

Week 8 - Identity & Politics

Session Review

Last week: Rights & The First Right

- Rights: Something we are entitled to or have a claim on.
- Our upstream worldview, beliefs and presuppositions guide our view of rights
- QOur rights must be discovered and revealed. Rights that are created by man can be revoked.
- Our rights come from God. They are inalienable, and as such exist prior to and independently from the authority of any civil government.
- “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”
Declaration of Independence

You have seen a repeated theme throughout this course on the importance of understanding the nature of man for our view of culture and politics.

The Theology of Identity

When addressing the issue of identity what are we doing?

Personal, social, cultural, gender, professional identities.

At the core of the question: Asking “who am I”.

What is a human?

What is the prime cause for conflict?

Anthropology: The study of the origins and nature of man.

In the last dozen years concepts of our identity have come center stage.

Christian Belief and Human Identity

On this matter of what is a person’s identity, we again must go upstream.

What was stated in week one.

The Gospel

God:

As the Creator of all, God is both the source and fulfillment of Life.

Creation:

All people were created, were intentionally designed by God, in His image for the purpose of having and enjoying fellowship with Him and His creation.

Sin:

Sin plunged all people into the lie and corruption that we do not need God, that He is not worthy. That His words are not good. That we can create our own gods and ultimate purpose. This separation from the God of Life brings guilt, corruption and is spiritual death.

God's Work:

In grace, God provided redemption through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

When our beliefs depart from this understanding only harm occurs. Because such a departure replaces truth with falsehood. Replaces reality with fiction.

Ideologies that purport the inferiority or superiority of one group of people based upon an inherited and immutable physical attribute is a false teaching and denies that we are created equal in God's image.

For some of the prevalent ideas now taking center stage let's go back to week three when we were talking about atheism.

A worldview that states there is no God. There is no supernatural.

In the 19th century a variant of atheism developed.

We need to go back to the teachings of Karl Marx to see some of the foundation of current ideas.

From here I am going to be discussing views in broad strokes.

There is great diversity in these views.

Someone may knowingly or unknowingly hold to parts of these views.

Someone may hold to the concepts but not use the term that I will use.
Someone may use the terms that I will use but not actually hold the views.

Everyone is an individual with nuanced views requiring patience to understand where they stand, as an individual.

Conversation and understanding is damaged by falsely attributing beliefs to other people.

While combating man made tribalism, we need to be aware of our own tribal tendencies in this regard.

Marxism

Karl Marx was a German philosopher during the 19th century. He worked primarily in the realm of political philosophy and was a famous advocate for communism. He cowrote The Communist Manifesto and was the author of Das Kapital, which together formed the basis of Marxism.

There are many important aspects to Marx's broken worldview that to this day are having a major impact on our world. For our purposes we will focus on a few of those.

"Religion is the opiate of the masses". He failed to recognize that he was not actually abandoning religious belief, he was simply a different religious belief. He created his own theology. What was the rival theology that he created?

There is no God, he believed there is only matter.

Marx created the concept of the oppression binary that would go on to be developed to what we see today.

Man is perpetually in a class struggle between the haves and the have nots. The oppressed and the oppressor. The issue is not sin against God. The issue is this binary of oppressed vs oppressor. The issue is not the heart of man. The issue is outward structural systems of oppression.

For Marx the haves were the owning class. The have nots were the working class.

For Marx the only "salvation" is for the have nots to overthrow the haves in revolution. Revolution and overthrow. Reconciliation was not at all a part of his view.

This is in contrast to the Christian Worldview and the concept of reconciliation.

The working man, for Marx, the oppressed man, needed to throw off the mechanism of the haves.

What was the evil mechanism of the haves?

Private property and capitalism.

For Marx, these are tools for oppression, inequality and exploitation.

Marx devised communism as the answer.

The result in history?

Communism was adopted by Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot in the name of combating this binary oppression.

We know some of the history. Millions died and continue to die today directly due to the false worldview of Marxism.

Frankfurt School of Critical Theory

In the 1920s an influential group of intellectuals went beyond Marx's view. They coined the term, critical theory, to describe their project. And they wanted to apply Marx's ideas beyond just economics. They wanted to apply it to things like culture, and to mass media, and to understand the other ways in which power operated to produce oppression and inequality.

But even that was 80 years ago, and since then, critical theory has created entire disciplines, like critical race theory, critical queer theory, post colonialism, critical legal studies, and other schools of thought.

Critical Theory

The emphasis will be upon Critical Race Theory or Anti-Racism.

Some Tenants

1. Social Binary

Society is divided into dominant oppressor groups and subordinate oppressed groups in different ways. The dominant groups created these binaries, these differences, for the sake of oppressing the minority.

"for every social group, there's an opposite group. The primary groups that we name here are race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, status, sectionality, religion, and nationality."

DiAngelo in their book, Is Everyone Really Equal?

(GRAPHIC)

Figure 5.1. Group Identities Across Relations of Power

Minoritized/Target Group	Oppression	Dominant/ Agent Group
Peoples of Color	Racism	White
Poor Working Class	Classism	Owning Class
Middle Class		
Women; Transgender; Genderqueer	Sexism	(cis)Men
Gays; Lesbians; Bisexuals; Two Spirit	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals
Muslims; Buddhists; Jews; Hindus; and other non-Christ- ian groups	Religious Oppression Anti-Semitism	Christians
People with Disabilities	Ableism	Able-bodied
Immigrants (perceived)	Nationalism	Citizens (perceived)
Indigenous Peoples	Colonialism	White Settlers

Terms and concepts in the Critical Theory Worldview

Intersectionality. All the interconnected areas where one falls into an oppressed grouping

As it relates to Race

Whiteness or White Privilege: Unearned advantages and benefits that come with being perceived as white in a racially stratified society.

White Adjacent: People of color who deny the creation of binary by the powerful as described

White Fragility: Whites that don't like the conversation around critical theory. Those in this category are fragile.

Color Blindness: Those who claim they are "colorblind" in regards to race, that is, not racist. However, in actuality, deny the intersectional binary and are in fact part of the oppressor group

2. Oppression Through Ideology

Oppression is redefined not only to mean being subject to violence

Oppression is being subjected to the oppressive binary belief system

The idea here is that you can be oppressed, but not because you're being coerced or treated

violently, but by the ideas themselves.

The binary roles are in and of themselves oppressive.

The heteronormative, white supremacist patriarchy is the binary - being in a society that upholds this oppression.

It's not that white supremacy can exist. But because of the false binary of race, white supremacy inherently exists.

Oprah, as a black woman, is oppressed, according to critical theory.

Is Oprah, in actuality, oppressed?

Critical theory does not pose this in terms of individuals. But groups. Because Oprah is in these groups she is therefore oppressed.

3. Lived Experience

Oppressed people have more access to truths about reality through their lived intersectional identity. They have special insight into and access to truths because they are oppressed, whereas people that are oppressors are actually blinded by their very privilege.

This lived experience does not involve one's own actual experiences, but where one falls intersectionality. The greater the number of intersectional areas one identifies with the greater their moral authority.

In this view so called oppressed voices are to be elevated, oppressor voices are to be diminished.

Moral authority is not connected to what is true, but to how oppressed I am.

The white male has less moral authority to speak than the black lesbian.

4. Identity, Not Truth

Intersectional identity is ultimate truth claims are a part of the structural oppression system.

For some in this school of thought, the great issue, the overarching story is not, "is something true".

This is from the Smithsonian in 2020.

ASPECTS & ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITENESS & WHITE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES



White dominant culture, or **whiteness**, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the institutional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture — including people of color.



- Rugged Individualism**
- The individual is the primary unit
 - Self-reliance
 - Independence & autonomy highly valued + rewarded
 - Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment, "You get what you deserve"

- Family Structure**
- The nuclear family: father, mother, 2.3 children is the ideal social unit
 - Husband is breadwinner and head of household
 - Wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband
 - Children should have own rooms, be independent



- Emphasis on Scientific Method**
- Objective, rational linear thinking
 - Cause and effect relationships
 - Quantitative emphasis

- History**
- Based on Northern European immigrants' experience in the United States
 - Heavy focus on the British Empire
 - The primacy of Western (Greek, Roman) and Judeo-Christian tradition



- Protestant Work Ethic**
- Hard work is the key to success
 - Work before play
 - "If you didn't meet your goals, you didn't work hard enough"

- Religion**
- Christianity is the norm
 - Anything other than Judeo-Christian tradition is foreign
 - No tolerance for deviation from single god concept



- Status, Power & Authority**
- Wealth = worth
 - Your job is who you are
 - Respect authority
 - Heavy value on ownership of goods, space, property

- Future Orientation**
- Plan for future
 - Delayed gratification
 - Progress is always best
 - "Tomorrow will be better"



- Time**
- Follow rigid time schedules
 - Time viewed as a commodity

- Aesthetics**
- Based on European culture
 - Steak and potatoes; "bland is best"
 - Woman's beauty based on blonde, thin – "Barbie"
 - Man's attractiveness based on economic status, power, intellect

- Holidays**
- Based on Christian religions
 - Based on white history & male leaders



- Justice**
- Based on English common law
 - Protect property & entitlements
 - Intent counts

- Competition**
- Be #1
 - Win at all costs
 - Winner/loser dichotomy
 - Action Orientation
 - Master and control nature
 - Must always "do something" about a situation
 - Aggressiveness and Extroversion
 - Decision-Making
 - Majority rules (when Whites have power)



- Communication**
- "The King's English" rules
 - Written tradition
 - Avoid conflict, intimacy
 - Don't show emotion
 - Don't discuss personal life
 - Be polite

I will call out a few things from this poster

- Self Reliance
- The nuclear family
- Object, rational linear thinking
- Cause and effect relationships
- Christianity
- Respect Authority
- Value of ownership of goods and property
- Delayed gratification
- Western Civilization
- Politeness
- Decision Making

Let's briefly address the comment on the nuclear family.

This poster is in complete alignment with the organization Black Lives Matter. BLM the organization was started by three people trained in Marxism. The whole "what we believe" statement from 2020 is a clear presentation of critical theory and the desired end goals.

From the BLM 2020 web site on "what we believe"

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200812121017/https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/>

"We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and "villages" that collectively care for one another, especially our children"

For Karl Marx, for Marxism, and for critical theory the concept of the nuclear family is a construct of oppression, a construct needing dismantling.

5. Goal of all of this is Social Justice

Anti Racism

Tear down the binary. Destroy the false binary distinctions that were created for the sake of power and oppression.

The goal is not merely to understand these inequalities, but to erase them. Their goal is liberation. They want to free people from oppression in all of its various forms.

How relevant is this? Last week there was a state wide public education seminar for school leadership. The keynote speaker spoke on Anti-Racism. The relevance is all around us.

Implications

What does this belief system lead to?

- People who are oppressors, morally inferior, because of their skin color - this is racism.
- Increases racism and conflict, not inclusion.
- Those who are oppressors can never atone, perpetual silent penance is the option
- Seeks to make the individual who is innocent pay for the sins of the group.
 - Social justice vs individual justice: being judged as guilty based upon being in an oppressor group rather than being judged based upon your actions.

Recognize the difference between the voice of the Good Shepherd who calls you to love all the sheep and the voice of the enemy that tells you some of them are guilty, blind, ignorant oppressors and that others are oppressed—all based on their melanin.

Voddie T. Baucham Jr.,

Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe

“I have heard a mantra lately that rings hollow in my ears: “There can be no reconciliation without justice.” When I hear that, I want to scream, “YES! AND THE DEATH OF CHRIST IS THAT JUSTICE!” All other justice is proximate and insufficient. It is because of Christ’s work on the cross that that we can heed the apostle’s admonition: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31–32). Who am I to tell a white brother that he cannot be reconciled to me until he has drudged up all of the racial sins of his and his ancestors’ past and made proper restitution? Christ has atoned for sin!”

Voddie T. Baucham Jr.,

Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe

Discussing Race

What if your 70 year old neighbor named Mildred states that she is anti-racist?

Does that mean she is looking for a Marxist revolution? That she is looking to overthrow the patriarchy? Well, maybe....but probably not.

Each person is different. People often use terms or hold to ideas without really understanding them. So what could you say to Mildred in that situation?

Ask her, “What do you mean by that?”

Is there racism, oppression, victimization in this world? Of course

Has there been hideous acts of oppression throughout history? Of course

Does unjust treatment occur? Of course

Is it possible to be a victim of bigotry and not adhere to critical theory? Of course

Should the church support and listen to such victims and seek to comfort and pursue justice? Of course

In discussing issues around oppression, racism, sexism we are again to seek to understand the person in front of us. The conversation is nuanced and requires a few things.

Be patient, be humble, be loving, be compassionate

Why?

We are all created in God's image.

As His image bearers we are to seek justice.

As believers in Jesus Christ we are to be one.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

Gender

Critical Theory weighs in on gender as well with what is known as queer theory.

Queer Theory: The critical theory of the oppression binary applied to sexuality and gender.

Remember the list of different oppressed groups?

However, on this matter of gender, in addition to this you also have a kind of gnosticism, which splits apart the body and the soul.

So, with gender ideology, what you really are, is this internal sense of gender, called the gender identity.

And your body is just this shell.

And if your body is incongruent with who you really are, your internal sense of gender, well, then the way that you fix that is by changing the body to conform to that internal sense of the self.

This internal sense of self is to be immediately indulged and affirmed. Surgically if necessary.

Let's take a step back. The development of critical theory was leading to this point.

In addition to this, leading up to this point, as a culture, there came a denial in our country about the nature of marriage.

That denial was about how marriage was created by God and was between a man and a woman.

The culture stated that homosexual marriage was legitimate, the political establishment was soon to echo that sentiment.

So, that denies the sexual binary's relevance in marriage.

The above oppression binaries were an arbitrary constructs made by critical theory.

However, here a natural binary of male and female created by God is declared an enemy of critical theory.

What's the next step? Denying the sexual binary itself, treating people as if they're sort of androgynous or interchangeable.

Gender ideology is in conflict with what God has revealed in His Word

So God created humans in his own image. He created them to be like himself. He created them male and female.

Genesis 1:27

Gender ideology is in conflict with what God has revealed through science. Genetically, physically, physiologically there are two genders.

Two genders with vast differences.

There are two genders, to assert otherwise is to pursue life in conflict with how we were intentionally and fearfully and wonderfully made.

Such a pursuit will only bring damage and brokenness.

This worldview now holds sway in education, healthcare, athletics, government, and other areas.

Why Teach on these Things?

Out of love and compassion.

“Christians should speak out on moral issues not because they feel "offended" or because their "cherished beliefs" are threatened, but because they have compassion for those who are trapped by destructive ideas.”

Nancy Pearcey

This brings us back to the good news of the Gospel.

A person's and a society's brokenness is a result of sin and attempting to live without regard for the reality of how we were created by God and how reality in the world works.

As believers we are to answer the need with the worldview that is revealed from God.

The issue of race is addressed with the biblical nature of man's identity. We are created in God's image. We are born equal.

We are born equally fallen and in need of a redeemer.

The issue of gender is addressed with the biblical nature of man's identity. We are created in God's image, male and female.

All men and women are fallen and in need of a redeemer.

Conclusion

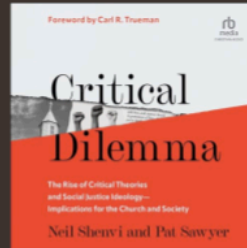
“But what might it look like for the church's politics if we became convinced-really convinced-both that we will have trouble in this world and that Jesus has overcome this world, as he promised? Might we present a strange and winsome confidence that is not desperate to win the culture wars but is also tenderly and courageously committed to the good of others?”

How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age

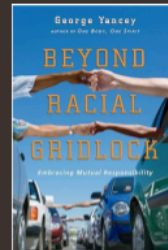
Jonathan Leeman

Resources

Critical Dilemma: The Rise of Critical Theories and Social Justice Ideology: Implications for the Church and Society
Neil Shenvi



Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility
George Yancey

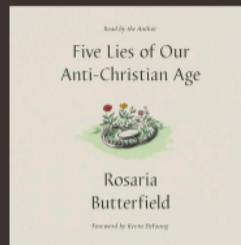


Resources

Gender Ideology: What Do Christians Need to Know?
Sharon James



Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age
Rosaria Butterfield



Resources

Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution

Carl R. Trueman

