

## Who's Afraid of the Frankfurt School? “Cultural Marxism” as an Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory

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This article argues that “Cultural Marxism” is an antisemitic conspiracy theory, by drawing from three of the main proponents of the theory in the United States today. According to the conspiracy theory, the Jewish Marxists of the Frankfurt School implemented a slow takeover of “culture,” seeking to undermine Christianity, family, and nation in favor of a new worldview and system of control, involving mass immigration, sexual liberation, and moral and aesthetic decline. Cultural Marxists, the conspiracy theorists believe, now control all areas of public life, including the media, schools, entertainment, the economy, and national and global systems of governance. Not only does this theory vastly overestimate the influence of a small group of intellectuals, the conspiracy theory trades on the Frankfurt School’s perceived Jewishness and amplifies antisemitic tropes. This article focuses on three of the main proponents of the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory—white nationalist Kevin MacDonald and self-titled paleo-conservatives William S. Lind and Paul Gottfried—showing how the work of each on the Frankfurt School amplifies antisemitic tropes and engages in conspiracy thinking that misrepresents the Frankfurt School’s ideas and influence. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Transformative Studies Institute*. E-mail address: [journal@transformativestudies.org](mailto:journal@transformativestudies.org) Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2019 by *The Transformative Studies Institute*. All rights reserved.]

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## INTRODUCTION

It was Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Breivik, who killed over seventy people in a car bombing and mass shooting of children in 2011, who first brought the term “Cultural Marxism” to the world’s attention in his thousand-some paged statement of belief, which focused almost entirely on the concept. In fact, the theory of “Cultural Marxism” appears to have inspired a number of other white supremacist terrorists since then, including the alleged shooter in the attack on a synagogue in Poway, California in spring of 2019, who killed one and injured three others.<sup>2</sup>

According to the theory of “Cultural Marxism,” a group of Jewish Marxists called the Frankfurt School have profoundly reshaped society and public opinion; deciding to abandon the original Marxist goal of an international working-class revolution, they sought to implement socialism through a slow, creeping takeover of “culture.” Under such names as “political correctness” and “multiculturalism,” so the theory goes, “Cultural Marxists” indoctrinated and shamed “the West” into abandoning Christianity, family, and nation in favor of a new worldview and system of control, involving mass immigration, sexual liberation, and moral and aesthetic decline. According to this theory, Cultural Marxism has won, and its opponents are hardscrabble, disinherited outsiders struggling to reclaim their Western, Christian heritage. The Cultural Marxists, they believe, now control all areas of public life, including the media, schools, entertainment, the economy, and national and global systems of government.

In actuality, the Frankfurt School was a relatively small group of mostly ethnically Jewish Marxist scholars who advanced an interdisciplinary critique to capitalism. These scholars sought to understand why the revolution predicted by traditional Marxist thought had not yet happened in Western Europe, where it seemed to have been stymied by forces including nationalism, bureaucracy, consumerism, and fascism. Among the names associated with the Frankfurt School are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, Franz Neumann, and Otto Kirchheimer. When the Nazis came to power, the Frankfurt School left Germany for the United States and reestablished itself in New York at Columbia University. Although the Frankfurt School’s “Institute for Social Research” exists to this day (now located again in Germany), the broader intellectual movement they

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Rosenberg, “A User’s Guide to ‘Cultural Marxism,’” *Salon*, May 5, 2019, <https://www.salon.com/2019/05/05/a-users-guide-to-cultural-marxism-antisemitic-conspiracy-theory-reloaded/>.

founded is known as “Critical Theory.”

Although some members of the Frankfurt School had cultural influence—in particular, some books by Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse were influential on some activists on the New Left in the 1960s—“Cultural Marxism” conspiracy theories greatly exaggerate the Frankfurt School’s influence and power. Furthermore, there is no academic field known as “Cultural Marxism.” Scholars of the Frankfurt School are called Critical Theorists, not Cultural Marxists. Scholars in various other fields that often get lumped into the “Cultural Marxist” category, such as postmodernists and feminist scholars, also do not generally call their fields of study Cultural Marxism, nor do they share perfect ideological symmetry with Critical Theory. The term does appear very occasionally in Marxist literature, but there is no pattern of using it to point specifically to the Frankfurt School—Marxist philosopher of aesthetics Frederic Jameson, for example, uses the term, but his use of the term “cultural” refers to his aesthetics, not to a specific commitment to the Frankfurt School. In short, Cultural Marxism does not exist—not only is the conspiracy theory version false, but there is no intellectual movement by that name.<sup>3</sup>

Although not all versions of the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory overtly stress the Jewishness of the Frankfurt School, Cultural Marxism relies on a variety of antisemitic tropes, applying antisemitic conspiracy tropes to the Frankfurt School. The Cultural Marxism theory resembles some past antisemitic conspiracy theories that continue to have influence today.<sup>4</sup> This includes the theory of “Judeo-Bolshevism,” according to which the Russian (Bolshevik) revolution was a conspiracy by Jewish bankers, and the forged document, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*,<sup>5</sup> according to which the Jews, together with the Masons, were involved in a conspiracy to “enslave Christian civilization under a new world order.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lately some Jewish leftists on social media are joking that they are “Cultural Marxists” in response to increased use of the slur. This use of the term should be understood for what it is: a reclaiming of identity from bigots, not an expression of belief in the conspiracy or a commitment to an actual school of thought called “cultural Marxism.”

<sup>4</sup> This theory, like theories about the Protocols of Zion, is very much alive and well. It is even promoted by a recent Russian television series on the life of Leon Trotsky (*Trotsky*).

<sup>5</sup> David Neiwert, *Daily Kos*, “How the ‘Cultural Marxism’ Hoax Began, and Why It’s Spreading Into the Mainstream,” July 19, 2019, <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/1/23/1828527/-How-the-cultural-Marxism-hoax-began-and-why-it-s-spreading-into-the-mainstream>.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor About the Jews: Antisemitism, Conspiracy, and the Protocols of Zion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

In this article, I will show that the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory is antisemitic by drawing from three of the main writers who advocate for the theory in the U.S. context today. Cultural Marxism is not just a conspiracy theory about the Frankfurt School as such, but a conspiracy theory that trades on the Frankfurt School's perceived Jewishness and amplifies antisemitic tropes, including theories of Jewish conspiratorial control of education, entertainment, finance, and the media, and portrayals of a Jewish influence on culture as promoting a regression in moral and aesthetic mores. Rather than trace all the increasing uses of the term on the right, I will focus on three of the main proponents of the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory: Kevin MacDonald, William S. Lind, and Paul Gottfried. The first (MacDonald) is a straightforward white nationalist; the second (Lind) would prefer to be called a "paleoconservative," but also indulges in antisemitism; and the third (Gottfried) is a fascist-leaning intellectual who is confusingly ethnically Jewish with certain antisemitic sides, and sees himself as an inheritor of Critical Theory who now must fight against it.

### THREE PROPONENTS OF THE CONSPIRACY THEORY

The first time someone asked me if I was a "Cultural Marxist," I assumed they had been exposed to neo-Nazi propaganda. Some quick research, however, revealed that I was wrong to assume. In fact, they could just as well have been watching Fox News.<sup>7</sup> A theory that started out in fringe political corners<sup>8</sup> and eventually became popular among neo-Nazis, has also moved via a variety of channels, including "paleoconservatives" like Pat Buchanan<sup>9</sup>, into something bordering on mainstream discourse.

The term "Cultural Marxism" has been bandied about by Andrew Breitbart,<sup>10</sup> founder of Turning Point USA Charlie Kirk,<sup>11</sup> young right-

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<sup>7</sup> Before his death, Andrew Breitbart, the founder of *Breitbart News*, which was later taken over by Steve Bannon, was the main promoter of the "cultural Marxism" conspiracy theory on Fox News. (Neiwert, "Norway Terrorist Breivik").

<sup>8</sup> A recent article in *Commune Magazine* traces the first use of the term to an obscure article by a member of the Lyndon LaRouche group. (Andrew Woods, "The American Roots of a Right-Wing Conspiracy," *Commune*, March 20, 2019,

<https://communemag.com/the-american-roots-of-a-right-wing-conspiracy/>

<sup>9</sup> Bill Berkowitz, "'Cultural Marxism' Catching On," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, Accessed September 28, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2003/cultural-marxism-catching>

<sup>10</sup> Neiwert, "Norway Terrorist Breivik."

<sup>11</sup> Charlie Kirk, "French Rioters Know the Truth About Democratic Socialism—Let's Not Bring it to America" Fox News Accessed October 7, 2019

wing pundit Ben Shapiro,<sup>12</sup> Washington State Representative Matt Shea,<sup>13</sup> Alex Jones's media outlet *Infowars*,<sup>14</sup> and members of Brazilian far-right President Jair Bolsonaro's administration,<sup>15</sup> including Bolsonaro's son, who enthusiastically described Steve Bannon as an opponent of Cultural Marxism.<sup>16</sup> A former aide to Trump, Rich Higgins, even wrote a famous memo framing Trump's presidential campaign as a war on Cultural Marxism that needed to be sustained during his presidency. Higgins wrote of a "cabal" (an antisemitic trope) promoting Cultural Marxism that included "globalists, bankers, Islamists, and conservative Republicans," and had captured control of the media, academia, politics, and the financial system, as well as controlling attempts to tamp down on hate speech and hate groups through CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) government programs. The Frankfurt School, Higgins asserted, sought to deconstruct everything in order to destroy it, giving rise to society-wide nihilism.

Bearing this cultural context in mind, we can focus on three of the most prominent proponents of the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory: Kevin MacDonald, William S. Lind, and Paul Gottfried. Despite the differences between the three figures and the varying degrees to which they directly highlight the Jewish background of the Frankfurt School, one can see in each case how their account of the Frankfurt School's ideas, praxis, and influence involves distortion or exaggeration, and how each account plays upon antisemitic tropes.

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<https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/charlie-kirk-french-rioters-know-the-truth-about-democratic-socialism-lets-not-bring-it-to-america>.

<sup>12</sup> Ben Shapiro, "Ben Shapiro: Frankfurt School" accessed October 7, 2019

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_Ngy2aU\\_QY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_Ngy2aU_QY)

<sup>13</sup> Matt Shea, "Wywiad z Mattem Shea z Waszyngtońskiej Izby Reprezentantów / The interview with Rep. Matt Shea (R)," Accessed October 7, 2019,

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoC97IkaZ2Q&fbclid=IwARImHspwpDb5iFIInulNSmhjKSuHbcK42s-l5sQRAiOsRtIldHO7VGPeP6\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoC97IkaZ2Q&fbclid=IwARImHspwpDb5iFIInulNSmhjKSuHbcK42s-l5sQRAiOsRtIldHO7VGPeP6_w).

<sup>14</sup> Infowars, "Is Cultural Marxism America's New Mainline Ideology?" October 10, 2018, <https://www.infowars.com/is-cultural-marxism-americas-new-mainline-ideology/>.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Watts, "Brazil's New Foreign Minister Believes Climate Change is a Marxist Plot," *The Guardian*, November 15, 2018,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/15/brazil-foreign-minister-ernesto-araujo-climate-change-marxist-plot> ; Jon Lee Anderson, "Jair Bolsonaro's Southern Strategy,"

*The New Yorker*, March 25, 2019,

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/04/01/jair-bolsonaros-southern-strategy>.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Mackey, "Eduardo Bolsonaro, Pro-Trump Son of Brazil's President, on Track to Be Ambassador to U.S.," *The Intercept*, <https://theintercept.com/2019/08/13/eduardo-bolsonaro-pro-trump-son-brazils-president-track-ambassador-u-s/>.

## KEVIN MACDONALD

White nationalist<sup>17</sup> Kevin MacDonald was impressed by mass shooter Anders Breivik’s writings on Cultural Marxism. Breivik was, MacDonald wrote after the attacks, “a serious political thinker with a great many insights and some good practical ideas on strategy.”<sup>18</sup>

MacDonald is one of the leading figures of what might be called the “intellectual alt-right,” the suit-and-tie fascists who have been to college, who write books, and who gather around conferences and think tanks. A retired psychology professor and evolutionary psychologist (a field that has often come under controversy), MacDonald’s gradual exile from the ranks of accepted scholarship began with a publication in a Holocaust denial journal, defending Holocaust denier David Irving, and progressed with the publication of three pseudo-scientific books defending antisemitic conspiracy theories in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> The theme of “Cultural Marxism” is taken up in the third book in the trilogy, *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (1998).

According to MacDonald’s *Culture of Critique*, Cultural Marxism is a part of a Jewish “group evolutionary strategy.” The use of the term “group evolutionary strategies” to imply that people groups could have long-term practices of cultivating and essentially “breeding” for certain traits, is not found in wider scientific literature, and MacDonald was the first to use the term in this way. In *A People That Shall Dwell Alone*, the prequel to his *The Culture of Critique*, MacDonald argues, for example, that Jews have strategically achieved higher “verbal intelligence” as measured by IQ scores,<sup>20</sup> enabling them to gain certain forms of dominance over gentiles. In *The Culture of Critique*, MacDonald explores movements that were led in large part by Jews, with MacDonald assessing them as “Jewishly motivated”<sup>21</sup> and aimed at “advancing specific Jewish interests,” whether these movements claimed to be doing so or not; in cases where leaders did not believe they are engaged in a uniquely Jewish project, MacDonald suggests they were engaged in “self-deception.”<sup>22</sup> Those engaged in “self-

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<sup>17</sup> “Kevin MacDonald,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed July 7, 2019,

<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/kevin-macdonald>

<sup>18</sup> Mike Wendling, *Alt-Right: From 4chan to the White House* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “Kevin MacDonald.”

<sup>20</sup> MacDonald, *A People That Shall Dwell Alone*, 188.

<sup>21</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, v.

<sup>22</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, vi.

deception,” among whom he includes the Frankfurt School, MacDonald classifies as especially pernicious: “The best deceivers are those who are self-deceived.”<sup>23</sup>

MacDonald locates Cultural Marxism within an historical trajectory that includes the transformation (in some cases secularization) of Jewish belief and practice into a “universalist ideology.”<sup>24</sup> According to MacDonald, Jews are using appeals to inclusion, democracy, social justice, and so forth in an attempt to move white gentiles into undermining their own race, including by shaming whites into allowing mass immigration from majority non-white countries, encouraging abortion, and enforcing multiculturalism and political correctness. Cultural Marxism, MacDonald concludes, is thus a Jewish strategy for making white gentiles feel bad about themselves and for encouraging them to destroy their race and culture.<sup>25</sup>

The thesis of *The Culture of Critique* is that Jews, especially leftist Jews, including members of the Frankfurt School, adopted a universalist worldview as a strategy to advance their particular, Jewish interests, and MacDonald believes that Jews are biologically suited to this task.<sup>26</sup> One might object that disproportionately high involvement by Jews in leftist social movements could be explainable in terms of a sense of solidarity between oppressed groups, or as an extension of the ethical values of Judaism, such as the injunctions of the prophets to defend the rights of the poor and the foreigner. But MacDonald sees the history of Jewish radicalism not as a product of choices by individual Jews, but as a collective project of Jews seeking power under cover of false claims of concern for universal human emancipation. The universalist tradition of Jewish radicalism—its humanism, its anti-nationalism, its commitment to a universal ethic transcending religious boundaries—is in MacDonald’s view nothing but a ruse.<sup>27</sup> By sticking together in leftist political circles while working to undermine nationalism and Christianity, MacDonald claims, Jews maintained group identity and vied for power over gentiles.<sup>28</sup> This belief combines the antisemitic tropes of Jewish “clannishness” and Jewish conspiratorial secret power. MacDonald also falls back on his theories about Ashkenazi Jewish high IQs to explain how this conspiratorial power could be possible.

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<sup>23</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, 89.

<sup>25</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, xxiii, xxviii.

<sup>26</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, xxxii.

<sup>27</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, 89.

<sup>28</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, 89.

In the narrative that MacDonald has set up—Jews are either openly concerned only with their own interests, or they are lying/self-deceptive “universalists” whose concern for humanity is simply a manipulation for in-group gain—there is no way that the Frankfurt School can win. When Adorno embraces the “negative” as a preferable concept to the universal, MacDonald decides Adorno is a particularist committed to a special role for Jews in negating established institutions. When Erich Fromm defends the value of the individual from the crushing power of capitalist alienation, MacDonald assumes Fromm is being “hypocritical,” since Fromm still seems to have some feelings of identification with Judaism, which is a group and not an individual identity.<sup>29</sup> MacDonald also frequently compares an individual Jewish thinker’s beliefs to the set of beliefs MacDonald ascribes to Jews as a whole, and then decides that the thinker’s work is internally contradictory. In MacDonald’s world, all Jews agree with each other, at least on an unconscious level. (So much for the famous saying, “Two Jews, three opinions,” which so well encapsulates the Jewish tradition of debate and diversity of opinion.)

To be clear, *The Culture of Critique* is an exercise in circular reasoning and propaganda, not serious scholarship. Its attempts at “science” are laughable at best; for example, MacDonald tells us that “North German” infants are friendlier to strangers than “Israeli” ones, because a study found that Israeli infants cried more in the presence of researchers, and he takes this as evidence that Jews are less friendly to outsiders and more clannish than non-Jewish whites. MacDonald also routinely takes quotes out of context and reinterprets them, especially when he thinks he can catch a Jewish leftist saying something peculiar about hatred, jealousy, or the like. (For example, he takes a passage in which Walter Benjamin was clearly complaining about the German Social Democrats, and implies bizarrely that Benjamin was describing a desire to bring down gentile society through mass immigration.<sup>30</sup>) At least it takes MacDonald until page 162 to unironically cite Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* as a source for his claim that Jews hypocritically profess universalism but practice particularism.

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<sup>29</sup> MacDonald writes: “The irony (hypocrisy?) is that Fromm and the other members of the Frankfurt School, as individuals who strongly identified with a highly collectivist group (Judaism), advocated radical individualism for the society as a whole” (MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, 141).

<sup>30</sup> MacDonald, *The Culture of Critique*, x. (MacDonald is quoting from Thesis XII in Benjamin’s theses on the philosophy of history (Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, Accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>.)

## WILLIAM S. LIND

Another major purveyor of the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory is “paleo-conservative” William S. Lind. Unlike MacDonald, Lind does not focus his critique of Cultural Marxism explicitly on “the Jews,” but his theory does have antisemitic dimensions. In fact, in 2002, Lind spoke to a Holocaust denial conference organized by Willis Carto, and in his talk on the Frankfurt School, Lind pointed out, “These guys were all Jewish.”<sup>31</sup> Instead of “the Jews,” however, Lind’s professed antagonist is the “globalists,” a term that conflates capitalists (supporters of capitalist “globalization”) with socialists and communists (supporters of a “global” working class revolt *against* capitalist globalization). Attacks on “globalists” (as well as “cosmopolitans,” or to use an earlier term, “internationalists”) are often used to make antisemitism more palatable for a wider audience. Antisemitism has long leaned on an equation of Jews with both capitalists and communists; a frequent element of antisemitic belief has been the portrayal of the Jew as both “banker and Bolshevik.” (This two-sided nature of antisemitism also helps to explain some of the frenzied agitation against George Soros, the liberal capitalist and philanthropist; in Soros, antisemites have hit upon an ideological jackpot posterchild for their purposes: an influential left-leaning capitalist Jew, whose leftism and influence they exaggerate.<sup>32</sup>) By presenting Jews as secretly both capitalists *and* communists, antisemitism harnesses legitimate working-class anger against capitalism (including a corrupt and exploitative financial system) and redirects that anger towards the left and scapegoated groups, including Jews. Although antisemitism pre-dates capitalism, the tendency of modern antisemitism to cast Jews as both capitalists and communists has made it possible for fascist movements to present themselves deceptively as “workers” movements (think National Socialist “Workers” Party) while still being fiercely oppositional towards the left.

William S. Lind worked closely with Paul Weyrich, who died in 2008, and both promoted the Cultural Marxism theory. Unlike Kevin

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen Piggott, “White nationalists Gather in Baltimore for the Ninth Annual H.L. Mencken Conference,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, Accessed May 25, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/11/04/white-nationalists-gather-baltimore-ninth-annual-hl-mencken-club-conference>.

<sup>32</sup> Ben Lorber, “The Resurgence of Right-Wing Anti-Semitic Conspiracism Endangers All Justice Movements,” *Rewire*, May 1, 2019, <https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches/2019/05/01/the-resurgence-of-right-wing-anti-semitic-conspiracism-endangers-all-justice-movements/>.

MacDonald, Weyrich is a major power broker on the right, who strategically used school integration fights in the South to make the white evangelical vote a formidable force, leading to the election of Reagan and eventually Trump; he helped to found a number of powerful think tanks, including the Heritage Foundation, ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council), and Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority.<sup>33</sup> (Weyrich and Lind collaborated through another of Weyrich’s think tanks, the Free Congress Foundation.) During Trump’s campaign, Lind met with Trump and gifted him a copy of Weyrich and Lind’s co-authored book *The Next Conservatism*.<sup>34</sup> The book is a “paleoconservative” political program, emphasizing cultural conservatism alongside foreign policy isolationism and economic nationalism, including exclusion of migrants. They suggest making English the national language and banning immigration from certain countries, especially Muslim ones.

In their book, Weyrich and Lind define the “ideology” of “Cultural Marxism” as the belief that “Western culture oppresses everyone except white males.”<sup>35</sup> Cultural Marxism “now controls almost every aspect of our society: the entertainment industry (the most powerful cultural force in America), music, fine arts, the media, the universities, the public schools, even many churches.” “Commonly known as ‘Political Correctness’ or ‘multiculturalism,’”<sup>36</sup> its object is “the destruction of Western culture and the Christian religion,”<sup>37</sup> they write. Falsely crediting Georg Lukacs (another Jewish Marxist) with founding the Frankfurt School, Weyrich and Lind emphasize that Lukacs established a sex education program in Hungarian schools: “He knew that if he could destroy the West’s traditional sexual morals, he would have taken a giant step toward destroying Western culture itself.”<sup>38</sup> They also blame Frankfurt School member Herbert Marcuse for creating “political correctness.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> AJ+, “The Man Who Mobilized the Evangelical Vote,” April 15, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcC53j32BW4>; Brendan Fischer, “Paul Weyrich’s Troika Reunited: ALEC Partners with Republican Study Committee at Heritage Foundation,” *PR Watch*, September 12, 2012, <https://www.prwatch.org/news/2012/09/11752/paul-weyrichs-troika-reunited-alec-partners-republican-study-committee-heritage-f>.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce E. Wilson, “Donald Trump Meets William S. Lind,” *4<sup>th</sup> Gen War*, July 3, 2016, <https://4thgenwar.wordpress.com/2016/07/03/trump-meets-man-who-inspired-2011-terror-attack-deadlier-than-orlando-shooting/>.

<sup>35</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 15.

<sup>36</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 36.

<sup>37</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 34.

<sup>38</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 37.

<sup>39</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 37.

Weyrich and Lind see the Frankfurt School as essentially stabbing America in the back, harkening back to Nazi portrayals of the Jews as unpatriotic backstabbers in World War I: "Fatefully for America, when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the Frankfurt School fled—and reestablished itself in New York City with help from Columbia University. There, it shifted its focus from destroying Western culture in Germany to destroying it in the United States, the country that had given it refuge."<sup>40</sup> Unable to distinguish a critique of right-wing and status quo institutions from an attempt to destroy all things, Weyrich and Lind view Critical Theory as an intentionally destructive criticism of all of Western tradition. What, they ask, is the "theory" of Critical Theory? "The theory is to criticize, subjecting every traditional institution, starting with the family, to brutal and unremitting criticism in order to bring them down,"<sup>41</sup> they write.

Like MacDonald, Weyrich and Lind appear to be personally offended by the Frankfurt School's critique of fascists, as seen in their statement: "Its series of publications called 'studies in prejudice,' which culminated in Theodor Adorno's immensely influential book *The Authoritarian Personality*, published in 1950...said that anyone who believes and lives by traditional Western culture is evil, a 'racist' or 'sexist' or 'fascist'—and is also mentally ill."<sup>42</sup> They then proceed to argue that the Frankfurt School defended and spread its ideas through a sophisticated, society-wide type of brainwashing:

The question facing the members of the Frankfurt School was, how could they couple their culturally destructive philosophy with a weapon powerful enough to actually destroy Western culture? They knew philosophy alone was too weak. Fatefully, they hit on a brilliant answer. Crossing Marx with Freud, they took from psychology a tool known as 'psychological conditioning.' By endless repetition, psychological conditioning works ideas directly into the unconscious, without any need for rational argument. The Frankfurt School worked psychological conditioning that transmitted their Cultural Marxism into education theory, into the mass media and into the entertainment industry (Horkheimer and Adorno spent the war years in Hollywood).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 38.

<sup>42</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Weyrich and Lind, 38.

The book's claim that the Frankfurt School hit upon a method of psychological conditioning for spreading its ideas is among the most absurd inaccuracies, relying on an insinuation based on Horkheimer and Adorno having lived in Los Angeles. This is where the latent antisemitism of the theory becomes particularly clear: according to Weyrich and Lind, who offer no evidence for this claim, a group of Jewish intellectuals were sneaking around Hollywood looking for ways to subliminally beam their ideas into the heads of Americans.

In a short article for *The American Conservative* in 2018, "The Scourge of Cultural Marxism," Lind repeats many of the claims made in *The Next Conservatism*. He claims that Cultural Marxism "seeks to disguise its real nature and goals, which are the destruction of Western culture and the Christian religion."<sup>44</sup> Adorno's philosophy of art is blamed for an aesthetic decline in contemporary society, while Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* has "wrecked America's public schools." Cultural Marxism, and especially Herbert Marcuse, are blamed for the 1960s sexual liberation movement, and Marcuse is credited with introducing the idea that the revolution will be made by "victim groups" rather than the proletariat. Marcuse's critique of tolerance is attacked, and he is quoted out of context as advocating "tolerance for all ideas and movements coming from the left, and intolerance for all ideas and movements coming from the right." (In a later section, I will clarify Marcuse's views on tolerance.)

Lind concludes of Cultural Marxism: "It is propagated by much of the video screen media. Cultural Marxism relies for its power not on logical argument but on psychological conditioning, to which video screens lend themselves all too well." And here we come again to the point: instead of simply being a group of scholars with whom he disagrees, the Frankfurt School are a shadowy cabal manipulating his mind through secret conditioning and "video screens." What mythic power he projects onto a small group of intellectual exiles!

It might all seem comical if it were not for the power and influence of people like Lind, as well as their aspirations for violence. To truly understand Lind's danger, one must look to his novel *Victoria: A Novel of 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare*, in which he fantasizes about a coming race war led by Christian militias, and describes tactics of "fourth generation warfare" that are similar to those of neo-Nazis' "leaderless resistance" or Timothy McVeigh's terrorism. In "fourth generation warfare," tactics are not shared in common across a movement or military, but rather

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<sup>44</sup> William S. Lind, "The Scourge of Cultural Marxism," *The American Conservative*, May/June 2018, 12.

individuals or small groups implement whatever means they deem most effective for the movement's shared ends. In one scene in the novel, the entire faculty of Dartmouth University are massacred in retaliation for their promotion of Cultural Marxism.

## PAUL GOTTFRIED

The massacre of the Dartmouth faculty is Paul Gottfried's "favorite scene" in Lind's *Victoria*.<sup>45</sup> It takes a little time to understand Paul Gottfried's standpoint and its far-right nature—at times, he can be mistaken for a Critical Theorist himself, as he likes to note that he studied under Herbert Marcuse (although, at the time, he was already a conservative and disagreed with him), and Gottfried has played a role in far-right journal *Telos*, which initially began as a left-wing Critical Theory journal. Furthermore, Gottfried is ethnically Jewish, although he seems to carry some of the prejudices shared by his fellow promoters of the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory. The same Gottfried takes credit for creating the term "alt-right" and was a mentor to Richard Spencer (the white nationalist now famous for sieg heiling Trump and later being punched in the head at the presidential inauguration), although Spencer's white nationalist politics are more extreme than Gottfried's "paleoconservatism."<sup>46</sup>

Gottfried's intellectual heroes include Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>47</sup> and Carl Schmitt, and like them, he is critical of the values of democracy and equality. A self-titled "reactionary," like Lind he calls himself a "paleoconservative," a term Gottfried also coined.<sup>48</sup> In his book *The Conservative Movement*, Gottfried writes that paleoconservatives "raise issues that the neoconservatives and the Left would both seek to keep closed," such as "questions about the desirability of political and social equality, the functionality of human rights thinking, and the genetic basis of intelligence."<sup>49</sup>

Gottfried has been a friend of Pat Buchanan since the 1980s and played

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<sup>45</sup> Paul Gottfried, "William S. Lind's VICTORIA Heralds America Breakup," VDARE, <https://vdare.com/articles/william-lind-s-victoria-heralds-coming-america-breakup>

<sup>46</sup> Gottfried even warmly thanks Spencer as a sounding board, in the Acknowledgments in Gottfried's 2009 memoir, calling Spencer "a true Southern patrician" and "[maybe] among the last of his kind" (Gottfried, *Encounters*, 206).

<sup>47</sup> "Session: Remembering the Interwar Right," Mises Institute, Accessed July 5, 2019, <https://mises.org/library/session-remembering-interwar-right>.

<sup>48</sup> Jacob Siegel, "The Alt-Right's Jewish Godfather," *Tablet*, November 29, 2016, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/218712/spencer-gottfried-alt-right>.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, 155; cited in Jacob Siegel.

a role in Buchanan's 1992 presidential campaign.<sup>50</sup> He was later involved with the paleoconservative publication *Taki's Magazine* alongside Richard Spencer, and Gottfried was influential on Spencer. Gottfried's writings appear on the antisemitic, Holocaust-denying website of Ron Unz, *The Unz Review*.<sup>51</sup> Gottfried's group,<sup>52</sup> the H.L. Mencken Club, hosted William S. Lind as a speaker in 2016 and has hosted a number of white nationalist speakers at its conferences.<sup>53</sup>

To really understand Paul Gottfried's mission, however, one must look at his role in *Telos* magazine since the late 1980s. *Telos* shifted from a left-wing to a right-wing journal around the time Gottfried joined the editorial staff, as other staff were quitting in protest of editor Paul Piccone's support of the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and "an atmosphere [at the journal] that is not only sexist but demeaning to all human beings."<sup>54</sup> Crucial to the transition was *Telos's* increasing engagement with the work of Nazi legal philosopher Carl Schmitt. *Telos* was also a major translator of French New Right (fascist) writer Alain de Benoist,<sup>55</sup> and two recent *Telos* articles are friendly to the ideas of Russian fascist Aleksandr Dugin. The critique of the totally administered society described by such Frankfurt School thinkers as Marcuse was to be solved not through progressive social change but through a leader/Führer/decider who could stand above and beyond the strictures of the law, in a triumph of arbitrary power over the monotony and loneliness of modern bureaucracy.

Central white nationalist figure Sam Francis was also associated with *Telos*, including serving as the keynote speaker in 1994 at a *Telos* conference on populism.<sup>56</sup> Francis was also an advisor to Pat Buchanan,<sup>57</sup> belonged to the white supremacist League of the South, and was "a close

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Gottfried, *Encounters: My Life with Nixon, Marcuse, and Other Friends and Teachers* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), 131; Jacob Siegel.

<sup>51</sup> Unz is also ethnically Jewish but deeply entangled in a web of conspiracy theories. Unz's support for Palestinians against Israelis wins him an eclectic base of support, including some who identify themselves with the left. However, Unz was also part of a "Human Biodiversity" group studying race and IQ, etc.

<sup>52</sup> Piggott, "White Nationalists Gather."

<sup>53</sup> The Mencken Club, "The Ninth Annual H.L. Mencken Club Conference," Accessed October 10, 2019, <http://hlmckenclub.org/2016-conference>.

<sup>54</sup> Danny Postel, "The Metamorphosis of *Telos*," *In These Times*, April 21-30, 1991.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Lowndes, "From New Class Critique to White Nationalism: *Telos*, the Alt-Right, and the

Origins of Trumpism," *Konturen* 9, (2017),

<http://journals.oregondigital.org/index.php/konturen/article/view/3977/3755>Lowndes, "From New Class Critique."

<sup>56</sup> Lowndes, "From New Class Critique to White Nationalism."

<sup>57</sup> Lowndes, "From New Class Critique to White Nationalism."

reader of...*Telos*." Francis was also the editor of the *Citizens Informer*, the publication of the white nationalist Council of Conservative Citizens.<sup>58</sup> The National Policy Institute was founded shortly before Francis's death in 2005 to focus on Francis's work, although Richard Spencer soon took over as head of the NPI.<sup>59</sup>

Paul Gottfried says "Cultural Marxism...aims at the utter destruction of bourgeois Christian society...with the moral, cultural, and religious foundations of Western civilization, all of which are implicated in fascism, the oppression of women, antisemitism, homophobia, all the things we are supposed to condemn."<sup>60</sup> Gottfried distinguishes Cultural Marxism from the philosophy of Marx, painting a picture of the Frankfurt School as abandoning Marxist political economy (a point he exaggerates, as this does not apply to all members) and being mainly interested in projects of progressive, liberal inclusion that he often accompanies with scare quotes (e.g., "I couldn't imagine even the founders of the Frankfurt School going quite so far in their embrace of 'gay rights' as to welcome what we now hail as part of a new political consensus") or a tone of irony, but to which his objections are not always clear.<sup>61</sup> Although he does not always make his objections completely clear, Gottfried's objection to the Frankfurt School seems to be tied to his "reactionary" defense of tradition. Although he identifies as a paleoconservative as opposed to a fascist, he did write a book that defends certain types of fascism (*Fascism: Career of a Concept*) while attempting to distinguish himself from Nazism. Despite his own Jewish background, Gottfried also seems to harbor some selective prejudice against Jews, particularly eastern European Jews, who seem to encompass for him his concerns with both Jewish neoconservatives and Jewish leftists,<sup>62</sup> and he has surrounded himself with white nationalists and antisemites of various sorts.

A distinguishing mark of paranoid and ideological (that is, false) conspiracy theories is their persistent refusal to make distinctions. Right-wingers of the paranoid sort can thus easily be amazed, for example, that some leftists advocate for gun ownership restrictions, while others join

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<sup>58</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, "Sam Francis," <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/sam-francis>

<sup>59</sup> Shane Burley, *Fascism Today: What It Is and How to End It* (Oakland: AK Press, 2017), 61-2.

<sup>60</sup> "Cultural Marxism vs. Postmodernism: Paul Gottfried Disagrees with Jordan Peterson," accessed July 12, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C38C7isqrw>.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Gottfried, "The Frankfurt School and Cultural Marxism," [https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2018/01/the\\_frankfurt\\_school\\_and\\_cultural\\_marxism.html](https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2018/01/the_frankfurt_school_and_cultural_marxism.html)

<sup>62</sup> Jacob Siegel; Gottfried, "The Influence of the Jewish Lobby."

organizations like the Socialist Rifle Association, which advocate against such restrictions—"That just shows their 'real' plan is to take guns away from conservatives, but keep them for themselves," they conclude. In fact, of course, there are simply differences of opinion about guns on the left, as there are on many topics.

The Cultural Marxism conspiracy theorists are no exception to this lack of distinction-making. First, the ideas advanced by any individual member of the Frankfurt School are generally taken as representative of all members of the Institute; Marcuse's views on tolerance, Adorno's aesthetics, or Fromm's psychoanalytic analysis of fascism cannot be universally attributed to "Critical Theory" as a whole. Secondly, the lack of distinctions made often extends beyond the Frankfurt School, such that everyone promoting "political correctness," for example, or "multiculturalism," is considered part of a single school of thought originating with the Frankfurt School. In MacDonald's case, the lack of distinctions extends so far as to encompass all Jews.

The linkages made between the Frankfurt School and other institutions and schools of thought are generally tenuous at best. Critical Theory differs in its approach from postmodernism, which unlike Critical Theory has tended to be wary of or even hostile towards Marxism, notwithstanding exceptions such as postmodernist Jacques Derrida's homage to Marx's continued haunting of the present in his book *Specters of Marx*. Critical Theory has tended to be quite male and Eurocentric, open to reason and to science, and often fond of the sort of "grand narratives" postmodernism rejects. Postcolonial theorist Edward Said (not a postmodernist), most famous for his critique of "orientalism" ("Western" stereotypes of "the Orient"), was critical of the Frankfurt School's false "universalism," and its tendency to view everything through a European lens. Some Critical Theorists have wrestled with such critiques as Said's and seek to "decolonize" Critical Theory.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, some Frankfurt School theorists of Horkheimer's generation engaged with non-Western traditions (such as Erich Fromm's work on Zen Buddhism). However, the Frankfurt School of Horkheimer's generation were essentially German philosophers, at home in the world of Kant, Hegel, and Marx. The image of these thinkers held by antisemitic conspiracy theorists—i.e., Critical Theorists meeting in some secret room plotting to destroy people's appreciation for Shakespeare or Gothic cathedrals—is deeply laughable. Although elements of the Frankfurt School were critical of Western

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<sup>63</sup> See for example, Amy Allen, *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

culture and civilization—Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and much of Adorno’s and Benjamin’s work in particular, contain poignant critiques of the Enlightenment—this is by no means representative of the whole of the Frankfurt School’s project, nor even of the totality of Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s contributions. And the notion that the Frankfurt School is against “the West” or “Christianity” *tout court* is hopelessly simplistic and false. Nor is “political correctness”—taken here to mean concern about avoiding certain kinds of speech that can cause harm to members of particular groups—a major theme in the Frankfurt School’s work. Nor was the Frankfurt School even unanimous in its support for the New Left; infamously, a frustrated Adorno even called the cops on some leftist student protesters for disrupting his teaching.

Herbert Marcuse’s essay on “repressive tolerance” is often cited as the source for the claim that Cultural Marxism is engaged in a “political correctness” project, and the essay is often misunderstood as an argument for state censorship or for social shaming of dissenters. In fact, the essay attempts to show that while United States society claims to be a beacon of freedom due to its practice of tolerance and absence of censorship, the U.S. capitalist state uses this very tolerance as a tool to reinforce its hegemony and to disempower the very kinds of brave, dissenting ideas that the liberal ideal of tolerance was originally intended to empower. The solution for Marcuse is not to make the U.S. state more repressive and censorious, but rather to refuse to obey the commands of a state that accommodates routine dissent (letters to the editor, calls to Congress) as so many examples of its own legitimacy, while that same state simultaneously casually rejects the protestations of the dissenters in order to carry out racist and classist projects at home and imperial violence abroad. Since dissenters have no ability to make their ideas stick under the current system, the U.S.’s claim to be a beacon of freedom is essentially a sham. Like Erich Fromm, by the 1960s Marcuse was plenty public about his radical politics. He was challenging his society directly and calling for revolutionary transformation...no underhanded beaming into people’s minds via Lind’s “video screen media” is going on here.

Despite such radicalism, however, it is also important to note that, contrary to William Lind’s claim that Critical Theory aims to “criticize everything” with the intent of destroying it, the word “critical” in “critical theory” refers to a critique of injustice and of ideology.<sup>64</sup> The term “critical” here also alludes to the Frankfurt School’s necessary attempt to

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<sup>64</sup> For example, ideology in the generic Marxist sense of the term: not worldviews in general, but false belief systems that conceal contradictory or unpleasant realities that could stir legitimate criticisms of the status quo

formulate a philosophy in light of their post-Kantian context. “Critique” was a central term for the great eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, famed for his trilogy of “critiques,” *The Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and *The Critique of Judgment*, which together contributed groundbreaking philosophical shifts in epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Any serious German philosopher of the early Frankfurt School’s generation would have been situating their work in relation to Kant and the neo-Kantian schools of the time. To be clear, Critical Theory is unquestionably *radical* in intent, in the sense of seeking to go “to the root” of social problems and to transform society, but this radicalism cannot be reduced to a nihilistic impulse to destroy with abandon. The philosophical trajectory out of which the Frankfurt School largely emerges—beginning at least as early as Immanuel Kant, J.G. Fichte, and G.W.F. Hegel, on through Karl Marx to later Marxist theorists including Georg Lukacs—emphasized the inherent practicality of theory; Kant even wrote an essay titled, “On the Common Saying: ‘That May Be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice.’” (He was against the saying.) Marx had written, as the Frankfurt School thinkers surely knew, that theory “becomes a material force” when it “grips the masses.”<sup>65</sup> For theory to be “critical,” then, implies that in order for theory to be “practical” (as true theory is), it must aim at undoing social injustices through challenging the worldviews that support them; theory must change, not merely interpret, the world (to paraphrase Marx). But to hear the conspiracy theorists tell it, Critical Theorists want to deny the working class access to culture and religion (specifically Christianity)—in reality, Critical Theory does challenge capitalism and intertwined unjust social structures such as the patriarchal family, but as a project, Critical Theory aims to liberate humanity, not destroy with abandon.

## THE “FUNCTION” OF CULTURAL MARXISM

The theory of Cultural Marxism fills a wide variety of functions. It condemns leftists and liberals, lumping them into a single category, while also explaining how even moderate conservatives feel the need to show levels of courtesy and accommodation to opponents that the far-right finds inappropriate.

For antisemites, the theory fulfills a host of functions. Because of the Frankfurt School’s interest in Freud and its critique of authoritarian family

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<sup>65</sup> Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, Accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>.

structures, defenders of the Cultural Marxism theory are able to continue the Nazi tradition of condemning psychoanalysis as a “Jewish science” and painting Jews as promiscuous and lecherous. Relatedly, Cultural Marxists are sometimes accused of “sexualizing children” (in the form of wanting to provide sex education classes in schools or accepting transgender identities among children, for example). These claims about sexualizing children make the Cultural Marxism theory mesh troublingly well with the far-right conspiracy theory of “Qanon,” which also has antisemitic sides, and which claims that Donald Trump’s presidency is actually part of an elaborate plan to crush a secret “cabal” of pedophile elites involved in ritual child abuse activities. Descriptions of these elites’ supposed activities often mirror the traditional “blood libel” accusations against Jews that go back centuries.

As with many antisemitic conspiracy theories, Cultural Marxism portrays the Jews as wily, behind-the-scenes controllers. Cultural Marxism updates the “Judeo-Bolshevism”<sup>66</sup> conspiracy theory for a post-Cold War context. It is less compelling to cast Jews as the behind-the-scenes controllers of the global Communist empire, and so Jews become shadowy behind-the-scenes controllers of the entire culture of the West. However, the outcomes as imagined by antisemites are the same: Jews as disloyal to their nations, as promoting “degenerate” art (hence the particular interest in the Frankfurt School’s aesthetics), as undermining sexual morality, and so forth.

For social conservatives who may not be antisemitic (or at least not consciously), Cultural Marxism provides an explanation for how an overwhelming number of people, perhaps the majority, disagree with them on what they take to be fundamental truths. Just as many white supremacists in the United States blamed the Jews for the civil rights movement because they believed African Americans were too stupid to achieve their own victories without shadowy controllers behind the scenes,<sup>67</sup> cultural conservatives are able to save face by blaming “Cultural Marxists” for the fact that so few people agree with them. Unable to defend their own ideas in the public sphere in a convincing manner, they rely on

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<sup>66</sup> Paul Hanebrink’s new book offers an extensive history of the Judeo-Bolshevism theory, including addressing its use by Hitler and Romanian fascist Corneliu Codreanu. (Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2018).

<sup>67</sup> Eric Ward, “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism,” June 29, 2017, *Political Research Associates*, <https://www.politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism>.

the assumption that their opponents are brainwashed by powerful elites, rather than having been rationally convinced.

## WHY FASCISTS SHOULD FEAR THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the functions that the Cultural Marxism narrative serves for antisemites and the far-right, they are likely to resist the Frankfurt School's influence because they understand, at least on an unconscious level, that the Frankfurt School does provide intellectual resources and an intellectual tradition capable of adequately challenging their ideas. The Frankfurt School contributed a great deal of theoretical work in opposing fascism and antisemitism. Among the most important texts are Herbert Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, which critiqued the dialectic whereby positivism fed into fascism; Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* and *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, studying a variety of authoritarian impulses both in Nazi Germany and contemporary U.S. society; Adorno's takedown of Martin Heidegger (a thinker now defended by *Telos* magazine) as an obscurantist Nazi in *The Jargon of Authenticity* and Adorno's classic *The Authoritarian Personality*; Leo Lowenthal's study of the rhetorical techniques of the antisemitic "agitator" in *Prophets of Deceit*; and Franz Neumann's critique of Nazi society and culture in *Behemoth*.

Furthermore, not lost on fascists is the Frankfurt School's involvement in taking on the Nazis through government institutions and NGOs. During the war, Lowenthal, Marcuse, Kirchheimer, Neumann, and Pollock all worked for the U.S. government.<sup>69</sup> Neumann, Marcuse, and Kirchheimer worked specifically for the OSS, the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, on the war effort.<sup>70</sup> "After the defeat of the Nazis, Neumann continued to work for the OSS and the Nuremburg War Crimes Tribunal under its chief prosecutor Robert H. Jackson."<sup>71</sup> Following the war, Marcuse and Neumann helped to develop denazification plans for Germany, and many members of the Institute conducted research on antisemitism in U.S. society through grants from the American Jewish Committee.

I suspect that such critics as Kevin MacDonald sense that the Frankfurt School's intensely interdisciplinary work on fascism, especially its

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<sup>68</sup> Or just stop being fascists, which would be much preferable.

<sup>69</sup> Stuart Jeffries, *The Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School*. (New York: Verso, 2016), 253.

<sup>70</sup> Jeffries, 253.

<sup>71</sup> Jeffries, 256.

engagement with psychoanalysis, gave them insight into the unconscious motivations of fascists and antisemites. Frankfurt School theorists would have no difficulty, for example, in spotting the psychological projection involved in MacDonald's claims that Jews are authoritarian, sexist and patriarchal, xenophobic, seek out charismatic leaders, reject reason and science, and think morality is not universal but rather based on ethnic belonging.<sup>72</sup> I believe, in fact, that the Frankfurt School remains useful to struggles against fascism not only negatively, as a critique of fascism, but positively, as a rich source of theoretical and thus ultimately practical insight into how fascism can be defeated. However, for the purposes of this article, it suffices to say: fascists should probably fear the Frankfurt School, but not for the reasons they claim.

As for the rest of us, Cultural Marxism turns out to be a useful exercise in understanding contemporary iterations of antisemitism, but provides no useful analysis or critique of the Frankfurt School. As seen in the uptake of the concept of Cultural Marxism by MacDonald, Lind, and Gottfried, Cultural Marxism is a conspiracy theory that links a small group of leftist German Jewish intellectuals to an implausible exercise in global control of culture, from a takeover of all school curriculum to the control of public discourse, sexual morality, entertainment, the economy, and social and political movements. The conspiracy theory not only misrepresents the Frankfurt School's intellectual project—it also perpetuates centuries-old stereotypes that dehumanize Jews, seeing a controlling hive-mind in the place of individual persons. For those already predisposed to antisemitism, Cultural Marxism provides a facile defense of the view that, with the Soviet Union now long gone, a nefarious “Judeo-Bolshevism” secretly holds the reins of global power. Proponents of this theory, whether they quietly write books or livestream themselves conducting mass shootings, are perpetuating untruths that make the world more dangerous and less humane.

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<sup>72</sup> MacDonald, xxxi.

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