

# That Reason Wonder May Diminish

Adam C. Trawick



“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise...” –Genesis 3:6

“Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read... If you can put your five fingers through it, it is a gate, if not a door. Shut your eyes and see.” -James Joyce, *Ulysses*

“Peace, ho! I bar confusion.  
'Tis I must make conclusion  
Of these most strange events.  
Here's eight that must take hands  
To join in Hymen's bands,  
If truth holds true contents.  
(to ORLANDO and ROSALIND) You and you no cross shall part.  
(to OLIVER and CELIA) You and you are heart in heart.  
(to PHOEBE) You to his love must accord  
Or have a woman to your lord.  
(to TOUCHSTONE and AUDREY) You and you are sure together  
As the winter to foul weather.  
(to all) Whiles a wedlock hymn we sing,  
Feed yourselves with questioning,  
That reason wonder may diminish  
How thus we met, and these things finish.” –Shakespeare (Hymen), *As You Like It*

“Mind can never be free of matter. Yet only by mind *imagining* itself free can culture advance. The mother-cults, by reconciling man to nature, entrapped him in matter. Everything great in western civilization has come from struggle against our origins.” – Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*

Four years ago, a viral phenomenon set forth a heated debate amongst online viewers. A week prior to the wedding of Grace and Keir Johnston, Grace's mother sent a picture of a blue dress with black lace to her daughter, she wanted the bride's opinion of the garment and was surprised when her daughter found its white and gold apparel distasteful. Her mother, baffled, explained it wasn't gold and white but black and blue. Grace then posted the picture on Facebook and many of her friends agreed with the bride—but others saw what Grace's mother saw in the shop. On the day of the wedding they bride and groom's friend Ceitlin McNeill, who was performing at the reception with her band Canach, donned the garment which, as it turned out, to the naked eye, was indeed blue and black. Ceitlin posted the picture the bride's mother originally took on her Tumblr account and the online magazine BuzzFeed picked-up the story. Needless to say, the ambiguity of the dress's color in the photograph drew subscribers and average online viewers alike into an interesting discussion which quickly turned tempestuous—the story made headline news at primetime hours. A story that not only should have been even a county-wide controversy

in the tiny island town of Colonay, Scotland had become a world-wide topic of intense debate. And the strangest of things were said by folks who, given very little information, were certain of the *truth*. Even celebrities were commenting. If you had internet access, most likely you had come across this peculiarity, and maybe even joined in the cacophonous verbal storm of those expressing their perplexity simultaneously along with their certainty. But it wasn't necessarily the topic itself, as odd as it was that such mundanity would catch on like a world-virus, *but what was said about what was (believed to have been) seen*.



Mindy Kaling @mindykaling · Feb 26

I think I'm getting so mad about the dress because it's an assault on what I believe is objective truth.

← ↻ 3.2K ★ 7.3K ...



Mindy Kaling @mindykaling · Feb 26

And if people disagree with my objective truth I get so angry I want to destroy that way of thinking because it is just viscerally SO WRONG

← ↻ 1.9K ★ 5K ...

What is concerning about these two posts are the semantics, the claims being made. Notice the oddity of the phrasing “assault on *what I believe is objective truth*...and if people disagree with *my objective truth I get so angry I want to destroy that way of thinking* because it is *viscerally* so wrong.” These kinds statements were vehemently and vociferously repeated by countless people. The issue with the color of the dress subsequently raised a far more complex discussion, one that seems all the more pertinent today than ever: when people begin to define objective truth as a belief, *view it* as personal property, where and how are we to begin any discussion? If there can't be an objective reality upon which all can find some common ground—how does a society gain any traction to move forward? How can individuals/culture advance if objective truth is merely perspective, subject to the whims of fickle recollection and myopic experience? How did it come to this? Where does this lead?

Flash forward four years and we have a new viral phenomenon, again, one centered around color, limited perspective, and objective truth. On January 19, 2019 a group of students from Covington Catholic High School gathered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial Center after having made a field trip to participate in the March for Life in DC to wait for their buses to arrive and carry them back to their school in Kentucky. This was the gathering point at which they were instructed by their chaperones to congregate at once the march was over. As they were waiting a group of men from the Black Hebrew Israelites (BHI) formed a few yards away and began mercilessly taunting them—although no one is certain as to what instigated such animosity towards them the epithets, insults, and simply hateful words thrown at them denote that it was the Make America Great Again hats some of the students wore to the march are what incited such vitriol. As the diatribe and insults from the BHI's grew more and more intense the students, after inquiring for permission from their chaperones, collectively began engaging their school rally chants to drown out the mean-spirited words of the BHIs. As this harmlessly competitive commotion escalated a group of Native American demonstrators began intersecting the middle ground between the students and the BHI's. The Native American group lead by Nathan Phillips began approaching the students. The video footage (which is ample and varied in perspective) shows Phillips singling out a few students but nothing confrontational, in fact the students began chanting in rhythm with the drum. Then Phillips is seen moving towards one student in particular, Nick Sandmann, and gets within kissing range of his face as he continues to beat his drum. Nick is videoed standing patiently, taking in the experience, a few diffusing nervous tics such as a smile, and twitch of the corners of his mouth become visible on Nick's face. After a couple minutes, and some harsh words from the other Native American demonstrators towards a few of the other students, and some typical excitability from inexperienced teens, it seems that the students are notified the busses have arrived, everyone departed, and no harm came to anyone.

Within a few hours a two-minute clip of Sandmann and Phillips surfaces online and the media outlets of all tiers go into a frenzy of outrage. It was quite remarkable the response, the readiness to condemn, a baffling collective pounce that blurred the line between protective and predatory. You could feel the lion's eyes as Phillips was lionized and Sandmann maligned and despised. Again, it wasn't the incident itself *but what was said about what (was believed to have been) seen.*



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One theme of the conversations over the past 24 hours = how deeply familiar this look is. It's the look of white patriarchy, of course, but that familiarity — that banality — is part of what prompts the visceral reaction. This isn't spectacular. It's life in America.



John Kovalic

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#TenYearChallenge



“A nervous tic, an unconscious look of anxiety, a habit of muttering to yourself – anything that carried with it the suggestion of abnormality, of having something to hide. In any case, to wear an improper expression on your face (to look incredulous when a victory was announced, for example) was itself a punishable offense. There was even a word for it in Newspeak: facecrime, it was called.” -George Orwell, *1984*

A few months after the chameleon dress incident some studies were conducted and it turns out the pixels that make up the image (i.e. the poor quality of the photo) set off peoples interior model of either: natural (blue) light which would render the dress white and gold, internally discounting the color blue, or artificial (orange incandescent) light, rendering the dress blue and

black, internally discounting orange incandescence. Dr. Bevil Conway, who conducted one of the experiments denoted that the conditions of the dress were ambiguous, lacking in context and “because [the] brain doesn’t have enough information to discern it...the brain has to turn on the internal model and say ‘hey, guru, what do you think is going on out there?’” Deprived of all the circumstantial particulars the brain had to make a leap to judgement based on preconceived notions. The same is the case with Phillips and Sandmann, given the truncated context of the video the worse was assumed. But why? Why was *this* the initial leap. In all this was a nonevent. Nothing happened. Yet, thousands *felt* they had *seen* injustice. Even after the near two-hour footage of the incident, coupled with various other angles and further explanation from Sandmann himself, and the ever-surmounting evidence that Phillips is not to be taken on his word, there are still those who are certain and gross, blatant injustice has been committed.

The west is now experiencing a crisis of context. America, particularly, is suffering a fragmentation of cultural perspective—a cultural decontextualization. The United States is the world stage of economic, cultural, and military order—but there is a new, far more sophisticated disorder erupting from our cultural consciousness. And it has surfaced from a collective psychological tectonic shift upsetting societal foundations fortified by tradition, sustained by cultural common purpose and the resulting quake has shaken loose our impulse to look outward and touch reality, gain our bearings and orient ourselves in the real world. Thus, the default, natural tendency to trust inward, recoil and regress into our tribal wombs to protect us from a terrible, tyrannical individual subjectivity that, without an objective contextual sphere, balkanizes perspectives, leveling suspicion on any and all that happen to stand out in an instance. Religion and art, which come from the same part of the mind, are the first to go. If a nation experiences a sundering from its religious and artistic traditions, the invisible, chthonian default settings of barbaric nature wear down the sophisticated cultural spirit of its people—a malaise resulting in an attrition of the soul, individually as well as collectively.

Without an outlet to consciously, and voluntarily exercise our will to autonomy from the impulses of nature we experience a form spiritual atrophy.

Art and religion are that place where the chthonian muck of Dionysian can be confronted on an individual level. They warrant our respect. Particularly in art, where one can plunge into the lived experience and craft a material representation of that process. A visible logic cobbled from the catharsis. Human beings cannot sustain themselves without both the external orderliness set before them by tradition and culture, nor can they continue on without plunging into the collagen prison of the mind, resurfacing with a revised and refined notion of self and surrounding—art is the residue of a voluntary psychological/spiritual spelunking into the stygian tumult of pure experience. Our weird little worlds only get weirder as we descend into the self, we need an objective realm, solid ground to climb back onto and that objective world is one that equally must be respectfully confronted. What holds a people together is not what they experience, per se, but what they agree *is there* to be experienced. The varying perspectives, subject to the capricious winds of circumstance, swirling around any given event are stultifying, they are too myriad and thoughtless. There must be a there, there.

Oddly, Shakespeare's, *As You Like It* came to my mind as the Phillips and Sandmann incident was developing. *As You Like It* is one of those plays that the more I read it the less I understand what exactly is going on but the more I understand what was happening, what *is there*. Like all great works of art, it's a process. His funniest, most levituous plays tend to be his most confounding. It would seem as though writing a piece in the vein of *As You Like It* is when Shakespeare would most successfully, and perhaps at first, unconsciously, test the fragility of truth so sensibly bound within the cultural heritage of language. It's as if he were writing merrily and then in epiphanic stupor would lift his quill, eyebrows contorted, and think aloud "*O' dear, where am I? I do believe I have syntactically fucked myself again. 'If truth holds true contents'?! My God, what the devil have I done?!*" Sitting down attempting to compose a light, humorous caper and suddenly the words "all the world is a stage" spill across the page. "Inspiration exists," Picasso once told us, "but it has to find you working." The play becomes, on the surface at least, an imaginative rumination on perspective and the shifty details therein. Details are a peculiar reality. Some change, others stay the same (perhaps because they are more than just detail, they're facts) and when details tenably stretch across great lengths of time their surroundings change or clarify rather; their constancy renders mutable their circumstance(s). "Well, Time is the old Justice that examines all such offenders, and let Time try." Beneath the surface of this play are certain details that have, with Time, like every genuine work of art, revealed the simple process of artistic exploration. *What is happening, what is there* in and around this play is Shakespeare's playful expedition into the subjective in order to achieve a material rendering of a pure aesthetic: the play as pleasing arrest for the mind.

*As You Like It* is the story of Rosalind whom falls in love with Orlando (whom is equally smitten with Rosalind) after he wins a wrestling match in her uncle's, Duke Frederick's, court. Once the Duke discovers Orlando is the son of an old enemy he storms out, and Orlando catches word that the Duke may punish him for the very nature of his name, so he decides to get out of dodge. Likewise, Rosalind is the daughter of the Duke's exiled brother and his foul mood has brought out more (life threatening) animosity towards her, thus, she escapes, along with her cousin Celia (the Duke's daughter), to evade persecution, seeks refuge in the Forest of Arden. She and Celia do this by concocting a scheme to wear disguises, Celia a dirty beggar named Aliena and Rosalind a man by the name of Ganymede, to bypass any who would recognize them otherwise, also because two beautiful women alone in the woods might not fare too well, "beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold." They manage, after inquiring upon a local of the edge of the forest with hopes of purchasing food, to wind up buying an entire farm and cottage. Long story short, Rosalind (as Ganymede) bumps into Orlando, after seeing his poetry about her carved in the trees, he confesses he is the poet who is hopelessly in love (again, not knowing he's telling *her* this) and she decides to "cure" him of this love by having him stop by her cottage daily where she will pretend to be a flighty, erratic version of herself in aim to disenchant him with the *idea* of her. Of course, this is done in order to get close to him and find out what he is looking for in a woman, play with him a bit, and see if he truly worthy. A straightforward plot, deceptively simple.

One glaring detail is the setting of most of the play's action, the Forest of Arden. A few well-established speculations as to its origins: the Ardennes, or Arden, Warwickshire (a deforested area from Shakespeare's youth and before deforestation it was known as the Forest of Arden, not subject to forest/royal law – not a preservation for the aristocracy's hunting sport, which is what the term "forest" traditionally meant in the medieval sense), and Arden also happens to be the maiden name of Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden Shakespeare—it is in this detail, supplemented or not by the geographical/historical actualities, that this particular work of art reveals an intimate relationship with the artist, an aesthetic representation of delving into the chaotic lawlessness of mind and reemerging to objective orderliness (everyone gets married to whom they wish, happily, and return to the royal courts outside the forest). Lawlessness, formlessness, are articulated and acted into formal order— form molded out of the primal soup of existence; the mind's formulation of the *prima materia*; the artist's return to the *strictly feminine* source of all creativity. In the case of *As You Like It*, a return to the foolish fluid forest of Arden's fecund womb in order for the self to be reborn as a pure object in relation to others on the stage, and thus, for Shakespeare at least, a refreshed, cleansed sense of self and place. Joseph Campbell spoke of the "dramatic form" of art as he elucidated on Joyce's three forms of art: lyrical, epical, and dramatic (Shakespeare utilizing a hybrid of lyrical and dramatic). Shakespeare delving into a chthonic turbidity of hermeneutics—that place of simultaneity where all is not only truly happening, but all that is happening is true at once; existing in all – all that exists; a maternal sphere encompassing all things that are to be cared for and molded into a form that will one day leave.

This is the realm of art: a place that isn't a place, a time out of time. A highly irrational realm because *the process of real art transcends the realm of the rational*. I believe today our media reflects a highly perspective-driven cultural sense of creative license with regards to events taking place in reality. *As You Like It* is a pertinent example of what the role of art is: a dreamy medium for the mind to push material boundaries into the transcendent. Where this impulse can do no damage. James Joyce—a student of Shakespeare, or, quite frankly, Shakespeare but inside out; if the melodic word was the action in Shakespeare (which I believe it was – there was no thinking in Shakespeare, just a lot of *doing* and witnessing; the somnambulist Shakespeare spilling his dream-speak onto characters who *if* they could think would not ever wind up in the nightmarish or dreamy pickles they find themselves in) then the word to Joyce, who was also a vocalist and musician, was the thought. All thinking. Syllabic mind-music. Legible lullabies—believed that "art is the human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an aesthetic end." That there was "improper art: kinetic" and "proper art: static"; the former being that which excites feelings of desire or loathing. Desire urging us to "possess", loathing urging us to "abandon or go from" something. "The arts that which excites [feelings], pornographic or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I use the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing." Joyce was a modernist writer/artist, and this is a modernist take on art. We now live in a postmodernist age where art is no longer a medium to the transcendent but simply a narrative or a message, in other words, propaganda. Postmodernist deconstruction has leveled that element of the transcendent, by validating all perspectives, granting all personal truths true, has transmogrified reality into a secular, social constructionist materiality. In other words: nothing is *True* because objective truth is simply a narrative constructed out of power dynamics and therefore only what is *experienced*

is “the truth”—and this is a dangerous cultural path to traverse for it simply dead-ends at a wall of hermeneutical vacillations that excite either loathing or desire – never satisfied. They eye no longer a means to navigate the labyrinth of reality, but instead a medium of justification for one’s personal reality. The eye compelling one’s desire and/or loathing.

*As You Like It* is riddled with eyes. Now, all of Shakespeare’s plays have the filament of observing or being observed woven through them but this one makes explicit the organ that is the eye. Eyes are mentioned everywhere. The story is about lovers *compelled* to irrational means to possess what their eyes desire or get away from what displeases them visually – it is only in the end, when all is tied together nicely, when a *return to order* occurs through marrying everyone off and all being pleased with their partners does the art of the play become the radiant visual logic of an artist’s efforts to encapsulate his process of personal experience. Joseph Campbell regarded the process of creating or apprehending as “a breakthrough. You have gone through the object and felt the transcendence that manifests through it, the transcendence of which you are yourself a manifestation. Pure object turns you into pure subject. You are simply the eye, the world eye, regarding beyond desire and loathing...”

*As You Like It* is ultimately a story about escaping orderly reality to a lawless realm of play without consequence – where things can be *played* out with impunity. Art is the only realm where compromise, constraint, and consequence do not apply. It is the mind’s respite from consequential action. Where, literally, *the truth is as you like it*. A true work of art is the material residue of one’s psychological submergence into the womb and the subsequent resurfacing where a cleansed perspective can reorient itself in the objective realm of consequence. The material rendering of that process as image now manifest and displayed to be experienced by others, “between the mind or senses of the artist himself and the mind or senses of others” as Joyce told us. All can be edified when encountering *real, true, proper art*.

Traditions such as art and religion give people a place to reflect, contemplate. One of the unfortunate side-effects of the digital revolution is its ability to feed our instincts and excite our impulses. The book took us into resourceful cogitation—the internet, reactionary confrontation. We as a species have yet to catch up with how instant things have become, the availability of *on demand* stimulation is unprecedented. The West itself has experienced a death of patience. And this is a true danger to Western Civilization for the Far East has not lost its tradition of biding their time. China is a cold, calculating, organized, and patient culture; so much so, they have made it an art form. Patience is what the Chinese are renowned for--not to mention their political bureau is made up of of engineers with IQs of 145; Xi Jinping wrings his hands, steadily, as he witnesses the death of patience in the west. There is a strong sense of tradition, art, discipline, rigorous scholarship and spiritual grounding in the Far East. This shouldn’t go unnoticed, nor viewed as archaic. Art, Religion, Tradition are context. Each need be respected, or our splintering perspectives will indeed lead to a cultural, spiritual, national demise.

When traditions, ancient in their formulation, are dispensed with, the default tribal tendencies imbedded in human nature fill the void left behind. Nature is far more colossal and relentless than any could possibly fathom. If a societal mode of taming such nature has proven tenable, it would be wise to embrace and preserve it, at least until something proves more efficient. A growing number of our youth are being brought up with hardly any exposure to, and education on Western and American traditions. History as it occurred and not as it's interpreted using power differentials is a must. History, particularly human history, is an unfortunate, brutal, highly compromised series of logical dealings given the conditions; detailed, highly nuanced and subject to time, place, and circumstance. To retroactively place the highly developed values of today on it is not only folly, it's fatal. We divide each other up when we place the highly sophisticated understandings of human relations we take for granted today and judge those in the days of old—it breeds contempt and resentment for the past as well as the present and cultivates a cynicism that is doomed to overcorrect the perceived injustices of yore. Christopher Hitchens was right, “if you really want to think about all the things that can't be redeemed, you'll be in some danger, I think, of weeping.” This isn't to say there aren't injustices in the past, nor that injustice doesn't exist today—but rather, through the context of appreciation for how far we've come, we will be better prepared to confront the injustices that could potentially come about; we certainly we will be better able to communicate. Approach the concerns voiced with the principle of charity. Regard questions as attempts to understand, not undermine. If we are to understand one another better, we must first better understand each other's questions. “The freedom of speech has to be balanced by the freedom to question” former (and soon-to-be-present) Attorney General William Barr claimed during his confirmation hearing. The hair-trigger media we are currently vicariously living through is a terrible context for all that is captured on camera in this highly surveilled age we find ourselves in; everyone is monitoring one another, just waiting for a wrong move, inscrutable expression, or assertive intonational contour. Politics is flooding the void left behind from the continuous excavation of tradition, religion, and genuine art. Communities are fracturing. A spiritual atrophy is plaguing our culture. Division is the new divination. People everywhere only see a furthering of political poles and thus, a widening chasm between neighbors. This “two Americas”, “either with us or against us” ultimatum rhetoric has got to go. It does nothing but polarize, heighten political sensitivities, and strain a cultural tension that is very real and will, if continued, inevitably snap. Politicians do not care about us, they all make six figures straight out of the gate and will never worry about healthcare, housing, schooling for their children, or security ever again—and all they do is battle between one another, plucking at our heartstrings, making us believe they are Apollos and Mousais. The smack-down sentiment printed in our papers and magazines, voiced on our television/computer/phone screens, permeating our interpersonal relationships, and tincturing our view of those we do not know is a descent into their game (and a low game it is). We can always disagree. With some we may even end our conversations on disagreement and conclude it best not to be around one another too often—this is perfectly well, such is life. No reason not to be neighborly to neighbors, same with strangers whom we have known on occasion.

Jaques: “God be wi' you. Let's meet as little as we can.”

Orlando: “I do desire we may be better strangers.” —*As You Like It*

If the 20th century taught us anything it's that we should not be handing our trust, faith, and individual citizen powers to the State. Politicians. Bunch of boondoggling rabble rousers, politicians. Boondoggle. Boy – if there ever was a word that every American should be familiar with, “boondoggle” is the word. Everyone would then understand Washington. Boondoggling is all about appearances – how things *look*. Taking up trivial tasks of no real value in order to look busy. Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez marching around Washington with her little coterie of yes-men-and-women in all the wrong buildings looking for Mitch McConnell comes to mind. Our taxpaying dime is not for paying her to stomp around DC making hashtags and demands. Seriously, that kind of spectacle is the mark of either a liar or a moron; I'll give her the benefit of the doubt—I don't think she's a liar. My favorite line from Spielberg's *Lincoln* was when Ole Abe (played by the incomparable, pitch-perfect Daniel Day-Lewis) tells his council “you grouse and heckle and dodge about like pettifogging Tammany Hall hucksters!”—ah, Tony Kushner capturing the lexical spirit of an age when statesmen were as thoughtful and literate as poets. Today they're just as dizzyingly feigning as poetic lovers, “for the truest poetry is the most feigning; and lovers are given to poetry, and what they swear in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign.” And, boy, do politicians *love* themselves and their voters. They marry their own truth.

It should concern all how interpretive politicians have become, and how illiterate they prove themselves to be, and it's the same story with the incoming “fresh faces” of the “most diverse congress in US history.” God, every time I hear someone bring up “diversity” I always think of Lady Henry from *A Picture of Dorian Gray*: “You've never been to any of my parties, have you Mr. Gray. You must come. I can't afford orchids, but I spare no expense in foreigners. They make one's rooms look so picturesque.”

Congress interpreting facts always devolves into a pedantic exercise of one-ups-manship. The academic politic; theoretical elucidations on *facts*. In other words, what facts *could* mean, and not what they are. Same goes for journalists. Spare us the dyspeptic pop-art that is your opinion—give us the facts, we'll figure the rest out from there. We have too many poets posing as journalists these days. I'd rather have a media composed of bad writers who are good journalists than bad journalists who are good writers. “Facts” comes from the Latin *factum*, meaning “an event, occurrence, deed, or achievement.” The word “fact” literally means “thing done.” Leave it there. Tell us what was done, what occurred. Congressmen and women are bad enough with their word-salad as it is; you hand them the reigns to a culture that has no objective reality to work with—they'll interpret with glee all the way to the bank. Safe in their limitless terms. The unapologetically unscholarly, theoretical concoction of the academy that is Identity Politics is to Congress what Shakespeare is to a lothario: a tactic of bewilderment to get you to succumb. This is why we are now having intellectually bankrupt conversations about the efficacy of physical barriers at borders. Well, guess what:

“It is wrong and ultimately self-defeating for a nation of immigrants to permit the kind of abuse of our immigration laws we have seen in recent years, and we must do more to stop it.” –Bill Clinton, State of the Union 1995

"The American people are a welcoming and generous people. But those who enter our country illegally, and those who employ them, disrespect the rule of law. And because we live in an age where terrorists are challenging our borders, we simply cannot allow people to pour into the United States undetected, undocumented, and unchecked. Americans are right to demand better border security and better enforcement of the immigration laws." –Senator Barack Obama, "U.S. Senate Floor Remarks — Immigration Reform. *Congressional Record, Vol. 152, No. 40.* - April 3, 2006.

This is why we have vapid sayings like “no such thing as illegal person”—well, there certainly is such a thing as non-citizens residing within our borders unlawfully, and countless more coming. Movements like Identity Politics gained so much power because the ideas that birthed it were never challenged by serious scholars, they were so absurd that they were beneath contempt of any serious intellect. And thus, it grew in the peripheries of academe: the humanities. Now, those who espouse these ideas are motivated to criticize character and motives rather than engage with the ideas because, well for one they can't, they lack the skills of rigorous thinking, and two because it's far easier than facing the consequences of the reality of their own ignorance. Identity Politics employs what I call *power-crowding*, where instead of engaging in a rational line of argumentation one simply appeals to the onlookers with broad stroke instigations and platitudinous moral pronouncements. Those who employ this tactic do not even go into the discussion/debate with the intention of achieving a communion through an exercise of dialectics between parties to reach clarity and an element of truth previously unseen. They instead rally as many as possible against their opponent where the discussion is no longer about the initial topic and the opposing debater just comes off as pedantic and insensitive because now everyone is thinking '*why are you still harping on these little facts when you've been verbally confronted about these larger injustices.*' Victory is declared via the appearance of moral superiority—successful communication simply doesn't operate, is not achieved, that way. This is anti-conversation, anti-idea. Eric Weinstein articulated this tactic rather succinctly:

"Anti-ideas, or suicide ideas are ideas that are just there to screw up the possibility of conversation: "*why are there only men on that stage?*" These kinds of weird cognitive denial of service attacks are not actually ideas, they are not part of conversation, they are attempts to force ones way into a conversation...you have to understand when things such as "diversity" are extolled as a virtue has to include the exclusion of certain perspectives; there is bad diversity and you have to drive bad diversity to as low a frequency camp as you can in order to get the benefits of good diversity...there is no diversity about what constitutes a conversation."

It is predominantly on the Left, but not solely.

“This Left is more likely to participate in a public shaming than to lobby for a new law; it is more likely to mobilize to occupy a park or shut down a freeway than to register voters. It “exaggerates the importance of philosophy for politics, and wastes its energy on sophisticated theoretical analyses of the significance of current events.” Its adherents “have permitted cultural politics to supplant real politics, and have collaborated with the Right in making cultural issues central to the public debate.” –Conor Friedersdorf

Kevin D. Williamson at *National Review* put it rather aptly:

“Relying on the ad hominem mode of argument means that you are stupid, if not generally and categorically stupid, then limited-purpose stupid in the context of the debate at hand.”

Ultimately, the origins of Identity Politics and the appeal to emotions are, for the most part, the result of a societal immersion in quotidian banality. It's the mark that things are actually quite good, thus human nature kicks in and wishes to shake things up. Things steadily get better, societally speaking, and thus we lose track of those smaller injustices that occur in our communities and instead of taking up the individual responsibility of being better individuals we pick apart our own little self-prescribed injustices and turn our lives into tragedies imposed by some invisible force—this builds resentment and is thus projected outward and we have the resulting theories of oppression. When you give people the freedom to whine, don't be surprised when the streets flood with tears. Take a look at the nightmare that is human history. Take a look at third world countries or first world authoritarianism, you will find real oppression, injustice, and tragedy. You can't help but be grateful if you take an honest, serious look at how bad it can get, or how little others around the world have in comparison.

“The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless *that* fact has at some time struck him. —And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and powerful.” –Ludwig Wittgenstein

\*If you didn't catch it, David Foster Wallace essentially just lifted this sentiment and fleshed it out in his “This Is Water” commencement speech.

Do not mistake me, great suffering befalls some people in this country because of the intolerant conscious and unconscious actions of others, but this idea that white supremacy (it's not even worth capitalizing that expression anymore) and the patriarchy are a systemic corruption imbedded in our culture and government you are delusional, resentful, and/or a lazy thinker.

Continuing to talk about white supremacy is like continuing to talk about Kathy Griffin—it just encourages an ineffectual minority to continue being annoying.

We—culturally, societally—are becoming as artless as politicians; void of nuance; shallow, parochial-minded. Not everything is political, but everything can be framed politically. Politics is optics. *In politics, all the world is staged.* And the 21st century is not looking good. And the corrosion of our ability to communicate with one another only exacerbates issues, and quicker leads us to a distrust in one another and a dependency on The State to settle our discrepancies, as well as our basic needs because we are too busy mindlessly picking each other apart and finding each other intolerable to collaborate with in the absence of mandate; regressing into the infancy of the playpen where everything was taken care of by larger figures who know what's best for us. The State should have as little to do with culture and community as humanly possible. Disband the EPA, Department of Energy, the Department of Education; delegate the powers of congress back to the states and the localities therein. Just look at The Fed – The Federal Reserve doesn't generate wealth, they just make money. Do you know how powerful that is? Put it this way: JFK tried taking on the Federal Reserve in 1963, he issued Executive Order 11110 giving the treasury department the authority to issue debt free silver certificates which would have bled the Fed dry—a few months later he was assassinated in front of his wife and the American people. Guess who took over the Warren Commission: John McCloy – the former president of the World Bank. The redemption of the silver dollar was soon after ceased.

The State is not who we should be looking towards to solve our individual, communal, cultural ails—that's on us, *we the people*. The state has proven over and over and over again that it is sketchy, power-hungry, and an incompetent regulator. Again, if the American body politic isn't reason enough not to trust the state with regulation and micromanagement, just look to 20th Century Europe, you'll learn of over 100 million corpses that stand as reason enough. People within their states and communities can figure out how they want to operate among one another. The President should essentially be someone elected to ensure national security and ensure the laws on the books are enforced, everything else is a power-grab. Our military shouldn't be out nation building, they should be out relationship building whilst simultaneously striking fear in the mind of any and all enemies of the three most powerful words on this planet: United States Military. The media loses their minds when General Mattis gets fired (again)—we have the best generals and scholars of warfare in the world. Throw a stone in Washington or any military base in this nation and you will clock a military genius. 74% of *all* applicants 18-24 are not accepted into the US military *because* of the high standards—that should relieve everyone, not stoke arguments about transgender discrimination. The point is, they take each case *individually*.

We are always rebelling against our origins. That is why Art, Religion, Tradition are so fundamental, they tame the barbaric default setting with cathartic constraints. When they go, the nation goes. When politics becomes the center of every conversation—you're witnessing the devolution of a sovereign country.

Art is where we go. Family, Community, Culture, and Country are where we come back to. Home is firm ground.

Somewhere I read that “levity is the soul of discourse” – though I cannot say this seemingly aphoristic, certainly stop-gap Shakespearean dictum is fundamentally correct it does merit consideration, even implementation. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of a “dangerous unselfishness” in his, rather prophetic, last speech, “I’ve Seen the Promise Land.” There may still be something to this notion too; a Socratic pestering, the gadfly always asking questions, not out of suspicion but out of childlike curiosity and for the sake of clarity—for all parties. But go about it lightly. And honestly.

When it came to achieving some clarity regarding the turbidity surrounding the dress, simply a little time, experimentation, contemplation, and context was all that was needed: “These papers are particularly valuable from the scientific view,” Dr. David Brainard, one of the neuroscientists studying the dress phenomenon said, “because they move the discussion of the dress into a realm where we have actual data about the phenomenon beyond the tens of thousands of tweets.”

Jesus was once walking down the street on the Sabbath. He came across a shepherd trying to get a sheep out of a hole in a ditch on the side of the road. Jesus looked at him and said “if you understand what you are doing, then you are blessed. If you don’t, then you are cursed.”

It is here, I suppose you can take an artful look at such, where the truth is as you like it.

As for this realm of consequence—be wary.

“And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe, and then, from hour to hour, we and rot and rot; and thereby hangs a tale.”