

Eyes Wide Open: Seeing Liberty

In [Lost In The Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book](#), Walker Percy raises a number of philosophical questions regarding the self and why we know so little about ourselves. He also invites readers to participate in a number of “Thought Experiments.” In a chapter on “Why the Self is the only Object in the Cosmos which Gets Bored,” he offers this experiment:

Imagine you are a member of a tour visiting Greece. The group goes to the Parthenon. It is a bore. Few people even bother to look—it looked better in the brochure. So people take half a look, mostly take pictures, remark on the serious erosion by acid rain. You are puzzled. Why should one of the glories and fonts of Western civilization, viewed under pleasant conditions—good weather, good hotel room, good food, good guide—be a bore?

Now imagine under what set of circumstances a viewing of the Parthenon would not be a bore. For example, you are a NATO colonel defending Greece after a Soviet assault. You are in a bunker in downtown Athens, binoculars propped on sandbags. It is dawn. A medium-range missile attack is under way. Half a million Greeks are dead. Two missiles bracket the Parthenon. The next will surely hit. Between columns of smoke, a ray of golden light catches the portico.

Are you bored? Can you see the Parthenon?

Explain.

Sometimes a dramatic change in circumstance can cause us to see – to really see – what until then was so commonplace and ordinary that we scarcely gave it any thought at all. The death of a loved one from an aneurysm, so sudden that we have

no time to utter a goodbye or say “I love you,” can wake us to memories and vanished possibilities. Many of us old enough to remember 9/11 also remember conversations and faces from that day, though we can’t recollect what we ate for breakfast last Sunday.

We are now going through just such a change in America.

For the last six months, Americans have lived in confusion and fear, some of it justified by COVID-19, some of it ginned up by those who govern us and their expert advisors. In some states, we are still required to wear masks and practice social distancing. Many businesses remain under restrictive measures while other establishments have permanently closed. Unlike some countries around the world, our schools will once again practice distance learning rather than getting students back in the classroom. Our churches are either closed or operating at reduced capacity, and sporting events, concerts, fairs, and other group activities are *verboden* in most places.

Those who issued these edicts, which in so many states have led to what is now basically a six-month quarantine, may have sought to reduce coronavirus deaths, but they were also blind to the side effects of their unprecedented dictates: the economic woes, the psychological damage to people of all ages, the increases in drinking and drug use, and the violence in many cities since June, all in part a consequence of the lockdown.

On this [video](#), a man spoke to the Shasta County, California board of supervisors. He points out what many are starting to say, that officials who have instituted this quarantine continue to get paid while so many others have lost their jobs. He concludes with these remarks:

Open the county. Let our citizens do what they need to do. Let owners of businesses do what they need to do to feed their

families. Take the masks off. Quit masking and muzzling your children. The psychological damage you're doing to them is horrible. I've had six friends kill themselves since it's happened. Veterans who lost their jobs. How do you feel about being complicit in perpetuating that, the greatest hoax ever perpetuated on the American people? And you're part of it while you wear your masks. In Shasta County, we're supposed to be red country up here. Not blue country, we're red country up here.

It shouldn't matter whether we live in blue country or red country. Every American should worry about the erosion of our freedoms. Governors and mayors have ridden roughshod over our First Amendment liberties, and nearly all of us have acquiesced to their edicts, some of us from fear, some because we are trying to be good citizens.

In the upcoming election, we should pay attention to the stances taken by candidates on issues like jobs, education, and law and order. These are vital to our country's health. But most of all, let's take a hard look at what candidates say about the value of liberty, and vote accordingly.

Soon there will be an acid test for these officials. Flu season is fast approaching, and this may result in an uptick in coronavirus cases. If some of those politicians revert to shutdowns and quarantines, it's time to say enough is enough, protest their commands, and, if necessary, refuse to obey them.

Sic semper tyrannis.

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