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Identity Politics and the Ruling Class

Reagan ditched the *Fairness Doctrine*. Now his youth complain they're shunned by the politically-correct media. Clinton's *Telecommunications Act* let mergers trample the free press. Now it pains his wing that we read rants and conspiracy, instead of news.

So much that Hillary employed teams of fact-checkers in 2016, figuring we couldn't trust our own minds to parse reality from clown-babble. Then—contrarily—she blamed her loss on hopeless cases. If one or the other were true, democracy would be a lost cause, and perhaps that's crossed her mind since losing, despite a majority of votes. But it can't explain why close to half of us had the common sense to not vote for either hopeless party. Yet, to hear either speak, tribal privileges are fracturing America. Not the top .001%'s privilege to half the wealth, nor the military's to the bulk of our taxes. Rather, half of the poor's designation, versus the other half's. Somehow, minorities -the lowest rung in terms of media ownership- bully the mainstream press, and rednecks -the next-lowest- bully the rest. (Hourly-waged Russians command any overlap.) And since, according to the Right (and much of the Left), 'political-correctness' stifles all other manner of free speech, elites are powerless to restore order to their own, private empires, or prevent the hordes tearing us up over what bathroom to use.

Really? Have we lost our pussy-grabbing Executive and Judiciary branches to the wanton touch of #MeToo? Can our founding, 'self-evident truths' not outwit pc's chauvinism? On the other hand, how is it 'deplorables' are blind to exploding class inequality, yet so attuned to the nuances of race, gender, and their nomenclature?

‘Identity-politics’ explain everything recently, from Trump and Kavanaugh, to *Crazy Rich Asians*. Francis Fukuyama has a new book out (I’ve read only part), regarding its tension with liberalism—group versus individual rights, etc., tepidly joining him to more-hawkish mouth-pieces like Sam Harris and Ben Shapiro (and some Left doom-sayers) who warn its steam-rolling our democracy. Their over-arching fear is that identity politics suppress rational—though not always politically-correct—thought, giving extremists on both sides the floor, who don’t mind confronting ‘identity’ on racist (and sexist, etc) terms. Ergo, more than an analytical device or a school of (not always congruent) ideas, a movement. A juggernaut, if you read and believe the hype.

But if so, whose? Saying ‘first respect my uniqueness, then treat me as equal’ provides snares that ‘first treat me as equal, then respect my uniqueness’ does not. The Left has a long history with -and can tie most of its successes- to the latter. The labor movement, for instance, united presumed-cultural rivals and coordinated dozens of languages. Ergo, the *Left*, by definition -the many against the privileged few- would have to be amnesiac, or -more likely- not the Left, to think a plan that tries to establish the differences first would better serve their goals.

Perhaps the cultural wins (like marriage equality) and sizable, politico-economic losses (demise of Unions, etc.) of the past few decades have inspired reorientation. There’s evidence, so long as we define the ‘Left’ as ruling, Neoliberal Democrats. Certainly their Wall Street financiers can accept women CEOs and gay marriage more-readily than Union wages and universal healthcare. (After all, the point of capitalism is to pocket the most one can *without* sparking an insurrection.) BUT an elite-run party -paid for by Wall Street—doesn’t constitute a Left. Nor is it able to absorb popular will. Proven, since they lose most of their elections.

Also, that leftists would demand censorship when most everyone of them believe the Right is in control, *and* when they’re silenced within their own party, seems farce. Again there’s evidence, college students sometimes dis-invite conservative speakers, and we figure, as Reagan did, they’re taught to (so he hiked tuition). But I doubt censorship exists as agenda, nor even as sentiment on any grand scale. Think, whenever something explodes multiple parties besides the bomber take credit. Where are the professors claiming this attack? If 18% are communists (as the American Enterprise Institute warns), what sort of communist links class to ‘identity’, not labor?

The other ‘fear’ is that over-zealous freshman are taking control, like in the Princeton and Evergreen incidents. Perhaps but it contradicts the wisdom of Occupy!, which refused the

collaborative financial, political, educative, and other aligned powers from pigeon-holling their complaints. -Wisdom that we credit to the young of the movement.

There's also a notion that dis-investment has engendered a new 'tribalism'. But even though 'color-blindness', for example, has excused softening equal-opportunity legislation (welfare reform, voting law, etc.), which baits 'identity', as minorities are often disempowered under the ruse of equality, color-blindness came out of the neoliberal play-book and expanded Leftward from think-tanks on the Right. In other words, while it's hard to gauge its impact, it marks a very separate program from the Left-academia or 'bottom-up' narratives.

Furthermore, most every poll finds 'economic inequality', not racial, gender, or other inequalities to be the #1 problem with America. So, while it's not unreasonable that our decline in wealth and status might see us retreat toward other than liberal identities (Fukuyama's point), unless someone's peddling those narratives, one plainly sees more leverage in class-solidarity.

As for the Right, what should be 'self-evident' is that complaining minority recognition is unfair to the majority rests on the same argument it decries; that your privilege impedes my privilege (instead of the reverse). Evident, at least to a Harvard-educated lawyer like Ben Shapiro. Yet you find all that fallacious, 'populist' reaction in his books. Do they speak to him or he to them? Does he speak for them?

Of course, identity politics aren't new. The Spanish liberal-philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset wrestled with it a century ago, when his homeland's empire was crumbling, and came up with a lot better answers (though it didn't save Spain from its fascist clown). Spain even had, in his words, 'a common past, language, and race, yet had split into mainly-regional factions because it had failed to invent a *sufficiently-attractive collective program for the future*'.[\[i\]](#)

Isn't he right? Rather than hell-bent on forcing this or that culture on the rest of us, aren't the 'extreme' Left, Right, and clusters of us in between are just figuring out that, increasingly, being 'American' means losing ground to the .001% and their top brass? The opening passage to the Combahee River Collective's manifesto says as much: '...focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of *identity politics*. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression.'

Last week Gary Younge revived that notion in a piece titled '*It comes as no shock that the powerful hate identity politics*' [\[ii\]](#), reminding that without 'women', 'blacks', and other

self-referential vanguards we wouldn't have democracy, anyway. It's an important point, and I agree, but is his over-arching theme—that the powerful hate it—also true?

Whether 'identity-politics' raise tensions or awareness among the crowd might be a secondary matter. First is whom they neglect. For all the media's naval-gazing, the system, itself gets rare attention. Mind, all political strategies shoulder contradictions. But it's odd that cultural issues (not to say there's no overlap) would hold the foreground right when fraudulent wars, torture, bank crime, rigged elections, police violence, tax-breaks for the rich, willful habitat destruction, and a widely-evident and growing gap between rich and poor and state and population have laid the political, economic, and judicial systems bare. Matters such as environmental or foreign policy are largely out of public reach, except with massive, boots on the ground confrontation. In which case, atomizing class politics seems counter-intuitive to the extreme.

Unless it's not us preaching it. It bears saying, in an oligarchy, oligarchs speak in order to make their actions less—not more—clear. That's what a shill like Ben Shapiro (Hillary does the work herself on the Left) laments when his talks get ignored (or Ocasio-Cortes ignores him). Shapiro's a cause-celeb for saying identity politics threatens our democracy, because it censors Right voices. Yet it appears complaining gets him *more*, not less, airtime. In fact, I've heard too little substance in his' speeches (or Hillary's of late) to warrant an interview, otherwise. Thus I suspect its the opposite of censorship; hyping the market, that threatens our democracy. Threatens for real, like the Telecom Act, not just prescriptively, like 'Russo-bots' and 'terrorism'.

Notes.

[i] *Invertebrate Spain*, 1921, p.37

[ii] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/oct/05/no-shock-powerful-hate-identity-politics>