

# The Arrogant Ignorance of the 'Well-Educated'

On more than one occasion my essays for *The Imaginative Conservative* have been inspired by bumper stickers. Many moons ago, for instance, I wrote "[The Wisdom and Wickedness of Women](#)" in response to seeing a bumper sticker declaring that "Well Behaved Women Do Not Make History." Recently, sitting in traffic, I saw this very same bumper sticker on the car in front of me, beside another which declared the following: "What you call the Liberal Elite, we call being well-educated." The juxtaposition of these two stickers, carefully selected by the car's owner to teach me a lesson, set me thinking. I might even say that it taught me a valuable lesson, though not the lesson that my neighbor in the car in front of me meant to teach me.

Let's take the second bumper sticker first. Clearly designed to offend other motorists, it is supremely supercilious and extremely arrogant. We, the average Joe, whoever we may be, are not as "well-educated" as the royal "we" driving the car in front of us. This pompous "we," who is presumably a she, presumes that anyone who disagrees with her is poorly educated, whereas she, of course, is well-educated. If we were as well-educated as she, we would agree with her.

To be fair to her, she is basing her presumption on data that shows that those who are "well-educated" tend to vote for the Democrats whereas those who are less "educated" tend to vote Republican. She votes Democrat because she is well-educated. We, who are presumed to be Republicans (because we are presumed to be stupid), complain that those who are better educated than us (and are therefore better than us) are part of an elite.

The problem is that her education is not as good as she thinks it is. If she was educated in our secular system, she would have learned nothing whatsoever about theology, presuming that, if there is a God, he, or probably she, agrees with us. If he or she does not agree with us, he or she can go to hell. And, of course, we can tell God to go to hell because

he or she is made in our image (we are not made in his/hers) and we can do what we like with him or her. In short, we can treat God with the same arrogance and superciliousness with which we treat our neighbor: "What God calls sin, we call being well-educated."

If she was educated in our secular system, she will know nothing of philosophy, or, if she does, she will believe that there was no philosophy worth taking seriously before René Descartes. She will know nothing of the philosophy of the Greeks, of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and still less of the great Christian philosophers, such as Augustine or Aquinas. Insofar as she's even heard of these people, she will presume that they did not know what they were talking about: "What the ancient philosophers call error, we call being well-educated."

If she was educated in our secular system, she will know nothing of history, or, if she does, she will know it only from her own twenty-first century perspective, or from the twenty-first century perspective of those who taught it to her. History is not about learning from the people of the past, their triumphs and their mistakes, but is about sitting in judgment on the stupidity of our ancestors, who are presumed to be unenlightened, or at least not as enlightened as she is or her teachers are. "What the people of the past believed to be immoral, we call being well-educated."

If she was educated in our secular system, she will know nothing of great literature, or, if she does, she will have misread it from the perspective of her own twenty-first century pride and prejudice, or from the proud and prejudiced twenty-first century perspective of those who taught her. She would not think of trying to read the great authors of the past through their own eyes because, living in the past, such authors lack the sense and sensibility which she has. "What Jane Austen calls pride and prejudice, we call being well-educated."

Once we understand what being "well-educated" actually means in the deplorably illiterate age in which we find ourselves, we are not surprised to find these two bumper stickers side by side. One who is "educated" in this way, will obviously believe that "well-behaved women do not make history." What we, the uneducated, call bad behavior, the

liberal elite call being well-educated.

To be “well-educated” is to be ignorant of theology, philosophy, history and the great books of civilization. It is to believe that we have nothing to learn from the Great Conversation that has animated human discourse for three millennia. It is to treat our neighbor in the car next to us with supercilious and scornful contempt, presuming that he is stupid because he is not as “well-educated” as we. It is to treat the greatest minds and the most brilliant writers in history with contempt because they are not as “well-educated” as we. In short, to be “well-educated” is not merely ignorance, it is the arrogance of ignorance.

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