

# The world is not a black-and-white place

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The world is a very complicated place. Well, let me qualify that. The world I live in is a very complicated place.

I'm not sure about the world where some of my neighbors apparently reside.

A lot of people do seem to be living in a pretty simple world. It isn't a very realistic or even practical world, but it's one they seem fairly comfortable occupying.

After reflecting somewhat intently on recent events – and the various interpretations of those events – I believe I have identified the primary source of our current dilemma.

The biggest challenge we face as a society involves our irrational fixation on “either/or” thinking.

Let me explain:

Stupid people tend to see everything – and everybody – through a lens that has only two options: Good or bad. Right or wrong. Regular or decaf. You are either one of “them” (the enemy) or you are one of “us” (the self-righteous).

You either support the president unconditionally or you hate him unequivocally.

You either support social distancing or you are planning to storm the Bastille.

You either support the unqualified right to bear arms, or you are a left-wing fascist sympathizer.

You either support universal healthcare or you're an insensitive, hard-hearted moral criminal.

You either support fiscal responsibility or you believe we should just fire up the printing presses anytime we need to pay for something.

With respect to the current pandemic, you either support saving lives, or you support saving the economy. Obviously, we can't do both.

Intelligent people have always understood that nothing is ever as it initially appears, and a superficial grasp of the relevant issues is usually a recipe for disaster.

“Any philosophy that can be put in a nutshell belongs there,” Julian Baggini once noted.

Unfortunately, that's exactly where some people seem most at home.

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