



Establishment Republican Fictions

Every presidential election season, those of us who find ourselves less than enthused regarding the GOP's potential nominees — conservatives — are invariably castigated by politicians and pundits alike as “purists.” We are unrealistic, we are told by the self-styled champions of “conservative values” — the Anti-Purists — in expecting an “ideal candidate.” We are reminded furthermore that should we decide to sit out the election or cast a “protest” vote, we will, in effect, have casted a vote for the Democratic contender. When, as is usually the case, disenchantment with the Republican candidate stems from the perception that he or she is a bit too accommodating of “abortion rights,” the conservative is scolded for being a “one-issue” voter.



We who wish to stay the leftward drift in which our country has been caught up for far too long need to grasp one crucial point: each of the foregoing claims is baseless. In fact, so great is the difficulty in accepting that anyone genuinely believes them, it is tempting to call them *lies*.

I don't know of anyone who has ever endorsed anyone who he could in good faith characterize as his *ideal* candidate; and I would be willing to bet anything that neither have the self-appointed guardians of Republican “conservative” orthodoxy ever encountered anyone fitting this description. That a person refuses to vote for someone who fails to remotely approximate his ideal of a candidate doesn't mean that he refuses to vote unless and until a candidate runs who perfectly embodies that ideal. There is nothing “purist” about such a person.

By abstaining to vote Republican, one does indeed make it easier for Democrats to win. But this is what philosophers call a tautology: it is trivially true and, thus, insufficiently enlightening. In other words: so what? Presumably, it is precisely because the disaffected Republican thinks that the GOP candidate is virtually indistinguishable from his Democratic rival that he refrains from voting in the first place.

The Anti-Purist will object that while the Republican may very well be far from ideal, he or she isn't as likely to undercut “conservative values” as the Democrat. Thus, it makes no sense for a conservative not to vote for the Republican.

This objection, unfortunately, isn't nearly as sensible as first glance may suggest. In fact, the conservative has a counter-objection ready at hand. The conservative need only reply that, *in the long-term* — and it is the long-term with which we are all, in the long-term, concerned, correct? — his vision for his country stands a greater chance of being implemented if the Republican actually *loses* the next election. After all, if the Anti-Purist isn't guilty of compromising his beliefs by voting for a Republican that doesn't share them, then the conservative isn't guilty of compromising *his* by acting in a way that



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could lead to a Democrat victory.

For as disastrous a president as Barack Obama undeniably is, had John McCain (above) been elected in 2008, chances are not too shabby that the backlash against “Big Government” that we have witnessed during the last two years and emblemized by the Tea Party would not have occurred. This wouldn’t have been because of any commitment on McCain’s part to Constitutional principles; McCain has no such commitment. But because he isn’t quite as far to the left as Obama, and because he is a Republican and any resistance to further consolidation of the federal government’s power is only going to derive from those already disposed to sympathize with the GOP’s platform, McCain’s Big Government philosophy would have persisted unchallenged.

Yet there is an even juicier counter-response at the conservative’s disposal. Ultimately, he can say, it isn’t his decision to sit out the next election that may account for the Republicans’ loss; it is the Republicans’ betrayal of their own plank and, hence, their constituents, that explain their opponents’ win. And this is the truth.

Finally, there is this business of the conservative’s being a [“one-issue” voter](#). It is true that for everyone there are some issues that weigh more heavily than others. Yet it is equally true that the Anti-Purist is no less a “one-issue” voter than the conservative. All that differentiates him from the object of his criticism is the content of his concerns.

The issue that matters most to the Anti-Purist is foreign-policy related. It goes by different names: American Exceptionalism, American Interventionism, and, most recently, the War on Terror. The various names notwithstanding, the Anti-Purist knows exactly what he wants: the Democratization of the non-democratic world. As the example of [Ron Paul](#) makes abundantly clear, the Anti-Purist promises to be astronomically more tenacious toward a Republican who lacks *this* desire than he would ever think of being toward his Democratic rivals. Indeed, *Democrats* aren’t as ruthless toward Republicans generally as the Anti-Purist is ruthless toward those Republicans devoid of his enthusiasm for militarily-driven projects to promote “American values” around the globe.

It is high time for conservatives to expose the Anti-Purists for who they are.



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