

The Storm

Immediate. Eventually rapid, variably controlled, bilious.

When I saw the tweet, I knew that it was bad, right? Like, I read it and there was this thing of like, “Ohhh, not a good look.” But, I wanted to do a little bit more digging because I like understood what it meant, but I was having trouble placing why of why it was bad. Because truthfully, I wasn’t, like, mad, per se, when I read it. I was but I wasn’t, but I was because I knew that I should be. Which sounds bad, which is why I was like, okay maybe I should look into this. And the story works out. But. That’s where I was coming from. I was mad in an intellectual sense. But even in that sense, I was like, what’s the real problem here? *Is* there a real problem here? Is there really a problem here?

So I go online and I’m doing my digging. Well, technically I was online already. I *was* online already. That’s where I saw the thing. Anyway. Someone had posted this tweet as like a screenshot, so I’m sitting there on this photo of the original tweet and I go over and I just read what this other person wrote as like a caption. Which was definitely helpful. And the basic gist of it was like, “Our community is not a monolith. Don’t use generic language when you mean something specific. It’s racist, xenophobic, culturally insensitive, etcetera, etcetera.”

And I read that and I’m like, yes, okay, yes, this is what I was feeling. I had an emotion that I clocked and I was valid in feeling that emotion because here is the cultural discourse to back it up. No, I didn’t think through these things specifically, but the next time something like this comes up, I can refer back to these neural pathways or, you know, um, thought processes to, uh, draw a more direct line from my immediate emotional/guttural/visceral reaction and the underlying critique that makes that reaction viable. Great.

So that’s like, Part I of the story.

Part II is like two days later. I’ve forgotten about what I just described. So, great. Not entirely, but you know, like, the short-term memory loss of scrolling where I’ve lost my awareness of a particular issue but if I were to scroll past it again I would be reminded of the thoughts I previously had, and I would conjure those to inform whatever I was scrolling past and then it would all come flooding back. So, forgotten-ish. Anyway. I’m scrolling and scrolling, and I see another tweet. I see another photo of a tweet, because I’m not on Twitter so I get my news about Twitter through Facebook and Instagram. So, I see this tweet and I’m reading and it’s responding to the tweet that the tweet has retweeted so obviously I get a little turned around but basically, and I don’t remember which one was which, but one person is essentially asking, “Would it have been better if that other tweet that we *hate* – [the original tweet] – had singled out this one group? Would you still be mad about it?” So I guess this was the original tweet because the next one is the response to that which is basically, “Yes, but no.” So then I’m thinking, right? I’m conjuring. And I’m like, yes. That’s the take. It lacked specificity. It painted with too broad a brush. Great. When I was like, “Ooh, that stings,” it came from getting lumped in with people that don’t represent me, specifically.

So, Part III. Seconds later.

This is where the photo aspect of it is important. I go over to the caption on the photo where someone else has written, basically, “Hot take: this is the wrong take.” So basically, this other person is saying that any take that boils down to a hashtag not-all-whatevers is still probably a bad stereotype in some way. Like, just in the same way that there are communities within groups that we belong to where we’re like, “Eh, maybe not for me,” and we come out and we say, like, they don’t represent or speak for all of us. That same logic can be applied to those communities, those smaller within-the-larger-group communities, to say, essentially, “Yes there are some ‘bad’ or ‘counter-cultural’ or ‘dissenting’ or ‘problematic’ groups within this community, but that doesn’t and shouldn’t come to represent the whole community.” Which is great. And then it goes on to say, “When you advance that kind of a narrative, you’re essentially propping up the same discourse, the same logic that made it possible for people to attack this larger group that we all belong to in the first place.”

So, flashback. I am one of those people. Or like, I was in a sense. I didn’t write anything or talk to anyone about it because I don’t feel like I often have much coherent words to offer to like the larger cultural conversation, so it’s not like I’ve said anything outwardly bad because I haven’t said anything outwardly. I’m not some kind of online hashtag not all warrior. But I’ve been cataloguing this whole thing, right? So that when it comes up again, I can go back to this tweet and that article or whatever and say, “Oh I read this thing that I really appreciated that was basically talking about the whatever and so forth.” And I realize that I have no, like, barometer for when things are bad or, I guess, problematic. Like, what makes something problematic?

It’s like, I have been following this trail of breadcrumbs for this Discourse, this Cultural Conversation, and I thought I was – to extend the metaphor – like picking up these torn pieces of this yummy loaf of bread and trailing like a little bit behind, but basically keeping up, and like eating these little morsels and swallowing them and digesting them and internalizing their nutrients. But I’m reading this comment from Ben – which is also confusing because one of the other guys from the tweet within a tweet is also named Ben – but I’m reading, like, Smart Ben’s comment and realizing I’m just regurgitating these pieces of stale bread. I’m like vomiting them up. Which–

So, this is a tangent, but I think it’s related to the (*gestures*) – anyway. So, the last time I vomited was actually like six years ago. I was in college and I was so drunk and truthfully I needed to vomit to reconcile the amount of alcohol I had put into my body. But, I couldn’t. I tried thinking of food. Tried, like, hanging myself over the toilet. Could not vomit. So, instead, I resolve to pull the proverbial trigger. So I reach down, give the uvula a little poke, and then, you know, it works. And I’m retching and it’s all coming out and my muscles are, like, so tense. And my throat stings so much.