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All cultures are not equal. Or at least they are not equal in preparing people to be productive in an advanced economy. The culture of the Plains Indians was designed for nomadic hunters, but is not suited to a First World, 21st-century environment. Nor are the single-parent, antisocial habits, prevalent among some working-class whites; the anti-“acting white” rap culture of inner-city blacks; the anti-assimilation ideas gaining ground among some Hispanic immigrants. These cultural orientations are not only incompatible with what an advanced free-market economy ... [rewards], they are also destructive of a sense of solidarity and reciprocity ... If the bourgeois cultural script — which the upper-middle class still largely observes but now hesitates to preach — cannot be widely reinstated, things are likely to get worse for us all.

Amy Wax and Larry Alexander

[Paying the Price for Breakdown of the Country’s Bourgeois Culture](#)

The Philadelphia Inquirer (9 August 2017)

What are university administrators and faculty so afraid of? The Wax-Alexander op-ed confronted important issues responsibly and with solid grounding in social-science research. Each of these administrative capitulations sends a message to professors not to challenge the reigning ideology. The result is an ever more monolithic intellectual environment on American campuses, where behavioural analyses of social problems may not even be whispered. What happens to America if those banned ideas turn out to be true?

Heather Mac Donald

[Higher Ed’s Latest Taboo Is “Bourgeois Norms”](#)

The Wall Street Journal (18 September 2017)

A better life has always been available to those who reject undisciplined and irresponsible behaviour, and embrace self-determination and personal responsibility. So-called bourgeois values have always empowered blacks to persevere and overcome bitter oppression. They provided the moral “glue” that held the black community together during the hardest of times.

Robert Woodson

[Black Americans Need Bourgeois Norms](#)

The Wall Street Journal (11 October 2017)

The Bourgeois Manifesto

What ails the U.S.? According to Amy Wax and Larry Alexander ([Paying the Price for Breakdown of the Country's Bourgeois Culture](#), *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 August 2017),

Too few Americans are qualified for the jobs available. Male working-age labour-force participation is at Depression-era lows. Opioid abuse is widespread. Homicidal violence plagues inner cities. Almost half of all children are born out of wedlock, and even more are raised by single mothers. Many college students lack basic skills, and high school students rank below those from two dozen other countries.

They might have added that [almost 80% of American workers subsist from one paycheck to the next](#), [the U.S. Government has long been broke](#) and [it's now in worse fiscal shape than any developed nation](#) (see also [this](#)). As in matters economic and military, so too in social disorders: the U.S. is the Western world's leader – and to various extents Australia, Britain, Canada, etc., are compliant followers. What underlies these plagues? Wax and Alexander reckon that

The causes of these phenomena are multiple and complex, but implicated in these and other maladies is the breakdown of ... bourgeois culture. That culture laid out the script we all were supposed to follow: Get married before you have children and strive to stay married for their sake. Get the education you need for gainful employment, work hard, and avoid idleness. Go the extra mile for your employer or client. ... Be neighbourly, civic-minded, and charitable. Avoid coarse language in public. ... Eschew substance abuse and crime.

These basic cultural precepts reigned from the late-1940s [indeed, in English-speaking countries they prevailed at most times from the mid-19th century] to the mid-1960s. They could be followed by people of all backgrounds and abilities, especially when backed up by almost universal endorsement. Adherence was a major contributor to the productivity, educational gains, and social coherence of that period.

Wax and Alexander are hardly uncritical of the years to the mid-1960s. Instead, they're balanced and dispassionate:

Was everything perfect during the period of bourgeois cultural hegemony? Of course not: there was racial discrimination, limited sex roles, and pockets of anti-Semitism. *However, steady improvements for women and minorities were underway ... when bourgeois norms reigned. Banishing discrimination and expanding opportunity does not require the demise of bourgeois culture. Quite the opposite: The loss of bourgeois habits seriously impeded the progress of disadvantaged groups.* That trend also accelerated the destructive consequences of the growing welfare state, which, by taking over financial support of families, reduced the need for two parents. A strong pro-marriage norm might have blunted this effect. Instead, the number of single parents grew astronomically, producing children more prone to academic failure, addiction, idleness, crime, and poverty.

This cultural script began to break down in the late-1960s. A combination of factors — prosperity, the Pill, the expansion of higher education, and the doubts surrounding the Vietnam War — encouraged an anti-authoritarian, adolescent, wish-fulfilment ideal — sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll — that was unworthy of, and unworkable for, a mature, prosperous adult society. This era saw the beginnings of an identity politics that inverted the colour-blind aspirations of civil rights leaders like the Rev. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. into an obsession with race, ethnicity, gender, and now sexual preference [italics added].

Would a revival of bourgeois virtues attenuate or even reverse these afflictions? Most of today's rulers and their stooges in the mainstream media and universities stridently reject Wax's and Alexander's answer:

There is every reason to believe so. *Among those who currently follow the old precepts, regardless of their level of education or affluence, the homicide rate is tiny, opioid addiction is rare, and poverty rates are low.* Those who live by the simple rules that most people used to accept may not end up rich or hold elite jobs, but their lives will go far better than they do

now. ... Schools and neighbourhoods would be much safer and more pleasant. More students from all walks of life would be educated for constructive employment ... *But restoring the hegemony of the bourgeois culture will require the arbiters of culture — the academics, media, and Hollywood — to relinquish multicultural grievance polemics and the preening pretence of defending the downtrodden.* Instead of bashing the bourgeois culture, they should return to the 1950s posture of celebrating it [italics added].

The Wax-Alexander diagnosis and prescription respects evidence and reason; accordingly, genuinely concerned observers and dispassionate analysts – as opposed to frauds, grandstanders, hucksters, posers and shills – have no sensible reason to contest it. Indeed, none other than Barack Obama affirmed bourgeois virtues when he rightly noted that a child reared without a father is 5-20 times more likely to live in poverty, leave school prematurely and commit crimes.¹ Alas, these days within Western universities, no factual utterance and reasoned defence of traditional morality goes undenounced. Confirming yet again that – [with a few honourable exceptions](#) – today’s academics are mostly pathetic clowns and sick jokes, a lynch mob of hysterical [snowflakes](#) condemned Wax and Alexander. In response, Heather Mac Donald wrote ([Higher Ed’s Latest Taboo Is “Bourgeois Norms”](#), *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 September 2017):

¹ “Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives,” said Obama, “we are reminded today that family is the most important. And we are called to recognise and honour how critical every father is to that foundation. They are teachers and coaches. They are mentors and role models. They are examples of success and the men who constantly push us toward it. But if we are honest with ourselves, we’ll admit that what too many fathers also are is missing – missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it.”

He added: “you and I know how true this is in the African-American community. We know that more than half of all black children live in single-parent households, a number that has doubled – doubled – since we were children. We know the statistics – that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and twenty times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioural problems, or run away from home, or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it.” For a transcript of then-Senator Barack Obama’s remarks at the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago, see [Obama’s Father’s Day Remarks](#) (*The New York Times*, 15 June 2008).

To the list of forbidden ideas on American college campuses, add “bourgeois norms” – hard work, self-discipline, marriage and respect for authority. Last month, two law professors published an op-ed in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* calling for a revival of the “cultural script” that prevailed in the 1950s and still does among affluent Americans ...

The op-ed triggered an immediate uproar at the University of Pennsylvania, where one of its authors, Amy Wax, teaches. The dean of the Penn law school, Ted Ruger, published an [op-ed in the student newspaper](#) noting the “contemporaneous occurrence” of [Wax’s and Alexander’s] op-ed and a white-supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Va., and suggesting that Ms Wax’s views were “divisive, even noxious.” Half of Ms Wax’s law-faculty colleagues signed an [open letter](#) denouncing her piece and calling on students to report any “bias or stereotype” they encounter “at Penn Law” (e.g., in Ms Wax’s classroom). Student and alumni petitions poured forth accusing Ms Wax of white supremacy, misogyny and homophobia and demanding that she be banned from teaching first-year law classes [read her reply [here](#); and on the subject of racial bias at Penn, see [this](#)].

Ms Wax’s co-author, Larry Alexander, teaches at the University of San Diego, a Catholic institution. USD seemed to be taking the piece in stride – until last week. The dean of USD’s law school, Stephen Ferruolo, issued a schoolwide memo repudiating Mr Alexander’s article and pledging new measures to compensate “vulnerable, marginalised” students for the “racial discrimination and cultural subordination” they experience. USD’s response is more significant than Penn’s, because it is more surprising. While USD has embraced a “social justice” mission in recent decades, the law school itself has been less politicised. It has one of the highest proportions of non-leftist professors in the country – about a quarter of the faculty. Mr Ferruolo, a corporate lawyer with strong ties to the biotech industry, presented himself until recently as mildly conservative. *If USD is willing to match Penn’s hysterical response to the Wax-Alexander op-ed, is there any educational institution remaining that will defend its faculty members against false accusations of racism should they dissent from orthodoxy?* [italics added]

Mac Donald observed that two aspects of the Wax-Alexander op-ed generated the most vitriol. First, not all cultures are “equal in preparing people to be productive in an advanced economy.” The Ayatollahs, Puritans and Sanhedrin that rule the academy denounced as blasphemy this statement of the obvious:

At Penn, Dean Ruger proclaimed that “as a scholar and educator I reject emphatically any claim that a single cultural tradition is better than all others.” *But that wasn’t the claim that Wax and Alexander were making. Rather, they contended that bourgeois culture is better than underclass culture – specifically, “the single-parent, antisocial habits prevalent among some working-class whites [and] the anti-‘acting white’ rap culture of inner-city blacks.”*

Mac Donald observed that, in their frenzied stampede to convict Wax and Alexander of “white supremacy,” the academic gang ignored the two law profs’ criticism of white underclass behaviour. (By their own “logic,” academics that refuse to condemn underclass “culture” thereby condone and perpetuate it.) Wax’s and Alexander’s second – and, to the uni [stasi](#), intolerable – crime is to commend bourgeois virtues. “Nostalgia for the 1950s breezes over the truth of inequality and exclusion,” five of Penn’s faculty gibbered in yet another laughable [op-ed](#). Actually – and as quoted above – Wax and Alexander explicitly acknowledged that era’s “racial discrimination, limited sex roles, and pockets of anti-Semitism.” Today’s ludicrous campus lightweights almost invariably ignore two deeply embarrassing – to them – truths: first, substantial economic advance – black and white – occurred in the U.S. during the bourgeois 1950s; second, deterioration has been the norm there since the libertine 1960s.

Mac Donald also noted, [as did Wax](#), that “none of [Wax’s and Alexander’s] high-placed critics have engaged with any of their arguments.” Specifically,

Mr Ferruolo’s schoolwide letter was one of the worst examples. The dean simply announced that Mr Alexander’s “views” were not “representative of the views of our law school community” and suggested that they were insensitive to “many students” who feel “vulnerable, marginalised or fearful that they are not welcomed.” *He did not raise any specific objections to Mr Alexander’s arguments, or even reveal what the*

arguments were. Instead, he promised more classes, speakers and workshops on racism; more training on racial sensitivity; and a new committee to devise further diversity measures.

Stronger racial preferences will most certainly follow. The implication of this bureaucratic outpouring is that the law-school faculty is full of bigots. In reality, Mr Alexander ... [is] among the most tolerant people in human history, and every University of San Diego law student is among the most privileged ... *The failure of administrators like Mr Ferruolo to answer delusional student narcissism with obvious truth is an abdication of their responsibility to lead students toward an adult understanding of reality* [italics added; see also [Professors: It's Not OK To Be White](#)].

Most Western Academics, Politicians and Voters Are Marxists

What ails Western nations? Today, most rulers and their puppets in the media and universities are, in effect, Marxists; specifically, they're [useful idiots](#) (examples are countless; recent ones include [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#)).² They incen-

² In [Higher Education's Deeper Ailment](#) (*The Wall Street Journal*, 13 November 2017), John Ellis writes:

"We are now close to the end of a half-century process by which the campuses have been emptied of centrist and right-of-centre voices. Many scholars have studied the political allegiances of the faculty during this time. There have been some differences of opinion about methodology, but the main outline is not in doubt. In 1969 the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education found that there were overall about twice as many left-of-centre as right-of-centre faculty. Various studies document the rise of that ratio to 5 to 1 at the century's end, and to 8 to 1 a decade later, until in 2016 [Mitchell Langbert, Dan Klein, and Tony Quain find](#) it in the region of 10 to 1 and still rising.

"... The imbalance is not only a question of numbers. Well-balanced opposing views act as a corrective for each other: The weaker arguments of one side are pounced on and picked off by the other. Both remain consequently healthier and more intellectually viable. But ... dominance promotes stupidity. As one side becomes numerically stronger, its discipline weakens. The greater the imbalance between the two sides, the more incoherent and irrational the majority will become ... It is important to understand why the radical left cleared the campuses of opposing voices. It was not to advance higher education, for that must involve learning to evaluate competing ideas, to analyse the pros and cons of rival arguments and concepts. Shutting down all but one viewpoint is done to achieve the opposite: to pre-empt

santly spout cant such as “diversity,” “equality” and “sustainability” as means to impose an evil ideology upon the ruled. For their part, most of the benighted, having suffered years of indoctrination (the anointed cunningly mislabel it “education”) and egged by the media, [demand that their rulers supply more Marxism!](#)

1. Consider the ten criteria in Table 1 (next page). Then ask yourself: “with respect to each criterion, do I favour the “communist” or “bourgeois” option? (The quotes in the middle column are the principle demands in Karl Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto* (1848; the passages in the right-hand column underlie my new book *The Bourgeois Manifesto*). Sum your ticks in each column. Are your preferences mostly commie or bourgeois?
2. Request that a friend, neighbour, etc., complete Step #1.
3. Hand Table 1 to any American, Australian, British, Canadian, etc., prof or uni student and request that he complete Step #1. How do his choices compare to yours, your friend’s, neighbour’s, spouse’s, etc.?
4. Using Google searches, etc., it’s easy to demonstrate that so-called “conservatives” such as Tony Abbott, George W. Bush, Stephen Harper, John Howard, Sir John Key, Theresa May, et al., are – never mind that they’d stridently deny it: look instead at their past words and deeds – Marxists!

These days, rulers and their lackeys parrot (many have lost or never acquired the capacity to reason; they’re unable to do anything other than mindlessly emote) a wicked doctrine that has [murdered up to 100 million and impoverished billions of people](#). Materially and morally, it’s now undermining the West: the vital question is whether the decline will be temporary or terminal. There’s no middle ground: Marxism is the mortal enemy of liberty, morality and prosperity; nowadays most academics, politicians and voters are Marxists; hence they’re cold-hearted opponents of independence, [decency, faith and tolerance](#). *They’re a big cause of the problem I call the Distemper of Our Times. Accordingly, they implacably reject the Distemper’s antidote – namely the root-and-branch eradication of Marxism from campus, state and society as a whole.*

analysis and understanding. Only in the absence of competing ideas can the radical sect that now controls so much of the campuses hope to thrive and increase its numbers, because it can’t survive open debate and analysis, and its adherents know it.”

**Table 1:
Contrasting the Bourgeois and Communist Manifestos**

Criterion	Communist Manifesto	Bourgeois Manifesto
1. Private Property	"Abolition of private property in land and application of all rents of land to public purpose."	Private property is economically and morally indispensable; the market is morally and empirically superior to the state.
2. Taxation	"A heavy progressive or graduated income tax."	Taxation is theft; theft is a crime; hence taxation is a crime.
3. State Ownership of Property (I)	"Abolition of all rights of inheritance."	The egalitarian ethic is morally reprehensible and destructive of morality and private property.
4. State Ownership of Property (II)	"Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels."	Abolish foreign aid and managed trade; establish free trade.
5. The Central Bank	"Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly."	The central bank inflates the boom that causes the bust; therefore abolish it.
6. State Ownership of Property (III)	"Centralisation of the means of communication and transportation in the hands of the state."	Decentralise, deregulate and privatise everything and everywhere.
7. State Ownership of Property (IV)	"Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan."	See points #1-6.
8. State Ownership of Property (V)	"Equal obligation of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture."	Egalitarianism necessitates coercion – and is thus reprehensible.
9. Economic and Social Engineering	"Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equable distribution of the population."	Abolish "social policy" – especially affirmative action, ethnic, gender and racial quotas, redistribution of income, minimum wage, etc.
10. Indoctrination of Children and Control of the Family	"Free education for all children in government schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production."	The welfare state is "legalised" theft; the family, Church, etc., are foundations of liberty and morality; hence free the family from the state's control.

Marxists Hate – and Thus Strive to Undermine – Western Civilisation

Marxism, to recall James Burnham's apt phrase, is the "ideology of Western suicide."³ It's logically incoherent and empirically false; moreover, it has repeatedly generated catastrophes that have cost scores of millions and blighted billions of lives. Underlying this malevolence, Marxists (since the 1960s, they've stolen the label "liberal") insist that human nature is neither fixed nor merely changeable: instead, it's putty in their hands. Indeed, they arrogantly insist, they can perfect human nature – and hence human beings. According to this mindset, traditional morals and institutions intolerably impede the inevitable progress that Marxist shepherds will lead; hence the proletarian herd *must* obey their masters – or else! These days, professors and politicians poke their noses anywhere and everywhere: there's no "problem" they don't think they can solve.

Logic and history don't budge Marxists in the slightest: they're simply immune to reason and evidence. *In their eyes, allegedly good intentions matter and demonstrably bad results don't.* Whether in the Soviet Union in the 1920-1930s, America's inner-cities since the 1960s or Venezuela and Zimbabwe today, catastrophic consequences are simply denied, ignored or blamed on capitalism. Marxism isn't just false, illogical and indefensible: it's utterly hypocritical. In the 1930s, Reds condemned "capitalist" poverty in the U.S. – but cruelly denied state-induced mass famine in the Soviet Union (and similarly in China in the 1950s, etc.). From the 1970s, liberals strenuously denounced atrocities upon blacks committed by white South Africans but mostly blithely ignored massacres of blacks by blacks elsewhere in Africa. "The liberal," Burnham astutely noted, "is hard put to condemn that group morally for acts that he would not hesitate to condemn in his fellows" (p. 225). Nowadays, if the bomb-thrower is Muslim, then any mention (never mind criticism) of Islam is taboo; but if the mass shooter is American, then condemnation of that country's alleged "gun culture" is compulsory! This liberal-Marxist guilt, Burnham concluded, metastasises into "a generalised hatred of Western civilisation and of own country as part of the West" (ibid). That, in a nutshell, is the crazy creed of today's typical academic.

³ See James Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism* (John Day & Co., 1964).

What, Then, To Do?

Unfortunately, the Marxist plague isn't going to disappear soon from Western campuses, legislatures and media. The solution to the Distemper of Our Times is thus disengagement – what I dub the Robinson Crusoe Ethic – from the destructive mainstream. Figuratively and literally, the bourgeoisie mind their own business. They thereby reject the fallacy that “we” can accomplish more by sharing effort and reward. Harry Browne (*How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World*, Liam Works, 1997, pp. 67-87) labels this fallacy the “Group Trap.” *You achieve more, ethically and economically, when you privatise effort, reward and their linkage – i.e., when your rewards depend primarily upon your own and not upon others' efforts.* When you join a group that collectivises inputs and outcomes, you squander precious time, effort and resources on an endeavour whose chance of success is miniscule and whose probability of emitting damaging consequences is great.

The ruler(s) of such a group, such as a political party or trade union, aggressively insist – and its followers tamely accept – that the group is, in effect, a single unit; accordingly, members fervently believe, it acts in unison. Only in this manner, insist collectivism's proponents, can the group's members achieve their common purpose. *The fatal flaw is that groups don't act: only individuals do.* Further, each individual will tend, if he's free to follow his conscience and self-interest, to act differently. Yet most people who join a group insist that it will promote “the common good.” The problem is that many people – not least politicians and unionists – arrogantly regard their self-interest and “the common good” as synonyms.

The falsity of its underlying assumptions – what's good for the shepherd is good for the sheep, that the group's members willingly and indefinitely sacrifice in favour of this alleged good, etc. – eventually undermines any collective effort. What occurs will at best be a cordial stalemate whereby inconsistent and often conflicting goals will be compromised into meaningless platitudes. Usually, increasingly “gridlock” erupts, no compromise of means and ends is possible and no coherent step towards the muddled and allegedly common objective occurs. Indeed, the typical result of collective action is the rule of the anointed few and the subjugation of the benighted many, i.e., the [iron law or oligarchy](#). Hence the bourgeoisie rejects collectivism: specifically, it knows that [politics isn't our salvation and politicians aren't our saviours](#).

The Bourgeois Manifesto

Wax's and Alexander's recent op-ed, the demented reaction thereto and today's Marxist zeitgeist provide timely background for my new book *The Bourgeois Manifesto: The Robinson Crusoe Ethic and the Distemper of Our Times*. It asks: what ails Western nations? The Great War (1914-1918), which the American diplomat and historian, George Kennan, rightly dubbed the West's "seminal catastrophe," triggered their decline. In its wake, most people's time horizons gradually became too short to generate the prosperity they presently demand – and which politicians frantically assert is their "entitlement." *Yet short-termism and promissory politics are merely surface manifestations; what fundamentally plagues us is the idol of democracy.* Reasoning from first principles – something that's alien to most faculty and politicians – the book demonstrates that debt, deficit, socialism (and thus penury, slavery and war) have inevitably followed in democracy's wake. It also shows that very few democratic rulers' time horizons were shorter than Winston Churchill's; hardly any, in other words, were more anti-bourgeois. Accordingly, few people inflicted so much damage upon Britain and the world. Churchill's heirs – today's implacably anti-bourgeois rulers and their stooges in the universities and mainstream media – exacerbate democracy's pernicious effects.

From their sinecures on campus and in parliament, Marxist fanatics of democracy disdainfully ignore or vehemently deny the necessary conditions of liberty, peace and prosperity, i.e., private property, sound money, genuine savings, long time horizons and entrepreneurial profit. *The Bourgeois Manifesto* assembles these elements into a guide that circumvents the mainstream's moral morass and economic cesspit. Its lodestar is the ethic – which Benjamin Franklin, a founder of the University of Pennsylvania, epitomised and which its delusional professoriate now despises – of the owners of businesses and of self-financed retirees. The bourgeoisie deserve analysis, praise and emulation because its members possess the antidote – the Robinson Crusoe Ethic – to the Distemper of Our Times. *The Bourgeois Manifesto* is available in both hard copy and e-book (Kindle) versions from Amazon in [Australia](#), [Britain](#), [Canada](#), [India](#) and [the U.S.](#)

Chris Leithner