

Sophistry, Flattery and Trump's 'Make America Great Again' slogan

By Clay Edwards

One of the worst things we can do with rhetoric is to saw reality into specks we call existences and determine the number of existences and fight about them accordingly. Rhetoric is about making the better out of our surroundings, to as in Plato's words in the Gorgias, make others better.

To measure the size of things in greatness or ungreatness is to wrap our lives in flattery in the idea that we can make things pleasant without accounting for the things themselves. I look at Vice President Pence's pictures (in response) one by one and ask whether they are being used to make killing war pleasant (Washington crossing the Delaware or Marines fighting and dying and killing to plant a flag on the top of foreign territory)? Do we make things pleasant by demonstrating that a group of people called Americans got to the moon first before Russians or Chinese or Martin Luther King being lionized for speaking out persuasively to a crowd of Americans making himself a target to be shot and killed on a balcony?

Certainly, if Washington had his choice, he might have served out his life as a British soldier or operate his farm in Mount Vernon. Certainly, if those Marines had their choice, they likely would have been at their homes working and playing, being in love and finding love instead of being targets for Japanese artillery, Arisaka rifles and Nambu machine guns and bayonets.

Certainly, Neil Armstrong would have felt just as good about what he was doing to advance knowledge if he happened to be Russian or Chinese or French or German or Japanese.

Would he have felt good as an American if he thought he had opened the door to sacrifice and war in space by people having just as much national pride as Pence tries to demonstrate but under a Chinese or Russian flag? And finally, with Martin Luther King - would King have rather been a pastor in Ebenezer Baptist Church preaching to a small flock or running a national movement with a target on his back, held back from a promised land for some of his followers?

Are we speaking of becoming great and becoming bad alternately or are we truly interested in art in design and practice? Are we interested in knowledge including of things we don't desire in climate change and the human role in it or are we concerned about hoarding greatness as some commodity of heroism in dealing with the disasters of war and taking advantage of others who may have not had the resources we Americans have had access to - so as to make ourselves feel superior to others? This is the ultimate political question and our answer to that will determine whether we service our needs or allow flattery to cater to our wants and whims of the moment.

Thank you for considering this matter. I hope it will resonate as productive political thinking that can help redirect the sophistry, flattering colors and enamels of killing war in nonkilling directions.

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