

Intelligentsia

Business



I think it's wrong for prose to contain substance without conviction. To make this piece as clear as I can—it is my battle cry, after all—I'll offer you my conviction here in the beginning.

It's that the becoming of an intellectual persona is the atrophy of an intelligent person. It's a psychological truism. And most of us, the upcoming generation of intelligentsia, are guilty of it. But we intellectuals needn't don an intellectual persona. Our own selves provide a much richer and more organic backdrop for our genius. Let's leave the canvas of our selves blank but for the strokes of conviction we're forced to paint.

And let's be understood for it. I won't accept the idea that an intellectual persona can be genuine, precisely because of what the intellectual persona is. I ought to have at least some credibility here. For, before I became me, I wasn't sure where I belonged in society. And I experimented with the intellectual persona for a few years.

It didn't work. It didn't work because it was insincere. Its aura is one of superiority and criticism. It's the persona you find in valedictorians who act like they don't have to try too hard to be the best. It's the heart of arrogance. And it's a lie.

The aura of superiority, if paired with an intellect or a talent that is truly superior in some way, can make for a person who seems un-human, super human. Of course, what it really makes is merely an inhumane human. The great delusion behind the aura of superiority is that which causes initially great men to fall—or to rise—to illusions of grandeur. They picture

themselves at the peak of human potential. They are really at the bottom of humanity.

They console themselves with the thought that “ it’s lonely at the top.” Frankly, it’s lonely because no one wants to be there if they’re the ones inhabiting it. Those deceived men at the top have simply separated themselves from the rest of humanity by degrees of truth. While most people remain in reality, seeing humans as things to be loved and cherished, they wander around their delusions, seeing humans as things to be conquered and surpassed. They will surpass us humans and become altogether un-human; they’ll become monsters. If they could forget about themselves for a moment they’d see that at the top of humanity are the men and women on their knees praising something.

At the top are those who lower themselves. The top is for those who have the humility and the compassion to reach down and help the rest up. We, as intellectuals, are no better than any other human. We simply have a special talent, an important gift, and we need the humility and compassion it takes to reach out—not down, per se—and connect and communicate with our brothers and sisters and friends. The aura of criticism is not a wholly bad thing. Modern intelligentsia understands at least this, that if no one were critical then we’d all be doomed to remain idiots.

But what they’ve missed is more important, that being critical does not mean being unloving. In fact, the best criticism—real criticism—can only be derived from a deep-set love for the subject or object being criticized. And now we can see that the majority of today’s criticism is so dangerous and

painful because it isn't mindless babble, but heartless babble. An arrogant heart is not a heart. You could be poetic and say it's a fading echo of a heart. That's too generous.

It's a hole, a hole content with nothing but demanding to be filled. The whispers in the street are that an arrogant heart is only content with itself. We could not be further from truth. An arrogant heart is only satisfied with a particular image of itself, an image it will change as soon as it's fulfilled. It goes around casting its contempt on everything and flaunting its image that never completely satisfies itself.

Because if it were to be completely satisfied with something it would have to admit that what satisfied it was truly excellent, the best of the best. The only thing it will allow to be labeled excellent is itself. But it knows too much of its own self; It knows it's not the best of the best. So it continues on in self-propagating delusion. When we make sure that people see us as an image of intellect we waste our intelligence and our understanding minds atrophy. But understanding minds are necessary for love.

So we fight the atrophy of an understanding mind, of an intelligent person, because they are the cure for naivety and ignorance and they know how to love. And lastly we need to remember the words of one of the greatest intellectuals, Kierkegaard, when he says that " Love, to be sure, proceeds from the heart, but let us not in our haste about this forget the eternal truth that love forms the heart" (Kierkegaard 29). What we need around here is more hearts. We have enough brains and minds and mathematicians. We've

got more scientists than we can employ. But one loving heart, self-propagating in love, can cure so much.

Let's be staggered by love's capacity to solve and cure. Let's forget the intellectual persona and let our hearts be the backdrop for our genius. Let's be intelligent people. Let's be humans. Works Cited Kierkegaard, Soren, Howard V.

Hong, Edna H. Hong, and George Pattison. Works of Love. New York: HarperPerennial, 2009. Print.