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# Kenneth Minogue: How Civilizations Fall Study Guide

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# KENNETH MINOGUE: HOW CIVILIZATIONS FALL

## STUDY GUIDE, 2007

### Steven Alan Samson

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/civilizationsfall-minogue-2203>

#### Outline

- A. BARBARISM VS. CIVILIZATION (1-3)
  - 1. **Ibn Khaldun's** Image of a City's Decline into Decadence
  - 2. Barbarian Invasion by a Tribe of Fierce Bedouin
  - 3. Variability of the Cycle
  - 4. Current Relativism Has Suppressed the Distinction between Barbarism and Civilization
    - a. Equality of Cultures: An Empty Piety
    - b. Moral Inequality of Cultures Shown by the Position of Women
    - c. Current Decorum Prefers a Rationalist Doctrine That Transposes European Standards into Abstract Universal Rights
  - 5. Relation between a Culture and a Class has Disappeared
    - a. Barbarism remains an Active Force
  - 6. Formula for Overthrowing Western Society
    - a. European Civilization Must Be Captured from Within
      - (1) Marx's Proletariat
  - 7. Marx's "**Make Your Own Tribe**" Kit
    - a. Found Useful by Nationalists, Anarchists, and Many Brands of Socialist
    - b. **Adolf Hitler** Played Down Victimization
      - (1) Aryan Superiority
    - c. Limitations of a Proletarian Revolution
      - (1) Workers Had Better Things to Do
  - 8. Vanguard Party [**Benito Mussolini and Vladimir Lenin**]
    - a. Principle of the **Praetorian Guard**: Emergence of Oligarchies Ruling through Democratic Slogans
- B. NEW TRIBE: THE RADICAL FEMINISM OF BETTY FRIEDAN (3-4)
  - 1. Domesticity with Degrees
  - 2. Tactical Innovation
    - a. Moralistic Principle That Demands Correspond to Justice
  - 3. Central Problem {Diane Schaub}: **Boredom**
    - a. Solution: Replace **Leisure** with **Wage-Slavery**
  - 4. First Task: Create a Shared Consciousness (**Psychological Collectivism**)
    - a. **Consciousness-Raising** Exploits Indignation and Cultivates Righteousness
      - (1) Image of the Prison [cf. Plato's Myth of the Cave]
    - b. Denial of Complementarity of the Sexes
    - c. Basic Principle = Flattery [Snob Appeal]
  - 5. Identity Politics
    - a. Class of Experts [Lenin's Vanguard]
      - (1) Correction of False Consciousness
    - b. Feminism: a Massive Psychic Transformation
      - (1) Rosie the Riveter
    - c. Conception of the Feminine as a Society-Imposed Corset [cf. Rousseau]
      - (1) Culture of Romance
  - 6. Feminism's Own Identity Problem: Two Ways of Construing It

- a. Massive Access of Confidence Among Women: Radical View
  - b. Complete Collapse of Feminism in Favor of an Ambiguous Project Using Women to Create an **Androgynous** [Unisex] and Manipulable World [See René Girard on the destruction of differences]
- C. FEMINIST OBJECTION TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION (5-6)
  - 1. Attempt to Conquer the West from within [Subversion]
  - 2. European Civilization: Achievement of White Males [Issue of its Raw Historicity]
  - 3. Medium of Social and Political Life
    - a. Sexual Complementarity
      - 1) Falstaff
      - 2) Mistake of Radical Feminists [Standard of Comparable Worth = Equivalency]
    - b. [Substitution]: Competing Feminist Canon
      - 1) Camille Paglia's Retort
    - c. Feminist Scorecard [i.e., **Tribal Consciousness**] Requires Equivalency
    - d. Feminist Derangement: Due to Superficial Education in the Humanities
- D. THE OPEN SOCIETY (6-8)
  - 1. European Openness to Other Civilizations [see David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*]
    - a. Borrowings
    - b. Diffusion of Its Knowledge
    - c. Ambivalence of Non-Westerners: Many Experience the West as a Liberation
  - 2. Ambivalence of Women
    - a. Educational and Professional Opportunities
    - b. Radical Feminist Version of the Story: a Struggle Against Oppression
  - 3. Beneficiaries of These Opportunities: Middle-Class White Women
    - a. Instead of Oppression They Were Merely Experiencing the Resistance Common to Any Form of Upward Mobility
    - b. Importance of Individual Character vs. Traditional Status: Christian Influence
    - c. **Ernest Gellner**: West Became "Modular" [Interchangeability]
    - d. Result: Versatility
  - 4. Liberal Feminism: Natural Development from Within
  - 5. Radical Feminism: Doctrinaire
    - a. Lack of Proportion
  - 6. Openness of Western Cultures
    - a. False Assumption of Male-Female Isomorphism
      - 1) "Comparable Worth" Argument
      - 2) Continual Drip of the Movement against Patriarchy
- E. KEY TO THE MODERN WEST: OPENNESS TO TALENT (8-9)
  - 1. Feminist Demand for Collective Quotas Has Overturned This Basic Feature
    - a. Destruction of Civilization by Replacing Achievement with **Quota Entitlements**
  - 2. How Did the West Collapse?
    - a. Fifth Column Exploited Weakness from Within
    - b. Acquiescence of Defenders of the Status Quo
      - 1) Inability to Agree on a Line of Defense
    - c. Objective of the attack
  - 3. Earlier Centuries
  - 4. Modern World
    - a. Work Seen as Liberation from the Confinement of Family Life
    - b. Old Socialist [inc. Zionist and Bolshevik] Dream of Communal Life
- F. WHY THE INSURRECTION SUCCEEDED (9-11)
  - 1. Feminists's Weakness Was the Condition of Their Success
    - a. Stereotypes of Social Perfectionism Softened up the Opposition for a

- Victimological Attack
          - 1) Feminist Indignation: Naked Interest Rather Than Moral Force
  - 2. Trustees of the Meritocracy, Who Were Men, Were Already Hiring Able Women
    - a. Radical Feminists Established the Idea of Quota Hiring
  - 3. Radical Student Politics in the 1960s Similarly Turned Academic Self-Understanding against Itself
    - a. Capitulation of the Dons [cf. Tom Wolfe's "Mau-Mauing the Flakcatchers"]
  - 4. Real Threat to the Universities Came from Government: Massive Power Shift
    - a. Governments Were Bent on Destroying the **Autonomy** of the Institutions of Civil Life [Result: Dependency]
    - b. Universities Succumbed to State Subsidies
  - 5. Success of the Radical Feminist Assault on European Civilization
  - 6. Rhetorical Questions
    - a. Slogans Masquerading as Questions [cf. Gen. 3:1]
      - 1) Pseudo-Questions Set the Agenda
- G. POLITICS OF THE ASSAULT (11-12)
  - 1. **Mancur Olson** on the Achilles Heel of Democracy: Special Interest Campaigns
    - a. Role of Party Politics as a Staging Area
    - b. Network of Powerful Bureaucracies
    - c. Occupying Army of Equal Opportunity Officers
  - 2. Effect on Universities of Quotas for "Gender Diversity"
- H. AREAS WHERE WOMEN ARE PATENTLY UNSUITED (12-13)
  - 1. Fire Fighting and Armed Services
    - a. Managerial Opportunities
    - b. Doctrine of Disparate Impact: Fitness Tests Modified
  - 2. Women Clergy
  - 3. Military
- I. WHY THE MALE CUSTODIANS OF OUR CIVILIZATION SOLD THE PASS (13-15)
  - 1. Some Element of Cowardice
    - a. Campaign to Erode the Morale of White, Male, Middle Class Defenders
      - 1) They Were Charged with Racism, Sexism, and Elitism
    - b. Defenders Were Not United
    - c. Result: Retreat
  - 2. Each Concession Could Be Used to Demand Further Concessions
    - a. Appearance of Legislation Mandating Equal Opportunities
      - 1) Hiring for High Status Jobs Requiring Degrees Became Fettered By a Set of Rules
  - 3. Consequence: Collapse of the Practical Wisdom [Prudence] That Balances Justice with Power
    - a. Cause: Collapse of Religion in the West
    - b. Self-Abnegation of Prosperous Westerners Who Are Cocooned from Immediate Consequences of Their Folly
      - 1) Assumption That Language of "Patriarchy" Renders Women Invisible
    - c. Political Correctness Seen as Harmless or a Joke
  - 4. Ferment of Radical Feminism Carries Out the Bolshevik Program of Creating a **Community of Homogeneous Creatures** Animated by Some Single Project [Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn referred to this as "identitarianism"]
- J. RADICAL FEMINIST REVOLUTION = DESTRUCTION OF OUR CIVILIZATION (15-16)
  - 1. "Progressive" View Accepts the Initial Dichotomy: That Men and Women Have Separate Destinies
  - 2. It Is Difficult to Account for How Men and Women Fit Together
    - a. Specifically Feminine Qualities of Women Prevent Them from Fitting Entirely Successfully into Structures Men Have Created
      - 1) Ambivalence of Male-Female Relations

- b. A World of Games and Conventions Has Grown Up Around These Attitudes
  - 3. Radical Feminism: A Humorless Rationalism That Seeks to Impose a Single Right Attitudes on Men and Women Alike
  - 4. Creativity Is Essentially Mysterious
    - a. **Bolshevik Fallacy** That There Is a Formula for Progress
  - 5. Modernization Now Involves the Whole World
    - a. No Other Civilization Has Been Able to Pick Up the Torch of Innovative Leadership
    - c. The Record Shows That Women Lack This Capacity to Innovate
      - 1) Men Have Been Responsible for Creating Paradigm Shifts
- K. SUMMARY (16-17)
  - 1. Political Correctness Is a Manacle around Our Hands: a Treaty of Accommodation between the Conquerors and the Conquered
    - a. One Consequence: Loss of Leisure (Diane Schaub) [see Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture*]
  - 2. Social Inclusion Involves a Spiritual Loss
  - 3. Silent Revolution

### Minogue Review

Ibn Khaldun	Betty Friedan	liberal vs. radical feminism
consciousness raising	leisure	androgyny
western openness	Ernest Gellner	quota hiring entitlements
massive power shift	loss of autonomy	homogeneous community
Mancur Olson	why male custodians of civilization sold the pass	
the Bolshevik fallacy	innovation	loss of leisure