Twitter Thread by Jonny Morris



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Not sure we need anymore It’s A Wonderful Life discourse but I’ve seen a couple of professional critics in my timeline completely misunderstanding the point of the film so I feel I must intervene for the sake of reason.

Yes, It’s A Wonderful Life ends with Potter getting away with stealing $8000 and with George still trapped in a town he wanted to leave.

But that’s kind of the point, once you realise the film is about depression, and how depression works.

Imagine you wrote down your life, with all the good things in the pro column and the bad things in the con column. When you have depression you only see the ‘con’ column. The 'pro' column is occluded.

That is the situation that George is in when he contemplates suicide. All that Clarence does when he intervenes is to enable George to see the ‘pro’ column again.

So he still has all the problems, regrets and fears that he had before. But now he is also aware that his life has made a difference, his life has been worthwhile and has been a life well-lived. People are better off with him than without him.

And he is, of course, now aware of the love of his family and friends, and that his ‘pro’ column is actually pretty well-stacked.

And that having a well-stacked ‘pro’ column is going to help him deal with his problems, regrets and fears. It isn’t going to take them away, it's just going to shift the scales.

So it’s not, as some have asserted, a flaw of the film that Potter gets away scot free, or that Clarence doesn’t wave a magic angel wand to solve any of George’s problems for him.

That would defeat the point of the film, which is that there are no magic (or pseudo-religious!) solutions. The only thing that changes in George’s life is that the dark veil of George’s depression is lifted, and he is given the chance to see his life in full, good and bad.

His life has been in black and white, but, with the timely intervention of Ted Turner, he can now see it in glorious full colour.

Or to put it another way, every life is a pile of good things and bad things. The good things don't always soften the bad things, but vice versa, the bad things don't necessarily spoil the good things or make them unimportant. (END)