

Where Do We Go From Here?

Part 2



By Steven Yates

Getting Our Minds Right

Frodo: I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.

Gandalf: So do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.

—*Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001).

In Part 1, we saw:

- **Election 2020 was stolen.** The evidence is being ruthlessly suppressed. People are losing jobs for speaking up. There's nothing we can do about this but remain calm, rational, and strategically-minded.
- **Conservatives face double-standards.** Free speech is under attack, and we see purges reminiscent of an incipient dictatorship, the "dictator" (so far) being an alliance of corporate behemoths. Sleepy Joe may not be Joe Stalin, meanwhile, but his signing a new "domestic terrorism" bill aimed at Trump-era conservatives relabeled *extremists* in the wake of "1/6" [is now on the table](#). There will be no legal controls on cultural left defamation and possibly even violence directed our way.
- **Libertarian arguments** that "these are private companies" are foolish. They misgrasp how power operates in the

real world and play into the hands of the *enemies* of freedom.

- **The cultural left is now empowered more than ever before**, via the Democrat Party, Big Tech, and other corporations (all sizes) who drank the “white fragility” Kool-aid. Biden is already [opening the borders](#). Motivated by foreign interests? Probably. By anti white racism? Almost certainly!
- **Expect the left to go after guns**, possibly after a false flag event at an airport or possibly a state capitol, although it could be anywhere that will make an impact and be used to generate hysteria.
- **If the Republican Party pulls away from Trumpism but remains clueless and directionless**, this guarantees a One Party State for the foreseeable future.
- **The country we grew up in is gone**. “Taking back America” is not presently a live option, and so we need to think about separation: spiritually, psychologically, educationally, and politically-economically (in that order), according to the principles we wish to live by.

All this said – it is essential *not* to put cultural Marxism* or globalism on a pedestal. One person emailed me recently and opined that the globalists are in panic mode. I agree. [Cultural Marxist*](#) efforts to undermine conservative Patriots in “white America” have *failed*. The fact that Trump was elected at all is proof of that. He got over 74 million votes last November.

As for globalists, more people today know about them than ever before. However loud the bleats of *conspiracy theory, conspiracy theory, conspiracy theory*, this genie is *not* going back in the bottle. The truth is, *they are running out of time, and they know it.*

But let’s not kid ourselves. We’ve lost some major battles recently. I ended Part 1 promising to work out specifics of, “Where do we go from here?” given our present dismal reality.

The first steps won't seem obvious or immediately practical, but bear with me here.

We have to start by getting our minds right. Going off half-cocked will accomplish nothing except costing more livelihoods, and that's if we're lucky. As we'll shortly see, controlling our emotions and instead thinking this through will give us an instant advantage. Leftists go off emotion. We don't have that luxury.

So first, *what is your worldview?* Is it God-based and rooted in a transcendent reality, or is it human-centered and rooted exclusively in *this* world? Why this is important: different worldviews yield different answers to basic questions about the human condition, what is possible, and what we might do in our present situation.

I argue [elsewhere](#) that if your worldview is secular and materialist, then in the end there is no hope. Not really. You came out of nothing and will return to nothing. In between gulfs of nothingness you get a mixture of pain, some pleasure, amidst distressingly little that makes sense. Secularism offers *surrogates* for a meaningful life: at best, wealth and success as society defines these; perhaps a quest for fame and celebrity hood on social media. Or buying bitcoin and hoping you don't lose your shirt. Getting lost in the details of a science. Or, perhaps, recreational drugs to escape into your head. Becoming a sex or porn addict. Some combination of these.

Joining a tribe. Getting on the "woke" bandwagon. Or the QAnon deformation: in my humble opinion it is that, as no one knows who "Q" even is, anymore than we knew who "PropOrNot" was. As education has collapsed and society has enstupidated itself, it has become harder to see false rabbit trails for what they are, and even some Trump supporters have succumbed to *the-mass-arrests-start-any-day-now* nonsense. Trust the Plan. Right.

(I said you might not like some of this. I wasn't lying.)

We either get *back to basics* or else!

Pascal once said (I paraphrase) that people divide into two groups: those who have found God and serve Him, and those who have not found God and seek Him. You don't want to be in a third category, which seems to be a majority in post-industrial, postmodern civilization: those who have not found God and couldn't care less.

There is solid actionable advice just in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7). Do not worship false gods or idols (like Mammon). Do not curse using God's name. Do not steal. Do not murder. Do not covet. Honor your father and your mother (*family* has a sacred foundation). And so on. Jesus went further: do not be angry with or insult your brothers (Matt. 5:22). Attempt reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24). Do not lust (Matt. 5:28). Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No' (Matt. 5:37). Love your enemies with *agape* love (Matt. 5:44).

None of us do these perfectly. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Hence the need for salvation through Christ alone ("I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" – John 14:6). What of those who never heard of Christianity? (this is for stubborn skeptics): "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse*" (Rom. 1:18-20).

Medieval philosopher-theologian St. Thomas Aquinas held that we learn something of God through Nature. From him and his

successors came Natural Law, a tradition sadly almost forgotten today, but indicating why certain behaviors and ways of organizing society pass the test of time, while others fail miserably. Conservatives should rediscover Natural Law (leaving aside hesitations some might harbor over its association with corrupt Catholicism – “let he who is without sin cast the first stone” (John 8:7)).

I believe Stoicism can help us, too, even if it is a mostly secular philosophy. For those stubborn skeptics I mentioned, it is the only option (yes, I dialogue with non-Christians).

Stoicism is a realistic philosophy. It has gotten attention in recent years. This should not surprise us at all.

It was founded in ancient Greece by a man named Zeno, then made its way to ancient Rome where its spokesmen ranged from Epictetus, born into slavery, to those born to rule such as Marcus Aurelius. Another Stoic luminary was close to power but in a worse personal situation than any of us can imagine: Seneca, first tutor and then advisor to the psychopathic Nero, commanded finally to commit suicide (he did). I doubt any of us will live a life as potentially miserable as was Seneca's. Despite it all he kept writing and advising, and his words resonate through the ages, words to keep in mind should we face a rough road ahead.

Those were turbulent times just like these, and arguably deadlier. Which would you prefer: a job loss and an attack by the Twitter mob, or being skewered in public with a sword and left in the street to bleed to death? Exiled from the public square, or crucified, as was Jesus and many early Christians? [Crucifixion](#) was one of the most brutal forms of execution ever thought up by sinful men.

Many Stoic writings have been lost. Historians have determined from what we have that early Stoics divided their philosophy into three parts: *physics*, *logic*, and *ethics*. *Physics* is how

the world works. *Logic* is our thought about how the world works. *Ethics* tells us how to live, given that the world works in specific ways, and given that our best thought can determine better versus worse.

The Stoics saw the world as governed by cause-and-effect – a commonsense perspective. Where they go next is very *uncommon*.

Epictetus counseled at the beginning of his *Enchiridion* (*Manual*) to distinguish what you can control from what you can't:

"Of things some are in our power, and others are not. In our power are opinion, movement toward a thing, desire, aversion, turning from a thing;... Not in our power are the body, property, reputation, offices, and in a word, whatever are not our own acts.... Remember then, that if you think ... the things which are in the power of others to be your own, you will be hindered, you will lament, you will be disturbed... If then you desire ... great things remember that you must not (attempt to) lay hold of them with a small effort; but you must leave alone some things entirely, and postpone others for the present... Straightway then practice saying to every harsh appearance: You are an appearance, and in no manner what you appear to be. Then examine it by the rules which you possess, and by this first and chiefly, whether it relates to the things which are in our power or to things which are not in our power...."

We can control, with mindful practice, our emotions and thoughts. And from this, our actions.

I emphasize this, because if we cannot get our emotions under control, we will not get anything else under control.

We cannot control the thoughts, emotions, and actions of others, including our enemies, any more than we can control the weather. Isn't it silly, if you think about it, to gripe about the weather? You can't control the cold outside. But you can acknowledge its reality, and instead of complaining, take

action to minimize your discomfort. You can dress in layers, for example.

To apply: we can't control the fact that the election was stolen, or that leftists hate our guts. But we *can* control our emotional responses to these. And get away from their sources.

Once acknowledged, **you can tune out their capacity to affect you**. The same with other salient realities I listed. This ties in with suggestions I made at the end of [Part 1](#). Don't use Twitter! Likewise, the fate of Parler is outside your control, and mine – but not your decision to buy from Amazon or Apple. Or to use Google's search engine (as opposed to [DuckDuckGo](#)).

Nor is making the reasons for your choice known outside your control. This will attract likeminded others. Have you noticed that within a group of the likeminded you can control slightly more than you can as an isolated individual?

A specific view of the world emerges from a fusion of Christianity and Stoicism. Some Christians will get upset at my view that the world is basically hostile–indifferent at best. Read Genesis 3:16-19 (whether literally or not, your choice). My reading of it is that we were created for a world of abundance. We fell. Abundance was snatched away and replaced with scarcity. Existence – at the most basic level of feeding ourselves – became a struggle. That struggle has continued ever since. Civilization is our answer to what Hobbes called the “state of nature” in which our lives are “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” He got the first one wrong. We form tribes which can become efficient and effective at killing one another until they develop civil society. Even then, they cannot solve the problems of scarcity and conflict. We try to create Utopias (or imagine how they could evolve) to recover that lost abundance, and they inevitably fail because human nature itself subverts and destroys them. Marxism was an example. Marx himself, moreover, was one of the angriest men of his time.

Christianity commands us to control our tempers. Stoicism emphasizes that you can control your emotions. The two are entirely consistent on this point. Exercises exist that help you do this. They might be as simple as breathing ten times, counting the breaths. Or reciting calming phrases. Cue yourself with a note written in ink on your palm if you have to. Then just do it. Afterwards, are you still angry? Meditating is another possibility. Nothing sophisticated or new-agey here. Just go somewhere quiet, sit, close your eyes, and rid your head of noise. A walk in the woods can accomplish this. There is something about greenery that is inherently calming. Nature was created by God, and so experiencing nature brings us closer to God. It works for me.

Reduce your consumption of news! Most of it is designed to arouse your emotions and keep your attention. For whatever reason we seem wired for *bad* news – for the scandalous, the tragic, the horrific, the destructive. Imagine news broadcasts that compared sunrise and sunset data at various places around the globe. Would anyone watch? Probably not. *Who cares?* viewers would ask. So news broadcasts are designed to rivet your attention, and the impotent emotions they arouse drain your energy. *Shut them off!* Unless it's something you need to know, such as if left-liberals are coming for your guns, or if medical tyrants are locking your community down again.

I get it. This is hard. But the payoff will be worth it!

Create *stillness* in your life, in the lives of your loved ones, in the lives of all those around you. Author Ryan Holiday, a present-day Stoic, wrote a book about this entitled *Stillness Is the Key* (2019). Holiday is not a Christian, but I recommend this book anyway.

Another book worth a look gave me the phrase *creative withdrawal*, which we will pursue next: *A Harmony Within: Five Who Took Refuge. A Study in Creative Withdrawal* (2007), by William A. Reinsmith. The author surveys five thinkers

beginning with Epicurus (not to be confused with Epictetus), whose hedonism and materialism seem wrongheaded to me but who understood that tranquility is not to be found by engaging the affairs of the world – especially in violent, repressive societies. Epicurus counseled non participation. His views overlap with Stoicism to the extent that they reflect awareness of the futility of trying to change what is outside our control.

Summing up: the increased prevalence of leftism / [cultural Marxism](#)* is outside our control, but how to respond is within our control. We should refrain from returning hate for hate. Forget engaging it on social media, or elsewhere. Walk away.

In our control is acquiring a mindset for independence. We've talked about that here. Next we will discuss withdrawal, beginning with another salient reality: ***public schools are destructive!***

Oh, before I go, another short tract I strongly recommend is *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu. There are a dozen places on the Web you can read it for free. We should not kid ourselves. We are at war. But not in the usual sense. This has been called "fifth generation" warfare, fought with weaponized language and information. Our enemies are very, very good at it! How else, after all, does a phrase like *all lives matter* get labeled *racist* in ways that are almost impossible to challenge publicly?

***The Saker**, whose writings I greatly respect, [recently dismissed](#) the phrase [cultural Marxism](#), calling it "totally meaningless."

Here is why I use it:

The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt School based in Germany concluded that classical or *economic* Marxism – the theory of history and political economy in the form Marx put forth in *Das Kapital*– was insufficient. Not only was the

proletariat totally uninterested in *overthrowing* the bourgeoisie, they wanted to *join* the bourgeoisie. Many were doing it! So ignoring one of economic Marxism's central implications—that capitalism would have to become a *global system*, inescapable, before revolutionary consciousness fully emerged (it wasn't close to doing this in the period 1930 – 1950)—they concluded it was necessary to *capture the culture*. Hence my phrase *the cultural left*, which I use interchangeably with *cultural Marxism*. The approved term was *Critical Theory*.

Gramsci and Frankfurt School devotees set about to subvert American culture by undermining traditional views of education / academia, law, the arts and entertainment, and mass media. They specifically targeted the Christian worldview, allying with materialists of all stripes.

Herbert Marcuse, the most influential Frankfurt School philosopher, invoked *race* in place of class. Feminists followed with *gender-bending*. They retained Marxian *group-derived* consciousness, and identity politics was born. *This explains the cultural left's complete indifference to America's working class – too white, too male, and too heterosexual*. Oppressors! in other words, quite contrary to Marx's view of the proletariat. [Cultural Marxists](#) were joined from across the English Channel by socialists of the Fabian Society who were infiltrating nominally conservative think tanks (we are up to the 1970s-1980s). This result in CINO institutions (*conservative in name only*). These ploys succeeded brilliantly. Which is a reason many people who self-identify as conservative are *still* wondering what the dickens happened.

Steven Yates's latest book *What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory* will be published this year.

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