Policy vs Culture

Rambunctious rhetoric can damage a position. So can the abuse and weaponization of institutions that require trust to function. Obama's abuse of the IRS for political purposes, and the possible politicization of the FBI stand to cause far more damage than Trump's reckless tweets, bullying tactics, and idle threats.

Best of 2017

Donald Trump Is The First President To Turn Postmodernism Against Itself

> *Like other utopian visions that seek to remake human beings into something alien to their nature, however, it is incapable of compromise, and thus lends itself to hypocrisy and fanaticism.*
>
> *Consequently, even as American society becomes more diverse and accommodating, more people nevertheless see senseless discrimination everywhere. As they run out of traditions, institutions, and customs to deconstruct, however, the more diluted the power rooted in their outrage becomes. Hence the growth in moral hysteria over ever smaller and more trivial things.*

Here's what healthcare looks like in a perfect world

America Needs a Liberal Party

America needs a new Liberal Party because both major parties have abandoned liberalism. Neither adequately supports international free trade or the defense of the West – the two pillars of the liberal world order since 1945. Both lack commitment to constitutionally limited government, separation of powers, free enterprise, and human equality and liberty under law. Each supports its own Malthusian antihuman collectivist ideology: for Democrats, it is ecologism, for Republicans, it is nativism.

The Rise of Illiberal Democracy

John Stuart Mill opened his classic On Liberty by noting that as countries became democratic, people tended to believe that "too much importance had been attached to the limitation of power itself. That . . . was a response against rulers whose interests were opposed to those of the people." Once the people were themselves in charge, caution was unnecessary. "The nation did not need to be protected against its own will." As if confirming Mill's fears, consider the words of Alexandr Lukashenko after being elected president of Belarus with an overwhelming majority in a free election in 1994, when asked about limiting his powers: "There will be no dictatorship. I am of the people, and I am going to be for the people."

The tension between constitutional liberalism and democracy centers on the scope of governmental authority. Constitutional liberalism is about the limitation of power, democracy about its accumulation and use.

Don't Shred Your Credibility for Your Tribe

The larger truth, however, is that those with no credibility make poor critics. Given the recent past, media outrage at

Spicer's press conference starts to seem less like a principled stand for the truth than an attempt to manufacture outrage. Thus, we see the wearying pattern of the modern Trump media debate. The media call out his falsehoods and decry the erosion of norms. His defenders call out media hypocrisy but then are themselves often incapable of telling the truth. After all, to speak the truth means "giving in." It means "not fighting."

Our politics is devolving into the pathetic spectacle of liars indignantly calling out liars for lying. Rule-breakers are outraged that other rule-breakers break rules. Norms that could be violated with impunity for "social justice" can't be violated for "nationalism." We stick with our tribe, through thick and thin – through truth and lies.

Muscular Votes

Globalization, big government, and metastasizing regulations have enriched the American coasts, in other words, while damaging much of the nation's interior.

Few major political leaders before Trump seemed to care. He hammered home the point that elites rarely experienced the negative consequences of their own ideologies. New York Times columnists celebrating a "flat" world have yet to find themselves flattened by Chinese writers willing to write for a fraction of their per-word rate. Tenured Harvard professors hymning praise to global progressive culture don't suddenly discover their positions drawn and quartered into four part-time lecturer positions. And senators and bureaucrats in Washington face no risk of having their roles usurped by low-wage Vietnamese politicians.

The First Duty of Intelligent Men

If we keep our liberal institutions functioning, our markets

flowing, and respect the liberties of everyone this progress will continue. It will not be consistent or equal and it will certainly not be painless. To the extent that we try to control these three factors (consistency, equality, or discomfort) we tend to retard growth and innovation, but not by much if we retain respect for liberty and dignity.

Our concerns about the cost of health care, pollution, and other social ills are mired in the marginalism of the present. When we make leaps in the treatment of diabetes, Alzheimer's, cancer and heart disease- and we will- health care costs will plummet; not because of government policy but despite it.

We can watch the news and cheer our side, and feign outrage at the other, but the net effect is little different than if it was a football game. The choice is not between being uniformed or misinformed; but between big ideas and marginal ones. You are not likely to find the former on the news.

[The Great Progressive Fallacy]

Much of the growth of government especially in the early progressive era was predicated on advances in science that led to the great progressive fallacy: that tools of description translate simply into tools for prescription. The most notable example was the use of the science of Darwinism to justify the morally reprehensible policy of eugenics.

[Who Rules the United States]

Donald Trump did not cause the divergence between government of, by, and for the people and government, of, by, and for the residents of Cleveland Park and Arlington and Montgomery and Fairfax counties. But he did exacerbate it. He forced the winners of the global economy and the members of the D.C. establishment to reckon with the fact that they are resented,

> *envied, opposed, and despised by about half the country. But this recognition did not humble the entrenched incumbents of the administrative state. It radicalized them to the point where they are readily accepting, even cheering on, the existence of a "deep state" beyond the control of the people and elected officials.*

The True Anti-Intellectuals by HO

> *Addressing the limits of the intellect is not to be anti-intellectual. It is the opposite. Knowing the limits allows wiser application, greater respect, and lower risk. This makes intellectualism more acceptable and trustworthy to a wider populace. It is the blind faith in credentialism and consensus that damages the reputation of the intellectuals. The cynicism and demonization of skepticism and true debate is the height of anti-intellectualism.*

Fake Hate Crimes by Kevin Williamson

> *The Left, particularly in the English-speaking world, has been in intellectual crisis since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Left's last really big idea was Communism. (Bernie Sanders would say "socialism," and the difference is not entirely trivial: Communism begins with a gun in your face, socialism ends with a gun in your face.) When Communism was discredited — not only by the failures of central planning alluded to earlier but also by its horrifying body count of some 100 million victims in the 20th century — the Left was left intellectually unmoored. It has come up with strategies — environmentalism, feminism, identity politics, "1 percent" resentment politics — but no big ideas.*

Kevin Williamson from National Review, Camino de Servidumbre

> *“The curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design.” From this Hayek, an old-fashioned liberal, concluded that while there might be room in a free and open society for a broad and generous welfare state, the project of providing benefits to poor and vulnerable people must be understood as distinct from the socialist project, which is to put economic production under political discipline.*

David French at National Review, [America’s ‘Smug-Liberal Problem]

> *Yes, there is a smug-liberal problem in America, one that smart liberals recognize. Stephens is right. You don’t win converts with mockery. You can sometimes win grudging compliance, but you mainly make enemies — especially when your mockery reveals your own ignorance and inconsistency.*

The Rest of the Apple

Upgrades tend to use more power as new features are introduced. To conserve the battery power of older phones, Apple reduced the processing speed, assuming a small difference in processing speed would be more tolerable and less noticeable than a battery that drained too quickly. This is hardly the sinister motive or forced obsolescence the conspiracy mongers attribute.

Policy and Attitude

“President Trump’s governance this year has been more conservative than that of George W. Bush or even Reagan. He has slashed the bureaucracy, cutting regulations at a maniacal clip. He has inserted constitutionalist appellate judges at a historic rate. He’s cut taxes. He’s looked to box in Russia in Ukraine while building up our alliances in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. He’s ended the individual mandate and he’s cut taxes.”

A Better Solution to Citizens United

“Those who remain concerned about the issue of money in politics may be focused on the wrong tool. What disturbs the proper representation is not money as much as restrictive ballot access laws. Super pacs control the money but still lack the access and thus must use the parties as their vehicles.”