explained how guards could hide prisoners from the Red Cross to prevent anyone from being called to account for human rights abuses. The release highlighted the regime of abuse at the camp and would help to raise calls for its closure. It also proved that WikiLeaks could provide a safe platform for such revelations, inspiring others to come forward.

The next major WikiLeaks revelation was the release of the 'collateral murder' footage leaked from within the US military. It showed the sanctioned killing of civilians in Iraq by the crew of a US helicopter gunship. The footage is a chilling record of war crimes in which a US

officer gives an order for sustained fire on unarmed civilians and a vehicle containing children. Twelve men were killed, including a Reuter's photographer, and two children were injured. No one answered for the crimes, but after the WikiLeaks intervention public opinion began to shift against the endless use of military intervention as a political solution to conflict.

It seemed that real change was now possible, and when WikiLeaks revealed corruption in Tunisian politics, civil unrest ensued and protesters publicly rallied against the government. The Tunisian government responded by hacking the sites of dissidents and spying on their online communications. To counter this, a small group of Anonymous members called Telecomix set up a secure communications network for protesters, while others took down the government websites with DDoS attacks. Eventually the Tunisian Prime Minister resigned, while the opposition publicly thanked WikiLeaks and Anonymous for their support.

As the Arab Spring gathered pace, a similar fate befell Egypt with dissemination of unbiased news via fax when the government suppressed internet access, leading to the resignation of President Mubarak. The deposing of corrupt rulers in Tunisia and Egypt was reminiscent of how the Illuminati had leafleted French peasants prior to the Revolution. Both WikiLeaks and the Illuminati capitalized on existing dissent and communicated it to the people, enabling the social upheaval needed to oust corrupt regimes. As the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes fell, Anonymous and WikiLeaks became the spiritual, and political, successors to the Illuminati ideals.

The importance of the internet as a tool for highlighting the crimes of authority was now well established. The public could share everything from mapping widespread police brutality (<http://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>) to circulating evidence of the Turkish government's corruption in 2014. These trends, and the WikiLeaks releases, signalled the control of news moving away from the collusion of the press magnates and towards a community-generated, uncensored view of reality.

Controlling how people think is the primary aim of the elite, through which they can shape public opinion to suit their goals. As online discussions began to explore issues outside the mainstream media, it became apparent that if people really understood how the world worked, they could recognize when it was being subverted by leaders or organizations to suit their own agendas. The flow of information was widening beyond the control of those who seek to perpetuate the lies.

The advent of WikiLeaks should have been a turning point in journalism, but instead many news anchors acted as if they had been told to undermine Assange and his team. State-influenced press and news outlets brazenly flaunted their allegiances by trying to demonize the WikiLeaks founder instead of actually investigating the issues he brought to light. The persecution of Julian Assange was akin to shooting the messenger, and the coverage made it clear that much of the mainstream media were working to an agenda to protect the state.

Even the film portrayal of WikiLeaks in the *Fifth Estate* (2013) asks its audience to feel sorry for the White House official who loses her job because the 'collateral murder' video becomes bad publicity for the US administration. It is difficult to tell if this was real media manipulation or just poor judgement on the part of the film makers, but at no point did they call to account those whose crimes were exposed by WikiLeaks, choosing instead to focus on Assange's personality and private life.

It is likely that Assange was seen as a threat by media companies not just because he was a conduit for damning evidence of war crimes and government corruption but because he also represented a true freedom of the press. It was inevitable that he would incur the wrath of the Old World Order, whose machinations he was threatening to expose. The response from government agencies and mainstream press judged the revelations of information via

WikiLeaks as acts of terrorism, and targeted Assange accordingly.

The US security agencies were desperate to incarcerate Assange, but he had not committed a crime: so as long as he remained overseas he was out of reach. To bring him down they could have tried to implicate him in a crime by planting illegal material on his laptop or fake evidence of his compliance in hacking, spying or theft. Eventually they chose to discredit him on moral grounds by attempting to destroy his reputation and credibility. Assange became the victim of a smear campaign to discredit him and crudely turn people against WikiLeaks. Accused of sexual misconduct in Sweden, Assange has been a political refugee in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since June 2012.

Assange is an icon, though he would hate to be described as such – an archetype of non-conformity made manifest to meet the needs of society at this point in history. His accusers retracted their claims long ago but the Swedish authorities continue to push for Assange's extradition from the UK. He would be acquitted in Sweden but exposed to an extradition order by the USA where he faces life imprisonment without trial. The charges should be dropped but the Swedish government seems to be controlled by the USA in this matter.

The WikiLeaks team continues to empower individuals within government organizations and businesses to act as a moral compass in a corrupt climate. Behind the scenes their volunteer staff do an incredible job of confirming sources and checking accuracy while handling tens of thousands of documents before making these public. Through this channel whistleblowers continue to risk everything to expose the crimes of their employers but also to uphold the idea of free speech against those in power.

THE WHISTLEBLOWERS

The greatest weapon in the battle for freedom of speech is those who have a moral imperative to reveal the criminal activity of the organizations that employ them. The 'collateral murder' footage released by WikiLeaks came from within the US military. And while the US government might make all kinds of claims to the contrary, whoever released it was doing the right thing by refusing to collude with their superiors. To do otherwise would be a crime of obedience akin to the 'acting under orders' excuse that allowed ordinary people to staff the Nazi concentration camps or commit the massacre at My Lai 4 in Vietnam.

Alongside the WikiLeaks and Anonymous collectives, the true heroes of modern counterculture are the actual whistleblowers who risk life and liberty to bring damning evidence of government abuses into public awareness. Chelsea Manning, who is accused of sharing military documents with WikiLeaks and was the possible source for the 'collateral murder' video, is currently serving 35 years in prison without trial. At the time of writing she has already spent three years in solitary confinement. Rather than face up to its actions and responsibilities, the US government chooses to silence its critics through incarceration.

The case of Edward Snowden adds another dimension to the argument, for while his act of whistleblowing revealed the crimes of his employers, the content of those revelations also have significant ramifications for the civil liberties of everyone.

EDWARD SNOWDEN

Edward Snowden was born in North Carolina in 1983. He trained as a computer programmer and, after a brief stint in the US Army, at the age of 22 he was recruited by the Central

Intelligence Agency (CIA). Snowden became a systems administrator and senior advisor to the CIA, and then became an infrastructure analyst for the National Security Agency (NSA). At the NSA he was given what is known as 'PRIVAC' clearance: privileged access to all levels of security. His role and security clearance gave him access to top-level secret projects and the tools being developed by the intelligence community. He realized that these tools went far beyond the remit of the NSA and were being used to undermine the freedoms of US citizens as stipulated by the constitution. With a growing unease at being party to the widespread abuse of power, Snowden chose to go public.

Snowden spent much of 2012 gathering evidence of covert spying operations that targeted the electronic communications of every US citizen and others worldwide. Unable to challenge his superiors directly, his only recourse was to go into hiding and make the evidence public. He relocated to Hong Kong, from where he contacted Glenn Greenwald, an American journalist working at *The Guardian* newspaper in London, and Laura Poitras, a documentary maker who had reported on the US occupation of Iraq. To go public with Snowden's revelations, Greenwald oversaw the release of a selection of the documents through the press and via WikiLeaks.

This release of information triggered a worldwide manhunt by the CIA and FBI to track down Snowden. At this point Julian Assange and WikiLeaks intervened to relocate Snowden to a temporary safe haven, and under FBI surveillance they smuggled him out of Hong Kong and into Russia. Embarrassingly, the US authorities had failed to cancel Snowden's passport and had misspelled his middle name on an extradition request to the Hong Kong authorities. Later they would incur further embarrassment by grounding the Bolivian President's private jet in the light of disinformation from WikiLeaks that Snowden was on board.

The CIA and NSA also mounted attacks on Snowden but failed to prevent the material from being released. The British security agency GCHQ then insisted that *The Guardian* newspaper destroy the archive that Snowden had given to Greenwald in Hong Kong. The staff of *The Guardian* were duly filmed as they drilled holes in a hard drive which they claimed was their *only* copy, suggesting that either GCHQ were being naïve or it was just a show to appease their gullible US counterparts.

Snowden is currently in exile from his friends, family and loved ones in temporary asylum in Russia. He faces charges of theft of secrets and espionage. The espionage accusation is clearly false, as he never intended to sell or share the information with foreign powers, but this was likely to have been added to his charge sheet as it can result in the death penalty.

It is clear that anyone who publicizes criminal activity should automatically be given amnesty from prosecution, unless they are directly responsible for the transgression. Perhaps a 'Snowden Act' should be passed to protect anyone who speaks out against crimes perpetrated by their organization, agency or government body.

SNOWDEN'S REVELATIONS

The National Security Agency (NSA) was created in 1952 and tasked with information gathering for the US security agencies. Within a week of the 11 September attacks the NSA began stealing all electronic communication that passed through the US telephone networks. AT&T alone was providing 320 million records a day to be automatically analysed for keywords and phrases of interest.

The project was at first limited to the tracking of domestic land lines and internet usage, but the NSA then hacked into undersea communications cables and set up listening stations to

capture international traffic and mobile activity. As their tools became more sophisticated, the NSA could identify a person and compile a dossier on their location, whom they knew, the documents they shared and the websites they visited. The long-term aim was to collect for every individual every signal, text, journey, purchase and social media interaction in their electronic communications record, and every page, image and video they ever viewed.

This data was then stored indefinitely, to be trawled as required years into the future. When a subversive is identified, a flag is placed against their profile and all subsequent communications are collated and reported in real time to the NSA and their partners around the world. They would compile watch lists for people they tracked, but instead of limiting this to terrorists they targeted anyone who might be critical of the current administration. According to Glenn Greenwald's source in 2014, there were 1.2 million people on the watch list.

Spying on US citizens requires judicial consent and can only be actioned by the FBI. The NSA Director Keith Alexander would later lie to Congress when asked directly if the NSA routinely collected the electronic communications of US citizens. Staff at the NSA who questioned the legality of his statements and actions were coerced into continuing the work.

Snowden also revealed the extent of non-US surveillance, including the tools being employed by the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) of the UK. They had co-opted hacker tools to undermine activists by hijacking their email accounts, hacking Facebook to gain personal photographs, and disabling any computer remotely. They could also generate an array of fake online identities to sway opinion polls and vote in support of government propaganda on news and media sites or execute DDoS attacks on subversive websites. Another GCHQ tool, called Treasure Map, could turn every device connected to the net anywhere in the world into a real-time location tracker.

These tools were shared with the NSA, which was shown to be attacking Anonymous and other political dissidents by attempting to intercept and disrupt their communications. Without oversight, the potential for the abuse of these tools against political dissidents or journalists was evidenced in 2015 when GCHQ in the UK admitted spying on Amnesty International, an organization devoted to human rights. In the USA documentary maker Laura Poitras, who made the excellent *Citizenfour* film about Edward Snowden's plight, had previously made a film that questioned the US war in Iraq. For this she was placed on a secret watch list with the highest possible threat rating, and she is summarily detained and interrogated whenever she crosses a US border.

As we are swept along into a world of mass surveillance and diminished civil liberties, the very tools that are being used to monitor us without our permission are also the weapons with which these schemes are being exposed. The secrecy of any organization is always weak, because it has to employ people, and those on the inside are ethically bound to reveal the truth. Whistleblowing has the potential to redress the balance, and if governments can enforce transparency across our communications, then we can demand a comparable transparency over government decisions. With the actual details coming to light of how our governments and agencies function, we are moving beyond George Orwell's authoritarian surveillance model towards Philip K Dick's paranoid unreality. As a result of Snowden's revelations, the NSA have added their own staff to their watch list of people to be monitored.

WORLD WAR WIRED

Politically, the Snowden leaks were damning for the USA, as they revealed the NSA to be spying on the emails and telephone conversations of world leaders of supposedly friendly

countries. Also hidden beneath the charade of national security were accounts of industrial espionage, as the same tools were used to ensure that the commercial interests of the USA were not threatened by overseas competitors. The muted responses to these revelations by other countries belied a sudden rise in cyber attacks on the USA.

On a global scale we have moved into a new age of 'information warfare', a term so broad that the US government has given it its own taxonomy to rationalize it into categories, and even its own university. Beyond the spy agencies monitoring civilians there is now a full-blown cyber war, with major governments trawling the servers of other governments to identify threats and wage digital war on them. To counter the secrecy surrounding Iran's nuclear programme, the US and Israeli governments developed a malicious virus called Stuxnet to take it offline. Even media companies have resorted to DDoS attacks against file sharing websites.

A digital Third World War is coming in which our frontline troops will be the very people that the government and media companies vilify and prosecute. Governments should embrace the hacktivists, but instead they persecute them, so like the early Christians who met in the catacombs of Rome, or the Illuminati among the lodges of Freemasonry, hackers are migrating to the darknet to bury themselves in encryption.

NET NEUTRALITY

The current online battles between oppression and transparency in America and Europe pale into insignificance in comparison with the dangers of closed regimes having the power to monitor and censor their subjects. While underground movements seek to provide indirect access to an uncensored web, the governments of China, Iran and North Korea try to limit the access their citizens have to the outside world. It is easy to point to countries such as Iran where film makers can face imprisonment if their work is deemed critical of the ruling regime, but in the West there is a more subtle form of censorship taking hold as the information we can see in our 'free' countries becomes vulnerable to manipulation.

The internet will continue to allow all forms of dissent to thrive, for as long as it remains free and uncensored. This lack of online censorship is something that we take for granted, but the keys to freedom are under constant threat as business and politics vie for control of the medium. The old money and power structures are desperate to control the internet, with media companies trying to maintain their monopolies. The ongoing battle to uphold net neutrality is being waged to prevent the internet from being controlled by either commercial interests or government censorship.

Net neutrality opposes the ability of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to control the flow of information that passes through their networks and select what people can access. The internet was designed and built to be free from commercial or political influence, and no organization or government should have the power to restrict traffic or to enable permissions. The web must remain decentralized and neutral to protect the flow of information as it passes through society.

To ensure this freedom of communication online, we must fight on two fronts: firstly, to protect the net from government or corporate control, and secondly, to pursue a right to privacy by avoiding or undermining the tools that are monitoring every facet of our digital lives. There is a real threat to free speech, in that personal data can be trawled to identify anti-government sentiments and exploited to undermine political opposition. When the right to anonymity is revoked and all dissent is monitored, society has unwittingly entered into a state of fascism.

The liberty that all Freemasons and the Illuminati hold dear, and for which the French revolutionaries took up arms, defines the limits of personal freedom. This includes the right to

privacy from government intrusion via online behavioural tracking, location tracking, electronic communications monitoring and video surveillance. The online battles illustrate the same conflict that has plagued the Illuminati and all counterculture movements. A small minority who hold the wealth and the power want to control everything to their own benefit, but they are pitched against loose collectives willing to fight for their rights and for a better world. As governments take extreme liberties with our civil rights, and businesses exploit every angle to keep us in debt-laden slavery, the internet becomes a place to voice and organize our dissent.

The US constitution exists to provide liberty to the people of the nation so that they might be free from oppression, intolerance, censorship, subjugation, slavery, tyranny and prejudice. But everywhere we find that the inequalities that inspired the French Revolution are again coming into play. Justice has become a tool for those in power, and the laws that should exist to keep power in check are being subverted. Our privacy is eroded by surveillance as government agencies the world over are hoovering up our communications while themselves becoming more secretive and less accountable. To put the people back in control to the extent of their wisdom should be the aim of politicians and technocrats everywhere.

TAKING SIDES

From the time of the Illuminati the fight has always been to liberate society, but now we are experiencing the emergence of a new cultural phenomenon. The battle for the mind has moved from secret societies to the connected communities of the internet age. As corporations frantically try to suppress the new technologies that threaten their revenue models, so an ever-widening group of individuals is shaping a collective uprising against them. The ability to publicize corporate deviance and unethical conduct has empowered society with a perspective that is closer to the truth than ever before in history.

This period of history will be reflected upon as a time when elite dynasties and powerful corporations aimed to take control of the world but were stymied by the rise in technology. WikiLeaks, the hacktivists including Anonymous, and government whistleblowers lead the charge of disseminating the secrets of those in power through technologies that undermine the state and the mainstream media. These agents of change are forming alternative societies that have the power to fight the Old World Order and become the new Illuminati.

Just as the Illuminati spread civil unrest through leafleting, we now see DDoS attacks on corporate websites that act against freedom. And while the Illuminati helped to provoke the French Revolution, when WikiLeaks released documents showing corruption in Tunisia and Anonymous fought to prevent the censorship of those in opposition to the Tunisian government, the results were comparable. Eventually the Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East could spread to the West unless governments learn to act responsibly.

Anonymous has many detractors and a track record of much misbehaviour, but the idea and the ideal stand. It is a place where masked superheroes are rallying youth to unleash dissent against corrupt autocrats. Anyone wishing to form a group outside of, or in opposition to, the ruling classes should symbolically adopt the mask and become anonymous. For those who need to work in secret, the signs and hidden meeting places of secret societies have been replaced with encryption and the darknet that protects the identities of its users. Only when dissent is as vast and faceless as its enemies can it hope to make a stand.

For those who wish to play no part in the politics of the day the internet still holds the key to an evolutionary future. The horizons of the internet will provide the broadest picture of what it is to be human, just as the Renaissance mind had tried to see religion, philosophy, politics, art

and science from all sides to construct a wider worldview. The internet already encompasses so many disparate perspectives, bringing both the best and worst of humanity to our notice: it accommodates every shade of culture, gender, sexuality, spirituality, art, politics, humour (including sarcasm), as well as the voice of youth and the chaos of technology. The online universe is expanding in all directions towards a boundless place where all beliefs are models to be transcended. As a result of this process the digital environment and its diverse societies are the arena where the structures of old are constantly challenged and prone to collapse.

The digital countercultures represent all aspects of life, from spirituality to technology and many use them to pursue their own understanding of the truth. They are weaving a new and inclusive myth of society that has the potential to steer humanity towards embracing all ambiguity and difference as a function of higher consciousness. There is a future that belongs to all of us, for we have reached the frontline of cultural revolution where the battle for freedom will play out. For society to fully embrace the new myth, a radical shift in consciousness is required. We must move away from the selfish and trivial towards the important and meaningful challenges facing society today.

If we achieve this, we become the Illuminati.

CHAPTER 11

THE EMERGING SOCIETY

Like all great statesmen, Adam Weishaupt stepped back from history and saw it for what it was. He understood how divorced from truth the rulers had become and how they lacked the wisdom to progress society towards a golden age of enlightenment. So he took it upon himself, for the good of humanity, to create an order that would survive against all forms of persecution while secretly striving for the emancipation of all. In creating the Illuminati, Weishaupt had connected with the thread of the ancient mystery schools and updated this tradition for his own time. Through the Illuminati he promoted a natural philosophy with the potential to liberate society from the yoke of superstition and the interference of governments.

The conditions in Europe prior to the first incarnation of the Illuminati are not so different from those across the world today. The misuse of power as revealed by WikiLeaks and the growing disparity between the wealthy 'one per cent' and the rest of society offer the possibility, aided by the connectivity of technology, for a premeditated evolutionary step. Whereas the French Revolution acted as a warning to the elite that people will suffer only so much exploitation and inequality before the balance of power is restored, the internet has the potential to strip them of power through the massive force of public opinion.

History has many examples of societies brought to the brink of collapse through the fall of empires or revolutionary change. In the demise of an old regime there is an opportunity for something new to emerge, but if we fail to capture this we risk dissolution – like the empire of Babylon that sank back into the desert. The collapse of society happens from the centre outwards, as the most conservative and rigid eventually give way to the weight of progress. However, such transformation can only be successful if there is something to replace the old structure. An expanded form of society is already taking shape, free from boundaries and censorship, in the vast autonomous regions that are the online communities. Online culture can

traverse fallacious geographical borders, religious ideologies and national identities to seek out a common ground for humanity. It is here that counterculture has begun to reassert the philosophy of emancipation and free expression.

To instigate a shift in society is a matter of widening the recognized mainstream until it not only includes the farthest reaches of the social spectrum but also embraces the opportunity for future groups to emerge. There are those who would block this process to protect their own interests, regardless of how that might inhibit human potential. But they cannot hold back progress indefinitely. The next step in social evolution will come not from the Old World Order that exists to uphold the conservative centre of society but from the fringes that embrace ambiguity and change. As the ideas that are percolating in alternative communities flow into the mainstream, society will evolve towards a more inclusive outlook. However, each individual must first commit to the question that Aaron Swartz framed at the beginning of this book:

'Ask yourself, what is the most important thing in the world I could be working on right now?'

For some, this will be to work towards personal illumination, to free their will so that they can make choices without the influence of nationalist mindsets and religious superstition. For others, it might be to apply their existing wisdom to teach or enlighten, and thus to help improve the world today. But before bringing change to the world, we must be sure that we are acting in service of our higher selves and not out of personal need or ego.

FIRST LIGHT

For those of a spiritual nature, the path to illumination is also unique to each individual, but the end goal in this case is potentially a gnosis, which connects the individual spirit to the divine so that they might know how to act in service of humanity. Many religions act as a barrier to gnosis, since they instil delusions in their followers and through centuries of scripture and dogma have become far removed from an experience of the divine. If they cannot evolve to meet the needs of a developed society and if they fail to practice equality and tolerance, they become incompatible with basic human rights and fall short of their spiritual aspirations. Any god or religion that cannot value women as equal to men is unlikely to be anything more than an invention of man.

Some fear that as religion declines, humanity will become devoid of meaning; but it is an essential part of being human to naturally connect to a spiritual calling and find meaning there. Once the cobwebs of religious dogma have been swept aside and the cynicism of the age fallen away, the potential for spiritual renewal will arise. This is the call of the Illuminati inviting us to be something greater than we currently are, and to broaden our minds and perspective on life as awareness increases. Gnosis and the path towards illumination evoke a natural morality and give purpose to our actions, and those who find enlightenment will recognize that dogma and holy men are but shadows in the divine light that illuminates consciousness. Whichever path we choose towards selfactualization, we can express our growing awareness in the service of creating an enlightened society.

SOCIETY 2.0

The current idea of society is a constantly evolving myth projected onto groups of people by the ruling classes. The civilizations of ancient Greece and Egypt, and the Roman and British

Empires all eventually gave way to new mythologies, as they failed to adapt to the needs of their subjects or fell to their enemies. As the USA behaves with increasing imperialism, it risks condemning itself to the same fate. At various points in history, society has been awakened by countercultures, including the Renaissance art movement, the scientists and philosophers of the Age of Reason, and the hedonistic search for self in the 1960s. These cultural revolutions were driven in every age by those who lived at the extremities of cultural experience, often attracting persecution until they became accepted and absorbed into society or until they amassed enough power to stand in open revolt against the ruling ideologies.

Every aspect of society has an edge, an extremity of thought promoted by rebellious individuals; and for the first time in history these unique identities are converging in a place that offers some protection from persecution and ridicule. Free from censorship and capable of reaching the widest possible audience, the internet has allowed the creation and discovery of new communities to better reflect the shape of society today. The more proactive of these groups are already pushing the boundaries and challenging what is acceptable, or trying by the power of the public forum to address the major issues that inhibit the evolution of society. They are living proof that the challenges we face today can be met if enough people are willing to collaborate in the sharing of knowledge and to take a stand against those who impede progress.

The collective power of online communities can mirror the work of the Illuminati by leveraging the influence of their individual members to make changes in the world. As more online communities of likeminded people form and grow, they will begin to enlarge the 'temporary autonomous zones', to use the phrase of American anarchist author Hakim Bey, until they join up and become a majority force to demand change on issues they consider worth fighting for. The power of online communities can be applied to activism ranging from public displays of dissent to participation in online petitions. An increasing number of people are realizing that they have a voice, and that voice deserves to be heard, whether picketing against the closure of a local hospital or signing an online petition to protect freedom of speech.

The idea of petitions might seem trivial in the face of global problems, but the act of joining a mass of people to promote a specific issue can highlight through sheer scale what the public really consider important. The aims can range from stopping wars and ending poverty worldwide to targeting specific businesses for not paying tax or for harming the environment. This is a movement that anyone can be a part of, and it is proving to be a more representative form of democracy than voting every four years for a token figurehead. To manage the rise of public forums, many countries now have state-recognized petitions that will bring change if they reach a certain threshold of support. Petitions on the We the People forum on the White House website in the USA are passed to the administration if they exceed 100,000 signatures. Other, independent petition sites have seen success in forcing changes in political policy and curbing the excesses of business. The collective voice demands that people are recognized as more than consumers, demonstrating that they are willing to unite against disempowering political administrations and regimes of corporate crime.

Influence can also operate on a personal level. Like all whistleblowers, Edward Snowden had a limited sphere of influence within his workplace when he became aware of crimes being committed by the government agency that employed him. Snowden could do nothing to challenge what he saw unfolding, but he recognized that he had the power to make those crimes public. Whistleblowers publish at great personal risk, but through people like Snowden and the mechanisms of WikiLeaks it is possible to publicize the corruption that is in place in government and in a range of organizations. A few exploit their special position to attract an audience, like Russell Brand using his fame to raise awareness of current issues or Bob Geldof

creating Live Aid, which put governments to shame for not responding to the tragedy unfolding in Africa. For the majority, personal influence might seem limited, but there are ways to engage in promoting ideas using determination and good works, rather than celebrity power.

The act of infiltration was a key tool of the Illuminati, achieved by joining a group and steering it towards a positive outcome or hindering the damage it does. For example, those who can stomach politics should consider getting involved in local elections, as it is easier to subvert a group when working from within its ranks than from the outside. And anyone already in a position within an organization can look for opportunities to influence and make good any tendency that is actively in opposition to the rights of humanity as a whole.

As government agencies have been using infiltration for decades, we will eventually reach a point where so many layers of influence are in play that no clear motive can be identified behind any action. Ultimately, a coup of the Old World Order is possible, as the closer they get to consolidating power, the more opportunities arise to steer them from the inside with the aims of the Illuminati in mind.

THE INVISIBLE PRISON

There are many groups highlighting the failings of the banking system by organizing online and offline action, such as the Occupy movement which has taken a stance against social injustices linked with extreme wealth and against corrupt business practices. Digital currencies like Bitcoin are yet to stabilize, but they have the potential to move wealth away from the cartels and undermine the infinite debt that comes with the usury of an interest-based business model. There is also a move away from the traditional trading of shares in faceless corporations towards the informed decisions and personal choice of crowdfunding. This model of business allows micro-funding through Kickstarter projects, avoiding the burden of interest charges on bank loans.

Unfortunately, personal greed is as much responsible for the failings of society as any grand conspiracy, and here we see the Illuminati teachings having relevance, as its members were instructed to 'humiliate the proud'. In modern society avarice is venerated as something to aspire towards, when it should be seen as a human tragedy. As the fight against poverty gathers strength, the ultra-rich must be challenged to stop competing over who has the most money and instead begin to compete over who has done the greatest good with it. This cultural shift is already taking place, as new technocrats like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, who has donated the majority of his fortune to a charitable foundation, act empathically and lead the way in inspiring those who have everything to help those who have nothing.

It is a failing of modern media that the portrayal of wealth is distorting the values of the next generation with an expectation that to be rich and famous is a meaningful pursuit and the pinnacle of success. To begin to dismantle these social constructs requires that we come to our senses and seek meaning in the media to which we are subjected. Members of the Illuminati were instructed to rid themselves of falsity in the form of news and political propaganda, but it is a challenge today to find a clear signal amidst all the noise and hyperbole. State-sanctioned media are at best selective, and sometimes entirely compromised, in their reporting of events. When *The New York Times* leaked an email stating that any articles relating to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were to be passed to the Agency for editorial approval, it became clear that today's press is prone to government manipulation. Many news channels slavishly reflect the propaganda of governments and the hidden agendas of the media barons.

In addition to influencing the news, the media conglomerates of today have become hydras

of disinformation. They support a form of myth-making that is used widely in business, to introduce doubt that challenges provable facts and even scientific evidence. For decades Big Tobacco invested huge sums of money to undermine research that proved conclusively the relationship between smoking and cancer. They did so by seeding debate and news with false experts to subvert scientific evidence. In recent years the persecution of scientists has taken a more insidious turn, as crowds of paid lobbyists pretending to be neutral, and corrupt think tanks employed to distort scientific research for corporate gain, openly criticize sound scientific evidence. In the oil industry Greenpeace found evidence of ExxonMobil funding disinformation on climate change via various institutes that promoted false research, adding to the confusion and denial in public opinion on climate change.

Charlatans can be found defending pesticides that are killing bees or pretending that sugar is not ruining the lives of children through ill health and obesity. It has become an extension of public relations to oppress science and introduce doubt into scientific consensus, without any legal recourse for injured parties. Meanwhile, the online scientific community has presented overwhelming evidence for global warming, while the sustainability movement exists to remind those in power that the environment must take precedence over profit. By publicizing the opinions of undoubted liars, the media are complicit in rendering solid scientific research inconclusive in the minds of their audiences.

It is in matters of war that the media seem happiest to collude with governments, as the influence of the Old World Order pushes for conflict over peace. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, written in the 5th century BC, states that 'all warfare is based on deception', and this is certainly true of the media-led propaganda. When footage from the war in Iraq shown in the USA revelled in the 'shock and awe' of long-range weapons being fired into enemy territories at night, the effect was akin to watching a firework display or the special effects of a science fiction movie. It appeared in stark contrast to the BBC news teams that chose to take cameras into cities and film the actual results of indiscriminate shelling. With schools, hospitals and other municipal buildings shown to be in ruins and countless civilians proved injured or dead, it comes as no surprise that the BBC is under constant threat from media barons and politicians.

The same state-influenced vested interests are also complicit in regurgitating the phrase 'war on terror', which is an example of cognitive dissonance, in that it appears to have meaning but is actually meaningless. It is not possible to declare war on an abstract noun. This trend of moving politics into the realms of unreality was recently promoted by a political adviser to the Kremlin, Vladislav Surkov, who drew upon ideas from the avant-garde art world to undermine the opposition with disinformation. To achieve this, he generated political signals so complex and confusing that they shielded the ruling party from any specific judgements. If people cannot understand what the leaders are doing or saying, they cannot organize an opposition.

In the West a similar strategy is employed by politicians and businesses to distract the public from their misdeeds, called 'crowding out'. This is achieved by burying actual issues in an avalanche of trivial 'pseudo-events' that are blown out of proportion to make easier targets for public attention and understanding. A Member of Parliament fiddling expenses makes for a simple headline compared with analysing at length the motives behind the invasion of Afghanistan and the impact it has on real people caught up in the conflict.

It is the state-sanctioned, sanitized images of war that army recruiters show on their tours of schools to arouse patriotism and entice children into the military meat grinder. They never mention the number of disabled veterans, prisoners or homeless that fail to find a way back from conflict. The endless Middle Eastern war has inspired a resurgence of the anti-war movement of the 1960s which has found support through the internet, but it still falls to public opinion to dissuade our leaders from aggression, so I leave the final stand on conflict to the

philosopher P D Ouspensky. While watching truckloads of prosthetic legs bound for the Eastern front during the First World War, Ouspensky realized they were replacements for limbs that had not yet been lost, and was inspired to reject all forms of nationalism outright.

As mainstream media are failing to meet the needs of society or to reflect social realities in a meaningful way, it falls to the anti-media and to advocates for the freedom of the press to make news of what is important and true. Alongside a few print publications, this is why the internet is worth protecting. It is a battleground for the truth: a place where conflicting realities can be given an equal voice, and where whistleblowers supported by WikiLeaks exercise the true right to free speech. Julian Assange, Edward Snowden and many others have helped to force the events that are shaping the world back into focus.

To see the world clearly is to screen out the sanitized press and go in search of something more honest. As a result, the power of the mainstream press is rapidly declining, while the vacuum left is filled by independent documentaries, online editorials and crowdsourced, eyewitness accounts that all publish free from editorial bias. Real news is the search for facts and not opinion, and with this aim in view alternative news websites and feeds are now in circulation, including The Intercept (<https://theintercept.com/>); which reports on real news and fights to maintain a freedom of the press, and Reddit (<https://www.reddit.com>), whose community outpourings collate the opinions of those who look beyond the state-sanctioned press. Once the bubble of phoney politics and fake journalism is pierced, the underlying agendas of those in power become apparent and can be challenged.

A CALL TO ACTION ON PRIVACY

The phrase 'a call to action' is intentionally ambiguous. It is taken from a standard marketing practice, whereby an exhortation aims at provoking a reaction in the recipient, be it making a purchase or seeking further information. One of the key differences between what the Illuminati railed against in the 18th century and what society has to contend with today is the insidious and intrusive nature of consumerism, so it seems appropriate to reclaim this phrase and apply it to the exact opposite. To embrace the Illuminati state of mind is to view life in terms of separating a meaningful signal from the noise surrounding us, thus challenging the overwhelming amount of media and advertising aimed at keeping people enthralled in consumerism.

Advertising forms a part of the unethical culture of acceptable dishonesty that is rampant in capitalism. Online advertising is getting progressively more intrusive, but if enough people were to actively discriminate against products pushed in front of them, the internet would revert to being a place of sharing instead of a relentless sales channel. Through self-awareness it is possible to look beyond branding, marketing imagery and messaging to focus on issues of authentic personal interest. We can all learn to screen out advertising. It is possible to reject the commercialism of the internet by opting out of the barrage of adverts and clickbait. A few advertisement blocking tools are listed in the Resources section at the end of this book. By such means we can begin to undermine the vapid culture of consumerism that serves to distract people and enslave them through debt to financial institutions.

Lurking behind consumer influence is the 'big data' of digital lives being mapped for marketing purposes to help to subject society to constant manipulation. Detailed dossiers of an individual's interests and behaviour are compiled, and then auctioned to advertisers, who then subject the individual to invasive marketing tactics. These companies specialize in honing down preferences to extract the maximum amount of money from each person, so that by the

time children born today come of age their entire existence will be charted in terms of optimum consumerism. Big data places a high value upon personal information harvested from social media, software, online shopping, store cards and apps. The latter often insist on access to personal information that is not required for the app to function but can be sold on to advertisers or government agencies.

The legal battle to maintain privacy is being fought by groups such as Fight for the Future (FFTF) and the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), which issue legal challenges to keep the internet free from control and censorship. They aim to uphold net neutrality and maintain freedom of speech in a battle that is raging between those who value their privacy and government agencies that are trying to maintain statesponsored spying. Without these legal challenges, government agencies would freely be able to trawl back through an individual's entire history of communications for any signs of anti-government sentiments or countercultural ideals. This undermines the basic freedom of privacy, and to counter this there is a race to achieve absolute online anonymity.

The optimum personal approach to privacy is to mask behaviour through any means necessary, including using tools and security methods adopted by the Anons and other advocates of online privacy, some of which can be found in the Resources section (p204). If the battle for privacy is lost in a world where free speech and private communication no longer exist, counterculture groups can learn from secret societies to cover their tracks by reverting to private language and coded messages. The development of language online is already evolving beyond the limits of the dictionary with the acronyms of texting, but must evolve further to include secrecy in its growing application. Abbreviations and letter substitution have already generated codes; but to speak in the third person or use original slang would help to avoid self-incrimination through any form of electronic communication. Behaviour must change as well, and as governments become more intrusive, the dissidents must let go of their egos to become 'Spartacus' or seek out the darknets and inhabit the 'deep web' of anonymity.

As an extension of personal privacy, the weapon of disinformation can be used to distort the 'big data' mapping of identity. Disinformation has been used by government agencies, secret societies and, recently, WikiLeaks to help to smuggle Edward Snowden out of Hong Kong. It is also the reason why over 70,000 Australians registered as having the religion 'Jedi' in the 2001 government census. In an age of 'big data' being mined and trawled to capture our every virtual action, it makes sense to add as much noise to the signal as possible. Every questionnaire, every detail that is asked with the purpose of data mining for marketing purposes is an opportunity to lie. If enough people do this, the commercial value of all marketing 'big data' becomes worthless. To ensure that they know nothing by making them think they know everything is the art of disinformation.

FUTURE NOW

There is a stencil on a wall of a government building in Cagliari, Sardinia, that shows the Anonymous mask, adopted from the Guy Fawkes mask in the film *V for Vendetta*, underscored with the word *DISOBEY*. This iconic image encapsulates both the value of political graffiti to challenge society to think for itself and the voice of youth in dissent for this generation. We have reached a point where the anti-establishment ethos of the Illuminati haunts governments in the form of digital 'hacktivists' such as Anonymous, WikiLeaks and other collectives. Like the Illuminati, these groups seek to empower individuals as social and political agents of change, while exposing the corruption and crimes of those in power.

The work of these groups resonates with a wider campaign of rebellion against the digital inquisition by governments and corporate powers, and carries with it the ideal of emancipation that echoes throughout history. For this reason, it is fitting that the Fawkes mask has been adopted as the symbol of Anonymous and its many hacker collectives as a means to continue their anonymity on- and offline. Although the UK celebrates Guy Fawkes's failed attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605 in a spirit of light-hearted carnival, this figure is useful at a more serious level to remind politicians and the Old World Order in general that uprisings like the French Revolution and the Arab Spring began with the idea that inequality and corruption should not be tolerated. A large enough counterculture movement is capable of many things, and a government's greatest fear in the digital age is that they cannot control the people if the people are informed, anonymous and legion.

At a time when governments in the West are going to great lengths to militarize the police to protect their authority, the rebellious nature of counterculture must try to work within the laws to achieve change; however, where extreme religious or dictatorial regimes still dominate, revolution might be the only option. For the West a less dramatic route to change would be to embrace the subversive power of online communities.

The next challenge is to steer humanity away from the false assurances of the Old World Order and get people to recognize their true predicament: numbed by media saturation, overwhelmed by consumerism, enslaved by financial indenture, subdued by militarized law enforcement and distracted from who we really are and the power we collectively hold. This power is potentially regime-changing, and the Old World Order should take note of it. In the words of Alan Moore in the film *V for Vendetta*:

'People should not be afraid of their governments; governments should be afraid of the people.'

Only when decent people like Paul John Denham, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden can go home will we know that the balance of power is being restored and governments are once again working in the service of their subjects.

CLOSING WORDS

The Illuminati took it upon themselves to liberate humanity from the religious, political and economic barriers that inhibited its progress. Their ideals put their members in direct conflict with the ruling classes of the 18th century, and as a result they were persecuted and suppressed for their work. Eventually they suffered the worst fate possible for any philosophical movement: they were tarnished by being associated with the very organizations they were fighting against, in the form of the Old World Order. The true Illuminati exist still, as a meme to enact social evolution; and until enlightenment is achieved, society will continue to be drawn inexorably towards their goals.

The true successors to the Illuminati today are those who embrace the internet as a means to disseminate ideas and to organize groups to further their cause. The digital medium has the potential to bring transparency to politics and empower the oppressed by making their plight known and enabling their causes. Anonymous, WikiLeaks and similar groups have become the spiritual and political successors to the Illuminati meme by challenging oppression and inequality in all its forms. Along with the whistleblowers, these collectives have already held governments and businesses to account and dispelled some of the myths of modern media. As pioneers they stand at the forefront of the emergent online societies and movements that have the power to undermine the machinations of the Old World Order.

Members of the Illuminati today would appear as nodes on the darknets or Anons in the chatrooms, while trying to create a critical mass of followers to support the emergent counterculture movements that exist online. The open source technology that underpins cyberspace and provides a haven for emerging cultures is itself an expression of an open access culture of working together for the good of society. This has led to crowdsourced collaborations that can innovate and extend technology into all areas of culture, and has allowed us to harness the collective computing power of the cloud for SETI's search for extraterrestrial life and hunt the next perfect prime number. The social interactions of online communities have the potential to transcend technology and become an enabler of human evolution.

Today's online environment might be the primordial soup from which the next stage of humanity will emerge. It is through the internet that we might discover the final incarnation of culture as one that includes the ever-expanding reaches of human thought and endeavour and is open to becoming a wholly inclusive global civilization that seeks to attain the absolute truth of all things. The final culture will embrace all humanity, as we reach a point where the perceived limits of nationality, belief, gender, age and sexual orientation are transcended. Illumination offers a new intelligence that would draw upon the sum total of human knowledge, including the knowledge of what it is to be fully human. To assist in this process of evolution would be to strive for a better form of culture by extending the concept in all directions through a dialogue that includes everyone.

If we choose to support the transition to an evolved society, then we must also evolve personally and take up the challenge of the Illuminati by identifying how we might be of service to their ideals. Each of us can become agents of the Illuminati by influencing change or supporting those who act for the greater good of society as a whole. Those who are willing to stand apart and embrace counterculture can join Anonymous, support WikiLeaks, and seek illumination in their lives and in all things. Others may choose to be more subtle while still finding ways to participate in productive work on what they consider to be the most important issues in the world today. Counterculture is an opportunity to explore human potential and to empower the change we want to see in the world. It is time to stand proud among the 99 per cent, and be inspired by Aaron Swartz and the Illuminati.

We are Anonymous.
We do not forgive.
We do not forget.
Join us.

RESOURCES

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DOCUMENTARIES

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- Bitter Lake*, by Adam Curtis, 2015: uncovering the war in Afghanistan
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NEWSFEEDS AND FORUMS

Be aware that people on forums are rarely who they seem. Don't trust them, don't tell them anything about yourself, and expect them to be dubious in nature or, worse still, employed by government agencies. Never incriminate yourself, not even in jest.

- Amnesty International* (<http://www.amnesty.org>): protecting human rights
- Anonymous* (<http://anonhq.com/>)
- The channels* (<http://www.4chan.org/>): discretion required, as these discussion boards expose you to explicit content, puerile reactions, *trolling and lots of undercover government spies*
- Cryptome* (<http://cryptome.org/>): archive of leaked documents
- The Daily Grail* (<http://www.dailygrail.com/>): all things esoteric
- Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF)* (<https://www.eff.org/>): fighting for digital rights
- eyeWitness to Atrocities* app (<http://www.eyewitnessproject.org/>): to capture images and video that are verifiable in a court of law; can also be used in the workplace
- Fight for the Future* (<https://www.fightforthefuture.org/>): protecting the *internet*
- The Guardian* (<http://www.theguardian.com/uk>): UK print and online newspaper for which George Monbiot among others write
- The Intercept* (<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/>): online news website from Glenn Greenwald and a host of excellent journalists
- Occupy Wall Street* (<http://occupywallst.org/>): movement fighting the banks
- The Onion* (<http://www.theonion.com/>): satire
- Reddit* (<https://www.reddit.com/>)
- Slashdot* (slashdot.org): online open source/technologist community
- TechCrunch* (<http://techcrunch.com/>): technology news
- Why We Protest* (<http://Whyweprotest.net>): Anons website for Chanology
- WikiLeaks* (<https://wikileaks.org/>)
- The Zeitgeist Movement* (<http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/>)

ONLINE PETITIONS

Petitions have been successful in changing the attitudes and actions of businesses and governments and providing a more granular view of public opinion. Join them, support them and sign petitions on issues that you feel are important. They are a legitimate way to get your voice heard, so share and donate if you can. If you are outside the USA and UK, there are doubtless similar lobbying groups in your country, so find them, and make a difference. You have more power than you realize.

38 Degrees (<http://www.38degrees.org.uk/>): UK campaigns for political change

Change Org (<https://www.change.org/>): petitions on global issues

Demand Progress (<https://demandprogress.org/>): fighting for democracy

ePetitions (<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/>): UK government petition site

Sum of Us (<http://sumofus.org/>): petitioning corporations to put an end to unethical practices

UK petitions (<https://petition.parliament.uk/>): petition the UK Parliament

We the People (<https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/>): public forum on The White House website

PRIVACY RESOURCES

The first step is to get updates for any software you have and install an antivirus to keep your computer from being hacked. Then set your browser to block tracking and scripts, and consider adding browser plugins like Ghostery to prevent the casual interception and monitoring of online traffic. Programs like Peerblock screen out known government tracking of your computer identity, though note that these are a drain on computer resources. Amnesty International has also developed a tool called Detekt which is a free download to scan your computer for government intrusion and spyware.

The next level of protection is to use a Virtual Private Network (VPN), which acts as a barrier to identifying your computer. VPN providers are good but will be unable to withstand a legal demand to hand over your details to law enforcement agencies. A web-based VPN is The Onion Router (TOR) network. Developed to protect US Naval communications, when using TOR every piece of data that leaves your computer is encrypted three times and scattered through the network, or nodes, of other TOR users. It is thought that the current TOR network has been compromised and there are nodes that are controlled by US intelligence services but the model still works and there will be future versions that are more robust.

For storing files securely, programs like TrueCrypt or CipherShed offer local encryption at file or folder level. These are also prone to compromise by government agencies, so keep track of newer versions. Browsing with HTTPS enforced will also add a basic layer of security to prevent the casual monitoring of your online habits.

To maintain private communications the original method, as preferred by hackers, is to use Instant Relay Chat (IRC). By online standards IRC is a relatively old technology, but still in use today as it allows the creation of private chatrooms. End-to-end encryption of emails is also becoming more common, and encrypted mobile phones are finding their way onto the market.

To stem the tide of intrusive advertising there are advert-blocking software and browser plugins that prevent tracking. If there are websites that you consider worthy of support through advertising revenue they can be added to a safe list in-program. This makes it an 'opt-in'

decision to see advertising, as the choice remains with the user.

Software can become compromised, so it is suggested you check the Anonymous websites for advice on staying safe online.

Adblock Plus (<https://adblockplus.org>): browser add-on to hide adverts
Bleachbit (<http://bleachbit.sourceforge.net/>): to clean junk off your PC
Detekt (<https://www.amnesty.org/>): Amnesty International free tool to scan your computer for government intrusion and spyware
Do Not Call Registry (UK) (<https://www.donotcall.gov/>): prevents sales callers
Disconnect (<https://disconnect.me/>): browser that prevents tracking
Ghostery (<https://www.ghostery.com/>): prevents some online monitoring
Https everywhere (<https://www.eff.org/https-everywhere>): forces sites to use https encryption
Last Pass (<https://lastpass.com/>): secure password manager
Noscript (<https://noscript.net/>): browser add-on to prevent scripts from running
The Onion Router (TOR) (<https://www.torproject.org/>): the dark web
Peerblock (www.peerblock.com): blocks tracking of your IP address
ProtonMail (<https://protonmail.com/>): secure email accounts based in Switzerland
Tails (<https://tails.boum.org/>): a Linux operating system optimized for privacy
Trackbuster (<https://trackbuster.com/>): strips tracking out of emails as they arrive in your inbox
Truecrypt, Veracrypt, Diskcryptor, BoxCryptor: encryption software at file or folder level
Windows Security Solution (<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/security-essentials-download>): free antivirus software
X-Chat, mIRC, HydrIRC, etc: Internet Relay Chat (IRC) providers as used by the Anonymous groups

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