Twitter Thread by Kareem Carr ■



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I've noticed a kind of tribal individualist that's common online. They move in mobs, make nearly identical objections, claim not be a group or believe in groups, and are extremely hostile to the identities of others.

They've also been REALLY BAD for online scientific discourse.

Many people believe in individualism so strongly that they seem incapable of perceiving anything to do with groups. They don't understand sociology as a category of knowledge or social problems as anything more than a collection of the unique challenges of individuals.

Many individualists don't believe in sociology. They see it as a false science. Since groups don't exist for them, only individuals, they don't think sociological can exist either. After all, how can one scientifically study groups when groups aren't real?

Many individualists don't understand public health. Inherent in the idea of public health is the idea that you personally might have to sacrifice for the well-being of others. That doesn't sit well with them so they reject public health as a false ideal.

Since many individualists claim not to be part of groups, they often substitute group identity with pledges of allegiance to ideas. They might say "I believe in logic and reason". They will say this even when they've long since abandoned logic and reason.

The claim of allegiance to the ideas becomes a way of identifying with the group rather than a factual statement about their personal interests. At some point, they no longer care if the claim is true. It's just a way of signaling to their fellow compatriots what side they're on.

Many individualists don't see countries as collections of people. They instead see countries as persons like some see corporations as persons. They'll say things like "Why aren't you grateful to America?", implying America is a person that can be hurt by a lack of gratitude.

These individualists, who claim not to believe in groups, have a brilliant trick. They repackage insults to their group identity as insults to certain ideas, which they treat like persons. They will call you out for attacking Logic, Reason, Civilization, etc

and treat these...

offenses like offenses against their dear mothers. This allows them to have a strong group identity without having a strong group identity.

All of this is bad for scientific discourse because it means we have a lot of people claiming to be fans of the hallmarks of science such as logic, reason, math, experiments etc who aren't really fans. They use science as a cudgel to beat back their perceived enemies.

Many individualists are nothing more than verbal brawlers. They don't produce any science. They hurt people in science's name. They confuse people about what science is. They attack actual scientists. They worsen online scientific discourse. In short, they are huge problem.