

# **The New Left of the 60's and Modern Neo-Liberalism**

# Nominalism and Modern Philosophies

- Fascism and Communism after WWI appeared to be in the “Dust Bin of History”
- The third ideology that developed out of the reformation and “enlightenment” was western liberalism which was to evolve into neo-liberalism and incorporate postmodernism
- During the era between the wars it wasn’t nearly as defined and visible as it has become in recent years and was gradually developing taking features from both fascism and Marxism
  - Amongst the American left from this era there was a good deal of interest in and support of Communism (Trotskyites for the most part) along with an increasing willingness to use the force of the state to manage society and control political opposition
- Coming out of the war Western liberalism came to be defined largely by what it opposed
  - as its competitors collapsed but as the geo-political situation developed in the 1950’s and 60’s there were more similarities than differences especially economically

# The Vital Center and End of the New Deal

- The Democratic Party at the end of the Roosevelt Administration had three branches
  - Socialists (represented by Henry Wallace who had been VP)
  - Progressives
  - Liberals (the Wise Men)
- As FDR's health deteriorated and was replaced by Truman who was a political choice who had been isolated the Liberals took over
- Progressives remained in the institutions
- The Socialists or Travelers, who were largely followers of Trotsky, wound up in academia or media

# Party Realignment

- The “Vital Center” started to breakdown in the late 50’s and early 60’s
  - This occurred as the result of more aggressive Cold War policies and Rise of the New Right after having disposed of the more libertarian “Old Right”
- The New Left that arose in the 60’s fueled by the Kennedy assassination and the increasingly unpopular Vietnam War was a distinct departure from the consensus liberalism
  - abandonment of all forms of American cultural heritage
- largely the children of the aristocracy of the Old Left, the New Dealers, the Activists and Reformers of another era
  - but they were no longer culturally American as opposed to clinging to a legacy of Yankee progressive Christian activism
  - the Church in all its forms were their adversary representing old power
- They were the product of fundamental changes in the educational system
  - Driven in large part by a new a growing form of adapted Marxism known as the Frankfurt School or Post Modernism and its key element, Critical Theory that was imported to the US from Germany in the 1930’s

# Frankfort School Postmodernism

- While referring to the Frankfort School as neo-Marxist is common, it could perhaps more appropriately be considered an expression of western neo-liberalism
  - Modern liberalism was forming itself during this period and came to be seen by the public as the anti-thesis to fascism and Marxism while it was really more of a close cousin that gathered to itself the worst elements of both
  - Another observation that is certain is that Frankfort School Post-modernism represented the final form of the philosophic movement of nominalism that sought to remove all forms of group identity including culture, religion, and even gender leaving the fully liberated individual to define their own reality
- Led to a concept of collective man replacing the Christian God
  - It became the purest form of Nihilism which its creators and advocates understood from the beginning

# Where It Came From

- Postmodernism came from the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Institute for Social Research following WWI.
  - The “*Frankfurt scholars*” the most renown of whom include, Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Wilhelm Reich were ideological communists and predominantly Jewish
  - forced out of Germany by 1933 and setp shop in American universities, most notably Columbia University.
  - Amongst the Frankfort school there were also a significant number of Freudians which was of importance in understanding their acceptance in the US.
- Their belief system called for nothing less than the destruction and erasure of western civilization
  - *Although most people never overcome the habit of berating the world for their difficulties, those who are too weak to make a stand against reality have no choice but to obliterate themselves by identifying with it. They are never rationally reconciled to civilization. Instead, they bow to it, secretly accepting the identity of reason and domination, of civilization and the ideal, however much they may shrug their shoulders. Well-informed cynicism is only another mode of conformity (Max Horkheimer from Eclipse of Reason, 1947)*

## How it was Sold and Spread

- Required the fostering and expansion of a government dependent and uneducated or mal-educated underclass to act as foot soldiers
  - Borrowing from Fascism on the other hand, neo-liberalism would eventually bring together cooperative and dependent business, media, financial players, and even churches who would be integrated with the government and would act as guardians for and enforcers of the neo-liberal order
- Selling this would require rebranding, deception, recasting of history, and collective amnesia
  - “*worker*” would be replaced with the more generic “*oppressed*”
  - Instead of referring to themselves as communists they bundled their ideas under the name of “*critical theory*”, which is not a theory at all but a school of thought
  - defined it by their stated goals like, “*to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them*” and to “*reveal the ideologies of the mechanisms of power and oppression*”
  - adopted psychology as their new playing field. Any form of historical memory would have to be eradicated or redefined
- Time and ignorance would take care of part of this and the “68ers” were the first generation with no direct memories of the calamities these beliefs had already brought

# Spread Through Academic Institutions

- Arguments all focused outward
  - philosophy of history with social sciences, economics, and sociology, psychology, and psychoanalysis while excluding all *“forms of social control”*
  - By focusing their arguments outwards, they would not have to defend their positions and could typically avoid explaining them to all but their initiated followers. It is a belief system based on, to quote Marx, the *“relentless criticism of all that exists”*,
- The most influential member of the Frankfurt school in the United States, was Berlin-born Marcuse (author of *One Dimensional Man* 1964)
  - Taught at Columbia, Harvard, Brandeis, and the University of California, San Diego
  - He enjoyed a pop culture sort of popularity in the 60's and saw the student rebellion of the 60's as a great opportunity to make Frankfurt School Critical Theory the core political philosophy of the New Left in America
  - Advocated the concept of *“Repressive Tolerance”*
- Created vast number of followers in humanities disciplines who became teachers (and politicians and media personalities) who taught other followers and so on.
- Came to control Academia and the private institutions



# Saul Alinsky – Rules for Radicals

- *Rules for Radicals* is a short book that could almost be considered more of a paper and lacks any real analysis or significant academic citations
  - Basically it's the ramblings of one angry man who is using withering criticism to tear down the society and economy he hates
  - Alinsky was born in Chicago in 1909, wound up going to high school in southern California, and then returned to Chicago to attend the University of Chicago where he got an anthropology degree
- Overview of Content
  - Always remember the first rule of power tactics: Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have. (Alinsky 1971, 126-31)
  - The second rule is: Never go outside the experience of your people. When an action or tactic is outside the experience of the people, the result is confusion, fear, and retreat. It also means a collapse of communication, as we have noted. (Alinsky 1971)
  - The third rule is: Wherever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy. Here you want to cause confusion, fear, and retreat. (Alinsky 1971)
  - The fourth rule is: Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules. You can kill them with this, for they can no more obey their own rules than the Christian church can live up to Christianity. (Alinsky 1971)
  - The fourth rule carries within it the fifth rule: Ridicule is man's most potent weapon. It is almost impossible to counterattack ridicule. Also it infuriates the opposition, who then react to your advantage. (Alinsky 1971)

# The Great Society and the Civil Rights Era

- Following the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, which created the Office of Economic Opportunity
  - the percentage of people dependent upon the federal government to stay above the poverty line increased, reversing a decade-long trend
  - eligibility rules for Welfare, Unemployment, and Social Security continued to be loosened and benefits increased
  - The amount spent on public housing rose nearly five-fold in a decade while food stamps increased tenfold.
  - Many public housing projects were crime infested and became too dangerous to live in
- effect on the Black family was especially pronounced
  - deliberate attempt to recruit Blacks into the welfare system during a time when unemployment for Black men was generally around 4%
  - Prior to the War on Poverty, 80% of all black families had a man and a woman raising children
  - nuclear family was defined as being Eurocentric while Christianity was demeaned
  - By 1992 more than half of all black adults had never been married while 16% had been divorced or widowed
  - About 57% of Black children lived in one parent homes and 7.5% didn't live with either parent

# Civil Rights Act

- prohibited segregation not only in public facilities but also in private establishments catering to the public such as hotels and eating places. It further prohibited discrimination in private employment based on race, creed, sex or national origin
  - extended federal authority over private behavior and to do this, the constitutional authority was tied not to the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment but to the Commerce Clause of the constitution
  - *“The Civil Rights Act represented no acceleration in trends that had been going on for many years”* Thomas Sowell
  - Affirmative action, which started in 1971 under Nixon, did result in some improvement for Blacks on the upper end of the earning spectrum but those at the other end just lagged further behind
- School desegregation didn't turn out any better
  - The Brown vs. the Board of Education Topeka Kansas Supreme Court decision in 1954 was based on sociology as opposed to educational performance featuring a doll study that indicated Black girls would rather play with white dolls
  - At the time there were public school districts that required racial segregation and these were in the South including the upper South
  - In 1968 the Supreme Court expanded the Brown decision in Greene vs. Country School Board of New Kent Virginia
  - The local control of local schools was lost. There was no demonstrable improvement in Black educational performance. Finally the *“magnet school”* concept that eventually developed as a way to avoid forced busing with amenities did nothing but drive up costs

# Liberation Theology

- Liberation Theology in a broad sense stemmed from Latin America and was a fusion of Christianity and Marxism
  - Originated from leftists priests and nuns and could be appropriately be seen as an internal subversion of the Catholic Church that was tied to revolutionary activities throughout Latin America
- Black Liberation Theology movement is credited to James H. Cone
  - Leftist African-American teacher and theologian at Union theological Seminary in New York
  - sees the Christian mission as bringing justice to oppressed people through political activism and recasts Jesus as the political liberator of oppressed Black masses
  - Cone further explains the core beliefs of Black Liberation Theology by saying, “*Black theology refuses to accept a God who is not identified totally with the goals of the black community. If God is not for us and against white people, then he is a murderer, and we had better kill him*”
- James Cone book, *Black Theology and Black Power* in 1968 defined the tenants of Black Liberation Theology
  - This work closely followed Herbert Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* in 1964 which had laid the groundwork for integrating Critical Theory with race and proposing an alliance of racial minorities, liberal academia, and violent outside agitators to acquire power
- Following Cone was Derrick Bell, who is the second most prominent academic associated with Black Liberation Theology
  - The last major contribution to this toxic mix of religious and political philosophy was added Kimberle Crenshaw with her theory of intersectionality, which sought to unite all supposedly oppressed and marginalized groups into one united theory of social justice, and held that different parts of one’s identity could intersect to “*compound their oppression*”