

A Survey of Right-wing Impresarios

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In an earlier essay, “Understanding The Right Wing”, I outlined the case that in order to vote for right-wing politicians, one must be one of two things. Either one is immoral (affluent, and know exactly what one is doing) or one is ignorant (non-affluent, yet horrendously misled about what ails the working class). There is no other possible explanation for endorsing a right-wing agenda.

Thus, there are two demographics of which the right wing is composed:

- The rich and immoral
- The well-meaning yet tremendously ill-informed / credulous

The former are the impresarios of right-wing propaganda (while the latter end up being the credulous, often well-meaning, followers). The right wing, then, is comprised of the dupers and the duped. The present essay is on the former. (For discussion the latter, see my essays on The New Millerites.) It is necessary to discern a common thread that runs through the more prominent dogma-mongers. Surveying a sample set of 43 celebrity bloviators is sufficient to reveal a trend. In random order:

1. Phyllis Schlafly
2. William F. Buckley Jr.
3. George Will
4. Ann Coulter
5. Sean Hannity
6. Glenn Beck
7. Michael Savage
8. Mark Levin
9. Jonah Goldberg
10. Larry Schweickart
11. Andrew Breitbart
12. Norman Podhoretz
13. Dick Morris
14. Michele Malkin
15. Robert Kagan
16. Bill Kristol
17. Tucker Carlson
18. Megyn Kelly
19. Michael Medved
20. Dinesh D’Souza
21. Charles Krauthammer
22. Thomas Sowell
23. Karl Rove
24. Fred Barnes
25. Grover Norquist
26. Irving Kristol
27. Bernard Goldberg

28. Brigitte Gabrielle
29. Laura Ingraham
30. David Barton
31. Peggy Noonan
32. David Horowitz
33. Ben Stein
34. Rush Limbaugh
35. James Dobson
36. Matt Drudge
37. Mike Gallagher
38. Laura Schlessinger
39. Roger Ailes
40. Michael Ledeen
41. Richard Lowry
42. Paul Gigot
43. Mark Steyn

Surveying this cavalcade of wing-nuts and blowhards, one is compelled to ask: **What do all these figures have in common**—other than the fact that they’re all wing-nuts and blowhards? To be sure, one notes a staggering degree of dishonesty, egregious ignorance, and flagrant mendacity. Bottom line: They are all charlatans. They get paid to bloviate and provide specious apologetics for the absurd, to concoct rationalizations for indefensible positions. But there seems to be far more to the story. Such people seem to break down into three groups.

Type 1 Impresarios:

Those who are *calculating* in their brazen wrong-ness (Buckley, Will, Stein, Kagan, B. Goldberg, Sowell, Norquist, Irving Kristol, Gigot, and Rove). These people are often relatively bright (though typically think that they are far smarter than they actually are), and they know *exactly* what they’re doing. They are devious, scheming, and have absolutely no shame. Most likely, they don’t actually believe a word that they say—but have a vested interest in pretending that they do. (For more on this, see my essay, *The Non-Millerite Pro-Millerites*.)

Their apodictic nature betrays a false pride: they are *kinda* smart people who are stupendously wrong...masquerading as *extremely* smart people who are stupendously right. This could be called the “Niall Ferguson” Syndrome...named after the preposterous English media pundit who is unapologetically pro-colonialist and still mourns the fall of the British Empire—while masquerading as a “scholar” in right-wing circles. The pernicious nature of these men is often lost on an ill-informed citizenry. Their duplicity goes un-noticed, as they operate “behind the scenes” (point in case: the notorious Koch brothers).

Type 2 Impresarios:

Those who are—though not complete imbeciles—utterly oblivious and obstinately ideological (R. Limbaugh, Schlafly, Noonan, Coulter, Schweickart, Horowitz, B. Kristol, Morris, Malkin, Carlson, Podhoretz, Drudge, Schlessinger, Ailes, Barnes, Krauthammer, J. Goldberg, Gabrielle, Ingraham, Ledeen, Lowry, Steyn, and Barton). These are generally people who aren't very bright yet think they ARE bright...and have succumbed to the delusion that they are profoundly insightful. Though of middling intelligence, they are under the impression that they have something wise to say about most things when, in fact, most don't know much about anything.

Many of these people have an ax to grind—or personal issues with which they are dealing. They are textbook charlatans, masquerading as gurus even as their glaring ignorance is paraded about for all to see. Such people have mastered the art of repressing any shame they might feel. On some level, they may know that they're full of shit...but they delude themselves into thinking they have Truth on their side. They typically have some kind of duende—a knack for persuading credulous audiences that they are worth listening to, and are thereby able to garner power. Normally, they're completely full of shit...and claim to know things that they simply don't know. Standard charlatans.

Type 3 Impresarios:

Those who are just plain dumb (Dobson, Hannity, Beck, Savage, D'Souza, Gallagher, Levin, Breitbart, Kelly, and Medved). The hogwash peddled by these figures can be accounted for by nothing short of sheer, raw idiocy—partly attributable to low IQ, partly attributable to psychological problems (e.g. severe insecurity issues, neuroses, groping for an identity, etc.) Figures of this type are typically quite delusional. They know almost nothing about anything—and make a career out of pretending otherwise. Such people require no shame simply because they are completely disconnected from Reality. They genuinely believe everything they say—as their minds are incapable of conceiving otherwise.

So it is, we have those who've prostituted otherwise promising minds for iniquitous purposes, those who aren't very bright but pretend to be, and those who are simply imbeciles. As far as right-wing politicians go, we find the same cross-section in each category:

1. The king of all impresarios is probably George Shultz. Other prime examples: Phil Graham, the Koch brothers, Alan Greenspan, Larry Summers, Hank Paulson, Robert Rubin, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, John Ashcroft, Elliot Abrams, Henry Kissinger, and Antonin Scalia fall into the first group. (This list is fairly limited, as most marginally intelligent men don't mis-use their mental capacities so egregiously. These are the figures who do not have a low IQ as an excuse for their malfeasance.)
2. Joe Lieberman, Darrell Issa, Rahm Emanuel, Newt Gingrich, Dick Cheney, Mitt Romney, Douglas Feith, Casper Weinberger, Rick Perry, Jack Abramoff, Andrew Card, Jean Kirkpatrick, Donald Rumsfeld, Eric Cantor, Paul Ryan, Mitch Daniels, Lindsey Graham, and Tom Delay fall into the second group. (These are simply well-known examples. The catalogue of powerful people who aren't very bright and have iniquitous motives seems endless. For example, most Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Defense since World War II have fit this profile.)
3. Rudy Giuliani, Clarence Thomas, Peter King, Jeff Sessions, John Kyle, G.W. Bush, Sarah Palin, Rick Santorum, Jim De Mint, Dick Armey, Mitch McConnell, John Boehner, and Michele Bachmann fall into the third group. (These are some of the most obvious cases. There is an endless list of utter imbeciles who rise to positions of power—many of whom are not in the limelight.)

With this sample set, we see that 25% of right-wing icons are type 1 impresarios, 50% are type 2, and 25% are type 3. Different people become right-wing impresarios for different reasons, but whether one is devious (1), deluded (2), or mentally stunted (3), the outcome is the same: obstinately pushing horrendous

policies with a brazen self-righteousness...and causing tremendous harm to society. The type 1 impresarios are examples of mendacity and avarice (what I call the non-Millerite pro-Millerites). The type 2 impresarios aren't even sufficiently competent to manage a small-town corner store...yet they somehow finagle their way into the Halls of Power. The type 3 impresarios are barely qualified to bag groceries at the local food mart, yet are influencing public policy at a national level. This is extremely disturbing. When people who know almost nothing about anything are running our society, we should take pause.

All three groups boast examples of pathology—and, in a couple cases, perhaps even psychosis. Some mixture of malice and idiocy seems to play a role in each case, in various ways, for different reasons. Which group contains the most egregious cases of degeneracy is difficult to say. What one can surmise is: If an anthropologist from an advanced alien civilization were to take the aforementioned individuals as specimens of humanity, the assessment for homo sapiens would be quite dismal.

Alas, in today's society, these are too often the kinds of people who "succeed". To understand how such figures rise to positions of power, it is necessary to undertake a critical analysis of the tens of millions of people who swallow right-wing propaganda. What kind of person, we must ask, would be credulous enough to take an ultra-right-wing figure seriously? A right-wing follower must be oblivious to the mendacity of the first group, the charlatantry of the second group, and the imbecility of the third group. In each case, a follower seems to be a sucker for different reasons.

Obliviousness to the first group is somewhat understandable, as many Americans are not BOTH highly-educated AND stupendously well-informed—conditions that may be required to be aware of what's going on behind the scenes. In order to be duped by the second group, one must be relatively out of touch, marginally credulous, and easily seduced. Moreover, one's critical / analytical thinking skills must be wanting. If one perceives credence to right-wing sophistry, one's knowledge-base must be dismally limited. To be duped by the third group, one must be so utterly oblivious that there is grave cause for concern.

It is important to understand that human psychology is not nearly as simple as these categories imply. For each individual, there is a potpourri of various internal (i.e. psychological) and external (i.e. social) factors at play, each playing off of one another. Distinctions between merely dunderheaded and completely bonkers are relevant. There is a difference between the patent absurdity of a Glenn Beck (moron) and the downright lunacy of Jim Jones (psychopath).

This compartmentalization, then, isn't a matter of resorting to sophomoric pejoratives so as to wage adolescent ad hominem attacks, nor is it succumbing to the temptation to indulge in oversimplification. Rather, it is an attempt to offer helpful explanations for iniquity by diagnosing the different motives and mental conditions that may lead to it. Such taxonomy is the nature of pragmatic stereotyping.

For each figure listed above, there are different elements involved in the right-wing fanaticism: some mixture of ignorance and psychosis, in conjunction with a panoply of ambient social forces that have impinged on that person. These are all independent variables. Ignorance and psychosis don't have any necessary correlation: one can exist in extremis without the other.

So we have the nutty obstinacy of, say, a Sean Hannity or a Dinesh D'Souza that is primarily attributable to dimwittedness, epic obtuseness, and yawning ignorance...coupled with severe character defects: avarice, greed, narcissism, shamelessness, myopia, careerism gone haywire, etc. Meanwhile, we have the sociopath-like conduct of, say, a Himmler or Pol Pot, which is primarily attributable to psychopathy. Being willfully dimwitted and obtuse is one thing, being a lunatic is another: but the two aren't mutually exclusive, as we've seen with, say a Mao Tse Tung or a Mark Levin.

Either way, we wind up with a pathological obsession with right-wing ideology—and the cult of personality that often accompanies such celebrity personalities. One extreme is pure idiocy; the other is bat-shit crazy. More often than not, though, the obsessive ideological bent is *the result of some mixture of the two*. One extreme is an idiot who has been given power; the other extreme is a crazy person who has managed to accrue power. Most right-wing impresarios exhibit some combination of the two, yielding a condition of delusion, neurosis, and preposterous beliefs.

It's a hunch of mine that psychosis and willful venality is involved more with the type 1 impresarios while sheer ignorance and mental deficiency plays a larger role with type 3 impresarios. It's the type 2 impresarios that are the most complex—as they represent a variety of unholy cocktails: some ignorance, some psychosis, and miscellaneous accidents of circumstance that endowed the person with malignancy.

Target Audience:

If ignorance is bliss, the G.O.P. offers paradise. One fact illustrates it all: The Republican National Committee rents the massive e-mail list of the notorious website, *WorldNetDaily*. That the two have the same target audience is both deeply disturbing and not at all surprising. After all, most right-wing followers receive their “information” from such esteemed sources as FoxNews and Andrew Breitbart. Bombastic rants, pernicious tirades, and endless bloviation therefore fill the media—enabling the impresarios to ply their trade.

It is safe to say that if the 84 people listed above had never been born, the world would now be a much better off place. Alas, bad people will always be among us—seeking to exploit insecurity, credulity, and ignorance for their own ends. The key, then, is to ensure that the general public remain vigilant and well-informed, so that bad people are never able to gain power. All three kinds of impresarios are only able to garner status by capitalizing on an ill-informed target audience groping for something to hold on to.