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Identity Politics and
Other Afflictions of Our Time

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Americans cleave to the things of this world as if assured that they will never die, and yet are in such a rush to snatch any that come within their reach, as if expecting to stop living before they have relished them. They clutch everything but hold nothing fast, and so lose grip as they hurry after some new delight.⁶

§5. It is worth remembering, especially in America, that in other parts of the world, nations—inheritances—are still very much alive and binding. Because equality is so important to us in America, we tend to think of other people around the globe as *persons*, without predicates, who have no inheritance, and who are “just like us.” The most important work of political theory in the second half of the twentieth century—*A Theory of Justice*, written by John Rawls—is premised on our American intuition that we can build a just political community with citizens who have no history.⁷ Only in America. In the rest of the world, on the contrary, most citizens acknowledge that the inheritance of their nation still binds them. Reasonable people will disagree about how intact that inheritance is, and even about what that inheritance is—but in America we often unreasonably conclude that inheritance is not binding at all.

§6. Throughout history, then, the human race has divided itself into nations, into different *kinds* of peoples, having different inheritances. As recently as the 1960s, we identified ourselves as distinct kinds of people, without the need to use additional terms. “He is Lebanese.” “She is French.” This was not limited to political distinctions alone; we also treated religion this way. “He is Protestant.” She is “Roman Catholic.” Ethnic distinctions—prone to historical drift and imagi-

6. Tocqueville, pt. 2, chap. 13 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, 536; cf. Prov. 22:28: “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.”

7. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

native construction—were handled in the same manner. “He is Phoenician.” “She is Viking.” Racial distinctions, too.

§7. As we entered the 1990s, however, a new term became ubiquitous in our everyday vocabulary: “identity.” As a philosophical term, identity has a long history. David Hume famously wrote about it in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739),⁸ with a view to showing just how transitive personal identity was. Sigmund Freud, whose monumental book *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930)⁹ is a classic in the academic literature of psychology, would seem to be a work very much concerned with identity. He, like Hume, saw the fragility of human ego, but never once uses the term identity. In Freud’s framework, the agonistic wrestling match between the id, ego, and superego, which raised doubts about where the self begins and ends, seemed not to require the term at all. Erik Erikson’s *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1959)¹⁰ is among the first works in which the term identity is used systematically in the psychological literature; but there, too, his concern was the *instability* of the self throughout the life cycle, especially in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Our use of the term during the 1990s and since that time has not indicated something transitory and fragile, but rather something firm and irrefutable. The term now has this more self-assured meaning whenever it is used. Instead of being “Lebanese,” I might instead proudly announce, “My identity is Lebanese”; “my gender identity is male”; “my religious identity is Protestant”; “my ethnic identity is

8. David Hume, “Of Personal Identity,” bk. 1, pt. 4, sec. 6 in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 164–79.

9. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961).

10. Erik H. Erikson, “The Problem of Personal Identity,” chap. 3 in *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), 108–76.

Phoenician”; and so on. What is going on here? Why add the term identity at all, when to a generation before, it seemed so unnecessary—indeed inappropriate, since it indicated something unstable rather than firm and irrefutable?

§8. The first answer is that in its more innocent and innocuous usage today, the term “identity” is simply the verbal upgrade and fashionable equivalent of what we once recognized the term “kind” to mean. Because the meaning of identity morphed from referring to something unstable to referring to something stable, we can understand why it came to be synonymous with the notion of a stable kind. On that basis, many Americans today declare that they have an American identity. Bearing this meaning in mind, when critics suggest that the term identity is unnecessary or pernicious, the response often heard is that people have had identities for all of human history, and that it is therefore impossible to eliminate the word. This response is understandable—but only when identity is synonymous with kind, and has no further meaning.¹¹

§9. The second answer is that the term “identity” has another and more radical meaning, which is fundamentally different from “kind.” Without this more radical meaning, the term probably never would have taken hold in the 1990s in the first place. I am speculating here, but it seems plausible that the innocent usage of the term identity, which today pertains to relatively stable kinds, is downstream of its more radical meaning, because it was only through its

11. See Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017). Lilla’s account of identity politics is of this sort. His complaint to the left is that the Democratic Party has fractured into multiple kinds, and that, unlike the old (pre-1968) Democratic Party, there is no longer anything that can gather these kinds together. Lilla’s courageous internal critique is among the most earnest attempts on the left to figure out where the Democratic Party went awry.

radical meaning that the term identity came to mean something stable rather than unstable, which is in keeping with the domestication that generally happens to all radical ideas.¹² This evolved meaning of identity involves not so much a specification of a *kind* but a specification of a *relationship*. More importantly, the relationship is of a specific type, with discernible religious overtones: the unpayable and *permanent* debt one kind owes another. In America and in Europe, we know which groups identity politics declares to be the debtors and which groups it declares to be the creditors. To think clearly about the framework of identity politics, rather than becoming overwhelmed by the current attributions that haunt us all, I will use the more exotic examples I have thus far relied on for illustration. When identity is a mere proxy for kind, Lebanese identity might be considered one kind and French identity might be considered another kind, and nothing more need be said. A distinction is made, and that is all. When identity takes on this second meaning, something fundamentally different is involved. Lebanese and French identities now stand in a relationship to each other: one is the offending transgressor; the other is the innocent victim.

12. A good example of the domestication of a radical idea is what happened with the term “value.” Today we accept that everyone has “values,” and that no one person’s values—religious or otherwise—are superior to another person’s values, because everyone is essentially equal. Yet Friedrich Nietzsche introduced the term in the late nineteenth century to *undermine* the idea of equality that Christianity upheld. He did this by attacking the Christian claim that there is an objective order that authorizes the equality of all persons (see Friedrich Nietzsche, 3rd ess., sec. 27 in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale [New York: Random House, 1967], 160). No revolutionary author wholly transforms society; to the contrary, the society in which he operates generally ends up appropriating his terms and warping his meanings, sometimes even to the extent that the terms come to mean the opposite of what he intended. Many of those who follow Nietzsche today are, unwittingly, *halfway revolutionaries*, who draw heavily from him—and misunderstand him. The same is true for those who claim to follow Karl Marx.

Moreover, the transgressor and innocent victim confront each other with these standings not just for the moment of their current encounter, but *permanently*. Like the stain of original sin that marks Adam and all his progeny, the transgressor is permanently marked. He himself may have done nothing to contribute to transgressions that predated him by decades or even centuries. Little matter. He *stands for* the sum of the transgressions linked to his identity. Pressing Christian imagery further, though distorting it immensely, like Christ, the transgressor *stands in* as a scapegoat¹³ for those who purport themselves to be innocent, but who know in their hearts that they are not wholly so. The transgressor thereby covers over¹⁴ their stains, so that no judgment against them may be rendered.

§10. This second understanding of identity is more often what we mean today when we speak about identity politics. Identity politics has no single proponent; it is less a single theory than a large genus within which all theories of innocent victimhood are species, because all of them invoke the relationship between transgression

13. The social and theological ramifications of the “scapegoat” have been developed and illuminated nowhere more profoundly than in René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999). Much of what follows relies on the framework Girard lays out. The Hebrew root of the idea warrants our immediate attention. Lev. 16:1–34 are the passages in which the scapegoat first appears. The scapegoat takes upon itself the sin of the entire community, and is then sent out into the desert so that the community may be reconciled and made pure.

14. “Covering over” has biblical overtones that cannot be ignored. See Ps. 91:4: “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.” God “covers” the brokenness of man. In the New Testament, the covering takes the form of the blood of Christ, which by virtue of covering the sinner, washes his sins away. See 1 John 1:7: “And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” In identity politics, the offering is the white, heterosexual man, whose symbolic sacrificial blood covers the sins of all others, so that they may be seen as innocents.

and innocence.¹⁵ Identity politics began penetrating our vernacular in the 1990s, and since that time, and at an ever-escalating pace, more and more groups have self-consciously claimed that they, too, have an identity—with a view to revealing the transgressions that they, the *invisible innocent ones*, have suffered. Had Hillary Clinton won the 2016 presidential election, it is not improbable that she would have followed through with the Obama administration’s plan to recognize MENA—people, like members of my father’s family, of Middle Eastern and North African descent—as a group identity, distinct from whites, and therefore to be counted among the innocents rather than among the transgressors. By definition, we cannot now imagine the groups who will be counted among the innocents in the distant future, because the nature of the undertaking involves making visible a currently invisible group. The exercise is instructive, however, not least because it lays down a marker by which we can measure how unawares we will be caught in the future.

In the quasi-religious world of identity politics, innocent victims alone are hallowed; they alone receive what could be called debt-point recognition, by which I mean credits in the invisible economy of transgression and innocence. The rest of us—however much our legal, economic, or social status might otherwise indicate—have no legitimate voice. Indeed, our penance as transgressors is to listen to the

15. See Martin Buber, pt. 1 in *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 3: “Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations.” Buber’s distinction is helpful. The term “identity” signifies *things* when used as a proxy for “kinds.” The term signifies a *relationship* within the rubric of identity politics. In Buber’s framework, identity is sometimes a primary word and sometimes not. Buber distinguished between things and relations, with a view to indicating that justice between men exceeds any calculus of payment. Identity politics, as I indicated in sec. 5 of the preface, recognizes the invisible economy of transgression and innocence, but applies it to groups, which are things.

innocents,¹⁶ and our lay responsibility in the identity politics liturgy is to assent to the right of the innocents to tear down the civilizational temple they say we the transgressors have built over the centuries—paid for, as it has been, not simply with money but with the unearned suffering of the innocents. Whatever the innocents wish to accomplish in politics is legitimate because the *real basis* of political legitimacy now is innocence.¹⁷ The past belongs to the transgressors, who today

16. Emblematic of this *demand* for recognition by innocent victims is an exchange chronicled in the Yale University courtyard on November 15, 2015. See “Public Shaming MOB Demand Groveling Apology from Yale Professor,” YouTube video, 12:32, posted by Gravitahn, March 5, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAr6LYC-xpE>. See also Michael Brendan Dougherty, “The Church of Grievance,” *National Review*, April 26, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2018/05/14/victim-mentality-identity-politics-dominate-modern-left/>.

17. What made political arguments so charged during the Obama administration is that those who opposed the president’s policies were often called “racist.” What does the term mean? Through reckless use, it has become almost useless. It has had no stable meaning over time, which makes an easy answer impossible. In the American context, the term first appeared in 1902 in a report written by Richard Henry Pratt for the twentieth annual meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference. Pratt, a founder and longtime superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, used the term to indicate a detrimental separation of the races. He proposed to erase this separation by immersing the American Indian fully into the broader Anglo culture. A decade earlier, he had famously declared, “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man” (*Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction*, reprinted in Richard H. Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites,” in *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian,” 1880–1900* [1892 report]; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973], 260–71, at 260.) For us today, the term “racist” has a very different, quasi-religious meaning. Thinking about the term with a view to the issues I hope to clarify here, a racist is *someone who scapegoats a victim*, in the belief that by directing his cathartic fury toward the victim, the society of which he is a part will purge itself of its poison and return to health. Political argumentation is difficult if not impossible when it is unclear whether what is at issue are “interests” or the will to scapegoat a victim. For the most part, the mainstream media treated criticisms of President Obama’s plans and policies

are an archaic holdover and an embarrassment. The future—politically, economically, and socially—belongs to the innocents. Little wonder that the prime transgressors—white, heterosexual men—who, in the world that identity politics constructs can have nothing important to say,¹⁸ eventually wonder if *they, too*, have been victims, and begin cataloging their own wounds. Hence, the recent emergence of what might be called a “men’s Me Too movement,” which presumes that the right to speak to and with other innocent victims hangs on the unearned suffering men have also endured through the ages.¹⁹

as the scapegoating of an innocent victim—as an act of racism—rather than as postracial disagreements with a president and his administration about what courses of action to take. The difficulty of distinguishing political argumentation from scapegoating an innocent has increased during the Trump administration. This debilitating situation in which political argumentation is no longer possible will end only when the identity politics of innocence is replaced by the liberal politics of competence. President Obama was, in a way, correct: We must become a postracial society. He thought that arrangement would usher in a postpolitical society, as well. Instead, a postracial society—a post-identity politics society—is what will make it possible to return to properly political argumentation.

18. In 1988, Stanford became the first top-tier US university to remove the works of “dead white men” from its core curriculum. Other universities followed. Today, teaching the Western canon remains under assault, because of the writings of the dead white men in it. See part 1, n. 61.

19. The emerging grievances that men list are legion. With respect to the criminal justice system: men have a lower chance of posting bail than women; men go to prison at a higher rate and are treated worse in prison than women; men are punished more harshly for the same crimes; men have higher rates of solitary confinement; men serve a higher percentage of their prison sentence. With respect to divorce: adjusted for income, men make higher alimony payments; men receive a lower rate of custody of children after divorce. With respect to education: men underachieve in their K–12 education; men attend college at a lower rate, and graduate at a lower rate. With respect to death: men have a lower life expectancy, by five years, in most developed countries; men are more likely to engage in “risky” behavior (cigarette smoking, heavy drinking, gun use, employment in hazardous occupations); men are twenty times more likely to die

§11. I will offer more nuanced accounts later (in sections 23, 26, and 27), but looking back at the period from the 1960s to the 1990s, and painting with a broad brush, a number developments contributed to the emergence of identity politics in America. First, the collapse of the mainline Protestant churches shunted the idea of transgression and innocence from religion into politics. Second, the extension of the black American template of innocence²⁰ to other groups after the civil rights era served a growing class of political brokers, who benefited from speaking on their behalf. Third, the discovery by the academic left in America of European postmodern thought

in a work-related injury; men have a higher rate of suicide; men are more likely to die from a violent gun or knife crime; men “suffer” because tobacco and alcohol are marketed more toward them. With respect to physical violence: men endure a higher rate of corporal punishment in childhood. With respect to war: men are forced by law and by societal pressure to fight and die in war; male “gendercide” has been practiced throughout history as a way of subduing populations. As veterans: men suffer higher rates of homelessness, suicide, PTSD, and drug addiction. With respect to employment: men are “forced” to work for pay in capitalist economies more than women are; women might be paid lower rates for the same work while being concerned with breaking through the glass ceiling, yet almost all of the thankless work done “below ground”—in mining, utilities, fishing, and excavation—is done by men. For an even more comprehensive account of the victimhood of men, see RealSexism.com.

20. By “template of innocence,” I mean not simply the *fact* of black American slavery, but the long invisibility of black Americans that took place after the Civil War put an end to legal slavery, followed by their emerging visibility—due in no small part to television—during the civil rights era. The innocent suffering of the invisible ones *was finally made visible*. I will consider the Christian basis for this template in due course. Here, I am noting that this most egregious instance of invisibility in American history became the basis for subsequent groups to make their own claims, as logical extensions of the black American case. On the matter of visibility and invisibility, see Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952). See also Joshua Mitchell, “Seizing the Crown of Thorns,” *First Things*, January 2020, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/01/seizing-the-crown-of-thorns>.

provided a framework more powerful than Marxism for attacking the legitimacy of historical inheritance and for distinguishing who is stained from who is pure.²¹ Identity politics has now incorporated itself into the heart of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party is not, however, the source of identity politics. To justify being heard in America today, you and I must demonstrate our special standing as innocent victims. Having demonstrated that, we can take our place in the political firmament and become activists, committed—in our hearts, but seldom in our recurrent daily actions—to “social justice.”

There is much to say about this, but before delving more deeply into why identity politics has taken hold, and what it does to and in the body politic, I will pause to consider what identity politics purports to repudiate—namely, the liberal idea of the competent citizen. This brief historical excursion into liberal thought will help bring to light the stark difference between what I will call the “liberal politics of competence” and the “identity politics of innocence.” Through the former, we can build a world together; through the latter, we cannot. Liberal thought has been more than three centuries in the making. Identity politics has been with us for less than a generation. We need to keep this in mind as we ponder the future. The liberal politics of competence requires our never-ending difficult labor in a mixed world of purity and stain; the identity politics of innocence asks only that we cover ourselves with the fig leaf of innocence, and leave it to the state to allocate resources to the innocents and their causes.

21. The metahistory that Marx proposed, which declared that the historical stage of capitalism would be replaced by the posthistorical stage of communism, could no longer be defended after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Postmodernism *denies* that there is a metanarrative of history, and in its stead gives us only contesting narratives without a larger meaning. In postmodernism, everything is contested, and those who defend the idea of a grander historical coherence illuminated by their inheritance do so from positions of usurped power.

D. WHO SHOULD BE HEARD? OF COMPETENCE AND INNOCENCE

§21. *Should all liberal citizens be heard?* If politics is concerned with calling out transgression and declaring innocence, as is the case with identity politics, a great many will have to remain silent or be silenced. In such a politics, only the innocent really have a voice. Liberal citizens answer the question differently. They are concerned with building a world with others—from the local to the national level. Therefore, *all* who speak with a view to that project should be heard, without impediment or prejudice. Whatever *kind* they may be, their credibility as fellow citizens depends on the ideas and interests they bring to the ongoing conversation about how to build a world together.

Why, we should ask, is the liberal citizen so intent on building a world?⁵⁵ Tocqueville's account remains among the most compelling. When people are stratified by money and not patronage, as they are in America, something new under the sun appears: *middle-class anxiety*. In the aristocratic age, under a patronage system in which everyone had reciprocal obligations to those above and below them, subjects had some small assurance that they would not fall too far. They may have had various fears, but they did not have class anxiety. When patronage disappeared, this changed. Because in the democratic age nearly everyone will taste enough of the goods of life to know what it means to enjoy them, but almost no one will be secure enough in their possession of them that they will not fear losing what they have, anxiety is the great disease of our day. As Tocqueville saw it:

55. The theological answer is that man, having been implicated in the corruption of God's creation, wishes to actively participate in its stewardship and renewal. This kind of answer is especially important in the covenantal theology of the American Pilgrims and their heirs. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the American proto-environmentalism of the nineteenth century. See Mark Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

When distinctions of rank are blurred and privileges abolished, when patrimonies are divided and education and freedom spread, the poor conceive an eager desire to acquire comfort, and the rich think of the danger of losing it. A lot of middling fortunes are established. Their owners have enough physical enjoyments to get a taste for them, but not enough to content them. They never win them without effort or indulge them without anxiety.⁵⁶

To ameliorate this anxiety, liberal citizens know they must turn toward their fellows with an outstretched hand. Manners between liberal citizens therefore must be “natural, frank, and open.”⁵⁷ These manners, in turn, reinforce the trust without which a liberal polity devolves into despotism. The disposition to withdraw into the solitude and safety of the imagination I have already considered. The charge given to liberal citizens to actively build a world with others counteracts it. Liberal citizens accomplish this through self-interest and through labor,⁵⁸ the immediate objective of which is the manipulation of the material world for the sake of well-being, and the profound inner mission of which is the development of the problem-solving competence citizens need to exercise their liberty well with others.

§22. Identity politics is for many today the compelling alternative to competence-based, self-interested, world-building liberal citizenship. Identity politics proclaims that innocent victims must be heard, and that historical perpetrators of transgression must listen, regardless of the competences they possess. While seldom attacked directly, this

56. Tocqueville, pt. 2, chap. 10 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, 531.

57. Pt. 3, chap. 2 in *ibid.*, 567.

58. See Locke, sec. 34 in “Second Treatise of Government”: “God gave the world . . . to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was to be his title to it), not to the fancy or covetousness or the quarrelsome and contentious.”

fixation on innocence quietly undermines and supersedes the idea of liberal competence by altering our understanding of who can speak and why.⁵⁹ If the proportion of those who labor in a particular field does not correspond to the demographic make-up of America, the explanation must be that one or more identity groups has been scapegoated, silenced, and excluded.⁶⁰ In the world identity politics constructs, the appropriate question posed to and within a field is not how to recruit the most competent practitioners, regardless of their innocent victim status, but how to modify, or even erase, the field to achieve proportional representation.⁶¹ We must, after all, avoid *embarrassment*—and too many transgressors in any one field is a moral embarrassment hard to publicly justify. When identity politics prevails, the legitimacy of a field is not correlated to its accomplishments, but rather to whether proportional representation has been achieved. That *is* its accomplishment.

59. In many translations of the New Testament, the words of Christ—the scapegoated Innocent One—appear in red, and require attentive listening to be truly heard. Identity politics is akin to a church service: silent listening to the “red letter” testimony of the innocent ones is required.

60. See Heather MacDonald, *The Diversity Delusion: How Race and Gender Pandering Corrupt the University and Undermine Our Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018).

61. Within the broad field of political theory, the fate of the subfield of history of political thought is illustrative. Since its inception, that subfield has largely involved the study of Western political theory, the shorthand designation for which today, among its critics, is the study of “dead white men.” It does not matter that Plato was Greek, that Aristotle was Macedonian, that St. Augustine was from present-day Algeria, that Hobbes was English, that Rousseau was Swiss, that Tocqueville was French, or that Nietzsche was German—or that each of these nations were at one time or another at war with each other. Western political theory is about dead white men. That is why in almost every university in America today, hiring in the subfield of the history of political thought is difficult to justify. The reason given is that “the voices of the silenced need to be heard.” The subfield itself is unlikely to survive, not because there are not supremely competent scholars within it, but because the subfield is an embarrassment to those who wish to reorganize the entire university with identity politics in mind. See part 1, n. 18.

§23. It is important to pause here to ponder more deeply the conditions under which the criteria of innocence offered up by identity politics *could* supplant the liberal criteria of competence. Under what conditions might this novel account of who may be heard and who must remain silent emerge and be justified? Four considerations immediately come to mind, which build on observations I made earlier in section 11. The first consideration of why identity politics has gained prominence, as I mentioned there, is that the collapse of the mainline Protestant churches shunted the idea of transgression and innocence from religion to politics. This intermixing and confusion between political and religious categories was an error that Tocqueville thought the Americans had avoided. In his words:

In the moral world everything is classified, coordinated, foreseen, and decided in advance. In the world of politics, everything is in turmoil, contested, and uncertain. . . . Far from harming each other, these two apparently opposed tendencies work in harmony and seem to lend mutual support.⁶²

This passage is worth attending to carefully. Religion and politics are not the same; they pertain to different domains of experience, and each has their own distinct grammar, categories, and vocabulary. They work well together when religion binds the moral imagination, by specifying how transgression and innocence operate in the invisible economy, and what we must do to abide by it. This then frees the practical imagination of liberal citizens to experiment and build in the visible economy. In mixing religion and politics together, the result is an unseemly and confused mess. When politics becomes a venue for establishing which groups are the transgressors and which are the innocents, we can expect that liberal citizens who believe that politics is a venue through which we may build a world

62. Tocqueville, pt. 1, chap. 2 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, 47.

together will be silenced—unless, of course, they can count themselves among the innocents.

It would stretch credibility to claim, as Tocqueville does, that America has ever completely separated religion and politics. Every upheaval of American society—the American Revolution, the Civil War, the social gospel movement, progressivism, the civil rights movement—has been inaugurated or assisted by religion. It stretches credibility even further, however, to claim that since the collapse of the mainline Protestant churches in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, America has “lost its religion.” A 2012 Pew Research Center report concludes that religious “nones” are on the rise.⁶³ Going back further, Reinhold Niebuhr had already seen in 1941 that his life’s work of bringing an understanding of original sin back to the mainline churches had failed.⁶⁴ What is missing from the analysis of this seemingly inevitable trend line pointing toward an America devoid of Christianity is the fact that although the dying mainline churches have increasingly abandoned the idea of original sin and the sacrificial atonement of the Innocent Lamb of God, the categories of transgression and innocence have migrated into politics and taken up residence. Identity politics *is* that migration. An ever-growing number of “nones” no longer attend church. Why should they, if they can find a seemingly compelling account of transgression and innocence in identity politics? Christianity has not disappeared from America; rather, the Christian categories of transgression and innocence have moved into politics—a development Tocqueville thought would lead to the complete paralysis of both politics and religion. Exactly this

63. See Pew Research Center, “Nones” on the Rise (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, October 9, 2012), <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>.

64. See Reinhold Niebuhr, preface in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 2 (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1941), 8. On why he failed, see Joshua Mitchell, “Is Christian Realism Enough?,” *Providence*, July 19, 2019, <https://providencemag.com/2019/07/is-christian-realism-enough/>.

has happened. Politics in America today is haunted by the question, Are microaggressions or unconscious bias (if not overt racism) toward the innocents lurking in or beneath the so-called interests that liberal citizens—especially white, heterosexual male citizens—profess? There will be no return to the politics of competence, through which liberal citizens build a world together, as long as the religious categories of transgression and innocence that identity politics promulgates overwhelm the political category of self-interest, as they now do.

The second reason identity politics has become so formidable is that after 1989, it has appeared to many that the long labor of history, with its never-ending competition and war between nations, is at an end, so that we may ease up, or let off entirely, on the disciplining demand for competence. For all of history, as nation fought nation, the innocent have suffered and endured heartless cruelty. Now, at history’s end, the lion must lay down with the lamb⁶⁵ and confess his transgressions. The final reckoning is at hand. In the 1989–2016 period from which we are now beginning to awaken, the nation was cast as an archaism, and an army of “conflict managers” emerged with a promise that great wars between nations need no longer break out.⁶⁶ The West, in short, entertained the illusion that history had ended and, *still under the sway of the Christianity it thought it had repudiated*, concluded that all the historical transgressions the West had incurred had come due and had to be judged. We need only slightly contort St. Augustine’s prefatory remarks, written in 426 AD in his great work *City of God*, for identity politics to reveal itself as the twisted heir of his thought: “We, the innocent, await in steadfast patience, until justice returns in judgment; then, we will ascend over our enemies as the final victory is won and

65. Isa. 11:6.

66. For the sober-minded counterargument that few wanted to hear at the time, see Edward N. Luttwak, “Give War a Chance,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 4 (July/Aug. 1999), 36–44.

peace established.”⁶⁷ Little wonder that in the Middle East, in South Asia, and in China—that is, in those places that Christianity never really cast its shadow—identity politics is something of a curiosity, because its end of history redemption-of-the-innocents seems quaint or foolish. Alternatively, in those regions, identity politics is an irksome reminder that any end-of-history thinking is a luxury in which only a hegemonic power can indulge. Only victors dream that history has culminated—*with them*.

The third reason identity politics has supplanted the liberal criteria of competence, at least in some portions of America, is illustrated through demographics. A scan of the 2016 electoral map on the next page reveals two Americas.⁶⁸ The division between the two sides has deep cultural roots, but the relatively recent advent of digital technology and communications networks has exacerbated it. There are any number of distinctions we can invoke to understand the division between the two sides. As shown on the demographic map, on the one hand, America has a “densitarian”⁶⁹ blue region. This region is well integrated into the global digital economy, with an hourglass pattern of wealth stratification and contains affluent “anywheres”⁷⁰ and low-wage service support workers, but few citizens in

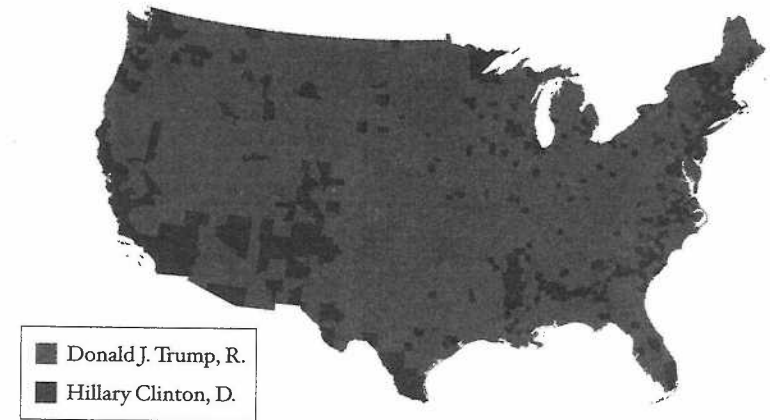
67. St. Augustine, preface of *City of God*, 5. Any serious effort to untangle identity politics will require comparing the transliteration given here to what St. Augustine wrote and believed.

68. A more recent Brookings study suggests that the problem has only worsened since 2016. See Mark Muro and Jacob Whiton, “America Has Two Economies—and They’re Diverging Fast,” Brookings, September 19, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2019/09/10/america-has-two-economies-and-theyre-diverging-fast/>.

69. Michael Lind has put forward the helpful distinction between “densitarian” and “posturban.” See Michael Lind, “The Coming Realignment: Cities, Class, and Ideology after Social Conservatism,” *Breakthrough Journal*, April 28, 2014.

70. David Goodhart has put forward the helpful distinction between “anywheres” and “somerwheres.” See David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The New Tribes Shaping British Politics* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017).

County-Level Results of the 2016 Presidential Election



Source: Mark Newman, Center for the Study of Complex Systems, Department of Physics, University of Michigan, December 2, 2016.

the middle. This is “front row” America.⁷¹ Anywheres are content to live . . . anywhere. They need live in no particular place to feel at home. On the other hand, there is a “posturban” red region, only partly integrated into the digital economy, with a diamond-shaped wealth stratification pattern, largely containing “somerwheres.” As the term indicates, they find their home in one place but not in another. This is “back row” America. Oversimplifying the matter somewhat, the blue regions are predominantly “digital” and the red regions are predominantly “analog.” I will consider the relationship between digital and analog in detail in section 85. This relationship is important not least because liberal competence is first and foremost

Anywheres are those cosmopolitan travelers who need no home to feel at home; somerwheres are those who are at home only when living in one place.

71. See Chris Arnade, *Dignity: Seeking Respect in Back Row America* (New York: Sentinel Books, 2019).

analog rather than digital. Little wonder that the liberal politics of competence prevails in the posturban zone among the somewheres who are part of back-row America. The identity politics of innocence, on the other hand, prevails in the digital regions where normalcy consists of products ordered on Amazon Prime; of temporary work assignments and long-distance relationships (and/or Tinder); of rental apartments and Uber; of episodic political activism posted on Facebook and Twitter; of vicarious screen entertainment (most notably, Netflix); of music downloads; of e-mail; of Instagram, and so on. These front-row Americans, enthralled by digital technology, as so many in the blue region are, easily imagine a perfection of which the lived-in world is incapable. Theirs is a timeless world freed from the burden of generation; a spaceless world freed from the need for borders; and a world in which it seems plausible to imagine that the inevitable sufferings and injustices of life need no longer be endured. If, to the dismay of your pride, it has dawned on you that the professional work you *really* do consists of being a “data-entry worker” for Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft—which for the rest of your life will gather, codify, and store *all* of your “inputs” at massive data storage facilities for *their* future use—you live in digital America. To put the matter in its starkest and most uncharitable light, if you live in digital America, *you* are the commodity. In analog regions, these cultural accoutrements and these sorts of jobs are less prevalent, though still widespread. If you know someone without an e-mail account, who does not own a smartphone, who pays with cash, or who has never lived more than twenty-five miles from his childhood home, you know someone in analog America. The two regions shade into each other, to be sure; but the cultural division, which now appears also as a class division,⁷² is real. No return to the analog world

72. See Darel E. Paul, “Culture War as Class War: How Gay Rights Reinforce Elite Power,” *First Things*, August 2018, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2018/08/culture-war-as-class-war>.

of liberal competence will be possible as long as the digital world is a substitute for, rather than a supplement to, the analog world. To put the matter in geographical terms, blue America can supplement red America, but not be a substitute for it—as so many in blue America imagine. We live in an analog world first, and a digital one second.⁷³ To put the matter in terms of the digital technology available to us in our homes, Alexa cannot be a substitute for liberal competence. Neither she nor her subsequent iterations can live our lives for us. For the moment, that is the wager so many of us have made.⁷⁴

The fourth reason identity politics has supplanted the liberal criteria of competence is that as the state has grown ever stronger, there are fewer occasions for citizens to build a world together. When this happens, when citizens engage one another over practical issues less and less, the countervailing evidence that citizens *cannot* be reduced to the monovalent group categories that identity politics promulgates becomes harder to find. (I will say more about these so-called monovalent groups in sections 43–48.) In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville noted that

as soon as common affairs are treated in common, each man notices that he is not as independent of his fellows as he used to suppose and that to get their help he must often offer his aid to them. When the public governs, all men feel the value of public goodwill

73. See David Sax, *The Revenge of Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2016). See also Scott, chaps. 9–10 in *Seeing like a State*, 309–57. Scott’s distinction between practical and scientific knowledge provides another way to illuminate the differences we are considering here. Scientific knowledge rests on, and can never escape from, practical judgment.

74. On the larger problem of supplements becoming substitutes, see Joshua Mitchell, “When Supplements Become Substitutes: A Theory of Nearly Everything,” *City Journal* (Autumn 2018), 57–65. See also entry O in this manuscript.

and all try to win it by gaining the esteem and affection of those among whom they live.⁷⁵

We do not need to stretch our imagination to understand what happens when the federal government grows in leaps and bounds and provides citizens with an ever-increasing array of “services” that make it unnecessary for them to work out their problems among themselves in their families and local communities. No longer having a real need to work with their fellow citizens, alone and isolated, their imagination wanders and they develop caricatured understandings of who their fellow citizens are, and even of who they themselves are. The corrective is painful but effective: in working with their fellow citizens, each realizes not only that his imagined picture of the other is a caricature but that decorum, decency, and respect will be necessary if any common project is to get done. When citizens *must* work with one another in order to succeed, they do not begin with this or that dreamy and dangerous claim about their identity; they begin with the project at hand that must be accomplished, and perhaps discover along the way who they are and who their fellow citizens are. When the *need* to work together disappears, then our troubles really begin. Today, the federal government, always looking for ways to expand its power, happily contributes to the current crisis, which could never have emerged in the first place if citizens actually had to work together. It does this by passing laws that protect and reinforce different identity categories, and by arming a vast array of highly paid professional experts who promise to help the rest of us understand—through diversity and microaggression awareness programs—why respecting different identities, rather than building a world together with our fellow citizens, is the most important task at hand. Meanwhile, because citizenship in America no longer requires that we work with our neighbor on

75. Tocqueville, pt. 2, chap. 4 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, 510.

common projects, acrimony and distrust grows. The federal government is more than happy to step in and mediate.

E. THE LONGING THAT IDENTITY POLITICS ANSWERS

§24. We are living in the midst of an American Awakening, without God and without forgiveness. The first two awakenings⁷⁶ brought religious renewal; the third—the social gospel movement and its aftermath (1880–1910)—invoked the authority of religion to bring about political and social transformation, but lost sight of Christianity along the way. The awakening through which we are now living comprehends politics through the categories of religion without recognizing it, has no place for the God who judges or the God who forgives, and has brought America to a dead end, beyond which no one can see. Identity politics renders judgment not based on “things done and things left undone”⁷⁷ but on the publicly visible, unalterable attributes that precede whatever citizens might do or leave undone. Identity politics offers no forgiveness for transgressions because they are irredeemable.

76. The First Great Awakening happened in the 1730s and 1740s; the Second Great Awakening occurred between the 1790s and 1820s.

77. From the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*: “ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen” (Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer: And Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* [New York: Oxford University Press, date uncertain], 6).

Those who by virtue of their identity are stained, but uncertain about whether they are condemned to hell or only to purgatory, grovel and willingly submit to never-ending public flagellation and self-condemnation. The well-off among them *never* walk away from their private privileges. The lesser members of this group—white, heterosexual men, who do not seem to understand the condemnation under which they live and who do not know how convicts and parolees are supposed to act—are scapegoated as the wrong kind of white men. Here are President Donald Trump and all the white, heterosexual men who voted for him. They are not citizens; they are “the adversary,”⁷⁸ against whom there must be resistance.

§25. I have not come this far to defend or to defile President Trump. The issue before us is the religious character of identity politics, and how the world must be viewed through its lens. Our American Awakening without God and without forgiveness does not allow that presidents be mere political figures with whom we may agree or disagree on any number of policy issues. Instead, they must be transgressors, as President Trump is currently depicted, or innocents, as President Barack Obama was depicted before him. Having made these sorts of judgments, we no longer dwell in the realm of liberal politics.

§26. We should be clear why it is that identity politics overwhelmed liberal politics in the first place. The contributing factors I have considered are important. I suspect its adherents would not have brought us to where we are today had it not been for the fact that the West is currently living in the shadow of Christianity, without having found a real replacement. It warrants repeating⁷⁹ that the West remains under the spell of the Christian categories of transgression and innocence, even if its churches no longer play the part they once did—of provid-

78. In Hebrew, *Satan* means “the adversary.”

79. See sec. 23.

ing a compelling account of just where and how transgression and innocence play out in the world, and in eternity. In 1887, pondering the future of the West, Nietzsche wrote, “It is the church and not its poison that offends us.”⁸⁰ By this, he meant that in his own century and for the next several centuries, the West would neither quite renounce nor return to Christianity. The recent appearance of identity politics in America and in Europe—the politics, *but not the theology*, of transgression and innocence—confirms Nietzsche’s prophecy. Nietzsche claimed that only the weak and resentful would need to understand their world in terms of transgression and innocence.⁸¹ Perhaps this is true of more people than we would like to imagine. Yet however much the weak and resentful misappropriate these categories, the central question with which the West has always been concerned—why are the scales of justice perpetually out of balance?—cannot be addressed without thinking them through. If Christianity today is not hospitable to these categories because the churches want only cheerfulness, then transgression and innocence will work their way into politics, where justice is also a question, to the happy contentment of the nones, who think they have escaped their religion, but in truth have not.

§27. The disequilibrium of Christianity since the Enlightenment, the inability to fully repudiate or embrace the religious inheritance of the West, has made it difficult for many Americans and Europeans to sleep well at night. Compounding their debilitation has been a parallel development, which could not have arisen at a more inopportune moment. On both sides of the Atlantic, citizens are haunted by the historical wounds their nations have authored—in America, the wound of slavery; and in Europe, the wounds of colonialism. At the moment when America and Europe lost their “culti-

80. Nietzsche, 1st ess., sec. 9 in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 36.

81. See 1st ess., sec. 10 in *ibid.*, 36–39.

vated ignorance”⁸² of these historical wounds and the need to “make all things new”⁸³ was highlighted, to what healing power could the transgressors appeal? More than a half century after the echo of the wound of slavery screamed out for attention in America⁸⁴ and the wound of colonialism in Europe became fully visible,⁸⁵ the answer given by identity politics is that *no healing power whatsoever* is available to them. What of the aggrieved innocents? Because forgiveness has been banished, their portion is unyielding and unending rage.⁸⁶ This volatile configuration without hope of resolution has unleashed the ancient furies of Greek and Roman mythology, who indiscriminately punish all the parties identity politics has in its sights with madness.

§28. The Greeks and Romans of old, and the Hebrews and the Christians, too, knew that Divine things were not to be trifled

82. See Shelby Steele, chap. 4 in *Shame: How America's Past Sins Have Polarized Our Country* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 33: “In the 1960s, America underwent what can only be described as an archetypal ‘fall’—a descent from innocence into an excruciating and inescapable self-knowledge. This innocence had always been a delusion. It was far more a cultivated ignorance of America’s sins than innocence of them, and this ignorance was helped along by a culturally embedded pattern of rationalizations, bigotries, stereotypes, and lies. But all of this came under profound challenge in the 1960s as one form of American hypocrisy after another—from racism to the second class treatment of women to Vietnam and our neglect of the environment—came to light and further cracked the veneer of American innocence.”

83. Rev. 21:5.

84. See Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, transcribed by Alex Haley (1965; New York: Ballantine Books, 1992).

85. See Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; New York: Grove, 2005).

86. From the literature of feminism, see Soraya Chemaly, *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger* (New York: Atria Books, 2018); and Rebecca Traister, *Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

with. Identity politics elicits man’s deepest longing for justice in a broken world, the resolution of which was long understood to be so mysterious, so awesome, and so apocalyptic that justice was placed outside of mortal reach. Identity politics dares to tamper with this somber and reverential insight, and claims to put justice within man’s conceptual grasp. Those who believe they have a grip on it, who think they can put it to political use on their behalf, do not understand that identity politics will turn against *all* who seek to enlist it. “They that sow the wind, shall reap the whirlwind.”⁸⁷ The longing for justice is a noble longing, instilled into the heart of man, nearest and dearest to him, at times more important than bread and water; yet at the same time mysteriously elusive and, finally, unfathomable.

F. THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

§29. I will consider the Democratic Party, many of whose members have thought they can contain and channel identity politics, in a moment. But first let’s look at the question of how members of the Republican Party have responded to the emergence of identity politics. The answer is, quite poorly. The modern Republican Party that emerged in the 1950s has been transfixed, to this day, on the twin threats of progressivism and Marxism. Its response to progressivism has been to remind the American public, with limited success, of the constitutional constraints placed on the federal government by the Founding Fathers. Its answer to Marxism has been to remind the American public, with modest success, that liberal and conservative ideas about commerce, tradition, law, God, and freedom are at odds with a grisly twentieth-century political movement whose death toll measures in the tens of millions. What held the Republi-

87. Hosea 8:7.

can Party together from the 1950s onward was a loose coalition that drew its understandings from Adam Smith's and Friedrich Hayek's ideas of commerce; Edmund Burke's ideas about tradition; Thomas Aquinas's ideas about natural law; John Calvin's ideas about biblical revelation; and the idea that America is a "propositional nation" dedicated to the equality of all, as suggested by Abraham Lincoln. This formidable array of thinkers, sometimes having little in common, provided the Republican Party a vast reservoir of ideas by which, before the end of the Cold War in 1989, it opposed progressivism at home and Marxism abroad. The Republican Party did not draw on these ideas in equal measure, but they were there, in reserve or for embellishment, when needed. Since 1989, the Republican Party has been adrift. After the 2016 election, the internal tensions between the different intellectual and theological factions in the party have become fissures. Where once there were agreements to disagree, now there is only disagreement. In short, the "fusionism"⁸⁸ that once worked no longer does. Neither together nor as solitary heroes under the Republican banner have Smith, Hayek, Burke, Aquinas, Calvin, and Lincoln been engaged in the post-2016 battle for the soul of America, which will not be fought over the ghosts of progressivism or Marxism, but rather over identity politics, which most Republicans ignore or, finding it irksome, wish would just go away.

§30. Although Republicans do not understand the weapons used against them, identity politics warriors have already engaged on all battlefronts, two of which warrant special attention because they have been the linchpins both of the Republican Party and the American experiment itself: commerce (Smith and Hayek) and tradition (Burke). Republicans continue to defend both market commerce and tradition—against the ghosts of progressivism and Marxism. The

88. See Frank S. Meyer, *In Defense of Freedom and Related Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1996).

Republican account of commerce? Citizens labor to build a world together, and receive payment for what they achieve. Payment is the supplement to their labor, though not a substitute for it.⁸⁹ Payment is tangible, and appears in the moneyed ledger that accountants keep. Identity politics, on the other hand, weighs and measures invisible, nonmonetary victim debt points—then reminds debtors each time they wish to be heard that payment is due, in perpetuity, regardless of their competence. Identity politics silences the transgressors, listens to the innocents, and encourages episodic "activism" on behalf of the innocents. Attentiveness to the invisibility of the innocents is the true measure of "social justice." So declares identity politics. The sublime mystery of "debt payment" *cannot* be rendered in terms of mere monetary price, the payment ledger of which records nothing of the mercy toward the innocents we are called to confess and enact. Republicans who defend free markets understand only monetary price and relentless competition. Their defense of a middle-class commercial republic and of competent citizens building a world together therefore *falls short* of the measure of mercy identity politics reveals. Republicans tell of a world of payments in which lions compete with one another, and in which the hope for lambs is that they, too, might become lions. Identity politics upends that world. Now, lions must listen to and elevate innocent lambs, and no longer eat them. The world foretold by the prophet Isaiah has arrived.⁹⁰ Justice is the ledger of tangible payments, and mercy is beyond price; the Republican defense of free markets is the former, the identity politics defense of "social justice" purports to be the latter.

§31. We require a sober account of why the schism between justice and mercy in the world of politics has emerged today with such

89. Arguments in favor of universal basic income mistakenly assume that money can be a substitute for labor.

90. See, again, Isa. 11:6.

force. The tension between them has been with us always. What has happened in the last half century to transform the tension into a schism? Guided by Tocqueville's insight that when the institutions of society no longer can (or do) address issues that are proper to them, those issues will be elevated to the political level,⁹¹ let's consider what has happened in the family and in the churches during the last half century.

§32. First, the family. Whether natural or contrived, the conventional generative family today is less and less the delicate yet volatile relation involving the "heartless father" who disciplines himself and his children, and who attends almost single-mindedly to the verities of payment; and the "compassionate wife and mother" who lovingly attends to her children, neighbors, friends, and pets with mercy and without concern for cost. For marriages such as these to work (and there are many of them still today), "patriarchal" justice—the father's world of payment—rules, in the sense that the bills first must be paid.⁹² Marriages that only attend to justice and payment, however, are poor specimens indeed, because beyond justice—supervening justice, in fact—is the mercy that wives and mothers always seem to bring forward as a necessary supplement. Mercy is what it is—the *gift* for which the world

91. See Tocqueville, pt. 2, chap. 5, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, 515: "The more government takes the place of associations, the more will the individuals lose the idea of forming association and need the government to come to their help. This is a vicious circle of cause and effect."

92. Another way of putting this is that men do not get married if they do not have the financial wherewithal to do so. See Oren Cass, chap. 3 in *The Once and Future Worker: A Vision for the Renewal of Work in America* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018), 49. See also David Autor, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson, "When Work Disappears: Manufacturing Decline and the Falling Marriage-Market Value of Young Men" (NBER Working Paper 23173, National Bureau of Economic Research, revised January 2018), <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23173>.

of justice and payment have no place—only after and against the backdrop of the world of justice and payment.⁹³ That world of justice and payment is the patriarchal world so many now wish to destroy. *Destroy justice, however, and there can be no mercy.* "The fatherless world of the identity politics," if such a phrase can be used, fixates exclusively on mercy—hence the impossibly expensive Green New Deal and the demand that there be free health insurance, or free college tuition, or socialism—which for the upcoming generation is a proxy, really, for the negation of the "capitalist" world of payment. This fatherless call for "free stuff" is the dreamy consequence of confusing supplements and substitutes, which will produce a political nightmare if implemented. There is no free stuff. There is only the mercy of the *gift*, which elicits thankfulness, or the distorted effort to eliminate the world of payment altogether, which produces a citizen who *demand*s everything and thinks he *deserves* everything.

These remarks about fathers and mothers will understandably exasperate thoroughgoing egalitarians. Who needs that sort of family anyway! On their account, these are distinctions without a difference. We are all "coparents" now. Of this, however, we can be certain: Because ideas only come to life in lived arrangements, if marriages containing heartless fathers and compassionate mothers and wives do disappear,⁹⁴ so, too, will one of the anchor points for the understanding, arrived at through experience with the world's limits and promise, that while mercy supplements justice, it cannot be a substitute for it.

93. Perhaps, biblically speaking, this is one of the reasons Adam was created first and Eve was created second. See Gen. 2:18–24. This would also mean that mercy was the capstone of God's creations.

94. They cannot disappear, though; they will only become mixed. "Helicopter parenting" is the result of just such mixing. Together, fathers and mothers demand from their children's schools a "return" on their payment, and expect such schools to show their children mercy by providing "safe spaces" for them.

This latter project—the project of substituting mercy for justice⁹⁵—is the fatherless project of identity politics. Not by accident does it appear as a political project when the institution of marriage—in which the heartless father and the compassionate wife and mother, who over a lifetime mysteriously work *together*—begins to disappear.

§33. Marriage is one among several institutional anchor points where citizens learn the supplementary relationship between justice and mercy. What of the churches during the last half century? As state “welfare” disbursements have increased, the share of charity and mercy our churches have infused into our communities has decreased. Charity is a merciful gift. Welfare, on the other hand, is a payment. The charity and mercy of the churches have always been the necessary supplement to the patriarchal world of commerce. “Everything has a price,” so declares market commerce.⁹⁶ Without this harsh injunction, the improvements of the modern world could never have occurred. For these improvements, we should be immensely thankful. “Charity and mercy are beyond price,” so declare the churches—and the synagogues, too. In a world where everything has a price, some will be unable to pay. When parishioners withdraw their own money and transform it into a gift, they answer the prayers of the poor. Parishioners

95. The immigration question, in Europe and in America, has also been degraded into a schism between justice and mercy, with neither side being willing to budge. On the one side are those who insist on the justice of lawful borders; on the other are those who believe that mercy is a substitute for justice, and therefore that there are no “illegal aliens,” only “undocumented immigrants.” In this matter, and in others like it, supplements—in this case, mercy—have been turned into substitutes.

96. See Smith, bk. 1, chaps. 4–7 in *Wealth of Nations*, 26–71. After introducing the relationship between the division of labor and the extensiveness of markets, Smith spends these chapters considering the mystery of value, cost, and price. He does not quite conclude that everything has a price; but Marx, following him on the left, and the Chicago School of Economics, on the right, did reach that conclusion.

quickly discover, however, that although their gift of charity and mercy has lightened the burden of the poor, “the poor will always be with us.”⁹⁷ The charity and mercy of parishioners can and must supplement the world of payment, but it will never be a substitute for that world, which will remain, broken and unhealed, until the end of time.⁹⁸ This difficult understanding of the necessity of charity and the limit of how much of it can be achieved in the churches is lost when the state takes over and disburses welfare payments. Where are charity and mercy located when we treat the mystery of “the poor always being with us” under the guise of state payment for which no supplement is necessary—for which, in fact, *more welfare* is the glib response to that mystery? We cannot do away with charity and mercy; they reveal a truth the world of payment cannot know. Without the anchor point of the churches, in which parishioners and citizens learn by heart the supplementary relationship of charity and mercy to justice, is it any wonder that the idea of substituting mercy for justice in order to abolish the world of justice and payment altogether comes to mind? This is the project of identity politics. Not by accident does it appear as a political project when welfare from the state supplants the necessary but limited scope of charity and mercy in the churches.

In direct proportion to the breakdown of the societal institutions in which we learn that mercy is a supplement to justice, the political project of making mercy the substitute for justice emerges. Republicans’ talking points about “family values” and “religious liberty”

97. See Deut. 15:11; Matt. 26:11; and Mark 14:17.

98. For the Christian, the world will remain broken until God returns at the end of history (see 1 Thess. 4:16–17). Marx, on the other hand, believed that communism, not God, will redeem the broken world. Every stage of history before communism arrives will be morally agonizing, and the penultimate stage of capitalism will be the most agonizing of all, because in that stage, everything has a price. See Karl Marx, “The Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 473–500.

purport to defend the family and the churches, but still with a view to the perils of progressivism and Marxism.⁹⁹ Failing to understand that *the challenge of our times is how to recover a healthy understanding of the relationship between justice and mercy*, they do not grasp that the argument they should be making about family and churches is that in and through them citizens learn that mercy must supplement justice but cannot be the substitute for it. Once we have learned that, the idea of market commerce can also be defended—not with a view to shoving mercy aside, but with the understanding that through it liberal citizens can build a world together, supplemented by the mercy we must show in our families, churches, communities, and nations.

§34. What of Republican arguments on behalf of tradition? Free-market Republicans generally do not defend tradition except insofar as it contributes to the social capital necessary for commerce to work well. Cultural conservatives within the Republican Party, often at odds with their free-market compatriots, defend tradition because civilization is impossible to sustain without it. No inheritance, no civilization. Progressivism undermined tradition by privileging novelty, experimentation, and efficient, top-down planning. Marxism undermined tradition through the belief that all historical arrangements and inheritances before the advent of communism enslave and alienate. Republican defenders of inheritance argue that tradition is the wellspring of accumulated wisdom. Citizens continue to do things in a certain way because they have been done that way before. Progressivism left tradition undisturbed only if reasons could be given for continuing

99. With respect to progressivism, the Republicans' defense has been that the family forms citizens, and the state has no business doing so; their defense of the churches has been that the state should not encroach upon religious liberty. With respect to Marxism, their defense of the family has been that its bourgeois form is not merely an artifact of the so-called capitalist phase of history; the defense of the churches has been that Christianity is a bulwark against Godless communism.

to do things the old way—though its prejudice was always against the old way.¹⁰⁰ Marxism never left tradition undisturbed. The revolution to which it was committed overturns the existing state of things.¹⁰¹

Identity politics, too, overturns the existing state of things. In the world it constructs, tradition is not an inheritance through which civilization is sustained; it is the tainted résumé of transgressions perpetrated. Slavery in America and European colonialism in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and South and East Asia are the real meaning of the celebrated historical inheritances of the West. So declares identity politics. The hallowed past of traditionalists was purchased with the blood of the innocents. That is all we need to know to pass judgment. Progressivism thought tradition was an obstruction to the future. So, too, did Marxism, though on different grounds. Neither thought of tradition as identity politics does—as a *stain* that delegitimizes inheritance altogether.

§35. How have Republicans responded to the indictment of the Western inheritance, in toto, that identity politics pronounces? Among themselves, they offer confident, full-throated endorsements of tradition, and especially of the Founding Fathers. When their Democratic Party opponents publicly charge that the blood of the innocents has indelibly stained the Western tradition, Republicans grow silent, fearful that they will be scapegoated and crucified for what they believe or say. The nails that hammer them to the cross of humiliation are words like “racist,” “misogynist,” “homophobe,” “Islamophobe,” “fascist,” “Nazi,” “hater,” and “denier.” In the name of the innocents who themselves were once scapegoated and cruci-

100. To this day, the best critique of this progressive frame of mind is by Michael Oakeshott. See Oakeshott, “Rationalism in Politics,” in *Rationalism in Politics*, 5–42.

101. See Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 162: “We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.”

fied by their transgressors, the innocents—or those who speak for them—now scapegoat and crucify the transgressors. In this scapegoating reversal,¹⁰² we no longer dwell in the realm of politics; we are instead working within the Christian categories of transgression and innocence—though very badly, and very dangerously.

§36. It warrants repeating that the notion that inheritance is stained in toto is distinctly Christian and, since Luther and Calvin in the early sixteenth century, decidedly Protestant.¹⁰³ The ancient Greeks generally thought that history evinced decay—for example, from an age of gold to an age of iron.¹⁰⁴ The notion that *all of history* is stained right from the beginning goes considerably further. Protestants who came to oppose the Roman Catholic Church—upheld as the latter was in part by a long tradition of the teachings of the church fathers—relentlessly pounded away at the claim that tradition was of any use. They needed to look no further for biblical ammunition than Paul’s letter to the Romans: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men,

102. In Europe today, and to a lesser extent in America, Jews endure a kindred scapegoating reversal. As victims of the Holocaust, they represent the blood of the innocents. As citizens, or supporters, of the nation of Israel, they represent transgressors who have built a world stained by the blood of the Palestinians. This sketch of the problem has been worked out with breathtaking clarity in Pascal Bruckner, chap. 5 in *The Tyranny of Guilt: An Essay on Western Masochism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 111–38.

103. St. Augustine (cited in part 1, n. 67) is often identified as the source of the doctrine of original sin. See, for example, St. Augustine, bk. 14, chap. 11 in *City of God*, 568–70. Anticipating St. Augustine by nearly a century is St. Athanasius, who in 355 AD wrote *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1953), with a view to putting an end to the Arian controversy; see, especially chap. 2, 31–37. The epistles of Paul, considered shortly, are the proximate set of post-Incarnation reflections on original sin.

104. This is the schema presented in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* circa 700 BC.

for that all have sinned.”¹⁰⁵ All are Adam’s heirs. By virtue of Adam’s sin, all are stained. So, too, is all that they do. Identity politics recapitulates the early Protestant pronouncement about the stain that deforms the world, and indicts tradition. Pressing the matter further, identity politics declares that the world of payment about which I have been speaking (see sections 31–33) is a cheap proxy for the debt that really matters—namely the debt transgressors owe. Luther inaugurated the Reformation by nailing his famous “Ninety Five Thesis” to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, declaring that man’s transgressions cannot be discharged with indulgences paid to the church.¹⁰⁶ Identity politics inaugurates a kindred reformation by declaring that underneath the superficial world of payment lie debts that the well-balanced books of the world cannot fathom.

Do the Protestant undertones in identity politics mean that the current battle between the Republican defenders of tradition and the Democratic adherents of identity politics, who wish to destroy tradition, is *yet another skirmish* in the unsettled, five-century-long European religious conflict between Protestants and Roman Catholics? Many Republicans who defend tradition, and who are conservative Roman Catholics, believe this to be the case, even though they seldom say it out loud.¹⁰⁷ I suggested in section 30 that Republicans are losing the battle with identity politics because their artillery is aimed, still, at the ghost of progressivism. Their target might not be as off the mark as I suggested, however. If both progressivism

105. Rom. 5:12.

106. See Martin Luther, “Ninety Five Theses,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 31, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 25–33.

107. Patrick Deneen’s work (cited in part 1, n. 23) comes closest to declaring that America’s current crisis is a result of Protestantism itself. He is among the few public intellectuals willing to strip away the pleasantries that often mask our debates and address the crisis head on.

and identity politics are the outworkings of Protestant Christianity, then at least conservative Roman Catholics are aiming in the right general direction.

There is more going on here, however, than meets the eye. To understand it, more must be said about the peculiar circumstance of conservative Roman Catholics in America to understand why identity politics, the latest outworking of Protestant Christianity, is undoing a half-century rapprochement that seems to some, in retrospect, to have been a mistake. The question of whether they can ever be *fully at home* in still culturally Protestant America has always haunted conservative Roman Catholics, who are attuned to the Protestant ambience of America in a way that Protestants and defenders of identity politics—who do not have the slightest clue that they are crippled inheritors of Protestantism—are not. It is worth remembering that mid-twentieth-century Roman Catholics largely made peace with America, notwithstanding progressivism. John Courtney Murray's seminal book *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*,¹⁰⁸ published in 1960, was the announcement of that peace. America's first Roman Catholic president, John F. Kennedy, was sworn into office in 1961.

The more gruesome identity politics deformation of Protestant Christianity that we see before us today has tested conservative Roman Catholic patience beyond its breaking point. Increasingly alienated from an America they do not recognize, and disgusted by identity politics even if they do not quite know what to do about it, many *within the Republican Party itself* have responded by withdrawing support for libertarian-tinged “freedom” and for “free markets”—the twin pillars of the party since the Reagan administration of the 1980s.¹⁰⁹ They patiently endured Reaganism because they saw

it as a bulwark against progressivism. Michael Novak's *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*,¹¹⁰ published in 1982, was their manifesto. That was then; this is now. Progressivism was the irksome but understandable outgrowth of Protestant belief; conservative Roman Catholics thought that with enough pressure, it could be checked. Identity politics, however, is another matter. Identity politics is a deeper deformation of Protestantism, which is overtly hostile to positions many conservative Roman Catholics simply cannot renounce. The call among remnants of the Reagan Republican coalition today for freedom and free markets, amid the onslaught of identity politics, rings hollow, and will not help conservative Roman Catholics fight back against it. They *tried* convincing themselves that these two pillars accorded with Roman Catholic teaching.¹¹¹ Yet what if Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*,¹¹² published in 1905, had been right that the instrumental libertarian concepts of freedom and free markets are *essentially* Protestant, and will *always* be so? If so, then conservative Roman Catholic support for the twin pillars of Reaganism really only amounted to defending one faction of Protestants against another. The recent emergence of the national conservative movement within the Republican Party, maligned and misunderstood by neoliberals and by those on the left, has been based on the declaration that that decades-long coalition is over. Outsiders are incredulous that many Republicans might now wish to think about solidarity among citizens rather than about libertarian freedom, or about tariffs that protect middle-class workers rather than about free markets. If you understand that conservative Roman

108. John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (1960; London: Sheed & Ward, 2005).

109. See R. R. Reno, “Rotting-Flesh Reaganism,” *First Things*, July 22, 2016, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/07/rotting-flesh-reaganism>.

110. Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982).

111. See Michael Novak, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

112. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1905; New York: Routledge, 2001).

Catholics—and many conservative Jews as well—have exceeded their tolerance of a certain strain of American Protestantism, with which they once aligned in the fight against progressivism, you can see in a clear light the great transformation underway within the Republican Party. The Reagan coalition is over. Identity politics killed it.

Setting aside the many questions about the future of the Republican Party that emerge from this train of thought, let me return to the relationship between identity politics and Protestant Christianity to note some important distinctions between the two. Identity politics differs from—or rather deforms—Protestant pronouncements in four important respects. First, whereas Protestants identify Christ as the only truly Innocent One, in identity politics groups of mere mortals purport to be innocent. Here, indeed, the Divine has been made flesh.¹¹³ The second difference is a consequence of the first: instead of all of Adam's heirs being stained, only white, heterosexual men are. The rest are unstained—and the more their identity differs from stained white, heterosexual men, the purer they can claim to be. Third, there is no forgiveness of transgression in the world of identity politics. Forgiveness discharges a debt. In the world identity politics constructs, political power accretes from debts that cannot be discharged. To forgive is therefore to lose hold on political power. That is not going to happen. Fourth, identity politics recognizes, as early Protestants did, that notwithstanding man's brokenness, creation must be restored, and the stain that man has left upon creation must be wiped away. That this call bears a resemblance to the call of the liberal citizen to build a world with others cannot be overlooked. Identity politics works through the call unto restoration in a nonliberal way. Because nature herself is an innocent victim, it declares that the stain of "anthropogenic climate change" must be wiped away, either by dismantling the world white,

113. A play on the Christian claim that "the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). In identity politics, the Lamb of God who comes down from heaven is not the Innocent One, but rather *this* or *that* innocent, all-too-mortal group.

heterosexual men have built with "unclean" energy¹¹⁴ or by sustaining that world only with "clean," green energy. The early Protestants began from an understanding of the brokenness of man and of his world, labored in competence, and sought the grace of God until He returned and "saved the world." Identity politics begins from an understanding of the brokenness of white, heterosexual men and the world they have built, and then, without the assistance of God, seeks to save the planet from the transgressors who have endangered it.

§37. Where does this searing attack on inheritance leave us? The indictment identity politics levels at the Western tradition is comprehensive. The stains of slavery in America and of European colonialism in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and South and East Asia are the "original sins" that taint the entire inheritance of the West, no less than Adam's sin taints all of his heirs, regardless of what his heirs achieve through labor and competence. What of the breakthroughs in science, philosophy, art, theology, politics, and economics that are the inheritance of the West? These extraordinary achievements subtract nothing from the debt transgressors never can repay. As Adam could not repay the debt he had to God because of his transgression,¹¹⁵ so, too, white, heterosexual men cannot repay their debt to the innocents. The comprehensive project that remains, now that the long history of transgression is nearing an end, involves recovering the silenced traditions of the innocents, which began when multiculturalism purportedly equalized all traditions, and soon will end as identity

114. "Original sin" is always singular. In identity politics, the *one* original sinner is the white, heterosexual man. All other *kinds* are innocent. In the "anthropogenic climate change" movement, the one original-sinning substance—the "unclean" substance—is carbon dioxide. Solve that problem and man can "save the planet." In both cases, as in Protestant Christianity, the task is to identify the one source of the crisis and seek redemptive release from its burden.

115. See Rom. 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death."

politics scapegoats and humiliates the tradition of the transgressors. Republicans have not dared to challenge this repudiation of the Western tradition directly because they have not yet grasped the breathtaking aspiration of identity politics, which is to distinguish cleanly between the transgressors and the innocents, silence the former, and listen to the “voices” of the latter. The parable of the wheat and the tares is perhaps the best way to understand this astounding enterprise:

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.¹¹⁶

The world is always mixed; good and evil interpenetrate. The transgressors (the tares) and the innocents (the wheat) are never completely separable. That separation will happen at the harvest, the time of which no one can anticipate.¹¹⁷ Man (the servant) does not wish to live in this mixed world, and conceives of a plan to distinguish and separate the wheat from the tares. Identity politics is that plan. The parable tells us that man cannot purify the world. Be-

116. Matt. 13:24–30.

117. See Matt. 24:36: “But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

cause the world is broken, tradition, too, is mixed, no matter whose tradition we consider. Repudiating one tradition in favor of another—say, by rewriting the history books so they depict the “marginalized” innocents as pure and without stain—will not redeem a broken world. Nothing *in* the world can bring about the redemption *of* the world. The alternative to the destructive project of identity politics, suggested by the parable, is the difficult hope of living in a broken world, the world of our inheritance, holding it dear notwithstanding its mixed legacy. We live in a broken world but are not broken by it. Like our families, traditions are never pure. They are, nevertheless, *our* families and *our* traditions. Whether we like it or not, we are constituted by them, we live in and through them; appearances to the contrary, we can never escape them. To be without them, as Aristotle long ago wrote, is to be “either a beast or a god.”¹¹⁸

Do Republicans who defend tradition generally recognize the mixed legacy of tradition? Here, I think it fair to observe that in response to the relentless attack by identity politics, which declares that tradition is irredeemably stained, many Republicans have made the opposite claim—namely, that tradition is an unequivocal good. This position is, I think, unsupportable and unhelpful—especially in America, where the legacy of slavery provides clear evidence of the mixed legacy of our traditions. Adopting this position leaves many Republicans unable to treat slavery in America as anything other than an *accident* that is incidental to the essential goodness of the American Founding, however conceived. Far better, I think, is the position intimated by the parable of the wheat and the tares, which suggests that the redemption of an intermixed world of good and evil is not to be found *in the world*—as both identity politics and, strangely enough, the Republican conservatism that unequivocally defends the goodness of tradition, suppose.

118. Aristotle, bk. 1, chap. 2, 1253a27–28 in *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 37.

G. THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

§38. Turning now to the Left, how have members of the Democratic Party responded to the emergence of identity politics? So far, the Democratic Party has embraced it, because it seems to be complementary to, or an inevitable development of, the familiar progressivism of the early twentieth century. Like progressivism, identity politics labors from above to alter what is below. Not content with relying on state power alone, identity politics also depends on multinational corporations in the economy and the society-shaping organs of education and the media to do its bidding. Progressivism used the power of the state to bypass the “inefficiencies” of democratic politics,¹¹⁹ with a view to increasing the level of well-being in the middle and lower classes. In this regard, progressivism remained something of a liberal project in its aim, even if not in its state-centric method. Identity politics is an antiliberal project. John Dewey, the great twentieth-century progressive, would not have endorsed it. Man’s struggles, Dewey wrote, invite him not to partake in lofty moral encomiums that short-circuit his struggle, but to develop, in concert with others, a competence through which he creates a world.¹²⁰ Man *is*, only through his working association with others.

119. See Woodrow Wilson, chap. 5 in *Congressional Government: A Study of American Politics* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1913), 255: “Efficiency is the only just foundation for confidence in a public officer, under republican institutions no less than under monarchs; and short terms which cut off the efficient as surely and inexorably as the inefficient are quite repugnant to republican as to monarchical rules of wisdom. Unhappily this is not the American doctrine.” Wilson thought that congressional expertise in Washington could bypass the inefficiencies of local and state governance, but that this could not develop when citizens rotate quickly in and out of national political office. Liberal competence was important, but a competent Congress would make up for the deficiencies of incompetent political representatives at lower levels.

120. See John Dewey, chap. 8 in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon,

In the world identity politics constructs, fellow citizens may empathize with others, but they build nothing together. Having arrived at the end of history, global elites inform us of what we need and build it for us.¹²¹ In such a world where things are done for them, citizens do not *do* anything; instead, they concern themselves with who has not been *heard*—hence the fixation among those who defend identity politics on recognition and kindred concepts.¹²² With this mission in mind, identity politics has compelled the state, economy, and society to be more “inclusive,” to give voice to “the marginalized.” It has seldom focused on the tangible struggle of the lower and middle classes, however, since people in these classes are not sufficiently “woke” to be recognized. Hence, the gradual abandonment of the conventional generative family, so urgently needed by “the least among us,” black and white, if they and their children are to have a chance at developing lives of stability and decency. With that came the gradual abandonment of the middle-class, job-producing manufacturing sector by the Democratic Party as the allure of identity politics grew. When only the debt-point economy of transgression and innocence mat-

1948), 207: “Society is the process of associating in such ways that experiences, ideas, emotions, values are transmitted and made common. To this active process, both the individual and the institutionally organized may be said to be subordinate. The individual is subordinate because except in and through communication of experience from and to others, he remains dumb, merely sentient, a brute animal. Only in association with fellows does he become a conscious center of experience.”

121. The poorest among us are especially hampered by this “care” from the state. See Woodson, chap. 5 in *Triumphs of Joseph*, 118: “Assumptions about the poor have spawned a social economy that is predicated on custodianship. Food stamps determine what the poor are permitted to eat; public housing, where they will live; public schools, whether their children will be educated; legal services, who their lawyers will be; and Medicare, who their doctors will be.”

122. See Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25–73.

ters, why attend to the manufacturing sector, which disproportionately employs white, heterosexual men, who are on the wrong side of the ledger of mercy? Once one of the cornerstones of the Democratic Party, the manufacturing sector and those it employs have disappeared from view. The electoral catastrophe of the 2016 Clinton presidential campaign in the Ohio Valley and the Midwest was just one result.

§39. Because identity politics demands of the transgressors that they *listen* to the “voices” of the innocent, members of the Democratic Party ponder the means by which the transgressors will be able to hear them. There are two: Either the innocents speak for themselves or brokers speak on their behalf. (I will introduce a further differentiation in section 49, but for the moment, let us stay with this clear distinction.) President Obama was a singular figure: as a black American, he could speak for himself; as president, he could speak on behalf of all black Americans. Then what? The 2016 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, a white woman, could speak as a woman, and did; but when she famously said that she was “going to have to talk to white people” about their racism,¹²³ her words strained credulity. Brokers who do not qualify as innocents, and who claim to speak on behalf of the innocents, must doubly defend them, and be doubly unremitting in their moral condemnation of their transgressors. Candidate Clinton’s “basket of deplorables” remark during a fundraising speech in New York City on September 10, 2016, nine weeks before the election, may have cost her the presidency, but because identity politics separates the transgressors from the innocents, a transgressor who dares to speak on behalf of the innocents better be believable to the innocents. If “racial identity” is in play, for example, then whites have to declare that

123. See “Hillary Clinton Talks Donald Trump, Terence Crutcher Murder + Her Health,” YouTube video, 12:09, posted by wbls1075nyc, September 20, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecNCx1bJxYE&feature=youtu.be>. Relevant comments begin at 6:45.

other whites, but not they themselves, are stained—the proof of which is just how enraged they are by the impure among them.¹²⁴ Identity politics scapegoats the transgressors. White transgressors who wish to show themselves to be pure and without stain must scapegoat other whites to demonstrate their purity—by declaring, as candidate Clinton did, that those whites are irredeemable. This is the dilemma white Democrats face in the Trump era. National elections cannot be won without the support of white voters, and yet for Democrats, whites as a group are stained. White Democrats must declare their hatred of President Trump and those who voted for him. At home, at parties, in public gatherings, in the media, in our universities, white Democrats must offer evidence of their hatred. A word, a glance, a sentence of scorn and derision—these are *required* whenever white Democrats enthralled by identity politics gather. Not meeting this requirement implicates you, and places you among the transgressors. If you are white, you are a racist unless you declare otherwise. The scandal of President Trump is your invitation to make that declaration. If you do not, you become the object of cathartic rage.

§40. The failure of candidate Clinton to win the presidency in 2016 raises vexing questions for the Democratic Party in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election. In the long run, can white candidates in the Democratic Party, who have long been brokers on behalf of the innocents, play that role any longer, after President Obama established the precedent that the innocents themselves can speak, and speak well, without white brokers? If the post-Obama Democratic Party remains committed to identity politics, it will eventually dispense with white brokers altogether. White Democrats, especially white women, can humiliate other white men, with a view to showing that they them-

124. This method by which transgressors declare their innocence by scapegoating others of their own kind has also been evident in the case of men’s responses to American feminism. Beware the man who, with zeal, professes feminism.

selves are pure. This only grants a provisional reprieve of the indictment against them. Their stains derive not from what they say or believe, but *from who they are*.

As I write this some eight months before the general election in November, the Democratic candidates who remain, and those who have come and gone, reflect the current state of play within identity politics. Joe Biden has a decisive lead over Bernie Sanders, but they are both “old,” in the double sense of being old in years and also being “old school.” Biden has been a white broker for the innocents for much of his career, and it is not clear that that model can work any longer in a Democratic party in which white, heterosexual men no longer really have a place.¹²⁵ That Biden also seems to have brokered deals that have enriched his son will not help his standing among younger Democratic voters whose formative trauma was the 2007–08 economic crisis and the class of permanent winners who emerged as a consequence of the way it was resolved. Sanders formed his ideas during the upheavals of the 1960s. A much younger generation of Democrats is now enamored of his ideas, while most of the older generation of Democrats disposed of their beads, tie-dyed shirts, and dog-eared, yellowing pages of Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* by the late 1970s. They have benefitted immensely from the crony capitalism that has swelled their retirement accounts, and are not about to let Sanders dismantle that edifice. Elizabeth Warren, now a phantom presence, is not as old as Biden and Sanders, but her credibility as a potential candidate plummeted after her Native American ancestry turned out to verge on statistical insignificance. In the world that identity politics constructs, candidates receive a hearing if innocence runs through their pedigree, and are ignored if it does not. After Warren became *just another white woman*, her words seemed less poignant, less worthy of Democratic

125. See Peggy Noonan, “If Biden Runs, They’ll Tear Him Up,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 2019 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/if-biden-runs-theyll-tear-him-up-11554420280>.

Party endorsement. To cover herself anew with the mantle of innocence, she declared: “We live in a country now where the president is advancing environmental racism, economic racism, criminal justice racism, health care racism.”¹²⁶ Incoherent as this statement seems on the surface, it reveals the strategy the Democratic Party has adopted since the civil rights movement: invoke black American moral authority for every cause you wish to advance—and expect black America to sit still and say nothing. Her invocation of “everything racism” failed to bolster her standing as an innocent, and among the innocents. Before she departed the race, Marianne Williamson at least had the good sense to know she is white, and offered public prayers seeking forgiveness for that unpardonable sin.¹²⁷ The attention given by Democrats to long-departed (Robert Francis) Beto O’Rourke was disproportionate to his demonstrated competence, and is explained by the *need* Democrats had, after President Obama’s ascendance, for O’Rourke to not be *just another white man*. Then there was candidate Pete Buttigieg, who, while white and gay, might have been too white and not gay enough.¹²⁸ For the most part, the agents of the first phase of iden-

126. Elizabeth Warren, quoted in Matthew Rozsa, “Democratic Candidates Shine a Light on Racial Disparities while Trump Doubles Down on Racist Remarks,” *Salon*, July 31, 2019, <https://www.salon.com/2019/07/31/democratic-candidates-shine-a-light-on-racial-disparities-while-trump-doubles-down-on-racist-remarks/>. In response, see Robert Woodson interview of July 31, 2019, on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, in Charles Creitz, “Bob Woodson: Warren’s Claims of Trump Racism on Health Care and Environment Are ‘Insulting and Condescending,’” *FOX News*, July 31, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/bob-woodson-warrens-claims-of-trump-racism-on-health-care-and-environment-are-insulting-and-condescending>.

127. See “Marianne Williamson Leads a Prayer Apologizing for Being White,” YouTube video, 3:01, posted by Daily Caller News Foundation, July 19, 2019, <https://youtu.be/cvBPwDIRgYU>.

128. See John Aravosis, “The Insanity of Democrats Attacking Buttigieg—for Not Being Gay Enough,” *Daily Beast*, updated March 31, 2019, <https://www.the-dailybeast.com/the-insanity-of-democrats-attacking-pete-buttigieg-for-not-being-gay-enough>.

tity politics in the Democratic Party were white brokers who spoke on behalf of the innocents. In the second phase, the innocents speak for themselves. The oscillating status of Elizabeth Warren and Beto O'Rourke—alternatively white broker and innocent—confirms the entrance of the Democratic Party into this new phase. Kamala Harris, a “woman of color” would have been the candidate most listened to within the Democratic Party in the run-up to the 2020 election if her heavy-handed prosecution of innocents during her stint as attorney general of California had not placed her among the transgressors. In the world identity politics constructs, mercy trumps justice. A woman of color who prosecuted criminals and showed no mercy does not fit in to the identity politics narrative. She sided with the transgressors—something too jarring to comprehend. President Bill Clinton was elected, in part, because he was “tough on crime” while he was governor of Arkansas (1978–80; 1982–92). His legacy within the Democratic Party today has been besmirched because of that stance, among other reasons. Once politics pertained to justice; henceforth, the only Democratic candidates who will be given serious consideration by the party faithful will be those who substitute mercy for justice.

A final caveat on the upcoming November 2020 election: While the logic of identity points to the disappearance of white brokers who speak on behalf of the innocents, if white candidates *do* prevail, their success will hang on the extent to which they can escape the cathartic rage that would otherwise settle on them for being white. They will do this by innocence-signaling their support for various social justice causes, so that they, like other groups of innocents, can be covered with righteousness. Perhaps, as has been proposed, the unspoken agreement that they must have a vice-presidential running mate who is not a white, heterosexual man will prevail. In these ways, as I indicated in section 13 of the preface, the cathartic rage that otherwise brings social death will *pass over* them and settle elsewhere—likely on middle- and lower-class whites, without whom the Democratic Party cannot win the presidency.

H. THE PURGE

§41. Proceeding from the premise of identity politics that it is both possible and desirable to cleanly distinguish between transgressors and innocents, we can imagine a Democratic Party in which the innocents finally replace the white brokers who once spoke for them. To understand the inner logic of identity politics, however, we must go further and imagine a world in which not only are the white broker-transgressors replaced by the innocents within the Democratic Party but also a world in which transgressors themselves disappear from view altogether. This is already starting to occur. Held responsible for transgression because of who they are, yet not authorized to act in accordance with who they are, an entire generation of boys and young men are already so benumbed and befuddled that they regularly withdraw into the video universe—or, all too often, explode outward in violence.¹²⁹ There, hidden from a world that declares, “The future is female,” they live vicarious lives of conquest, command, protection, and competence. Because in the world identity politics constructs, there can be no wars in defense of noble causes, no new horizons to explore, no wives and children to protect,¹³⁰ these young men are of no use—except as a scandal providing orientation for the innocents. Held responsible for the sins of the world and at the same time accorded no author-

129. See Mark Meckler, “Of the 27 Deadliest Mass Shooters, 26 of Them Had One Thing in Common,” *Patheos*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/markmeckler/2018/02/27-deadliest-mass-shooters-26-one-thing-common/>. The one thing these mass shooters had in common is that they came from fatherless homes, which is to say that they grew up in a world in which men had no real place.

130. See Geoff Dench, “Reversing the Descent of Man,” *Quillette*, December 28, 2018, <https://quillette.com/2018/12/28/reversing-the-descent-of-man/>. This essay was extracted and reproduced from Geoff Dench, *Rediscovering Family* (London: Hera Trust, 2003) after the author's death.

ity in that world: this is the lesson an entire generation of boys and young men have learned by heart.¹³¹

Despite their ever-diminishing standing, white, heterosexual men nevertheless still wear the crown of thorns. They are the transgressors, through whom are justified every innocent identity—women, “people of color,” and those gathered under the heading of LGBTQ. Purge white, heterosexual men and a momentous question emerges: Because identity politics involves a relationship between transgressors and innocents,¹³² *can the innocents be innocent without transgressors?* Who, after the first purge, will stand in and justify the remaining innocents? White, heterosexual women, while women, are nevertheless white; “men of color,” while “of color,” are nevertheless men; “heterosexual women of color,” while “women of color,” are nevertheless heterosexual; and so on. Because of the centrality of the wound of slavery in America, white, heterosexual women are likely to take the place of white, heterosexual men as the transgressors after white, heterosexual men have been humiliated, taken their cue, and disappeared from view. Let us imagine, then, the purging of white, heterosexual women that would take place—say, after other innocent identity groups discover that under the banner of “The future is female,” these women have been its disproportionate beneficiaries. Unless all women make proportionate advances, “privilege” will be the charge leveled against white, heterosexual women, and all remaining innocents will rally against them. I say this here and elsewhere: *The innocents must have their scapegoats*. It is not a stretch to see the titanic struggle that took place during the long run-up to the 2020 presidential election between the white speaker of the house, Nancy Pelosi, and the women of color deri-

131. See Warren Farrell and John Gray, *The Boy Crisis: Why Our Boys Are Struggling and What We Can Do about It* (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2019).

132. See sec. 9.

sively called “the squad”¹³³ over the Green New Deal and the decision to file articles of impeachment against President Trump as the first battle in the long campaign adherents of identity politics will wage to purge white women after white, heterosexual men have dutifully taken their leave. Then what? Who might the next targeted transgressor be? If the recent controversy over whether “homophobic” black American comedian Kevin Hart should have hosted the ninety-first annual Academy Awards show in February 2019 is any indicator, the formerly innocent group of black American, heterosexual men will be next in line. The standing of black Americans within identity politics warrants special attention, which I will consider in more detail in section 50. Worth remembering, for the moment, is that purveyors of identity politics take the template of the black American wound of slavery and extend it to women, people of color, and those gathered under the heading of LGBTQ. The travesty that should surprise no one who understands the inner logic of identity politics is that some portion—or all—of black America will eventually be betrayed by it. Black Lives Matter will be, indeed. Identity politics eventually comes for everyone. The last remaining identity group will be the one that has *just enough* power to scapegoat and purge its transgressor while appearing, paradoxically, to be an innocent victim.

§42. Seeking to redeem the scapegoated innocents, identity politics itself requires a scapegoat through whom the innocents can be redeemed. For now, that scapegoat in the Democratic Party is the white, heterosexual man. He bears a toxin, “toxic masculinity,” that must be purged from the body social. When he is fully humiliated and purged from society (as all scapegoats must be), a new scape-

133. This group consists of congressional representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts, and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. All of these women are under fifty years old, and all came to power during the 2018 midterm elections.

goat must emerge, who will become the transgressor through whom innocence is established and proclaimed. Someone playing the part of the innocent today *will* play the part of transgressor tomorrow. Little matter who it is; the important thing is that the relationship between transgression and innocence be maintained. If that relationship collapses, the theodicy question—why is there evil in the world?—is no longer answerable. The sacrifice of former innocents on the identity politics altar will be the gruesome but necessary payment that maintains the relationship. Former innocents will be the offering that provides the answer to the theodicy question that identity politics demands. Not long ago, Christians believed that man was the transgressor; that Christ was the Innocent One; that evil could be explained by the brokenness of man; and that salvation came through this understanding of the relationship between mortal transgression and Divine innocence. In identity politics, the Innocent One, the Lamb of God, has no place. For the Democratic Party, the innocents are *here*, in a world that has been broken by the transgressors;¹³⁴ and salvation comes to those who spend their lives cleanly distinguishing between mortal transgressors and mortal innocents, and then turning their cathartic rage toward new transgressors as the old ones are purged.¹³⁵

134. White, heterosexual man has broken the world *politically* by his invention of liberalism, *economically* by his invention of capitalism, *socially* by his patriarchal tyranny, and *environmentally* by the greed that his industrial capitalism unleashed.

135. See Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's May 10, 1983, speech upon accepting the Templeton Foundation Prize (in "Men Have Forgotten God": Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Templeton Address," *National Review*, December 11, 2018, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/aleksandr-solzhenitsyn-men-have-forgotten-god-speech/>): "The failings of human consciousness, deprived of its divine dimension, have been a determining factor in all the major crimes of this century. The first of these was World War I, and much of our present predicament can be traced back to it. It was a war (the memory of which seems to be fading) when Europe, burst-

I. GROUP UNITY?

§43. The need to cleanly distinguish between transgressors and innocents means that in identity politics, everyone must have an unequivocal group affiliation. My father's family emigrated from Lebanon; my mother's family emigrated from Wales, Holland, and Germany. I am Protestant, rather than Catholic. None of these descriptors—over which wars in Europe, the Mediterranean region, and America have been fought for several thousand years—matter to identity politics. Until and unless the identity category of MENA is given legal sanction by the US Government (see section 10), I am white—therefore a transgressor. Nothing more. Not one of the groups that identity politics needs in order to declare guilt and innocence are monovalent, however. White citizens with German,¹³⁶ Irish, and Italian heritage have an ample family history of harsh treatment received during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century at the hands of citizens who traced their ancestry to the British Isles. The category "national origin" appeared

ing with health and abundance, fell into a rage of self-mutilation which could not but sap its strength for a century or more, and perhaps forever. The only possible explanation for this war is a mental eclipse among the leaders of Europe due to their lost awareness of a Supreme Power above them. Only a godless embitterment could have moved ostensibly Christian states to employ poison gas, a weapon so obviously beyond the limits of humanity." Absent the Divine Innocent One, who is the Scapegoat for the entire world, European nations scapegoated one another. Europe today wishes to dissolve its nations, so that national scapegoating—read, "nationalism"—will no longer be possible. The problem is not nationalism; *the problem is group scapegoating*, which European elites continue to practice, this time around on those that do not believe in the cause of a postnational world order.

136. For a fine account of the German case, see Duncan Moench, "Anti-German Hysteria and the Making of 'Liberal Society,'" *American Political Thought* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2018), 86–123.

on the US census in 1800¹³⁷ in order to keep track of nationalities who—let’s just say it—were not welcome in America, especially as the nineteenth century wore on. The term “minority” in America was initially used only for numerical calculation, without the moral overtones of national origin; it pertained to kinds of peoples from other European nations who were not yet assimilated into American culture. Only during the last half century has the term taken on the purpose it has today—which is as a means of gathering together a heretofore heterogeneous mix of whites and then distinguishing them from all nonwhites. Because “minority” is a constructed category,¹³⁸ we can be sure that a generation from now its meaning will be different.

How about religious cleavages, say, between white Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—let alone the extraordinary tensions that exist within each of these groups? Do these not indicate that whites are many rather than one? Scripture-centered Protestants have little to say to members of the dying mainline churches. Social justice Catho-

137. See Mike Gonzalez and Hans A. von Spakovsky, *Eliminating Identity Politics from the U.S. Census*, Heritage Foundation Backgrounder Report 3327, 3–6 (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, June 29, 2018), https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/BG3327_0.pdf.

138. The most comprehensive account of the origin and development of the term “minority” is to be found in Philip Gleason, “Minorities (Almost) All: The Minority Concept in American Social Thought,” *American Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (Sept. 1991), 392–424. A number of distinct phases can be discerned in Gleason’s treatment. First, the term minority pertained without the overtones of transgression and innocence, to *kinds*. Second, minority became a euphemism for the category of “race,” which, in the interwar years, was a category many Americans were uncomfortable using because they had no answers for the questions it posed. Third, as the euphemism “minority” became the synonym for race, a new term emerged to cover over American discomfort, and to allow those who were white but not white, heterosexual men to have a place in the identity politics firmament: “oppressed groups.” The overall trajectory began with the physical distinctions between kinds and ended with the identity politics relationship between transgressors and innocents, between white, heterosexual men and all other groups.

lics are contemptuous of those Catholics who think Vatican II went too far, and vice versa. The cleavage between reformed Judaism and Hasidic Judaism is perhaps unbridgeable. Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, while both in Israel, are worlds apart.

How about class cleavages? Aspirationally, America is a classless society; therefore, our concern about class cleavage should grow as the barriers to entry into a higher class become insurmountable. Yet in their actions, white elites today largely care only about their own,¹³⁹ in conjunction with the network of primary schools, extracurricular activities, activist causes, and Ivy League colleges and universities that assure that the children of these elites, too, will become members of the privileged class. The price of admission for heretofore scapegoated innocents to join them is strict adherence to the identity politics byline. That is the central educational lesson all elites-in-the-making receive in these networks. Heaven help black Americans or other “minority” members who believe—as a vast majority do—that marriage is a fragile generative relationship between a man and a woman. Either they keep silent or they are purged. Professing the words that identity politics countenances is the linguistic prerequisite for becoming a member of the elite class in America today. If you are woke, the tree of life is yours. Woe unto you if you fall from grace, for then the flaming sword will bar your return to the Edenic world¹⁴⁰ that was promised; and by the sweat of your brow you will labor¹⁴¹ until you die, unredeemed. Little wonder our Ivy League college students today oscillate back and forth between thinking the world is theirs for the taking and fearing that the slightest mistake will cast them

139. See David Brooks, “How We Are Ruining America,” *New York Times*, July 11, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/11/opinion/how-we-are-ruining-america.html>.

140. See Gen. 3:24: “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

141. See Gen. 3:19.

into outer darkness—the outer darkness of dwelling among the “deplorables,” who can never rise. “Yale or jail”; “Harvard or homeless.”¹⁴² Identity politics is the fig leaf that hides the sin of class privilege among many white elites in America today.¹⁴³ On the measure of class, white people divide into two antithetical political and class clusters: the right kind of white person who espouses identity politics and the wrong kind of white person who does not. By definition, white members of this latter, lesser class are considered racists, misogynists, homophobes, Islamophobes, fascists, Nazis, haters, deniers, and so on in the eyes of white elites. So much for the supposed unity of whites in classless America.

§44. Perhaps if whites are not a single monovalent group, we can find the group unity we seek by looking to women. Are women one or are they many? Feminist rhetoric about the solidarity of all women suggests a common “women’s experience,” yet nothing could be further from the truth. Elite white woman aspire to successful careers, defer having children until a time of their own choosing, sometimes pay women of color to care for their children while they work since they are unable to afford the time off themselves, and defend no-fault divorce. The obstacles they perceive to achieving equality are the glass ceiling above them and the prospect that they may be constrained by law from doing with their bodies whatever they choose should pregnancy befall them. Colleges and universities dutifully train the young men in attendance to believe these things as well, as the precondition of marrying and forming households with these soon-to-be career women. The combined income of these

142. Revered by several generations of Americans, Robert Frost’s 1916 poem “A Road Not Taken” invites the reader to consider taking the road less traveled. The refrain of all too many young men and women today—“Yale or jail”; “Harvard or homeless”—countenances the well-worn path instead.

143. After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid themselves from God and pretended that they were innocent. See Gen. 3:7: “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

married couples will dwarf the annual earnings of the bottom 80 percent of American families. “Freedom” will be their byword in all that they do.

I am not suggesting that nothing good comes of these arrangements. Families who can afford nannies, for example, sometimes form lifelong bonds of affection with them, which redound to the benefit of all. In the democratic age, the irreconcilable tension in a woman’s life between generation and personhood has afforded a few the opportunity for deep and satisfying reflections of the sort that would not have been possible in an earlier age. I *am* suggesting, however, that these important and sometimes precious developments are the purview of a narrower group of women than the beneficiaries of these developments imagine.

What of the unfree “sisters” of these women? A chasm Achilles himself would not leap often separates them. A woman is vulnerable in the way a man never will be: She has children. Not all do; but if not enough do, civilization perishes. Pregnancy is exhausting; childbirth, nursing, infancy, the long labor of civilizing sons and daughters—these all require an inward-looking disposition that women far more often than not have, and in full measure. This leaves them vulnerable to the chaos, threats, and demands that come at them from outside the home. No one can look both ways, inward and outward, at the same time, with equal concentration. In this, the age of freedom, every working mother knows this agonizing and unresolvable truth.¹⁴⁴ Protection against their vulnerability can be provided by the state,¹⁴⁵ can be purchased by wealthy married couples or wealthy single mothers, or can be provided by a hus-

144. See Elizabeth C. Corey, “No Happy Harmony: Career and Motherhood Will Always Tragically Conflict,” *First Things*, October 2013, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2013/10/no-happy-harmony>.

145. The greater the state welfare available, the lower the rates of marriage will be. Women will have children under this arrangement—but not too many, because while the state can provide the cash payments and modest services needed to raise one or two of them, it cannot provide enough in the way of the daily array of protections needed against the outside world to justify having more.

band, who promises his vulnerable wife and the mother of his children to attend dutifully to the outward world on her behalf. For unfree sisters, no-fault divorce has not meant the chance to start over with someone more “compatible”; it has meant the proliferation of single-mother households situated at or below the poverty line, with children whose prospects are dim, and whose cost to society is staggering. When the solemnity of the marriage vow is a relic without meaning, and when the state, or the church, ceases to enforce marriage or impose a high cost for reckless exit, some women are liberated while others are condemned to penury. Elite women buy their protection against vulnerability. Daily and unremittingly, their unfree sisters are exposed to it. The unfree sisters do not dream of shattering glass ceilings and overthrowing the patriarchal order; those who wish to marry or those who stay married ponder the iron manhole covers, the dirty jobs in America held twenty-to-one by men, and wonder if the wages earned by their husbands in those jobs will be enough to pay next month’s bills. Women in America are not one.¹⁴⁶ Feminism may claim to speak for all women but, like so many other “isms”—communism, environmentalism, capitalism,¹⁴⁷ and the like—it never does. A few win; many lose. Women in America are not monovalent. No one group of women speaks for the whole.

§45. How about black Americans? Are they one group or many? The slavery to which all but the free-born were subject destroyed fami-

146. For an account of how women in America are divided in their assessment of President Trump, see Joshua Mitchell, “Sex and Sin in Protestant America,” *First Things*, October 25, 2016, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/10/sex-and-sin-in-protestant-america>.

147. Marx uses this term; Adam Smith never does. In Smith’s estimation, market commerce is not a comprehensive system. If Marx is correct that capitalism is a system with an internal logic that must unfold in the way he describes, then a few win and many lose. If Smith is correct that market commerce and its necessary institutional correlates can undergird a healthy middle-class commercial republic, then the arrangement Marx suggested is inevitable need not develop. For conceptual clarity, it is important not to equate Smith with capitalism.

lies from forming in the first place, and authorized sexual dominion over enslaved women, who had neither the legal nor the moral right to their own bodies. So prevalent was such sexual predation by slave masters that the organizers of the 1850 US census thought it necessary to establish the categories “black slaves” and “mulatto slaves.”¹⁴⁸ The 1890 US census contained the categories “black,” “mulatto,” “quadroon,” and “octoroon”—distinctions thrown out in the 1900 US census on the recommendation of the former census superintendent Robert Porter, who argued that the differentiations had become so complex and cumbersome that they yielded little usable information. It helped considerably that a number of prominent black leaders had argued for the collapse of those categories into one as well.¹⁴⁹ That determination allowed the biracial President Obama to become our first black American president. If, as W. E. B. DuBois argued, a single drop of black blood stained blacks, so much so that no amount of white blood within them could wash them clean in the

148. A timeline of the categories employed by the US census from 1790 to the 2010 can be found at: “What Census Calls Us,” Pew Research Center, February 6, 2020, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/interactives/multiracial-timeline/>.

149. See Jennifer L. Hochschild and Brenna M. Powell, “Racial Reorganization and the United States Census 1850-1930: Mulattoes, Half-Breeds, Mixed Parentage, Hindoos, and the Mexican Race,” *Studies in American Political Development* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008), <https://scholar.harvard.edu/jlhochschild/publications/racial-reorganization-and-united-states-census-1850-1930-mulattoes-half-br>: “Blacks were also increasingly committed to a move from blurred to rigid boundaries, albeit for different reasons. Although a significant segment of light-skinned blacks continued to affirm the distinctive classification of mulatto, many black leaders had long claimed that distinguishing blacks from mulattoes was conceptually mistaken and destructive of solidarity. W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, had urged census officials in 1900 to ‘class those of African descent together,’ and to accept an expert advisory panel that included Booker T. Washington and Kelly Miller, a prominent black sociologist. Du Bois chose his list of experts carefully; both Washington and Miller advocated black unity and erasure of the line between blacks and mulattoes.”

eyes of whites,¹⁵⁰ is an external imputation by whites such as this one enough to make all black Americans one rather than many? What of their differing inheritances? In the illuminating 1979 essay “Ethnicity: Three Black Histories,” Thomas Sowell suggested that black America is not one, but rather three: descendants of “free persons of color,” whose numbers had reached 488,000¹⁵¹ by 1860; descendants of American slaves, the largest portion of black Americans; and descendants of West Indian slaves, the smallest but most successful of the three groups.¹⁵² Relatively intact families, property holdings, and education—each being a prerequisite of liberal citizenship—explain the relative success of the latter group. Tensions among these three groups exist to this day. The groups differ, as well, in the extent to which each has benefitted from the Great Society programs President Johnson called forth in his University of Michigan commencement speech of 1964.¹⁵³

The supposed imputation by whites who see a *stain* in one drop of black American blood gives the false appearance of unity. Dif-

150. See W. E. B. Dubois, chap. 2 in *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Atlanta: Two Horizons Press, 2011), 38: “But let the murderer be black or the thief brown or violator of womanhood have a drop of Negro blood, and the righteousness of the indignation sweeps the world.”

151. According to the US census, the slave population in 1860 was 3,953,760. One of every nine black Americans in the United States at that time was a “free person of color.”

152. See Thomas Sowell, “Ethnicity: Three Black Histories,” *Wilson Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1979), 96–106.

153. In the world identity politics constructs, governmental programs offer compensation for the innocents. President Johnson had something else in mind. Through such programs, disadvantaged citizens would be helped, so that they, too, could develop competence and build a world together. In his words, “But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches *the marvelous products of our labor*” (Lyndon Johnson, “President Johnson’s Speech on the ‘Great Society’” [speech, University of Michigan, May 22, 1964; emphasis added], https://www.pbs.org/ladybird/epicenter/epicenter_doc_society.html).

fering inheritances reveal durable cleavages among black Americans. What of those cleavages that, as Tocqueville put it, exist by virtue of the fact that whites and black Americans mix but do not yet combine?¹⁵⁴ The history of black American political thought is the response to this ambiguous position—neither quite in nor out—which takes the form of arguments to *exit*; arguments to *voice* political opposition; and, notwithstanding its problems, arguments for *loyalty* to the American regime.¹⁵⁵ The works of Malcolm X, W. E. B. Dubois, and Booker T. Washington, respectively, are emblematic of these arguments. On this reading, the division among black Americans today derives not from differing inheritances but rather from the agonizing ambiguity of the standing of black Americans in America. Division along these lines gets electrically supercharged by a universal fact about all communities: They will have their scapegoats. In section 39, I noted that white brokers scapegoat other whites in order to have their standing as transgressors covered over. Transgressors, too, need scapegoats—to deceive themselves, if not the innocents, that they are pure. In the case of black Americans, the universal fact of scapegoating within a community is supercharged by the historical legacy of slavery in America and the standing of innocence it announces. Unlike whites, who in the world identity politics constructs are forever stained, black Americans confront the momentous question, If because of slavery we are innocent, who among us is to be the scapegoat? One answer is that the scapegoat is the black American who refuses to believe that any salubrious benefit derives from declaring black

154. See Tocqueville, pt. 2, chap. 10 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, 340: “The Indians die as they have lived, in isolation; but the fate of the Negroes is in a sense linked with that of the Europeans. The two races are bound one to the other without mingling; it is equally difficult for them to separate completely or to unite.”

155. See Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

American innocence. To put the matter more starkly, the scapegoat is the black American who has seen enough of purported innocence that justifies debilitating self-satisfaction, and that precludes building a world of the sort liberal citizens envision. Here are the “conservative” black Americans who have been a scandal for their fellow black Americans, and for whites who, wishing to cover over their own transgressions, fix their attention on innocence rather than competence (see sections 22–23). In the last quarter century, a modest list of prominent black American conservatives include Ben Carson, Herman Cain, Alveda King, Glenn Lowry, William Raspberry, Condoleezza Rice, Shelby Steele, Thomas Sowell, Carol Swain, Clarence Thomas, Walter Williams, David Webb, and Robert Woodson Jr. Within identity politics, they are not black Americans; they are betrayers and adversaries, whom everyone else must denounce.¹⁵⁶ The relative standing of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Dubois, two towering figures in early twentieth-century black American thought, illustrates the issue: The former is today scapegoated; the latter is a saint among the innocents. Every community needs its scapegoats.

§46. What of Hispanics? Are they one or many? Long before “Hispanic” first became an umbrella political category in the 1970 US census, it was a literary genre, pertaining to Spanish-speaking authors from Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Iberian Peninsula. What gathers these regions together is the sea on which sailed Spanish galleons, searching for gold and silver during the mercantile period.¹⁵⁷ Like all colonizers, the Spaniards ruled by cutting deals with

156. See “Different Rules—Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in His Own Words,” YouTube video, 0:58, posted by ManifoldProductions, October 25, 2019, <https://youtu.be/LCYERqQDjQg>.

157. Adam Smith’s 1776 masterpiece, *The Wealth of Nations*, was among the first to argue that wealth is not measured by the amount of gold and silver in the national treasury but by the labor of its citizens. The Spanish con-

local elites across the ocean, who then mediated between oppressor and oppressed. Were these mediators, many of whose heirs today fall under the category of Hispanic, transgressors or innocents? What of the never-ending wars prior to the arrival of the Spaniards between the ancestors of those currently labeled Hispanic? Did the victor-transgressors of those wars suddenly become innocents after the Spaniards conquered them? We may ask this question of the African theater as well: Did the African warriors who conquered weaker tribes and sold their conquest to white slave traders suddenly become innocent when European colonialists took control and subdued them? What of those African warriors whose tribes once conquered others and then themselves were conquered and sold into slavery? Are they innocents? What, too, shall we make of the American Indian tribes—the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Seminole—who owned black slaves? Are they transgressors or innocents? When identity politics fixates on white, heterosexual men, the stain of the transgression is indelible. What, then, is the status of black Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians whose ancestors were transgressors? If they were once transgressors, are they not always transgressors? What of white, heterosexual women whose ancestors managed households in which slaves labored? In the American Southwest, where Native American Indian tribes were decimated by Spanish conquest long before whites arrived, are the Hispanics now living there transgressors or innocents? If some Hispanics living there were transgressors, are not all of them—living everywhere—transgressors, by virtue of their common identity category?

The category Hispanic would not exist had the Spaniards not colonized the New World. The Hispanic literary genre coheres and achieves its depth and height by virtue of the renewal that miraculously followed from the transgression, suffering, and death asso-

quest of the New World was driven in part by the older understanding of wealth that *The Wealth of Nations* superseded.

ciated with Spanish colonialization. The history of humanity provides similar lessons. *Suffering and death are not arguments against life.*¹⁵⁸ If they were, not one of us would be here today. We are here by transgression. All of us. The Hispanic literary genre once recognized this. The Hispanic political category does not. That is because in identity politics, the scapegoated white, heterosexual man covers over everyone's historical transgressions, no matter how grievous and unspeakable. Before the collapse of the mainline churches in America, parishioners would have said that Christ, the Scapegoat, covers over the sins of all mankind. In identity politics, the unrelenting loathing toward the transgressor, the white, heterosexual man, is the precondition of the innocence of everyone else.

§47. What of those gathered under the heading of LGBTQ? Are they one or many? Let us admit from the outset the mystery of erotic longing.

158. See Absalom Jones, "A Thanksgiving Sermon, preached January 1, 1808, in St. Thomas's, or the African Episcopal, Church, Philadelphia: On Account of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, on That Day, by the Congress of the United States," in *American Sermons* (New York: Library of America, 1999), 543: "It has always been a mystery, why the impartial Father of the human race should have permitted the transportation of so many millions of our fellow creatures to this country, to endure all the miseries of slavery. Perhaps his design was, that a knowledge of the Gospel might be acquired by some of their descendants, in order that they might become qualified to be the messengers of it, to the land of their fathers. Let this thought animate us, when we are teaching our children to love and adore the name of our Redeemer. Who knows but that a Joseph may rise up among them, who shall be the instrument of feeding the African nations with the bread of life, and of saving them, not from earthly bondage, but from the more galling yoke of sin and Satan."

Suffering is only the final word if redemption is unavailable. The suffering of slavery, to which the sermon fully attests, has a meaning: God gave to His suffering servants the keys to His eternal kingdom so that they might return to their transgressors in Africa and invite them into the eternal kingdom. Remove the vindication of suffering in the spiritual economy, and direct payment alone must compensate for it. Identity politics demands such payment—not yet as reparations but as victim debt points to be accumulated.

What, really, does it mean and portend? Plato long ago suggested that we deceive ourselves when we opine that in *having* another, we find what we are truly looking for.¹⁵⁹ Erotic love is a Divine summons. We misunderstand its directive if active possession is all we hope to gain through it. Erotic love is an invitation to the Good, the True, and the Beautiful; these, man cannot possess but only behold and passively receive, like warm sunlight on a cold day.¹⁶⁰ The contemporary debate about "sexual orientation" rests on the hobbling illusion that genuine satisfaction comes through active possession. Who today is prepared to declare that erotic longing that ends in possession cannot fill the emptiness in our soul? Because we are a sex-obsessed society, the political parties that have gathered around this question have already rejected this sublime answer; they disagree only about *who* may rightly possess and be possessed.

However inadequate all active possession may be from the philosopher's vantage, there is nevertheless a basis for distinguishing between different sorts of erotic longing, one that hinges on the uncontestable fact that regeneration of life cannot happen without active possession,¹⁶¹ and the institution of generative marriage that

159. See Plato, 210a–212a in *Symposium*, trans. and intro. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

160. In Plato's *Republic*, the tyrant, Thrasymachus, believes that only through possession do we "get it all" (bk. 1, 343c). This understanding is contrasted with that of the philosopher who "gets it all" (bk. 5, 476a–c) by seeing the whole of which particular things are but partial manifestations.

161. The opening scene of Plato's *Republic* has Socrates "coming down" (bk. 1, 327a in *The Republic*) to the Piraeus from Athens. This locution has its counterpart in the "Allegory of the Cave." There, Plato tells his interlocutors that once the philosopher has seen the light of the Good, he must "go down" (bk. 7, 520c in *ibid.*) and dwell with those who are still enchained in the shadowy world of coming-into-being-and-passing-away—that is, in the place where death is always a worry. That is why Plato has the Athenians worshipping the goddess Bendis, the goddess of fertility, in the opening passage of *The Republic*. Through Bendis, the worshippers hope to increase their fecundity, so that through the regeneration that her blessing bestows, the Athenians may keep their family name alive and keep death at bay.

ensconces it. Contemporary romantics wish generative marriage to be a lofty thing, unburdened by possession.¹⁶² Never can that be entirely so—a fact confirmed when marriages founded on the romantic view crash to earth and end in divorce court, haggling over who owns what.

Marriage based on the *having and holding* of possession is not the lone institution subject to this romantic embarrassment. So, too, is private property. Through property ownership, we secure our households and regenerate our society. Because death is always near, for everyone and for every civilization, possession is the prerequisite to the regeneration that keeps death at bay. Family and market commerce based on private property demand this.

Identity politics does not declare, as liberal thought might, that erotic longing institutionalized in generative marriage must have a higher stature in society than other sorts of erotic longing; and

162. See Friedrich Nietzsche, sec. 39 in *Twilight of the Idols and the Antichrist*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 105–6: “The decadence in the valuing instinct of our politicians, our political parties, goes so deep that *they instinctively prefer* that which hastens the end. . . . Witness modern marriage. It is obvious that all sense has gone out of modern marriage: which is, however, no objection to marriage but to modernity. The rationale for marriage lay in the legal sole responsibility of the man: marriage thereby had a center of gravity, whereas now it limps with both legs. The rationale for marriage lay in its indissolubility in principle: it thereby acquired an accent that could *make itself heard* against the accidents of feeling, passion and the moment. It lay likewise in the responsibility of the families for the selection of mates. With the increasing indulgence of love matches, one has simply eliminated the foundation of marriage, which alone *makes* it an institution. One never establishes an institution on the basis of an idiosyncrasy, one does *not*, as aforesaid, establish marriage on the basis of ‘love’—one establishes it on the basis of the sexual drive, the drive to own property (wife and child considered as property), the *drive to dominate* which continually organizes the smallest type of domain, the family, which *needs* children and heirs so as to retain, in the physiological sense as well, an achieved measure of power” (emphasis in original).

that some other sorts of longing, which history confirms have always been with us, can also be accommodated. Identity politics declares that conventional generative marriage is not “inclusive,” and, as such, is a prejudice that must be ousted. Only members of a civilization that has cheated death, through technology or through the one-sided expropriation of life-giving resources from other civilizations (often to their detriment), can ignore the need to elevate conventional generative marriage above other sorts of erotic longing. Identity politics operates from a viewpoint made possible by our privileged civilization. As such, its beneficiaries are blind to the way in which their privilege serves themselves and harms others. Yet for identity politics to work, this privileged viewpoint must be maintained. Without the indictment leveled at the white, heterosexual man who is involved in conventional generative marriage, there can be no transgressor through whom all *Ls, Gs, Bs, Ts, and Qs* gather together and achieve their innocence. The innocent unity announced by the term “LGBTQ community” is a unity only insofar as there is a transgressor to scapegoat. Without the white, heterosexual male transgressor who provides the fig leaf that conceals the differences between them, there are only *Ls, Gs, Bs, Ts, and Qs* who are, or will eventually be, at odds with one another. On this point, the reader should be clear, in light of my earlier remarks about the mysterious nature of erotic longing, that these remarks are made with a view to calling out what I take to be a rather poor basis of achieving unity, and nothing more. A unity achieved by scapegoating another person or group is a cheap imitation of the genuine communion for which we long. Identity politics chooses the cheap imitation as a shortcut to the real thing. Always.

What are some of the concealed differences between *Ls, Gs, Bs, Ts, and Qs* that belie the claim of unity? Mainstream media silence about this matter notwithstanding, gay men are not univocal in their political views. Gay conservatives have long argued against identity

politics.¹⁶³ Like their fellow liberal citizens, they wish to build a world around competence rather than innocence. These gay men have no place in the world identity politics constructs; they are a category that cannot exist. Lumped together with conservative women and conservative black Americans, gay men who find identity politics pernicious, who refuse the abridgement “innocent victim,” are invisible men. The professed longing of identity politics is that the voiceless be heard. The ugly truth is that identity politics silences a vast swath of humanity in order to accomplish its aim. With each extension into uncharted territory, the warriors of “inclusion” purchase their purity by besmirching a growing pool of others. In the 1970s, we should remember, feminists insisted they be referred to as “womyn” rather than as “women,” in order to *elevate and distinguish* themselves from men and the designation

163. Before founding the Log Cabin Republicans in 1993, Richard Tafel received a stern rebuke from his Harvard Divinity School classmates for his politically incorrect views. In a prescient brief essay in the July/August 1991 issue of *Harvard Magazine*, which anticipated the logic of identity politics, he wrote: “To play the Game [at Harvard], you had to know card values; straight white male was worth least—the joker. Straight white female next, gay white male next, gay white female next. The most powerful card was the one considered most oppressed. If your oppression status was worse than the person with whom you were arguing, perceived victim status conferred academic and moral authority. To play the game right, one had to speak the lingo. Failure to use the right words could cost you. Calling a ‘person of color’ a ‘colored person’ would set you way back. Calling a person ‘handicapped’ was an equal disaster. The name for ‘handicapped person’ kept evolving: from ‘specially challenged’ to ‘differently abled’ to ‘differently gifted’ to ‘bodily challenged.’ When writing the word “women,” one gained points if he spelled it with a *y* instead of an *e*. But I would have lost points, as you might have noted—because I used “he” in the last sentence. Linguistic points mattered more than intellectual points. I believe the PC movement is having the same chilling effect on our universities that McCarthyism had on the entertainment industry. When—for all the best reasons—our academic institutions start acting as thought police, stifling the marketplace of ideas, we begin to erode the foundation of scholarship and American society, which is free thought and free speech.” Richard L. Tafel, “And from My Lips Will Come What Is Right,” *Harvard Magazine* (July/Aug. 1991), 12.

they had imposed for millennia. Today a war is being waged on feminists who wish to retain their distinction by those—largely *Ts* and *Qs*—who now seek to erase the feminist designation womyn and replace it with “womxn.”¹⁶⁴ Facing the dysphoria of life that occasionally enshrouds every questioning being, many *Ts* and *Qs* have settled upon the conclusion that birth sex is the source of their generalized dissatisfaction, and that the designation womyn is actually a poison rather than an antidote to their suffering. For them to feel *included*, feminists—many of whom believed in generative marriage, just on unconventional terms—must now be *excluded*. That this former group has reached this conclusion should not surprise us in light of the growing consensus among our young men and women that their sexed bodies are archaic, burdensome, unjustifiable relics of a generative civilization they now must renounce. I noted the irony earlier: Only a privileged hegemonic civilization that has cheated death dare dream that it has no duty to reproduce itself. False humility always rests on monstrous pride.

The *strangeness* of our embodiment and the death it portends have long fascinated our greatest minds.¹⁶⁵ What is remarkable today is the narrowness of the range of reflections on the meaning of that strangeness. Pondering the human condition, Tocqueville wrote:

The short space of sixty years can never shut in the whole of man’s imagination; the incomplete joys of this world will never satisfy his

164. See Luis Miguel, “WOMXN: The Latest LGBTQ Newspeak Aimed at Destroying Womanhood,” *New American*, December 31, 2019, <https://www.thenewamerican.com/culture/family/item/34479-womxn-the-latest-lgbtq-newspeak-aimed-at-destroying-womanhood>.

165. In the “Allegory of the Cave” (bk. 7, 514a–520d in *The Republic*, 209–14), Plato suggests that the seemingly familiar world of the prisoners is a *strange* world for those who have eyes to see the Truth. Pressing contemporary terminology into service, the shadowy world of the cave is the *cis*-world, in which most feel at home. The philosopher, however, knows his home is elsewhere. See bk. 4, 592b in *ibid*.

heart. Alone among created beings, man shows a natural disgust for existence and an immense longing to exist; he scorns life and fears annihilation.¹⁶⁶

Tocqueville and so many others before and after him concluded that dysphoria arises from the collision between the intimation that our souls are eternal and the wretched fact that death is the fate of all embodied life. Taking on a *different* embodied form does not halt the collision; it only delays it. Just as the redemption of the world cannot happen from *within* the world, so, too, the redemption of our embodied form cannot happen from within *another* embodied form. As such, we may wonder why, today, a number of people believe that the release from their birth sex will offer salvation for their dysphoria. The epithet “cisgender,” leveled as a critique of those men and women who are at home with their birth sex, does have a ring of truth to it. As death comes near, the bodies in which we have been at home will betray us, and reveal to us as we approach the threshold that if we are to have a home, we will not find it in our once trusty companion. Christianity, too, tells us that the body that has been our home in “the short space of sixty years” is not enough. Redemption is the ecstatic release from mortal embodiment and the homelessness of sin that attends it. Today, when in the lives of so many people God is either distant or absent, the *ecstasis* of release from our birth sex has become, for some, a surrogate for the redemptive *ecstasis* God once offered. Identity politics sanctions this surrogate—as the deepest expression yet of the liberation from the heterosexual transgressor. Insofar as *Ls*, *Gs*, *Bs*, *Ts*, and *Qs* are all not heterosexual, they are a unity by virtue of the distinction they have in common. However, insofar as many of them are, like so many heterosexuals, at home in their birth sex, and perhaps even believe that there are natural differences between men and women,¹⁶⁷ while others are

not, *Ls*, *Gs*, *Bs*, *Ts*, and *Qs* are not a unity. Only by scapegoating the transgressive heterosexual can the appearance of unanimity among them be maintained. The uncovering of the substantive differences between them will take the form of one innocent among them scapegoating another. This has already begun to happen.¹⁶⁸

§48. In the world identity politics constructs, everyone has a monovalent group affiliation. They may have more than one monovalent affiliation, as the growing “intersectionality” literature now stresses,¹⁶⁹ but the aggregated identities whose synergy is greater than the sum of the parts¹⁷⁰ are nevertheless comprised of monovalent unities. On the question of whether and how such unities exist hangs the fate

February 1, 2019, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/02/andrew-sullivan-the-nature-of-sex.html>: “We have to abandon the faddish notion that sex is socially constructed or entirely in the brain, that sex and gender are unconnected, that biology is irrelevant, and that there is something called an LGBTQ identity, when, in fact, the acronym contains extreme internal tensions and even outright contradictions. And we can allow this conversation to unfold civilly, with nuance and care, in order to maximize human dignity without erasing human difference.”

168. See Sky Gilbert, “Homophobia and the Modern Trans Movement,” *Quillette*, January 31, 2019, <https://quillette.com/2019/01/31/homophobia-and-the-modern-trans-movement/>.

169. The origin of the term is attributed to Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1, art. 8, 139–67.

170. See *ibid.*, 140: “I argue that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated.”

166. Tocqueville, pt. 2, chap. 9 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, 296.

167. See Andrew Sullivan, “The Nature of Sex,” *New York*, “Intelligencer,”

of identity politics and the intersectionality that exponentially multiplies the universe of possible innocents. In the categories we have briefly considered—white people, women, black Americans, Hispanics, and those gathered under the heading of LGBTQ—the empirical facts of division and disunity are controverted and covered over by the unity of the transgressor, who confers innocence and unity on all who stand in relationship to him.¹⁷¹ This is not the immediate face-to-face relationship that liberal citizens understand, in which the parties to the relationship *discover* who they are through their ongoing conversations and arguments, and through what they build together. It is a relationship mediated by the monovalent (or intersectional) identities each person unalterably stands for and represents. In this latter sort of relationship, there is nothing to argue about, nothing to build.

J. THE TWO MINUTE HATE

§49. I distinguished two vastly different understandings of citizenship in sections 12–23: Liberal citizens are concerned with competence; identity politics is concerned with innocent victimhood. Liberal citizens cannot dwell on innocent victimhood, because the purportedly unalterable identities that justify such a status do not help liberal citizens build a world of competence together. When citizens no longer need to associate with one another in their everyday lives, there will be scant evidence that their fellow citizens are not monovalent representatives of this or that group identity. When citizens no longer need to build a world to-

171. See Andrew Sullivan, “We All Live on Campus Now,” *New York*, “Intelligencer,” February 9, 2018, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/02/we-all-live-on-campus-now.html>: “The goal of our culture now is not the emancipation of the individual from the group, but the permanent definition of the individual by the group. We used to call this bigotry. Now we call it being woke. You see: We are all on campus now.”

gether, they can be seduced into looking at one another in the way identity politics proposes.

Tocqueville did not anticipate identity politics, but he did anticipate the isolation of citizens, one from another, that would be its prerequisite. He praised the Americans for building a world together, foresaw a distant future where they would turn away from face-to-face horizontal relations with their fellow citizens, and predicted that unless stronger motives deterred them, they would come to depend only on their vertical relationship with the state.

I am trying to imagine under what novel features despotism may appear in the world. In the first place, I see an innumerable multitude of men, alike and equal, constantly circling around in the pursuit of petty and banal pleasures with which they glut their souls. Each man, withdrawn into himself, is almost unaware of the fate of the rest. . . . Mankind, for him, consists of his children and his personal friends. The rest of his fellow citizens are near enough, but he does not notice them. He exists in and for himself. . . . Over this kind of man stands an immense, protective power, which alone is responsible for securing their enjoyment and watching over their fate. That power is absolute, thoughtful in detail, orderly, provident, and gentle. It would resemble paternal authority if, father-like, it tried to prepare its charges for a man’s life, but on the contrary, it only tries to keep them in perpetual childhood. It likes to see citizens enjoy themselves, provided that they think of nothing but enjoyment.¹⁷²

Chilling and prescient as Tocqueville’s 1840 prophecy about the disappearance of liberal competence is, he thought citizen competence would be supplanted by state competence, not by the politics of innocence that identity politics foment. Another way of putting this would be that Tocqueville anticipated progressivism but not identity politics. To move

172. Tocqueville, pt. 4, chap. 6 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, 691–92.

from Tocqueville's prophecy to the catastrophe of identity politics, the categories of transgression and innocence have to migrate from religion into politics, something I briefly considered in section 23. To his credit, Tocqueville saw that this *could* happen but did not think the Americans would succumb because "religion [remained] free and powerful within its own sphere and content with the position reserved for it."¹⁷³

Tocqueville is not our only guide to what has befallen us, however. On the other side of the Atlantic a century later in 1949, after two world wars left Europe without faith in itself or in God, George Orwell described a tyrannical future, like Tocqueville's, inhabited by citizens who were isolated from one another—but unlike Tocqueville's, this tyrannical future was held together by scapegoating a transgressor rather than by state competence. In what is perhaps the most memorable passage of Orwell's novel *1984*, isolated citizens of Oceania gather daily for a "Two Minute Hate" directed toward Emmanuel Goldstein. Without this scapegoat, Oceania's own blemishes would become visible. Through Emmanuel Goldstein—a man whose last name indicates he is Jewish,¹⁷⁴ and whose first name is the name of Christ,¹⁷⁵ "the Lamb

173. Tocqueville, pt. 1, chap. 2 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, 47.

174. The long history of the scapegoating of Jews within Christianity and, therefore, in the West shows no sign of abating. St. Augustine's *City of God* (bk. 4, chap. 34, 178) contains among the first articulations of it. Martin Luther's 1520 essay "On the Freedom of a Christian" (in *Luther's Works*, vol. 31, 329–77) establishes the trope of "dialectical history," which became the forum through which Jews were later scapegoated in the nineteenth-century works of Hegel and Marx. Under the unassuming heading of "the narcissism of minor differences," Freud suggested in 1930 that the scapegoating of the Jews was the "means [by] which cohesion between the members of the [larger] community is made easier. In this respect the Jewish people, scattered everywhere, have rendered most useful services to the civilizations of the countries that have been their hosts." Freud, chap. 5 in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 72.

175. See Matt. 1:23: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

of God who takes away the sins of the world"¹⁷⁶—Oceania washes itself clean and restores its purity.

Before the Hate had proceeded for thirty seconds, uncontrollable exclamations of rage were breaking out from half the people in the room. . . . In its second moment, the Hate rose to a frenzy. People were leaping up and down in their places and shouting at the tops of their voices in an effort to drown the maddening bleating [lamb-like] voice that came from the screen. . . . The horrible thing about the Two Minute Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds, any pretense was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces with a hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic.¹⁷⁷

However disturbing this dystopia may be, bound together as it is by a sacrificial scapegoat who may not even exist, Orwell's *1984* doesn't come close to anticipating the fever of identity politics in America today. First, although citizens of Oceania are isolated, they are not proxies for monovalent group identities that bear the mark of either transgressors or innocents. Citizens of Oceania may be unable to love and forgive one another's foibles and betrayals,¹⁷⁸ but one group's stain is not the precondition of another group's purity. No

176. See John 1:29: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

177. George Orwell, pt. 1, sec. 1 in *1984* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1949), 15–16.

178. See pt. 3, sec. 7 in *ibid.*, 240. Tyranny in the democratic age, both Tocqueville and Orwell understood, would be possible only if the links between citizens were dissolved. See Tocqueville, pt. 2, chap. 4 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, 509: "A despot will lightly forgive his subjects for not loving him, provided they do not love each other."

one group of them stands for transgressions perpetrated and, at the same time, stands in for the innocents and covers their sins. Second, in America, the ever-growing penetration of the federal government into daily life has altered the task of our congressional representatives, and contributed to a catastrophe Orwell could not have imagined. Article I, section 8 of the US Constitution enumerates the powers of Congress, and leaves to the states how daily life is to be regulated. Until the twentieth century, without the ability to levy an income tax directly, the projects of Congress were of limited scope. That changed with the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment, in 1913, which effectively turned congressional representatives into patronage brokers who measure success by the metric of funds returned to their congressional districts from the income tax-enriched federal treasury. The political configuration of Orwell's 1984 includes the ministries of truth, love, peace, and plenty, presided over by Big Brother. Elected representatives play no part. Not so in America. Therein lies the problem. In my earlier discussion of the distinction between brokers and innocents in sections 39–40, I noted that by its own internal logic, identity politics cannot countenance the representation of innocents by white transgressor-brokers. The innocents must speak for themselves.¹⁷⁹ There, I did not consider the fact that in our post-1913 republic, all congressional members, innocents or otherwise, are patronage brokers. The metric of funds returned to their congressional district invites these patronage brokers to declare that citizens in their district are innocent victims, incapable

179. "Cultural appropriation" involves taking on the trappings of an innocent identity without asking the permission to do so from those who are of that identity. Technically, transgressor-brokers who are the congressional representatives of innocents have received such permission—not so much to speak like them or dress like them, but to speak on their behalf in public—by virtue of having been elected by them. It is unclear on what grounds they would be justified in doing the latter, if they are not justified in doing the former. Moreover, if consent is required, would it not have to be unanimous to count?

of solving their own problems without massive federal assistance, which they will oversee.

To their discredit, both political parties are content with this patronage-broker model of congressional representation. The Republican Party has generally done this on behalf of wealth. The current Democratic Party's unwavering embrace of identity politics has sent it searching in every corner of America for indebted innocents it can purportedly represent—most recently, transsexuals. We can be sure there will be more—currently undreamed of—innocents in the future. What this means is that unlike the arrangement Orwell describes, in which politics remains independent of the Two Minute Hate that purges the community, in the Democratic Party political activity is concerned with the ever-expanding search for new innocents through whom the sins of the transgressor-scapegoat can be revealed and the rage against him can increase.

The frenzy of identity politics in America and in the Democratic Party cannot die down after it reveals and certifies a new group, however. Because little holds the Democratic Party together today besides the white, heterosexual male transgressor who, unlike Emmanuel Goldstein, is without luster or charisma, current innocents within the party machinery must continually discover new groups of innocents who have suffered at his hands. Together they then gather in incredulity and wonder aloud why they did not recognize beforehand just how sinister their common transgressor really was. Orwell's Two Minute Hate would not be enough today. In 1984, Big Brother offered up Emmanuel Goldstein as the one sufficient sacrifice, who allowed Oceania's citizens to go back to their grim everyday lives without sacrificing one another.¹⁸⁰ The fever of identity politics offers so much more than a return to grim lives. Because this is America, the land of the Puritan

180. For Christians, Christ is the one sufficient Divine sacrifice, who puts an end to the sacrifice of living creatures. See St. Augustine, bk. 9, chap. 15 in *City of God*, 359–61.

fixation on stain and perpetual novelty, identity politics—being thoroughly American, in spite of appearances to the contrary—also offers us both. In every waking moment, we rummage through our personal and national memories to expose past and present transgressions to the light of day; and we perpetually seek out novel groups whose innocence confirms the depravity of the transgressors. Such is the character of our American Awakening without God and without forgiveness.

K. BLACK AMERICANS BETRAYED

§50. No American citizens have been betrayed more by identity politics than black Americans, whose special standing bestowed on them by the deep wound of slavery in America has been used unabashedly as a template for all other supposed innocents to make their own claims. Civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, transsexual rights: are these not all fungible variants on the same theme of transgression and innocence? Asked to step back while new franchise-expanding innocents are invited to figuratively occupy the front seats of the Democratic Party bus, black Americans are expected to sit tight and not complain about where the bus is headed or how much it is costing them—or at least costing a large number of them. Identity politics *needs* to render black Americans not as struggling, albeit competent, liberal citizens whose history evinces extraordinary, and reproducible, models of success but instead as perennially innocent victims. For that reason, the history of their successes against formidable odds must be erased, without regard for those black Americans most harmed by that erasure. In its stead has been placed a new history and a new formula for benefiting not all black Americans but only a small group among them whose fortune and hard work have prepared them to take full advantage of the configured opportunities that now come their way. Along the way, the tacit understanding is that they will adhere to the account of their plight that identity politics promulgates. In Robert Woodson's words:

The Guardians of Grievance, the cohort of advisors that are today's version of W.E.B. Dubois' "talented tenth" . . . [have revised history to focus] almost exclusively on the degradation whites have imposed on blacks and the accomplishments of the civil rights leadership's efforts since the sixties. Conveniently airbrushed from the portrait of black America are the remarkable models of self-help—accomplishments of black entrepreneurs and mutual aid societies during eras of the most brutal racial repression and slavery. Lost is the legacy of personal responsibility and principle-based entrepreneurship that could provide today's youth with a pride in their heritage and an adaptable model that could guide their futures. The selective history that is transmitted to our young people is, simply put, that blacks came to this country on slave ships; from there they went to plantations and slavery; from the plantations to the ghetto, and, finally, to welfare.¹⁸¹

In the world identity politics constructs, oppressive social forces loom large and human freedom looms small.¹⁸² Have not the transgressors systematically scapegoated the innocents and kept them from sharing in the bounty of America? The history of slavery and its after-

181. Woodson, chap. 3 in *Triumphs of Joseph*, 51–52. See also Robert L. Woodson Sr., "A Betrayal of Martin Luther King," *Hill*, January 20, 2019, <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/426017-a-betrayal-of-martin-luther-king>: "The surest way to sabotage the prospects of blacks is to convince them that they have no agency and, therefore, no responsibility and no hope. This is insulting to the memory of Dr. King and immoral in its continued intellectual incarceration of people into a mindset of victimhood, rather than one of achievement."

182. Tocqueville thought that as citizens in the democratic age become more lonely and isolated, they would be enticed by histories that inform them that they are caught up among vast social forces that they are powerless to alter. See Tocqueville, pt. 1, chap. 20 in *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, 496: "Classical historians taught men how to command; those of our own time teach next to nothing but how to obey [social forces]. In their writings, the author often figures large, but humanity is always tiny." Marx's theory of the necessary historical development of communism is a fine example of the sort of history Tocqueville criticizes.