The Persistence of Red Scare in Contemporary American Society

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THE PERSISTENCE OF RED SCARE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper will consider the stubborn presence of anti-communist tendencies and the paranoid fear (as described by Richard Hofstadter) of leftist ideologies in the American society and beyond it since the Bolshevik Revolution until today. The evolution of these tendencies will be contextualized through three different stages of the phenomenon known as the "Red Scare"; starting from the years after the Russian Revolution, to cultural Marxism and its proponents, and lastly, focusing on the analysis of the contemporary legacy of the prior two stages as embodied in Jordan Peterson's term of 'postmodern neo-Marxism'. Namely, the focus will primarily rely on the analysis of the contemporary American discourse around the topics of Marxism, postmodernism, identity politics and its most popular contenders ranging from academic professors and public intellectuals such as Peterson to various American politicians. The analysis will try to uncover the connection between these public figures and their paranoid style of anti-communist discourse (again as defined by Hofstadter), and the contemporary leftist response surrounding the issues. Methods of analysis will include the perspectives of cultural studies including critical discourse analysis, psychoanalysis and "Ideologiekritik".

Key words: Red Scare, cultural Marxism, postmodernism, paranoia, Jordan Peterson

Content

Red Scare

Since many comprehensive history books[1] have covered the topic extensively, the aim here is not to offer an exhaustive analysis of the Red Scare phenomenon. Instead, this overview serves two primary purposes. Firstly, it establishes the groundwork for the subsequent discussion. Secondly, it seeks to abstract the semantic essence embodied by the term Red Scare—an all-encompassing fear and pervasive paranoia surrounding Communism. Fear and paranoia that permeated the United States in the aftermath of World War I, from roughly 1917 to 1920, and in the period called McCarthyism or the Second Red scare during the Cold War, primarily in the late 1940s to the mid-1950s, and as we shall see later on, all the way until the early 1990s. Amidst these eras, there was a prevailing apprehension that communist ideologies and influences were permeating American society and institutions. The reason for this was a defensive response to significant occurrences like the Russian Revolution in 1917, when the Bolsheviks, a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party sought and managed to overthrow the Russian monarchy through a revolution led by the working class, with the aim to concentrate the power in the hands of the proletariat. During that time, after World War I, there was widespread labor unrest, strikes, and protests even in the United States. Therefore, Americans were concerned that radical leftist ideas, influenced by the Russian Revolution, might lead to similar upheaval in the U.S, since the Russian Revolution had a profound impact on the global spread of communism. This, in turn, raised alarming concerns over subversion and espionage within the United States and created a profound animosity towards communism. The government, led by bodies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), undertook investigations, surveillance, and prosecutions aimed at

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[1] Some of those include: *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* by Robert K. Murray, *McCarthyism: The Fight for America* by Jill Lepore, *Witness* by Whittaker Chambers, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* by Ellen Schrecker.

individuals and groups suspected of harboring communist affiliations or sympathies. The Red Scare periods saw significant overreactions, violations of civil liberties, and false accusations. The fear of communism was, in many cases, exaggerated or used as a pretext for suppressing political dissent and persecuting individuals with leftist beliefs, even if they had no ties to espionage or subversion. Numerous political activists, intellectuals, and figures from the entertainment industry faced scrutiny, blacklisting, and persecution.

Today, the abstracted conceptual residue of this animosity is widely regarded as a remnant of the competition between the superpowers of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, which stemmed from the stark opposition between the values and principles they embodied. Fundamentally speaking, the United States and the Soviet Union represented divergent ideologies: the U.S. strongly upheld capitalism, democracy, and individual liberties, while the Soviet Union advocated for communism, central planning, and collective ownership. As Murray suggests,

> Even more basic in creating a hostile attitude was bolshevism's unyielding emphasis on the world-wide overthrow of capitalism and the complete abolition of private property. This doctrine ran counter to all accepted American traditions of political philosophy and economy and struck terror into the heart of the average American conservative. (34)

For American conservatives, who typically held strong beliefs in limited government intervention, free markets, and the protection of private property rights, the Bolshevik doctrine represented both a radical departure from their deeply held values and an attack on their property values. It instilled a sense of fear and anxiety, as it challenged the very foundations of the American socio-political and economic system. Even more so, the development of nuclear weapons by both the U.S. and

the Soviet Union intensified fears of a potential nuclear war. The perceived expansion of communism heightened concerns among conservatives that it could spread and threaten American security and way of life. What is more, the Soviet Union's support for communist movements and regimes around the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America, significant events such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Cuban Revolution underscored the tension even further.

Not to forget Senator Joseph McCarthy who is perhaps the most infamous figure associated with exploiting the fear of communism for personal and political gain during the Second Red Scare in the 1950s. McCarthy's tactics became known as "McCarthyism," which included making unfounded accusations, guilt by association, and creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. He accused people of being communists or communist sympathizers without solid evidence and often relied on innuendo and rumors. This created a climate in which anyone with leftist or progressive views could be labeled a threat to national security. He also used anti-communism as a political tool to attack his opponents and gain power on the one hand (i.e. He simply accused the Truman administration of harboring communists so as to discredit the Democratic Party), and on the other hand he campaigned for the Republican Party, using anti-communist rhetoric as a way to win support. In any case, McCarthy's tactics eventually led to his downfall. He overreached and faced increasing scrutiny for his baseless accusations and lack of concrete evidence. The U.S. Senate investigated his conduct, and he was censured in 1954 for his behavior. This marked the beginning of his political decline, and he died in 1957.

Cultural Bolshevism

However, the Red Scare phenomenon did not stop with senator McCarthy's death. While the Red Scare had a broader scope, encompassing political, social, and economic aspects of American life,

it was not the only version of a paranoid fear of Communism. Similar fears of Bolshevik influence arose in Nazi Germany and elsewhere where there were active fascist movements during the 1920s and 1930s. The term "Cultural Bolshevism" was first coined as a tool in the propaganda campaign of the Nazi regime, especially in relation to modernist art that was considered subversive and incompatible with Nazi ideology. The term was employed to convey the perception of a radicalization or politicization of culture and the arts by the Bolsheviks, who aimed to effect societal transformation through the promotion of Marxist ideology and the suppression of bourgeois or traditional cultural expressions. By associating Marxism and Bolshevik influences with what they perceived as the moral decay, corruption, and degeneracy of contemporary culture, the Nazis sought to depict cultural Bolshevism as a danger to German identity, traditional values, and national interests. Or as Roger Griffin states,

> The conventional narrative established in the history of interwar Germany and in the history of art has it that Hitler s seizure of power marked a brutal caesura between an ultra-laissez-faire society hosting modernist experiments in every realm of culture and society, and an ultra-totalitarian one hostile to modernism to the point of persecuting it as if it were an ethnic group considered subhuman, and thus to be mocked, persecuted, banned, removed from society, forced into migration, and even physically exterminated. Modernism and Nazism are thus antithetical and irreconcilable. (From 'Weimar Modersnism', 360–361)

Hitler's seizure of power is seen as a sharp break that led to the persecution, suppression, and even physical extermination of modernist artists and their works. The Nazi regime propagated the notion that cultural Bolshevism constituted a form of Marxist conspiracy intended to corrupt traditional

German culture and society. Also, Hitler would go so far as to say that Marxism is a Jewish doctrine, in *Mein Kampf* he states,

> The Jewish doctrine of Marxism repudiates the aristocratic principle of Nature and substitutes for it the eternal privilege of force and energy, numerical mass and its dead weight. Thus, it denies the individual worth of the human personality, impugns the teaching that nationhood and race have a primary significance, and by doing this it takes away the very foundations of human existence and human civilization. If the Marxist teaching were to be accepted as the foundation of the life of the universe, it would lead to the disappearance of all order that is conceivable to the human mind. And thus, the adoption of such a law would provoke chaos in the structure of the greatest organism that we know, with the result that the inhabitants of this earthly planet would finally disappear. Should the Jew, with the aid of his Marxist creed, triumph over the people of this world, his Crown will be the funeral wreath of mankind, and this planet will once again follow its orbit through ether, without any human life on its surface, as it did millions of years ago. (57)

It is obvious how this quote expresses an anti-Semitic viewpoint that links Judaism with Marxism and presents them both as having a huge destructive potential with mythological consequences. According to the quote, the Jewish interpretation of Marxism rejects natural hierarchies and instead emphasizes the importance of numerical strength and force, disregarding the value of individuals and the significance of nationhood and race. Hitler suggests that if Marxism were widely adopted, it would lead to the breakdown of societal order, resulting in chaos and ultimately the extinction of humanity. He presents the notion that the triumph of Jewish influence, combined with Marxist ideology, would be a destructive force that could lead to the collapse of civilization, leaving the

Earth devoid of human life. It is crucial to keep this type of rhetoric in mind because it is an eclectic example of a type of rhetoric employed for all of the analogous versions of the "Red Scares".

Cultural Marxism

It could be generally assumed that this type of a paranoid discourse would only persist as long as there was a perceived threat of communism. However, even with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries in the early 1990s, which significantly reduced the geopolitical influence of communism, the discourse characterized by paranoia and the lingering apprehension towards the residual cultural legacy and logic of communism remained unabated. Which is why by the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s, a new discourse emerged on the Marxist influence in numerous social and cultural exchanges in the contemporary American society and it was merely translated from Cultural Bolshevism to Cultural Marxism. Bearing in mind that the term Cultural Marxism first referred to a theoretical framework within cultural studies and sociology that examined the intersection of culture, power, and social inequality and analyzed how cultural practices and institutions contribute to the maintenance of societal hierarchies and perpetuate dominant ideologies, it has later been co-opted by right-wing movements as a pejorative term, detached from its original academic context, with the purpose of stipulating that Marxists have now shifted their focus from the economic aspects of society to cultural and social issues, with the aim of undermining traditional values, institutions, and norms.

The group of intellectuals that this backlash mostly revolved around were called The Frankfurt School; a group of interdisciplinary social theorists, philosophers, and cultural critics who emerged in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s and were based at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. Its founding members included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm. However, due to the rise of the Nazi regime in the 1930s, the scholars

were forced to flee Germany to escape persecution, but subsequently found refuge in the United States. Later on, they were invited by Columbia University in New York City to establish an Institute for Social Research there and with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, the institute was able to relocate to the United States in 1934 and continue its critical research on social theory and cultural criticism. While it is no secret that The Frankfurt School's critical methodology was heavily influenced by Marxist theory, it also drew on a range of other related intellectual and philosophical traditions including Hegelian idealism, Freudian psychoanalysis, antipositivist sociology and critical theory. The School's members were deeply concerned with the cultural, social, and political conditions of modernity, and they sought to develop a critical theory that could both explain and transform these conditions.

However, among the first names to accuse The Frankfurt School of importing dangerous ideologies and subverting everything that the Americans find dear was Michael J. Minnicino, whose 1992 article called "The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and Political Correctness" posits that the Frankfurt School had a covert agenda to undermine Western society through their intellectual work. Simply put, Minnicino argued, that when Marxism failed as a political and economic project, its proponents (The Frankfurt School as the most crucial ones) infiltrated its agenda into university discourse which gave birth to political correctness and started a steady path towards the destruction of the Western civilization. "Our universities, the cradle of our technological and intellectual future, have become overwhelmed by Comintern-style New Age 'Political Correctness'. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, our campuses now represent the largest concentration of Marxist dogma in the world." (5), his article boldly states. Furthermore, he pinpoints the main culprits for this 'conspiracy', "The single, most important organizational component of this conspiracy was a Communist thinktank called the Institute for Social Research

(I.S.R.), but popularly known as the Frankfurt School after its location at the University of Frankfurt in Germany." (5) 'Conspiracy' here refers to the main aim of the Frankfurt School, or as Minnicino describes it,

> About a hundred years ago, it was as though a long checklist had been drawn up, with all of the wonderful achievements of the Renaissance itemized-each to be reversed. As part of this "New Age" movement, as it was then called, the concept of the human soul was undermined by the most vociferous intellectual campaign in history; art was forcibly separated from science, and science itself was made the object of deep suspicion. Art was made ugly because, it was said, life had become ugly. (5)

These accusations will later serve as the foundational rationale for the growing conspiracy movement against the Frankfurt School, and their influence and acceptance were to expand as time progressed. More precisely, Martin Jay describes the historical setting that helped Minnicino, who was then a part of the LaRouche[2] movement, to secure his ideas and help popularize the bad reputation of the Frankfurt School,

> LaRouche and his followers have, to be sure, always remained on the fringe of the fringe, too confused in their ideology to be taken seriously by either radical left or right, with little if any significant impact on the real world. But the seed sown by Minnicino was ultimately to bear remarkably poisonous fruit. The harvester was the Free Congress Foundation, a paleoconservative Washington think tank founded by Paul Weyrich, who was also in on the creation of the Heritage Foundation and the

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[2] The LaRouche movement, founded by Lyndon LaRouche, was a politically fringe and ideologically complex group that combined far-left economic ideas with far-right conspiracy theories. It gained notoriety for promoting anti-Semitic and anti-British conspiracy theories and exhibited cult-like characteristics among its members. The movement engaged in political activism, including running candidates for office and publishing literature, but faced legal troubles and declined in influence over time. Overall, it left a legacy of controversial and extremist beliefs.

Moral Majority movement. Much of the financial support came from his collaborator Joseph Coors, who knew how to turn all that pure Rocky Mountain water into a cash flow for the radical right. The FCF sponsored a satellite television network called National Empowerment Television, which churned out slickly produced shows promulgating its various opinions. (176)

In other words, Minnicino's ideas were financed by powerful and influential people on the right and soon enough the notion that the Frankfurt School's ideas posed a threat to traditional values and national identity, and permeated various domains, including academia and other cultural institutions, spread through the conservative media. Martin Jay continues to recount the event when he was called to comment on the Frankfurt School in a broadcast held by the aforementioned television, since he was considered an academic expert on the topic, having authored his doctoral dissertation on the institute, which was later revised into a book called *The Dialectical Imagination.* However, he was surprised to discover that he had entered a 'set-up': the show was purposefully edited to fit the anti-Frankfurt School narrative,

Having done a number of similar shows in the past on one or another aspect of the history of the Frankfurt School, I naively assumed the end results would reflect my opinions with some fidelity, at least within the constraints of the edited final product. But what happened instead was that all my critical remarks about the hypocrisy of the right-wing campaign against political correctness were lost and what remained were simple factual statements confirming the Marxist origins of the School, which had never been a secret to anyone. […] In any event, the "documentary," soon available on the net, spawned a number of condensed textual versions, which were reproduced on a number of radical right-wing sites. These in

turn led to a welter of new videos, now available on YouTube, which feature an odd

cast of pseudo-experts regurgitating exactly the same line. The message is

numbingly simplistic: all the ills of modern American culture, from feminism,

affirmative action, sexual liberation and gay rights to the decay of traditional

education and even environmentalism are ultimately attributable to the insidious

influence of the members of the Institute for Social Research who came to America

in the 1930s. (176–177)

Not only was the show purposefully framed and manipulated to criticize the Frankfurt School, it also blatantly misrepresented its work and influence to a wide audience and soon enough the tumultuous story of "cultural Marxism" found ever more champions and propagators.

One of them was William Lind, a political commentator, writer, and former US Congressional aide, and also Patrick Buchanan, a senior advisor to three U.S. presidents, a conservative commentator and a former presidential candidate. Both were associated with the paleoconservative movement, which was characterized by its rejection of neoconservative foreign policy and its emphasis on traditional values and social order. Lind, in particular, is credited with popularizing the pejorative use of the term "cultural Marxism" in a text called "Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology", published by the aforementioned Free Congress Foundation in November 2004. In this text, he argued, just like Minnicino, that a group of Marxist intellectuals had developed a cultural agenda in the wake of the failed Marxist revolutions of the early 20th century. According to Lind, these Frankfurt School intellectuals saw traditional values and cultural norms as impediments to their own revolutionary goals and sought to undermine them through a strategy of "political correctness." As he states,

"Political Correctness" is in fact cultural Marxism – Marxism translated from economic into cultural terms. The effort to translate Marxism from economics into culture did not begin with the student rebellion of the 1960s. It goes back at least to the 1920s and the writings of the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci. In 1923, in Germany, a group of Marxists founded an institute devoted to making the translation, the Institute of Social Research (later known as the Frankfurt School). One of its founders, George Lukacs, stated its purpose as answering the question, "Who shall save us from Western Civilization?" The Frankfurt School gained profound influence in American universities after many of its leading lights fled to the United States in the 1930s to escape National Socialism in Germany. (5)

Once again, the Frankfurt School is implicated as a key perpetrator of the alleged cultural Marxist conspiracy, particularly and interestingly so in conjunction with the ideas of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's relevance in this context stems from his seminal work, *The Prison Notebooks*, where he developed the concept of "cultural hegemony", which has the potential to perfectly fit into a contorted narrative of a Marxist conspiracy. More precisely, Gramsci's writings on cultural hegemony were composed between 1926 and 1937, during his imprisonment by the fascist regime led by Benito Mussolini. At the time, Mussolini's regime sought to exert control over all aspects of society, including politics, the economy, and culture. Gramsci recognized the importance of cultural and ideological control in shaping public opinion and maintaining social order, whereby the ruling class uses its control of institutions like the media, education, and religion to promote its own worldview and interests, while also winning the consent of the subordinate classes by offering them some degree of cultural and ideological participation. Gramsci held that this is achieved not by force or any direct or violent oppression but by shaping the thoughts and convictions of society.

That way the dominant group can influence the conduct and demeanor of individuals without the necessity of explicit repression. So then, the only way for the revolution to ensue and the only way that the subordinate classes can challenge and potentially overthrow the dominant class is to establish a counter-hegemonic force, Gramsci contended.

William Lind and Patrick Buchanan, however, believed that this is a devious communist plan and that it is exactly what the cultural Marxists and the leftists had already succeeded in. By overthrowing the dominant order of the Western Civilization, they achieved their "cultural hegemony" via infiltrating the academia, the media and other cultural institutions to push their anti-western agenda. In his book *The Death of the West*, Buchanan states,

> By the end of World War II, the liberal Left had managed to capture not only the arts, theater, literature, music, and ballet, but also motion pictures, photography, education and the media. Through its control of the culture, the Left dictates not only the answers, but the questions asked. In short, it controls the cosmological apparatus by which most American[s] comprehend the meaning of events. (88–89)

According to Buchanan, the leftists had successfully managed to recapture the dominant culture just like Gramsci has instructed them to do (here we see the analogous connection to Cultural Bolshevism). Jérôme Jamin, a French professor of political science, also recounts the influence Buchanan had and the general consensus on the arguments for the Frankfurt School conspiracy,

> In 'What is the Frankfurt School (and its Effect on America)?' – an article which would later influence the presidential candidate Pat Buchanan in his book The Death of the West – Atkinson goes on to say: Didn't America win the Cold War against the spread of communism? The answer is a resounding 'yes, BUT.' We won the 55-

year Cold War but, while winning it abroad, we have failed to understand that an intellectual elite has subtly but systematically and surely converted the economic theory of Marx to culture in American society. And they did it while we were busy winning the Cold War abroad. They introduced 'cultural Marxism' into the mainstream of American life over a period of thirty years, while our attention was diverted elsewhere. (88)

Once again, in all of these texts the idea remains the same – Marxism never went away and its consequences are no longer visible on the economical plain, but on a cultural one. The consequences of cultural Marxism are often described responsible for the perceived erosion of Western culture, the undermining of Christian-Judeo values, the general decline of moral standards, the suppression of free speech, and even the potential resurgence of fascism. Buchanan phrases it as, "what was immoral and shameful—promiscuity, abortion, euthanasia, suicide—has become progressive and praiseworthy. Nietzsche called it the transvaluation of all values; the old virtues become sins, and the old sins become virtues" (8) Additionally, Minnicino refers to the situation of students at the University of Virginia successfully petitioning to drop the requirements to read "Dead European Males" (Homer and Chaucer for example) as an act of totalitarianism. 'This is not the academy of a republic; this is Hitler's Gestapo and Stalin's NKVD rooting out deviationists, and banning books-the only thing missing is the public bonfire.' (5), he bemoaned. Lind, on the other hand, is bemoaning the loss of the freedom of speech, "But if we expect to prevail and restore our country to full freedom of thought and expression, we need to know our enemy. We need to understand what Political Correctness really is." (3)

In other words and in their opinion, this totalitarian tide of undercover Marxism helps to popularize political correctness and identity politics, including subsequent and more contemporary

"wokeism", LGBTIQ+ rights movements, immigrant acceptance, and multiculturalism. In his essay *Cultural Marxism and the Radical Right*, Jamin provided perhaps one of the best encapsulations of why these conservatives considered Cultural Marxism so alarming,

> For those 'fighting' against Cultural Marxism they see the idea revolving around the assertion that yesterday's Marxists would have a very difficult time today finding 'the proletariat' to support their revolutionary cause/goals. As a solution to this, in order to regain public trust, Marxist must now extend the defense of the 'proletariat' to the 'new proletariat', who are now made up of women to be protected against 'macho men'; foreigners protected from 'racist nationals'; homosexual people from 'homophobes'; humanists from 'Christians'; juvenile delinquents against 'violent and aggressive police' and so forth. Regarding strategy, the theory states that Cultural Marxists must accuse their enemies of being racists, anti-Semites, homophobes, fascists, Nazis and conservative, which allows for the implementation of a 'politically correct' language, and the banning of criticism of Cultural Marxism. As such, the ultimate goal of Cultural Marxists, according to the theory, is to discredit institutions such as the nation, the homeland, traditional hierarchies, authority, family, Christianity, traditional morality in favour of the emergence of an ultra-egalitarian and multicultural, rootless and soulless global nation. (86)

William Lind even states that obviously when referring to the meaning of Critical Theory,

> Critical Theory was essentially destructive criticism of the main elements of Western culture, including Christianity, capitalism, authority, the family, patriarchy, hierarchy, morality, tradition, sexual restraint, loyalty, patriotism, nationalism, heredity, ethnocentrism, convention and conservatism. These criticisms were reflected in such

works of the Frankfurt School as Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom and The Dogma of Christ*, Wilhelm's Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*. (11)

Marxism is, again, the scapegoat for the perceived threats to the stability of the conservative values and its ultimate goal is to discredit traditional institutions such as the nation, family, religion, and moral values, in favor of an egalitarian and multicultural global society without strong cultural roots or identity, which if taken too far, will result in 'the disappearance of all order that is conceivable to the human mind' and 'the inhabitants of this earthly planet would finally disappear' (*Mein Kampf* 57). Which is, ironically, a perfect echo of Hitler's apocalyptic diagnosis – a notion which will be closely analyzed later on in this thesis.

Ben Shapiro

But the discourse on cultural Marxism does not stop here. Naturally, it has undergone further evolution and resumption in a recent decade, largely influenced by figures like the Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson and the American conservative activist Ben Shapiro. While Peterson's insights warrant nuanced consideration and deeper examination, it is useful to firstly and briefly survey Shapiro's discourse as an initial foray into a contemporary perspective and the inherent logical framework of the paranoid discourse surrounding "Cultural Marxism." Namely, Shapiro rose to prominence as a political commentator, but he is also an author and a lawyer and his political scope of concern is gun control, abortion, and, coincidentally, the declining of the Western Civilization and free speech, as well. He has written a dozen books, all of which have a strong critical stance against leftist ideas. Some of the titles include: *Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth*, *Primetime Propaganda: The True Hollywood Story of How the Left Took Over Your TV*, *Bullies: How the Left's Culture of Fear and Intimidation Silences*

Americans, *The Right Side of History: How Reason and Moral Purpose Made the West Great*, and *How to Destroy America in Three Easy Steps*. Some of these lengthy titles became New York Times bestsellers and have become central to the ongoing debate surrounding "neo-Marxism" and the perceived decline of Western civilization, issues that are obviously of paramount concern even among contemporary conservatives.

For example, Shapiro's first book *Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth* that was published in 2004 largely echoes the ideas of Minnicino, Buchanan and Lind. In this book, Shapiro argues that American universities and colleges are dominated by a liberal bias that indoctrinates students with leftist ideology. Shapiro presents numerous examples of how universities promote liberal ideas, including affirmative action, multiculturalism, and political correctness. He, just like his predecessors, also argues that this leftist bias in academia stifles conservative voices and discourages free speech. Shapiro attributes the liberal bias in universities to the dominance of left-wing professors and administrators, as well as the influence of left-wing organizations and activists. He argues that this bias has a harmful impact on students, limiting their exposure to diverse viewpoints and preparing them poorly for the real world. He mainly blames it on the ongoing presence of socialism,

> […] there is a concerted movement within universities to revive the "glory" that was once socialism. They do it by minimizing the value of capitalism which they say is unfair to the lower classes. They do it by making "profit" a dirty word. They do it by demonizing the rich as leeches sucking blood from the hard-working poor. They do it by depicting corporations as rapists of the environment and the Third World. They do it by allying with Big Labor. They do it by glorifying communist dictatorships like China and Cuba. They do it by preaching a re-evaluation of the

very definition of private property. Marxism is dying globally. But it's alive and

kicking at America's universities. (68)

Shapiro reflects more on the communism versus capitalism binary and argues that when these "university socialists" criticize capitalism, they purposefully blow up its consequences in order to offer Marxism as a superior alternative. Further on in *Brainwashed*, Shapiro briefly touches on what he believes are the historical roots of the liberal bias in American universities. He argues that the bias can be traced back to the 1960s, when left-wing activists and radicals began to take over university campuses and use them as platforms for their political agendas. According to Shapiro, these activists promoted a new form of liberalism that, once again, rejected traditional American values and institutions. They were heavily influenced by Marxist and socialist ideas and sought to use universities as tools for social change and political activism.

Even more so, in his last book, similarly to his first book, Shapiro argues that the political left in America has been using authoritarian tactics to silence dissent and impose its worldview on the rest of the country. He claims that institutions such as the media, academia, and big tech are complicit in this effort and have been actively working to suppress conservative voices and ideas. Shapiro also discusses what he sees as the dangers of the left's approach to politics and offers suggestions for how conservatives can push back against it. In essence, his discourse taps into the spirit of the Red Scare and the deep-seated fear of Cultural Marxism, using similar root arguments but merely adapted to a different context.

Jordan Peterson

Similarly, dr. Jordan Peterson, a Canadian professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, author and public commentator too, displays the same underlying paranoias about the communist

influence in universities, however, he goes a step further to recast this age-old discourse in a new nomenclature appropriated for the contemporary context. Namely, Peterson gained notoriety following a viral video in which he engaged in a heated debate with university students over the use of transgender pronouns[3]. The debate arose in 2017 following Peterson's public opposition to the Canadian Bill C-16, which amends the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to prohibit discrimination and hate propaganda based on gender identity and gender expression. Peterson heavily opposed the Bill, claiming that it poses a serious threat to free speech, citing the problematic hypothetical possibility of being legally punished if he does not use the correct pronouns of his transgender students in a classroom situation.

In numerous follow up interviews, Peterson often pointed out what he believes is the root cause of the Bill C-16 - a dangerous agenda pushed by the leftist university minority that is trying to impose unnatural rules on language for the majority of people. He often likes to point out that this type of lawmaking is equal to the one in fascistic and totalitarian regimes. Consequently, owing to his numerous and often controversial public appearances regarding the issue, the reception of his ideas was dual. The public began either labeling him a bigot or hailing him as a heroic defender of free speech. As a result, his controversial lectures, which had already been available on YouTube, gained significant attention and sparked a heated discussion within the academic and intellectual communities of America and Europe. Since then, Peterson's public discourse, which mostly revolves around psychology, self-help, self-improvement, social justice and occasionally philosophy has severely proliferated and rose to popularity. His lectures are now easily found on YouTube, his books are translated worldwide, he has held numerous seminars, debates, interviews,

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[3] The following can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CM7jpTJWPkg&ab_channel=AerialView

and even started his own podcast. Without doubt, Peterson is an important figure on the conservative scene.

Furthermore, another one of his most emphasized critiques is aimed at what he sees as the negative consequences of identity politics, including the rise of feminism, which he believes is not fighting for equality of both genders, but is in fact leading to unhealthy attitudes about traditional masculinity, causing men to lose their social and ontological purpose, leaving them feeling confused and disillusioned, and thus, once again posing a danger to the values of the entire Western civilization, potentially leading to its directionless and chaotic collapse.

This is why the subtitle to one of his most popular books, *12 Rules for Life* is *An Antidote to chaos*. This book is written in the form of a self-help guide outlining twelve practical and seemingly banal, but profound principles an individual should follow to live a meaningful and fulfilling life, which is why Peterson likes to ground his analysis in a multitude of disciplines ranging from psychology, philosophy to mythology, and his personal experiences and anecdotes – to invoke a more serious academic legitimacy to his otherwise straightforward ideas. Throughout his work, Peterson displays a pronounced interest in chaos and order, in both *12 Rules for Life* and in his first book *Maps of Meaning,* he emphasizes the importance of both of these principles. He suggests that order is necessary for society to function, and chaos represents the unknown and unpredictable aspects of life. However, too much order leads to stagnation, and too much chaos leads to destruction; which at a cursory glance sounds self-explanatory and logical. But Peterson twists these simple facts to support his worldview, or as Žižek states, "the problem with him does not reside in his lies, but in the partial truths that sustain his lies" (*Myth and Mayhem,* 17).

Which is similar to Smith's critique,

In his books and lectures, Peterson describes chaos as "feminine." Order, of course, is "masculine." So the threat of being overwhelmed by chaos is the threat of being overwhelmed by femininity. The tension between chaos and order plays out in both the personal sphere and the broader cultural landscape, where chaos is promoted by those "neo-Marxist postmodernists" whose nefarious influence has spawned radical feminism, political correctness, moral relativism, and identity politics. (53)

This interplay between chaos and order is not only relevant at an individual level but also extends to the broader cultural context. Peterson assigns the meaning of chaos to "postmodern neo-Marxists", which promote the emergence of ideas and movements such as radical feminism, political correctness, moral relativism, and identity politics. He, as his aforementioned paranoid peers, sees these developments as threats to societal stability and values. However, one of the ideal Peterson's solutions to confront and integrate chaos in order to navigate the complexities of life and achieve a sense of order and meaning are his set of practical tips such as taking personal responsibility, pursuing meaning rather than happiness, standing up for oneself, and striving for excellence. Hence, the *12 Rules for Life.*

Although not overtly political, these objectives are presented as a practical means of addressing the disorder that characterizes contemporary life. But the surprising twist this time is that the main leftist intellectual scapegoats responsible for the disorder were not explicitly the Frankfurt School, but Foucault and Derrida whose Marxist ideology masqueraded as postmodernist theory and deconstruction. Peterson explicitly shows his distaste towards these ideas and argues this philosophy is too nihilistic, chaotic, and dangerous, and that it threatens to abolish hierarchies and morality as we have known them for centuries. In *12 Rules for Life* he posits,

It is almost impossible to over-estimate the nihilistic and destructive nature of this

philosophy. It puts the act of categorization itself in doubt. It negates the idea that

distinctions might be drawn between things for any reasons other than that of raw

power. Biological distinctions between men and women? Despite the existence of

an overwhelming, multi-disciplinary scientific literature indicating that sex

differences are powerfully influenced by biological factors, science is just another

game of power, for Derrida and his post-modern Marxist acolytes, making claims

to benefit those at the pinnacle of the scientific world. There are no facts. (409)

According to Peterson, even when confronted with a wealth of compelling scientific evidence from

diverse disciplines pointing to the significant influence of biological factors on sex differences,

proponents of this philosophy, such as Derrida and his post-modern Marxist followers, dismiss the

notion as nothing more than a manifestation of power dynamics. The concept of objective facts

becomes obliterated, leaving no room for the recognition of empirical reality. In their view, science

itself becomes just another arena where power is wielded to benefit those who occupy the upper

echelons of the scientific establishment. Or as even Lind stated, "Cultural Marxism says that

history is wholly explained by which groups – defined by sex, race and sexual normality or

abnormality – have power over which other groups" (6). Peterson correctly understands that

postmodernism is critical of the notion of absolute truth, objective knowledge, grand narratives

and even the belief that language and discourse, including science, can accurately represent reality

and suggests that they are constructed and mediated by social, historical, and cultural factors. He

also acknowledges that postmodernism critiques the traditional notions of power, authority, and

hierarchy, and advocates for more decentralized and pluralistic forms of social organization. The

idea is correct, but on the other hand, the link he sees between postmodernism as a merely

rebranded Marxism but with a minor twist in the basic premise of the ideology, so that instead of class struggle, the central societal tension lies in the struggle for power, is ludicrous. Even if a superficial glance might reveal similarities between the two, since both Marxism and postmodernism have a type of a struggle as their core concern, however, it does not mean that they are in any other way alike. The analogy does not hold up under scrutiny because it fails to recognize the essential differences between Marxism and postmodernism, which we will elaborate further below.

This is why his entire nomenclature of "postmodern neo-Marxism" is a faulty interpretation, because it is fundamentally paradoxical, since postmodernism then by definition rejects and criticizes any grand materialistic narratives about humanity and society, including exactly Marxism. Actually, it is really no secret that Marxist and postmodernist intellectuals have always been at odds with each other. Therefore, Peterson claiming that "Derrida described his own ideas as a radicalized form of Marxism" (403) (which would require an extensive analysis on its own) is a complete misinformation, and misunderstanding on his part. Let us consider how Žižek explains this fallacy in nomenclature,

> I find Peterson's fixation on political correctness and other targets as the extreme outgrowth of 'cultural Marxism' (a bloc which, in its 'postmodern neo-Marxist' form, comprises the Frankfurt School, the 'French' poststructuralist deconstructionism, identity politics, gender and queer theories, etc.) to have numerous problems. He seems to imply this 'postmodern neo-Marxism' is the result of a deliberate shift in Marxist (or communist) strategy: after communism lost the economic battle with liberal capitalism (waiting in vain for the revolution to arrive in the developed Western world), its leaders, we are told, decided to move to the

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domain of cultural struggles (sexuality, feminism, racism, religion, etc), systematically undermining the cultural foundations and values of our freedoms […] I see no necessary link between this line of thought and liberalism. The notion of 'postmodern neo-Marxism' (or its more insidious form, 'cultural Marxism'), manipulated by some secret communist centre and aiming to destroy Western freedoms, is a pure alt-right conspiracy theory […] First, there is no unified field of 'cultural Marxism'—some of today's representatives of the Frankfurt School are among the most vicious denigrators of the 'French thought' (poststructuralism, deconstruction); and many 'cultural Marxists' are fiercely critical of identity politics, etc. Second, any positive reference to the Frankfurt School, or the 'French thought', was prohibited in socialist countries—where the authorities were much more open towards Anglo- Saxon analytic thought (as I remember from my own youth)—so to claim that both classic Marxism and its 'cultural' version were somehow controlled by the same central agent has to rely on the very suspicious notion of a hidden master who secretly pulls the strings. (18–19)

In other words, to conflate Marxism and postmodernism as if they share a common origin is indicative of a profound misunderstanding of their fundamental nature. They are fundamentally at odds even to the point that socialist countries prohibited any positive reference to the Frankfurt School or "French thought" and both 'parties' have a critical attitude towards one another, which renders making the claim of a hidden master controlling both classic Marxism and its cultural version highly dubious. Such a perspective can only fall into the realm of an unfortunate conspiracy, lacking a nuanced understanding of the distinct philosophical underpinnings and divergent trajectories of these two ideologies.

The Society of Conspiracy

Regarding conspiratorial bias, it might be useful now to consider Timothy Melley's book *Empire of Conspiracy.* In it, Melley posits that conspiracy theories function as a means of cultural and political critique, offering individuals an alternative perspective to interpret intricate and disconcerting events. Through the exploration of diverse case studies, he analyzes the impact of conspiracy theories on politics, popular culture, and public discourse. In doing so, Melley delves into the psychological dimensions of conspiracy thinking, examining the allure of conspiratorial explanations and the underlying anxieties they seek to address. In his own words,

> Americans now account for all sorts of events-political conflicts, police investigations, juridical proceedings, corporate maneuvers, government actions, and a wide range of other phenomena-through conspiracy theory. Conspiratorial explanations have become a central feature of American political discourse, a way of understanding power that appeals to both marginalized groups and the power elite. (7)

Furthermore, he adds,

> In moments of agency panic, individuals tend to attribute to these systems the qualities of motive, agency, and individuality they suspect have been depleted from themselves or others around them. Thus, agency panic not only dramatizes doubt about the efficacy of individual human action, it also induces a postmodern transference in which social regulation seems to be the intentional product of a single consciousness or monolíthic "will. (13)

In other words, as we have just established, there is no justifiable reason why anyone should suspect that a group of scholars have a clandestine and organized agenda against the entire Western civilization. Even more so, in this mindset characterized by conspiracy thinking, there is often a failure to grasp the complexity involved in analyzing a multifaceted concept such as "the decline of Western Civilization". Numerous variables come into play, making it challenging to attribute the phenomenon to a single 'monolithic will'. Melley quotes Frederick Jameson on this, "Conspiracy theory, Jameson remarks, is "a degraded attempt-through the figuration of advanced technology-to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system" (qtd. in Melley 9). But as is the case here, this oftentimes happens[4]. Melley here gives us a clue as to why, when saying that agency panic arises when individuals experience a sense of being overwhelmed by external forces or systems that they perceive as influential in shaping their lives and restricting their freedom to act. This state of distress often triggers a strong desire to restore a sense of personal agency and control. For the proponents of the Cultural Marxist conspiracy, this means that there is a certain perceived loss of control due to the sudden changes and disconcerting events in the domain of society and culture that they attribute to one scapegoated enemy – the Marxists. The fundamental principles of the Western Civilization, they suspect, are going through serious changes, which they feel alienated by and powerless to change.

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[4] It is ironical how, looking at it now, there is a statement of Lind's that claims, 'The second major parallel is that both cultural Marxism and classical, economic Marxism have *single-factor explanations of history*. Classical Marxism argues that all of history was determined by ownership of the means of production. Cultural Marxism says that history is wholly explained by which groups – defined by sex, race and sexual normality or abnormality – have power over which other groups.' (6). The ironical part being this moment of projection or maybe even hypocrisy revealed in this statement about 'single factor explanations of history'. Lind is accusing Marxists of having single factor explanations when they attribute the entire collapse of the Western civilization to Marxism.

The Myth of the Western Civilization

But what exactly are these fundamental principles of the Western Civilization, why are they so important to conservatives, and what might they actually mean? Namely, what conservatives believe about the Western civilization consists of a retrospectively constructed origin myth of heavily intertwined ideas that all carry numerous biases. Critical approach to the term often reveals a geographical and conceptual binary between 'The West' and 'The East' or even 'The West' and the rest. The West geographically including Western Europe and North America, and the rest being everyone else including eastern and most southern countries, which is obviously not a geographically conditioned split but geopolitical one.

The conceptual binary often portrays the West as a bastion of civilization, culture, and the birthplace of modern thought and democracy, while other regions are sometimes depicted as lacking in these aspects, which implies that culture and civilization can only be attributed to the West, creating a perceived dichotomy between the West and the rest of the world. On most accounts this civilization implies undoubted forward progression that includes the period of ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages and Christendom, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the Scientific revolution, and the birth of the modern liberal democracy. Naturally, creating a historical overview such as this one necessarily draws on obvious criticism which might include accusations of diminishing or excluding the Asian or any other influence in the development of European culture, eurocentrism, European exceptionalism and essentialist history. As Peters puts it, rephrasing Hobson,

> In *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* John Hobson (2004), Professor of
> Politics and International Relations at Sheffield University, mounts a challenge to the
> ethnocentric bias of mainstream accounts of the "Rise of the West" that assumes that

Europeans engineered their own economic and political development into capitalist modernity with no help or influence from other civilizations. The rise of what he calls the "Oriental West," Hobson argues not only depended upon a number of critical Eastern inventions but also the imperialist appropriation of Eastern resources. Hobson offers an Afro–Asia centric view of world history that decenters the myth of the European miracle or virgin birth. This historical counterargument runs against the Eurocentric bias of world history common to both Marxist and non-Marxist accounts that deny the influence and significance of the non-West in the rise of capitalist modernity. (66-67)

In other words, through his historical counterargument, Hobson's objective is to challenge the prevailing belief in the European miracle or virgin birth, which attributes Europe as the exclusive creator of its own advancement. In contrast, he emphasizes the interconnected nature of civilizations and underscores the significance of Eastern contributions in shaping the course of Western civilization.

Which is exactly the main point of reference in postcolonial criticism. Edward Said introduces Orientalism, which presupposes the construction of the East as the "Other," a distinct and exotic entity separate from the Western self. Western scholars, writers, and artists often approached the East with a sense of superiority and a belief in the inherent cultural and intellectual superiority of the West. This perspective created a dichotomy between the civilized, rational, and modern West and the primitive, irrational, and backward East. By emphasizing the positive and desired aspects of European history and culture, while ignoring or minimizing the negative, such as slavery, segregation, racism, poverty, and inequality, European exceptionalism can create a distorted view of the country's past and present, and limit the ability to address these issues. Having

that in mind, it is essential to recognize that history is nuanced and multifaceted. Presenting a comprehensive understanding of "The West" requires acknowledging these complexities and exploring the diverse forces and ideas that have shaped it over time.

Furthermore, the historical overview of the West contains several quite obvious contradictions and complexities. On the one hand, the notion of the West often being synonymous with Judeo-Christian values implies a moral framework rooted in shared religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity. These values encompass principles like the moral law derived from the Ten Commandments, monotheism, justice, fairness, and sanctity of marriage, including, as Lind pointed out, 'Christianity, capitalism, authority, the family, patriarchy, hierarchy, morality, tradition, sexual restraint, loyalty, patriotism, nationalism, heredity, ethnocentrism, convention and conservatism' (5), principles not at all exclusive to the West but are often presented as such to reinforce a binary between Christians and Arabs as old as the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the West is also seen as inheriting the Enlightenment, an era known for its emphasis on reason, science, rationalism, and skepticism towards religion. All of which goes to show that the Enlightenment blatantly contradicts the traditional Judeo-Christian values. This paradox essentially exposes the non-linearity and inconsistency of history, suggesting that the narrative of "The West" as a consistently elevated or progressive entity might not hold up under closer scrutiny at all.

Having that in mind, the things that Jordan Peterson, and his predecessors claim to be the great products of the Western civilization, also subsumes even the things that Cultural Marxists stand for. Unless we manipulate the equation to mean that the Western values are the same as the values of the political right, and all of the opposed values are supposedly not western, but they become to embody the 'Other', the savage, the non-civilized, the immoral sexual deviants, multiculturalists, anarchists, the non-whites and Jews. In that case, there is a supposed justified

fear of being dominated and conquered by the intruding 'Other', which only allows for more reassurance in one's own biased beliefs and opens the way for ideas about radical solutions. Žižek warns about the pathology of such claims,

> Jacques Lacan wrote that, even if what a jealous husband claims about his wife (that she sleeps around with other men) is all true, his jealousy is still a pathological phenomenon: the pathological element being the husband's need for jealousy as the only way to retain his dignity—identity, even. Along the same lines, one could say that even if most of the Nazi claims about the Jews were true (i.e. that they exploit Germans, they seduce German girls, etc.)—which they are not, of course!—their anti-Semitism would still be (and was) a pathological phenomenon, because it repressed the true reason why the Nazis needed anti-Semitism: to sustain their ideological position. In the Nazi vision, with their society construed as an organic Whole of harmonious collaboration, an external intruder is needed to account for divisions and antagonisms. (*Myth and Mayhem,* 14-15)

This metaphorical jealousy easily spills into again, a conspiratorial and paranoid idea of a certain scapegoat becoming the main political and ideological enemy.

The paranoid style

Here we come back to Minnicino's, Lind's, Buchanan's and Peterson's discourse which is an eclectic example of what American historian Richard Hofstadter in his book *The paranoid style in American politics, and other essays* defined as a 'paranoid style'[5],

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[5]Melley seems to be mentioning Richard Hofstadter's eclectic book of essays on *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* but in a modestly critical way, by arguing that one should not be so quick as to equate political paranoia with an actual clinical pathology. He mentions Lang and Deleuze, "Theorists of schizophrenia working against traditional

But there is a vital difference between the paranoid spokesman in politics and the clinical paranoiac: although they both tend to be overheated, oversuspicious, overaggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression, the clinical paranoid sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be living as directed specifically against him; whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others. Insofar as he does not usually see himself singled out as the individual victim of a personal conspiracy, he is somewhat more rational and much more disinterested. His sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation. (4)

This moral indignation is blatantly evident in the discourse of Minnicino, Lind and Buchanan. To express the graveness of the situation, they all use apocalyptic language and wording. Their sentences brim with deterministic, nihilistic, anthropological, mythological and apocalyptic diagnoses and statements about the Western society. Minnicino does this explicitly when stating that "a new Dark Age is exactly what we are in" (5) and "there is no reason why this tyranny of ugliness should continue one instant longer" (4). Lind compares the 1950s America to today's America and sees a dramatic downfall, 'a nation that had decayed and degenerated at a fantastic

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psychological models, from R. D. Laing and Gregory Bateson to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, have shown that pathologizing judgments of such abnormal modes of experience may stem from overidentification with normalizing clinical assumptions." (Melley 13)

However, Hofstadter emphasizes a crucial distinction here, which will become even more prescient in our further analysis, especially when we arrive to Lacanian framework, "I am not speaking in a clinical sense, but borrowing a clinical term for other purposes. I have neither the competence nor the desire to classify any figures of the past or present as certifiable lunatics. In fact, the idea of the paranoid style would have little contemporary relevance or historical value if it were applied only to people with profoundly disturbed minds. It is the use of paranoid modes of expression by more or less normal people that makes the phenomenon significant" (3-4).

pace, moving in less than half a century from the greatest country on earth to a Third World nation, overrun by crime, noise, drugs and dirt. The fall of Rome was graceful by comparison.'(5). Shapiro also states, 'What is eroding is the fundamental principles upon which the civilization is based,' and, 'we're reverting to a sort of tribalism we see in our politics that's getting quite ugly' (K.N.C., and A.M.). Peterson also expresses concerns in *12 Rules for Life*, 'It is almost impossible to over-estimate the nihilistic and destructive nature of this philosophy.' (409) In short, these paranoid spokesmen all share an extremely dramatic and deterministic outlook on the contemporary state of events in the Western Civilization.

Griffin's populist ultra-nationalism

Žižek contextualizes this problem even further, to the point where these patriotic political passions easily spill into a type of nationalism, or even fascism,

> Today, the anti-immigrant populists deal with the 'problem' of the refugees: they approach it in the atmosphere of fear, of the incoming struggle against the islamization of Europe, and they get caught in a series of obvious absurdities. For them, refugees who flee terror are equated with the terrorists they flee from, oblivious to the obvious fact that, while there may be among the refugees also terrorists, rapists, criminals etc., the vast majority are simply desperate people looking for a better life. (*Myth and Mayhem,* 15)

Now let us consider the way that Buchanan talks about the West,

> Is it in the nature of things that nations and civilizations rise, expand, dominate, and rule, only to recede and offer equality to their subject peoples—an offer accepted, until those subject peoples acquire the power to rise, expand, and dominate

themselves? Is our era of the equality of nations really the end of history or but a temporary truce, a phony peace, an armistice, a time of transition from a day of Western dominance to a day when the West pays tribute? British historian J. E. Frond once wrote that "if ten men believe in something so deeply they are willing to die for it, and twenty men believe in something so deeply they are willing to vote for it, the ten will give the law to the twenty." 55 As we look at America, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, which peoples today show a greater disposition to die for their dreams? Is all our prattle about the equality of peoples willful self-delusion? Is it but the prelude to a renewed struggle to control the destiny of men and nations, a struggle that a rich, depopulating, dying West, with its deep aversion to war, bred of the bloodbaths of the twentieth century, is destined to lose? As Sophocles said, one must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been.

Is it the evening of the West? (113–114)

Here, Buchanan fears the metaphorical "evening of the West", the depopulation of the West and what the alt-right commonly likes to refer to as "the white-genocide", brought about by the multiculturalism and immigrant invasion which weaken the sense of collective origins. Because the West was extending 'olive branches', or offers of peace with other cultures, and projected 'delusions of equality' of all people, it now has to face the alarming prospect of subjugation, because it is, as he believes, only natural that civilizations expand, rule and dominate one another once they are given that opportunity. He suggests that the West's aversion to war, shaped by the devastating conflicts of the twentieth century, may weaken its position in comparison to regions where people are more inclined to fight for their aspirations, which alludes to the 'Other', more

precisely 'the Orient'. In essence, if the West loses its sense of self and its unity and greatness, maybe it will have to consider the prospect of "paying tribute" to 'the Other'.

But, as we have just established, the greatness of the West is a particular type of an ideological construction. Why dwell on it? Griffin would describe this as an example of a reactionary rhetoric which is often characterized by a romanticization of the past, a rejection of modernity, and a desire to return to traditional social structures and values. So, it is no wonder that it is strongly tied with a term he coined as populist ultra-nationalism which he stipulated that emerges in times of crisis or social dislocation when certain groups feel threatened or marginalized so they resort to narratives of the 'good old times' when none of the perceived challenges of today existed. He writes,

> [Populist ultra-nationalism] tends to be associated with a concept of the nation as a 'higher' racial, historical, spiritual or organic reality which embraces all the members of the ethical community who belong to it. Such a community is regarded by its protagonists as a natural order which can be contaminated by miscegenation and immigration, by the anarchic, unpatriotic mentality encouraged by liberal individualism, internationalist socialism, and by any number of 'alien' forces allegedly unleashed by 'modern' society, for example the rise of the 'masses', the decay of moral values, the 'levelling' of society, cosmopolitanism, feminism, and consumerism. (64)

Let us also consider what Murray says, which goes along the same lines with Griffin,

> Not only did certain facets of the domestic scene during the 1920s illustrate the continuing significance of the Red Scare; foreign policy as well was affected by the

experience. Certainly, our whole attitude of diplomatic aloofness was partially the result of the fear and distrust we harbored for everything foreign, and the rampant nationalism which we displayed was promoted to some degree by the Red Scare. (273)

Populist ultra-nationalists often attribute the contamination of their idealized community to various "alien" forces unleashed by modern society. These forces may include the rise of the masses, which they see as a threat to traditional hierarchies and social order, as well as the decay of moral values, the leveling of society, cosmopolitanism and feminism. The constantly emerging pattern here is fear, the fear of something foreign, the fear of the 'other' intruding into the well known and established order, the fear that was cultivated since the October Revolution, the inability to cope with challenges and critiques that come with sudden changes. This is why patriotism and nationalism are a common response here, because they revel in the idea that it provides a sense of unity and shared identity among citizens. It appeases the most inner anxieties caused by the contemporary chaos. However, in a way, it also calls for collective action to return to the 'old times'.

It is no wonder then that Minnicino's article calls for a revolution of fundamental principles of our civilization, "either we create a Renaissance—a rebirth of the fundamental principles upon which civilization originated—or, our civilization dies" (6), he bemoans. The civilization and the world will simply die out if more people do not root out the Marxists once and for all. The society needs to go back to how it was, and it needs to be restored to these 'fundamental principles'.

Likewise, Peterson's typical argumentation would consist of recognizing the existence of a popular societal polemic (such as transgender activism and Bill C-16) but predicting the

consequences (stifling of free speech) of that problem to be anthropologically severe, so much so, that the entirety of cultural values of a single civilization might be in danger. By presenting the problem to be as severe, one creates a platform for oneself to offer a dogmatic solution and present himself as a heroic figure. Smith describes Peterson like a Weberian type of a charismatic leader,

> Max Weber, who introduced the concept around 1920, defined it as "a quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers. Charismatic leaders like Peterson promote themselves as visionary heroes, lone voices crying out in the wilderness. Unencumbered by self- doubt or self- criticism and impatient with intellectual caution, their rhetoric is grand, sweeping, and apocalyptic. […] Charismatic leaders serve a function in times of rapid social change, when long-standing social identities are threatened. They advertise a glorious future in which the group they minister to will take its rightful place and their enemies will be vanquished. [They] first elicit depression and despair in their audience, then paranoid terror of a deadly enemy, before finally offering salvation though a redemptive order that abjures reasoned discourse. (54–54)

Here we can see how complex and multifaceted the positions that these paranoiacs occupy are. The paranoid style easily leads into a type of nationalism, fascism, reactionism, conspiratorial thinking and requires a strong and a charismatic leader with a sweeping rhetoric to sustain its very own logic and offer a way out of the chaos, disorder, uncertainty and intrusions into the familiar order.

Consequences of this discourse

The persuasiveness of this discourse must not be underestimated because it has helped produce certain dangerous implementations with severe consequences. Although Peterson's methods for the call of suppression of 'postmodern neo-Marxism' are simplistic such as buying his book of rules, not conforming to the ideology of pronouns here and there, and 'cleaning your room', his predecessors were not so mild in their suggestions to battle Cultural Marxism. Lind suggest heavy amounts of misogyny, homophobia and racism,

> Rather, those who would defeat cultural Marxism must defy it. They must use words it forbids, and refuse to use the words it mandates; remember, sex is better than gender. They must shout from the housetops the realities it seeks to suppress, such as the facts that violent crime is disproportionately committed by blacks and that most cases of AIDS are voluntary, i.e., acquired from immoral sexual acts. They must refuse to turn their children over to public schools. Above all, those who would defy Political Correctness must behave according to the old rules of our culture, not the new rules the cultural Marxists lay down. Ladies should be wives and homemakers, not cops or soldiers, and men should still hold doors open for ladies. Children should not be born out of wedlock. Open homosexuals should be shunned. Jurors should not accept race as an excuse for murder. (7)

Anders Breivik: No longer dog-whistling fascism

As if this was not already enforcing enough intolerance, the entire narrative unraveled with even worse repercussions. In 2010 for Anders Behring Breivik, or Berwick (his anglicized last name), a far-right extremist, perpetrated a string of deadly and explosive assaults with 77 people

dead in Utøya, Norway with the intent of promoting his 1,500-page manifesto, titled *2083—A European Declaration of Independence*. Berwick enters this story as an example of how these paranoid discourses are not only limited to America, but were powerful and influential enough to the spread all the way to Europe and this time, the consequences were not just theoretical or ideological. They were concrete and radical.

Berwick first set off a car bomb in Oslo that killed eight people and injured many others. He then traveled to the island of Utøya, where a youth camp organized by the Norwegian Labour Party was being held, and opened fire on the attendees. Berwick's shooting spree lasted for about an hour and fifteen minutes, during which he killed 69 people, mostly teenagers, and injured over 100 others. The victims were attending the camp to participate in various activities and workshops, including political discussions and debates.

In his aforementioned book, where he even details his attack, he plagiarizes multiple texts written on this already familiar notion of the contemporary danger that the Western society is in. Some of those texts he actually references as his inspiration, such as Minnicino's eclectic manifesto. Berwick states, "One of the few looks at the Frankfurt School by someone not a sympathizer, this long journal article explains the role of the Institute for Social Research in creating the ideology we now know as 'Political Correctness' (34). Obviously, Berwick believes Minnicino's dismissive attitude towards Frankfurt School is generally an exception and he commends Minnicino for espousing their destructive ideology that initiated the "Dark Age" in the first place, so the two are basically sharing the same concerns. However, Berwick's solution to the same problem is destructive and violent.

In short, the essence of his painfully long book is a Frankensteinian blend of many existing far-right movements from "counter-jihad movement", another belief that the Western culture is in

danger from Muslims who are colonizing it, Vienna School of Thought, which stands against multiculturalism, Islamification and also Frankfurt School, and English and European defense leagues. This is best encapsulated in the forewords of Berwick himself,

> Multiculturalism (cultural Marxism/political correctness), as you might know, is the root cause of the ongoing Islamisation of Europe which has resulted in the ongoing Islamic colonization of Europe through demographic warfare (facilitated by our own leaders). This compendium presents the solutions and explains exactly what is required of each and every one of us in the coming decades. (9)

In a nutshell, Berwick contends this Islamisation is happening because the cultural Marxists influence "our leaders" to facilitate multiculturalism, which recognizes and values the diversity of different cultural groups within a society and promotes the idea that multiple cultures can coexist and thrive within a single society, and that no one culture is superior to another. However, Berwick contends he sees pass that (just like Lind) and recognizes that this seemingly benevolent idea in fact endangers the European nation, threatening its peoples to become "indigenous people" that will soon cease to exist in their pure form because of interracial marriage and "half-bloods". An inbred race will be formed that will blot out the essential Europeanism from people. Needless to say, his "compendium" calls for action against this revolting idea in order to stop it from spreading and has detailed instructions on how to declare war on cultural Marxists, how to illegally acquire weapons to fight in this patriotic revolution, and essentially how to kill anyone standing in the way to do so. If this wealth of data is not sufficient to convince one that this represents the most abhorrent form of fascism, consider the following words directly from Berwick's *Declaration of Independence*:

As a Justiciar Knight you are operating as a jury, judge and executioner on behalf

of all free Europeans. Never forget that it is not only your right to act against the

tyranny of the cultural Marxist/multiculturalist elites of Europe, it is your duty to

do so. There are situations in which cruelty is necessary, and refusing to apply

necessary cruelty is a betrayal of the people whom you wish to protect. (837)

This must have been the same line of reasoning motivating Mr. Berwick to ruthlessly kill 77

people. When asked by the police about his motivations behind the slaughter, he described his acts

as self-defense from the Marxists and referred to himself as a "hero" (Knausgaard). According to

his belief system, it is necessary for any patriot to carry out the execution of the Marxist elites of

Europe, as such an act is deemed to be in the interest of the greater societal good. In any case,

because of the difficulties in retelling all of the terrors contained within the voluminous 1,500-page

tome, it is suggested that individuals peruse its contents independently. Upon even a cursory

examination, it becomes apparent that the ethical implications of this compendium are both severe

and display extreme fascist tendencies.

Jacques Lacan's discourses

Finally, considering the colossal extent of this entire conspiracy, it might be important to

interpret all of the aforementioned problems through the framework of Jacques Lacan's theory of

four discourses. Because the discourse surrounding Cultural Marxism, however unpersuasive it

might sound to a leftist reader, or a reader well acquainted with the writings of the Frankfurt

School, still managed to capture the attention and ferocious action of the right-wing audience, and

present itself as a common ideological position of critique on the right. This is why Lacan's theory

of four discourses seems important for the final discussion. The Four Discourses can be used as a

theoretical framework in critical theory to analyze the dynamics of power and ideology in society. They can help to reveal how discourse operates as a form of social control, how language constructs subjectivities and identities, and how different discourses intersect and interact in shaping social reality. By using Lacan's structuralist diagrams, we could enable a conceptual and taxonomical clarity in the discussion surrounding the topics of cultural Marxism and political correctness, and also provide a differentiation of roles within those topics. In a way this might be useful for facilitating a debate, and for easier structural visualization of the issues, while also introducing vocabulary for further conclusions.

Bearing in mind that this theoretical framework stems from psychoanalysis, it is important to emphasize that it is by no means an attempt to individually psychologize the actants of this discourse or to positivistically ascribe definitive motives to their actions, as Hofstadter also pointed out. Rather, its purpose is to explore how a certain discourse or ideology can be constructed based on a relative perspective on the political spectrum, using psychoanalytical concepts. It is important to clarify that this analysis is not exhaustive, but rather provides a general framework for comprehension[6].

It might be useful to identify Lacan's framework first and then apply it on the discourse surrounding cultural Marxism. Namely, Lacan believed there are four fundamental discourses – the master, the university, the hysteric and the analyst discourse and that they could be expressed as permutations of a four-term configuration which implies the relative position of the subject ($), the master (S1), knowledge (S2) and *objet petit a* (a). This fourfold configuration also represents four different values or functions: the agent, the other, the production, and truth. Within each

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[6] the source description of the four discourses can be found in Lacan's work *Other Side of Psychoanalysis.*

discourse, the *agent* engages with an *other*, and the pursuit of *truth* in the discourse is achieved through a specific process of *production*. The relationship between the master-signifier (S1) and knowledge (S2), which relies on the crucial mediation of speech, creates a division between the subject and the production of the discourse. As a consequence, the discourse is perpetually insufficient. In this scenario, an insurmountable gap, exists between the subject ($) and the object (a).

Lacan's definitions of the four discourses are as follows: In the master's discourse, the master is the agent and it exercises power by imposing knowledge, norms, and regulations upon subordinate individuals. They establish the criteria, define the boundaries, and dictate what is deemed acceptable or valuable within the given social context. The master's authority stems from their dominant position and is exerted through the manipulation of resources, information, or other forms of influence. This discourse reflects systems of oppression, authoritarianism, and social control that can permeate diverse realms of society, including politics, education, workplaces, and interpersonal interactions. The master's power is often sustained through methods like obedience, discipline, and punishment, ensuring that individuals comply and conform to the existing order.

Within the framework of the university discourse, the subject assumes the role of a seeker of knowledge, driven by the desire to amass expertise and understanding. This discourse is centered around the intricate processes of knowledge transmission, generation, and validation, which are facilitated through diverse institutional frameworks like academia, research institutions, and intellectual communities. At its core, the discourse encompasses a dynamic interplay between the Master (S1) figure, embodying established knowledge and wielding authority, and the University (S2) entity, representing the intricate system responsible for the production and dissemination of knowledge.

In the context of the analyst discourse, the analyst assumes the role of the supposed knower (S1) endowed with the knowledge and expertise of psychoanalysis. Conversely, the analysand takes up the position of the supposed ignorant (S2), actively seeking insight and comprehension of their unconscious workings. This discourse places significant emphasis on the therapeutic relationship and delving into the realm of the unconscious within the practice of psychoanalysis. It underscores the crucial role played by interpretation, gaining insight, and engaging in self-reflection during the process of psychological healing and personal growth. By providing a framework for comprehending the dynamics of the therapeutic encounter, the analyst discourse reveals the transformative potential inherent in the realm of psychoanalysis.

The hysteric discourse, on the other hand, assumes the role of the agent (S1), employing inquiries, interrogations, and challenges to established knowledge, all in the quest for acknowledgement of their desires and experiences. Language, rhetoric, and performative acts become potent tools for the hysteric, enabling them to incite reactions and disrupt prevailing social orders. This discourse unfolds through a dynamic interaction between the hysteric and the Other (S2), symbolizing societal norms, figures of authority, or dominant ideologies. The hysteric harnesses the power of questioning, ambiguity, and subversive tactics to unsettle the status quo and demand recognition for their desires. By engaging in the hysteric discourse, individuals dare to confront societal norms and power structures, aiming to destabilize the existing order and expose its internal contradictions. The hysteric discourse endeavors to dismantle fixed meanings, unearth concealed desires, and reshape power dynamics to reclaim subjective agency. This discourse sheds light on the profound significance of language, rhetoric, and the hysteric's distinctive position in scrutinizing societal structures. It underscores the hysteric's unwavering pursuit of recognition, their courageous exploration of desire, and their pivotal role in unmasking repressed or

marginalized aspects of culture. Ultimately, the hysteric discourse provides a conceptual framework for comprehending the intricacies of subjectivity, power dynamics, and the role of language within the multifaceted realm of the hysteric subject, and it is precisely this discourse that will be of most importance here.

In light of this, what is proposed is a classification of the so far discussed discourse on the subject of cultural Marxism according to the Lacanian framework. At first glance, it may seem convenient that, for instance, Jordan Peterson assumes the role of an agent in the discourse of the analyst. Given the analytical discourse scheme, his role would be to awaken the hysterical and divided subject ($) through his "psychoanalytic" (or in his case psychological) knowledge or truth (S2) in order to produce an awakening, that is, some kind of subversion of the master signifier (S1). Referring to Žižek's interpretation of the Lacanian discourse of the analyst, this would mean the following:

> The discourse of the analyst designates the appearance of a revolutionary-emancipatory subjectivity that resolves the split of the university and hysteria. In it, the revolutionary agent - a - addresses the subject from the position of the knowledge that occupies the place of truth (i.e. that intervenes in the "symptomatic torsion" of the subject's constellation), and the goal is to isolate oneself from the master signifier that has structured the subject's (ideological-political) unconscious.
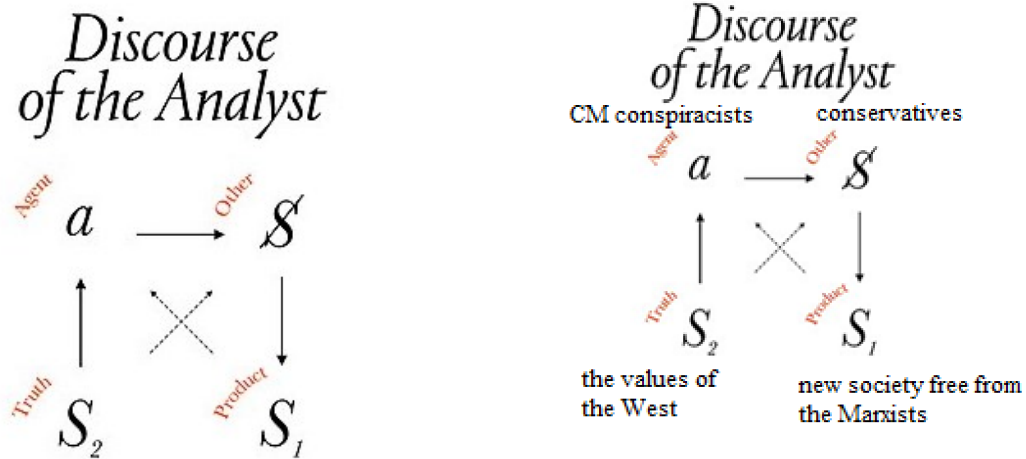> (*No subject*)

According to Žižek, in the discourse of the analyst, the revolutionary agent (referred to as "a") addresses the subject from a position of knowledge that occupies the place of truth. This means that the revolutionary agent intervenes in the subject's constellation, which encompasses their beliefs, desires, and unconscious processes. By intervening in the "symptomatic torsion" of the

subject's constellation, the agent seeks to bring about a transformative change. The revolutionary agents being the aforementioned conspiracists addressing their hysteric right-wing audience from a position of knowledge that is presented as a place of truth, which can, in their case, be their political dogma or the unerring values of the Western civilization which legitimize their knowledge. The goal of the discourse of the analyst is to help the subject isolate themselves from the influence of the master signifier, and the master signifier refers to a dominant ideological or political construct that structures the subject's unconscious, shaping their beliefs and behaviors. By challenging the authority and influence of the master signifier, the discourse of the analyst aims to free the subject from its grip and open up possibilities for new modes of thinking and being.

In other words, by applying this model even more specifically and succinctly to the example of Jordan Peterson, Minnicino, Lind, Buchanan or the like, we could say that they all penetrate the discourse and the cause of the subject's desire (a), and who, as the agents of such discourse, address recipients who are hysterical, divided subjects ($) - in this case their common audience or the conservatives, whom they want to lead to an understanding and overthrow of the master - in this case, cultural Marxism or postmodern neo-Marxism (S1) - while actually reproducing new (or in this case, old) master signifiers – those of the acclaimed moral values of the Western civilization (S1) - that are not oppressive from the outside, as the main master's discourse is, or as the political correctness is. As Mark Bracher writes about the product of the analytical discourse, "There is a crucial difference, however, is in this new [reproduced] discourse of the Master: its master signifiers are produced by the subject, rather than imposed upon the subject from the outside." (124).

The illustrations would look as follows:

Discourse of the Analyst

Agent $a \longrightarrow \$$ Other

Truth S_2 S_1 Product

Discourse of the Analyst

CM conspiracists   conservatives

Agent $a \longrightarrow \$$ Other

Truth S_2 S_1 Product

the values of the West   new society free from the Marxists

Therefore, it seems that these men pose as the sages who recognize the hysteria of conservatives in the face of increasingly vocal liberal movements and identity politics that attribute them an oppressive role. Conspiracists of cultural Marxism offer them knowledge and vocabulary with which they can fight against this postmodern leftist neo-Marxist propaganda and thus overthrow society and return it to its "factory settings".

However, there is an important note to add here. As we have witnessed so far, the conspiracists ultimately imply that this present societal collapse is to be blamed explicitly to the domain of the political left. And they are not entirely wrong in pointing out some of the weaknesses of the contemporary left, which include attitudes of *ressentiment* (as Nietzsche put it) and fanatical political correctness that are increasingly associated with public denunciation and populism, and even this stifling of freedom of speech, and less and less with any significant socio-political influence, let alone catalyzing change. Even the woke left would like to appeal to itself as participating in the analyst discourse. Žižek himself states,

> Far from opposing the new forms of barbarism, as it often claims to be doing, the
> woke left fully participates in it, promoting and practicing an oppressive discourse

without irony. Though it advocates pluralism and promotes difference, its subjective position of enunciation – the place from which it speaks – is ruthlessly authoritarian, brooking no debate in efforts to impose arbitrary exclusions that previously would have been considered beyond the pale in a tolerant, liberal society. (*Project syndicate*)

However, most of these issues are not even considered the domain of authentic radical leftism (Marxism). Instead, the cases that Peterson and his conspiracist predecessors mention and wants to attribute to the entire left, as if it were such a homogeneous identity, should fall into the category of contemporary liberalism, a phenomenon in contemporary social policy that leftists and "cultural Marxists" often criticize, thus demonstrating Peterson's nomenclature to be off the mark once again. Žižek acknowledges some of the problems that they highlight,

And this is why Peterson's outbursts are so efficient, although (or, perhaps, because) he ignores the inner antagonisms and inconsistencies of the liberal project itself: the tension between liberals who are ready to condone racist and sexist jokes on account of the freedom of speech, and the PC regulators who want to censor them as an obstacle to the freedom and dignity of the victims of such jokes, is immanent to the liberal project and has nothing to do with an authentic Left. Peterson addresses what many of us somehow feel goes wrong in the PC universe of obsessive regulation: the problem with him does not reside in his lies, but in the partial truths that sustain his lies. If the Left is not able to address these limitations of its own project, it is fighting a lost battle. (*Myth and Mayhem* 17)

The difference being that Žižek does not attribute these problems to a developed Marxist-postmodern university conspiracy. On the contrary, he believes that the consequences that Peterson attributes to the leftist-Marxist agenda are actually a byproduct of late capitalism. In his 2020 book

A Left that Dares to Speak Its Name, Žižek states, "The alt-right's obsession with cultural Marxism signals its refusal to confront the fact that the phenomena it attributes to the cultural Marxist plot (moral degradation, sexual promiscuity, consumerist hedonism[7], etc.) are actually the result of the immanent dynamics of late capitalism" (254). In other words, the things that seem most frightening and alarming to Peterson regarding the state of today's society, such as the collapse of objective moral values and displaced hierarchies and authorities, are simply symptoms of the internal workings of the cultural logic of late capitalism (in the Jamesonian sense). Therefore, ironically, it is revealed here that the master against whom the cultural Marxists conspirators think they are fighting (S1) - instead of the dreaded postmodern neo-Marxism - is actually capitalism[8] itself.

Moreover, if there were a real master (S1) to be overthrown, it would be capitalism. Therefore, their real role in this political discourse seems to be nothing more than an agent role of hysterical discourse because the hysteric is the one who rebels against the master (for them, it's cultural Marxism) but ultimately legitimizes the master's discourse (which, beyond their paranoid delusion, is actually capitalism). In fact, Bracher confirms this when explaining hysterical discourse, "despite rejecting the master, the hysterical subject remains in solidarity with him" (107). And, "this solidarity manifests itself in the wish of anxiety for security and stability, the search of meaninglessness for a meaning or identity, and the urge of shame to coincide with the ideal. This is the meaning of Lacan's warning to revolutionary students that what they were really asking for - and would get – was a master" (122–123).

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[7] Or what Buchanan calls, 'what was immoral and shameful—promiscuity, abortion, euthanasia, suicide—has become progressive and praiseworthy. Nietzsche called it the transvaluation of all values; the old virtues become sins, and the old sins become virtues' (8)

[8] Further on 'capitalism' will refer on the logic of late capitalism, not on economic capitalism.

This is also a warning to every revolutionary hysteric that they will only get a master because, like Peterson, Minnicino, Buchanan, and Lind, their discourse only perpetuates the status quo of capitalism, and thus their ideology helps produce new markers of the master by diverting attention from the real problem into the dense labyrinth of contemporary identity polemics, which are also a byproduct of globalization and capitalism. It is worth noting that there is a significant corpus of cultural studies that point to the same problem of neglecting capitalism as not only an important but an extremely obvious culprit for the current social state of affairs, especially in American society, and then, synecdochally, in most Western societies. For instance, in the context of scholarship in the American studies, University of Zagreb Professor Stipe Grgas writes about this,

> […] with the evident task of promoting values and epistemologies that would be antipodal to the socialist worldview that advocated a materialistic interpretation of man and his history, American studies scholars largely neglected the questions of capital, economic production, or class divisions. […] The omission of economic and social determinants, accompanied by decades of identity legitimization focused on race, ethnicity, and gender issues, has made it difficult to understand the totality of American reality. (10)

In other words, Grgas argues that there is no proper understanding of American identity and contemporary social and discursive reality without considering economic determinants instead of identitarian ones.

Grgas is not the only one making this claim. Fraser writes,

We are facing, then, a new constellation in the grammar of political claims-making—and one that is disturbing on two counts. First, this move from redistribution to recognition is occurring despite—or because of—an acceleration of economic globalization, at a time when an aggressively expanding capitalism is radically exacerbating economic inequality. In this context, questions of recognition are serving less to supplement, complicate and enrich redistributive struggles than to marginalize, eclipse and displace them. I shall call this the problem of displacement.

The term "problem of displacement" that Fraser coined suggests that the emphasis on recognition (i.e. The form of politics that she categorizes contemporary identity politics under) has the potential to marginalize and displace discussions and actions related to economic redistribution. Rather than enriching and complementing redistributive struggles, questions of recognition can overshadow them, diverting attention and resources away from addressing economic inequality. Furthermore, Marie Moran in her book *Identity and Capitalism* portrays the current social situation in line with Žižek's argument. She states,

> (...) massive social and economic inequalities created between the displaced and impoverished people are interpreted in ethnic, racial, or religious terms (…). People are encouraged to understand their powerless circumstances in terms of the increasingly visible opposition of different identity groups: identity differences, rather than common nodes for political action, then provide the basis for, but also the content of, contemporary political struggles, which is further exacerbated by the fact that this economic restructuring also undermines existing forms of political organization of the working class. (117)

In other words, replacing economic issues with identity-based ones is a methodological mistake. Therefore, it ultimately turns out that Peterson and the conspiracists are knocking on the wrong door. Not only is their entire diagnosis of the current social state wrongly positioned, but it even diverts the discussion away from the real problems in society caused by current economic conditions and the cultural logic of late capitalism, not dangerous postmodern neo-Marxists or social justice warriors. Furthermore, even in Lacanian terms, by attempting to be the analysts who penetrate dominant ideological discourses and create a new and more desirable ideological ground for the hysterical mass, they actually turn out to be just another group of hysterics who reinforce a strong wave of reactionary politics and its fervent supporters, maintaining the status quo and producing even more ideological signifiers that will support the cultural logic of late capitalism.

Martin Jay grounds the problem back into this deeply underlying reactionary anxiety,

It is very disheartening to see how robust this phenomenon [of Cultural Marxism conspiracy] remains today, and a source of bitter irony to observe how the [Frankfurt] School itself has become its explicit target. But if there is one positive implication of these developments, it is the perverse tribute today's radical right pays to the School's acuity in revealing the workings of their deplorable ideology and its origins in their political and psychological pathologies. In looking for a scapegoat for all the transformations of culture which they can't abide, they have recognized the most acute analysts of their own condition. In the fog of their blighted understanding, they have discerned a real threat. But it is not to some phantasm called "Western civilization," whose most valuable achievements they themselves routinely betray, but rather to their own pathetic and misguided worldview and the dangerous politics it has spawned in our climate of heightened fear and despair. The

answer should not be to replace one scapegoat with another and trace all critiques of political correctness and the anxieties of those who level them back to the machinations of an extremist cult. Only a solution in which the deeper sources of those anxieties can be reduced will lessen the attraction of such theories to the people who find them persuasive. (38)

Jay aptly points out that despite the turmoil this conspiracy has generated, it has successfully brought the Frankfurt School back into the spotlight. Furthermore, it serves as a stark reminder of just how painfully accurate their societal analyses continue to be in the context of today's political climate. What Jay suggests then to reduce the conspiracies and its potency is not to try and fall into the same trap of scapegoating and finding a common enemy, but rather to bring into spotlight the underlying fear and anxiety that supports these conspiracies and offer a solution that would address them.

Final contentions

Throughout this paper, we've explored the transformation of the Red Scare phenomenon into a multifaceted and paradoxical symptom that keeps haunting the American unconscious. A symptom that is rooted in a specific incapacity to grapple with the prevailing cultural dynamics of late-stage capitalism. It manifests itself through the creation of paranoid conspiracies, the production of uninformed and even dangerous public discourse, and the practice of scapegoating. The intention behind this paper has been to shed light on this intricate issue, offering a comprehensive view of the problem at hand. However, it's important to acknowledge that it may raise more questions than it provides answers. The future remains uncertain in terms of whether these anxieties surrounding contemporary cultural turmoil will persist and how they will be managed in our so called 'post-ideological' globalized society. Who comes after Jordan Peterson

and what comes after 'postmodern neo-Marxism' is a question yet to be answered or perhaps an event to be prevented.

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