Intellectual Flattening

life is just too complicated to reduce to binary choices

from Spanish Bombs by Kevin Williamson at National Review

> *William F. Buckley Jr. scoffed at American progressivism as the ideology of "free false teeth," i.e., the belief that wherever there is want, it is the duty of the state to provide. Do progressives favor free false teeth? Yes, of course. Do conservatives also want impoverished grandmothers to have false teeth? "Well, it's not that we don't want grandmothers to have false teeth, but somebody has to pay for those false teeth, and you have to consider the opportunity cost and what they might have done with that money otherwise, and what the false-teeth subsidy will do to incentives and the long-term capital structure of the artificial-dental-implant markets, dentistry-related questions of moral hazard, interstate dental standards, and, hey, have you read Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth? Because it has some really interesting things to say about . . . "*
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> *In 2016, conservatism underwent a kind of intellectual flattening with the rise of "binary choice" rhetoric. You'll be familiar with the general outline of that approach: If you weren't all in for Donald Trump, then you were effectively all in for Hillary Rodham Clinton — it's to the wall for one or to the wall for the other. That's not an especially intelligent line of argument, but it is one that has found some favor on some parts of the populist Right. If God were to smite Donald Trump's Washington tomorrow, the last thing Sean Hannity would say before being turned into a pillar of salt would be: "But what about Neil Gorsuch?"*