

Don't Make Me Wonder

A few of my friends are convinced that woke activists plan on establishing a woke dictatorship. Overall, I deem this is paranoid hyperbole. Every now and then, however, I read a woke activist, and I briefly wonder if my paranoid, hyperbolic friends are right.

What am I supposed to think, for example, when George Mason University's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion announces that, "Anti-racism and inclusive excellence will be foundational in every program, process, policy and procedure at Mason"? Does this mean I have to stop teaching the economics of discrimination? Pointing out that the "diversity and inclusion" is an Orwellian smokescreen for uniformity and exclusion?

So far, GMU's DEI has yet to crack down on me. But I wonder if, one day, they will.

More of my friends are convinced that the Republican Party plans on establishing a Trumpian dictatorship. Again, this seems like an exaggeration. Yet when I listen to Trump, I start to wonder. What am I supposed to think when the man says things like this?

I went in yesterday and there was a television screen, and I said, "This is genius." Putin declares a big portion of the Ukraine — of Ukraine. Putin declares it as independent. Oh, that's wonderful.

The January 6 riots, similarly, were so hare-brained that I wouldn't call them a "coup attempt." That couldn't have been Trump's plan, right? Even so, he made me wonder. And I wonder still. The same goes for Viktor Orban. Does he want to be the Putin of Hungary? I don't know, but when he praises "illiberal democracy," he makes me wonder.

Or to take one last example, when I debate socialists, most of them never even mention the old Soviet bloc. They give the impression that their ideas have never been tried. Which makes me wonder: Are they unaware of the history of actually-existing socialism? Do they know, yet not care? Why do many socialists feel no need to unequivocally distance themselves from mass murderers who share their label? Maybe they don't think mass murder in the name of socialism is all that bad. Maybe they hope to do some themselves. Probably not, but latter-day socialists make me wonder.

All of this makes me meta-wonder: Why is anyone making me wonder if they're monsters? Why don't they go out of their way to reassure the world of their non-scary intentions? A few possibilities:

1. *Reassuring the world of your non-scary intentions is too hard.*

Assessment: Conceivably, but I don't buy it. Yes, some people are so hypersensitive that they'll assume the worst no matter what you say. But what about the rest of us?

2. *Reassuring the world of your non-scary intentions pays poorly.* When you share your ideas, you're appealing to friends and fellow travelers. They'll interpret your words charitable. Everyone else is a waste of your persuasive energy.

Assessment: Ugly, but fairly plausible.

3. *Reassuring the world of your non-scary intentions pays negatively.* Making thinly-veiled threats is a good way to get what you want, even if you would never follow through on those threats.

Assessment: Not so plausible. The main audience that hears thinly-veiled threats are your detractors. And your detractors are the last people who will bend the knee to you.

4. *Reassuring the world of your non-scary intentions is no fun.* Focusing on your own greatness is fun. Defusing misunderstandings about yourself is not fun.

Assessment: Again, plausible.

5. *The worst is true.*

Assessment: I wonder. Oh, how I wonder.