

A Brief History of Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness

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PART 2

The Frankfurt School

The Founding Agenda

In 1923 Georg Lukacs helped establish a Marxist research center at the University of Frankfurt under the sponsorship of Felix Weil. Like Marx's benefactor, Friedrich Engels, Weil was the son of a wealthy capitalist and an ardent Marxist who had earned a Ph.D. in political science from Frankfurt University. The Institute's first director, Carl Grunberg, was a professor of law and political science at the University of Vienna and an avowed Marxist. (In fact, Grunberg was the first openly-Marxist professor to hold a chair in a German university.) The original name for the center was the Institute for Marxism (*Institut fur Marxismus*), but Weil and Grunberg decided for public relations purposes to give it a more generic name, The Institute of Social Research (*Institut fur Sozialforschung*). Since then, it has usually been referred to as simply "the Frankfurt School."

From the outset the founders were clear about the school's mission. Their model was the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, and according to Weil, "I wanted the institute to become known... due to its contributions to Marxism as a scientific discipline." However, there was always a contradiction between the Institute's stated philosophy and reality. Although theoretically a Marxist institution, the governing structure of the Frankfurt School was anything but classless and

egalitarian. In fact, it was even more hierarchical and less collegial than most academic institutions with a single director who was empowered with dictatorial control over the Institute's policies, programs, faculty and administration. That inconsistency aside, as Martin Jay records in his book, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research* (1973, 1996), "Carl Grunberg concluded his opening address by clearly stating his personal allegiance to Marxism as a scientific methodology, [and declared that] Marxism would be the ruling principle of the Institute."

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



The Institute of Social Research facility in Frankfurt

Marxist think-tank, the Institute was a center for theoretical discourse but not revolutionary activism. Although some of its faculty and staff were avowed Communists, the Institute was never officially affiliated with either the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) or the more moderate Socialist Party of Germany (SPD). Furthermore, although the Frankfurt scholars praised Lenin and the Bolshevik regime in the early Twenties, support for the USSR was more tempered after Lenin died in 1924. Interestingly, Grunberg and his colleagues were careful not to criticize Stalin overtly, but they circumspectly kept their distance.

Grunberg suffered a stroke in 1927 and retired as director of the Institute of Social Research a couple of years later. In 1930 Max Horkheimer became the director of the Institute, and at that point a new philosophy took hold in the Institute. Horkheimer's view of Marxism was more expansive and dialectical rather than rigid and mechanical, and like Gramsci and Lukacs before him, he was convinced that the major impediment to the spread of Marxism was Western culture. In particular, he despised traditional Judeo/Christian ethics and morality, which he believed prevented the widespread acceptance of Marxism.

Under Horkheimer's directorship, the Frankfurt scholars synthesized Marxism, Social Darwinism and Freudian psychology, and in the process they created an ingenious cultural ideology that had the potential to radically transform German (and Western) culture. Horkheimer was convinced that human values and actions were psychological as well as ideological, and he was adamant that the Institute integrate psychology into its philosophy. The result, as Martin Jay observes, was that in the early years "the Institute concerned itself primarily with an analysis of bourgeois society's socio-economic substructure" in keeping with classical Marxism, while "in the years after 1930 its prime interest lay in its cultural superstructure" as developed by Neo-Marxist theoreticians.

Under Horkheimer, the Frankfurt School propagated a revisionistic Neo-Marxist interpretation of Western culture called Critical Theory. In essence, Critical Theory was a comprehensive and unrelenting assault on the values and institutions of Western civilization. Based on utopian social and political ideals, Critical Theory offered no realistic alternatives,

but it was nonetheless a devastating critique of the history, philosophy, politics, social and economic structures, major institutions, and religious foundations of Western civilization. As a result, despite the individual personalities and the respective differences and emphases of the various Frankfurt scholars, there was a basic philosophical coherence in their cumulative work. Ultimately, what united these scholars was the application of a Neo-Marxist dialectic in their unrelenting criticism of contemporary Western society and culture.

An important point to consider is that the driving force behind the Frankfurt School's research was never impartial scholarship but the aggressive promotion of a radical left-wing socio/political agenda. Even Martin Jay, who is generally sympathetic toward the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory, concedes that "the true object of Marxism... was not the uncovering of immutable truths, but the fostering of social change." The conservative research scholar, William S. Lind, is more blunt:

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

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

Dialectics was superb at attacking other systems' pretensions of truth, but when it came to articulating the ground of its own assumption and values, it fared less well... Critical Theory had a basically insubstantial concept of reason and truth, rooted in social conditions and yet outside them... If Critical Theory can be said to have had a theory of truth, it appeared in its immanent critique of bourgeois society, which compared the pretensions of bourgeois ideology with the

reality of its social conditions. Truth was not outside the society, but contained in its own claims. Men had an emancipatory interest in actualizing the ideology. [Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 62.]

This is, to say the least, an unconvincing argument. The claim that truth is only a product of one's historical circumstance would itself be a product of one's historical circumstance, which is of course self-refuting. Although denying they were epistemic relativists, the Frankfurt scholars were certain that truth is found only within historical circumstances, yet they claimed personal exemption from the restrictions of their own historical circumstance and assumed a transcendent truth perspective. In logic, this is the "self-excepting" fallacy – but they conveniently resolved this contradiction by simply dismissing formal logic as bourgeois thinking. Besides, it imposed unwanted restrictions on their theoretical assertions.

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

Although independent scholars in their own right, the Critical Theorists held a common commitment to Neo-Marxism and the belief that Western civilization has been an imperialistic and repressive force in human history – especially, Western Christianity. In their view, Western civilization was built on aggression, oppression, racism, slavery, classism and sexual repression. Decades later, this ideology became the philosophical basis for the founding of the various "critical studies" programs and departments in universities such as

African-American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Feminist Studies, Peace Studies, and LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bi-sexual/Transgender) Studies.

Particularly significant in this regard was Wilhelm Reich's book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), which offered up an intriguing revision of the Marxist dialectic. Unlike classical Marxism, which was fundamentally economics-based and reductionistically simplistic in terms of setting the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, Reich contended that the conflict in the 20th century was between "reactionaries" and "revolutionaries." In other words, the culture war was not exclusively a class-based conflict but one between those who held incompatible socio/political ideologies. This allowed some among the elite classes in society, including some who were rich and highly-educated, to join in the struggle against oppression along with the poor and the exploited. Of course, it also opened up the opportunity for Marxist intellectuals such as Reich and his Frankfurt School colleagues to take leadership in the culture war on behalf of the downtrodden and the victims of Western capitalism and Christian oppression. Nonetheless, as members of the intellectual elite, they retained a certain distance from the unwashed masses. As Martin Jay notes, "the Institute's members may have been relentless in their hostility towards the capitalist system, but they never abandoned the life-style of the *haute bourgeoisie*."

In retrospect, the Frankfurt School had a significant influence on the evolution of the American left over the past 70 years, particularly the kind of cultural Marxism that generated the New Left movement in the 1960s. Since then, the

left has launched an unremitting culture war of attrition that has largely succeeded in terms of secularizing American culture and undermining traditional values and institutions, and much of its ideology, inspiration and tactics were gleaned from the Frankfurt School's Institute of Social Research.



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

The 'X' Factor

From the outset, the founding fathers of Communism understood that traditional family values and male/female relationships could be exploited in order to destabilize Western culture. In fact, throughout most of history, in both Western and non-Western societies, women had been oppressed and denied basic civil rights, so this was an issue that could easily be used by Critical Theorists in their critique of Western culture.

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

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

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

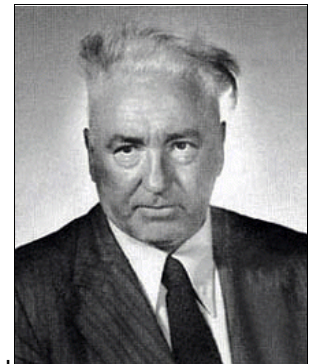
society was a major theme in their ideology.

In this regard, the social psychologists Eric Fromm and Wilhelm Reich played key roles in the integration of Marx and Freud. Fromm contended that sexual orientation is merely a social construct, there are no innate differences between men and women, and that sexuality and gender roles are socially determined. Furthermore, he argued that sexually-repressed societies discourage sexual experimentation and practices such as homosexuality due to manmade legal codes and moralistic taboos that are psychologically inhibiting and counter-productive. All this does is increase the angst-level in society and keep people in a perpetual state of frustration.

The psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich was one of the originators of "sexual politics" and, like Fromm, an outspoken sex propagandist. Based on a Darwinian evolutionary view of humanity, Reich argued that human beings are fundamentally sexual animals. For Reich, sexuality is an innate impulse that should not be inhibited by artificial and manmade moral restrictions. In his book, *The Sexual Revolution*, he argued that sexual repression was an underlying cause of many psycho/social pathologies, and he laid much of the blame on "familial imperialism" that is perpetuated through the authoritarian structure of the traditional family. In fact, according to Reich, "familial imperialism" is the root cause of "national imperialism."

The authoritarian family is the authoritarian state in miniature. Man's authoritarian character structure is basically produced by the embedding of sexual inhibitions and fear in the living substance of sexual impulses. Familial imperialism is ideologically reproduced in national imperialism....

The authoritarian family... is a factory where reactionary ideology and reactionary structures are produced. [Quoted by Raymond V. Raehn in "The Historical Roots of 'Political Correctness,'" in William S. Lind, *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. www.freecongress.org.]



Wilhelm Reich

Reich's solution, as he argued in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), was to replace the traditional patriarchal family with a matriarchal model, which he regarded as the only truly "natural" order of things. This was part of a comprehensive sexual revolution, which according to Reich should include the legalization of homosexuality and abortion, in order to foster a more "natural" and "healthy" society. Of course, all this sounds suspiciously similar to the sexual propaganda later spouted by the likes of Alfred Kinsey and Hugh Hefner, who themselves were influenced by Reich and Fromm, among others. The great attraction, of course – other than the obvious fact that it appeals to our base instincts – is the pseudo-scientific basis for it.

[NOTE: Reich's aggressive advocacy of sexual politics was too extreme even for most of his fellow-radicals at the time. In the early 1930s he was expelled from both the Communist Party and the International Psychoanalytical Association, and in 1939 he emigrated to America. In 1942 he founded the Orgone Society, which advocated free sex and mental health through "the power of the orgasm." Years later, the Food & Drug Administration sued Reich for fraud, and he died in prison in 1957.]

In terms of long-range influence, the most significant Frankfurt School sex propagandist was Herbert Marcuse. Like his colleagues, Fromm and Reich, Marcuse understood that a true cultural revolution would include sexual liberation along with political and economic transformation. In this regard, he called for the casting off of all traditional values and sexual restraints, to be replaced by what he termed "polymorphous perversity." Even the concept of marital love and fidelity was counter-revolutionary, according to Marcuse. Although cultural change was the ultimate goal, what seemed to primarily stimulate him was the pleasure principle. Like the radical French Jacobins a century-and-a-half earlier, Marcuse questioned, "What good is a revolution without general copulation?"

Neo-Marxism and Popular Culture Political Protest Music

In Martin Jay's book, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School*, his chapter on "Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture" is particularly insightful given the enormous influence of popular culture in our society. Of course, much of popular culture – including most music, movies, television, etc. – is merely crass entertainment, and as such much of it is trivial, banal and inconsequential (except for the fact that reflects the feelings and the shallow thinking of so many people). Nonetheless, some popular entertainment is truly significant and its cumulative effect is substantial. Although the following comments refer primarily to popular music, many of these observations generally apply to other forms of mass entertainment, too.

Social observers have long recognized the power of song. Reportedly, Plato commented that if he could write the popular songs of his culture, he cared not who wrote the laws. In other words, like the Neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School, Plato understood that culture drives politics, not vice-versa. As novelist John Steinbeck once noted, popular music expresses the most fundamental values and beliefs of a people and constitutes the "sharpest statement" about who and what they are. According to Steinbeck, we can learn more about a society by listening to its songs than by any other means of observation, since "into the songs go all their hopes and hurts, the anger, fears, the wants and aspirations." Leo Lowenthal, a leading theorist in the Frankfurt School, expressed the same idea when he wrote that "mass culture is psychoanalysis in reverse."

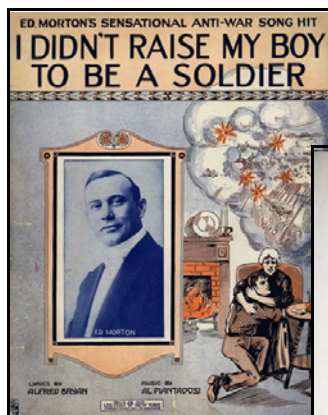
Popular culture, including music, has always functioned as a kind of social barometer, and throughout history the significant issues and events of the day have often been expressed through the medium of popular music. From the broadside ballads of the Revolutionary era to the campfire sing-alongs of the Civil War, from Joe Hill's radical labor anthems of the early 20th century to the Depression-era Dust Bowl ballads of Woody Guthrie, from the folk and rock socio/political commentaries of the 1960s to the nihilistic rantings of contemporary punk and rap, popular music has often expressed the *Zeitgeist* – the spirit of the times. Throughout the 20th century hundreds of popular songs functioned as socio/political musical editorials, and although most were quickly forgotten and left little lasting

impression, some were quite profound and undeniably influential.

[NOTE: Before the advent of the phonograph and the radio, popular music was indistinguishable from folk music in that one generation's popular songs became the folk songs of succeeding generations. It wasn't until the early 20th century, with the evolution of a commercial music industry, that popular music became a distinct category from folk music.]

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

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



such as “Over There” and social commentaries like “How Ya Gonna Keep ‘em Down on the Farm (After They’ve Seen Paree)?” During the raucous and prosperous Roaring

Twenties very few serious socio/ political commentaries were written and recorded, but following the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the

onset of the Great Depression there was once again a flurry of socio/political musical commentaries. Many of these songs, such as “Happy Days Are Here Again” and “There’s No Depression In Love,” were slick and jazzy productions designed to revive the flagging spirits of the American people, while others dealt more seriously with social realities such as “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” “Hobo’s Lullaby,” and many of Woody Guthrie’s songs.

Likewise, World War II inspired scores of songs that echoed the times – e.g., Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America,” “Remember Pearl Harbor,” Johnny Mercer’s “G.I. Jive,” The Andrews Sisters’ “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition,” “Coming In On a Wing and a Prayer,” Peggy Lee’s “Waiting For the Train To Come In,” and many others. In the relatively placid Fifties few songs dealt with themes other than romance (e.g., Elvis Presley’s “Love Me, Tender,” Pat Boone’s “Love Letters In the Sand,” etc.) or the pursuit of pleasure (Bill Haley & the Comets’ “Rock Around the Clock,” Chuck Berry’s “Sweet Little Sixteen,” etc.). Then, the turbulent 1960s once again produced a great outpouring of socio/ political topical songs. But unlike the past, this time counter-cultural themes dominated the music, and the lyrics tended to be overwhelmingly critical of mainstream American lifestyles and values.

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

Many people wonder why so much popular music is so ugly, so degenerate, so sexualized, so obscene, and so fixated on drugs and violence. Since all art is an expression of philosophy and moral values, much of this is due to the insidious influence of Nihilism and Postmodernism on contemporary American culture. But some of it directly reflects a Neo-Marxist political ideology as well. To radical left-wing social critics, the reason why so much modern art expresses such rage and dissatisfaction is because it reflects the

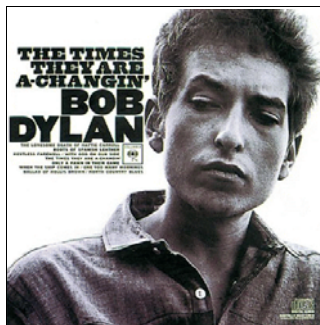


realities of living in a repressive and oppressive society under the heavy yoke of capitalist exploitation and traditional Christian-influenced moral values.

Cultural Marxists argue that all of life is a struggle against the forces of oppression and repression. Originally, classical Marxism focused rather narrowly on economic oppression and class conflict, but by the 1930s Neo-Marxists began to widen the scope of their cultural critique to include a broader range of social issues and even psychological factors – in particular, issues related to sexual repression. In their condemnation of Western culture, they emphasized social injustice and the plight of marginalized minorities – those victims of the bourgeois social order that included the working classes, racial minorities, radical feminists, homosexuals, and non-Christians in general. Therefore, it was within the context of their Neo-Marxist Critical Theory that they encouraged the politicization of the arts as part of a full-scale assault on Western culture.

Among cultural Marxists there have been two competing theories regarding the proper role of revolutionary art. The first approach, which Lenin sanctioned and has always been the most common, focuses on content. In this approach art is an expression of agitprop (agitation/propaganda), and it emphasizes overtly social and political messages. However, these messages may be either relatively mild and suggestive or harsh and confrontational. Examples of the former would include many of the socio/political protest songs of the early Sixties such as Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" and Pete Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone." By the mid-Sixties much of the protest music became more explicit and aggressive, as characterized by songs such as Dylan's "The Times They Are A-changin'," Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction," The Beatles' "Revolution," or "I Feel Like I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag" by Country Joe & the Fish.

The alternative theory of revolutionary art emphasizes form rather than content. As such, its messages are often more stylistic than overtly propagandistic. This approach has been incorporated into



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

Theodor Adorno, the Frankfurt School's most prominent cultural analyst, was a staunch advocate of the form over content approach. Adorno began his academic career as a music critic, and as a doctrinaire Marxist he had a peculiar take on music as a political statement. He was contemptuous of popular culture in general, which he regarded as bourgeois, frivolous and counter-revolutionary, and as a musicologist he was particularly scornful of popular music, which he considered trivial, insipid and banal – which of course most of it was (and always has been).

But Adorno was more than just a cultural elitist, and he held a radical view of art and culture that few would accept. According to him, since modern bourgeois culture is intrinsically "repressive," art could only be "authentic" if it were non-commercial, dissonant and alienating. In other words, any art form, such as music, that conveyed joy or contentment or harmony was at best an expression of ignorance or at worst an affirmation of the authoritarian status quo. Declaring that "defiance of society includes defiance of its language," Adorno might also have added that defiance of society includes not only defiance of its traditional values but its art forms as well. As he stated, "We interpret [art] as a kind of code language for processes taking place within society, which must be deciphered by means of critical analysis."

[NOTE Marxism has long been recognized as a kind of surrogate religion. As such, it shares some common perspectives with Christianity, such as a deep longing for transcendence beyond present realities. Also, like Christians, Marxists rejected the popular notion that art is merely an

expression of the individual creativity of artists themselves. Art is not values-free or values-neutral. Wittingly or not, all art expresses the beliefs and ideals of its creators, and the concept of artistic creative freedom is in many respects illusory. Unlike Christians, however, Marxists were strict determinists who believed that sociological factors alone *determine* people's values. Christians don't deny that society and culture can *influence* (or *condition*) our values, but human beings still have a measure of free choice as a result of being created in the *imago Dei* – the image of God. Still, like Marxists, Christians believe that the ultimate goal of art is not merely individual expression but a reflection of truth and reality.]

According to Adorno, until current social and political alienation and contradictions were reconciled in reality, the utopian harmony of art must always reflect the current dissonance. For him, everything was political, and since bourgeois capitalistic society was innately discordant and repressive, the only legitimately authentic music was that which avoided commercialism and “spurious harmony” and expressed the “contradictions” of modern life. Furthermore, he reasoned, just as true artistic creativity was determined by social factors, so too was people's subjective appreciation of art. This is why popular culture, including virtually all popular music, was so deplorably vacuous: it expressed bourgeois values and the unsophisticated tastes of the masses, who were the psychologically oppressed products of a bourgeois capitalistic system and its propaganda. The People needed to be liberated from such constraints, and Adorno believed this could be accomplished in part through true art and true music, which was innately revolutionary and counter-cultural. As he expressed it...

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

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

For Adorno, even modern jazz, which many conservatives feared was promoting sensuality and undermining traditional morality, should be rejected as just another commercial commodity.

Observing that it served primarily as dance or ambient background music, he challenged the claim that jazz was sexually liberating. In fact, he contended, rather than transcending alienation, jazz music actually strengthened it by reconciling the alienated individual with mainstream culture.

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

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

Increasingly, the Institute came to feel that the culture industry enslaved men in far more subtle and effective ways than the crude methods of domination practiced in earlier eras. The false harmony [promoted in popular culture] was in some ways more sinister than the clash of social contradictions, because of its ability to lull its victims into passive acceptance.... Moreover, the spread of technology served the culture industry in America just as it helped tighten the control of authoritarian governments in Europe. Radio, Horkheimer and Adorno argued, was to fascism as the printing press had been to the Reformation [Ibid, pp. 216-17]

In his study of the Frankfurt School, Jay concludes that the Institute's greatest impact on American intellectual life was its critique of mass culture along with its analysis of American authoritarianism (see below, “Fascist Amerika”).

But Adorno's philosophy of culture and music was too extreme even for many of his Neo-Marxist colleagues, some of whom challenged his basic assumptions. Walter Benjamin, a notable philosopher and essayist, expressed the more orthodox Marxist view that came to prevail among most left-wing social critics and activists. Unlike Adorno, Benjamin recognized the immense potential of agitprop commercial entertainment, and he contended that popular

music could be a potent political weapon in the culture war in terms of undermining traditional values, radicalizing the masses and transforming culture. Adorno was unconvinced, and argued that any such attempts to integrate “socialist realism” into commercial popular music only succeeded in promoting the kind of “premature harmony” that was in fact counter-revolutionary.

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

Adorno’s eccentric views aside, many Marxists understood intuitively the power of politicized music as a social and cultural force. As noted earlier, the IWW was a radical Marxist labor union in the early 1900s that included a fragile and volatile coalition of Communists, socialists and anarchists. According to its Manifesto, the union was founded on “the class struggle” and “the irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class,” and its motto proclaimed, “The final aim is revolution.” IWW rallies often resembled religious revivals with stirring, emotional speeches and a lot of group singing. Songwriters such as Joe Hill converted scores of well-known church hymns into labor anthems, and the IWW even published its own hymnal of sorts, the *Little Red Songbook*, featuring songs such as “Solidarity Forever,” sung to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”



Charlie Chaplin

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

[NOTE: Like most other left-wing groups, the IWW was constantly racked by internal sectarian disputes and power struggles. During World War I it lost most of its members, and many of its leaders were charged with treason and sent to prison. “Big Bill” Haywood, the public face of the union, evaded prison by fleeing to the USSR, where he was treated as a celebrity by Lenin’s regime. When he died in 1928, Haywood was buried in the Kremlin – one of only two Americans so honored. In its short but colorful history, the IWW produced quite a few memorable characters including the firebrand agitator, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Joe Hill, America’s first left-wing protest singer/songwriter.]

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

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



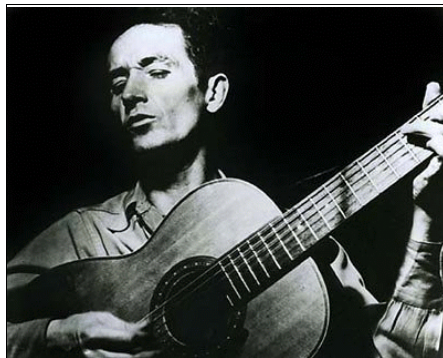
Joe Hill

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

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

Instead, the American left preferred the socio/political folk-style music of performers such as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and the Almanac Singers. In their minds, folk music was the music of “The People” and therefore an “authentic” art form, and operating outside the commercial music industry, it was itself a protest against capitalism.

Furthermore, politicized folk music avoided the kind of “spurious harmony” – both thematically and musically – that Marxists like Adorno



Woody Guthrie

detested. Unlike slick commercial jazz and sentimentalistic love ballads sung by professional crooners, folk-style music was plain and

unadorned. It featured simple instrumentation, and songs were sung (or in many cases, croaked, howled, wheezed, whined, growled or rasped) in a down-home style by singers with gloriously untrained voices. The “beauty” of the song was in its message rather than the melody, the instrumentation or the vocals. Therefore, a warbler like Woody Guthrie could be hailed as a great singer and musician when in fact he could not have sounded worse if he’d been born without vocal cords. (Nor would his guitar playing have suffered much had his fingers been webbed.)

The folksong genre remained the officially sanctioned and preferred medium for left-wing music into the 1960s. As a young music phenom, Bob Dylan mastered the genre and wrote some of the defining protest songs of the early Sixties such as “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Masters of War” and “The Times They Are A-changin’.” But he soon grew tired of acoustic folk music because it was too restrictive, and when he formed a rock band and went electric, folk purists such as Pete Seeger went ballistic. For Seeger and other left-wing ideologues, authentic political music *was* folk music, and they regarded Dylan as a



Pete Seeger

commercial sell-out to the capitalistic music industry. This opinion didn’t last long, however, as other gifted songwriters such as Paul Simon and Phil Ochs converted to rock.

By the late 1960s, left-wing themes and influences had thoroughly infiltrated American pop culture in music, movies, the theater and even TV. In the end, the elitism of a Theodore Adorno was discarded for very practical reasons: a Marxist agenda could very effectively be communicated to mass audiences through mass marketing and new technologies. If the ultimate goal was cultural infiltration and social change, concessions had to be made to the realities of modern life. In fact, being almost entirely consumer-driven and virtually devoid of any quality control, there was not a medium more open and susceptible to left-wing propaganda than popular culture.

American Neo-Marxism

The Columbia Connection

When Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in Germany in 1933, the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research was shut down “for tendencies hostile to the state” and most of its library confiscated. Horkheimer was one of the first scholars to be dismissed from Frankfurt University along with luminaries such as the theologian Paul Tillich and the psychologist Karl Mannheim. Seeing the proverbial handwriting on the wall, most of the Institute’s faculty and staff fled Germany, and the trustees considered reestablishing the school in Geneva, London or Paris. Significantly, they never considered seeking sanctuary in Stalin’s Russia.

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

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

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

Philosophy, art, and science have lost their home in most of Europe. England is now fighting desperately against the

domination of the totalitarian states. America, especially the United States, is the only continent in which the continuation of scientific life is possible. Within the framework of this country’s democratic institutions, culture still enjoys the freedom without which, we believe, it is unable to exist. [Quoted in Martin Jay, p. 167.]

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

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

(2) A critique of American authoritarianism, including a withering attack on the evils such as racism in American society and culture. Just as classism had been the greatest vulnerability in European society and culture, racism has been America’s most persistent problem. In the early 1920s Trotsky predicted that just as the oppressed proletariat constituted the revolutionary vanguard in classical Marxist thought, oppressed blacks could be formed into a revolutionary vanguard in America. This was a form of Marxist revisionism that Lenin (and later Stalin) would condemn as heretical and “counter-revolutionary,” but Horkheimer and his colleagues regarded it not only as a concession to reality but an opportunity.

In classical Marxism the proletariat class was the designated catalyst for bringing down the old order and ushering in the new. But in the 1930s labor unions had entered into collective bargaining agreements with management, and the material conditions in modern industrial societies such as the U.S. were such that the working classes had been co-opted by the allure of materialism and the promise of a rising standards of living. As such, they were no longer suited for the revolutionary role, and Neo-Marxist theoreticians no longer felt bound exclusively to

the interests of the proletariat. Instead, they were willing to ally with any and all “progressive” forces that were dedicated to the revolution.

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

All social and political systems are flawed, and all are deserving of serious examination and criticism. But there were two fundamental problems with Neo-Marxist Critical Theory: First, it is based on a seriously defective naturalistic worldview that, among other things, provides no philosophical basis for judging the morality or goodness of anything; and second, Critical Theory was exclusively a one-way street. While subjecting America and Western Europe to intense and withering criticism, Horkheimer and his colleagues were incredibly naive (or simply cowardly) when it came to the Soviet Union. In this respect they were guilty of employing a deplorable double-standard. While expressing outrage over racial bigotry in the United States, for instance, they found it excruciatingly difficult to criticize Stalin’s totalitarian dictatorship. Even in the late 1930s, after Stalin had murdered millions of Soviet citizens in the Ukrainian Terror Famine and the various Purges, they remained almost totally silent, and in 1946 Horkheimer declared that “at present the only country where there does not seem to be any kind of anti-Semitism is Russia.” Almost as if on-cue, when asked about Communist atrocities and Soviet gulags, their typical response was, “But what about the Negroes in the South?” – as if there was a moral equivalency between the two.

When the Institute of Social Research relocated in America, it lost much of its funding.

The costs associated with resettling and employing more than a dozen refugee scholars, along with poor investments in the stock market and disastrous real estate transactions severely strained the Institute’s economic resources. [Yes, you read that right: the Neo-Marxist and anti-capitalist ISR invested heavily in the capitalistic system.] In fact, had it not been for the financial support of the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee, the Institute might have ceased to exist.

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

In 1941 Horkheimer and Adorno relocated to Pacific Palisades near Santa Monica, California, where they joined other German leftists such as the playwright Bertolt Brecht. Unfortunately, no substantive histories have been written that explore their Hollywood connections during these years or their influence in the movie and TV industries. But in 1947, during the height of the post-war “Red Scare,” the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was sufficiently concerned about Communist influence in the Hollywood entertainment industry that it held extensive hearings and subpoenaed more than 40 writers, directors, actors and producers. Ten of those called before the committee – the infamous “Hollywood Ten” – refused to testify and were cited for contempt. Many of the others were blacklisted by TV and movie studio bosses, including the singer/songwriter, Pete Seeger, who was kept off television for 20 years until he was finally invited to appear on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in 1967. With characteristic defiance, he sang an anti-war song, “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy,” dedicated to President Johnson.

The Sixties

After World War II Horkheimer and Adorno returned to Germany and reestablished the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt. Over the next several years, approximately 50 scholars who had been associated with the Institute obtained faculty positions in American universities. Of these, Herbert Marcuse emerged as the most notable. Through his teaching and writings, he became the key link between the Neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School and the American New Left movement of the 1960s.

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

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

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

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

The single most significant influence on the ideology of the New Left was Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, published in 1955. In the book, Marcuse argued that most of the angst and hang-ups and neuroses that young people feel are the result of sexual repression.

The solution was "non-repressive society" in which libertarian socialistic values prevailed – i.e., an egalitarian society in which individuals were free to pursue their own hedonistic instincts. Marcuse coined the phrase, "Make love, not war," and his call for sexual liberation is sometimes cited as the inspiration behind popular Sixties' slogans such as "Do your own thing" and "If it feels good, do it." Such was his influence, both in America and Europe, that during the student uprisings in France in May of 1968, activists carried signs that read, "Marx/Mao/Marcuse."

The 1960s was one of the most turbulent periods in American history. As Richard Bernstein, a reporter for the *New York Times*, later

noted in *Dictatorship of Virtue: Multiculturalism and the Battle for America's Future* (1993), "Thirty years ago, something shifted in the national mind." Bernstein might have added that thirty years earlier something also shifted in the *rational* mind that set the stage for the chaos to come. Beginning in 1960 with the formation of the premier New Left student activist group of the Sixties, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), continuing through the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964 and the massive campus disruptions of the late Sixties, and culminating with the Kent State killings in the spring of 1970, American society and culture went through convulsions – the aftershocks of which are still felt today.



Throughout the ordeal, the left gradually gained strength and expanded its influence through the steady

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

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



theoretical impulse in contemporary academic life.”

Likewise, in radio, television and print media, just as former Sixties activists came to dominate in higher education, they moved into positions of influence in the mainstream media. As their power increased, they grew bolder and more aggressive. Borrowing a key tactic from Lenin and the cultural Marxists of an earlier period, liberals and radical leftists began labeling conservative ideas “politically incorrect.” The implication was that only liberal elitists truly understood the parameters of political orthodoxy, and that any ideas outside those boundaries were ignorant, unrealistic, and/or immoral.

Fascist Amerika

A basic premise of Neo-Marxist ideology is that traditional America is innately Fascist – hence, the spelling of “Amerika” with a ‘k’ in left-wing propaganda. According to this theory, there is a latent Fascism in the American soul as a result of America’s heritage of capitalism, racism, sexism, imperialism and Christianity. Several prominent Frankfurt School scholars put forth this idea, including Wilhelm Reich in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933) and Eric Fromm in *Studies on Authority and the Family* (1936), which concluded that sado-masochism was the core characteristic of the authoritarian/Fascist personality. (Fromm later disavowed this thesis.) Max Horkheimer also weighed in on the issue in a 1950 essay entitled “The Lessons of Fascism,” in which he associated the authoritarian personality with a set of generalized character traits that included an acceptance of conventional values, respect for authority, stereotypical thinking, “a penchant for superstition” (i.e., religion), and prejudice toward one’s opponents.

The most extensive study of the subject was Theodor Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), in which he sought to verify statistically a theory of the prototypical Fascist personality as linked to a particular set of conventional moral and cultural values. According to Adorno, these authoritarian traits, which are reinforced and nurtured through the traditional patriarchal family, contribute to certain character traits that condition many Americans to accept Fascism and socio/political repression.

The Authoritarian Personality promoted a view of psycho-politics based on Freud’s dubious theory of the unconscious. Despite such a scientifically-

questionable foundation, Adorno argued passionately and with an air of authority. He was scathing in his contempt for conservatives and traditionalists, whom he argued were not merely wrong-headed but mentally disturbed. According to Adorno, the only mentally healthy person is the “genuine liberal” – fiercely independent, tolerant (except, of course, toward traditionalists), and committed to egalitarianism and “social justice” (as defined, of course, by the radical left).

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

- Conventionalism. Rigid adherence to conventional middle-class values.
- Authoritarian submission. A submissive and uncritical attitude toward authority figures.
- Authoritarian aggression. The inclination to apply or enforce conventional values on others.
- Anti-intraception. Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, or the intuitive.
- Superstition and stereotypy. The belief in the supernatural or mystical determinism, and the disposition to think in rigid categories (i.e., racial, ethnic and gender prejudice).
- Power and “toughness.” A preoccupation with dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader-follower; identification with power figures; exaggerated assertion of strength and toughness.
- Destructiveness and cynicism. Generalized hostility and the tendency to vilify others.
- Projectivity. “The disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world” (i.e., a conspiratorial mindset).
- Sex. An exaggerated concern with conventional sexual morality and a preoccupation with other people’s sexual practices. [Source: Martin Jay, p. 243.]

Borrowing from Freud and Fromm, Adorno contended that the breeding ground for the “authoritarian syndrome” was the patriarchal family headed by a “stern and distant” father. In such scenarios, he argued, children repress their innate hostility while becoming passive/aggressive, which produces serious mental

disorders such as sado-masochism. By contrast, the families of mentally healthy children were more matriarchal, less conventional, less status-conscious, and less demanding. In such families the parents were loving and affectionate, but the mother, who was nurturing but also strong and independent, was clearly dominant.

According to Adorno, this explained why the Fascist personality lacked empathy and compassion for others. Originally, he identified the antithesis of the authoritarian Fascist as the principled and mentally-healthy “revolutionary,” but when he finally published his study he referred to this alternative character type as a “liberal” or a “democrat” – terms that were considerably less controversial. The prototypical liberal was an independent thinker who was committed to “progressive social change” and who, coincidentally, held the same values and bore the same characteristics as Adorno and his Neo-Marxist colleagues. Adorno had found himself in his own research, which must have come as a most pleasant surprise.

[NOTE: Many have pointed out the subjective and problematical nature of Adorno’s research as well as his simplistic caricature of conservatives. For substantive critiques see Paul Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State* (Princeton University Press, 2001), and the notes accompanying Martin Jay’s *The Dialectical Imagination*. Particularly noteworthy are those who criticized Adorno’s political bias in the study. Edward Shils, for example, questioned why authoritarianism was associated with Fascism alone and not Communism, and why was the F Scale not a ‘C Scale’ or a ‘T Scale’ (for Totalitarian)? Obviously, despite all their rhetoric about “toleration,” leftists such as Adorno were every bit as biased and intolerant as the conservatives whom they despised. See Martin Jay, pp. 244-48.]

Adorno’s thesis that America is innately Fascist is transparently self-refuting. The very fact that radical leftists like him were free to propagate their views contradicted his argument. If America is so racist, xenophobic and repressive, why does it continue to attract hordes of immigrants, and why do virtually all those who come here (legally) also choose to stay? The facts tend to speak for themselves, and in fact there is no country in the world where citizens in general, and racial and ethnic minorities in particular, enjoy more civil liberties, more opportunities, and a higher

standard of living than in the United States.

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

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

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

I don’t just mean in terms of limits on state coercion, though that’s true, too, but also in terms of individual relations. The United States comes closest to classlessness in terms of interpersonal relations than virtually any society. [“Interview with Noam Chomsky and Bill Bennett,” *American Morning with Paula Zahn*. CNN (May 30, 2002). Tim Adams, “Noam Chomsky: Thorn in America’s Side.” *The Observer* (10/30/2003).]

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

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

The legacy of the Frankfurt School is a mixed bag. While conservatives are unanimous in their condemnation of the Institute and Critical Theory for undermining traditional American values and institutions, liberals and leftists are more ambivalent. On the one hand, the Institute's brand of Marxist revisionism abandoned many of the revered dogmas of Marxist theory, including the revolutionary potential of the working class, class struggle as the dynamic engine of history, and the economic substructure as the basis of social analysis. Perhaps most significantly, the Institute, consisting primarily of leisured intellectuals and tenured academics, severed the connection between revolutionary theory and *praxis* (or action). Yet in the 1950s more than 50 scholars associated with the Institute gained positions in American colleges and universities, and their influence helped spark the student uprisings of the 1960s and the radicalization of American higher education. And in light of present political realities, it remains to be seen just how far-reaching their impact will be.

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

The Apostles of PC A Left-wing Rogues' Gallery

In conclusion, I have provided the following brief biographical sketches of six of the most significant and influential theorists in the history of American cultural Marxism: Eric Fromm, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, Paul Goodman and Noam Chomsky. The first three were Germans with direct connections to the Frankfurt School, while the last three were Americans whose works influenced the New Left and the counterculture in the 1960s and provided the philosophical basis for contemporary Political Correctness.

Eric Fromm

Eric Fromm (1900-80) was a psychologist, psychoanalyst, and humanistic philosopher who was raised in an orthodox Jewish family. One of his grandfathers and two great grandfathers were rabbis, and an uncle was a Talmudic scholar. Nonetheless, Fromm rejected orthodox Judaism in his mid-twenties and became a committed secularist.

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



Eric Fromm

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

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

Maslow would later term it, “self-actualization.”

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

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

From Fromm’s perspective, classical Marxist theory was psychologically naive, and he believed psychoanalysis could provide the missing link between a society’s socio/economic substructure and its ideological superstructure. Nonetheless, he always maintained that the greatest influence on his thinking was Marx, not Freud, whom he regarded as too bourgeois and patriarchal. When Fromm wrote his autobiography in 1962 he declared emphatically that “Marx is a figure of world historical significance with whom Freud cannot even be compared.” He also confirmed that “I have always upheld the... point that man’s capacity for freedom, for love, etc. depends almost entirely on [his] socio-economic conditions.”

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

After severing his connections to the Institute of Social Research, Fromm’s subsequent work focused less on political and psycho-sexual issues and more on the interpersonal components of

neurosis. He also emphasized the integration of ethics and psychology, and in later years even developed a fascination with Zen Buddhism.

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

Theodor Adorno

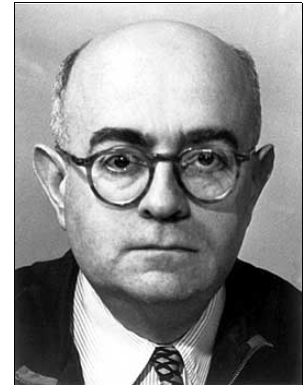
Theodor Adorno (1903-69) was one of the 20th century’s premier Neo-Marxist social philosophers. He grew up in a cultured family in which his mother, a Catholic, was a gifted musician, and his father, a Protestant convert from Judaism, was a wealthy wine merchant.

Adorno studied both music composition and philosophy at the University of Frankfurt, writing his dissertation on Kierkegaardian aesthetics under the direction of the Christian socialist and liberal theologian Paul Tillich.

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

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

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



Theodor Adorno

liberation. But ultimately, ideology prevailed over aesthetics, and he explained his disenchantment with the arts with the comment, “To still write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric.”

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

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

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

Herbert Marcuse

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) was a philosopher, social theorist, and political activist. In terms of promoting cultural Marxism, Marcuse was the key figure as he linked the Neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School with the New Left movement of the 1960s. His influence was such that the media dubbed him “the father of the New Left.”



Herbert Marcuse

Marcuse, like most of the early Frankfurt School scholars, was born into an affluent family of assimilated Jews. After serving in the German army in World War I he was briefly involved in politics with the Social Democratic Party, but he quit in protest when the party renounced revolutionary politics and began cooperating with the moderate

Weimar government. Marcuse studied philosophy at the universities of Berlin and Freiburg, and received a Ph.D. in literature in 1923. He later studied under Martin Heidegger, and although the two differed politically, Marcuse always acknowledged Heidegger as the greatest thinker and teacher he ever encountered. In 1933 he joined the faculty of the Frankfurt School’s Institute of Social Research, and the following year he fled Nazi Germany and worked along with Horkheimer and others at the Institute of Social Research at Columbia University.

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

In 1955 Marcuse published his first major academic work, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. The book was a bold attempt to synthesize Marxism and Freudianism, and it became the essential connection between the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School and the New Left of the 1960s. *Eros and Civilization* was a wholesale repudiation of Western civilization and a clarion call for a cultural revolution, and it provided a pseudo-intellectual basis for the sexual revolution of the 1960s. The book quickly became a favorite among free-thinkers, Beatniks and bohemian hedonists, and a few years later it inspired a generation of young counterculture radicals in the Sixties.

Eros and Civilization is anything but a practical guide for revolution, but it set forth a libertarian and hedonistic social philosophy that held great appeal to affluent Baby Boomers in post-war America. Marcuse called for a democratic socialist society based on the principles of “non-alienating labor,” freedom, and the pursuit of happiness – including sexual liberation. As such, he rejected a central tenet of Freud’s theory of social psychology. According to Freud, civilized society operates according to the “performance principle,” and therefore it must necessarily be repressive by forcing its people to spend most of their time and energy working rather than gratifying their desires. Freud believed that if human beings were freed from the constraints of labor and traditional social and moral taboos, civilization itself would collapse.

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

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

Marcuse called for sexual liberation, “polymorphous perversity” and the abolition of the monogamous and “patriarchal” family, and at times he seemed perfectly enraptured by his own psycho-sexual fantasies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

working classes – those who ought to have a revolutionary consciousness – are co-opted by the seduction of mass consumption.

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

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

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

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

Marcuse's 1965 essay on "Repressive Tolerance" essentially defined what is now considered Political Correctness. He declared that capitalist democracies are innately totalitarian, and therefore a selective or "discriminatory form" of tolerance should be applied to ensure that the opinions of marginalized minorities are recognized. It is perfectly proper, he contended, to silence "repressive" intolerance (i.e., conservative opinions) in order to protect the rights of minorities. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression should be regulated in order to

suppress intolerant conservative views and behavior, and to promote a more fair and equitable society. In Marcuse's words, "Liberating tolerance would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left." In the essay he criticized mainstream liberals for failing to confront conservative values and other "evils," a theme that New Left singer/songwriter Phil Ochs incorporated into his scathing satire of liberal hypocrisy in "Love Me, I'm a Liberal."

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

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

Unlike Adorno, Marcuse didn't buy into the emerging postmodern consciousness in the 1970s. As a hard-headed rationalist, he put forth a revised version of the classical Marxist metanarrative and promoted a kind of cultural Marxism that was more comprehensive than merely the economic component.

C. Wright Mills

C. Wright Mills (1916-62) was an American sociologist who taught at Columbia University from 1946 until his death in 1962. Like Marcuse and Paul Goodman (see below), Mills was more of a libertarian socialist than a doctrinaire Marxist, but his contributions to New Left thought and Political Correctness were nonetheless considerable.



C. Wright Mills

Mills shared the same jaundiced view of traditionalists and conservatives as Adorno and Marcuse, but he aimed most of his criticism at the American liberal elite. In the process he articulated many of the themes that later characterized the ideology of the New Left –

specifically, that an undemocratic "power elite" dominated American society, and that mainstream liberalism had lost its social consciousness and now represented the status quo. As an ardent opponent of post-war U.S. foreign policy and the Cold War, he charged that a small group of Washington politicians, Pentagon officials and corporate barons controlled the government. (Interestingly, President Eisenhower would later warn of the dangers of an unchecked "military/industrial complex that was unresponsive to the interests of the American people.) To show his disdain for the governing elite, Mills traveled to Cuba in the early 1960s and wrote a book praising Fidel Castro's "social experiments."

Mills began his critique of American society in 1948 with *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*. Like most leftist intellectuals who bought into Marxist conflict theory, Mills was troubled by the fact that American labor leaders had lost their radical edge and were willing to compromise with the capitalist business establishment for the sake of better pay, employment benefits and job security. To Mills, this was tantamount to selling out, and he considered it a tragic betrayal of the union ideal. In his mind, they had become part of the Establishment, and were therefore part of the problem in terms of moving American society

farther toward socialism. In a follow-up book, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), he applied the same analysis and critique to mainstream white collar employees and the corporate managerial class.

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

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

Paul Goodman

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

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



Paul Goodman

more of an anarchist than a socialist.

Goodman was a romantic and an idealist at heart. In an interview of Studs Terkel, he explained that his greatest challenge in life was "to grow up as a human being into a culture without losing nature." As a bisexual, he was involved in the gay liberation movement of the late Sixties and early Seventies – his "out of the closet" announcement coming in an essay entitled, "Being Queer." He argued that homosexual relationships between males were natural and healthy, and commented that "what is really obscene is the way our society makes us feel shameful and like criminals for doing human things that we really need."

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

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

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

[Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock." Copyright 1969, Siquomb Music.]

Goodman had little hope that the older generations would rebel against the established order, but he was optimistic that young people could change the culture through radical reforms or by starting their own counter-cultural institutions. Throughout most of the Sixties he supported the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the New Left agenda in general, but eventually he disengaged from the movement as it became increasingly erratic, strident and violent. After a campus appearance in 1967 in which he was heckled by a group of radical students, he realized that an entirely new worldview was being forged – but it was anything but the dawning of the Age of Aquarius:

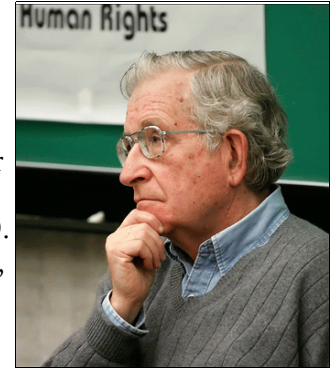
Suddenly I realized that [these students] did not believe there was a nature of things. [To them] there was no knowledge but only the sociology of knowledge. They had learned so well that physical and sociological research is subsidized and conducted for the benefit of the ruling class that they were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

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

Noam Chomsky

Noam Chomsky (1928-) has been the foremost propagator of Frankfurt School-style Neo Marxism for the past 50 years. Chomsky is a philosopher and a political activist, and as a professor at M.I.T. he taught in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy from 1955 to the present. Chomsky was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and his father was a Hebrew scholar as well as a member of the radical Marxist labor union, the I.W.W.

A self-described anarchist and “libertarian socialist” (a term he borrowed from Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man*), Chomsky has also been an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy since the 1960s. He condemned the American involvement in Vietnam and wrote that the U.S. should have been prosecuted for war crimes. Other than the United States, his favorite target has been Israel. Although an ethnic Jew, he has been a harsh critic of Israel and an ardent supporter of radical Palestinian groups such as the PLO. Following Nine-Eleven, he wrote that “the U.S. itself is a leading terrorist state.” In his book, *The End of Faith*, the atheist apologist Sam Harris chides Chomsky for drawing absurd “moral equivalencies” between the U.S. and Iraq, or between Osama ben Laden and Saddam Hussein and George Bush and Tony Blair.



Noam Chomsky

Paradoxically, in recent years Chomsky has conceded that the United States is “the greatest” and “the freest country in the world.” In a 2002 interview on CNN with Paul Zahn, Chomsky declared...

I don’t just mean in terms of limits on state coercion, though that’s true, too, but also in terms of individual relations. The United States comes closest to classlessness in terms of interpersonal relations than virtually any society. [“Interview with Noam Chomsky and Bill Bennett,” *American Morning with Paula Zahn*. CNN (May 30, 2002). Tim Adams, “Noam Chomsky: Thorn in America’s Side.” *The Observer* (10/30/2003).]

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