



THE LEFTIST MIND

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Introduction

Significant and noticeable changes have occurred in the U.S. in our culture, institutions, and political practice since the 2020 election. These changes reflect features of what I identify as the leftist mindset.

In what follows, the "leftist" mind will refer to anyone who advocates an all-powerful government with the potential to manage all other societal institutions. That management is to be carried out allegedly by experts trained in the social sciences, not by any individual or class or special interest group or leaders of another institution like religious ones, etc.

My explanation will identify four reasons why the leftist view has become a permanent feature of the modern political landscape and why it remains popular despite its consistent record of economic failure and often mass genocide.

The first reason is psychological. It is natural for humans to wish for immortality and perennial happiness.

A second reason is historical: The Enlightenment Project (EP) originated a belief that social science, not religion or some other institution, can help us achieve perennial happiness, if not immortality.

The third reason is the theory and practice of the leftist mindset, specifically the semantic barbed-wire or defense mechanism that has been constructed to protect this mindset from external challenge. That is, I shall identify the logical structure of the arguments that need to be advanced for the Project (EP) to be taken seriously.

The fourth part will show the extent to which the practices of democracy helps to sustain the leftist mind.

The Human Predicament: The Desire To Live Happily Ever After

The leftist mind will always be with us. If there is universal truth about humanity it is the desire to

flourish indefinitely or to live happily forever. Every society from the least sophisticated to the most sophisticated has its "witch doctors" who claim the ability to help us do just that. Even some of those who commit suicide reflect this truth since living under present conditions of finitude for these individuals is unbearable and they see suicide as leading to some sort of better afterlife or at least permanent relief from the pain they are currently enduring.

Many religions, Christianity in particular, have responded to this need by promising to help us achieve immortality, but its promissory note is for the "next" life. Even the agnostic wisdom literature designed to reconcile us to mortality would not be so robust if there were not a powerful basic impulse to live happily ever after. To the extent that people wish to live happily "ever after" there will always be a market for or an audience receptive to any promised policy or remedy for the human predicament.

At the other extreme, if you adopt a totally reductive materialistic account of humanity in which we are all only members of an animal species struggling to survive in a zero-sum world, then there are no objective moral constraints. In such a world, there will always be cynical fraudsters who will seek to exploit human gullibility. To quote an old folksong, "it is better to be a hammer than a nail."

Recent advances in medical science have only reinforced the urgency of the human predicament. Life expectancy has increased dramatically. There is no scientific reason to date to believe that medical science will stop making advances and perhaps enable some version of "immortality." It is precisely at this point that leftists enter the debate. The first item on their agenda is state/government control of healthcare.

Control Healthcare

If the desire to live happily forever is as fundamental as I think it is, then guaranteed healthcare is the top item on the leftist agenda. Given even the present state of advances in medical technology, there is already not enough money to provide everything to everybody ("[Affordable Care Act](#)" is unaffordable). This means that government must either ration care or be given a blank check and potentially unlimited power. The blank check requires political leaders to raise taxes (the government does not have any resources other than a printing press at the Treasury Department).

Increasing the national debt (average person does not really understand this, and the rest of us may

have ungrateful children anyway) is the first step; raising taxes on the "rich" is the second step, and this in turn leads to increasing class warfare. Class warfare gets redefined as equity, inclusion, etc. and entails controlling education so everyone understands the new definitions. Such warfare might lead to serious armed resistance, so confiscating weapons is the next priority. The confiscation is justified on the grounds that guns not people – who are born naturally good (see below)– are responsible for mass homicides.

The Enlightenment Project – A Social Technology

Of course, living longer and living happily ever after are not the same. Nevertheless, advances in medical science are part of a trend that has emboldened the leftist mind. Modern physical science has given us a technology that allows us to control much of the physical world. The leftist (post-Enlightenment) thinking is that there must be a social science(s) that can give us a comparable social technology.

The "Enlightenment" is a term used broadly to refer to the intellectual and social ferment in Western Europe during the eighteenth century. Our intention is not to generalize about this entire period but to identify a specific, salient project that we shall call the Enlightenment Project. The Enlightenment Project is a program to define and explain the human predicament through science as well as to achieve mastery over it through the use of a social technology. [Becker claims](#) that the dream of a technological utopia is the common inheritance of liberals, socialists, and Marxists.

This project originated among the philosophes in France in the eighteenth century. The most influential included [Diderot](#), [d'Alembert](#), [La Mettrie](#), [Condillac](#), [Helvetius](#), [d'Holbach](#), [Turgot](#), [Condorcet](#), [Cabanis](#), and Voltaire.

Isaiah Berlin characterizes the Project as follows: *"The conviction that the world, or nature, was a single whole, subject to a single set of laws, in principle discoverable by the intelligence of man; that the laws which governed inanimate nature were in principle the same as those which governed plants, animals and sentient beings; that man was capable of improvement; that there existed certain objectively recognizable human goals which all men, rightly so described, sought after, namely, happiness, knowledge, justice, liberty... that these goals were common to all men as such...that human misery, vice and folly were mainly due to ignorance either of what these goals consisted in or of the means of attaining them-ignorance due in turn to insufficient knowledge of the laws of nature. . . Consequently, the discovery of general laws that*

governed human behaviour, their clear and logical integration into scientific systems-of psychology, sociology, economics, political science and the like. . . create a new, sane, rational, happy, just and self-perpetuating human society, which, having arrived at the peak of attainable perfection, would preserve itself against all hostile influences, save perhaps those of nature." Voegelin identified the EP as one of the historical forms of Gnosticism.

Theory And Practice

The logical consequences of this Enlightenment belief system are:

1. If there are such experts, then all former traditional centers of authority (family, religion) and all symbols of past authority (e.g. statues, holidays) need to be replaced.
2. If there are such experts, then there will be a consensus on policy. Those who disagree reflect ignorance, cultural lag, or subversive elements in society. Subversives will sometimes pretend to be whistleblowers.
 - Ignorance and cultural lag can be overcome with patience, re-education programs, or psychological counselling (e.g., sensitivity training).
 - Subversion may require more stringent measures such as public shaming, firing people, reassignment, or institutional restraint (imprisonment).
3. Educational institutions will be run by experts, not by parents.
4. All public media (news, social media, etc.) will be censored to insure the public is properly informed. This is not a matter of information but of judgments about the relevance and interpretation of the information. Given how complicated the world is, only properly educated and full-time experts are in a position to make these judgments.
5. Elections should be positive events and not divisive ones: Consensus building, public reaffirmations, confirmation of public support, etc. Having a single political party (with the most college graduates) will be a sign of such a successful endeavor.
6. Political and legal institutions (in fact all institutions) will be run by bureaucratic experts who possess theoretical knowledge of the collective good. There is no longer any need for brokering interests in an adversarial atmosphere.

In addition to the call for experts and censorship, the Project impliedly led directly to a destruction of traditional Christian values. Christianity had wisely and traditionally maintained that human beings were complex beings endowed with free will and with destructive tendencies (original sin) as well as

wholesome ones. One does not have to accept a particular theology or philosophy to believe this – one could just use one's own experience or your own eyes.

Advocates of the EP identified this belief as a false one perpetrated upon the ignorant and designed to maintain control over them. In its place, the EP advocates were led to maintain that human beings are born (fundamentally) good, and either (a) obstacles to their natural goodness could be removed (classical liberalism) or (b) they could be provided with the resources (redistribution) to express their natural goodness (modern liberalism, socialism, Marxism).

It was no accident that freedom in the modern world came to be defined negatively, in its most popular version, as the absence of external constraints. In an analogous way, rationality could seemingly be promoted by removing obstacles such as the belief in religion, authority, custom, or tradition. No seemingly dysfunctional person would be left behind. This has the added benefit of reinforcing the progressive-scientific story by providing a naturalistic account of why it has taken so long to arrive at the super-rationalism of the Enlightenment.

Given the economic and social challenges of the modern world, it seemed to many of those impatient to alter the status quo that a wholesale rejection of authority, tradition, and the religious institutions that seemed to support the status quo was the quickest way to achieve reform; hence, the enthusiasm for a liberated (contextless, ahistorical, purely theoretical) reason. Since traditional institutions had justified themselves on the grounds that they embody a certain wisdom about human shortcomings, theories about the natural goodness of human nature seem doubly attractive to critics of the status quo.

Part of the problem with parents, grand-parents, and older people in general (lol) is that they not only failed to produce a utopia but they found excuses for their failure by citing books that no one reads anymore (Plato to Orwell), by pointing to human imperfection and by claiming that custom reflected the experience of failed utopian dreams. That is why "properly" educated young people will be the vanguard of progress.

The University Becomes The Home Of The Enlightenment Project

Universities emerged during the Middle Ages as both repositories of human wisdom and training institutions for the intellectual and moral elite, namely the clergy. They still claim this role, but the elite

are now civil servants trained in the alleged social sciences.

How did all of this come about? Historically the American university emerged in the 19th century from a variety of sources: Religious affiliation, local communities, and private benefactors. The university consisted of factions with competing paradigms. The oldest paradigm is epitomized in Newman, and originated in the small liberal arts college with a religious affiliation: *The traditional purpose of liberal education was to preserve, critique, and to transmit our cultural inheritance, to pursue knowledge and to foster a sense of liberty and responsibility.* To subordinate itself to the outside world, the university would only compromise itself and become an instrument for commercial or political exploitation.

A second paradigm is the German research model with its emphasis on the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, the graduate school and the training of professionals. Knowledge should not be in the service of special interest groups because knowledge knows no political boundaries. The spectacular success of this model in physical science and technology encouraged government subvention.

The third paradigm is utilitarian: The university is seen as an institution for solving various and sundry social problems. It exists as a means to social ends defined externally to the university itself. The notion of the college graduate as a civil servant evolved into the notion of a special class which aims to run society.

Newman's moral model of the university has been marginalized (Honors Program), the research model has been corrupted (e.g., hundreds of Western epidemiologists sign a statement denying that covid-19 came from a Wuhan laboratory – and they know this how?) and coopted through government financing, and the politicized utilitarian model has triumphed. The intellectual origin of this triumph lies in the Enlightenment Project.

In theory, governing boards exist to represent the interests of taxpayer citizens in public universities and the original intent of philanthropists in private universities. In practice, the boards of universities tend to "rubber-stamp" policy actions generated by university administrations and faculties. There is little effective external control on the internal authorities that run educational institutions. Government funding of private universities has now reached the point where there are virtually no universities that could be described as "private." More important, the feudal guild system of academic disciplines operates in both systems so that the same people circulate from one to the other.

We have witnessed the collapse of the distinction between public and private education. The university is an industry in which those who consume its product do not purchase it; those who produce it do not sell it; and those who finance it do not control it. Is there any wonder that faculties offer the sort of product they themselves derive most pleasure in supplying - a product which need not meet the desires or the needs of those for whom it is produced?

Because of the vast expansion of universities in the 1960s, all standards have been eroded, and the ethos of what it means to be a responsible faculty member has been lost. These newer faculties now control the commanding heights of all other institutions because the faculties are the gatekeepers of all professions, including the clergy! Even culture has been professionalized. Academic freedom (and creativity) have been replaced by a new politicized orthodoxy.

There are two sources for the current state of degradation: The domination of higher education by a faction with a social and political agenda (EP); and second, the addiction to financing education through increased reliance and ultimate dependence upon local, state, and federal governments. These two sources work in tandem because the political agenda construes social life as a series of problems beyond the control of individuals and capable of solution only through a statist controlled social technology. It is easier, more remunerative, and more prestigious to get a government grant than to teach summer school; it is easier to get a government grant if the purpose of your research is to show that we need more government subvention and control.

Voting the bums out and changing administrations through elections is important. But, if we do not seriously reform the university - the problems will never go away. When in the minority, leftist faculty demand toleration/academic freedom on our principles, and when in the majority they deny it on theirs.

The Logic Of The Left

There are serious problems with the EP. First, the social sciences are not in fact sciences. They neither explain, nor predict, nor offer any serious social technology.

When the physical sciences explain, they do so by identifying a substructure (not immediately visible to the naked eye like atoms, molecules, microbes, black holes, etc.). That substructure is later accessed

often through sophisticated equipment. The alleged social sciences claim there is a substructure but they never produce it (e.g. how does one confirm the presence of "institutional racism?" Numerical "disparities" are not explanations of themselves.). Instead of a cumulative growth as in the physical sciences, we get an endless series of fashionable terminologies (psycho-babble).

The alleged social sciences offer competing accounts with no way to determine which, if any, is correct. And it gets worse from there. Competing hidden structure theories offer second level hidden structure accounts of why rivals disagree. This undermined any possibility of civil discussion. For example, If I deny the existence of "institutional racism" that becomes evidence in the eyes of some that I am a "racist." What the left now insists upon is that all people will be judged on the basis of their race – this is what racism used to mean, but now it means just the opposite. It is precisely this kind of self-contradictory and illegitimate intellectual maneuver that allows the alleged social technocrats to undermine all traditional sources of authority. There are good reasons to study the social world, and there may be some insightful historical narratives, but such narratives are not and should not be presented as science.

There is a peculiar menace associated with the hyper-rationalism of this alleged social science. It is not rational precisely because it does not recognize any realistic or meaningful limits. It dissolves the difference between a potentially efficacious restraint and the cynical employment of violence. It encourages violence, that is, force intended to hurt or to damage others. It becomes more focused on resentment of the rich than on love of the poor. By delegitimizing protest, it undermines the very possibility of human communication. Perhaps it was not an accident that the title of B.F. Skinner's book was *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*.

Aside from their intellectual bankruptcy, the alleged social sciences are incapable of providing a liberal education: to preserve, to critique, and to transmit our cultural inheritance, to pursue knowledge and to foster a sense of liberty and responsibility. The present faculty deny the legitimacy of our cultural inheritance. Moreover, our cultural inheritance is not simply a body of knowledge about which one can theorize. That inheritance (a series of practices with many voices not just one) is something that has to be instantiated and imparted. It is not, and should not be, found in only one institution. The study of the liberal arts and obtaining a degree does not make one either a decent human being or even wise.

An example of make-believe social science is the recent discussion of "race." Terms like "white," "black," "yellow," etc. have a long history that reflects historical accident, private agendas, different social,

economic, and political circumstances. In the nineteenth century, some biologists tried to make "race" a meaningful physical science concept. They failed. The term "race" is a social construct, but that raises the question is it a useful construct and to whom. Nowadays, [the author of *White Fragility*](#) has tried to turn "white" into a meaningful social science concept. This too has failed and merely reflects a political agenda. I predict that it will someday be as embarrassing as racial biology.

Second, are human beings to be understood as mechanisms, organic (teleological) entities, or something else? If we are mechanisms (stimulus/response) then we can be reprogrammed. But on what basis would we decide to program people? Are not the choices/decisions of the programmers themselves the result of prior programming? This kind of proposed social technology requires the alleged social scientists to be the only ones (special kind of elite) who are truly free from outside control. The original purveyors of this kind of irresponsible intellectual position ([Comte](#) and Marx) tried to evade this criticism by claiming that historical progress led to this immaculate emancipation – unfortunately, this is just another level of question-begging social science ad infinitum [it just did not happen].

The denial of free will absolves all responsibility. In a world in which everyone is a victim, there is no one to blame. But blaming some target is essential to the leftist mindset. This is not a fact (what kind of experience or empirical evidence would constitute proof that we are totally the result of external influences?) but an assumption to justify a policy. For example, it is sometime said that "there is no teaching if there is no learning," thereby putting the entire onus for failure on the teacher and none on the student or the parents of the student, etc. This can then lead either to a wholesale replacement of the faculty or to intimidating the faculty. Most of what passes for policy is not a solution to a problem but a policy in search of a problem, that is, either a "solution" to a problem that does not exist or it leaves the real problem untouched or unrecognized.

If we were organic entities, then we would have built in goals. All of these goals would have to be part of a consistent whole with a master goal? How would you prove that? Does this really square with our daily experience of having to resolve conflict by making hard but not happy choices? For example, the left has always had trouble dealing with sexual taboos. It is neither semantically nor realistically possible to "choose" everything. Do we want to grant that there are experts who "know" what we "really" want as opposed to what we think or say we want?

Ironically, the left does not solve problems by actually producing a social technology. Instead, it uses

other means. For example, it uses the new physical technology (wire-taps, social media, control of news outlets, rigging of elections, etc.) both to silence dissent and to create the impression that there is a real social consensus.

The new technocrats also solve problems by redefinition. If there is a numerical disparity (e.g. larger percentage of one group in prison than their percentage of the population), we change the numbers by emptying the prisons. Problem solved! We can eliminate incarceration by "reducing" crime (or statistics thereof), by reducing the list of forbidden activities or not prosecuting people (think of drug dealers as "unlicensed" pharmacists). If there is an unequal distribution of income, then redistribute it through taxation, by the government of course. If student achievement shows disparity or if previous leftist policies lead to an overall decline in performance, then eliminate grading or assessment (or alternatively just assess the graders). Eliminating standards merely reinforces stereotypes and feeds the anxiety of an inferiority complex.

Since we now can define crime out of existence there is no need for a police force. Hence, we can defund the police department. This is not the reduction in the number of public employees (real police confront evil on a daily basis), but the prelude to hiring a different group of people (who deny the existence of evil) to address social issues. It's all about the personnel or getting one's own people in there.

Perhaps it is now time to redefine "social" technology. Social technology is the creation of a bureaucratic structure, both formal and informal, to reprogram public attitudes. The formal structure will include such things as revitalized public-employee unions, a new kind of police presence (we need to get rid of "force"), only hiring public service bureaucrats who believe in the program, etc.

The informal structure will embody many of Alinsky's Rules for Radicals. The execution of Alinsky's rules requires the use of "shock troops." This has, for a variety of historical reasons, become the assigned role primarily of vulnerable African-Americans. One of the saddest aspects of this entire charade is the way in which African-Americans continue to be treated in a patronizing and condescending way.

1. *"Ridicule is man's most potent weapon. There is no defense. It is almost impossible to counterattack ridicule. Also it infuriates the opposition, who then react to your advantage."* Translation: You are not allowed to challenge anything an African-American says about race (Black Privilege of playing the

race card) because you are incapable of understanding "their" world; never engage in polite rule-governed debate; use late-night comedy TV shows for character assassination, fake news, cancel culture, cyber bullying, accosting officials in public places such as restaurants, restrooms, etc.

2. *"The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself."* Translation: Carefully planned and executed public demonstrations, small scale riots, looting, burnings preferably confined to low-income African-American neighborhoods or down-town high profile shopping areas rather than "white" middle-class residential neighborhoods.
3. *"Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it."* Translation: Demonize Donald Trump; the "white" male; the top 2% of income earners, etc.
 - This is actually the Achilles heel of the leftist mindset. To begin with, a negative narrative is never as effective as a positive one. A negative narrative is also inconsistent with the assumption that people are born good and corrupted by their environment because that implies no one is to blame. On the other hand, given the absence of any positive achievement (redistribution never leads to the transmission of wealth from the rich to the poor; instead it leads to the destruction of wealth and to the transfer of power from the individual to the state [de Jouvenel]), the blame game is all they have.
 - More to the point, the blamers reflect the fact that there are chronic non-achievers: *"The emergence of this disposition to be an individual is the pre-eminent event in modern European history... there were some people, by circumstance or by temperament, less ready than others to respond... the counterpart of the... entrepreneur of the sixteenth century was the displaced laborer... the familiar anonymity of communal life was replaced by a personal identity which was burdensome... it bred envy, jealousy and resentment... a new morality... not of 'liberty' and 'self-determination,' but of 'equality' and 'solidarity'... not... the 'love of others' or 'charity' or... 'benevolence'... but... the love of 'the community' [common good]... [the anti-individual or mass man] remains an unmistakably derivative character... helpless, parasitic and able to survive only in opposition to individuality... [only] The desire of the 'masses' to enjoy the products of individuality has modified their destructive urge"* [Oakeshott]. Obama's claim that *"you did not build that"* was the clearest expression of the attempt to undermine the prestige of real achievers.
4. *"A good tactic is one your people [leftist activists] enjoy."* Translation: Enlist students to execute the rules since for them it is fun and games, an exciting form of bonding, meeting potential people to date, and a chance to do something to change the world without serious study (you might even be excused from a boring class or demanding exam).
5. *"Make the enemy live up to its own book of rules."* Translation: Use demonstrations to provoke police overreaction and then claim that the establishment is engaged in repression; make the public believe that you are playing by the rules when you really intend to subvert the system;

claim that you want to be part of the system when what you really want is to change the system altogether.

Political Democracy And The Leftist Mindset

"Democracy" simply means majority rule. It is a form of government in which any majority (e.g. the bottom 51%) has the potential to mistreat or rip-off the other 49%. You can be exploited by one, the few, or the many. Almost every major writer from the ancients to the early 19th-century condemned democracy. That is why the U.S. founders created a "Republic" designed to minimize conflict, not pretend to eliminate it altogether. The standard tactic of all leftist demagogues has always been to insist on more democratization. Democratization is not just about extending the franchise (one of my feminist students repeatedly refused to answer me when I asked who was allowed to vote and thereby to pass the 19th Amendment- most likely because acknowledging that white males passed the 19th Amendment did not fit her narrative).

As de Tocqueville, Mill and others pointed out, democratization is an attack on meritocracy and the elevation of mediocrity. The major theoretical question for the U.S. is whether a Republic and a meritocratic culture are compatible with a democratic society (social mobility/not a permanent class structure). The left, as I have defined it, wants greater government control of every institution. To achieve this in a democratic society you need to persuade the majority that meritocracy is a fraud and a form of oppression. That is why the left focuses on community organizers to fabricate a "majority" composed of the resentful, willing to endorse an all-powerful government. Among these are "race hustlers" who are often no better than Jews who served the Nazi atrocities.

To date, advocates of a meritocratic culture (self-interest rightly understood) have prevailed because of (1) the unprecedented achievements of the U.S. economy (e.g. covid-19 vaccines – why is it that the U.S. economy under Trump produced three, the UK one, and the rest of the world nothing worth mentioning?); (2) the achievements of the meritocrats have grown the pie for everyone; and (3) the continuous failures of government controlled economies.

For the left to prevail, it will be necessary to cobble together a majority composed of all those who think or have been persuaded to think that the U.S. meritocracy is a wholesale fraud (African-Americans, radical feminists, recent migrants from failed nation-states who want to move to the US but have no understanding of why the US is different). There are two versions of this:

- Replace one meritocracy with a "better" one (perhaps redefine achievement).
- Give up on meritocracy all together. In this version, the "spoils" are divided up by spokespersons for the various voter constituencies.

The politicians who exemplify or endorse the outlook of the left are not to be confused with intellectuals, academics, social scientists, journalists or anyone who really believes in or articulates the leftist mindset (at best, the latter may serve as bureaucrats).

These particular politicians have a different skill set and mentality. They exhibit no outstanding intellectual accomplishments. They crave success, recognition, power, riches, etc. but lack either the talents or personality to achieve those things in real world occupations. They have no record of prior successful achievement even in political life (except for winning an election; how could they when the leftist agenda is unachievable?). They are ambitious people but without substance (a too common American trait). They are salespeople who sell dreams, in short, con-artists. The most that they can accomplish is to enrich themselves and to provide jobs for the true-believers by increasing the size of government bureaucracies. They are entrepreneurs of a sort for whom success is a matter of winning elections and maintaining themselves in power or at least gaining a sinecure in leftist institutions (universities, think tanks, nonprofits, etc.).

If seeking and holding public office were a temporary responsibility (e.g. term limits, etc.) one could rely upon integrity, and if you lose on any issue you can go back to your real life. If you are a professional or career politician, then that is your real life, and you have no alternative except to win at all costs. Failed or even disgraced leftist politicians automatically get a "pass" because their "heart was in the right place," because they too were victims of something or other, but most of all because the leftist mindset is unable/unwilling to surrender or question the dream of utopia or its own role/responsibility for promoting the failure.

Time To Fight Back

Let me put this into historical perspective. It is no accident that so much of phony social science has focused on "race." Western Europeans (Brits in particular), who generally had "lighter" skin color than inhabitants of sub-Sahara Africa, Asia, South America, etc., were the first to formulate and adopt the logic of modernity: The Technological Project (Descartes' suggestion that we make humanity the masters and possessors of nature – instead of conforming to nature we control it for human betterment

– this includes both modern weapons and modern medicine), market economies (Adam Smith), limited government (Locke), the rule of law, and a culture of autonomous individuality. This enabled Western Europeans to "colonize" the rest of the world. In time, the rest of the ("developing") world gradually and painfully adopted or is in the process of adopting all or part of the Technological Project.

That same logic, especially the concept of individual autonomy (J.S. Mill), led to the discrediting of "colonization." As [noble-prize winner Naipaul](#) has put it:

*"The universal civilization has been a long time in the making. It wasn't always universal; it wasn't always as attractive as it is today... the extraordinary attempt of this civilization to accommodate the rest of the world, and all the currents of that world's thought... This idea of the pursuit of happiness is at the heart of the attractiveness of the civilization to so many outside it or on its periphery... It is an elastic idea; it fits all men. It implies a certain kind of society, a certain kind of awakened spirit. I don't imagine my father's parents would have been able to understand the idea. So much is contained in it: **the idea of the individual, responsibility, choice, the life of the intellect, the idea of vocation and perfectibility and achievement...** It cannot generate fanaticism. But it is known to exist; and because of that, other more rigid systems in the end blow away."*

Regardless of skin color, ethnicity, etc. people from all backgrounds, both inside and outside the U.S., have succeeded in adopting and thriving within that universal civilization. There is a mountain of statistics and narratives to support this contention, but it is egregiously ignored by purveyors of misinformation, phony social science, and fabricators of false and misleading historical narratives about slavery. Was it not the British who ended the 19th-century Atlantic slave trade?

At the same time, there are large numbers of people who either reject this civilization or are dysfunctional within it. The presumption on the part of the leftist mindset is that the dysfunction is solely the result of some kind of external conspiracy (e.g. "orientalism") that can only be overcome by an all-powerful government is (a) question-begging, (b) self-serving, and (c) ignores the extent to which public policies advocated by the leftist mindset (e.g., welfare; see [Charles Murray's work](#)) are themselves responsible for the problem. If things are so bad, why do so many foreign scholars of color who excoriate the West compete for academic positions in New York and London?

It seems to me to be a legitimate question to ask the following: (a) might we have to live in a world in

which many people are either incapable or unwilling to become autonomous? (b) if so, should we aim for something less demanding? (c) what would it look like? (d) Is the guaranteed annual income a recognition of this problem or the creation of a permanent under-class? Shall we be defined by our "winners" or by our "losers?" I do not pretend to have final and definitive answers to those questions.

The foregoing is a conversation we must have among ourselves (if you are reading this far). There cannot be an honest conversation with the leftist mindset since its pursuit of a phony social science has led it to the land of invincible ignorance.

A Multiplicity Of Narratives

What I have just offered is not social science (there are no hidden structures) but an historical narrative. If there is a "better" narrative, then let us politely discuss both it and what you might mean by "better." I suggest that each of us will have to ask ourselves what narrative rings true and which narrative each of us will choose to live by. In the end it will be a matter of choice and not the discovery of some hidden structure.

The leftist mindset has one more arrow in its quiver. Leftists announce with great fanfare ([Lyotard](#)) that there is not, and there can not be, one authoritative narrative. They are correct. Let me go one step further and not only endorse this claim but add to it. It is precisely because of this capacity of the human imagination that we can formulate different accounts. This is a good thing, a useful thing that accounts for the incredible creative potential of the human race.

The really important question is: What sort of social structure is most compatible with the recognition that there will probably always be a multiplicity of narratives? Curiously, the recognition of this condition is not a new or unique event. We have already been through this during the religious wars of the 17th-century and the subsequent discussion of what to do when there is a multiplicity of religious (and agnostic) narratives. Locke gave us an answer then, and it is one that still works for most of us. We tolerate any narrative that does not deny the legitimacy of other narratives and that does not impose its narrative upon others.

A free and open society in which each of us pursues our own dream without imposing on others is the only one compatible with a multiplicity of narratives. If there is no authoritative collective narrative, then

there is no collective good. Without a collective good, the leftist mindset has no basis on which to promote an all-powerful government. Such a government would amount to a form of fanatical oppression. This may satisfy constituencies who seek power over others, but it will not solve any problem. The leftist mindset is intellectually bankrupt and leads only to despair.

People of substance understand that utopias are intellectual frauds, that life is a continuous and difficult balancing act, that benefits come with costs, that success is often a matter of luck, and that public service is or should be a temporary responsibility. Keeping this in mind can lead us back to hope. It can remind us that there is something worth fighting and even dying for, namely freedom.

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The [featured image](#) shows, "Prisoners' Round" by Vincent van Gogh; painted in 1890.

