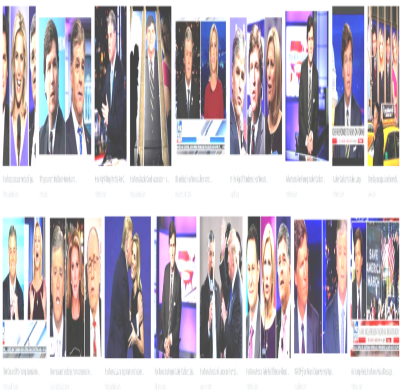


Itâ??s just a performance

Description

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However much I disagree with the sentiments, I think I get political conservatism: putting high value on the status quo, small government, individualism, minimally regulated free enterprise, nostalgia for a reconstructed past. Iâ??ve read Ayn Rand.

Beyond that itâ??s performance: as Laura Ingraham and other Fox News Channel media presenters scoff, look bemused, chuckle, deride and pour scorn on *liberals* and *liberal critique.* Surely these Fox *pundits* donâ??t really believe what they say! In any case, those that downplayed the January 6 Washington riot were shown to circulate text messages revealing just how concerned they were. They also pandered to anti-vax opinion yet followed the strict pandemic rules of their own organisation (Fox).

In his landmark book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, sociologist Erving Goffman (1922-1982) began with reference to con-artists and tricksters, who he called â??showmen.â?• The first chapter is titled â??Performance.â?•

> â??When the individual has no belief in his own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of his audience, we may call him cynical, reserving the term sincere for individuals who believe in the impression fostered by their own performance. It should be understood that the cynic, with all his professional disinvolvement, may obtain unprofessional pleasures from his masquerade, experiencing a kind of gleeful spiritual aggression from the fact that he can toy at will with something his audience must take seriouslyâ?• (10).

Though we are entitled to identify some behaviours as those of a con-artist, it is not the case that the rest of us should be categorised as â??genuine.â?• We are all performers. We all play roles. Goffman cites Ezra Park (on page 12).

> â??everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role . . . It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know our selvesâ?• (249).

Park provides an interesting etymology of â??person.â?• It relates to wearing a mask. I looked it up on the OED for confirmation:

> â??classical Latin *persÅ•na* mask used by a player, character in a play, dramatic role, the part played by a person in life, character, role, position, individual personality, juridical person, important person, personage, human being in general, grammatical person â?¦â?• (OED).

I think that to start from the position that we are all â??performers,â?• puts deception, falsity, con-artistry and hyperbole in a different light than the usual framing of truth versus falsity. See posts: Is post-truth politics a thing?, Elect a clown; expect a circus and You can fool all the people some of the time.

References

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- Park, Robert Ezra. 1950. *Race and Culture*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press
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Category

1. Media

Tags

1. performance
2. post-truth
3. trump

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