

ON THE SUBJECTIVE MENTAL STATE OF LIBERALS

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In 1974, philosopher Thomas Nagel famously asked “What Is it Like to be a Bat?” Nagel rejected reductionism, the idea that all consciousness can be reduced to simpler components identical for all sentient beings. Instead, he held that for each type of conscious being, there is a unique mindset embodying what it feels like to be that type of being. These subjective experiences are called the “qualia” of consciousness, the internal viewpoints inherent to a sentient creature. Nobody can say what the qualia of a bat are, but I am here to analyze a closely related question: what are the qualia of a liberal?

By liberal, I do not mean classical liberal, or even the American moderate Left that until the 1960s was ascendant in the Democratic Party. Rather, I mean left-liberal, or progressive, the ideology of cultural Marxism, of the Frankfurt School, now dominant in the Democratic Party, as it has been dominant for some time in the academic world and in other worlds controlled by the Left, such as the media-entertainment complex. What goes on behind their eyes? To a neutral observer, the externally visible political actions of today’s liberals are irrational and incoherent. The simplest explanation for their behavior is that liberals are people of low intelligence, and that they are not educated (whatever degrees they may have). An alternative simple explanation is that they desire evil and hide that desire, so their actions and stated reasons do not match. But, while both are possible explanations, it seems unlikely that that any of this is how they perceive the world and their actions. So again—what are the qualia of a liberal?

We should be clear that specific policy prescriptions are not examples of qualia. For example, demanding gun control every time there is a shooting, or demanding gun control in general, despite the demonstrable total irrationality of using that policy prescription to fix the problems liberals claim it will fix, is not an example of qualia. Nor are the ever-increasing Left demands for censorship of views that oppose theirs. These are only the external appearances resulting from internal phenomena—equivalent to a bat turning in the air upon echolocating a mosquito to eat. The deeper question is what is the bat thinking upon making the turn? He is trying to achieve a goal, but what mental visions

impel that effort? Upon this question, and similar ones, translated to the liberal brain, much turns, for if we can understand, even a little, we can more effectively combat their poison.

This question of liberal qualia first occurred to me when listening to a new podcast put out by the *New York Times*, called "The Argument." Having listened to three episodes, it has become clear that this podcast alone provides all I need to complete my analysis. I conclude that liberals have four key qualia, ones unique to liberals, compared to normal human beings. I note, by the way, that all human beings share most of their qualia. There is no reason to believe that liberals perceive, say, the color red differently than the rest of humanity, or the taste of Pabst Blue Ribbon. Here we are seeking the qualia distinctions that explain political action. Furthermore, naturally, we are relying to a certain extent on generalizations.

The first quale is that liberals do not see reality as it is. What their eyes perceive is not the truth, because everything is filtered through an ideological lens, which removes anything that contradicts their ideology before it can enter their minds. Reality is totally subordinated to political ends, which are derived purely from abstractions. Unlike a bat's echolocation, this is not merely a different way of seeing the world. It is an inferior, neutered, way of seeing the world. If a bat could not see the world accurately, it would starve. Liberals are able to avoid such consequences, the hammer blows of reality, because in America today they live in bubbles of their own creation in which everyone else believes the same thing, in which they are never exposed to the consequences of reality and where everyone whose opinion they care about acts as if unreality is real. Critically, in those bubbles, liberals also control the levers of power, and of reward and punishment. In this walled ecosystem, they do not starve, because food is stolen for them from those who can produce value because they see reality clearly. Liberals are thus like the Old Bolshevik, Rubashov, in Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, who, on his way to be shot after conviction for crimes he knows to be wholly imaginary, truly believes that his execution is necessary and correct, since the Party is always right, history dictates that his death is required, and through this lie the Promised Land will be achieved. Even as the bullet enters his skull, Rubashov cannot free himself of the prison his

mind has created for him, and so it is for liberals today—except that the rest of us, not them, suffer and die for their distorted vision of reality.

The second quale, related to but distinct from their divorce from reality, is that liberals use key words, first inside their heads and then spoken out loud, only after mentally assigning them new meanings designed to serve their abstract political goals. For example, in current political discourse, we constantly hear that anything not Left, and especially Trump, is “corrupt” and “illegitimate.” These words are used because liberals know that anything not in agreement with them is bad, and they know that the words “corrupt” or “illegitimate” designate bad things. But corruption is objectively defined, Webster’s says, as “dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery.” (Or, more broadly, corruption means that someone with power claims to be performing a defined, neutral, role, and is instead performing a different, self-interested, one.) Illegitimate means “not authorized by the law; not in accordance with accepted standards or rules.” Liberals’ complaint about Trump has nothing to do with those meanings. Instead, the words have been redefined to mean “nebulously very bad, in a way I need not explain.” In practice, this is a rhetorical device, what Scott Adams calls “linguistic kill shots.” Critically, though, in liberals’ own minds the meanings have not changed.

The third quale, again related but distinct, is emotivism ruling rationality. Any matter perceived by a liberal that affects his political worldview is not analyzed objectively, nor are his conclusions supported logically, but rather with unbridled emotion. Occasional efforts at rationality are made, but upon any examination or challenge, emotion swamps any such attempt. Why? Well, we can’t really tell directly, of course, but this phenomenon seems to let the liberal avoid the consequences of denying reality, to serve to indicate tribal affiliation to other liberals, and to signal virtue and righteousness to the world at large, as well as to the liberal himself. Emotivism often appears as projection in the service of self-exculpation, used by liberals to whip themselves up into a righteous rage and justify ever more vicious attacks on those who stand in the way of their utopian political goals.

The fourth quale is breathtaking arrogance, blended with a nebulous, yet unshakeable, conviction of their own moral superiority, both tied to the belief that history is a wave and liberals are destined to ride it

like the Silver Surfer. The origin of this is not anything rational, such as an analysis of the past and measured predictions about the future, but an insatiable desire to lord it over supposed inferiors, feeding the human desire to feel that one is on a higher plane than others. This characteristic is often the most evident in particular political discussions, such as those surrounding global warming. It is reinforced, as with the anti-reality quale, by liberals' living in a walled ecosystem, where they can daily reassure each other that yes, indeed, we are superior. And it often comes out in the visceral belief that anyone who disagrees with them is evil, since that belief allows feeling superior without any need to demonstrate superiority.

So those are the four liberal qualia. I will note that my analysis of qualia is done with a somewhat broad brush. Some liberals, for example, do see the world clearly; they are just evil and want evil ends. Such was Lenin. But in America today, few liberals are like that, though probably more than are willing to admit that their main difference from Pol Pot is that their field of action is in North America, not Asia.

It might also be objected these are not true qualia, since they are ideologically driven distortions of mental processes, not purely organic products of the brain. True enough, though it's not clear that the ideology came first. Just as likely, some defect in the liberal mind resulted in them believing this way, and that same defect reinforces the qualia driving specific political demands. As Jonathan Haidt has noted, morality derives largely from pre-existent mental states; so (probably) with liberal qualia, although we will never truly know, since normal people cannot get inside the liberal mind, and if we are liberal, we lack the ability to self-analyze in this fashion.

Finally, this analysis is not without its dangers. One logical progression of identifying the mental defects of one's political opponents is to view them as less than human, a path that has led to disaster ever since the French Revolution. That path is primarily one the Left has trodden, and in recent times, they have increasingly become unrestrained about wanting to step onto it in America. But the same temptation can occur on the Right. We should be careful that understanding the liberal mind is used as a tool to combat their political program, and to strip them of power, forever, but not to dehumanize them.

OK, let's illustrate these characteristics through examples from the podcast. The declared reason for "The Argument" is "for democracy to work, we need to hear each other out. . . . [We] explain the arguments from across the political spectrum." The podcast features three regular *New York Times* columnists, Ross Douthat, Michelle Goldberg and David Leonhardt. Douthat is the only conservative who writes for the *New York Times* and he is very conservative, although also very much infected by inside-the-Beltway thinking (which he admits). Goldberg and Leonhardt are very far left. Goldberg is farther left; that the newspaper thinks that Leonhardt can be the centrist in this trio is charming. But it isn't surprising—every other person who writes for the *New York Times* is also very far left, except for house "conservative" David Brooks, since the paper has reimagined itself as a full-time organ of attack upon Trump and anyone right of center, providing a safe space bubble for its clueless readers to imagine that they have the moral high ground, while reminding them of the looming power of those wishing to attack the Left. Whenever I read the NYT, to which I have to admit I subscribe, I often find it weirdly compelling, even hypnotizing, until I step back and realize that almost all articles are packed with demonstrable lies, both of commission and omission, and, perhaps more importantly, skilled writing is used to weave deliberate propaganda, of which Joseph Goebbels would be proud.

Anyway, in the first episode, "Is the Supreme Court Broken?," the three columnists did a good job of being civil. All three are well-informed. But a good part of what Goldberg especially, and Leonhardt as well, said was quite literally insane and utterly divorced from reality, which made me think of bats as an explanation—maybe she just sees things in a way normal humans don't. Despite appearances, I don't think Goldberg is a mental defective. Instead, she is an outstanding illustration of the externally visible results of liberal qualia, as is Leonhardt, to a somewhat lesser degree.

The pivot of the discussion in this episode was the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh, with the premise being Leonhardt's statement, "For the first time in decades, the court is firmly conservative. And now Democrats are calling it a broken, partisan body." Leonhardt, acting as *de facto* moderator, first asks Goldberg, "When you realized that Brett Kavanaugh was going to be Justice Kavanaugh, how did it feel?" She

responded, “[I]t’s hard for me to emphasize the extent to which this is, just, like, personally degrading, right, there’s political disagreement and there’s political loss, and then there’s personally feeling like you have been dehumanized and degraded and a sinking punch in the gut that, you know, these hostile men basically have their boots on our necks and are not going to remove them. . . . It is grueling.”

We see here three of the four liberal qualia. We see rank emotivism—it is grueling; doom is coming; they are bad; I am choking. We see an unreal reality; no normal human being could conclude that the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation was anything other than “political disagreement” and “political loss,” or that it was objectively, in any way, “dehumanizing,” “degrading” or that “hostile men . . . have their boots on their necks and are not going to remove them,” metaphorically or otherwise. And we see “partisan” redefined to mean “no longer dominated by the Left.”

Moving on, Douthat, after abasing himself to a small degree with preemptive apologies, something never done once in any episode of this podcast by either Goldberg or Leonhardt, or anywhere else by them, probably ever, notes that “for forty years, after World War II, the Supreme Court was run by a cabal of pretty liberal justices who spent a lot of time overturning a lot of laws and effectively sort of moral customs in America. . . . The way liberals are feeling right now about the prospect of a conservative Court is the way conservatives felt about the real Court for generations.” Leonhardt responds that what we have now “feels qualitatively different” and maunders on that the Court is “more partisan, I think it’s much more radical than when it had a center or center-left majority.” Again, no attempt is made to demonstrate this in even the slightest way, because the assertion is self-evidently ludicrous—it is more pure unreality and emotivism, as shown by the dead giveaway verb “feels,” along with more redefinitions.

Goldberg jumps in to endorse shrinking or expanding the Supreme Court to pack it with liberals, rejecting the possibility that will lead to a downward spiral of reaction and counter-reaction. She rejects it not for any rational reason, but because otherwise the End is Nigh. “The situation we have now strikes me, and I think not just me, as intolerable, and I think that most liberals have the sense that there is no limit to the right’s kind of determination to impose its power on us by any

means possible, and so inasmuch as you sort of lose faith that we're all playing by some set of ground rules or that we all have some shared commitment to the process, you just start feeling that like you're a sucker if you don't use every single tool at your disposal." So, decades of rule by the Supreme Court in favor of the Left and in opposition to democracy may be ending, though no court ruling has been made yet, but the Apocalypse has arrived. Again, we see three of the four liberal qualia (this time, we are missing word re-definitions, but we have unreality, emotivism, and claimed moral superiority).

Then Goldberg, without seeing the contradiction to what she just said, suggests that the real problems (for the Left) will not show up "unless and until this Supreme Court starts handing down really radical 5-4 decisions that, say, thwart what a President Elizabeth Warren tries to do with corruption reform—I think you will see a popular demand that something be done." Leonhardt chimes in to say that despite "this enraging moment," "the right answer is for Democrats and progressives to continue pointing out the ways in which this Court is illegitimate." And here we have my original example, of redefinition of "corrupt" and "illegitimate." In no plausible universe does either of these words apply to the Supreme Court as currently constituted (which Court, as I say, has not issued a single ruling). But, using the transitive property, to liberals, "conservative majority on the Supreme Court" equals "rulings that do not comport with Left desire to rule through the Court" equals "bad" equals "corrupt and illegitimate."

Leonhardt asks Douthat what he hopes for out of this Court, to which Douthat says he wants some victories for conservatives on social issues, but modestly rejects "an aggressive activist Court that's trying to strike down every law that a President Warren passes. I think the way we get back to sanity around the Court is for the Court to give some victories to social conservatives . . . [but] respect democracy when it leads to liberal outcomes too." In turn, Goldberg answers the same question, unleashing a barely coherent rant. "I don't really have hopes. I think that they're just going to do their worst." We will have "extremely sinister effects, not just on the hot button social issues, but really on the power of corporate money, on the abilities of Democratic majorities to pass laws restraining corruption and inequality." Brett Kavanaugh was chosen so that Donald Trump could neuter Robert Mueller, who is, any

day now, going to find Russian meddling in some broom closet. “So I think we could have a real breakdown of the rule of law.” Leonhardt wraps up by saying “I hope the whole mess of this confirmation makes the Court a little more humble. . . . I think a humble Court right now, rather than a Court that tries to remake America and society in its own image, would be much better for the country.”

We see here all four qualia. “Humble” is redefined to mean “subservient to liberal goals.” When the Left spends decades remaking America, that is justice; when the possibility arises that the Right may reverse some of these Left gains, they need to be subservient instead, because that is “better for the country”—i.e., better for the Left. We also see here bizarre claims of moral superiority, akin to the man who, having killed his parents, throws himself on the judge’s mercy as an orphan. No acknowledgement is made of the hatred and confusion engendered purely by leftist attacks on Kavanaugh by obvious liars and perjurers, whipped up in organized fashion. Their purity is unassailable; their opponents, by merely defending themselves from slander, are “sinister” and trying to achieve “the breakdown of the rule of law.” All this in just a few sentences—and note that nowhere in any of these podcasts can Douthat be even once accused of exemplifying any of the four liberal qualia.

I could multiply these examples endlessly, and maybe I already am, but let’s just see two more, from a different podcast in the series, “How Screwed Up is American Democracy?” Goldberg hyperventilates, “We’re already in a situation where I and a lot of other people feel like we’re being ruled by an illegitimate, undemocratically elected cabal of our enemies.” When Douthat queries the use of “enemies,” asking “do you pause at all before using the word ‘enemies’,” she shrilly responds, “Not any more. . . . I look at a President whose basic *raison d’être* is ‘owning the libs,’ is making people like me, and my family, and my friends, scared and afraid and humiliated, and I see people cheering for him, I see people cheering for him precisely because he does that, and I don’t know how to describe them anyway except ‘my enemies.’” On the surface, this is a mirror image of conservative complaints about their enemies. Maybe conservatives just live in their own bubbles, a topic I am going to address in a different analysis. But poke a little, and it’s not just ludicrously unmoored from reality, but malevolently so. Does

anyone actually believe that Goldberg is ever “scared and afraid and humiliated”? Is she attacked when she goes to restaurants or in public places? Might she lose her job if she says something liberal? Might her children be ostracized by some political position she takes? Do people in power that she cares about treat her with contempt? Of course not. Those things only happen to conservatives, every day, to millions of them. Never to liberals, and most especially never to powerful liberals like her.

But that’s not what Goldberg sees, and that’s my point. What Goldberg actually objects to, even if it is hidden from her, is that she may not be on top anymore; she may no longer be able to dish out contempt and humiliation to conservatives, forcing them to accept her radical political programs, because they may succeed in neutering a chief method of liberal power. That’s why they are her enemies—because the peasants are revolting and trying to throw off the liberal yoke and whip, not because they are actually causing her any type of harm. Filtered through the four liberal qualia, though, Goldberg sees herself as the persecuted, yet resilient and ultimately triumphant, Angel of Justice, pure in thought and deed.

And in the same podcast, in addition to continuing to use “corruption” and “illegitimate” with redefined meanings, both Goldberg and Leonhardt repeatedly, more than twenty times, refer to the Republican Party using “damaged,” “broken,” “beyond repair,” “fundamentally sick,” and similar terms. They never say once what they mean by that; they treat it as obvious. But it’s transparently not a normal use of those terms—when one refers to something as “broken,” that means it cannot perform its function. In the case of a political party, its function is to gain power for its adherents. By that measure, the Republican Party is very much not broken, and no case can be made that it is. No, what they mean is a complete inversion of the actual meaning of “broken”—they mean that the Republican Party is effective and dominant, and eroding the power of their own political party. Once Leonhardt reverts, and says the Republicans are “doing so much damage,” which is an accurate phrasing. That reversion unveils the redefinition, of course.

It’s not just this podcast series, of course—it’s most liberal pronouncements today. Take, for example, a piece that the famous Holocaust historian Christopher Browning wrote a few weeks back in that liberal

bastion, the *New York Review of Books*, shrieking that Trump is Hitler (and tacking on that it doesn't matter, since global warming is going to kill us all). Unfortunately for him, his writing totally beclowns him, and ruins his reputation. He, however, does not and cannot see that, for he has the qualia of a liberal (and lives and breathes in the walled garden of liberalism). But his piece jarringly illustrates all four characteristics of liberal qualia, as you will see for yourself if you subject yourself to Browning's piece. I won't go into detail, since this analysis is long enough, and dead horses should not be beaten, but I'm happy to discuss further if there is demand from the People!

In the meantime, you can take this analysis home with you, and when you listen to liberal demands, I hope you will have a better idea of what is actually behind those demands. How to fight back most effectively is a topic for another day, but, as always, forewarned is forearmed.