



Humanists Hawaii

NEWSLETTER

July 2006

July meeting at Krauss Hall

John White presents

A History of Funeral Practices in the United States

*July 30, 2006
10:30 a.m.*

*Krauss Hall 112
University of Hawaii*

Throughout history, people have mourned the death of loved ones with some type of ceremony. The typical contemporary American funeral is, however, a very recent happening. In times past, funerals tended to be very plain, a pine box, family and friends caring for the body, and simple burial. This is in dramatic contrast to the modern American funeral designed and performed by professionals who transform the dead body into a living memorial and perform elaborate and expensive funeral rituals.

John White has studied this phenomenon. He will describe the history and development of modern American funeral traditions and the businesses associated with these traditions. John has also been a member of the Memorial Society for many years and a board member for eight years. He will inform us about strategies currently involved in dealing with the deaths of loved ones.

Most people give little thought to funerals until they are thrust into a crisis of critical questions. People tend to go with what is represented as tradition rather than seek alternatives to a standard funeral or shop around. Choice of a service or last rites is influenced by family preferences, traditions, religious beliefs, and customs of the community.

John will provide a structure for us to consider the inevitable and plan for future loss of loved ones or conversations with family and friends regarding the ceremony to mark our own eventual demise.

America before 1937

In pre-1937 America, workers were exploited, factories were free to pollute, and old people were generally poor when they retired. This is not an agenda the public would be likely to sign onto today if it were debated in an election.

But conservatives, who like to complain about activist liberal judges, could achieve their anti-New Deal agenda through judicial activism on the right. Judges could use the so-called Constitution-in-Exile to declare laws on workplace safety, environmental protection and civil rights unconstitutional.

---Adam Cohen, *New York Times* legal affairs analyst,
quoted by Jeffrey Jamison on the blog of
the American Constitution Society, January 25, 2006

Between the Dying and the Dead

Dr. Jack Kevorkian's Life and Battle to Legalize Euthanasia
by Neal Nicol and Harry Wylie, University of Wisconsin Press, July 2006,
cloth, 288 pages, \$27.95.

Dr. Jack Kevorkian is best known for inventing the 'suicide machine' and being an outspoken proponent of the right to die with dignity. He has changed the way many people think about living wills, physician assisted suicide and euthanasia. *Between the Dying and the Dead*, the first authorized biography of Kevorkian, explores the many facets of this complicated and controversial man.

On November 22, 1998, Dr Jack Kevorkian made headlines across America when a videotape showing him administering a lethal injection to Thomas Youk, a 52-year-old man in the final stages of Lou Gehrig's disease, was broadcast on national television. The program triggered intense debate, three days after it was aired Kevorkian was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. He was tried and sentenced to 10-25 years in a maximum-security prison.

Born in 1928 in Michigan, Kevorkian was the son of Armenian refugees who fled to America to escape the Turkish genocide. A precocious student, his humor and intelligence caused him trouble at school and at home. He abandoned the engineering career his father had mapped out for him to become a doctor, but after witnessing his mother's long and painful death from cancer, Kevorkian resolved to ease the suffering of the terminally ill.

Kevorkian embarked on a career in pathology earning himself a nomination for a Nobel Prize. From pioneering living wills and the right to refuse resuscitation to perfecting blood transfusions from cadavers to the living, harvesting organs from death row inmates and inventing the suicide machine for which he became famous, Kevorkian's career was a series of forward thinking innovations. Oregon's Death with Dignity Act – on which Britain's ADTI (Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill) Bill is modeled – was based on Jack Kevorkian's principles of assisted suicide.

Kevorkian's efforts to legalize euthanasia gathered pace when, in 1987, he started advertising in newspapers as a 'physician consultant for death counseling'. In the following years he earned the nickname Dr. Death for assisting in the suicide of over 130 people. In each of these cases, the individuals used homemade devices to start the flow of carbon monoxide or intravenous chemicals that caused their death. In Thomas Youk's case,

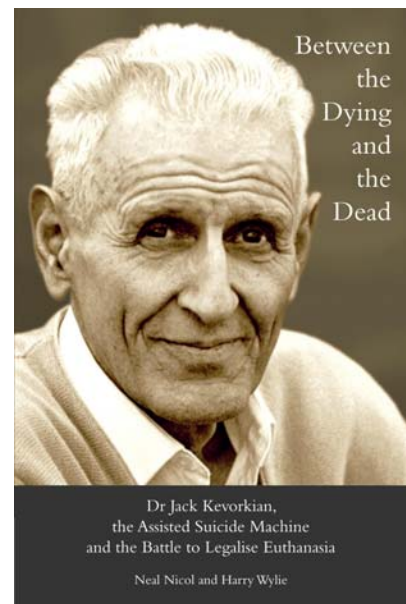
however, Kevorkian had to administer the injection because Youk's illness meant he was unable to work the suicide machine himself. In an attempt to force the law, Kevorkian videoed the suicide and sent the tape to the media.

Few people know that he was sentenced, for all intents and purposes, to life in prison. Many believe him dead. The institution called Legislative America has so isolated him from the public that, by disallowing media contact and legal appeals, they succeeded in their goal of shutting him in and shutting him up – out of sight, out of mind. Jack is a remarkable human being, whose life and work deserve to be celebrated. It is hoped that *Between the Dying and the Dead* will educate the world to the plight of this humanitarian. [This paragraph is from the preface]

Between the Dying and the Dead is an absorbing account of Kevorkian's battles with the press, right-to-lifers, politicians, doctors and the legal authorities and the struggles that led to his imprisonment.

Neal Nicol has been a friend and co-worker of Dr. Kevorkian since 1961. He was a willing guinea pig in the doctor's research in cadaver blood transfusion and chromium 51 cell survival studies. His medical training as a corpsman and laboratory technician enabled him to assist Dr. Kevorkian on many occasions, while his laboratory supply company often provided materials necessary for Dr. Kevorkian's efforts. Nicol regularly visits Dr. Kevorkian in prison and continues to be a steadfast supporter of the right to die.

Harry Wylie is a long-time friend and confidant of Dr. Kevorkian. Harry and his wife, Arlene, were Dr. Kevorkian's next-door neighbors and are two of the ten people on the doctor's prison visitation list. They visited him on a monthly basis for five years and now, residing alternately in Mexico and Canada, speak weekly with him by phone



Don't Let Them Turn Back the Clock!

The war on birth control
by Cecile Richards, Planned Parenthood

Birth control is used by 98% of American women. It's healthy, safe, and effective. It reduces the number of abortions. It's basic health care.

We can all agree on that much, right?

Apparently not. Leaders from the ultra-conservative right are determined to paint birth control as evil, just as they've tried to do with abortion. They have attacked the pill and emergency contraception – they've even campaigned against condoms!

It's time to show mainstream Americans who is behind the War on Birth Control.

Urge your senators and representative to sign the congressional resolution on family planning – to say whether they're for birth control, or against it.
<http://www.ppaction.org/campaign/supportfamilyplanning1/x58x3n2ftnmjxk?>

Eighty-nine percent of Americans favor more access to information about birth control, and 81% think birth control access is a good way to prevent abortions*, so birth control opponents are clearly outside the mainstream. But a lot of elected officials are silently backing them, scared to offend their narrow political base.

So we're asking senators and representatives to support a new resolution, just introduced in Congress, which says:

- (1) Congress should help women, regardless of income, avoid unintended pregnancy and abortion through access to affordable contraception; and
- (2) Congress should support programs and policies that make it easier for women to obtain contraceptives.

Can you imagine saying "no" to that? No programs to haggle over, no tough budgeting decisions to be made, no lawmaker's pet project. It's just a simple statement: Congress should support access to birth control.

Urge your leaders to support H.CON. Res. 404 and S. Res. 485. Reach them at www.ppaction.org/campaign/supportfamilyplanning1/x58x3n2ftnmjxk?

Even if your senator and representatives already back this resolution, they still need to hear from you. This resolution could lead to a showdown in Congress, and we want to make sure every last moderate lawmaker is with us.

You can learn more about the War on Birth Control here: www.ppaction.org/ct/2d1YXT11AzDK/

* "Most Americans Back Easy Access to Birth Control, Survey Finds," *Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2006

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See scheduled events, pictures of officers and current and archived newsletters at our website:
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If you'd like to receive your personal email at the prestigious Humanists.net address, contact WebMaster Mike at the address or phone number above.

HH's Meeting Place Room 112 Krauss Hall

Driving on Dole Street past the University, turn mauka on East West Road then ewa on Correa Road. Drive to the end and turn makai toward the circle with the big tree. There's free parking on part of the circle, on the other side of Krauss Hall and various lots around campus. The entrance to Krauss Hall 112 is at the Diamondhead end of the lily pond.

We'll have an HH sign by the door. Hope to see you all.



Letters by HH people

To Humanists Hawaii:

I believe you have proposed an ideal of congregation for Humanists Hawaii. I strongly concur and hope the members will get together on this. Home socials could work and sharing coffee and cake would not stress the ladies.

I was president of the chapter years ago and had a great run. I followed Walter Leu.

Your excellent newsletter issues you send me are fine.

Another Humanist group is making great strides. Prof. Kurtz leads with a building in Amherst NY, another with a theatre area and library in Hollywood and, now I hear, one soon to be launched in Washington DC. I've vainly tried to have AHA join them, but no success. This for many years. It's sad to be split. The human element of personality is stronger than our glorious cause.

My best regards to my buddies: Jack and Barbara Mitchell.

Philip Ellison, DDS

RIPMobile – antitoxin program

RIPMobile is a program for recycling your old cell phone. I'm told that they'll even cover your postage.

The RIPMobile program helps you transform your drawer full of unused cell phones into something you'd rather have – cool stuff! Here's how it works: You tell them what old (and not-so-old) mobile phones you have sitting in a drawer or on a shelf around the house. They calculate the value of those phones (some PDAs have value too), and tell you what they are worth (they pay you in RIPMobile points" – a "point" is worth a dollar). You then send those phones and their accessories in to them so they can inspect and test them. They can only pay you for working phones and PDAs, but they can recycle ALL mobile devices you send them, so don't throw any away because they aren't valuable – they *all* have toxic materials in them.

They triage, test and pay you for working phones per the terms of their agreement. You can read the agreement at www.ripmobile.com/agreement.asp

RIPMobile will pay you top-dollar value for your old cell phones because they have buyers for these phones all over the world. Those phones may be old to you, but will probably be the first phones our customers on the other side of the world have ever owned

RIPMobile will issue you RIPMobile "points" for the value of these phones – a point is worth a dollar. *You* tell them how you want to spend the points, and they will issue you gift certificates for the vendors you select. You can get almost anything from hot music to

cool clothes to electronics or games – whatever you want – there are literally millions of choices available. Current entertainment partners include MSN Music, with over 1 million songs to choose from,

Check it out at www.ripmobile.com/how_works.asp

The Honolulu Advertiser, July 13, 2006

'809' scam is real – and costly

by Robbie Dingeman, Bureaucracy Buster

Q. There's an e-mail going around about people who get an "urgent" phone message to call an 809 area code, and later ended up getting charged thousands of dollars for the call. Is this for real?

A. Unfortunately, yes, it can and does happen. A person gets a call from someone who says you've won a prize, or a family member is hurt or something else that might encourage you to call without thinking.

The Federal Communications Commission said the message sometimes comes in a call or page or even an e-mail. The agency reports that in each instance, the three-digit area code resembles a typical U.S. area code, so people will return the call and find out much later that they've inadvertently dialed another country and gotten zapped with a big phone bill.

Hawaiian Telcom spokeswoman Ann Nishida said phone security experts there say the "809" phone scam has existed for several years. The 809 area code is an international call to the Dominican Republic, but many people are not aware of this because they didn't dial an international code. Similar scams say to dial 284, 876 and other numbers.

Unsuspecting callers can rack up very high international long-distance charges quickly, sometimes while listening to a long recorded message. Nishida said some Hawai'i consumers may be more likely to call an 809 number because it is close to our 808 area code.

And what's worse about this, Nishida said, is that since you made the call, you're responsible for the bill. Nishida said customers who believe they have received a fraudulent message or e-mail associated with Hawaiian Telcom services may also call the company's Corporate Security at 643-7111 (option 1), weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

She also offers some tips:

- Be cautious in returning calls with vague messages or unfamiliar numbers.
- Don't call any unfamiliar area code without checking where it is and how much the call could cost.
- Report possible fraud to the Federal Communications Commission or Federal Trade Commission. For more information, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumer_facts/809.html or www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/alerts/phonscam.htm.

What's in a Word? Plenty, if it's "Marriage"

George Lakoff analyzes the current debate over same sex marriage.

by George Lakoff

Marriage is central to our culture. Marriage legally confers over 600 benefits, but that is only its material aspect. Marriage is an institution, the public expression of lifelong commitment based on love. It is the culmination of a period of seeking a mate, and, for many, the realization of a major goal, often with a build-up of dreams, dates, gossip, anxiety, engagement, shower, wedding plans, rituals, invitations, bridal gown, bridesmaids, families coming together, vows, and a honeymoon. Marriage is the beginning of family life, commonly with the expectation of children and grandchildren, family gatherings, in-laws, little league games, graduations, and all the rest.

Marriage is also understood in terms of dozens of deep and abiding metaphors: a journey through life together, a partnership, a union, a bond, a single object of complementary parts, a haven, a means for growth, a sacrament, a home. Marriage confers a social status -- a married couple with new social roles. And for a great many people, marriage legitimizes sex. In short, marriage is a big deal.

Conservatives are using two powerful ideas: definition and sanctity. We must take them back. We have to fight definition with definition and sanctity with sanctity. For both sides, "marriage," as an ideal, is defined as, "the realization of love through a lifelong public commitment." Love is sacred. The sanctity in marriage is the sanctity of love and commitment.

Like most important concepts, marriage also comes with a variety of prototypical cases: The ideal marriage is happy, lasting, prosperous, with children, a home and friendships with other married couples. The typical marriage has its ups and downs, its joys and difficulties, typical problems with children and in-laws. A nightmare marriage ends in divorce, due perhaps to incompatibility, abuse, or betrayal. It is a rich concept.

None of the richness we have just discussed requires marriage to be heterosexual -- not its definition, its sanctity, its rituals, its family life, its hopes and dreams. The locus of the idea that marriage is heterosexual is a widespread cultural stereotype.

In evoking this stereotype, language is important. The radical right uses "gay marriage." Polls show most Americans overwhelmingly against anti-gay discrimination, but equally against "gay marriage." One reason, I believe, is that "marriage" evokes the idea of sex and most Americans do not favor gay sex. Another is that the stereotype of marriage is heterosexual. "Gay" for the right connotes a wild, deviant, sexually irresponsible lifestyle. That's why the right prefers "gay marriage" to "same-sex marriage."

Because marriage is central to family life, it has a political dimension. As I discuss in my book *Moral Politics*, conservative and progressive politics are

organized around two very different models of married life: a strict father family and a nurturing parent family.

The strict father is moral authority and master of the household, dominating the mother and children and imposing needed discipline. Contemporary conservative politics turns these family values into political values: hierarchical authority, individual discipline, military might. Marriage in the strict father family must be heterosexual marriage: the father is manly, strong, decisive, dominating -- a role model for sons and a model for daughters of a man to look up to.

The nurturing parent model has two equal parents, whose job is to nurture their children and teach their children to nurture others. Nurturance has two dimensions: empathy and responsibility, for oneself and others. Responsibility requires strength and competence. The strong nurturing parent is protective and caring, builds trust and connection, promotes family happiness and fulfillment, fairness, freedom, openness, cooperation, community development. These are the values of a strong progressive politics. Though the stereotype again is heterosexual, there is nothing in the nurturing family model to rule out same-sex marriage.

In a society divided down the middle by these two family models and their politics, we can see why the issue of same-sex marriage is so volatile. What is at stake is more than the material benefits of marriage and the use of the word. At stake is one's identity and most central values. This is not just about same-sex couples. It is about which values will dominate in our society.

When conservatives speak of the "defense of marriage," liberals are baffled. After all, no individual's marriage is being threatened. It's just that more marriages are being allowed. But conservatives see the strict father family, and with it, their political values as under attack. They are right. This is a serious matter for their politics and moral values as a whole. Even civil unions are threatening, since they create families that cannot be traditional strict father families.

Progressives are of two minds. Pragmatic liberals see the issue as one of benefits -- inheritance, health care, adoption, etc. If that's all that is involved, civil unions should be sufficient -- and they certainly are an advance. Civil unions would provide equal material protection under the law. Why not leave civil unions to the state and marriage to the churches?

Idealistic progressives see beyond the material benefits, important as they are. Most gay activists want more than civil unions. They want full-blown marriage, with all its cultural meanings -- a public commitment based on love, all the metaphors, all the rituals, joys, heartaches, family experiences -- and a sense of

normality, on a par with all other people. The issue is one of personal freedom: the state should not dictate who should marry whom. It is also a matter of fairness and human dignity. Equality under the law includes social and cultural, as well as material benefits. The slogan here is "freedom to marry."

The ability of ministers, priests and rabbis to perform marriage ceremonies is granted by governments, not by religions. And civil marriage is normal and widespread. Besides, it will only satisfy pragmatic liberals. Idealistic conservatives will see civil unions as tantamount to marriage, and idealistic progressives will see them as falling short of equal protection.

And what of the constitutional amendment to define marriage legally as between a man and a woman? Conservatives will be for it, and others with a heterosexual stereotype of marriage may support it. But it's unlikely to get enough progressive support to pass.

It's hard to tell right now.

Progressives need to reclaim the moral high ground of the grand American tradition of freedom, fairness, human dignity, and full equality under the law. If they are pragmatic liberals, they can talk this way about the civil unions and material benefits. If they are idealistic progressives, they can use the same language to talk about the social and cultural, as well as the material benefits of marriage. Either way, our

job as ordinary citizens is to reframe the debate, in everything we say and write, in terms of our moral principles.

Sanctity is a higher value than economic fairness. Talking about benefits is beside the point when the sanctity of marriage is in dispute. Talk sanctity first. With love and commitment, you have the very definition of the marital ideal -- of what marriage is fundamentally about.

We all have to put our ideas out there so that candidates can readily refer to them. For example, when there is a discussion in your office, church, or other group, there is a simple response to someone who says, "I don't think gays should be able to marry, do you?" The response is, "I believe in equal rights, period. I don't think the state should be in the business of telling people who they can or can't marry. Marriage is about love and commitment, and denying lovers the right to marry is a violation of human dignity."

George Lakoff is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Lakoff has published a multitude of articles in major scholarly journals and edited volumes. He is the author of the influential book, Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think (2002).

Humanists Reject States' Arguments Against Gay Marriage

American Humanist Association

American Humanist Association leaders oppose the July 6 New York court ruling declaring that current state laws denying marriage rights to same-sex couples are constitutional in that state.

Fred Edwards, AHA director of communications, said, "The court correctly states that the idea of same-sex marriage is 'a relatively new one' to our culture. However, not just the idea is new; so are our practices. Current realities have changed . . . The court is therefore basing its decision on the outdated, religious interpretations argued by the religious right instead of the present needs of a modern society. The nature of marriage, of our families, and what it means to love have evolved in the last fifty years. Our laws need to reflect our changing society."

The court declared that the current laws are justified given that they are based on the role childrearing plays in marriage, and that the legislature could have a "rational basis" for limiting marriage to heterosexual couples because of their ability to bear children. The court grounded this conclusion on two main arguments: that marriage can act as an "inducement" to heterosexual couples to remain in stable, long-term, and child-bearing relationships, and that it could rationally be concluded that "it is better, other things being equal, for children to grow up with both a mother and the father" because children benefit

from living with models of both sexes.

But, "Like it or not, today there are approximately 600,000 households headed by same-sex partners with children under 18," said Beth Lamont, a practicing Humanist Celebrant in New York State who officiates gay and lesbian commitment ceremonies. "The court's decision isn't going to make these families vanish. So it's time to recognize that such families exist and are entitled to the same protections granted families headed by heterosexual couples, which include over 1,000 legal benefits, such as health insurance coverage and inheritance rights."

"Even more absurd," Edwards said, "is that New York State has, for over a decade, allowed same-sex couples to adopt children. Therefore it is a contradiction to have one right so well established but then, at this late date, suddenly refuse to grant a related and necessary right."

New York was not the only state to rule against gay marriage on July 6. The Georgia Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling that a contested ban on same-sex marriage, which had previously been struck down by lower courts, would be upheld. The ban had been approved by 76% of the voters in 2004.

"It is disheartening," said Edwards, "that Georgians reject gay marriage and civil unions . . . when no law in their state restricts gay adoptions or foster parenting."

An Open Letter to Falun Gong

July 12, 2006

Dear Dr. Lily L. Zhang:

Thank you for your invitation to speak out against human rights violations perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party against the Falun Gong. The American Humanist Association strongly opposes government sponsored human rights abuses inflicted on any people, including Falun Gong practitioners . . .

We are aware of how Chinese government persecution against religious and political groups is widely documented. Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghurs, and other Chinese citizens are denied the basic freedoms. Freedom of speech, assembly, and religion are not respected. Citizens may be imprisoned without trial, and courts don't have the power of judicial review. None of these conditions should be condoned.

We regret, however, that we must decline to accept your invitation. As we've participated in a past event, this open letter is being sent to explain our position.

Given our strong human rights position, we cannot share the Falun Gong platform without concern that it will be viewed as an endorsement of the intolerant positions held by this religion. Though the Falun Gong in the United States claim "tolerance" as a primary principle, the Chinese word for this principle (*Ren*) is more appropriately translated as "forbearance;" in this case, forbearance as a form of resignation, a survival skill for getting through suffering. Falun Gong founder Li Hongzhi has explicitly condemned interracial relationships and homosexuality, and has even said, as reported by the *San Jose Mercury News*, that gay people would be "eliminated" by "the gods." These intolerant views are confirmed on reading a translated version of the second volume of the Falun Gong's primary religious text, *Zhuan Falun*.

Beyond the issue of tolerance, we Humanists don't support several irrational and unfounded Falun Gong

claims – such as Li's belief that aliens are attempting to overtake human souls, or that Falun Gong unleashes supernatural powers that reverse the effects of aging. While Humanists often work closely with groups and individuals of differing views, any tacit support of these ideas would be incompatible with our dedication to reason and science.

We continue to hope that the Chinese government will one day embrace democracy and compassion, and allow the freedom of religion and from religion for all groups, including the Falun Gong.

Sincerely,
Roy Speckhardt
Executive Director, American Humanist Association

AHA Scorns Stem Cell Veto

American Humanist Association

On July 19, President Bush used the first veto of his presidency to limit medical research. The popular bipartisan measure to expand federally funded stem cell research passed with wide margins in both the House and the Senate and is supported by approximately 70% of Americans, according to polls.

"It is disheartening that President Bush is obstructing promising research that could lead to life-saving treatments," commented Roy Speckhardt of the AHA. "Bush is clearly seeking to impose a narrow religious ideology, to the detriment of millions suffering from debilitating or life-threatening illness, and against the wishes of the vast majority of Americans. With this veto, the President has placed greater value on small clusters of cells than on fully-formed adults."

An AHA board resolution last year said "The American Humanist Association supports research employing embryonic stem cells and federal funding for such research commensurate with its potential to advance scientific knowledge and lead to the development of novel therapies . . ."

Do you think that humans should search relentlessly for truth, that they feel compassion for all humankind and determine and promote what is right?

Do you think people can live meaningful, responsible and ethical lives without the need for believing in supernatural beings or places?

Would you like to join a group that shares your thoughts. Humanists – generally – believe these things.

If you'd like to join Humanists Hawaii, please complete and mail this form with a check for your annual membership fee of \$25 if you're single, \$40 if you're a couple, to: Marcia Lambeth at 825 Coolidge St. #310 Honolulu HI 96826.

Dr/Mr/Ms _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phones: Home: _____ Work: _____ email: _____

A sobering look at what may very well be our future

After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order by Emmanuel Todd. Translated by C. Jon Delogu. 192 pages, Columbia University Press, New York. 2004, cloth, \$29.95.
excerpts from a review by Thom Hartmann on *Buzz Flash*

In 1976 – long before American conservatives would claim that Ronald Reagan's 1980s debt-driven massive military spending "bankrupted" the Soviet Union – French demographer and author Emmanuel Todd wrote a best-selling book titled *La Chute finale* (*The Final Fall*), predicting the imminent fall of the USSR.

Time proved him right, and hindsight tells us that Reagan and Bush had nothing whatever to do with the fall of the USSR. It rotted from within.

Now comes Emmanuel Todd to predict the fall of another empire: America.

In *Après l'empire* (*After The Empire*), a runaway bestseller across Europe and in Japan, Todd asserts that many of the demographic and historic indicators that led him to predict the looming collapse of the Soviet system can now – with some variations that are even more alarming – be applied to the United States.

Every American should read this book. We must read it to understand how Europe, Russia, China, and Japan (and others) view us. And because its logic, facts, statistics, and conclusions are unassailable.

The main thesis of Todd's book is that America is

posturing, playing the role of the leader of the "free world" and head of the new American Empire, when, in fact, we are militarily, economically, and morally bankrupt. In fact, he suggests, much of the posturing is for consumption by the domestic American audience, as the rest of the world (with the exception of a few dependent Third World nations) knows we're already in decline and perhaps even ready to implode.

Economically, twenty-five years of Reaganomics – "free trade" elevated to a virtual religion (including complicity by Clinton in signing GATT/WTO and NAFTA) – and the massive budget and trade deficits that have resulted from this, have turned the US from an independent manufacturing powerhouse and the world's leading creditor into a bankrupt nation with little manufacturing capacity left, dependent on other nations for imports to maintain our unsustainable standard of living.

Our moral bankruptcy, Todd suggests, is the result of these same economic and political policies emanating from the radical right (neoliberals) in America, and are rapidly morphing our nation from a democracy into an oligarchy.



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