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## Liberalism Radicalized: The Sexual Revolution, Multiculturalism, and the Rise of Identity Politics

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### Abstract

*Beginning in the 1950s, a more radical form of liberalism emerged in the academy that sowed the seeds for the sexual revolution and multiculturalism. Neo-progressivism mobilized the New Left of the 1960s, transformed American politics, and continues to dominate the cultural and political conversation today. It combines what neo-progressives call personal politics (the idea that American citizens have a right to all forms of self-expression) and cultural politics (the idea that cultural groups are entitled to special status) together as the twin pillars of a new identity politics. As a result, citizens today have more, not less, freedom from government in the realm of sexual expression, and the American electorate has been fractured into various groups.*

In the past two decades, a new, more radical form of progressivism has taken over American social and political life, even finding its way into the White House. Fresh instances of this new progressivism appear every day. For example:

- At the 2012 Democratic National Convention, progressives officially supported same-sex marriage as a civil right and unofficially rejected the word *God* in their platform;
- President Barack Obama, labeled the “First Gay President” by *Newsweek* for his support of gay rights, has instructed the Attorney General of the United States not to defend the Defense of Marriage Act; and
- Vice President Joe Biden has said that discrimination against transgendered persons is the “civil rights issue of our time.”<sup>1</sup>

The new progressivism divides Americans into categories of race, class, and gender. It renews the specter of race conflict by rejecting the goal of civil rights, in which individuals achieve equality under the law; instead, the goal is political racial solidarity against what is viewed as an inherently racist American system.

As a former law professor, Obama has been associated with the movement called Critical Race Theory, which—according to a proponent—“seeks to highlight the ways in which the law is not neutral and objective, but designed to support White supremacy

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and the subordination of people of color.”<sup>2</sup> Race politics has taken center stage, with both political parties vying for the loyalty of the growing number of Hispanic Americans. Obama attributed his recent presidential victory to the “Latino community,” while the Republican Party, admitting that it is “too old, too white,” scrambles to court the Latino vote.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the politics of gender has grown as 55 percent of women voted for Obama in 2012.<sup>4</sup> Rallying around the Affordable Care Act, progressives accused those who opposed the new right to taxpayer-funded contraception of waging a “war on women.”

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## The New Left, the political movement that grew out of neo-progressivism, transformed American politics.

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This is not the old progressivism of 1910, nor is it the self-styled “liberalism” of the 1940s and ‘50s. The term “liberals” here refers to what many in the Democratic Party and American society called themselves between 1948 and 1969. These were the heirs to the early 20th century Progressives. Economically, these are the liberals of the generation that came of age during World War II: unionized blue-collar laborers and farmers.

In 1949, historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., defined economic liberalism as “democratic, regulated capitalism—the mixed society.”<sup>5</sup> He believed that liberals were the pragmatic “vital center” between the opposing dogmatism of conservatives like Robert Taft, who wished to repeal the programs of the New Deal, and the new progressives, who challenged Harry Truman within the Democrat Party and ran Henry Wallace as a third-party presidential candidate in 1948.

These liberals of the center were an intensely patriotic group. They supported the Cold War because they thought Communism was just as bad as fascism. Truman fired Secretary of Commerce Wallace for his sympathy toward the Soviet Union, purged the new progressives from the Democratic Party, and made bureaucrats swear loyalty oaths. These liberals found common ground with Republican President Dwight Eisenhower, who called his platform “dynamic conservatism” because it combined fiscal conservatism and anti-Communism with an acceptance of the New Deal programs. Given their progressive roots, these liberals embraced big government.

Liberals were also socially and morally conservative: Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants with big families, bigger cars, and, increasingly, homes in the suburbs, where they watched *Father Knows Best*, *I Love Lucy*, and *Gunsmoke*. Culturally, the difference between liberals and old progressives, on the one hand, and neo-progressives, on the other, is obvious at a visceral level: One can’t imagine Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman, or Lyndon Johnson chanting “om” with Allen Ginsberg at the 1967 Human Be-In, dropping acid with Timothy Leary, or inviting Jay-Z to the White House.

These old liberals did not disappear—in fact, they are today’s neoconservatives. Irving Kristol, Michael Novak, David Horowitz, Richard Perle, and Norman Podhoretz briefly supported the radicalism of the 1960s, and when they forsook their Leftist radicalism to return to the fold of 1950s liberalism, they called themselves “paleo-liberals.” Progressive Michael Harrington derisively called them “neo-conservatives” in 1973. In Kristol’s famous formulation, a neoconservative was “a liberal who has been mugged by reality”<sup>6</sup>—but a liberal nevertheless. This

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1. Matea Gold and Michael Memoli, “Democrats Put God, Jerusalem Back in Platform over Objections,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/sep/05/news/la-pn-dnc-platform-god-jerusalem-20120905> (accessed April 26, 2013); “The First Gay President,” *Newsweek*, May 21, 2012; Andrew Sullivan, “Biden Says Transgender Discrimination ‘Civil Rights Issue of Our Time,’” *Politico*, October 30, 2012, <http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/10/biden-says-transgender-discrimination-civil-rights-147761.html> (accessed April 26, 2013).
  2. Dorothy A. Brown, “Fighting Racism in the Twenty-First Century,” 61 WASH. & LEE L. REV. 1485 (2004), 1486.
  3. CNN, “Republicans Want to End Perception as ‘Stuffy Old Men,’” March 18, 2013, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2013/03/18/republicans-want-to-end-perception-as-stuffy-old-men/> (accessed May 13, 2013).
  4. Halimah Abdullah, “How Women Ruled the 2012 Election and Where the GOP Went Wrong,” CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/08/politics/women-election> (accessed May 13, 2013).
  5. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962), p. xiii.
  6. Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 75.
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is why today's neo-progressives, when they doubt Obama's radical credentials, frequently call him a "neo-liberal."<sup>7</sup>

The New Left, the political movement that grew out of neo-progressivism, transformed American politics. That transformation was a partial rejection in practice and a total rejection in theory of the principles and policies on which the 1950s self-styled liberals had risen to power and claimed victory in World War II.

That is not to say, however, that there was no connection between neo-progressivism and the earlier progressive and liberal movements in America. Neo-progressivism was a continuation of progressivism and liberalism in that it rejected the Founders' teachings on natural rights, limited government, and constitutionalism.<sup>8</sup> And while there was a vast difference of both ends and means between the goals of LBJ's Great Society and the neo-progressive radicals, the early Progressives to a certain extent did pave the way for both through their withering critique of the old order inherited from the Founding and their embrace of "progress" in both political and cultural terms.

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## Freudo–Marxist thinkers posited that American capitalism was akin to a disease and that the destruction of capitalism required the destruction of the moral underpinning that sustained it.

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The New Left combined what they called personal politics (the idea that American citizens have a right to all forms of self-expression) and cultural politics (the idea that cultural groups are entitled to special status) together as the twin pillars of a new identity politics. In the first, citizens today have more, not less, freedom from government in the realm of sexual expression; in the second, neo-progressives fractured the American electorate into various groups:

the 1 percent, the 99 percent, the African American "community," the Hispanic "community," the white male vote, the white female vote, etc. These insular groups were no longer to be assimilated into a common American culture; they were to be given special status as oppressed or oppressor groups in a larger, more hostile view of the Western tradition. This view, commonly narrated in school textbooks, places America, Christianity, and capitalism at the vanguard of a colonial, exploitative, racist, sexist, homophobic imperialism.

The clear goal of the sexual revolution and the politics of race, class, and gender was to oppose the American liberal establishment and bring about a new kind of society founded upon a new standard of right. The personal politics of the New Left was intended to deconstruct the old liberal, progressive order to allow for a return to nature that would promote happiness and personal fulfillment in contemporary America. This, of course, meant something wholly different from the earlier conception of nature in which the Declaration of Independence, with its appeal to the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," was grounded.

This essay will return to the origins of neo-progressivism, which emerged in the 1950s as a revolt against liberalism across almost all academic fields. Two of those fields, psychology and sociology, provided the theories for sexual revolution and multiculturalism that would mobilize the New Left and so dominate and motivate liberal theory and politics today.

## The Sexual Revolution

Free-love movements in America go back to the mid-19th century. The first sexual revolution, which began in the 1920s and was associated with the Progressive thinkers of the time, was confined to small bohemian groups, literati, and radical psychoanalysts that gathered in places like Greenwich Village. While it began to undermine the old moral order, it did not penetrate the mainstream as the sexual revolution of the 1960s did.

Some of the key thinkers behind the sexual revolution in both the 1920s and the 1960s can be traced

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7. Princeton University Professor Cornell West, quoted in "Obama: Progressive or Pragmatist?" Al Jazeera English, April 21, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestoryus2012/2012/04/20124219324978745.html> (accessed April 26, 2013).

8. See Ronald J. Pestritto, "The Birth of the Administrative State: Where It Came From and What It Means for Limited Government," Heritage Foundation *First Principles Report* No. 16, November 20, 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/11/the-birth-of-the-administrative-state-where-it-came-from-and-what-it-means-for-limited-government> (accessed April 26, 2013).

to Freudo-Marxism within the field of psychology. Freudo-Marxist thinkers posited that American capitalism was akin to a disease and that the destruction of capitalism required the destruction of the moral underpinning that sustained it. Ironically, the Freudo-Marxists rejected fundamental teachings of both Marx and Freud. They abandoned crucial Marxian concepts: the labor theory of value, the rejection of private property, historical materialism, and the idea that mind is the byproduct of the mode of production. They also abandoned Freud's theory of sublimation.

Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist who founded psychoanalysis, had taught that the foundation of a civilization and its citizens' ability to reason was an education in moral asceticism, or the renunciation of one's instincts. The human being is initially controlled by a desire for pleasure—called the pleasure principle—and only by painful necessity does he adopt the reality principle, in which reason mediates between the impulse to pleasure-seeking and the reality that only some pleasures are attainable and compatible with civilization.

Freud described the trade-off in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930): Repression—the thwarting of sexual desire—which made all human beings to a certain degree neurotic, was simultaneously the foundation of civilization, in which neurotics channel their nervous energy into other pursuits such as art and science. Self-denial was, in this understanding, the necessary basis for the higher pleasures of educated society.

Freud's teachings appealed to liberals, who were interested in freedom from economic necessities and not sexual liberation. They wanted economic, not sexual, reforms and adopted Freud's teachings as the best defense of the American economy and sexual morality. Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, who worked as a propagandist in the Wilson Administration, used Freud's theory to justify state capitalism: Americans' natural aggression could be channeled by advertisements toward consumerism, which he called "propaganda for peace." People who were obsessed with buying things might be less inclined to fight wars. Corporations employed psychoanalysts to create advertisements that titillated their viewers' sexuality and turned their unconscious sexual desires toward various products.

Liberals in the 1950s, appealing to Freud, openly taught sexual gratification, often in campy sex education videos, but still within marriage and traditional sex roles. Sex within romantic marriage would diminish neuroses. Sexual morality was grounded on the premise that sex was higher, or more "human," when associated with duty. Without this sense of duty, they believed, humans abandoned reason and were led by pleasure itself to pre-marital sex, promiscuity, and adultery.

**Wilhelm Reich and Sexual Liberation.** The father of the modern sexual revolution in the U.S. was dissident psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957). He participated in the sexual revolution of the 1920s, and his teachings inspired the counterculture in the 1950s and 1960s. Reich is ubiquitous among the works of the Beat writers Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs; acclaimed authors J.D. Salinger, Norman Mailer, and Saul Bellow; and even actor and director Jack Nicholson.

Most significant was his influence on Paul Goodman, whom Dan Rather called "the guru of the New Left." Goodman, an openly bisexual liberationist who underwent "Reichian analysis," was one of Reich's earliest American supporters. He founded gestalt psychotherapy and offered Reich's ideas to a popular audience as a cure for the sexual suppression of liberalism. He became one of the most influential writers for the student radicals of the 1960s. His works, among them *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), were the most widely read in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement.

Reich was a proud, forceful man, a medical doctor with an incredible eye for detail. As a young man, he saw death on the grisly Italian front in World War I; though he despised war, he claimed it had given him a sense of heroic destiny, and he returned home a committed socialist. Maturing in 1920s Vienna, where he attended his first psychoanalytic seminars and studied under Freud, he combined his socialism with its libertine culture. He chafed at the psychoanalysts' sexual conservatism as the older generation frowned upon his sexual indiscretions. He frequently cheated on his wife, a psychoanalyst herself.

Reich reveled in satisfying his natural desires and wished to free others to enjoy a similar freedom. "Sexuality," he wrote, "is the center around which the life of society as a whole as well as the

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9. Wilhelm Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm: Discovery of the Orgone*, tr. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1986), p. 21.

inner intellectual world of the individual revolves.”<sup>9</sup> The enemy of natural freedom, he believed, was religious and political strictures that led to shame, guilt, and jealousy. In 1929, he founded the Socialist Association for Sex Hygiene and Sexological Research; riding around in a van, he procured illegal abortions for girls with unwanted pregnancies, gave out contraception, and encouraged premarital sex.

In 1933, he was expelled from both the International Psychoanalytic Association and the Communist Party. With the rise of Nazism in Europe, in 1939, Reich’s followers in the United States secured him a visa and a lectureship at the New School for Social Research in New York. Setting up psychotherapeutic practice, Reich continued to have a devoted following. An experimentalist, he believed that he had discovered a new physical energy, which he called orgone, the material correlate to Freud’s sexual energy of libido. Losing interest in psychotherapy, he created therapies to release the flow of this cosmic energy. He spent the remaining years of his life, often in isolation, performing experiments to better understand it.

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## In his writings, Wilhelm Reich provides an intense criticism of what he calls “compulsive morality” and the religions used by political regimes to inculcate it.

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Reich built great boxes, called accumulators, in which patients could reabsorb their expended orgone and cloud-busters to unclog pockets of orgone in the atmosphere. (Some blueberry farmers once paid him to induce rain.) Reich stressed the implications of his discovery for national defense against both “red fascists” and UFOs (not to mention its implications for energy independence), but the United States Food and Drug Administration was not enthusiastic. After high-profile articles in *Harper’s* and *The New Republic* about the “growing Reich cult” that surrounded his sexual theory and orgone experiments, the FDA indicted him for transporting orgone accumulators across state lines. A jury found him guilty

of fraud, and the judge ordered that his accumulators be smashed and his books burnt. Convicted as a fraudulent quack, Reich died in 1957 in a federal penitentiary.

For this reason, later psychologists tended to caricature his ideas and distance themselves from his work. However, the core of Reich’s social theory was quite persuasive to many. Reich’s central idea, his rejection of genital repression and his proposal that sexual liberation destroys the morals underlying capitalism, was repeated by leading thinkers like Paul Goodman, Herbert Marcuse, and Norman O. Brown. In 1964, *Time* magazine recognized Reich’s influence:

Dr. Wilhelm Reich may have been a prophet. For now it sometimes seems that all America is one big orgone box.... From innumerable screens and stages, posters and pages, it flashes larger-than-life-sized images of sex.... Gradually, the belief spread that repression, not license, was the great evil, and that sexual matters belonged in the realm of science, not morals.<sup>10</sup>

Reich’s eccentricity was matched by a certain intellectual brilliance and a broad willingness to entertain unconventional opinions. He founded character analysis, an entirely new field of psychoanalytic study that analyzed neurotic characters, not neurotic symptoms, meaning that it viewed certain types of human beings as ill. He extended his practice beyond individual therapy, seeking answers in social organization for the pathologies that he witnessed in the clinic.

Among the ill character types, one most threatened society: “mass man,” whose character was the basis, he argued, of fascism. The fascist possessed “a sado-masochistic character” and, fearing his own political freedom—and pleasure—turned to dictatorial tyrants. The United States, he asserted, was not far behind Nazi Germany. The root of Americans’ self-denial lay in their capitalist society’s rejection of the true concept of human nature. Reich argued that sexual repression, formerly viewed as essential to all civilization, creates and exacerbates the very neuroses Freud had claimed to ameliorate; indeed, he claimed, the greatest human sickness is morality.

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10. “Morals: The Second Sexual Revolution,” *Time*, January 24, 1964.



Reich and the Freudian revisionists argued that there were “laws of nature” and a natural right that could be discovered by human reason. A return to the study of this nature could reveal how to ameliorate human problems. Rejecting “the relativistic view,” revisionist Erich Fromm wrote: “It is the task of the ‘science of man’ to arrive eventually at a correct description of what deserves to be called human nature.”<sup>11</sup>

Beginning from the position that what is pleasing is natural while self-denial is educated by convention, Reich posited an innate biological growth in humans that had been repressed for political purposes. The naturally pleasing included food, drink, warmth, sex, and the seed of science—curiosity, or pleasure in knowing. Upon these basic needs, various higher activities naturally developed; technology, for one, develops in the service of these needs.

The pleasurable life was incompatible with the moral, which was “antithetical to nature.”<sup>12</sup> It was free from pangs of duty, which were internalized in the human conscience and in a sense of honor. In his writings, Reich provides an intense criticism of what he calls “compulsive morality” and the religions used by political regimes to inculcate it. For Reich, sadism—which included aggression focused back upon oneself or upon others—unfortunately had been the underpinning of all human relationships since the beginning of organized political societies.

The very habits of civilized males, who defer chivalrously to women, he regarded as inseparable from their unconscious belief that women are inferior. Hence, the moment when men feel they have acted most honorably is precisely when they have displayed their domineering desire and carved out a realm of the “masculine.” Reich realized that chivalry was not conscious; it was a habit educated first in the differentiation of the sexes—a moral distinction inculcated by the patriarchal family and supported by a political culture in which men and women are given sexual roles. A scientific psychology, he believed, would make patients conscious of the non-sense of morality and its internalized guilt.

But Reich found in his private practice that revealing to patients the logical and historical origins of their guilt did not work. Freud, he concluded, had falsely divided words and deeds: Patients in the clinic reflected upon their moral inhibitions without discarding their reserved habits. Reich believed that they used logic, words detached from emotion, as a defense mechanism for their still-ingrained morality. The patient might talk freely about sex and morality as if he possessed no guilt or shame, but in his physical behavior, he retained a “character armor” of the same moral inhibitions.<sup>13</sup> The disease of morality, like a virus, lay tucked away, obscured by philosophic jargon.

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Because morality was embedded in habit, it would have to be removed by new habits. Hence, Reich constructed a revolutionary private therapy that focused on both acknowledging and acting out psychic tensions to remove, layer by layer, the armor of guilt and shame that had been established as part of the moral education. Reich focused on sex because it was the core of the entire character structure. When the process was completed, the successful patient would be “genitally potent,” meaning spontaneous and without inhibitions.

Reich was the first to combine Freud and Marx in a new revolutionary dialectic. He believed that conventional morality, as a “plague,” had become so dangerous politically in fascism and state capitalism that it threatened human existence. To protect those living the healthy pleasurable existence and to preserve humanity from the sadism of morality, he constructed a utopian political program called “natural work democracy” to attack morality at its core.<sup>14</sup> In

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11. Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1955), p. 21.

12. Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution: Toward a Self-Governing Character Structure* (New York: Pocket Books, 1975), p. 28.

13. Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, pp. 144, 170–171.

14. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, tr. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Simon and Schuster/Touchstone, 1970), p. 360.

this utopia, the patriarchal family, which represses sexuality, is replaced by the “natural family,” which liberates its members from sexual constraints and cultivates that which is pleasurable.<sup>15</sup>

These sexually liberated citizens would demand new “genital rights,” among which were the abolition of laws against abortion and homosexuality, the reform of marriage and divorce laws, free birth control advice and contraception, and the abolition of laws preventing sex education.<sup>16</sup>

To this Reich added other teachings, such as instruction in masturbation, the right to “extramarital sexual intercourse,” and the “right of the unmarried woman to have a partner.”<sup>17</sup> Reich mocked the hypocritical liberal who advocated sexual education for his daughter yet frowned on her sexual pursuits. He explained:

[T]he girl does not merely need to be free genitally; she also needs privacy, a means of contraception, a sexually potent friend who is capable of love..., understanding parents, and a sex-affirmative social atmosphere—all the more so if her financial means of breaking through the social barriers against adolescent sexual activity are minimal.<sup>18</sup>

The family, however, he viewed as the destructive institutional tool of a broader social and sadistic morality: the morality of capitalism. To destroy capitalism, Reich posited that the old socialists’ logical arguments about economic exploitation were insufficient; one must destroy the moral habits upon which capitalism is founded, such as self-restraint, industry, frugality, and punctuality. Hence the Reichian dialectic: Sexual repression was intertwined with economic exploitation, and sexual liberation would destroy the basis for capitalism.

The sexually liberated individual would never again work a demeaning job that bored him; he would seek the equivalent of the good orgasm in all aspects of life—for example, by creativity in labor. He would demand the redistributive goods that his

conscience formerly prohibited him from demanding. Reich wrote of his patients:

Quite spontaneously, patients began to feel the moralistic attitudes of the environment as something alien and peculiar.... Their attitude toward their work changed. If, until then, they had worked mechanically...now they became discriminating [and] were stirred by a need to engage in some practical work in which they could take a personal interest. If the work which they performed was such that it was capable of absorbing their interests, they blossomed. If however, their work was of a mechanical nature as, for example, that of an office employee, businessman, or middle attorney, then it became an almost intolerable burden. In other cases, there was a complete breakdown in work when the patient became capable of genital gratification.... It turned out [they] were always patients who had, until then, performed their work on the basis of a compulsive sense of duty, at the expense of the inner desires they had repudiated.<sup>19</sup>

Reich did not believe that there could be an end to all repression, but he did believe that humans could eliminate much of it. Once human beings were freed from toil and able to indulge in what other Freudian revisionists called “polymorphous perversity”—a life of celebrating pleasure in all of its forms—they would refuse to return to the drudgery of their old jobs. They would demand the means to self-fulfillment as a privilege of citizenship.

**Herbert Marcuse, the Humanists, and the 1960s Counterculture.** Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), a member of the Freudo-Marxist Frankfurt School and professor of political philosophy at Columbia, Harvard, Brandeis, and the University of California San Diego, renewed the question of eliminating repression in *Eros and Civilization* (1955). He applied his theory to politics in a trenchant critique of capitalist society entitled *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), which sold over 300,000 copies—a best-seller

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15. Reich, *The Sexual Revolution*, p. xix.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. xi, 36, 251–253.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

19. Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, p. 175–176.

by academic standards. Journalists called him the “Father of the New Left” because of his immense popularity among student radicals.

Marcuse wrote a cursory critique of Reich, but a careful study reveals considerable similarity between the two. A soft-spoken philosopher and émigré from Nazi Germany, Marcuse rejected Freud’s and what he considered the whole of Western philosophy’s characterization of reason as something that “subdues the instincts.”<sup>20</sup> This, he thought, was the moralistic view of reason as the inhibitor of desire, which consequently divides the human person against itself. Rather, Marcuse argued that the philosophic life, or Reason properly speaking, was itself a life of desire. This life of Eros harmonized and unified the soul and therefore constituted the proper end of man. In Marcuse’s own words, “the things of nature become free to be what they are. But to be what they are they depend on the erotic attitude: they receive their *telos* only in it.”<sup>21</sup>

Marcuse heralded a new society to accompany his philosophic teaching. Historically, repression was needed because man faced necessity; political regimes, including the modern capitalist society, had been constructed upon moral teachings that erected a severe conscience: the self-denial required for industrial production. But now these virtues, which had been inculcated to solve the economic problem, were no longer necessary; indeed, he claimed that they intensified human aggression and thereby posed a threat to society.

Marcuse sought a progressive revolution to end what he called “surplus repression” and bring about the “aesthetic state”—something akin to European socialism.<sup>22</sup> “Polymorphous sexuality” would be liberated at the expense of the capitalist work ethic. The workday would be dramatically shortened, and individuals would choose their work, viewing it more as play. Modern man would accept a lower standard of living in return for the pleasures of instinctual gratification. He would fully detach sex from monogamy

and reproduction and completely accept what he formerly viewed as sexual perversion.

In the progressive society, the “sadism” of traditional morality would be viewed as a perversion of human nature. Marcuse claimed that sadism could be removed in the fully erotic person: “Being is experienced as gratification, which unites man and nature so that the fulfillment of man is at the same time the fulfillment, without violence, of nature.”<sup>23</sup> The human body in its entirety—indeed, the whole human personality—would be viewed as an instrument of desire and pleasure.

Marcuse was not alone; Reich’s revolt was followed by other former psychoanalysts, who called themselves Humanists. One of their leading lights was Abraham Maslow, who advocated a return to a study of what was right by nature: “It is possible to study this inner nature scientifically and to discover what it is like—not invent—discover.”<sup>24</sup>

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Maslow argued that a close study of natural human development could be the basis for an ethical psychology; hence, it was the nature of an individual, not moral principles, that set the parameters for self-actualization. “Intrinsic guilt,” he wrote, “is the betrayal of one’s own inner nature or self, a turning off the path to self-actualization.”<sup>25</sup> Self-actualization includes the achievement of peak experiences, which should be fostered and not limited by society. Although Maslow came to loathe what he called the “cultural & ethical relativism” of the 1960s, it was he who had written that sex was

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20. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), p. 126.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

24. Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1968), p. 3.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 194.



for most people “one of the easiest ways of getting peak experiences.”<sup>26</sup> While liberals defended the old morality as socially necessary, the Humanists argued that it now posed too great a danger to mankind because of the new technologies of destruction: Historically, those who secretly loathed human nature had turned to political-religious crusades to change it. Hence, the Humanists encouraged a political program to overturn the proposed institutions of repression: the nuclear family and conventional sexual mores.

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They espoused socialism, the ideal regime for the pleasurable existence as it provides material goods—food, clothing, and shelter—and also the conditions for higher pleasures. New positive, political rights would be logically grounded in a new progressive framework that would give individuals the choices that allow them to actualize themselves within the realm of their possibilities so as to allow each individual to flower to his unique potential. This they called authenticity.

There are limits to these choices; even the Humanists regarded traditional sadism as unnatural and believed that violent offenders must be incarcerated. On the other hand, the sadism of asceticism must be removed by public education and government-subsidized therapy. The most common form of sadism is the construction of the idea of two distinct genders, a social imposition that limits personal growth by confining it within traditional gender roles. A healthy society, said the Humanists, would

then recognize the many unique manifestations of erotic desire and grant sexual rights to its citizens to explore and express their discovered gender identities.

Humanism is imitated by a vulgar version: the teaching of self-creation that often results in various eccentricities, sexual promiscuity, and cultivated absurd behaviors. Still, having to choose between vulgar systems, the Humanists favored those over the liberals’ repression. Taking sides against the middle class in the culture wars of the 1950s, psychologists wrote popular books on sex to attack the old morality.

Leading psychologists and countercultural icons called American culture fascist, or sexually repressive, and Reich’s sexual liberation became the measure of the healthy society. Ginsberg and Kerouac, looking for a more authentic existence, turned away from American middle-class conformity to what they claimed was the healthier African American culture. The Beats imitated jazz—the very word slang for sex—in a new, spontaneous lifestyle and a new kind of writing. Kerouac, who featured Reich in *On the Road*, writes, “At lilac evening I walked... wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.”<sup>27</sup> Ginsberg eulogized in *Howl*: “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix.”<sup>28</sup> In the growing counterculture, minority cultures were said to be superior precisely because, in contrast to white American culture, they celebrated “authentic” personalities.

In the 1960s, the counterculture went mainstream. Self-acceptance was embodied in songs and slogans like “Be True to Yourself” or “Follow Your Heart.” One could be false to oneself, or inauthentic, only if he desired what others told him he ought to desire. Hugh Hefner published the “Playboy Philosophy,” urging the liberation of sexual desire without guilt, and had his own variety/talk show featuring American celebrities. Helen

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26. Abraham H. Maslow, *The Journals of A. H. Maslow* (Monterey, Cal.: Brooks/Cole, 1979), p. 949; *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin, 1972), p. 175.

27. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Penguin, 1976), pp. 179–180.

28. Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2001), p. 9.

Gurley Brown, in the bestseller *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962), rejected the idea of guilt for premarital sex.

College students would capture this new aesthetic of freedom in pithy slogans: “Make Love, not War”; “If it feels good, do it”; “Go With the Flow.” Reich’s influence on the New Left in West Germany was unparalleled. Protesting students scrawled slogans in graffiti: “Read Wilhelm Reich and act accordingly.”<sup>29</sup> In 1968 in Paris, student demonstrators threw copies of Reich’s books at police as the agents of sexual repression.

### The Sociological Critique of Liberalism

Besides the psychological and psychiatric source in the sexual revolution, the second pillar of neo-progressivism—the politics of race, class, and gender—can be traced to the teachings of sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) on personal and cultural politics. While these movements have led to bigger, more intrusive government centralization, their original purpose was in fact to decentralize the American administrative state and state capitalism by fragmenting the American identity and carving it up into competing groups.

Interestingly, the new sociology approached political questions from a perspective opposite to psychology. While it too recognized a natural individual spontaneity, it ultimately stressed that human biological desires were largely shaped by society; spontaneity could never grow into a rational freedom unless one possessed choices within the social structure. Mills, asking which social organization best allowed individuals to thrive, was most concerned about the diminishing freedom under 1950s state capitalism. Coining the term “New Left,” he defined for future radicals an agenda in opposition to liberalism.

Mills, like Reich, was idiosyncratic, combining physical toughness with mental toughness. As a boy, his family was constantly on the move, and he made few close friends. He left Texas A&M University after his first year (it is rumored he was expelled

after a fistfight). Four years later, he graduated from the University of Texas at Austin, where he excelled as an undergraduate, publishing articles in top sociological journals.

As a professor at Columbia University, Mills remained an outsider. He dressed in flannel shirts like one of the Beats, rode a motorcycle, and attacked snooty sociologists for their convoluted theories, which were written in pseudo-scientific gobbledygook so as to confuse the average reader. Scorning the limp, academic niche writers, he used logical rigor to penetrate big topics in stirring books. His writing, said the 1960s radicals, was manly and assertive, unlike the passivity of their well-adjusted white-collar fathers.

Mills’s career centered around a sociological study and critique of American liberalism, which he believed had derailed from its original goal of achieving reason and freedom. “For in our time,” he wrote, “these two values, reason and freedom, are in obvious yet subtle peril.”<sup>30</sup>

The “central goal of Western humanism,” wrote Mills, was “the audacious control by reason of man’s fate.”<sup>31</sup> Liberals had assumed that this goal could be accomplished by efficient bureaucracies, but the new scientific management had actually stunted the individual’s ability to reason and master his own fate. The attainment of true freedom, wrote Mills, here echoing earlier Progressives like John Dewey, would require a radical social reconstruction:

“The kingdom of freedom” of which Marx and the left in general have dreamed involves the mastering of one’s fate. A free society entails the social possibility and the psychological capacity of men to make rational political choices. The sociological theory of character development conceives of man as capable of making such choices only under favorable institutional conditions. It thus leads to an emphasis upon the necessity of changing institutions in order to enlarge man’s capacity to live freely.<sup>32</sup>

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29. Philipp Gassert and Alan E. Steinweis, eds., *Coping With the Nazi Past: West German Debates on Nazism and Generational Conflict, 1955–1975* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), p. 165.

30. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 168.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

32. C. Wright Mills and Patricia Salter, “The Barricade and the Bedroom,” *Politics*, October 1945, p. 315.

This road to freedom required a rejection of the old liberalism. A new social philosophy must be grounded, Mills wrote, “on the assumption that the liberal ethos, as developed in the first two decades of this century by such men as Beard, Dewey, Holmes, is now often irrelevant, and that the Marxian view, popular in the American ’thirties, is now often inadequate” because “they do not enable us to understand what is essential to our time.”<sup>33</sup>

Mills provided a sociological critique of the West. He argued that its theories of economic and intellectual freedom—liberalism and socialism—were passing phases. To usher in a new post-modern epoch, Mills sought to expose the myths of liberalism, replace them with new conceptions of “Reason and Freedom,” and organize a New Left capable of overthrowing state capitalism. Mills led the charge in a sociological assault on American society.

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**To usher in a new post-modern epoch, C. Wright Mills sought to expose the myths of liberalism, replace them with new conceptions of “Reason and Freedom,” and organize a New Left capable of overthrowing state capitalism. Mills led the charge in a sociological assault on American society.**

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The first myth that Mills attacked was that of middle-class morality. Rugged individualism and the entrepreneurial spirit were “illusions” perpetuated by the state but practiced only by an insignificant class of small businessmen. The old virtues had been replaced by “scientism,” which applied the techniques of control from the physical sciences to human beings. In truth, liberals hated individuality and innovation; what they really loved, the unspoken morality of

corporate cubicles, was efficiency: the stuffy air of the boardroom, long-winded meetings, and being nice.

Paul Goodman famously critiqued this “efficiency.” The new service jobs in modern society held no intrinsic importance: They were useless, and capitalistic society was absurd because it promoted uselessness. Young Americans, he claimed, knew the difference between useful work, which could be justified as life-important, and the efficient production of baubles and hamburgers for consumption.

Mills found the morality of efficiency to be even more insidious. He argued that white-collar work was dehumanizing: Workers became “cheerful robots” who only “pretend[ed] interest” in their own work.<sup>34</sup> They were forced to affect, in insincere smiles, that they liked their customers. In the “personality market,” their personalities were mechanized and their spontaneity destroyed.

The nuclear family, wrote Mills and other sociologists such as David Riesman and William H. Whyte, was the instrument of conformity. Riesman wrote of the “despotic walls of the patriarchal family.”<sup>35</sup> The father, the “organization man” who donned a “gray flannel suit,” was stripped of seriousness and hence of authority and virility as well. As presented in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), which starred James Dean, domineering neurotic mothers had taken over, depriving young males of their rite of passage, leaving them confused and turning them to delinquency to prove their manhood.

The capitalistic disruption of the family also led to a denial of feminine sexuality. The frigid mother, detached from the unmanly role of her husband, fled to exotic sexual escapades or alcohol to find the excitement lacking at home. Housewives were stunted humans—Mills called them “darling little slaves”—confined to the prisons of suburban homes.<sup>36</sup> Social life was shaped by the children in a “filiarchy”—or a rule by children—that directed all aspects of life.<sup>37</sup> Going farther, Goodman called suburbanites the “new proletariat,” the servile child-bearers for the state.<sup>38</sup>

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33. C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. xx.

34. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, p. 171.

35. David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, abr. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 254.

36. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, p. 10.

37. William H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 378.

38. Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 118.

Sociologists generally reserved special hatred for the new suburbs, the “apotheosis of pragmatism,” which molded Americans into conformity.<sup>39</sup> Extensions of corporate growth, the suburbs reproduce like a polyp, lumping together large numbers of rootless, interchangeable strangers without any higher collective goal than moneymaking.

In his bestseller *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), David Riesman wrote that suburbanites, having lost their social institutions, lose on the one hand the necessary socialization for an authoritative sense of self required to resist conformity and, on the other, the traditions against which an autonomous individual derives a sense of purpose.<sup>40</sup> Desperate for community and seeking meaningful ties, the residents grow shallow roots—bridge clubs, canasta, and bowling leagues—that are just enough for the bare minimum of communal life. There is much social activity but little real civic or political activity. Friends are chosen for convenience, and new associations, led by tiny, unspectacular leaders, produce brief, ephemeral traditions. Surrendering to the fleeting opinion of the group, the residents place a premium on “adjustment”; indeed, the best-adjusted are the ones who are constantly adjusting.

Examining the “character structure” of these suburbanites, Riesman announced the decline of the “inner-directed personality,” which follows the demands of conscience, and the rise of the “other-directed personality,” which is anxious to receive the approval of others. Toleration of others becomes the premiere social virtue: Residents are intolerant of those who are not tolerant. But such toleration produces greater conformity because it levels all opinions, leaving nothing sacred.

Mills also attacked the liberal myth of “scientific” rationalization: that greater bureaucracy leads to more rational outcomes; rather, it led to chaotic, irrational policies, such as Mutually Assured Destruction. While the size of bureaucracies increases, it does not correlate to more rational policies or freer individuals. Lost in a rat maze of red tape, citizens take on the superstitions of medieval peasants:

Science, it turns out, is not a technological Second Coming. Universal education may lead to technological idiocy and nationalist provinciality, rather than to the informed and independent intelligence. Rationally organized social arrangements are not necessarily a means of increased freedom—for the individual or for the society. In fact, often they are a means of tyranny and manipulation, a means of expropriating the very chance to reason, the very capacity to act as a free man.<sup>41</sup>

Such tyranny begat tyranny. The abstracted world in which bureaucrats lived, functioned, and related made them capable of the greatest atrocities. American foreign policy only spread the slavery of state capitalism; it exhibited an aggressive expansion akin to other world empires. In the name of anti-Communism, America tyrannized over smaller countries, designating them the “Third World,” and in the name of liberating them exploited their natural resources.

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But the greatest myth of all, wrote Mills, was the myth of liberal democracy and pluralism. Liberals argued that America’s pluralist politics balanced interests, safeguarding its people from authoritarian rule, but Mills found only a hierarchical “Power Elite” that manipulated the public through media to maintain the status quo.<sup>42</sup> It commanded the resources of vast, impersonal bureaucratic organizations and tyrannized over its subjects’ lives from afar. It staffed a convoluted bureaucracy with a priesthood of experts, who dissemble the workings of government. It stripped citizens of a sense of power and made of democracy an empty formality: Liberals and conservatives “are now parts of one

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39. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 295.

40. Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, pp. 256, 239, 259.

41. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, p. 168.

42. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 3–4, 311–315.

and the same official line.”<sup>43</sup> Through personality adjustment, it herded children into public education to deprive them of charisma, not to cultivate it. It prevented opposition by monopolizing its subjects’ social and private roles, predicting the formation of new power groups, fragmenting their power bases, and co-opting their identities. It used ever more sophisticated and technological methods of control to atomize and alienate its subjects.

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### Mills looked for new authoritative groups that could revolt against the Power Elite and renew the political process, as the existing groups were part of the corrupt system.

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There was little difference, in Mills’s estimation, between the rule of the Power Elite in the United States and the Soviet Union.

**The Fragmentation of America.** To defeat this tyranny and create a truly free society of informed, rational participants, Mills called for a new political philosophy: In what he called the “Sociological Imagination,” social scientists would lay aside their neutrality and engage in public discourse, as well as criticism, over political issues.<sup>44</sup> Because society is maintained by authority—or the recognition of commonly held values—the new sociologist must create theories that question and weaken the power structure. He must illuminate and solve, not ignore, social problems. Instead of a value neutrality, he helps to create the conditions for a free society.

Mills became this advisor to the political movement that he named the New Left. He supplied the information to reinvigorate radical groups, which would come not from the Power Elite, but from the democratic process itself.

For the democratic process to work, he said, there must be a return to actual, not formal, democracy. Actual democracy requires the formation of new groups or “publics,” each invigorated by belief in its own value system and sustained by its own symbols

of authority. Mills looked for new authoritative groups that could revolt against the Power Elite and renew the political process, as the existing groups were part of the corrupt system.

The Old Left, consumed with stale, Marxist philosophy, was demoralized and no longer radical; blue-collar workers had become the tools of government-sponsored unions. Even the word *proletariat*, seldom used by 1950s socialists, no longer meant solidarity. Liberal class consciousness, especially in relation to minority groups, had become a matter of charity.

Mills next turned to the growing class of white-collar workers for a revolutionary movement, but he found that they were unorganized, dependent upon large bureaucracies, and lacking in class consciousness. Mills needed a new proletariat:

[W]ho is it that is getting fed up? Who is it that is getting disgusted with what Marx called “all the old crap”? Who is it that is thinking and acting in radical ways? All over the world—in the bloc, outside the bloc, and in between—the answer is the same: It is the young intelligentsia.<sup>45</sup>

The young intelligentsia, to create new authoritative communities, must resurrect utopianism. Utopianism, or the creation of the ideal human community in theory, must provide a standard for criticism of the existing one. Hence the neo-progressives’ constant reference, even today, to “community.”

Mills argued that a return to community was necessary to revitalize democracy. The New Left would decentralize, or fragment, the American Establishment into competing values as opposed to interests. Participatory democracy would occur in new communities along two different lines: personal politics and cultural politics.

Personal politics meant a politics that appealed to meaningful personal traits in order to create a group loyalty that would rival loyalty to the old unifying symbols of Americanism. Feminists as a political group, for example, could command the loyalty of individual members by appealing to their individual concerns over reproduction, child care, and career

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43. C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War Three* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1960), p. 183.

44. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, p. 113.

45. C. Wright Mills, “Letter to the New Left,” *New Left Review*, No. 5 (September–October 1960).



opportunities in order to redefine the traditionally feminine roles of wife and mother. Cultural politics, or multiculturalism, would fragment the American public along ethnic lines. The ultimate goal, wrote Mills, was that these groups take over the technologies of state capitalism and wield them for human ends.

The resolution between these two views, one which argued that government remove itself from personal questions and one that wished to fragment American society into conflicting moral views, was the politics of civil liberties, particularly sexual expression, combined with the individual's civil rights as a member of a protected "insular minority": the politics of race, class, and gender.

### The Politics of the New Left

Reich's and Mills's ideas, in various forms, dominated the cultural and political conversation for the next half-century and still dominate today. They took root politically in the New Left, a movement named by Mills. Todd Gitlin, president of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) from 1963 to 1964 and today a professor of sociology at Columbia, calls Mills "the most inspiring sociologist of the second half of the twentieth century" and "a guiding knight of radicalism."<sup>46</sup>

Tom Hayden, Gitlin's predecessor as SDS president, wrote his master's thesis on Mills, romantically entitled *Radical Nomad*. Imitating Mills, Hayden wrote "A Letter to the New (Young) Left" with the goal of creating a radical movement among college students. Hayden's 1962 Port Huron Statement called for a return to humanist values; the goal, Mills's conception of freedom, could be achieved through Mills's idea of a politicization of the personal and cultural. With a sense of urgency, Hayden called for a "reflective working out of a politics anew" and listed the "modern problems": nuclear war, racism, meaningless work, nationalism, American affluence set against world hunger, overpopulation against limited world resources,

and government manipulation against "participative" democracy.<sup>47</sup>

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The Great Society's expansion of government programs in the style of the New Deal was hardly a common ground between liberals and radicals. Rather, it was the focal point of a liberal-radical battle over ideals. It was precisely the methods—a redistributive scheme that entrenched "the Corporate State"—that the radicals attacked.<sup>48</sup> Despite President Lyndon B. Johnson's pandering, the radicals rejected the Great Society as a duplicitous scheme concocted both to fill the meaningless void of the Affluent Society and to secure the reins of corporate power. The domestic policy programs, they claimed, were essentially a form of graft. Funding for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Housing Act, and the Job Corps seldom went to the poor, and when it did, it was not, as Johnson claimed, a "hand-up," but a "hand-out."<sup>49</sup>

Battling the liberals, radicals within the Great Society programs tried to divert their funding to rally and empower new dissident groups in society: to mobilize the poor and ethnic minorities for a new radical politics. Projects included the training of 20 activists by community organizer Saul Alinsky, who promised to go to the poor and "rub raw the sores of discontent," and LeRoi Jones's Black Arts Theater, which produced Marxist, black nationalist dramas on the streets of Harlem. Jones wrote, "The Black Artist's role is to engage in the destruction of America as he knows it. His role is to report and reflect so precisely the nature of the society... [that] white men [will] tremble, curse, and go mad,

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46. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, p. 229.

47. Tom Hayden, "Introduction: Agenda for a Generation," in Port Huron Statement, 1st Draft, 1962, pp. 1-2, <http://www.sds-1960s.org/PortHuronStatement-draft.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2013).

48. Hayden preferred this term to "power elite" as "more accurate because of its focus on the joined political and economic institutions." See Tom Hayden, *Radical Nomad: C. Wright Mills and His Times* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), p. 135.

49. Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2009), pp. 217ff.

because they will be drenched in the filth of their evil.”<sup>50</sup> Revolution was the aim: In one of his plays, a parody of the radio-TV *Jack Benny Program*, Benny’s black valet, Rochester, robs and conquers his white oppressors.

Little wonder, then, that when James Farmer, who launched the 1961 Freedom Rides, proposed an adult literacy program, President Johnson personally axed it and demanded an end to “kooks and sociologists” in the Office of Economic Opportunity.<sup>51</sup>

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### **[R]adicals within the Great Society programs tried to divert their funding to rally and empower new dissident groups in society: to mobilize the poor and ethnic minorities for a new radical politics.**

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Radicals rejected the Great Society because they rejected its conception of greatness. In his denunciation of the Great Society, Marcuse claimed it was a question of conflicting utopias: the Great Society’s capitalist utopia of ever-increasing expansion in production and technology or the Socialist Society of individuals, freed from a lifestyle of consumption, who choose their own form of labor. The Socialist Society adopts a “new consciousness,” while citizens of the Great Society mistakenly believe that they are free.<sup>52</sup> The policies of the Great Society and the freedom that Americans fought to spread around the globe were, in reality, slavery.

The student radicals saw in the Vietnam War proof that the fight against liberalism was a matter of principle, not policy. The war, writes Gitlin, “was symptomatic of a rotten system or even an irredeemably monstrous civilization.”<sup>53</sup> The American system was poisoned from the roots. Vietnam was a “racist war” waged by “a technologically superior, white-led juggernaut against a largely peasant Asian society.” And it was not just a foreign war; America’s

tyranny abroad mirrored its tyranny at home. It was, in Gitlin’s words, a “seamless economic and cultural system characterized by white supremacy, murderous technology, and irresponsible central power devoid of justice.” Heroic revolutionaries were needed to oppose this juggernaut, and the formation of Mills’s revolutionary publics fit well into a Marxist framework.

The concept of a proletariat—an exploited or repressed group—proved malleable. The revolution would be waged by a new proletariat, one with different grievances. According to Marcuse, “This revolution would find its impetus and origins not so much in economic misery, but in revolt against imposed needs and pleasures, revolt against the misery and the insanity of the affluent society.” In a different kind of cultural revolution, the New Left would mobilize “marginal groups” that had not been politicized before.<sup>54</sup>

By 1965, one year into the Great Society, a Freudo-Marxist framework was firmly established. Multiculturalism, feminism, and the student rights movements all placed themselves within the context of a broader crusade for liberation from Western capitalism’s oppression and repression.

The vanguard against capitalist expansion was Third World peoples, as yet uncorrupted by liberalism. Mills and Marcuse looked to Cuba for radical leadership to provide a third way toward freedom. Student radicals flew to Havana, where they met with Communist leaders who confirmed their heady ideas that they were the rebel leaders in an American civil war. SDS required its leadership to read Franz Fanon, a psychiatrist turned Algerian revolutionary, whose book *The Wretched of the Earth* was popular among student radicals. French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre wrote a preface to the 1964 English edition, in which he denounced Western oppression and proclaimed Third World superiority. Fanon’s book, similar to Sartre’s own existential psychoanalysis, posits a psychology of colonialism in which the oppressed internalize the symbols of their oppressors. He prescribes revolting against Europe and the

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50. Leroi Jones, in “The Task of the Negro Writer as Artist: A Symposium,” *Negro Digest*, Vol. 14, No. 6 (April 1965), p. 65.

51. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, pp. 252, 270.

52. Herbert Marcuse, *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Douglas Kellner, 5 vols. (New York: Routledge, 1998–2004), Vol. III, p.77.

53. Todd Gitlin, “Foreword,” in Tom Wells, *The War Within: America’s Battle over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1994), p. xvii.

54. Marcuse, *Collected Papers*, Vol. III, p.188.

West and implementing a new third way of achieving the humanist ideals that Europeans had failed to achieve. Europeans, in turn, must look to the Third World for their own salvation.

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In America, Fanon's colonial theory complemented Malcolm X's black nationalism, which viewed blacks as a people colonized by imperialist Americans. Angered by the influence of whites within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), black power advocates expelled them in 1965–1966. A 1967 Chicago SNCC leaflet stated, "We have to all learn to become leaders for ourselves and remove all white values from our minds.... We must fill ourselves with hate for all white things."<sup>55</sup>

The Black Panthers turned to "revolutionary nationalism" to reinvigorate this sense of community. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton argued that blacks must reject their American identity and "reassert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture; to create their own sense of community and togetherness."<sup>56</sup> Following protests by student radicals, San Francisco State opened up the first Black Studies Department in 1968.

White students who traveled south to work in the civil rights movement both condemned their own culture and in their crusade identified with the

oppressed. They admired the heroism and envied the sense of purpose that they encountered.

Mario Savio, who had worked in SNCC's Freedom Summer weeks before, started the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964 when campus police attempted to arrest an activist for setting up a display table. The state-funded universities, Savio concluded, were part of the same oppressive system that controlled the South. The universities of the liberal state were part of a manipulative machine, devoid of higher purpose and focused on power. Savio lashed out in his Sproul Hall address: "There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that...you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels... upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop!"<sup>57</sup>

When SDS president Paul Potter, in a 1965 speech to 25,000 onlookers, exhorted his listeners to "name the system," students knew it to be a thinly veiled reference to capitalism.<sup>58</sup> The next SDS president, Carl Oglesby, called it "corporate liberalism." Tom Hayden urged the powerless students in the North to take inspiration from the powerless blacks who fought segregation in the South. The concern of the university, he wrote, should not be "passing along the morality of the middle class, nor the morality of the white man, nor even the morality of this pot-pourri we call 'Western society.'"<sup>59</sup>

Students claimed that they were an oppressed and repressed minority, one that had a key role to play in the revolution. One SDS member's speech, "Toward a Student Syndicalist Movement," links in common victimization college students with the bombed villages in Vietnam; another member gave a speech calling on white-collar workers, who were in reality repressed slaves, part of "the new working class," to reject their white chauvinism and join

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55. Chicago Office of SNCC, "We Must Fill Ourselves With Hate for all Things White," in *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*, ed. August Meier, Elliott Rudwick, and Francis L. Broderick (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1971), p. 487.

56. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 37.

57. Hal Draper, *Berkeley: The New Student Revolt* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 98.

58. Paul Potter, "Naming the System," speech at march on Washington to end the war in Vietnam, April 17, 1965, Students for a Democratic Society Document Library, [http://www.antiauthoritarian.net/sds\\_wuo/sds\\_documents/paul\\_potter.html](http://www.antiauthoritarian.net/sds_wuo/sds_documents/paul_potter.html) (accessed April 26, 2013).

59. Tom Hayden, "Student Social Action: From Liberation to Community," in *The New Student Left*, ed. Michael Cohen and Dennis Hale (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 281.

Third World revolutionaries against Western capitalist oppression.<sup>60</sup>

**Sexual Politics.** Radical feminism, according to Sarah Evans, a student radical, one of the first historians of the movement, and today a professor at the University of Minnesota, began as a form of Mills's personal politics that proceeded from the civil rights movement. Female civil rights workers associated Southern segregation between the races with fears of miscegenation. Hence, racism did not stand alone; it protected the entire Southern patriarchal family and culture, in which women played a traditional role. Student women who were crusading for equal rights at first accepted traditional roles in the movement—cleaning and secretarial work.

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## An early feminist manifesto demanded state provision of birth control, abortion, and free child care.

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What was called “radical feminism” began as a revolt against male chauvinism within the civil rights movement. A 1964 SNCC paper noted that “this is no more a man’s world than it is a white world.” The following year, Casey Hayden and Mary King equated the “racial caste system” with “the sexual caste system.”<sup>61</sup> Feminist activists placed this oppression within a Marxist framework, applying colonial theory: “As we analyze the position of women in capitalist society and especially in the United States we find that women are in a colonial relationship to men and we recognize ourselves as part of the Third World.”<sup>62</sup>

In their fight for independence, women in all classes could find common interests and create new symbols of unity more powerful than those of American liberalism, especially the “family unit

[that] perpetuates the traditional role of women and the autocratic and paternalistic role of men.” With the creation of an identity group, feminists could fracture American society, entrench a new political position, and demand new rights. An early feminist manifesto demanded state provision of birth control, abortion, and free child care.<sup>63</sup>

Evans recalls that in 1967, she witnessed the “creation of a new, radical feminist movement.”<sup>64</sup> In 1969, along with hundreds of other women all over the country, she entered graduate school “determined to study women’s history.” Women’s studies courses were first offered in 1969; degrees followed in 1970.

Feminism grew stronger as a social movement during the 1970s, expanding through “consciousness-raising” groups. Feminists won new political rights, including:

- The 1964 Civil Rights Act, which bars discrimination in hiring on the basis of sex;
- Title X of the Public Health Service Act (1970), which provides access to contraceptive services;
- Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, which bars discrimination on the basis of sex in “any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” and that requires federal funds be allocated equally to male and female collegiate programs; and
- The 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which barred discrimination on the basis of “pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.”

Women as a civil rights group received heightened scrutiny protection in *Craig v. Boren* (1976). The ACLU lawyer in that case, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, who now sits on the Supreme Court of the United States, recently commented that feminism as a movement

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60. Carl Davidson, “Toward a Student Syndicalist Movement, or University Reform Revisited,” position paper delivered at SDS convention, August 1966, Students for a Democratic Society Document Library, [http://www.antiauthoritarian.net/sds\\_wuo/sds\\_documents/student\\_syndicalism.html](http://www.antiauthoritarian.net/sds_wuo/sds_documents/student_syndicalism.html) (accessed April 26, 2013); Gregory Calvert, “In White America: Liberal Conscience vs. Radical Consciousness,” speech delivered at SDS Princeton Conference, February 1967, , <http://www.sds-1960s.org/Calvert-WhiteAmerica.pdf> (accessed April 26, 2013).

61. “SNCC Position Paper (1964),” in Sarah Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 234; Casey Hayden and Mary King, “Sex and Caste,” in Evans, *Personal Politics*, pp. 235–236.

62. “Liberation of Women,” *New Left Notes*, July 10, 1967, in Evans, *Personal Politics*, p. 240.

63. Ibid.

64. Evans, *Personal Politics*, p. ix.

would not be over until the Supreme Court had nine female justices.<sup>65</sup>

The feminist movement's concept of gender went hand in hand with the sexual revolution, which Marcuse said was essential for a political revolution: "The New Left should develop the political implications of the moral and sexual rebellion of the youth... [W]e should try to transform the sexual and moral rebellion into a political movement."<sup>66</sup> Because, as some noted, feminism crusades to end the constraints of "femaleness," it advocates one's right to claim any gender without discrimination.

While numerous works in the 1960s had sensationalized the "homosexual underworld," Gore Vidal's works gave it a human face. In *The City and the Pillar* (1948), he wished to show the "'naturalness' of homosexual relations, as well as [make] the point that there is of course no such thing as a homosexual.... [T]he word is an adjective describing a sexual action, not a noun describing a recognizable type. All human beings are bisexual."<sup>67</sup>

The 1969 Stonewall Riots, in which homosexuals fought New York City police, is frequently labeled the beginning of the gay rights movement. It was commemorated the following year in the first gay pride marches in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. In 1969, Paul Goodman wrote "The Politics of Being Queer," which identified homosexuals as another civil rights group that is politically repressed and oppressed. He begins, "In essential ways, my homosexual needs have made me a nigger."<sup>68</sup> Gay, lesbian, and transgendered rights were recognized as an issue of radical solidarity. In a 1970 open letter, Black Panther Huey Newton promoted an alliance between black revolutionaries and "the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation

Movements."<sup>69</sup> Sexual minorities began to crusade for civil liberties and civil rights.

The Supreme Court carved out an entirely new realm of civil liberties under the "right to privacy." Under Ninth Amendment police powers, states had passed laws to uphold what Chief Justice Warren Burger called the "Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards" of "Western civilization."<sup>70</sup> Following the cultural shift, between 1965 and 1977, the Court replaced this "Judeo-Christian" morality with the new progressive morality.

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**The Supreme Court carved out an entirely new realm of civil liberties under the "right to privacy." Following the cultural shift, between 1965 and 1977, the Court replaced "Judeo-Christian" morality with the new progressive morality.**

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According to the Court, the "autonomy of the person" is constitutionally respected in "decisions relating to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing, and education."<sup>71</sup> Sexually, the Court recognized new rights for married adults, single adults, and minors to buy contraception. So too was the old Judeo-Christian notion of the "person concept" replaced with the Court's recognition of a woman's right to an abortion.<sup>72</sup> The Court finally overturned sodomy laws as an unconstitutional violation of the privacy rights of consenting adults.

The Court has not altogether rejected a role for moral legislation: Sadistic acts, Justice Anthony

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65. CBSDC, "Ginsburg Wants To See All-Female Supreme Court," November 27, 2012, <http://washington.cbslocal.com/2012/11/27/ginsburg-wants-to-see-all-female-supreme-court/> (accessed April 26, 2013).

66. Marcuse, *Collected Papers*, Vol. III, p. 134.

67. Gore Vidal, *The City and the Pillar* (New York: New American Library, 1965), p. 155.

68. Paul Goodman, "The Politics of Being Queer," in *Nature Heals: The Psychological Essays of Paul Goodman*, ed. Timothy Stoehr (New York: Free Life Editions, 1977), p. 216.

69. Huey Newton, "A Letter From Huey to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters About the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements," in *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, ed. David Hilliard and Donald Weise (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), p. 157.

70. *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 (1986).

71. *Lawrence et al. v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003); *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833 (1992).

72. Peter Irons and Stephanie Guitton, eds., *May It Please the Court: The Most Significant Oral Arguments Made Before the Supreme Court Since 1955* (New York, The New Press, 1993), pp. 350, 353.



Kennedy has recognized, deserve no constitutional protection, for they constitute “moral depravity.”<sup>73</sup> However, Justice Kennedy repeated the new morality, which extends individual autonomy to “consensual sexual relations conducted in private.” Such acts constitute “private conduct not harmful to others.”<sup>74</sup>

Sexual minorities have also been recognized as groups that require civil rights protection under the Equal Protection Clause. In 1996, the Court overturned a Colorado law banning special protections for gays and lesbians because it “named as a solitary class persons who were homosexuals, lesbians, or bisexual either by ‘orientation, conduct, practices or relationships’...and deprived them of protection under state antidiscrimination laws.” The Court recognized the motive as sadism “born of animosity toward the class of persons affected,” hence with no “rational relation to a legitimate governmental purpose.”<sup>75</sup> This year, the Obama Administration filed a brief arguing that California’s ban on same-sex marriage “violates the fundamental constitutional guarantee of equal protection.”<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

When asked in 1974 whether the New Left had succeeded, Herbert Marcuse said that it had “changed the consciousness of broad sectors of the population.”<sup>77</sup> He was right: Over the past 50 years, neo-progressives have successfully implemented Reich’s sexual revolution and Mills’s identity politics. Race, class, and gender studies are the core of the modern liberal curriculum at public schools and

universities. Today, the New Left not only controls the Democratic Party, but also has taken root broadly in upper-middle-class American culture.

Neo-progressives assent to an underlying logic for the good life and the good society, but that logic is radically different from the previous liberal morality. The cultural shift has granted all Americans unprecedented individual freedoms in sexual expression. So too has it erected a new politically correct morality along with an official narrative that highlights the West as the engine of oppression and repression.

Conservatives and old liberals who seek to oppose these changes must return to where they lost the battle: the intellectual arena. They should first begin with a genealogy of neo-progressivism to weaken the myths that sustain it. They should also take a lesson from Mills, who begged his readers to ask:

What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period?... In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of “human nature” are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period?<sup>78</sup>

On such an intellectual foundation, they might successfully engage, as Mills also wrote, in the “struggles over the types of human beings that will eventually prevail.”<sup>79</sup>

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73. *Coker v. Georgia*, 433 U.S. 584 (1977), cited by Justice Kennedy in *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, 554 U.S. 07 (2008).

74. *Lawrence et al. v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

75. *Lawrence et al. v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003); *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U.S. 620 (1996).

76. *Hollingsworth v. Perry* (2013), *Brief for the United States as Amicus Curiae Supporting Respondents*, 6.

77. Marcuse, *Collected Papers*, Vol. III, p. 157.

78. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, p. 7.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 158.