

**White Coat*

White padded rooms for those who've gone insane
White houses when a room just will not do
White coats for those who tend and heal the lame
White flight for those to whom world owes its dues

A world disjointed, fractured, disabused –
Of notion that the whole world's truly whole
Sees value only in instruments used
Songs souls sang succumbing to rational

But world is more than manipulative
A place to form and fashion our own ends
The world is created explicative
God's expression we ought enjoy and tend

The best pragmatism can never work
Unless one understands their purpose first

We humans categorize everything. We have our set places for people and things events, and everything else. Whereas some nations, tribes, or peoples worked in groups or had more dynamic systems, for the past several hundred years, Europeans, in particular, have specialized and separated everything. Everything has a function, and if it doesn't make our jobs faster and easier and better, then it is trivial. In the first quatrain I describe the place for the mentally insane – in white, padded rooms. I also poke fun at our politicians, which rings especially true this political season (2016). I wrote this in October, before the president was selected, so it's not a super specific jab. It's talking about politicians in general. It seems as though the difference between the mentally insane and the politicians in DC and candidates running for the white house is a matter of degrees in terms of their housing. Sometimes it seems as though the more insane are given plush jobs and seats of responsibility.

Doctors, of course, also have their place with their attire – their pure, white coats. Others find their niche as well. Here I speak of white flight, where entitled whites leave their community. They think that their money and ability to leave entitles them to forsake the needy around them, forsake other groups of people who are unlike them, and move away from problems. This view that the world owes them a comfortable life pushes them out to the suburbs.

Such a specialized system fractures the world. It dis-integrates it. It disabuses humanity of the notion that the world is one massive, beautiful collage of story and purpose, and the notion that we are all valuable humans regardless of place or position. We are all connected and responsible for our fellow humans. Whereas the Eastern notions of wholeness take everything too far and prevent important distinctions and discernment, this notion of pragmatism that is common in Western modernity goes too far the other way. It says that there is really no wholeness, there is only distinction.

Ultimately, this fracturing leads to compartmentalization and utilitarianism. If I live in a particular fragment, then what I do is only valuable in so much as it advances my small world and agenda. If I see no use for it in my sub-world, then it has no use. We see this very clearly as the fine arts have fallen out of favor. But while we may live compartmentalized lives, we were not made compartmentalized. We may have abolished song and color from our lives, whitewashing the walls of reality into a blank canvas upon which no color will ever touch, but our souls were made to sing. They sing not because song necessarily advances our own little slice of life, but because holistic life contains song. Our pleasure, enjoyment, and fulfillment rely on integration. I recommend reading G.K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, as he spends a considerable amount of time elaborating on the problem of hyper-focus.

The world isn't intended to be a tool we use for our own contrived purposes. When we make it as such, meaning, altruism, and all sorts of fantastic things fly out the window. This is because we aren't creators of ultimate meaning. We are discerners of meaning. God has created us with souls that reflect his image, in a world that he made to glorify him. He has blessed us with work – with the opportunity to tend the garden he has created. We are called to enjoy him and love him by tending what he has made and serving others. But notice that the tending and keeping aren't the goal – rather the enjoyment of relationship is the goal. Tending and keeping is how we enjoy each other together by helping, creating, sharing, etc. One is able to tend and serve the world as a scientist, but not only as a scientist. The liberal arts colleges still house the long held Christian notion that the world is integrated because it was created by one creator, with order and purpose. Pragmatism is a great outlook, but it can only work if it knows the purpose for the work. If the goal is survival, then that which leads to survival is good. If the goal is pleasure, then that which leads to pleasure is good. The problem with modern pragmatism is that nobody knows what the work ought to be. This leads to enmity, as all of our differing goals and forms of pragmatism which guide us conflict with each other – causing us to prioritize self over others.

It is ironic that most forms of pragmatism can't work, as this is what pragmatism is. Pragmatism may be great at shining the tires on a car, but it leaves the rest of the car in disrepair. The only pragmatism that works is the pragmatism that seeks to cut through self-centeredness and self-created "purpose," and embrace that for which we were created.

