

Why I Don't Relish Leftist Rage

Written by Bryan Caplan.

Since the election, several people have privately asked me, "Well, whatever you think about Trump, don't you at least enjoy the attendant outrage of the left? At least that must make you happy, right?" Don't I want to see them choke on their own rage? Not at all.

In my misanthropic youth, the answer would have been a resounding yes. But in all honesty, I put away such childishness years ago. I have a rich, full life that affords me ample opportunities for pure joy. I have no need to seek out joy sullied by anger. And again in all honesty, I wish everyone else felt as I do. Living through this disgraceful election, and then seeing partisan pundits double down on their disgraceful behavior afterwards, just discourages me. This is especially true when I'm sympathetic to the conclusions of practitioners of the disgraceful behavior. Reasonable, fair-minded disagreement gives me hope; unreasonable, unfair agreement just creeps me out.

What about the unreasonable and unfair? Don't I want to see them choke on their own rage? Not at all. To give me pleasure, they would have to display a far rarer reaction: heart-felt repentance. All of the following would be music to my ears:

1. "Forgive me, for I have allowed my emotions to cloud my judgment. From now on, I'll strive to be calm when I analyze politics."
2. "Forgive me, for I have apologized for dishonesty, demagoguery, and half-truths. From now on, I'll prize truth over political victory."
3. "Forgive me, for I have trolled, stating arguments I know to be flawed in order to aggravate others. From now on, nobility comes first."
4. "Forgive me, for I have advocated collective punishment of groups I dislike, even though I know most members of these groups are innocent. From now on, I will make a special effort to treat members of groups I dislike justly."
5. "Forgive me, for I have advocated government coercion, even though it's far from clear that leaving people alone would lead to worse results. From now on, I embrace the presumption of liberty."

If any of these mea culpas come my way, I'll be delighted and grateful – and never say, "I told you so." But if repentance remains rare – as I firmly expect – I won't let it get me down. Any observant person who turns to politics for happiness is doomed to dismay. I have my Bubble, and it is enough.

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