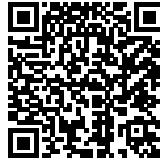




WANT ANSWERS?... SIMPLE BUT WRONG, OR COMPLEX BUT RIGHT?

Posted on November 1, 2021 by Deacon Chuck Lanham



There is a vague discomfiture that comes with the realization that the times have so little improved from those of even our remotest ancestors. One might well consider that man has been regressing since the very beginning with the fall from God's good graces. And yet, never willing to admit to error, man calls error progress and progress never quite enough. There is, quite naturally, —or so the progressives insist—an existential necessity for progress for its own measure, never bothering to consider either the direction or better purpose toward which we are supposed to be progressing. It seems progressives—perhaps unintentionally, though of that I have serious doubts—are hellbent on putting “all ya'll deplorables back in chains” while lasciviously twerking the pâté de foie gras.

In his 1905 essay, *Notre patrie*, [Charles Pierre Péguy](#) (1873-1914), French Catholic poet, author, and writer made this penetrating observation: *“It will never be known what acts of cowardice have been motivated by the fear of not looking sufficiently progressive.”* Now, I have never admitted to any great mathematical profundity, and you are welcome to check my subtraction if you are in doubt, but as near as I can figure that was one hundred sixteen years ago. But wait, there's more! As Roger Kimball [opines](#), Péguy has enduring importance *“because of his insights into the distinctive hubris of modernity: the curious modern tendency to substitute faith in technique for the cultivation of wisdom, the belief that a perfect administration of life could somehow relieve us of the burden, the unpredictable adventure, of living.”* [Elsewhere](#), R. R. Reno notes, *“Péguy flourished in the first years of the twentieth century, his life cut short by a German bullet in 1914. Since that time, the modern hubris has grown only more monstrous.”*

Always a keen observer of human nature, *“Truth may be contradicted a thousand times,”* the Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen *Old Errors and New Labels* wrote, *“but that only proves that it is strong enough to survive a thousand assaults...”*

But for any one to say, “Some say this, some say that, therefore there is no truth,” is about as logical as it would have been for Columbus, who heard some say, “The earth is round,” and others say, “The earth is flat,” to conclude: “Therefore there is no earth at all.”

Like a carpenter who might throw away his rule and use each beam as a measuring-rod, so, too, those who have thrown away the standard of objective truth have nothing left with which to measure but the mental fashion of the moment.

There are those who loudly deny logic and reason; others, far too many, through self-inflicted vincible

ignorance would rather be led by the nose than to think or act for themselves. Haile Selassie, former Emperor of Ethiopia (1930-1974) once said, *"Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph."* Thus, it is that the silent masses accept without question the simplest expositive, never knowing nor caring whether what they are told is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Nearly eleven decades ago (Daily News, Oct. 5, 1912,) Chesterton posed an interesting "what-if" very much aimed squarely at this generation. *"Suppose,"* he wrote, *"for some reason or other, our great-great-grandchildren come to the conclusion that the 20th century was the beginning of a relapse into barbarism, like the decline of Rome." Seems as though such supposing no longer needs to be supposed. He goes on, "They will have plenty of coincident facts to quote; the nature-worship which we call pantheism, the power of the medicine-men whom we call scientific specialists, the belief in tribal curses and destinies which we call heredity, the disproportionate preoccupation with the tribe or pack which we call sociology, the Nietzscheans with their worship of force, the Eugenists with their hints of Infanticide."*

To translate into current post-modern cant: worship which we call secular humanism, the belief that humanity is capable of morality and self-fulfillment without belief in God; the power of public experts and scientific publicans lacking commonsense, bereft of productive expertise or strict commitment to the scientific method; the belief in the immutable destinies of tribe and race which demand open borders and unrestrained migration; the disproportionate preoccupation with tribe or race or ethnicity under the guises of woke identity, reparations for inherited sins, and equality of outcomes; the Nietzschean nihilism ("God is dead") which has led to the indiscriminate use of force by the state; the Eugenists (dehumanizing pro-choice) with their demands for unlimited, unrestrained murderous human sacrifice—no more hints of Infanticide—whether unborn, one foot in the grave, or whomever they by happenstance deem a burden to society or a heretical hindrance to their temporal great god Progress.

What Chesterton once supposed is clearly no longer merely a figment of his enormous imagination. What he imagined as possible most assuredly now haunts us. The reason his imagination failed to account fully was explained by his contemporary, C.S. Lewis. In the opening of *Mere Christianity*, Lewis suggests the absence of *"some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behaviour or morality or whatever you like to call it,"* would result in man fighting like animals:

Quarrelling means trying to show that the other man is in the wrong. And there would be no

sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of agreement as to what Right and Wrong are; just as there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of football.

Now this Law or Rule about Right and Wrong used to be called the Law of Nature. Nowadays, when we talk of the 'laws of nature' we usually mean things like gravitation, or heredity, or the laws of chemistry. But when the older thinkers called the Law of Right and Wrong 'the Law of Nature', they really meant the Law of Human Nature. The idea was that, just as all bodies are governed by the law of gravitation, and organisms by biological laws, so the creature called man also had his law—with this great difference, that a body could not choose whether it obeyed the law of gravitation or not, but a man could choose either to obey the Law of Human Nature or to disobey it.

We may put this in another way. Each man is at every moment subjected to several different sets of law, but there is only one of these which he is free to disobey. As a body, he is subjected to gravitation and cannot disobey it; if you leave him unsupported in mid-air, he has no more choice about falling than a stone has. As an organism, he is subjected to various biological laws which he cannot disobey any more than an animal can. That is, he cannot disobey those laws which he shares with other things; but the law which is peculiar to his human nature, the law he does not share with animals or vegetables or inorganic things, is the one he can disobey if he chooses.

Lewis then stated the obvious. *"This law was called the Law of Nature because people thought that every one knew it by nature and did not need to be taught it."* Apparently, not everyone got the memo. Some people, he wrote, would say that *"the idea of a Law of Nature or decent behavior known to all men is unsound, because different civilisations and different ages have had quite different moralities."* "But," Lewis countered, *"this is not true. There have been differences between their moralities, but these have never amounted to anything like a total difference. ... It seems, then, we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong. People may be sometimes mistaken about them, just as people sometimes get their sums wrong; but they are not a matter of mere taste and opinion any more than the multiplication table."*

Roger Simon [recently opined](#) on what he sees America moving toward, even living through: real-life "Communism, American Style." Key to his argument is what Karl Marx assumed: that his system would first come to the more modern industrialized state, which to Marx at that time was Germany. He was

wrong about that. "Or," Simon asks, *"was he? Perhaps he was just ahead of his time."* Bear in mind, Marx's manifesto depended on an existing technologically advanced, affluent society, and an impossible to ignore class dichotomy. Again, Simon asks, *"What modern industrialized state could be more fecund for communism than the United States of America, the country with the most-est of all?"*

America is and has been for a very long time, the richest, most affluent country to ever exist. By third-world standards, even the poorest of the poor supported by an indulgent welfare state are more affluent than over half of the world's population. *"It's the part of human nature that makes for good communists. In fact, communism owes its existence to them. They are the part of America that will allow, indeed are allowing, communism to walk in the door. Among them are some of our richest and most successful citizens, but that does not stop them from being fools."*

Follow The Pied Piper Of Science

It should be noted the three authors cited (Lewis, Chesterton, and Sheen) were of the latter part of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century and yet what they wrote is as relevant to the latter half of the twentieth and the first quarter of the twenty-first. One cannot turn a page without discovering some relevant thought, idea, or warning of what the future holds should man not change course and return to God, reason, and objective standards of truth. Unfortunately, only the choir will bother to read the music, the conditioned congregation much too enthralled with the high priest's siren exhortation to hear it. To be fair, the conditioned are often unaware of the conditioning being set upon them for the conditioners are well aware of the dangers of an informed public, thus the censorious exorcism of opposing voices from the public square.

C. S. Lewis (1898 – 1963)

In *Religion Without Dogma?* (1946), Lewis analyzed the underlying problem of the materialistic mindset which he had but tangentially touched upon with *The Abolition of Man* (1944). If there is no God, if the material world is all that there is, then thoughts are but electro-chemical reactions in the brain. From where, Lewis then asks, does this capacity for thought come from? For the secular humanist and progressive materialist there can be no soul, no spirit, no transcendent mind; brain function (thought and body control) merely the result of random, electro-chemical processes. As Lewis explains it, *"Every particular thought (whether it is a judgment of fact or a judgment of value) is always and by all men discounted the moment they believe that it can be explained, without remainder, as the result of irrational*

causes:"

Whenever you know what the other man is saying is wholly due to his complexes or to a bit of bone pressing on his brain, you cease to attach any importance to it. But if naturalism were true then all thoughts whatever would be wholly the result of irrational causes. Therefore, all thoughts would be equally worthless. Therefore, naturalism is worthless. If it is true, then we can know no truths. It cuts its own throat.

I remember once being shown a certain kind of knot which was such that if you added one extra complication to make assurance doubly sure you suddenly found that the whole thing had come undone in your hands and you had only a bit of string. It is like that with naturalism. It goes on claiming territory after territory: first the inorganic, then the lower organisms, then man's body, then his emotions. But when it takes the final step and we attempt a naturalistic account of thought itself, suddenly the whole thing unravels. The last fatal step has invalidated all the preceding ones: for they were all reasonings and reason itself has been discredited. We must, therefore, either give up thinking altogether or else begin over again from the ground floor.

Dwight Longenecker, in his essay [*Religion Without Dogma*](#), adds, "The same is true of relativism. If the idea that 'there is no such thing as truth' comes from the human brain, and the human brain is the result of random, irrational evolution, then the statement, 'there's no such thing as truth' is also senseless. But of course, we know certain statements are true not because they are true in the realm of ideas, but because first of all they are true in this physical world of reality. The philosopher proves the brick is real by kicking it and howling in pain."

With *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis envisioned what a world completely governed by scientifically verified facts and devoid of any conception of the Tao would look like. Lewis considered the Tao (a term from the [*Analects of Confucius*](#)) "to mean something like moral inheritance, the legacy of humane wisdom that the older generation imparts to the younger and which the younger have a duty to hand on in due course" (Michael Ward, [*After Humanity*](#)). For Lewis, a society rooted in technology-inspired manipulation must, by definition, organize into two classes of people: conditioners and the conditioned. Lewis saw with rare prescience and clarity of mind exactly "what the thing called 'Man's power over Nature' must always and essentially be:"

And all long-term exercise of power, especially in breeding, must mean the power of earlier

generations over later ones. ... In order to understand fully what Man's power over Nature, and therefore the power of some men over other men, really means, we must picture the race extended in time from the date of its emergence to that of its extinction. Each generation exercises power over its successors: ... This modifies the picture which is sometimes painted of a progressive emancipation from tradition and a progressive control of natural processes resulting in a continual increase of human power. In reality, of course, if any one age really attains, by eugenics and scientific education, the power to make its descendants what it pleases, all men who live after it are the patients of that power. They are weaker, not stronger: for though we may have put wonderful machines in their hands we have pre-ordained how they are to use them. ... There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won by man is a power over man as well. ... For the power of Man to make himself what he pleases means, as we have seen, the power of some men to make other men what they please.

Lewis did not address or identify the conditioners directly, but the twenty-first century conditioned know all too well. Einstein, perhaps one of, if not the greatest scientific mind of the twentieth century, provided a hint, arguing in a 1949 article against the concentration of wealth and power in a few hands (conditioners):

[Such concentration will result in] an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

G. K. Chesterton (1874 – 1936)

Chesterton had a great many things to say about a great many things which is to say he found a great many things interesting though often paradoxical. There is much controversy these days over how many of the rich and powerful elite despise the current order of things; they hate whatever stands in their way of attaining more wealth and power, their insatiable desire to destroy and reconstruct the world into something more to their benefit. Of this sort of radical revolutionary Chesterton would most certainly have had something to go on about. And indeed, he did just that in his introduction to [*The*](#)

Defendant (1901). "I have imagined that the main business of a man, however humble, is defence. I have conceived that a defendant is chiefly required when worldlings despise the world—that a counsel for the defence would not have been out of place in that terrible day when the sun was darkened over Calvary and Man was rejected of men." Some three decades later it would seem Chesterton was just getting his second wind:

If the modern man is indeed the heir of all the ages, he is often the kind of heir who tells the family solicitor to sell the whole damned estate, lock, stock, and barrel, and give him a little ready money to throw away at the races or the night-clubs. He is certainly not the kind of heir who ever visits his estate: and, if he really owns all the historic lands of ancient and modern history, he is a very absentee landlord. He does not really go down the mines on the historic property, whether they are the Caves of the Cave-Man or the Catacombs of the Christians, but is content with a very hasty and often misleading report from a very superficial and sometimes dishonest mining expert. He allows any wild theories, like wild thickets of thorn and briar, to grow all over the garden and even the graveyard. He will always believe modern testimony in a text-book against contemporary testimony on a tombstone. He sells the family portraits with much more than the carelessness of Charles Surface, and seldom even knows enough about the family even to save a favourite uncle from the wreck. For the adjective "fast," which was a condemnation when applied to profligates, has become a compliment when applied to progressives. I know there are any number of men in the modern world to whom all this does not in the least apply; but the point is that, even where it is obviously applicable, it is not thought particularly culpable. Nevertheless, there are some of us who do hold that the metaphor of inheritance from human history is a true metaphor, and that any man who is cut off from the past, and content with the future, is a man most unjustly disinherited; and all the more unjustly if he is happy in his lot, and is not permitted even to know what he has lost. And I, for one, believe that the mind of man is at its largest, and especially at its broadest, when it feels the brotherhood of humanity linking it up with remote and primitive and even barbaric things.

Read with a mind open to truth—a nonexistent bit of nonsense the radical left in all its incantations must necessarily deny—one can always find in Chesterton a diamond hidden among the discard and clutter. Admittedly, our current condition is certifiably Mad Hatter, complicated and complex, beyond Wonderland nonsense; by all appearances we have lost our collective minds. Chesterton noted eleven decades ago that *"there is nothing that needs more fastidious care than our choice of nonsense. Sense is like daylight or daily air, and may come from any quarter or in any quantity. But nonsense is an art. Like an art, it is rarely successful, and yet entirely simple when it is successful."* It is difficult to imagine one so

disinherited of a past while content and happy not knowing what has been lost, and yet, that is tragically the output of many, if not most, elite institutions of "higher" education.

There is truly nothing simple in pretending to be sane, especially when it is the "expert" opinion of any well-known but quite mad, mad scientist with a god complex. I believe it was Chesterton who said that any really true opinion can be proved from anything which is very much the old joke: opinions are like anuses, everyone has one and most borrow a foul odor from the barnyard. And yet, by all the evidence, opinions are the dernier cri of modern civilized man. Unfortunately, civilization, unlike opinions, is fast dwindling into oblivion.

Chesterton in his essay for *The Illustrated London News* (September 9, 1911) wrote, "*Vox Populi vox Dei is not a maxim we are in any danger of overdoing; for the modern world has profoundly lost faith in both the two entities. But there is one sense in which the voice of the people is really like the voice of God; and that is that most of us take precious little notice of it.*" Every bit of his observation is truer today than yesterday and by every indication will be all the more so tomorrow. The conditioners neither listen to the voice of the conditioned nor to a higher power.

Fulton J. Sheen (1895 – 1979)

In *Religion Without God* (1928) Sheen observed, "*there is, in modern thought, a too general readiness to accept anything which criticizes the traditional, and too great an unwillingness to judge the value of the criticism.*" This is, of course, ever more so with post-modern thought, evidenced by cancel culture with the willing, some would say, vainglorious assistance of the agitprop corporate media:

The scientific study of religion has undergone tremendous changes during the last four centuries, changes due in part to the modern mode of approaching problems, and in part to the universal adoption of the experimental method. This changed attitude toward the problems of religion has been marked with each succeeding century. The sixteenth century asked for a "new Church," the eighteenth for a "new Christ," the nineteenth for a "new God," and the twentieth asks for a "new religion." In response to these appeals and in the name of "progress," "science" and "liberty," the Church became a sect, Christ but a moral teacher, God the symbol for the ideal tendency of things, and religion an attitude of friendliness to the universe.

Sheen noted there were two possible adjustments in life: *"one is to suit our lives to principles; the other is to suit principles to our lives. 'If we do not live as we think, we soon begin to think as we live.' The method of adjusting moral principles to the way men live is just such a perversion of the due order of things."* Man has increasingly, over the last half century instead of making men conform to principles of morality, changed the principles to conform to heterodox immorality. *"This kind of philosophy would never have permitted the Prodigal Son to return to his father's house. It would have settled the 'crisis' by finding a new and handsome name for the husks he was throwing to the swine, and called it 'progress away from antiquated modes of morality:'"*

The giggling giddiness of novelty, the sentimental restlessness of a mind unhinged, and the unnatural fear of a good dose of hard thinking, all conjoin to produce a group of sophomoric latitudinarians [17th century English theologians not insisting on strict conformity to a particular doctrine or standard] who think there is no difference between God as Cause and God as "mental projection"; who equate Christ and Buddha, St. Paul and John Dewey, and then enlarge their broadmindedness into a sweeping synthesis that says not only that one Christian sect is just as good as another, but even that one world-religion is just as good as another. The great god "Progress" is then enthroned on the altars of fashion, and as the hectic worshipers are asked, "Progress towards what?" the tolerant answer comes back, "More progress." All the while sane men are wondering how there can be progress without direction and how there can be direction without a fixed point. And because they speak of a "fixed point," they are said to be behind the times, when really they are beyond the times mentally and spiritually.

The high priests of the great god "Progress", as Sheen called them, preach the gospel of want and greed, of hatred and despair, on the one hand bemoaning how terribly awful and rotten the world has become while on the other hand promising utopia, but first, all must be destroyed so it can be built back better. Sounds much too much like, *"But we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it – away from the fog of controversy."* In the meantime, lower your expectations, you overindulgent deplorables. No bread? *Qu'ils mangent de la brioche*. All this recalls a song by Kenny Rogers & The First Edition:

*I pushed my soul in a deep dark hole and then I followed it in
I watched myself crawling out as I was a-crawling in
I got up so tight I couldn't unwind
I saw so much, I broke my mind*

I just dropped in to see what condition my condition was in.

The condition of the conditioned's condition has been conditioned by the conditioners. Any more questions?

The Abolition Of Commonsense

It should come as no small surprise then how little commonsense plays any meaningful role in the daily life of post-modern man. Evidence of the ubiquity of nonsense pervades every niche, nook and cranny of society, tribe, creed, and culture. Opinion has become the opioid of the masses, addicting the "unwashed" masses to an insidiously nasty habit; facts are irrelevant or inconvenient, truth subjective and relative.

Should opinion be not "as you like it" it must be denigrated, censored, and silenced. Opposing opinion is "fact checked", then, disavowed as dangerous, evil, hate speech, or against established community standards—which, unsurprisingly, are never critically defined. Most Americans fail to grasp the serious political and intellectual implications surrounding the silencing of opposing voices:

Banning the speech of the allegedly oppressive majority while directly or tacitly inciting protected groups to make unchallengeable claims to marginalization and voice hatred of the majority, outlawing "hate speech" promises to make the public square even more filled with hatred. The criminalization of "hate speech" leads not just to more "hate speech," but also to civil strife. Most pernicious of all is the legal and moral acceptance of the premise contained in "hate speech" criminalization: the forced acceptance or celebration of unfalsifiable, self-created identities that are impervious to even mild rational interrogation, which opens the way to despotism.

In denying or banning speech considered dangerous or "hate speech" throughout the public square, America will cease to be a nation of the people, by the people, for the people; and it most assuredly will too soon perish from the Earth.

Of opinion, John Stuart Mill (*On Liberty*, 1859) warned, *"If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one*

person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind:"

But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

Mill's argument is especially persuasive given post-modern political discourse is too often manufactured out of whole cloth, almost entirely from fickle public opinion, such opinion biased to conform to the prejudice of the one asking for it. Even then, the published analysis is carefully tricked to a preferred outcome and unwelcome opinion either ignored or suppressed. Long before opinion polling became digital and commonplace, Mill saw the problems inherent in relying on opinion as a virtuous, rational source for serious decision-making. *"We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still."*

First, the opinion which it is attempted to suppress by authority may possibly be true. Those who desire to suppress it, of course deny its truth; but they are not infallible. They have no authority to decide the question for all mankind, and exclude every other person from the means of judging. To refuse a hearing to an opinion, because they are sure that it is false, is to assume that their certainty is the same thing as absolute certainty. All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility.

Unfortunately, for the good sense of mankind, the fact of their fallibility is far from carrying the weight in their practical judgment, which is always allowed to it in theory; for while every one well knows himself to be fallible, few think it necessary to take any precautions against their own fallibility, or admit the supposition that any opinion of which they feel certain, may be one of the examples of the error to which they acknowledge themselves to be liable.

Reliance on opinion rather than true knowledge founded upon verifiable fact and data is a guaranteed recipe for poor decisions. Likewise, wholesale mindless acceptance of the magical tunes played by the pied pipers of science and polity, as well as the Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (DIE) polemics of disharmonious mountebanks are guaranteed to lead naïve and gullible lemmings over the proverbial cliff.

Intellectual giant, Thomas Sowell, in his inestimable wit and wisdom once quipped, "It is depressing to hear ideas trumpeted as New! when the underlying reasoning involved was common in the 1840s or the 1790s—and discredited by the 1920s." Elsewhere ([*Barbarians Inside the Gates*](#)), he says, "*I never cease to be amazed at the people who want to make your decision for you, instead of supplying you with the information you need to make your own decision.*" In [*Knowledge and Decisions*](#) (1980) he acknowledges the intentional shift away from traditional education which had once focused on the enormous range of human knowledge. In describing what "knowing" meant he employed the phrase "ignorant savage" which, to the progressive woke politically correct social justice warrior is "hate speech": undeniably racist, xenophobic, and culturally insensitive:

The savage is wholly lacking in a narrowly specific kind of knowledge: abstract, systematized, knowledge of the sort generally taught in schools. Considering the enormous range of human knowledge, from intimate personal knowledge of specific individuals to the complexities of organizations and the subtleties of feelings, it is remarkable that one speck in this firmament should be the sole determinant of whether someone is considered knowledgeable or ignorant in general. Yet it is a fact of life that an unlettered peasant is considered ignorant, however much he may know about nature and man, and a Ph.D. is never considered ignorant, however barren his mind might be outside his narrow specialty and however little he grasps about human feelings or social complexities. We do sometimes refer to a "learned fool," but the notion of a "fool" implies deficiencies in the reasoning process (so that one is easily deceived or fooled), whereas it may actually be knowledge that is lacking, so that the "learned" person has simply not learned enough outside a certain sliver of human experience.

Sowell adds, "*We need to consider the full breadth of knowledge and its depth as well. That is, we need to consider not only how much we know, but how well we know it.*"

Perhaps nowhere has such lopsided uninformed opinion become the main course du jour than on university campuses where traditional education over the past several decades has been barbarously exorcised. In [*The Dying Citizen*](#), (2021) Victor Davis Hanson describes the uptick in an array of nonteaching, in loco parentis, and therapeutic services, coincident to an increasing array of noncompetitive degrees and skills:

In other words, too often the universities saw themselves no longer as teachers of the inductive method and the elements of foundation knowledge. Instead, they were activists. They became

intent on shaping young minds to adopt a politicized agenda, whether defined as unquestioned embrace of climate change activism, identity politics, or redistributive economics.

Deductivism—picking and choosing examples to conform to a preconceived result—was a recalibration that proved far more costly, and ultimately toxic, for the student than the prior commitment to traditional education that had emphasized a set body of knowledge, and inductive method of accessing it, and the training of an inquisitive mind.

"In today's world," according to Ryszard Legutko ([The Demon in Democracy](#)), "entertainment is not just a pastime or a style, but a substance that permeates everything: schools and universities, upbringing of children, intellectual life, art, morality, and religion:"

It has become dear to the hearts of students, professors, entrepreneurs, journalists, engineers, scientists, writers, even priests. Entertainment imposes itself psychologically, intellectually, socially, and also, strange as it might sound, spiritually. A failure to provide human endeavors—even the most noble ones—with an entertaining wrapping is today unthinkable and borders on sin."

The modern sense of entertainment increasingly resembles what Pascal long ago called divertissement: that is, an activity—as he wrote in his Thoughts—that separates us from the seriousness of existence and fills this existence with false content. Divertissement is thus not only being entertained in the ordinary sense of the word, but living and acting within artificial rules that organize our lives, setting conventional and mostly trivial goals which we pursue, getting involved in disputes and competitions, aspiring to honors-making careers, and doing everything that would turn our thoughts away from fundamental existential matters. By escaping the questions of the ultimate meaning of our own lives, or of human life in general, our minds slowly get used to that fictitious reality, which we take for the real one, and are lured by its attractions.

Legutko states what is intuitively obvious to anyone not yet ensnared by trivial pursuits, that the "difference between Pascal's divertissement and today's entertainment" is,

the modern man, no matter how much a desire to have fun has captured his soul, knows very well that it is an artificial construction, not the real thing. Whether some other, more objective reality exists is to him a matter of indifference, and if told there is not, he would probably still

remain unmoved. Having neutralized all musings about objectivity, the modern man takes pride in his deep involvement in entertainment, which in the absence of other objective references he considers natural.

In an [insightful essay](#), Arthur Milikh describes what has become obvious and objectively true throughout most of the latter half of the twentieth century, but progressive dogma in the first two decades of the twenty-first:

America's universities have been progressivism's most important asset, its crown jewel. For over half a century, they have served as the left's R&D headquarters and the intellectual origin or dissemination point for the political and moral transformation of the nation, especially through the sexual revolution and the identity-politics revolution. Universities have trained the new elites who have taken society's helm and now set its tone through the other institutions thoroughly dominated by the left: the mainstream press, mass entertainment, Fortune 500s, and tech companies. Universities have also brought to rural and suburban America these moral revolutions, converting generations of young people to their cause. Universities are arguably the most important institution in modern democracy—no other institution has such power to determine the fate of democracy, for good or ill.

Universities were meant to be the one fixed place in democratic society insulated from the ceaseless motion of democratic life, with its petty passions, consumption, and moral and intellectual fashions. They were meant to serve as the guardian of the mind and its greatest fruits. In previous eras, segments of society (especially the clergy and the aristocracy) were devoted to protecting learning and a tradition of books. But democracy does not support such classes, and it was originally hoped that the universities would assume this role. Regrettably, they are no longer animated by their original purpose of serving republican self-government or the freedom of the mind. As such, they must be treated as political entities.

That the freedom of speech is under attack on many campuses should not be surprising, given that the freedom of the mind, of which speech is the expression, is rarely understood as their purpose any longer.

In a recent interview Milikh observed how great books formed and informed him far beyond what is now considered accepted norms of academic pedagogy. "In democracy," he said, "all you have is

basically public opinion. You have no past. We don't remember what happened 10 years ago. And so, all you have to compare your own life against is what you see directly before you or the kind of propaganda images given to you." Anyone who has ever read Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will recognize the similarities to the "memory hole" in constant use by the Ministry of Truth. He went on to remark how many people are no longer curious, but rather, are sponges absorbing whatever is given them; never thinking through any of the opinions handed to them.

What struck this avid reader the most was this: *"Reading great books gets you liberation from the immediate, liberation from the propaganda, liberation from all the opinions that you are told you must hold to be a good, decent person."* Hearing this woke a memory of something I had recently read (Douglas Murray, [*The Madness of Crowds*](#)):

The ability to tell the truth and survive would appear to depend—among other things—on your line of work. 'Cancel culture' certainly does exist. And by now it has become clear how it works. It operates most effectively when it can locate a hierarchy above an individual that is itself wobbly, gutless or otherwise vulnerable to mob pressure. Universities have become Exhibit A in all this. In 2019 Cambridge University's dismissal of Noah Carl and Professor Jordan Peterson (the latter from a visiting fellowship) amply demonstrated how mobs of ill-informed activists can pressurize an ancient institution into going against the only principles that justify its existence. After all, if a university is going to encourage non-experts to judge experts and privileges people who do not read over those who do, then what is the point of the university?

This then "circles back" to the core issue: no one has the time to read great books. Yet, time is but the effect not the cause of such disinclination, neither are the myriad of excuses so easily inculcated in young minds. The truth is basic, fundamental skills (the 3Rs: reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic) have been purposefully and maliciously demoted, superseded by mind-numbing intersectionality, multiculturalism, gender-bending, CRT, equity, and social justice indoctrination. Thus, no one reads because they have never been taught, encouraged, or even permitted to read great literature, especially with an open and critical mind. Tragically, the statistics bear this out.

There is, of course, a purpose behind the deliberate social indoctrination—exemplified with the historical distortions found in the *New York Times 1619 Project* or the mandated indoctrination of Critical Race Theory. Santayana's warning, *"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,"* rings clarion to modern ears. It is perhaps a pointless exercise, given so few are capable of or bother to

read, to mention what Nicholai Bukharin and Yevgeni Preobrazhensky had to say in [*The ABC of Communism*](#) (1920) on education:

The task of the new communist schools is to impose upon bourgeois and petty-bourgeois children a proletarian mentality. In the realm of the mind, in the psychological sphere, the communist school must effect the same revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois society, must effect the same expropriation, that the Soviet Power has effected in the economic sphere by the nationalization of the means of production. The minds of men must be made ready for the new social relationships. If the masses find it difficult to construct a communist society, this is because in many departments of mental life they still have both feet firmly planted upon the soil of bourgeois society, because they have not yet freed themselves from bourgeois prejudices. In part, therefore, it is the task of the new school to adapt the mentality of adults to the changed social conditions. Still more, however, it is the task of the new school to train up a younger generation whose whole ideology shall be deeply rooted in the soil of the new communist society. [emphasis mine]

In bourgeois society, the child is regarded as the property of its parents - if not wholly, at least to a major degree. When parents say, 'My daughter', 'My son', the words do not simply imply the existence of a parental relationship, they also give expression to the parents' view that they have a right to educate their own children. From the socialist outlook, no such right exists. The individual human being does not belong to himself, but to society, to the human race. The individual can only live and thrive owing to the existence of society. The child, therefore, belongs to the society in which it lives, and thanks to which it came into being - and this society is something wider than the 'society' of its own parents. To society, likewise, belongs the primary and basic right of educating children. From this point of view, the parents' claim to bring up their own children and thereby to impress upon the children's psychology their own limitations, must not merely be rejected, but must be absolutely laughed out of court. Society may entrust the education of children to the parents; but it may refuse to do anything of the kind; and there is all the more reason why society should refuse to entrust education to the parents, seeing that the faculty of educating children is far more rarely encountered than the faculty of begetting them. Of one hundred mothers, we shall perhaps find one or two who are competent educators. The future belongs to social education. Social education will make it possible for socialist society to train the coming generation most successfully, at lowest cost, and with the least expenditure of energy.

The social education of children, therefore, must be realized for other reasons besides those of pedagogy. It has enormous economic advantages. Hundreds of thousands, millions of mothers will thereby be freed for productive work and for self-culture. They will be freed from the soul-destroying routine of housework, and from the endless round of petty duties which are involved in the education of children in their own homes.

That is why the Soviet Power is striving to create a number of institutions for the improvement of social education, which are intended by degrees to universalize it. To this class of institutions belong the kindergartens, to which manual workers, clerks, etc., can send their children, thus entrusting them to experts who will prepare the children for school life. To this category, too, belong the homes or residential kindergartens. There are also children's colonies, where the children either live permanently, or for a considerable period, away from their parents. There are in addition the crèches, institutions for the reception of children under four years of age; in these the little ones are cared for while their parents are at work.

In a 1955 essay, entitled, "Propaganda" the late author and historian Richard Weaver wrote, "It's tempting to say that the only final protection against propaganda is education. But the remark must be severely qualified because there is a kind of education which makes people more rather than less gullible:"

Most modern education induces people to accept too many assumptions. On these the propagandist can play even more readily than on the supposed prejudices of the uneducated. It is the independent, reflective intelligence which critically rejects and accepts the ideas competing in the market place. Education to think rather than mere literacy should be the prime object of those seeking to combat propaganda.

Life seldom comes with simple questions, simple answers to life's complexities are rarely persuasive, at times foolish, but more often dangerous, even on occasion dead wrong.

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The featured image shows, "The Questioner of the Sphinx," by Elihu Vedder; painted in 1863.

