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A journal for restless minds

# Colloquī *: to discuss*

**Bespoke Woke Bloke Be Broke**

*Why, whatever do you mean?*

# Incognizant of Cognizance

*The obvious is never obvious to the oblivious*

There seems to be a dearth of curiosity these days, which much like Alice is curiously “Curiouser and curiouser!” After all, “she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English.” Alice was curious, which is, no doubt, why she followed the white rabbit wearing, of all things, a waistcoat, muttering “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!” down the rabbit hole into Wonderland. Why Alice was not the least curious upon hearing a white rabbit speaking English is itself most curious. And yet, for Alice, formerly known as Alfred, to admit such a preposterous thing would have needlessly embarrassed the easily offended bespoke woke rabbit, who would have most assuredly demanded his/her/their/its<sup>1</sup> head. It appears that curiosity is curiously lost along with the innocence of youth, which begs the question, wherever and whenever did it come and whenever and wherever did it go? That indeed is curiouser and curiouser.

“Curiously,” anyone curious enough to go down the rabbit hole to investigate, will discover an *ad-verb*—a word or phrase that modifies or qualifies an adjective, verb, or another adverb or a word group, expressing a relation of place, time, circumstance, manner, cause, degree, etc. (e.g., gently, quite, then, there). Holy rabbit’s foot, that is curiously curiouser and curiouser! “Curiously” then modifies another word in a way that shows eagerness to *know* or *learn* something, thus, my initial observation that there is among the general population a curious loss of curiosity. Adults who should know better but know little if anything at all curiously lack any eagerness to know or learn something beyond how to walk and talk and chew gum, but, heaven forbid, never at the same time for neither rhyme nor reason. Perhaps their dismal lack stems from taking much too much to heart the prov-

erb from Ben Jonson’s 1598 play, *Every Man in His Humour*: “Curiosity killed the cat” which could not possibly be so since so few simply have not enough curiosity to have ever learned of Ben Jonson, the play he wrote four-hundred years ago, or the rather curious idiom. Given that history, either yesterday’s breakfast or what happened four centuries ago, has been memory holed to better fit the narrative *du jour*, curiosity must have curiously preceded history down the proverbial rabbit hole.

It is curious indeed, when you think about it, should you bother to think at all, how incurious (i.e., not eager to know something; lacking curiosity) we have become; whether from apathy, ignorance, or fear remains too close

to call. Tragically, children, from the earliest of ages, who are, by nature, insatiably curious, are preemptively disabused of such unrestrained inquisitiveness. Some curiosities, of course, should be squelched or mollified, such as playing with fire, sticking metal into an electrical outlet, running into a busy street holding a sharp knife, or picking up a rattlesnake. Children are inquisitive, they want to learn, to know, to experience new and wondrous things. Too often, whether intentionally or unintentionally—more the former than the latter, I fear—curiosity, that youthful eagerness to know, to learn, is



cruelly suppressed. In *What Happens Next?* Michael Cassity recalls of a middle school class (I believe they were 11-year-olds) where the entire class read *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame and having finished the book, a “wave of relief—and accomplishment—is felt in having read a book together which contains a sentence like:”

When Toad found himself immured in a dank and noisome dungeon, and knew that all the grim darkness of a medieval fortress lay between him and the outer world of sunshine and well-metalled high roads where he had lately been so happy, disporting himself as if he had bought up every road in England, he flung himself at full length on the floor, and shed bitter tears, and abandoned himself to despair.

The young readers take on words like “immured” and “disporting” and let them trip off the tongue—good words to listen to and to add to their storehouse of words. Grahame believed young readers loved words. If it is true that some entering first graders have listening vocabularies of 15,000 words, *The Wind in the Willows* must be easy fodder for middle schoolers if we could but find a way to unlock that kind of exponential learning.<sup>2</sup>

The tedious simplification of vocabulary to monosyllabic tripe—See Dick run. See Jane walk. See Spot laugh at Dick and Jane—does nothing to improve vocabularies or encourage the natural curiosity of young children to learn and to know. Quite the opposite, it stifles and “dumbs-down” the child’s vocabulary; all in the name of equity, of course, for everyone must be reduced to the lowest common denominator to be perfectly fair and equitable. While it may seem inconsequential to many, even a single word, its meaning and spelling can provide a child a sense of accomplishment. I can still recall, after more years than I care to recall, the sense of empowerment I felt when, as a precocious 8-year-old, I learned to spell a 28-letter, twelve syllable word and recite its definition: *Antidisestablishmentarianism*—refers to the 19<sup>th</sup> century political movement whose position advocated for the Anglican Church to continue to be the state church and receive government patronage, in opposition to disestablishmentarianism. Ask me today and I can still rattle it off like a legal spokesman for a car commercial. In kindergarten, my grandson brought home a spelling test marked with a smiley face and the teacher’s comment: “Great Work!” His mother was righteously livid and promptly took his teacher to task for rewarding him even though he had misspelled “caterpillar” and “quadricep”; both words he knew how to spell as well as the definitions. He had been reading from the age of three, doing fourth grade math (including fractions) at the age of five and the teacher thought she was doing him a favor by lying to him so as not to “hurt” his feelings.

Why the “dumbing-down”? The common excuse is to make language simpler and easier to understand in order to make it more popular, a trope to manipulate reality, to keep the unwitting ignorant, compliant and easier to control. Thus, there is an expansive vocabulary for the privileged upper-class and a simple one for the lower-class

peasantry. It is the same as saying, when the peasants complain of having no bread, *Qu’ils mangent de la brioche*, “Let them eat cake.” Chesterton, not one to mince words nor to use unfamiliar words merely to satisfy the snobish, once noted “There seems just now to be a very vivid black and white *chiaroscuro* of knowledge and ignorance where there was once something more like a twilight of general information.”<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding the thoroughly unfamiliar *chiaroscuro*, a summary glance will no doubt leave one under a shadow of misunderstanding, if not completely in the dark. The latest and current fiction, posing slavishly as impoverished history, the *1619 Project*, illustrates with pinpoint accuracy what Chesterton meant. With the next sentence he explains that this *chiaroscuro* is “partly due to certain school methods by which a pupil only learns a period,” that is, a specific slice in time and character without explication of the broader, general information necessary to place the specifics in context. He writes, “if you asked such a pupil why a penny in the pocket of an ordinary Frenchman at that period bore a single Roman eagle and the penny in the pocket of an Austrian a double-headed eagle, he not only would not know, but he could not learn, without ploughing up whole centuries of empires and revolutions about which he had never been told anything intelligent at all.”

Children, like Alice *nee* Alfred, everywhere and always, are naturally curious, they follow the strange and unpredictable, eager to slide down the rabbit hole to see what may come of it, unconcerned of what once was or whatever the consequences. Winston Churchill once said much the same of history, “As history unfolds itself, by strange and unpredictable paths, we have little control over the future and no control at all over the past,”<sup>4</sup> and at another time, “A nation that forgets its past has no future.” Understanding that learning about your history is not about making any one person or group feel guilty. You cannot be guilty of actions that took place before you were born. Rewriting history to fit a preferred narrative is a lie. The *1619 Project* is a lie, a slavish lie, but a prevarication, nonetheless. Churchill knew of such “histories” and the importance of fact and truth when recording history. In 1926 he wrote that “Words, which are on proper occasions the most powerful engines lose their weight and power and value when they are not backed by fact or

winged by truth, when they are obviously the expression of a strong feeling, and are not related in any way to the actual facts of the situation." Years earlier, in March of 1908, he remarked on the tendencies to rely on rumor and gossip when those troublesome facts are precious few and far between. "History cannot proceed by silences. The chronicler of ill-recorded times has none the less to tell his tale. If facts are lacking, rumour must serve. Failing affidavits, he must build with gossip." Churchill's admonition is a cautionary tale: history is always recorded by the victorious long after the victory, thus, history, any history should always be taken with a large helping of salt, brined, cured, and aged by sober minds. A sage historian and professor once advised of the importance of understanding the causes, conduct, and consequences of any historical event. "A historian worthy of the title must never rely on memory for the mundane facts, e.g. names, dates, and places. Such artifacts are important to place in their proper order as precision demands, but such order is readily discovered through searches of historical records; memory is a recorder of violent disreputation. From an historical perspective, what is of greatest importance are the whats and whys: what caused it, why did it play the way it did, and what happened as a result?" Pseudo-historical fantasies served up as self-serving propaganda such as the *1619 Project* fail miserably in all respects to historical accuracy; it begins on a false premise and sinks beneath the weight of deliberate inaccuracies and lies. The thought of feeding such hogswallop to anyone, especially to curious children, is revolting to say the least, and dangerously sick to anyone professed to be sane.

Michael Knowles—it is curiouser and curiouser why so many of my closest friends and acquaintances identify as Michael—writes "Language changes naturally over time. A notable recent example is the word *literally*, which once meant the use of words in their most basic sense without recourse to metaphor but now also describes the use of words metaphorically, which is the opposite of literally. If that isn't confusing enough, the word *literal* refers to letters, which are symbols and therefore the opposite of literal, and the non-literal sense of *literal* goes back at least a century, to James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*—all of which is to say that the natural evolution of language is complicated."

The politically correct perversion of language, on the other hand, is neither natural nor complicated. Political correctness is like a man attempting to give himself a nickname. The artifice and transparency of the act make it impossible. The nickname will never stick—unless the man has the power to enforce it.

Consider social scientists' newly invented, politically correct name for young criminals. There is nothing natural about calling a young criminal a "justice-involved youth," and the reason for the lexical change isn't complicated. Leftist political activists wanted to spring bad kids from the clink, so they decided to rename the juvenile delinquents, who by definition had involved themselves with injustice, as "justice-involved" to make the public more amenable to their release. The unnatural jargon hasn't taken hold in popular culture, but it has stuck in higher education and administrative government because the activists and their allies control those institutions.

Since words matter so much, the definition of "political correctness" itself must matter. Differing definitions of political correctness agree that it involves rejecting certain language to better conform to some political orthodoxy. The *Oxford Dictionary of New Words*, for example, defined the term in 1997 as "conformity to a body of liberal or radical opinion on social matters, characterized by the advocacy of approved views and the rejection of language and behavior considered discriminatory or offensive." These are all necessary features of political correctness, but they are not sufficient. **Political correctness does not merely mask the harsh realities to which clear language refers; it actually contradicts the underlying meaning of words**, thrusting culture through the looking glass. [*emphasis mine*]

Most people recognize that language plays a role in leftist ideology. But the relationship goes further than that. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell describes the relationship between the politically correct lexicon Newspeak and the English socialist regime IngSoc. "Don't you see the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?" asks a member of the totalitarian party. "The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is IngSoc and IngSoc is Newspeak." The same might be said of political correctness and leftism. A man who believes he is a woman must at all times be called a "trans woman," or better still just a "woman," because leftist ideology demands a liberation so radical that a man can become a woman simply by saying so. **Language does not merely reinforce the ideology but actually constitutes it.** [*emphasis mine*]

Some defenders of political correctness have admitted that they use language to manipulate reality, but they maintain that their conservative opponents do the very same. The Oxford linguist Deborah Cameron made this accusation during the debates over political correctness that roiled the academy in the 1990s. According to Cameron, with the advent of political correctness, liberal “verbal hygienists” were simply pointing out “that the illusion of a common language depends on making everyone accept definitions which may be presented as neutral and universal, but which in fact represent the particular standpoint of straight white men from the most privileged social classes.” In other words, they declared value-neutral language a lie designed to enforce patriarchy and white supremacy.<sup>5</sup>

And we thought anti-racist sentiment was a recent invention! Oh, the evil patriarchy, those dastardly straight white men and their predilected homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, misogynistic, racist, claustrophobic white supremacy! Seems as though there is nothing new under the sun. What is new, what is obvious, should there be anyone with an ounce of curiosity left to look for it, what stands out like a black Cheshire cat sitting on a white picket fence is the army of social justice warriors, anti-racist protestors, social studies and critical race theory academics, and egotistical apparatchiks who are—not exclusively mind you but for the most part—rich, privileged, uppity, virtue signaling white, over-educated morons, imbeciles begging for their miserable politically correct lives in the false hope that they too will not be cancelled.

“Political correctness relies on euphemism,” Knowles writes, “soft words used to sugarcoat harsh realities. We all use euphemisms some of the time as a matter of good manners.... Polite euphemisms soften the truth, but they do not lie.” “Leftists tend to manipulate language by using vague terms and jargon not just to soften but to conceal the realities to which they refer. Killing babies in the womb becomes “women’s healthcare” and “reproductive rights,” even though abortion results in precisely the opposite of health and reproduction. ... Political correctness lies. The very phrase “political correctness” illustrates this intrinsic dishonesty, as “political correctness” is no more political than any other sort of speech, and it isn’t correct. The phrase came into use as a way to categorize falsehoods that ideologues believed ought to be considered true for political purposes.” Though the phrase, “Political

correctness” was not known in Churchill’s day, the practice was even then making inroads into changing the language to soften and seduce the unwary.

I hope you have all mastered the official Socialist jargon which our masters, as they call themselves, wish us to learn. You must not use the word “poor”; they are described as the “lower income group.” When it comes to a question of freezing a workman’s wages the Chancellor of the Exchequer speaks of “arresting increases in personal income.” The idea is that formerly income taxpayers used to be the well-to-do, and that therefore it will be popular and safe to hit at them. Sir Stafford Cripps does not like to mention the word “wages,” but that is what he means. There is a lovely one about houses and homes. They are in future to be called “accommodation units.” I don’t know how we are to sing our old song “Home Sweet Home.” ‘Accommodation Unit, Sweet Accommodation Unit, there’s no place like our Accommodation Unit.’ I hope to live to see the British democracy spit all this rubbish from their lips.<sup>6</sup>

The Socialist Party are very mealy-mouthed today, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Sir Stafford Cripps] is very delicate in his language. One must not say “deflation,” but only “disinflation.” In a similar manner, one must not say “devaluation,” but only “revaluation,” and finally, there is the farce of saying that there must be no increase in personal incomes when what is meant is no increase in wages. However, the Chancellor felt that a certain broad prejudice attaches to the word “income” and that consequently no one would mind saying that incomes shall not increase—but wages, no. However, it is wages that he means, I am sure that the British electors will not be taken in by such humbug. I suppose that presently when “disinflation” also wins its bad name, the Chancellor will call it “non-disinflation” and will start again...<sup>7</sup>

“The word ‘vice’ originally meant abnormality, deformity, failing. This is a book about modern vices—that is, modern flaws—and about norms, the standards by which we live.” So does Russell Kirk begin *Enemies of the Permanent Things*.

The malady of normative decay gnaws at order in the person and at order in the republic. Until we recognize the nature of this affliction, we must sink ever deeper into the disorder of the soul and the disorder of the state. A recovery of norms can be commenced only when we moderns come to understand in what manner we have fallen away from old truths.

Good literature and bad literature exert powerful influences upon private character and upon the polity of the commonwealth. Sound political theory and practice make it possible to maintain and improve private virtue; debased politics must debase human character. If ethical understanding, then, is ignored in modern letters and politics, we are left at the mercy of consuming private appetite and oppressive political power. We end in Darkness.<sup>8</sup>

Literature and language are two sides to the same coin. A simple vocabulary is, by definition, self-limiting, a small lexicon limits the sources and resources one can *literally* utilize to inform and verify truth and reality. Without a healthy vocabulary, serious, life-affirming literature is left to die a dusty death in long forgotten graves. That there is little notice or concern for the cancellation of studies in classic literature on college campuses is understandable given the curious lack of any vocabulary beyond the meanest lexicon. In speaking of the norms of literature, Russell Kirk wrote of the “great duty of ensuring a continuity of the mind among men,” and of the principal responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of the man of letters and the teacher of literature.

I do not hesitate to say that theirs is a sacred function; they are keepers of the Word. It is they who, more than the statesman, remind us of what Burke calls “the great primaevial contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place.” It is they who guard this contract of those who are dead, and those who are living, and those who are to be born. If this contract, this law of continuity, is broken, Burke continues, “nature is disobeyed, and the rebellious are outlawed, cast forth, and exiled, from this world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence, into the antagonist world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow.

Just this is the punishment of our rebel generation, which has thrown away the literary heritage of the past quite as it has broken with the moral and social prescriptions of traditional civil social existence. In some measure, the guardians of our literature have been overwhelmed by the deluge of industrialism, mass schooling, and physical alteration of society. But probably it is true, no dominant class in society ever is overthrown simply by a force from below; what undoes the masters of the state is a failure of nerve, a disease of their confidence. And probably it is true, similarly, that

no set or school of men who stand for an ancient cultural inheritance ever is broken simply by the blow of an innovating systems of thought; when the old order of civilization reels and falls, it is because the keepers of the Word no longer are confident in their truth. I am inclined to think that humane learning has been terribly injured in our time because the people who are entrusted with the conservation of human letters have forgotten the true meaning of humanism; and I believe that English literature has been treated with contempt in our schools and our colleges because of what a friend of mine calls “the treason of the English teacher.”<sup>9</sup>

Another author offered a similar thought, daring to comment on the decline, and perhaps the end to *credible* journalism in America. In his book *Ideas Have Consequences*, the late Richard M. Weaver, professor of English at the University of Chicago wrote, “[F]or Plato, truth was a living thing, never wholly captured by men even in animated discourse and its purest form, certainly, never brought to paper.”

In our day it would seem that a contrary presumption has grown up. The more firmly an utterance is stereotyped, the more likely it is to win credit. It is assumed that engines as expensive and as powerful as the modern printing press will naturally be placed in the hands of men of knowledge. Faith in the printed word has raised journalism to the rank of oracles; yet how could there be a better description of them than these lines from the Phaedrus: “**They will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome, having the reputation of knowledge without the reality.**” [*emphasis mine*]

If the realization of truth is the product of a meeting of minds, we may be skeptical of the physical ability of the mechanism to propagate it as long as that propagation is limited to the printing and distribution of stories which give “one unvarying answer.” And this circumstance brings up at once the question of the intention of the rulers of the press. There is much to indicate that modern publication wishes to minimize discussion. Despite many artful pretensions to the contrary, it does not want an exchange of views, save perhaps on academic matters. Instead, it encourages men to read in the hope that they will absorb.<sup>10</sup>

Published 73 years ago (1948), long before the global overreach of Big Tech oligarchies, the Internet, ubiquitous Social Media platforms, and 24-hour cable television media outlets, Weaver’s words now seem somewhat simplistic but genuinely prophetic. What he failed to anticipate is

the unholy marriage of the media with the polity of the left which has turned the last remaining vestiges of journalistic credibility into the unacknowledged state propaganda machine; “Newspeak is IngSoc and IngSoc is Newspeak.” Freedoms of the press and of speech and of the people to peacefully assemble are fast becoming archaic figures of speech; the free exchange of ideas no longer tolerated, opposing voices silenced, cancelled, their views “fact checked”, labeled misinformation, disinformation, and tagged as failing to meet community standards. Michael Anton accurately describes this “ruling class horse manure,” a rather pithy phrase describing seven of the most common, oft deployed lies of the regime’s propaganda machine.<sup>11</sup>

1. The *Law of Merited Impossibility*: “That will *never* happen, and when it does, boy will you [homophobes, transphobes, racists, sexists, whatever] deserve it.” This law disarms resistance to the latest leftist enthusiasm. Whatever the innovation, there will be no adverse consequences. None! Puberty blockers and disfiguring surgeries have no downsides whatsoever. The “science” is clear. It also dismisses “slippery slope” arguments. Worried that allowing people to “self-identify” as whatever sex they want will lead to 50-year-old male perverts exposing themselves to ‘tween girls? That will never happen, but anyone who suggests it will happen is an alarmist with a heart full of transphobic hate. Those who get to impose fresh irrational indignities on the rest of us are the upper caste; those who object, or even have reservations, are the lower caste, who are not allowed to harbor, much less express, any doubts. Whatever humiliation the upper caste has planned for us, we deserve and must meekly accept. Hence when said pervert 50-year-old actually does start waving “her” equipment in the girls locker room, that thing that ten seconds ago you said would *never* happen, well, it is righteous punishment for the retrograde.
2. The *Celebration Parallax* which may be stated as: “the same fact pattern is either true and glorious or false and scurrilous depending on who states it.” A parallax is the apparent difference in position of the same object seen from different vantage points. For instance, an analogue speedometer that reads sixty miles per hour to the driver, but fifty to the passenger—even though the needle itself is only in one place. One need not actually, clearly oppose the subject under discussion in order to be blameworthy. Declining or neglecting to celebrate forcefully enough is enough. As in Stalin’s Russia, lack of enthusiastic clapping is regarded as opposition. On no subject is the Parallax more prevalent than immigration. Depending on who is doing the talking, the demographic transformation of the nation is either a glorious trend that portends a permanent Democratic majority and a more “vibrant” future, or else a “conspiracy theory” that is not happening in any way at all, no-how.
3. The *Law of Salutary Contradiction*: “That’s not happening and it’s good that it is.” My personal favorite, though the Law of Merited Impossibility runs cheek to jowl to cheek. But who can tell behind the face diaper? While the Law of Merited Impossibility applies to the future, this one is about the present. Is the Biden Administration inviting in illegal immigrants, then putting them on military planes and shipping them to the heartland? Absolutely not ... and these future Nobel Prize winners deserve their shot at the American Dream. Once you recognize the pattern, you see it everywhere. It is the cornerstone of ruling class rhetoric.
4. The *Smalls Exhortation*: the ruling class, our masters bleat about “democracy” but have redefined the word to mean “getting exactly what we”—i.e., they—“want.” Any ostensibly “democratic” outcome that might result in us getting what *we* want is *ipso facto* illegitimate.
5. The *Lie-Back Imperative*: the regime’s preferred mode is not merely to allow its targets to speak, but to *require* it—so long as the targets deny the regime apparatus said what she said. Hence the response to “you are evil and deserve what’s coming to you” must be “You don’t think ill of me and wish me no harm.” Every punch in the face must be publicly rationalized, by the victim, as a massage. The purpose is partly to bully the frog into staying in the pot and partly a matter of humiliation. In the oft-quoted words of Anthony Daniels, “a society of emasculated liars is easy

to control.”

6. The *Enmity Counteraccusation*: Don’t appreciate being called evil because of your race? Then you are “divisive”! Dare put up your hands to block an incoming punch? That’s violence” You’re just supposed to take it. They are enemies who treat you like enemies while they insist that you treat them as friends. If you so much as speculate as to where their insane vitriol might lead the country, you will be accused of wishing for that outcome.
7. “*You’re worthless, baby; and if you even think of trying to leave me, I’ll kill you*”: Deplorable Americans are loudly and incessantly said to be the worst people in the history of the planet, pure unadulterated evil, with no legitimate concerns, interests or grievances. Then why live with us? Either our masters know (or intuit) deep down that we can live without them but they can’t live without us, or else they want to keep us around to administer what they view as deserved punishment.

Anton lists these as a quick and dirty guide to regime propaganda and so it is, but, and this is key, such a guide is necessarily targeted to a literate adult audience; for the masses, his warnings are like grains of sand, indistinguishable, soon washed away with the oncoming tide.

So, what is “propaganda” and where, why, who, and when does the propagandizing begin? Harold Dwight Lasswell describes propaganda as a tool used by the press and others, cloaked as learning and wisdom—sounds eerily familiar, curiously like the definition of curiosity. “Propaganda is a concession to the rationality of the modern world. **A literate world, a reading world, a schooled world prefers to thrive on argument and news.** [*emphasis mine*] It is sophisticated to the extent of using print; and he that takes to print shall live or perish by the Press. All the apparatus of diffused erudition popularizes the symbols and forms of pseudo-rational appeal; the wolf of propaganda does not hesitate to masquerade in the sheepskin. All the voluble men of the day—writers, reporters, editors, preachers, lecturers, teachers, politicians—are drawn into the service of propaganda to amplify a master voice. All is conducted with the decorum and the trappings of

intelligence, for this is a rational epoch, and demands its raw meat cooked and garnished by adroit and skilled chefs.”<sup>12</sup>

The late political theorist Hannah Arendt posits the why, arguing “Before they seize power and establish a world according to their doctrines, totalitarian movements conjure up a lying world of consistency which is more adequate to the needs of the human mind than reality itself; in which, through sheer imagination, uprooted masses can feel at home and are spared the never-ending shocks which real life and real experiences deal to human beings and their expectations. The force possessed by totalitarian propaganda—before the movements have the power to drop iron curtains to prevent anyone’s disturbing, by the slightest reality, the gruesome quiet of an entirely imaginary world—lies in its ability to shut the masses off from the real world. The only signs which the real world still offers to the understanding of the unintegrated and disintegrating masses—whom every new stroke of ill luck makes more gullible—are, so to speak, its lacunae,<sup>13</sup> the questions it does not care to discuss publicly, or the rumors it does not dare to contradict....”<sup>14</sup>

The who—not the 1960s English rock band—are of two minds: the totalitarian elite and “society’s disenchant-ed, disaffected, dissatisfied, and maladjusted who are unwilling or unable to assume responsibility for their own real or perceived conditions but instead blame their surroundings, ‘the system,’ and others. They are lured by the false hopes and promises of utopian transformation and the criticism of the existing society, to which their connection is tentative or nonexistent. Improving the malcontents’ lot becomes linked to the utopian cause. Moreover, disparaging and diminishing the successful and accomplished becomes an essential tactic. ...By exploiting human frailties, frustrations, jealousies, and inequities, a sense of meaning and self-worth is created in the malcontent’s otherwise unhappy and directionless life. Simply put, equality in misery—that is, equality of result or conformity—is advanced as a just, fair, and virtuous undertaking. Liberty, therefore, is inherently immoral, except where it avails equality.”<sup>15</sup>

“So the last will be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16). The last is the “who”, the first to be molded into

social justice warriors, our children and our youth. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6) is sage advice. But, should the trainer be, not the parents, but a school teacher informing students that two plus two is racist, what then?

Contrary to the popular and meaningless mantra that educators ought to “teach students how to think, not what to think,” education necessarily teaches certain facts to the exclusion or outright contradiction of others. The slogan actually disproves itself, as it tells people what to think about education.

When a teacher informs his students that two plus two make four rather than five, he teaches them what to think; the students’ grasp of basic arithmetic, in turn, teaches them how to think about more complex problems. The principle extends beyond mathematics. When a teacher in ethics or religion tells his students that it is wrong to steal or that it is wrong to commit murder, he teaches them what to think, and these lessons teach students how to think about other moral issues.

So when a leftist instructor teaches that it is right to murder through abortion, when he teaches that it is right to steal through confiscatory public policy or even outright looting, he too teaches his students what to think, and this perverse moral education likewise shapes how they think about other questions—at grave cost to society.

The *New York Times* exemplified this ideological market distortion in 2020 when it set out to rewrite the history of the United States through the *1619 Project*. The project, which took its name from the year in which the first slave ship arrived at the shores of Virginia, aimed “to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative”<sup>16</sup> To lead the ambitious project, the *Times* tapped the left-wing journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, who based her series of essays on a lie.

“Conveniently left out of our founding mythology,” Hannah-Jones wrote, “is the fact that one of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery.”<sup>17</sup> Hannah-Jones, who majored in history and “African-American Studies” may have overheard this canard as she steeped in the School of Resentment during her undergraduate years, but the claim has no basis in reality. Hanlon’s razor impels us never to attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity. But whether through dishonesty or ignorance, the 1619 Project began with a lie.<sup>18</sup>

“Not even left-wing historians could abide the deceit.” In a letter signed by academic historians from around the country, “these errors, which concern major events, cannot be described as interpretation or ‘framing.’ They are matters of verifiable fact, which are the foundation of both honest scholarship and honest journalism.” The letter offered historical correction, which was subsequently ignored.

On the American Revolution, pivotal to any account of our history, the project asserts that the founders declared the colonies’ independence of Britain, “in order to ensure slavery would continue.” This is not true. If supportable, the allegation would be astounding—yet every statement offered by the project to validate it is false. Some of the other material in the project is distorted, including the claim that “for the most part,” black Americans have fought their freedom struggles “alone.”

Still other material is misleading. The project criticizes Abraham Lincoln’s views on racial equality but ignores his conviction that the Declaration of Independence proclaimed universal equality, for blacks as well as whites, a view he upheld repeatedly against powerful white supremacists who opposed him. The project also ignores Lincoln’s agreement with Frederick Douglass that the Constitution was, in Douglass’s words, “a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT.” Instead, the project asserts that the United States was founded on racial slavery, an argument rejected by a majority of abolitionists and proclaimed by champions of slavery like John C. Calhoun.<sup>19</sup>

As Knowles quips, “The historians’ critique reads like an usher at Ford’s Theatre asking, ‘Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play?’ The entire 1619 Project hinges on the premise that our forebears founded the country to defend slavery. When the historians refuted that claim, the thesis fell apart. The *Times* persisted in error for a full seven months before ‘clarifying’ its central claim to read, ‘One of the primary reasons *some* of the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery’ a change that succeeded neither in admitting fault nor in salvaging the thesis (emphasis mine).”

But the *Times* never needed to prove the thesis, only to popularize it, which the outlet spent a fortune doing. In the fall of 2019, the *Times* secretly spent three million dollars on just three Facebook ads promoting the

project and an unknown amount more than that. While Facebook requires the buyers of “ads about social issues, elections, or politics” to make information about audience reach and ad spend available to the public—a requirement the *New York Times* demanded and praised—the *Times* itself skirted those rules by presenting their false, highly ideological, revisionist history as objective journalism.

Within a year, the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting had translated the project into a curriculum with lesson plans and reading guides, which promptly entered more than 3,500 classrooms around the country. The academic historians had complained that the project’s lies “suggest a displacement of historical understanding by ideology,” but that was the point from the very beginning. The 1619 Project did not attempt to recover some hidden truth or refute some long-told lie but rather to “reframe” American history itself.<sup>20</sup>

Chesterton—how I admire the man—wrote that “In one sense, this is supremely the educational age. In another sense, it is supremely and specially the anti-education age. It is the age in which the Government’s right to teach everybody’s children is for the first time established. It is also the age in which the father’s right to teach his own children is for the first time denied.”

It is the time in which experimentalists earnestly desire to teach a jolly little guttersnipe everything; even Criminology and Cosmic Poise and the Maya system of decorative rhythm. But it is also the time in which earnest philosophers are really doubting whether it is right to teach anybody anything; even how to avoid taking poison or falling off precipices.

But the practical difficulty of our present education is even worse. It is attempting to conduct a process, and yet it has produced a world which incessantly interrupts and reverses that process. Education is initiation; it is in its nature a progression from one thing to another; the arrangement of ideas in a certain order. A child learns to walk before he learns to skip; he learns his own alphabet before he learns the Greek alphabet. Or, if any educationist now reverses this process, he must at least have a reason for reversing it, and must therefore refuse to reverse the reversal. But the real life of our time reverses everything and has no reason for anything. The real world, that roars round the poor little gutter-boy as he goes to school, is an utterly anti-educational world. If the school is really giving any education, the world is certainly engaged day and night in ruining his education. ...The gutter-boy spends about three-quarters of his time in getting uneducated. He is educated by the modern State School. He is uneducated

by the modern State.”<sup>21</sup>

These days a good teacher is hard to find. Not that good teachers no longer exist, for they do; they are difficult to find because they have been effectively silenced, forced underground, fighting a system against which they can neither ignore nor hope to overcome, not if they wish to continue to teach. “Today, more than ever, good teachers are fighting against overwhelming odds. The traditional art of teaching has been challenged by a kind of insanity one might call test-based accountability. Teachers are now ‘accountable’ (emphasis on count) to parents, to the principal, to the local board, even to their state for the recorded quantitative progress of each student, based almost exclusively on frequent criterion-based standardized test and other monitoring checks.”

Who makes up all these tests? They want to measure this. They want to evaluate that. This generation is the most measured, evaluated, and statistically analyzed of any generation in history. Teachers, therefore, almost by default, must teach to the standardized test criteria, a stifling, robotic limitation on one’s capability towards inventiveness. Such pressure leads to “scripting” a teacher’s lessons. Weekly or bi-weekly tracking schemes march onward toward the inevitable numerical end: standardized tests, a battery of them, which are then used to evaluate teaching effectiveness across an impossibly diverse demographic landscape. These results are then used to “rank” teachers and schools in a kind of competition derby.<sup>22</sup>

This growing dependence on tracking schemes has effectively crippled and destroyed education. Increasingly, school districts and administrations rely on invasive software tracking systems such as Infinite Campus to track and monitor students in all aspects of their lives. Infinite Campus tracks over 2,000 data points on each student and that data is maintained forever, long after the student is no longer a student. The data includes, but is not limited to, academic performance, behavioral issues, medical issues, psychological profiles, administration and counseling notes; all is supposedly segmented, departmentalized, sliced, diced and parboiled. Parents have limited access, need approval from two administrators to see academic data, and are denied access to the remaining data. A recent newspaper report on the arrest of a school counselor for pedophilia revealed how pernicious this as

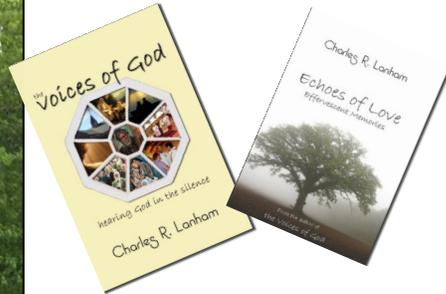
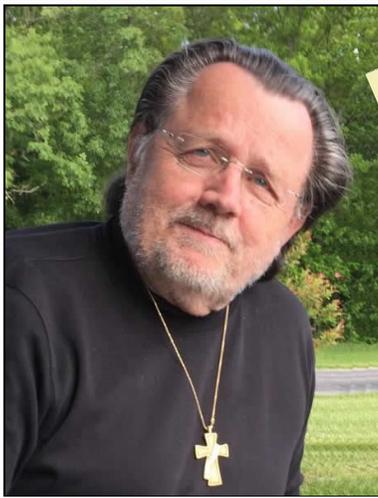
this system can be: the school counselor had access to every student's counseling information, which begs the question as to whether such information was, or possibly could have been used for illicit purposes.

From the teachers' unions to the school boards and school administrations, the left's stranglehold on education is overwhelmingly absolute. Online learning, the result of the pandemic has had unanticipated consequences. Parents are waking up, but parents are no longer in control and the left knows it. The age in which parents have the right to determine what their children are taught, the values, morals and ethics they want to instill in their children, has tragically long left the building. Our children and grandchildren are the future. What they are taught now will determine what their future and ours will be.

1. The list of gender-neutral pronouns is constantly revising as the numbers of genderbending genders escalates exponentially. Use whatever pronouns you like. I will continue to use proper pronouns based on genetic binary sex: male and female.
2. Michael Dennis Cassity, *What Happens Next: Celebrating Stories with Children* (Reno, NV: Michael Dennis Cassity, 2012), 89-90.
3. G.K. Chesterton, "The Twilight of General Information", *The Illustrated London News*, March 31, 1936; cf. G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, Volume XXXVII, *The Illustrated London News 1935-1936* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2012), 253. **Chiaroscuro**: *noun*. The treatment of light and shade in drawing and painting; an effect of contrasted light and shadow created by light falling unevenly or from a particular direction on something.
4. Winston Churchill, *Churchill by Himself: The Definitive Collection of Quotations* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 53.
5. Michael Knowles, *Speechless: Controlling Words, Controlling Minds*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2021), 2-4.
6. Winston Churchill, *Churchill by Himself*, February 8, 1950, 59.
7. Winston Churchill, *Churchill by Himself*, October 27, 1949, 60.
8. Russell Kirk, *The Enemies of the Permanent Things: Observations of Abnormality in Literature and Politics* (Peru, IL: Sherwood Sugden & Company, Publishers, 1984), 15.
9. Russell Kirk, *The Enemies of the Permanent Things*, 67-68.

10. Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1948), 87-88.
11. Michael Anton, "That's Not Happening and It's Good That It Is", *The American Mind*, A publication of the Claremont Institute, <https://americanmind.org/salvo/thats-not-happening-and-its-good-that-it-is/>.
12. Harold Dwight Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (Boston: MIT Press, 1927), 221.
13. **Lacuna** (*noun*), **Lacunae** (*plural noun*): an unfilled space or interval; a gap.
14. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1968), 353.
15. Mark R. Levin, *Ameritopia* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2012), 7-8.
16. Nikole Hannah-Jones, "The 1619 Project," *New York Times*, August 14, 2019, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html).
17. "New York Times Corrects the 1619 Project—but It's Still a Giant Lie," *New York Post*, March 15, 2020, [ny-post.com/2020/14/new-york-times-corrects-the-1619-project-but-its-still-a-giant-lie/](http://ny-post.com/2020/14/new-york-times-corrects-the-1619-project-but-its-still-a-giant-lie/).
18. Michael Knowles, *Speechless*, 96-97.
19. "We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued the 1619 Project," *New York Times*, December 20, 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/magazine/we-respond-to-the-historians-who-critiqued-the-1619-project.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/magazine/we-respond-to-the-historians-who-critiqued-the-1619-project.html).
20. Michael Knowles, *Speechless*, 98-99.
21. G.K. Chesterton, "On Private Property and Modern Education", *The Illustrated London News*, May 28, 1932; cf. G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, Volume XXXVI, *The Illustrated London News 1932-1934* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2011), 91-92.
22. Michael Dennis Cassity, "What Happens Next?", 162-163.





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