

As many know, the term “leftist” comes from where the more radical French Revolutionaries physically sat in their Assembly in the tumultuous years between their Revolution, and their (necessary) return to autocracy under Napoleon. What is often forgotten is the range of opinions within this group, from the very moderate, up to the murderous Jacobins, on both political and economic issues. Some of them, arguably, were closer in outlook and goals to modern Barry Goldwater-ish Conservatives than anything we would recognize as “left” today. They were seated where they were simply because they did not want to see the King reinstated, with all the abuses of trade and favoritism that went with it.

They were, in the best possible sense, “liberal”, in that they wanted to hew to the concept of liberty (libertas: to be free) that underlies both words. This position of being against both Kings and all-powerful States is, to my way of thinking, the essence of Liberalism. This is a benign doctrine. True “Conservatives” in our modern sense, then, are Liberal. This word was applied to both Adam Smith and John Stewart Mill, who stand in a clear line of enlightened thinkers to whom we owe much.

To this I would oppose two iterations of Leftism: Sybaritic Leftism, and Cultural Sadeism. I will define both presently, but will note here simply that my intent is to use new words to perhaps enable new perceptions, or enhance old ones; certainly, it is to think clearly, to the best of my ability. To do so, I will start with the most basic foundation possible in a social field: the meaning of life.

As I see it, when we ask this question, we are looking for an answer or answers to two issues: what to do, and the problem of pain. A systematic approach to the first question further requires us to answer the question of what is true. Logically, if one wants to determine what to do, one must have some standard as to what is WORTH doing, and why.

The problem of pain is very simply why and how to persist living, in a world which never seems to fully answer our questions as to how its put together, and which offers disappointment and heartbreak, seemingly at every turn. More practically, the question is how to transmute the pains of loss, privation, and failure into a sense of joy and contentedness, such that life at most times and places feels worth living.

Meaning and liberty: they are integrally related. Liberty is of no value, unless one has some sense of what to do with it.

Historically, of course, these questions were answered through religious and social institutions. You did what your father or mother had done. Much of the hand-wringing that accompanies existential questions like this was also avoided due the simple fact that life was so hard, you had no time for questions like these.

And this brings up an excellent point: these questions can be “answered” simply by taking your best guess, and going. The philosophers make themselves miserable with these questions, whereas the people who fail to ask them, feel no need to answer them,

and are thus unaware of the “contradiction” their own happiness would otherwise present. As an old teacher of mine once put it: “the meaning of life is in life”.

This is not the time and place for navel gazing, though. I simply want to place the answers that the two iterations of Leftism provide within a context. Both of them are designed to address, through political and economic processes, the above questions.

Sybaritic Leftists address the problem of pain through hedonism. They believe the point of life is to enjoy it: to feel pleasure as much and as often as possible. They take the further step of believing that the NATURE of life is that it is SUPPOSED to be easy. They resent those who claim otherwise.

Perhaps the paradigmatic examples of this mindset are the social democracies of northern Europe. To the extent possible, they have enacted institutions that by design mitigate—and to the extent possible, eliminate—the pain of all possible vagaries of life. Retirement benefits are generous, unemployment benefits are generous, health care is provided “free”. Luxury goods of all sorts are consumed in great quantities, vacations are long, pay is high, and the overarching, latent understanding, is that in a properly ordered society, no one should ever be compelled to make any sacrifice in the name of anything other than comfort.

To a great extent, this is an attractive paradigm. What American would not love four to six weeks annual vacation? Virtually no fear of losing your job? A social safety net that catches everyone, and subsidizes almost indefinitely people who simply don’t want to work? The Danes, we read, are the happiest people on Earth. And why not? Life is good.

So what is wrong with this? In a perfect world, nothing. But we do not live in a perfect world. History, as we call the process of change through violence and adaptation, has not ended. There are people who want what they have, and they are prepared in many cases to die to get it.

This creates a dichotomy: on one side, you have people who believe that life is supposed to be easy, and this leads necessarily to the conclusion that all conflict can be managed through negotiation, and that the sort of happiness they have, is what everyone should want; on the other, you have people with a radically different meaning system, who think that a life lived simply for pleasure is vulgar and decadent.

I am speaking, of course, of radical Islamists, who are gradually taking over Europe, and whose eventual victory is a demographic certainty, if nothing changes. Sybaritic Leftists simply do not have “place holder”—a peg to hang the concept on—of people who will not compromise as a matter of principle. Their world is one of pretending that life is all sunshine and roses, if people just decide to get along. Certainly, this is their life experience, one that has been in large measure enabled by American military hegemony.

In their political rhetoric, Sybaritic Leftists speak of equality, justice, human rights, and a host of other worthy ends. In their own social orders, inequalities of income are largely muted through taxation. Justice systems are impartial and fair, and their systems of government are largely in congruence with their stated ends.

Such is not the case with Cultural Sadeism. The Marquis de Sade—who incidentally sat in the far Left in the Revolutionary Assembly for a period of time—radically rejected the possibility of developing a coherent meaning system in a world characterized by pain. His solution to the meaning systems provided him—traditional virtue embodied in and through the Church teachings, and the behavior patterns of the French social order—was to reject it in total. He was an atheist who spoke of God as the cruelest invention of the human mind, who still permitted himself to imagine God as necessarily vindictive and cruel, as evidenced by the predations of man on man, and animal on animal, throughout His creation.

Virtue, you see, is the process by means of which sacrifice is sanctified. You give your life for your country out of love. You keep your word, even when it is difficult, because you cannot imagine being the sort of person who wouldn't. You feel shame—pain—if you fail to meet your own expectations and those of others. Virtue is a type of personal order—it tells you what to do—and it is a way of conquering pain. Marines take pride—pleasure—in their honor and fidelity, even though they are bought at the cost of pain.

Extended, Virtue is a means of developing and maintaining social order. The Sybaritic Leftists make their systems work in large measure because the people operating them are honest. The Danes are also, we read, the least corrupt nation on Earth.

Cultural Sadeists reject all of this. They posit that all so-called virtue is hypocritical. Everyone and everything is corrupt, broken, and only the sincerely evil are honest. Everything has to go: all traditions, all religions, all social orders whatsoever, except those dictated by them.

Robespierre, and St. Just, in justifying the torture and mass murder of largely innocent human beings, referenced “Virtue”. They even referenced compassion. How is this possible? By what process does one conclude that inverting traditional standards of convicting the guilty and acquitting the innocent counts as “justice”? All the loot stolen from the aristocrats (bourgeoisie in later Communist iterations of this) was appropriated by equally corrupt Revolutionaries, who simply used the chaos to line their own pockets (as, again, did later Communists).

The logic is this: the world is either fundamentally just, or corrupt. If any corruption is found anywhere, then one can faithfully conclude that world is fully corrupt. As such, it needs to be destroyed, in toto, and rebuilt. Now, moral orders are integral to social orders. Social orders that are imperfect are corrupt, and need to be destroyed. Logically, then, underlying moral orders also need to be destroyed.

The person who accomplishes this destruction is moral. This destruction is the foundationally moral act, and anything done in the name of that destruction is therefore just and virtuous.

This sounds ludicrous, of course, but 100 million corpses will attest to the fact that these ideas can and have been implemented. That this is insane, does not mean it didn't happen. It did.

The foundational goal of all Communist revolutionaries is to destroy clarity with respect to morality. They are often misunderstood, because they use the same language that Sybaritic Leftists do. They speak of human rights. They speak of justice. They speak of social renewal. They use all of the same words that decent, good people use. But in practice, they mean none of it.

Lenin claimed he was carrying out the Revolution in the name of the Workers. This is a standard Communist riff on the basic theme set down by Marx. Yet, if one looks dispassionately at what he did, upon assuming power, no conclusion is possible but that he took an objectively bad situation, in which Russian workers were being taken advantage of, and made it substantially worse.

Where they were being worked hard before, he increased their hours. Where they had safety issues before, he made them worse. Where they were underfed before, he initiated a ration card system where only those faithful to his agenda would be fed, and made it against the law to seek food elsewhere. Where their job security was tenuous before, he introduced the possibility of being sent to a concentration camp for crimes as small as being late to work a couple of times. And the list goes on.

As Orwell argued compellingly, one of the first requirements of mind control is language control. Rationality requires the capacity to identify concepts with realities. It is a heuristic system by means of which to manipulate symbols so as to uncover hidden underlying truths.

And yet, rationality is an "artifact" of the same social orders which these revolutionaries want to overthrow, and so it must be destroyed. The means of destruction is cognitive dissonance. Sybaritic Leftists, when they say "justice", mean what we would all recognize as justice. Cultural Sadeists, when they say justice, can mean absolutely anything. For example, Mao had all the villages in China draw up lists of "bourgeois criminals". He gave them percentages of "criminals", say 10%, which was their quota they had to meet. This meant that 10% of the villagers were to be convicted of crimes, without fail. He didn't care which 10%, and he didn't care if they had actually done anything. This was called justice.

When they were brainwashing our soldiers in the Korean War, they would show them two lines, one of which was clearly longer than the other. Using some combination of threats and enticements, they would convince our men to agree the two lines were even. This was often the beginning of the end for their "cognitive sovereignty".

Having rejected moral orders, then, the only possible means of organizing society is naked power. Reality becomes what you are told it is. Practically, conformity becomes the only possible virtue. **The problem of pain is solved by universalizing it. The problem of what to do is solved by subordinating the world to tyranny.**

We must remember that even though we differentiate Sadism and Masochism, the reality is that Sade was himself also a masochist, who enjoyed being beaten. His solution, again, to the problem of pain, was to make it the only reality that interested him. He preferred inflicting pain, but like mid-level Communist functionaries, was quite content to be a part of a system in which it was instead inflicted on him. How many of those who survived the purges of Stalin or Mao can really have believed that their friends who were led away to their doom were actually guilty? Surely the intrapsychic subterfuge that enabled their continuing loyalty was in part moral resignation?

What, then, is the relationship between Sybaritic Leftism and Cultural Sadeism? The relationship is rich, and distressingly close. First off, they use the same rhetoric. They are indistinguishable in this regard. This leads to moderates getting lumped together with radicals by their opponents, and to moderates themselves being deceived as to the radicals intentions.

If you look at the Revolutions that actually happened--in France, Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Korea, and others--what you will see, in the initial phase of the process, is a coalition of people using the same language. You will see, in my terms, genuine liberals (more on this in a moment), Sybaritic Leftists, and Cultural Sadeists. Yet, as the Revolution progresses, heads start to roll; literally in France, and figuratively everywhere else. The Sadeists have no principle but power. They know no morality but power. So they lie, cheat, and steal their way into power. They create an atmosphere in which to be accused of a crime is to be guilty of a crime, then start accusing their opponents of these crimes, for which the penalty in most cases is death.

Good examples are the execution by guillotine of the Girondist faction in France, or the several thousand competing nationalist leaders murdered by Giap, at Ho Chi Minh's request, in North Vietnam in the mid-forties. There were many genuine democrats in Lenin's coalition. All were killed, imprisoned or exiled.

The very moderation and humanity of Sybaritic Leftists blinds them to the naked hatred which motivates some of the people around them. They were used to great effect, for example, during our own Vietnam War. The Communists used words that resonated with them. They copied our Constitution. And they won the support of the Sybarites for a war that resulted in the enslavement of an entire nation.

There is a further relation. Sybarites take as their foundational premise the idea that life is supposed to be easy; that the goal of governments is to ensure this; that this is not just a desirable, but a possible goal. Formally, this leads to an erosion of traditional values. What is the point of patriotism, for example, if it leads to conflict? What is the point of

honor, when it can be manipulated for the ends of others? What is the point of a family if it interferes with your personal pleasure? What is the point, in general, of suffering which does not lead quickly to a visible, concrete reward?

Over time, this leads to a weakening of what might be termed the “chains of the sacred”. There can be no question that a commitment to duty constitutes a reduction in personal pleasure. Soldiers, for example, don’t get to do what they want, when they want. Committed Christians (or Muslims) have limits on their behavior which they accept. Sacrifice is literally an “act of the sacred”.

The root word for religion is “religio”, which literally means “to bind”, as best we can tell. I have been speaking of Meaning and Truth as existential answers to the problems of pain and action. This is to a great extent true, but clearly these answers happen in social fields, and the congruity and compatibility of our answers are what bind us together as human beings. They are what tell us what we might expect from others, at the same time they tell us what we OWE others. They create continuity and stability. More than that: they are both necessary and sufficient for human community and solidarity.

Any social order which rejects some form of “binding”, some form of the sacred, is one in which the members will lose one another. They will become alienated from one another. Not knowing what to expect from others, one is hesitant to offer too much trust. It is a documented fact that the more “multicultural” a given neighborhood or city is, the less trust is felt. This makes perfect sense, even though it flies in the face of politically correct dogma. Such dogma relies, in fact, on the Sybaritic Leftist notion that social integration—like everything else—OUGHT to be easy.

And in practice, the more or less casual rejection of tradition by Sybarites dovetails nicely with the principled rejection of moral values by the Sadeists. How can a society defend itself from moral subversion, when it has decided that no sacrifice which does not conform to the convenience of its members is worth making? That no danger could ever be so great as to lead to the overthrow of that order? This places that society at danger both of internal collapse, AND of military conquest.

Sadeism, then, is moral suicide. It is the rejection of morality, followed by inclusion in an order that tells you what to do, and makes conformity the only virtue. All stable principles and all rationality are rejected. Both the Nazis and the Communists were Sadeists. Truth is what they tell you it. Red is Green, and War is Peace.

Sybarism is a much slower form of suicide, much as Kurt Vonnegut claimed was the case for smoking. The symptoms of decline show up only intermittently, and only vaguely. To the extent that people are culturally homogeneous, they are greatly slowed, since the problem of alienation manifests with greater difficulty. Sybarism is not so much a collapse, as it is a rejection of the means by which to prevent a collapse.

To both, I would oppose true Liberalism, which I hope will be our future. Put as simply as possible, it consists simply in retaining shared notions of the sacred, within a politically

open framework. Liberals understand that life can be made easier, and will negotiate about the details of it, but understand that there can be no freedom without sacrifice, and no community without genuine, shared virtue.

As I use the term, Liberalism is a rejection of decadence, which enables a firm faith in the future based upon personal and cultural strength. We do not reject pleasure, but neither do we neglect our duties to understand our world, participate in it, oppose those who would destroy it, and work hard to make it better in a meaningful, and carefully considered way.

Diversity is a blessing, but only when we are also bound together in common cause. To the extent that we are doing what is right, we are protecting freedom. Freedom can only be valued by those who are morally alive.