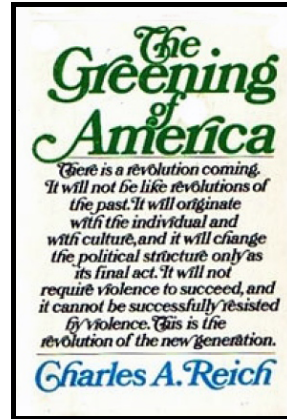


The Origins of Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness

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PART 1

*“There is a revolution coming.
It will not be like revolutions in the past.
It will originate with the individual
and the culture, and it will change the
political structure as its final act.
It will not require violence to succeed,
and it cannot be successfully resisted by
violence. This is the revolution of the
New Generation.” – Charles Reich,
The Greening of America (1970)*



Introduction

In his book on the American Civil Liberties Union, Alan Sears of the Alliance Defending Freedom writes that one of the great myths of the 20th century is that the ACLU started out as a good, patriotic, pro-liberty organization that unfortunately strayed off-course. The truth, however, is that when we look at its history the evidence shows something quite different. From the beginning, the ACLU had a subversive agenda: to undermine the foundations of traditional American culture through the manipulation and exploitation of our legal system.

A similar case can be made regarding the origins of Political Correctness. For many people, “PC” is a somewhat amorphous term used to characterize a variety of random ideas and causes with no particular unifying themes other than the fact that they are socially and politically “liberal” or “progressive”. Otherwise, Political Correctness seems more like a general orientation or an *ad hoc* collection of policies, speech and behavior codes that the moral guardians on the left regard as socially-acceptable in keeping with their particular slant on social justice. But most people don’t perceive of PC as a fixed ideology, and the

general assumption is that it is well-intentioned if sometimes a bit extreme, hyper-sensitive or even silly. However, a closer look at the history of Political Correctness reveals something quite different and considerably more alarming. Although often associated with cultural liberalism, it is in fact an insidious form of cultural Marxism.

Far from being just a random collection of idealistic notions, Political Correctness is an orchestrated attack on Western civilization and its venerable institutions. In particular, PC is a comprehensive critique of traditional morality and

ethics, socio/political conservatism, and the Christian faith and values. According to the apostles of PC, all of these influences are antiquated impediments to progress – the goal of which is a global libertarian/socialist society in keeping with the principles of the *Humanist Manifestos*.*

Critics of Political Correctness consider it to be a sinister form of social control used to censor ideas, words, policies and behavior that are considered offensive and inappropriate by the liberal elites who dominate the commanding heights of American culture: the mainstream media, academia and the education establishment, and much of popular culture in contemporary American life. For PC advocates, labeling certain thoughts, speech and actions “politically incorrect” is an effective way to censor dissenting views or prohibit anything that they consider (1) conservative and reactionary – either politically, socially, morally or religiously; or (2) insensitive or discriminatory toward certain minorities that warrant special protection – i.e., blacks, Hispanics, feminist women, homosexuals, and non-Christians in general. This is the mentality behind the left’s obsession with “micro-aggressions” and the advocacy of fascistic indoctrination programs such as “diversity training” workshops.

The PC obsession with group identity and its efforts to grant special protection status to certain kinds of people is the basis for the recent trend in “hate crimes” legislation whereby perpetrators are punished for their motives (i.e., their attitudes toward their victims) rather than simply for what they have done. In violation of the Constitutional guarantee of equal justice under the law, “hate crimes” legislation imposes stiffer punishments for crimes committed against certain preferred “victim” groups, which is a form of jurisprudential discrimination and injustice that is unprecedented in American history. Furthermore, the simple act of criticizing the work, the beliefs or the actions of someone who belongs to one

* *The Humanist Manifestos* are a series of documents drafted by the American Humanist Association in 1933, 1973, and 2003 that articulate the principles and vision of a libertarian/socialist new world order based on secular humanistic values. Each version was signed by notable humanists in government, academia, science, literature and the arts. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanist_Manifesto.

of these specially protected groups can be deemed “hate speech,” as William Lind notes in his essay, “The Origins of Political Correctness”:

For the first time in our history, Americans have to be fearful of what they say, of what they write, and of what they think. They have to be afraid of using the wrong word, a word [considered] offensive or insensitive, or racist, sexist, or homophobic....

[Unless it is defeated, Political Correctness] will eventually destroy... everything that we have ever defined as our freedom and our culture. [William S. Lind, “The Origins of Political Correctness.” [Www.academia.org/lectures](http://www.academia.org/lectures).]

The Evolution of a Term

The term “Political Correctness” has been around for a while, but its meaning has changed over time. It was first used in an early Supreme Court case, *Chisholm v. State of Georgia* (1793), in which the Court declared that references to “the United States” rather than “the People of the United States” was “not politically correct.” In this sense, the Court was simply declaring that “the United States” as a legal entity was technically improper – the inference being that the federal government was merely the agent of the states and of the American people.

In modern use, scholars trace the term to Mao Zedong’s *Little Red Book*.** Prior to Mao, the concept of Political Correctness was used by Bolsheviks to suppress all opposing speech and actions that strayed from the official Communist Party line. Since the Party supposedly represented “The People,” anything that dissented from Communist orthodoxy was counter-revolutionary, politically incorrect, and therefore intolerable.

In the 1960s the term was adopted by Neo-Marxists to emphasize their dogmas and silence their critics. According to New Left ideology, traditional conservative and Christian beliefs and practices were innately “authoritarian,” “repressive,” “unprogressive,” and “fascist.” Therefore, such views were deemed “intolerant” and should be censored or even banned from public discourse. In a 1970 essay, *The Black Woman*, Toni Cade Bambara declared that

** See Ruth Perry, “A Short History of the Term ‘Politically Correct’” in Patricia Aufderheide, *Beyond PC: Toward a Politics of Understanding* (Graywolf Publishing, 1992).

“a man cannot be politically correct and a chauvinist too.” The concept of Political Correctness was also used to shield certain minority groups from unfair stereotyping or insensitive labeling. Efforts to discourage crude and demeaning pejorative terms in reference to certain racial, ethnic and nationality groups should certainly be applauded, but not at the expense of sacrificing the right of free speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Sometimes the PC speech code campaigns can become self-parodies. For example, in the 1960s the traditional terms “colored people” and “Negroes” were phased out in favor of “blacks” and then “Afro-Americans,” which was later amended as “African-Americans” and, eventually, “people of color.”

In the 1990s, due to its association with radical left-wing ideas, the term “political correctness” was used pejoratively by conservatives in response to efforts by liberals to suppress free speech and conduct. In a 1991 commencement speech at the University of Michigan, President George H. W. Bush noted the growing movement on campuses to “declare certain topics... expressions... [and] even certain gestures off-limits.” Similarly, in *The Death of the West*, conservative commentator Pat Buchanan wrote that “Political Correctness is cultural Marxism, a regime to punish dissent and to stigmatize social heresy as the Inquisition punished religious heresy. Its trademark is intolerance.”

Even liberal *Newsweek* magazine, in a 1990 cover story on the new “Thought Police,” noted the Marxist roots of Political Correctness:

PC is, strictly speaking, a totalitarian philosophy.... Politically, PC is Marxist in origin.... There are... some who recognize the tyranny of PC but see it only as a transitional phase, which will no longer be necessary once the virtues of tolerance are internalized. Does that sound familiar? It's the dictatorship of the proletariat. [“Taking Offense.” *Newsweek* (Dec. 24, 1990), p. 51, 53, 54]

The publication of serious critiques of PC in books such as E.D. Hirsch’s *Cultural Literacy* (1988), Allen Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), Paul Johnson’s *Intellectuals* (1988), Roger Kimball’s *Tenured Radicals* (1990), Dinesh D’Souza’s *Illiberal Education* (1991), and David Horowitz’s *Indoctrination U* (2007) exposed the dark fascist side of this ideology to the general public. Nonetheless,

with the liberal domination of the mainstream media, the education establishments, strategic and powerful political offices, the Hollywood/pop culture entertainment industries, and even many Christian denominations and churches, the apostles of PC have been able to dominate key areas of American culture to the extent that their agenda is often unopposed. But perhaps the left’s greatest ally is the American public’s general level of ignorance regarding history, philosophy, or even current events as they relate to the current state of our culture.

PC Ideology

A New Dark Age

In his article, “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and Political Correctness,” Michael Minnicino comments on the insidious and cumulative effects of Political Correctness on contemporary American society and values, as well as the need for a new cultural Renaissance:

The people of North American and Western Europe now accept a level of ugliness in their daily lives which is almost without precedent in the history of Western civilization.... Our own city streets, home to legions of the homeless, are ruled by Dope, Inc., the largest industry in the world, and on those streets Americans now murder each other at a rate not seen since the Dark Ages.

At the same time, a thousand smaller horrors are so commonplace as to go unnoticed. Our children spend as much time sitting in front of television sets as they do in school, watching with glee, scenes of torture and death which might have shocked the audience in the Roman Coliseum. Music is everywhere, almost unavoidable – but it does not uplift, nor even tranquilize – it assaults the ears, oftentimes spitting out obscenities. Our plastic arts are ugly, our architecture is ugly, our clothes are ugly....

Our universities, the cradle of our technological and intellectual future, have become overwhelmed by Comintern-style New Age “Political Correctness.” With the collapse of the Soviet Union, our campuses now represent the largest concentration of Marxist dogma in the world....

[T]he ugliness we see around us has been consciously fostered and organized in such a way that a majority of the population is losing the cognitive ability to transmit to the next generation the ideas and methods upon which our civilization was built. The loss of that ability is the primary

indicator of a Dark Age. And a new Dark Age is exactly what we are in. In such situations, the record of history is unequivocal: either we create a [new] Renaissance – a rebirth of the fundamental principles upon which civilization originated – or our civilization dies. [Michael J. Minnicino, “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and ‘Political Correctness’.” *Fidelio*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 4-5.]

Minnicino is demonstrably correct. Despite being the most prosperous and affluent nation in human history (the average American worker ranks in the top 1% of income-earners worldwide), America is rapidly descending into a “Dark Age” marked by social discord, violence, corruption, stupidity and ugliness. This is obvious not only in our education and political systems: observe most modern architecture, most movies and TV (including TV news), and most contemporary music (mainstream pop, heavy metal, rap and hip-hop). American society and culture have never been so rude, so crude, and so lewd. This is not by accident, and it runs diametrically counter to what one might reasonably expect in terms of social evolution. Sinister forces have driven these trends, cleverly exploiting the dark side of human nature, and much of it is attributable to decades of propaganda propagated by cultural Marxists under the guise of Political Correctness.

Seven Principles of Political Correctness

There are seven principles that essentially define Political Correctness. Note that some of these are obviously contradictory, but rational consistency is rarely regarded as essential for radical leftists who tend to dismiss logic itself as “Western thinking.”

1. Liberal Elitism. The only social and political ideas and practices that have legitimacy are those in keeping with the liberal secular humanistic agenda. As the Neo-Marxist Theodor Adorno argued in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1948), only the true liberal can be considered mentally healthy and socially well-adjusted. According to Adorno, conservatives and traditionalists are reactionaries who retard human social evolution. Such people are also innately fascistic, which renders them mentally and/or morally inferior. Conservatives are not simply wrong: they are ignorant and dangerous. As such, their ideas are unworthy of serious consideration and should be excluded from the public square.

Like the pigs in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, cultural liberals believe that “Everyone is equal – but some people are more equal than others.” Those who are “more equal” are the liberal cultural elites in academia, the media, the entertainment industry and government. Those who have been properly educated in the values of cultural liberalism are the natural leaders in society. Committed to tolerance and egalitarian democracy, the elite have the right and the responsibility to lead others into correct paths of thinking and living.

2. An Evolutionary View of Society and Culture. Along with human biological evolution, human societies and institutions are also evolving toward greater heights of awareness and sophistication. What might have been “true” or “reasonable” in the past is often outdated in the present. Therefore, according to contemporary liberals, those who hold to conservative and traditional values are on “the wrong side of history.”

3. Moral Relativism. There are no moral absolutes. All standards, including all laws, are conditional, situational, and socially-determined. Furthermore, everything is subjective and derives from one’s cultural heritage, race, class, sex, sexual orientation, life experiences, and lifestyle. Postmodernists would also add that all laws are impositions by the powerful on the weak.

Every person’s opinions and moral values are of equal value and worth, and no one should be allowed to impose his/her beliefs on others. However, there are exceptions to this principle: because many of the beliefs and practices of social conservatives are ignorant, outdated, insensitive, intolerant and judgmental – in short, hateful – they should not be allowed in the public square.

4. Five Inviolable Values. There are five values that should govern all thinking and social interaction in a free and democratic society.

- **Tolerance.** Tolerance is an absolute virtue. We should accept every person, group, and culture non-judgmentally, and no one has a right to judge any person, group or culture as being inferior or wrong. However, this principle does not apply to Christians or social conservatives because such people are bigoted, intolerant and judgmental.

- **Egalitarianism.** The only legitimate form of government is democracy. There should be no restrictions on voting and office-holding based on race, sex, education or moral factors (except perhaps in the case of certain types of felons). In recent years many liberals argue that even illegal aliens are entitled to full citizenship rights, including the right to vote.
- **Multi-culturalism.** All societies and cultures are morally equivalent and equally legitimate, as are all cultural heritages and traditions. Christianity and Western culture are no better than any other religion or cultural heritage, and to think otherwise is to be narrow-minded, exclusivistic and ethnocentric. Multi-culturalism is the basis for the PC veneration of “diversity,” which cultural liberals regard as innately good.

[Note: It is important to distinguish between the *sociology* of multi-culturalism and the *ideology* of multi-culturalism. Multi-cultural sociology is simply descriptive – a study of various cultures and their distinctive traits, religions, unique histories and traditions, etc. This is useful (or even necessary) knowledge given the realities of our contemporary global society, and it is relatively non-controversial.

The ideology of multi-culturalism, however, is something altogether different. Derived from a secular humanistic worldview and based on relativistic presuppositions, it blurs the qualitative distinctions between various cultures just as religious pluralism seeks to render all religions essentially the same. But the reality is that cultures – like religions, political systems and individual human beings – are all different. All have their flaws, but some are obviously better than others. The ideology of multi-culturalism, however, promotes a left-wing socio/political agenda that denigrates the uniqueness of Western civilization and the Judeo-Christian heritage in order to advance a radically new kind of society and culture based on secular humanistic values.]

- **Inclusion.** No individual or group has a right to discriminate against anyone else. However,

it is sometimes necessary to grant special status and preferential treatment to minorities and other groups in order to rectify the injustices of the past. This is the basis for Affirmative Action.

- **Religious pluralism.** All religions are man-made, and to the extent that there is any truth or value in them, all are (more or less) equally valid (or invalid). It is the height of bigotry to believe that any particular religion (such as Christianity) is exclusively “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

5. Education and Social Transformation.

The primary purpose of education is not to accumulate a broad range of knowledge in keeping with the traditional philosophy of education – i.e., a substantive introduction to the liberal arts – but to acquire the necessary values and socialization skills that are essential to living cooperatively in our diverse multi-cultural society. To that end, competition in education should be minimized as much as possible in the interest of building up students’ self-esteem.

The key to social and political progress is through secular humanistic education, a form of indoctrination that liberates young people from traditional prejudices so as to advance societal evolution. If properly educated, citizens today can become more tolerant, enlightened and socially-conscious than those of the past.

6. Social Consciousness. Individualism is selfish and socially irresponsible. People should think and act in the interests of the commonweal (the common good of society) in order to promote the ideals of equality and social justice. No one should impose his/her moral values on others. However, because many people have not yet evolved to the necessary level of social consciousness, the liberal elite have a responsibility to protect the victims of social injustice from those who are insensitive to their needs.

Individualism is a threat to social harmony. Politics is about group identity whereby people are defined primarily by their race, ethnicity, class, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Due to past discrimination, special status should be accorded racial and ethnic minorities, homosexuals, and in some cases, women.

7. (All cultures may be equally valid, but...) Western civilization and values are the source of most of the world's problems. Throughout history, Western civilization and culture have been marked by racism, sexism, homophobia, conquest, violence, cultural imperialism, oppression, exploitation, religious bigotry, etc. In modern times capitalism, which is based on greed and the exploitation of people and resources, has contributed to inequality and social injustice. In addition, traditional Christianity has inhibited social progress due to its exclusive truth-claims, its intolerance of other religions, and its history of repression and oppression.

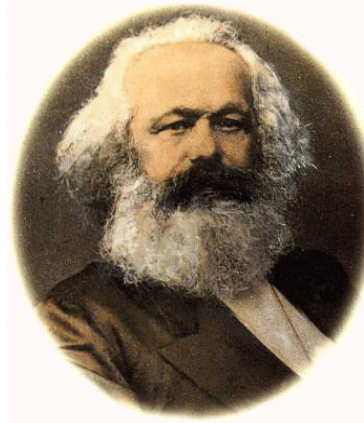
Marxism 101

The Marxist Dialectic

Contemporary Political Correctness is a form of cultural Marxism that is derivative of a naturalistic (atheistic) worldview and a secular humanistic philosophy. As discussed below, Political Correctness follows the Marxist dialectic in terms of its theory of history and its vision for social and cultural progress.

Secular humanism. As an atheist with a naturalistic/materialistic worldview, **Karl Marx** (1818-83) was contemptuous of religion in general and Christianity in particular. In this regard he was influenced particularly by the writings of **Ludwig Feuerbach** (1804-72), who in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) put forth the theory that religion is a purely human invention and a generally negative influence because it distracts man from what is real by focusing his attention on an imaginary afterlife. In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx echoed these sentiments with comments such as “Religion is the opiate of the people” and “Man is the supreme being for man.”

Given his atheistic prejudice, Marx failed to appreciate that religion (or more correctly, the yearning for transcendence) is a basic human need. Intrinsicly, we want to know where we came from, why we're here, and what becomes of us when we die – questions for which naturalism has no satisfactory answers. Furthermore, religion provides a basis for morality and social concern by challenging us to go above and beyond our own personal interests. This is why, in general, people of faith are the most charitable



and benevolent people in the world. In addition, numerous studies confirm that religious people are generally happier, better-adjusted, and emotionally more stable than non-believers. Marx's idealistic utopian

Communist society was in some respects a secularized version of the Kingdom of God – a harmonious and cooperative community but without God. Blinded by his prejudices, Marx omitted the one factor and the one power that could actually transcend human selfishness, egoism and conflict, which is why Communist societies have been among the most tyrannical and brutal in all of human history.

Marx held a cynical view of Christianity and Christian history that distorts reality. While he was correct in observing that religion (including nominal Christianity) has often been used by the rich and the powerful to serve their own interests and preserve the status quo, he failed to appreciate that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of liberation. When clearly and honestly proclaimed, it actually confronts and condemns the forces of exploitation and oppression that have plagued all societies and cultures throughout time.

Secular humanism is a man-centered philosophy that derives from a naturalistic worldview. Historically, it dates back to classical Greece – in particular, to the Sophist philosophers who replaced the traditional pantheistic/pagan worldview with an anti-religious one. Sophism was best summarized by Protagoras in his famous dictum, “Man is the measure of all things” (in contrast to the gods being the measure of all things).

One of the first references to the term “humanism” was in the Renaissance era, and as originally used it had no anti-religious connotation. Essentially, Renaissance humanism was a celebration of human creativity, particularly in literature and the arts. As such, it honored the dignity and the sacredness of human life as created in the *Imago Dei*, the Image of God. Although it tended to shift the focus somewhat

from a God-centered perspective to one that was more man-oriented, Renaissance humanism was certainly not expressly secular. For the next several centuries it was a generally innocuous term, and many of the great scholars and intellectuals of the late-medieval and Reformation eras referred to themselves as Christian humanists.

During the Enlightenment, however, the concept of humanism took a decidedly secular turn. Enlightenment *philosophes* tended to look to pre-Christian classical culture for intellectual inspiration and their model of the ideal society, and for many of them Christianity represented institutionalized religious repression, theological dogmatism, and antiquated superstition. Unfortunately, traditional status quo Christianity was not up to the intellectual challenges of the day, and as Os Guinness has noted in *The Dust of Death*, “As the 18th century came to a close, all the wisdom and all the wit apparently lay on the side of the Enlightenment.”

By the mid-1800s, science also appeared to turn against traditional biblical faith. The old geocentric theory of the universe had long been refuted in the works of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and others. Now, due to further advancements in astronomy and new discoveries in geology and paleontology, the belief in a young universe and a young earth – including the recent creation of mankind only a few thousand years ago – were called into question. With the emergence of Darwin’s theory of evolution, biology also appeared to challenge the belief that humanity is a special creation of God. Instead, it was argued that naturalistic processes alone were sufficient to replace God as the explanatory cause of all life forms. Furthermore, the new literary methodologies of historical and textual criticism appeared to cast doubt on the divine inspiration of the Bible. As a result, many Christians, not wanting to be left behind, abandoned traditional biblical beliefs for theories and philosophies more compatible with “science” and modern thought.

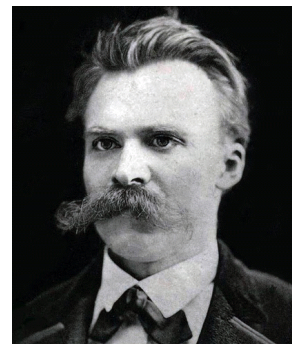
Since the dawn of Christianity, but especially in modern times under the influence of Feuerbach, Darwin, Marx and Freud, there has always been within atheistic naturalism a special hostility toward the Christian faith. In the late 19th century this antipathy was most vociferously expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche in works such as *The Anti-Christ*,

in which he slandered Christianity as “the great curse” and “the ultimate corruption” of the modern world. According to Nietzsche, “The Christian Church has left nothing untouched by its depravity; it has turned every value into worthlessness, and every truth into a lie, and every integrity into baseness of soul.” (Suffering from dementia, Nietzsche spent most of the last decade of his life in an insane asylum in which he imagined himself to be Jesus, Napoleon, and Buddha – among others.)

With the coming of the 20th century, many of the secularistic forces and influences that had been at work in American society since the time of the Enlightenment coalesced to spawn new movements and organizations. Not coincidentally, secular humanism as a defined philosophy emerged in full force just after World War I, just as Neo-Marxist scholars in Germany were working out their theories and setting their agenda. [Note: See the following section on the historical origins of Neo-Marxism and the Frankfurt School.]

From an organizational standpoint, several notable events occurred in America in the 1920s and ‘30s that advanced a Secular Humanistic agenda. In 1920 a coalition of liberal lawyers and activists founded the American Civil Liberties Union, and the ACLU has functioned ever since as a powerful legal arm for the left-wing agenda. It has also been in the forefront of the contemporary culture war, waging aggressive campaigns against Christianity in American public life.

In 1929 Charles Potter, a former Baptist preacher turned Unitarian, founded the First Humanist Society of New York, and the following year he wrote an influential book, *Humanism: A New Religion*, in which he cast a vision for a totally secularized society and culture. Three years later a group of 34 lawyers, scholars, educators, and other professionals organized the American Humanist Association and drafted *The Humanist Manifesto*. Based on Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*, *The Humanist Manifesto* provided a philosophical platform for the humanist movement and put forth a radical secular vision for America.



Friedrich Nietzsche

Also noteworthy was the formation in 1961 of the Unitarian/Universalist Church, a merger of the two most prominent groups associated with religious humanism in America.

Over the past forty years the secular humanist alliance has been in the forefront of America's culture war, aggressively and relentlessly promoting various left-wing causes from abortion-on-demand and same-sex "marriage" to amnesty for illegal aliens. They have steadily gained momentum over time, and since the 1980s their agenda has been advanced through several well-financed and influential organizations including...

- The American Freethought Society, in conjunction with its publishing arm, Prometheus Books;
- People for the American Way, founded by the TV producer, Norman Lear;
- Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, a high-profile advocacy group led by Barry Lynn; and
- A variety of Political Action Committees (PACs), most notably MoveOn.Org, which is financed by the billionaire George Soros. (Soros is as strident as he is rich. In 2002 he was quoted as saying, "The separation of church and state, the bedrock of our democracy, is clearly undermined by having a born-again President [George W. Bush]." Soros would apparently prefer to have someone who is fair and unbiased on matters related to church and state, such as an atheist like himself.)

Likewise, two influential publications should be mentioned in passing that have contributed significantly to promoting secular humanism in American public life: *Playboy*, founded in 1950, and *The Skeptic*, founded in 1992.

[Note: As Charles Potter and many others have recognized, secular humanism is not a neutral philosophy but a godless religion. In 1961, in the case of *Torcaso v. Watkins*, the U. S. Supreme Court acknowledged it as such when it declared: "Among religions in this country which do not teach... a belief in the existence of God, are Buddhism, Taoism... Secular Humanism and others."]

Philosophy of History. Classical Marxism was based on the theory of economic determinism, class warfare, and the struggle for control of the means of production. In the opening lines of the *Communist Manifesto* Marx wrote, "The history of all hitherto existing society is a history of class struggles." According to him, societies progressed through various stages of development until they reached the level of capitalism. Inevitably, the exploited working classes would rise up, overthrow their capitalistic oppressors, and establish a pure communistic (classless) society based on the egalitarian principle, "From each according to his ability to each according to his need."

However, the transition from competitive capitalism to cooperative communism wouldn't occur overnight, as human beings have been conditioned historically to think and act individualistically rather than cooperatively. The evolution toward a pure classless society must be guided by a "**dictatorship of the proletariat**," an elite class of enlightened intellectuals (such as Marx, for instance) who would socially engineer the process.

Anticipating postmodernism, Politically Correct Neo-Marxism is predicated on the belief that all history is driven by power relationships. Certain groups – defined by race, religion, sex and class – dominate others that are the victims of oppression and injustice. In order to create an equal and just society, the liberal elite class – in particular, politicians, judges, educators, entertainers, and the media – must mold public opinion and promote legislation and values that move society toward the left-wing utopian ideal.

Social Theory. Sociology-based stereotyping, social polarization and class conflict (and even class warfare) are integral aspects of classical Marxist social theory. Classical Marxism divided society into "good" and "bad" people along broad socio/economic lines. The "good" were the "productive" classes – i.e., the proletariat class of common laborers, factory workers, artisans, farmers and peasants who worked with their hands. The "bad" were the predatory exploiters – the bourgeoisie class, the capitalists, industrialists, bankers, managers, landlords, clergy, etc.

In contemporary Neo-Marxist thought, this kind of simplistic social stereotyping is perpetuated, except that now the “good” are the victimized minorities – feminist women, blacks, Hispanics, homosexuals, etc. – and the “bad” are white males, non-feminist white females and Christians.

The division of humanity along broad sociological lines rather than according to individual character has been a recurring theme since ancient times, but it usually has been cast in economic terms. Racial and sexual politics is a uniquely 20th century concept. But long before Marx, notable Americans acknowledged the age-old problem of class envy and class conflict. John Adams put it this way: “In every society where property exists there will ever be a struggle between rich and poor.” James Madison, writing in *The Federalist*, noted that “The most common... source [of conflict throughout human history] has been the various and unequal distribution of property.” Fifty years later, Abraham Lincoln observed, “These capitalists generally act harmoniously, and in concert, to fleece the people.”

The massive social and economic upheavals brought on by the emergence of modern capitalism and the Industrial Revolution only exacerbated class biases and tensions, as Marx correctly noted in the *Communist Manifesto*: “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.” This was nothing new. A decade before Marx, the platform of the Working Men’s Republican Political Association of Penn Township, Pennsylvania stated the same theme:

There appear to exist two distinct classes, the rich and the poor; the oppressed and the oppressor; those that live by their own labor and they that live by the labor of others; the aristocratic and the democratic; the despotic and the republican, who are in direct opposition to one another in their objects and pursuits.

By the time the Populist and Progressive reform movements emerged in the late 1800s, many reformers had come to accept the inherent injustice of the bifurcation of society into two mutually-exclusive and competing classes. Consider this statement in the Populist Manifesto of 1892:

On the one side are the allied hosts of the monopolies, the money power, great trusts and railroad corporations, who seek the enactment of

laws to benefit them and impoverish the people; on the other are the farmers, laborers, merchants, and all other people who produce wealth and bear the burdens of taxation....

Throughout his extended political career, the evangelical Christian politician and social reformer William Jennings Bryan often expressed similar sentiments:

On the one side stand the corporate interests of the U.S., the moneyed interests, aggregated wealth and capital, imperious, arrogant, [and] compassionless....

Like Bryan, the firebrand Populist crusader Mary Lease railed against the kind of crony capitalism that dominated the economic and political fortunes of the nation in the late 1800s. In her famous stump speech, “Wall Street Owns the Country,” and in her later book, *The Problem of Civilization Solved* (1895), she declared:

Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street and for Wall Street.

The turn of the 20th century was a time of great reform movements as both the Populists and the Progressives challenged the traditional socio/economic status quo. Although their emphases were different, the Populist/Progressive coalition pushed a broad-based agenda calling for cleaner government and less political corruption; female suffrage and a more democratic political system; governmental regulation of trusts and corporations; a healthier and safer work environment; better pay and shorter hours for workers; consumer protection legislation; disability insurance and pension plans for workers; new labor laws protecting women and children; and laws to limit the workday to 10 hours. As one reformer put it, “The real heart of the movement is to use the government as an agency of human welfare.” Many of the most outstanding Americans of the era were caught up in the great humanitarian and reform causes of the day with bourgeois progressives such as Helen Keller often sounding as radical as the socialists:

This country is governed for the richest, for the corporations, the bankers, the land speculators, and for the exploiters of labor.... There is a natural competition and conflict between these competing

groups that can only be resolved by a survival of the fittest.

In the early 20th century the main difference between middle-class reformers such as Helen Keller or Jane Addams and democratic socialists such as Eugene Debs was a matter of degree, not kind. But although their rhetoric often sounded alike, there was at least one fundamental philosophical difference between them. Many Progressive humanitarians believed capitalism could be reformed and made more humane under proper government regulation, unionization, and new technological innovations. Furthermore, they did not believe, as did the socialists and Marxists, that there is an inevitable and unreconcilable conflict of interests between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat classes. In time, of course, this proved to be generally true as decade-by-decade the working conditions, incomes, and standard-of-living for the working classes gradually improved.

Social and economic progress is not a zero-sum game in which someone must lose whenever someone else wins. In a nation in which all race- and gender-based legal restrictions have been eliminated, it is possible (so far as any manmade system allows) to have an equal-opportunity society wherein people succeed or fail according to the quality of their character. This should be the ideal, but it would thwart the goals of the cultural Marxists who use social conflict as a pretext to radically transform American society and culture through persistent agitation. Therefore, a key tactic in their assault on traditional values and institutions is the exploitation not only of class envy but also of racial and sexual politics.

Authoritarianism. Theoretically, the ultimate goal of Marxism has always been a classless (or communistic) society in which everyone is equal. Since this goal defies the realities of human nature, it takes a special class of people in society with the power to impose egalitarianism on everyone else. In Marx's writings, he called this interim phase between the fall of capitalism and the dawn of communism the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Naturally, he inferred that this was a benevolent dictatorship (at least, benevolent after all the "counter-revolutionaries" in society had been eliminated), but for the hundreds of millions who have had to endure Communist Dictatorships of the Proletariat in places like the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, Cuba, North

Korea and elsewhere, it has been anything but humane and just.

Like their patriarch Marx, Neo-Marxists are convinced that those who oppose their agenda are witless traditionalists with no social consciousness and no regard for social justice. Therefore, the cultural elite class has a moral responsibility to protect the victims of social injustice – the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, feminists, homosexuals, radical left-wing political ideologues, *et al.* – from the bigotry and exploitation of troglodyte conservatives.

Furthermore, because their cause is righteous, the cultural elite are justified in using any means necessary to suppress dissent and control society and culture for the common good of "the people." Therefore, a certain amount of censorship is necessary in order to suppress "politically incorrect" opinions in the interest of a more fair, just and harmonious society – as defined by the cultural elite, of course.

Theory of Expropriation and the Redistribution of Wealth. Classical Marxism taught that following the revolution, the proletariat had the right to expropriate the land, factories, and other property of the bourgeoisie. Of course, in the initial stages all assets and resources had to be confiscated by the state and "the People's Party" (i.e., the Communist Party) until the dictatorship of the proletariat had prepared the masses to transition into a pure communist society. But at least theoretically, an essential component of the theory of expropriation was the redistribution of wealth and power in order to punish the rich for their sins and reward the victims of social injustice. To rally support among the working classes for a Communist revolution, Marx called for "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax" along with the "abolition of all rights of inheritance." Ultimately, though, his aim was to confiscate the wealth of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie and redistribute it to the masses, as he noted in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The distinguishing feature of Communism is... the abolition of bourgeois property.... Modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

The expropriation and redistribution of wealth is perennially popular since it exploits the class envy that is present in virtually all societies throughout history. Among the poor and the working classes, there has always been the tendency to view the rich and the powerful with fear and loathing. In some societies, of course, the class antagonism is considerably more justified, but even in the most free and open societies it will always be a source of contention. Consider the following comments by the Populist organizer Ignatius Donnelly in 1894:

This government was founded by plain men, not millionaires. But we now have two parties arrayed against each other, Aristocracy against Commonality. Thirty thousand families own one half of the wealth of this country, and they have no part in producing it. They have stolen it from the labor and toil that has produced the nation.

Similarly, the American socialist Eugene Debs was passionate in decrying the vast disparity between the incomes and lifestyles of the rich and poor, which he regarded as innately unjust:

I am opposing a social order in which it is possible for one man who does absolutely nothing that is useful to amass a fortune of millions of dollars – while million of men and women who work all the days of their lives secure barely enough for a wretched existence.

Furthermore, it wasn't just radical reformers and socialists who expressed outrage over the disparity between the privileged elite and the common working classes. In 1886 the writer, humorist and social commentator, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) wrote...

Who are the oppressors? The few: the king, the capitalist and a handful of other overseers and superintendents. Who are the oppressed? The many: the nations of the earth; the valuable persons; the workers; they that make the bread that the soft-handed and idle eat. Why is it right that there is not a fairer division of the [resources] all around? Because laws and constitutions have ordered otherwise. Then it follows that laws and constitutions should change and say there shall be a more nearly equal division.

In our day, the enforcers of Political Correctness have taken the classical Marxist theme of expropriation and redistribution of wealth and turned it into a racial (and sometimes gender-based) spoils system in education, government and corporate

America. Once PC zealots are entrenched in a university, a government bureaucracy or a corporation, they often implement an expropriation program under the guise of “diversity” and enforce it through Affirmative Action quotas. When initiated in the 1970s, the concept of Affirmative Action was promoted as a means to compensate for past injustices. In some cases there was some merit in this attempt to “level the playing field,” but as time goes on such programs merely institutionalize a form of reverse discrimination. Rather than individual merit and competence being the decisive factors in admissions, hiring and promotions, the primary criteria now become race, ethnicity or gender (and in some cases, sexual preference).

Selective Tolerance. In classical Marxism the bourgeoisie were castigated as “counter-revolutionaries” and “enemies of the people.” As vile exploiters, they were entitled to no respect and no rights. Today, PC Marxists promote racial- and gender-based cultural diversity as a method by which they can break the supposed social and economic domination of white males.

As mentioned earlier, the left poses as the champions of tolerance, but in reality they are only selectively tolerant when it comes to real diversity. They have no interest in ideological diversity if it includes Christians, social conservatives or moral traditionalists. They justify their bigotry and intolerance the same way Marxists have always done. Just as Communist parties, posing as the official voice of “the people,” outlawed all opposition (“counter-revolutionary”) parties, cultural Marxists believe they have a responsibility to eradicate the last vestiges of Christian influence and white male dominance in America's cultural institutions.

This explains why so many traditionally conservative institutions eventually become liberal over time. Reasonable conservatives understand that, due to the fallibility of mankind, traditional values and practices are imperfect, so they tend to tolerate people whose views are more liberal or relativistic. Similarly, in their skepticism toward traditional values, liberals tend to tolerate those who are more radical than themselves. Hard-core radicals, however, are left-wing fundamentalist ideologues. Unlike moderates and most conservatives, they understand the principle of culture war. They realize that what is at stake is a struggle

between two incompatible and irreconcilable worldviews. This is why they are resolute and implacably hostile toward anyone more traditional or conservative than themselves. With this mentality in place, it is inevitable that cultural institutions veer farther and farther to the left over time.

Sexual Politics. In modern times, one of the strongest appeals of radical left-wing ideology has been its promotion of sexual liberation. This was an animating theme in the French Revolution, and it was featured prominently in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Both of them advocated the abolition of the traditional family, and in Marx's *The German Ideology* (1845) and Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) they argued that traditional male patriarchy oppressed females by holding them as property of their fathers and husbands. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx also called for the abolition of marriage and the open "community of women" (i.e., free sex).

As stated previously, Political Correctness is essentially cultural Marxism, and as an ideology it derives from a naturalistic worldview and a secular humanistic philosophy. As Dinesh D'Souza notes in his book, *What's So Great About Christianity* (2007), one of the greatest attractions of naturalism is its sexual implications. Secularists and left-wing ideologues in particular have always known this, and D'Souza quotes one as saying, "Against the power of religion we employ an equal if not greater power – the power of the hormones."

Ever since the 1920s Neo-Marxists have emphasized the 'X' factor as part of their strategy for cultural subversion. Like other social radicals before them, they argue that traditional and conventional sexuality is repressive, and that there should be no limits on sexual experimentation and expression. A key component of cultural Marxism, and a clever strategy on their part, has been the integration of Marxism and Freudianism. Like the Freudians, they believe traditional Biblically-based sexual morality is a repressive force that hinders societal evolution.

Freudian psychology, the Sexual Revolution of the 20th century, and *Playboy*-style hedonism are rooted in a naturalistic worldview that considers men and women to be highly-evolved animals. This makes any appeal to "morality" problematical, as "morality" becomes whatever the individual feels is "natural" or

society deems acceptable. In the past, most societies repressed sexual libertinism because it was considered irresponsible and resulted in negative social consequences. But in the 20th century sex propagandists have argued that repression of the sexual libido is psychologically unhealthy and therefore worse than sexual libertinism. For human beings prone to egoism and driven by base impulses, this is a nearly irresistible temptation, and it has been exploited very effectively by cultural radicals who use sexual politics to undermine the moral integrity of our society and advance their ultimate agenda.

Post-Script: Truth and Consequences

Regarding the ideology of Political Correctness, it is helpful to keep two points in mind:

- (1) The PC mentality tends to assign value to people according to their group identity within broad sociological categories as defined by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.; and
- (2) PC controversies often involve the suppression of truth. For left-wing ideologues, certain truths must be censored and suppressed because they are "intolerant," "insensitive," and they hurt people's feelings. According to this mentality, certain protected groups – for instance, racial minorities, homosexuals, non-Christians, and feminist women – must be accorded special exemption status from criticism.

Now in the first place, lumping these groups together is illogical, unwarranted, and even insulting. Blacks are a race, feminism is an ideology, and homosexuality is a moral issue or perhaps a lifestyle. It is illogical and unwarranted to criticize people because of their race or gender for the simple reason that race and gender have nothing to do with their beliefs, values, character or lifestyle. On the other hand, feminism is an ideology, and it is fair game for criticism, as is homosexuality, atheism, liberalism, conservatism, or any number of other belief-based ideologies.

But under the type of speech codes that PC advocates seek to impose, any criticism of any of these special status groups is potentially a form of "hate speech." Even worse is the tendency to apply this kind of fascist censorship on the individual level. Not only

are certain *groups* regarded as immune from criticism, but even *individuals* within these groups are untouchable. Conversely, of course, a deplorable double standard is applied in the case of “hate speech” that is directed toward white people (particularly, white males), heterosexuals and Christians.

Political Correctness is tyrannical, hypocritical, self-righteous, hyper-sensitive and humorless. Furthermore, it is anti-individual and irrational. According to the PC rules of engagement, it is insufficient to value human beings according to the content of their character; people must be accepted (or rejected) on the basis of the sociological group category into which they fit. In effect, this robs individuals of their individual identity.

Cultural Marxism: Historical Origins The Greatest Threat

In the late 1980s many culture watchers were alarmed by the emergence of “Political Correctness” in higher education – a form of left-wing cultural imperialism that was adamantly doctrinaire and implacably intolerant of all opposing views. The same kind of radical left-wing ideologues who sparked the Free-Speech Movement in Berkeley in 1964 and protested against “conformity” in American society and the lack of intellectual diversity in higher education were now firmly entrenched in academia, where they were committed to restricting free speech and controlling the behavior of a new generation of students.

The irony is striking, to say the least. Consider the following excerpt from a famous speech in 1964 by Mario Savio, a UC-Berkeley student activist who was rallying his fellow students to enter Sproul Hall and begin their sit-in demonstration:

We have an autocracy which runs this university. It's managed [like a corporation]. Now, I ask you to consider: If this is [an industry], and if the Board of Regents are the board of directors, if President [Clark] Kerr is the manager, then I'll tell you something: the faculty are a bunch of employees, and we're the raw material! But we're a bunch of raw material[s] that don't mean to have any process upon us, don't mean to be made into any product, don't mean to end up being bought by some clients of the University, be they the government, be they industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone! We're human beings!

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

Now, no more talking. We're going to march in singing, “We Shall Overcome.” Slowly – there are a lot of us. Up here to the left... I didn't mean that as a pun.... [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Savio]

Many of those who occupied administration buildings and shut down campuses in the 1960s are no less radical today, except that now they hold key positions in academia as administrators, deans and tenured professors. Now that they and their ideological colleagues control higher education, occasionally they are surprisingly candid regarding their agenda. One of the most influential is Henry Louis Gates, a former literature professor at Duke (and now at Harvard), who commented in 1991:

Ours was the generation that took over buildings in the late sixties and demanded the creation of black- and women's-studies programs, and now, like the return of the repressed, we have come back to challenge the traditional curriculum. [Quoted in D'Souza, "Illiberal Education." *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 1991), p. 56.]

Expanding on this theme, Gates identified "a rainbow coalition of blacks, leftists, feminists, deconstructionists, and Marxists" who have infiltrated academia and are now "ready to take control." It will not take long, he predicted. "As the old guard retires, we will be in charge. Then, of course, the universities will become more liberal [!] politically." [Ibid., p. 71.]

Here is a similar testimony from Jay Purini, a professor of English at Middlebury College:

After the Vietnam War, a lot of us didn't just crawl back into our library cubicles; we stepped into academic positions. With the war over, our visibility was lost, and it seemed for a while – to the unobservant – that we had disappeared. Now we have tenure, and the hard work of reshaping the universities has begun in earnest. [Ibid., p. 57.]

Academics such as Annette Kolodny, a former Berkeley radical and now the dean of the humanities faculty at the University of Arizona, are often quite open regarding their agenda. According to Kolodny, "I see my scholarship as an extension of my political activism." Typical of this mentality is Frederick Jameson of Duke University who describes his academic mission as the creation of "a Marxist culture in this country, to make Marxism an unavoidable presence in American social, cultural and intellectual life, in short to form a Marxist intelligentsia for the struggles of the future." The deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller is even more expansive, claiming that his goal is nothing less than "demolishing beyond hope of repair the machine of Western metaphysics."

Thomas Sowell, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, is convinced that the greatest threat to Western civilization comes not from Communist China or Islamic Jihadism or any other external threat, but from within – specifically, in the elite media and within our own universities. In the following comments, Sowell asks the question, "Can Western civilization survive its own intellectuals?"

Western civilization has survived the invasions of Genghis Khan from the East, the Ottoman Empire from the South, and two world wars originating from within. But whether it will survive its own intellectuals is much more doubtful.

The battlefield is everywhere, but especially where the young are being taught – from the elementary school to the university. The sins of the human race are being taught to them as the special depravities of the United States or of Western civilization [i.e., the practice of *sat*].

Deep thinkers like to talk about such things as the oppression of women in Western society – when in fact women have had a much lower position in Islamic cultures... and girl babies were often routinely killed in parts of Asia. It was a Western nation – Britain – which put an end to the burning of widows alive on their husbands' funeral pyres in India.

Slavery is of course the trump card of critics of Western civilization. But the tragic fact is that this abomination has existed on every continent inhabited by man. The pyramids were built by slaves.... [and] Slavery existed in both North and South America before the first white man set foot in the Western Hemisphere....

It was precisely in the West – notably in England – that a moral revulsion against slavery and a movement to stamp it out everywhere developed in the late 18th century.

Gross double standards in judging Western and non-Western cultures have become so commonplace among intellectuals that few seem to notice it anymore.... Those who habitually use such double standards... are some of the most fortunate and pampered people in Western society, including both highly paid media intellectuals and academics with soft schedules and numerous perks. Why these should be among the most venomous critics of the West – and the most blindly one-sided – is no doubt a long and complex story. However, spoiled brats have seldom been noted for their gratitude. [Tomas Sowell, "Will Western Civilization Survive Intellectuals' Attack?" *Marietta Daily Journal* (Oct. 4, 1987), p. 2D.]

Marxism and the Great War

Karl Marx predicted that when the next great European war erupted, class consciousness would prevail over nationalistic loyalty. As he envisioned it, the working classes throughout Europe would rise up and revolt against their capitalist exploiters and the bourgeois politicians who controlled these governments. According to Marx, war was certainly inevitable because, by their very nature, capitalist nations are constantly competing for control of vital raw materials and natural resources that feed their industrial factories. However, once the conflict came, the social solidarity of the proletariat would supercede any residual patriotic sentiments they felt. Therefore, for example, the poor and oppressed workers in Britain and France would feel a greater sense of commonality with their counterparts in Germany than with their own upper class elites.

The long-anticipated Great War finally broke out in 1914, but to the dismay of Europe's socialists the masses of workers joined up and fought for their country just as they always had done in the past. But Marx was right about one thing: just as he had predicted, the war was an unmitigated disaster for European civilization as it destroyed the fragile political, social, and economic stability of the continent along with most of what was left of any residual Christian influence.

One Marxist propagandist who capitalized on the crisis was the Russian Bolshevik **Vladimir Ilyich Lenin** (1870-1924). At the outset of the conflict Lenin wrote *Socialism and War* in which he declared, "War cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and Socialism is created." Conversely, he argued that class-generated civil wars – "wars waged by the oppressed class against the oppressing class" – were "legitimate, progressive and necessary." This was the context in which he proclaimed his famous dictum: "Convert the imperialist war [i.e., World War I] into civil war" [i.e., the Bolshevik Revolution]. Lenin was not only a firebrand revolutionary but also a doctrinaire Marxist evangelist. As he exhorted his fellow-Bolsheviks in *Socialism and War*, "explain to the masses that they have no other road to salvation except the revolutionary overthrow of their governments."

The great irony was that at the turn of the 20th Century most Europeans were optimistic regarding their prospects for the future. Europe and much of the rest of the world seemed to be on the verge of a new age of unprecedented peace, progress and prosperity. Democracy and self-determination were hailed as the wave of the future and the solution to traditional nationalistic rivalries and disputes, and the concept of constitutional government was becoming more universally accepted than ever before. Capitalism, industrialization and new inventions and technologies were producing a vast array of innovative products and services, all of which were contributing to higher standards of living for the masses. Many nations were enacting progressive labor laws to protect the rights of workers, just as they were implementing social welfare safety-net programs on behalf of the indigent and the mentally-ill. Furthermore, with the establishment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (in effect, the first "World Court") authorized by The Hague Peace Conference of 1899, large-scale warfare seemed a thing of the past.

The scholar and journalist Norman Angell (1872-1967) exemplified the spirit of the age. Ignoring the realities of human nature, Angell was convinced that common sense and reason rendered war unthinkable. In his best-selling book, *The Great Illusion* (1910), he argued that nations had become so financially and economically interdependent that swords would inevitably be beaten into plowshares. After all, why would any nation be so foolish as to engage in open warfare when it was obvious that both victors and vanquished would suffer such devastating consequences? Therefore, he predicted that Europe and the rest of the industrialized world would never again blunder into a major conflict such as the Napoleonic Wars that had ravaged the Continent a century earlier. Buying into the popular social Darwinist paradigm of the day, Angell wrote that warfare "belongs to a stage of development out of which we have passed," and he doubted that mankind, "in blind obedience to primitive instincts and old prejudices, enslaved by the old [prejudices], would ever again go to war."

[Note: Although he was consistently wrong about nearly everything, Angell was nonetheless an influential force in European affairs for nearly 30 years. Both before and after the Great War he was one

of Britain's most energetic peace activists, and in the inter-war years (1919-39) he was a Labor Party MP and served on the Executive Committee of the League of Nations. In 1933, the same year that Hitler came to power in Germany, Angell was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Over the course of his career he wrote 41 books in which he continued to argue that war was outdated – all in the midst of the bloodiest and most destructive half-century in human history.]

All of this naive optimism aside, there were others, considerably more perceptive, who warned of “shipwrecked Europe” – a civilization caught up in scientific and technological progress and materialistic success but devoid of the kind of moral and spiritual values that mitigate human conflicts. In that regard, the fate of the “Unsinkable Titanic” on its maiden voyage serves as an appropriate metaphor for the horrors that awaited European civilization on the eve of World War I.

In reality, the aforementioned Friedrich Nietzsche was considerably more perceptive than most intellectuals at the time. Nietzsche was a cynic and an apostle of nihilism whose core message was the “death of God.” His point, of course, was not that there had ever been an actual (literal) God: Rather, the very *idea* of God as the Sovereign Moral Arbiter of the Universe and the One to whom all of mankind was accountable was what was dying in European intellectual circles by the late 1800s. Now, with the advance of science (or to be more accurate, the cult of *scientism*), the *concept* of God was passe. God was no longer a necessary explanatory cause for the natural material world, which is the only reality there is.

According to Nietzsche, belief in God no longer stirs the human imagination or governs how people live their lives. Perceptively, he understood that the “death of God” had certain inevitable consequences, and that the socio/political ramifications of the “death of God” were dire. If there is no God, there is no absolute standard for what is True, Good, and Beautiful. It would take time for the word to filter down to the masses, but eventually the Bad News of the death of God would change everything. A culture cannot lose its philosophic and moral center and long survive. Inevitably, there would be a total breakdown in human society on every level – individually as well as for the family, the community, the society and the culture. With the collapse of all moral boundaries,

humanity would be free to pursue “the deification of passion” and “splendid animality.” The ultimate consequence, as he warned in 1880, was that a catastrophic “Age of Barbarism” would descend upon Europe:

Our whole European culture is moving for some time now with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade, as toward a catastrophe.... There will be wars such as have never happened on earth. [Quoted in Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death*, (Crossway Books, 1994), p. 34.]

Nietzsche also predicted the rise of totalitarianism. The death of God leaves human beings too weak to live without rules, and inevitably the state – the “New Idol” – would be established as a substitute for the Absolute, forcing people to serve it rather than God. Understandably, Nietzsche had little regard for philosophers such as Hegel and Marx who theorized that there was some higher or ultimate purpose in history. Likewise, he dismissed romantics such as the Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt who sought meaning in life through aesthetics – the veneration of art, music, and beauty. But he was particularly contemptuous of those optimistic secular humanists who predicted a bright and better future for humanity in a post-Christian world. As the Christian social critic Os Guinness notes:

The humanists claimed that they could retain Christian values [such as the inherent dignity of man and an objective basis for justice] and give them a validity independent of God. But Nietzsche dismissed this as impossible since the Christian faith was the entire undergirding of all Western civilization – not only of its religious beliefs but also of its social values and its fundamental view of human nature. His diagnosis was not progress, but a time of decadence whose logic is nihilism. There remains only the void.... For those who would not face the desperate extremity of the truth exposed to them, he had nothing but scorn. Nietzsche agreed with Burckhardt in hating the ‘odious windbags of progressive optimism’ and saw only the horror of the abyss. [Ibid., p. 37.]

Nietzsche wasn't the only voice in the wilderness warning of impending disaster. Fifty years earlier **Heinrich Heine** (1797-1856), a Jewish essayist and romantic poet, wrote an ominous prophecy in which he predicted that Germany posed the greatest threat to civilization in the future. However, in contrast to

Nietzsche who blamed Christianity for most of the world's problems, Heine understood the Church to be the sole bastion of civility that kept German militarism – that “frenzied madness of the ancient warriors” – in check. However, there would come a time when Christianity would “collapse miserably,” leading to a new Dark Age of barbarism “unlike anything before in the history of the world.” In his words:

Christianity – and this is its greatest merit – has somewhat mitigated that brutal German love of war, but it could not destroy it. Should that subduing talisman, the cross, be shattered, the frenzied madness of the ancient warriors, that insane Berserk rage of which Nordic bards have spoken and sung so often, will once more burst into flame. This talisman is fragile, and the day will come when it will collapse miserably. Then the ancient stone gods will rise from the forgotten debris and rub the dust of a thousand years from their eyes, and Thor will leap to life with his giant hammer and smash the Gothic cathedrals....

Do not smile at my advice – the advice of a dreamer who warns you against Kantians... and philosophers of nature. Do not smile at the visionary who anticipates the same revolution in the realm of the visible as has taken place in the spiritual. Thought precedes action as lightning precedes thunder. German thunder is of true German character; it is not nimble, but rumbles along ponderously. Yet it will come, and... its crash will be unlike anything before in the history of the world. Then you will know that the German thunderbolt has fallen at last.... A play will be performed in German which will make the French Revolution look like [a tea party]. [*The History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (1834).]

Although Heine's prophecy would ultimately be fulfilled a century later in the horrors of Nazi Germany, the Great War of 1914-18 was what destroyed Old Europe and set the stage for Hitler's ascent to power. Portentously, Heine also wrote, “Where they burn books, they will also ultimately burn people.” Almost as soon as they seized power in 1933, the Nazis burned his books. Then a few years later they burned people – including more than six million Jews like Heine.

Unfortunately, few Europeans, and even fewer Americans, took either Nietzsche or Heine's warnings seriously. Heine was virtually unknown, and Nietzsche was certifiably a crank and a crackpot – not to mention, an insanely vile individual. But ironically,

like Heine, he understood the consequences of the “death of God” and the erosion of Christian influence in Western civilization far better than most of the intelligentsia of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Prosperous, progressive, optimistic, and generally post-Christian, few Europeans imagined the cataclysm that awaited the Continent. Once the conflict began, propagandists hyped it as “the war to end all wars” and, in America, “the war to make the world safe for democracy.” In fact, it was an unmitigated disaster. As Pope Benedict XV (r. 1914-22) later observed, “This war was the suicide of Europe.”

With the erosion of Christian influence came the unleashing not only of pent-up aggressive impulses but the collapse of moral sanity and common sense. In his essay, “Sarajevo: The End of Innocence,” the historian Edmund Stillman ruminates on the cause of the greatest war in human history to that time, and the apparent lack of any rational causal factors:

But why the mindlessness of the war that followed, the blundering diplomacies and reckless plans that made disaster inevitable once hostilities broke out? It is all so grotesque: great and shattering consequences without proportionate causes. When the inferno... ended at last, the broken survivors asked themselves the same question, seeking to comprehend the terrible thing that had happened. To have endured the inferno without a justifying reason – to be forced to admit that a war of such terror and scope had been only a blind, insouciant madness – was intolerable. It was easier to think of it as an unworthy or a wrongful cause than as a ghastly, titanic joke on history.

After the event Winston Churchill wrote: “But there was a strange temper in the air. Unsatisfied by material prosperity the nations [of Europe] turned restlessly towards strife.... Almost one might think the world wished to suffer.” Yet if this opinion had been widely accepted, it would have been a judgment on human nature too terrible to endure. And so a new mythology of the war grew up – a postwar mythology of materialistic cynicism almost as contrived as the wartime propaganda fictions.... It embraced the myths of the munitions manufacturers who had plotted a war they were, in fact, helpless to control; of Machiavellian, imperialistic diplomacies; of an ever-spiraling arms race, when in fact the naval race between England and Germany had, if anything, somewhat abated by 1914.

But no single cause or combination of such causes will explain the First World War. Neither the Germans, the Austrians, the Russians, the French, the Italians, nor the British went to war to fulfill a grand ambition – to conquer Europe, or the world, or to promote an ideology. They did not even seek economic dominion through war. The somber truth is that Western civilization, for a hundred years without a major war and absorbed in a social and technological revolution – progress, in short – turned on itself in a paroxysm of slaughter. [Emund Stillman, “Sarajevo: The End of Innocence,” in William L. Langer, ed., *Perspectives in Western Civilization* (American Heritage Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 218-9.]

Punctuating Stillman’s thesis, Richard Miller, in his book, *Bohemia: The Protoculture Then and Now*, describes the “torrent of events” and the “karma of violence” that forever disrupted the peace and tranquility of Europe during these traumatic years:

In the beginning, most of the soldiers believed they were fighting for civilization, peace and freedom; later, they fought simply for survival. By November 1918, 60 million of them, some wearing belt buckles marked GOTT MIT UNS (God With US), others with cap ornaments emblazoned DIU ET MON DROIT (God and My Right), still others following the flag of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, had slashed and shot and stabbed and shelled and bombed one another until almost 10 million lay dead and 21 million had been wounded. European youth – the best – and with it the European future, had been physically exterminated or mentally transformed. Most of the young idealists were dead. Among the survivors, broken or whole, the tender idealistic quality of soul had been cauterized and scabbed over....

Nothing could ever again be as it had been. August 1914 released a torrent of events that carries us still and a karma of violence not yet redressed. A generation had been lost; enormous capital squandered. The Americans alone wasted enough money to have built a good new house with a garage and a Model T Ford for every family in the country....

For millions God, and with Him the Christian traditions, lay rotting alongside His dead servants in northern France, Poland, the Italian Alps.... Not only was God dead, but so was Man. [Richard Miller, *Bohemia: The Protoculture Then and Now* (Nelson-Hall, 1977), pp.127-8]

As both Stillman and Miller observed, the moral and spiritual havoc wreaked by the Great War was

incalculable – a theme that Eric Maria Remarque addressed in his 1928 anti-war classic, *All Quiet on the Western Front*:

For us lads of 18 [our elders] ought to have been mediators and guides to the world of maturity, the world of work, of duty, of culture, of progress – to the future. We often made fun of them and played jokes on them, but in our hearts we trusted them. The idea of authority, which they represented, was associated in our minds with a greater insight and a manlier wisdom. But the first death we saw [on the battlefield] shattered this belief. We had to recognize that our generation was more to be trusted than theirs. They surpassed us only in [clever rhetoric]. The first bombardment showed us our mistake. And under it the world as they had taught it to us broke into pieces.” [Eric Maria Remarque: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Fawcett Crest, 1928, 1956), pp. 16-7.]

Aborted Revolutions in Germany

In the wake of the Great War two independent Communist revolutions in Germany threatened to topple the newly-established Weimar Republic. In Berlin, the **Spartacist Uprising** erupted in January 1919, less than three months after the official end of the war. Although the revolt wasn’t initially orchestrated by the Communist Party, it quickly became associated with the Spartacist League, a Marxist organization led by **Rosa Luxemburg** and **Karl Leibnecht**.

Luxemburg was a Polish-born Jew and a radical Marxist, and she was a passionate and charismatic activist and organizer. Prior to the war she was imprisoned three times for protesting German militarism and imperialism, and in the



Rosa Luxemburg

midst of the conflict she co-founded the Sparacist League along with Leibnecht. As the war dragged on, the Kaiser’s government grew less tolerant of dissidents, and both Luxemburg and Leibnecht were imprisoned for the last 2½ years of the conflict for treasonous activities.

In January 1919 a general strike by workers flooded the streets of Berlin with protesters, and the

demonstrations quickly turned into street battles between militants and the Weimar government. Once the violence erupted and blood was shed, the revolt was joined by various left-wing groups such as the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), the Spartacist League, and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).

The government responded by calling in a crack militia regiment, the *Freikorps*, to quell the uprising, and over a four-day period hundreds of protesters were slaughtered. At some point in the melee, both Luxemburg and Leibnecht were arrested and summarily executed.

Meanwhile, a second revolution was taking place in Bavaria under the direction of the Marxist politician and journalist, **Kurt Eisner**. Like Luxemburg and Leibnecht, Eisner had been incarcerated during the war for treason. Upon his release from prison near the end of the war, he organized a revolution in Bavaria that overthrew the monarchy, and he and his supporters declared Bavaria a free state. A coalition of Communists and socialists elected Eisner the prime minister of the Bavarian Socialist Republic, but in January 1919 his party was defeated at the polls. A month later, as he was on his way to present his resignation to the Bavarian parliament, Eisner was assassinated.

With the failure of the Spartacist Uprising and the fall of the Bavarian Socialist Republic, Communism failed in its bid to seize political power in Germany. Throughout the 1920s the German Communist Party remained a potent force, but eventually its arch-rival, the National Socialists (or Nazi Party), prevailed as the incompetent and corrupt Weimar Republic finally collapsed in 1933.

The Soviet Republic of Hungary

The most successful Communist revolution in Europe after World War I occurred in Hungary under the leadership of **Bela Kun** (1886-1938). Kun was born in Transylvania, a province in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time. (After the war, Transylvania was incorporated into the new nation of Romania.) Kun's father was a lapsed Jew and his mother a nominal Protestant, and as a young man he identified with the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.

Kun worked as an investigative journalist prior to World War I, and he later fought in the Austro-Hungarian army. Captured by Russian troops in 1916, he converted to Communism in a POW camp. Following the Bolshevik Revolution and the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that ended Russia's involvement in the war, Kun served in the Red Army during the early months of the Russian Civil War.

When World War I officially ended in November 1918, Kun returned to Hungary along with several hundred other Hungarian Communists. Immediately, he and his comrades founded the Hungarian Communist Party and launched a major propaganda campaign against the government. Like most of Europe, Hungary was economically and socially ravaged by the war. Inflation was out of control, along with massive unemployment and a lack of housing, food and fuel. Kun, a fiery and intense orator and a gifted organizer, organized a series of strikes and protest demonstrations until he was arrested as a Communist agitator and thrown into prison in February 1919.

In the midst of all this turmoil, the Hungarian army was fighting a Romanian independence movement that was supported by the Western Allies. When the Allies threatened to intervene in Hungary on behalf of the Romanians, the Hungarian Social Democratic government, desperate for potential allies, reached out to the USSR. Since Kun was known to have Lenin's support, the Social Democrats opened negotiations with him even while he was still in prison. The SD's agreed to form a coalition with the Communists, and in an odd turn of events Kun was released from prison and promptly sworn in as the Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the new Soviet Republic of Hungary.

As the dominant official in the government, Kun moved quickly to solidify his power base. In a letter to Lenin, he boasted that "My personal influence in the Revolutionary Governing Council is such that the dictatorship of the proletariat is firmly established, since the masses are backing me." In reality, Kun was even more radical than Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and under his direction the Hungarian Soviet nationalized most private property and converted all agricultural land into collective farms rather than distribute the land to the peasants. Then, since neither anyone in the government nor the peasants had any expertise in running large farms, they wound up retaining the

former estate owners as managers. So in effect, nothing really changed for the rural masses.

The Hungarian government was more doctrinaire than competent, and in short order it drove the economy further into depression. Inflation and unemployment continued to soar while agricultural and industrial production plummeted to new levels. To control dissent, Kun organized a secret police that orchestrated a “Red Terror” campaign.

In Russia, the Bolsheviks were focused on their own internal problems, so they never intervened in Hungary’s war with the Romanians. With Western backing, the Romanian military invaded Hungary in the summer of 1919, took Budapest, and forced the Hungarian government to capitulate. Kun’s short-lived Communist regime had lasted only 133 days.

[Post-script: Kun’s political career didn’t end with the fall of the Soviet regime in Hungary. Initially, he fled to Vienna, but was incarcerated by the government for nearly a year before being released in a prisoner exchange with Russia in July of 1920. With Lenin’s patronage, he became an official in the Communist Party, and while serving in the Crimean he reportedly ordered a mass genocide against thousands of ethnic minorities in the area. In addition, he was responsible for the execution of tens of thousands of White Russian POWs who had been promised amnesty if they surrendered.

As a political ally of Grigory Zinoviev, the head of the **Communist International** (a.k.a. the **Comintern**), Kun became a high official in the Comintern. In 1921 he was sent to Germany as a Soviet diplomat, but he failed in his mission to spark a Communist uprising against the Weimar government. Later, he worked as a Comintern operative in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Kun had an abrasive personality, and he constantly feuded with other Communist leaders. During Stalin’s purge of the Old Bolsheviks in the late 1930s, Kun was arrested, charged with being a Trotskyite, imprisoned and executed – probably in 1938.]

Bolshevik Russia

Surprisingly, the one place where a Communist revolution actually succeeded long-term was in Russia, a nation that Marx would never have expected. Russia was an unlikely country for a Communist

revolution since it was one of the most backward nations in Europe and had hardly even industrialized or transitioned to capitalism. But under the leadership of **Vladimir Ilich Lenin** (1870-1924) the Bolsheviks seized power in the **October Revolution** of 1917. Once in control they signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany on March 3, 1918 that effectively took Russia out of the war. This allowed the Bolsheviks to begin the long process of consolidating their control over all of Russia.

This was an arduous task as the Communists met fierce opposition. Anarchy prevailed as there was widespread chaos in the cities and countryside with tens of thousands of armed peasants, many of whom were war veterans, roaming the countryside, looting, plundering, seizing land and killing anyone who stood in their way. To eliminate all “enemies of the state” Lenin appointed **Leon Trotsky** (1879-1940) head of the Red Army and commissioned him to break the back of any and all opposition resistance movements throughout the country.



Leon Trotsky

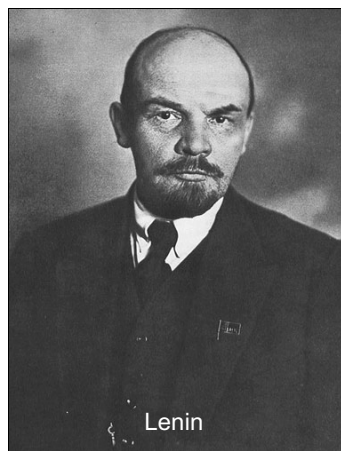
For more than three years the Bolsheviks fought a variety of rebel factions. Their main opponents were various “White” armies, conservative monarchists that were loyal to the Tsar and the old regime.

Theoretically, the Whites should have been able to defeat the Reds, but internal rivalries within their own ranks weakened their position and they eventually were defeated. A much smaller but tenacious enemy was the Socialist Revolutionaries, a loose coalition of violent anarchists who considered the Bolsheviks too moderate. In their attempt to overthrow the government, the SR’s resorted to terrorism and assassinations, and they even managed to shoot Lenin in 1918. In addition, local para-military outfits called the “Greens” roamed the countryside, skirmishing with both the Reds and the Whites.

The casualty rate in the Russian Civil War was catastrophic – actually higher than in World War I. Approximately one million were killed in actual battles and skirmishes, nearly three million died of

famine, and another six million were victims of a major cholera epidemic.

In the midst of the Civil War, Russia was invaded by Allied military forces in 1918. Originally, troops from the United States, Great Britain and France landed in Russia to protect Allied weapons that were being stored in Murmansk and Archangel from falling into German hands. Once in Russia, however, the Allies conspired with various White army contingents that were attempting to overthrow the Bolsheviks. In subsequent Communist propaganda, the Allied Intervention was depicted as an act of imperialist aggression and an attempt by the Western Powers to overthrow the “legitimate” government of the USSR. Obviously, the Allies had nothing but contempt for the Bolshevik regime that had unilaterally negotiated with the Germans, pulled out of the war, and broken all the treaties that the Tsar’s government had with the West.



The Allies hoped to see the Communist regime collapse and expected that it would be replaced a friendly government, but when the task proved too difficult, support for the Allied Intervention withered and the troops were removed. Thirty years later, Winston Churchill would

remark that one of the greatest mistakes of the 20th century was “the failure to strangle Bolshevism in its cradle.”

Lenin and his comrades were absolutely ruthless as they turned Russia into the first totalitarian state in modern history in keeping with Marx’s concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Officially atheistic and denying any moral and ethical standards that might temper their tyranny, the Communists imposed a dictatorship over the Russian people that was unparalleled in its scope and depth of depravity. In pursuit of their utopian vision of “equality” and “social justice,” the Bolsheviks were as fanatical and dogmatic as any religious zealots in history. In that regard, they rationalized that the end justified the means – or as Lenin stated, “Not a single problem of the class struggle has ever been solved in history

except by violence.... You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs.” Commenting on the diabolical moral relativism and the twisted logic inherent in Bolshevik ideology, the Russian Jewish philosopher Semyon Frank observed:

Sacrificing himself for the sake of this idea, he does not hesitate to sacrifice other people for it. Among his contemporaries he sees either merely the victims of the world’s evil he dreams of eradicating or the perpetrators of that evil.... This feeling of hatred for the ‘enemies of the people’ forms the concrete and active psychological foundation of his life. Thus the great love of mankind of the future gives birth to a great hatred for people; the passion for organizing an earthly paradise become a passion for destruction. [Quoted in Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics from the Great War to the War on Terror* (HarperCollins, 2007), p. 39.]

Many Western liberals and socialists, initially supportive of the Bolshevik Revolution in theory, were shocked once they realized just how cruel and sadistic Lenin’s regime truly was. One of these was the British socialist philosopher, Bertrand Russell, who accompanied a delegation of Labour Party officials on a visit to the USSR in 1920. Appalled by what he witnessed, Russell later wrote:

I felt that everything I valued in human life was being destroyed in the interests of a glib and narrow philosophy, and that in the process untold misery was being inflicted upon many millions of people. [ibid.]

Attributing the rise of Communism in Russia to the catastrophic effects of the Great War and the collapse of traditional Christianity, Russell continued:

The war has left throughout Europe a mood of disillusionment and despair which calls aloud for a new religion, as the only force capable of giving men the energy to live vigorously. Bolshevism has supplied the new religion. It promises glorious things. [ibid.]

Once the Bolsheviks had established their control over the major population centers and had either eliminated or at least neutralized their main opposition, Lenin prepared to “export the revolution” by invading Europe. In retrospect, the plan appears absurd, but in the months following the end of World War I much of Europe was in utter chaos. Lenin had always been a bold and audacious strategist, and he

reckoned that Europe was ripe for conquest. The plan was to ignite a series of Communist revolutions throughout Eastern Europe and link up with the Communists in Germany.

As a doctrinaire Marxist, Lenin was convinced that Communism was an inevitable historical process that could not be contained within a single country such as Russia. He believed that eventually it would spread throughout the entire world, and that the survival of Communism in the USSR depended upon the overthrow of unfriendly capitalistic governments. As he put it, “As long as capitalism and socialism exist, we cannot live in peace. In the end one or the other will triumph.” Aided by their sympathetic sycophants in the West – socialists and liberals whom Lenin referred to as the Bolsheviks’ “useful idiots” – he was confident that one Western democracy after another would submit to Communism until finally the United States would drop into their hands “like an over-ripe fruit.”

An integral part of the Bolsheviks’ global strategy was the establishment of the Third Communist International (or Comintern), founded in Moscow in 1919. Fearing that the Bolshevik regime in Russia would suffer the same fate as the Paris Commune following the Franco-Prussian War, the goal of the Comintern was to coordinate the exportation of the revolution through the organization of Communist cell groups within target countries “by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State.” In effect, the various Communist parties would operate as a subversive fifth column behind enemy lines. To that end the Comintern churned out propaganda for mass distribution along with secret internal memos directing foreign Communist parties to take their ideology, organization and strategies from the Bolsheviks. Since Old Europe had collapsed and a variety of left-wing groups were vying for influence and power, much of the Comintern’s propaganda was aimed at rival

socialist parties. So although in theory an international organization, the Comintern was in fact a propaganda organ of the Bolshevik regime in Russia.

For Lenin, the first step in exporting the revolution was to conquer Poland, which had recently regained its national independence according to the terms of the treaties that ended World War I. But Poland’s eastern boundaries were ill-defined, and Polish and Russian troops had been fighting in the Ukraine since before the end of the war. Lenin considered Poland to be the bridge to Central and Western Europe, and the most direct route to Berlin and Paris ran through Warsaw. In 1919 Trotsky led the Red Army into Poland but suffered a crushing defeat at the Battle of Warsaw (a.k.a. the Battle of the Vistula) in August 1920. Subsequently, Polish forces drove the retreating Russians farther eastward, securing Poland’s independence and stabilizing its eastern borders.



Cultural Marxism: Early Theoreticians

A New Focus

In the aftermath of World War I the great continental-wide proletarian revolution that many Marxists expected never materialized. The working classes of Europe never united *en masse* behind the Red banner, and with the failure of Communist revolutions in Germany, the collapse of Bela Kun's regime in Hungary, and the Red Army's defeat in Poland, the Soviet Union was left isolated as the lone Communist state. Classical Marxist theory had proved insufficient in terms of rallying the masses of Europe, and in the midst of the post-war intellectual debates in Communist circles two theorists emerged who redefined Marxism in keeping with the times: Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukacs. Rather than focus exclusively on society's economic substructure, Gramsci and Lukacs turned their attention to the superstructure – the culture. This was a more comprehensive and ambitious undertaking, but in the long term it would prove to be a brilliant and effective strategy for undermining Western civilization.

Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian journalist, philosopher, and a political theorist. He joined the Italian Socialist Party on the eve of World War I, and for the next several years he wrote for various socialist newspapers. After the war ended, Gramsci was instrumental in founding the Communist Party of Italy.

Gramsci was among the first to recognize that a Marxist revolution was dependent upon infiltrating and subverting key cultural institutions and gradually changing the values of a society – a process that would require a long protracted culture war of attrition. Traveling to the Soviet Union in 1922 as a representative of the Italian Communist Party, he witnessed the brute force and tyranny involved in trying to convert that nation to socialism. His conclusion was that Communism was too



radical and too atheistic to be accepted voluntarily in the West. What was needed was a persistent and prolonged propaganda campaign that would undermine people's confidence in traditional values and religious beliefs, thereby making them more amenable to radical socialism. This was the essence and the theory of what would later be called **Neo-Marxism**.

Gramsci worked for the Comintern in Moscow and then in Vienna, where he hoped to spread the Bolshevik Revolution throughout Europe. Leaving his wife and family behind in Moscow, he returned to Italy to help create a united front of left-wing parties in opposition to Mussolini's Fascist regime. From 1924-26 he represented the Communist Party in the Italian legislature, but in 1926 he was arrested in a crackdown on dissidents. In his trial, the prosecutor declared, "For twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning." Apparently, that sounded like a good idea to the judge, and Gramsci was sentenced to just that – twenty years in prison. Eight years later he was released for health reasons, and he died a couple of years after that.

While in prison Gramsci wrote *Prison Notebooks*, a blueprint of sorts on the culture war. He called his working thesis and strategy **Critical Theory** – a systematic and broad-based assault on the moral and institutional foundations of Western culture. It was an ambitious agenda as Gramsci was convinced that the working classes were blind to their class interests due to two factors:

- (1) Capitalists and other social conservatives controlled the major cultural institutions, including the media and the education system. Over generations, these traditional institutions maintained social control by promoting bourgeois values and creating a consensus culture.
- (2) Christianity was a counter-revolutionary force that exerted great influence over Western civilization. In the mind of Gramsci and his comrades, Christian morality and ethics were identical to bourgeois values and therefore intrinsically repressive. Christianity kept the masses docile and pacified by promising "pie in the sky" in the afterlife rather than focusing attention on unjust social and political systems in this world.

Gramsci advocated a two-pronged attack on capitalist culture: both from the bottom-up and the top-down. First, Marxists should formulate and implement a uniquely secular proletarian culture that appealed to the working classes in order to increase their sense of class-consciousness and solidarity. An integral part of this strategy was to challenge the conventional assumption that bourgeois values and morality, including traditional Roman Catholic and Protestant religion, were natural, rational and just. Correspondingly, Marxists should work to transform European culture over time through a process of “cultural hegemony” – i.e., by infiltrating and controlling the cultural institutions that exert the most influence over society. Whereas Marx had written of the “commanding heights” of the economy – the key industries that essentially controlled the nation’s production and distribution – Gramsci’s vision was to undermine, and eventually take over, the commanding heights of the culture.

As a classical Marxist, Lenin had considered culture “ancillary” to economics and politics. Gramsci, however, knew otherwise, and argued that the best way to gain political and economic power was through a prolonged process of cultural subversion. As he wrote, “In the new order, socialism will triumph by first capturing the culture via infiltration of schools, universities, churches and the media by transforming the consciousness of society.” [Note: Compare this comment to the quote by Charles Reich in *The Greening of America* at the beginning of this chapter.]

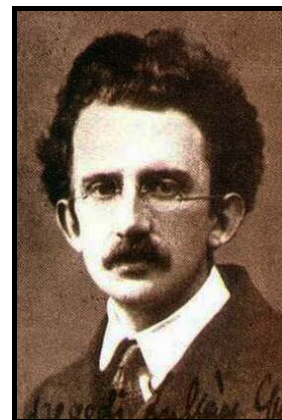
Although his career as a revolutionary was relatively short-lived, Gramsci contributed significantly to the Neo-Marxist agenda. His *Prison Notebook* and other writings were among the most influential socio/political works of the 20th century, as any substantive scholarly studies in social theory and popular culture reveal.

Georg Lukacs

Like Gramsci, the Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg (or Gyorgy) Lukacs (1885-1971) focused on the strategic importance of culture in relation to a Marxist transformation of Western civilization. Lukacs grew up in Budapest and was the son of a wealthy Hungarian Jewish investment banker. A gifted scholar, he received a Ph.D. in literary history and criticism

from the University of Budapest in 1909. Nine years later, in the midst of World War I, he converted to Communism and joined the Hungarian Communist Party.

The following year Lukacs served as the People’s Commissar for Education and Culture in Bela Kun’s Hungarian Soviet Republic, and in this position he launched a campaign of “Cultural Terrorism” – a kind of shock therapy designed to radically change the culture.



One of Kun’s priorities was to introduce a comprehensive sex education indoctrination program into the schools that promoted sexual experimentation, “free love,” premarital sexual relations, and attacks on monogamous marriage and traditional Christian views on sexuality. Children were encouraged to reject the values of their parents and the authority of the Church. Unfortunately for Lukacs and his Soviet comrades, however, the program met stiff opposition, especially from the Roman Catholic Church, and was deemed so radical that it alienated the working classes and produced a backlash against “the people’s” government.

When the Hungarian Soviet Republic was overthrown, Lukacs sought sanctuary first in Vienna and then in the Soviet Union where he strategized with Gramsci and other Communist emigres. In 1923 he was dispatched to Germany where he chaired a meeting of left-wing intellectuals and scholars that led to the founding of the **Institute for Social Research (ISR)**. Over the next decade the ISR would function as the premier Neo-Marxist think-tank with the goal of undermining Western values and institutions. In its association with the University of Frankfurt, the ISR later came to be known simply as the **Frankfurt School**.

For several years Lukacs worked in Moscow as an agent of the Comintern, but he withdrew from active involvement in politics over tactical differences with Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks. In 1929 he moved to Vienna, but the following year he and his wife fled to the USSR to avoid arrest. With Stalin now in power, he was not allowed to emigrate until fifteen

years later after the end of World War II. Stalin was suspicious of Neo-Marxist intellectuals such as Lukacs and his colleagues in the ISR, regarding them as too cosmopolitan and independent-minded. Therefore, he forced Lukacs into “self-criticism” and even ordered him jailed temporarily as a German sympathizer during World War II. Somehow Lukacs managed to survive Stalin’s periodic and paranoid purges even though most foreign Communists, including Bela Kun, were executed during this period.

After the war Lukacs returned home to Hungary where he was involved in the Hungarian Communist Party. In 1956 he became a minister in the short-lived revolutionary reformist government of Imre Nagy until it was violently crushed by the Soviets. Nearly executed following the collapse of the Hungarian Revolution, he publicly recanted his “revisionist” views and remained a loyal Communist until his death in 1971.

Lukacs was one of the foremost Marxist theoreticians in the post-World War I era. In most respects an orthodox Marxist, he reminded his readers in his seminal work, *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), that “The premise of dialectical materialism is this: ‘It is not men’s consciousness that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness.’” Yet like his Neo-Marxist colleagues of the Frankfurt School, Lukacs also understood that a successful Marxist revolution depended upon a prolonged campaign of subversion in order to undermine bourgeois capitalistic culture. This was the theory behind his famous slogan, “Who will free us from the yoke of Western Civilization?” in which he argued that a Communist revolution could only succeed if it were preceded by a comprehensive cultural revolution. In his words: “Such a worldwide overturning of values cannot take place without the annihilation of the old values and the creation of new ones by the revolutionaries.”

In that regard, and as a militant atheist, Lukacs realized that the single greatest obstacle to the advance of Marxism – even more than the bourgeois capitalistic system – was traditional Christian beliefs and values. For Lukacs, Communism was his religion, and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to advancing the cause. But to succeed, the revolution would have to inspire the kind of messianic fervor and “religious

power” that characterized early Christianity. The goal, however, would not be personal salvation and self-fulfillment but “the destiny of the community” in a world that had been “abandoned by God.” Combining Rousseau romanticism and Marxist realism, he argued that only in the historical context of a pure communist society could mankind collectively overcome the “transcendental homelessness” that prevents each person from experiencing “the longing of all souls for the place in which they once belonged, and the nostalgia for utopian perfection, a nostalgia that feels itself and its desires to be the only true reality.” This is (to use two terms that should be mutually-exclusive) nothing less than spiritualized Marxism.

As a pragmatic relativist who believed that the end justifies the means, Lukacs argued that a successful revolution cannot be inhibited by moral and ethical considerations. Unlike the bourgeois liberals, the Christian humanitarians and the moderate socialists whom he despised, Lukacs understood that the culture war is just that: a *war*. To that end, all scruples must be discarded, and there is no place for sentimentality or compromise. As Nietzsche taught, one must think and act “beyond good and evil.” It is either domination of subjugation – a struggle for supremacy and the survival of the fittest. Inspired by the Nietzschean glorification of raw power, Lukacs called for the overthrow of Western culture by any means necessary.

In order for the Communist agenda to succeed, all vestiges of Christian faith and morality must be obliterated. Drawing his inspiration from the “Grand Inquisitor” section of Dostoyevski’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, Lukacs understood full-well that if there is no God, everything is permissible. Therefore, any act in the service of the Revolution is justified, for such an act can be “neither crime nor madness.... For crime and madness are merely objectifications of transcendental homelessness.” In one particularly revealing passage in *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukacs identified the source of the Marxist vision:

The abandonment of the soul’s uniqueness solves the problem of unleashing the diabolic forces lurking in all the violence which is needed to create revolution.... Any political movement capable of bringing Bolshevism to the West would have to be Demonic.

