

Reflections on the Reality We're Facing

In his *Life of Samuel Johnson*, James Boswell recounts an incident in which he and Johnson were discussing philosopher Bishop Berkeley's idea that matter was non-existent, that everything in the world is ideal. When Boswell says that the bishop's hypothesis cannot be refuted, Johnson kicks a large stone and says, "I refute him thus."

Philosophers can argue over Bishop Berkeley's [proposition](#), but for most of us reality exists in matter and in real time. Right now, for instance, I am seated in a chair on a second story deck of Tiffany's Motel on Topsail Island, North Carolina, looking out over a stretch of sea oats and tall grasses, waterways, and vacation homes. The broad sky is blue with a dusting of white clouds, the temp is close to 80 degrees, and crickets, frogs, and toads are singing around me.

This is reality for me. Whether it's an illusion poses an interesting question, but to live in this world I find Johnson far more helpful than Berkeley.

Here's another reality: Yesterday I spent most of the day in the company of my children and grandchildren in a house just a mile away. During that time, a friend, my daughter, my three sons and their spouses, and I engaged in many conversations, discussing everything from education to the FBI's raid on Donald Trump's home, from the priest's homily at the Mass we'd attended that morning to the grocery store prices of eggs and meat.

An equally substantial reality was the swarm of grandchildren, ages 18 months to 16, who ran to the beach, splashed in the waves, raided the kitchen for sandwiches, chips, and cool drinks, watched television, and asked the adults several

hundred questions.

Now that, believe me, is a living, breathing reality.

And it's a reality to which I pay more and more attention these days. Those children, nut-brown or reddened with the sun by the evening, all beautiful in their own particular way, are as different one from the other as the shells on the shore. Their roots run in a dozen directions—English, German, Italian, Caribbean, Mexican, and half-a-dozen other nationalities—and each one, including the youngest, is already stamped with a unique personality.

And I know as they grow up and go out into the world, or perhaps even before that, providence offers them no guarantees. Some will succeed, perhaps beyond their wildest dreams, while some may fail to achieve their ambitions. Some may die young while others may live three-score-and-ten years beyond my own descent into the grave. God bless them all, and may they never fail to realize that each of them is a walking, breathing piece of poetry.

That is also my reality.

But it is not reality which frightens me about their future.

No—what crafts my apprehensions are the unrealities of today's world, particularly here in the United States of America.

Lies and warped ideology create illusions, which in turn can become abnormalities, and in our age, illusion and abnormality are in the saddle. The Democrats in Congress, for example, have just approved the spending of hundreds of billions more dollars, which will do little for the rest of us and which will place future generations, including my grandkids, under the burden of a debt they cannot hope to repay. Our elites and masters decree that by the year 2035 the government will no longer purchase gasoline-powered vehicles. Climate change advocates are demanding a vast reduction in livestock and

farmlands, showing little regard for how human beings will continue eating. The COVID crisis brought a whole series of blunders and widespread fraud, leaving in its wake a trail of falsehoods that are still being exposed.

These are the unrealities that make me afraid for my grandchildren and indeed, for their entire generation. Lies breed lies, and when the truth comes out, as inevitably happens, Pandora's box opens, and all hell breaks loose. The rotten edifice collapses, the con game is blown to smithereens, and everyone—both the guilty and innocent—must pay the piper.

Truth eventually defeats falsehoods and lies. Reality always buries unreality. And in this way, sooner or later, we will refute those who have promoted these illusions and chicanery.

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