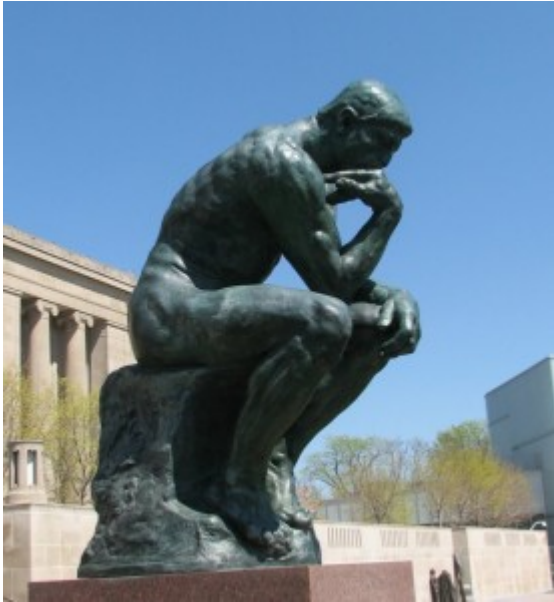


The Identity Crisis of a Liberal Thinker



In promoting his latest book, *"The Tyranny of Cliches: How Liberals Cheat in the War of Ideas"*, writer Jonah Goldberg has been making a solid, distinguishing point about how conservatives and liberals view themselves.

As Goldberg told CNN's Piers Morgan a few weeks ago, we conservatives are largely aware that we are... well, conservative. There's an inherent cognizance that allows us to self-identify as such.

Conservatives understand that small government, personal responsibility, the right to bear arms, and a pro-life stance are 'conservative' issues.

When conservatives watch Sean Hannity on television or listen to Rush Limbaugh on the radio, we recognize that we're hearing a conservative viewpoint – not a mainstream consensus. When we turn on FOX News, we're aware of a right-leaning tilt in much of their analysis.

Conservatives understand that when our candidates lose an election, it's due to either unpopular policies, a failure to persuade voters toward a vision, or qualification concerns.

Because of this self-awareness, conservatives have traditionally been shy about expressing their political views.

That's changed a little bit over the past couple of years, but for the most part, we naturally presume that the people around us are not conservative, so we choose not to burden them with our grandiosity.

Liberals are often a different story.

They typically view themselves as the mainstream of America. They openly speak their mind in the realm of politics because they assume everyone around them pretty much feels the same way as they do.

Liberals watch the national network news and they can't seem to find any ideological bias in its presentation. They buy into subtly (and not so subtly) placed commentary as conventional wisdom.

Liberals have a hard time understanding criticism of President Obama. To them, he's dignified and largely infallible so they reject the notion that reasonable people could possibly be unhappy with the job he's done. Thus, they conclude that racism must be a factor in those people's grievances and that FOX News and conservative radio are somehow brainwashing the electorate away from *reason* and *common sense*.

A prime of example of this identity crisis was put on display last week when Regis Philbin interviewed David Letterman on CNN. Letterman, whose bitter, left-wing rants and lopsided castigation of prominent Republicans have become trademarks of his program in recent years, made it a point to declare that he was a registered 'Independent'. He presented this information in order to dismiss the accusation that partisanship plays a role in who he targets for ridicule on his late night show.

The defense was laughable, and Letterman wasn't even trying to make a joke. The vast majority of hyper-partisan, left-wing nut-jobs at MSNBC are most likely also registered as *Independents*. Does that mean they're moderate or fair-minded?

Of course not. Merely checking 'Independent' on a voter registration form doesn't exonerate someone from being an ideologue. To insist otherwise would be pure buffoonery. All it means is that you'll probably receive less political junk-mail and fewer campaign calls in the Fall.

Yet, Letterman probably does fancy himself as some nondiscriminatory, middle-of-the-road guy who's just saying what he thinks *everyone else* is thinking. He suffers from a liberal identity crisis.

MSNBC's Chris Matthews is suffering from the same ailment. Despite providing the country with countless hours of embarrassing fawning over President Obama, and making it his life-mission to excoriate *everything conservative*, he routinely insists that he's a centrist, not a liberal.

Chris Matthews would probably have a defender in Dan Rather, who told Jon Stewart earlier this week that, contrary to popular belief, most journalists are not liberal. Rather took it a step further, going as far as to call the notion of liberal prevalence in the mainstream media "a sham."

Rather's assertion is a tough one to defend, considering that study after study has drawn the exact opposite conclusion, including one reported in 2010 by the *Washington Examiner*. The study revealed that President Obama and the Democratic party received 88 percent of the 2008 campaign contributions given by network news executives, on-air talents, producers, and reporters at ABC, CBS, and NBC. And my guess is that most of those contributors wouldn't consider themselves to be "liberal" either.

Speaking of Jon Stewart, at least *he* admits that he's a liberal. As Newsbusters recently unearthed, he even told Larry King back in 2000 that he's more of a "socialist" than a Democrat. And no, he wasn't joking. Yet, even in Stewart's case, he seems to have fooled himself into believing that the

left-leaning political tilt that exudes every night from his show on Comedy Central is representative of prevailing wisdom in our country. After all, he and Stephen Colbert organized their “Million Moderate March” in Washington DC less than two years ago as a way to denounce the ideological divide in our country.

Yes, Stewart and Colbert actually presented themselves as *moderates*.

Now, I’m the first person to admit that Jon Stewart is a comedic genius. I was a fan of his long before he was a household name. But he’s anything but a genius when it comes to how inclusive he believes his views to be. Let’s recap the timeline: In 2000, he was to the left of the Democratic party by his own admission. During the Bush era, he’d clearly swung even further left. Suddenly, in 2010, he was the embodiment of the American moderate?

And let’s look at Stewart’s views on the media. He believes that FOX News is bias. As a conservative, I understand why he says that. I would challenge him on some of the specific allegations he’s made over the years, but the reality is that FOX News leans right in its presentation. It does. I think most conservatives would concur.

What completely substantiates my point about the identity crisis of liberals, however, is that Stewart does NOT see liberal bias in the rest of the news media. Last year on FOX News Sunday, he told Chris Wallace that there is NOT political bias coming from the likes of ABC, CBS, NBC, The New York Times, and The Washington Post. The most he ceded to Wallace was that he thought MSNBC was just now “attempting” to go in the same direction that he believes FOX News has gone in.

MSNBC is just *attempting* to show a political slant?

Keep in mind that Stewart made this observation less than a year ago. He wasn’t speaking of the MSNBC from ten years ago.

He was speaking of today's MSNBC who long let Keith Olbermann spew left-wing, dishonest diatribes on a nightly basis. This is the MSNBC that featured the thrill up Chris Matthews' leg, in his adoration for President Obama. This is the MSNBC that has given Ed Schultz, Rachel Maddow, Lawrence O'Donnell, Al Sharpton, and Martin Bashir all hosting positions on their own shows. This is the MSNBC who reported on "white people" who were "showing up with guns" at a Tea Party rally in 2009, when in reality the only guy who brought a gun was an African American – a fact the network purposely edited out of the accompanying video.

Yet, Stewart wasn't quite prepared to accuse MSNBC (or any of the mainstream media outlets, for that matter) of putting forth an ideological slant. To him, they're more or less *down the middle*.

It's all very sad, isn't it?

People like Letterman, Matthews, Rather, and Stewart are certainly *representative* of something, but it's not the American moderate. They're representative of the left's inability to recognize who they, themselves, are. And when so many people refuse to self-examine their shared ideological beliefs, it's tough to make the case that their ideology has any merit at all.