

Leftist Federal University

On the Psychology of Modern Leftism and Its Possible Impact on Subcultural Studies

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Universities in the Western World are no longer hoards of previously held ideals, such as “freedom of speech” and “freedom of expression”, but display increasing tendencies of political agitation with a strong proclivity for leftish ideas. The great shift within university culture occurred after the Second World War and would not have taken place without it.

In their article on “Subculture, Culture and Class”, John Clarke and other researchers demonstrate how “structural and cultural changes” affected “post-war Britain” (Clarke et al. 18). The absence of fathers, who deceased as a result of the war, lead to “breaks in normal family life” (Clarke et al. 19). Mothers were forced to find a job and leave their children in the hands of the state in order to provide for their families. Due to this process, the nucleus of pre-war British culture – the (extended) family – was severely damaged. The rearing and education of the children was transferred to federal institutions.

Moreover, the fast advance of “*mass* communication, *mass* entertainment, *mass* art and *mass* culture” submitted the youth to an “evermore uniform cultural process” (Clarke et al. 18). While their parents were at work (or dead), pupils and students spent “an increasing portion of their youth in age-specific educational institutions” (Clarke et al. 20).

Within these institutions, which “transmit and reproduce” culture in its “dominant” form (Clarke et al. 13), the system (state) instead of the parents would shape the students’ opinions and beliefs. Furthermore, in these institutions the students were to a large extent separated “from the rest of society” (Clarke et al. 20). The “massive extension of higher education” (Clarke et al. 20) within Great Britain lead to a rapid increase in the total number of academics.

What started out as a “subculture” of leftish students and researchers on university campuses, would (over the decades) develop into the dominant ideology prevailing in universities in Great Britain and Austria today. In this paper, the contemporary, dominant university culture, which could also be termed an ideology or pseudo-religion, is called “leftism”. Leftist students were on the forefront to call for a “social change”, advocating the extension of the welfare-state, which was established in Great Britain in the mid-1950s (see: Clarke et al. 21). Leftist philosophers and sociologists, such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (two founding fathers of the “Frankfurt School”) would provide the ideas that set in motion the most notable shift in ideology within universities since their foundation.

According to Patrick Williams, starting in the 1960s, a trend arose within “British Subcultural Studies”, which advocated “a neo-Marxian approach to class and power” (Williams 575). These approaches and theories are still predominant in universities, as it will be exemplified with one text, which was presented by the author in the course of a seminar on “Subcultural Studies”. In the before mentioned article “Subcultures, Cultures and Class” by John Clarke and other researchers, the political and ideological orientation of the authors was instantly (and blatantly) visible. On the first four pages of the article, Karl Marx, the “father” of Communism, was quoted three times and a journal called “*Marxism Today*” once (Clarke et al. 9ff.). In one of the quotes, Marx expressed the conviction that “producers of ideas [...] regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch” (Clarke et al. 12).

Never before in the history of humankind was it “easier” (on a technological level) to produce and induce ideas in the form of films, songs and news reports. The important film-studios, record-labels, news agencies and broadcasting networks are in the hand of a very selected few, often referred to in

popular literature as the “elite”. They are representatives and enforcers of the “system” that we live in. The system as a whole is also known as “culture” or “dominant culture” within British subcultural studies. Clarke and others express the notion that “dominant culture has also become the basis of a dominant ideology” (Clarke et al. 12). Alas, the system in discussion is the system of the dominant culture, which is able to propagate its dominant ideology on all media channels imaginable and in all institutions provided by it. The following is crucial to understand:

The dominant culture represents itself as *the* culture. It tries to define and contain all other cultures within its inclusive range. *Its* views of the world [...] will stand as the most natural, all-embracing universal culture.
(Clarke et al. 12)

This paper argues that leftism is the dominant culture, when it comes to social studies, such as subcultural studies, at Western Universities today. A full elucidation of the term “leftism” will be given in a later paragraph.

Following Marx’ argumentation, presented in a previous paragraph, the ruling class can be identified as the few people, who consider themselves to be an “elite”, supposedly “better” than the rest of humanity and in the position to spread propaganda for its goals to ever greater extents. Its culture is “embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in *mo-res* and customs [...]” (Clarke et al. 10). In the present paper, the institution in discussion is the university and the system of belief is leftism. It will be proposed that **feeling of inferiority** and **oversocialization** form the psychological core of modern leftism. The paper’s aim is to unveil to students and university professors alike, how leftist ideas have found a strong footing within universities and its goal is also to indicate that this development has to be dealt with in an open and scientific manner. It should not be acceptable that a university (through its representatives) would take a political stance on all important aspects of life. The university was established to be a place, where young men could exchange their thoughts in a civilized and sophisticated manner. Its aim was not to proliferate the agenda of the “mainstream”, to “cater to the masses” or to impart leftist morals. It will be suggested that a hegemony of leftism would on the long run rid the university of most of its founding stones, such as “freedom of research” and “open results”. As leftism is inherently political, it will not allow divergent thinking, when it has risen to (uncontested) power. Reverting to Marx, university professors are gradually losing their status as innovative “producers of ideas”, when at times they merely parrot the phrases, slogans and pseudo-mantras heard in the official media outlets and the “published”, “politically correct” opinion. It will not be asserted that university professors are a subculture, but rather that they are (when it comes to politics) agents of the system. Leftism is not in conflict with the system, it upholds it.

The man behind many ideas presented in this article was born on the 22nd of May 1942 in Chicago, Illinois (USA) to a family of Polish immigrants. Because of his performance at an IQ-test, he skipped a grade in Primary School. In High School, he was a member of the mathematics and German clubs and skipped yet another grade. He graduated at the early age of 15 and enrolled in Harvard University with only 16 years of age. He received a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Harvard in 1962.

When in Harvard, he was part of a questionable “study” by psychologist Henry Murray. In course of this study, Murray would ask each participant to write an essay about his personal dreams and beliefs and then he would ridicule these writings and psychologically abuse the participant. The man in question spent more than 200 hours in this “study”, facing intense humiliation at a weekly basis for more than three years. After this “experience”, he still got his master’s and doctoral degrees in mathematics at the University of Michigan. With 25 years of age, he became assistant professor at the University of California (Berkeley), where he taught mathematics. In 1969, he unexpectedly resigned. Two years later, he moved to a self-built cabin in Montana and lived a “primitive” life without electricity, running water or an income. He would write the manifesto, which is under discussion in this paper, under the pseudonym “FC”, which stands for “**Freedom Club**”. His (real) name is Theodore John Kaczynski. His friends call him Ted. Still, in the world of film and fiction, he became “famous” under the pseudonym “Unabomber”. His “story” was recently told from the perspective of a FBI-Agent in the Netflix-Series called “Manhunt: Unabomber”. Details on his personal life are (to varying degrees of quality) to be found all over the internet as a result of Kaczynski’s (public) trial. In short, what has been referenced here (concerning Kaczynski’s life), can also be found on Wikipedia and other online sources. In this paper though, the focus will (from now onward) lie solely on the main literary work of Kaczynski, which was published by “The Washington Post” on the 19th of September, 1995, carrying the title: “Industrial Society and Its Future” (ISAIF). In it, Kaczynski explains the need for the extremist measurements he undertook (sending bombs to representatives of the system) as follows: [the manifesto is always cited with its abbreviated title followed by the number of the paragraph]

Take us [Freedom Club] for example. If we had never done anything violent and had submitted the present writings to a publisher, they probably would not have been accepted. If they had been accepted and published, they probably would not have attracted many readers, because it’s more fun to watch the entertainment put out by the media than to read a sober essay. Even if these writings had had many readers, most of these readers would soon have forgotten what they had read as their minds were flooded by the mass of material to which the media expose them. In order to get our message before the public with some chance of making a lasting impression, we’ve had to kill people. (ISAIF 96.)

This manifesto was chosen (despite the negative connotations it may have to some readers), because it was written by a former (scientifically acclaimed) student, graduate and assistant professor, who criticized the leftist ideology now dominant in Western Universities. Kaczynski’s explications are accessible, logical and therefore appropriate for a university paper.

After this prolonged introduction, the term “**leftist**” still requires a more precise clarification:

When we speak of leftists in this article we have in mind mainly socialists, collectivists, “politically correct” types, feminists, gay and disability activists, animal rights activists and the like. (ISAIF 7.)

Whereas some university professors in Great Britain or Austria would reject the labels “socialist” or “collectivist”, most of them support “feminist” ideas and strive to maintain “political correctness”. Marxist and gender theories have found their way into the auditoriums of all Western Universities.

The works of socialists, feminists and other activists for “social change” dominate the compulsive reading lists for numerous 2022-lectures in Great Britain and Austria. New genders and pronouns were introduced, the workings of the language altered – all in the name of “political correctness”. This holds true for the article “Subculture, Culture and Class” in which the “social individual” is referred to with the female possessive pronoun “her” without any logical explanation or grammatical justification (see: Clarke et al. 11). When discussing “The Danger of Leftism”, Kaczynski further characterizes leftists:

The leftist is oriented toward large-scale collectivism. He emphasizes the duty of the individual to serve society and the duty of society to take care of the individual. He has a negative attitude toward individualism. He often takes a moralistic tone. He tends to be for gun control, for sex education and other psychologically “enlightened” educational methods, for social planning, for affirmative action, for multiculturalism. (ISAIF 229.)

Kaczynski argues that universities are a bastion for political correctness:

Those who are most sensitive about “politically incorrect” terminology are [...] a minority of activists, many of whom do not even belong to any “oppressed” group but come from privileged strata of society. Political correctness has its stronghold among university professors, who have secure employment with comfortable salaries, and the majority of whom are heterosexual white males from middle- to upper-middle-class families. (ISAIF 12.)

Kaczynski also explains the “two psychological tendencies that underlie modern leftism”, which are “feelings of inferiority” and “oversocialization” (ISAIF 9.).

The **feelings of inferiority** include low self-esteem, depressive moods, guilt and self-hatred (see: ISAIF 10.). When considering that the “old white man” is often the scapegoat for the world’s problems in current discourse (see: Colonial Studies), guilt and self-hatred will be experienced by many students and professors alike. In addition to that, it is increasingly difficult to formulate a sentence, which is in no way offensive to anyone. Dire restrictions of vocabulary usage and precautions have to be taken to produce “politically correct” speech. According to Kaczynski, a person, who “interprets as derogatory almost anything that is said about him (or about groups with whom he identifies” has feelings of inferiority (ISAIF 11.). He continues his observations by stating that such persons are “hypersensitive about the words used to designate minorities and about anything that is said concerning minorities” (ISAIF 11.). This “hypersensitive” approach towards minorities (with the notable exception of unvaccinated students) can be witnessed in university, where lectures advocating a diverse, multi-cultural world are frequently held. Kaczynski proposes that such people “seem almost paranoid about anything that might suggest that any primitive culture is inferior to our own” (ISAIF 11.). The truth of this statement is especially striking, if one considers the common notion at universities to denigrate the history of European countries and simultaneously extol the importance of cultures, which were considered to be “primitive” by university professors not too long ago.

Leftists often develop “an intense identification with the problems of groups that have an image of being [...] inferior” (ISAIF 13.) and “hate anything that has an image of being strong, good and successful” (ISAIF 15.). As they harbor these feelings, they loathe the idea of being alone and self dependent:

The leftist is anti-individualistic, pro-collectivist. He wants society to solve every one's problems for them, satisfy everyone's needs for them, take care of them. (ISAIF 16.)

A similar idea is expressed in Williams' text, when he states that the "inability to succeed" was seen "as the fault of the system" by (leftist) subcultures (Williams 574). Kaczynski further elaborates on this by writing that leftists "prefer to give society the credit or blame for an individual's ability or lack of it" (ISAIF 18.). Consequently, (in their mind) the feelings of inferiority are not their own fault, but have to be accredited to the negligence of society. This is also the main reason for the leftist's collectivism: "He can feel strongly only as a member of a large organization or a mass movement with which he identifies himself" (ISAIF 19.). So far, the first of the two psychological tendencies has been briefly explained. The second one is **oversocialization**:

Some people are so highly socialized that the attempt to think, feel and act morally imposes a severe burden on them. In order to avoid feelings of guilt, they continually have to deceive themselves about their own motives and find moral explanations for feelings and actions that in reality have a nonmoral origin. (25.) [...] Notice that university intellectuals constitute the most highly socialized segment of our society and also the most leftwing segment. (ISAIF 27.)

A leftist, as he is described by Kaczynski, also "tends to identify with victims" (ISAIF 229.). One example for this would be the "Black Lives Matter"- movement, which has a stronghold in Western Universities. Kaczynski reasons:

Helping black people is not their real goal. Instead, race problems serve as an excuse for them to express their own hostility and frustrated need for power. (ISAIF 21.) [...] In all ESSENTIAL respects most leftists of the oversocialized type want to make the black man confirm to white, middle-class ideals. (ISAIF 29.)

In short, they aim to "make the black man into a copy of the white man" (ISAIF 29.), which is probably not in the best interest of black people, or people of color, or whatever term is allowed to be used, when "freedom of expression" meets "politically correct" censorship. Kaczynski then affirms his prior assertion by underlining that the "leftist wants to integrate the black man into the system and make him adopt its values" (ISAIF 29.). This is an interesting argument, which is not discussed at all in university lectures. Self-proclaimed "social justice warriors" could follow these propositions and in the process scrutinize, if their struggle for the rights of others could be an expression of their own need to feel powerful and important (within a group).

For the oversocialized type strives to integrate as many people as possible – minorities, whom he wants to "help" – into the system and in the process he is making them comply to the system's demands, which gives him a sense of power in return.

After the discussion of the underlying psychological tendencies in modern leftism, Kaczynski introduces the theory that human beings share a common "need" to undergo "**the power process**", which consists of "four elements: goal, effort [...] attainment of goal [...] [and] autonomy (ISAIF 33.).

If no exertion is involved in the attainment of everyday physical needs, such as nutrition, water and warmth, people are prone to invent “artificial goals for themselves” (ISAIF 38.):

We use the term “surrogate activity” to designate an activity that is directed toward an artificial goal that people set up for themselves merely in order to have some goal to work toward [...]. (ISAIF 39.)

Because most jobs require nothing but “a moderate amount of intelligence and, most of all, simple OBEDIENCE” (ISAIF 40.), people can not undergo the power process in adequate ways and flee themselves into **surrogate activities**, such as “scientific work”, “humanitarian work”, “climbing the corporate ladder”, “acquisition of money” and “social activism” (ISAIF 40.).

Kaczynski asserts that “most people need a greater or lesser degree of autonomy in working toward their goals” (ISAIF 42.). If one has to work “under rigid orders handed down from above” (ISAIF 42.), not enough autonomy is provided. It could be argued that such is the case, when writing a “scientific” paper for the university. In this paper, for example, the over-boarding use of citations could be contested or the wording of sentences could be the cause for annoyance. A student, who would comply 100% to the (partly unspoken) regulations of several university courses, would never dare handing in a paper like this. The majority will comply to the requirements and satisfy their need for the power process with the help of surrogate activities. At this stage, many papers have become a homework, regurgitating what was drummed into the students.

Conventionally, there is an additional need for “theories” and “opinions” to solidify the arguments made in a paper. But, what students today will be presented as suitable sources is in many instances strongly ideological in nature. Kaczynski criticizes leftish philosophers, who “tend to dismiss reason, science, objective reality and [...] insist that everything is culturally relative” (ISAIF 18.). Leftist philosophers frequently do not want to differentiate, discriminate and classify, but rather relativize and “de-construct” – “the leftist hates science and rationality because they classify certain beliefs as true (i.e., successful, superior) and other beliefs as false (i.e., failed, inferior)” (ISAIF 18.). As a result, leftist theories applied to Kaczynski’s work (if taken into account) would serve to relativize and de-construct it in a way that it will lose its clarity and might no longer be understood correctly. The author will restrain from that and instead present the genesis of (non-leftist) **subcultures** according to Kaczynski:

Because of the constant pressure that the system exerts to modify human behavior, there is a gradual increase in the number of people who cannot or will not adjust to society’s requirements: welfare leeches, youth gang members, cultists, anti-government rebels, radical environmentalist saboteurs, dropouts and resisters of various kinds. (ISAIF 116.)

Subcultures from this point of view include only groups which are in some way “rebels against the system” (ISAIF 161.). Kaczynski then mentions “nazis” and “militiamen” as additional examples (ISAIF 161.). Since educational institutions are part of the system and because education as a whole “is becoming a scientific technique for controlling the child’s development” (ISAIF 148.), only groups that oppose leftism are considered to be subcultures. Others may be termed mainstream cultures.

They (mainstream cultures) are not problematic for the system. Kaczynski clarifies:

The system couldn't care less what kind of music a man listens to, what kind of clothes he wears or what religion he believes in as long as he studies in school, holds a respectable job, climbs the status ladder, is a "responsible" parent, is nonviolent and so forth. (ISAIF 29.)

Hence, two types of subcultures have to be differentiated:

1) (Sub-) cultures inside system (**mainstream cultures**): They are no threat to the workings of the system, but in reality serve it. They will be tolerated (if not fostered). Current examples: "BLM-", "LGBTQ-" and "Global Warming-" activists.

2) **Subcultures** that are not part of the system and antagonize it. They are dangerous for the system and therefore not tolerated. They will be censored and forbidden. Current examples: unvaccinated "Corona deniers" and (right-wing) freedom fighters of all kind. Kaczynski states:

[T]he members of these groups are loyal primarily to one another rather than to the system, hence the system cannot control them. [...] Obviously the system would be in serious trouble if too many people belonged to such groups. (ISAIF note 7.).

Williams highlights the circumstance that "[m]ost popular information about any subculture [...] is generated by 'outsiders' "(Williams 583) – usually researchers at university. If those researchers are leftists, then they will (in many cases) be attracted to subcultures of the first type and be appalled by subcultures of the second type. This could lead to a biased treatment of these subgroups of subcultures. But of what importance is the field of subcultural studies to the system?

Kaczynski claims that we are allowed to do anything "we like as long as is UNIMPORTANT. But in all IMPORTANT matters the system tends increasingly to regulate our behavior" (ISAIF 72.). In that sense, most of the scientific work undergone at the moment, can be considered to be an unimportant surrogate activity. When discussing the motives of scientists, Kaczynski comments:

With possible rare exceptions, their motive is neither curiosity nor a desire to benefit humanity but the need to go through the power process: to have a goal (a scientific problem to solve), to make an effort (research) and to attain the goal (solution of the problem.) Science is a surrogate activity because scientists work mainly for the fulfillment they get out of the work itself. (ISAIF 89.) [...] Thus science marches on blindly, without regard to the real welfare of the human race or to any other standard, obedient only to the psychological needs of the scientists and of the government officials and corporation executives who provide the funds for research. (ISAIF 92.)

Lastly, the question has to be answered, why the prevalence of leftism could lead to severe constraint for any student, who does not confirm to leftism. Kaczynski recalls:

In the United States, a couple of decades ago when leftists were a minority in our universities, leftist professors were vigorous proponents of academic freedom, but today, in those universities where leftists have become dominant, they have shown themselves ready to take away from everyone else's academic freedom. (ISAIF 216.)

Kaczynski characterizes leftism as a pseudo-religion with a strong focus on morals. The faithful has "a deep conviction that leftism is morally Right [...] and that he has not only a right but a duty to impose leftist morality on everyone" (ISAIF 218.). Anything "contrary to leftist beliefs represents Sin" (ISAIF 219.). Yet, as a leftist's fight for other people's rights is a surrogate activity, he will not be satisfied, even if all of his demands are met:

Suppose you asked leftists to make a list of ALL the things that were wrong with society, and then suppose you instituted EVERY social change that they demanded. It is safe to say that within a couple of years the majority of leftists would find something new to complain about, some new social "evil" to correct; because, once again, the leftist is motivated less by distress at society's ills than by the need to satisfy his drive for power by imposing his solutions on society. (ISAIF 220.) [...] For them the drive for power has only one morally acceptable outlet, and that is in the struggle to impose their morality on everyone. (ISAIF 221.)

The author of this paper is aware that some readers might find the statements of Kaczynski about leftism offensive. Kaczynski himself was conscious about this too and clarified his approach:

Some readers may say, "This stuff about leftism is a lot of crap. I know John and Jane who are leftist types and they don't have all these totalitarian tendencies." It's quite true that many leftists, possibly even a numerical majority, are decent people who sincerely believe in tolerating others' values (up to a point) and wouldn't want to use high-handed methods to reach their social goals. Our remarks about leftism are not meant to apply to every individual leftist but to describe the general character of leftism as a movement. (ISAIF 223.)

It was demonstrated in this paper that the "Frankfurt School" and similar leftist thinkers ushered in a monumental change within universities in the West after the Second World War. As a growing number of Marxist (Communist) ideas were integrated in the curriculum, "old" and "outdated" ideas had to make room for the "progressive" paradigms of gender studies, feminist theories and the like. Universities acting out the politics of the system, fully conforming to its agendas and ruminating its propaganda, are no longer a stronghold for "free thinkers". In the last decades, the canon of literature in many areas of studies was revised and in the process bereaved of classics that were now labelled "chauvinistic" or "racist". On the other hand, books of little known female and leftist authors were incorporated into the "official" canon and made a mandatory reading for students. Moreover, critical professors and students, who do not perpetuate leftist ideology, got "deplatformed", their papers and articles would not be published or severely censored.

Students and university professors alike should be very aware of these developments and most of all they should not deceive themselves about the danger of leftism. In his letter to “Scientific American”, Kaczynski argues that “[m]ost scientists have a deep emotional commitment to their work and are not in a position to be objective about its negative aspects” (Kaczynski 17).

Contemplating all the information on the psychology of modern leftism provided in this paper, each student or university professor reading it should enter the debate on leftism, thereby questioning his own beliefs and most importantly his *mores*.

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Final Thoughts:

No one stops to ask whether it is inhumane to force adolescents to spend the bulk of their time studying subjects most of them hate. (ISAIF 119.)

It isn't natural for an adolescent human being to spend the bulk of his time sitting at a desk absorbed in study. A normal adolescent wants to spend his time in active contact with the real world. (ISAIF 115.)