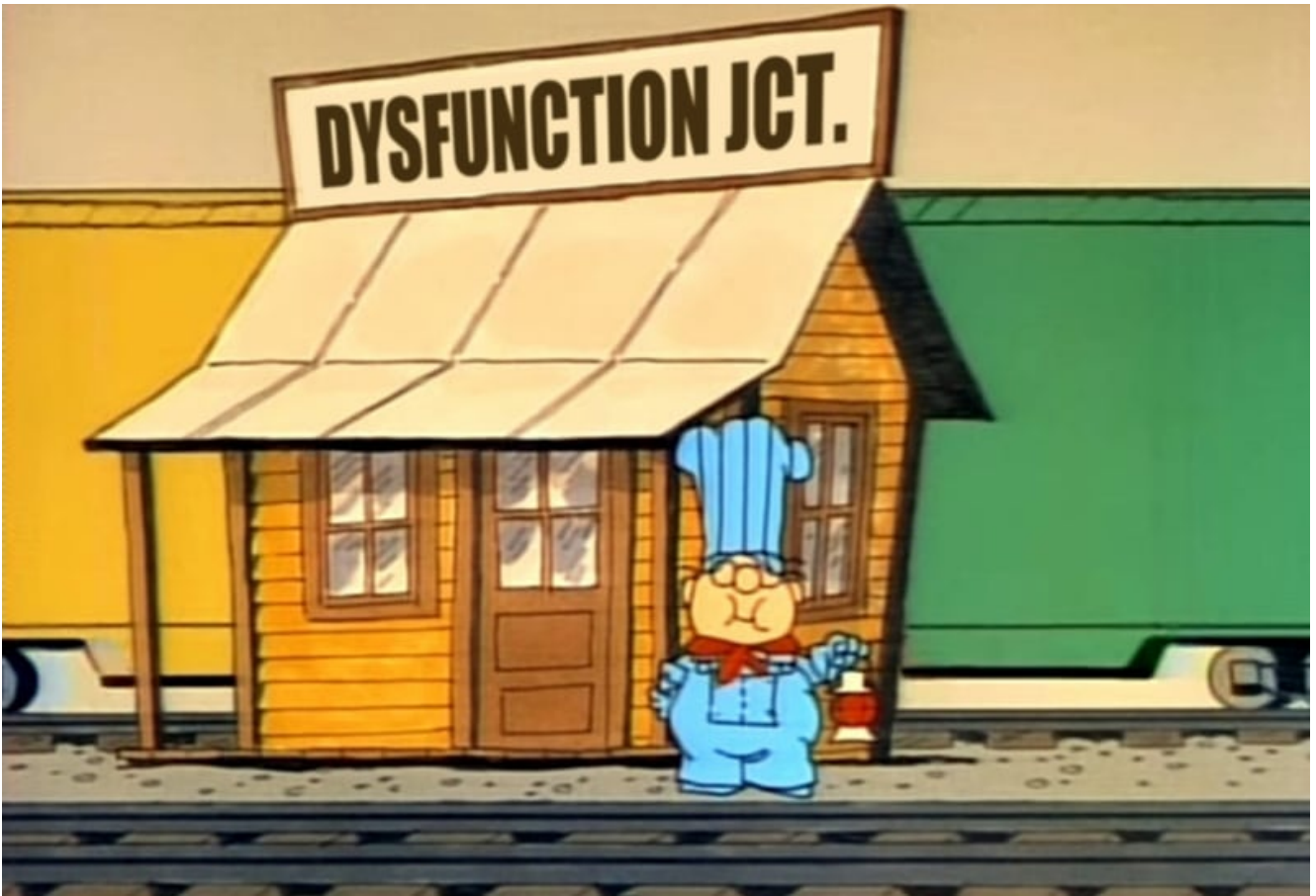


Dysfunction Junction

By [Daniel Mallock](#) (May 2019)



Conjunction junction, what's your function?

–School House Rock, 1973

Years ago, when learning grammar, syntax, and human communication and interaction skills was entirely apolitical, there was [School House Rock](#). It was a cute, but really valuable, musical and animated television show that helped kids understand the complex, and often difficult rules of the English language. [Conjunction Junction](#) was one memorable episode.

The early 1970s was a time of domestic upheaval with the Vietnam War winding down (though Americans were still dying there), conflict with the “Communist World” was ever-present, domestic leftist terrorists were exploding bombs, robbing banks, and kidnapping heiresses—all for the “betterment of society” in their view. The profoundly violent and dysfunctional worldview and broken sense of self of the radicals of that era are not unlike those of the people driving today’s domestic upheavals.

One of the great differences between the 1970s and the end of the second decade of the 21st century in our country is that the radicalism and wrong-headedness espoused by fringe radicals of that time are now championed by the press, entertainers, “journalists,” educators, politicians, and Democrat party leaders and candidates for president.

Many institutions (including the Democrat political party)—once the bastions and protectors of a sort of societal stability—are the headquarters now of a new American [Jacobinism](#). The radicalism once limited to extremist leftist revolutionaries has moved from the street to the leadership circles of economic and political power.

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During the early days of the French Revolution ([April 2, 1790](#)), Thomas Jefferson, a secret helper of the pre-Jacobin, anti-monarchists there, informed Lafayette—former general in our revolution, national hero of France, and one of the early leaders of that country’s unfortunate revolution—that “we are not to expect to be translated from despotism to liberty, in a feather-bed.”

The early days of the revolution in France are more similar to 2019 America, than when I watched Conjunction Junction as a kid in the 1970s.

The early French revolutionaries, like Lafayette, were not interested in a comprehensive and fundamental transformation of the government, society, and country—they wanted an end to the monarchy and a more republican form of government. These limited goals were soon overturned with the execution of the King and Queen, war, and the rise of the Jacobins whose goals were extensive (if not fully comprehensive), massive, essentialist, and finally catastrophic.

There are many Americans who likely ask, during the course of any given day, *What has happened? Why have things changed so dramatically?* There has been a fundamental shift, a slow revolution whose culmination is now at hand, that has been ongoing for almost a hundred years. At its core, in addition to loss of faith in democracy, loss of faith in capitalism, loss of faith in the greatness of the country itself, the unity of the country is deconstructed and devalued to such a degree that the shattering consequences grow by the day.

When I watched Conjunction Junction as a kid, and the controversies and tragedies and horrible events of that era were happening all around me, I knew that the country itself was unified by certain ideas and concepts and principles (even amidst all the conflicts). These old and long-revered values about national identity, about the greatness of the country, the excellence of the American people, about the importance and brilliance of the Constitution, were then mainly shared by members of both major parties.

These once fundamental ideas have recently been so stridently challenged and, in many respects, overturned, that *E Pluribus Unum*—the essential core of the unity of the United States in conjunction with the Constitution—is now little more than a bittersweet and tragic memory.

The growing disunity of the country drives both domestic distemper, personal frustrations, political, racial, and religious violence, and the glee of our enemies and rivals abroad. The dysfunction of our politics and culture is plain for all to see who care to look; it is illustrated by growing disillusion, rising extremism, intolerance, and hate. It is an environment in which the mentally ill, the fringe, and the insane are empowered and triggered, if not launched, on their missions of atrocity and evil. It is a sort of perfect storm of controversy and contretemps for which there is no educational musical program to explain it all in some attractive fashion. National catastrophes never have attractive, entertaining explanations.

This time of conjunction, this catastrophic confluence of institutionalized, wide-spread radicalism and loss of faith in the foundations of the republic, has no soundtrack nor

archetypal program that the children of today will later recall in their adulthoods. "When I was 9-years old and the country immolated itself, I watched 'xxxxxx' on television and I learned . . ." will be an oft-used declaration in the future spoken by nobody.

The essential element of learning from history is to not push all historical people and events through the sharp prism of our own times, but rather to empathetically see the world through the eyes of those who experienced the past. That is, as students of history, we're obliged to understand the world as *they* did, not only how we interpret it or feel about it *now*. Learning from past events is difficult enough, retroactive judgment is much more so and few have the knowledge, wisdom, or skill to do it.

This fundamental lesson of history is now widely unknown. The consequence is that the lessons of history are now not understood (or lost) so that we face the classic potential [doom](#) of all civilizations: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

A [conjunction](#) is an intersectionality of words (or phrases) brought together to form a new meaning greater than the separate words or phrases themselves. "Intersectionality" now has a new meaning: the combinations of victimhood and "identity" that provide "legitimacy" among certain, growing, populations of people with a victimization and self-referential worldview. These combinations require multiple different victim and identity groups; the more victimized identity groups to which one belongs the more "legitimacy" such a person might then command. That this is a misuse of the term "legitimate" is not relevant.

This obsession with one's identity and that of others is in fundamental opposition to the ages old concept of national unity, and its critical importance. It is a dangerous and unpleasant fake validation of what we once called, and condemned, "stereotyping." Intersectionality and victim/identity groups are a contrary concept to *E Pluribus Unum*. It is a worldview fundamentally in opposition to Martin Luther King's dream of America:

[I have a dream](#) (Yeah) [applause] that my four little children (Well) will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. (My Lord) I have a dream today. [enthusiastic applause]

Thomas Jefferson wrote [in 1820](#):

With us things are going on well. **the boisterous sea of liberty indeed is never without a wave**, and that from Missouri is now rolling towards us: but we shall ride over it as we have over all others. it is not a moral question, but one merely of power. it's object is to raise a geographical principle for the choice of a president, and the noise will be kept up till that is effected, all know that permitting the slaves of the South to spread into the West will not add one being to that unfortunate condition, that it will increase the happiness of those existing, and by spreading them over a larger surface, will dilute the evil everywhere and facilitate the means of getting finally rid of it, an event more anxiously wished by those on whom it presses than by the noisy pretenders to

exclusive humanity. in the mean time it is a ladder for rivals climbing to power.

(bold mine)

Jefferson's description of American political and public life as a "boisterous sea" is accurate. Nobody ever said that democracy would be easy; the founders simply promised that they would try to build a government and society that would be better than tyranny. This simple calculus has long been forgotten.

Disturbingly, Jefferson complained of the "evil" of slavery while holding slaves at the same time, and doing nothing at all to eradicate the grotesque institution. This elemental hypocrisy of Jefferson's is at the heart of newly rising anti-Jefferson sentiment and is in line with the puritanical revisionism and judgmentalism of the present generation regarding figures of Civil War history and many of the founders, too. [Kate Smith](#), the noted singer of "God Bless America," is the most recent victim of this public eradication of those not considered stainless enough by the fake purist radicals of the left.

Most dangerous of all in this period of excessive, unforgiving, bitter judgmentalism is the conclusion at which some on the radical left have arrived; since some of the founders were flawed, since some mistakes have been made, since perfection ever alluded the founders and those who followed, the *country itself* is therefore of questionable value and ought to be redesigned, remade, rebuilt—that is, destroyed.



The greatly flawed radicals and reactionaries of the present moment appear to require nothing less than political and moral perfection (in their view) from our historical figures and heroes. Such things cannot be attained by the living nor the dead. It is ironical that such purity is in no way considered necessary for the leaders of this new anti-historical reaction movement nor its members.

This unforgiving, anti-contextual, revisionist mood, which results in the catastrophic expulsion of our flawed heroes and great men and women from public honor and memory is an element of the conjunction of radicalism and ignorance, and a total lack of comprehension among people-who-ought-to-know-better of the complexities of humans and of the past. It is a denialism of the past, of lessons learned, of forgiveness extended and accepted by past generations, of reconciliation—all in service to a delegitimization and deconstructionist movement.

Should you visit Arlington National Cemetery to pay your respects to our national heroes, you will see a massive

[memorial monument](#) to the Confederate dead of the Civil War. Some might find such a monument at such a place as an anachronism or an historical puzzle. But it is none of those things. It is a monument to Americans.

After the Civil War, with so much work on race, on identity, on economic and national rebuilding, on mourning the lost, and honoring the dead of both sides, remaining to be done such a monument was raised. It carries a message of national reunification, respect, and forgiveness, concepts now seemingly in short supply.

I remember watching Conjunction Junction. I learned about the English language and how to use it. There was no such program on how to understand history, or humanity, or how to solve the great problems of my little circle of existence or the greater challenges of the country or the world.

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- [Disbelief About Belief: Secular Academics and Religious Fundamentalists](#)
- [infiltrate the government](#)—accomplished only through espionage and stealth—are now touted publicly on the presidential campaign trail and espoused by Democrat party lawmakers in the halls of Congress.

I can sing the refrain with ease, it's not difficult. I know all about conjunctions now. I know the consequences when things that should be joined together are kept apart, and the damages done when things brought together ought to remain separate. We're not like Lafayette fighting to eradicate a

despotic system, we're more akin to Americans of the Early Republic period struggling to retain the rights and freedoms that we've already got.

I find myself singing "conjunction junction" now and again. But the junctions I hope to see aren't forthcoming. Our American politics and culture are now a conjunction of dysfunction, a "dysfunction junction." I can make it rhyme easily enough, but it's as dissonant as anything I've ever heard: Dysfunction junction what's your function?

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