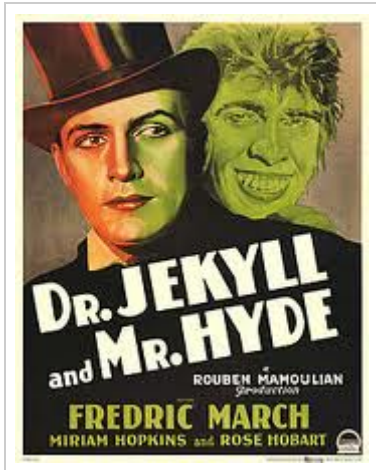


FLORIAN GALLER

Cultural War in the USAⁱ

1 Personality dissociation



I think the concept of humans you can have as a psychohistorian is very special, compared with that in other social sciences. So I assume that all people consist of two personalities, namely of a reasonable one and a dissociated one which I call alter ego. You can take as a well known example the novel "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde" by Robert Louis Stevenson which was first published in 1886. There two personalities, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, lived in the same body. Dr. Jekyll was a humanitarian and philanthropic person and Mr. Hyde was his secret second personality, a murderer and a sadist, driven by self-hatred.

The reasonable personality is physiologically located in that side of the brain which is connected with the speech centre. It represents our explicit value system. This part manifests itself in terms of politics for peace, economic prosperity and environment protection. The alter ego is located in the other side of the brain which is not connected with the speech centre. It pursues murderous sociopathic goals which are directly opposed to those of the reasonable personality. Its values are not explicitly outspoken, you can determine them only by the implications of what somebody says when he is driven by his alter ego. I do not consider the alter ego as an organ which is the same in every human being. Roughly said the strength of the alter ego is dependent from the extent of traumatic experiences of a person in his lifetime, especially in his early lifetime. The more traumas during their early lifetimes happened the more people are haunted by traumatic inner feelings of rage, anxiety, guilt and shame.

In order to get rid of the traumatic feelings people have to avoid contact with their traumatized child and the connected traumatic feelings. Therefore some people become criminals, murdering and hurting other people as adults. Most of us choose another way. We prefer to act out our traumas in groups and nations where we do not have to assume individual responsibility. We do this by giving support to politics and politicians who pursue goals in the interest of our alter egos. I call such politics "alter ego politics" and such politicians "agents of our alter egos".

Subsequently you'll see two examples for personality dissociation in politics.

Example 1: Rush Limbaugh

Limbaugh apologizes to law student for insult

By PHILIP ELLIOTT / Associated Press – Sat, Mar 3, 2012

WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh apologized Saturday to a Georgetown University law student he had branded a "slut" and "prostitute" after fellow Republicans as well as Democrats criticized him and several advertisers left his program...

Commentary: I think our alter egos love the hatemonger Rush Limbaugh. Nevertheless, when he gets too explicit, when the neglect of explicit values becomes obvious, then he can face opposition from our reasonable personalities and "several advertisers left his program".

Example 2 (Republican presidential nomination contest)

GOP campaign turns bizarre in SC; debate is next

By DAVID ESPO / Associated Press – Jan 19, 2012

... The former Massachusetts governor had other challenges in a state where **unemployment approaches 10 percent. He adamantly refused to explain why some of his millions were invested in the Cayman Islands, how much was there or whether any other funds were held offshore.**

Under pressure from his rivals to release his **income tax returns** before the weekend — a demand first made by Perry in a debate on Monday — he told reporters it wouldn't happen. "You'll hear more about that. April," he said...

Commentary: The Republican presidential nomination contest has been strongly influenced by the "Republicans archconservative political shock troops in the Tea Party"ⁱⁱ. While usually taking care not to damage their reputation as uncompromising Neoliberals, the candidates started to accuse each other in front of their core-constituency not to pay enough taxes and not to be concerned about unemployment. This is so because our reasonable personalities might back off from a candidate when they are focussed on his selfish behaviour and can make the connection between having the money offshore and high unemployment in their home-state. At the same time their alter egos might appreciate the ruthlessness of a candidate because that could include the promise for the acting out of traumatic feelings in politics in the future after the candidate has been elected for president.

2 Explicit and implicit value system

Cartoon 1: Mitt Romneyⁱⁱⁱ



Commentary: The agents of our alter egos never explicitly mention the true reasons why we should vote for them. So they never speak to us like this: "Be not afraid. I will take care that our children will have horrible childhoods, that everybody will be suffering and nobody will be able to live a happy life, that our societies and live on the planet will be destroyed by wars and environment pollution." Nevertheless our alter egos might just understand this when the agents of our alter egos explicitly call themselves "compassionate conservative" as G.W. Bush did when he took care not to wake up our reasonable personalities.

Only the cartoonists sometimes are able to formulate the message to our alter egos in an explicit way as in the case of the Cartoon mentioned above when Mitt Romney offers a drink from a bottle labelled "OLD BUSHONOMICS" to a person named "ECONOMY" who suffers from a hangover and says: "HERE'S JUST WHAT YA NEED, PAL. HAIR OF TH' DOG THAT BIT YA."

3 Cleansing

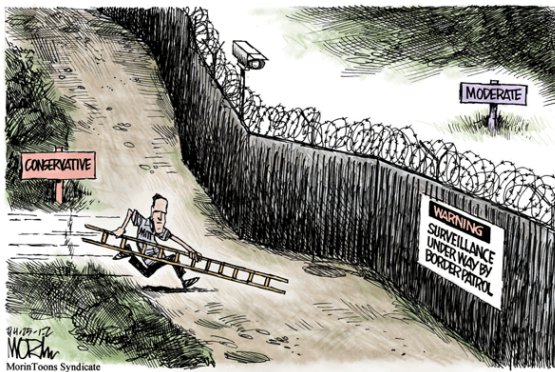
Cartoon 2 Barack Obama^{iv}



Cartoon 3 Rick Perry^v



Cartoon 4 Moderate^{vi}

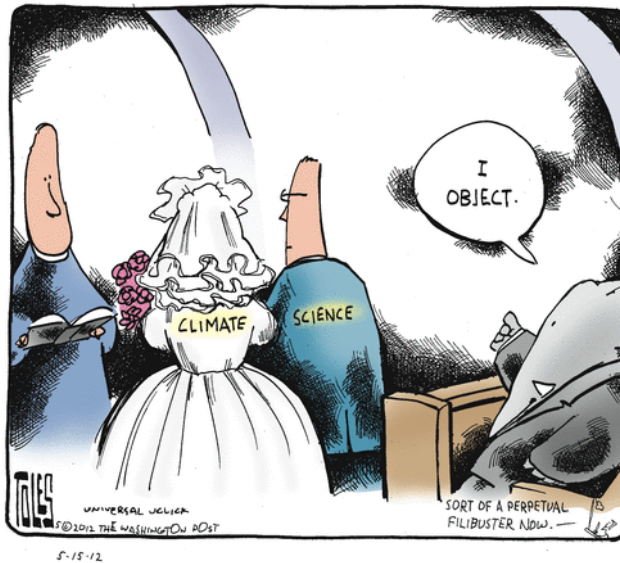


Commentary: People have two personalities and correspondingly there are two ways of politics. Mostly, spontaneously, we favour the alter ego politics. Sometimes when we are in big trouble as was the case in 2008 when the financial crisis broke out we move to our reasonable personality and elect a reasonable president. But that means real hardship for us. Because you never feel strong when you give support to a moderate politician who does not pursue the goal to make us suffer. You can see this from Cartoon 2. Obama as the centre of reasonable politics is weak because his car has flat tires and the people who help him get intoxicated by the automobile exhaust. Things are different in Cartoon 3 on Rick Perry. The air and his shirt are clean and he looks strong. Identifying with this sort of policy can make us feel strong although it should make an insane impression if you listen to what he is saying ("I FEEL LIKE SECEDING!!" or "BERNANKE'S ACTIONS ARE TREASONOUS!!").

Fittingly in Cartoon 4 the moderate area is a danger zone which needs "SURVEILLANCE ... BY BORDER CONTROL". Mitt Romney, being in the secure conservative area and running towards the fence, obviously to move into the moderate area, is closely monitored by video control.

4 Alter Ego Politics

Cartoon 5 Marriage^{vii}



Alter ego politics are nourished by our need to be freed from traumatic feelings stemming from traumatic experiences during our early life times. We do not want to come into contact with our experience of weakness, anxiety and rage when we were exposed to abuse by almighty grown ups who abused their power.

The defence of these feelings is shaping the political process. In politics we project the actors upon the early abuse situation on the social groups of the poor and the middle class as well as on scapegoat groups as coloured people or immigrants on the one side who represent the helpless baby or more precise our true selves. On the other side there are the rich and powerful who abuse their power. These represent the abusing grown ups.

In order to defend us against our traumatic feelings we spontaneously identify with politics which are neglecting the existential needs of the broad population or more precisely which are against our true selves. The latter explains why alter ego politics do not only pursue goals which intend to deteriorate the existential living conditions of the broad population but of humans themselves. This can be seen by war politics and politics which neglect the need of environment protection, see cartoon 5 (the elephant is an emblem for the Republican Party). If we neglect the environment or wage big wars everybody will be impaired by the consequences.

5 Cultural War

I regard cultural war as a synonym for alter ego politics.

Paul Ryan: GOP presidential candidates will fully back proposed budget



Ryan unveils his proposal Tuesday (Jacquelyn Martin/AP)

The Ticket – Tue, Mar 20, 2012

... Republicans focused on the plan's fiscal highlights Tuesday, which include major changes designed to reduce spending and the deficit, including eliminating the Alternative Minimum Tax, reducing the current six individual tax brackets to two—10 percent and 25 percent—and lowering the highest corporate tax rate from 35 to 25 percent.

Republicans pretend to aim to reduce the deficit. Their primary message is: "Reduce spending and the deficit". And afterwards they say: "including eliminating ...and lowering ...tax rate". Their primary message contains something which seems ok (reduce deficit) but then they are smuggling in tax cuts and by doing so the promise to reduce the deficit is withdrawn. The aim of the reduction of spending is not the reduction of deficit, since tax cuts will raise the deficit again. If they would say we want to "cut spending in order to reduce taxes and leave the deficit unchanged" their proposition would not look so nice.

Furthermore we know from the example of the G.W.Bush administration, that he cut taxes but not spending. On the contrary that administration spent a lot of money on wars and secret services.

So reduction of deficit and spending is not the real goal of Republicans. What is reduced in neoconservative states is the kind of spending which is in the existential interest of the broad population. The real aim of such a state in the interest of our alter ego is intimidation of the emancipation of people, the increase of suffering of the population, generally spoken the destruction of the self, the destruction of the environment and all sorts of other apocalyptic developments.

During the times of Manchester Liberalism in the 19th century, when the system of free market economy was at its highpoint the broad population and the economy were not protected enough against the abuse of power by powerful rich people. Only the regulation of the 1930s (New Deal), and a strengthening of legal protection of the labour force together with social security could make things better. Also interventions of the state in times of economic crisis (fiscal policy) and the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions were important. Such measures were brought about the rise of the broad population which had been poor in the 19th century and could become middle class after world war 2.

In our days there is a lot of hostility against the federal state and the idea to diminish the competences of the federal government is popular. The Republicans and the conservative justices of the Supreme Court like the idea to go back to a confederation. This is problematic because it implies the reduction of the problem solving capacity of the state. Just think of the legislation for environment protection or social protection of the working force because of the free rider problem. Not protecting the labour force or the environment in a partial state would save money for a sovereign state and therefore there is an incentive not to protect the environment. Only a federal state can solve this problem.

At the end let's look at a cartoon which in a realistic way shows the meaning of the cultural war:

Cartoon 6 Church ^{viii}



The church is labelled with the Republican elephant and the name is "CHURCH OF ECONOMIC DISPARITIES & ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION". This fits the interpretation of cultural war as alter ego politics.

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English Proofreading by Rudy Weiler (www.rweiler.ch).

ⁱ This is a modified version of the original published in the Journal of Psychohistory. In the original most cartoons are not depicted and only their content is described. In the modified version all cartoons are shown.

ⁱⁱ AFP, Feb 13, 2011, Republicans find tempest in the Tea Party

ⁱⁱⁱ www.gocomics.com, Ben Sargent, May 17, 2012

^{iv} www.gocomics.com, Glenn McCoy, Aug 18, 2011

^v www.gocomics.com, Stuart Carlson, Aug 18, 2011

^{vi} www.gocomics.com, Jim Morin, Apr 24, 2012

^{vii} www.gocomics.com, Tom Toles, May 15, 2012

^{viii} www.gocomics.com, Clay Bennett, Mar 9, 2012