



## Killing Comedy

Seth Dillon

“The world has become too absurd to be satirized.”

The great English writer, G.K. Chesterton, said that way back in 1911, long before math was considered racist and biological men were allowed to compete against women in sports. One can only imagine what he would say if he were alive today.

At *The Babylon Bee*, where we write satire for a living, we’re feeling Chesterton’s pain in a big way. Just look at these headlines that were satirical at the time we wrote them...

On May 9, 2017, we ran this headline: ‘2+2=4,’ Insists Closed-Minded Bigot

That was a joke, of course. But on August 10, 2020, the *Washington Examiner* published this story: Math professor claims equation  $2+2=4$  ‘reeks of white supremacist patriarchy’

On August 13, 2020, we ran this headline: BLM Rioters Awarded Nobel Peace Prize

At the time we thought this was obvious satire, but on January 29, 2021, this story was published in *The Guardian*: Black Lives Matter movement nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

On March 25, 2020, we ran this headline: Pants Sales Plummet As Everyone Working From Home

*The very next day*, this story appeared in *Yahoo! Finance*: Amid coronavirus, Walmart says it’s seeing increased sales of tops—but not bottoms

I could go on. Our satirical headlines are proving to be prophetic with astonishing regularity. So what does this mean for humor and satire? Well, for one thing, it makes our job *much* more difficult.

You might be surprised to hear that. The crazier reality is, the easier it is to make fun of, right? Actually, it’s the opposite. Satire exaggerates the truth to make a point. But when reality is this absurd, and extreme views and behavior are commonplace, how do you go a step beyond it? Almost anything we publish now ends up being believable. And much of it ends up actually coming true, as you’ve just seen. This is exactly what Chesterton was talking about. It’s one of the ways the left is killing satire: by turning reality into a parody of itself.

There’s another, more intentional and insidious way the left is killing satire, and that’s through censorship. We published an article a couple of years ago with this over-the-top headline:

## CNN Purchases Industrial-Sized Washing Machine To Spin News Before Publication

Believe it or not, *Snopes fact-checked this story*. I mean, come on...a washing machine? To spin the news? That's an obvious joke. But Snopes fact-checked it and rated it "false"—as if we had written a serious story.

It used to be that jokes were either funny or not—they made you laugh, or they didn't—but now, in the fact-checking age, we're giving them a truth rating. Jokes are no longer funny—they're false. And false information is dangerous. In response to the Snopes fact check, Facebook warned us that we'd be demonetized and deplatformed if we continued publishing "fake news." It should go without saying that there's a big difference between fake news—which is meant to deceive—and satire, which is meant to entertain and inform through mockery, humor, and irony. But the left benefits by blurring this distinction. If they can successfully lump us in with fake news, then they can shut us down. It's that simple.

These fact checks—which often smear us by suggesting we're purposefully misleading people—are nothing more than a creative, conniving way of justifying censorship. But why would anyone want to censor satire? Why is Facebook paying *USA Today* to write lengthy refutations of our jokes? (Yes, they actually do that.) Because humor is ultimately a vehicle for truth delivery, and the truth can be offensive. Think about all the things you're not allowed to say anymore—not because they're false, but because they make people uncomfortable. Satire cuts right through the pretense and political correctness to expose uncomfortable truths, and it does so more ruthlessly and effectively than anything else.

C.S. Lewis said, "Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered." Satire is necessary for the same reason. Satire ridicules bad ideas. And now, more than ever, bad ideas need to be exposed for what they are before they gain an even bigger foothold on our minds and hearts—especially on the minds and hearts of young people. And while good philosophy and rational argumentation are indispensable, it's often humor that's most effective.

To quote our friend G.K. Chesterton once more: "Humor can get in under the door while seriousness is still fumbling at the handle."

I'm Seth Dillon, CEO of *The Babylon Bee*, for Prager University.