

Re: The New York Times Editorial (November 11, 2019), “The Disorienting Defense of Mr. Trump”.

To understand the disorienting defense of Mr. Trump, consider the anecdote from Dr. Freud about the man who was accused by his neighbor of returning a borrowed kettle in damaged condition. The borrower offered the following three defenses: it didn't have hole when he returned it; it already had a hole in it when he borrowed it; and he never borrowed the kettle in the first place. Of course, these are contradictory but, Freud explains, it doesn't matter which you accept because any one of them would serve the same purpose: to disown the borrower's guilt.

Trump doesn't care which defense you accept; any one accomplishes the same purpose for him. We need to keep our eye not on the defense but on the underlying guilt.

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