

## **AGAINST COUNSELS OF DEFEAT**

*February 11, 2022*

To defeat your enemy, you must know your enemy. Therefore, we must know what the Left is. I use a consistent core definition—the Left is those who follow the prime commandments of limitless emancipation and forced egalitarianism. You can further define the Left by example, beginning with the revolutionaries of 1789, and drawing a line through the Paris Commune, the Bolsheviks, Mao, and the cretins of 1968. Where does that line extend today? At this moment, most would say it has emerged as “wokeism,” the self-given catchall term for those consumed by the latest iteration of Left ideology. Quite a few on the Right fear wokeism and predict its dominance in apocalyptic terms. I am here to preach the opposite; I will explain why wokeism (which I will call late-stage leftism, or LSL) is no special threat, rather merely a manifestation of the centuries-old scourge of the Left, and a devolved, last-gasp one at that.

Over the past thirty years, the Left has conquered every center of power in America. What this implies for our future divides the modern Right. Pessimists point to statistics and past trends to counsel that some decades-long horror is our future. Optimists, rarer than the pessimists, acknowledge that such data appears against them, but they appeal to history and a higher level of generality, to principles of reality and human nature they believe dictate a new hope. On the pessimist side, very recently an article by N. S. Lyons received wide play; it is worth reading, and I will to some degree use his piece as a foil today (or go here for a follow-up from Niccolo Soldo). Or for a take centered on the related decay of Christendom, you can read another recent well-received article by the philosopher Chantal Delsol. (Another eternal pessimist is Rod Dreher, whose proffered solution, the Benedict Option, has no provision for any defensive action against attack, and is therefore pure fantasy.)

To counter these, I can't point you to any notable optimist pieces, except by me. Unalloyed optimism exists mostly on the pagan or vitalist Right. You do get some optimism from people like Michael Anton and the Claremont Institute, along with analysis such as Anton's recent excellent article “Unprecedented,” but it is very tempered optimism.

Nonetheless, I am right and the pessimists are wrong. The evidence set out by the pessimists is true, as far as it goes, but we must always avoid the temptation to put blinders on ourselves by predicting the continuation of the thing that is happening, which is the error into which pessimists have fallen.

This is not to say that LSL can be defeated by electoral action in the present dispensation. There is no political solution. We will not return to earlier times, when it seemed like Left and Right were reasonably balanced (though even that balance was just an illusion, at least since roughly 1920). Certainly no prominent political opponent of LSL, say the estimable Christopher Rufo, fighter against the anti-white program of Critical Race Theory, has any chance whatsoever of accomplishing anything lasting, if LSL, that is to say, the Left, is not first broken completely and permanently. If Rufo won everything he wanted—let's say some set of aggressive legislative action, not struck down by the courts, which was then actually enforced and enforceable, what would our reward be? The world of 2018, and the same teachers now barred from teaching CRT instead doing it on the sly, with the approval of all those who oversee them, while continuing to add fresh Left offenses to mankind such as sexual grooming of young children. No, the idea of a leftist in American life must be made akin to the idea of a Hittite in American life—an impossibility, because none remain. That's not feasible working inside our current structures, which are wholly within our regime's, that is, within the Left's, control.

Nor is our elite going to abandon LSL on their own, realizing that it contains the seeds of their own destruction. Far too many of the elite are committed ideologues of the Left, and those who are not, while when we win they will certainly join the new dispensation, shedding their past ideas like so much worn clothing, are not going to now swim against the tide. This is particularly true when, in our nearly completely fake economy, massive financial rewards accrue to those who are Left, and ruin awaits anyone who betrays today's Popular Front. Change is only going to come when we bring it about ourselves, at a moment dictated by larger forces (for more thoughts about which you can read my recent analysis of Stephen Kotkin's *Uncivil Society*, about the 1989 fall of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe). As Lenin said, timing is all.

We should be prepared, and to be prepared, as I say, we must understand. I want to discuss what is perhaps the most common trope across the Right—that LSL is a religion, sometimes even called the “New Faith,” with the implicit (or explicit) corollary that being a religion makes it much more powerful and hard to defeat. This is completely wrong. (It is relevant that once, long ago, the “New Faith” was Czesław Miłosz’s term for Communism.)

It is true that the beliefs of LSL are largely metaphysical beliefs—as with all Left movements, the questions are not policy questions, such as the appropriate marginal tax rate, but existential questions. The Left has always offered, and LSL also offers, an approach toward transcendence, toward participating in some greater effort, outside of and bigger than the individual, making his life seem meaningful. LSL tends even more toward transcendence than past Left incarnations. First, our society as a whole no longer offers any meaning, for most people, through traditional channels, which necessarily fuels a search for new meanings. And second, LSL’s myriad internal inconsistencies and stupidities require some overarching framework that supports the suspension of disbelief, such that the adherent does not have to notice he lives embedded in insane beliefs that are disconnected from reality.

But it is false that these “faith-beliefs” have an “iron grip on the individual and collective mind” (in the words of Lyons). He argues that liquid modernity is the laboratory culture in which LSL flourishes—what he fails to see is that this flourishing is merely like the scum of bacteria on an agar plate, wide but not deep (though even Lyons says that those actually subscribing to LSL are, by surveys, less than ten percent of the population). If the twentieth century taught us anything, it is that if the masses become ideologized, they will switch their ideology if it fails them, or even just if it becomes socially desirable to do so, often to one they hated the day before. The most famous example of this is how, as Patrick Leigh Fermor and Sebastian Haffner noted in descriptions of their time spent in 1930s Germany, huge numbers of Communists and Social Democrats changed allegiance overnight from Marx to Hitler—and then away from Hitler a few years later. Far from an iron grip, political ideologies tied only to earthly transcendence are cast off, by most, as easily as a snake’s skin. Certainly, a few individual ideologues (Lenin comes to mind again) keep the faith through thick and thin, but

such men are vanishingly rare. If the Right can break its sclerosis and become ascendant, most of those adhering to LSL will rapidly adhere to the new political tendency in town.

You can see the weak grip of LSL, and how it differs from a real religion, in practical matters. First, adherents of LSL never, ever, are willing to, or do, suffer in the least for their beliefs. Quite the contrary—they are always rewarded, usually (and intentionally) at the expense of others who are not as fiercely demonstrative of their beliefs, or who, horrors, are not believers. LSL is therefore not really even an ideology (which, as James Burnham defined it, is “a more or less systematic and self-contained set of ideas supposedly dealing with the nature of reality . . . and calling for a commitment independent of specific experience or events.”). A religion is certainly an ideology, and it is true that for almost all LSL adherents, no possible experience or event would change their beliefs, since they are disconnected from reality—but the most modest incentives would, which shows the supposed religion simply does not have the hold of a true religion. Which is why modern Left ideologies are subject to preference cascades that destroy them.

Second, LSL has no reach as a creed outside of a narrow slice of atomized and dying Western cultures. You will have noted that BLM riots in 2020 kept well away from Hispanic inner-city neighborhoods, or any part of the country where white people and law enforcement not in thrall to LSL lived. A few astroturfed protests occurred in other Western countries where LSL already exists, but no new converts were made. LSL simply can never convert most cultures; it can damage the cultures in which its filth has managed to find a foothold, namely decayed Western cultures, but is powerless beyond that. It has no universal pull. Try organizing a BLM arson fest in Moscow or Budapest; the citizens will beat you to a pulp before the policemen arrive to do it again. Third, those in the grip of LSL have extremely few children; all successful religions encourage many children. Seen a Shaker lately? No, you haven't. My point is not so much that LSL will die out from lack of children, it is that a religion that promises nothing positive about the future, such that children seem like a good idea, is not an actual religion. LSL is thus nothing like early Christianity, or early Islam, or Mormonism; it is not a religion in the ways that matter. (I suspect that all those who claim LSL is a religion are not strongly religious themselves.)

Nonetheless, by the pessimists, the erosion of Christianity in the modern West is often compared to the waning of paganism in Rome, with the conclusion that LSL is the new Christianity, replacing the old religion, and with the implication that we face millennia of its dominance. I am not sure how much the first part of this analogy holds up, but I am sure the second part is silly. What will be remains to be seen, but LSL bears nothing but surface comparison to early Christianity. That, in Delsol's words, a normative reversal can occur when a new religion takes hold, and that LSL is a reversal of everything Christian, while true, is a logical fallacy if used to prove that LSL is the new dominant religion. It is accurate that LSL is filling, in part, the void left by the ebbing Christianity. It does not follow LSL is itself a religion. Rather, it is grasping at straws by an unmoored elite realizing that it offers nothing of value and that its days are numbered; they have been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and they seek anything that will let them pretend this is not true.

An underlying dynamic on display in LSL, which tends also to create behaviors that mimic religious belief, is elite overproduction, something Peter Turchin made famous as a partial explanation for our society's instability. By showing how zealous you are to those with rewards to distribute (almost all stolen from those not Left), you can get a leg up in the rat race for a limited number of positions with adequate pay and prestige, even though you lack any relevant abilities or qualifications. (This effect is made less powerful because the job market in America is still somewhat free. By contrast, Communist regimes were the sole employer, giving them an unparalleled ability to force compliance; LSL has less power over employment, though obviously a great deal in some areas, and total in the professional-managerial elite.) Lyons says LSL adherents have somewhat alleviated this dog-eat-dog competition by "creating their own job market," that is to say, by erecting a complex of jobs available only to the Left to perform LSL work. Maybe so, but that merely stretches out the day of judgment, and you can't levitate fake forever. And anyway all this is just one, extreme, manifestation of that the vast majority of jobs in America today are BS jobs, adding no value whatsoever to society. It is self-limiting, because eventually the stupidity will be squeezed out of the economy by simple operation of reality.

A second pillar of Lyons' argument is that LSL is here to stay because, as a percentage, the young are by far the farthest left age cohort. He argues that such cohorts do not change their views over time, and thus change is generational and therefore slow. (Tanner Greer has expanded on this argument.) Lyons cites what everybody cites: Robert Putnam's analysis in *Bowling Alone*. But Putnam only studied a few decades in postwar American history, when America was still strong (though with the growing problems Putnam identifies, and many more), and that was a unique time and place. I disagree that cohorts stay the same as a historical matter; as I noted above, in most of the twentieth century, mass ideological change within all cohorts was common. (Along similar lines, other recent American generations, X and Z, were also supposedly in thrall to the Left when they were young, and they are not anymore.) Today's young have not converted to LSL as their permanent creed. They are lost, and quite a few have grabbed hold, for one reason or another, to this set of beliefs. This tendency is abetted, to be sure, by the hardcore, long-duration-thinking Left, and its control of tools of indoctrination, including social media, which creates great pressure to unthinkingly adopt political stances. Wikipedia, to take just one example, is aggressively curated to be an engine of Left propaganda. The effect of that propaganda, incorporated verbatim in innumerable crappy term papers, is, however, more analogous to casting a spell than to true indoctrination. When you live within a delusion, leaving it does not require conversion, but merely disillusionment. In this case, that disillusionment is provided by any alternative source that exposes Wikipedia's lies (and the lies of the young's teachers). Fear of this dynamic is one major source of the current Left rage and hysteria over Joe Rogan.

That the young are not actually wedded to LSL is evident for another reason—LSL is not primarily a political philosophy, it is a mental illness, the sour fruit of safetyism, feminization, and the internet. (To be fair, Lyons agrees with this.) And that was before the insane reaction to the Wuhan Plague turbocharged mental illness among the young. Really, much of LSL is a type of hysteria (which no doubt accounts for its distinctly feminized characteristics), and hysterias are not lasting—when you slap a hysteric across the face, she calms down. (Boys, don't hit girls.) When somewhere between 15% and 50+% of those born after 1996 say they are on the homosexual spectrum (a spectrum that is itself pure

fantasy), reality has long since left the building and is burning rubber for the county line. We are living in a diseased fantasy, not a political frame. I think it clear that youth LSL is not some fearsome monolith, but merely the last wobbles of a top whose spin is coming to an end. It's dramatic, but it's indicative of system failure, not power. When the top falls over, everything will be reset.

This becomes even clearer if you examine the historical antecedents to LSL, Left movements that had actual coherence. Certainly the ideology of the revolutionaries of 1789 was pernicious and anti-human. It denied reality—but it had not become completely unmoored from reality, believing that it could be changed by wishing. Yet it still destroyed itself, because the ideologues trapped within it could not stop their train from hurtling ever further Left, until common sense overtook society and Left leaders were sent posthaste to the guillotine. Unlike LSL, however, if you look at the French revolutionaries, or at the Bolsheviks, or Mao, it is true that these movements had many of the indicia of a religion. Famously, many Old Bolsheviks, when executed after show trials in the 1930s, went to their deaths willingly, seeing themselves as sacrifices necessary to advance the greater, inevitable historical goal. (This was memorably portrayed in Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*.) Even the Communist satellite regimes of postwar Eastern Europe had many who believed, as Milosz detailed, in the New Faith. But LSL is the farce stage of Left history; its decline in comparison to its predecessors merely proves its "late-stage" character. No adherent of LSL will die for LSL; he won't even suffer the least discomfort. In fact, he demands additional comforts, in the form of rewards, financial and emotional, and when he cosplays at direct action in the street, he inevitably flees if confronted with any opposition, or if the agents of the regime assigned to guard and protect his attacks fail in their duty. The young gender nonbinaries of LSL, and Antifa girly-men, are not today's Red Guards, nor will they ever be, because the first time the face of one is smashed in, the rest are going to stay home. Nor is any metamorphosis of LSL towards the harder-edged past movements of the Left on the horizon. Nobody is coming to save the soyboys of LSL from their own stupidity.

Intelligence and competence, not just bravery, is another area in which LSL is sorely lacking relative to its historical forebears. If Ibram X. Kendi is your high priest, which he is for LSL adherents, you are in

trouble, because he is an obviously stupid grifter, albeit one with a generous endowment of low cunning. He is not like Trotsky, or Lenin, or Stalin, or anybody who ever accomplished anything of substance on the Left. That's just one example, though. Every prominent proponent of LSL I can think of has low general intelligence and zero charisma (most are heinously ugly to boot, probably not a coincidence). Those on the Left with high intelligence either object to LSL, seeing that it is harming their goals and plans, or much more often, simply keep silent (and perhaps are changing their views internally; we will find out). Either approach will not bear fruit; they are stuck on the freight train hurtling down the tracks toward the inevitable Left crackup.

So what would defeating LSL look like? Lyons asks "who's going to stop?" the pro-CRT teachers, and by extension, LSL generally. A good question, but baked into that cake is that nobody is even trying. We have a pretty good idea of what would happen if real force were used. If a strong society passed appropriate legislation, and this was enforced, not only by the courts and the administrative system, but by social pressure, and by extra-judicial incentives and punishments against persons and property as necessary, CRT would disappear overnight. Some of its proponents would, or would be forced to, leave town, but most would simply toe the new line, abandoning their living within a lie, what Milosz called the self-deluding practice of *Ketman*, and soon come to support and believe in the new line. This isn't possible in isolation. I mean a total remaking of society is necessary first, not just electoral success with minor follow-through quickly frustrated by the real powers in the regime, who are not elected. But once we have that, we have an easy path to defeat LSL and all its adherents.

Perhaps the most arresting claim of Lyons's piece is "But it seems to me the woke revolution [analogous to Mao's], as co-opted by the elite [as Mao intended], is being tailored to point not towards dissolution and lawless chaos forever, but towards a reordering that brings with it a great centralization and unification of power." This sounds dangerous, but is not likely, nor does Lyons offer any reasoning for how our fragile regime could accomplish anything of the sort, when it cannot keep the lights on or the shelves stocked. The ascendancy of the Left in America today, the result of the long march through the institutions, was based on a very definite historical moment, coming after World War



II, with ever-growing economies fueled by petroleum and technology, and a ruling class not sufficiently attuned to the dangers of Left ideology. The totalitarian panopticon is not arriving, and there will be no centralization and unification of Left power, which has already passed its high water mark. In fact, technology will exacerbate the inevitable collapse of LSL, a lesson we can learn from the collapse of Communism in 1989 (again, my piece on Kotkin's book is really a companion to this piece). It is true that the Right has no interest in a counter-march. That's because the Right doesn't offer transcendence. It doesn't have to offer a counter-ideology, however. It only has to break the power of the Left, remove recalcitrant leftists from the body politic by any means necessary, and offer a competent path to human flourishing. That it does not offer a counter-ideology will make it much stronger and longer-lasting in the long run.

Big talk, big talk, say my readers. How do we get there? Let's talk about practical matters. As many, including Lyons, have pointed out, the enormous amounts of money available to, and spent by, the Left is a problem. Most visibly this is the hundreds of billions spent annually by the massive Left complex of foundations, NGOs, and so forth, from the Ford Foundation on down. Less visibly this is the regime media complex, which uses its money to broadcast continual propaganda, Anton's Narrative and Megaphone. It's not only the promulgation of such propaganda; the money also allows its creation, as in sending reporters to locations of important events, where they baldly lie, but are able to create an appearance of verisimilitude by their physical presence. The Right has, by comparison, a tiny percentage of these financial resources—far less than one percent of them, maybe a hundred times less than one percent. And most of the time it uses its financial resources poorly, usually to help advance the goals of the Left, as those trusted by ordinary people on the Right betray them to curry favor with the Left.

What's the solution? That's easy. Seize the money; all of it. I would (will?) simply confiscate all wealth of any foundation, NGO, entity, or person that has participated in any meaningful degree in furthering the goals of the Left. This includes facially neutral groups such as Catholic Charities, which in practice are used by the Left, for goals such as forcing aliens here illegally onto communities that have no desire for their presence. The money of any very rich person (say, owning above net

assets of \$10 million) who has substantially contributed to Left causes will also be confiscated (including assets held outside the United States, on pain of imprisonment or worse). Laurene Powell Jobs, George Soros, Bill and Melinda Gates, Larry Fink, and all other hugely destructive people (most of whom either did not earn, or stole, their money) will be permitted to retain only a nominal amount of total assets, perhaps \$50,000. (Many will also be lustrated and rusticated, but that's another story.) True, if the power to create these outcomes arises, it will likely be as a result of, or downstream from, economic collapse and other spicy events, so many of these fortunes may not be as great, but that does not change the general principle, which is of crucial importance. The money, of course, will be redirected to appropriate ends, including rewarding those who took risks to defeat the Left.

How will this happen? Lyons correctly says that the Right will do nothing even if given great electoral victories in 2022 or 2024. What he ignores is that the Right doesn't have to do anything; the Left will get the party started for them, because they cannot help themselves, and their reach always exceeds their grasp. There is no way the Left can dial back their program, their demands, to something that does not eat itself; they cannot limit themselves, even as LSL exhibits obvious increasing divergence from reality. Like the scorpion on the turtle's back, it is in their nature. Lenin could change course, for a short time. Not today's Left, mostly because they are stupid, but also because there is no single leader, no Blue Caesar, and there cannot be, as I have outlined elsewhere. As Malcolm Kyeyune has ably illustrated, using the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as a historical precedent, the Left already deployed all its possible power in 2020. There are no more adherents to gain, no more power centers to conquer; from here, their power can only erode, and when your house of cards is built on sand, trying to deploy the same range of power again is unlikely to be a winning strategy—especially when the regime is facing an economic catastrophe, combined with a humiliating comedown from superpower status. Much of the power of LSL is a function of LSL projecting that it is powerful; it follows that when this spell is broken, its power will collapse, in a step function, as most collapses are. Lyons refers to a possible “Second Woke Crusade.” Yeah, that's not going to work out; their violence cannot extend beyond where it did without receiving much more violence, and much more

effective violence, in return, and that assumes that people do not decide they can improve their situation by destroying the Left—if they do, the regime will be overthrown within days, just as was Nicolae Ceausescu.

Most people are fed up, more than you might think—but as under late-stage Communism, the regime expends inordinate resources trying to keep those opposing the regime silent and separated, feeling isolated and alone. But if you want some amusement, and some optimism, listen to Kid Rock's latest release (though you will have to have a high tolerance for bad language). Maybe it is true, after all, as the internet's disappointed pioneers once hoped, that you can't stop the signal.

It's inevitable that we win—or rather that they lose. (René Girard has some interesting things to say to this point.) The precise mechanism I cannot say. Certainly, at some point a preference cascade will enable the Right to destroy the Left. What will replace it is not necessarily better; our society has huge problems beyond simply having been poisoned by the Left. It is possible that, as James Poulos predicts, or hopes, the resilience of Christianity might create a religious revival, something Delsol rejects. I only predict the broad outlines, but those are, in short, that the Left is going to lose its power within the next ten years (probably only after widespread violence, however), and that LSL will be looked back on as the equivalent of mesmerism.

What if I'm wrong? I could be wrong about many things, or at least many things I predict for the future. One often hears, quoting Adam Smith, "There is a great deal of ruin in a nation." But he meant economic ruin, not cultural ruin, and he would have found the pathologies of today's ruling class nearly incomprehensible—most likely comparing it to the Rome of Emperor Heliogabalus, though that was only a pale shadow of the nastiness of today's ruling class regime. Yet, if the regime stays stable for decades, despite my confident belief it is on its last legs, and only awaits the inevitable crisis, I'm going to look stupid. One doesn't want to be a Millerite, rejiggering one's prophecies every time the apocalypse fails to arrive. If twenty years from now, everything is the same, but worse, I'll look very foolish. I'll take that bet, though. And if I am wrong, maybe I will join the winning team, and announce my new status as a non-binary twinkletoes. Or I will take up full-time gardening. Many possible futures await.

You may say my Sullan solutions are insane. No, they are simply inevitable, and there are none so blind as those who will not see. Hold a mirror to your face, and look not at your face, but over your shoulder, at history. You will see I am right.