

A CULTURAL ANALYSIS

CULTURE OF DELUSION

*The Ideological Inversion of the
Greco-Judeo-Christian Civilization
in a Romantic-Marxist Dystopia*



Harm Timmerman

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Mottos

"Every cop is a criminal. All the sinners are saints." — Sympathy for the Devil, The Rolling Stones

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." — Isaiah 5:20–21

When a person fails to critically examine — from a cultural, historical, and psychological perspective — where their worldview and values come from, and by whom they were shaped, those views are simply handed to them by invisible and opaque processes. Such a person merely repeats the opinions of others and makes the decisions others want them to make. The unexamined person becomes a plaything of the cultural and ideological currents of their time. This is fortunate when the prevailing culture is grounded in wisdom and the balance between reason and feeling. It is disastrous when that culture is built on ignorance — when its narratives appeal only to humanity's lower instincts.

For the generation of boomers.

Foreword

"The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work... when you go to church... when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth." — The Matrix (1999)

Like most books in the tradition of cultural criticism, this one was born from years of observation — in society, in my professional life in higher education, and in my personal experience — and from a growing sense of unease. A deep concern about the direction of Western civilization as a whole, and about the individuals within it who seem to find it harder and harder to navigate their lives.

That unease drove me to search for answers. Like many others, I scoured the internet — articles, YouTube videos, podcasts, blogs — trying to make sense of cultural and social developments that troubled me. The explanatory framework I try to articulate in this book emerged from years of studying history, culture, philosophy, and psychology. It was a journey into the deep recesses of our civilization's soul — and into human nature itself. It remains a confronting realization that the views we hold, and the life decisions we base on them, feel deeply personal and carefully considered — yet are ultimately shaped by forces we barely understand and rarely see. The power of narrative. The power of ideology. These are not forces to be underestimated.

What I was searching for was an explanatory model — a lens through which the strange, troubling, and bewildering developments in Western culture could be understood. A framework for making sense of the narratives that reach us through institutions: the opinions, values, and worldviews embedded in education, media, art, and politics, communicated over and over, which ultimately shape policy. Narratives that ordinary people increasingly fail to recognize themselves in. Narratives that leave them feeling estranged, unseen, unheard — or worse: dismissed, ignored, cancelled. Modern forms of excommunication.

The central argument of this book is that since the French Revolution, the original foundation of Western civilization has been slowly and systematically replaced. That original foundation — the culture, ideology, and tradition upon which the West was built — was rooted in Greco-Judeo-Christian thought. Its corresponding way of life and work ethic were Protestant-Calvinist in character. Beginning with society's cultural elites in the nineteenth century, that tradition has been displaced by a Romantic-Marxist worldview. Especially since the cultural upheaval of the 1960s, this ideology has become dominant — visible in virtually every narrative that reaches us through any medium or institution. It shapes our thinking, and through our thinking, our life decisions and the courses our lives take.

Given the tragic trajectories many lives are taking — and the growing number of people who fail to achieve even basic life goals — I considered calling this book *A Culture of Betrayal*. Betrayal is a charged word. It implies intentional malice. But the internalization of worldviews and the reproduction of narratives is largely unconscious. Contributing to a dominant ideology — thinking and acting within its framework — is often subtle and well-intentioned. Our conduct, habits, and even our thinking are shaped by custom, convention, and culture.

What is clear is that every dimension of the Greco-Judeo-Christian tradition has its direct opposite in the Romantic-Marxist culture. An *Inverted Culture* would have been an apt title. And that is indeed what this book describes: a civilization turned upside down — an inversed culture in which the values, norms, and orientations of the preceding civilization have been systematically reversed.

The ideas of the Romantic-Marxist culture are ideological in nature: not entirely false, but profoundly oversimplified, representing only a fraction of reality. Think of looking through a keyhole: what you see is real, but the vast majority of the picture remains hidden. Ideological thinking tends toward tunnel vision. This culture does not align with reality or with human nature. It lacks common sense. In short: we are living in an age of delusion.

The goal of this book is to illuminate the pervasive presence of the Romantic-Marxist worldview in the stories our institutions tell — to make its individual traits visible and recognizable. I hope the reader will be encouraged to reflect on the degree to which their own thinking and worldview have been shaped by it. Ultimately, it is up to each reader to critically assess these ideas — and to consider whether this worldview holds up, whether it corresponds to reality, and whether it is a sound foundation for the decisions we make in life.

This is not a simple undertaking. It requires real familiarity with the characteristics of Romanticism and Marxism, and a certain alertness — the ability to spot those characteristics in the narratives that surround us. This is especially challenging because those traits rarely appear explicitly. More often they are embedded subtly and implicitly: in tone, in the questions asked — or pointedly not asked — in the lifestyle of a cultural icon, in the protagonist of a television commercial, in what is visible and what is not, in symbol and metaphor. It also takes courage to examine critically the beliefs you may have held for years — and to revise them if necessary. A paradigm shift rarely follows a single book. It usually unfolds over years of accumulated experience.

An ideology — a culture — is to a human being what water is to a fish: it is everywhere, and we take it entirely for granted. The goal of this book is to awaken awareness of the nature of that water — of our culture — and to help turn the dominant ideology around: toward a culture in which human beings can flourish again, in society, in community, in family. A culture that cares for its people — rather than being the source of their suffering.

In the Egyptian myth of Osiris, Seth, and Horus, it is the falcon Horus who goes to war against the forces of decay and confusion. Horus is defined by his piercing gaze — the famous Eye of Horus, symbol of clear vision, penetrating insight, and the ability to see what others cannot. He loses that eye in battle. But he wins it back — and with it, he restores order.

This book aspires to be the Eye of Horus. Not as a claim to completeness or infallibility, but as an invitation to see more clearly. To recognize the phenomena in our culture for what they are. To decode the narratives that institutions send our way every day. To understand — from a better vantage point — what is really going on, and what is at stake.

The water is everywhere. It is time we became aware of its quality — because it so profoundly shapes the quality of our lives.

A Culture of Delusion

"The most dangerous ideas in a society are not the ones being argued, but the ones being assumed."
— G.K. Chesterton

The West has changed. Not only on the surface — in its architecture, its demographics, its technology. Those changes are visible and measurable. But they are the effect, not the cause. The deeper transformation has taken place in the mind: in how people see themselves, their neighbors, their society, their past and future. In what is considered good and what is considered evil. In what is deemed normal — and what is deemed suspicious. In the questions that are asked — and those that are never raised.

This transformation did not happen overnight. It has been a slow process — fifty years of steady cultivation by the very institutions that constitute society: education, media, politics, art, and the church. Generation after generation has absorbed a worldview that is, at its core, Romantic-Marxist in character — without that label ever being used, without most people having read a word of Rousseau or Marx. That is precisely the power of a dominant ideology: it spreads not through books but through imitation, not through arguments but through narratives, not through conscious choice but through the air we breathe. People carry the ideas of philosophers whose names they may never have heard — and whose works they have never read.

The result is a society displaying phenomena that baffle, disturb, or irritate people — but which they cannot explain. That is precisely what this book aims to provide: an explanatory model. A lens through which those phenomena become intelligible — not as conspiracy, not as coincidence, but as the inevitable outcome of an ideology that has been operating for so long and so broadly that it has come to seem like reality itself. Two conflicting worldviews now coexist in the West — and the tension between them is growing. This book explains where that tension comes from, why it is so persistent, and how it can be recognized. Because once you see the pattern, you see it everywhere.

A New Distinction

Before cataloging these phenomena, one analytical distinction is worth establishing — one far more illuminating than the familiar left/right divide.

This is not about left versus right. It is about the degree to which the Romantic-Marxist ideology has been internalized. This is a spectrum. At one end are those who have absorbed it fully and uncritically — for whom its traits are so self-evident that they are no longer recognized as ideology at all, but simply as reality. At the other end are those who resist it — consciously or intuitively, on the basis of lived experience, faith, or plain common sense.

It is no coincidence that those on the political left tend to have internalized the ideology far more deeply than those on the right. But the distinction is not political — it is ideological. Even self-described conservatives are not immune to the dominant culture. They breathe the same air.

Nature as Sacred Ground

Is it not alarming that in the most densely populated country in Europe, over a hundred wolves now roam freely — and that anyone who finds this problematic is dismissed as hating nature? The Romantic experiment of the Oostvaardersplassen — a large Dutch nature reserve left entirely to its own devices — ended in a drama of starving horses and mass culling, while its architects continued to present it as a success. Meanwhile, wind farms and solar parks have been constructed across the landscape, fundamentally altering its appearance, without a democratic mandate ever being sought.

Why is the fear-mongering around climate catastrophe so pervasive that any sober discussion of genuine scientific uncertainties is immediately branded as denial? Extinction Rebellion blocks highways and damages public property — and receives sympathy and leniency from the courts. Those who protest immigration policy on the same day are removed by force. The difference is not the severity of the disruption. It is the ideological color of the cause.

The Eternal Youth

Few seem troubled by a sixteen-year-old Swedish girl who skips school to dictate world politics while heads of state listen reverently. Meanwhile, educational quality has declined decade after decade as teaching methods have grown ever more innovative. Six in ten students in the Netherlands leave primary school functionally illiterate — unable to understand a government notice or read a newspaper article.

Boys are dropping out of education in large numbers, taking longer to graduate, and achieving economic independence later — yet this barely registers as a societal concern. At the same time, adults are encouraged to stay in touch with their inner child, to keep playing, to refuse to grow up — as though adulthood were a loss rather than an achievement.

The Disrupted Marketplace

Divorce rates remain stubbornly high decade after decade — roughly half of all marriages end in failure. Some people accumulate dozens or even hundreds of sexual partners before turning thirty, while others struggle to form any lasting relationship. The sexual and relational marketplace has grown so unbalanced that a small number of men command a wildly disproportionate share of attention while a large number are effectively shut out.

Many people observe that sex has been decoupled from love, commitment, and continuity in the dominant cultural narrative — and that anyone who questions this is branded prudish or moralistic. Meanwhile, sexually transmitted infections are rising across virtually every category. The suggestion that this might be connected to the sexual revolution barely earns a hearing in public debate.

The Spiritual Supermarket

People who call themselves atheists see no contradiction in simultaneously practicing yoga, getting their chakras balanced, and believing in the healing power of crystals. Buddhism has gone so mainstream that Buddha statues are sold at discount home stores. Every town has an esoteric shop — while the churches empty out.

The community the church once provided — weekly gathering, shared rituals, care for one another's children — has vanished, replaced by individual spiritual experience. People hold the views of thinkers whose names they have never heard. They do not recognize themselves in Rousseau or Marx — the founding figures of the ideology this book describes. And yet they think in their categories.

The Normalized High

The Netherlands has earned an international reputation as a narco-state in the making — with hundreds of drug labs, a black economy worth billions, and young people being recruited as drug couriers. A university student in their twenties has a dealer's menu on their phone and can place an order faster than a pizza delivery. Vaping, marijuana, and designer drugs have become so normalized at parties and festivals that abstaining makes you the exception.

Almost no one asks aloud whether the normalization of substance use is connected to the damage it causes — in addiction, in mental illness, in criminal networks. The debate is conducted almost exclusively in terms of personal freedom and individual autonomy. The bill is presented elsewhere.

Music Everywhere

Music has become the central life experience for millions — festivals are the new cathedrals, nearly everyone has played in a band or still does, people say music is the most important thing in their lives. Performing arts schools train young people to become artists in a market that can sustain only a handful of them. The festivalization of society continues while loneliness increases — as though the collective feeling of a festival field can replace the community that has disappeared everywhere else.

At the same time, politicians and public figures increasingly stop referencing the great figures of Western philosophy in favor of obscure thinkers whose actual influence on Western civilization was minimal. It is a symptom of a culture that no longer knows — or wants to know — its own intellectual heritage.

The Glorification of the Oppressed

Each year, tens of thousands of migrants enter Western Europe — and anyone who raises questions is immediately suspected of xenophobia or racism. Asylum seekers are provided with housing, furnishings, and welfare benefits while people on social housing waiting lists wait for years. Indigenous peoples and people of color are systematically framed in the dominant narrative as inherently noble and perpetually victimized — a framing that denies the full complexity of their actual lives.

Crime statistics showing an overrepresentation of certain groups can barely be discussed — because the ideology has predetermined the conclusion. It is not the statistics but the person who cites them who is deemed corrupt.

The Collapse of Authority

Police officers are verbally abused, spat on, and physically attacked — and those responsible rarely face serious consequences. Teachers report a collapse of respect and authority in the classroom — and the solutions offered always involve more dialogue, more empathy for the student, more horizontal relationships. Politicians are judged on personality and image rather than substance and competence. Doctors, judges, and mayors must increasingly defend their authority against citizens who believe they know better.

Equally troubling is the reflexive anti-Americanism that permeates European public discourse. The United States — the nation that liberated Western Europe and helped shape Western democracy — is subjected to systematic ritual criticism. Every Republican president is automatically compared to Hitler: Nixon, Reagan, Bush, Trump, without distinction. The criticism has the character of an ideological reflex — one that requires no factual verification.

Empty Churches, Persecuted Christians

Churches across Western Europe are emptying at a rate unprecedented in European history — while people who identify as Christian increasingly feel ashamed to say so. Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world today — in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia — yet that persecution receives almost no attention in Western media. The Judeo-Christian tradition, which laid the foundations of the Western rule of law, democracy, and the very concept of human dignity, is treated as a historical mistake.

Even publications that once championed Christian values have long since abandoned that identity. The long march through the institutions has reached the church too. What remains of it.

The Disqualified Man

Boys and men are overrepresented in virtually every alarming social statistic — school dropout, suicide, addiction, homelessness. Yet this is barely treated as a subject of policy concern. The phrase "toxic masculinity" appears daily in public debate — while a comparable analysis of destructive female behavior is virtually absent. Many women who embraced the feminist promise of liberation report, in later life, regretting the choices they made under its influence — yet this too is given almost no space in the dominant narrative.

The Delusion

All of these phenomena share one common denominator: they are the expression of an ideology that has overwhelmed reality. An ideology so deeply internalized that it is no longer recognized as ideology — but as reality itself.

In psychiatry, a condition in which a person holds beliefs demonstrably at odds with reality — beliefs that cannot be revised by evidence or argument — is called a delusion. A delusion is not a lie: the person in its grip genuinely believes. It is not stupidity: intelligent, educated people can be just as deeply deluded as anyone else. What defines a delusion is its resistance to correction. The stronger the evidence that the belief is wrong, the more fiercely it defends itself.

This is not a clinical diagnosis of individuals. It is a cultural diagnosis. A society that can no longer revise its beliefs in the light of reality — that resolves its cognitive dissonance by reinterpreting the facts rather than reconsidering the belief — displays the characteristics of a collective delusion.

And that delusion has a name. It is called the Romantic-Marxist ideology. Its characteristics are recognizable in every one of the phenomena described in this chapter. Its origins, its logic, and its consequences are what this book sets out to explain.

Because whoever understands the ideology understands the phenomena. And whoever recognizes the phenomena can begin to ask the right questions.

Introduction — Culture of Delusion

Axioms, Thesis, and Reader's Guide

"We're the middle children of history, man. No purpose or place. We have no Great War. No Great Depression. Our Great War's a spiritual war... our Great Depression is our lives. We've all been raised on television to believe that one day we'd all be millionaires, and movie gods, and rock stars. But we won't. And we're slowly learning that fact. And we're very, very pissed off." — Tyler Durden, Fight Club (1999)

Introductory Terms

Two concepts deserve a brief explanation before this argument begins, as they set the methodological tone for everything that follows.

An axiom is a proposition accepted as a foundational premise on which further argument is built. Axioms are not proven — they are taken as starting points. Accept the axioms and you accept the logic of the argument that flows from them. Reject them and you reject the argument as a whole. The judgment belongs to the reader.

An aphorism is a short, pointed statement that contains a deeper wisdom — an invitation to think rather than a claim to proof.

The axioms formulated in this chapter arise from psychological, sociological, and cultural patterns of human behavior. They are universal in character: recognizable in any society at any point in history, regardless of the specific content of the prevailing ideology. They describe not what is desirable, but what is.

General Axioms

I. Karl Marx's observation concerning the base-superstructure structure forms the first and most fundamental premise: institutions — media, politics, education, religion, the judiciary, the arts, the family — control the means of communication and hold a certain monopoly on the distribution of information. Through those channels, narratives are constructed and disseminated to the population. This is an observation, not a judgment. The dynamic holds in every society at every point in history — regardless of the content of the ideology being spread.

II. Because narratives are spread through communications media and channels, the dominant ideology is closely tied to technology and technological innovation — and to exclusive access to it. Those who control the channels of communication control, to a significant degree, the story. And those who control the story control, to a significant degree, the thinking.

III. These stories carry an ideology: the totality of opinions, values, ideas, norms, and beliefs that is dominant — or hegemonic — in a given society. An ideology is never neutral. It contains and dictates a life script, a set of expectations, an interpretation of what is good and what is evil, what is worth pursuing and what is to be rejected.

IV. The individual components of an ideology behave as memes — the cultural equivalent of the biological gene, as introduced by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (1976). An ideology as a whole can be understood as a memplex: the cultural equivalent of a chromosome. Just as genes spread and mutate, ideas and ideologies spread and mutate — consciously and unconsciously, through imitation and repetition.

V. In the spread of memes, attention plays a crucial role — and attention is generated largely through attractiveness. Cultural role models and culture carriers therefore play a key role in storytelling and the transmission of culture and ideology. They are the pre-eminent attention-generating entities.

VI. The internalization of an ideology and its individual components occurs both consciously and unconsciously. They are present in virtually every narrative a person encounters — in the talk show and the newspaper article, in the advertising flyer and the teaching method, in the song lyric and the sermon. It is, to use the familiar metaphor, the water in which the person swims: present everywhere, rarely recognized as such.

VII. That internalized ideology dictates and results in a worldview — a self-image, an image of others, an image of the world — and consequently in decisions. From everyday choices to the most fundamental life decisions: the choice of a partner, a profession, a lifestyle, a moral orientation. This applies to every person — including the representatives of the institutions themselves.

VIII. The dominant ideology in a society helps determine the life trajectories of its citizens and maintains relations of production and class. It is not politically neutral — it always serves certain interests, even when those interests are rarely presented as such.

IX. Since the components of an ideology are by definition constructs — learned by humans, not given by nature — they result in a false consciousness: the conviction that one thinks freely and independently, while in reality one thinks within the frameworks supplied by the dominant culture. Every individual life, with its own biography, and every society's history, is a narrative — a construct of the mind that we experience as reality.

X. People logically have only limited insight into the original sources and founding figures of the opinions and ideas they hold. The human being is thrown into a world and culture that is the result of a centuries-long process. Life is generally accepted as it presents itself — without investigating the historical, philosophical, and ideological roots of that life. This is not a weakness but a given of the human condition.