

Cultural Marxism

by William S. Lind

Cultural Marxism is a branch of western Marxism, different from the Marxism-Leninism of the old Soviet Union. It is commonly known as “Multiculturalism” or, less formally, Political Correctness. From its beginning, the promoters of cultural Marxism have known they could be more effective if they concealed the Marxist nature of their work, hence the use of the terms such as “multiculturalism.”

Cultural Marxism began not in the 1960s but in 1919, immediately after World War I. **Marxist theory had predicted that** in the event of a big European war, **the working class all over Europe would rise up to overthrow capitalism and create communism.** But when war came in 1914, that did not happen. When it finally did happen in Russia in 1917, workers in other European countries did not support it. **What had gone wrong?**

Independently, two Marxist theorists, Antonio Gramsci in Italy and Georg Lukacs in Hungary, came to the same answer: **Western culture and the Christian religion had so blinded the working class to its true, Marxist class interest that Communism was impossible in the West until both could be destroyed.** In 1919, Lukacs asked, “Who will save us from Western civilization?” That same year, when he became Deputy Commissar for Culture in the short-lived Bolshevik Bela Kun government in Hungary, one of Lukacs’s first acts was to introduce sex education into Hungary’s public schools. He knew that if he could destroy the West’s traditional sexual morals, he would have taken a giant step toward destroying Western culture itself.

In 1923, inspired in part by Lukacs, a group of German Marxists established a think tank at Frankfurt University in Germany called the Institute for Social Research. This institute, soon known simply as the Frankfurt School, would become the creator of cultural Marxism.

To translate Marxism from economic into cultural terms, the members of the Frankfurt School—Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, to name the most important—had to contradict Marx on several points. They argued that culture was not just part of what Marx had called society’s “superstructure,” but an independent and very important variable. They also said that the working class would not lead a Marxist revolution, because it was becoming part of the middle class, the hated bourgeoisie.

Who would? In the 1950s, Marcuse answered the question: a coalition of blacks, students, feminist women and homosexuals.

Fatefully for America, when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the Frankfurt School fled—and reestablished itself in New York City. There, it shifted its focus from destroying traditional Western culture in Germany to destroying it in the United States. To do so, it invented “Critical Theory.” What is the theory? To criticize every traditional institution, starting with the family, brutally and unremittingly, in order to bring them down. It wrote a series of “studies in prejudice,” which said that anyone who believes in traditional Western culture is prejudiced, a “racist” or “sexist” or “fascist”—and is also mentally ill.

Most importantly, the Frankfurt School crossed Marx with Freud, taking from psychology the technique of psychological conditioning. Today, when the cultural Marxists want to do something like “normalize” homosexuality, they do not argue the point philosophically. They just beam television show after television show into every American home where the only normal-seeming white male is a homosexual (the Frankfurt School’s key people spent the war years in Hollywood).

After World War II ended, most members of the Frankfurt School went back to Germany. But Herbert Marcuse stayed in America. He took the highly abstract works of other Frankfurt School members and repackaged them in ways college students could read and understand. In his book “Eros and Civilization,” he argued that by freeing sex from any restraints, we could elevate the pleasure principle over the reality principle and create a society with no work, only play (Marcuse coined the phrase, “Make love, not war”). Marcuse also argued for what he called “liberating tolerance,” which he defined as tolerance for all ideas coming from the Left and intolerance for any ideas coming from the Right. In the 1960s, Marcuse became the chief “guru” of the New Left, and he injected the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School into the baby boom generation, to the point where it is now America’s state ideology.

The next conservatism should unmask multiculturalism and Political Correctness and tell the American people what they really are: cultural Marxism. Its goal remains what Lukacs and Gramsci set in 1919: destroying Western culture and the Christian religion. It has already made vast strides toward that goal. But if the average American found out that Political Correctness is a form of Marxism, different from the Marxism of the Soviet Union but Marxism nonetheless, it would be in trouble. The next conservatism needs to reveal the man behind the curtain—old Karl Marx himself.

Lind is the Director for The Center for Cultural Conservatism of the Free Congress Foundation.