

EIGHT ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE ONGOING UNREST

The last couple weeks have seen great dissent against the protests and riots that have followed the killing of George Floyd. While most such arguments have some merit and strength by itself, the totality of the case against the ongoing political agitation draws full salience and lucidity by various criticisms being allowed to associate with and build upon one another. Perhaps part of the reason that the arguments proffered haven't struck as much a chord with the American public as they merit is because of their deployment in isolation. It is then worth bringing them together with each other. On top of that, such an oppositional case is best extended and deepened with lesser-made points inquiring into the inextricable attachment between present events and our foundational philosophical beliefs and values.

As it happens, there aren't a couple, or even a few good reasons to be against the ongoing unrest. There are at least eight such reasons. Each of these constitutes a *distinct* argument below, though almost none is an *independent* argument. Overall, they fall into two categories. Analyses of the unrest can either refer to what the unrest connotes or to what it denotes, to what it signifies or to what it says, to what is implicit or to what is explicit. The first three arguments look at what is implicit *in* the unrest, and the following five move increasingly to arguing against explicit positions taken *by* the unrest. Each of the categories will begin with arguments that are of relatively less depth—and correspondingly of greater currency in the mainstream conversation—moving from there to the fundamentals.

The eight arguments against the ongoing unrest may, from reference and resonance with each other, generate an energy that is distributed between and bolsters each. On top of that, though, the hope is that this distilled energy itself consolidates into an ethos of greater vitality and potency than is streamlined in any prevalence today, applying to not just the affairs of this moment, but clarifying and contending for an alternative way of collective living than that espoused by the dominant liberal regime.

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The first category of arguments against the unrest effectively focuses on the riots, their consequences and their subtexts. A question may be whether there is an argument that the riots and violence legitimize opposition to the totality of the political upswell. The answer can be given in advance: There is not an argument that can legitimize opposition, since the counterargument can soundly be made “But that’s not what the movement is really about” or “One can support the protests without supporting the violence.”

There really isn't a completely satisfying rejoinder to that. However, such points made against this category of arguments by the defenders of protests are themselves not completely satisfying either, as there isn't a sound argument that can demonstrate that supporting the protests *doesn't* implicitly support the riots. Still, this first category, reaching toward subtexts of

the protests and its associated manifestations, may be more easily disavowed by their defenders, while the points of the second category, not needing to read between any lines, are harder to deny.

That doesn't mean that the better arguments are of the latter category; that something lends itself to more easy disavowal has nothing to do with its qualitative seriousness. Nevertheless, rather than trying to come up with the less objective case that supporting the protests implicitly supports the riots, the intent of the three points in this category is to articulate latent yet momentous negatives to the riots than are typically discussed. So far, in criticizing the riots, emphasis has been placed on the first of these points. It is my hope that discerning two neglected messages inhering in the riots prompts at least some reflection that a *better* disposition—even if can't be the *correct* one—toward the whole of the present upswell is one that would rather have no part of it:

1. **Devastation:**

The riots that have accompanied the protests have led to unspeakable suffering. The ruin of countless honest and innocent shopkeepers, who were already suffering under the crunch of the coronavirus recession, was likely sealed by the looters and vandals that partook in the uprising. More gravely, perhaps over a couple dozen [people have been killed](#)—not just by cops, and not just cops themselves, but also innocent bystanders in or near the protests subject to the trigger-happy raptures of insurrection, or shopkeepers attacked by solipsistically rapacious looters. As if the revolting video of George Floyd's death wasn't enough, further video footage of death and destruction that came out in the coming days has made for wearisome viewing. Still, perhaps harder to watch has been footage of those who have lost their [loved ones](#), [livelihoods](#) or [vital belongings](#).

This reality is well-known and has received ample attention. It is thus not necessary to elucidate it at length. But it does constitute a very legitimate reason, one that can well stand by itself for opposing the totality of the unrest and be expressed simply through the idiom that two wrongs do not make a right.

Nevertheless, there are two objections to this point that can be anticipated or that have been made, and it is worth addressing them. The first of these is that the violence of the riots pales in comparison to the violence inflicted on black people by American society, so one should shut up about the more tangible violence, and moreover, if the violence is a part of a larger unrest that forces changes that improves the terrible oppression of black people in the United States, that is acceptable. In other words, to make an omelette, you have to break a few eggs.

The underlying premise of that counterargument, that the oppression of black people is of such an extreme, is examined in an argument ahead. But assuming right now that the premise is correct, the conclusion doesn't follow in this case. Of course, sometimes force is

needed to prevent evil. But that must be precise, directed violence. To take a common analogy, it is widely accepted by most people who would prefer peace to war that fighting against the Axis Powers in World War II was necessary. However, were the firebombings of Tokyo and Dresden necessary as they were conducted? That is much more debatable, and the argument can be made that the extent of death and destruction they caused didn't actually contribute to the Allied victory, and that they constitute atrocities that the US and UK could be legitimately censured for.

Similarly, it is doubtful that any of the death and destruction caused by the riots is necessary or useful for undoing the professed legacy of racism. In other words, it would be different if, against the wrong of George Floyd's killing and racism in general, the violence of the riots was a right. That could perhaps undo the first wrong. But that is not the case here. The riots are a second wrong, and two wrongs do not cancel each other out; in fact, they may be closer to multiplicative than additive.

The second counterargument against this point could also be made to the following two points. It may concede that this violence isn't legitimate, just as the firebombings of Tokyo and Dresden may not have been. However, it would point out, World War II was legitimate, and with that ask, just because there are undesirable aspects to a political event, does that mean the movement as a whole is illegitimate? On one level, the answer is no. As noted above, these three arguments are more subjective, and just as one could choose, on the basis of their values about needless suffering, choose to reject the movement in general because of the violence, some could also, on the basis of their values about oppression, choose to support the movement as a whole despite the violence.

Still, scrutiny on this matter, even if not making a perfectly sound case for the moral delegitimization of the movement, can make a much more sound case for its strategic rejection. After all, there has been much talk designating the current upswell as a "revolution," a fundamental transformation of society. Whether or not a revolution of its ideals and aims would be legitimate, the fact is that if this wants to be a revolution it needs to do better. The agitation right now would not be able to hold a candle, let alone pitchforks and torches, to actual revolutions, which involve discipline and strategic coordination. From Gandhi calling off campaigns of his that saw violence and riots associated with them to an archetypal Leninist revolution led by a vanguard with strictly maintained and efficacious party discipline, ample examples demonstrate that it is only a fanciful notion of a "revolution" that takes chaos as a given.

In fact, it may be a particularly American fantasy to not think there's something off about a "revolution" that is overwhelmingly disorderly rather than orderly, a fantasy fueled by vapid punk music and the hyperindividualistic liberal idea that the enforcement of discipline and the subsumption of individual impulses to the collective good is tyranny. Order is necessary for successful revolutions; even semi-orderly revolutions bear the risk of Thermidorean reactions. In sum, if this unrest aspires to be "revolutionary," it is in fact a farce, and even if not scorned out of

some illusory moral objectivity, it could certainly be laughed off, for it is going to accomplish nothing of the sort.

This isn't to say that nothing at all will come out of the current upswell. Changes may be coming out of them, and if those are changes that one wants, one could say that the totality of the unrest is worth it, and the riots condonable. Whether these changes are themselves desirable will be evaluated in the latter half of this essay; the point right is just that the more undeniably negative aspects of the unrest themselves don't clearly lend themselves to any kind of meaningful change, desirable or undesirable, and the totality of the unrest, because of its lack of order and coordination, will likely not have revolutionary outcomes.

2. Nihilism:

If there was no good reason for the riots to have harmed so many people, why did they take place? The previous argument looked at one significant and undeniable effect of the riots. But underlying what was *done* by the violence, vandalism and looting, what was *said* and *meant* by it? Where were the riots *coming from*?

The coronavirus is an important starting factor for answering that. It is hard to imagine that the agitation that has occurred would have, with the same intensity, in a nation that hadn't been through the ordeal and debacle that the US had been. Surely, the cruel, jarring forthrightness of the video footage of George Floyd's death would have struck a nerve. There may have been mass protests. However, it's not obvious that they would have been the biggest protests in the US since the late 60's.

Others have observed how there was a great amount of pent-up energy among a populace that had been stuck at home for a couple months. That isn't incorrect. To a large extent, the people shouting at cops just wanted something to do, and as it happens, throwing a brick through a Starbucks window and screaming "Kill Whitey" at the top of one's lungs is one way to do that. But there was a lot more going on than just that. It is also true that there was a lot of frustration about the recession that had come about along with the pandemic as well. But frustration by itself too does not explain the degree of violence and destruction that took place.

A more exhaustive reading of the riots, rather, would see in them not just frustration, but a vote of no-confidence in the American system. The rioters had given up on society. Jeet Heer [described the scenario](#) as one in which the social contract had been broken. That gets much closer to what is real at the truest, even if intangible level. Liberals and leftists must have especially felt that the social contract had been broken by the system, and consequently, that there were no longer mandates of civic responsibility and self-restraint applicable to the people. This political camp is very willing and able, sometimes too much so, to see how Donald Trump tends to make a shambles of governance. Insofar as the face of the American system was Donald Trump, the left was increasingly liable over the last 3.5 years to call the end of the social

contract. The murder of a black man by a cop—a phenomenon to which the left projects some affinity or association of Trumpian right-wing values—was an unsurprising strawman that may have broken society's back.

However, while Donald Trump and the coronavirus were immediate causes for many liberals to feel that America is something to be given up on, many have felt that way for a long time, whether or not legitimately so. In the eyes of many black people and political radicals in general, there never was a proper social contract in America. After all, these revolutionary spirits would tell us, the state has been murdering and imprisoning and marginalizing black bodies since the USA has existed. America as it is, from the radical perspective, has never been something that has merited or for that matter received a vote of confidence, and has always been something to be given up on and be replaced afresh by something better.

The purpose here is not to pass judgment about the evaluation that the American system itself has been as is worth giving up on or not. It is rather to point to what such an evaluation entails—and that is where the deeper issue lies. In a sense what we are facing here is a problem of modernity itself. It is a specifically modern phenomenon that we do not think of the American “system,” the political and economic institutions that comprise the armature of our society, as something distinct from the life of the nation itself. Indeed, the quintessential political unit of this epoch is known to be the “nation state,” a name and concept that describes this very convergence, which has become so ingrained in our thinking and our social workings that it appears error-ridden to even posit a separation of the two now. But it is a fact that when we think of “America”—indeed, when we think of society itself—we tend to think of these two aspects as forming a unified whole.

There lies the basis of the fundamental trouble with the current uprisings. It would be one thing if there were a vote of no-confidence given to the contingent “American system” of governance, production and exchange—for example if protesters had only burnt down the Minneapolis Third Precinct police station. Whether or not that would have been a right thing to do, that by itself means a very different thing from all the other burning that took place. This is because if the system is coextensive with society as a whole, rejecting the system entails the indiscriminate repudiation of society itself, which is what we are seeing.

No other explanation exists—except that such acts were all committed by police or white supremacist provocateurs—for why the riots would want to [set fire to the headquarters of the AFL-CIO](#), the largest union in the US and thus the most important organ of the labor movement, or why it would [consign St. John's Church to flames](#), or why it would [lay wreck to the offices of the IndyWeek](#), the main progressive, independent newspaper of the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area in North Carolina. After all, black workers [are more likely to be union members](#) than white, Hispanic or Asian workers; a black person [is more likely to be a Christian](#) than a white person; and the IndyWeek is as progressive and supportive of identity politics as they come.

Such manifestations of the riots do not just indicate that there is a degree of ideological confusion or directionlessness to the uprisings. That is true, but on top of exhibiting the *lack* of such coherence, such acts also demonstrate that the uprisings *bear* the message that *society is overall a failure, and needs to be treated as such*. The former is aimlessness; the latter is nihilism, which is not passive or random, but a disposition that actively says that something is meaningless, enabling its treatment as such. Consider a situation in which an apologist for the riots is told, “But we may never recover from this. It may be a long time until our cities have the same vitality and ease again, and many of these businesses, which gave our cities their life and even defined our communities, will never come back.” It is quite conceivable that the response may be something to the effect, “Well, to hell with it, it wasn’t worth it or working out anyway”—this “it” referring, subtextually, to society itself.

Of course, one could well say that the preponderance of the political unrest was peaceful and does not desire the utter leveling of civilization itself. However, insofar as even a minority of violence and destruction was thereby excused for the supposed bigger picture, it has shown that the larger progressive movement for justice and “anti-racism” finds such a sentiment at least acceptable, even if not necessary. The risks, however, of accepting such a sentiment, render the movement as a whole unacceptable.

There are further dimensions to this that will find exposition in the next argument, ‘Hypnosis’, and the last one, ‘Breakdown’. But one of the core positive values associated with all the dimensions is this: *Society is in fact a beautiful and meaningful thing and must not be compromised or assailed for the sake of some other supposed social progress*. It is the disavowal of this idea that shows the nihilistic aspect of the protests. Consider that a common response to people raising concern about the destruction of “non-living” things such as buildings or cities was simply that such banal things can be rebuilt, whereas a life such as that of George Floyd cannot be brought back. In other words, elements of society can be sacrificed to save human lives. Underlying such a tacit pronouncement is the idea that society, indeed hitherto civilization, is itself meaningless, having only instrumental value. It has value insofar as it can be used as fodder, burnt to advocate for the plight of the oppressed.

The metaphysics and sociology of this mindset are both vapid. The fact is that cities and communities have life too, and they cannot be so simply “rebuilt.” Of course, the argument isn’t that the life of a George Floyd is of secondary importance to the life of a city; the point is that they form a synergistic whole. Laying wreck to society for the sake of George Floyd, then, doesn’t do justice to his death—it kills him twice over.

It suffices as a sole-standing reason to oppose the ongoing unrest that it fosters such an attitude toward society as a whole that it is something that can be given up on and assailed. It could be said that for a long time, the left has been indifferent to the objective richness of civilization itself, the most blatant examples of this being its identitarian crusades for representation at the cost of merit, and its politically correct rewritings of histories and syllabi.

But now the stakes have been raised from indifference or aimlessness to the degradation caused by active nihilism.

But eternity is in love with the productions of time, as William Blake so well put it. Society, or the joys of civilization—from grand monuments, to infrastructures that enable our material and psychological well-being, to the small businesses with their little pleasures that will never come back now—are what make human life worth it, both in terms of their creation, and through revelling in them. That is why the stakes of nihilism are too high. A movement that has such nihilism to it is bound to end up in rioting, and with rioting, the stakes of the movement aren't just about what is being ostensibly advocated for; they are extended to society itself. As such, rioting forces a distilled choice about what may be the ultimate stakes of society: You may rather prefer to avoid positioning yourself in such unidimensionality, but when there are riots, you're either an anarchist, or you're a traditionalist.

This isn't to say that there are no problems with society, or that the system must remain immune for the sake of a vibrant civilization. There are definitely ways in which society is unfair to various groups of people in various ways, and those should be addressed. But if a movement comes to bear the disposition that society is itself a comprehensive failure and can be treated as such, there is no option but to oppose such a movement. The nobler aims of such a movement can be achieved without such a disposition, and moreover, society is simply too precious a thing.

3. Hypnosis

This argument explores a corollary to the reading already introduced in 'Nihilism'. It need not have been separated from the above, but framing it distinctly puts into relief the precise ideological framework that enables what was discussed above, and thus enables fleshing out an alternative one. The point above was that the ongoing unrest bears a dimension to it that sees society as something that can be laid waste to, if for the right ethical reasons. What could such an ethical reason for this be?

The answer was already alluded to above: The Black Lives Matter movement is ultimately one that seeks justice or fairness, i.e., it seeks to undo double standards in the treatment of any two people or any two groups of people. The basis for such a goal is the belief in equality: If there is a discrepancy in how the law treats two people of two different groups, with all other variables remaining the same, that means that the law—and society at large—does not see them as equal. We consider that to be wrong. An associated ideal is that of liberty: Equality is good because the right of individuals to act freely in their own interests and in the interests of whomsoever they choose is good; if some people are held back in being able to do that, that's unfair. Ultimately, all these ideas are tied to the sanctity and preeminence of the individual. The total good, even if added up for all of society, arises from the parts that lie at the level of individual human beings. The Good, then, correlates most to the subjective well-being or

utility of individuals, and the sum thereof. This framework, placing such emphasis on rights, equality, liberty and the individual, is in a nutshell the simplified philosophy of liberalism.

This critique is not going to argue that people should not be equal in the eyes of the law, that they should be ascribed different degrees of essential moral worth, or that freedom is bad. If the world is a level playing field, it is a better world, and to the extent that the world is not a level playing field, it is worth thinking about how that can be changed—without actually making things worse. Moreover, a meaningful life can only be one in which there is a significant degree of freedom to make meaning in and out of it.

The point here, instead, is to highlight the extent to which equality has become the predominant, if not the sole, ideal that structures the priorities of our culture. The extreme emphasis on equality that liberalism places was more justified in the last couple centuries, but it can well be argued that it has hit the point of diminishing returns, a point that will be fleshed out better in arguments in the latter half of the essay. The argument right now is that while equality is a good idea and an important thing, acting as if equality is the only good idea and the only important thing is a bad idea—and if that is happening, that is an important thing, worth inspecting.

To first see the extent to which it is a structuring principle of society, though, read between the lines of the statements and justifications given by many corporations that have supported the unrest. Most of [the rhetoric](#) has been fairly unsurprising, the standard lines that the company is against racial discrimination, supports black people in standing up against police brutality, etc. But it starts to become clear how strange the status of justice and equality are when corporations that have had their property destroyed still come out with statements to the effect that [that's okay. the important thing right now is to be fighting racism](#). One starts to wonder that yes, it may be important to fight racism, but surely you have some thoughts about your stores being vandalized and looted, right, so what kind of transcendent power is leading you to remain silent about that?

The answer is the power of liberalism. This is all the more apparent when one sees corporations engaging in apologia for the riots in general. Take Sony, for example, telling Zach, a guy who criticized it for remaining silent on the destruction of their city, that "[Cities can rebuild. Zach.](#)" It is interesting, and very telling of the current vapidness, that Sony didn't even say cities can *be rebuilt*, and ascribed to cities instead some easy, automatic regeneration. But more essentially in rebuking Zach so, Sony is saying, "Nothing matters more than achieving equality."

Corporations have been getting increasingly woke for a few years now, but it is a watershed moment in the growing monopoly of liberal ideology in our culture when their wokeness has them defending violent, destructive riots. Liberalism is not only the framework through which the conversation and advocacy around George Floyd's killing takes place, it is the reigning ethos of our society itself. The sway of that reign is being cemented by the present movement, which is something to be apprehensive about.

However, it is not necessary that this framework of ideals characterizing the upswell of sentiment around George Floyd is either the only or best one possible. Liberalism notably fails to be able to account for responsibility as an important ideal, especially responsibilities or duties toward future and past generations. In fact, it would even reject the idea that there exist duties toward past generations, and though there is great talk of future generations in liberal discourse about the environment, ultimately such talk is incongruous with the YOLO-istic ethos of liberalism and its emphasis on “lived experience,” which in part explains the failure of liberal politics to effectively address ecological challenges.

Apart from duty, the case has already been made regarding the meaning and beauty of the attainments of civilization, which liberalism also cannot account for, due to the preeminence it gives to subjective utility. While a church was burned right now, it is not inconceivable that a more beautiful and meaningful artifact of our society may be defiled or destroyed soon. Tomorrow a Smithsonian collection may be vandalized, and it may be said that this was called for to make up for or draw attention to the atrocities inflicted upon black people. And to take a deliberately provocative example, not one thought in the debates about the statue removals that have again been in vogue has been about the sculptural value of the statues. It may well strike the reader as absurd that this would even be a consideration. Right now, the discussion is entirely focused on the ethical dimensions of what the statue does or does not represent. Yet, the aesthetic dimension could be a consideration, even if not the sole one, and that it is completely out of the equation is again telling of the supremacy of liberalism.

This is not the space to argue what alternative ideals for society should be. What could be said, though, is that if one is wary of the ideals of liberalism being given inordinate and utmost priority, to the exclusion of almost all others, then wariness is also warranted for the current political unrest. It would be one thing if the “anti-racism” movement sought justice and equality, which is hardly disagreeable. What is being done by the movement goes far beyond that, though. It is rather facilitating and cementing the monopoly of liberalism as the only ideological game in town, a matter that will be examined for a specific dimension in the penultimate argument ahead.

But this dimension bears distillation by itself: Liberalism is not just advocating for equality or other liberal values; it is facilitating a social ethos that believes that anything goes for the sake of these values. The message is not “equality also matters,” and the message is not confined to a specific political domain; the message is rather that “nothing matters compared to equality” and the moral weight claimed by the George Floyd affair is leading all of society to believe this latter message. Liberalism mesmerizes us with the benign-seeming pendulum swing of its cudgel—and as occurs in hypnosis, takes away our peripheral vision.

The predominance of this ideological framework could have great ramifications for how society evolves—or devolves—in the long-run. The impression that activists like to give is that their fight is of supreme moral urgency, and activist discourse is framed in increasingly polarized

terms that suggest that if one is silent, and does not espouse slogans with specific philosophical undergirdings and entailments, [then one is complicit in violence](#). However, the costs of liberal ideological hegemony may outweigh the benefits of liberal stances, which may well be appropriate in some specific domains. As it happens, it is possible to advocate for justice in a specific case without saying that justice should be the structuring principle of society at large. But if liberalism is on such a crusade to pronounce equality, justice, and accompanying ideals such as guilt and diversity as forming the touchstone of our culture, that leaves no option but to desist from otherwise worthy advocacy. Liberalism has become far too coupled with the air we breathe as a society, and we are nigh asphyxiated.

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The line between what is implicit in and explicit to the unrest was already blurred in the argument about Extremism. If it is a subtext of the apologia surrounding this movement that everything else matters less than justice, it is a rather shallow subtext—both in terms of the depth and weightiness of that message itself, as well as its distance from blatancy. However, insofar as the critique tied to the protests, it projected an implicit acceptance or support between the two, and thus was part of the first of the two categories. But while the first half explored the undergirdings and implications of the riots, the remaining five points of this half can suffice through scrutinizing just the peaceful protests. As it happens, there is plenty to be questioned even if one were to pretend that the riots can be separated from the totality of the agitation. This half as well begins with the most obvious or prevalent of the points in it. From there the analysis moves again to the fundamentals.

4. **Recklessness:**

It has been asked, but it is worth repeating: What exactly were liberals and leftists thinking, going out protesting in the middle of a pandemic, weakening mitigation measures whose overall deficiency they themselves criticized the government for, and defying lockdown orders after having [berated conservatives](#) for doing the same a few weeks prior?

The answer to what they were thinking has already been given in the previous argument: They were thinking of liberal values, and the context of the coronavirus allows for a great case in point how a predominant sway of liberal values in society can undo a proper sense of priorities, and why such a sway may not be the healthiest for a society. The sentiment of the progressives, after all, is simply that this fight is more important than that against coronavirus. But the question is still begged: Why? On what basis can the risk of a flare-up that kills many more people than George Floyd—who was, let us not forget, one person—be justified? If one cares about groups only through the vantage point of justice, rather than thinking about the vitality and happiness of groups or communities in more multifaceted a way, it comes to be that

one person killed because they are black is a worse event than thousands killed impersonally by a virus as colorblind as Lady Justice herself.

It is not yet clear whether the protests are leading to an escalation of the pandemic. Many public health experts, [including Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#), say there is no reason it shouldn't. At the same time, some have suggested that there is some evidence that the [virus does not mainly spread in open, outdoor settings](#), so the risk may be low. The point right now is not to settle this debate, for the fact is that people were protesting not out of enlightenment that the risk of outdoor transmission may be low, but regardless of their knowledge of that, or, if 82,000 likes mean anything, with [the notion that if the pandemic gets worse, it's not their fault](#).

Such is the allure of basking in the participation of social justice, in fact, that some public health experts have even [gone so far as to pronounce](#) that since systemic racism constitutes a greater public health risk than the coronavirus, mass gatherings to protest racism were justified. For example, [a protester interviewed by The New York Times said](#) "I'm just as likely to die from a cop as I am from Covid".

While the pathos to such a sentiment makes for uncomfortable refutation, a look at some simple numbers is behooved: While cops kill, on average, 1000 Americans of all races per year, the coronavirus had killed over 100,000 people in America by the time the protests began. In other words, it would take over a century for cops to cause as much loss of human life as the coronavirus caused in about three months.

Yet, if it is true that racism is a greater risk than the coronavirus, that position should be applied to the workings of the coronavirus itself. It is known that due to disparities in wealth, and accompanying that, healthcare provisions, African Americans are at greater risk of dying from the coronavirus than those of any other race barring the ultimately marginalized Native Americans. (Liberals have framed this fact to argue that the virus isn't colorblind, which is delusional—more on that ahead—since even if for systemic reasons certain races are at greater risk than others, the virus itself remains just a virus.) If one is ostensibly concerned about the plight of black people, to be engaging in activities that, if they lead to deaths, will likely lead to disproportionate deaths of black people comes across as nothing short of grandstanding intended to signify one's own moral uprightness, indifferent to the preponderance of black lives.

It is furthermore apparent as grandstanding on evaluating the protests not just for their effect on a particular race, but comparing apples-to-apples, or humans-to-humans. From this standpoint, given the risk of any mass gathering eliciting flare-ups that take out some thousands of people more, each person who has taken part in a protest has effectively said, "I may result in the deaths of thousands more people in weeks than cops kill each year, but I am justified in that." Each person who has taken part in a protest has effectively said, "I feel justified in potentially undoing public health gains that have been made at the painstaking cost of the worst loss of livelihood in 90 years."

The supposed justification, of course, is justice, and the wager is that if something finally changes as a result of these protests, thousands of innocent lives will also be saved. Such a counterargument about the opportunity cost of not protesting is not trivial. Still, its framing is faulty insofar as the belief is that the problem is essentially one of racial oppression and that this is a moment of real transformative change, which will be examined in the following two arguments.

For now, the point is about how the predominance of liberal ideology alters various equations of priority. This is because it is not the tendency of liberals and leftists to think apples-to-apples in such scenarios. There is something qualitatively worse about a death due to injustice, from this humanistic ethos. Valuations are valuations, and this cannot be objectively refuted. But these mass protests exhibit a society which, so intoxicated by the ethereal plane of the politico-ethical, may not have the disposition or capacity to act in a way that ensures large-scale survival if and when necessary. To the extent that the present agitation furthers the legitimacy of approaching affairs primarily with respect to their implications on justice, rather than sheer life and death, it is best actively spurned—perhaps, though hopefully not, for the sake of our collective existence.

5. Delirium:

There is a sense in which none of this is really happening. Which is to say, if the “uprising” is understood as the authentic or organic response of people to the death of George Floyd, occurring primarily because of the emotion elicited by the injustice of the death itself, then that is not what is happening. There is only the appearance of such political activity and expression; however, the featherless bipeds comprising those appearances could as well be zombies.

If ‘Nihilism’ above was about modernity as such, this argument is about late modernity, and its media-borne Spectacle. A generation has come of age since the philosopher Jean Baudrillard proclaimed that The Gulf War Did Not Take Place, commenting on how images of propaganda purporting to represent reality made up the truth of “war” to Western audiences. Since then, social media has only intensified the dominion of images or representations not just reflecting reality, but taking over as reality. What we do in “real life” is for the sake of how it will appear amid the procession of images on the Internet. Our ~~likings~~ “likes” are hardly spontaneous affinities emerging as the truth of the life in us; rather, they are impelled by external and inauthentic constructions of identity, unable to engender as much passion or joy as would be through presence to reality as opposed to images.

Off-screen as well, what happens in so-called “real life” comes to acquire a staged tenor, all a means to some purposes of governmentality or market valorization. [As Nicholas Hausdorf wrote for *Jacobite*:](#)

“The cybernetic state neutralizes resistance as information. The idea anticipating this state and conceiving of it as machine is already outlined in Hobbes’ Leviathan. The 20th century will perfect it to encourage acts of disobedience, if only because the managed upheaval of discipline-based stability generates the more intimate power-knowledge to be harvested. The state-machine thus inserts itself ever deeper into proliferating fields of disorder to observe and repackage them for domestic astroturfed grassroots resistance and democracy exports.”

All this is true also for the current protests. Yes, people do truly believe there is racism and that racism is bad. But a large part of that belief comes not from the spirit in them that spontaneously professes that killing innocent people is bad, but out of fidelity to being a certain kind of person who is woke and in vogue. Insofar as social justice is trendy, if a few people with somewhat of a prominent place in the Spectacle (i.e., “influencers”) start shouting “OH LORD, THE TERRIBLE OPPRESSION OF BLACK PEOPLE!” with even half a decent reason to be doing so, millions of other people may also start echoing that in a mechanical cadence conducted by discourse itself, for its own logic and ends, dictated by compulsions of representation rather than outpourings of vitality. Eventually, [the shouting on screens rises to a fever pitch, a chord of proper delirium is struck](#), and people take to the streets, each protester a unique black square set in motion by the autonomous and absolute Holy Spirit of Social Justice, speaking everything that must be spoken, but saying nothing. Society itself, finally, achieves the state of a comprehensive blackout, and the Black Square, thoroughly transcendentalized, remains the only entity with its own will and sensibility.

While this process has been exemplified right now, it is hardly the first time such a thing has happened on the Left. Adolph Reed Jr., the stalwart dissident (read: anti-woke) black socialist, made this point in an essay on the current agitation:

“The left has no particular place it wants to go. And, to rehash an old quip, if you have no destination, any direction can seem as good as any other. The left careens from this oppressed group or crisis moment to that one, from one magical or morally pristine constituency or source of political agency (youth/students; undocumented immigrants; the Iraqi labor movement; the Zapatistas; the urban ‘precariat’; green whatever; the black/Latino/LGBT ‘community’; the grassroots, the netroots, and the blogosphere; this season’s worthless Democrat; Occupy; a ‘Trotskyist’ software engineer elected to the Seattle City Council) to another. It lacks focus and stability; its métier is bearing witness, demonstrating solidarity, and the event or the gesture. Its reflex is to ‘send messages’ to those in power, to make statements, and to stand with or for the oppressed.”

Reed was duly cancelled for these sentiments, but what he says is true. Each time something like this happens, the left thinks, “This is it! This is the revolution!” It is questionable

whether the left would undertake a movement if it didn't project some [revolutionary fantasies](#) onto it each time. It simply wouldn't be cool enough to partake in otherwise. The same is true now. Of course, the sight of buildings on fire can evoke memories of encyclopedia articles about revolutions, but as Chris Cutrone of the Platypus Society put it, "Violent protests aren't revolutions, and crime isn't revolutionary."

This isn't to say that *nothing* will come out of it. This point is rather about the soulless, frenzied delirium with which politics is conducted, and what that reflects and reinforces about our general psychosocial being. There is some authenticity to the sentiments on the streets and council meetings, which is why some change is already happening from the city to federal level. But a lot of the change that is sought does not come from a sane and sound place—more on this in the next argument—but that is in part because from square one, the movement proceeds by delirium, with motives of individualized self-positioning rather than coordinated thinking.

One may also think that the degree of rage and other expression that erupted this time is an indication that this time is different. Skepticism may be warranted. It is true that these have been bigger and more violent protests than usual. But the intensity of protest is not related to the outcome that comes out of them, but to the extremity of today's world. Ours is increasingly a peril-ridden, nervous society, fraught with catastrophic risk and bursting at the seams. That does not mean that the normal mode of democratic political participation will now, finally, be able to overcome its conditions. In an orderly dysfunctional society, we saw relatively mild movements come and go interspersed by lulls. In a chaotic dysfunctional society, [we will see riots and generic, nihilistic violence come and go](#), interspersed by periods where things are supposedly "normal."

Overall, the movement is par course, even if more intense than usual, for left politics, which is to say, it is [a flagrant muddle of indignation and akrasia](#). The pseudonymous Twitter account Anti-Minotaur has been particularly trenchant in chronicling this. [As they stated it](#), "There are decades where nothing happens and weeks where decades happen", true. But what we are witnessing right now, with the riots and protests, is definitely, obviously and indisputably a continuation of decades where nothing happens, and people deserve to know that." [And then later](#), "To be clear, my attitude towards the riots and protests begins with sympathy and ends in mistrust. With no viable leadership or concrete rational goal, they cannot advance. Their impact on history, if any, is likely to be negative and further the process of fragmentation."

Indeed, the ongoing unrest is a self-imposed psy-op. People think something is happening because other people are thinking and saying something is happening. And it is true, something or the other will happen as a result of it. But it is worth asking: Is this how the world should be? What may be the costs of conditioning ethical conduct using the faddishness of virality on lit screens? Might the real tragedy in fact be that our civilization lacks the freedom to chart its own course with consciousness, and regardless of atomistic rewards? What is worse, that social progress is needed, or that social progress is itself now the functioning of a formerly living being, a society, turned into a sickly, spellbound automaton?

6. Delusion:

The previous argument concluded by asking whether a greater tragedy than the racism itself may be that ours is increasingly a society wherein mass participation in politics takes place mindlessly, as a rudimentary reflex responding to certain stimulating keywords, as if haunted by a delirium of the word of social justice. This leads to a rather inappropriate question, yet one of untold and unutterable importance: Does there even exist such a tragedy of racism? Could it be that this entire upswell of activism is based upon significant factual errors, and that as a result, the full picture of racial oppression that constitutes the driving force and axiom of all the protests and advocacy is actually misled?

Let us start with a principal progressive premise, that the killing of George Floyd was reflective of a norm and structure of racist policing in the US. This is not the first place that this premise has been weighed up against the following facts, but they seem to need more repeating: It is true that a quarter of people killed by the police about every year in recent years have been black, which is greater than the percent of black people in the US, suggesting that black people are disproportionately targeted by policing. A figure brandished around the mainstream media in the last couple weeks says that a black American is [2.5 times more likely](#) than a white American to be killed by the police.

If one's denominator was simply skin color, the fact is that black people are more likely to be victims of police violence than white people. However, police killings are typically a function of encounters with armed or violent suspects. (Yes, George Floyd's case doesn't fit this bill, but this was a very anomalous event.) And while 13 out of every hundred people in the US is black, [38 percent](#), almost three times the proportion, of violent crimes are committed by black people, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

This indicates, in polar contrast to the notions borne by everyone with protests signs demanding that police officers stop killing black people, that an armed or violent black person is killed *disproportionately less than* an armed or violent non-black person. Again, the data does corroborate this: For every 10,000 black people arrested for violent crime, three are killed; for every 10,000 white people arrested for violent crime, four are killed. And since almost all police killings occur against violent or armed suspects, if an armed or violent black person is proportionally speaking at less risk of getting killed by a police officer than such a non-black person, it could be said a black person in general is at below average risk of getting killed in one out of the 250-million-plus interactions that police officers have with Americans per year. As far as *police killings* go, there simply is no racism in America.

Still, one may ask for the number of unarmed or nonviolent people killed. Last year, according to the [Washington Post's Fatal Force Database](#), 15 unarmed black people were killed by the police, whereas 25 unarmed white people were killed by the police. Again, given the

much smaller number of black people who live in the US, those numbers may seem damning, but those 15 people represent 6.3 percent of black people killed by police officers, whereas the 25 white people killed by police officers account for 6.6 percent of white victims of police killings. In other words, almost all whites and blacks killed by the police were armed, so the disproportion in the paragraph above remains more salient in evaluating racially biased police brutality. It is, in sum, the violent crime rate that accounts for the disparity in police killing people of different races, as Leonydus Johnson explained in [a thread](#) with the above numbers, as such a disparity between races disappears when controlled for violent crime. Or more simply put, the police inordinately kill not black people, but suspects of violent crime regardless of their race.

More dimensions must also be considered in evaluating the reality of racism, policing and killings. It is shocking to find out that the police are [the sixth-leading cause of death among black men aged 15-44](#). As sad as that is, one tends to look at it differently on finding out that [the foremost leading cause of death among black men aged 15-45 is homicide](#), and that [almost all of these are by other black men](#). While about 250 black people are killed by the police per year, a greater number was killed by other black people last year *in Baltimore alone*. Going through [FBI data](#) on homicide for the last several years, it appears more black children are murdered every year—almost all, again, by other black people—than black adults are killed by the police every year. In all, there are around 7,000 black victims of homicide every year, meaning that a black person is over 25 times more likely to be killed by another black person than by a police officer. The *New York Times*, having lavished a pull-quote upon the Black Lives Matter organizer in the previous argument [who thought himself](#) equally in danger from the police and the coronavirus, may want to go back and ask him why he fears either of these more than other black men.

However, progressives are allergic to talk about black-on-black crime, claiming that it is but a ruse to divert focus away from police murders. In terms of actual suffering to loved ones and communities, how is talking about police killings not more of a ruse to divert focus away from black-on-black killings? In a world not topsy-turvy, one might think that if there is one instance of one phenomenon and 25 instances of another, focusing almost all energy on the first would be the diversion. Not in the world of liberalism.

Maybe, though, just maybe, cops killing black men is more of a byproduct of the levels of black-on-black homicide than vice versa. Is it not more plausible that the police are getting involved in that violence because it already exists, for whatever reasons that it does, perhaps systemic, than it is plausible that black men are killing so many black men because some black men are getting killed by the police? Maybe even—at the risk of terminally offending some readers—in the world as it is, if the police did not kill as many armed or violent black men as they had to, the net number of black men getting killed would be even higher. This may not be true, but if we are going to seriously debate policies that end the policing of black communities, this hypothesis should at least be considered, principally for the sake of those black lives that these debates are wagering.

A related dimension was brought to light by [a column in *The Wall Street Journal*](#), which used the same *Washington Post* database as above for its numbers: “In 2018 there were 7,407 black homicide victims. Assuming a comparable number of victims last year, those nine unarmed black victims of police shootings represent 0.1% of all African-Americans killed in 2019. By contrast, a police officer is 18½ times more likely to be killed by a black male than an unarmed black male is to be killed by a police officer.”

In the end, it may be that black people, particularly young black males, are disproportionately killed in the US, by the police and by other people, but it is a peculiar ideological whim to focus on that without acknowledging fully and truly that black people, particularly young black males, are disproportionately likely to be killing people in the US as well. In fact, older blacks realize this, which is why many of them, contrary to the delusional version of reality that progressives live in wherein all black people feel unbearably oppressed by the police, [actually desire more policing in their neighborhoods](#). They would not do so if they did not know that it isn't that the police are after black people at large, but after criminals, who by-and-large hurt their own. These older African-Americans do not find it a matter of racism that a disproportionate number of people killed by the police are of their own skin color, and neither should we.

A parallel exists with sex and age: Males and young people are likely to be causing much more homicide or violent assault than females and older people, and correspondingly, they are also much more likely to be killed by the police. But if the fact that almost all of the people killed by the police are male doesn't make the police sexist in the collective imagination, neither should they be considered racist by the fact that a disproportionate number of the people killed by the police—not even close to “almost all” as with males—are black.

There are three points, with respect to all of this, that are likely in the mind of the progressive “anti-racist.” First, why is it that black people are committing more violent crimes? Couldn't that be due to systemic racism, and isn't ignoring that perpetuating racism? Second, there is a racial bias in the criminal justice system, even if not directly in policing, and that's what this movement is really about. Third, is it okay that the police kill so many people, regardless of their race?

We can look at these points from last to first. The last is the simplest to answer, despite its dishonesty in shifting the goalposts stated by the very name “Black Lives Matter.” No, it's not okay that police in America kill so many people. The institution of policing has significant issues, amply demonstrated by [video footage](#) from the recent protests of cops needlessly brutalizing peaceful protesters, and in some cases, mere bystanders. (Here is [the Wikipedia article](#) of the list of incidents of police violence during these protests.) One would have to be a dogmatic ideologue to contend that America's police forces are just fine. They are not, and significant reform is needed.

As for the second point, the same troubles of adjusting for other variables remain. Progressives point out that a black person on average gets a prison sentence 10 percent longer than a white person for the same crime. This certainly seems damning, if true. However, sentences are not given by an algorithm that inputs a crime and outputs a sentence, whether or not that should be the case. Due to a greater than 10 percent gap in wealth, white people are able to afford better legal counsel, which makes a huge difference. Apart from that, there are many factors that could influence the sentences meted out by judges, most notably prior history and the surrounding community and family circumstances, indicating a likelihood of returning to crime, oppositional behavior toward law enforcement and the court, and on top of being able to afford legal services, full knowledge of the legal services one is entitled to, a form of cultural capital perhaps.

To take a particular example in the criminal justice system that “anti-racists” [sometimes point to](#), consider the disparity between crack cocaine, used predominantly by black people, which is punished more heavily than powdered cocaine, used predominantly by white people. [Here the disparity arises from two facts](#): that crack is much more potent than powdered cocaine, and that the crack trade is much bloodier than the powder trade. For these two reasons, it was actually the Congressional Black Caucus that lobbied for stricter punishment against crack, with a mind toward protecting their own communities. Moreover, as it happens, crystal meth, consumed most by whites and then by Hispanics, and comparably potent and dangerous as crack, is punished with the same severity as the latter.

Most studies that only point to net differences in law enforcement and criminal justice between races without accounting for confounding factors such as these are trying but to prove a political point. Often, when such confounding factors are taken into account, disparity appears not on lines of race, but some other factor that is at least more understandable, even if in an ideal world those factors would also be reduced.

This isn't to say there is no racism in the criminal justice system. For example, marijuana criminalization, to a great extent, serves the purpose of the police being able to lock up black men whom they see as threats for other reasons. The fact that black people are far more convicted for possessing, consuming or selling marijuana than white people is undesirable and unfair, a byproduct of their being policed more on account of higher crime rates.

However, the popular progressive picture of the criminal justice system is an exaggeration. There are problems with American's criminal justice system, some of which are more directly related to race. But many—maybe even most—points serving as fuel for contemporary “anti-racist” and anti-police politicking are simply unfounded, based on ignoring the variables that really matter.

This leaves the first and most fundamental rebuttal from the progressive, that underlying systemic racism could explain the disparities in violent crime between blacks and whites, and

thus could also lie at the bottom of disproportions in police brutality, meaning that policing is in fact ultimately racist.

To a large extent, such a stance would be fine. The argument here is not that anti-black racism, systemic or otherwise, does not exist at all, as the marijuana example above should attest. In general, from having simply existed in the world and observed it, it is hard to deny that anti-black sentiments are present among all races in the US.

As another example, directly related to policing, [it appears](#) that even though there is not much gap in the lethal use of force, blacks are more likely to be subject to non-lethal use of force by the police than whites. It is quite plausible that there exists a minority of cops that hold anti-black racial prejudices. That, combined with the fact that [most police violence is committed by another small minority of cops](#), likely results in an intersecting scenario wherein there is a small but significant number of cops who are both anti-black and liable to using unnecessary violence. Given the absence of comparable anti-white sentiments in our society, it is unlikely that there would be a corresponding minority of police officers who are both anti-white and liable to using unnecessary violence.

In general, to the extent that higher crime rates lead to higher rates of police violence toward black people, there are deeper reasons why there is higher crime in black communities. The disparities between black Americans compared to other races, most notably whites and Asians, do not just end at criminal justice. There are also disparities in outcomes with respect to healthcare, educational attainment, income and more. These in part explain the difference in higher crime rates, and moreover beg the question: Why do those disparities exist?

It is beyond the scope of this argument to go through each disparity and evaluate exactly how much overall disparity is on account of systemic racism. Still, it can be granted that systemic racism does exist to some significant extent, which is partly responsible for higher crime rates, and thus disproportionate police violence against black people.

However, there are three necessary aspects to framing systemic racism correctly in the context of policing and criminal justice, neither of which has been taken up by Black Lives Matters and the current progressive discourse.

First, policing and criminal justice disparities are largely a symptom of underlying disparities that lead to more crime. A movement that places central emphasis on policing and criminal justice as a very significant element, or even *cause*, of the misery of black people, which is what is being done in the present moment, is misled. Poverty tends to lead to violent crime, and our society treats violent crime the way it does, whether or not it should. Still, the predominant message of the protests is that the police are specifically killing black people, though the reality is that the police are killing a lot of people who display violent behavior regardless of their skin color. As such, mentally ill people happen to be perhaps [the greatest victims of police brutality](#). America is nothing if not a very violent society, and the casualties of

this reality are diverse and tragic. But it is rare that they are casualties *because of* some category they belong to except “Giving police officers a reason to believe they may act violently.”

Fixing underlying systematic disparities leading to the kind of policing that is being protested would make a larger and deeper difference in preventing such policing than protesting policing itself. For example, higher educational attainment [is known to](#) correlate to lower crime rates in communities worldwide. There is grassroots advocacy being done to improve schools in black neighborhoods for sure; the suggestion here isn't that this idea hasn't struck activists yet. Still, if one wanted more intensely to help improve the lot of black communities after the killing of George Floyd, one should all the more intensely then advocate for better schools, for example. Be warned, though; putting the cart before the horse and highlighting the much more glamorous issue of police violence will get more Instagram stories shared.

Putting the cart before the horse has a couple other pernicious effects as well. The argument here is that the disparity of outcome getting most attention these days is an effect of other deeper problems. Right now, because of the moral importance given to the disparity in this outcome of policing, it is taboo to have any attitude toward it except one that wishes its swift and total undoing. To the extent that this particular disparity is actually due to underlying injustices, there is some validity to desiring that this disparity be addressed.

However, first, undue focus on the effect compared to the cause likely would result in the causes manifesting in other undesirable disparities—that is simply how complex psychosocial systems work. Second, it is possible for disparities between groups to emerge for some reason or another—sometimes due to fluctuations of fortune, with no component of oppression—even when there are not underlying, unjust inequalities. If a culture is normalized, as is happening, wherein moral weight is given to the reflection of reality rather than its substance, or to the product rather than the process, the conclusion could be to institute even more or differently unjust social dynamics, infringing upon equality of opportunity for all groups, in order to level outcomes.

The next framing that is largely, though not totally, missing from the current discourse is that to the extent that policing does unfairly hurt black people at a higher rate than other races, the solutions at the level of policing itself that will make the greatest marginal difference are far more subtle than the sloganeering that has taken place. To a great extent, the problems of police departments require directed and well-enforced fixes at the level of effective statecraft. For example, [this is a report](#) from 2017, detailing how the Minneapolis Police Department conducts subpar psychological testing. Perhaps if it was at par with the present standard, a clearly reckless and unempathic goon such as Derek Chauvin would not have been able to get into the police force, and George Floyd would still be alive.

There are [many other empirical directions](#) that should be honed in on. But extending predictive policing to the police, forgetting about the very idea of implicit bias, etc. don't constitute “dismantling white supremacy” or whatever it is the ritualistic orgies on the streets

these days fancy themselves doing. There is certainly some support for evidence-based policy, and Campaign Zero must have seen its coffers find much heft in the last few weeks. But the crowd that wants to see nothing short of police abolition (there's another eight-argument essay to be written about that) and which finds advocating for police reform "[absolutely unacceptable](#)" is becoming increasingly dominant.

However, you don't need to "dismantle white supremacy" to save lives. To the contrary, saving lives will involve framings about right and wrong in which talking about "white supremacy" and other such buzzwords won't and can't fit in. In fact, trying to make George Floyd's death about "white supremacy" wholesale, before trying to make changes in boring and effective areas of bureaucracy is also little but grandstanding, meant to prove some personal moral point, rather than caring about the next George Floyd. Indeed, pressuring Kim Kardashian via social media to talk to Trump about increasing the budget for Department of Justice investigations may make a bigger difference than painting murals or chanting at cops to "bend the knee" or other such instantiations of "praxis." Sadly for the next George Floyd though, that isn't cool in the cultural codes of the day.

The third claim is likely to be the most controversial, but unless those who want to see black lives and black communities flourish in the greatest possible sense summon the sense and will to say, it is unlikely that this progress will take place: This is that African-Americans have problems that cannot be addressed just by addressing racism faced by them.

Everyone knows, for example, based on the video footage of the looting that accompanied this unrest, that young black men and women [disproportionately represented the looters](#)... far more disproportionately than the disproportions involved in the violence they face at the hands of the police. (This isn't to absolve young whites of accountability for their contributions to the riots, which seemed, to generalize again, to be proportionally more in the domain of [plain vandalism](#) and [non-instrumental](#) destruction, hardly superior forms of antisocial behavior.)

Furthermore, everyone knows—most so those black business-owners whose shops were ransacked—that it wasn't mainly basic necessities that were looted. The looting that took place along with the rioting was immoral, unnecessary behavior. It was cowardly opportunism; it was rank consumerism; it was stealing from one's neighbor. It disclosed concerning values, or the lack thereof, among significant swathes of black America—though by no means the entirety of it—and it was yet another case in point that on top of some political and economic reforms, a cultural shift is also direly needed in black communities for their full welfare.

This is a racist observation, however, according to liberal America. It is an oppressive analysis that takes attention away from the question of *why* there is such a problem among black people, they would say. (And then are also those who would blankly deny that such problems are more prevalent in black America, and more broadly deny that crime is actually higher among black people than it is among other races, claiming for instance that if only cops

would hang out around white or Asian neighborhoods that much, they would find as much violent crime. There is no hope in arguing against those with such a psychotic purview toward racial differences, whatever may be the cause of those differences.)

This is the patronizing attitude toward black people decried by conservatives—including sundry black intellectuals—and rightly so. It is not just unconvincing hand-waving, but sheer condescension, which would attempt to explain all suboptimal behavior of black people by pointing to the legacy of racism. Yet that is what dominant culture is doing. “Of course,” today’s progressive is effectively saying to black people, “you would break into an Adidas store and run out with the latest Yeezys; how else can a person who lives with the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, redlining, police profiling, voter ID laws and microaggressions be expected to behave?”

It would be an interesting change, however, to see these same progressives tell the mothers and wives of the thousands of black men killed every year by other black men that those deaths were in part inevitable, after all, due to the slave trade. Or to tell [the three quarters of black children](#) who are growing up today without fathers—a number that has remained steady for fifty years, despite significant reductions in racism at the institutional and cultural level throughout American society—that their fathers are above accountability for such decisions.

Of course, these factors—especially fatherlessness—contribute to higher crime rates and other disparities. They cannot thereby entirely change unless black communities also change from within, on top of broader political and economic improvements that may also be necessary. It is about undeniable, if one were to be fully honest with oneself, that even if the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow and segregation were to be undone, and the realities, to the extent they still linger, of present-day racism eradicated, there would still be problems caused and largely faced too by black Americans. Whatever may be the reason those patterns were set in motion, to say that only systemic racism causes the suffering of black people is a lie—one moreover harmful most of all to the race it seeks to be made on behalf of.

Black lives, however, matter. Not only do they matter, they are capable of forging their own upliftment beyond their present lot. The success of black immigrants to the US (such as [this feisty one](#)) demonstrates that there is nothing inherent to the black skin color itself that is meant to consign black people to their current disparities of outcomes. As for blacks descended from generations of African Americans, there are definitely some bad things being done to them, and even more very bad things that have been done to them. Yet there are also bad things that they are doing now, most of all to themselves. Even if they are doing those things out of disenchantment with what has been done to them, they are better than that, for the same life flows through them that flows through all other humans and nonhumans. The only proper attitude toward racial inequality is that African Americans have faced unspeakable injustices over the last few centuries into the present moment, *and* they can and should be doing much better themselves regardless of those injustices.

Contemporary progressivism, however, will not say this. It paints black people as victims beyond qualification, above criticism and bereft of agency. It says that there is no oppression like the kind black people are facing, and that they are nothing besides oppressed. This is a delusion, and it is leading to deluded politics. Looking at the matter with integrity shows that the reality is that the State is addressing *crime*, heavy-handedly and out of a baseless paradigm of human nature perhaps, but not out of a *predominant* spirit of racial discrimination. And, it isn't that there is more crime in black communities *entirely* due to institutional discrepancies and lack of opportunity, though that is true to some extent, and should be addressed.

A movement that approached matters in such a measured and accurate way would be worth supporting. But the “anti-racist” movement today posits that black America is *uniquely* and *wholesale* oppressed. This is a lie—to itself, to black America and to the world. Defunding the police likely has value. But when it is sought from unfounded premises and misled beliefs, the gains from such reform may be outweighed by the costs of giving undeserved credence and power to baseless positions. For then, such positions could even more vigorously demand or enforce other changes that, still proceeding from delusion, bear the risk of tragic errors of means and ends. The ongoing movement and unrest behoove, regrettably, opposition instead. Indeed, it is the case that the delirium and delusion of social justice is leading to dismal and gravely maladaptive indignations, entitlements and hostilities. These will be considered in the next argument.

7. Theocracy:

This is the argument about woke culture and political correctness. It is true that the number of bytes that have lended themselves to invectives against wokeness as well as apologia for it must be enough to fill up several data centers at this point. Still, here are some more. There are two specific matters to be focused on with respect to the social justice ethos of the present politicking: What it ties to, and more critically, what this unrest itself has been promoting (and demoting).

It is no secret, of course, that this is a left movement in a comprehensive sense. It would be one thing for a cause to be more popular on the left, for some cultural reason or another. For example, gay rights have historically been a left-wing cause, but given the very nature of the matter—that homosexuality can also occur in people who develop right-wing beliefs—it is an issue that over time has found natural support from conservatives as well. With something like this, there was not a case that supporting gay rights means one also has to, say, support rent control.

Luckily, significant advances in gay rights were won before intersectionality became a gospel on the left. For this movement, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—bless her heart—[put it explicitly](#): “If you’re calling for an end to unrest, but not calling out police brutality, not calling for

health care as a human right, not calling for an end to housing discrimination, all you're asking for is the continuation of quiet oppression."

Now, racism has never been a single-issue topic. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for example, was explicit about the links between domestic racism and the Vietnam War, and saw how the plight of black America was tied to economic exploitation well past the end of slavery. What is different now is that to have a dream of no racism is tied to a *specific, necessary and comprehensive* vision of the world well beyond worthy ideals such as love, brotherhood or dignity. Tying racism at home to racism abroad is still talking about racism. In a nation wherein poverty is considerably higher among black people, Dr. King's criticisms of capitalism were coherent even if not absolutely valid. Despite his questioning of wealth inequality and the profit motive, despite his famous observation that the US practiced socialism for the rich, and rugged individualism for the poor, he never explicitly said that racism cannot be addressed without dismantling capitalism or abolishing the stock exchange. And he certainly did not make connections such as the ones made in this post that was circulating recently:

If You Want to Dismantle Racism

To the Paris Hiltons of the world, you need to realize that anti-racism involves more than just being kind. It also involves more than just rethinking the police.

Dismantling our racist system involves, in no particular order and among other things:

- Ending voter suppression.
- Radical voter education.
- Mass participation in community listening forums, gender and race workshops, and trauma awareness programs.
- Free education, for everyone of all ages.
- A spiritual and intellectual Renaissance.
- Ending the war on drugs.
- Freeing, rehabilitating, and assimilating prisoners who are not a threat to public safety and reimagining how we treat violent or unstable people.
- Abolishing borders (See: Revolting Prostitutes) and rehabilitating all refugees, including and especially those who were soldiers.

Putting a stop to the fascists of the world without civilian casualties. 2/3

Radical material aid to vulnerable populations.

Decriminalizing sex work and empowering sex workers to become community leaders.

Empowering the science and academic communities and holding public dialogues on how to create a new world order that benefits everyone.

Ending the narrative that one must work to earn a living. We should take care of each other and encourage each other to pursue our passions -- even if someone's passion is smoking weed and making people laugh. It is feasible.

Ending the luxury market.

Holding the rich accountable and of course seizing their wealth for redistribution.

Radical gun control that respects a person's right to defend themselves within reason.

Radical environmental protections and the restoration of nature.

End to land ownership.

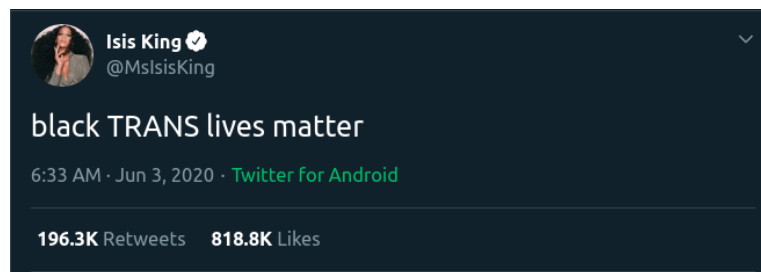
Eco-friendly housing and energy production. 3/3
Global, eco-friendly transportation system.
End to factory farming.
Mandatory, intensive sexual health education and free birth control for everyone.
Pouring resources into our public schools and reimagining what public education can be.
Rehabilitating and radically caring for veterans, the homeless, addicts, the anti-social, and the mental "ill."
Educating and rehabilitating those who have been brainwashed and radicalized by misinformation or religion (ie racists).
Intensive, trauma-informed mandatory seminars regarding human history, with special attention to slavery, imperialism, rape, war, torture, sadism, paedosadism, police and state brutality, environmental destruction, etc.

Now, if it were just a matter of policy proposals, maybe that would be understandable. But there is more going on in the above list beneath and beyond a specific claim such that decriminalizing sex work is needed to end racism. The issue is rather that all these ideas cohere into a very specific vision about the world. Any progressive movement nowadays, including this one, is not just conducting advocacy regarding specific issues. It is, in every breath taken, advocating for a specific world. It would in fact be hard to make a strong argument that decriminalizing sex work is needed to end racism. However, that is what is in vogue among younger progressives and leftists, and so, it is just magically connected, because the ultimate purpose of the massively popular cultural movement that is the left is to create a specific, total world—and “ending racism” is partially just a means to that. The fact that liberal nations worldwide saw large demonstrations take place alongside those in the US, including in those where almost no one ever gets killed by the police such as [New Zealand](#) and [the Netherlands](#), shows that the movement isn't just about opposing racism, it is about the hegemony of a particular model of the world.

Everyone knows this at some level of their minds or another, which is a large part of why conservatives have such a knee-jerk apprehension toward the upswell of “anti-racist” sentiment that is going on right now. Many of them would support simple and actual anti-racism, and policies that would accomplish that. But what is apparent now, beneath the veneer of seemingly honorable aims such as showing that “white supremacists aren't welcome,” is a specific world. In this world, a particular kind of person is denigrated, and culture associated with certain people, often white, is stigmatized. These are strata of the populace that are already being rendered disposable by global economic dynamics, and the language surrounding movements like this give the message that liberals are not only okay with this, they would be happy if it did

happen, opening up space for a [beige](#), gender-neutral society where all individual ethnic cultures are erased and replaced by a hegemonic cosmopolitan culture where all that is allowed is worshipping Lizzo and Greta Thunberg.

Indeed, the progressive world-vision is constructed largely as a photographic negative of what is considered the authentic image of “white society,” for what it entails in the popular imagination, or even “America” itself, the latter word associated more with guns, the Bible and barbeque grills than with genteel cafes and political *haute couture*. Ideas such as decriminalizing sex work or “trauma-informed mandatory seminars” (read: struggle sessions) are less so policy proposals, and more so dog-whistles meant to channel and energize activists for the crusade of actualizing wokeworld. Sometimes the dog-whistles are subtle, and it’s only through association with other slogans and discourses that it’s known that a sentiment such as “Make Racists Afraid Again” doesn’t mean just that. Such a sentiment is, on top of that, an avowal of a consciousness that goes far beyond opposing racists, to fleshing out a whole world, whose analysis and flavor are both captured by not-so-subtle dog-whistles such as these:





Now, many people may prefer to not want a world made in the image of such a consciousness, and that could be a natural reason to feel iffy about the “anti-racism” hashtagging and looting lately. However, there is no obvious reason to prefer a society of more traditional—and dare it be said, commonsensical and reasonable—ideas of how things should be compared to wokeworld, in the way that one would obviously prefer, other variables remaining constant, a secure world to a precarious world, or living in the Goldilocks Zone to another part of a Solar System. One is a world of Drag Queens, another is a world of Beauty Queens, and it seems like an arbitrary choice to prefer one over another.

If it were only a matter of Drag Queens vs. Beauty Queens, that would be different. That is not fundamentally what this is about, however, and this is where it is illuminating to hone in on a few of the actions or words that have surrounded the unrest. Start, for example, with the new craze of having the police, or white people in general, “bending the [knee](#)”—a gesture in the collective mind, for those unaware, most because of its prevalence in *A Game of Thrones* to signify submission. Or consider [the liturgies](#) of supplication and absolution that have occurred at many rallies. Or [progressive segregation](#). Or—a particularly telling example—revisit [this video](#) of a couple of white people licking a black man’s boot.

There are two big problems with these sorts of things: First, what it means, and second, how it’s spread and enforced. The most clear implication of such acts is that “anti-racism” is currently enacted as a process of guilt and shame, rather than universal empowerment. Power is seen as a zero-sum game, a fixed-size pie whose proportions can only be distributed

differently, not as something that can be shared and grown. This is coming to be a predominant ethos of progressivism, particularly as there is an increasing expectation—moving beyond hope—that white people should “bend the knee.” Most recently, even Democratic Congresspersons performed the gesture.

But symbols have meanings, and this gesture is not merely one of swallowing pride or forgoing privilege. It connotes, rather, relinquishing dignity. We had long moved past a world, in the United States, in which any person had to bow and bend over as a matter of custom for another person. We should ideally be a society in which everyone can hold their head high, and one moreover in which with every increasing person who does so, there is more might and vigor in the collective, to reinforce the life in each.

Liberals and the left, however, would rather that we go in the opposite direction. [Values and perception have gone so wrong](#) in so much of our society now that people are being cheered as they dehumanize themselves and as others demand that of them, with a barely hidden logic that the only way to get out of the bottom of a hierarchy is by flipping it. However, prejudice is prejudice—and the broader vilification of whiteness normalized in woke culture is nothing but that—and domination is domination—regardless of how much sociology textbook one can spew off—and prejudice and domination are bad. Insofar as that is what the present political activity means, insofar as it is thus promoting a culture of derogation and belittling, it merits unequivocal repudiation.

Unfortunately, it is not just promoting such a culture, it is enforcing it. These arguments here are an invitation to get deplatformed or cancelled. As the previous argument suggested that the present “anti-racism” would not stop until there is total equality of outcome, this argument cannot help but posit that the thrust of social justice movements such as this is for the total penetration and pervasion of woke thinking and being throughout the fabric of society. It is nigh but a soft totalitarianism. A dictatorial state need not be necessary for totalitarianism. To use a (very sound) distinction made by philosophers popular on the left, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, if power in industrial society was exercised through the enforcement of overt discipline, then in post-industrial society, it is exercised through subliminal control. The Law need not punish thoughtcrime; the Discourse simply prevents it. Or to slightly alter [the canny observation](#) the pseudonymous Logo Daedalus made in the context of present debates, if the woke left is dominant in our society, abolishing the police will just mean that everyone is The Police.

Totalitarianism takes on a particular character in post-industrial society though, different from that involving the State at its center. Insofar as something transcendental is needed to totalize, the totalitarianism of post-industrial, “post-ideological,” digital society takes on a paradoxically atavistic form. Lacking the center of the state that reigned dominant through the twentieth century, it props itself up on premodern templates. Social justice is a church, and its reign is a theocracy. Michael Tracey, commenting on Twitter, put it cleanly: “The rituals at these protests closely resemble what you would see at an Evangelical-style religious service.

Collective kneeling or sitting in prayer. Hands raised reverentially to the sky. Liturgical chants. [This is a new expression of secular, civic religion.](#)” The movement that has emerged since the killing of George Floyd is specifically one tending toward a postmodern theocracy.

Such an analysis finds lamentable vindication well beyond the protests. Throughout our discourse, the correct stance on matters of social justice are certainly not opinions, they are not even truths, they are, collectively, Truth, and to deny Truth is heresy. In fact, to not see Truth as plainly apparent can only be demonstrative of a lack of intelligence and receptivity, which raises the question of whether one is a fully thinking and feeling person, and enables persecution.

If one thinks this is all very exaggerated, that the terms “totalitarianism” and “theocracy” are excessive if used for social justice culture—especially seeing that these words are being published on the Internet—the fact is that these are actually considerations that are getting people fired and culled from “respectable society.” Take for example that Stan Wischnowski, the Executive Editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* who was with the paper for 20 years, led it to a Pulitzer and doubled the minority staff, [was forced to resign](#) after publishing a piece titled ‘Buildings Matter,’ even after going through the ritual of posting an apology about it. Or the “social democratic data scientist [who] [lost his job](#) at [Civic Analytics] for tweeting an article by a biracial ... African-American studies scholar suggesting that rioting [sic] is politically counterproductive”. Or the UCLA professor who was “put on leave” (read: fired) for not giving [special treatment to black students](#).

The message of mainstream liberal society is clear: Fall in line, or face the consequences. To be accepted in society, you must be woke. If you’re not actively “speaking up” by sharing posts about fighting racism on social media, you are racist, you are in fact an active participant in violence—Archbishop Tutu, after all, said that if you’re neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor—and dare you not question whether there is actually as much injustice as is being reported. Some incidents of “lived experience” are sufficient proof of the condition of millions—and haven’t you heard the new truth on the block? *Cum hoc ergo propter hoc*—like if you agree. And if you swipe right and match [on Tinder](#), you must be prepared to show receipts of donations to “anti-racist” organizations. Your acceptance depends on your submission, and love, personal finance and everything in between is subsidiary to your attendance to this feckless dog and pony show called “social justice.”

This, more fundamental than racial injustice itself, is the spirit and drift of the ongoing unrest. For the sake of society, the unrest must therefore be opposed.

8. Breakdown:

The most explicit, self-defining statement of the current political movement against racism is “Black Lives Matter.” This pronouncement was also adopted and affirmed, though in a

vein against the dominant narrative, toward the end of 'Delusion'. To say that black lives matter is regarded today as the ultimate touchstone of virtue and wisdom.

However, the idea that black lives matter is nonsense. Not just that, the notion that "black lives" exist is an error. Its rival statement, "All Lives Matter," is no different. It is not that either is false. It's not that black lives *do not* matter. Statements to the effect of lives mattering, rather, cannot be right or wrong, since truth does not apply to nonsense. Lives cannot matter, and they cannot not matter, because lives do not exist. There are no such things as "black lives" or "all lives." There is only life.

This is one of the most blatant and fundamental errors in current politics, committed by left and right alike. That it is so widely accepted as a basis for discussion about all matters related to joy and suffering bears witness to the thoroughness with which modern liberal conceptualizations have laid siege upon our consciousness. For it is by no means necessary to think of our existence as the sum of individual "lives" that each person, thought of as their own monad, possesses. It is an arbitrary philosophical choice to do so. Moreover, it is this conceptualization that enables the notions of the self, the other, success, failure, attachment and aversion, which we then err into living and breathing, and which are together at the root of all the suffering that we bring upon our existence. This arbitrariness and counterproductivity, in turn, are the outcome of its falsehood, which we fall into when we are alienated from—not "our lives"—but from the life in us.

This idea was already implied at the start of this essay, when discussing the Nihilism of not seeing cities or societies as having life in the way humans do. But of course they have life, the same life that we have. Life is one. This is not a mystical notion, though mystics and sages of varying creeds have experienced and communicated this truth with acuity that a naturalistic consciousness by itself cannot realize. Still, it is a scientific, biological, material fact. Life is a system, we know, with each node in the system a mere junction, a partial object, serving the purpose of life as such.

Each of us, each organism, is an open system, defined by our relations and connections with and within ecological nodes in our habitat. The information and energy flowing through this whole system, along with the computations taking place within and between our incidental substances to maintain homeostasis, metabolize, grow, adapt, and reproduce, are ontologically primary to our egos. They are what we call life, and each of us has it—not our own version of it, not a part of it, but the same life, and all of it, present at once with each of us.

Our limited consciousness leads us to foreground these nodes that we make the metaphysical mistake of identifying with as I's and me's. But "it is not the line that is between two points, but the point that is the intersection of many lines," as Gilles Deleuze recognized. It is only because these lines, the omnidirectional vectors of life, pass through our material bodies and the emergent psychological phenomena we call our minds, that we experience vitality.

A society that does not recognize this, a politics that does not proceed from the experiential truth of this material reality, is bound never to find the liberation it seeks. A society or politics that turns the truth on its head, and acts as if it is organisms and their odd, conditioned notions about individuality that are prime, is bound to be afflicted by conflict, pain and sorrow.

All the strife we are seeing and partaking in today is an inevitable sequela of the original error having broken down life into innumerable fragments, and basing all our desires and actions on this breakdown. That Black Lives Matter directly names itself on the basis of this error is a fitting epitome of modern thought, but the name itself is secondary; the important point is that our politics actually sets out from and takes as its object of concern the “lives” of humans, and how each such life, thus reduced, individually fares. But life does not just inhere within us—it inheres among us, between us, on top of us, below us, into us, out of us and beyond us. It is, moreover, sacred.

Any pursuit or deed that treats “lives,” or life in the individual organism as inviolable, while treating life in its fullness with frivolity, does not see life correctly. As such, it cannot actually regard life in the individual—including the life in George Floyd—as sacred either. There is no good reason to support an upswell of political energy and activity that claims to honor and do justice to George Floyd, but in response to the fatal attack on the life in him, justifies assaults on life through violence, destruction and dehumanization. In responding so, it ultimately commits sacrilege against the life he had. Indeed, on account of errors that such a pursuit proceeding from a place of error is bound to make and has indeed made, it must, in the best faith, be opposed.

Then, a better path, one that proceeds with all of life, and honors all that is sacred about the world, is opened up. If the life in George Floyd is regarded as finite and limited to his temporary being, then the thoughts and deeds of the ongoing unrest—that he cannot be brought back to life, and the retaliatory violence against other living beings is justified by that ultimatum—make sense. But fortunately, that is not the case, and there is no reason to walk down that road; instead, we can walk along a road with the life of George Floyd. There is, in the end, no question of his life being brought back, because though he was lost, and though it was a desecration of life that led to his loss, his life has not been lost. For that life is the same that you and I have, and we are still here, present with it right now.