

PART II: MATH GIRL

10/18/22 Part of the problem of Self-Definition is that the way you see your own personal situation is infinitely fragile: the construct of the Self in your head is truly extant only to you and under constant attack from the perceptions and realities of the exterior world. Case in point: I would prefer to think of myself as this right-brain creative type, comfortable with the ambiguities of the human emotional landscape, able to handle Themes and Ideas &c, but when the rubber hits the road I am truly just better at Euclid than at reading for seminar. Pot does not make me feel the sort of mind-freeness that its Aquarian proponents describe, instead when I am in the pot-zone I gravitate towards watching math videos on Youtube. On 10/4/22 at ~1900H I found myself interfacing w/ Neely and Asia Ferguson ('25) on the topic of "is kissing more or less intimate than dry humping" and when I relayed how the model we had created of intimacy of relation relative to intimacy of sexual act could be described as a proportion I was met with kind laughter and a type of "oh of course you, Luca (the Math Girl), would seek to describe intimacy in the context of a mathematical model" reaction that made me deeply, existentially unnerved. And yet this is one of the parts of myself that I feel most readily equipped to present to other people, despite being the parts I would least like to define the whole. It's not that I find Math Girl to be some loathsome, unappealing creature. In the abstract I find her quite the reverse. I just don't want to be her, or rather I'm scared about how much I do. To be comfortable with the unbounded nature of the world and not feel the need to impose order and structure upon it seems like the mature, reasoned approach to me. I am envious of the poets and the anarchists and the philosophers who see existence as a continuous function (and there she goes doing it again.) To say that mathematics *must be* a real, physical language independent of human thought that we are engaged in the procedure of discovering, this feels like the rationalization of a stunted or malformed mind, one that is afraid of the possibility of uncertainty. I don't know why. But I know that the main reason I'm so insecure about liking TENET as much as I do is that I feel like you could hand me anything with a structure baked into it and I would happily set to work trying to uncover and diagram it (the structure) but if the primary mode of engagement with a thing is emotional nuance well I might as well sit in the corner with a bucket on my head. I first smoked pot on 8/27/20 ~1500H and since then I have been loathe to watch a movie sober. The Apollonian I get. The Dionysian must be artificially induced. And here I am stranding on the shore, watching the boat go backwards, feeling as though I have missed another one.

BAD PRESIDENTS KHUSHI SALGIA ('24)

Man #1 tried to eradicate an entire race of people from the country. Man #2 lied under oath in court. Man #3 engaged in bribery involving hundreds of thousands of dollars. Man #4 illegally tapped the phones of influential figures. Man #5 evaded millions of dollars of taxes. Man #6 abandoned his wife when she was giving birth. All of these men had extramarital affairs. And all 6 were presidents of the United States.

Why do we notoriously elect the worst presidents? History is no stranger to unfit leaders. But historically, most leaders were part of a hereditary monarchy, where the method of election was determined by bloodline. Now, when we have the option to *choose* who we put in power, we still don't always end up with a leader who has our best interests in mind. What mistakes occur when we evaluate who to *put in charge* of our country?

Most people think they are a good judge of character. We all have certain shortcuts we rely on when it comes to forming an impression about a person. These shortcuts are not perfect, and they fail us when it comes to politics. People are less rational when considering issues that emotionally and personally affect them. Politicians know this, and they skillfully play to this weakness.

A common mistake we make when we vote for our leaders, is when they say the things we like to hear. Politicians are notorious for making promises that they don't follow through on, and it's indicative of more than just a flaky personality. Upon hearing a promise that appeals to them, voters immediately become biased towards that politician—even if what they are promising sounds unrealistic. Things like making college free, ending world hunger, or getting rid of unemployment sound like hefty goals to accomplish in four years. But do people consider this fact, of whether or not something like this is actually achievable? No, they just hear a promise to fix an issue that personally affects them and immediately fill in the bubble next to their name on the ballot. A solid plan for achieving that goal is not even necessary. During the 2012 election, Massachusetts governor proposed a 59-point plan to fix the economy. It sounds reasonable that fixing the entire U.S. economy would be no easy task. Of course there would have to be at least 59 steps. But what were people's reactions? They thought it was ridiculous. They made fun of it and called the steps boring. People complain about politicians not following through on their promises, but when a politician *does* try to offer a genuine solution rather than a catchy buzz-phrase, they don't want it either. There's a reason politicians have catchy slogans. They seem cheesy, but they work. Human nature has an inclination to prioritize quick fixes over long term solutions.

Being a politician is like being a celebrity in many ways. Celebrities need to maintain a certain image. Part of this is for making them and their lifestyle seem aspirational. But another part of this is branding themselves so that they fit a certain archetype or aesthetic. Celebrities need to be seen wearing designer products, curating a friend group with people just as famous as they are, and posting photos on social media that fit their "aesthetic." Similarly, politicians need to be seen with a



-What's this?

RUFFIANS FIGHTING.

traditional nuclear family unit: a white-picket fence, and a blonde trophy wife, and kids. It's all about fabricating an image so that these politicians fit into a nicely labeled box in our head. We like what we understand. When something or someone doesn't fit an existing mental model in our head, we look at it with fear, suspicion, and judgment. It all stems from our fear of the unknown that kept our primitive ancestors alive, but harm us today. In addition to voting for what is familiar to us, we also vote for those who remind us of ourselves. If we are close with our family, and a politician preaches family values, if we care about the environment, and a politician is seen drinking out of a metal straw, or if we are a devout Christian and a politician mentions "God's will," then we are more likely to give them our vote.

This barely scratches the surface of all the tactics politicians use to gain our trust. However, based on the level of deception, lying, and flakiness that is involved, it is clear why most people would feel uncomfortable conducting themselves in this manner and from entering the field in the first place. Those who don't have the borderline sociopathic personality that politics requires, who enter the field hoping to make a genuine difference, either eventually quit as it doesn't align with their values, or adopt this personality type. Regardless, there's a reason that we elect the people we do. It's because we don't have many great options to start with. And the reason for this, is due to our biases and irrationality, we unintentionally set up the system in a way that people have to manipulate others to get elected.

Bild 2. Spinett från 1564.

imagine
this
is
bread

från

serium
nusect,

THE OYSTER-WENCH ABOUT TOWN SAYS...

MICHAL KENNEL ('24)

FOCACCIA MIEI AMICI. That's right. It's bread time. You know the stuff, the breath of life.

SO, you begin with the YEAST. It's actually kinda alive but not alive enough to keep vegans from eating it so that's funky. Yeast, meaning 2 ¼ tsp of yeast in ½ cup warm water. Now this is where people complain because they say you can't hardly get the water right, but I like to put it

at just about shower temperature and that seems to work for me. Kinda steamy, but not in a weird way. Just, not boiling but still hot you feel?

Then that yeast has gotta eat and much, and like me, it has a soft spot for sugar, so you add 1 tsp of sugar in a big ol bowl with the yeast and water cause it's gonna GROW. Let it sit for like 5 minutes but try not to forget about it yet.

When it's nice and foamy and kinda looks like the foam you get on top of a cappuccino, you are ready for the next step. I'M TALKING EVEN MORE WARM WATER. 1 MORE CUP MY DUDES. Then you wanna put in some olive oil (2 tbsp) and some salt (1 ½ tsp). And then it's time for the flour. ADD 3 ½ CUPS OF FLOUR.

Now it's time to get your issues out like that meme of the grinch taking yoga classes and you get to punch the hell out of some dough. Try slapping it on the table. Try folding it in half and smooshing it down. It's fun. You do that until it's all smooth and elastic, adding flour if you need it. You might need a little more... but despite my articles I'm not actually ace at baking at such a high altitude, so take this with a grain of salt. Pun intended.

Once you're done, put a little more olive oil into a bowl and place the dough in, turning it over to make sure it's got a nice coat of grease on it like Odysseus showing up to that (underage?) girl on the beach. NOW you can forget about it. Well, for an hour. You have to come back. When you come back, punch that dough like it just unironically called something 'Kantian' and press it into a jelly-roll pan.

Now leave it in time out for 45 minutes to think about what it's done. When you get back, it should be a little fluffier. Poke it all over so that you get little indentations and sprinkle it with even MORE salt and olive oil along with any other toppings/spices you wanna use. I told you last time. I don't know you. Do what you want.

This is where you're gonna wanna preheat the oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit. Maybe go make a cup of tea. Maybe give a certain Michal Kennel a friendly gift of chocolate. After maybe 20 minutes, you should come back and shove that pan of focaccia in the oven.

LOVE IT. WATCH IT. BE THERE FOR IT.

And let it sit in the oven for 15-18 minutes until it's niiiiice and crispy. Then devour it like a Maenad on speed. Share it with no one. Except Michal Kennel, maybe.

Fig. 4. "C. IVLIVS CAESAR." Black and white line engraving, Aegidius Sadeler, from a painting by Titian. 13 7/8" x 9 1/2". Colonial Williamsburg