

# What Do Liberal Abusers Really Think?

#MeToo's most notorious alleged sexual predators, Harvey Weinstein and Eric Schneiderman, were also prominent liberals. From *New York Magazine's* pre-scandal profile of Schneiderman:

*He has the soul of an activist—he sees himself as a movement progressive. And halfway through his term as A.G., Schneiderman, 58, has become New York's definitive liberal, using the national prominence his predecessors brought to the office to try to yank an increasingly centrist Democratic Party back toward its progressive roots. He's become a gatekeeper for the left.*

Even if both of these figures miraculously turned out to be innocent, there must be plenty of vocally left-wing perpetrators of sexual violence. My question: What do liberal abusers *really* think? What's actually going on inside their heads? Consider some possibilities:

1. *Global insincerity.* If you enjoy acts of sexual violence, vocal liberalism seems like a useful way to distract attention from your crimes. In their hearts, people like Weinstein and Schneiderman are apolitical. They don't care about the issues they claim to care about, and don't loathe the political "enemies" they claim to loathe.
2. *Local insincerity.* Another possibility is that liberal abusers are, by and large, sincere left-wing ideologues. But they covertly doubt liberal views (indeed, mainstream views) on sexual violence. So while they think it's OK to, say, beat their girlfriends, they earnestly yearn for a \$15 minimum wage.
3. *Reactionary-in-liberal clothing.* Perhaps liberal abusers are secret but sincere proponents of reactionary patriarchy. They think women are their born slaves, so they have every right to engage in unrestrained sexual violence.
4. *The political is not personal.* Some utilitarians think that utilitarianism is an ethic for governance, not personal behavior. Perhaps some liberals picture liberalism the same way: *Society* should adhere to leftist norms, but individual liberals are free to pursue their self-interest as they think best.
5. *Self-control problems.* Saint Paul famously said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Perhaps liberal abusers face the same demons. They

deeply love liberal ideals – including ideals about proper sexual behavior. But when they interact with actual women, they're overcome by their own lust and anger.

6. *Self-conscious evil*. Rather than suffering from self-control problems, perhaps liberal abusers just don't *feel* like doing what they think is right. While they're perfectly able to control their impulses, and concede that their impulses are immoral, they choose evil anyway because it's more fun for them.

Conservatives probably gravitate to explanation #1, while liberals will more likely favor #5. To me, mix of #2 and #6 is most psychologically plausible. It's hard to believe that liberal abusers are globally apolitical; that's taking method acting to an inhuman level. Still, liberal abusers have an especially strong motive to exaggerate their commitment to feminism. That said, their behavior probably falls far short of whatever looser norms they do accept. Furthermore, since abusers are almost always repeat offenders, I don't buy "self-control" excuses. After all, a multitude of commitment strategies are available to any latter-day Paul who "just can't help himself" – starting with "never spend time alone with non-relatives of the opposite sex."