

“Living Without Creativity”

By Paul A Rose Jr.

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I bought and we-watched the classic cult film *THX 1138* last week. The movie was released the year I was born; co-written, directed and edited by none other than George Lucas. In fact, I recall when I first watched it years ago, the story was that the film in theatres was a re-make of a student film Lucas had done at University of Southern California. In fact, *THX 1138 4eb* was made by Lucas, from a script written by some of his fellow students who had decided not to make it for their student film, including Walter Murch, the sound designer who helped Lucas re-write the version released in theatres. In the “liner notes” of the recent special DVD release of the “director’s cut,” Lucas writes,

“He (Francis Ford Coppola) and many of the filmmakers he brought to (American) Zoetrope wanted to find artistic ways to reflect their concerns about changes in our society, about a shift away from creativity and individual achievement and toward a corporate, consumerist mentality. Those fears and concerns are certainly central to *THX 1138*, so it seemed to be a natural choice as the first release for what we believed would be a revolutionary studio.”

That certainly didn’t stop them from asking me to pay \$20.00 for the DVD... Lucas and fellow filmmakers saw *THX 1138* as not so much a futuristic story, but a sci-fi parable about the 1970’s, when they made it. As the saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. I think many would agree that we are facing the same kinds of questions today. Lucas’s best films have always been about preserving individualism, and fostering rebellion. American Graffiti, Indiana Jones, and of course, Star Wars (the original trilogy) where rebellion isn’t limited to an attitude. *THX 1138* is no exception. Films like these resonate with American audiences because we all hope that we are individuals, capable of rebellion, were the times to call for it. Even if that ignores the fact that we often discover that we are trapped in a culture where a group mentality decides your choice of music, clothes, etc., even among the so-called individuals. Individuality is fine, as long as you do it within the confines of what is acceptable to your peer group.

However, watching the film did get my creative juices flowing. What would a world look like that was devoid of creativity? What if the so-called evolutionary scientists are right and the world as we know it simply evolved over time to the level of complexity that we see today? Seems unlikely to me, but I admit I’m biased. If there was no Creator to inspire us, how would our lives be?

There is a sequence in *THX 1138* when the main character is sentenced to a penal existence for unauthorized (and therefore perverted) sexual contact and drug abuse (in the premise of the movie NOT taking his prescribed drugs). He is moved to this room that is entirely white. White so bright that you cannot see anything and I must believe your optical senses would become overloaded after an extended period. In fact, I referenced that landscape in a previous column I wrote for Fuse Magazine. The only color at all in

the area is the prisoners flesh tones and the stormtrooper-like guards black outfits. The filmmakers shot the entire sequence in a huge soundstage in LA where they overlit everything which enabled them to shoot cheaper because they didn't even have to move the cameras. Simply shoot Robert Duvall walking into the distance being absorbed by the white, then have him turn around to complete the scene by walking back into camera view. Up and down, left and right, in and out are all twisted around and impossible to determine because everything is bright white.

I think a world without creativity would look much like this. Tell me, what is the need for color? At best, without creativity or some sort of art, everything would be black and white. There was a film that came out some years ago that launched the careers of Tobey Maguire and Reese Witherspoon called *Pleasantville*. Maguire's character is a teen obsessed with a *Father Knows Best* type show called Pleasantville. Somehow, he and his rebellious sister (Witherspoon) ended up transferred into the reality of 1950's Pleasantville, where everything is perfect – and in black and white. As they interact with the regular residents of Pleasantville, Maguire and Witherspoon essentially introduce sin, which suddenly causes color to start appearing.

A lot of churchgoers were offended by the movie, because of the way the filmmakers used color. Color, at least in the eyes of many religious leaders, signified sin entering into the world of Pleasantville. The problem is, this is a false offense. If believers hadn't been browbeaten into believing that the only good society that ever existed in America was in 1950's *Leave It To Beaver* television shows, which, in fact, didn't represent that reality any more than *Friends* or *The O.C.* show how real people live these days, they wouldn't have been offended. The fact is, color represented far more than sin entering the world of Pleasantville, although there was some sin associated with it. The color actually represented reality crashing into the fantasy, which requires some notion of sin. At least the last time I checked the Bible, I think we're all tainted by sin. To bring color in without some negative repercussions would have been as false as the black and white perfection previously shown in the movie. I hate to tell you folks, but reality isn't all good, which is another argument in favor of creativity – even creativity that on some level offends.

You don't agree with my theory? Not satisfied with just black and white? Okay, I'll even throw in green, since plants show that color because of the chlorophyll in their makeup, but you never know, maybe plants would have evolved a different way of taking in energy that did not require the use of chlorophyll. You might try and point out that the sun is yellow. But without creativity, why assign an alphabetic designator to a optic perception anyways. Further, who's to say that there would be enough definition in the optic receptors we call our eyes to notice such shades of grey? And why create an alphabet? I can hear some of you, "to communicate, of course." But why would we need to communicate at all? Most early language started out as pictures, pictures used to represent objects and ideas that were used to tell stories.

But without creativity, what are stories? There is nothing to communicate, so there is no need for communication structures, things just happen. How did memory come about?

What need is there to remember things when all that matters is what is happening now? You see, in my mind, it is impossible to imagine the world coming into being without some type of creative force at the back, because I exist in a society that is in every way permeated with creativity. Even if humans weren't themselves creative beings, the rocks and trees cry out with the testimony to a creative genius.

And the fact is, humans are creative beings. We cannot exist in a world that was not built by a creative mind. I'm sure there are many who claim that this is why we "invented" God. Nothing could be further from the truth, in my mind. There is no scenario I can imagine why the world would be as it is without some glaring evidence of a plan, an idea, a design – A Creator. There is more complexity in the design of my hand than can be accounted for from trillions of years of accidents and evolution. How does love evolve? If it was just about procreation, I certainly wouldn't have foreseen the development of people who are so fickle that love is required to keep them together. I almost wrote "women," but the fact is men are as fickle in many areas as women are stereotyped to be. How did that evolve? What is sacrifice, what is truth, what is time? They are all matters that rely on the creativity of humans, modeling the creativity of God.