Essay 1, Chapter 5: "Evidence in History"

Chapter Five: "Evidence in History"

#Hunter's gist for ch. 5 is: In the spread of Christianity from marginal sect to dominating world religion, the change had more to do with structural changes and networked elites than with a simple grassroots change of belief. Cultural change happens top down.
The same applies to the conversion of European pagans. The Irish missionaries went after leading families, chiefs, kings, who later funded the ongoing cultural and religious activities of the monasteries.

#Hunter pays special attention to the Carolingian Renaissance in learning and arts, an elite movement that trickled down to the masses.
Even the Reformation was due more to elite networking and structural changes (nationalism, emerging mercantile class).

The same can be said for later renewal and reform movements. Edwards, Wesley, Wilberforce, all elites who ran in privileged circles.
Likewise post-Christian movements like the Enlightenment: elites cashing in on changing patterns of patronage (not ch, but state).

Socialism too. Marx, Engels, Lenin, all from upper bourgeois families, very educated, using networks to spawn elite movements.

#Hunter quote: "The irony here of course is that Marxism views history as inevitably unfolding toward socialism but its ushering in was done from the top, by powerful cultural intellectuals whose theory was both highly abstract and difficult to read by any but the most intellectually trained thinkers." (76) Marxism wasn't a popular movement. It was a movement of disaffected intellectuals.

On the bottom of p. 76, he has a bunch of footnotes tying the triumph of Darwin, Nietzsche, modern art, etc. to netwks and patrons.

In sum, "Change in a culture or civ. simply does not occur when there is a change in the beliefs and values in the hearts and minds of ordinary people or in the creation of mere artifacts." What does matter is resourcing and networking among elites.

So #Hunter says, essentially, "Kiss your idealistic dreams of democratic cultural change goodbye. It don't work like that." Sad but true?

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