

Laughter, the Bane of Tyrants

[The Babylon Bee](#) isn't one of my regularly visited websites, but I landed on its front page the other morning and started scrolling through headlines. Pretty soon a snicker escaped my lips, then a giggle, and then several bursts of downright hearty laughter, which a co-worker was soon sharing after I read him a choice headline.

I went back to my work feeling refreshed and content. It felt good to laugh, to look at the troubles our world faces through the funny side of the lens for once.

That I would find such laughter from a conservative satire site like *The Babylon Bee* would likely come as a surprise to many of our ruling elites. For the last couple of decades, popular opinion has placed good political humor solely in the hands of those on the left side of the political spectrum, professors Matt Sienkiewicz and Nick Marx [told Politico in a recent interview](#). Resting on their laurels, however, isn't doing liberal humorists any good; in fact, conservatives now appear to have the humor market cornered, partly due to the fact that their liberal counterparts are no longer funny.

This lack of humor from the left seems to stem from cancel culture and a fear of being offensive in even the most minute ways. Instead of laughing at something funny, liberals engage in virtue signaling, telling people "that there is a moral problem or maybe a political problem with finding [something] funny," Sienkiewicz says.

When liberals do this, however, they "are ceding ideological territory in the culture wars to the rights," Marx says, noting that comedy is "a binding agent" that unifies people. Furthermore, humor has a power to attract younger audiences, for, as Sienkiewicz explains, "If it is perceived that you are going to have more fun and be less subject to [scrutiny about]

laughing at the correct things on the right than on the left, well, which party do you want to attend if you're not deeply ideological?"

Marx and Sienkiewicz are themselves liberals who spent the last three years studying the issue of conservative humor. But they could have spared themselves some trouble pondering its rise, for British satirist Malcolm Muggeridge explored the same issue in his book [*Confessions of a Twentieth-Century Pilgrim*](#). Muggeridge points out that Christians—just like today's traditionalist conservatives studied by Marx and Sienkiewicz—are often believed to be humorless, the assumption being that “a sense of humour and a Christian faith are incompatible.” But such an assumption is totally mistaken, Muggeridge wrote. Instead,

It is the millionaires and pornographers and megalomaniacs, and doctrinaire politicians and sociologists and abortionists, people of that stamp, who wrap themselves in solemnity, and wince at the sound of laughter. “That idiot laughter, a passion hateful to our purpose”, Shakespeare’s King John says, speaking on behalf of all tyrants everywhere and at all times, anointed and ideological.

Why is laughter the bane of tyrants? Because tyrants seek to enslave people, but laughter helps an individual break free from such enslavement.

Laughter frees us physically by stimulating body organs, relieving stress, and aiding relaxation, [the Mayo Clinic says](#). It also boosts our immune systems and acts as a painkiller. It frees us emotionally by lightening our moods and enabling us to form connections with others, and it is through such community that we gain further freedom by the realization that [we are not alone](#) in our ideas and practices. And in a sense, it also frees us mentally, for it allows us to get into the minds of the ruling elites, for as Muggeridge wrote in a

[different essay](#), “When the governed laugh, the governors cannot but have an uneasy feeling that they may well be laughing at them.”

So do you believe in freedom and want to spread it around? Then laugh. Look for the funny side of even the most mundane things in life.

And don’t just keep the humor to yourself, either. Share the funny parts of your day with your family. Pass along a relevant and amusing meme on social media. Laugh at a co-worker’s joke. Who knows? The joy you spread may be just the thing to cut through the gloom that tyrants use to keep us enslaved.

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