WHY THE 'LEFT' IS INTOLERANT

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Introduction

There are many forms of intolerance and many different kinds of explanations, motives, and defenses for the various forms. There is no presumption here that intolerance is always and everywhere unacceptable. In this essay, I shall focus on that form of intolerance manifested as censorship of what is permitted in writing and speech, limitations on what kinds of questions, the manner of their formulation and the kinds and range of answers permitted. In addition, I shall focus on censorship that takes the form of editing, reinterpreting and reporting what other people say; finally, I shall focus on censorship of the presumed motives (not just the reasons) of what other people are thinking. The particular historical and institutional context I have in mind is contemporary so-called free societies such as the US and the UK and specifically within them government bureaucracies, universities and all forms of public communication, such as newspapers, magazines, blogs, internet, publishers, TV, radio, etc.

Precisely because of the foregoing focus and the kinds of individuals that would be relevant, my explanation will be interested primarily in the intellectual origins of the intolerance, or, if you like, the kinds reasons offered or that might be offer in defense of the intolerance.

Human beings sometimes, but not always, find it necessary to offer a formal reason(s) for their public policy positions. We do so when we believe that the people to whom the formal explanation is addressed are, or will be, members of the same moral community as ourselves. Otherwise, the offering of reasons is irrelevant, often counterproductive, or dishonest.

When I refer to the 'Left', I shall mean *those who advocate radical social change instituted by the force of the state and justified by appeal to some moral abstraction or Utopian aim*. Given my understanding, the 'Left' will refer in general to so-called progressives, modern liberals, socialists, Marxists, those who self-identify in terms of identity politics, and the like. Political affiliation is no longer particularly helpful here.

Intellectual Origins of Social 'Expertise'

In the 18th-century, the French *philosophes* developed the idea that there could be social sciences, modeled after the physical sciences. These alleged social sciences would be able to explain, predict, and control social phenomena. Thus was born the idea of a **social technology**. The belief that a social

technology would enable us to create a Utopian society was the shared intellectual inheritance of liberals, socialists, and Marxists (Becker 1962). Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* expressed such a view. Fromm described it in the following way: "[Skinner's] system attracts those psychologists who are liberals and who find Skinner's system an argument to defend their political optimism. He appeals to those who believe that desirable social goals like peace and equality are not just rootless ideals, but can be established in reality. The whole idea that one can 'design' a better society on a scientific basis appeals to many who earlier might have been socialists. Did not Marx, too, want to design a better society. Did he not call his brand of socialism 'scientific' in contrast to 'Utopian' socialism… Moreover, Skinner's theory rings true, because it is (almost) true for the alienated man of the cybernetic society. In summary, Skinnerism is the psychology of opportunism dressed up as a new scientific humanism" [The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1973].

The Enlightenment Project is the Pelagian attempt to define and explain the human predicament through science as well as to achieve mastery over it through the use of a social technology. This project originated in France in the18th-century with the *philosophes,* Diderot, d'Alembert, La Mettrie, Condillac, Helvetius, d'Holbach, Turgot, Condorcet, Cabanis, and Voltaire:

[T]he 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, were not unattainable, nor incompatible, and 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… would, by replacing the chaotic amalgam of guesswork, tradition, superstition, prejudice, dogma, fantasy…that hitherto did service as human knowledge and human wisdom (and of which by far the chief protector and instigator was the Church), 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.[Berlin, 1993, pp.27-28].

The social science disciplines now housed in the universities claim to possess the relevant truths that

would enable them to produce a social utopia if they can gain control of the only institution capable of controlling all the other institutions, namely the government.

Hence, the social sciences, which have colonized all other disciplines including the arts, sciences, schools of communication, law schools, and even schools of business, have produced a faculty that overwhelmingly supports government that is ever more powerful. This is what intellectuals tell themselves makes them the most important people in society. It is there raison d'être. Since education is now understood to be a form of technology, education is indistinguishable from indoctrination. Universities and colleges may advertise to parents that a college degree increases lifetime income but that is not the major mission of present higher education. Its mission is social reform.

Unfortunately, for them, The U.S. has a constitution, an electoral college, and a republic as opposed to a pure democracy. This makes it difficult to obtain the correct personnel for the government. Hence, it is necessary to indoctrinate the ignorant public. This requires:

First, purge the faculty of those who do not believe in either the intellectual legitimacy of the social 'sciences' or the practical effectiveness of social technology. Academic freedom is a relic of a bygone pre-scientific era. It may have been necessary at first to entrench leftist professors, but it is no longer needed. This exemplifies the old saying that "when in the minority demand tolerance on your host's principles but when in the majority deny it on yours."

In an analogue to the Vatican, only some have access to all writings; all others, including authors (instructors) must be silenced. A catechism displays the only admissible questions and the only admissible answers.

Second, sanitize and redefine the curriculum. Remove all offensive and counter-productive material.

Third, create a paid group of monitors to observe and report on faculty and staff who might deviate from or sabotage the curriculum.

Fourth, insist that everyone get a college degree and adjust the requirements (lower standards) to facilitate this.

Fifth, train journalists to spread the truth. Since these journalists will be taught the hidden truth about how people think, in the same way that physicists understand the behavior of unseen molecules, journalists do not report what people actually say because it is mere surface phenomena. They report what people really mean, the hidden structure, even if that is not what those people say. This is not in their eyes fake news or misrepresentation. It is social 'science'. It is telling the 'real' hidden truth.

It is not only permissible but also morally required to do or say whatever is necessary because the end justifies the means. The end always justifies the means only as long as the end is incontrovertibly acceptable (i.e. beyond dispute). Presumably, only the 'elect' know that 'end' and therefore are in a position to impose it on others.

Working with allies in the bureaucracy, this may at times look like spying on a campaign, sabotaging an election and an administration, and rigging the outcome of future elections, but what it really means to advocates of social technology is the giving of total fulfillment. They know the truth and they will make us really free.

There are many prominent thinkers, such as Hayek, who have debunked the whole idea of a social 'science'. Human beings are not mechanisms and not simply organic entities. Moreover, there cannot be a science of humanity or of the social world. Any description of the human world would be valid only if agreed to within a pre-existing social/cultural framework. Any attempt to explain that framework (as opposed to describing it) would be a further explanation that would be valid only if agreed to within some other framework, and so on *ad infinitum*!

My argument should not be confused with the older claim that you cannot deduce a norm (an 'ought') from a fact(s) ('is'), an argument wrongly attributed to Hume. There cannot be facts or anything designated as a fact unless we already agree on a prior set of (epistemological) norms/practices. So, norms are more fundamental than facts, and hence it is obvious why we do not deduce norms from facts – a trivial point and not a profound insight. This goes to the heart of the argument: all (any) civilization is possible only if there is some kind of agreement on norms. What the new left does is to obscure this point by talking as if they are articulating an intellectual or symbolic position when in fact they reject a common set of norms (e.g., burning the flag or not kneeling at the national anthem). That is why they systematically obscure (or are confused about) the distinction between the existence of a norm and the extent to which we instantiate the norm in our practices.

Let me give an example of how this works.

I shall refer to this maneuver as CYA. Progressive advocates of social technology claimed for many years that dysfunction within the African-American community was solely the result of poverty or the lack of resources and that a variety of welfare programs would solve the problem.

As Charles Murray documented it in his book, *Losing Ground*, that progressive strategy not only failed to solve the problem but also made it worse! Two consequences followed. First, Murray was vilified as a racist for this book. Second, progressives invented a new or meta-theory to cover the failure of the first theory/policy.

The new theory was 'institutionalized racism'. I shall ignore the fact that such an expression is a meaningless abstraction that confuses different categories (if you are a logician you will understand this) and hence cannot be, and is therefore not, confirmable. The *explanans* is identical to the *explanandum*. On the contrary, by every objective measureable the U.S. is not racist (Connerly, *WSJ, 7/24/20*), and popular opinion increasingly favors doing everything reasonable to improve opportunities for Blacks. 'Reparations' is not reasonable because it is more of the same failed program of transferring resources.

CYA also reflects another dishonest intellectual stratagem. Advocates of social technology assume that whatever is true of physical science is the model for everything else. There are two versions: elimination and exploration. In *elimination*, there is an explicit substitution of new ideas for old ideas. Elimination is a form of radical replacement through innovation. Examples are the elimination of Ptolemy's geocentric view of the universe and its replacement by Copernicus' heliocentric view of the universe; another is the elimination of traditional theories of disease by the discovery of microbes. Elimination makes sense if there is some prior agreed upon framework in terms of which we can judge that one new theory is better than an old theory.

In *exploration*, on the other hand, we begin with our ordinary understanding of how things work and then go on to speculate on what might be behind those workings. The new understanding replaces the older one by appeal to underlying structures. The underlying structures are discovered by following out the implications of some hypothetical model about those structures. The discovery is empirically confirmable and replicable by using telescopes, microscopes, and other sophisticated devices. Exploration is exemplified in the use of the atomic theory to explain chemical behavior or the behavior

of gases.

Exploration is the mode of thought of academic social science. By analogy with physical science, the social sciences have persistently sought to discover the hidden structure behind the everyday understanding of social activities. From Durkheim to Marx, and beyond, social scientists have persistently sought to reveal a structural level of which we are not immediately aware. Exploration is the search for structure rather than for meaning, the search for the formal elements underlying the everyday world rather than believing that the everyday world can constitute its own level of understanding.

The problem with exploration is that there is no way to confirm or disconfirm an exploration in the social sciences. There are no sophisticated devices such as social microscopes to reveal what cannot be seen by the naked eye. There is no progress in the social sciences like the progress in the physical sciences. There is merely the substitution of one fashionable language for another. The riders and the tunes change, but the carousel only moves in a circle.

We are unable to choose among competing explorations. Denied formal criteria or extra-systematic criteria for evaluating their own hypotheses, social theorists can only fall back upon aesthetic and/or informal criteria. Immense prestige is accorded to those individuals skillful in formulating clever, ingenious, and sometimes bizarre hypotheses. Ingenuity becomes the benchmark of success, and as in present day movements in the arts leads to sudden shifts in fashion. Another dead-end is the appeal to intuition so that rival explorers claim that their hidden structure hypothesis 'better' captures some private intuition about our ordinary understanding. There is, of course, no independent way of establishing this.

How, then do we avoid nihilism? Progressives do so by offering a further or meta-exploratory account of why their opponents opposed the first level exploratory account. Therefore, if I disagree that the lack of resources is the cause of dysfunction, the progressive accuses me of racism, of harboring a secret dislike or revulsion of some group of people. This is no more rational or confirmable than the first level exploration, but it is a very clever and sometimes effective political/rhetorical maneuver, especially with the intellectually unsophisticated. One Tower of Babel replaces another.

There are alternative and competing accounts of what underlies our normative framework, but there is no way of resolving, in exploratory terms, which one is correct. Without a consensus on the framework,

there is no way of distinguishing between when a thinker helps us to alter our norms by clarification of the alleged underlying structure and when he or she is just an advocate of a particular set of norms. Without a consensus on the framework, we might be led to the cynical conclusion that the very idea of a framework is a myth. That is, we are led to nihilism. Once we are willing to face nihilism, we can well ask "Why seek to resolve differences peacefully?"

By subscribing to scientism, theorists are also led to embrace determinism. Rawls is an example of an environmental determinist when he says that "Even the willingness to make an effort, to try, and so to be deserving in the ordinary sense is itself dependent upon happy family and social circumstances" [*Theory of Justice* (1971), p. 74]. That is why these theorists deny things like the Augustinian or Kantian conception of the moral free will and deny, as well, the notion of an autonomous internal self. The traditional, pre-Enlightenment, conception of a moral agent subject to internal sanctions is denied. It is plausible to such theorists to take seriously the question "Why should I be moral?" If there are no internal sanctions, then there can only be external sanctions. Social equilibrium is to be maintained through external social control, i.e. intolerance and ultimately force!

There are enormous and insurmountable problems here. If we are nothing more than creatures of stimulus and response then why choose to institutionalize any one particular set of norms? Of course, we can maintain that these 'machines' have an internal telos or purpose, but how do we confirm this allegation or decide which alleged goal is the true one. You cannot establish the truth of teleology in an empirical way, and neither can you square individual free will with teleology.

I shall refer to the 'old left' as those who sincerely believed that they could win the argument on purely intellectual grounds. However, as epistemological sophistication grew in the physical sciences (1960s and 1970s), it became increasingly clear to philosophers of science (e.g. Kuhn, Feyerabend) that there was no independent way to establish the objective truth or the notion of objective progress even in the physical sciences. The Enlightenment Project dream of a social technology needed a new foundation.

Post-Modernity

As opposed to classical thinkers, modern or post-Renaissance thinkers have come to recognize that norms and standards (truth, beauty, goodness) are not grounded in, nor do they refer to, structures independent of human perspectives. One sees this in Copernican astronomy, Einsteinian relativity, the revival of ancient skepticism and what Kant, influenced by Hume, called the Copernican Revolution in

philosophy. This notion of relativity to human perspective is already present in Renaissance works of art. For the benefit of the obtuse, to proclaim that something is true, beautiful, or good, etc. is to say that members of some relevant community will agree with that assessment. You might not agree with this modern epistemology, but there is nothing contradictory or irrational about it.

Postmodernists consider all norms as products of historically contingent circumstances that reflect cultural hierarchies. As such, any prior claim to social authority is delegitimized. This involves two separate beliefs: (a) the empirical claim that there are no universally significant facts about humanity and (b) the existent norms are historically accidental and therefore challengeable.

For our purposes, the second claim is the most significant. To begin with, whatever current norms there are for scholars and journalists (including the norms of academic freedom, veracity, interpretation, etc.) are challengeable or deconstructable. We live in a world of norm pluralism. If so, how do we go about managing disputes or replacing norms? There are traditional norms of challenge and replace, but those norms are themselves contingent. Here we have reached a dead end. You cannot even say that "anything goes" because that too is a contingent norm. We are left with the appeal to force.

Some postmodernists are undismayed by the foregoing. They will claim that they speak for a previously unrecognized set of norms variously described as the norms of the dispossessed, the marginalized, the exploited, etc. The Marxist provenance of this view is obvious and should be kept in mind. In fact, these particular postmodernists claim to be the articulators or spokespersons of those norms. Put into action, these spokespersons will try to persuade advocates of the traditional norms by various means to embrace the norms of the downtrodden. Those means include direct action and violence if necessary. There is no set of super-norms in their eyes for resolving these disputes.

Personally, I think these postmodernists are correct in pointing out the limits of rational discourse. It also seems historically accurate to claim that many disputes were resolved only by conflict (rebellion, revolution, civil war, etc.). Under such circumstances, intolerance is a perfectly consistent response.

Friends, colleagues, and others who do not get this point dismay me. The latter keep trying to find some logical flaw in postmodernism. For example, how can we agree that all norms are historically contingent? Does that not show that we agree on something? Of course it does; but 'agreement' is a social process. Philosophically, we do not all agree on what 'agreement' means.

My other friends seek some 'rational' way, some form of negotiation or concession, perhaps secession, to resolve the dispute. These otherwise 'good' people understandably want to avoid the use of force. In failing to understand those partisans of the left who are postmodern, the 'good' people (Neville Chamberlain comes to mind) are helpless, if not hopeless intellectually, and they will lose without a fight.

The well-intentioned but obtuse readers will jump-in at this point and claim that the appeal to historical events is a self-contradiction on the part of postmodernists. Again, this misses the point. Agreement on the occurrence of one event shows at best that we share at least one norm. Sharing one norm does not translate into sharing a set or framework of norms. Even agreement on the application of a norm to a set of circumstances is compatible with different interpretations of the same event in the light of a set of norms. No single norm operates in total independence of the set to which it belongs.

It is not simply the case that there are significant ethical disagreements about substantive issues. Many if not most of these controversies do not appear to be resolvable through sound rational argument. On the one hand, many of the controversies depend upon different foundational metaphysical commitments. As with most metaphysical controversies, resolution is possible only through the granting of particular initial premises and rules of evidence. On the other hand, even when foundational metaphysical issues do not appear to be at stake, the debates turn on different rankings of the good.

Again, resolution does not appear to be feasible without begging the question, arguing in a circle, or engaging in infinite regress. One cannot appeal to consequences without knowing how to rank the impact of different approaches with regard to different ethical interests (liberty, equality, prosperity, security, etc.). Nor can one uncontroversially appeal to preference satisfaction unless one already grants how one will correct preferences and compare rational versus impassioned preferences, as well as calculate the discount rate for preferences over time. Appeals to disinterested observers, hypothetical choosers, or hypothetical contractors will not avail either.

If such decision makers are truly disinterested, they will choose nothing. To choose in a particular way, they must be fitted out with a particular moral sense or thin theory of the good. Intuitions can be met with contrary intuitions. Any particular balancing of claims can be countered with a different approach to achieving a balance. In order to appeal for guidance to any account of moral rationality one must already have secured content for that moral rationality.

It even does not matter if I am wrong in my understanding and partial defense of postmodernism. It does not matter if there are non-trivial universal truths about humanity or universal/timeless norms. If a group of people do not believe in or accept those norms the consequences are the same. It does not matter if some postmodernists are advocating some benign change, for others can consistently demand something more radical. It does not matter if one is willing to allow co-existence or partition or secession if the other side wants dominance. The need for dominance will be discussed in the next section.

The transition from social technology to postmodernism marks the transition from liberalism to socialism and/or Marxism. The 'new' left has replaced/superseded the 'old' left.

In fact, we do live in a world, and even in our own U.S. society, of moral pluralism. There is one social tradition (norm, practice), namely the Anglo-American one, where moral pluralism has been largely and successfully managed. It is called the rule of law. We live in different substantive moral communities (Christian, Jewish, etc.) and, at the same time, we all subscribe (or we used to) to the *procedural* norm of toleration. Despite these different substantive communities, all of them contain within themselves the resources to adopt the procedural norm of toleration. Of course, this tradition (articulated by Milton, Locke, Mill, Hayek, Oakeshott) is historically contingent.

Many post-modernists reject this tradition (they claim it is an expression of a hidden structure of oppression). This tradition does nothing to glorify/redeem the status of intellectuals, activists, or those with a radical agenda.

Oakeshott has captured this mindset of these particular post-modernists in his description of the anti-individual. Throughout most of history and everywhere in the world, human beings have identified themselves as members of a community. There were neither autonomous individuals not anti-individuals.

The most important event in modern European history is the rise of the autonomous individual beginning in Renaissance Italy (13th - 15th centuries). There are no autonomous individuals anywhere before the Italian Renaissance. Autonomous individuality is a feature of Western European civilization and later spread elsewhere. All creative activity [creative/destruction] is the product of autonomous individuals: "It modified political manners and institutions, it settled upon art, upon religion, upon industry and trade and upon every kind of human relationship." Not everyone makes the transition –

some are left behind (by circumstance and by temperament): Individuals manqué and anti-individuals.

The mind-set of the new 'individual' (Hobbes, Kant) is auto-nomous (self-rule is the translation). They impose order on themselves; self-disciplining, not self-indulgence, rather than requiring outside control and direction; risk-takers; self-defining; self-respect (something you give to yourself); pursue self-chosen courses of action rather than playing traditional roles. Policies advocated by autonomous individuals include encouraging creativity, a free-market economy, limited government, limited to being an umpire – enforce the rules of the game and not pre-determine the outcome; liberty and equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome; the rule of law. Society is viewed as a civil association: there is no overall collective good/goal. Economic entrepreneurs and conservative lawyers are the ones with superior status in this world.

The new left, the new breed of post-modernists, do in fact hold a kind of substantive account of morality. They can no more step out of all historical contexts than anyone else.

What is that mind-set? It is the mind-set of the anti-individual. They like being part of a protective community that takes care of them and relieves them of the anxiety of making choices; they are risk-averse –dominated by the fear of failure; they seek self-esteem (something that other people give you). There were some people, by circumstance or by temperament, less ready than others to respond to this invitation to become autonomous. Once some people become autonomous individuals and others do not, those who do not make the transition become anti-individuals. Anti-individuals are a reaction against autonomous individuals.

They are resentful of autonomous individuals and feel envy, jealousy, and resentment. They have feelings rather than thoughts, impulses rather than opinions. They need a leader; they want equality and solidarity. They blame autonomous individuals for the anxiety; want to destroy the prestige of autonomous individuals and make everyone an anti-individual; they want equality of outcome. They are not necessarily poor, not necessarily ignorant, and often members of the intelligentsia. Because of their mind-set, they cannot and will not function in a market economy; hence, they are dysfunctional in a modern commercial society.

The public policies advocated by anti-individuals include encouraging uniformity, the Democratic-Socialist abolishment of private property, government 'guarantees' and the regulation of everything. Law is reduced to politics – laws are supposed to achieve a political agenda. Society is conceived of as

an enterprise association: there is a collective goal (vouchsafed to the elect) in which each person sublimates his/her own goals and is fulfilled by their social roles.

As you can see their substantive account of morality is wholly negative – they know what they are against but are unclear on what they favor – or - they favor a laundry list of abstractions that temporarily allow them to pour whatever meaning they want into it. What holds them together is what they are against. One cold maintain, as Ortega did, that this is actually the absence of morality as opposed to an alternative morality.

Ideology as Religion

It has been observed for some time, e.g. Nietzsche's assertion that 'God is dead,' that Western societies are increasingly secular. The older comprehensive religious cultural narratives such as Christianity and Judaism seem less and less relevant or meaningful to more and more people. One could argue that THIS IS A FURTHER CONSEQUENCE OF EMBRACING The Enlightenment Project.

Even new variants of these older narratives keep moving further and further 'left' in their orientation. By this, I mean that they increasingly support policies that promise immediate earthly postponement or resolution of the human predicament, to wit that we can suffer physical and mental dysfunction from the time we are conceived and that as we grow older we become more infirm and then die. Perhaps in a broader sense we all seek to make sense of our mortal lives.

Politics is now the new religion. Politics, understood as some institutional arrangement that defines the master moral community, has replaced the family and religion or what we used to call civil society. In some cases, the alleged new community can go beyond traditional nation states and now encompass a super-state (e.g. EU) or a global entity (e.g. U.N.) or even encompass non-human things such as animals, plants, the whole earthly environment. "Today, the New Left is rushing in to fill the spiritual vacuum at the center of our free and capitalist society." [Irving Kristol, 1972, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism"]. There is no longer any pretense that centralized control of the economy is more productive or efficient; equality of outcome and communal solidarity are intrinsic ends that take absolute precedence over everything else. They no longer care about the reasons that past agents had for what they did; all history is to be judged and written from the progressive moral perspective.

Post-modern thinkers have a better understanding of our epistemological predicament than do hopeless advocates of older forms of liberalism (libertarian, classical liberal, etc.). Many traditional religious thinkers also understand the limits of discursive reason but they have either stopped believing the literal truth of their tradition or simply do not know how to defend their commitment. The latter have forgot that the advocacy of toleration is a largely cultural or civil achievement.

Religions have traditionally been enterprise associations, that is, promoting a collective goal to which individual goals, freedoms, etc. are subordinated. In practice, that has meant excluding others, i.e. intolerance. Christianity and Judaism, notably among others, subsequently (i.e. after centuries of religious wars) found the internal resources to accept procedural tolerance. This is not true of some others. Among the latter (supply your own list) there is a strict policy of intolerance if not hostility and outright suppression of dissenters. After all, it is not possible to win an argument rationally. The 'left' of late has adopted this attitude even in the U.S. and the U.K. Once you understand the logic of enterprise association, the felt need of salvation and total meaning (a comprehensive purpose to everything), you can understand the policy of intolerance.

Domination is not some intrinsic feature of the human predicament, rather, it is the response of those who fear any threat to their enterprise association. Since they ARE UNWILLING TO LIVE WITHOUT A TOTAL VISION, they can prevail only by eliminating opposition. Intolerance is a simple reflection of how the new left has become a religion that brooks no opposition.

I offer a crucial example. What a religion or political system understood as a religion offers is total meaning, total commitment, and salvation (fill in the content). The major policy proposal in the U.S. and elsewhere of the 'left' is single-payer health care – you will be kept alive as long as possible (in case there is no after-life or you might fail to qualify for it) at 'public' expense. Once this part of the economy is under central government control, there is no going back and total control of the economy and of all institutions is inevitable in order to guarantee that there is no going back. If you subscribe to this, intolerance of all kinds is permitted/required, or you are guilty of destroying the lives of millions upon millions of other human beings. Intolerance in the eyes of the new left would be a small cost to pay given the benefits.

What is Really Wrong Intellectually/Morally With The New Left

As I have argued above, you cannot defeat the new left with arguments about objective truth, and you

cannot refute them by claiming that post-modernism is somehow incoherent. Simply restating your own commitment is not a refutation of those who do not share that commitment.

What can we do? On the positive side, we can appeal to the Anglo-American cultural inheritance which is grounded in custom/practice (not theory) and the practice of resolving disagreements about practice. This does not require an abstract theory, nor a theory of history, nor a narrative of any kind. People either share or they are willing to share these practices or they do not. Histories (narratives, theories) do not resolve these matters because, at best, history can only legitimately tell us what happened (e.g. a battle took place on such and such a date) or what the agents involved understood themselves to be doing (not some theory of what we attribute to them).

If we do not share the same understanding of the practices, then there is nothing more to be said. Yes, I know we yearn for more. Holding on to the illusion of some 'objective' truth either turns us into the same direction as those we oppose or it undercuts our ability to fight back. We do not have to hold onto the belief in an objective truth except as a private substantive view; what we need to hold onto is the belief in the validity of our practice of procedural tolerance. Some of us have no difficulty in squaring this procedural norm with our different substantive views. The 'left' is incapable of doing this, and that is why they not only want to change the rules but also want to change the rules for changing the rules.

What the new left does is to say that they share the practices (e.g. free speech, democracy, etc.) but reserve the right to interpret them in a way with which we do not and cannot agree. There is a word for this, and it is 'dishonesty'. The new left understands this game, but their critics do not.

The left is constantly calling for "equity" and "diversity" and tolerance, but as soon as you say something they don't like they'll attack you personally, and in a really mean way. And, when you try to talk with them about it, they tell you that you're hurting their feelings and they can't talk about it. This among academics, who are supposed to be trained in rational argument! There is so much resentment in the anti-individual—the calls for group solidarity and the constant airing of endless grievances really do seem to point to a kind of pathology in the soul.

In failing to see that the left is a form of religion what is missed in all of this is that the left will argue that things like free speech, the right to self-defense, in fact the whole of the Bill of Rights is not a set of procedural norms but a substantive morality that is being imposed on them. To disagree with them is to impose the Judeo-Christian morality on them. Who knew that Locke's invocation of our God-given

natural rights was a form of aggression? So the new scholarship is meant to make us understand that it's actually the non-left that is now being accused of intolerance.

We must face what is really going on. Intellectuals who oppose the new left have difficulty with accepting reality because as intellectuals they naturally want to believe that we can arrive at agreement through free and open discussion, that we can either refute the other side or that the other side can convert us rationally. After all, that is what intellectuals do (like the man with a hammer who sees everything as a nail) or is their only claim to superiority, and that is also why they have never been able to resolve our deepest conflicts. Activists (e.g. Alinsky) understand this weak point and exploit it without hesitation.

As I write this, I have become acutely aware that what I have written will be rejected by some because it is not wholly scholarship but a form of advocacy. Perhaps it is time to recognize the limits of scholarship and the point at which rhetoric needs to take hold.

What *would* the left do with their lives if everything were made perfect, in their estimation? That's the real question. They thrive on injustice and dissatisfaction. The pertinent other question is, I think, what ought I myself to be doing to promote a flourishing life for myself and my family?

Many ordinary people have a better grasp of this than do our educated elites. That is because our educated elites have undergone a process that has blinded them with abstractions. This is no longer a parlor game; it is no longer an issue of saving American civilization. It is an issue of saving civilization itself. What we tend to forget is that civilization is a product of evolving practices and not a product of theory.

In the end, we have to take responsibility for how we choose to understand ourselves and our relationships with others. If we are honest with ourselves, we shall recognize that we are about to engage in a civil war or revolution; there is no theoretical justification for our choices. But we can hope to God that we are doing the right thing.

As Herbert Butterfield once put it, "When we have reconstructed the whole of mundane history it does not form a self-explanatory system, and our attitude to it, our whole relationship to the human drama, is a larger affair altogether – it is a matter not of scholarship but of religion… Ultimately our interpretation

of the whole human drama depends on an intimately personal decision concerning the part we mean to play in it" [*Christianity and History* (1949), pp. 27 and 86].

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The image shows "Soft Construction with Boiled Beans," by Salvador Dalí, painted in 1936.