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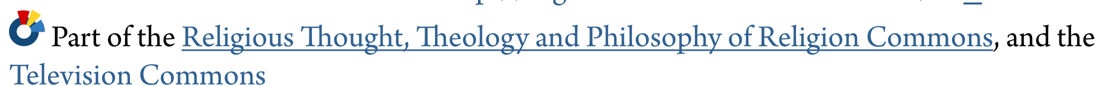
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Vanquishing Evil without the Help of God: *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and a World Come of Age

Richard Grigg

One of the most distinctive religious features of the 1960s was the death of God theology. It is useful to look back at the death of God movement from the perspective of communication studies. After all, the movement received unprecedented coverage in the popular media. More intriguing, however, is the specific fashion in which death of God theologian William Hamilton, one of the most influential figures in the discussion of the death of God, referred to particular aspects of the modern communication environment. According to Hamilton, the communication technologies of the 1960s helped make it a world "come of age." In such a world, Hamilton averred, society no longer needed to depend upon God.

More specifically, Hamilton singled out a particular television series of the 1960s, the spy drama The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, as displaying characteristics of a world come of age. In an attempt to provide a careful analysis of just how U.N.C.L.E. accomplished this, this essay explores the show's consistent modernism, its explicit treatment of religion and spirituality, its approach to trans-national evil, its depiction of individual action, and how it treated the private domain. The sort of worldview analysis employed in the essay is relevant to looking at the role of belief in God, or lack of such belief, in other enacted fictional narratives.*

Key Words: *Cold War; death of God; Hamilton, William;* The Man from U.N.C.L.E.; *modernism; television*

American culture in the 1960s was a complex juxtaposition of competing forces, a fact evidenced by the difficulty contemporary commentators have in agreeing about the legacy of the Sixties. It should come as no surprise, then, that religion and spirituality in Sixties America were also complex, given that they were inextricably linked to the larger social dynamics of the era. America's churches and synagogues soldiered on without significant loss of members, and evangelist Billy Graham was at the height of his popularity, while some non-churchgoing Americans experimented with everything from Buddhism and Hinduism to drug-based spiritual quests.

One of the most sensational religious phenomena of the decade was the "death of God theology." The theology of the death of God was influenced by a host of thinkers and events, including Friedrich Nietzsche (who shaped the thought of death of God theologian Thomas J.J. Altizer), German Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (an influence on William Hamilton), the Nazi Holocaust (that led Richard Rubenstein to renounce belief in God in his *After Auschwitz*) and the analytic movement in philosophy (that informed Paul VanBuren's *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*). The death of God movement has a particularly important place in the history of religion and communication in this country, for a reasonable case can be made that it was the last movement in academic religious thought that was effectively communicated to the educated American public. The media has kept contemporary Americans up to date on religious topics from the rise of evangelicalism, to the results of the latest biblical scholarship, to the attacks upon belief in God spearheaded by scientists such as Richard Dawkins, but the majority of sophisticated laypersons in America's churches and synagogues today know little or nothing about what has traditionally been called "philosophical" or "academic" theology. They have been left in the dark about "deconstructive theology," "radical orthodoxy," and even "eco-theology." By contrast, the Sixties death of God theology, a product of theological discussion in the halls of America's universities and seminaries, was widely discussed in the popular media. There is no more potent illustration of this fact than the famous *Time*

magazine cover for April 8, 1966. In large red letters placed on a jet-black background, *Time* dramatically posed the question, "Is God Dead?" The death of God theologians' own monographs were not read in wholly unprecedented numbers, but there was an unprecedented number of reporters and commentators willing to pass along the news of God's death to the public. Even Malcolm X got in on the act, declaring that the end of Christianity was near and referencing Protestant theologians who were heralding a "post-Christian" era (369).[1]

The most accessible of the secular or death of God theologians, and the one most attuned to the sensibilities of the larger culture, was William Hamilton. A professor at Rochester Divinity School, Hamilton was moved by the message of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who had written from a Nazi prison that humanity had now "come of age," an echo of Immanuel Kant's claim in *What is Enlightenment?* that humanity was finally ready to be freed from its eons of immaturity. For Bonhoeffer, and subsequently for Hamilton, Christians must carry out their responsibilities in the world without relying on the constant interventions of God and the trappings of traditional Christianity. Hamilton, a talented literary commentator as well as theologian, became an enthusiastic apostle of the notion of a "religionless Christianity," the idea that we human beings should look to Jesus of Nazareth as our ethical guide, but that we ought to carry out our Christian duty in the world without the constant invocations of God typical of Christian worship. Hamilton's version of the death of God was, in fact, an optimistic vision, one that imbibed that particular motif of Sixties culture consisting in confidence in the human ability to create a just world.

William Hamilton is of particular interest for our purposes, not simply due to the importance of the death of God theology in general for the history of religion and communication, but also because he actually touched on technical issues of communication in the society of the Sixties and how they affected religious perceptions. In an essay suggestively titled "The New Optimism—from Prufrock to Ringo," Hamilton adopts the terminology of Kenneth Boulding, who contrasted "civilized society"—the constricted world of the status quo—and the "post-civilized age." According to Hamilton, the latter is "the age of the mass media, of automation, of the constantly accelerating rate of change" (Hamilton 160). It is manifested in the "technological optimism" of a Marshall McLuhan (161). Hamilton characterizes the post-civilized attitude as one of "resolute confidence and optimism that even the really intractable problems that have marked our civilized period can be overcome, problems as apparently irreducible as war [. . . .]" (160).

Hamilton's 1966 article provides an important clue about how the communication technologies blossoming in the Sixties were linked to the specific form of optimism that helped constitute his notion of the death of God. But Hamilton leaves behind an even more tantalizing archeological artifact. He mentions television and points to a particular Sixties television series that exemplified the cultural perspective he wants to celebrate in his death of God theology: "The Man from U.N.C.L.E," Hamilton asserts, "is post-civilized" (160). *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, which was created by Norman Felton and Sam Rolfe and aired on NBC from 1964 to early 1968, was a James Bond-inspired spy series. Indeed, its two heroes, Napoleon Solo, played by Robert Vaughn, and Illya Kuryakin, played by David McCallum, had the guns, the gadgets, and the outrageous adventures that were obligatory for any self-respecting spy after Sean Connery had served Her Majesty's Secret Service on the big screen. The show's heroes traveled around the globe foiling villainous attempts to rule the world and terrorize its inhabitants. What is more, the men from U.N.C.L.E. did their job with humor and style. But, following Hamilton's lead, this essay will argue that, whatever its creators' intentions, *U.N.C.L.E.* was much more than it appeared: it was an adventure-drama that managed to display a world in which human beings had come of age, a world in which God was no longer necessary.[2] My analysis will show that *U.N.C.L.E* turned out to be a surprisingly effective medium for exploring God's role in the world—or God's lack of any role—in that it constituted a uniquely modernist genre, one particularly adept at depicting a world come of age.

How does one communicate the death of God in an enacted fictional narrative? One could present a phenomenology of God's absence, an exploration of characters' sense of loss in the face of the death of God. The paradigmatic example here, and a particularly severe one, is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. An example that is simultaneously less extreme, more contemporary, and closer to the television medium, is Billy Bob Thornton's film adaptation of *All the Pretty Horses*. That film effectively explores a sense of divine absence in the Mexican penal system in the middle of the twentieth century.

But Hamilton's version of the death of God is not a pining for God's presence, but rather the confident modernist assertion that we can get along in the world without God. If we are to depict this version of the death of God in a television drama, how will such a depiction differ from a story in which God is simply not mentioned, due to television's long-standing determination to avoid raising any religious hackles? In an attempt to answer this question, I shall begin with some general observations, and then proceed to theoretical considerations more specifically aimed at *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*

An effective fictional narrative, televised or otherwise, does not simply state its author's sensibilities about the world in fictional form. If it is successful, it presents the viewer with a world, that is, an interlocking set of values, beliefs, challenges, and possibilities that are offered for the viewer's own appropriation. In other words, the viewer is invited to take up residence in the worldview presented in the drama and make it his or her own world. Paul Ricouer has famously referred to this as the world "in front of the text" (43). While the world *behind* the text is made up of the author's subjective predilections and intentions, the world *in front of* the text, the world presented to every viewer (in the case of a television "text"), is an objective possibility independent of the author who created the text.

This matter of world-presentation in a fictional television narrative is a species of the more general phenomenon in which our means of communication serve as instruments for creating a version, or versions, of reality. As James Carey has succinctly stated the matter, "communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed" (23). It is worth noting that, while the world created by an author in a novel is independent of the author's subjectivity, the appropriation of that world by the individual reader may still bear the marks of subjectivity, in that the reader can read in relative isolation from others. Television, by contrast, is by its very nature a more social phenomenon, in that thousands of viewers will see the same drama simultaneously, some of them sitting together in front of the same television screen, and many will talk about it with one another around the water cooler the next day. Viewers may even be led to another kind of social intercourse by purchasing products advertised during the drama's broadcast. If the communication of fictional narratives can be world-building, and if a world is stronger the more persons who affirm it (the more robust its social "plausibility structure," to utilize Peter Berger's terminology [45]) then television drama should be an effective world-building device.

All of this is pertinent to my consideration of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* If I create a television drama in which the protagonists never mention God, my drama does little or nothing by itself to communicate the death of God. Rather, the viewer, if he or she even notices the lack of references to God, can easily conclude that the show's writers are simply more interested in exploring other topics. But how *does* one create a drama that communicates the death of God, if one does not employ the phenomenology of absence and depict characters struggling over God's demise? One must present the viewer with a fully realized world, so that the places in the world framework where one would normally expect to find God are not simply passed over, but, rather, *clearly shown to be filled by new-found human powers and capacities.*

An examination of the particular attributes of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* that made it just such a drama will begin with a consideration of the show's consistent modernism. I shall subsequently move to an examination of specific episodes of the series in which religion and spirituality—but not God—were depicted,

then to an exploration of the show's portrayal of trans-national evil, on to an analysis of how *U.N.C.L.E.* dealt with individual human action, and, finally, to a consideration of its treatment of the private dimension. All of these topics other than consistent modernism—religion and spirituality, trans-national evil, individual action, and the private dimension—can be thought of as components that fit into particular slots in the framework of a world.

Because modernism and postmodernism are defined in literally hundreds of different ways, stipulative definitions are unapologetically offered here. Let us stipulate that modernism derives from the elaboration of the notion of human rights in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from the Enlightenment's commitment to universal reason, and from the commitment to pursuing technology. What is more, modernism exudes confidence in what human beings can accomplish in the world via their use of universal reason and technology and by their commitment to human rights. It is important to keep in mind that when that preeminent champion of the Enlightenment mentioned above, Immanuel Kant, speaks of universal reason, his paradigm is scientific reason. The epitome of reason for Kant is the physics of Isaac Newton, which is why David Hume's attack upon the notion of causality, a crucial component of Newtonian physics, spurred Kant to write his famous analysis of reason's abilities and its limits, the *Critique of Pure Reason.*[3]

Modernism actually thinks human beings capable of both an internal and an external mastery. Via universal reason, the modern self can master himself or herself. Emotions, drives, memories—all the sundry components of our selfhood—can be harmoniously held together on the basis of our rationality. This is the internal mastery. The same universal reason allows the human community to master the larger world, especially through science and the technologies that it makes possible. This is the external mastery.[4]

There are two principal ways in which this modernist confidence in reason has been undermined. First, some commentators have come to see scientific reason not as a liberating

force that will usher in the era of human maturity heralded by Kant, which is also William Hamilton's world come of age, but as a narrow, technocratic subdivision of our rational capacities that threatens to enslave us. In this case, Enlightenment reason becomes Max Weber's famous "iron cage," (181) and is responsible for what Jürgen Habermas colorfully describes as the "colonization of the lifeworld" (Habermas II).

The second way in which Enlightenment scientific reason is undermined is when it is utilized in a fashion that falls short of modernity's universal aspirations. Ironically, the main villain here turns out to be another product of modernity itself, namely, the rise of the nation state. Nationalism, a phenomenon that historians often place along science as a peculiar achievement of the modern era, almost inevitably stunts scientific reason's potential universality by putting it at the service of one's own nation and using it against competing states.

These apparent difficulties attached to modernist reason pave the way for postmodernism. The latter attitude explicitly denies the possibility of universal reason and holds that reason, valuation, and the criteria for their application are internal to a myriad of separate "worlds," such as the worlds constituted by different cultures. As stipulatively defined here, postmodernism is more apt to celebrate this collapse of modernist confidence in universal reason than to bemoan it. But if the triumph of universal, Enlightenment reason is illusory, then so, too, is the notion of a world come of age, a world in which human beings can get along perfectly well without any divine aid.

This essay claims that *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* offers a potent example of a world come of age. Given that the notion of the world come of age is tied to Enlightenment modernity, it can only be assumed that *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* is also a powerful example of modernism. A preliminary clue to the show's unique embrace of modernity can be gleaned by a brief foray into the question of genre. Of course, there is no one particular genre in which *U.N.C.L.E.* must necessarily be placed. Given that it serves up a large helping of comedy along with its spy drama, we might appropriate Leah Vande Berg's "generic hybrid" category,

"dramedy" (88). Or, if we are more interested in socio-economic categories, we can follow Leon Hunt in seeing *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and its telegenic stars as representing a special sort of "conspicuous consumption" genre (130). But surely the most obvious classificatory move is to place *U.N.C.L.E.* in that long line of television action-dramas that pit the representatives of law and order against the forces of evil. The grandfather of that genre, in both television and film, of course, is the Western. It is a mainstay of the Western to have the hero stand nearly alone against the forces of lawlessness. While the larger society may supply the rules, it is too cumbersome, and perhaps too corrupt, to enforce its own dictates. Hence, that task is left to the heroic individual.[5] The paradigmatic television instantiation of this self-reliant hero is *Gunsmoke's* Marshall, Matt Dillon, played by James Arness over an incredible twenty-year run, from 1955-1975. This image of the lawman as outsider finds its apotheosis on the big screen, where it is pushed into the familiar category of the "antihero," in Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry*.

Of course television and the movies have also offered up a host of "buddy" crime dramas, where we have two heroes, usually men, who rely upon one another, as Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin do in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* But this genre is often simply a variation on the lone lawman genre, in that the buddies often break the rules and cover for one another when they do so. In other words, the protagonists still find it necessary to enforce justice on their own terms, because they are continually let down by the powers that be. Here one thinks, for instance, of *Miami Vice*, the popular Eighties crime drama in which the Don Johnson character, Sonny Crockett, in particular, is a rebel.

While *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* must, in some respects, certainly be located within the law enforcement adventure genre, it stands out for a very significant reason: the law enforcement organization of the show's title, U.N.C.L.E., is, in effect, one of the stars of the show. That is, in stark contrast to a *Dirty Harry*-like disdain for the larger law enforcement apparatus, the heroes of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* are more than happy to be associated with U.N.C.L.E., and the show's viewers are meant

to be enthralled with what U.N.C.L.E. stands for and with what it can accomplish.[6] Whereas James Bond sometimes reacts toward Her Majesty's Secret Service with disdain, Napoleon and Illya never respond that way to U.N.C.L.E., nor to their chief, Mr. Waverly. One might even go so far as to say that the organization U.N.C.L.E., and its technologically potent New York headquarters, operate in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* in a manner akin to how the starship *Enterprise* operates in *Star Trek*. What will be especially important for our purposes is how the entity known as U.N.C.L.E. incarnates a modernist vision.

It requires no over-reading to find in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* a commitment to universal rights, universal reason, and technology. That is its consistent modernism. In the world of the 1960s, a world characterized by the stand-off between the United States and the Soviet Union—at the time, many Americans resigned themselves to the U.S.-Soviet opposition as a permanent fact about the world—*U.N.C.L.E.* envisioned a world beyond the Cold War. "U.N.C.L.E." stood for the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement, and the show did indeed emphasize a *united* undertaking. U.N.C.L..E. employed secret agents from around the globe. To make the point that it was not beholden to Cold War sensibilities, *U.N.C.L.E.*'s two starring agents were Napoleon Solo, an American (Solo was actually a Canadian in the original proposal for the program), and Illya Kuryakin, a Russian.[7] There was never any suggestion that Kuryakin was an anti-Soviet defector. And just as the Russians weren't the bad guys, Americans weren't the good guys. Series creator Norman Felton recalled:

> It bothered me to perpetuate the notion that Americans seem to solve everybody's problems. I didn't like entertainment that said, "Any problems? Uncle Sam will send someone." I said, I'll do an adventure with good men and bad men—Americans, Germans, French, Russians, anybody. Good and bad on both sides, because that's the way things are. (qtd. In Biederman 34)

Felton's proposition was surely an important one, coming as it did during the anti-Communist fervor of the early Vietnam

War. The emphasis on the protagonists as consistently engaged in trans-national law enforcement was a new wrinkle in spy fiction. The James Bond of Ian Fleming's original novels, for example, was British through and through, even to the point of despising Americans, if Christopher Hitchens' tongue-in-cheek essay is a reliable guide (2006)!

All peoples could participate in U.N.C.L.E. What is more, all peoples were considered equally deserving of U.N.C.L.E.'s efforts at enforcement of basic principles of just behavior. Various episodes of the program showed U.N.C.L.E. heeding the call of Africans, Arabs, Asians, and Native Americans, as well as of Americans and Europeans. The notion of universal rights was taken for granted.

In addition to taking it for granted that the world ought to be dedicated to the principle of universal rights, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* bespoke a confidence in universal reason. The two are obviously connected, for it is universal reason that can articulate a set of universal rights. All of the countries of the world could, in the end, come to agreement about which principles of justice should be enforced in which particular situations. There is clearly a connection here with the most optimistic visions of what the United Nations might one day accomplish. Many viewers of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* actually confused U.N.C.L.E. with the U.N., and the latter organization was flooded with requests for information about how to become an U.N.C.L.E. agent.[8] The series itself suggested that U.N.C.L.E. was an international law enforcement organization, a kind of genetically enhanced Interpol, that worked in conjunction with the U.N. In "The Take Me to Your Leader Affair" episode, we see a world crisis being managed by a character who looks conspicuously like then-U.N. Secretary General U Thant (identified as the spokesman of the "Council of Nations"). He and other world leaders turn to U.N.C.L.E. to take the necessary action. The belief that an organization such as the U.N. can be truly effective, and that a multitude of countries can come to agreement about when and how U.N.C.L.E. should step into a situation, is based upon confidence in universal reason. In other words, whatever the cultural differences that separate us, all persons finally speak the same language. Those cultural differences are transcended by a universal form of reason of the Enlightenment variety, so that we can forge agreement. And note that the universal reason in question cannot apply simply to technical matters: If agreement is to be reached on international crises, there must be something universal about our value systems as well.

The contentiousness of this confidence is brought into relief by contrasting it with the postmodern attitude as stipulatively defined above. A postmodernist of the variety we are imagining would reject the very notion of universal reason. He or she would be apt to claim that different cultures constitute their own independent worlds. "Reason" will be defined and governed according to rules generated within each culture. Thus, while different peoples who engage in warfare with one another might be able to agree on some decidedly general principle, such as the desirability of ending the war's bloodshed, the two sides will not know how actually to stop the violence, for they will vigorously disagree about fundamental principles of right and wrong, justice and injustice. From the perspective of *U.N.C.L.E.*, by contrast, to paraphrase Horace, I am a rational human being, and no reasoned convictions will be foreign to me.

In the world of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, then, the notion of Providence becomes what Ludwig Wittgenstein would call a mere idling wheel. In other words, it does no real work; we human beings are perfectly able to manage the challenges of history all by ourselves. In his 1961 Inaugural Address, the young President John F. Kennedy averred that, here on Earth, "God's work must truly be our own." While Kennedy's reference to God can surely be interpreted in a manner consistent with more traditional theological sensibilities, one already convinced that he or she lives in a world come of age will read it as redolent of world-come-of-age confidence: The divine hands, whatever they might be doing in some Great Beyond, do not have much work to do here below.

This vision not only suggests confidence in the power of universal reason. It also suggests confidence in human goodness, for the problems to be solved by the U.N. and U.N.C.L.E.

can only be fully tractable if universal reason is not corrupted and stymied by sin. Those less optimistic than Hamilton and his modernist kin will argue that, when warring nations sit down to talk, for example, their selfish interests will so color their use of reason that the different parties' conclusions will lack anything resembling universality. By contrast, then, those who do fully embrace modernist optimism implicitly aver not only that we do not need God to control historical events, but also that we do not need God to redeem us before we can exercise that control. For the modernist, our powers of recognizing the principles of human rights and justice, of agreeing about those principles with others, and of being able to put the principles into effect, are better described as robust than as "fallen."

The Man from U.N.C.L.E. was optimistic and confident not just about human social behavior, but about individual behavior as well. Indeed, the most consistent plot device, set up in the design of the program before the first script was written, was that some innocent would be caught up in an adventure involving U.N.C.L.E. and an evil adversary. The innocent citizen would inevitably rise to the challenge and do his or her part to vanquish evil. This device was modeled on Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, in which Cary Grant's character is the outsider taken up into the adventure.[9]

But what of the other spy dramas of the 1960s? Television programs share with all other artistic expressions a rootedness in their own time and place. *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, then, was inevitably a child of its era, and there were other espionage television adventures on television in that same decade. One might reasonably expect that they shared *U.N.C.L.E.*'s unambiguous commitment to Enlightenment universal reason and the attendant notion of universal rights. In fact, however, they usually did not.

Recall the observation made earlier that Enlightenment confidence in reason can be undermined by two factors, in particular. First, the scientific reason championed by thinkers such as Kant can be denigrated by others as merely a subset of human reason, and a dangerous one at that. For its critics, scientific reason is more apt to enslave humanity than to produce a world in which

humanity comes of age. Hence it is that one of the most fascinating espionage programs of the 1960s is appropriately titled *The Prisoner*. Patrick McGoohan, the show's star, effortlessly segued from his role as the protagonist of *Secret Agent Man*, an earlier British series, to the disgruntled British agent of *The Prisoner*, who retires from government service in disgust. The British intelligence apparatus apparently believes that the secret agent depicted by McGoohan, who is known to the viewer only as "Number Six," knows too much to be left to his own devices, free to wander the streets of London. Their response to this perceived security threat is to render him unconscious and whisk him away to a mysterious island where the inhabitants, though they appear well-treated to the casual observer, are indeed prisoners. The series is focused upon Number Six's attempts to discover who is in charge and just what is going on. The ability of the enigmatic masters of the island to keep their "guests" in line is very much a function of science and technology. The island's surveillance equipment transcends the state-of-the-art and is informed by a science fiction sensibility. Most notable is the strange bubble-like object that can be manipulated to zip along the ground after any would-be escapee and essentially smother him or her. The island on which Number Six finds himself is Weber's iron cage brought to television. The bars of the cage may seem harmless, or even beneficent, to those less astute and spirited than our hero—they are kin to the citizens of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*—but Number Six sees the bars for the constraints that they really are. There is certainly no modernist confidence in scientific reason here, then.

The other major force that can effectively undo Enlightenment universal reason is nationalism. After all, nationalism is an attitude that not only falls short of universality, but one that actually entails playing one's own nation off against other human communities. As historian Lynn Hunt explains, while some political thinkers initially supposed that human rights would be established precisely via national self-determination, "nationalism turned increasingly closed and defensive" (184). Indeed, as nationalism unfolded, it "took on a more xenophobic and racist character" (185).

If nationalism came to birth in the seventeenth century

with the advent of modernity, it grew to maturity in the twentieth century, which showed all-too-effectively in two world wars what nation states can visit upon one another. There is a sense, however, in which nationalism reached its zenith in the Cold War, for even though that "war" did not produce pitched battles of the magnitude of the world wars, it was the one conflict between nations—principally the United States and its allies on one side and the Soviet Union and its satellites on the other—that actually threatened world annihilation.

There were three particularly successful Sixties espionage series in addition to *The Prisoner* and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* These three series—the British program *The Avengers*, and the U.S. programs *I Spy* and *Mission Impossible*—were all offspring of the Cold War in ways that *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* was not. As a result, all fell prey to a nationalist mindset that prevented their embrace of a truly modernist confidence in universal reason and thus of the possibility of a world come of age.

In *The Avengers*, in which Patrick Macnee played dapper secret agent John Steed, it was invariably the protection of Great Britain that was at issue. Steed had a number of different partners over the course of the series, but the most fondly remembered is Emma Peel, dashingly portrayed by Diana Rigg. In those episodes in which Steed was teemed with Mrs. Peel, the two had to foil plots to quietly conquer Britain by taking it one village at a time, to nuke London, to steal the Crown Jewels, and even to defoliate the fabled English countryside. In other words, Steed and Peel were unambiguously agents of the British government, and their duty was to dear old England. What is more, their enemies were stand-ins, if not outright representations of, the West's Cold War opponents.

I Spy was a U.S. television program in which Robert Culp and Bill Cosby portrayed globe-trotting American agents. Their employer was clearly identified as the Pentagon. The show's scriptwriters were unabashed about making the villains "Communists" and even members of the "KGB." So too with the Impossible Missions Force that exercised its daring-do in the American series *Mission Impossible*. While the IMF frequently took on the "Syndicate," a decidedly American enemy, they too openly battled regimes that hailed from behind the Iron Curtain.

In short, *The Avengers*, *I Spy*, and *Mission Impossible* not only made reference to the Cold War and to British and American nationalism, they made the Cold War and nationalism the focus of their storytelling. By contrast, we have seen that Norman Felton bent over backwards to have *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* transcend Cold War sensibilities and their attendant nationalism. The most obvious and effective manifestation of Felton's efforts is the character of Illya Kuryakin, a Russian who is one of the heroes of the show. U.N.C.L.E. is not MI5 or MI6, nor is it the CIA or U.S. military intelligence. It is more akin to a fictional espionage unit of the United Nations, via which the various countries of the world can cooperatively vanquish trans-national evil. If one is beholden to the Cold War and nationalism, then reason's potential universality is blunted and conflict among nations is a given. There can be no world come of age in which, as William Hamilton suggested in the quotation at the outset of this essay, even war can be overcome. It will not be possible realistically to hope for Immanuel Kant's "eternal peace" (*To Eternal Peace*).

But if the world has not come of age, and if we find ourselves in a perpetual Cold War with the sword of nuclear apocalypse hanging over our heads, then it is far from clear that we can manage the world without God. Quite the contrary: A little Providence is much to be hoped for. Furthermore, the enemy with which we are locked in nuclear embrace in this instance is none other than "Godless Communism." All the more reason, then, to celebrate traditional piety rather than to abandon it. It is only in the world of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, wherein we are allowed to suspend belief in the inevitability of the Cold War and its concomitant nationalist hysterias, that Providence becomes a mere idling wheel and we can risk declaring the death of God.

In addition to a commitment to universal rights and universal reason, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* displayed just the sort of confidence in technology, including modern communication technologies, that Hamilton highlighted in his 1966 essay. U.N.C.L.E. headquarters was a hyper-modern metallic structure hidden behind a facade of brownstone buildings in the East 40s of

New York City near the U.N. building. Agents entered Del Floria's Tailor Shop, a modest business a few steps below sidewalk-level, walked into one of the tailor shop's changing rooms, and opened a wall that led into a world of automatic steel doors, laboratories filled with exotic electronic equipment, and spartan metallic offices replete with high-tech systems that allowed for instantaneous communication around the world. When in the field, U.N.C.L.E. agents, operating in the days before cell phones, used cleverly disguised pocket communicators that bounced their signals off the Telstar satellite, cutting-edge technology in the 1960s. One of the enduring icons of the series is the pen that was really a communicator into which agents intoned, "Open Channel 'D.'"

Of course, part of the show's infatuation with technology was a function of its investment in spy gadgetry: missile-firing automobiles, miniaturized cameras and guns, ultrasonic weapons, and other tools of the imaginary spy trade. The *U.N.C.L.E.* writers even anticipated the use of remotely controlled Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles, UAVs, as weapons (in "The Mad, *Mad* Tea Party Affair," and "The Deadly Toys Affair" episodes). And those same writers used nearly every opportunity to think up ways for evil-doers to use advanced technology. God forbid that the world should be extorted by villains with the technology to generate earthquakes ("The Project Deephole Affair"). All in all, however, modern technology gave U.N.C.L.E. agents the tools they needed to ensure that right prevailed around the world.

Given our interest in communication here, as well as Hamilton's approving reference to Marshall McLuhan, it is incumbent upon us to note how effectively *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* exemplifies McLuhan's canonical dictum about the identity of medium and message. *U.N.C.L.E.*'s infatuation with technology is reinforced by the nature of the television medium itself. Television is, of course, one of the most familiar and emblematic products of twentieth-century technology. Furthermore, in the Sixties, there was still an aura of shiny newness surrounding the television medium. This was emphasized for fans of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* by the fact that the show straddled the black-and-white and color eras: The first season of *U.N.C.L.E.* was in

black-and-white, while the rest were shot in color.

But in the case of *U.N.C.L.E.*, the medium not only helped shape the message, the message actually validated the medium; there was an unusual reciprocal reinforcement of medium and message. U.N.C.L.E. headquarters was crammed full of television screens. There were television systems used for everything from keeping an eye on what was happening inside the U.N.C.L.E. building itself to pulling in information from far-flung corners of the world. One wall of U.N.C.L.E. chief Mr. Waverly's office was dominated by a television camera and by a TV screen. It may well be that no series up until *U.N.C.L.E.*'s time so emphasized the television screen as *the* portal upon the world.

There is a sense, of course, in which, just as the medium is always the message, the message always *formally* validates the medium. If the medium communicates the message, then, tautologically, the medium is shown to be capable of such communication. But, in the case of *U.N.C.L.E.*, the message *materially* validates the medium: The television series provides a specific content for the claim that the television screen can provide potent access to the world.

This point can be reinforced by noting that *U.N.C.L.E*'s makers succeeded in creating a distinctive technological style. John Thornton Caldwell speaks of *Miami Vice* having a "stylistic signature" (66), and anyone familiar with that series knows what he has in mind. But *U.N.C.L.E.*, too, has a stylistic signature, in this case a particular sort of modernist, technologically-oriented architecture. Thus it is that William Gibson, perhaps our most talented literary interpreter of society's relationship to technology, can have the protagonist of his 2003 novel, *Pattern Recognition*, thirty-five years after *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* went off the air, imagine "a sort of *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* room" equipped with "a huge screen"(221). Once again, then, the message reinforces the medium, given its infatuation with the television screen.

It is important to return at this point to James Carey's observation that our means of communication help create worlds. Suppose that we consider *U.N.C.L.E.* for a moment not in terms of the world behind the text, nor of the world in front of the

text, but in terms of the world within the text (which world, of course, makes possible the world in front of the text). Within the fictional world of the television program, the organization known as U.N.C.L.E. had an unprecedented amount of communications technologies at its disposal, everything from little fountain pen communicators to powerful computer systems that could be consulted for information. If Carey's observations are correct, then U.N.C.L.E. wielded a powerful array of world-making technologies. Of course, holding true to the modernist, Enlightenment sensibility, one would assume that U.N.C.L.E. was not engaged in the profligate creation of a multitude of worlds. For Enlightenment-style modernism, there is a single objective reality, and it is initially independent of human consciousness. But in order for that reality to be mentally habitable by human beings, it must be cognitively mapped, so that human beings can orient themselves within it. Thus, in the modernist perspective, communication technologies do not create reality or realities *ex nihilo*; they construct the *conceptual world* that we inhabit by creating and communicating the cognitive grid that securely fits on top of the underlying reality. That underlying reality must be given voice for it to become an existentially available world, and it is given voice through communication technologies.

If modernist optimism about human capabilities erases the need for the doctrines of Providence and Redemption, the ability of modern communication technologies to create the humanly habitable world seriously undermines the doctrine of Creation. In a significant sense, human beings can create the world through their own powers. They do not create the underlying physical universe, of course, but they do put together the "world" of human meaning and morality. More specifically, the modernist constructs meaning and morality by employing universal reason to determine what human meaning and morality should look like. And to aver that meaning and morality are derived from reason is to imply that they do not derive from divine revelation or sacred tradition. We should look instead to something such as Jürgen Habermas' universal communication community. A world that is recognized as humanly created in this fashion is a

world come of age indeed.

What of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*'s specific treatment of religion and spirituality, what might be called the "transcendence slot" in the framework of an existential world? There were, in fact, a number of episodes in which spiritual practices were shown. The treatment of these practices only reinforces our reading of *U.N.C.L.E.* as displaying the sort of world-come-of-age sensibility that William Hamilton wishes to celebrate. Indeed, there is something akin to an Enlightenment superciliousness in these episodes. In "The Very Important Zombie Affair," for instance, a dictator on a Caribbean island employs the traditional art of voodoo to control his subjects and neutralize his political opponents. The nasty effects of voodoo are shown to be quite real, but they operate not thanks to any supernatural agency, but, rather, via the power of suggestion. As the dictator himself, El Supremo, explains, one must believe in the power of the voodoo practitioner who is hexing one for the hex to have any effect. Enlightenment rationality carries the day.

Extra sensory perception, a darling of current New Age spirituality, is at issue in "The Bat Cave Affair" (in which Martin Landau, who will end up playing Rolin Hand on *Mission Impossible*, hones a vampire act that may have come in handy decades later in preparing for the film *Ed Wood*). A naive young woman named Clemency McGill appears to have extraordinary psychic powers. But, alas, it turns out that technologically sophisticated villains are transmitting her "perceptions" into her brain through a comb that she wears in her hair. Technology is real; ESP is not.

If the *U.N.C.L.E.* writers dismissed both voodoo and psychic powers, they didn't think much of new religious movements either. In "The Love Affair," for instance, Eddie Arnold plays Brother Love, who holds revival meetings to make converts to his religious community. But Brother Love turns out to be anything but loving: He is actually in the business of kidnapping scientists and forcing them to work on a nuclear spaceship. New religious movements come off no better in "The Prince of Darkness Affair," which introduces us to the Third Way. Its leader, too, turns out to be a villain bent on world domination. But in this case, the

bad guy, one Luther (ouch!) Sebastian, seems actually to believe that an old man in a white robe that the movement carts around may have revelatory information for the world. But when the alleged prophet at long last opens his mouth, apparently ready to break his silence and grace the world with his profundity, all he manages to do is to die.

In summary, mainline religion is absent from the three-and-one-half seasons of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, but not conspicuously so, given that one would not expect a spy adventure to treat it. Other forms of religion and spirituality do, however, appear. They are universally dismissed, if not as covers for evil, then as superstitions that a clear-headed rationality can easily unmask. The Enlightenment sensibility, something William Hamilton would applaud, is alive and well in the world of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* By contrast, a perusal of the storylines of other spy series of the Sixties, specifically the aforementioned programs *The Avengers*, *I Spy*, and *Mission Impossible*, suggests no *U.N.C.L.E.*-like interest in new religious movements.[10] *Mission Impossible*'s Impossible Missions Force does occasionally employ pseudo psychics—a phrase any self-respecting child of the Enlightenment will deem redundant—but it does not bother with spiritual movements afoot in American society. These three television shows portray characters bent on battling the Soviet Union and its minions. We can conjecture that, as a result, they simply do not have time to worry about anything as apparently harmless as religious cults.

The next topic on our agenda is *U.N.C.L.E.*'s treatment of transnational evil, a relevant subject because of its connection with the traditional Christian notion that we require divine action to be redeemed from evil. We have already seen that, in the *U.N.C.L.E.* world, redemption is not required where the interactions among nations are concerned. But that does not mean that the world envisioned by *U.N.C.L.E.* is devoid of evil in all respects. Far from it. Because the main locus of evil is not the interplay among different nations, evil pops up in a transnational guise. The men and women from *U.N.C.L.E.* battle one international nemesis in particular, the powerful anti-*U.N.C.L.E.* known as Thrush. It is constituted by a technologically savvy and well-organized army

of bandits bent on world domination. The name Thrush bares a suspicious resemblance to James Bond's early nemesis, Smersh. But while the name Smersh was appropriated by Ian Fleming from an actual Soviet organization, Thrush, with its ubiquitous bird logo, is purely fictional. In the make-believe world of *U.N.C.L.E.*, however, it is perfectly able to give U.N.C.L.E. a run for its money. In each individual episode of the series in which U.N.C.L.E. is battling Thrush, the former comes out on top. But Thrush is never destroyed; it is always ready to do battle another day.

On the one hand, in our own world today with its multinational corporations and increasing globalization, the idea that a Thrush-like organization might arise to cause trouble is not immediately outlandish. For instance, it is not hard to imagine an only slightly more evil Enron or Halliburton causing plenty of problems for the world. But, on the other hand, U.N.C.L.E.'s opponents, Thrush in particular, have a large dose of the fantastic about them. Thrush leaders invariably have science-fiction-derived devices for creating their mayhem. Where the human mind alone is concerned, for example, Thrush has a device to read it ("The Discothèque Affair"), to control it ("The Green Opal Affair"), and, if need be, simply to turn it to mush ("The Brain Killer Affair"). If we can truly live in the world under our own power alone, with no help from a transcendent deity, then we must be able to handle evil, whether individual, national, or transnational. *U.N.C.L.E.*'s fantastic portrayal of transnational evil, what some might even call comic-book, appears, then, at least initially, as the weakest component of its worldview. Here we apparently see not so much Enlightenment confidence in human abilities to overcome evil, in other words, but more often a fanciful dismissal of the complications of real evil.[11]

Our consideration of *U.N.C.L.E.*'s treatment of trans-national evil poses a question for a previously discussed component of its worldview: Might not *U.N.C.L.E.*'s vision of a world in which nations truly cooperate to stop evil in its tracks also have more of the fantastic about it than of the real world? Doesn't the picture of a world in which organizations such as the United Nations are genuinely effective require a suspension of disbelief,

which then becomes the basis for the suspension of *belief* that we need a God to help us deal with the world? The answer to these questions is "No," at least to the extent that one can find serious political philosophies today that envision world cooperation not unlike that displayed by *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* Perhaps the most notable example is the recent work of historian Francis Fukuyama, best known for his book, *The End of History*. As a result of his reflections upon the debacle that is the American war in Iraq, Fukuyama's recent writings suggest a rejection of "neo-conservatism," which counsels unilateral American action to democratize the world, in favor of "multi-multilateralism." As Fukuyama explains it:

> The United States needs to come up with something better than "coalitions of the willing" to legitimate its dealings with other countries. The world today lacks effective international institutions that can confer legitimacy on collective action; creating new organizations that will better balance the dual requirements of legitimacy and effectiveness will be the primary task for the coming generation. As a result of more than 200 years of political evolution, we have a relatively good understanding of how to create institutions that are rulebound, accountable and reasonably effective in the vertical silos we call states. What we do not have are adequate mechanisms of horizontal accountability among states. (67)

But Fukuyama is optimistic that the next generation can indeed create multi-multinational organizations. This is as much to say that it will be possible to create a truly credible version of something like the United Nations, as well as an international law enforcement organization such as U.N.C.L.E. The world displayed in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, a world come of age, is not far, then, from the world that some significant thinkers still seriously hope to see.

In addition, we should not minimize the fact that the world's political leaders have not given up on the United Nations. Witness the recourse to the U.N. to halt the violence in the summer of 2006 between Israel and Hezbollah. Again, writing in the *Human Rights Watch World Report 2007*, Peggy Hicks observes that " . . . the United Nations has shown the ability to do more for human rights than the sum of its parts," (38), that is, more than the individual nations that make it up.

But we should not leave the topic of *U.N.C.L.E.*'s treatment of transnational evil just yet. Consider two qualifications of the claim that there is a fantastic or even a comic-book sensibility here. First of all, the comic book approach to evil, an approach that is often evident in the James Bond films, frequently centers on one megalomaniac madman. The *Batman* comics give us the Joker and the Penguin, for instance, and James Bond gives us Dr. No and Goldfinger. This focus on the evil genius hell-bent on taking over the world is effectively parodied in the *Austin Powers* movies. By contrast, in the *Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, the most frequent incarnation of evil, as already mentioned, is not a single madman but an organization, namely, Thrush. The notion that a transnational organization could wreak havoc on the world is surely not as unbelievable or as comic-book in character as the idea that a madman working alone could do so.

Second, the very fact that *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* was a unique Sixties espionage vehicle in that it looked beyond the Cold War to cooperation among nations means that its writers had no ready-made template for depicting evil. Transnational evil, in other words, was not something already clearly in view, not something familiar, such as German fascism or Communist aggression. As a result, *U.N.C.L.E.*'s depictions of a transnational form of evil were bound to be less constrained and more speculative than portrayals of thoroughly familiar forms of evil.

We turn now to the component in the lattice-work of our existential world that we shall call "individual action," that is, the deeds carried out by individuals rather than by organizations or countries. *U.N.C.L.E.*'s heroes, like the heroes in most action-adventures on television and in film, must consistently perform actions with life and death consequences. They are constantly in mortal peril. According to the well-known dictum, there

are no atheists in foxholes. But do the men and women from U.N.C.L.E. whisper a quick prayer when they find themselves in a dangerously tight spot? Of course not! Would James Bond do so? Never! Action heroes such as Napoleon Solo and James Bond are expected to be able to carry the day drawing solely upon their own resources (or, at the very least, their resources pooled with that of a partner such as Illya Kuryakin). Hence, we see that in the slot of the existential world reserved for individual action, God is once more absent.

But this fact returns us to the matter of suspension of disbelief. Isn't it just part of the action-adventure genre that we must suspend disbelief in the hero's ability, all on his or her own, to triumph over gigantic odds? Two observations are required to answer this query. First, there is nothing inherent in the heroic narrative as a form that precludes the hero depending upon supernatural powers for aid. Odysseus, after all, who is surely one of the patron saints of the hero genre, readily engages in ritual sacrifice to call up the spirits of the dead so that he can consult them. On the other end of the historical spectrum, Luke Skywalker relies on the Force, and *The Matrix* trilogy's Neo certainly has a productive relationship with the supernatural. Second, while it may be true that the suspension of disbelief in the hero's powers to go it alone has become a staple of the contemporary heroic adventure on television and in film, that fact itself says something about the absence of God. Why do we want our heroes to be able to get along all by themselves, without any divine, supernatural aid? If that is our ideal, why does our ideal lack the note of dependence upon God?

Standing next to the space in our world framework reserved for individual action is what can be termed the private domain. This has to do with the intimate self-consciousness of the individual subject. *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* never showed us Napoleon Solo sitting alone at his kitchen table in the middle of the night, bottle in hand, agonizing over the meaning of life. The program, as a light action-adventure series, did not have the dramatic heft required to weigh in on serious human angst.[12] Perhaps this constitutes a genuine lacuna in *U.N.C.L.E.*'s presentation of a world. While its touching upon human rights, the role of reason, the power of technology, trans-national evil, and individual action means that the show presented its viewers with a more fully realized world structure than most television programs, its failure to explore the private domain is apparently a weakness in its presentation, however unintentional, of a world without God. For, if much theorizing about religion in the West is correct, it is precisely to the private sphere that religion retreated after the collapse of Christendom in the modern period.

On the other hand, the perceived freedom to skip wrenching depictions of the private sphere can be read in terms of modernism's aforementioned belief in the individual's ability to master his or her selfhood via reason. Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin, as well as their boss, Mr. Waverly, all appear to be supremely self-confident men, not angst-ridden victims of Freudian tensions that de-center the psyche. The heroes of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* may have no need of God as a center point around which to unify their selfhood.

Of course, even if we decide that *U.N.C.L.E.*'s relative silence on the private arena must be taken to be a genuine lacuna, the suggestion that God has no place in the *public* dimensions of our world, whatever place God may have in the private domain, already powerfully undermines the notion of an omnipresent deity. In other words, the fact that *U.N.C.L.E.* ignores the private dimension by no means completely undercuts its ability to present a world come of age. If piety is safely walled off in the ghetto of the private, it is no longer a terribly powerful phenomenon.

When William Hamilton dubbed *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* "post-civilized," he meant that it displayed the characteristics of a technologically savvy world come of age, a world in which, at least for Hamilton himself, we can do without God. We have seen just how *U.N.C.L.E.* can be said to have presented Hamilton's world come of age by its depiction of numerous components of our existential world as independent of God. What we have uncovered in our analysis of *U.N.C.L.E.* surely has implications for the larger question of how enacted fictional television and film dramas communicate God's presence or God's absence.

We can ask, with respect to any such drama, how it deals with the different components of our existential world that we have considered above. Does it show human beings negotiating those sections of the existential world with little or no need for God? If so, it may well be presenting us with a world in which belief in God is moribund. The spy genre has shown itself to be more amenable to this sort of analysis than one might initially imagine. This is because it is a genre that often touches upon a number of the constituent elements of a world, including the relationship among nations, trans-national evil, and individual action. Other genres may prove more effective in addressing the private domain, and might actively depict the death of God by showing God's absence from the private portion of one's world.

Our explorations up to this point have tied *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*'s presentation of a world come of age, in William Hamilton's sense, with *U.N.C.L.E.*'s thoroughgoing modernism. Has the distinctiveness of that modernism been exaggerated here? My contention that it has not can be buttressed by briefly comparing *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* with a contemporary television series that, on the surface, it closely resembles, namely, *Alias*. From 2001-2006, Jennifer Garner portrayed CIA agent Sydney Bristow, a kinetic young spy who could rumble with the best of them. Along with her father, Jack, and a dedicated band of additional CIA colleagues, Sydney used the same sort of imaginative gadgets employed by James Bond and the men from U.N.C.L.E. to combat evil. In this particular instance, evil was represented by an organization known as SD-6, which Sydney had infiltrated (accidentally, as it turns out).

Based upon this summary, *Alias* would appear to be very much a present-day *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* In fact, however, *Alias* is postmodern where *U.N.C.L.E.* is modern, given the stipulative definitions proffered above. The former series' postmodernism has at least four components, each of which can be briefly summarized. First, rather than exhibiting the modernist, so-called "centered" self, a self that is master of its own fate—note how Napoleon and Illya demonstrate this mastery via their cool, even flippant attitude in the face of even the gravest danger—*Alias* depicts a self characterized by dispersal. Far from being held together by an autonomous rational center, Sydney Bristow's selfhood is dispersed over a host of times, experiences, and perspectives. *Alias* creates a bevy of problems for poor Sydney's sense of identity. She suffers serial challenges to her selfhood, from constant discoveries about hitherto hidden aspects of her upbringing to melodramatic confrontations with her estranged mother, who is an enemy agent. But Sydney's lack of mastery over her identity goes further. At one point, she loses her memory, during which time she is turned into an assassin. As a result, she must subsequently confront the fact that she has been someone entirely contrary to her "own" deepest moral sensibilities. In short, the constantly changing iterations of Sydney's identity bespeak something closer to the postmodern mindset than to *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*'s modernism.

Second, whereas Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin exercise modernist condescension toward religious cults and New Age prophecies such as those offered by the seer of the Third Way, Sydney Bristow and her colleagues enthusiastically embrace them. Indeed, a large number of *Alias* episodes center on the prophecies of one Milo Rambaldi. Something of a "Nostravinci," Rambaldi lived in the fifteenth century but somehow invented technologically advanced devices, in addition to making apocalyptic predictions. In the world of *Alias*, the knowledge that issues from the scientific worldview does not reign supreme as the paradigm of universal reason. Rather, in good postmodernist fashion, a plurality of "knowledges" exists side by side.

Third, whereas Napoleon and Illya happily embrace the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement and see it as unambiguously good, Sydney Bristow has a typically postmodern distrust of bureaucratic modernism, Max Weber's aforementioned "iron cage." Indeed, *Alias* is predicated on the idea that the "CIA" turns out to be SD-6. And even when Sydney seems to have discovered the real CIA, she is in for continuing surprises as apparently virtuous CIA operatives turn out to be traitors. Furthermore, her superiors in the real CIA are not infrequently pig-headed bureaucrats, a far cry from *U.N.C.L.E.*'s wise, grandfatherly Mr. Waverly.

Finally, we come to the different stylistic signatures—Caldwell's phrase—of the two series. William Gibson has reinforced the notion that there is indeed a characteristic *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* style. It is the modernist architectural style of U.N.C.L.E. headquarters, with its sliding steel doors, its no-nonsense, form-follows-function minimalism, and its rooms stocked with television screens. By contrast, a careful look at the *Alias* set for SD-6, in particular, suggests something closer to the postmodern retro-tech look of Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*. The employees of SD-6 work amidst a technological pastiche. Particularly noteworthy is the open ductwork of SD-6 headquarters. The ambiguity of the technology that adorns SD-6 is perhaps inevitable for an organization that is more enamored of technologies invented by a fifteenth century prophet than of the workaday technologies of the modern world.

If *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* is thoroughgoing in its modernism, and if its depiction of a world come of age depends on that modernism, how would *U.N.C.L.E.*'s message fare in the present day and age? And how would William Hamilton's version of the death of God theology do? Hamilton nailed his ideological flag to an optimistic vision according to which even war could be abolished. Recent history has apparently made a mockery of that aspect of his philosophy. We have seen everything from ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, to genocide in Rwanda, to sectarian slaughter in Iraq, to war-bred atrocities in Darfur. But, as the references to Fukuyama and to the U.N.'s successes in advancing human rights above suggest, hope springs eternal. Perhaps there will yet be a world in which nations cooperate to quash evil. Then the men and women from U.N.C.L.E. will have their day.

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Endnotes

1 As the expression "post-Christian" era suggests, the death of God movement, if not actually confined to Christianity, at least appears confined to the Abrahamic religions. It is telling in this regard that Sam Harris, in *The End of Faith*, a book that might be read as a part of a new wave of death of God theologies—though Harris' position cannot, strictly speaking, be considered a death of God "theology," since it derives from a philosopher-neurologist rather than from within the theological world—has some kind words for Eastern spirituality. On the other hand, Christopher Hitchens, in his *God Is Not Great*, titles Chapter 14 "There is No 'Eastern' Solution." Hitchens would like to see the death of God as the death of religion in all of its forms.

2 Authorial intent is not at issue here. It is unlikely that *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*'s creators were interested in the death of God, but that does not affect the implications of their creation. *U.N.C.L.E.* displayed a world in which human beings could be their own masters. In this world, one might reasonably proclaim that God was absent, if not dead. However, while *U.N.C.L.E.* displayed the social conditions for the possibility of such a proclamation, it did not itself explicitly announce that God was dead. Another way to formulate this point is to say that *U.N.C.L.E.* displayed a world in which God was, in effect, dead, but it did not broadcast the death of God *theology*.

3 Kant was also concerned about "practical" or moral reason, of course. Note, however, that he gave it a universality modeled on the universality of scientific reason.

4 On modernism as defined by a sense of internal and external mastery, see Grigg, pp. 25-26.

5 Compare Kaminsky, p. 58.

6 By contrast, the capacities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation as depicted in the veritable propaganda piece, *The FBI*, which starred Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. and ran from 1965-1974, might impress viewers, but the show's plodding attempts at realism guaranteed that it would certainly not enthrall them. Again, detective Joe Mannix (Mike Connors) of *Mannix*, which aired from 1967-1975, began work as an employee of the high-tech agency Intertech, but by his second season of sleuthing, he was off on his own.

7 The indispensable guide to the making of *U.N.C.L.E* is John Heitland's *The Man from U.N.C.L.E. Book*.

8 *U.N.C.L.E.*'s makers did their part to reinforce the series' more naive viewers in their confusion of fiction with reality. As the credits rolled at the end of each episode, viewers saw the acknowledgement, "We would like to thank the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement without whose assistance this program would not be possible."

9 An interesting bit of trivia is that the spy boss in both *North by Northwest* and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* was played by Leo G. Carroll.

10 An episode guide for *The Avengers* can be found at http://theavengers.tv/forever/peel.html [,] for *I Spy* at http://www.tv.com/i-spy/show/571/episode_guide.html [,] and for *Mission Impossible* at http://www.tv.com/mission-impossible/show/577/episode.html [.], June 1, 2007.

11 The third season of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, in particular, stooped to campiness and mere silliness. From the perspective of diehard *U.N.C.L.E.* fans, this led to the series' demise, despite the fact that the fourth season returned to scripts with a more serious action-adventure feel.

12 It would be wrong to suggest that there was *no* exploration of the private sphere in the various episodes of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*. For example, the innocent caught up in the action in "The Mad, *Mad* Tea Party Affair" complains that her life is so empty that its contents could all be inscribed on the head of a pin, with room left over for *The Gettysburg Address*.

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