

HYDE PARK

Got something to share with fellow Democrats?
Now's the time and here's the place!

Submit contributions to wayne@looking4light.com.

Occasional Virtual Soap Box

January 14, 2022



“Spirit!’ Scrooge cried, tight clutching at its robe, ‘hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?’...

‘Good Spirit,’ he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it, ‘your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may

change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life?’...

‘I will honor democracy in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!’”

Wayne’s blog: <https://looking4light.com/scarab/>.

Back issues of *Hyde Park* can be found there.

Note

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Editorial

Open letter to Rubio and Scott

Wayne Dickson

Dear Sen. ___—

I write to urge that you support the voting rights bills about to be brought before the Senate—or, at the very least, that you support allowing them to be openly and honestly debated, and then decided by roll call vote.

Informed persons both here and around the globe are aware that what's at stake is the survival of American democracy. Some are praying desperately that it will survive. Others (not just in places like Russia or China, but here in the U.S. as well) are hoping that it will wither and die. Paul Weyrich spoke for the latter when he said, "I don't want everybody to vote.... [O]ur leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down."

This is not the time to be coy or ambiguous like George Orwell's Napoleon the pig, who asserted that "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." Weyrich had the courage to make his oligarchic convictions both clear and a matter of public record. We Americans have the right to expect the same courage from our sitting U.S. senators.

Senators often boast that theirs is "the greatest deliberative body in the world." It's time now to back that boast. It's time for US senators to show their fellow Americans and the world whether they agree with Thomas Jefferson that all men are created equal... or with Paul Weyrich and Napoleon the pig that some men are created "more equal" than others.



Feature

Blissful ignorance vs. miserable understanding.

Wayne Dickson

I'm afraid this will be a bit complex, but (for reasons I'll get to later) I trust that the sort of person who reads *Hyde Park* will cut me some slack.

During my four decades as a college teacher, I worked with all sorts of students. At one end of the spectrum were those with limited academic ability, who had been provisionally admitted to college. At the other end were *Ph.D.* candidates. Lots of variety, obviously, but at every point along that continuum I encountered two recurring issues: ignorance (lack of knowledge and/or understanding) and fear.



The possession of knowledge and understanding exacts its own cost, of course. I remember a cartoon in *The New Yorker* magazine. A patient or client is stretched on the archetypal sofa. A balding, bearded psychiatrist or clinical psychologist sits holding a notebook. He says something like, "Of course you're miserable!

You're highly educated and deeply aware." I used to tell *Honors* students about that cartoon, warning them that my job as their professor was to be a merchant of misery. There's something to be said for choosing blissful ignorance over miserable awareness and comprehension.



Many readers will remember when Richard Feynman demonstrated the cause of the Challenger disaster by dipping an o-ring into the glass of ice water on the table in front of him.

But I'm concerned here with the opposite problem, the lack of knowledge and understanding. The great physicist Richard Feynman said on more than one occasion that to confront the complexities of nature leaves one confused, and that being confused is a really uncomfortable feeling. That, he said, is why scientists are always working so hard to understand the things they're discovering. Unfortunately, that's also why so many others are always working so hard to deny what confuses

them, and to deny what scientists and other “knowledge workers” are discovering.

In respect to Feynman’s “feeling of confusion,” the crucial question is both implicit and rarely acknowledged: “Why?” Why do I lack knowledge? Why do I not understand? Despite his periodic “Ah, shucks” protestations, Feynman himself was supremely confident to the point of arrogance (in my impression). He had no doubt that the confusion was caused by complexity, and he was certain that scientists like him could come closer and closer to understanding. For others, though, it’s not that simple.

Approaches to understanding causation fall along a continuum, from simple to complex. Question: Why is this kite flying? A simple explanation would be that it’s catching the wind, which holds it aloft. A complex explanation would involve explanations of airfoils and of why the wind is blowing in this particular place on this particular day at this particular time with this particular force. It’s generally accepted that, psychologically, the more conservative one’s personality type, the less tolerance one has for explanations involving complex causation.

For instance, why is *California* experiencing so many wildfires, and why are they more and more serious? A complex explanation would focus on climate change, of course. A simple explanation would focus on Soros-financed Jewish conspirators firing lasers from satellites in space.

As in the previous example, simple explanations often focus on finding a particular person or persons to blame. For example, according to an aide, after losing the vote to abolish the ACA Donald Trump’s very first question was, “Who’s to blame for this?” As it happens, his own arrogance and incompetence were to blame. This is doubly relevant. Those on the right like Trump secretly, even subconsciously, suspect that their lack of knowledge or inability to understand is due to their own weakness. Thus, as a self-protective reflex, their first move is to look immediately for someone else to blame.

Think what this means for someone who is trying to argue rationally with such a person. First, it means getting that person to deny an inherent personality trait and accept the possibility of complex causation. Second, it means getting the person to deny an inherent instinct towards psychological self-preservation, so to speak, and accept the possibility she or he lacks either the knowledge or the ability to comprehend.

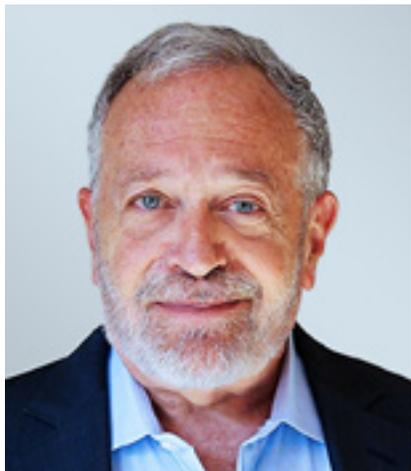
Good luck with that!



Feature

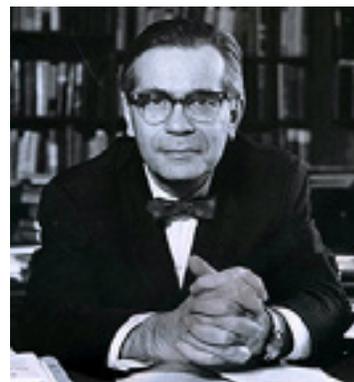
Another word on one of my favorite Christmas movies.

Wayne Dickson



into the hands of Potter, Potter sees an opportunity to ruin George....

It's two radically opposed versions of America. In Potter's social-Darwinist view, people compete with one another for resources. Those who succeed deserve to win because they've outrun everyone else in that competitive race.



Robert Reich has the perfect answer to Trumpism

Robert Reich January 01, 2022

As I've considered the real lesson of January 6, I've been prompted to rewatch a movie that provides a hint of an answer — Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, which was released 75 years ago this month....

[T]he movie's central conflict is between Mr. Potter (played by Lionel Barrymore) and George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart). Potter is a greedy and cruel banker. George is the generous and honorable head of *Bedford Falls* building-and-loan—the one entity standing in the way of Potter's total domination of the town. When [George's Uncle Billy] accidentally loses some deposits that fall

Though some of his inferences and conclusions have been challenged, Richard Hofstadter's *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944) remains the key text [here](#). Hofstadter argued in *Social Darwinism* that, during the *Gilded Age*, “American society saw its own image in [a] tooth-and-claw version of natural selection” [34]. Popular writers like the conservative sociologist William Graham Sumner legitimated “ruthless business rivalry and unprincipled politics” in the name of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution [35].

After the death of George’s father, who founded the building-and- loan, Potter moves to dissolve it—claiming George’s father “was not a businessman. He was a man of high ideals, so-called, but ideals without common sense can ruin a town.” For Potter, common sense is not coddling the “discontented rabble.”

In George’s view, *Bedford Falls* is a community whose members help each other. He tells Potter that the so-called “rabble ... do most of the working and paying and living and dying in this community.” His father helped them build homes on credit so they could afford a decent life. “People were human beings to him,” George tells Potter, “but to you, they’re cattle.”

...

Soon after *It’s a Wonderful Life* was released, the *FBI* considered it evidence of *Communist Party* infiltration of the film industry. The *FBI’s Los Angeles* field office—using a report by an ad-hoc group that included *Fountainhead* writer and future Trump pin-up girl Ayn Rand—warned that the movie represented “rather obvious attempts to discredit bankers by casting Lionel Barrymore as a ‘scrooge-type’ so that he would be the most hated man in the picture.” The movie “deliberately maligned the upper class, attempting to show the people who had money were mean and despicable characters. This ... is a common trick used by *Communists*.”

The *FBI* report compared *It’s a Wonderful Life* to a *Soviet* film, and alleged that Frank Capra was “associated with left- wing groups” and that screenwriters Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett were “very close to known *Communists*.”

This was all rubbish, of course—and a prelude to the Red Scare led by *Republican* Senator Joe McCarthy of *Wisconsin*, who launched a series of highly publicized probes into alleged *Communist* penetration of *Hollywood*, the *State Department*, and even the *U.S. Army*.

The movie was also prelude to modern *Republican* ideology. Since Ronald Reagan, *Republicans* have used Potter-like social Darwinism to justify... tax cuts for the wealthy, union-busting, and cutbacks in social safety nets. Rand herself became a hero to many in the Trump administration.

Remember Paul Ryan? He used to give every member of his staff a copy of Rand’s *Fountainhead*, requiring that they read it. Rand Paul is named after her.



Feature

SCOTUS wants to use both its own logic and its own facts.

Wayne Dickson

One sentence from the Supreme Court's ruling against an OSHA vaccine rule reveals its upside-down logic

Cody Fenwick January 13, 2022

In a new ruling on Thursday, the six conservative justices on the *U.S. Supreme Court* blocked the Biden administration from implementing a sweeping requirement for vaccines under the *Occupation Safety and Health Administration*....

Writing in a *per curiam* decision [one written by the entire court rather than a single justice], the court's six-justice conservative majority used twisted logic to overrule the administration's decision. The three liberal justices wrote a joint dissent, arguing that the court's decision overstepped its own authority....

The decision explained:

"The *Solicitor General* does not dispute that *OSHA* is limited to regulating "work-related dangers." ... She instead argues that the risk of contracting COVID-19 qualifies as such a danger. ***We cannot agree.*** [My emphasis.] Although COVID-19 is a risk that occurs in

many workplaces, it is not an *occupational* hazard in most. [emphasis original]"

It's hard to figure out what this last sentence really means.

It's essentially saying, "Though COVID-19 is a danger in the workplace, it's not a workplace danger." The phrasing tries to dance around this obvious contradiction by using the word "occupational" instead of "workplace," by inserting meaningless italics, and by appending the words "in most" at the end — without justifying or explaining their inclusion or relevance. But don't get confused — the court's claim is just as nonsensical as my version.



Most *Hyde Park* readers will be familiar with Daniel Patrick Moynihan's assertion that "You are entitled to your opinion. But you are not entitled to your own facts," though they might not remember who stated it.

In explaining their decision, the *Court's* conservative "super majority" hypocritically insist on violating Moynihan's rule. They claim that COVID is not a "workplace danger." And they make this claim in their own "workplace,"

the courtroom in which they listen to oral arguments. To protect themselves from COVID in this workplace, they have moved the attorneys' podia back 10 feet from where they used to be, and required that those attending be vaccinated. Here's their official **statement**:

Courtroom access will be limited to the Justices, essential *Court* personnel, counsel in the scheduled cases, and journalists with full-time press credentials issued by the *Supreme Court*. Out of concern for the health and safety of the public **and Supreme Court employees** [emphasis mine], the *Courtroom* sessions will not be open to the public. The *Court* will continue to closely monitor public health guidance in determining plans.

United Airlines, for one, would certainly reject their claims that COVID is not an "occupational hazard" in most workplaces. They have announced that before they mandated vaccinations, an average of one *United* employee each week was dying of COVID. Since the mandate, none have died.

As usual, representatives of the meatpacking industry have been silent. However, an **article** on *Modern Farmer's* website describes the findings about that industry by a *House* subcommittee chaired by James Clyburn:

It's now known that meatpacking plants were major COVID-19 hotspots that spread the virus in rural and suburban communities far more than in similar towns without a plant. From federal inspectors put at risk to allegations of betting on infection numbers, meatpacking plants were chaos zones for

months. They were uniquely situated to spread the virus: Workers have to work in close physical proximity for long hours, in indoor environments, and they often live together in company-provided housing.

And the rapid consolidation of the meat industry has meant fewer, but larger, packing facilities. If one plant gets hit with a wave of COVID-19—and many did—that can infect a far greater number of workers than if the industry was more spread out....

The *Congressional* subcommittee's investigation led it to internal documents from the major players in American meatpacking—*JBS*, *Tyson*, *Cargill*, *Smithfield* and *National Beef*—which had previously not been public. It found about 59,000 positive cases at plants run by those companies between March 2020 and February 2021, with some plants having COVID-19 infection rates of around 50 percent. At least 269 deaths of plant workers can also be attributed to COVID-19, according to the subcommittee's report.



The hypocritical half-dozen.

Feature

One if a man...

Wayne Dickson

Glenn Beck said he didn't need the vaccine – now he's very sick with COVID and is taking ivermectin



It used to be common in this country and others for the same doctor to treat both humans and animals—thus the aphorism referring to prescriptions for pills or capsules: one if a man, two if a horse.

As recently as 1960 when I matriculated in college, the same man who worked for the university treating college students several times a week worked also as an independent veterinarian treating large animals.

Now, for QAnonamagas, the circle seems to have closed. In respect to COVID, they're

rejecting human medications in favor of those designed and intended for animals. This is especially interesting, given that the vaccines were developed in part by a program Trump created, and Trump himself is now advocating getting both vaxxed and boosted.

Glenn Beck is the latest high-profile example. This is fascinating to me. Lots of punditry and bloviating about this, of course. But does anyone know of serious studies that are being conducted?