

INTELLECTUAL MORONS

How Ideology Makes

Smart People

Fall for

Stupid

Ideas



Daniel J. Flynn



CROWN FORUM
New York

**To my mother, Janet Flynn,
who read to me.**

~

**To my father, Ronald Flynn,
who led a reader's life.**

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INTELLECTUAL MORONS

“THE TRUE BELIEVER”



A faith is not acquired by reasoning. One does not fall in love with a woman, or enter the womb of a church, as a result of logical persuasion. Reason may defend an act of faith—but only after the act has been committed, and the man committed to the act.

—ARTHUR KOESTLER,
The God That Failed

WHEN IDEOLOGY IS YOUR GUIDE, YOU'RE BOUND TO GET LOST. Ideology deludes, inspires dishonesty, and breeds fanaticism. Facts, experience, and logic are much better at leading you to truth. Truth, however, is not everyone's intended destination.

This is a book about morons. The morons that we'll meet don't have tobacco juice dripping from their chins, sunburned necks, or any other stereotypical manifestations of dimness. As the title suggests, *Intellectual Morons* focuses on cognitive elites who embarrass themselves by championing idiotic theories, beliefs, and opinions. It is a quite pedestrian occurrence for stupid people to fall for stupid ideas. More interesting, and of greater harm to society, is the phenomenon of smart people falling for stupid ideas. Ph.D.s, high IQs, and intellectual honors are not antidotes to thickheadedness.

It doesn't matter how smart you are if you don't use your mind. Ideologues forgo independent judgment in favor of having their views handed to them. To succumb to ideology is to put your brain on autopilot. Ideology preordains your reaction to issues, ideas, and people, your view of politics, philosophy, economics, and history. For the true believer, ideol-

ogy is the Rosetta Stone of everything. It provides stock answers, conditions responses, and delivers one-size-fits-all explanations for complex political and cultural questions. Despite the conviction and seeming depth of knowledge with which ideologues speak, they are intellectual weaklings—joiners—who defer to systems of belief and charismatic gurus for their ideas. Why bother thinking when the guru provides all the answers? What's the use of examining the facts when the system has already determined the real truth?

When you submit to a guru, allow a system to predetermine your views, or become a knee-jerk party-liner, you abdicate your responsibility to think. For an intellectual, this is the unforgivable sin. Intellectuals think. This is what they do. When intellectuals let ideology do their thinking, we can't with any justification continue to label them intellectuals. This is not an anti-intellectual book. It is an antipseudo-intellectual book.

And many obviously bright political leaders, academicians, journalists, and artists reveal themselves as pseudo-intellectuals.

Why does Al Gore believe that cars pose "a mortal threat to the security of every nation"?¹ Why do feminist leaders defend accused wife-killer Scott Peterson against charges of killing his unborn son?² Why do seemingly well-educated antiwar activists see President George W. Bush "exactly as a Hitler," argue that the U.S. government orchestrated the 9/11 attacks, and liken America to "a stuck-up little bitch"?³ Why does the intellectual godfather of the animal-rights movement, Princeton professor Peter Singer, object to humans eating animals but not to humans having sex with them—and why does the activist group PETA defend that position?⁴

In other words, why do smart people fall for stupid ideas?

The answer is ideology.

SYSTEMS

Communism, environmentalism, animal rights, sexual anarchism, feminism, postmodernism, multiculturalism, relativism, deconstructionism—foreign ideologies to most people—have been embraced without scrutiny by intellectuals at various points during the past century. The intelligentsia's enthusiasm for these isms has made it easier for them to overlook the shortcomings of those most closely identified with these systems. The ideologies themselves also get a pass, since their advocates dominate the fields that generally hold ideas up to scrutiny. Since this book argues

against formulas, it is fitting that several of the systems and gurus discussed don't fit into this formula. Both Objectivists and Straussians, ideologues on the political Right, operate outside of normal intellectual circles. But like the other ideologues discussed, they function inside a cloistered environment shielded from outside criticism. Society should be so lucky as to be guarded from these isms as the isms are from society, but an ideology's blockers only seem to screen incoming ideas.

The primary and most obvious reason people join mass movements and follow ideology is the issues they address. To view all ideologues as entirely tricked or self-deluded overlooks the fact that at the core of many ideologies is a laudable idea, whether it is the need for a clean environment, a better understanding of other cultures, or equality of opportunity for the sexes. Naturally, people want to correct the failings they see around them. But dangers arise when the perceived morality of the mission allows immorality—lying for the cause, forcing the "good" upon society, self-righteousness, and so on—to corrupt the crusaders. Problems also occur when activists mistake any cause bearing their ideology's name for a noble one. It is intentions rather than outcomes that matter for such people. Thus we must separate the ideological nonsense from the good idea it clings to.

Can't we support equality of opportunity for women while opposing Andrea Yates-style "fourth-trimester" abortions? Does support for a multicultural outlook mean holding your tongue regarding the practice of female genital mutilation, AIDS-curing sex with virgins in South Africa, and Middle Eastern "honor" killings? Can't one be against cruelty to animals and still enjoy a tunafish sandwich?

To the ideologue, the answer is no. All the ideology—the good, the bad, and the ugly—is a package deal.

Defining one's position based on what serves the cause makes the party line triumphant. Allegations of sexual impropriety against Senator Bob Packwood, Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, and California gubernatorial candidate Arnold Schwarzenegger—all Republicans—sparked angry campaigns to oust these men from political life. When women accused Bill Clinton of sexual harassment, indecent exposure, and even rape, the same Democrats who rabidly attacked Packwood, Thomas, and Schwarzenegger reflexively defended the president. Hypocrisy is, of course, bipartisan. One president with a (D) next to his name sponsors humanitarian missions in Haiti, Bosnia, and Somalia and the opposition blasts him for "nation building." His successor, who sports an (R) next to

his name, does the same thing to a greater degree in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Haiti and his party's stalwarts cheer him. What matters to the party-liners in both cases is not the issue involved but how that issue can be used to damage political opponents. "The issue is not the issue," 1960s radicals famously remarked.⁵ It still isn't, unfortunately.

Ideologues are prone to mistaking their ideal for the real. Whether consciously or not, they tend to see what they want to see and to find what they want to find. The impulse to evaluate reality by how it vindicates the greater theory leads to a selective use of facts, cooking the books, and simply making things up when the facts don't cooperate. In other words, ideologues draw conclusions prior to investigating. Smaller truths pale in comparison with the importance of the larger "truth," the ideology.

What never fails inside the mind of an intellectual never works outside the confines of his head. The world's stubborn refusal to vindicate the intellectual's theories serves as proof of humanity's irrationality, not his own. Thus, the true believer retrenches rather than rethinks; he launches a war on the world, denying reality because it fails to conform to his theories. If intellectuals are not prepared to reconcile theory and practice, then why do they bother to venture outside the ivory tower or the coffeehouse? Why not stay in the world of abstractions and fantasy?

From an early age, smart people are reminded of their intelligence, separated from their peers in gifted classes, and presented with opportunities unavailable to others. For these and other reasons, intellectuals tend to have an inflated sense of their own wisdom. It is thus arrogance, and not intelligence, that leads them into trouble. They're so smart, hubris compels them to believe, that they can run everyone else's life. But no one is that smart. What's more, theorists devising systems for the rest of us to live under often have a difficult time running their own lives. Mundane tasks are to them what quantum physics is to the rest of us.

"To make of human affairs a coherent, precise, predictable whole one must ignore or suppress man as he really is," social theorist Eric Hoffer observed. "It is by eliminating man from their equation that the makers of history can predict the future, and the writers of history can give a pattern to the past."⁶

Systems fail because the notion of a single idea directing, ordering, and planning the lives of vast numbers of people is an absurd one. Human beings are too independent, and the fact that there are more than 6 billion of us makes applying one system to all of mankind an idiot's endeavor. Tolerance for the failed idea rarely wanes. Tolerance for the

humans invariably does. When the masses balk, elites impose their will. After all, they know what's best for us.

The same impulse that pushes men to believe arrogantly that a system can plan the affairs of whole nations leads them to think that a theory can explain all of history. Single-bullet theories of history rarely pan out. The attraction of such explanations is their simplicity. They relieve adherents from any obligation to think. The answers are preordained. "Human nature," sociologist Raymond Aron reminds us, "is not very amenable to the wishes of the ideologists."⁷

Why has ideology taken such a powerful hold over so many smart people? Humans desire meaning in their life. With the decline of religion among the well-educated, intellectuals increasingly look for meaning outside the church, temple, and mosque. Ideology can fill this void. It bestows an easy-to-understand explanation for the way the world works. It supplies a moral code, membership in a community, and a vocation. The new religions exalt secular saints, enforce dogma, punish heretics, value self-sacrifice, and sanctify writings. In short, ideology serves as a proxy religion for people who view themselves as too smart for traditional religion. And since worshiping a god is an impossible task for the self-obsessed, the intellectual moron worships himself—man—and the ideas that will deliver us all into salvation.

Seeing ideology in this light—as a substitute for religion—explains quite a bit. The ideologue believes he possesses a truth others have missed—for the more audacious true believers, the key to earthly redemption. Ideology contains no such power, but if you believed that it did, dishonesty, repression, murder, and other sins might be seen as a mere pittance to pay when you're providing deliverance to humanity. When you're saving the world, what's wrong with telling a few lies? If you're making heaven on earth, what's wrong with sacrificing a few people to save the rest? But heaven is in heaven and not on earth, and demands for human sacrifice necessarily make any cause suspect.

GURUS

Behind the bad ideas that have poisoned politics and culture stands ideology. Behind ideology stand gurus—the popularizers and founders of the theoretical systems that have done great mischief by misleading people. These are the ones who have planted the many harmful and false ideas that have taken root in our society. We must naturally go back to these

gurus to examine the roots of those bad ideas. Only by looking at the ideas and those who propagated them—and when, where, why, and how they did so—can we begin to clean up the mess that the ideas have unleashed.

Intellectual Morons examines the mendacity and foolishness of those who have had a far-reaching impact on the world through ideas. The progenitors of these stupid ideas are in some cases the leaders of massive popular movements. Others have had monuments erected in their honor. The majority have authored books that have sold in excess of a million copies. They are not bohemians relegated to the fringes of society. They are the paragons of establishment respectability.

So who are the generals leading armies of intellectual morons?

Alfred Kinsey, Margaret Sanger, and Michel Foucault propagated a notion of sex without consequences. Those “liberated” from antiquarian ideas regarding sex soon found themselves chained to unplanned offspring, incurable diseases, and personal emptiness. Kinsey, Sanger, and Foucault peddled falsehoods to alter the prevailing morality to accommodate their own unconventional behavior. They needn’t change; the world should. Kinsey knowingly perpetrated a fraud, shouting “Science!” to silence skeptics. Similarly, Planned Parenthood founder Sanger simplistically branded any opponent of her agenda as a tool of the Catholic Church. Like Icarus flying too close to the sun, Foucault pushed the limits of sexuality and paid for it with his life. All three shared a penchant for damning their critics as troglodytes standing athwart progress.

Feminist matriarch Betty Friedan covered up her life in the Communist fold and fabricated an everywoman, housewife persona to legitimize her ideas. Years later, when victimhood became all the rage in feminist circles, she leveled, then retracted, a charge of spousal abuse. Despite her celebrity status, many of her claims went unchecked by journalists and academics for decades.

Soviet spy Alger Hiss lied for the most primal of reasons: to save his skin. It is hardly unusual for someone facing years in a federal penitentiary to obfuscate the crimes he has committed. What are we to make of his supporters?

Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Gore Vidal have spent the better part of their long lives portraying the nation that has protected their freedoms as the base of worldwide oppression. The self-refuting nature of their work has never dawned on them. Vidal’s jaundiced view sees America operating behind the curtains during the 9/11 attacks and the Okla-

homa City bombing. Zinn penned a million-selling America-bashing history that reads more like fiction. Chomsky overlooked the very real sins of anti-American governments but saw with amazing clarity nonexistent offenses committed by the United States. The MIT professor denied Pol Pot’s mass killings in Cambodia, for example, but imagined a “silent genocide” conducted by the United States against Afghanistan. The trio has never lost faith in their theories, only in reality.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu peddled falsehoods to enhance her credibility as spokeswoman of the oppressed. When caught, she simply dismissed her accusers as racists. This was a sufficient explanation for her academic admirers, who continue to assign her book as if nothing has changed.

Like the street-corner evangelist, biologist Paul Ehrlich warns of the proximity of doomsday. Giving Ehrlich the benefit of the doubt, one could say that he never intended to deceive others. Perhaps his many predictions for environmental apocalypse were merely wrong. That he continued to issue such dire forecasts after deadlines for earlier predictions came and went is a sign that Ehrlich should have been dismissed. He wasn’t. He gained celebrity and credibility from the media, higher education, and the world of philanthropy. The more wild and inaccurate his declarations, the greater his stature became. Since Ehrlich issues his proclamations from Stanford University, and not from a sidewalk pulpit, the intelligentsia confuses his delusional fanaticism for wisdom.

W.E.B. Du Bois looked for heaven on earth behind the Iron Curtain and, like most ideologically motivated searchers, found what he was looking for. At one time or another, the NAACP cofounder offered praise for just about every bad idea that came along in the twentieth century—Communism, Nazism, racial separatism, and eugenics, to name but a few. Du Bois’s academic cheerleaders revise history to manufacture a civil rights hero who never existed.

In a more enlightened time, advocating infanticide as humane while condemning Thanksgiving dinner as something akin to murder might have suggested a mild form of insanity. Today, it earns Peter Singer an endowed professorship at Princeton University.

Ayn Rand launched a philosophy that elevated her own opinion to holy writ, immodestly naming it Objectivism. In the process, she sold tens of millions of books and established a global following. The best Objectivists ironically were the ones who imitated Rand most closely, right down to her Russian accent. Rand liked smoking, so lighting up became

obligatory for her acolytes. Rand hated Shakespeare, so her followers denounced the Bard while partaking in *Charlie's Angels*, what she called "tiddlywink music," Ian Fleming spy novels, and any other low-church indulgence that Rand found pleasurable. Rand sought to prove the perfectibility of man, but her life instead demonstrated how human we all are.

Europeans Jacques Derrida, Leo Strauss, and Herbert Marcuse put forth theoretical frameworks that attempted to legitimize dishonesty as a form of expression. The topsy-turvy world of Marcuse directed readers to see intolerance as tolerance, violence as nonviolence, and totalitarianism as freedom. Derrida leads a gang of literary critics that exhorts connoisseurs of the written word to read into texts any meaning desired, regardless of the author's intent. Leo Strauss, the Right's house deconstructionist, remains the only figure associated with contemporary conservatism to gain a major following within academia. Strauss purported to discover hidden meanings in the works of great philosophers by relying on numerology and encoded silences. When several of his followers occupied key positions within the executive branch of the U.S. government prior to 2003's Iraq war, the consequences of this crackpot ideology proved greater than fostering ignorance of long-dead philosophers.

"If you're on the wrong road," C. S. Lewis famously wrote, "progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man."⁸ For too long, intellectuals have been traveling briskly down the wrong paths, taking the rest of us along for the ride. It's time to get off and turn back, quickly.

To fix what's wrong with politics and culture by laboring for the victory or defeat of a particular candidate or piece of legislation is merely to chop away at branches that will grow back. Real change will come only when we unearth the roots of the bad ideas holding sway over countless academics, journalists, artists, government officials, and other elites.

JOINERS

Joiners rarely have more than a surface knowledge of the issues in which they involve themselves. What they lack in knowledge, they make up for in passion. Every reader has come across the joiner, the person who shifts every conversation to the favored cause of the moment, attends massive group-therapy sessions commonly referred to as protests, and decorates

his car with various bumper stickers. To the automobile's owner, pithy lines like "Keep Your Rosaries Out of Our Ovaries" and "Hate Is Not a Family Value" clearly express his views. To everyone else, the myriad slogans blur, and only one message stands out: The owner of this car is a screwball.

The celebrity joiner is always sure to wear the appropriate ribbon, use an acceptance speech to ramble on about a political cause, and serially affix his name to diverse petitions. Susan Sarandon, Michael Stipe, Alec Baldwin, Ed Asner, Jane Fonda, and Yoko Ono are a few who qualify for the celebrity joiner hall of fame.

Even the joiner's inability to abide by the ideology's dictates fails to persuade her of possible flaws in the secular faith.

- "I think the only people in this nation who should be allowed to own guns are the police officers," proclaimed Rosie O'Donnell. "I don't care if you want to hunt. I don't care if you think it's your right. I say, 'Sorry. It is 1999. We have had enough as a nation. You are not allowed to own a gun,' and if you do own a gun I think you should go to prison."⁹ After making these remarks, Million Mom Marcher Number One made headlines when her bodyguards sought concealed-weapons permits to protect her children when they went to school.¹⁰
- Megabucks populist Arianna Huffington ran for governor of California charging that "corporate fat cats get away with not paying their fair share of taxes." She should know. The tightfisted Huffington paid no state income taxes in 2001 and 2002 and handed over a meager \$771 to the Internal Revenue Service during the same period.¹¹
- Michael Moore excoriates big business for exporting jobs, weakening unions, and offering miserly pay and benefits. In his own business dealings, Moore proves more flexible. The *Roger and Me* director outsourced the design and hosting of his website to Canadian companies. Sporting the poseur fashion of scruffy jeans and his trademark baseball cap, the man behind *Fahrenheit 9/11* lives in a multimillion-dollar Manhattan condo, demands first-class flights and five-star hotels, and sends his daughter to a posh school. One Hollywood source states, "Michael's the greediest man I've ever met." Former employees describe the work environment Moore created as "a sweatshop,"

“indentured servitude,” and a “concentration camp.” According to former workers, union scale, health care, humane hours, and even pay for services rendered were at times hard to come by for some in Moore’s shop. A writer for the short-lived *TV Nation* remembered Moore explaining to a pair of writers, “[I]f you want to be in this union, only one of you can work here.”¹² For GM’s Roger Smith, such behavior warranted an attackumentary.

- Self-proclaimed environmentalist Barbra Streisand laments our “unsustainable way of life” and declares that decreasing “fossil fuel emissions” is “the most important thing that we can do today.”¹³ But Streisand owns an SUV, trades shares in the oil and gas company Halliburton, and occasionally travels in a forty-five-foot mobile home that gets less than ten miles to the gallon.¹⁴ In a case thrown out of court, Streisand actually sued an environmental activist for posting a picture of her beachfront home on the Internet to document coastal erosion.¹⁵

They’re excessive, but can we blame Rosie for providing safety to her children, Arianna for keeping the money she earned, Moore for preferring Big Apple glitz to factory-town tedium, or Babs for living in comfort? But if the advocate can’t live under the system, why must we? The cognitive dissonance should spark the joiner to reassess the tenability of her position, but it rarely does.

Joiners mistake great passion for great wisdom. They are more persuaded by the volume and pitch of an argument than by the logic and facts behind it. The bolder and brasher the pronouncement, the better it sounds in the true believer’s ears. Initiates speak an insider language. The ideologically elect demonstrate more concern for proving their ideological bona fides than for effectively communicating ideas to outsiders. *Patriarchy, proletariat, whim-worshiper*, words that would be about as meaningful to most listeners if spoken in Martian, are liberally tossed about by the joiner to enhance his credibility within his particular circle. In addition to buzzwords, the ideologue peppers his speech with mantras, slogans, and other mindless bromides.

Movements attract misfits. The desire to change the world usually corresponds with personal unhappiness. The frustrated man, not the self-contented one, goes about altering his surroundings. He would do better changing himself, but egomania prevails and fosters a less rational cure for his troubles. Mass movements also attract misfits because they take all

comers. Someone who finds it difficult to make friends, or to fill in any of the 365 empty dates on his social calendar, is relieved of these problems by remaining obedient to the Cause. The individual who doesn’t thrive as an individual longs to be part of something bigger. The Cause allows him to belong to the group, but naturally takes his individuality in the process. As the joiner loses his identity amid the mass, adversaries lose their individuality—their humanity—in the eyes of the joiner.

Apostate Communist Stephen Spender, writing in *The God That Failed*, recognized this aspect of mass movements. “[W]hen men have decided to pursue a course of action,” Spender wrote, “everything which seems to support this seems vivid and real; everything which stands against it becomes abstraction. Your friends are allies and therefore real human beings with flesh and blood and sympathies like yourself. Your opponents are just tiresome, unreasonable, unnecessary theses, whose lives are so many false statements which you would like to strike out with a lead bullet as you would put the stroke of a lead pencil through a bungled paragraph.”¹⁶ In other words, in pursuit of ostensibly humanitarian ends, the true believer sees no contradiction in wiping out other humans.

The religious nature of ideology spawns an odd character—the *ismist*, the true believer who floats from one ideology to the next. For the *ismist*, the ideas expressed hardly matter in comparison with being a part of something, belonging. Hence, we witness the spectacle of rabid Communists transforming into virulent anti-Communists, Objectivists becoming Scientologists, and religious conservatives morphing into gay activists—any cause will do.

To question the joiner’s faith is to mark oneself as an enemy. Mocking the guru or challenging the system puts the ideologue on the defensive, and not merely regarding his worldview. The joiner, whose submission to the guru’s teaching is often rewarded with automatic friends, a newfound social life, and restored purpose, views the heretic as a threat to all this and defends accordingly.

“To rely on the evidence of the senses and of reason is heresy and treason,” Eric Hoffer noted regarding the ways of fanatics. “It is startling to realize how much unbelief is necessary to make belief possible.”¹⁷ In his midcentury classic *The True Believer*, Hoffer depicted the mass-movement fanatic as one seeking to escape from the self by means of enlisting in a world-saving cause, one that he would kill or die for. His glorious ends justify his despicable means. The ideologue’s faith seems impenetrable: “At the root of [the fanatic’s] cockiness is the conviction that life and the

universe conform to a simple formula—his formula.”¹⁸ The true believers Hoffer described are just like the ones we find today. Times have changed but not much else.

THE COSTS

It is folly to blame “bad” ideology for the current degraded state of the public square. The problem isn’t necessarily Left ideology or Right ideology, but all ideology. Anyone who abandons rational analysis for the dictates of a governing philosophy is bound to be led astray. To the ideologue, what matters is not whether an idea is good or bad, harmful or beneficial, or true or false. What matters is whether it can serve the Cause.

There is great danger when lies are institutionalized as truth. Ideas, Richard Weaver famously wrote, have consequences. Men of action adopt ideas and put them into practice. Civilization suffers the repercussions of bad ideas. The evils this past century witnessed are not historical constants. The concentration camps and the gulag, total war, and Big Brother’s garrison state came about because bad ideas wrought bad consequences. These were anything but accidents. Closer to our time and place, unparented children, well-traveled venereal diseases, and dissipating freedoms—to smoke, to own firearms, to drive without the government’s robotic paparazzi tracking you—result from the implementation of some scribbler’s fantasy of how the rest of us should live. Ideology makes us susceptible to pernicious and false ideas, because true believers never view evidence of the system’s failure as just that. In the face of failure, ideologues have a vested interest to claim success.

Ideology acts as a mental straitjacket. It prevents adherents from seeing reality, encourages zealotry, and justifies dishonesty. It makes smart people stupid.

In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, the unjustified warnings regarding book learning seem more appropriate to the intellectual morons we find today: “They will appear omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome, having the reputation of knowledge without the reality.”¹⁹ This is a fitting epigraph for those discussed in the following pages.

“FICTION CALLS THE FACTS BY THEIR NAME”

The New Left’s Pop Philosopher

in: Daniel Flynn, *Intellectual Morons: How Ideology Makes Smart People Fall for Stupid Ideas* (NY: Crown, 2004), 13-32.



There is, indeed, a very close analogy between words and coins, both quintessentially human creations. A word, when fresh-minted, has the objectivity and innocence of a legal penny. Handled by men, it is soon subjected to the processes of inflation or deflation, and acquires moral or immoral characteristics.

—PAUL JOHNSON,
Enemies of Society

ALMOST HALFWAY THROUGH THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, GEORGE Orwell published his classic novel, *1984*. Orwell described a society that exhibited an extreme form of political correctness before such a phrase had entered common parlance. At the time of its printing, *1984*’s futuristic dystopia of Oceania mirrored the totalitarianism that had swept across Eastern Europe.

Orwell’s biting prose, which had earlier made him a hero of the intelligentsia when he penned such vehement denunciations of British colonialism as “Shooting an Elephant” and “A Hanging,” now transformed him into an object of hate among those who still believed that a City upon a Hill existed between the Carpathians and the Urals. Winston Smith, the protagonist of *1984*, finds himself in a society where euphemisms are the staple of language. The Ministry of Truth’s main purpose is to spread lies. Forced labor camps are renamed “joycamps.” The party’s slogans—WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH—reflect a world where the meaning of words is topsy-turvy. There is even a name for this new language: Newspeak.

Real-life Oceanias are not hard to find. Walk onto any of a great number of college campuses today and life imitates art. University administrators and professors preach the gospel of “tolerance” but are completely intolerant of anyone who might challenge the liberal orthodoxy.

Examples abound. At Cornell University, when a mob of student activists burned hundreds of copies of the conservative campus newspaper—copies they had stolen—the dean of students attended the newspaper burning to show his support for torching free speech. Moreover, a Cornell spokesperson defended not the conservative newspaper’s right to free speech but rather the liberal activists’ right to theft and newspaper torching: “The students who oppose the *Cornell Review* have claimed their First Amendment right to be able to have symbolic burnings of the *Cornell Review*.”¹ Administrator John Smeaton banned displays of the American flag by Lehigh University employees after glimpsing the Stars and Stripes adorning a campus bus on 9/11. Speaking fluent Newspeak, the insensitive vice provost maintained, “The message was supposed to be that we are sensitive to everyone.”² At Minnesota’s St. Cloud State University, the university president forced a student journalist to undergo “multicultural sensitivity training conducted by Multicultural Student Services” merely for arguing, perhaps illogically, that banning credit card companies from campus is illegal in the same way that banning blacks is illegal. The public condemnation of the student and the punishment meted out would “teach others the lesson of tolerance,” said the intolerant school leader.³

The ancient university mottoes *veritas* and *lux et veritas* weren’t always empty slogans. But today they’ve yielded to intolerance advertised as tolerance, politics disguised as scholarship, indoctrination calling itself education, and other phenomena that inhibit the search for truth. In some classrooms, ignorance is indeed strength.

The person most responsible for this development is a German émigré named **Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979)**, who preached that freedom is totalitarianism, democracy is dictatorship, education is indoctrination, violence is nonviolence, and fiction is truth. Nothing better sums up the modern academic Left’s Orwellian dishonesty than what Marcuse called “liberating tolerance,” which he defined as “intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.”⁴ Even if today’s professors, administrators, and campus activists haven’t read anything Herbert Marcuse wrote—and many of them haven’t—his ideas are nonetheless pervasive. His influence is so profound that the

denizens of academe carry out his marching orders without ever getting them from the original source.

It is not terribly unusual to hear lies told in the service of ideology. Far more extraordinary is forming an ideology that serves to codify lying as a legitimate form of discourse. This is precisely what Herbert Marcuse did.

Marcuse was the pop philosopher of the New Left. He allegedly coined the catchphrase “Make Love, Not War,” but even if he didn’t, that spirit certainly dripped off the pages of several of his books.⁵ When Parisian students revolted in May of 1968, they carried signs reading “Marx/Mao/Marcuse” as they tore apart the city.⁶ In America he came to even more renown—or notoriety, depending on one’s perspective—as the mentor of Angela Davis, the militant fugitive whose manhunt, capture, and trial on charges of murder and conspiracy created a media sensation. One Marcuse admirer ventured to guess that “among pure scholars he had the most direct and profound effect on historical events of any individual in the twentieth century.”⁷

THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

The sage of campus radicals in ’60s America got his start in Weimar Germany, developing his outlook at the Institute of Social Research. Established in 1923, the institute was to be called the Institute for Marxism, but its founders quickly saw the political disadvantages in such a blatantly ideological name for a scholarly endeavor. In addition to Marcuse, the group boasted a circle of intellectual luminaries that included Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, and Georg Lukacs. Although his colleagues viewed him for many years as an inferior, Marcuse’s star would in time eclipse the institute’s entire constellation.

By the 1960s, outsiders had begun referring to this gang of scholars as the Frankfurt School, in deference to the German city, and university, whence they came. The Frankfurt School was multidisciplinary. Sociologists, philosophers, literary critics, psychologists, and specialists in numerous fields made up its ranks. The common denominator linking its followers was Critical Theory, a term that Horkheimer first used in his 1937 essay “Traditional and Critical Theory.” Critical Theory, as its name implies, criticizes. What deconstruction does to literature, Critical Theory does to societies. Critical Theory does not offer a positive alternative to what it is criticizing and thus itself avoids criticism—except, of course,

the inevitable complaints about its reliance on accentuating the negative regarding societies, people, and ideas critical theorists don't like.

Marcuse and his cohorts expanded Marx's fetishization of the worker to include minorities, women, homosexuals, and other "outsider" groups. Mixing Freud with Marx, they psychoanalyzed Western civilization from a socialist outlook and recommended overhauling not just the economic system, but the family, patriotism, and organized religion too. By applying the principles of Communism to matters beyond economics, the Frankfurt School ensured that Marx's ideas wouldn't die if traditional Communism lost its luster.

Herbert Marcuse formally became associated with the Institute of Social Research in 1932. Shortly thereafter, the Nazis ascended to power in Germany. If not for the near-universal Jewish identity of the institute's members, then certainly for their association with Marxism, most of those connected with the Frankfurt School wisely fled Germany. The Nazis seized the house shared by two critical theorists and converted it into a barracks; they turned the institute itself over to the Nazi Student League.⁸ The institute relocated, first to Geneva, then to Columbia University in New York City. The Frankfurt School's emigration to the United States and not to the Soviet Union, and its return after the defeat of the Nazis to capitalist West Germany and not to one of the multitude of Communist nations, speaks volumes about the divide between theory and practice among its leaders.

Other contradictions arose. Even while they railed against capitalism, the Cultural Marxists had difficulty applying to themselves the ideas they wanted to impose on others. For all the talk of Marxist systems, the institute severed its ties with Leo Lowenthal because he dared ask for a pension, and by 1950 the institute's director enjoyed a salary seven times higher than what lower-level employees made.⁹ In fact, nearly all of the Frankfurt School's major players personally enjoyed the perks of capitalism. Stock quotes adorned a whole wall in Friedrich Pollack's office.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Herbert Marcuse lived a life of leisure because he was subsidized by his father, who owned a construction company; his father paid for his apartment and provided him with part ownership of a book business. Likewise, Theodor Adorno enjoyed the generous support of his parents well into adulthood. Max Horkheimer was the son of a millionaire industrialist. Jurgen Habermas's father served as the director of the local chamber of commerce.¹¹ Were these men rebelling against the bourgeoisie, or their parents? Their lavish upbringings do much to explain

why these trust-fund revolutionaries never really connected with the workers. Worse, the institute gladly took capitalist blood money from the Rockefeller Foundation, and it even accepted a contract from a company that had generously contributed to the Nazi Party and had helped take over factories in conquered nations. A sympathetic historian of the Frankfurt School somewhat understatedly labels this a "serious lapse."¹²

Traditional Communists found the institute's unorthodox Marxism heretical. The Cultural Marxists, however, were hardly political free spirits. Many associates of the Frankfurt School were committed Communist Party members, a few even Soviet spies.¹³ The Communist Party directed Georg Lukacs, whose wife was a terrorist in czarist Russia, to denounce his book *History and Class Consciousness* after its publication in 1923 because portions of it offended powerful ears in Moscow.¹⁴ When another institute scholar dared criticize Hitler during the Nazi-Soviet pact, historian Martin Jay notes that his book "was suppressed by its own publishers and copies already printed were recovered if at all possible."¹⁵ Rarely did the practitioners of Critical Theory focus their criticism on the Communist world. Prior to World War II, Theodor Adorno advised, "in the current situation, which is truly desperate, one should really maintain discipline at any cost (and no one knows the cost better than I!) and not publish anything which might damage Russia."¹⁶

Marcuse himself was even more deferential to the Soviets. In 1947, he argued that the Nazi defeat in World War II didn't change the precarious situation:

The Communist Parties are, and will remain, the sole anti-fascist power. Denunciation of them must be purely theoretical. Such denunciation is conscious of the fact that the realization of the theory is only possible through the Communist Parties, and requires the assistance of the Soviet Union. This awareness must be contained in each of its words. Further: in each of its words, the denunciation of neo-fascism and Social Democracy must outweigh denunciation of Communist policy. The bourgeois freedom of democracy is better than totalitarian regimentation, but it has literally been bought at the price of decades of prolonged exploitation and by the obstruction of socialist freedom.¹⁷

Deviationists paid a price. One unfortunate exponent of Critical Theory who had spent time in Stalin's gulag and Hitler's concentration

camps did speak out against Communist subversion in the United States. Karl Wittfogel named names. His longtime colleagues subsequently shunned him.¹⁸

In its most ambitious project, the Frankfurt School took advantage of the postwar zeitgeist that mistook social science for real science. Arguably the Frankfurt School's most famous work, the 1950 book *The Authoritarian Personality*, reported that America was potentially on the brink of fascism because of personality traits within individuals that had been developed by the family, religion, capitalism, and patriotism. The authors' methods were hardly scientific. Relying on Americans' responses to a special questionnaire to prove their thesis, they maintained that agreement with certain statements on the questionnaire indicated an affinity for authoritarianism. One such statement was "Now that a new world organization is set up, America must be sure that she loses none of her independence and complete power as a separate nation."¹⁹ But what the authors took to be signs of fascism were merely indications of conservatism. In fact, they inadvertently betrayed this bias, for in one instance they argued that agreement with a particular statement indicated potential fascism, but elsewhere they said that agreement with the same statement was a sign of conservatism.²⁰ Writing about *The Authoritarian Personality*, a historian of the Frankfurt School asked, "Was it not, therefore, merely the prejudices of left-wing academics, who wanted to discredit political and economic conservatism by demonstrating a correlation between ethnocentrism and fascist character structures, which were being disproved?"²¹

This was the "scientific" background out of which Herbert Marcuse emerged. But over time, Marcuse would do much to separate himself from his Frankfurt School brethren. Most members of the Institute of Social Research, and the institute itself, returned to Germany after World War II, but Marcuse stayed in America. There, he would go on to greater fame and influence than his fellow critical theorists.

SEX, DRUGS, AND ROCK 'N' ROLL

Before becoming the savant of the New Left ragtag, Marcuse tried his hand at a number of pursuits. He had served in the German military during World War I, in the U.S. Office of War Information and the Office of Strategic Services during the Second World War, and in the U.S. State Department for several years after the war. Still, he attained his greatest influence in the world of academia. In the 1950s he held positions at

Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, and in 1954 he began an eleven-year stint at the infant Brandeis University. There he would publish his two most famous works, *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man*. By the time he arrived in Southern California to begin teaching at the University of California at San Diego in 1965, he was already being viewed as the intellectual guru of the counterculture.

And for good reason. He taught his followers the virtues of poor hygiene and a "body unsoiled by plastic cleanliness."²² To practice nonviolence in the age of the Black Panthers, the Weathermen, and the Symbionese Liberation Army, he proclaimed, was to commit acts of violence against the establishment. Speaking of such groups, Marcuse contended, "If they use violence, they do not start a new chain of violence but try to break an established one."²³ He spoke directly to radical firebrands, sometimes being careful to rescind earlier commands. For example, in 1972's *Counterrevolution and Revolt* he informed readers that his earlier emphasis on the "political potential" of swearwords had perhaps been misguided. "The verbalization of the genital and anal sphere, which has become a ritual in left-radical speech (the 'obligatory' use of 'fuck,' 'shit') is a *debasement* of sexuality," he castigated. "If a radical says, 'Fuck Nixon,' he associates the word for highest genital gratification with the highest representative of the oppressive Establishment, and 'shit' for the products of the Enemy takes over the bourgeois rejection of anal eroticism."²⁴ Heavy stuff!

It isn't just the Newspeak of 1984 that Marcuse's writings evoke. The famous Orwell witticism—that some ideas are so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them—often comes to mind when one tumbles through a Marcuse essay. Yet intellectuals were not the only ones reading Marcuse's work. His message had broader appeal, for he called for something the counterculture could relate to: the pursuit of pleasure.

Marx argued against the exploitation of labor; Marcuse, against labor itself. Don't work, have sex. This was the simple message of *Eros and Civilization*, released in 1955. Its ideas proved to be extraordinarily popular among the fledgling hippie culture of the following decade. It provided a rationale for laziness and transformed degrading personal vices into virtues.

The book took Freud and turned him on his head. Marcuse agreed with the German psychologist that civilization is the result of the repression of animal instincts, like the sex drive. He disagreed, however, that civilization is a good thing. What the author mined from Freud he mixed

with his unique interpretation of Marx. "To each according to his needs" was updated to include not just material needs but pleasure's "needs" as well.

In a later book, whose literary style was much more conducive to being understood by his youthful audience, Marcuse described his reinterpretation of Marx:

In Marxian theory, originally, impoverishment meant privation, unsatisfied vital needs, first of all material needs. When this concept no longer described the condition of the working classes in the advanced industrial countries, it was reinterpreted in terms of relative deprivation: relative to the available social wealth, cultural impoverishment. However, this reinterpretation suggests a fallacious continuity in the transition to socialism, namely, the amelioration of life within the existing universe of needs. But what is at stake in the socialist revolution is not merely the extension of satisfaction within the existing universe of needs, nor the shift of satisfaction from one (lower) level to a higher one, but the rupture with this universe, the *qualitative leap*. The revolution involves a radical transformation of the needs and aspirations themselves, cultural as well as material; of consciousness and sensibility; of the work process as well as leisure.²⁵

Doctrinaire Communists cringed at Marcuse's application of Marxist thought to issues that Marx never addressed. In the late 1960s, Marcuse was even forced into hiding because of threats against his life from orthodox Marxists who disdained his call to abandon the workers as the catalyst of the coming revolution (which Marcuse didn't see as coming in the near future anyhow).²⁶ In the place of the workers—who despised the Marxists, after all—the professor called for a *mélange* of "victims": racial minorities, women, homosexuals, and so on.

Eros and Civilization posits that man's "labor time, which is the largest part of the individual's life time, is painful time, for alienated labor is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle."²⁷ The culprit ruining the lives of the citizenry was the technological capitalism that had created the many products that seemed to improve the lives of consumers. The products didn't. They merely forced consumers to work more and more to consume an even greater number of unnecessary vendibles.

The solution was for people to stop working and start doing what felt nice. Marcuse called for "polymorphous sexuality" and "a *transformation* of the libido: from sexuality constrained under genital supremacy to eroticization of the entire personality."²⁸ Some work would be necessary, he conceded, but only a bare minimum. "Since the length of the working day is itself one of the principal repressive factors imposed upon the pleasure principle by the reality principle," *Eros and Civilization* proclaims, "the reduction of the working day to a point where the mere quantum of labor time no longer arrests human development is the first prerequisite for freedom."²⁹ Automation would allow for the reduction of toil without losing the benefits of that toil, and the "exchangeability of functions" would make labor all the more tolerable.³⁰ Marcuse conceded that "a vastly lower standard of living [would occur] if social productivity were redirected toward the universal gratification of individual needs: many would have to give up manipulated comforts if all were to live a human life."³¹ This bit of realism amid a scribbler's fantasyland demonstrates the ridiculousness of the whole scenario.

The fantasyland, however, was very popular among academics, and Marcuse's works, particularly *Eros and Civilization*, became a staple of the curriculum in a wide variety of fields. On the book's final page, he preached that "the struggle" for the sexualization of culture "has to be turned into a spiritual and moral struggle."³² The recent substitution of glandular for intellectual pursuits in such courses as the University of Michigan's "How to Be Gay: Homosexuality and Initiation," Berkeley's "Pornographies On/Scene," and Antioch's "Queer Acts," in which "Drag will be encouraged but not required," is proof that Marcuse's call to arms did not fall on deaf ears in higher education.³³ A parade of MTV tarts, a lecherous cad's eight-year occupation of the White House, and court demands that society endorse relationships between couples of the same sex indicate that Marcuse's "spiritual and moral struggle" has moved beyond academia's ivy-covered walls.

ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN

A major theme of Marcuse's work, most clearly stated in 1964's *One-Dimensional Man*, is that reality is false and fantasy is truth. The one-dimensional man can only conceptualize the tangible world around him. The enlightened, two-dimensional man can see, in addition to the expe-

rienced world, a world of potentiality. The perfect world viewed by two-dimensional man fulfills all the promises of the Marxist ideal. It is this utopia, Marcuse theorized, that is the true universe.

Paintings, novels, poems, plays, and other works of art play a prime role in injecting “true consciousness” into connoisseurs: “Fiction calls the facts by their name and their reign collapses; fiction subverts everyday experience and shows it to be mutilated and false.”³⁴ Examples of the rebellion against reality that Marcuse suggested aren’t difficult to find, especially in Hollywood. The noble inmates and sadistic guards in *The Shawshank Redemption*, the virtuous prostitutes in *Pretty Woman*, and the treasonous Marines in *The Rock* evoke a notion of reality so foreign to the dictates of common sense as to make celluloid simian Dr. Cornelius and Tatooine bad-guy Jabba the Hut seem realistic in comparison. If you’re a leftist, your life story need be only mildly interesting to warrant a lionizing Tinseltown biopic. *Reds*, *The People v. Larry Flynt*, *Patch Adams*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Malcolm X*, *Frida*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Silkwood*, *Gorillas in the Mist*, *Norma Rae*, and *Evita* are just a few examples of Hollywood’s hagiography of leftist icons. Where are the movies about Pope John Paul II, Whittaker Chambers, Mother Teresa, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn? Is it that they’ve led less interesting lives than, say, Patch Adams?*

*While Hollywood propaganda certainly predated Marcuse’s preaching (consider, for example, *Birth of a Nation* and *Mission to Moscow*), its role today as an ingredient in films is often more highly valued than entertainment’s role. Take the five films nominated for the Academy Award’s Best Picture in 1999. All but one force-fed audiences a heavy-handed political message. *The Green Mile* bemoans the death penalty, while *The Insider*, which lionizes Marcuse by name, tells the story of a left-wing reporter and his source’s fight against an evil tobacco corporation. *The Cider House Rules* is the story of a gentle abortionist whose unenlightened apprentice finally gets over his hang-up of being an orphan and learns the virtues of infanticide. Upon receiving an Oscar, its writer thanked Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Rights Action League. *American Beauty*, an excellent movie that took home the award for best picture, is more effective in its propaganda because it actually entertains. The film is a venomous indictment of American society that skewers the life-draining corporate conformity faced by the husband, the Tony Robbins-style self-improvement of salesmanship adopted by his wife, and the high school inhabited by their daughter that serves to manufacture such people. The only normal family in their neighborhood is a homosexual couple, and the film’s villain is a repressed Marine colonel. That the movie’s writer and producers were gay activists shocked no one. More recently, Oscar nominees have included the class-warfare whodunit *Gosford Park*, crusading environmentalist biopic *Erin Brockovich*, the boring feminist film *The Hours*, and *Gangs of New York*, yet another cinematic ode to class warfare.

Fictional expression is so appealing to utopians precisely because anything, no matter how ridiculous, can be made to seem realistic. (It’s no coincidence that two members of the Frankfurt School actually settled in Hollywood to write for the film industry.) What fails in real-world practice is often an unmitigated success in film, on the stage, or in the pages of a novel. Because the stated goal of a work of fiction is entertainment, the cultural message might be subtle, and as a result it can have a greater impact. Propaganda can be particularly effective in entertainment because people are supposed to suspend reality when they watch sitcoms, movies, plays, and other dramatic performances. With enough theatrical repetition, the abnormal becomes normal, and far-fetched ideas seem plausible.

In Marcuse’s world, critical thinking, and even logic, is the enemy. In *One-Dimensional Man* he condemned “the process by which logic became the logic of domination.”³⁵ If an ideal is devoid of sound logic, Marcuse argued, the problem is not always the idea but sometimes logic itself. To Marcuse, logic is a tool of oppression, in no small measure because it can be used to debunk many ideas that he thinks are good ones.

According to Marcuse, *nothing* can debunk his claims. That’s the beauty of the system he foisted on his followers. He claimed that the senses distort reality by portraying reality as that which is experienced, and that is why the one-dimensional man, slave to his senses, cannot visualize the Marxist utopia. Thus, he argued, “True knowledge and reason demand domination over—if not liberation from—the senses.”³⁶ Experience and the senses work against true reality. To become enlightened, he reasoned, one must emancipate oneself from these chains of oppression.

Another enemy is the scientific method, which, through its claims of objectivity, denies the reality of utopia. “[T]here is no such thing as a purely rational scientific order; the process of technological rationality is a political process,” Marcuse wrote.³⁷ He reserved special contempt for science, because he deemed it responsible for man’s “ever-more-effective domination of nature” and the “ever-more-effective domination of man by man *through* the domination of nature,” which brought ecological pollution, military destructiveness, assembly-line conformity, and other maladies.³⁸

In keeping with the theme of Critical Theory, Marcuse rationalized that he didn’t need to come up with a positive alternative to explain what should replace logic, reason, objectivity, experience, and the other truth-finding methods that he denounced. “We are still confronted with the demand to state the ‘concrete alternative,’” he complained years later.

“The demand is meaningless if it asks for a blueprint of the specific institutions and relationships which would be those of the new society.”³⁹

LIBERATING TOLERANCE

Distraught by the inability of Cultural Marxism to grab hold of the masses in the West, Herbert Marcuse searched for new solutions to bring about the social change he longed for. “[F]ree competition and free exchange of ideas have become a farce,” he concluded in the 1960s.⁴⁰ Under such a system, Marcuse realized, Marxism didn’t fare well. What was needed was “the cancellation of the liberal creed of free and equal discussion.”⁴¹ “Not ‘equal’ but more representation of the Left would be the equalization of the prevailing inequality.”⁴² This is when he proclaimed his doctrine of “liberating tolerance,” the Orwellian call for “intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.”⁴³

Shunning the protocols of Critical Theory, Marcuse laid out a vision for his tolerant society of the future. What actions did he recommend to achieve “true tolerance”?

They would include the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armament, chauvinism, discrimination on the grounds of race and religion, or which oppose the extension of public services, social security, medical care, etc. Moreover, the restoration of freedom of thought may necessitate new and rigid restrictions on teachings and practices in the educational institutions which, by their very methods and concepts, serve to enclose the mind within the established universe of discourse and behavior—thereby precluding *a priori* a rational evaluation of the alternatives.⁴⁴

It would be justifiable, then, to revoke free speech rights from anyone who opposed socialism. Later, he called for restricting speech even further, arguing for “[w]ithdrawal of tolerance from regressive movements before they can become active; intolerance even toward thought, opinion, and word, and finally, intolerance . . . toward the self-styled conservatives, to the political Right.”⁴⁵

Marcuse’s mutterings on tolerance call to mind yet another of Orwell’s observations: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”⁴⁶

Marcuse was careful to assure liberals, who traditionally opposed censorship, particularly suppression of creative expression, that “censorship of art and literature is regressive under all circumstances.” His very next sentence, however, revealed that he had no problem censoring literature and art that he didn’t like. “The authentic oeuvre is not and cannot be a prop for oppression, and pseudo art (which can be such a prop) is not art,” he wrote.⁴⁷ In his fantasy world, he would be suppressing not art or literature in banning such material, but pseudo-art and pseudo-literature.

Tolerating what you like and censoring what you don’t like, of course, had a name before Marcuse came along. It was called intolerance. Intolerance had an unpopular ring to it, so Marcuse called it by its more popular antonym, tolerance. This word was often modified by *liberating*, *discriminating*, and *true*. Further corruption of language came via his criticism of practitioners of free speech as “intolerant.”

Proponents of government policing of the marketplace of ideas are often accused of an elitism that assumes people are too dumb to think for themselves and need the state to think for them. But in Marcuse’s case, the opposite is true. Because people *do* think for themselves—and reject what Marcuse is offering—he is compelled to limit options. If he didn’t do so, people would make choices he opposed.

Marcuse’s pedantic prose gave the intelligentsia a highfalutin academic justification for intolerance. It gave moral sanction—indeed, a sense of self-righteousness—to liberals acting in the most illiberal way. The modern university, with its speech codes and general “intolerance against movements from the Right,” is the most graphic example of what Marcuse has wrought. But we see the pernicious influence of this ideology elsewhere in our culture. Calls for John Rocker to be banned from baseball for making impolite remarks, efforts to remove Dr. Laura from the airwaves for her religious conviction against homosexuality, and attacks on Mel Gibson for making a movie about Jesus Christ are all manifestations of the new “liberal” sensibility on censorship. While a remnant of old-style liberals exist—Nat Hentoff, Harvey Silverglate, Tammy Bruce, and Camille Paglia, to name but a few—many of those known as liberals today are merely leftists who have co-opted a name. Those who walked down the path set by Marcuse ceased in all but name to be liberals.

FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

Marcuse's view of freedom and democracy was similarly skewed. As with his interesting interpretation of tolerance, Marcuse reversed the meanings of *freedom* and *democracy* and then assigned the labels *antifreedom* and *antidemocratic* to those who actually believed in liberty and popular sovereignty. Marcuse's followers once again had to borrow Alice's looking glass to concur.

It is instructive to see which nations embodied freedom and which ones exemplified tyranny in Marcuse's view. "[I]s there today, in the orbit of advanced industrial civilization," he asked in 1964, "a society which is not under an authoritarian regime?"⁴⁸ The question answered itself. Western societies, like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, were really "authoritarian" states. Vietnam, Cuba, and Red China, according to Marcuse, represented freedom.⁴⁹ "For a whole generation, 'freedom,' 'socialism,' and 'liberation' are inseparable from Fidel and Che and the guerrillas," he wrote; "they have recaptured . . . the day-to-day fight of men and women for a life as human beings."⁵⁰

Marcuse and his confederates knew totalitarianism. The perverse lesson that they gleaned from their experiences in Germany was not to fight against tyranny but to be the tyrants. If totalitarianism undermined their goals, they spoke the language of human rights and liberation. If the total state served their ends, they adopted an apologist's accent.

Marcuse simultaneously condemned "the repressive ideology of freedom" and affirmed Rousseau's oxymoron that people "must be 'forced to be free.'"⁵¹ When Westerners were asked if they were free, inevitably they would answer in the affirmative. This answer was irrelevant, according to Marcuse, who contended that the people would be free "if and when they are free to give their own answer. As long as they are kept incapable of being autonomous, as long as they are indoctrinated and manipulated (down to their very instincts), their answer to this question cannot be taken as their own."⁵² One suspects that until the people agreed with Marcuse, they would always be deemed lacking in independence.

For Marcuse, democracy is a worthy form of government only if it facilitates the arrival of socialism, and it is to be discarded when it turns against the Left. In the last years of his life, Marcuse quite openly acknowledged the Left's inability to win through the democratic process. He affirmed in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, for instance, the depressing fact that the "radicals are confronted with violent hostility on the part of

the people."⁵³ Che Guevara was killed in Bolivia because the very peasants he claimed to be aiding turned him in to the authorities. In America, groups of working-class men known as the "hard hats" engaged radical activists in fistfights. Unique among Marxists, Marcuse recognized the wide chasm between leftist rhetoric extolling the workingman and the reality of the workingman's contempt for the people employing such rhetoric. "The prevalence of a non-revolutionary—nay, antirevolutionary—consciousness among the majority of the working class is conspicuous," he noted.⁵⁴

The foremost impediment to achieving Marcuse's utopia was not kings or dictators or the aristocracy, but the people themselves. The people were suffering from "false consciousness" and couldn't recognize what was good for them, Marcuse maintained. Democracy was dangerous, because where it appeared to be carrying out the will of the people, it really subverted their will. At least people who lived under tyrannies did not suffer under such illusions. By giving people supposed political rights, Western democracies made "the traditional ways and means of protest ineffective—perhaps even dangerous because they preserve the illusion of popular sovereignty."⁵⁵

The German émigré railed against democratic systems, saying, "The *immediate* expression of the opinion and will of the workers, farmers, neighbors—in brief, of the people—is not, per se, progressive and a force of social change: it may be the opposite. The councils will be organs of revolution only to the degree to which they represent the people *in revolt*."⁵⁶

Democracy was good when it benefited the Left, but bad—and therefore not real democracy—when it went against the Left. He wrote:

Direct democracy, the subjection of all delegation of authority to effective control "from below," is an essential demand of Leftist strategy. The demand is necessarily ambivalent. To take an example from the student movement: effective student participation in the administration of the university. In political terms, this demand presupposes that the majority of the student body is more progressive than the faculty and the administration. If the contrary is the case, the change would turn against the Left.⁵⁷

By his admission, democracy is merely a part of strategy, a means to an end. It possesses no inherent value other than its ability to, from time

to time, bring the Left political power. When it has served its purpose, or when the people are against the Left, democracy should be abandoned.

It was an ideology of convenience—do what works for you when it works for you. Sadly, the Left has adopted Marcuse's teachings. Different rules applied to Western democracies than to Communist countries, Middle Eastern dictatorships, and Third World outposts. The standard carried to the battlefield of ideas by Marcuse would be picked up by Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and countless other culturally alienated scribes in the years to come.

REAL EDUCATION IS INDOCTRINATION

"All authentic education," Marcuse wrote, "is political education."⁵⁸ Education's antithesis, indoctrination, he disguised as education. It was the familiar formula: assign a word with positive connotations, in this case *education*, to an ugly practice—*indoctrination*.

The Frankfurt School's aim was not enlightenment but attitudinal adjustment. Psychological conditioning through entertainment, the classroom, linguistic taboos, and other means would transmit their ideology through osmosis. The scientific method, logic, reasoning, debate, and other staples of a classically liberal education they deemed bourgeois. Why go through all of that nonsense when the Marxist truth has already been revealed? The educator of the future would teach students *what* to think, not *how* to think.

Of specific interest to Marcuse was higher education—and not coincidentally, that is where he has had his most profound influence. "The development of a true consciousness is still the professional function of the universities," he stated.⁵⁹ In Marcuse's heyday of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Left took over campuses, further promoting violence, the stop-the-war effort, black nationalism, the women's movement, the drug culture, sexual licentiousness, and other phenomena. And they retained their control of the universities. Protestors who took over administration buildings in the 1960s were calling the shots from those very same administration buildings a few decades later. Marcuse foresaw this development:

What appears as extraneous "politicization" of the university by disrupting radicals is today (as it was so often in the past) the "logical," internal dynamic of education: translation of knowledge into

reality, of humanistic values into humane conditions of existence. This dynamic, arrested by the pseudo-academic features of academia, would, for example, be released by the inclusion into the curriculum of courses giving adequate treatment to the great nonconformist movements in civilization to the critical analysis of contemporary societies.⁶⁰

When Marcuse wrote this, the college campus was almost entirely innocent of such departments as women's studies, environmental studies, and peace studies, let alone more recent creations like gay and lesbian studies. Today, more than six hundred programs grant degrees in women's studies.⁶¹ At schools like Duke, Harvard, and Cornell, there are more classes listed in the course catalogue for women's studies than for economics.⁶² Programs in gay and lesbian studies (or sex studies, queer studies, or any of its other manifestations) exist at the University of Massachusetts, Brown, the University of North Carolina, the University of California at Santa Cruz, Bowdoin, and dozens of other schools. According to one of the most popular readers in gay and lesbian studies, the subject "straddles scholarship and politics" and it "intends to establish the analytical centrality of sex and sexuality within many different fields of inquiry, to express and advance the interests of lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men, and to contribute culturally and intellectually to the contemporary lesbian/gay movement."⁶³ Other fields of this ilk are similarly pervasive and aggressively political.

What unites these seemingly disparate fields of study is a condemnation of Western civilization. The various victim-studies concentrations are Critical Theory broken down into specific components, each bemoaning a particular aspect of society. Peruse the course descriptions of these departments and Herbert Marcuse's name continually pops up.

DUMB AND DISHONEST IDEAS

In the late 1960s, the monster unleashed by the Frankfurt School turned on its creators. University campuses and city streets erupted.

The disorder hit close to home for the Institute of Social Research. In 1968, one of Theodor Adorno's students led a chaotic takeover of Frankfurt University, during which Jurgen Habermas's research assistants conducted teach-ins. The protestors renamed the school Karl Marx

University. The sociology department became the Spartacus Department.⁶⁴ In January 1969, students invaded the building that housed the Institute of Social Research, prompting the institute's directors to call the police. To their embarrassment, the directors learned that the students were just looking for a place to hold a discussion. Of this incident, Marcuse wrote Adorno, "We cannot ignore the fact that these students have been influenced by us (and not least by you)."⁶⁵

The rebellions continued. During one lecture by Adorno, by then the leader of the Institute of Social Research, a gang of disruptive women who forgot to wear their tops barged into his classroom. Habermas displayed to historian Martin Jay the lock he put on his phone to impede radical students who would break into his office from running up long-distance bills.⁶⁶

All this disorder caught the Frankfurt School's leadership off-guard. Incredulous, Adorno admitted, "When I made my theoretical model, I could not have guessed that people would try to realize it with Molotov cocktails."⁶⁷

People did, unfortunately, try to realize the Frankfurt School's societal blueprint. They still do. They do so because Cultural Marxism's evangelist, Herbert Marcuse, effectively transmitted the blueprint to the masses. Ideas aren't contained in a vacuum.

Marcuse is significant, first, because he helped save Marxism by divorcing it from its association with economics and applying its tenets to any number of "victim" categories. The worker was erased and in his place came an endless stream of variables: the homosexual, the woman, the black, the immigrant. The enemy was no longer capitalism, but racism, sexism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, ableism, and a host of other isms and alleged pathologies. By appropriating Marxist analyses to issues unrelated to economics, Marcuse exhibited either great prescience or great luck. Within a few decades, faith in the Marxist economic model had largely collapsed along with the Iron Curtain. Cultural Marxism still thrives.

A second legacy is his role in legitimizing scholarly pursuits pertaining to matters less of the mind than of the groin. Sex-obsessed philosophical books such as *Eros and Civilization* and *An Essay on Liberation*, novel for their time, now flood the academic market. What was once relegated to the walls of bathroom stalls is now common fare in the pages of scholarly journals or on the printing plates of university publishing houses.

Even more significant than Marcuse's contributions to establishing "victim studies" and an intellectualism based on sexuality was his impact on discourse. The impact was especially profound in the university.

Appropriately, we embark upon an investigation of dumb and dishonest ideas by conducting an examination of the thought of Herbert Marcuse. Unlike many others discussed in this book, Marcuse did something more pernicious than simply tell a few lies to further a cause. He created a theoretical framework that endorsed double standards and the separation of words from their meanings for the purpose of granting positive connotations to negative practices. This verbal legerdemain created a real-life Newspeak. "If a National Museum of Double Standards is ever built," journalist John Leo humorously proposes, "we should name it for Marcuse and put a huge statue of him on the roof. Maybe he should be shown holding up two fingers, one for each standard."⁶⁸ Marcuse quite clearly had two standards on violence, democracy, freedom, education, tolerance, and any other issue that he wished to distort.

In the final chapter of *1984*, Winston Smith is told by O'Brian, a high-ranking party official:

You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. You also believe that the nature of reality is self-evident. When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you. But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes, and in any case soon perishes; only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be truth is truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party.⁶⁹

Academics looking through the jaundiced eyes of Marcuse see anything that they want to see. "Diversity" describes a faculty that looks like the United Nations but thinks like a San Francisco coffeehouse. Women who don manly garb, never shave their legs or underarms, and imitate males by dating other women are labeled "feminists." "Tolerance" is defined as saying anything you want, so long as it agrees with prevailing campus dictates. "Multiculturalism" shuns an exploration of foreign cultures in favor of bashing America. "Equality" means treating individuals differently through race and gender preferences.

Far too often, present-day ideologues mask their agenda with sweet-sounding words when their real goal is to wage war on the concepts embodied by those words. The twenty-first century rolls onward, but the campuses are perpetually stuck in 1984. The result is a corruption of language that threatens meaningful discourse. Participants in debate can at once be speaking the same language but effectively be speaking different languages. Words that have fixed definitions, like *democracy* and *tolerance*, now come to mean something entirely different in the vernacular of the intellectuals.

In the dénouement of 1984, Winston Smith, his spirit broken, traces “2 + 2 = 5” on a table. When we are taught to use such words as *tolerance*, *diversity*, and *sensitivity* in an Orwellian—or, perhaps more appropriately, Marcusean—fashion, two plus two begins to equal five.

“SCIENCE!”

How a Pervert Launched the Sexual Revolution



*A man must be something of a moralist if he is to preach,
even if he is to preach immorality.*

—G. K. CHESTERTON,
Heretics

WHAT MOTIVATES SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARIES? DO THEY SELFLESSLY long for an elevation of society onto a higher plane, or is it their selfish design to bring the world down to their own degraded level?

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was incapable of holding a job and sponged off women his entire life. He spawned five children, not one of whom he bothered to name, all of whom he abandoned to almost certain death at an asylum. He was a sexual pervert and enjoyed physical punishment and exposing himself to women.¹ Should it surprise us, then, that he advocated a philosophy of sexual anarchy, state ownership of children, and the subsidization of those unwilling to work?

British writer Paul Johnson reminds us that so far as we know, “Marx never set foot in a mill, factory, mine, or other industrial workplace in the whole of his life.”² His war against free enterprise stemmed not from solidarity with the workers but from his constant debts, unemployment, and inability to support his family. His mother complained, “Karl should accumulate capital instead of just writing about it.”³

More recently, apostles of the drug culture—Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Abbie Hoffman—have preached what they practiced. It was only after these men became drug users that they also became apologists for substance abuse.

Halfway through the twentieth century, Indiana University professor Alfred Kinsey launched what was perhaps the first salvo in the Sexual Revolution. The Kinsey Reports hit postwar America like a sucker punch. Claiming that more people than America was willing to admit engaged in premarital sex, homosexuality, adultery, and various other frowned-upon pursuits, 1948's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and 1953's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* revolutionized American law, culture, education, and a host of other areas. Critics of the best-sellers, the media informed America, were to Kinsey what the Church was to Galileo. Kinsey, after all, was a "scientist."

At midcentury, Kinsey's fame rivaled that of Harry Truman, Joe DiMaggio, and Douglas MacArthur. Today, the IU professor is perhaps best known for putting forward the idea that 10 percent of the population is gay, with "1 in 10" becoming something of a mantra for homosexual activists.

By the twilight of the 1960s, the Sexual Revolution that Alfred Kinsey helped father was in full bloom. The Pill, the advent of *Playboy* magazine, increased sexuality in entertainment, male dislocation from decades of near-nonstop warfare, and the women's and gay rights movements all changed the moral fabric. Kinsey, more than any other human being, can be said to be responsible for the change. His detractors point to the increased rates of abortion, illegitimacy, rape, divorce, and sexually transmitted disease as his legacy. His supporters claim that a more sexually open and tolerant society has improved the lives of nearly everyone, particularly gays, who are no longer forced to keep their lives hidden. As evidenced by the controversy surrounding the 2004 release of the biopic *Kinsey*, starring Liam Neeson, he is a polarizing figure to this day.

Partisans and detractors agree that Kinsey changed the world. While time obscures his name, Kinsey's spirit looms large in a world much more indulgent of unsettling sexual behavior:

- A March 2000 state-funded conference in Massachusetts instructed high school students how to engage in a sexual practice called "fisting" and dispensed bandages for "when the sex got really rough."⁴
- Videos aired by MTV after school, by performers like Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears, increasingly resemble soft-core porn on late-night pay television.

- In 2003, *Rolling Stone* explored the homosexual subculture of "bug chasers" and "gift givers." The labels refer to gays who actively seek HIV, and the men who grant their wish. One bug chaser, who ironically volunteered as an AIDS educator, explained, "I think it turns the other guy on to know that I'm still negative and that they're bringing me into their brotherhood. That gets me off, too." The moment he is infected, he confessed, will be "the most erotic thing I can imagine."⁵ The piece seems to have exaggerated the popularity of such pursuits, but this sensationalism didn't negate the fact that something this sick actually occurs.
- Some institutions have begun constructing third bathrooms for transgender people. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, for instance, doled out \$8,000 to build a bathroom for a single employee.⁶
- A Florida group hosts a nudist camp for children, featuring such activities as a naked talent show and eating s'mores nude around a campfire.⁷
- After tying up and gagging a blindfolded classmate, a San Francisco Art Institute student performed a class project with him in front of students, two professors, and security. This is how the "artist" described the outdoor event: "I engaged in oral sex with him and he engaged in oral sex with me. I had given him an enema, and I had taken a shit and stuffed it in his ass. That goes on, he shits all over me, I shit in him."⁸

Post-Kinseyan America is very different from pre-Kinseyan America. The Indiana University professor set into motion radical societal changes. No less a sexual revolutionary than Hugh Hefner, founder of *Playboy*, has labeled himself "Kinsey's pamphleteer."⁹ Though it is too simplistic to pin the blame or credit for any social trend on one person, Alfred Kinsey has had extraordinary influence.

In fact, he is more relevant now than when he lived. Proponents of relaxed attitudes toward sex and sexuality still trumpet Kinsey's findings to show the "truth" about sex that supposedly puritanical Americans don't want us to know. It is quite an achievement for a supposed scientist whose work was an utter fraud. Of course, the intellectual morons who promote

concentration camps, will cling tenaciously to life under the most miserable conditions,” he emotionally argues.³⁶ Similarly, he likens medical research on animals to Nazi experiments on humans.³⁷

While eating animals is strictly off-limits in Singer’s ideal world, having sex with them is not. In an article in a dark corner of the Internet, Singer graphically describes an octopus performing sex acts upon a woman. Elsewhere in the piece he details men engaging in the marital act with barnyard hens. Of this latter practice, the Ivy League prof proclaimed, “But is it worse for the hen than living for a year or more crowded with four or five other hens in [a] barren wire cage so small that they can never stretch their wings, and then being stuffed into crates to be taken to the slaughterhouse, strung upside down on a conveyor belt and killed?”³⁸

Contemplating that humans, like dogs, monkeys, apes, and elephants, are mammals, Singer concludes, “This does not make sex across the species barrier normal, or natural, whatever those much-misused words may mean, but it does imply that it ceases to be an offence to our status and dignity as human beings.”³⁹

PRINCETON LABELS SINGER “MAINSTREAM”

Aristotle ridiculed the pre-Socratic philosophers Melissus and Parmenides by humorously pointing out that “their premises are false, and their conclusions do not follow.”⁴⁰ Much of the same neglect of logic is at work in the writings of Peter Singer. His premises aren’t true, and the conclusions he draws from these false premises don’t always follow his faulty starting points.

His argument, for instance, that abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia are good because the world already has too many people (and that more people means more misery) is subjective at best. By what standard are there too many people? Population *has* exploded in recent decades. Yet a great many people are living healthier, happier, and longer lives and are facing less hunger, disease, and warfare than previous generations did. Despite what Jeremiahs Ehrlich and Singer tell us, life is better now than ever.

Singer contends that “speciesism” is equivalent to racism and sexism. Racism and sexism, however, evoke opposition because all human beings are equal before the eyes of God. For “speciesism” to be tantamount to these societal afflictions, Singer assumes that all creatures are equal. They

are not, and thus the moral equivalency that he ascribes to quite different behavior patterns—for example, snacking on beef jerky and denying a black man a job because of his skin color—doesn’t stand up to scrutiny.

Singer also maintains that if killing a baby leads to the happiness of a greater number of people than if that baby lived, then it should be killed. Implicit in this argument is the idea that there is a way of predicting how an infant will turn out. But there isn’t. If Singer’s formula had been adopted, there probably would have been no Jesus Christ, Ludwig von Beethoven, or Stephen Hawking.

Peter Singer is mainly guilty of being a bad philosopher by peddling logical fallacies. But what is one to make of his defenders who run Princeton University?

Many at Princeton share Singer’s views. Unlike Singer, however, they are not comfortable being associated with views that are almost universally recognized as part of the crackpot fringe. Thus, they claim that Singer really didn’t say the things he is credited with saying, but was misquoted. Similarly, faculty and administrators attack Singer’s critics in an attempt to silence them. **Here again we see the legacy of Herbert Marcuse in the academy:** Those who speak passionately of the need for “free speech” and “academic freedom” often deny free speech to others with whom they disagree. Singer’s supporters are also in the habit of using candy-coated terms—such as *humanitarian* and *bioethicist*—to describe a man whose beliefs have earned him the moniker “Professor Death.”

Princeton appointed Singer its first bioethics professor in 1998. Naming a proponent of legalized infanticide and euthanasia for many disabled people to a “bioethics” position in a “Center for Human Values” understandably strikes many observers as Orwellian. Princeton president Harold Shapiro, who chaired a bioethics panel appointed by President Clinton, approved bringing the Australian on board at the prestigious university. Shapiro defended his decision by saying, “You wouldn’t want to come to a university where only certain views are allowed.”⁴¹ Yet many contend that that is exactly what Princeton is, noting that the school’s faculty is dominated by leftists.

The director of Princeton’s Center for Human Values, Amy Gutmann, explained her belief that Singer’s view is “a mainstream philosophical view.”⁴² *Mainstream?* Perhaps among Gutmann’s friends or in the faculty lounge. But among nonintellectuals Singer’s views are considered extreme. Gutmann insisted, “I don’t think any University can deny tenure to any individual who’s done first-rate work.”⁴³ Yet in the past, Gutmann

to truth. Aristotle famously observed that his loyalty to truth outweighed even his loyalty to Plato. The philosopher remarked, "For though we love both the truth and our friends, piety requires us to honor the truth first."⁹

BAD IDEAS, BAD CONSEQUENCES

Social philosopher Eric Hoffer once observed, "There is hardly an atrocity committed in the twentieth century that was not foreshadowed or even advocated by some noble man of words in the nineteenth."¹⁰ Indeed, long before the October Revolution, Karl Marx laid out the blueprint for the ideology that consumed 100 million lives. Likewise, Hitler's racialism was hardly a novel concept that he devised. The seeds of his murderous reign were planted long before he rose to power.

Ideas have consequences. This was demonstrated when the theories and views of the previous era came of age—sometimes disastrously—during the twentieth century. One needn't possess clairvoyant powers to deduce that bad things will happen if the ignoble lies of our age are further ingrained as "truths" within society.

Lincoln was fond of asking, "If you call a dog's tail a leg, how many legs does a dog have?" "Five," his audience would invariably respond. The correct answer, he would point out, is four. Calling a tail a leg does not make it a leg. Calling lies truth doesn't make them truth.

In the ongoing culture war, the standard of truth was long ago discarded in favor of ideology. If the search for truth is to replace ideological utility as the intellectual's *raison d'être*, then ignoble lies need to be exposed far and wide. Every propagandist's habit of calling his lies truth is a tacit acknowledgment that the public abhors naked falsehood. Sunlight is the solution. The truth is still a standard that deserves to be held high.

When you refuse to think, someone else will determine your thoughts for you. Joiners look for their ideas from gurus and the systems that they lay down. Rather than bringing them closer to truth, as joiners seem to believe, gurus and systems act as an intellectual ball and chain. They stifle the thought of many otherwise brilliant people. The intellectual moron is one who is gifted but who squanders his talent by relying on ideology to assign him his beliefs. As the old slogan of the United Negro College Fund says, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

When confronted with new information, the joiner's immediate concern is, "Will it serve my cause?" We would all be better off if we approached untested assertions by instead asking ourselves, "Is it true?"

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