

The True Liberal, The Modern Liberal, and the Environmental Liberal

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Excerpted from [Man in the Trap](#)

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Editor's Note: Much of Dr. Baker's original description of sociopolitical character types referred to the ideological beliefs of those types. Many of these ideological beliefs have changed in the 45 years since Baker wrote. What has not changed are the specific characterological traits which one observes in the different sociopolitical characters, which Baker describes beautifully in the excerpt below. [Robert A. Harman, M.D., Reprinted from The Journal of Orgonomy, volume 35, number 1]

The term "Modern Liberal" needs clarification as it has become rather misleading with shifts in the current political discourse. Currently, the more accurate and descriptively precise term "Pseudo-Liberal" has replaced it. We have retained the original here for historic purposes.

The True Liberal

The [true] liberal is generally a verbal type, optimistic, intelligent, and prone to intellectualism. He is outwardly sophisticated, emotionally superficial. The energy concentrated in the head gives him buoyancy and general lightness, having nothing to do with actual weight; his feet are not quite on the ground. He is prone to anxiety and concomitant impatience. His outlook is mechanistic so he usually likes urban life. His acute intellect often makes him sensitive and perceptive, but intellectualization also prevents great depth of feeling. His emphasis is as much on style as on content. Violence is abhorrent to him, aggression disturbs him; he would not choose a career in the military, police, or FBI. The true liberal's concentration of energy in the brain allows for fuller development of mental talents, but at the expense of contact with his core. His values are thus less in keeping with nature, more superficial. Thus his character is less stable than the conservative's and more prone to degenerate into exaggeration and destructive social attitudes.

Socially, the [true] liberal is a moderate who stands, both rationally and out of guilt, for extensive improvement for the lot of the common man. Pushed to impatience by anxiety, and disillusioned with the slowness and inefficiency of social progress, he calls upon a central government to innovate and force changes. Believing in the common man and identified with him, he is sure he will respond to these changes by assuming the necessary responsibility to handle them. He calls for more education, an easing of moral restrictions, and less

repressive religions, all of which are unquestionably commendable goals. Having maintained some contact with his core, he has feeling, but his intellect is dominant in trying to solve the problems of humanity. He does not understand the structure of man, with its sexual repression and guilt, and cannot see that this structure will not allow man to respond to freedom, nor to accept it. Thus bewildered, the [true] liberal believes that ever more and more change is necessary, so he must continue his Herculean task forever onward. His outlook is constructive, but hampered by insufficient insight and by his own guilt and anxiety. Certainly he effects much good, and when his ideas are well balanced with the conservative philosophy, the result is a very satisfactory solution to social progress.

The true liberal is open to reason and facts, is accessible and naturally polite. He can openly show his disturbance at facts and reasons that shake his prior beliefs and is capable of change. If he becomes emotional, he may express appropriate anger at abuses or frustrations, but he never becomes hysterically derisive like the modern liberal, because he has no need to defend his beliefs by a dogma. His liberalism seldom comes up as an issue in therapy.

The Modern Liberal

Strictly speaking, although he calls himself one, the modern liberal is not a liberal at all, but a collectivist. He is strongly defended by a dogma and when this is attacked he becomes contemptuous, derisive, and replies with verbal formulas and sarcasm. [Footnote 1] He has an unshakable, unrealistic conviction of his own infallibility and intellectual superiority.... Although modern liberals are actually few in number compared to true liberals or environmental liberals, their influence is felt out of proportion to their number because their anxiety presses them to force acceptance of their needs and since, by nature, they are clever, vociferous, and exceptionally articulate. They are the policymakers behind the scenes in government or the writers of articles of opinion in intellectual magazines and other media of communication. It is because their dangerous ability to influence the thinking of people not only in this country but throughout the world is so great at the present time that I devote so much time to a description of their character structure. Nietzsche has described [the] modern liberal as follows: [Footnote 2]

There is a very narrow, imprisoned, enchained sort of thinker who wants approximately the opposite of our intentions and instincts.... They belong, to make it short and sad, among the levelers, these falsely named "free-thinkers." They are glib-tongued and scribble-mad slaves of democratic taste and its "modern ideas"; all of them are men without solitude, without solitude of their own; what they would like to strive for with all their power is the universal green pasture-happiness of the herd: security, lack of danger, comfort and alleviation of

life for everyone. Their most frequently repeated songs and doctrines are "equal rights" and "compassion for all that suffers." Suffering is taken by them as something that must be abolished.

Characterologically this liberalism represents a misfired solution to the problem of guilt and anxiety: the anxiety gets bound up in political attitudes and ties, fixed to a specific and characteristic ideology. These "self-evident" truths the modern liberal sees as unshakable and unarguable, since any attempt to challenge them shakes the very core of his defenses and stirs up intolerable anxiety. The modern liberal ... is further from genital primacy [than the true liberal] and less capable of rational functioning. He expounds all the ideas of the true liberal, not any longer for their own sake, but because they give him the feeling of righteousness and purpose. His humanitarianism is largely rationalization. His concern for others is not at all sincere, as in reality he is quite venomous, and his sympathy for the underdog is merely a reaction formation. The modern liberal lives almost entirely in his intellect. His brain is his substitute for genital potency; it gives him a basis for feeling superior, much as the phallic character uses his erect penis to feel superior. The [modern] liberal pierces everyone around him with his sharp brain. In place of phallic contempt, the [modern] liberal uses intellectual contempt, arrogance, and clever verbal castration. His wit is barbed, amusing at the expense of others. He is void of kind or gentle feelings, except superficially in his causes, and that of course stops all argument, since anyone who "feels so deeply" about the injustices of the world must be above reproach.

This intellectualism is his chief defense against feeling, especially his guilt and anxiety which color and pervade all his attitudes. His anxiety makes immediate fulfillment of his needs imperative, so he tends to favor revolutionary rather than evolutionary tactics. Since his real problem lies elsewhere, he is never satisfied, but needs to advocate constant change and expediency rather than long-range goals. Behind his guilt lies the unresolved Oedipal conflict with the father, whom he fears. Characteristically, he is secretly rebellious against the father whereas the conservative is openly competitive. [Footnote 3] Because he cannot compete with the father, he hates both the competition and the father and identifies always with the underdog, the unsuccessful and the indolent. Subversively defiant, he dare not show any open aggression, so great is the fear of the father and so intense the guilt. Moreover, his biosystem cannot stand it. He can allow himself to be aggressive only in causes and abstractions. Any other aggression fills him with intense anxiety and leads him to pacify, compromise, appease. For this reason he is unable to assume responsible leadership whether it be in government or in raising a child. Privilege he wants as a right and not something that must be earned competitively.

The liberal's intellectualism, guilt, and fear of the father leads directly to his egalitarianism. He feels guilt at his own success or advantages and is thus

opposed to differences in social structure. Basically he needs to feel that all people are the same. They are brothers and should fraternize freely. Because of his anxiety he cannot wait for evolutionary change and therefore advocates governmental social and economic planning, at a federal rather than local level. He wants the government to remove all differences among people (leveling). From this he gets a sense of belonging which dilutes his guilt. No one (the father) is better than he, no one (the criminal) is worse....

In his secret rebellion against the father he identifies with the underdog. An extreme form of this is his sympathetic indulgence of the criminal with whom he identifies through guilt. [Footnote 4] This indulgence of the criminal the [modern] liberal calls his "enlightened" or "modern" attitude of "understanding" the criminal. Punishing the criminal activates his own guilt and interferes with his ability to suppress criminality and juvenile delinquency. The criminal, the delinquent, and the law-abiding citizen all become "equal." At the same time, liberals view the entire military with contempt, as they do the police, because (1) their purpose is to protect society, not rebel against it, and (2) these are not intellectual careers but active, aggressive ones, and what the [modern] liberal cannot accept, he derides. This is of course, an emotional plague reaction. That the military and police provide for his personal safety and well-being, and this at great peril to themselves, evokes no feeling of gratitude or admiration.

The [modern] liberal's need to identify with the underdog is most passionately expressed in his stand on the racial question. In this, as in all his causes, the [modern] liberal is hysterically impatient.... He tries to correct social wrongs by legislation, but the real problem goes back to biophysical readiness, which means responsibility. This requires change of structure, reorientation, and education, through gradual rather than sudden processes, for both Negroes and whites. Because the [modern] liberal has little feeling for true responsibility, he also ignores the Negroes' share of responsibility for their behavior and situation in life. [Footnote 5] He rationalizes and excuses Negro lawlessness and rioting as expected behavior from their long suppression....

Many injustices are committed on the altar of social consciousness.... I do not mean to imply that a sense of social justice is pathological. One has to look at the source. In the [modern] liberal the express motives are not the real motives. There is a great difference between a stock altruism based on hidden guilt and a genuine feeling for the golden rule, reality based. This stock altruism is not open to argument, because the [modern] liberal does not argue rationally, rather he uses sarcasm to imply that any intelligent and reasonable person would think as he does. He supports his premise by rhetoric rather than logic. [Footnote 6] He mentions reason often in his arguments-and even enthrones it as a panacea [Footnote 7] but seldom is he open to it.

Through his intellectualization he has withdrawn energy from his pelvis. He has largely or wholly lost contact with his core, that is, with his natural feelings, and substituted a superficial social facade of concern for all mankind. He likes to think of himself as a world citizen and has contempt for nationalism, a defensive repudiation of his country (father) and its success. His concern for the peoples of the world is purely verbal, especially in those who approach the extreme left of the spectrum.... It is also a reactive defense against his real contempt for people. He has no loyalty to home, community, or country.

His intellectualism makes the modern liberal mechanistic rather than mystical. Religion is taken lightly if not discarded altogether for a purely mechanistic philosophy or dialectic. Having no recourse to religion to solve or handle his guilt, he is driven relentlessly to solve all problems of humanity with an overpowering immediacy, regardless of the rationality of his means or solutions.... He thus advocates with firm conviction the efficacy of the "universal dialogue." He does not say discussion and this is interesting and correct. He does not believe in discussion but merely in words. He talks and writes voluminously but never gets to the point. [Footnote 8]

Sex, like religion, the [modern] liberal also takes lightly. As supporter of "modern" sex concepts, he calls for sexual freedom, as he does for all other freedoms, but does not want the responsibility that goes with it. Thus what he really supports is license and promiscuity. [Footnote 9] Cut off from real feeling, he writes books on sex-glib, unrestrained, and irresponsible as to what they urge on the public. He misleadingly depicts "different kinds of orgasm," that is, pregenital orgasms in adults, as the goal of genital union and is totally ignorant of the nature and function of genital orgasm. He equates fornication with genuine sexual love or else denies that sex and love have any connection. His excessive concern over the minutest details of pregenital play, his mechanical and studied approach, are in direct proportion to his personal orgasmic frustration and impotence....

Another facet of the [modern] liberal approach, particularly in keeping with his intellectualism, is in his promotion of progressive education. This is a misinterpretation and distortion of the teachings of the liberal philosopher and educator John Dewey and his followers. The emphasis is placed on social adjustment, group activities, group thinking, and social studies rather than on learning per se. Discipline is given minimal consideration if any, and students are promoted automatically regardless of marks. Competition is considered bad for the child, and it is felt that examinations should be eliminated. Since World War II there has been a trend orienting the child toward thinking of himself as a world citizen, downgrading patriotism, loyalty to country, and respect for America's past heroes.

Or, the modern liberal may attempt to follow the teachings of A. S. Neill of Summerhill. He claims to be "on the side of the child" but fails to understand either Neill or the child. [Footnote 10] The result is a guilt-distorted, mechanical application of "freedom-oriented" and "sex-affirmative" techniques in which "all the right things" are rammed down the child's throat, creating confusion, resentment, frustration, brattiness, beatnikism. What is ignored is the child's emotional capacity to accept such teachings or to assume the responsibility for their correct application....

The liberal does not set out specifically to foster communism, he sets out only to protect his own defenses. Yet liberalism is every day steering civilization toward communism and away from free-flowing life. In becoming emancipated from old repressions and restrictions, the human being must be that much more adequate and capable of accepting the greater responsibility which goes with greater freedom. Never having understood himself and his feelings, however, and never having been capable of behaving rationally, he was not prepared for any new freedom. He has reacted to it by increased fear of life, and, as a result, by trying to reduce the size of life to the size of his own brain. Every day contact with himself and his true feelings becomes that much more difficult and that much more to be feared. In his effort to keep control, he has become not only more irrational, like the ordinary neurotic, but has moved increasingly toward controlling other people, like the emotional plague. Total mechanistic control over everyone is what communism is, and as the liberal moves steadily and quickly to the left, the point will occur where liberalism turns into communism. The process is evident in the fact that the [modern] liberal is today less interested in opposing communism than in opposing conservatism. The [modern] liberal considers that the enemy is to the right; communism is "not so bad." [Footnote 11] In place of the old self-control imposed by repression and taboos, there is now to be the "improvement" of mass control by bureaucracy. In place of a sex-negative attitude imposed upon a basically healthy feeling of life, there is now to be sexual "freedom" with the loss of the capacity for love. The latter is by far more life-negating. Contact with nature has been given up, without which man has no feeling of belonging, no real home, without which life is no longer life but only a worthless imitation.

It is this core of total devitalization in the [modern] liberal which is responsible for his attitude of "peace at any price." Functionally, to be at peace is to be bioenergetically unblocked, to flow and stream, consonant with a deep, inner feeling of well-being. That is, there is no such thing as peace without true inner freedom. Those whose devotion to peace is real know full well that there is a time for tranquility and a time for fighting.... The pacifistic liberal of today is seeking rather to arrange his environment so that there is the least disturbance to his crippled energy system. His assumption that the communistic plague can be appeased, educated by example, or blackmailed by world opinion is, from the

functional energetic viewpoint, an untenable illusion. It is an acute political myopia; he cannot look clearly at the political situation because it is a product of his own structure, which he cannot afford to view objectively. The pacifist is using his intellect to rationalize his real motive, which is fear of genuine movement. He can propose only one solution. Talk. But no matter how prolific or eloquent he is with words...behind the liberal exhortation is a crippled energy system which cannot tolerate movement or healthy aggression.

The modern liberal is contemptuous of capitalism. The expressed reason is that capitalism is cruel and heartless: the real reason is that capitalism is cruel to him, because it is a system in which individuals must compete on their own, which he cannot tolerate...[Thus the modern liberal advocates that the government interfere in the constructive work of others]. The expressed motive is to help those unable to succeed; the real motive is to eliminate success, so that he will not have to feel anxious and inferior. [Footnote 12] Otherwise said, his wish is to castrate the successful (father) and to eliminate the means by which people become successful (what might be called castration of the nation, i.e. the fatherland). The stated motive is never the real one, which is why I call his rebellion subversive. The [modern] liberal's opposition to all differences in social structure, is, likewise, an expression of his need to pull down the mighty (father)....

Reich has given the clue to the bioenergetic nature of liberalism. He states, "In the ethical and social ideals of liberalism we recognize the representation of the superficial layer of the character, self-control and tolerance. The ethics of this liberalism serve to keep down the 'beast' in man, the second layer, our secondary impulses, the Freudian 'unconscious.' The natural sociality of the deepest nuclear layer is alien to the liberal. He deplors the perversion of human character and fights it with ethical norms, but the social catastrophes of this century show the inadequacy of this approach." [Footnote 13]

The liberal, thus, is ever in the position of defending himself against a breakdown into secondary impulses. He organizes his life and his thinking (his intellectuality) in the service of his defense. His fear of aggression is rooted in the fear of a collapse of his defenses that might result from an energetic push, particularly if the aggression is directed against something that would expose the nature of his character. He cannot tolerate movement and tries to avoid excitation of his biosystem. From this may be derived the ideas concerning adjustment, equality, peace, etc. This is the character type who swells the ranks of the so-called peace movements, civil rights groups, and "friendship with the enemy" societies. Their frequent show of anti-American feelings, whether open or disguised, is a reaction against the amount of healthy aggression still prevalent in American institutions. It is also a reflection of their unresolved Oedipal situation of rebellion against the father, a rebellion that is always subversive, never open (the role of Oedipal guilt

is discussed above under "Characteristics and Symptoms"). They magnify and dramatize a basically rational fear of atomic disaster as a projection of their own personal fear of bioenergetic disintegration. They use their intellectual resources and media to create a mass hysteria that is paralyzing to a defense effort. They are more willing to see the necessity of direct action against a Nazi threat than against communists, since an exposure of the communists is a partial exposure of themselves.

As noted above, the use of intellect as a defense is particularly characteristic. Reich has suggested that the brain may have become so large and complex that it acts essentially as a parasite, sucking up energy from the body, particularly from the pelvis. This may account for the frequent eye block problem of intellectuals and the so-called "intellectual look" of the "egghead." In fact loss of contact by withdrawal or blocking in the eyes is, I believe, a prerequisite for the use of intellectualism as a defense. The resulting fear of disintegration explains the inordinate need among liberal types to "belong." They find in the mass protest groups of society the support, compensatory aggression, and extra strength for their defenses as well as revenge against their alleged tormentors. They tend to be either hysterically energetic or passively intellectual (superior). Neither type of expression is of course indicative of natural healthy energy regulation or genitality. They are quick to support any group which provides them safely with the belonging, revenge, and defenses they seek -- to fill the gap between their longings and their poor capacity for fulfillment. They have lost contact with their core and must defend themselves from any impulses that come from it. Communism represents an even more desperate flight and may be said to be mankind's most desperate flight from itself in history. In communism, man flees from unattainable god within himself (the bioenergetic core) and from historical theism which he rejects intellectually and cannot tolerate emotionally -- to the attainable and tolerable illusion of God to which in final desperation he surrenders with complete faith everything that is basically human.

The Environmental Liberal

I wish to clarify one type of liberal that seems paradoxical in this context. This is what I call the environmental liberal. Actually he is structurally not a liberal at all but is a conservative with liberal ideas. He is anti-communist, moderate in his views, and sincere and one can sense his conservative structure almost immediately.... He grew up in a liberal environment but liberalism never became a part of his structure. It is therefore easily given up. This type of liberal remains open to education and facts, but albeit is rather naïve to political persuasion. He probably constitutes the greatest number of liberals.

Footnotes

1. For an excellent exposition of modern liberalism as an elaborate system of dogma read, James Burnham, *Suicide of the West* (New York, Day, 1964). [back to text](#)

2. From *Beyond Good and Evil*, Friedrich Nietzsche, H. Regnery Co., Chicago, 1955, paragraph 44. [back to text](#)

3. Although this is literally true in many cases it is meant rather as an expression of rebellion against the father image or heritage. The same is true in the case of the conservative's identification with the father. [back to text](#)

4. In a letter to the *New York Times*, October 4, 1964, Daniel Gutman, Dean of the New York Law School and former President Justice of the Municipal Court of the City of New York, said in part: "Every day in the week lawyers engaged in defending criminals argue that it is better for '100' or '500' or '1000' guilty men to go free than have one innocent person punished. This interpretation of the ancient biblical axiom means that it is better to let loose an army of inhuman felons on society than to risk erroneous conviction of an innocent person. The possibility of error cannot be entirely eradicated.... We are virtually encouraging criminals.... Every safeguard must be provided to protect the innocent [but] every proper means should be invoked to enable us to combat...the evil, destructive acts of the wanton criminal.... In many of these cases where the convictions have not been permitted to stand, the guilt of the accused has been established beyond any doubt." [back to text](#)

5. A Negro clergyman in Harlem, Bishop James P. Roberts, had the courage to say of conditions there, "Instead of hurting the children and talking of bussing, let's get down to the main trouble in Harlem schools, the indifference of the Negro parents and the lawlessness of their children.... But first we must show that we can be responsible in our own community; this is not a question of poverty but one of morality." *New York Times*, February 14, 1964. A few other Negro leaders have similarly pointed out the need for responsibility. This is not a modern liberal attitude. The Interfaith Health Association in Queens, Long Island is another good example of responsibility in the community. This association has already won a small victory in eliminating both slum and slum psychology and at the same time promoted true integration rather than a paternalistic one. [back to text](#)

6. Cf. Sydney Hook's discussion of the ritualistic liberal who relies on rhetoric rather than logic, slogans rather than analysis of problems. *Political Power and Personal Freedom* (New York, Criterion Books, Inc., 1959). [back to text](#)

7. Just as the French revolutionaries proclaimed "The Age of Reason." back to text

8. Editor's Note: Both the true liberal and the modern liberal have difficulty getting to the point. However, the modern liberal uses talk not only to avoid getting to the point himself, but, more importantly, to interfere with the capacity of others to think clearly. The presence of a modern liberal often creates a chaotic situation where no one is allowed to get to the point. [Robert A. Harman, M.D.] back to text

9. One can understand his interest in pornography, which is essentially an intellectualized sexual outlet. He frequently calls this art. back to text

10. This does not apply to all schools that follow Neill. The Fifteenth Street School in New York City, for example, [was] seriously interested in the welfare of the child and [had] a true understanding of freedom. back to text

11. Malcolm Muggeridge, British critic, in his review of *The Liberal Establishment*, by M. Stanton Evans in *Esquire*, September 1965, makes the following statement: "We liberals are so made that...anyone foolish enough to be on our side is a villain. We despise a Tshombe who, by and large, would seem to be well disposed toward us, and venerate a Nkrumah, who hates our guts and never hesitates to say so.... Liberalism will be seen historically as the great destructive force of our time; much more so than communism, fascism, nazism or any of the other lunatic creeds which make such immediate havoc.... As mankind goes to their last incinerated extinction, the voice of the liberal will be heard proclaiming the realization at last of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." back to text

12. Editor's Note: This is true even in cases where the modern liberal individual experiences lasting fame, material wealth, etc. It is no exaggeration to say that lack of core contact and absence of constructive achievement render the modern liberal eternally insecure. back to text

13. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Preface to the Third Edition (New York, Orgone Institute Press, 1946), p. viii. back to text