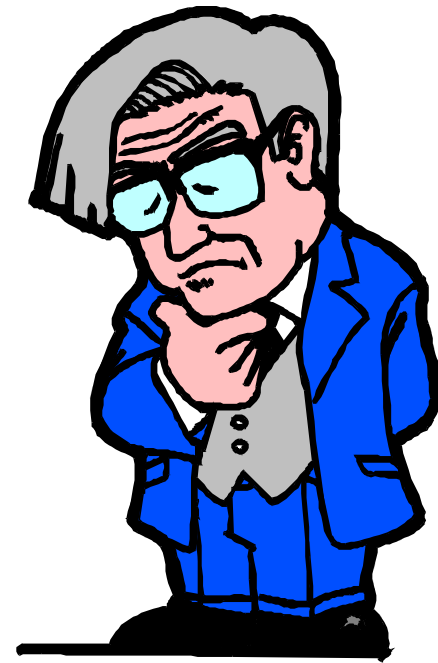


The New Class

An American Nomenklatura



by G. Arthur Morrison

with a communist vote of 98 or 99 percent, followed by a precipitous drop to 20 or 30 percent after elections went secret-ballot. This gap between poll result and actual secret-ballot election result might serve as a barometer, an index, of the degree to which authoritarian forces, of one stripe or another, have made inroads into a given society, and it could add one more support for the idea of the New Class as vanguard of an emerging totalitarian ethos in Western countries.

It is one thing to point out a threat, another to combat it. Reasoning with a group that regards reason itself as an "instrument of the patriarchal oppressor" is very likely futile. What then is the solution? If there is one it is the following: ***Any thinking person concerned about the future of civilization should do no less than direct the most urgent efforts towards elucidating and publicizing in the starkest possible terms and in greatest detail, the profound parallels between radical New Class ideology and the ideologies of the two full-blown nihilistic political movements of recent times, the Nazi-fascism of Hitler and the Red-fascism of Stalin.*** The nearly complete lack of public awareness suggests that this revelation would arrive as a thunderclap, and would do more to render this ideology unfashionable than any other course of action.

Secondly, a positive action is required. We must find an alternative not only to the postmodernist relativism in ethics, but also to the ethics associated with traditional religious mythologies, these not having kept current with many of today's requirements, for example environmental concerns, population control and sex equality.

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ally by business interests, now increasingly by the millenarian, apocalyptic Religious Right. Those of us who are not True Believers rebound desperately from one to the other like a multiply spurned lover, now and then hopefully embracing an independent would-be savior. For a glimpse into America's future, let us try pushing Galbraith's convergence theory somewhat further than he might prefer, and consider today's Russia. It confronts the chaotic, amoral legacy of the Soviet New Class: a devil's brew of crime, rampant superstition, and corrupt economy, and a work ethic destroyed by 75 years of an extreme welfare mentality (welfare, that is, for the Nomenklatura). There exist only two exit doors. To return to a totalitarian mode it must isolate its people from the world and restore the methods and practices which led to the collapse in the first place; the other door leads to Western style democracy for which unfortunately Russia has no cultural background.

What will be the role of Corporate America (CA), this uncomfortable bedfellow of the New Class? As long as the NC is able to hold its clients down on the plantation with "welfare colonialism", things sail smoothly along and CA is willing to not only coexist but collaborate with it. Now however, a dangerous wild card is dealt, a consequence of NC policy itself: the looming catastrophe of the runaway National Debt, like the greenhouse effect on Venus. (As of 1997 this scenario has been at least temporarily staved off by high tax revenues due to a strong economy). In the ensuing financial meltdown, admittedly a worst case analysis, NC would catch a bad case of unemployment, its dependents will rise in wrath, savings may be wiped out, conjuring up visions of the Weimar debacle and its dreadful sequel. Or not. ***The American New Class is no more invincible than its Soviet counterpart, especially if the public is awakened, and the topic of the New Class agenda becomes a topic of everyday conversation.***

One might say in criticism that most people don't spend much time thinking about starting a civil war, they just try to get by. However one could say the same thing about many a pre-war situation. Much of the impetus behind the war spirit of 1914 was a fervent longing to ditch the daily grind and go out seeking adventure; if a great Cause was behind it, so much the better. And speaking of getting by, the celebrated, emerging "road rage" phenomenon, in which one motorist attempts to pass another and gets shot for his trouble, must be a barometer, a harbinger, of something. The hunch is, that something is not domestic tranquility...

An article in US News (Dec 9, '96) points out an effect which has been increasingly observed in political polling during recent election campaigns. Poll results in many Western countries (where a poll-taker requests, in person, positions on candidates or issues) have become skewed to the left, that is, toward New Class positions, giving about 3 to 5 percent error in predicting election outcomes. Author Michael Barone speculated on causes by suggesting that many respondents feel their true positions on issues to be unacceptable to a vaguely defined "establishment" with powerful media resources which can intimidate by a psychological threat, if not a real one, leading subjects to tell the perceived authorities what they presumably want to hear. As a historical extreme case of this phenomenon, consider the Soviet elections

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The American New Class (NC), as one of its favorite philosophers, Karl Marx, might have called it, has become an immensely powerful force in society since World War II, elbowing its way to a position alongside Big Business as a dominant player in the society. The utility of this terminology has been recognized by, for example, both conservative Irving Kristol and neo-Marxist Alvin Gouldner, defining a bifurcation of the middle class: the producers of tangible economic goods and related services on one hand and on the other, the non-technical information workers: ***bureaucrats, lobbyists, lawyers, non-technical academics, media workers, and mental therapists.*** This latter conglomeration is the New Class; its formation was allegedly forced by automation's reduction in demand for physical labor. Here the two pundits part company. Kristol considers NC ascendancy as Bad News, Gouldner welcomes it as a beneficial force, able to guide society to a more egalitarian future through social engineering. In this connection we must remember what Marx actually advocated: not that the proletariat itself should lead, but that it would be led by a special educated socialist ruling group - analogous to the medieval clergy- which in theory would keep the proletariat's interests foremost on its agenda.

One characteristic of NC occupations is the difficulty of gauging the actual quality level of an individual's performance. ***Incompetence becomes harder to spot, hence the NC becomes a haven for mediocrity.*** One cause for the formation of NC may well have been the adoption of Keynesian economics as a response to the 1930s depression. Keynes observed that total demand had fallen below a certain critical mass, and recommended a vast increase in government deficit spending to bridge the gap, not realizing or at least not admitting, that this would eventually create a huge politically entrenched parasitic segment of the economy. ***If economists are searching for a cause for the stagnation in real incomes over the 25 years since the 60s, they might find it worthwhile to take a hard look at New Class ascendancy during that period.***

NC job security is typically high; many are public employees. Thus one might expect the NC to support the expansion of government at the expense of the private economy. When one thinks of powerful unions today, one does not think so much of the AFL-CIO or the UAW as one did a few decades ago, but of such NC organizations as the National Education Association (NEA) and other public employee PACs. NEA spends much of its resources lobbying Congress, opposing measures, such as parental choice of schools, that it perceives would weaken the power of the education establishment.

At this point I wish to suggest a parallel of the American New Class with the former Soviet ruling class or Nomenklatura (in our less coercive environment, sans Gulag). Both are nonproducers, both make up about 10% of the population. Both are more or less hostile to private enterprise. Both became the most powerful cultural arbiters of their respective societies. For the first time in history, producers of culture have little or no connection with producers of tangible products. In this light it is not surprising that some curious, even bizarre ideologies have wafted out of academe in recent decades, presently under the banner of "postmodernism" and "multiculturalism". These have in common a set of ideas which constitute on a fundamental level the philosophy of nihilism, which means a denial of hierarchy of quality among any set of concepts or objects; to put it bluntly, that nothing is better than anything else. More puzzling is the cause. After all, if NC has achieved such overwhelming hegemony and prestige, why would it fall victim to such a poignant, pathetic angst? I can speculate that nihilism in academe, especially in its very core, the *radical gender feminist*, is the unconscious result of frustration at the inability to be productive in a tangible sense, or originally creative. Literary theorists for instance, have introduced one critical system after another, succeeding one another like dress styles, analyzing the same literary works in attempted imitation of the sciences; it would appear for little other purpose than to generate new thesis topics for Phd dissertations.

In **Growing up Absurd**, written about 1959, Paul Goodman essentially predicted the romantic upheaval of the 60s as a revolt against what he called the Organized System or Rat Race, which at that time consisted almost exclusively of the world of big business. The marginal 50s "beatnik" concept evolved rapidly into the mass-cultural "hippie". But sadly the 60s movement failed to find an antidote to the tragic and universal predicament of modernity: *the shortage of meaningful work in which a person can engage with sincere "loving dedication"*. Hence the New Class shibboleth of "service to society" and later, disillusionment and the turn toward nihilism. But perhaps there is a more fundamental process at work here. The New Class has noticed something. Whether it has noticed it consciously or unconsciously is not important: *that the more it concentrates on inventing ineffective or even destructive "solutions" to society's problems, the worse conditions get and the more money and power are thrown in the NC's direction by an increasingly desperate, and unsuspecting electorate*. Here the old saw is apropos: If you do the job right the first time, it's done. If you do it wrong fourteen times in a row, you've got job security. In this light, nihilism fits the bill as the *perfect ideology for dissemination to the masses to facilitate social breakdown*.

There is another side to Nietzsche's coin, the theory of the Superman, or superior man who has absolute mastery over his emotions and human nature. The ideas of Nihilism and Superman appear on the surface to contradict each other, since the concept Superman implies a hierarchy of quality. But look at the question from a different perspective: Nihilism is not mere idea; it is a lethal weapon, an instrument of destruction of one human by another, one class by another. One must ask, who benefits from New Class postmodernism? The sole beneficiary is the NC itself.

will and not intelligence....there are ascending grades on the way to the achievement of higher levels of consciousness...there is no such thing as truth, either in the moral or the scientific sense" This could be taken as a position statement, almost a mini-manifesto, by any New Age celebrity from Shirley Maclaine on down. All surely would be discomfited to discover the source: a 1930s statement by Adolf Hitler. Some authors such as Constance Cumbey have claimed that New Age is actually a resurgence of Nazism. I rather would say that Nazism is a particular outbreak of that more general phenomenon of "postmodernism", the retreat from reason, of which New Age is a religious manifestation.

What remains for New Age is to attempt to create a consistent mythology to replace the Biblical story. Skeptics and believers debating the "alien abduction" and "space brothers" stories that have saturated the media have largely ignored one plausible theory, which is due to C. G. Jung: that these tales are nothing less than the seed of an emerging religious mythology which is, for better or worse, more in tune with our technological times. One might almost think of it as a modernized version of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, or the reported visitations by demons in the Middle Ages

A peculiar and significant event occurred a few years ago in connection with the above. One of the foremost literary deconstruction theorists, Prof. Paul De Man of Yale, was exposed as a Nazi collaborator, having made propaganda for the Vichy regime during the War. Now if one follows the common idea that postmodernists are simply leftover Marxists who have not yet heard the bad news about the fall of the Empire, one might easily predict a breaking away, a revulsion among his colleagues. What actually happened was precisely the opposite. Academic support rallied behind De Man, making arguments that a traditionally rational person would find startling: for example, that De Man's actions were not his at all, but merely those of "ideology speaking through him", echoing the return to a prehistoric magical way of seeing the world, that of the Oracle and the Shaman as a link between the human and the supernatural.

Some say that if an issue is ignored for long enough it gets tired, gives up and goes away. The Race Problem is quite robust for a 300 year old. The black ghetto has fallen into the advanced stage of nihilism, with an astronomical crime rate which is really a form of mass destruction, of civil warfare. From here the plague begins to spread to the rest of the population. The Problem appears insoluble, because it is really a conflict of irreconcilable world views; in Nietzschean terms, between Dionysian romanticism and Apollonian classicism. To "solve" it requires an unlikely scenario: one side or the other must surrender and adopt the enemy Weltanschauung. The good news is, a nihilistic atmosphere can dissipate, as in Germany after the war. The bad news: it must hit bottom, like the alcoholic with DTs, before recovering.

Increasingly, irrational pressure groups dominate the two major political parties: Democrats by the sophisticated, postmodernist New Class, Republicans tradition-

exotic and paradoxical bird: an anti-New Class media personality.

Tragically, nihilism is not mere pastime of the ivory-tower set; it is the historic precursor to mass destruction. When quality judgments disappear, so does any way to distinguish criminal violence from that which restrains it. The fragile barrier civilization has erected is breached; and savage instincts know no limits.

Rene Girard, in *Violence and the Sacred* writes:

"As soon as the essential quality of transcendence... is lost, there are no longer any terms by which to define the legitimate forms of violence (the kind which prevents other kinds) and to recognize it among the multitudes of illicit forms. The definition... then becomes a matter of mere opinion. [It is] the harbinger of something far worse - a violence which knows no bounds" Prior to major outbreaks of violence of the past, even in this century, we find nihilism diffusing into and poisoning the mind, subsequently the whole spirit of the times. When, as today, the prevailing intellectual ideology is nothing if not nihilistic, one can hardly be surprised at the accelerated fraying of our social fabric, the ever worsening barbarism spreading out before our eyes. It is interesting to compare the religious proclivities of the NC and the religious Right. Presently NC is not so much into the formerly fashionable atheism as one might expect. Recoiling from the ennui of Nietzsche's Death of God, many NCers embrace the rising, mystical New Age movement, even while perhaps remaining nominally Christians or Jews. New Age might profitably be viewed as part of a long-term process, beginning in the Renaissance, of reversal of the Christianization of the late Roman Empire.

Nevertheless, while being "religious", New Age is recognizably suffused with nihilism, as we see from examining a few of its main tenets:

1-We are all "gods" determining our own reality; emphasis is on immanence.

2-"hierarchy" is denied; all conscious entities, in some versions even all things, have equal status and validity; value judgments are taboo. (Scratching one of the more extreme "animal rights" adherents will likely uncover a New Ager).

NC leans towards spiritual nihilism with an Eastern tinge, it retrogresses to tribalism, to magical, prehistoric thought patterns, the attempt to control events directly by the human will alone. To underline this, recent polls of college freshmen revealed 10% to 20% of respondents who claimed the Holocaust and other examples of human sacrifice could not be condemned because such condemnation would assume one culture's moral superiority over another.

Consider this quotation:

"...We are now at the end of the Age of Reason. The intellect has...become a disease of life. A new age of magical interpretation of the world is coming in terms of

The New Class academic considers himself a Superman, willing the destruction of the inferior Old Class, and his instrument of destruction (by which the ordinary man is led to destroy himself) is Nihilism.

John Kenneth Galbraith (quintessentially New Class) wrote in the '60s, whether as warning or advocacy, -I suspect the latter-, that Russia would gravitate toward the US system -libertarianize- and the US would move toward the Soviet variety of socialism. ***In the wake of Soviet collapse, we acclaim the first part of this prophecy, but overlook the second.*** NC ideology supports the indefinite expansion of the welfare state until it entirely supplants the private sector; showing perhaps a greater spiritual affinity with Stalin than Jefferson. As an instrument in this campaign, ***the NC has for all practical purposes controlled the national Democratic party since the 1960s***, displacing the Roosevelt coalition of Labor, Southerners, and the old middle class. (I hasten to say there exist pockets of resistance, notably the Chicago Democrats). ***NC's livelihood actually depends on the continuing existence of crime, poverty and ignorance. Its main strategy is to maneuver certain other segments of society, especially the disadvantaged, into a condition of dependency on services that it provides.*** In turn it can not only continue to justify its own existence as the gatekeeper of ever-burgeoning "programs", but can effectively command its dependents' loyalty come election day. Note that a large fraction of tax money spent on "anti-poverty" programs goes not to the poor themselves, but directly into the NC's pockets.

From where does the frustration, and even violence, of the "Old Class"(OC), derive? Obviously from deterioration of economic living standards, with the resulting mental stress. Unconsciously many realize that after the first industrial revolution devaluing muscles, the second devaluing routine brainwork (e.g. adding columns of figures), the third revolution has arrived; human life is on the verge of total domination by artificial intelligence. Some, as before, react hysterically as to a mortal threat. As one might expect, nihilism is no stranger here either. However, it typically takes the more disguised, less intellectual form of apocalyptic, millennial beliefs about the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world. What distinguishes the so-called Religious Right? Paul Tillich wrote that American Fundamentalism, in context of Protestant history, is actually a "radical evangelicalism" which curiously parallels Marx in emphasizing the idea of the End of History, a final, literal "steady state" of salvation which requires the world first to endure catastrophic tribulations and purification.

Beneath the surface we see that most of this group has been deprived of any real cultural power in the society, even on so elementary a level as being reassured by hearing one's views represented among commentators on the nightly news: ***They "...are frozen out of the dominant institutions of the society where culture is produced: the universities, the elite media, the entertainment world, advertizing, public education, the large charitable foundations. They have no voice, they are totally ghettoized..."*** - James D. Hunter, prof. of sociology and religion, U. of Virginia. In this light, the uproar over Rush Limbaugh stems from his rarity: he is that