

The Origins of Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness

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PART 2

The Frankfurt School

The Founding Agenda

In 1923 **Felix Weil** organized a week-long symposium, chaired by the aforementioned **Georg Lukacs**, in Frankfurt, Germany in which they laid out a vision for a Marxist think-tank and research center. Ironically, like Friedrich Engels (Karl Marx's longtime collaborator and benefactor), Weil was the son of a wealthy capitalist, but he had converted to Marxism as a Ph.D. student while studying under the political philosopher **Karl Korsch** at the University of Frankfurt. Following the conference, Weil secured the financing to erect a building and fund the salaries for an institute that would have the academic status of a university. The original name for the center was the Institute for Marxism (*Institut für Marxismus*), but for public relations purposes the directors decided to give it a more generic name, **The Institute for Social Research** (*Institut für Sozialforschung*). Since then, the ISR has usually been known simply as "the Frankfurt School."

The Institute's first director, **Carl Grunberg**, was a professor of law and political science at the University of Vienna and the first openly-Marxist professor to hold a chair in any German university, and from the outset he and Weil were clear about the school's mission. Inspired by Lukacs's recently-published *History and Class Consciousness*, their model was the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. According to Weil, "I wanted the institute to become known... due to its contributions to Marxism as a scientific discipline." However, there was always a contradiction between the Institute's stated philosophy and reality. Although theoretically a Marxist institution, the governing structure of the Frankfurt School was anything but classless and egalitarian. In fact, it was even more hierarchical and less collegial than most academic institutions with a single director who was empowered with autocratic control over the

Institute's policies, programs, faculty and administration. That inconsistency aside, as Martin Jay records in his book, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research* (1973, 1996), "Carl Grunberg concluded his opening address by clearly stating his personal allegiance to Marxism as a scientific methodology, [and declared that] Marxism would be the ruling principle of the Institute."

Weil and Grunberg were orthodox Marxists, but from the beginning they encouraged a broad interdisciplinary approach to scholarship. As a result, the Institute attracted gifted scholars not only in economics but also in philosophy, history, psychology, sociology and other academic areas. Although generically Marxist, there were some philosophical variations and different emphases as various scholars applied Marxist principles to their particular field of

study. As an independent Marxist think-tank, the Institute was a center for theoretical discourse but not revolutionary activism. Although the ISR started with Comintern support and some of its faculty and staff were avowed Communists, the Institute was never officially affiliated with either the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) or the more moderate Socialist Party of Germany (SPD). Furthermore, although the Frankfurt scholars originally praised Lenin and the Bolshevik regime, their support for the USSR was more tempered after Lenin died in 1924. Interestingly, Grunberg and his colleagues were careful not to criticize Stalin overtly, but they circumspectly kept their distance. For his part, the paranoid Soviet dictator was always suspicious of the ISR. (In fact, one of the original founders of the ISR, Richard Sorge, was a Soviet spy.) Stalin regarded the Institute as too cosmopolitan and its faculty and staff too eccentric, independent-minded, and insufficiently loyal.

Grunberg suffered a stroke in 1927 and retired as director of the Institute of Social Research a couple of years later. In 1930 **Max Horkheimer** became the new director of the ISR, and at that point a new philosophy took hold in the Institute. Horkheimer's view of Marxism was more expansive and dialectical than rigidly doctrinaire, and like Gramsci and Lukacs before him, he was convinced that the major obstacle to the spread of Marxism was traditional Western culture. In particular, he despised orthodox Christian beliefs and values that were antithetical to most everything that Marxism advocated.

Under Horkheimer's leadership the Frankfurt scholars sought to synthesize classical Marxism, Social Darwinism and Freudian psychology, and in the process they created an ingenious ideology that had the potential to radically transform Western culture. Horkheimer believed that human values and actions, as well as political ideologies, were not exclusively the products of materialistic conditions in life, and that psychology played a key role in the evolving cultural dialectic. Therefore, he insisted that the Institute integrate psychology into its philosophy and political theory. The result, as Martin Jay describes, was that in the early years "the Institute concerned itself primarily with an analysis of bourgeois society's socio-economic substructure" in keeping with classical Marxism, while "in the years after 1930 its prime interest lay in its cultural superstructure." This was the

theoretical basis for **Neo-Marxism**.

Under Horkheimer, the Frankfurt School developed a revisionistic Neo-Marxist interpretation of Western culture called **Critical Theory**. In essence, Critical Theory was a comprehensive and unrelenting assault on the values and institutions of Western civilization – in effect, a kind of philosophical and psychological culture war. Based on atheistic Marxist ideals, Critical Theory offered no realistic alternatives, but it was nonetheless a devastating critique of the history, philosophy, politics, social and economic structures, major institutions, and religious foundations of Western civilization.

The primary target of the critical theorists was the unique Christian heritage of the West that emphasized the sacredness of human life and the inherent value of the individual. Being created in the image of God, human beings have the rational ability to discern good and evil, the moral responsibility to choose between the two, and the potential to build a more just, equitable and humane society and culture to the extent that they operate according to the moral and ethical principles of Natural Law. Cultural Marxists understood that until these beliefs were discredited and destroyed, Western societies would never reach the state of hopelessness and alienation that was an essential prerequisite for a socialist revolution. Therefore, the number one priority of the ISR was to destroy faith and confidence in the Bible and orthodox Christian beliefs and values – something that both secular and liberal "Christian" scholars had been doing since the Enlightenment.

Therefore, despite the individual personalities and the different emphases of the various Frankfurt School theorists, there was a basic philosophical coherence in their cumulative work. Ultimately, what united these scholars was the application of a Neo-Marxist dialectic in their unrelenting criticism of contemporary Western society and culture. As Michael Walsh wryly notes in *The Devil's Pleasure Palace: The Cult of Critical Theory and the Subversion of the West* (2015), "The left is always on the attack; after all, they have nothing to defend."

An important point to consider is that the driving force behind the Frankfurt School's research was never impartial scholarship but the aggressive promotion of a radical left-wing socio/political agenda. Even Martin Jay, a University of California at

Berkeley history professor who is generally sympathetic toward the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory, concedes that “the true object of Marxism... was not the uncovering of immutable truths, but the fostering of social change.” The conservative scholar William S. Lind is more blunt:

The goal of Critical Theory was not truth but praxis, or revolutionary action: bringing the current society and culture down through unremitting, destructive criticism. [William S. Lind, “Further Readings in the Frankfurt School,” in *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. www.freecongress.org.]

Horkheimer and his associates did not regard truth and reason (including Marxist dogmas) as immutable and transcendent realities, but neither did they consider themselves relativists – either epistemologically or ethically. Instead, they contended that truth exists, *but only within history*. In this sense, they regarded the dichotomy between absolutism and relativism to be false because it was merely a theoretical construct divorced from real life situations. As Martin Jay explains, “Each period of time has its own truth, Horkheimer argued.... [and] what is true is whatever fosters social change in the direction of a rational society.” He goes on to note...

Dialectics was superb at attacking other systems’ pretensions of truth, but when it came to articulating the ground of its own assumption and values, it fared less well.... Critical Theory had a basically insubstantial concept of reason and truth, rooted in social conditions and yet outside them... If Critical Theory can be said to have had a theory of truth, it appeared in its immanent critique of bourgeois society, which compared the pretensions of bourgeois ideology with the reality of its social conditions. Truth was not outside the society, but contained in its own claims. Men had an emancipatory interest in actualizing the ideology. [Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (University of California Press, 1973, 1996), p. 62.]

This is, to say the least, an unconvincing argument. The claim that truth is only a product of one’s historical circumstance would itself be a product of one’s historical circumstance, which is of course self-refuting. Although denying they were epistemic relativists, the Frankfurt scholars were certain that truth is found only within historical circumstances, yet they claimed personal exemption from the restrictions of their own historical circumstance and assumed a transcendent truth perspective. In logic, this is known

as the “self-excepting” fallacy, but they conveniently resolved this contradiction by simply dismissing formal logic as bourgeois thinking. Besides, logic imposed unwanted restrictions on their theoretical imagination.

Under Horkheimer’s leadership the Frankfurt School attracted some brilliant scholars and intellectuals including **Theodor Adorno, Eric Fromm, Wilhelm Reich, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal** and **Herbert Marcuse**. Like Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukacs, Bela Kun and other notable European Marxists in the early 1900s, many of the Frankfurt scholars were secular Jews, a fact that the Nazis successfully exploited in their propaganda regarding a “Jewish conspiracy” of Communist intellectuals who were perverting German society.

Although independent scholars in their own right, the Critical Theorists held a common commitment to Neo-Marxism and the belief that Western civilization in general, and Christianity in particular, have been sources of imperialism and repression force throughout history. In their view, Western civilization was built on aggression, oppression, racism, slavery, classism and sexual repression. Decades later, this ideology influenced the founding of the many “critical studies” programs in universities such as African-American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Feminist Studies, Peace Studies, and LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bi-sexual/Transgender) Studies.

Particularly significant in this regard was Wilhelm Reich’s book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), which offered up an intriguing revision of the Marxist dialectic. Unlike classical Marxism which was fundamentally economics-based and reductionistically simplistic in terms of setting the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, Reich contended that the real conflict in the 20th century was between “reactionaries” and “revolutionaries.” In other words, the culture war was not exclusively a class-based conflict but one between those who held incompatible socio/political ideologies. In theory, it pitted those who promoted a progressive social evolutionary vision against conservatives desperately clinging to outdated values and beliefs. This allowed some among the elite classes in society, including some who were wealthy and highly-educated, to join in the ongoing epic struggle against oppression on behalf of the

poor and the exploited masses. Of course, it also opened up the opportunity for Marxist intellectuals such as Reich and his Frankfurt School colleagues to take leadership in the culture war on behalf of the downtrodden and the victims of Western capitalism and Christian oppression. But as members of the intellectual elite, they were justified in retaining a certain respectful distance from the great unwashed masses. As Martin Jay notes, “the Institute’s members may have been relentless in their hostility towards the capitalist system, but they never abandoned the life-style of the *haute bourgeoisie*.”

In retrospect, the Frankfurt School had a significant impact on the evolution of the American left over the past seventy-five years, particularly the kind of cultural Marxism that spawned the New Left movement in the 1960s. Since then, the left has launched an unremitting culture war of attrition that has largely succeeded in secularizing American culture and undermining traditional values and institutions, and much of its ideology, inspiration and tactics were gleaned from the Institute for Social Research.

The ‘X’ Factor

The ISR was founded as an interdisciplinary research institute, but beginning in 1931 several psychologists from the Frankfurt Institute of Psychoanalysis became ISR associates and significantly expanded the scope of Marxist ideology as it related to the field of psychology. From the outset the founding fathers of cultural Marxism understood that there were two areas of Western culture that were particularly vulnerable to attack: capitalism and sex. Influenced by Judeo/ Christian standards of morality and ethics, Western societies traditionally had emphasized sexual discipline and the patriarchal nuclear family as the bedrock of society. Humanistic



(L-R): Felix Weil, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno.

psychology, however, regarded sexual discipline as sexual repression, and as such it was deemed unnatural and unhealthy. Just as they exploited the excesses and vulnerabilities of capitalism, cultural Marxists also capitalized on the history of sexism in their critique of Western culture. As in virtually all societies throughout history, women in the West had generally been suppressed, oppressed, denied basic civil rights, and relegated to subordinate status. This was an area of social injustice that Critical Theorists

could easily use to discredit Western culture.

In Karl Marx’s *The German Ideology* (1845) and Friedrich Engels’ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), both men argued that traditional male patriarchy oppressed females by holding them as property of their fathers and husbands, and both advocated the abolition of the traditional family. But neither Marx nor Engels wanted to see women truly liberated; they simply wanted a sexual revolution in which women were released from marital contracts so they could be held in common by men.

A key component of Critical Theory was its integration of Marxism with Darwinism and Freudianism. Factoring Freud into the equation was controversial because he was generally held in low esteem by traditional Marxists who understood human psychology in terms of Pavlovian behaviorism. Philosophically, Freudianism was inherently counter-revolutionary in that it discounted the primacy of economics in human social evolution in favor of liberation through psychoanalysis and the release of libidinal impulses. Rather than a violent external revolution that immediately liberated the masses, the Freudian revolution was peaceful, deliberative, individual and internal. In traditional Marxist circles, Freudianism unduly complicated the sublime simplicity of the whole Marxist dialectic of history as class struggle.

But as proud and independent Marxist revisionists, the ISR scholars saw great potential in utilizing Freud as a useful ally in their efforts to undermine traditional Western values and culture. Like Freud, they considered sexual repression to be a hindrance to societal evolution. According to Horkheimer and others, bourgeois society is inherently sexually repressed, which is a major factor in neurosis and other forms of mental illness. They believed that a revolutionary, post-capitalist and post-Christian society could liberate humanity from this repression, so sexual liberation from the restrictions of a patriarchal society was a major theme in their ideology.

In this regard, the social psychologist **Eric Fromm** (1900-80) played a key role in the integration of Marx and Freud. Fromm contended that sexual orientation is merely a social construct, that there are no innate differences between men and women, and that sexuality and gender roles are socially determined. Furthermore, he argued that sexually-repressed societies discourage sexual experimentation and practices such as homosexuality due to manmade legal codes and moralistic taboos that are psychologically inhibiting and counter-productive. All this does is increase the angst-level in society and keep people in a perpetual state of frustration. [For more on Fromm, see the section at the end of this chapter on “The Apostles of P.C.”]

Along with Fromm, the psychoanalyst **Wilhelm Reich** (1897-1957) was an influential sex propagandist and one of the originators of “sexual politics.” In fact, it might be an understatement to say that Reich was obsessed with sex. Early in his career he wrote *The Function of the Orgasm* (1927) in which he proclaimed, “There is only one thing wrong with neurotic patients: the lack of full and repeated sexual satisfaction.” Therefore, he concluded, sexuality is an innate impulse that should be liberated from artificial and manmade moral restrictions. In his 1936 book, *The Sexual Revolution* (a term he invented to link the political revolution and sexual liberation), Reich argued that sexual repression was the underlying cause of most psycho/social pathologies. As Christopher Turner notes in “Wilhelm Reich: The Man Who Invented Free Love,” Reich managed to “create morality out of pleasure,” thereby allowing “radicals to view their promiscuity as political activism.”

[<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jul/08/wilhelm-reich-free-love-orgasmatron>.] Although an influential theorist in early left-wing sexual politics, Reich was so extreme that he soon lost credibility even among his doctrinaire Marxist colleagues. Shortly after publishing *The Sexual Revolution* he was expelled from both the International Psychoanalytical Association and the Communist Party for excessive crackpottery. [For more on Reich, see the section at the end of this chapter on “The Apostles of P.C.”]

In terms of long-range influence, the most significant Frankfurt School sex propagandist was the social theorist **Herbert Marcuse** (1898-1979). Like his ISR colleagues, Fromm and Reich, Marcuse understood that a true cultural revolution would include – along with political and economic transformation – sexual libertinism. In this regard, he called for the casting off of all traditional values and sexual restraints in favor of what he termed “polymorphous perversity.” Even the concept of marital love and fidelity was counter-revolutionary, according to Marcuse. Although cultural change was the ultimate goal, Marcuse understood the tactical appeal of the pleasure principle. In *Eros and Civilization* (1956) he sought to integrate Neo-Marxism with a kind of Neo-Freudianism in such a way as to turn the power of the libido into a revolutionary force. Like the radical French Jacobins a century-and-a-half earlier, Marcuse’s attitude was, “What good is a revolution without general copulation?”

Marcuse was particularly notable in another sense. In his 1965 essay, “Repressive Tolerance,” he essentially defined modern Political Correctness. According to Marcuse, freedom of speech and expression should be regulated in order to suppress “intolerant” conservative views and behavior in the interest of guaranteeing a more “fair” and “equitable” society. In his words: “Liberating tolerance would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.” For good reason, Marcuse came to be known as the “father of the New Left” in the 1960s, just as he is one of the progenitors of modern Political Correctness. [For more on Marcuse, see the section at the end of this chapter on “The Apostles of P.C.”]

American Neo-Marxism

The Columbia Connection

When Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in Germany in 1933, the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research was shut down “for tendencies hostile to the state” and most of its library confiscated. Horkheimer was one of the first scholars to be dismissed from Frankfurt University along with luminaries such as the theologian **Paul Tillich** and the psychologist **Karl Mannheim**. Seeing the proverbial handwriting on the wall, most of the Institute’s faculty and staff fled Germany, and the trustees considered reestablishing the school in Geneva, London or Paris. Significantly, they never considered seeking sanctuary in Stalin’s USSR, the only officially-Marxist regime in the world at the time. Horkheimer and his colleagues may have been sinister, but they weren’t stupid. They knew full-well that Stalin would never have tolerated their idiosyncratic Marxist revisionist theories.

In previous years the ISR had developed contacts with prominent Americans including the Marxist historian **Charles Beard**, the sociologist **Robert MacIver**, and the theologian **Reinhold Niebuhr**, all of whom were associated with Columbia University in New York City. When Horkheimer visited the U.S. in May, 1934, he was received by Columbia’s president, Nicholas Murray Butler. Much to Horkheimer’s surprise, Butler offered the ISR official affiliation with the university, including offices and classrooms in one of the university’s buildings. As Martin Jay recounts the story...

Horkheimer, fearing he had misunderstood Butler because of his limited command of English, wrote a four-page letter asking him to confirm and clarify his offer. Butler’s response was a laconic “You have understood me perfectly!” And so the International Institute for Social Research, as revolutionary and Marxist as it had appeared in Frankfurt in the 1920s, came to settle in the center of the capitalist world, New York City. [Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (1973, 1993), p. 39.]

With that, the Institute for Social Research was reestablished at Columbia University and became a haven for Frankfurt School refugees throughout the 1930s and until the end of World War II. In the foreword of the first issue of the Institute’s *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* published in America, Horkheimer acknowledged his and his colleagues’

good fortune, and the peace and security that the United States offered. In his words...

Philosophy, art, and science have lost their home in most of Europe. England is now fighting desperately against the domination of the totalitarian states. America, especially the United States, is the only continent in which the continuation of scientific life is possible. Within the framework of this country’s democratic institutions, culture still enjoys the freedom without which, we believe, it is unable to exist. [ibid., p. 167.]

The great irony, of course, was that while America was providing sanctuary to Horkheimer and his comrades, they were working to undermine the very traditions and democratic institutions that accorded them safety and security. Although Horkheimer portrayed the Institute as a non-political and “scientific” think-tank, he and his colleagues applied the same principles of Critical Theory they had developed in Germany to American society and culture as they focused on two priorities:

(1) A critique of German National Socialism (Nazism), which they disingenuously caricatured, along with Italian Fascism, as “right-wing” totalitarian ideologies. In the process, they linked Nazism and capitalism to the extent that Horkheimer declared that those who refrained from criticizing capitalism forfeited the right to criticize Nazism.

(2) A critique of American authoritarianism, including a withering attack on evils such as racism in American society and culture. Just as classism had traditionally been Europe’s most vulnerable point of attack, racism had been America’s most persistent problem. In the early 1920s Trotsky predicted that just as the oppressed proletariat constituted the revolutionary vanguard in classical Marxist thought, oppressed blacks could be mobilized as the shock troops for an American revolution. Although this was a stark departure from classical Marxist theory, Horkheimer and his colleagues were quick to realize the potential in this strategy.

In classical Marxism the proletariat class constituted the shock troops of the revolution who would overthrow the old order and ushering in the new. But in the 1930s labor unions had entered into collective bargaining agreements with management, and the material conditions in modern industrial societies such as the U.S. were such that the working

classes had been co-opted by the allure of materialism and the promise of a rising standards of living. As such, they were no longer suited for the revolutionary role, and Neo-Marxist theoreticians no longer felt bound exclusively to the interests of the proletariat. Instead, they were willing to ally with any and all “progressive” forces that were dedicated to the revolution.

As Horkheimer and his ISR associates settled into America in the 1930s, racial bigotry and discrimination were pervasive and blatant. The Frankfurt scholars viewed this problem as a golden opportunity, and they effectively exploited the situation in their efforts to forge a new revolutionary alliance of victims – i.e., blacks, Jews, and the traditional proletariat classes of factory workers, farmers and menial laborers – along with their sympathizers in academia, the media, and in the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). A standing joke among Greenwich Village Communists in the 1930s was this exchange between two Party members discussing an upcoming cell meeting: “You bring the Negro, and I’ll bring the folksinger.” They could have added: “And we’ll ask another comrade to bring the Jewish intellectual.”

All social and political systems are flawed, and all are deserving of serious examination and criticism. But there were two fundamental problems with Neo-Marxist Critical Theory: First, it is based on a seriously defective naturalistic worldview that, among other things, provides no philosophical basis for judging the morality or goodness of anything; and second, Critical Theory was exclusively a one-way street. While subjecting America and Western Europe to intense and withering criticism, Horkheimer and his colleagues were incredibly naive (or simply cowardly) when it came to the Soviet Union. In this respect they were guilty of employing an unconscionable double-standard. For example, while expressing outrage over racial bigotry in the United States, they found it excruciatingly difficult to criticize Stalin’s totalitarian dictatorship in the USSR. Even in the late 1930s, after Stalin had murdered millions of Soviet citizens in the Ukrainian Terror Famine and the various Purges, they remained virtually silent. As if on-cue, when asked about Communist atrocities and Soviet gulags, their typical talking-point response would be: “But what about the Negroes in the South?” – as if there were a

moral equivalency between the two.

When the Institute for Social Research relocated in America, it lost much of its funding. The costs associated with resettling and employing more than a dozen refugee scholars, along with poor investments in the stock market and disastrous real estate transactions, severely strained the Institute’s economic resources. [Yes, you read that right: the Neo-Marxist and anti-capitalist ISR invested heavily in the capitalistic system.] In fact, had it not been for the financial support the Institute received from the Rockefeller Foundation, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), the International Labour Organization, the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee, and the Hacker Institute (an upscale psychiatric clinic in Beverly Hills), the ISR would probably have ceased to exist.

With the coming of World War II, several associates of the ISR, including Herbert Marcuse, found employment in Washington, D.C. in government agencies such as the Board of Economic Warfare, the Office of War Information, and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS – the forerunner of the CIA). During the war most of the Institute’s members became American citizens. A small staff, headed by Leo Lowenthal and Friedrich Pollock, continued to operate out of the Institute’s New York office until June, 1944 when the building was turned over to the U.S. Navy. At that point the ISR was relocated in smaller offices in Columbia’s Low Memorial Library, and by 1949 the Institute was no longer associated with the university.

Shortly after the end of World War II Horkheimer was recruited by John J. McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, to return to Germany as part of the Allies’ “denazification” program. Horkheimer was put in charge of reforming German higher education, and he was joined in 1949 by his former ISR colleague, Theodor Adorno. Over the next several years they and their colleagues influenced the political culture in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and as professors at Frankfurt University they indoctrinated a whole new generation of German scholars in the ideology of Neo-Marxism – most notably the philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas. In 1951 they also succeeded in reestablishing the Institute for Social Research.

The Sixties

Throughout the 1950s dozens of scholars who had been associated with the Institute for Social Research obtained faculty positions in American universities. Of these, **Herbert Marcuse** emerged as the most influential. Through his teaching and writings, he became the key link between the Neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School and the American New Left movement of the 1960s.

The New Left incorporated the seminal ideas of Critical Theory in its critique of America as a fascist and repressive state. For left-wing activists in the Sixties, Critical Theory was far more appealing than classical Marxism for 3 reasons:

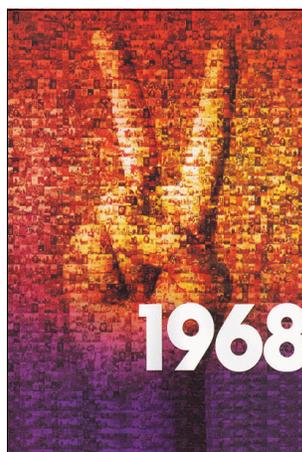
(1) It provided a comprehensive deconstruction of American culture as innately racist, sexist, imperialistic, and consumer-obsessed;

(2) It incorporated the arts and popular culture into the cultural revolution; and

(3) It celebrated sexual liberation and a rejection of traditional moral values.

The single most significant influence on the ideology of the New Left was Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, published in 1955. In the book, Marcuse argued that most of the angst and hang-ups and neuroses that young people feel are the result of sexual repression. The solution was a "non-repressive society" in which libertarian socialistic values prevailed – i.e, an egalitarian society in which individuals were free to pursue their own hedonistic impulses. Marcuse's call for sexual liberation and "polymorphous perversity" inspired popular Sixties' slogans such as "Do your own thing" and "If it feels good, do it," but he framed the erotic revolution in the larger context of a cultural and political revolution. In his words, "The fight for eros is a political fight." His hedonistic message stimulated both the egos and the libidos of many self-indulgent and rebellious youth in the Sixties, and such was his influence both in America and in Europe that during the student uprisings in France in May of 1968, activists carried signs that read, "Marx/Mao/Marcuse." [Note: In a rare denunciation of an individual, Pope Paul VI in 1969 criticized Marcuse, along with Freud, for promoting "disgusting and unbridled expressions of eroticism" and advocating "license cloaked as liberty." (Quoted in Michael J. Minnicino, "The New Dark Age," p. 27.)]

The 1960s was a tumultuous time in American history. Two of the most perceptive commentaries on the decade are William L. O'Neill's aptly-titled *Coming Apart* and Peter Collier and David Horowitz's *Destructive Generation*. As Richard Bernstein, a reporter for the *New York Times*, later noted in *Dictatorship of Virtue: Multiculturalism and the Battle for America's Future* (1993), "Thirty years ago, something shifted in the national mind." Bernstein might have added that thirty years earlier something also shifted in the *rational* mind that set the stage for the chaos to come. Beginning in 1960 with the founding of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the premier New Left student activist group of the Sixties, and continuing through the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1964, the emergence of the hippie drug scene and the counterculture movement in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district in 1965, the massive campus riots of the late Sixties, and then culminating with the Kent State killings in the spring



of 1970, American society and culture went through convulsions – the aftershocks of which still reverberate today.

Throughout the ordeal the left gradually gained strength and expanded its influence through the steady infiltration of higher education, the media and other key areas of influence in American public life. (In the Frankfurt School, this strategy of infiltration and cultural subversion was referred to as "the long march through the institutions" – a reference to Mao Zedong's Long March to eventual victory in the Chinese Civil War.) Throughout the 1960s, with the escalation of the Vietnam War, many college and university graduates enrolled in master's programs in hopes of evading the draft, and some of the most radical eventually earned Ph.D.'s with the intention of fundamentally transforming American society through the education system. (Of all the Ph.D. degrees granted by American universities in the 110 years between 1860 and 1970, half were granted in the 1960s.) Others opted to avoid the draft by enrolling in

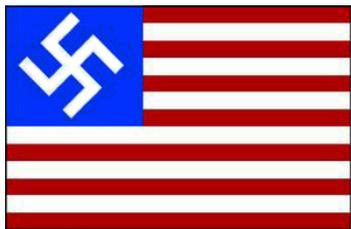
seminary and becoming ministers in liberal Protestant denominations or priests in the Roman Catholic Church.

By the mid-to-late 1970s many of these former student radicals were moving into positions as junior faculty and administrators, and by the early 1980s they were firmly entrenched in most universities and attaining tenure. Gradually, liberal arts faculties became more radical as Neo-Marxists began replacing older New Deal liberals who retired, and over time a rigid left-wing ideology prevailed in many departments. As Martin Jay has written, “it cannot be doubted that Critical Theory has achieved... a secure – perhaps ironically even a canonical – status as a central theoretical impulse in contemporary academic life.”

Likewise, just as former Sixties activists came to dominate in higher education, they moved into key positions of influence in the mainstream media – radio, television, and print media. As their cultural influence and power increased over time, they grew bolder and more aggressive. Borrowing a key tactic from Lenin and the cultural Marxists of an earlier age, liberals and radical leftists began labeling conservative opinions “politically incorrect.” The implication was that only liberal elitists truly understood the parameters of political orthodoxy, and any ideas outside these boundaries were dismissed as antiquated, ignorant, bigoted, insensitive, intolerant, hateful, and unjust. (Or as the argument is typically framed, conservative views are racist, sexist, classist, xenophobic, and homophobic.) As such, they are unworthy of serious discussion and should be banned from the public square.

Fascist Amerika

A basic premise of Neo-Marxist ideology is that traditional America is innately fascist – hence, the spelling of “Amerika” with a ‘k’ in left-wing propaganda. According to this theory, there is a latent



fascism in the American soul as a result of America’s heritage of capitalism, racism, sexism, imperialism and Christianity.

In the 1930s the Frankfurt School sponsored two psychoanalytical studies on the phenomenon of fascism in Germany: **Wilhelm Reich’s** *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933) and **Eric Fromm’s** *Studies on Authority and the Family* (1936). Based on respondents’ answers to a questionnaire, Fromm analyzed the German populace as “authoritarian,” “revolutionary,” or “ambivalent.” (Fromm borrowed these categories from J. J. Bachofen, the controversial 19th Century Swiss anthropologist who claimed that human societies were originally matriarchal.) From the results of his study, Fromm concluded that sado-masochism was the core characteristic of the authoritarian/fascist personality. Of course, the interpretation of the data was anything but unbiased or scientific as it was all filtered through a Neo-Marxist and Neo-Freudian values grid, but it did hold great potential in terms of its propagandistic value.

In 1942 the American Jewish Committee offered to fund a Department of Scientific Research within the ISR for the purpose of studying anti-Semitism in America. Max Horkheimer enthusiastically agreed to supervise the project, and over the next several years ISR scholars produced five volumes of research. The last and most extensive study of the subject was **Theodor Adorno’s** *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), in which he sought to verify statistically what he called “a new anthropological type” – the prototypical fascist as characterized by a particular set of conventional moral and cultural values. According to Adorno, these authoritarian traits, which are reinforced and nurtured through the traditional patriarchal family, contribute to certain character disorders that condition many Americans to accept fascism and socio/political repression.

The Authoritarian Personality promoted a view of psycho-politics based on Freud’s dubious theory of the unconscious. Despite such a scientifically-questionable foundation, Adorno argued passionately and with an air of authority. He was scathing in his contempt for conservatives and traditionalists, whom he argued were not merely wrong-headed but mentally disturbed. According to Adorno, the only mentally healthy person is the “genuine liberal” – fiercely independent, tolerant (except, of course, toward traditionalists), and committed to egalitarianism and “social justice” (as defined by the radical left).

In 1951 the political philosopher **Hannah Arendt** helped popularize the authoritarian personality thesis in her best-selling book, *Origins of Totalitarianism*. **Max Horkheimer** also weighed in on the issue in a 1950 essay entitled “**The Lessons of Fascism**,” in which he associated the authoritarian personality with a set of generalized character traits that included an acceptance of conventional values, respect for authority, “stereotypical thinking,” “a penchant for superstition” (i.e., religion), and “prejudice toward one’s opponents.” Naturally, he exempted himself and his colleagues from that last stereotype. [Note: In a follow-up article entitled “**Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease**,” written virtually on the eve of the “Doctor’s Plot” – Stalin’s last purge directed primarily against Jewish physicians in 1952-53 – Horkheimer noted with characteristic moral insight: “[A]t present, the only country where there does not seem to be any kind of anti-Semitism is Russia.”[!]

From a marketing standpoint, a major attraction of Adorno’s book was his construction of an “**F-Scale**” (Fascist-Scale) rating system based on nine personality variables incorporating several terms that are currently associated with Political Correctness. According to Adorno, the Fascist character type strongly identifies with the following traits:

- Conventionalism. Rigid adherence to conventional middle-class values.
- Authoritarian submission. A submissive and uncritical attitude toward authority figures.
- Authoritarian aggression. The inclination to apply or enforce conventional values on others.
- Anti-intraception. Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, or the intuitive.
- Superstition and stereotypy. The belief in the supernatural or mystical determinism, and the disposition to think in rigid categories (i.e., racial, ethnic and gender prejudice).
- Power and “toughness.” A preoccupation with dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader-follower; identification with power figures; exaggerated assertion of strength and toughness.
- Destructiveness and cynicism. Generalized hostility and the tendency to vilify others.
- Projectivity. “The disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world.” [I.e., a conspiratorial mindset.]

- Sex. An exaggerated concern with conventional sexual morality and a preoccupation with other people’s sexual practices [Source: Martin Jay, p. 243.]

Borrowing from Freud and Fromm, Adorno contended that the breeding ground for the “authoritarian syndrome” was the patriarchal family headed by a “stern and distant” father. In such scenarios, he argued, children repress their innate hostility while becoming passive/ aggressive, which produces serious mental disorders such as sado-masochism. By contrast, the families of mentally healthy children were more matriarchal, less conventional, less status-conscious, and less demanding. In such families the parents were loving and affectionate, but the mother, who was nurturing but also strong and independent, was clearly dominant.

According to Adorno, this explained why the fascist personality lacked empathy and compassion for others. Originally, he borrowed Fromm’s term to identify the antithesis of the authoritarian fascist – i.e., the principled and mentally-healthy “revolutionary.” However, by the time he finally published his study he referred to this alternative character type as a “liberal” or a “democrat” – terms that were considerably less controversial. According to Adorno, the prototypical liberal was an independent thinker who was committed to “progressive social change” and who, coincidentally, held the same values and bore the same characteristics as Adorno and his Neo-Marxist colleagues. Like many agenda-driven scholars, Adorno found himself in his research, which must have come as a pleasant surprise.

[Note: Many have pointed out the subjective and problematical nature of Adorno’s research as well as his simplistic caricature of conservatives. Yet despite the book’s unprovable hypothesis, his interpretive survey methodology became standard procedure in the social sciences. For substantive critiques of Adorno and his work, see Paul Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State* (Princeton University Press, 2001), and the notes accompanying Martin Jay’s *The Dialectical Imagination*. Particularly noteworthy are those who criticized Adorno’s political bias in the study. Edward Shils, for example, questioned why authoritarianism was associated with

Fascism alone and not Communism, and why was the F Scale not a 'C Scale' or a 'T Scale' (for Totalitarian)? Obviously, despite all their rhetoric about "toleration," leftists such as Adorno were every bit as biased and intolerant as the conservatives whom they despised. See Martin Jay, pp. 244-48.]

Adorno's thesis that America is innately fascist is transparently self-refuting. The very fact that radical leftists like him were free to propagate their views contradicts his argument. Simply put: if America were so racist, xenophobic and repressive as the left contends, why does it continue to attract hordes of immigrants, both legal and illegal, and why do virtually all those who come here legally and most who come here illegally choose to stay? The facts tend to speak for themselves, and in fact there is no country in the world where citizens in general, and racial and ethnic minorities in particular, enjoy more civil liberties, more opportunities, and a higher standard of living than in the United States.

Rather than support the Neo-Marxist thesis of Fascist Amerika, the evidence indicates that fascism and authoritarianism, such as Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist witch-hunt of the early 1950s, are anomalies in American history. As the former Sixties radicals Peter Collier and David Horowitz argue in *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts on the Sixties*, the McCarthy phenomenon and the Red Scare were merely a blip on the radar screen of American history.

The history of McCarthyism shows how alien the witch-hunt mentality is to the American spirit and how superficial its hold on the American psyche. Appearing in the extraordinary circumstances of the postwar period, McCarthyism was brief in its moment and limited in its consequences. And it was complete in the way it was purged from the body politic. The Wisconsin senator's strut on the stage ended in a crushing repudiation by his colleagues. [Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts on the Sixties*, p. 196]

From point of fact, as even the neo-Marxist M.I.T. professor, Noam Chomsky, has admitted, the whole Fascist Amerika line is a fabrication. As Chomsky concedes, the United States is "the greatest" and "the freest country in the world."

I don't just mean in terms of limits on state coercion, though that's true, too, but also in terms of individual relations. The United States comes

closest to classlessness in terms of interpersonal relations than virtually any society. ["Interview with Noam Chomsky and Bill Bennett," *American Morning with Paula Zahn*. CNN (May 30, 2002). Tim Adams, "Noam Chomsky: Thorn in America's Side." *The Observer* (10/30/2003).]

The Frankfurt School: A Post-Script

One obvious problem with Neo-Marxist Critical Theory is that it is entirely an open-ended strategy with no fixed point or realistic destination or standard of measurement. At what point does one find respite in the pursuit of utopian perfectionism? All human systems are flawed, and those seeking socio/political salvation in this world will never find satisfaction. Even the proponents of Critical Theory admitted that its truth-claims could not be assessed or critiqued, verified or falsified, by reference to the present order for the simple reason that the present order is hopelessly flawed. This requires a leap of faith that even Kierkegaard would have found foolishly presumptuous.

At times, even the Frankfurt School itself has been victimized by its own radical ideology. Early in 1969 Frankfurt University was temporarily shut down when student demonstrators called a general strike and seized control of several buildings. When students moved in to occupy the facility of the Frankfurt School, the Institute's directors, Ludwig von Friedeburg and Theodor Adorno, responded like contemptible bourgeois administrators had done elsewhere in Europe and America: they called for the police to expel the barbarians. Then, a couple of months later, several female protesters burst into a classroom where Adorno was lecturing and staged a symbolic protest, baring their breasts and fulminating about sexist oppression. Adorno was neither amused nor impressed, but for a brief moment he was subjected to the kind of incivility, harassment and street theater (or in this case, stage theater) that Neo-Marxists have sponsored and encouraged for decades.

The legacy of the Frankfurt School is a mixed bag. While conservatives are unanimous in their condemnation of the ISR for undermining traditional American values and institutions, liberals and leftists are more ambivalent. On the one hand, the Institute's brand of Marxist revisionism abandoned many of the revered dogmas of classical Marxism including the revolutionary potential of the working class, the class

struggle as the dynamic engine of history, and the economic substructure as the basis of social analysis. Perhaps most significantly, the ISR, consisting primarily of leisured intellectuals and tenured academics, severed the connection between revolutionary theory and *praxis* (or action). Yet in the 1950s more than 50 scholars associated with the ISR gained positions in American colleges and universities, and their influence helped spark the student uprisings of the 1960s and the radicalization of American higher education. And in light of present political realities, it is apparent that the impact of the Frankfurt School over the decades has been immense. Among its many powerful and influential ideological children, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are among the most notable.

For the Neo-Marxist historian Martin Jay, the primary contribution of the Frankfurt School was its preservation of the “integrity” of the Marxist ideal at a time when Stalinism threatened to delegitimize it. Most Christians and conservatives would consider that accomplishment alone to be the most damning indictment of the Frankfurt School.

Michael Minnicino offers a sober assessment of the impact of the Frankfurt School over the past seventy-five years, along with the only possible solution to reverse all the damage that has been done to Western culture. As he warns, if America and the West continue down the road to self-destruction, it could very well usher in a horrific new “Dark Age” in human history.

The principles through which Western Judeo-Christian civilization was built, are now no longer dominant in our society; they exist only as a kind of underground resistance movement. If that resistance is ultimately submerged, then the civilization will not survive – and in our era of pandemic disease and nuclear weapons, the collapse of Western civilization will very likely take the rest of the world with it to Hell.

The way out is to create a Renaissance. If that sounds grandiose, it is nonetheless what is needed. A renaissance means, to start again: to discard the evil, and inhuman, and just plain stupid, and to go back hundreds or thousands of years to the ideas which allow humanity to grow in freedom and goodness. Once we have identified those core beliefs, we can start to rebuild civilization. [Michael J. Minnicino, “The New Dark Age,” p. 27.]

In our current “post-Christian” society and culture, the answer is not to be found in politics or in any socio/political ideology. A new cultural Renaissance will dawn only in the wake of a great spiritual awakening that is unprecedented in its impact and scope. It is possible only if a critical mass of Christians resolutely adopt the necessary countercultural values, priorities and lifestyle reflective of the true Body of Christ here on earth. Correspondingly, it is possible only if a critical mass of people recover those self-evident universal moral and ethical truths inherent in Natural Law, resolve to live accordingly, and tolerate nothing less in others.

Ultimately, the Bible is emphatic that the culture war is merely the surface-level manifestation of a titanic struggle being waged in the spirit realm for the souls of millions of individuals for whom Christ died, both here in America and worldwide:

Ephesians 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Convergent Paths

Orwellian and Huxlian Socialism

In their book, *How Now Shall We Live?*, authors Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey contrast the dystopian predictions of **Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*** (published in 1932) with those of **George Orwell's *Nineteen Eight-Four*** (published in 1949). Both forecast a bleak future for human society, but they differed on how that society would be managed and manipulated by the ruling elite.

Orwell feared a brutal totalitarian-style system in which Big Brother exerted control over all aspects of its people's lives through direct coercion and intimidation. Huxley, on the other hand, foresaw a society that had been so compromised and corrupted by narcissism, materialism and hedonism that the people had voluntarily surrendered their freedoms for a life of ease, security, and immediate gratification. While Orwell warned of an oppressive regime that controlled the media and utilized propaganda to spread lies and suppress the truth, Huxley depicted a soft, self-absorbed, complacent, and entertainment-obsessed society in which no one *cared* about the truth.



George Orwell



Aldous Huxley

Whereas Orwell warned of an all-powerful and intrusive government that banned books and other kinds of free expression, Huxley forecast a softer and more seductive kind of tyranny in which the government wouldn't *need* to ban books or censor speech because no one *cared* about reading serious books or speaking out on political issues anymore. While Orwell predicted a society deprived of information by government-controlled censors, Huxley predicted a society over-saturated by

information from electronic media to the point that people lost the ability to process rationally what they saw and heard. And whereas Orwell described a world in which the government controlled people by inflicting pain, Huxley imagined a world where people were manipulated by their craving for pleasure, safety and security.

As Colson and Pearcey observe, "Both novels have proven to be uncannily accurate – Orwell describing the totalitarian plague of our century, Huxley the sickness of affluent free societies." Huxley was especially critical of civil libertarians who are always vigilantly on guard against an "externally imposed tyranny" but seem oblivious to the fact that people in prosperous Western societies are particularly vulnerable to being manipulated by the mindless distractions of modern technology. (This is a theme that the French philosopher and sociologist Jacques Ellul commented on extensively in many of his works, most notably in *The Technological Society*.) More specifically, Colson and Pearcey remark that "nowhere is the appetite for distraction more seductively tantalized by the banal, mindless entertainment of pop culture than in America." [See Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* Tyndale House Publishers (1999), pp. 468-69.]

The Neo-Marxism that the Frankfurt School promoted is certainly a kinder and gentler form of Marxism that avoids the kind of violent revolution that classical Marxism sanctioned, but both ideologies share a similar goal: a radical socialist society in which government controls the economy as well as the public lives of its citizens. In that respect, Neo-Marxism is merely a more gradual and a more subtle means to the same end. Posing as democratic, egalitarian and tolerant, in fact it is committed ultimately to the destruction of traditional American values and ideals – including the principles of economic freedom and basic civil liberties such as a freedom of speech, freedom of information, and freedom of religion.

Recent American history seems to support Huxley's thesis that we have more to fear from cultural seduction and the pitfalls of prosperity than from outright government tyranny, but a Huxlian society can so weaken the social and moral fabric as to set the stage for the ultimate Orwellian nightmare. In fact, that very scenario appears to be playing out at the

present time as Uncle Sam is being transformed into Doctor Sam and eventually, one fears, into Big Brother Sam.

These are chilling prospects, but they are the inevitable products of the process of the secularization of Western (and American) culture that have been in effect since the dawn of the Enlightenment and were first manifest in the tragedy that was the French Revolution. The tide of secularism has ebbed and flowed over the past two centuries, but over time there has been an obvious and undeniable erosion of traditional Judeo/ Christian values and ethics. In his book, *The Thirties*, Malcolm Muggeridge commented on the collective damage to Western civilization wrought by secular idealists from Voltaire and Rousseau in the 1700s to 20th Century theoreticians such as Margaret Sanger and John Dewey. As Muggeridge observed...

We are living in a nightmare precisely because we have tried to set up an earthly paradise. We have believed in "progress." Trusted to human leadership, rendered unto Caesar the things that are God's.... There is no wisdom except in the fear of God; but no one fears God; therefore there is no wisdom. Man's history reduces itself to the rise and fall of material civilizations, one Tower of Babel after another... downwards into abysses which are horrible to contemplate.

Neo-Marxism and Popular Culture

Red Channels

In Martin Jay's book, *The Dialectical Imagination*, the chapter on "Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture" is particularly insightful and relevant given the Institute for Social Research's influence on popular culture since the 1940s.

Before the 20th Century the distinction between "art" and "entertainment" was more pronounced (just as the line between journalistic news and entertainment was more clearly defined before the advent of TV cable news). As generally understood, the appreciation of fine art required a greater level of background knowledge and focused concentration than did popular entertainment, and its purpose was to inspire, enlighten, and elevate the human soul. With the invention of motion pictures, recorded music, radio and television, these remarkable new technologies had the potential to bring the great works of art to millions of people who otherwise would never have had access to them. Conversely, these media could also pander to the lowest common denominator. And as Neo-Marxist theoreticians realized early on, they could also be exploited with great effect to dull people's sensitivities and reprogram their thinking for propagandistic purposes and, ultimately, for social control.

Of course, much of popular culture, including most music, movies, television, etc., is merely crass entertainment, and as such much of it is trivial, banal and inconsequential – except for the fact that it reflects the feelings and the shallow thinking of so many people. Nonetheless, some popular entertainment is truly significant, and its cumulative effect can be substantial. Many political leftists understood this from the outset, which is why they were eager to use these fascinating new communications industries to promote their agenda. As an example, Theodore Adorno predicted in 1944 that "Television aims at the synthesis of radio and film,... [and] its consequences will be quite enormous."

In 1941 Max Horkheimer and Adorno left New York City and relocated to Pacific Palisades near Santa Monica, California, where they joined other German leftists such as the playwright Bertolt Brecht and the composer Arnold Schoenberg. Unfortunately,

no substantive accounts have been written that explore their Hollywood connections during these years or their influence in the movie and TV industries. But as early as 1938 the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) had released a report claiming that many Communists were involved in the entertainment industry.

In 1947, at the outset of the post-war “Red Scare,” HUAC convened hearings and subpoenaed more than forty writers, directors, actors and producers. Before the interrogations began, Walt Disney testified that the threat of Communists in the film industry was indeed serious, and he even named specific people whom he suspected of being Communists. Disney was then followed by Ronald Reagan, president of the Screen Actors Guild, who accused some within his union of using “communist-like tactics” in an attempt to control union policies. Subsequently, ten of those called before the committee refused to testify and were cited for contempt of Congress. These were the infamous “Hollywood Ten,” and all were given one-year prison sentences and officially blacklisted by TV and movie executives.

In 1950 a pamphlet entitled *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*, published by the conservative business newsletter, *Counterattack*, named 151 entertainment industry professionals as “Red Fascists” (i.e., past or present members of the Communist Party U.S.A.) or Communist sympathizers.* Many of those named, along with a growing list of others, were barred from employment in the media and the entertainment industry for a number of years. One

* Among those listed in *Red Channels* were **Langston Hughes** (writer), **Lillian Hellman** (author and playwright), **Orson Welles** (author, writer and director), **Arthur Miller** (playwright and a husband of Marilyn Monroe), **Leonard Bernstein** (composer), **Aaron Copland** (composer), **Edward G. Robinson** (actor), **Will Geer** (actor), **Lee J. Cobb** (actor), **Paul Robeson** (singer and actor), **Lena Horne** (singer and actor), **Artie Shaw** (musician), **Alan Lomax** (folklorist and musicologist), and **Pete Seeger** (folk singer).

Among those later blacklisted as Communists or Red-sympathizers were **Charlie Chaplin** (actor, director and producer), **Richard Attenborough** (actor, producer and director), and **Harry Belafonte** (singer).

of the most notable was the singer/songwriter Pete Seeger, who was kept off television for twenty years until he was finally invited to perform on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in 1967. With characteristic defiance, Seeger sang an anti-war song, “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy,” dedicated to President

Johnson. [Note: For an eccentric satire on the Communist involvement in Hollywood, see the 2016 motion-picture, *Hail Caesar!*]



The Music Front

Social observers have long recognized the power of song. In *Republic*, Plato urged the philosopher/ kings in his ideal society to carefully control the style and the content of the music in their culture. Plato realized the power and potential of music in terms of its influence and impact on a people’s values and ideals, and like the Neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School he understood that culture drives politics, not vice-versa. As the novelist John Steinbeck once noted, popular music expresses the most fundamental values and beliefs of a people and constitutes their “sharpest statement” about who and what they are. According to Steinbeck, we can learn more about a society by listening to its songs than by any other means of observation, since “into the songs go all their hopes and hurts, the anger, fears, the wants and aspirations.” Leo Lowenthal, a Neo-Marxist German sociologist who was associated with the Frankfurt School, expressed the same idea when he wrote that “mass culture is psychoanalysis in reverse.”

Popular culture, including music, has always functioned as a kind of social barometer, and throughout history the significant issues and events of the day have often been expressed through the medium of music. From the stirring broadside ballads of the Revolutionary era to the campfire sing-alongs of the Civil War, from Joe Hill’s radical labor anthems of the early 20th century to the Depression-era Dust Bowl ballads of Woody Guthrie, from the folk and rock socio/political commentaries of the 1960s to the



nihilistic rantings of contemporary punk and rap, popular music has often expressed the *Zeitgeist* – the spirit of the times. Throughout the 20th century hundreds of popular songs functioned essentially as socio/political musical editorials, and although most were quickly forgotten and left little lasting impression, some were quite profound and undeniably influential.

[Note: Before the advent of the phonograph, the radio, and the mass marketing of music, popular music was indistinguishable from folk music in that one generation’s popular songs became the folk songs of succeeding generations. It wasn’t until the early 1900s, with the evolution of a commercial music industry, that popular music became a distinct category from folk music.]

Prior to the 20th Century social protest songs often disguised their messages, such as in the Mother Goose rhymes. However, with the coalescence of several different reform movements in the early 1900s, socio/political protest music became more open and explicit. In particular, the radical left-wing of the labor movement, as characterized by the Marxist-oriented Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), utilized music to rally the troops and advance its agenda. Labor anthems, such as those composed by songwriters such as Joe Hill, contained sharp and explicit lyrics and were sung with revivalistic fervor by the union faithful.

Since popular music echoes the spirit of the times, socio/political message songs tend to proliferate particularly during times of crisis and turmoil. This was certainly the case during World War I when Tin Pan Alley songwriters churned out scores of topical songs related to the war – everything from the anti-war songs related to the war – everything from the anti-war “I Didn’t Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier”

to flag-waving anthems such as “Over There” and social commentaries like “How Ya Gonna Keep ‘em Down on the Farm (After They’ve Seen Pree)?” During the raucous and prosperous Roaring Twenties few serious topical songs were written and recorded, but following the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression there was once again a flurry of socially-relevant musical commentaries. Many of these songs, such as “Happy Days Are Here Again” and “There’s No Depression In Love,” were slick and jazzy productions designed to revive the flagging spirits of the American people, while others dealt more seriously with social realities such as “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” “Hobo’s Lullaby,” and many of Woody Guthrie’s topical ballads.

Likewise, World War II inspired scores of songs that expressed the mood of the times – everything from Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America,” “Remember Pearl Harbor” and “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition” to Johnny Mercer’s “G.I. Jive,” The Andrews Sisters’ “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” The Murphy Sisters’ “You’re a Sap, Mister Jap,” Spike Jones’ “Der Fuhrer’s Face,” and Peggy Lee’s “Waiting For the Train To Come In.” In the relatively placid Fifties, however, pop music once again retreated into total banality. Few songs dealt with themes other than romance (e.g., Elvis Presley’s “Love Me, Tender,” Pat Boone’s “Love Letters In the Sand,” etc.) or teenage hedonism (Bill Haley & the Comets’ “Rock Around the Clock,” Chuck Berry’s “Sweet Little Sixteen,” etc.). Then, the chaotic Sixties once again generated a great outpouring of socio/political songs. But unlike the past, this time counter-cultural themes dominated the music, and the lyrics tended to be overwhelmingly critical of mainstream American lifestyles and values.

Since the Sixties popular music in general has become considerably more cynical and sexual. Much of it is an outright celebration of decadence, and the glorification of sex, drugs, violence, irresponsible hedonism and mindless materialism is certainly disturbing. If Britney Spears, Madonna, Eminem, Lady Gaga, the hip-hoppers and the gangsta rappers speak for a critical mass of young people today, this is truly alarming. And although most of this music is not overtly political, the very fact that these people are pop culture icons is a damning indictment of both the aesthetic and the moral state of our culture.

Many wonder why so much popular music is so ugly, so degenerate, so sexualized, so obscene, and so fixated on drugs and violence. Since all art is an expression of philosophy and values, much of the problem is due to the insidious



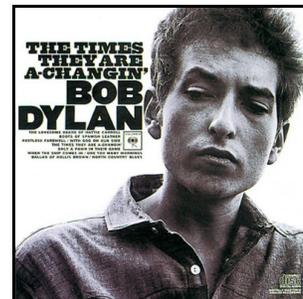
influence of nihilism and postmodernism on contemporary American culture. But some of it directly reflects a Neo-Marxist political ideology as well. To radical left-wing social critics, the reason why so much modern art expresses such rage and dissatisfaction is because it reflects the realities of living in a repressive and oppressive society under the heavy yoke of capitalist exploitation and traditional Christian-influenced moral values.

Cultural Marxists argue that all of life is a struggle against the stultifying forces of authoritarian fascism. Originally, classical Marxism focused narrowly on economic oppression and class conflict, but by the 1930s Neo-Marxists began to widen the scope of their cultural critique to include a broader range of social and psychological factors, especially as they related to two issues: sexual liberation and social justice as it related to the plight of the oppressed – i.e., marginalized minorities and others who were victims of the bourgeois social order. The victim class included, in particular, low-income workers, racial minorities, radical feminists, homosexuals, and non-Christians in general. Therefore, it was within the context of their Neo-Marxist Critical Theory that they advocated the politicization of the arts as part of a full-scale assault on Western culture.

Among cultural Marxists there have been two competing theories regarding the proper role of revolutionary art. The first approach, which Lenin endorsed and which has always been the most common, focuses on content (or substance) over style (or structure). In this approach, art serves as a form of “agitprop” (agitation/propaganda), and it emphasizes overtly social and political messages. However, these messages may be either relatively mild and virtually subliminal or direct and confrontational. Examples of the former would include many of the protest songs of

the early Sixties such as Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind,” Pete Seeger’s “If I Had a Hammer” and “Where Have All the Flowers Gone,” and Phil Ochs’ “Power and the Glory.” By the mid-Sixties, though, much of the protest music became more explicit and aggressive as characterized by songs such as Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-changin’,” Barry McGuire’s “Eve of Destruction,” The Beatles’ “Revolution,” or “I Feel Like I’m-Fixin’ -To-Die Rag” by Country Joe & the Fish.

The alternative theory of revolutionary art emphasizes form rather than content, and the message has more to do with style than content. This approach has been incorporated into various types of avant-garde music



such as atonal free form jazz (most notably, the music of John Cage), the extended guitar “freak-outs” that were popular among some rock bands in the Sixties, and in recordings such as John Lennon’s bizarre “Revolution No. 9” on The Beatles’ *White Album*. More recently, genres such as rap, hip-hop, punk rock and heavy metal typically emphasize form over content. In much of this music the lyrics are vague, inarticulate or even unintelligible, but the mood is obviously angry, aggressive and anti-social. In such music, form trumps content to the point that, to borrow Marshall McLuhan’s famous dictum, the medium *is* the message. Despite the lack of any clearly articulated or intelligible message, such music can function as a potent expression of socio/political protest.

Theodor Adorno, one of the left’s most prominent cultural analysts, was a staunch advocate of the form-over-content theory. Adorno began his academic career as a music critic, and as a doctrinaire Marxist he had a peculiar take on music as a political statement. He was contemptuous of popular culture in general, which he regarded as bourgeois, frivolous and counter-revolutionary, and as a musicologist he was particularly scornful of popular music, which he considered trivial, insipid and banal (which of course most of it was – and always has been). As an early proponent of postmodernism, Adorno believed that “truth” and “morality” are completely relative to the

historical circumstances that work unconsciously on the artist himself. In his article, “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and Political Correctness,” Michael Minnicino describes Adorno’s quixotic relativism as it derived from the Marxist theory of dialectical materialism:

[T]he artist does not consciously create works in order to uplift society, but instead unconsciously transmits the ideological assumptions of the culture into which he was born. The issue is no longer what is universally true, but what can be plausibly interpreted by the self-appointed guardians of the *Zeitgeist*. [Michael J. Minnicino, “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and ‘Political Correctness’.” *Fidelio*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1992), p. 10.]

For Adorno, then, the great challenge for the socially-conscious artist in the midst of an unjust, ugly and exploitative capitalistic culture is to expose the phoniness and utter bankruptcy of such a culture and thereby increase the level of discontent and alienation among the masses. This requires new cultural expressions that will increase this sense of frustration, anger and rebellion. [Note: If this brings to mind distortionistic modern art and sterile cubist architecture – along with heavy metal, punk rock, rap and hip-hop music – then the reader is on the right track.]

Adorno was more than just a cultural elitist, and he held a radical view of art and culture that few found palatable. According to him, since modern bourgeois culture is intrinsically “repressive” and “conformist,” art could only be “authentic” if it were non-commercial, dissonant and alienating – in other words, if it was atonal. Therefore, any art form such as music that conveys joy or contentment or harmony is at best an expression of ignorance or at worst an endorsement of the fascist authoritarian status quo. Declaring that “defiance of society includes defiance of its language,” Adorno might also have added that defiance of society includes not only the rejection of its traditional values but its art forms as well. As he stated, “We interpret [art] as a kind of code language for processes taking place within society, which must be deciphered by means of critical analysis.” Therefore, the true purpose of music and every other modern art form should be to subvert anything inspiring and uplifting so as to thwart any transcendent spiritual inclinations, leaving the only

creative option to be what the Neo-Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht called the “estrangement effect.”

According to Adorno, until current social and political contradictions are reconciled to the Marxist conception of “social justice,” art must always reflect the current state of dissonance and alienation. For Adorno, everything is political, and since bourgeois capitalistic society is innately discordant and repressive, the only legitimately authentic music is that which avoids commercialism and “spurious harmony” and expresses the “contradictions” of modern life. Furthermore, he reasoned, just as true artistic creativity is determined by social factors, so too is people’s subjective appreciation of art. This is why popular culture, including virtually all popular music, tends to be so deplorably vacuous: it expresses bourgeois values and the unsophisticated tastes of the masses, who are the psychologically- and culturally-stifled products of a bourgeois capitalistic system and its propaganda. The People have to be liberated from such constraints, and Adorno believed this could be accomplished in part through true art and true music – which in the current social context must be revolutionary, countercultural, and discordant. In his words:

A successful work [of art]... is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure....

Art... always was, and is, a force of protest of the humane against the pressure of domineering institutions, religious and otherwise.... [Quoted in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 179]

[Note: Marxism has long been recognized as a kind of surrogate religion in the sense that it puts forth a grand historical metanarrative, and its fundamental doctrines cover everything from atheistic naturalism and a secular philosophy of human nature to theories related to dialectical materialism, class warfare and violent revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the eventual emergence of a utopian classless society. Like Christians, Marxists reject the popular notion of “Art for art’s sake” – the idea that art should merely be an expression of the individual creativity of the artist him/herself. From point of fact, Marxists understand that art is in no way values-free or values-

neutral. Wittingly or not, all art expresses the beliefs and ideals of its creators, and the concept of artistic “creative freedom” is in many respects illusory. Unlike Christians, however, Marxists are strict determinists who believe that sociological factors alone *determine* who and what we are. Conversely, Christians don’t deny that society and culture can *influence* (or *condition*) our character and values, but human beings still have a measure of free choice as a result of being created in the *Imago Dei* – the image of God. Still, like Christians, Marxists believe that the ultimate goal of art is to serve a higher and transcendent purpose. It is not merely about individual self-expression but a reflection of ultimate truth and reality.]

For Adorno, even modern jazz, which many conservatives feared was promoting sensuality and undermining traditional morality, should be rejected as just another commercial commodity. Observing that it served primarily as dance or ambient background music, he challenged the claim that jazz could be used to advance the revolutionary agenda. In fact, he argued, rather than promoting dissonance and alienation, jazz music actually mitigated it by reconciling the alienated individual with mainstream culture.

Prior to Adorno, most criticism of popular culture came from social conservatives. Now, however, it was attacked as a tool of the status quo that pacified the masses and diverted their attention away from all the oppression, repression and social injustice inherent in American culture. As such, it was part of a massive bourgeois capitalist conspiracy. The historian Martin Jay explains:

The Frankfurt School disliked mass culture, not because it was democratic, but precisely because it was not.... The culture industry administered a nonspontaneous [and] phony culture rather than the real thing. The old distinction between high and low culture had all but vanished in the ‘stylized barbarism’ of mass culture.... The subliminal message of almost all that passed for art was conformity and resignation.

Increasingly, the Institute came to feel that the culture industry enslaved men in far more subtle and effective ways than the crude methods of domination practiced in earlier eras. The false harmony [promoted in popular culture] was in some ways more sinister than the clash of social

contradictions, because of its ability to lull its victims into passive acceptance.... Moreover, the spread of technology served the culture industry in America just as it helped tighten the control of authoritarian governments in Europe. Radio, Horkheimer and Adorno argued, was to fascism as the printing press had been to the Reformation.... [Ibid, pp. 216-17]

In his study of the Frankfurt School, Jay concludes that the Institute’s greatest impact on American intellectual life was its critique of mass culture along with its analysis of American authoritarianism (see the previous section, “Fascist Amerika”). But Adorno’s philosophy of culture and music was too extreme even for many of his Neo-Marxist colleagues, some of whom challenged his basic assumptions. **Walter Benjamin**, Adorno’s colleague and a notable philosopher and essayist, expressed the more orthodox Marxist view that came to prevail among most left-wing social critics. Unlike Adorno, Benjamin recognized the immense potential of agitprop commercial entertainment, and he contended that popular music could be a potent political weapon in the culture war in terms of undermining traditional values, radicalizing the masses and transforming culture. Adorno was unconvinced, and argued that any such attempts to correlate commercial popular music with “socialist realism” only succeeded in promoting the kind of “premature harmony” that was counter-revolutionary.

Most left-wing artists took Benjamin’s view because Adorno’s more radical critique essentially eliminated any audience for their art. In this regard Bertolt Brecht was particularly significant in his utilization of the theater as a political forum to explore what he called “the critical aesthetics of dialectical materialism.” Brecht inspired a whole new generation of Marxist artists and entertainers, and his influence was particularly significant in films and the theater. Meanwhile in America, perhaps the most successful and influential propagandist for the Marxist cause was the actor and movie producer, **Charlie Chaplin**, whose comic genius in films such as *Modern Times* and *The Great Dictator* skillfully and subtly promoted the left-wing agenda.

Adorno’s eccentric views aside, many Marxists understood intuitively the power of politicized music as a social and cultural force. As noted earlier, the



Charlie Chaplin

IWW was a radical Marxist labor union in the early 1900s that included a fragile and volatile coalition of Communists, socialists and anarchists. According to its Manifesto, the union was founded on “the class struggle” and “the irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class,” and its motto proclaimed, “The final aim is revolution.” IWW rallies often resembled religious revivals with stirring, emotional speeches and a lot of passionate group singing. Songwriters converted scores of well-known church hymns and traditional folk tunes into labor anthems such as Laura Payne Emerson’s “Industrial Workers of the World” (sung to the tune of “Wabash Cannonball”), Joe Hill’s “There Is Power In a Union (tune: “There Is Power In the Blood”), Ralph Cheney’s “Onward, One Big Union” (tune: “Onward, Christian Soldiers”), and G. G. Allen’s “One Big Industrial Union” (tune: “Marching Through Georgia”). The IWW even published its own hymnal of sorts, the *Little Red Songbook*, featuring the most popular of all labor anthems, Ralph Chaplin’s “Solidarity Forever,” (sung to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic”) – one verse of which proclaims:

*They [the capitalists] have taken untold millions
That they never toiled to earn
But without our brain and muscle
Not a single wheel can turn
We can break their haughty power
Gain our freedom when we learn
That the union makes us strong.*

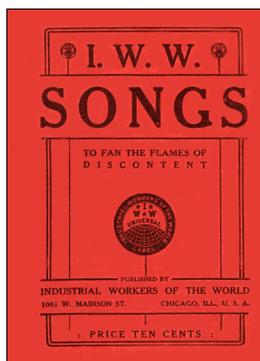
(CHORUS)

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

For the union makes us strong!



[Note: Like the Socialist Party in America, the Communist Party USA and other far left groups, the IWW was constantly racked by internal sectarian disputes and power struggles. During World War I it lost most of its members due to its militant anti-war position, and many of its leaders were charged with treason and sent to prison. “Big Bill” Haywood, the public face of the union, evaded prison by fleeing to the USSR, where he was treated as a celebrity by Lenin’s regime. When he died in 1928, Haywood was buried in the Kremlin – one of only two Americans so honored. In its short but colorful history the IWW produced quite a few memorable characters including the firebrand agitators **Elizabeth Gurley Flynn** and **John Reed** (featured in the 1982 movie, *Reds*), along with **Joe Hill**, America’s first notable left-wing protest singer/songwriter.]

In 1914, on the eve before he was scheduled to be hanged, Joe Hill explained his motivation for writing socio/political protest songs:

A pamphlet, no matter how good, is never read more than once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over. I maintain that if a person can put a few cold, common sense facts into a song, and dress them up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them, he will succeed in reaching a great number of workers who are too unintelligent or too indifferent to read a pamphlet or an editorial.



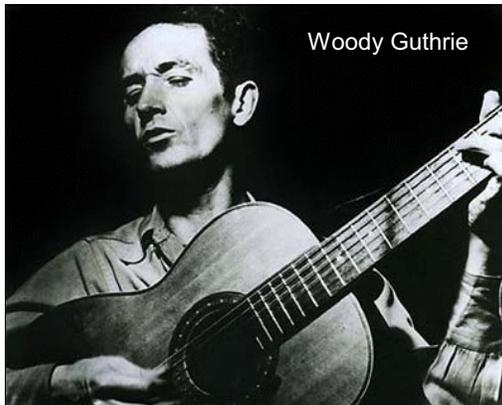
Joe Hill

[Note: Joe Hill was a Swedish immigrant and a professional provocateur who, according to American left-wing lore, was hanged by local authorities for his courageous stand against injustice on behalf of the downtrodden working class. From point of fact, he was executed for murdering two men. At the 1969 Woodstock music festival, folk balladeer Joan Baez momentarily resurrected the dormant memory of this early working class hero with her lilting rendition of “Joe Hill,” but few in the crowd had a clue who she was singing about.]

Left-wing protest music was not a factor in American popular music during the Roaring Twenties, but with the coming of the Great Depression dozens of

songs related to the times were played on the radio and became hits. Some American leftists, along with their European counterparts such as Theodor Adorno, considered all commercial popular music to be bourgeois and counter-revolutionary, but others saw great potential in exploiting the medium for propaganda purposes. Still, American Communists generally looked at popular music with suspicion if not outright contempt. Popular music was mostly Broadway show tunes, formulaic Tin Pan Alley love songs or hyper-kinetic jazz, and most doctrinaire Marxists dismissed the commercial music industry as just another capitalistic scam operation.

Instead, the American left preferred the socio/political folk-style music of performers such as **Woody Guthrie**, **Pete Seeger**, and the **Almanac Singers**. In their minds, folk music was the music of “The People” and therefore an “authentic” art form. Operating outside the commercial music industry, it was intrinsically a protest against capitalism. Furthermore, politicized folk music avoided the kind of “spurious harmony” – both thematically and musically – that hardcore Neo-Marxists like Adorno detested. Unlike slick commercial jazz and sentimentalistic love ballads sung by professional crooners, folk music was plain and unadorned. It featured simple instrumentation, and songs were sung (or in many cases, croaked, howled, wheezed, whined, growled or rasped) in a down-home style by singers with gloriously untrained voices. The “beauty” of the song was the message rather than the melody, the instrumentation or the vocals. Therefore, a warbler like Woody Guthrie could be hailed as a great singer and musician when in fact he could not have sounded worse if he’d been born without vocal cords. Nor would his guitar-playing have suffered much had he been born with webbed fingers.



The folk song genre remained the preferred and officially-sanctioned medium for the music of “the People” into the 1960s as determined by the Greenwich Village leftist elites who published *Sing Out!* and *Broadside* magazines, and it was within this subculture that the young music phenom, **Bob Dylan**, mastered the genre and wrote some of the defining protest songs of the early Sixties such as “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Masters of War,” “A Hard Rain’s A-gonna Fall,” and “The Times They Are A-changin’.”



Pete Seeger

But Dylan soon grew tired of acoustic folk music because he found it too restrictive, and when he formed a rock band and went electric, folk purists such as Pete Seeger went ballistic. For Seeger and other left-wing purists, authentic political music *was* folk music, and they regarded Dylan as a commercial sell-out to the capitalistic music industry. This opinion didn’t last long, however, as other acoustic folk artists such as Paul Simon, Phil Ochs, and Joni Mitchell also eventually branched out from the strict confines of traditional folk music.



By the late 1960s left-wing themes and influences had thoroughly infiltrated American pop culture in music, movies, the theater, literature, and even TV. As Walter Benjamin had foreseen, a Neo-Marxist agenda could very effectively be communicated to mass

audiences through mass marketing and new technologies. If the ultimate goal was cultural infiltration and social change, concessions had to be made to the realities of contemporary lifestyles. In fact, being almost entirely consumer-driven and virtually devoid of quality control standards, there was not a medium more open and susceptible to left-wing propaganda than popular culture. Yet in subsequent decades a unique synthesis emerged, particularly in the field of popular music. Beginning with acid-rock and heavy metal, followed by the violent and nihilistic rantings of punk rock, rap and hip-hop, ugly music became normative as it was comfortably integrated into the mainstream pop music industry. As Michael Minnicino observed in his article, “The New Dark Age,” the disparate strategies for cultural subversion advocated by Benjamin and Adorno, which on the surface seem utterly contradictory, actually represent the coordination of “almost the entire theoretical basis of all the politically correct aesthetic trends which now plague our [society].” Remarkably, and regrettably, this has been an integral part of the whole Neo-Marxist agenda: the startling success of their sick and sinister subversion of American culture.

The Apostles of PC

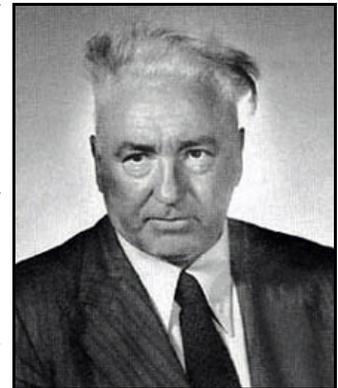
A Left-wing Rogues’ Gallery

The following are short biographical sketches of six of the most significant and influential theorists in the history of American cultural Marxism: Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, and Paul Goodman. The first four were Germans with direct connections to the Frankfurt School, while the last two were Americans whose works influenced the counterculture and the New Left in the 1960s and established the philosophical basis for contemporary Political Correctness.

Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957)

In the early years of the Institute for Social Research, Wilhelm Reich was an influential psychoanalyst and one of foremost proponents of sexual politics. Both from his writings and personal life, it is evident that Reich was absolutely obsessed with sex. In his book, *The Sexual Revolution* (1936), he argued that the greatest threat to mental health was sexual repression.

Reich laid much of the blame for sexual repression on “familial imperialism” perpetuated through the authoritarian structure of the traditional family. In fact, according to him, “familial imperialism” was the root cause of “national imperialism,”



including fascism. The solution, as he argued in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), was to replace the traditional patriarchal family with a matriarchal model, which he regarded as the “natural” order of things. As he put it...

The authoritarian family is the authoritarian state in miniature. Man’s authoritarian character structure is basically produced by the embedding of sexual inhibitions and fear in the living substance of sexual impulses. Familial imperialism is ideologically reproduced in national imperialism.... The authoritarian family... is a factory where reactionary ideology and reactionary structures are produced. [Quoted by Raymond V. Raehn in “The Historical Roots

of 'Political Correctness,' in William S. Lind, *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. www.freecongress.org/

This was all part of a comprehensive sexual revolution that would liberate mankind by promoting every conceivable variation on sexual behavior, including homosexuality, in the interest of a more free, "natural" and "healthy" society. If all of this sounds suspiciously similar to the sexual propaganda later spouted by the likes of Alfred Kinsey and Hugh Hefner, it should. Most all of the sex propagandists of the 1950s, '60s and '70s were influenced by Reich and Fromm. And of course, legalized abortion was also an integral part of the mix, that being necessary in order to deal with the unwanted consequences of the Sexual Revolution. (According to his biographers, at least four of Reich's sexual partners over the years had abortions.)

In 1947 *Harper's* magazine featured Reich in an article, introducing him to mainstream America as the leader of "a new cult of sex and anarchy." The great attraction, of course – other than the obvious fact that it appeals to our base instincts – was the pseudo-scientific basis for it. Years later in 1964, as an article on Reich in *Time* magazine observed, "Gradually, the belief spread that repression, not licence, was the great evil, and that sexual matters belonged in the realm of science, not morals."

Reich's aggressive advocacy of sexual politics was too extreme even for most of his fellow-radicals at the time. By the mid-1930s he had been expelled from both the International Psychoanalytical Association and the Communist Party for his crackpot theories. In 1939 he emigrated to America, and three years later he founded the Orgone Society, an organization that advocated free sex and mental health through "the power of the orgasm." It was also during this time that he invented the Orgone Energy Accumulator, a wooden cupboard about the size of a telephone booth that was lined with metal and insulated with steel wool. According to Reich, the OEA (or "Orgasmatron," as Woody Allen later dubbed it in his 1973 satirical sci-fi film, *Sleeper*) collected and charged up the body with the primal "life force" of the universe, which Reich associated with what most people call "God." A charismatic self-promoter, Reich claimed that his OEA could not only dissolve psychosexual repressions but cure cancer. He even persuaded

Albert Einstein to check out the machine, hoping to gain his endorsement. (After two weeks of testing, Einstein concluded that it was a hoax.) Nonetheless, Reich managed to manufacture and sell variations on the Orgone Accumulator over the next dozen or so years, and its users included a veritable Who's Who of the 1950s counterculture and radical left, including Norman Mailer, J. D. Salinger, Henry Miller, Saul Bellow, Paul Goodman, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs. Even "James Bond" (Sean Connery) was an enthusiastic OEAer.

From all of this, one might suspect that Reich was perhaps a bit out of touch with reality(!). There is ample evidence that this might in fact have been true. In the early 1950s he invented an orgone gun that he called the "Cloudbuster," claiming that it could divert hurricanes and generate rainstorms in the desert, and by 1954, convinced that Earth was under attack by UFOs, he used the Cloudbuster to fight off aliens who often hovered over his town. (He later claimed that he had shot down several of them.) In his last book, *Contact with Space* (1956), he wrote that it was possible that his own father had been an alien from outer space.

In 1955 the Food & Drug Administration brought charges against Reich for fraudulent advertising of his Orgone Energy Accumulator, and in 1957 he was sentenced to two-years in prison. He died of a heart attack a few months later.

Seven years after his death, the aforementioned *Time* magazine article declared that "Dr. Wilhelm Reich may have been a prophet. For now it sometimes seems that all of America is one big orgone box." Decades before the invention of the Internet and the mainstreaming of Internet pornography, the article proceeded to explain how the Sexual Revolution was transforming all of American society and culture:

With today's model [of the Orgone Energy Accumulator], it is no longer necessary to sit in cramped quarters for a specific time. Improved and enlarged to encompass the continent, the big machines works on its subject continuously, day and night. From innumerable screens and stages, posters and pages, it flashes larger-than-life-sized images of sex. From countless racks and shelves, it pushes the books that a few years ago were considered pornography. From myriad loudspeakers, it broadcasts the words and rhythms of pop music erotica. And constantly, over the

intellectual Muzak, comes the message that sex will save you and libido make you free. [Quoted in Christopher Turner, "Wilhelm Reich: The Man Who Invented Free Love." <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jul/08/wilhelm-reich-free-love-orgasmatron>]

Eric Fromm (1900-80)

Eric Fromm was a psychologist, psychoanalyst, and humanistic philosopher who was raised in an orthodox Jewish family. One of his grandfathers and two great grandfathers were rabbis, and an uncle was a Talmudic scholar. Nonetheless, Fromm rejected orthodox Judaism in his mid-twenties and became a committed secularist.

As a student at the University of Heidelberg, Fromm studied sociology under two renowned scholars, Karl Jaspers and Alfred Weber (a brother of Max Weber). He took his Ph.D. in sociology in 1922 and later trained in psychoanalysis.

In 1930 Fromm joined the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, and after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 he emigrated to America and taught at Columbia University. In 1943 he co-founded the Washington School of Psychiatry, and 3 years later he co-founded the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Psychology. Fromm also taught at Bennington College (1941-50), Michigan State University (1957-61), NYU (1962-74), and at the University of Mexico in Mexico City.

Fromm's psychology was a mix of Marxism and Freudianism. While Marx emphasized economic determinism, Freud theorized that human behavior is mostly the product of biological drives and culture-based repression. To this, Fromm added a third component: the innate yearning for freedom – or as Abraham Maslow would later term it, "self-actualization."

In 1941 Fromm published *Escape from Freedom*, a seminal work in political psychology in which he theorized that due to the insecurities of life, we tend to gravitate toward authoritarian fascism unless we "master society and subordinate the economic machine to the purposes of human happiness." *Escape from Freedom* was a favorite among left-wing ideologues and existentialists alike, and it was often required reading in colleges and universities in the 1960s.

By the time Fromm published *Escape from Freedom*, he had parted company with his Frankfurt School colleagues over philosophical differences. Thereafter, he devoted himself exclusively to his clinical work and his subsequent writings. He followed *Escape from Freedom* with *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (1947) and *The Art of Loving* (1956), which are essentially existentialist in nature. No longer a doctrinaire Marxist, he had come to believe that individual self-fulfillment is the greatest good. He defined a "true revolutionary" as an individualist who has "emancipated himself" from loyalty to his familial heritage, his nation-state, his race, his party and his religion.

From Fromm's perspective, classical Marxist theory was psychologically naive, and he believed psychoanalysis could provide the missing link between a society's socio-economic substructure and its ideological superstructure. Nonetheless, he always



maintained that the greatest influence on his thinking was Marx, not Freud, whom he regarded as too bourgeois and patriarchal. When Fromm wrote his autobiography in 1962 he declared emphatically that "Marx is a figure of world historical significance with whom Freud cannot even be compared." He also confirmed that "I have always upheld the... point that man's capacity for freedom, for love, etc. depends almost entirely on [his] socio-economic conditions."

In *The Sane Society* (1955) Fromm called for a "humanistic communitarian socialism." He spurned Western capitalism and Soviet communism, both of which he considered to be bureaucratic, dehumanizing, and alienating, and argued that the "sane society" would be one in which human freedom and the communal good were the ultimate goals.

After severing his connections to the Institute of Social Research, Fromm's subsequent work focused less on political and psycho-sexual issues and more on the interpersonal components of neurosis. He also emphasized the integration of ethics and psychology,

and in later years even developed a fascination with Zen Buddhism.

Although no longer a Neo-Marxist theoretician, Fromm didn't totally divorce himself from politics. In the mid-1950s he joined the American Socialist Party, and he was a staunch supporter of SANE, the disarmament group aligned with the international peace movement. Early in 1968 he supported Eugene McCarthy for president but gradually lost interest in politics after Richard Nixon won the election.

Theodor Adorno (1903-69)

Theodor Adorno was one of the 20th century's premier Neo-Marxist social philosophers. He grew up in a cultured family in which his mother, a Catholic, was a gifted musician, and his father, a Protestant convert from Judaism, was a wealthy wine merchant.

Adorno was a classically trained pianist who studied music composition and philosophy at the University of Frankfurt, writing his dissertation on Kierkegaardian aesthetics under the direction of the liberal theologian and socialist Paul Tillich. For a while in the mid-1920s he also lived in Vienna where he studied under atonalist composers such as Arnold Schoenberg and became immersed in the Marxist and avant-garde counterculture.

In 1933 the Nazi government expelled him from the university due to his non-Aryan ancestry and Marxist ideology. The following year he sought refuge in England and then immigrated to America in 1937, where he worked closely with Max Horkheimer at the Institute of Social Research at Columbia University and as the head of the music study division of the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University.

In 1941 Adorno became co-director of the Research Project on Social Discrimination at the University of California at Berkeley, and after the war he returned to Germany and taught at the University of Frankfurt from 1949-69.

Adorno was a doctrinaire Neo-Marxist who attributed the Holocaust to the influence of Enlightenment rationalism, which he considered to be the philosophical basis for modern totalitarianism. Yet conversely, he was also a gifted composer and a romantic at heart who considered the arts to be the key to human liberation. But ultimately, ideology prevailed over aesthetics, and he explained his

disenchantment with the arts with the comment, "To still write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric."

As mentioned earlier, Adorno's book, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), was a seminal and influential work in Neo-Marxist psycho-politics. His "F-Scale" and strategy of associating conventional middle-class values with fascism and mental illness was as brilliant as it was dishonest. In many respects it defined the rules of engagement in the culture war, and succeeded in putting conservatives (and most Christians) clearly on the defensive.

Anticipating the rise of postmodernism, Adorno put forth the theory that language and dominant thought-forms are tools of political power that the ruling class uses to control social orthodoxy. As part of its control strategy, the ruling class uses commercial popular culture to pacify the masses, reinforce the dominant values, and control "deviants" – i.e., social and political dissidents. According to Adorno, all of this is driven by the insatiable demands of a capitalist economy that exploits people's greed for more material goods. That aside, his was not the radical postmodernism of later theorists such as Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida. Throughout his career he remained a utopian idealist who envisioned a political system and a culture in keeping with his concept of social justice.

As a musicologist, Adorno understood the cultural and propaganda value of the arts – particularly, music and movies. As mentioned earlier, he was a scathing critic of commercial popular culture which regards art as little more than a marketable commodity, and he questioned whether true art could survive in a capitalistic world in which everything is driven by the profit motive. Seeing art as a primary front in the culture war, he believed that the only legitimate art and music were those that challenged the commercially-defined sensibilities of the middle class.



Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)

Herbert Marcuse was a philosopher, social theorist, and political activist. In terms of promoting cultural Marxism, Marcuse was the key figure as he linked the Neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School with the New Left movement of the 1960s. His influence was such that the media dubbed him “the father of the New Left.”

Marcuse, like most of the early Frankfurt School scholars, was born into an affluent family of assimilated Jews. After serving in the German army in World War I he was briefly involved in politics with the Social Democratic Party, but he quit in protest when the party renounced revolutionary politics and began cooperating with the moderate Weimar government. Marcuse studied philosophy at the universities of Berlin and Freiburg, and received a Ph.D. in literature in 1923. He later studied under Martin Heidegger, and although the two differed politically, Marcuse always acknowledged Heidegger as the greatest thinker and teacher he ever encountered. In 1933 he joined the faculty of the Frankfurt School’s Institute for Social Research, and the following year he fled Nazi Germany and worked along with Horkheimer and others in the ISR’s offices at Columbia University.

During the Second World War Marcuse worked for the Office of Secret Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, and he later served in the State Department as the head of the Central European Office for Intelligence Research in the immediate post-war period. In 1950 he returned to academia as a lecturer in sociology at Columbia University and a senior fellow at the Russian Institute, and four years later he joined the faculty of Brandeis University. Brandeis was a hotbed of left-wing politics, and Marcuse became a popular and influential professor. But he was also a lightning rod for controversy, and when Brandeis refused to renew his contract in 1962 he accepted a position at the University of California at La Jolla.

In 1955 Marcuse published his first major academic work, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. The book was a bold attempt to synthesize Marxism and Freudianism, and it became the essential connection between the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School and the New

Left of the 1960s. *Eros and Civilization* was a wholesale repudiation of Western civilization and a clarion call for a cultural revolution, and it provided a pseudo-intellectual basis for the sexual revolution of the 1960s. The book quickly became a favorite among free-thinkers, Beatniks and bohemian hedonists, and a few years later it inspired a generation of young counterculture radicals in the Sixties.

Eros and Civilization is anything but a practical guide for revolution, but it set forth a libertarian and hedonistic social philosophy that held great appeal to affluent Baby Boomers in post-war America. Marcuse called for a democratic socialist society based on the principles of “non-



alienating labor,” freedom, and the pursuit of happiness – including sexual liberation. As such, he rejected a central tenet of Freud’s theory of social psychology. According to Freud, civilized society operates according to the “performance principle,” and therefore it must necessarily be repressive by forcing its people to spend most of their time and energy working rather than gratifying their desires. Freud believed that if human beings were freed from the constraints of labor and traditional social and moral taboos, civilization itself would collapse.

In contrast, Marcuse advocated the actualization of “a reality beyond the performance principle,” and asserted that mankind could find fulfillment “not through dominion and exploitation [i.e., the tyranny of labor and the “performance principle”] but through the release of inherent libidinal forces.” His socialist utopia would operate according to “the erotic reconciliation of man and nature in the aesthetic attitude, where order is beauty and work is play.”

[Note: This is reminiscent of a dialogue that took place within a radical group in the late 1960s. The leader had just proclaimed that henceforth the group would abolish all social conventions, including work. From now on, all they would do is eat, sleep, have sex, and protest the war. This sounded perfectly groovy until one of the neophyte radicals thought to ask, “But who’ll make the signs?”]

Marcuse called for sexual liberation, the abolition of the monogamous and “patriarchal” family, and “polymorphous perversity” (a term he picked up from the Neo-Marxist political philosopher Norman O. Brown), and at times he seemed perfectly enraptured by his own psycho-sexual fantasies:

No longer used as a full-time instrument of labor, the body would be resexualized, (which) would first manifest itself in a reactivation of all erotogenic zones and, consequently, in a resurgence of pre-genital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy. The body in its entirety would become an object of cathexis, a thing to be enjoyed – an instrument of pleasure. This change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been reorganized, particularly the monogamic and patriarchal family.

A “resexualized” body in which “all erotogenic zones” would be “reactivated” along with a “resurgence of pre-genital polymorphous sexuality” and “a decline of genital supremacy,” culminating in the “disintegration” of all cultural institutions? Marcuse apparently enjoyed himself immensely, but it’s hard to take all of this seriously. Perhaps that is why many Sixties’ radicals preferred reading *Eros and Civilization* while stoned. Yet the strangest part was that he dedicated the book to Sophie Marcuse, his wife of 50 years.

Predictably, *Eros and Civilization* elicited strong reactions even among those on the left side of the culture war. Eric Fromm called the book “nihilistic,” accused Marcuse of misrepresenting Freud, and pointed out that his former colleague lacked any practical experience with psychoanalysis. More seriously, he charged that the book promoted irresponsible hedonism. Like Freud, Fromm was convinced that the tension between hedonism and civilization was necessary to curb the worst excesses of human behavior. It was absurd, he argued, to think that widespread “polymorphous perversity” was compatible with a well-ordered society and culture. Certain practices that Marcuse tolerated, such as sadism and coprophilia, should never be socially sanctioned. Furthermore, the loss of restraint and the obsession with immediate gratification that Marcuse advocated would break down all self-discipline and render humanity easily manipulated, as in Aldous

Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

Yet despite its radical and irresponsible hedonism, *Eros and Civilization* was one of the landmark books of the 20th century in terms of igniting the sexual/cultural revolution of the 1960s. As William Lind observes...

Marcuse understood what most of the rest of his Frankfurt School colleagues did not; that the way to destroy Western civilization... was not through abstruse theory, but through sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll. Marcuse wrote other works for the new generation that spawned the New Left... but *Eros and Civilization* was the key work, the one that put the match to the tender. [William S. Lind, “Further Readings in the Frankfurt School,” in *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. www.freecongress.org.]

In 1958 Marcuse published *Soviet Marxism*, one of the first substantive critiques of Soviet Communism by a left-wing intellectual. Using a line of argument that would later become standard fare in Neo-Marxist circles, Marcuse charged that Stalin’s regime had perverted orthodox Marxism and betrayed Lenin’s revolution by the imposition of a totalitarian and bureaucratic state. Like many Neo-Marxist Western intellectuals, Marcuse departed from rigid Marxist orthodoxy whenever it suited his purposes, so he rejected the glorification of the state that relegated the individual to insignificance.

In his next major work, *One -Dimensional Man* (1964), Marcuse criticized both capitalism and Soviet-style communism. In place of classical Marxism, he advocated a form of “libertarian socialism” that glorified individualism and humanistic values. Nonetheless, the final aim was a radical cultural revolution that would transform man’s basic existence. According to Marcuse, man actualizes his potential in history through revolution.

In his critique of capitalism, Marcuse argued that, whereas early capitalist societies had used human beings as units of production, advanced capitalist societies thrive on over-production and over-consumption. He contended that modern capitalism is an unholy alliance and a tangled web of exploitation involving capital investments, industrial management, technology, mass production, advertising, and mass consumption. In such a mutually-exploitative matrix, human beings become mindless consumers of unnecessary products – consumption addicts and

pawns of modern advertising. As a result, the working classes – those who ought to have a revolutionary consciousness – are co-opted by the seduction of mass consumption.

Marcuse argued that the end result is that human freedom is sacrificed as people live to work more so they can buy and consume more. He considered production and consumption to be an integral part of a “conformist society” that suppresses individualism, but his primary concern seemed to be that such mundane matters interfered with more important things in life such as the perfection of “polymorphous perversity.”

According to Marcuse, the solution to escaping the robotic routine of modern society comes through “the Great Refusal” – an intentional rejection of capitalism, technology, and the cult of consumption. Rather than being a mindless slave addicted to production and consumption, Marcuse called for liberation... through erotic sexuality. As a leading advocate of sexual politics, he contended that sexual liberation was an essential aspect in the social and political transition from capitalism to socialism.

However, since the traditional proletariat class is innately conservative and religious, and because it has been co-opted by consumerism, the vanguard for any cultural revolution must come from disenfranchised minorities, social rebels, the liberal elite, and a radicalized intelligentsia.

Unlike most academicians who spurned popular culture, Marcuse recognized its potential impact on society and understood that a political revolution is inextricably linked to a cultural revolution. His theories influenced subsequent generations of scholars who specialized in popular culture as well as radical activists such as Abbie Hoffman, co-founder of the Youth International Party (YIPPIEs), and Angela Davis, a black Communist whom Marcuse called “my best student.” (Davis also studied in Frankfurt under Theodor Adorno.)

Marcuse’s 1965 essay on “Repressive Tolerance” essentially defined what is now considered Political Correctness. He declared that capitalist democracies are innately totalitarian, and therefore a selective or “discriminatory form” of tolerance should be applied to ensure that the opinions of marginalized minorities are recognized. It is perfectly proper, he contended, to silence “repressive” intolerance (i.e., conservative

opinions) in order to protect the rights of minorities. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression should be regulated in order to suppress intolerant conservative views and behavior, and to promote a more fair and equitable society. In Marcuse’s words, “Liberating tolerance would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.” In the essay he criticized mainstream liberals for failing to confront conservative values and other “evils,” a theme that New Left singer/songwriter Phil Ochs incorporated into his scathing satire on liberal hypocrisy in “Love Me, I’m a Liberal.”

In 1969 Marcuse wrote *An Essay on Liberation* in which he called for a systematic approach to cultural subversion, including a linguistic revolution to alter (and confuse) the meaning of key words and terms. Sensing that the times were indeed a-changin’, he celebrated all the liberation movements of the Sixties from civil rights to the counterculture, student rebellions, women’s liberation, gay liberation, and even the Vietcong. Skillfully exploiting racial politics, he demonized white males as the source of America’s problems, and called on blacks to rise up and become the vanguard in a comprehensive social and political revolution. Emphasizing the theme that Charles Reich would incorporate into *The Greening of America*, Marcuse called for a radically new approach to the concept of revolution:

One can rightfully speak of a cultural revolution, since the protest is directed toward the whole cultural establishment, including the morality of existing society.... There is one thing we can say with complete assurance: the traditional idea of revolution and the traditional strategy of revolution has ended. These ideas are old-fashioned. [Quoted by Raymond V. Raehn in “The Historical Roots of ‘Political Correctness,’” in William S. Lind, *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. www.freecongress.org.]

Unlike Adorno, Marcuse didn’t buy into the emerging postmodern consciousness in the 1970s. As a hard-headed rationalist, he put forth a revised version of the classical Marxist metanarrative and promoted a kind of cultural Marxism that was more comprehensive than merely the economic component. Fittingly, his last “contribution” to Western civilization came in the late 1970s when he helped found the radical environmentalist Green Party in

West Germany. Over the course of his life his influence on modern Western culture has been as pervasive as it has been perverse.

C. Wright Mills (1916-62)

C. Wright Mills was an American sociologist who taught at Columbia University from 1946 until his death in 1962. Like Marcuse and Paul Goodman (see below), Mills was more of a libertarian socialist than a doctrinaire Marxist, but his contributions to New Left thought and Political Correctness were nonetheless considerable.



Mills shared the same jaundiced view of traditionalists and conservatives as Adorno and Marcuse, but he aimed most of his criticism at the American liberal elite. In the process he articulated many of the themes that later characterized the ideology of the New Left – specifically, that an undemocratic “power elite” dominated American society, and that mainstream liberalism had lost its social consciousness and now represented the status quo. As an ardent opponent of post-war U.S. foreign policy and the Cold War, he charged that a small group of Washington politicians, Pentagon officials and corporate barons controlled the government. (Interestingly, President Eisenhower would later warn of the dangers of an unchecked “military/industrial complex that was unresponsive to the interests of the American people.) To show his disdain for the governing elite, Mills traveled to Cuba in the early 1960s and wrote a book praising Fidel Castro’s “social experiments.”

Mills began his critique of American society in 1948 with *The New Men of Power: America’s Labor Leaders*. Like most leftist intellectuals who bought into Marxist conflict theory, Mills was troubled by the fact that American labor leaders had lost their radical edge and were willing to compromise with the capitalist business establishment for the sake of better pay, employment benefits and job security. To Mills, this was tantamount to selling out, and he considered

it a tragic betrayal of the union ideal. In his mind, they had become part of the Establishment, and were therefore part of the problem in terms of moving American society farther toward socialism. In a follow-up book, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), he applied the same analysis and critique to mainstream white collar employees and the corporate managerial class.

The Power Elite (1956) was Mills’ most influential work, and it established his reputation as a major social critic. Although based on some dubious premises, it resonated with many Americans in a time when Cold War tensions were steadily escalating. It also provided fodder for disaffected leftists who believed American society was innately fascistic and oppressive.

Mills refused to call himself a Marxist, and if pressed, he probably would have preferred to describe himself as an independent libertarian socialist. Nonetheless, his view of American society and culture was certainly compatible with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and his basic philosophy incorporated traditional Marxist dialectical themes regarding social and political power relationships, alienation and manipulation. Like Politically Correct leftists today, his orientation was to politicize everything in life, as he wrote in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959): “It is the political task of the social scientist – as of any liberal educator – continually to translate personal troubles into public issues....”

Paul Goodman (1911-72)

Like Marcuse and Mills, Paul Goodman (1911-72) provided intellectual inspiration for the New Left, primarily in his enormously popular and influential book, *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (1960). Goodman was a sociologist and a co-founder of Gestalt Therapy, but he is remembered for the most part as an influential New Left theoretician and activist.

Goodman attended Hebrew schools as a youth, graduated from the City College of New York (CCNY) in 1932, and then pursued a doctorate degree in sociology at the University of Chicago. He was a regular contributor for several years to Dwight Macdonald’s left-wing journal, *Politics*, although he



freely admitted that he was more of an anarchist than a socialist.

Goodman was a romantic and an idealist at heart. In an interview with the author and historian Studs Terkel, he explained that his greatest challenge in life was “to grow up as a human being into a culture without

losing nature.” As a bisexual, he was involved in the gay liberation movement of the late Sixties and early Seventies – his “out of the closet” announcement coming in an essay entitled “Being Queer.” He argued that homosexual relationships between males were natural and healthy, and commented that “what is really obscene is the way our society makes us feel shameful and like criminals for doing human things that we really need.”

As an anarchist, Goodman argued that even liberal institutions were repressive forces in American society. As an example, he contended that schools stifle children’s healthy natural instincts and subtly indoctrinate them with the values of a materialistic and unhealthy society. He complained that order, conventionality and predictability took precedence over spontaneity and creativity, memorization of trivial facts trumped critical thinking, and the interests of teachers and administrators took priority over the needs of students. Similarly, he argued, all of American society was governed by the same perverse values. Large bureaucratic institutions – both governmental and private – were run by technocratic “experts” whose agendas ran counter to the needs and interests of their employees and the public in general. Centralized institutions were inefficient, wasteful and predatory, and constantly expanded their power at the expense of individual liberty and the general welfare.

Goodman’s solution to the problems of bureaucratization and centralization resonated not only with the New Left but the Sixties counter-culture as well. In opposition to the conventional Establishment and the status quo, he proposed intentional decentralization and a return to small communities – a theme that Joni Mitchell later integrated into her popular song, “Woodstock.”

*We are stardust, we are golden
We are caught in the Devil’s bargain
And we got to get ourselves
Back to the Garden.*

[Joni Mitchell, “Woodstock.” Copyright 1969, Siquomb Music.]

Goodman had little hope that the older generations would openly rebel against the established order, but he was optimistic that young people could change the culture through radical reforms or by starting their own countercultural institutions. Throughout most of the Sixties he supported the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the New Left agenda in general, but eventually he disengaged from the movement as it became increasingly erratic, strident and violent. After a campus appearance in 1967 in which he was heckled by a group of radical students, he realized that an entirely new worldview was being forged – but it wasn’t exactly the dawning of the Age of Aquarius:

Suddenly I realized that [these students] did not believe there was a nature of things. [To them] there was no knowledge but only the sociology of knowledge. They had learned so well that physical and sociological research is subsidized and conducted for the benefit of the ruling class that they were doubtful that there was such a thing as simple truth.... I had imagined that the worldwide student protest had to do with changing political and moral institutions, and I was sympathetic to this. But I now saw that we had to do with a religious crisis. Not only all institutions but all learning had been corrupted by the Whore of Babylon, and there was no longer any salvation to be got from Works.

What Goodman was experiencing, of course, was the dawning of the age of postmodernism – a worldview devoid of morality that he and others such as Marcuse and Mills had inadvertently birthed through their systematic deconstruction of Western culture and values. Revolutions often end up devouring their own, and now it was Goodman who was being dispatched to the guillotine by the very radicals he had inspired just a few years earlier.



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Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness

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