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David Foster Wallace's '100-word Statement' on the 'millennium'

We're all—especially those of us who are educated and have read a lot and have watched TV critically—in a very self-conscious and sort of worldly and sophisticated time, but also a time when we seem terribly afraid of other people's reactions to us and very desperate to control how people interpret us. Everyone is extremely conscious of manipulating how they come off in the media; they want to structure what they say so that the reader or audience will interpret it in the way that is most favorable to them. What's interesting to me is that this isn't all that new. This was the project of the Sophists in Athens, and this is what Socrates and Plato thought was so completely evil. The Sophists had this idea: Forget this idea of what's true or not—what you want to do is rhetoric; you want to be able to persuade the audience and have the audience think you're smart and cool. And Socrates and Plato, basically their whole idea is, "Bullshit. There is such a thing as truth, and it's not all just how to say what you say so that you get a good job or get laid, or whatever it is people think they want."