

From a Chat to Metapolitics: A Journey in Thought

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In mid-August of 2016, I was included in a group of five people sitting around a table chatting at the University of Vermont, which is in the city of Burlington, Vermont's largest, 42,000 people. Four of us were a current or retired faculty member at the university and the other was a new dean who had arrived in town from California a few weeks earlier. Basically the occasion was to meet and welcome the newcomer; he was center stage. No big agenda, professional small talk over coffee.

During the conversation, the new arrival—I'll call him Bill—commented that he was indeed happy to come to Vermont, great state, but that he realized it takes a generation to be accepted by Vermonters as one of them, as a real Vermonter. I remembered being told that same thing soon after I came to Vermont from Minnesota over forty years ago to take up my duties as a tenure track assistant professor at the university. The assumption behind this conventional wisdom is that Vermonters have a strong and positive sense of who they are as a unique people and feel connected and committed to one another and to this place and to their way of life, and that it takes a good measure of socialization and accommodation for an outsider to become one of them.

“I'm not sure what you said is true, Bill, or true now anyway,” I offered. “I mean, Bernie Sanders came here from New York City back when I did and he's a senator. And Howard Dean, another presidential candidate from this state, in 2004, came here from Massachusetts, I think it was, and he got to be governor. I felt checked out and kept at a distance by Vermonters when I first got here, but I don't think this sort of thing goes on much now, if it goes on at all.”

“That’s interesting,” Bill responded. . . . “I’m an avid bicyclist and did it a lot of it in California. There are some really good bike trails down around the lake [Lake Champlain]. I went biking yesterday and the view of the lake and the Adirondacks [mountains] is spectacular. It’s going to be excellent for that here.”

That evening I thought about the exchange, such as it was, with Bill earlier in the day.

I brought up an image of Bernie Sanders in the old days—young, tall, not hunched over as he is now, abundant dark curly hair—running for state offices on the fringe left-wing Liberty Union Party ticket and getting a percentage point or two of the vote. Bernie’s remarkable political rise since then prompted me to Google the 1970 Vermont state office holders and compare them to the current ones, and to check out presidential voting in the state since that time, to see if what went on with Bernie seems to fit into a larger pattern.

In 1970, the U.S. senators from Vermont were Republican Winston Prouty, born in Newport, Vermont, and Republican George Aiken, from Brattleboro, Vermont. Now, Vermont’s senators are Democrat Patrick Leahy, born in Montpelier Vermont, and Independent, though he caucuses with the Democrats, Bernard Sanders from Brooklyn, New York.

The U.S. Representative—Vermont has just one—back in 1970 was Republican Robert Stafford from Rutland, Vermont. Now, it’s Democrat Peter Welch, born in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The governor in 1970 was Republican Deane Davis, born in East Barre, Vermont. Now, it is Democrat Peter Shumlin. Shumlin is a native Vermonter, from the town of Brattleboro, though with his father’s Russian Jewish heritage and his mother being from the Netherlands, I wouldn’t call him a typical Vermonter.

As for presidential elections, with the exception of 1972 (Democrat George McGovern lost everywhere but Massachusetts and the District of Columbia that year), there has been a neat split: until 1988 Vermont went Republican in the presidential election, and since then it has gone Democrat. At this writing, that trend seems likely to continue in the 2016 presidential election.

Based on these data, politically Vermont has gone from insiders to outsiders and from Republicans to Democrats. In the parlance of our time, Vermont has transformed from a red state to a blue state.

I thought about my experience over the years with native Vermonters. My most extensive contacts with them have been in elementary and secondary schools as part of my work as an education professor and in my university courses. I decided that, yes, the takes-a-generation notion had some validity when I first came to this state, but there is little if any truth to it at the present time. As far as I can tell, Vermonters these years possess no particular cultural or geographic identity, no allegiance to a tradition or way of life, no feeling of obligation to their ancestors to keep anything going or build on anything. It seems that there's been a cultural as well as a political transformation in this state in the time since I've been here.

My mind then flashed on Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), an Italian theorist and politician—less than five feet tall, by the way—whose writings about cultural change have influenced my thinking and work as an academic in education. (Check Amazon for a list of his writings.) Gramsci was a member of the Italian Communist party who was imprisoned by the Mussolini regime for a time. Although his ideological orientation and my own differ markedly, I have found his analyses instructive. I get ideas anywhere I can find them.

Gramsci expanded upon the Marxist concept of *cultural hegemony*. Culture has to do with the worldview and ways of a group of

people, how they see themselves and where they come from, and their beliefs, perceptions, explanations, norms and standards, what they value and consider highest, what they most cherish. Hegemony refers to that which is dominant or most influential. Cultural hegemony—cultural dominance—is achieved when a movement propagates its preferred way of thinking and behaving to the point that it becomes the shared, common sense outlook of the masses. Once cultural hegemony is in place, social, political, and economic programs can be more readily implemented.

To Gramsci, the battle, the struggle, to control or alter the world, to get you and yours one up on them and theirs, to subordinate, diminish, hurt, supplant, or destroy the enemy, is in the first instance, and most crucially, cultural. What most characterizes Gramsci's Neo- or Cultural Marxism from classical Marxism is its emphasis on transforming the culture. This contrasts with politicizing and activating a particular segment of society, namely, the working class. The focus here is on re-educating the hearts and minds of everyone, including, and most particularly, the educated middle and upper classes, whose acquiescence, support, and leadership are vital to achieving the utopian society being pursued, even if in reality this program may be detrimental to their own interests.

Gramsci underscored the importance and centrality of schooling and the mass media in attaining cultural hegemony. His assertions along this line align with my own thinking and experience and have given direction to my work in education. Indeed, to understand the cultural changes, as well as the politics, in Vermont these past decades is to gain insight into the ways the media and schools have shaped or conditioned the outlook of the people who live here, particularly young people. Consider the lives of children and adolescents: all day, every day in schools being told what to think and do by teachers, and then doing assigned night and weekend work on top of that; it's called homework. And much of

the rest of their time being spent with the media: television, movies, the music industry, video games, and in recent years, social media.

Even though there is less time spent in classrooms, university life is similar. Students aren't really *studying* anything; rather, they are *taking courses*, designed and tightly controlled by faculty. They listen to lectures three times a week, read the books listed in the syllabus, write papers on the topics the professor assigns, and take tests the professor constructs. Don't cross him if you want his approval and a good grade in the course, as well as a favorable recommendation letter from him when you need one. It's important to note that the residential, set-apart, cloistered dimension of the university experience provides the opportunity for cultural education or training to take place outside of the contexts of academic courses, in dormitory-based programs and organizations and through invited speakers.

During my time at the university, I developed a graduate course entitled *The Mass Media as Educator* with the following course description:

Analysis and assessment of the mass media's teachings about reality and worth and how to live our lives individually and collectively.

The premise behind the course is that the creators of media not only provide entertainment and diversion, they are also, consciously or unconsciously — and it is most often consciously — instruct, they educate; they provide lessons, as it were, in what to believe and value and how to conduct one's life. It's revealing to look at any television show or movie or song lyric or video game as a school of sorts. With reference to anything you care about—with this magazine's readers, it might be the status and fate of white people—ask yourself, what does this particular "school" teach and how does it go about it.

An example that comes to mind is the “American Idol” school, which ran on American television for 15 years and whose success has been described in an academic on the media as “unparalleled in broadcasting history.”¹ While we watched the televised talent competition, we also were being taught some important lessons about race, including:

- Blacks and whites are equal. Blacks can sing at least as well as whites, if not better, and that counts for something, because singing well really matters, to the point that you are an idol if you can sing a popular song exceptionally well. Hitting a high note becomes the standard of measure, rather than, say, blacks’ and whites’ educational accomplishments or contributions to science and technology.
- Whites, and particularly white men, are nothing special—a white judge, a black judge, a man, a woman, a white singer, a black singer, all the same, interchangeable; egalitarianism confirmed.
- Racial integration is good; here we all are, mixed in together, and it’s working out great.
- Music industry-produced popular music, with its political and cultural messages, should be taken very seriously.
- Whites should acknowledge and defer to their black betters (white singers dutifully listening to critiques of their performances from black judges).

You get the idea. Kids, and adults too, in Richford Vermont, watching and learning.

I’ll leave this topic with the generalization that the mainstream media systematically undercut the traditional Vermont way of life, disparage it, pull the rug out from under it. Beyoncé’s performance at halftime during the Super Bowl last year with its skimpy outfits and gyrations and celebration of the Black Panthers

was not exactly an endorsement of the Vermont heritage. Also, I'll offer the recommendation that you look into the superb writings on the media by Edmund Connelly for *The Occidental Observer*, an online magazine (where this article was first posted). Find Connelly's name in the TOO's author archives and look through his writings.

And last, here is a list of some of my writings on the media. You can find them on this site. Scroll through the writings to find them.

- “Ken Burns’ Show Business.” An analysis of filmmaker Ken Burns' seven-part documentary on World War II, "The War," shown on PBS in late 2007. I analyze the documentary from the perspective of what I call the four rules of successful show business (Burns exemplifies them). I define show business broadly to include anyone in the business of showing in a way that makes them or what they are putting on display look good to others. Teachers, journalists, and politicians are in show business. For that matter, we are all in show business, even if it is only to get a date or a marriage partner or secure a job. I'm in show business writing this. You can note how someone in an area you care about—Donald Trump, say—matches up with these four rules of show business.
- “The Tale of John Kasper.” In 1956, twenty-six-year-old John Kasper traveled to Clinton, Tennessee, which is just outside Knoxville, to combat school integration in that city. Kasper's exploits in Clinton received international media attention.
- “A Message in the In-box.” An example of how local and national media covered my work in the university around race. There was a stark contrast between reality—what I was actually doing and why—and how it was depicted. But how were readers to know that?

- “How They Get Us to Watch the Super Bowl: An Inquiry into Sport Marketing Strategies.” Much can be learned from the ways sport exhibition companies use the media to sell their products.
- “‘Moneyball’ [the film *Moneyball*]: An Inquiry into Media Manipulation.” Important to note in this article is that the film’s screenwriter and guiding force Aaron Sorkin chose the appealing actors Brad Pitt and Jonah Hill to “teach” the racial and ethnic “curriculum” in this film.
- “The Orlando Shootings: Talk, Reality, and *The New York Times*.” How the *Times* covered killings at a gay bar in Orlando, Florida in June of 2016. Most people assume a separation between news reporting and editorial content in the *Times*. Not so; one and the same.

In recent years I have observed my students becoming increasingly involved with social media to the point that it has become a truly remarkable phenomenon. It looks to me as if Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and text messaging go on virtually non-stop every waking moment of the day — including walking along the street and waiting at the traffic light, eating at a restaurant, during the ballgame, and yes, furtively during classes. My impression is that social media, up to now at least, has fostered a disconnect with concrete reality, plugged people into the popular culture and its imperatives, encouraged a “now” time orientation (both the past and the future become beside the point), and promoted group thought, conformity to current orthodoxies, and immaturity. None of that is good news for those interested in the focus of this magazine, promoting the cause of white people.

Some of my writings in the writings section of this site about social media that grew out of my experience with college students and concerns as a parent of a pre-teen daughter:

- “An Educator’s 10 Concerns About Social Media.”
- “Personal Computer Use in Our Time: An Addiction?”
- “Social Media, Young People, and the Challenges for White Activism.”

Over the past few decades, and increasingly, schools at all levels, though especially in the university, have been influenced by Cultural Marxism. Scholarship and intellectual autonomy have given way to advocating causes and mind management: multiculturalism, diversity, white villainy (racism, white supremacy, oppression, privilege), social justice, and political correctness. Vermont students, so it is believed, need to be reminded not of what is unique and finest about them but rather of their insularity and backwardness. Who are they to believe that there is anything special about them or their way of life? As a matter of fact, they need to be told to clean up their acts.

The following excerpt from a letter to the editor of a newspaper in response to an article demonizing me for my writings on race from a white perspective communicates a sense of what it is like for a Vermonter in the university.

I took a class taught by Professor Griffin. . . . In a private conversation, he encouraged me to never allow anyone to make me feel ashamed of where I came from. This was the exact opposite message that I received in the university’s mandatory race and culture class, where I was made to be more ashamed of my skin color than I ever thought possible.

In an effort to counter this currently dominant thrust, I developed a university course entitled Traditionalist Education. Its course description gets at what it’s about:

Perspectives on schooling at all levels directed at preserving and extending a heritage (cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, regional, national), or promoting individual freedom, character, or academic excellence.

I can't say the course has had any measurable effect on anything, but I felt it an honorable thing to do to conceptualize it and shepherd it through the process of approval as a permanent course offering.

The bottom line, the generalization: schools have contributed greatly to the loss of the cultural hegemony native Vermonters once possessed in their home state.

Some articles of mine in the writings section of this site about education:

- “A Needed Paradigm Shift in Education.” Where, in my view, American schooling has come from historically and where it is now.
- “Totalism and Thought Reform in American Universities.” There is a long and short (or relatively short) version of this available on the site.
- “Critical Theory in the American University: A Critical Issue.”
- “*Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*, by James Loewen.” A book review
- “Joseph K., Kenny Rogers, and Me: My Experience in an American University.”

It seems to me that a cultural message of the following sort (the reader is invited to read it over and improve on it) needs to be communicated to white people, particularly the young:

You are white and that matters incredibly. You can be very, very proud of who you are. You owe it to yourself to learn about the best your race has thought and achieved over the span of its history so that you will know why. Being a white person carries with it responsibilities: You need to develop your mind and body and character and personal effectiveness so that you can live honorably and decently and productively as a white man or woman by the highest standards of your race. And you should feel an obligation to protect and enhance the places your forebears left to your care, and to look out for the wellbeing of your racial kinsmen.

The question, of course, is how to impart this message (or one that's better). The first thing that comes to mind is to do what the Cultural Marxists and their liberal allies have done so effectively in recent decades through the schools and the mass media, except do it in reverse: that is, instead of tearing down whites and their ways and their heritage, build them up.

The problem with that approach, however, is that anybody disposed to go in that direction would not have ready access to the schools and to the mainstream media. Entities that train and license teachers and the schools that hire them have zero tolerance for white consciousness and commitment, and white activists don't control movie studios, television networks, newspapers, and record labels. Also, going public with anything favorable about white people is dangerous: it's a way to get smeared, harassed, snubbed, and marginalized, and to lose your job or not get the one you applied for, as well as to get rejected in school applications. The evidence demonstrates that those who have advocated for whites under their own names—no exceptions I can think of—have paid heavy dues for it.

Which is not to say that the cause is hopeless. It's a benevolent universe. Almost always, where there is a will — a clear intention — indeed there is a way. So write your book or make your movie or forge a career in education or start your organization or run for political office, whatever it is. But keep in mind that you are going to rub the people currently in power the wrong way and they are going to do their best to get you for it, so you need to be savvy about how you go at it or you'll be beaten to a pulp.

Even if it turns out that your efforts don't meet with success, that doesn't mean the work wasn't worth it. I think of Albert Camus' book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.² Your path in life and mine might be Sisyphus' — spending our time on earth pushing a boulder up a mountain only to have it roll back down on us. But contrary to what one might suppose — and I can give personal testimony to this — this futile existence can be personally gratifying. Living with integrity, in alignment with one's highest values and purposes, successful outcomes or not, results in an overall, pervasive, sense of satisfaction with oneself and one's life. As Camus put it in his book, “The struggle itself is enough to fill man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.” Plus, even if you don't get your boulder all the way up the mountain, boulder pushing strengthens your muscles and makes you more powerful in the other areas of your life. More, your diligence pushing a boulder might inspire others who are better at pushing boulders than you are to push ones that do get to the top of the mountain.

A big reason for hope in this day and age are the possibilities provided by the Internet and social media for getting messages across. I personally am a creature of the Internet in my race-oriented writing—books, articles, my personal web site. I would be publically silent on the topic of race if it weren't for the Internet. You wouldn't be reading this if it weren't for the Internet.

A prime example of the effective use of electronic communication currently is the Alt-Right (Alternative Right), which is largely an online phenomenon—web sites, Twitter, podcasts, boards such as 4chan, memes, and so on.³ The Occidental Observer, an online webzine where this writing was originally posted, and its editor Kevin Macdonald are prominent in the Alt-Right. In recent weeks [remember, this was written in late August, 2016.] the Alt-Right has come to the attention of the general public because of its support of Donald Trump’s presidential candidacy.

Alt-Right writers draw a distinction I find useful between the political and *metapolitical*. Metapolitical sounds to me to be akin to cultural in the term cultural hegemony.

Greg Johnson on his Alt-Right site *Counter-Currents*:

I am of the opinion that the most important avenues of attack for us are media and culture, not the political process or forming a party. . . . The strategy I prefer is metapolitical. Our ideas are the truth and we must evangelize our truth to our people through social, cultural, and literary means.⁴

Lawrence Murray on his site, *Atlantic Centurian*:

Metapolitics deals with the underlying causes and conditions of political change. Metapolitics operates on two levels: *intellectual* and *organizational*. Metapolitical *ideas* include moral systems, religions, collective identities (tribal, national, racial), and assumptions about what is politically possible. Metapolitical *organizations* propagate metapolitical ideas, bridging the gap between theory and practice.⁵

The political and metapolitical are interactive phenomena. Political realities affect metapolitics; and the reverse is also true: metapolitics affects politics. Having both constructs to work with (I’ll use cultural and educational as synonyms for metapolitical) is helpful in the context of this writing. They provide lenses for

understanding and assessing past and present political and metapolitical circumstances and their interplay, and for charting ways forward. What's gone on? How's it going now? What should happen next?

Keeping both the political and the metapolitical realms in mind, here are some questions/issues that come to mind:

- How is the Alt-Right doing in the political realm? In particular, what are the political advantages and disadvantages, and likely political consequences, of the support for Trump? Will it hurt Trump? Will it help the Alt Right?
- How is the Alt-Right doing in the metapolitical realm? Back to Trump, how has he affected things culturally? Is Trump a good teacher of the Alt-Right, or white racial, metapolitical “curriculum”? How about these web sites? The Right Stuff. American Renaissance. The Daily Storner. RADIX. The Occidental Obsever. VDare. Alternative Right. And this think tank? The National Policy Institute? And this journal? *The Occidental Quarterly*. Check their sites out online.
- How is the Alt-Right and white activism doing with woman both politically and culturally? These efforts have been male-dominated. I get the sense that, in the main, the Alt-Right and white activism tend to be turn-offs to women. To the extent that that is true, why, and what can be done about it?
- How are the Alt-Right and race realism doing with white university students and educated white people generally? In an article for *The Occidental Observer*, which was also published in its companion journal *The Occidental Quarterly*, I described a fictional “John Jones,” a composite of actual students I had worked with in the university.

John Jones has been in the hands of the enemies of white people all of his life, many of which, interestingly enough,

have been white gentiles like John. If there has ever been anything or anybody bad in the history of life on planet Earth, according to the people who have had his ear and graded his papers—the mass media, politicians, textbooks and teachers--a white like him did it. Slaveowners, Nazis, brutish rural hicks and rednecks?—his people. Who slaughtered the Indians?—there you go. The exploiters of colonial peoples? That's right. Thomas Jefferson? He had a thing going with his slave. Who kept Jackie Robinson out of baseball? Three guesses. The dreaded sexist, autocratic, privileged, oppressive white male? All John has to do is look in a mirror. Racists and haters?—the referent isn't Jewish and black racism and hate. Homophobes? Who killed Mathew Shepard? John's kind did, that's who. The religious right? Scary wackos. John's Catholic? Pedophile priests, come on.

For all practical purposes John's heart and mind have been had when it comes to race. The mind shaping has worked. John associates his whiteness with guilt and shame. His racial identity is nothing to bring front and center and be proud of; rather, it is something to atone for. And why should John see things any other way? He couldn't name a white advocate or a white organization if his life depended on it. John Jones knows infinitely more about LeBron James and the NBA than he does about race realism. Whites have no interests, no need for solidarity, no need for leadership or organization or collective action, no need for self-determination. Every other group on the face of the earth, yes; whites, no. To go in that direction is to be a racist bad guy and John Jones needs to be a good guy, in his own eyes and in the eyes of others. In John's mind, for whites to love their race and to work for its betterment they must feel superior to other races and hostility toward them and want to lord it over them.

John's graduating from the university in June and hopes to get a good job. Depending on how the job interviews go, he might wait tables this summer in Colorado. Up the line,

he'd like to have a family and live a respectable and happy and peaceful life.

Or let's say John's older. There's the job working for Aetna and the wife and two kids and a mortgage and visiting his aging parents on Sundays after the church services. The grass needs cutting and his son is on a Little League team he's coaching and his daughter is in a ballet recital coming up and he's concerned about her getting bullied in school and through the Internet. His wife is staying late at work a lot and he's starting to get suspicious. And he's wondering if he has diabetes; anyway, he's tired all the time. It's Tuesday evening at 7:30 and he has just finished putting away the dishes after the dinner he cooked (his wife had to work late) and his kids are in their rooms doing homework or something.⁶

How are we doing with John Jones? What are we going to do with John Jones?

It's important to engage in both the political and metapolitical (cultural, educational) realms vigorously and concurrently, all the while keeping an eye on how activities in each realm have an impact on the other. My basic posture with reference to just about anything — a work project, a family, artistic creations, a sports team, a social/political movement — is that people involved in these undertakings should do what they most believe in doing and can do well. So whatever people are doing now, say in the Alt-Right movement with their web sites, if upon reflection it feels right to them, keep it going.

It's important to keep in mind, however, that no matter what anybody does, it isn't everything; other things need doing as well. For example, currently there is a strong presence in the Alt-Right movement of a hard-edged, mocking, sarcastic persona and approach. That's effective — with some people. A soft-edged, respectful, and sincere manner and way of doing things is effective too — with some people. Another example: a good number of

excellent intellectual, scholarly, “big picture” analyses and proposals are being produced—how everything works and basically what ought to happen. That’s very much needed; do that if it’s what you do. But needed too are “small picture” investigations that produce concrete, specific, doable activities and projects that can be undertaken in both the public and private dimensions of our lives.

The challenge for everyone who sides with the Alt-Right movement, or the white racial movement, whatever the preferred perspective, is to identify what he or she can best do to help move things along in a positive direction. It doesn’t have to be anything big; little contributions add up. And whatever it is, the individual doesn’t have to go public with it. It may well make sense to lay low, stay underground, use a pseudonym. Back to Camus, he worked anonymously in the French resistance during World War II.

But whatever you or I decide is best to do, we need to get to it before it is too late, both in the world and in our mortal existence.

Endnotes

1. Doris Baltruschut, *Global Media Ecologies: Networked Production in Film and Television* (Routledge, 2010) p. 106.
2. Check Amazon, there are a number of publishers and dates of publication with this book, first published in 1942.
3. Some Alt-Right web sites: Atlantic Centurian, Counter-Currents, The Occidental Observer, The Right Stuff, VDare, American Renaissance, RADIX, Alternative Right, Vanguard News Network, and The Daily Stormer.
4. Greg Johnson, “Metapolitics & Occult Warfare,” the Counter-Currents web site, posted December 10th, 2012
5. Lawrence Murray, “White Nationalism FAQ,” the Atlantic Centurian web site, posted on April 13th, 2016,

6. Robert S. Griffin, "Are Whites Pathological? Yes and No," *The Occidental Observer*, posted June, 2013; also in *The Occidental Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Summer 2013.