***The Noctis Effect***

**On the War of Egos in the Social Media Era and the Triumph of Anti-Intellectualism**

Human life is a war of egos. Sentience is the self-aware mind, the side effect of which is the need of the sentient mind to make some sense of itself and place itself within the context of the other minds embodied around it. Without this self-sense, this self-conceptualization in relation to others, we feel an unsustainable angst, unmoored in an existence which is agonizingly incomprehensible. Such a nonsensical unmooring of ourselves and our realities is unbearable, with the sentient mind thus driven to place itself within the context of its reality in order to maintain the stability which we call sanity. Thus, even without a true sense of ourselves or those whom we attempt to place in contextual categorizations in relation to us, the ego persists; the need to know who and what we are and our roles in human life.

The result of the contextual categorization held by every seemingly independent mind is conflict. What we believe ourselves to be remains in constant flux, even as we attempt to understand self and invest in ideas which we adhere to our sense of self; ideas which, combined, constitute our ideologies. These unfixed self-conceptualizations and their adherence to personalized ideological value systems define what we believe that we are, eventually becoming cemented as our psychological selves, or psyches. And the mind makes those psyches real, even when they don’t stand up to tests of reality. Some become so invested in the makings of their psyches that they become delusional, insistently defending a psyche even when empirical, social and scientific evidence persistently demonstrate its falsity. It may in fact be that every psyche possesses some degree of delusion; the difference between what it is and what it believes itself to be. It may also be that ‘enlightenment’ is the eradication of such delusion.

Thus, short of the possession of enlightenment (which may be impossible, else relatively possessed through spiritual revelations of the shared essential self), human life is a war of egos; of psyches; of psychologically-ingrained self-perceptions which cannot ‘jibe,’ or be in accordance, with those possessed by and encountered through our interactions with others. In fact, the simpler and less presumptuous our egotistic selves (or, again, psyches), the closer they are to our essential selves, the less egotistic warfare we are likely to provoke and perpetuate; which is why, again, spiritual revelation is core to peace and the higher forms of evolution which the human race is capable of achieving. Alas, we are nowhere near to this ascendance, and few, if any, human beings have ever peeled away the non-essential elements of ego to the point where only the essential remains, and they become enlightened.

In humanity’s current state, when we come into contact with egos which are mutually-exclusive with our own, which attempt to enforce a reality which is contrary to the reality enforced by our own psyches, conflict results. We must either change the elements composing our egos, which is extremely difficult and painful and requires a degree of self-security which few possess (for, if the more likely they are to possess it, the fewer of such mutual-exclusivities they will become enmeshed by), or we must prove the other ego false, and so retain our sense of self. All the separated battles within this war are taxing upon those engaging in them, and the contestants must wage the battle until the point where their respective psyches become stabilized; become reassured of the reality in which they’re invested.

This paper represents the fact that writing is my therapy, the primary means by which I release mounting pressures and attempt to stabilize my own ego, bringing it back into a sustainable existence. Of the many conflicts which have destabilized my ego in my late thirties, I find one of them particularly troubling; I would like to delve into that anecdote at this time, as I believe it illuminating of ego warfare.

*Facebook* is a consistently menacing force in human life, and a persistent force of destabilization of the human psyche. Everything is a double-edged sword, and *Facebook* is no different, providing positive value in some respects but, for many, if not most, creating a more negative value, or cost. Of the many ways in which it costs us, from becoming a compulsion to which we’re leashed to being a primary gateway through which the advertising corporations stoking our consumption habits glean the information which they use to facilitate that stoking, the highest cost comes through egotistic warfare.

*Facebook* is a popularity contest, based upon ‘friends’ and ‘likes’ and the sharing of our messages, etc. It is a platform for vanity; for showing the world how happy and beautiful and clever and otherwise valuable we either believe ourselves to be and/or want others to believe that we are. *Facebook* is, in other words, all about ego; about self-conception and, through others, self-perception. It is less about developing ideas and true connections and the sharing of information (all of which it is capable of, but which is rare in all but select, stable populations) than it is about advancing the idea of ourselves in competition with others’ ideas of themselves. We’re the smart ones, the beautiful ones, the ones who others should envy. It plays right into the most costly of elements of the sentient being: the building and reinforcement of ego giving rise to its inevitable conflicts with other egos that threaten our egos.

Here we come to Lissa Noctis. She was gorgeous, and I agreed with her disgust for Donald Trump (who may be said to represent the monstrous meeting of sociopathy with the delusional ego run amuck), the focus of many of her posts at the time. Most of those posts were attempts at creating or sharing previously created memes that she thought were clever paired with scantily-clad photos of herself. As she was so visually appealing, she had generated a great number of largely male followers. I believe this to be based upon how and why popularity is primarily generated in the West: the ease of quickly sweet indulgences that appeal to common interests; that which is easy for the mind and senses to feed upon.

I became *Facebook* ‘friends’ with her and followed her posts for a while (for the same reason the other guys followed her posts), during a time in which I had more faith in *Facebook* as a means of producing mental and social value, and was thereby posting thoughts of a philosophical nature, hoping that others would see that value and that I might build connections with others through that shared value realization. I made a few friends in this manner, and became involved in some philosophical ‘groups’ on the platform, but over time I found that my motive for using *Facebook* was rare, as most are on it for the comfort feeding which those like Noctis offer in order to produce the followers, likes and shares that feed their egotistic self-worth owing to their easy offerings being lapped up through popular appeal. A very slim minority deemed my contemplations of value, and even my involvement with the aforementioned philosophical groups plunged into negativity when my disagreements with several of their moderators led to my being booted from these groups. How can you hold a *Facebook* discussion group on the pretense of philosophical pursuits of truth and then boot those whom challenge you?

Thus, I came to find that *Facebook* is, more than anything, about triviality, about shallowly-perpetuated forms of vanity, and about facilitating egotistic warfare through the disharmony of conflicting psyches. People purposefully post things that won’t be considered controversial (things that are ‘politically correct’), that are easy to digest, and that they consider clever which won’t ruffle feathers and lead to conflicts; and because conflicts yet persist in those wishing to share their beliefs, their ‘friends’ tend to narrow until all that’s left in their online friend group are those whom generally agree with them and that they want to impress with their cleverness, beauty and other extensions of vanity. Thus, it is the worse of human engagement that this application encourages: triviality, consumption, vanity, egotistic warfare and divisiveness; it is through such egotistic extensions that self-assuring popularity is produced.

Noctis is the queen of such shallow popularity promoting the worst aspects of psychological need. And, I found, I am largely her antithesis; a natural nemesis. I share thoughts which I believe are of value, and which therefore tend to appeal to very few in our instantly-gratifying, consumerist-centric culture; a culture in which ‘thinkers’ are near to dead and woefully under-appraised, as thinking isn’t popular or, in the same vein, profitable (in fact, a thinking people leads to reductions in trivial forms of popularity and the consumption-compulsions producing profit; it leads to conspicuous consumers of products *and* thoughts; to lean, wise customers whom conflict with the objectives of western avarice). After viewing one of her posts I realized that she’d unfriended me. This, of course, irked my ego, so I asked her why?

She said that she found my posts to be ‘tedious (not instantly gratifying),’ but that I shouldn’t worry, I could still follow *her* posts. I told her that I’m not that type of follower, and that her dismissing my posts as tedious essentially suggests that she doesn’t want to think; that she only wants to look at and read things which are easy to consume and which don’t intellectually challenge her. She sent me laughing emojis, and, shortly thereafter, sent me a shared post regarding people who think they understand things when they don’t; about people pretending to be experts. This, again, was her reaction to a series of posts I made which are reflective and philosophically-contemplative in nature. The post suggested that I was fake and worthless; that anyone that posits anything considerable is pretending to understand something which only the experts can understand. Similarly, she posted something just before that on her page about how everyone should be sharing memes only. She was a proponent of insubstantiality.

Now, insubstantiality is common. I understand the desire to keep things light and simple, and though this prevalent force of modernity is itself disturbing, it’s not offensive. But what *is* offensive is anti-intellectualism posing as intellectualism. Not long after this series of disquieting exchanges with Noctis, I saw something else she’d posted through a friend’s page who was sharing her post. It said something to the effect of: “It is the hallmark of dangerously stupid people to continually have ideas and share solutions which they think the experts have somehow missed.” Here we come to the problem: this cannot coexists with what I know of myself and my nature, and my place in the world: I am, by nature, an idealistic thinker, and am thus naturally compelled to do and be precisely what she was shitting on. Consider the psychological causes of advancing such a statement, of my interactions with this queen of vanity, and the destructive effects of anyone taking up sides with such positions as her. Don’t think. Don’t have ideas and share solutions because they’ve all been had before. Only fools believe otherwise.

What causes such a need to tear down those that think? Why be so threatened by those that advance ideas; that contemplate complex concepts and promote those that they think have value? Her ego is clearly threatened by people like me. This instability of psyche is not uncommon; in fact, this type of egotistic warfare is a prevalent force in my life. So why focus on this one battle? Noctis personifies the problem in the modern world: not only does she produce and spread triviality for the purposes of her own vanity, feeding the world the simple sugar that makes them fat, dumb, gluttonous over-consumers scoffing at thin, wise customers, but she fights to advance the notion that *anti­-intellectualism is smart.*

Noctis is a product of the worst aspects of the modern world, which makes her ego the enemy of my ego. Not all egos are created equal. And so long as humanity falls short of a sustaining enlightenment, the forms of self-conception prohibiting the value of progressive thoughts and ideas cannot triumph.