

## Cobb

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### Conservatism

November 13, 2016

#### A Brief Retrospective on the Conservative Brotherhood

The Conservative Brotherhood lasted a good 4 or 5 years I guess. I started my blog 'Cobb' in '02 having retired from another project called Vision Circle. [Vision Circle](#) was my last attempt at advancing a Progressive anti-racist black partisan discussion on the web. It was good while it lasted and is archived nice and neat. As Lester Spence headed to big time academia, he had to scrub some of his provocations, and we never got the late lamented Prometheus Six to join up. But like I said, Vision Circle was a success.



Three nights, which I will meld into one, three things occurred to me.

1. Dr. Lou, an old family friend, gave me an updated 'by any means necessary' speech that said that the US respects the Japanese because the Japanese were ready to kill and die by the millions, and Japanese culture has \*nothing\* to do with that respect. It was Japanese blood and all of Japan's money in war. Black Americans consequently are absolute fools to think cultural nationalism could produce better results. The powers that be in America respect power. Black Americans were not, are not, and never will be ready for war.
2. Black Americans have politically put all of their eggs into one basket of political aims, despite the fact that real class differences (and economic, and cultural) exist among 30 odd million black Americans in 2003. Some fraction of those need to be working the other side of the aisle.
3. Black American patriots who wave the American flag were booed at the Sydney Olympics. If black Americans want to be and do become the best in the world, why are they hated, and when they are, who is going to defend them? There was, and is, a fundamental problem black Americans have with patriotism.

So my aim was to put a stake in the ground and assert two things.

- The Civil Rights Movement is done, and won, and never going back.
- Black Americans are not going to be a race forever and their class distinctions will matter more. They need to be getting baksheesh from the American Right, not just welfare and pity from the American Left.

So I took Cobb, the most conservative sounding part of my name, registered Republican and started blogging about what the black Right was, is and should be. In the beginning, I started going to local Republican functions and discovering all of my stereotypes etc. I made efforts to understand the American Right and distinguish its various parts and pieces. I was very surprised at the diversity of black opinion on the Right. I never expected pure Christian social conservatives. I never expected pure Pro-Life advocates. I expected a lot of buppies and people like Vernon Jordan. I was wrong. Since my blog was fairly popular, I was able to meet with and invite all of the major black bloggers on the right. They all signed up. But some left after a short period, notably LaShawn Barber and Ambra Benjamin.

My aim was to identify and name the Old School black politics, culture and values that I had always heard had a 'natural' affiliation with the American Right. So I came up with some words that I figured a broad cross section of black Americans could deal with. My own insight and research kept telling me, some fraction of black Americans were always comfortable voting for local Republican candidates, and basically their biggest problem was the racism of the GOP and the Southern Strategy. So I'm like, OK let's be black and proud conservatives with no racism and see what happens. A lot happened. Thus the Old School Core Values:

The Conservative Brotherhood is a group of African American writers whose politics are on the right hand side of the political spectrum. Expanding the dialog beyond traditional boundaries, they seek to contribute to a greater understanding of African Americans and America itself through advocacy and commentary.

#### Old School Core Values:

##### Pride

We are African Americans of all backgrounds and ethnicities. We are proud of our heritage, and respect the lives, triumphs and tribulations of our forebears in this country and beyond. We aim to represent their greatest hopes for us and honor their memory.

##### Patriotism

The United States of America is our home, not simply by default but by choice. We take our duty to our home seriously and we defend it. We seek to improve it by our work and values and leave it better than we found it.

##### Family

We are extended families and we put family first. It is the primary organization to which our lives are dedicated. We fight for the proper upbringing of our children. We demand respect and consideration of our elders. We love and support our brothers and sisters.

##### Industry

We work twice as hard and sometimes get half as far, but we work with dignity and we expect and enjoy our rewards. We are not materialistic but we know the value of a dollar. We seek self-improvement through creativity, dedication and effort in our jobs, businesses and partnerships.

##### Piety

We have abiding faith in God and the principles of righteousness. We strive to be true to transcendent values and take the long view of our purpose on Earth. We conduct ourselves as vessels of spirit and we guard our own souls and the souls of others from corruption.

##### Liberty

We believe in the rule of law and rights of people to be free and to determine their own fate. We fight tyranny and oppression of all kinds keeping in mind the battles of those who struggled and died that we might be free.

##### Pluralism

We believe in a tolerant and open society, and we welcome all people to enjoy its benefits and responsibilities.

Even as I look at these values today, they are not far from my heart. But I learned a lot just by the act of putting them together and challenging people to deal with the fact of our creation.

In the middle, I made a clear discovery that 'be' seemed to be more important than 'do'. So the very act of saying "I am a black Republican" or "I am a black Conservative" got in the way of doing what those values instructed. Whereas it was very comfortable for us to say what we believed unapologetically, we always had to deal with haters. For a while it was good sport to fight back from this alternative perspective, but after a time my head started ringing from the sound of people's heads exploding. You probably wouldn't be surprised at how deeply ingrained it is in people's heads to associate everything evil in America with the perceived acts and ideas of the Republican Party.

In the end, I found that America became obsessed with 'be' and just assumed 'do' could not, or would not happen. The blog league was a success, I maintained a core site for some time but it ultimately got hacked. I wasn't interested in doing anything for money or getting involved with parceling out funds from the site. It wasn't as if I didn't have a day job. And while I got some notoriety from appearances on TVOne, in various blogging and journalistic venues and as a regular on NPR, I wasn't really hungry to make a media star out of myself, much less deal with the possibility that I could be seen as a shill. Again, I took no money and accepted no ads on my blog with the exception of normal blog syndication. I never made enough money from that to pay the 15 bucks a month it cost me to host Cobb.

In 2006 I killed the blog and took a hiatus. In 07 I went balls to the wall over the Obama nomination and won best black blogger that year. When Obama was elected in '08, people were shocked that I didn't bend over for his platform which I found domestically mendacious and internationally naive. As well, in the broader fight for civil liberties, I recognized that identity politics had won, just as the hardest multiculturalists dreamed, and those values I talked about above meant nothing in the abstract unless I, the Conservative Brotherhood and everybody else could find a way to reconcile our false blackness with the real blackness. It was like I was in a rap battle with DMX about realness. Despite the fact that it happened while we in the Brotherhood were taking slings and arrows, a real black man became the real head of the real Republican Party, a victory nobody wants to admit happened.

It's funny when I think about it now. For two years, 2009-2011 the Republican Party was run by a black man, and the disrespect from the Left was so profoundly cold that you couldn't cut it with a blowtorch. It was like Krell metal. And now all those years of devolution and confusion has landed us here, where all people know is Trump and have no idea of how complicit they were in his election.

The Conservative Brotherhood faded away like an old soldier and people went their separate ways. I see folks from time to time, especially Joseph C. Phillips and a lot of us remain friends on Facebook, but I have basically lost all interest in domestic politics as any sort of activist. I see how entirely new networks of trust have to be built over the ashes of our currently barely functioning democratic institutions. It will happen, and I know what the content will have to be, but I have absolutely no interest in the daily bitching points.

More recently I have been interested in understanding what will happen before that rebirth occurs. That makes me something of a prepper. But I understand how many people are entranced by wishful thinking and magical realism and the unbearable lightness of their narrative playlists. You'd think Russians hacking the DNC would do it, but that's not enough either. I mean not when people don't even talk about Georgia, Ukraine, the Crimea and Syria. It's rather stupendous to watch Baby Boomers still in power acting as if Russia went away like Fukuyama said.

I have always survived and moved forward by being a couple steps ahead, but I'm just lucky that I don't shy away from the ugly and my own life is satisfactory enough for me to invest spare time in learning. But I am always pleased that there are always some people who get it right and don't waste too much time on what is not. So, The Conservative Brotherhood served its purpose and I am very proud of what we did. But I've moved on from political writing. There's not much of a future in that for people as subtle as I am. So I'm digging history instead. And programming languages, of course.

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February 18, 2016

## **American Socialism = Progressive Neoliberalism**

Socialism isn't bad, but America is already socialist enough.

The original socialist impetus was moral as was made clear to me in [my reading of George Orwell](#). His excellent book 'The Road to Wigan Pier' made the case for socialism in Britain. Essentially in those days before the advent of the supermarket, when more people farmed with oxen than tractors, a few oligarchs could conspire to restrain their investment in an industry and actually starve people. This was proven in England's coal mining industry. The plan for socialism was generally simple which was to gain control of such industries and compel investment so towns like Manchester would not be devastated. The demand for socialism included things we take for granted today, like standardized hours, overtime pay, educational stipends, investment matching and workman's compensation insurance for injuries on the job. In other words 'benefits'. But the larger idea was of 'scientific socialism', ie a vision of how technology could benefit the working class.

Today we have benefits and we have a larger number of capitalists and corporations than ever. It cannot be said that a half dozen privately owned companies control entire industries such that a collusion between them to go golf instead of invest in job creation will actually starve whole cities. Markets have become more global and open. If American capitalists don't find steel an attractive investment, Indian capitalists will buy the mills at a discount. In short, the deprivations of capitalism are not as deadly as they once were before WW2 when the average worker didn't have electricity.

Today 'socialism' in America means neoliberalism. It used to be fashionable for employees to own their companies here in the states, but benefits have advanced so much and unions have declined in influence that 'the people owning the means of production' is not considered to be a deciding factor in whether or not employees are well cared for. Neoliberalism takes the socialist model and essentially applies it to people on the fringes of society, and from all big businesses and the public through taxation. So now that the average workers have benefits and social welfare from the average employer, Leftists seek to extend benefits to the unemployed. For example, candidate Bernie Sanders wants to tax businesses and the public to pay for free college education. This has nothing to do with the moral case for socialism which was to put bread on the table and a chicken in every pot, this is more like a lobster dinner for people who have declared themselves gluten intolerant.

This critical difference between providing basic social services for the infrastructure of society and not working people to death in sweatshops and unsafe factories, and looking at the whole of GDP and raising taxes so that the government gives out more esoteric benefits to workers and non-workers alike, to citizens and non-citizens alike is the moral difference between true socialism and neoliberalism.

The essential problem with Progressive's neoliberal agenda is that it is unsustainable. It seeks an ever higher standard of living on the basis of 'inequality' and to flatten society. That goes beyond the reasonableness of socialism towards collectivism and communism, and yet it is soft-peddled as 'socialism' or 'democratic socialism'. The American standard of living has already met the moral requirements of proper socialism. What we are now witnessing is nothing more than the greed of the activist Left.

Neoliberalism has a good chance in America because they can always claim underdog status. They cannot be held responsible for the bankruptcy of their ideas because they are too clever in their manipulations of regulatory and tax law. They will bleed that which is profitable to fund that which is wasteful without ever actually taking charge. They can always claim that 'too many' people are homeless and corporations and the public are 'not doing enough' to justify their policies. But they will never use their own money and power to solve the problem. They merely push and push in the same direction with other people's money using the force of new laws they are always pursuing. If the policy fails, they claim there was never enough commitment and money. If the policy succeeds, they move on to expand their influence in another area. But you'll find no original private models - everything gets dumped to the responsibility of government.

So in direct answer, American 'socialism' is neoliberalism, which taxes everyone as much as politically possible and tries to turn government into a benefits factory in every direction. This is exactly what contributes to making politicians only responsive to money. It is not so much steal from the rich and give to the poor as make government the broker for more and more of

American life, by stealing the moral argument of socialism when what is actually happening leans more towards state control. And in that way American trying to vote themselves rich is the road to serfdom as it will put more power and money in government hands and out of the hands of the people.

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August 11, 2015

### **Misconceptions about Conservatives**

I was raised as a Progressive within the 'Talented Tenth' in one of the wealthiest black communities in America. When the black sprinters for the US team were booed at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, I was shocked that the best in the world were heckled for raising the American flag. It made me reconsider what black men are expected to do and be with regard to patriotism, especially when they are successful. As part of that investigative process, I registered Republican and strove to understand and become a part of the American Right, and so I began a blog which is a journal of that passage. By becoming this 'paradox' a black American Conservative, I witnessed many myths. Here are some of them.

#### **The first myth is that conservatives are white, want to stay white and interpret all racial issues the same way liberals do and because of that, actively oppose Liberals based on racial or racist principles.**

In fact Conservatives spend relatively little time thinking about race and in particular have not evolved ways of speaking different 'racial languages' to different racial constituencies. The myth is that Conservatives speak a 'dog whistle' language to whites. The fact is that Conservatives want to be non-racial and speak to other character traits instead of race. This appeals to people who are not concerned with racial identity as central to politics, which does in fact resonate with people who are nominally 'white'.

#### **The second myth is that Conservatives are born and not made.**

There is this idea that only if you are raised in a particular kind of Christianity, or live in the South or did not get some crucial education or some other demographic stereotype, that you are likely to be and stay Conservative. Liberals almost always ignore or discount those Americans who grew up liberal or progressive and then thought their way away from those ideologies. I don't know for certain, but I would guess that there are more Progressives who became Conservative than the other way around.

#### **The third myth is that the American Right is just like the Right in other countries.**

This is especially annoying when it comes to Germany. Liberals tend to blithely associate Conservatism with Fascism when it comes to the matter of Conservative support of military service and military engagement. Very few would stop to look at the founding principles of the Nazi Party and see why, in principle, it is a Socialist worker's party. Because of this, Liberals assume for example, that nobody who escaped Nazi Germany would become an American Conservative, but in fact there is an entire school of Conservative thought called the Straussian School.

#### **The fourth myth is that Conservatism is monolithic.**

Liberals mistake conservative political philosophies for a dictionary definition of 'conservative' like 'lack of nerve' or 'unwillingness to change'. Few people, including many if not most Republicans, bother to read books by conservative thinkers like Hayek, Oakshott, Strauss or Kirk. Just as few Liberals, including many if not most Democrats, bother to read books by Adorno, Marcuse or Rorty. I think in general this is because Liberals assume that Republicans are true exemplars of Conservative principles and that their policy positions are principled.

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June 15, 2015

### **The Last Man in the World You Want to Deal With**



The last man in the world you want to deal with is a police officer. That is as it should be.

I've been saying for several years now that the entire point of a free public education in this country is to provide individuals with the capacity for self-rule. That's what the nation was founded on, the principles of liberty which said you own yourself. And so a government was formed that retained sovereign powers but constrained them to a reasonable minimum through divided government. While it is true that any of the three branches have now accumulated enough power to make a hash of any liberty, the principle of self-rule and self-determination still applies to American citizens.

Doc mentioned something to me the other day. 911 is what you call when you have nowhere else to go. 911 is what you call when you are completely helpless to do anything for yourself. 911 is for the crisis. When the pooch has not only been screwed but gang raped and bludgeoned. When your world of talent, ability, luck, discipline, education, know how, can do, get up and go and blessings of the Almighty have completely been exhausted, who do you call? You call the cops.

You call the cops at your wits end, but you still really don't want to. You wonder how the hell you got into the situation and you're mad as hell, confused and scared. Everything has gone wrong in your world and you can't

handle it. What could be worse?

Indifference.

Few things piss off people than the image of a fat, sloppy, lazy, bored police captain listening to you puke your guts out in a complete state of panic while he's eating his donuts and coffee, looking for a sharpened pencil for filling out your report. 911 will put you on hold. But nurses in reception do the same thing when your leg is broken and you're bleeding from your eyeballs. Tech support does the same thing when your screen goes black. City Hall does the same thing when your kid gets hit by a car at the intersection where you've been begging for a traffic light. FEMA does the same when your house is flooded with effluent from the river that the Army Corps was supposed to have diked. The White House does the same when your diplomat is shot in the head in Benghazi.

Are you sensing the pattern?

If you had been able to handle your own business, if you had stopped eating chocolate fudge brownies for lunch, if you had slapped that little knucklehead when he was 12 and sassed you.. you wouldn't be waiting in line to vote for a bureaucracy of public services for you to wait in line for and handle things for you that rich, powerful people don't have to worry about. Take a number. Wait your turn. Shut up. Be patient, and don't try this at home. We're the experts and you are not. Need to know basis and all that.

Some of you sad, horrified and miserably disappointed folks thought waiting in line for dubious public service is the way of the world. It is. The world of incompetents and suckers for Progress. But you thought. Yeah. You thought that society was supposed to protect you. You thought that when you got insulted, that somebody bigger, stronger, smarter with official sanction and a red white and blue super suit would come and rescue you from your grievous situation. You thought your grievance had merit.

It does. With you. What are \*you\* going to do about it?

Well, you're going to take the law into your own hands. Which by all accounts would be just fine if you hadn't spent the rest of your life putting the power of the law into the hands of the government. But now, of course, taking the law into your own hands is against the law. It didn't used to be when there was a bit more principle and a lot less law. If you would have learned how to birth your own baby, you wouldn't have to wait for Blue Shield to approve your OB GYN.

Now you lament that nobody told you that you would be on your own? No. You just assumed that you weren't, that the people who made the Afterschool Specials were actually everywhere. You assumed that society worked for people like you. No. People like you work for society, because you've bought into its promises of emergency services and crisis interventions. Hell, you even volunteered to pay more taxes to help people closer to crisis situations than you. Lord knows you volunteered my taxes to pay for more.

And now you look in the face of the man with a gun and a badge and you're not so sure any more, are you? Are you awake now? Do you get it?

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November 05, 2014

**Tim Scott**

I don't know much about [Tim Scott](#), but I'm not surprised that he exists. I'm glad he won. [Yay](#). Then again, I told you so at least [ten years ago](#).



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August 13, 2014

### **Civil Rights & The American Conservative Movement**

Just found this via Jonah Goldberg - an essay written in 2008 by [William Voegeli](#). Shrill, naive and or provocative people are always asking for proof that the GOP or Conservatives aren't racist, and they cannot wait to drop a Southern Strategy bomb on the Right. Even though I don't much care these days for defending the American Right, I did spend a lot of time in it and understood there was nothing particularly frightening about that experience, nor was there anything oxymoronic about my position in it.

So here's Voegeli's [scholarly piece](#) stolen whole cloth for the sake of completeness and to debunk the drunken notion that nobody on the Right actually thinks seriously about Civil Rights. I expect you to read the whole thing.

And here is a juicy excerpt:

Viewed from 2008, the movement Buckley led was detached from the civil rights struggle because conservatives, despite frequent and apparently sincere expressions of hope for racial harmony, rarely viewed the fight against pervasive, entrenched, and episodically brutal racial discrimination as a question of great moral urgency. Conservatives were personally opposed to Jim Crow as liberals of a later generation insisted they were personally opposed to abortion. Making the opposition personal was a way to keep the states, in the case of abortion, or the nation, when it came to segregation, from making it governmental.

Buckley did not mention race in his famous publisher's statement in the inaugural issue of *National Review*. The magazine was going to stand athwart history and yell Stop. But it would be yelling at Communists, "jubilant" in the belief they had an "inside track to History," and at liberals "who run this country" and who, having embraced relativism, rejected "fixed postulates...clearly enunciated in the enabling documents of our Republic" in favor of "radical social experimentation."

It was within this framework that *National Review* conservatism addressed the issues raised by the civil rights movement. Integration and black progress were welcomed when they were the result of private actions like the boycotts of segregated buses or lunch counters, which Buckley judged "wholly defensible" and "wholly commendable." He also praised a forerunner to the socially responsible mutual fund, an investment venture started in 1965 to raise capital for racially integrated housing developments, calling it "a project divorced from government that is directed at *doing* something about a concrete situation," one that "depends for its success on the spontaneous support of individual people."

The corollary was that conservatism opposed the civil rights agenda when it called for or depended on Big Government. "We frown on any effort of the Negroes to attain social equality by bending the instrument of the state to their purposes," Buckley wrote in 1960.

But we applaud the efforts to define their rights by the lawful and non-violent use of social and economic sanctions which they choose freely to exert, and to which those against whom they are exerted are free to respond, or not, depending on what is in balance. That way is legitimate, organic progress.

This opposition to Big Government engendered conservative opposition to every milestone achievement of the civil rights movement. *National Review* denounced [Brown v. Board of Education](#) (1954), calling it "an act of judicial usurpation," one that ran "patently counter to the intent of the Constitution" and was "shoddy and illegal in analysis, and invalid as sociology." It opposed the [1964 Civil Rights Act](#) and 1965 Voting Rights Act on similar grounds. A Buckley column dismissed the former as

a federal law, artificially deduced from the Commerce Clause of the Constitution or from the 14th Amendment, whose marginal effect will be to instruct small merchants in the Deep South on how they may conduct their business.

Senator Barry Goldwater used similar reasoning to justify voting against the bill on the eve of his general election contest with Lyndon Johnson. Saying he could find "no constitutional basis for the exercise of Federal regulatory authority" over private employment or public accommodations, Goldwater called the law "a grave threat" to a "constitutional republic in which fifty sovereign states have reserved to themselves and to the people those powers not specifically granted to the central or Federal government." Goldwater arrived at this conclusion, according to Rick Perlstein's book on the 1964 campaign, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (2001), after receiving advice from two young legal advisors, William Rehnquist and Robert Bork.

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showed up to counter-protest claiming freedom of expression, in their newly printed Dickwolves t-shirts. The leaders of PAX, influential as they must be as demiurges of the videogame and fantasy comic book industry ultimately had the bigger wallets, and failed to issue the requisite non-apology. Of course, they're not wrong. But they're also hella wicked improper.

Since I grew up assuming the airs of the Talented Tenth, I am no stranger to Noblesse. I have learned what is proper, and to my immediate right, as if I needed to prove such things, is my Funk & Wagnells Blue Book by Emily Post. But as the Madoff-defrauded gentry of Palm Beach know all too well, the social register ain't what it used to be. Victimology is the new virtue, but what it lacks in prestige, it makes up for in self-righteousness. Well there is something to be said for prestige and propriety which this new class of self-righteous virtues politically-correct types are all to unwilling to admit. They cling to their post-modern narratives and do everything possible to isolate their morality from those who held power, prestige and propriety in Western history. They have no respect for old money, or its ways and means. To the new breed it all smells of Colonel Blimp's colonialism.

But propriety must be the standard for the emergent powers as well. At some point, they must put down the pitchforks and pick up the teacups. In the end, wearing snarky t-shirts is the mark of someone who doesn't want to be responsible, but just make powerful noise. The world emphatically does not need more powerful noisemakers, because some values are simply absolute. And this is what our essayist, squishy feminist protester that she may be, does in fact recognize, with precisely the subtlety the situation called for. If you are going to give credibility to the power of fanboys of alternative fantasy universes, there are still some old school standards of propriety they are going to have to adhere to in order to maintain any respectability whatsoever.

Now let's get back to the gifts of the strong. Clearly in the case of the PAXian pro-dickwolf chavs, their feisty claims to freedom of expression gave rise to dunderheaded peasant vulgarity, which they felt no compulsion to rise above, apologize for or reign in. You can call email rape threats bullying but it seems to me our feminist friend ultimately did what makes sense, which is to call them on their incivility and discriminate. What may arise from this principled choice may end up as a feminist alternative to the alternative, but hopefully not. The proper observation from my POV is to note the cracked moral foundation of the PAX leadership and their ultimate inability to lead civilized people. PAX, under such guidance, will degenerate, like rap did, for the same 'anti-feminist' reasons, which should lead us to recall that perhaps there is no virtue in anti-social nerddom, no matter how many anti-social nerds one aggregates into a 'community'. In short, there are no gifts forthcoming, these dudes aint so strong.

Secondarily and tangentially though, let us expand the idea up the nation-sized.

Our president decided back in 2007 that he might meet personally with Bashar Assad who was cosplaying his father's dictatorial rule over Syria. As time progressed, Assad proceeded to become less fantastically and more realistically a rapist of slaves, especially with regard to their rights which he obviously didn't defend or acknowledge. On the way to becoming a target of chemical weapons, you predictably lose both acknowledgment and defense. The junior Assad, of course, was weak, and had to show strength through callous brutality. Not real virtue, but the dishonorable, unprestigious and improper noise of abusive power. Something those who consider themselves victims will always be quick to demonstrate.

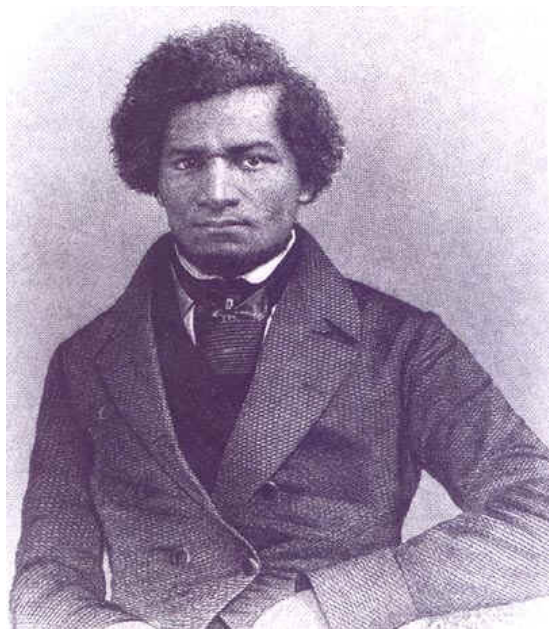
And so what kind of dickwolvian tales do we have to hear from the Syrians, or in fact anyone suffering under tyrants before we become anything more than 3% heroic? If you remember properly, we sent Condi Rice over to Lebanon to make sure that Hezbollah and other Syrian funded commandos were safe from those evil Israelis. And of course Americans were absolutely convinced, or so went our policy, that Israel was a much worse ruler over people than the Syrian backed commandos. Because Cedar Revolution PAX! Or some such illogic. And so we were 3% effective. Iran backed Syria, Syria backed Hezbollah and Hezbollah is better than Israel because Hezbollah serves Palestinians unconditionally. Right? That is a question I think too few people are contemplating. And this is testament to the new (strength) of America, which is our complete unwillingness to see this same kind of pattern and be heroic.

In the wake of the failure of the Iraq War to satisfy my neoconservative dreams, I recognized the genius of Russell Kirk who said there is no such thing as Human Rights. That is because there is no international sovereign power, and God help us if there ever is. There is only national sovereign power and thus only Civil Rights. A lot of Americans might pretend to say that there is a such thing as Human Rights and acknowledge that Syrians have them as do the Chinese and the people of Myanmar. Yes, they have Human Rights in theory we acknowledge, but you already know that they won't be defended.

September 05, 2013 in [Conservatism](#), [Domestic Affairs](#), [Geopolitics](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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February 14, 2013

## Your Black Republican Problem is Not My Problem



Ishmael Reed wrote in the NYT:

*The Republican Party was influenced by the abolitionist Liberty Party, whose leading lights included William Lloyd Garrison, Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass, who later said: "I recognize the Republican Party as the sheet anchor of the colored man's political hopes and the ark of his safety."*

*Likewise, in an 1872 letter to her fellow activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anthony wrote: "I shall continue to work for the Republican Party ...for what the party has done and promises to do for women."*

*Why can't that emancipationist sentiment return today? The original Republicans were born from a challenge to the far right — Lincoln gained influence by criticizing the Know-Nothing Party, the far right of his time. The same could happen today, gaining millions of adherents tired of the right's racism and the left's big-government stereotypes. Call it "neo-Classical Republicanism."*

*The door is wide open. As Mr. Obama's critics on the black left have noted, blacks haven't benefited from his presidency as much as other factions of the Democratic coalition. He's less of a Malcolm X than a Booker T. Washington, who would have endorsed the president's belief that "a rising tide lifts all boats."*

The Republican Party I know is playing three games. The first game is the Washington game of winning and spinning. It takes whatever power it has and can wrangle to get its way inside the Beltway. That results in just what you think it does. These are the Republicans of Boehner and company - they are who they are - lords of influence, power brokers, men with no time for nonsense. The second game is the game of money and votes. If you are local, your job is find out where the money is, get that money. Money means the guy who owns the Ford dealership who shows up at fundraisers and charity auctions. Votes means the people who will walk house to house and knock on doors and sit at voter registration tables for hours on end every weekend. What you want into is the third game.

The third game is the game of ideas and ideology. It's about the culture of the Right. And that is a media game - an open game. Whoopi Goldberg said that TV is the one place where you can have a million followers and be called a loser. Everybody who is black in the American Right knows that there are a million black Republicans, and we all know that's never enough. The Republican Party cannot do and will not do what Ishmael Reed says because Ismael Reed is not standing up on national TV saying "I am a Republican and this is what I believe". Everything he said rings perfectly true and is perfectly acceptable to the GOP, but that's \*his\* way with words, backed by \*his\* name recognition by black Americans. It's the same way with Dr. Ben Carson, whom all of a sudden gets this groundswell of support because he knows how to diss Obama in a way that makes lots of blackfolks tingly. But every black American on the Right already knows this.

Any and every proper black self-reliance idea is baked into Republican values. It always has been, and the GOP is not hostile, but welcoming of all those ideas. It's the broad American media that is hostile and most black Americans - those who are waiting for Denzel Washington on a golden chariot - are playing right into that hostility. The ideas have never changed. When JC Watts was speaking on those ideas, we laughed at him because Chris Rock told us to. When Glenn Loury was speaking on those ideas, we dismissed him because we wanted to

wait and hear him say Republicans are racist too. When Connie Rice was speaking on those ideas, we said she was sleeping with GWBush. When Michael Steele was speaking on those ideas we said, he can't win a statewide office. You name the black Republican, all of them have the same ideas, and all of them have a bullet aimed at their head a lame excuse on it. Do you hear what I'm saying? Crabs can't wait to get their claws into black Americans who climb up and say "I'm a Republican and this is what I believe." The ideas have never changed.

Let me tell you what it's like to be black on the American Right. No, on second thought, you figure it out for yourself. Because it works for me and my family, and that's all the black I'm responsible for. Niky Mianj or whatever her name is never going to sing that song because it's an old solid idea that works for Scandinavian farmers in North Dakota, and it works for everybody outside of the cool demographics all around the world and it doesn't make you popular. Conservative values are like calculus. Knowing them only helps you solve problems, and being unpopular isn't a problem.

Did you hear what I'm saying? Being unpopular is not a problem.

Singing has always been a good idea. You can't grow up in America not knowing how to sing a Michael Jackson song. But Hollywood is the bastion of Frankfurt School propaganda and so their job is to put their cool demographics on TV singing Michael Jackson songs. So that way you get popular. I think people like Glee because it's wheelchair and GLBT friendly, and guess what. You don't get to be on national TV making the big bucks by accident. The professionals know how to make you popular - that's the game they are playing. So Glee is what it is by design. But the songs are old and singing is good. The ideas have never changed.

I don't do media any longer. I'm fortunate enough to be a part of the second industrial revolution - the information technology revolution. That's my day job - I build stuff. I used to be in that ideas game. But after a while I realized that I didn't have to come up with any more new ideas, I just had to get more exposure to the ideas I was on about. That meant playing a media game - a game I called 'Famously'. How famous can you get? To win that game you do your damndest to stay in the public eye saying \*something\*. After a while you get famous for being famous. Yeah well, my mama didn't raise me to be a media star. Everybody knows Connie Chung, but what ideas does she stand for? She's popular, that's all.

So somebody tells me what the GOP \*ought\* to do to get black votes, what they really mean is somebody ought to make the Republican Party \*popular\* - because they have an \*image problem\* with 'black America'. But the ideas have never changed, and being unpopular is not a problem.

February 14, 2013 in [Conservatism](#), [Domestic Affairs](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(50\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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November 14, 2012

### **A NeoSecessionist Manifesto & A Return of the Creed**

As I received it in the mail this morning:

Dear American liberals, leftists, social progressives, socialists, regressive, Marxists, and Obama supporters, et al:

We have stuck together since the late 1950s for the sake of the kids, but the whole of this latest election process has made me realize that I want a divorce. I know we tolerated each other for many years for the sake of future generations, but sadly, this relationship has clearly run its course.

Our two ideological sides of America cannot and will not ever agree on what is right for us all, so let's just end it on friendly terms. We can smile and chalk it up to irreconcilable differences and go our own way.

Here is a model separation agreement:

1. Our

two groups can equitably divide up the country by land mass, each taking a similar portion. That will be the difficult part, but I am sure our two sides can come to a friendly agreement. After that, it should be relatively easy. Our respective representatives can effortlessly divide other assets since both sides had such distinct and disparate tastes.

2. We don't like redistributive taxes, so you can keep them.

3. You are welcome to the liberal judges and the ACLU.

4. Since you hate guns and war, we'll take our firearms, the cops, the NRA, and the military.

5. We'll take the nasty, smelly oil industry and you can go with wind, solar, and bio-diesel.

6.

You can keep Oprah, Michael Moore, and Rosie O'Donnell. You are, however, responsible for finding a bio-diesel vehicle big enough to move all three of them.

7. We'll keep capitalism, greedy corporations, pharmaceutical companies, Wal-Mart, and Wall Street.

8. You can have your beloved lifelong welfare dwellers, food stamps, homeless homeboys, hippies, druggies, and illegal aliens.

9. We'll keep the hot Alaskan hockey moms, greedy CEO's and Rednecks.

10. We'll keep the Bibles and give you NBC and Hollywood.

11. You can make nice with Iran and Palestine and we'll retain the right to invade and hammer places that threaten us.

12.

You can have the peace-niks and war protesters. When our allies or our way of life are under assault, we'll help provide them security.

13. We'll keep our Judeo-Christian values.

14.

You are welcome to Islam, Scientology, Humanism, political correctness, and Shirley McLain. You can also have the U.N., but we will no longer be paying the bill.

15. We'll keep the SUV's, pickup trucks, and oversized luxury cars. You can take every Prius you can find.

16. You can give everyone healthcare if you can find any practicing doctors.

17. We'll continue to believe healthcare is an earned luxury and not a right.
  18. We'll keep "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "The National Anthem."
  19. I'm sure you'll be happy to substitute "Imagine", "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing", "Kum Ba Ya," or "We Are the World".
  20. We'll practice trickle-down economics and you can continue to give trickle-up poverty your best shot.
  21. Since it often so offends you, we'll keep our history, our name and our constitution and our flag.
  22.  
Would you agree to this? If so, please pass it along to other like-minded liberal and conservative patriots and if you do not agree, just hit delete. In the spirit of friendly parting, I'll bet you answer which one of us will need whose help in 15 years.
- Sincerely,  
John J. Wall  
Law Student and an American
- P.S.: Also, please take Ted Turner, Sean Penn, Martin Sheen, Barbara Streisand, George Clooney and Jane Fonda with you.
- P.S.S.: And you won't have to "Press 1 for English" when you call our country.
- \*\*If you can't stand behind our Military, please feel free to stand in front of them! \*\***

Cute.

I think they've named a lot of things in a lot of people's heads. People who don't really have the time or inclination to engage the public via the Chatting Classes.

I have found comfort in my adopted ridiculously expensive neighborhood of Redondo Beach and now I have some feeling about propriety - some sense of not giving up an inch to the Element. It's partial. But if it were my town, where all my property was, I would defend it to an extreme degree.

If there were some way to get all the property owners in unison on those matters of keeping the proper laws in place, I think there would be no secession. But I think many have turned against the ownership society. And so we will be under a state of siege for some time. But there is everything in owning your own castle and running it properly.

My point is that secession of the mind in society is not complete, and I believe that people with a sense of propriety will simply bar the doors, not move. We will not flee to Red States. We simply will not flee. We can stand our ground wherever we are. At some point, the secession of the mind will be complete, and people once again will have creeds that matter.

So provisionally, this is the new creed of Cobb the Downsider:

### *Sense Amid Madness. Wit Amidst Folly.*

November 14, 2012 in [A Punch in the Nose, Conservatism, Domestic Affairs](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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May 14, 2012

### **How Phil Agre Was Wrong About Conservatism**

I'm going to interactively debug this old essay by Phil Agre called [What Is Conservatism and What Is Wrong with It?](#)

[Philip E. Agre](#)

August 2004

Liberals in the United States have been losing political debates to conservatives for a quarter century. In order to start winning again, liberals must answer two simple questions: what is conservatism, and what is wrong with it? As it happens, the answers to these questions are also simple:

Q: What is conservatism?

A: Conservatism is the domination of society by an aristocracy.

Q: What is wrong with conservatism?

A: Conservatism is incompatible with democracy, prosperity, and civilization in general. It is a destructive system of inequality and prejudice that is founded on deception and has no place in the modern world.

*If you can accept this fundamental misrepresentation of Conservatism, then you are finished rather in the way logicians understand that assertion of the truth of a falsehood implies a universe of illogic. This is apparently Agre's religion, and so I reject his premises. That's remarkably simple, but maybe he finds other truths that make his mistated case more compelling. Let's see. BTW, this is about all that I read to convince me this is worth writing. I have no idea what lies ahead...*

These ideas are not new. Indeed they were common sense until recently. Nowadays, though, most of the people who call themselves "conservatives" have little notion of what conservatism even is. They have been deceived by one of the great public relations campaigns of human history. Only by analyzing this deception will it become possible to revive democracy in the United States.

*If people don't know what they are, then they cannot be considered properly. If I tell you that I am a Martian but am not from Mars, you cannot judge real Martians based on my shortcomings. So Agre may be shadowboxing.*

//1 The Main Arguments of Conservatism

From the pharaohs of ancient Egypt to the self-regarding thugs of ancient Rome to the glorified warlords of medieval and absolutist Europe, in nearly every urbanized society throughout human history, there have been people who have tried to constitute themselves as an aristocracy. These people and their allies are the conservatives.

*Shaky. People are leaders who can lead. Aristocracies are about ability. Not direction. The faculty at Brown University is an aristocracy. The architects of the Bauhaus are an aristocracy. It doesn't make them evil because they lead. It doesn't make them right or wrong. It only makes them leaders.*

The tactics of conservatism vary widely by place and time. But the most central feature of conservatism is deference: a psychologically internalized attitude on the part of the common people that the aristocracy are better people than they are. Modern-day liberals often theorize that conservatives use "social issues" as a way to mask economic objectives, but this is almost backward: the true goal of conservatism is to establish an aristocracy, which is a social and psychological condition of inequality. Economic inequality and regressive taxation, while certainly welcomed by the aristocracy, are best understood as a means to their actual goal, which is simply to be aristocrats. More generally, it is crucial to conservatism that the people must literally love the order that dominates them. Of course this notion sounds bizarre to modern ears, but it is perfectly overt in the writings of leading conservative theorists such as Burke. Democracy, for them, is not about the mechanisms of voting and office-holding. In fact conservatives hold a wide variety of opinions about such secondary formal matters. For conservatives, rather, democracy is a psychological condition. People who believe that the aristocracy rightfully dominates society because of its intrinsic superiority are conservatives; democrats, by contrast, believe that they are of equal social worth. Conservatism is the antithesis of democracy. This has been true for thousands of years.

*Conservatism has not existed for thousands of years, but human leadership has. We are to ask ourselves whether or not any regime of leadership is just, honorable, effective, righteous. This is the study of history. We study history in order to learn, and we make judgments. But let us ask a simple question about democracy. Is it representative? Is the purpose of*

*elections, vote-getting and office-holding self-serving or in service to society? If a Conservative or any candidate for democratic election campaigns to serve for the benefit of society, it is a simple task to measure whether or not that promise is fulfilled.*

The defenders of aristocracy represent aristocracy as a natural phenomenon, but in reality it is the most artificial thing on earth. Although one of the goals of every aristocracy is to make its preferred social order seem permanent and timeless, in reality conservatism must be reinvented in every generation. This is true for many reasons, including internal conflicts among the aristocrats; institutional shifts due to climate, markets, or warfare; and ideological gains and losses in the perpetual struggle against democracy. In some societies the aristocracy is rigid, closed, and stratified, while in others it is more of an aspiration among various fluid and factionalized groups. The situation in the United States right now is toward the latter end of the spectrum. A main goal in life of all aristocrats, however, is to pass on their positions of privilege to their children, and many of the aspiring aristocrats of the United States are appointing their children to positions in government and in the archipelago of think tanks that promote conservative theories.

*Nepotism is the proper word here, not conservatism. How many Republicans from Chicago are named Daley? How many Republicans from Massachusetts are named Kennedy? How many named Clinton? But beyond that, let me take this opportunity to assert something in parallel to Mr. Agre's claims about aristocracy. I will quote Thomas Jefferson whom I understand to be quoting Plato, in that his goal for American government is to establish an 'aristocracy of merit'. So let us see whether Agre is against aristocracy or against bad aristocracy.*

Conservatism in every place and time is founded on deception. The deceptions of conservatism today are especially sophisticated, simply because culture today is sufficiently democratic that the myths of earlier times will no longer suffice.

Before analyzing current-day conservatism's machinery of deception, let us outline the main arguments of conservatism. Although these arguments have changed little through history, they might seem unfamiliar to many people today, indeed even to people who claim to be conservatives. That unfamiliarity is a very recent phenomenon. Yet it is only through the classical arguments and their fallacies that we can begin to analyze how conservatism operates now.

### 1. Institutions

According to the first type of argument, found for example in Burke, social institutions are a kind of capital. A properly ordered society will be blessed with large quantities of this capital. This capital has very particular properties. It is a sprawling tangle of social arrangements and patterns of thought, passed down through generations as part of the culture. It is generally tacit in nature and cannot be rationally analyzed. It is fragile and must be conserved, because a society that lacks it will collapse into anarchy and tyranny. Innovation is bad, therefore, and prejudice is good. Although the institutions can tolerate incremental reforms around the edges, systematic questioning is a threat to social order. In particular, rational thought is evil. Nothing can be worse for the conservative than rational thought, because people who think rationally might decide to try replacing inherited institutions with new ones, something that a conservative regards as impossible. This is where the word "conservative" comes from: the supposed importance of conserving established institutions.

*Well this is a tangle. Perhaps Agre doesn't want to deal with examples. Again, let us consider Brown University and the Bauhaus school of architecture. Are such social institutions anti-rational? Is the Red Cross anti-rational?*

This argument is not wholly false. Institutions are in fact sprawling tangles of social arrangements and patterns of thought, passed down through generations as part of the culture. And people who think they can reengineer the whole of human society overnight are generally mistaken. The people of ancien régime France were oppressed by the conservative order of their time, but indeed their revolution did not work, and would probably not have worked even if conservatives from elsewhere were not militarily attacking them. After all, the conservative order had gone to insane lengths to deprive them of the education, practical experience, and patterns of thought that would be required to operate a democracy. They could not invent those things overnight.

Even so, the argument about conserving institutions is mostly untrue. Most institutions are less fragile and more dynamic than conservatives claim. Large amounts of institutional innovation happen in every generation. If people lack a rational analysis of institutions, that is mostly a product of conservatism rather than an argument for it. And although conservatism has historically claimed to conserve institutions, history makes clear that conservatism is only interested in conserving particular kinds of institutions: the institutions that reinforce conservative power. Conservatism rarely tries to conserve institutions such as Social Security and welfare that decrease the common people's dependency on the aristocracy and the social authorities that serve it. To the contrary, they represent those institutions in various twisted ways as dangerous to the social order generally or to their beneficiaries in particular.

*I take it as axiomatic that any ideology rarely tries to conserve institutions that are antithetical to their premises. Clearly the Jacobins didn't seek to conserve the Ancien Regime. Revolutions "are" the active destruction of particular institutions. The Barbarians didn't seek to conserve Rome. So as things change, for rational or irrational reasons what is conserved or enhanced has a particular flavor. Elementary. Agre's phrasing is odd "institutions such as Social Security and welfare that decrease the common people's dependency on the aristocracy and the social authorities that serve it." Social security and welfare he appears to claim "decrease" the common people's dependency on the aristocracy. Really? I wonder if he'll spell that out.*

### 2. Hierarchy

The opposite of conservatism is democracy, and contempt for democracy is a constant thread in the history of conservative argument. Instead, conservatism has argued that society ought to be organized in a hierarchy of orders and classes and controlled by its uppermost hierarchical stratum, the aristocracy. Many of these arguments against egalitarianism are ancient, and most of them are routinely heard on the radio. One tends to hear the arguments in bits and pieces, for example the emphatic if vague claim that people are different. Of course, most of these arguments, if considered rationally, actually argue for meritocracy rather than for aristocracy. Meritocracy is a democratic principle. George Bush, however, was apparently scarred for life by having been one of the last students admitted to Yale under its old aristocratic admissions system, and having to attend classes with students admitted under the meritocratic system who considered themselves to be smarter than him. Although he has lately claimed to oppose the system of legacy admissions from which he benefitted, that is a tactic, part of a package deal to eliminate affirmative action, thereby allowing conservative social hierarchies to be reaffirmed in other ways.

*Here Agre seeks to conflate and confuse a school of thought existing before the flowering of democracy in the West with that before. Some measure of historical specificity is required here. I'm not sure that I'm going to get it. For example, you could not examine the history of the Whigs in England, the precursors of the Republicans in America and suggest that they did not support aristocracies. But they are much further from Agre's conception of 'conservatives' than are the English Tories. So are they 'less' conservative or not conservative? Furthermore, what is the United States Senate but an aristocracy, in fact, what is a Republic if not a society organized of orders and classes controlled by its uppermost hierarchical stratum - where that stratum is in the American case, the Constitution and those practitioners most superior in its understanding? Is there not a Supreme Court, Superior Courts and Lower Courts? Do not the lower bow unconditionally to the higher?*

American culture still being comparatively healthy, overt arguments for aristocracy (for example, that the children of aristocrats learn by osmosis the profound arts of government and thereby acquire a wisdom that mere experts cannot match) are still relatively unusual. Instead, conservatism must proceed through complicated indirection, and the next few sections of this article will explain in some detail how this works. The issue is not that rich people are bad, or that hierarchical types of organization have no place in a democracy. Nor are the descendants of aristocrats necessarily bad people if they do not try to perpetuate conservative types of domination over society. The issue is both narrow and enormous: no aristocracy should be allowed to trick the rest of society into deferring to it.

*Which is why conservatives often dispute the political opinions of academics who have been granted tenure.*

### 3. Freedom

But isn't conservatism about freedom? Of course everyone wants freedom, and so conservatism has no choice but to promise freedom to its subjects. In reality conservatism has meant complicated things by "freedom", and the reality of conservatism in practice has scarcely corresponded even to the contorted definitions in conservative texts.

To start with, conservatism constantly shifts in its degree of authoritarianism. Conservative rhetors, in the Wall Street Journal for example, have no difficulty claiming to be the party of freedom in one breath and attacking civil liberties in the next.

*For example?*

The real situation with conservatism and freedom is best understood in historical context. Conservatism constantly changes, always adapting itself to provide the minimum amount of freedom that is required to hold together a dominant coalition in the society. In Burke's day, for example, this meant an alliance between traditional social authorities and the rising



business class. Although the business class has always defined its agenda in terms of something it calls "freedom", in reality conservatism from the 18th century onward has simply implied a shift from one kind of government intervention in the economy to another, quite different kind, together with a continuation of medieval models of cultural domination.

This is a central conservative argument: freedom is impossible unless the common people internalize aristocratic domination. Indeed, many conservative theorists to the present day have argued that freedom is not possible at all. Without the internalized domination of conservatism, it is argued, social order would require the external domination of state terror. In a sense this argument is correct: historically conservatives have routinely resorted to terror when internalized domination has not worked. What is unthinkable by design here is the possibility that people might organize their lives in a democratic fashion.

*This is foolish, fallacious and wrong. Conservatives understand and believe that freedom is an inherent God given right of individuals and that it is only by social contract that any individual should be bound to give up any freedom whatsoever. That in fact, the state should take only a minimum proxy of power by consent and has in and of itself no power not derived from said God given inalienable right. Conservatives make the acknowledgement that men can and will do anything and must promise to do little of what is known to be socially destructive. Failing that promise, they must be compelled by law - and not arbitrary law, but the accumulated wisdom of law. Thus freedom under the law is Liberty and Conservatives seek to maximize Liberty. The central Conservative argument is for a politics and social order that retains the Hobbsean Leviathan of Law through the power of the state yet maximizes individual Liberty. It is this dynamic tension that energizes the work of Conservatives.*

This alliance between traditional social authorities and the business class is artificial. The market continually undermines the institutions of cultural domination. It does this partly through its constant revolutionizing of institutions generally and partly by encouraging a culture of entrepreneurial initiative. As a result, the alliance must be continually reinvented, all the while pretending that its reinventions simply reinstate an eternal order.

*The market does not continually undermine the institutions of cultural domination, read 'social order'. The market is an amoral force, and no amount of marketing convinces human beings that parents should not feed their children, or that the dead should remain unburied in the streets. Conservatives respect that individual liberty is undermined by the suppression of cultural traditions which are the result of human evolution and the fundamental unchanging aspects of human nature itself. It is human nature itself that is eternal and so it orders itself according to what is eternal about human desire - good and evil, loyalty and betrayal, generosity and greed, shamelessness and discretion, every virtue and vice. Conservatives are not confused about what should be and what should never be up for sale in free markets.*

Conservatism promotes (and so does liberalism, misguidedly) the idea that liberalism is about activist government where conservatism is not. This is absurd. It is unrelated to the history of conservative government. Conservatism promotes activist government that acts in the interests of the aristocracy. This has been true for thousands of years. What is distinctive about liberalism is not that it promotes activist government but that it promotes government that acts in the interests of the majority. Democratic government, however, is not simply majoritarian. It is, rather, one institutional expression of a democratic type of culture that is still very much in the process of being invented.

*For someone who refuses even to give a direct quote from Burke, Agre's authority on what his conservatism has been 'for thousands of years' is suspect. But what he claims of liberalism is in fact something of great concern to Conservatives. To promote government that acts in the interests of the majority is by definition majoritarian, something quite obviously problematic to Agre. What he should know and what Chomsky has shown is that 'the majority' is a fictional, political creation. In other words, a 'majority' can be defined and such a majority can be artificially aggregated. Consent can be manufactured. This is, indeed, the work of Progressives. But as I mentioned previously, the dynamic tension between the Leviathan of Law and Individual Liberty requires work, and amidst a world full of change, such work is never complete. Conservatives seek balance. Balance is virtuous. Equilibrium should be sought.*

//2 How Conservatism Works

Conservative social orders have often described themselves as civilized, and so one reads in the Wall Street Journal that "the enemies of civilization hate bow ties". But what conservatism calls civilization is little but the domination of an aristocracy. Every aspect of social life is subordinated to this goal. That is not civilization.

*Agre disagrees with the Wall Street Journal, presumably its editorial board. Wish we had some examples.*

The reality is quite the opposite. To impose its order on society, conservatism must destroy civilization. In particular conservatism must destroy conscience, democracy, reason, and language.

*Odd that. Surely then conservatism must be able to recognize such things in order to be able to destroy them, and if they were to destroy them, surely they would not miss them. Thus a perfect conservative society would have no conscience, democracy, reason or language. To us he ascribes God-like powers, he must then think us devils.*

\* The Destruction of Conscience

Liberalism is a movement of conscience. Liberals speak endlessly of conscience. Yet conservative rhetors have taken to acting as if they owned the language of conscience. They even routinely assert that liberals disparage conscience. The magnitude of the falsehood here is so great that decent people have been set back on their heels.

Conservatism continually twists the language of conscience into its opposite. It has no choice: conservatism is unjust, and cannot survive except by pretending to be the opposite of what it is.

Conservative arguments are often arbitrary in nature. Consider, for example, the controversy over Elian Gonzalez. Conservatism claims that the universe is ordered by absolutes. This would certainly make life easier if it was true. The difficulty is that the absolutes constantly conflict with one another. When the absolutes do not conflict, there is rarely any controversy. But when absolutes do conflict, conservatism is forced into sophistry. In the case of Elian Gonzalez, two absolutes conflicted: keeping families together and not making people return to tyrannies. In a democratic society, the decision would be made through rational debate. Conservatism, however, required picking one of the two absolutes arbitrarily (based perhaps on tactical politics in Florida) and simply accusing anyone who disagreed of flouting absolutes and thereby nihilistically denying the fundamental order of the universe. This happens every day. Arbitrariness replaces reason with authority. When arbitrariness becomes established in the culture, democracy decays and it becomes possible for aristocracies to dominate people's minds.

*Does Physics claim the universe is ordered by absolutes? Just curious. Is Planck's constant actually constant? The mass of a gram? The wavelengths of visible light? The size of an electron?*

*Elian Gonzales' fate is something trivial enough to be determined by the wisdom of one ordinary mid-level judge. Conservatives have no fundamental issue with the judiciary. The example of one child is hardly enough to overturn the legitimacy of a political ideology, that is unless one is so besieged by 'conscience' that one can handily ignore the reality of capital crimes in America.*

Another example of conservative twisting of the language of conscience is the argument, in the context of the attacks of 9/11 and the war in Iraq, that holding our side to things like the Geneva Convention implies an equivalence between ourselves and our enemies. This is a logical fallacy. The fallacy is something like: they kill so they are bad, but we are good so it is okay for us to kill. The argument that everything we do is okay so long as it is not as bad as the most extreme evil in the world is a rejection of nearly all of civilization. It is precisely the destruction of conscience.

*Evidently Agre had most of his arguments with college freshmen.*

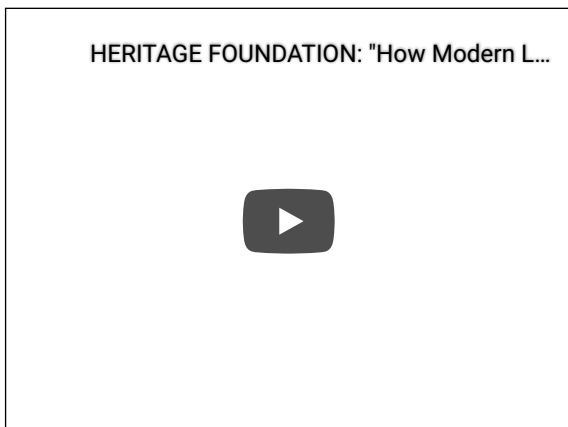
Or take the notion of "political correctness". It is true that movements of conscience have piled demands onto people faster than the culture can absorb them. That is an unfortunate side-effect of social progress. Conservatism, however, twists language to make the inconvenience of conscience sound like a kind of oppression. The campaign against political correctness is thus a search-and-destroy campaign against all vestiges of conscience in society. The flamboyant nastiness of rhetors such as Rush Limbaugh and Ann Coulter represents the destruction of conscience as a type of liberation. They are like cultists, continually egging on their audiences to destroy their own minds by punching through one layer after another of their consciences.

*I should like to substitute the words 'revolutions' for 'movements of conscience' and 'eugenic evolution' for 'social progress'. Now reread Agre's sentences above. The campaign against political correctness was not a search and destroy mission against all vestiges of conscience, it was a successful injection of common sense into an over-production of perverse dissatisfaction with all that is settled in society. It was leaven against the adolescent instinct. But note how Agre presumes that which is 'conservative' by his definition must be devoid of*

January 22, 2014

### Two Mind Explosions: Sayet & Haidt

Damn this long weekend. I started reading too much. Here are two videos that have me reintegrating a lot of ideas. I'll review them later.



First this from Evan Sayet.

And then this from Jonathan Haidt.



January 22, 2014 in [Brain Spew](#), [Conservatism](#), [Domestic Affairs](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
[Reblog \(0\)](#) | [Digg This](#) | [Save to del.icio.us](#) | [Tweet This!](#) |

September 05, 2013

### Gifts of the Strong



Somebody once told me that 'Rights are the gifts of the strong'. Let's think about that for a moment.

If you merely wish to acknowledge that everyone has rights, or as Jefferson et al put it, is endowed by the Creator in an inalienable way, well that's one thing. But acknowledgement and defense are two different things. Somebody has got to defend rights.

Let's look at the outlying conditions. In condition A, you are denied acknowledgement. In the old American racism dichotomy you had Southern Racism and Northern Racism. Southern racism says you can get socially close, but not too high. That would be defense without acknowledgement. The Southern bigot will defend you as a friend but deny that you can do \*anything\*. Northern racism says you can high but not too close. That would be acknowledgement without defense. The Northern bigot will say that, yes of course in \*theory\* you can do anything you like, but don't expect any help from \*me\*. Foggy? Yeah probly. But think about it.

I'm taking the oppressed minority metaphor angle because I just read something totally squishy in a multicultural victimology sense that also makes perfect civilized sense. Such occasions are rare and I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge and defend the principle at work, which is that Rights are the Gifts of the Strong, as in Noblesse Oblige.

If you know what cosplay is, if you are something of a geek on the comic side of the universe of fiction which sometimes approaches literature, then you probably know what Penny Arcade is. Therefore you would know what PAX is and you are probably familiar with the Dickwolf Controversy. If you are none of these things and had to put your hand down as I elaborated, all you need to know is the following:

Young adults who dig comics and videogames and fantasy fiction have aggregated themselves into an annual conference in celebration of their emergence from marginality. In other words, America has created yet another un-classically reared multi-million dollar industrial titanic 'community' from the peasantry. And like most Americans who emerge as a strident sort of minority claiming rights like 'freedom of speech'; like most Americans who suffer the need for self-aggrandizing rage; like most Americans who take their success from humble beginnings as evidence of justice, the leaders of PAX have become self-important boorish assholes, who are clueless about the difference between being right and being proper.

What's this? A difference between being right and proper? Dare we bring class and propriety into such matters? Yes we must, because of that little thing called power. And this is what was evidenced in the semi-brilliant essay I read this morning.

You see, several years ago such and such a comic mentioned slaves being raped all night by the dickwolves, which is an excruciatingly biting image. Well, I suppose you should see the comic to get the gist. Still, it should be obvious that nobody of any moral education could possibly argue for slaves to be continually raped, but is freeing 3% of them heroic? OK it's heroic, but is it heroic enough? Hold that thought. The Dickwolf Controversy involves the kind of bruha one would expect at a Northern California liberal university in which actual victims of rape show up, escorted by recently bored activists who now have a cause, to protest this gratuitous slap in the face with their newly printed No Bully signs. In this case, the leaders of PAX

reason, language, and conscience. It must be impossible for conservatives to serve humanity by this definition, and in order for humanity to even \*be\* humanity, Agre's view of social progress \*must\* be fulfilled. This is the imperative of revolution. It always has been.

Once I wrote on the Internet that bears in zoos are miserable and should be let go. In response to this, I received an e-mail viciously mocking me as an animal rights wacko. This is an example of the destruction of conscience. Any human being with a halfways functioning conscience will be capable of rationally debating the notion that unhappy bears in zoos should be let go. Of course, rational people might have other opinions. They might claim that the bears are not actually miserable, or that they would be just as miserable in the forest. Conservatism, though, has stereotyped concern for animals by associating it with its most extreme fringe. This sort of mockery of conscience has become systematic and commonplace.

*One is either for or against the establishment and defense of civil rights for animals. It's all any Conservative should care about.*

[Continue reading "How Phil Agre Was Wrong About Conservatism" »](#)

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April 28, 2012

### Self Determiation vs Marxism



A blast from the past.

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April 11, 2012

### Reflections on The Conservative Mind



There used to be something called blip.tv. The link is dead.

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March 05, 2012

### Of Sluts, Sex and Silence

Let us first have a moment of silence for the 7000 civilians killed in Syria.

Ok now let's talk about the sex life of collegiate women and what it means in American peasant politics. And while we're at it, let's talk about how one man's insult means everything and how his apology means nothing. But before that lets talk about how another man's untimely death provides an opportunity for his political enemies to Write his obituary and how .. Nah let's not. I believe that the portsiders are against the privatization of anything, including and especially sexual behavior.

If you have a civil libertarian bone in your body consider the following. I don't want sexual behavior made public and I am against any agenda that seeks to politicize sexual behavior. I don't think you'll find that there are any sex crimes whatsoever that the American Right defends. So why is there a political agenda to saturate the public sphere with the sexual details of certain Americans? If I had read what the media has published about the woman who is now famous for being insulted by Rush Limbaugh, chances are that I would know more about her sexual history than I do about my own mother's. It's not because my own mother doesn't have a sexual history, it's because it's none of my business, none of your business and none of America's business. Whomever she is, she shouldn't have to opt out of having her personal information shared. I don't want my personal information shared. I don't want you to ask and I don't want to tell. But there is a political agenda out there that says we must ask and we must tell, and they're willing to change the law in order to do so. They have.

All they want to do is talk about sex. And they won't shut up. It has gone too far.

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February 14, 2012

## Brooks Nails It

Charles Murray? Is that what you've been talking about? Sheesh. Brooks has got the right perspective.

Liberal economists haven't silenced conservatives, but they have completely eclipsed liberal sociologists and liberal psychologists. Even noneconomist commentators reduce the rich texture of how disadvantage is actually lived to a crude materialism that has little to do with reality.

I don't care how many factory jobs have been lost, it still doesn't make sense to drop out of high school. The influences that lead so many to do so are much deeper and more complicated than anything that can be grasped in an economic model or populist slogan.

This economic determinism would be bad enough if it was just making public debate dumber. But the amputation of sociologic, psychological and cognitive considerations makes good policy impossible.

The American social fabric is now so depleted that even if manufacturing jobs miraculously came back we still would not be producing enough stable, skilled workers to fill them. It's not enough just to have economic growth policies. The country also needs to rebuild orderly communities.

This requires bourgeois paternalism: Building organizations and structures that induce people to behave responsibly rather than irresponsibly and, yes, sometimes using government to do so.

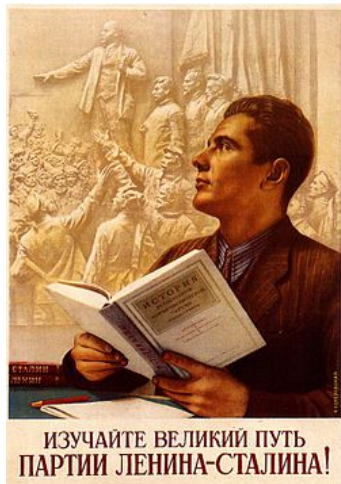
Social repair requires sociological thinking. The depressing lesson of the last few weeks is that the public debate is dominated by people who stopped thinking in 1975.

Makes me very glad I'm raising my kids the way I have, in \*this\* community, where there is society. It's not just family values, but it's society - which is why I don't pay much attention to politics any longer.

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January 31, 2012

## Why Are You Afraid of Socialism?



The difference between socialism and communism is not important. What is important is whether or not the ruling elite believe in the masses or not.

I am reading the book that I never learned in school which is Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*. Published in 1990, Conquest took materials previously unavailable for his original written in 1968 with a view to the provisional title 'I Told You So You Fucking Fools'. Conquest was Solzhenitsyn before Solzhenitzen. Not prophetic, merely accurate in such a way as to be practically immune to wishful thinking.

What emerges is a picture of a society at war with itself, which is always the case of revolution. But what I am taking away from this read is not something merely awful because of the ways and means through which Stalin himself destroyed the nation and the people, but based on the inevitable injustice of the precepts of the revolution itself. This was new, a surprising revelation to me.

You see the vanguard, be they Menshevik or Bolshevik were ultimately the leaders and definers of the revolution. As it happened, the Bolsheviks 'won'. And so great was their need, it was a revolution after all, to destroy the basis of power of the enemies, that they were willing to jail and kill their countrymen along the lines defined by the revolutionary vanguard. Ultimately, and principally, all was done for the liberation of the peasant from their capitalist overlords. And so (being very terse here with history) it was inevitable that 'land reform' was part of the process. Collectivization: take from the rich and give to the poor, all in the name of 'the people'. But which people? Which indeed would, by revolutionary definition, become right and proper leaders of the new ruling class, ie those in charge of collectivization? It had to be organized. It had to be scientific. It had to be orderly and disciplined in order to fulfill the goals of the revolution - otherwise there would be no need for collective power or its exercise. If you left it to \*all\* of the people, they would become capitalists again. No. There was a need for organized force to insure the proper level of equality.

The problem was that there were different classes of peasants over which to rule. In particular there was the matter of the Kulaks. These were those peasants of the most capable strain - those who had managed to save money and manage what little business they had, oppressed as they were by the landed gentry. And so with the coming of the revolution in 1917, the Kulak welcomed the Bolsheviks as they delivered crushing blows to the landowners. But the Kulaks were not given requisite power in the vanguard who ordered them around more arbitrarily than those bourgeois nationalists they replaced. And where did the farm products of the Kulaks and the peasants go? Well to feed the revolutionary army, and the political vanguard of course. Within one year it became civil war, and the Kulaks thus became the enemy of the people.

Peasants were starved to feed the revolutionary army on behalf of the peasants and the vanguard could not afford to let the revolution die - after all this was not merely a solution for Russia, but for the whole of mankind. It became clear to the leaders of this revolution that Kulaks and those politically like them would have to be suppressed until the proper new peasant could take his place. Meanwhile the vanguard would suppress the opposition. The Bolshevik party line became all the truth the system could sustain, given the peasants willingness to make war against it. It was this fundamental inversion of democracy that foreclosed any possibility of the Soviet system to produce anything even vaguely resembling justice. The ensuing cruelty, show trials, purges and pogroms were but external and inevitable expressions of the fundamental cancer within.

What is further shocking about Stalin's rule was the extent to which the Party destroyed its own fathers. Conquest details the arrest, detention, torture, confession, trial and execution of Bolshevik after Bolshevik by the Bolsheviks and their replacement, bureau after bureau, region after region.

Imagine, if you could, the idea that Americans for Obama would have all the Clinton Administration shot, starting with Rahm Emmanuel and anyone who supported him. This is how it went in 1930 Russia. Old heads of the 1917 revolution were being put to death in 1937, no matter how high they had been. The only survivors would be the blindly obedient, and the executors.

--

What is there to fear from socialism? The answers are easy to determine. You merely need to discover who is arrogating it upon themselves to call the status quo unfair and how far they would go to revolutionize. The status quo is always defined by the people who are making the decisions that the people live with. In a free market, that's everyone who participates in it. To shunt aside the market for political reasons is to find fault with the people who sustain it, who must inevitably be suppressed. Those who would take power on behalf of 'the people' will inevitably have to form a sustained, organized, scientific, disciplined new order. A new ruling class, with new powers... for the new people.

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January 10, 2012

**JS Mill: Liberty in Discovery**

Reading from the Catholic Education Center, a definition of liberalism &amp; progress:

It would be impossible to give a definition that captures (at a proper level of detail and complexity) all of the different aspects and phases of liberalism. Rather than define it, I will read a single passage from J.S. Mill's *On Liberty* (1859). If this text does not capture the soul of liberalism, then I suspect that nothing will. Mill wrote that:

There is always need of persons not only to discover new truths and point out when what were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices and set the example of more enlightened conduct and better taste and sense in human life. This cannot well be gainsaid by anybody who does not believe that the world has already attained perfection in all its ways and practices. It is true that this benefit is not capable of being rendered by everybody alike; there are but few persons, in comparison with the whole of mankind, whose experiments, if adopted by others, would be likely to be any improvement on established practice. But these few are the salt of the earth; without them, human life would become a stagnant pool. Not only is it they who introduce good things which did not before exist; it is they who keep the life in those which already exist....There is only too great a tendency in the best beliefs and practices to degenerate into the mechanical; and unless there were a succession of persons whose ever-recurring originality prevents the grounds of those beliefs and practices from becoming merely traditional...there would be no reason why civilization should not die out...[6]

This is something I understood a while back, but I never used the word 'progress'. The way in which I oppose Progressivism has nothing to do with questioning Mills premise here, but exactly to the extent which Progressives assume that the pace of government is adequate to the task - which is in my view oxymoronic. Government policy assumes, by definition, ossification of best practices into law, which we all know cannot be practically undone at any rate sufficient for the process of discovery to be sustained. Rather it makes for a sinecure for those corporate entities who, through their marketing, infantilize the population.

Discovery is what the common man needs to exercise within the milieu of his class. His own experience is the best teacher as he discovers not only the enlightened selections of his superiors, but the alternatives to those which make his advancement a choice as opposed to a prescription.

Notice additionally the way in which Mill shows his appreciation for the good things in life which already exist. This must be the place for conservation of classics, best done by those swift enough not to be overly impressed with novelty and change for its own sake.

This is all in the context of writing skeptically of Dawson's rejection of technology, or more specifically technocracy. There too I am in agreement. But what I think neither Mill nor Dawson appreciated is the extent to which the democratization and decentralization of technology enables individual agency. That must be the gating criterion. And I then cede the conversation in principle to [Richard Stallman's Four Freedoms](#).

I think it is possible to generalize what Stallman is saying to all of the sorts of technology that Dawson might oppose, and that should be the test. That being the case, there is always the probability of discovery long after the inventors have died - so long as the spirit of invention and discovery is maintained.

So today I just discovered and converged some very important concepts. It has made me an even greater proponent of Open Source, not only in software but in the context of the Force of Education.

January 10, 2012 in [Conservatism](#), [Critical Theory](#), [Matters of the Spirit](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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November 23, 2011

**The Soviet Middle Class**

There's a great passage in Niall Ferguson's latest book *Civilization: The West and the Rest* that's an excellent jumping off point for discussions about income inequality and the prospects for capitalism. I also see this in terms of my Peasant Theory, so this is an interesting and important area of my concern. My emphasis is bold.

If the Cold War had ever become hot, the Soviet Union would very likely have won it. With a political system far better able to absorb heavy war losses (the Second World War death rate as a percentage of the pre-war population had been fifty times higher than that for the United States), the Soviet Union also had an economic system that was ideally suited to the mass production of sophisticated weaponry. Indeed, by 1974 the Soviets had a substantially larger arsenal of strategic bombers and ballistic missiles. Scientifically, they lagged only a little way behind. They were also armed with an ideology that was a great deal more appealing than the American alternative in post-colonial societies all over what became known as the Third World, where poor peasantries contemplated a life of drudgery under the heel of corrupt elites who owned all the land and controlled the armed forces.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, it could be argued that the Soviets actually won 'the Third World's War'. **Where there was a meaningful class war, communism could prevail.**<sup>83</sup>

Yet the Cold War turned out to be about butter more than guns, ballgames more than bombs. Societies living in perpetual fear of Armageddon nevertheless had to get on with civilian life, since even the large armies of the 1950s and 1960s were still much smaller than the armies of the 1940s. From a peak of 8.6 per cent of the population in 1945, the US armed forces were down below 1 per cent by 1948 and never rose above 2.2 per cent thereafter, even at the height of the American interventions in Korea and Vietnam. The USSR remained more militarized, but the military share of the population nevertheless declined from a post-war peak of 7.4 per cent in 1945 and remained consistently below 2 per cent after 1957.<sup>84</sup> The problem for the Soviet Union was simple: the United States offered a far more attractive version of civilian life than the Soviets could. And this was not just because of an inherent advantage in terms of resource endowment. **It was because centralized economic planning, though indispensable to success in the nuclear arms race, was wholly unsuited to the satisfaction of consumer wants.** The planner is best able to devise and deliver the ultimate weapon to a single client, the state. But the planner can never hope to meet the desires of millions of individual consumers, whose tastes are in any case in a state of constant flux. This was one of the many insights of Keynes's arch-rival, the Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek, whose *Road to Serfdom* (1945) had warned Western Europe to resist the chimera of peacetime planning. It was in meeting (and creating) consumer demands that the American market model, revitalized during the war by the biggest fiscal and monetary stimulus of all time, and sheltered by geography from the depredations of total war, proved to be unbeatable.

Ferguson, Niall (2011-11-01). *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (Kindle Locations 4245-4266). Penguin Group. Kindle Edition.

It really boils down to this. Income inequality is the consequence of the ability of individuals and their companies to get a better handle on what the consumer wants in a consumer economy. If you don't have a consumer economy, then the needs of human beings are very basic and entirely capable of being sustained by a central planning government bureaucracy. This is how people survive in the Third World without consumer market economies. Human beings can and do adapt to living in relative poverty.

So I want to draw attention to the income inequality between the American middle class and the Soviet middle class. The parents of the Baby Boomers was the first generation of Americans to have access to consumer credit. I grew up in Los Angeles with no credit. My back to school clothes were bought on layaway at Orbachs on Wilshire Boulevard, and even that was a big deal. (Signal Wealth). Is the cost of this banking crisis in America is to take consumer credit back to that era? Could we survive without consumer credit? Of course we could, and the economy would shrink, but personal savings would increase. And it is precisely that formula of reduced spending in the household that people rail against when it is the rich household that is doing so. I believe that a good percentage of American employment is foo foo employment, which is to say 'nice to have' from the perspective of corporate employers who seem to be arbitrarily laying off. That is not to say that many corporations are not well managed and simply callous in their cost-cutting of rank and file employees rather than trimming management. But to say that there are new classes of consumer goods and employment deriving from that which can be considered expendable.

It seems to me that from the Occupy POV, which I interpret as socialist and anti-corporate (but also useful from some perspectives), the waste, fraud and abuse of capitalism comes from its ability to make extraordinarily wealthy people who have orders of magnitude more wealth than the rest of us. To the extent that they are not specific, the enemy is wealth itself. In other words they want class warfare. If they are to be specific, then they have to say what sort of wealth is bad. To attack the idea of the corporation itself is to attack equally the makers of baby food and the makers of chemical weapons. Dow Chemical is a corporation and so are the makers of Gerber, Nestle. Nestle is 5x larger than Dow, and why shouldn't they be? I am not able to differentiate Occupy's definition of good wealth vs bad, but if they have one principle with which I agree it is that there should be no public bailouts of private failure. This is an endorsement of private enterprise without industrial (central planning) policy. But the extent to which they may desire advanced and burdensome regulation could amount to the same

thing. In any case, without being specific about which corporations are good and which are bad, their focus on banking may end up simply rolling back consumer credit. That doubles down the bet against the consumer economy.

I have always looked at the number of choices in the supermarket as an indicator of the health of the economy. I'm not alone in wondering what's wrong when I don't see fresh produce of the sort I want in that aisle. The connection to signal wealth consumer items, as foo foo as they may be is what gives the American (peasant) consumer his status and what makes his providers rich. Entertainment money is but a fraction of the American consumer's budget, but the connection is much clearer. U2 is rich because their audience pays them. Tom Cruise is rich because his audience pays him. The same is true for McDonalds, Nestle, Dow, Xerox, Ford, etc etc. Americans would not stand for their choices as consumers to be reduced to 'plain wrap' or GI supplies. That reeks of the Soviet system. But inevitably our extra wealth (a lot of which is foo foo signal wealth) comes exactly from that choice being made available in the market and all of the 'extra' business created by fashion. If there were only one style of sunglasses for the masses, then Ralph Lauren and Oakley would be flat on their asses.

Do you want there to be people who can afford a BMW, or should every car be 'the peoples car'? I want the connection to be clear. The more the government regulates, the fewer legal choices exist. The fewer that exist, the more you constrain the economy and make it more centrally planned, the more you increase income equality, the more it works for the Soviets, the more you approach as our good friend CNU terms it, 'warsocialism'. When a job is just a job, then a military job is just like any other.

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September 08, 2011

## Milton Friedman



A reminder of where we've come from.

Interesting that he talks about conservative economist but not political Hayekian conservative, which he would be. Again note the difficulty with which the host grapples with the distinction between the aim of the people and the agency of government programs. Friedman doesn't do a good job pointing this out, jousting as he does which makes it appear that he is fatalist. It would be useful to determine exactly in which ways Friedman would direct government policy given what Bernanke had to face, or if he's just being facile in assigning blame to the government for the Great Depression.

The associated YouTubes are also very good. I will always remember his snappy comeback when asked if he ever was poor to which he replied 'If you had cancer, would you only accept treatment from a doctor who had cancer?'

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July 24, 2011

## Simplicity

Our message to the White House over the last several months has been clear: there will be no debt limit hike without restraints on future spending and cuts greater than any hike, and there can be no tax increases. A bill that doesn't meet these tests cannot pass the House. The president has never put forth a plan that can actually pass in Congress. Perhaps he will today.

-- John Boehner

July 24, 2011 in [Conservatism](#), [Domestic Affairs](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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July 15, 2011

## The Narrative of the Frankfurt School



## PJTV - Bill Whittle - The Narrative - Political Correctness



For those of you who don't know, this is the drug that Breitbart is high on.

And while I haven't gotten a chance to meet a lot of my philosophical compatriots face to face, I suspect that many of the more thoughtful ones might have a course or two at Claremont in common.

I've been waiting for Bill Whittle to get his proper funding so as to not be under the financial thumb of PJTV or whatever the reason was for this video to only recently become freely available. This is one of his more inspired 13 minutes - which covers a lot of ground. You're not likely, I think, to see anything this good on television of any sort. Yet.

Declaration Entertainment is the new home of Whittle and he's taking a slightly different tack from what I've seen. He's getting better. And again this particular message is the one that strikes home for former Progressives like me who were never quite comfortable with all of the Commies who show up for the MLK Day Parade.

Interestingly enough, the Frankfurt School was exactly where I was pointed when I wanted to understand and make more sense of everything I had been trying to learn outside of my profession. And 'Critical Theory' is a category in this blog because it was the black critical theorists that I began reading back in '90 when I decided that being part of the Talented Tenth wasn't quite enough for me. Since it is Julyteenth I should expand on that a bit.

I can recall the day when, unlike just about every summer weekend before, I began wanting to enjoy the company of books to the company of my black yuppie compadres. I was at a pool party and a day or two before, I started reading *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. It was the first book by a black author that truly captivated me with its content and style. So much of what I had read before was so shallow by comparison - here finally was the intellectual level of black literature I had been searching for. As I had previously read Gloria Naylor's "Women of Brewster Place" and some others I forgot - I had been so embarrassed. There seemed to be nothing to quench my thirst for art and literature above the level of BET, and I spent a lot of time and money looking for black highbrow culture. That Naylor had won a prize as one of the best American writers, I was more than disappointed. It was this kind of disappointment that was more indicative of my needs rather than Naylor's mediocrity. I began to head towards all things Asian, impressed as I was by the films of Kurosawa, the biography of Mishima, the philosophy of Sun Tzu, the manga of Otomo, the fiction of James Clavell and this chick named Maiko. At the same time, I was mightily impressed by both the Graywolf Annual on Multicultural Literacy and the original Cultural Literacy by E.D. Hirsch Jr.

I was ending my 20s and I wanted more. I figured I had done quite enough of the buppie thing and it wasn't very satisfying. I wanted more than ski trips and a BMW. Well, I wanted those too, but also more. I wanted my black culture to be the ultimate black culture. And when I finally read Toni Morrison, and I finally saw *The Colored Museum* by George C. Wolfe, I began to see where it was. In fact there was something in academia, and I was introduced to the formal Critical Theorists through my associations with UCLA's black professoriate. So I read, in those days before Skip Gates had compiled the selections for the Norton Anthology, those considered on the leading edge of black scholarship Kimberle Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, Derrick Bell, bell hooks, Stephen L. Carter and the lord and master of all, my new hero Cornel West. It was Cornel West who finally gave me the understanding, at a philosophical level, what my American intellectual inheritance was. Without any idea that there was any substance to Conservative thought in America or Europe at all, I came to know the American Pragmatists through his survey, 'The American Evasion of Philosophy'.

Amidst the brain rot of Afrocentrism and the 50 page books of rabid bloviators like Juwanza Kinjufu and Francis Cress Welsing I came to the Progressive edge seeking Praxis.

Praxis is a specific kind of obedience that organizes itself around a social theory of reality in order to implement in the society the freedom, inherent in faith. If faith is the belief that God created all for freedom, then praxis is the social theory used to analyze what must be done for the historical realization of freedom. To sing about freedom and to pray for its coming is not enough. Freedom must be actualized in history by oppressed peoples who accept the intellectual challenge to analyze the work for the purpose of changing it. -- James Cone, *Speaking the Truth*

That was something I could sink my teeth into because *Evasion* showed me without question that all the philosophical basis for 'freedom' and 'liberty' were the All-American ideas of Emerson, Dewey, DuBois, Mills and Neibuhr and further that there was nothing other than pedantic epistemological nonsense coming out of Europe. I was basically in thrall to this mindset until my son was born and I had to get real.

But there were cracks in the armor I could perceive before the beginning of the end. The post-modern deconstructionist babble was its own worst enemy. I understood Eco's semiotics well enough to tell that a lot of baffling bullshit was being sold. So when I finally got the recommendation to follow up on Adorno and company (not surprisingly from a friend at Columbia U.) I had just about had enough. Morrison had ironically showed me that good writing was better than coherent Left theory, so as she went off the deep end of suffering and started *Playing in the Dark*, I was ready to walk away from it all, which I finally did in about '96 in the midst of my Boohabian playground. The last blackified book I (sorta) read was 'Volunteer Slavery', which although it was about Corporate America, also pretty much summed up too much of black writing's intellectual direction. When I moved to the South and started reading 'Pushed Back To Strength', after about eight years of reading, I was pretty much done.

I settled on reading James Baldwin as the last of my black literature knowing it would return me to the subjects of love and integrity. At least those were the books I wanted to read of Baldwin's. And having done so, I abandoned all of that Progressive philosophy to make money and raise a family in Atlanta, the black mecca. But the last of my high energy New York intellectual pursuits led me to the source and all I could hear was that Marx didn't get everything right, but the only way to really understand capitalism is to master Marxist thought. Therefore, Frankfurt School. Which is kinda weird considering that I actually wanted to get an MBA from Columbia and become a quant programmer on Wall Street.

I was quite fortunate to have made my first six figure year in 1995 as an independent consultant. And that year I learned what it felt like to walk around a city in a suit because I wanted to, on a day I didn't have to work because I didn't feel like it. I was my own boss. The seeds were sown and the practicality of being that kind of breadwinner set me up for my conservative conversion several years hence. But I had stepped outside one main stream of *The Narrative* when I left New York.

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June 04, 2011

### Mamet's Conversion

[David Mamet speaks](#) for many.

I found not only that I didn't trust the current government (that, to me, was no surprise), but that an impartial review revealed that the faults of this president—whom I, a good liberal, considered a monster—were little different from those of a president whom I revered.

Bush got us into Iraq, JFK into Vietnam. Bush stole the election in Florida; Kennedy stole his in Chicago. Bush outed a CIA agent; Kennedy left hundreds of them to die in the surf at the Bay of Pigs. Bush lied about his military service; Kennedy accepted a Pulitzer Prize for a book written by Ted Sorenson. Bush was in bed with the Saudis, Kennedy with the Mafia. Oh.

And I began to question my hatred for "the Corporations"—the hatred of which, I found, was but the flip side of my hunger for those goods and services they provide and without which we could not live.

And I began to question my distrust of the "Bad, Bad Military" of my youth, which, I saw, was then and is now made up of those men and women who actually risk their lives to protect the rest of us from a very hostile world. Is the military always right? No. Neither is government, nor are the corporations—they are just different signposts for the particular amalgamation of our country into separate working groups, if you will. Are these groups infallible, free from the possibility of mismanagement, corruption, or crime? No, and neither are you or I. So, taking the tragic view, the question was not "Is everything perfect?" but "How could it be better, at what cost, and according to whose definition?" Put into which form, things appeared to me to be unfolding pretty well.



Apparently, his new book is out. [American Thinker has a review.](#)

I very much like the fact that Mamet sees the difference between conservatism and liberalism as the worldview of the tragic vs the perfectionist. A very good question at the beginning of WWID (which I will explain later in Lorite terms) would be, Do you think people are basically good? A conservative would not say that they are basically evil, nor that they are basically good, but that events and circumstances can conspire to bring out the vile beast in men and that none are exempt.

This book: *The Secret Knowledge: On the Dismantling of American Culture*. Is what Breitbart and I discussed several weeks ago at USC's book fair. Now it will be free in the wild. Will it strike at the heart of Hollywood and Madison Avenue? One hopes.

I find it interesting that Mamet has found the same intellectual signposts at roughly the same time as I did. Although I was a light neocon in the early 80s having discovered Sowell, I didn't quite understand all of the implications of proper conservatism.

At any rate, I think this graf best describes...

The book chronicles Mamet's transformation from liberal to conservative, but it also reflects the transformation of liberalism itself, as liberals became "progressives" and shifted ever further to the left, with their "shared truths" increasingly hard to credit in light of lived experience. Many people became conservatives simply by standing still -- as liberalism moved away. And it was liberals, in the form of neo-cons, who reinvigorated conservatism and

transformed it from what it used to be.

Right.

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May 18, 2011

## Of Tea Parties and Runaway Slaves

One of the toughest things about being particularly literate and attempting always to be well read upon the subtleties of the day is that one often finds oneself in the company of those who are not. I am reminded at this particular moment of my first visit to Fenway Park. Not being a huge baseball fan, I wasn't particularly interested in buying expensive tickets, and so I found myself in the bleachers. If you've ever been in the bleachers at a Red Sox game, you must know what it's like to be surrounded by loud, rowdy fanatics on the very borderline of public drunkenness. Not my crowd. But it was still a good game and I rooted for the home team.

It's often like that when I present myself as a Republican or as a conservative. I'm not so fanatical about it that I buy the expensive placements, but it doesn't mean that I particularly enjoy being associated with the rowdies. I'm a conservative and a Republican because my experience and thinking dictate that I should be. I didn't do it for the company.

So this puts me in the odd position of, well, being a bloody individual who chooses what he chooses as an expression of will, not as some existential crutch. I do so with the express understanding that some conservatives have unfairly earned all conservatives the reputation of not having such a vocabulary as 'existential crutch'. Then again, there's a certain kind of projection going on in the minds of the opposition.

It is with this sort of situation in mind that I deal with the loaded brickbat terms 'Tea Party' and 'Runaway Slave'. You see, this week I intend on attending an event with 'Runaway Slave' in the title. A certain minister [C.L. Bryant](#) is making a film about black American conservatives, and I'm very curious to check it out. Having been apprised of the situation, I'm going. It turns out that Breitbart is involved, as is Jesse Lee Peterson, two lightning rods.

I've encountered Peterson only briefly, and about 20 years ago through his association with [BOND](#). It was at a Black Family Reunion in Exposition Park back in the days when that was going strong in Los Angeles. BOND reminded me of a gang for squares, a kind of bush league Alpha Phi Alpha for the kids who never made it to college. Snob that I am, and liberal that I was, it was easy for me to look down my nose at the whole program. But I did respect the young man I did meet, took his business card and smiled at the thought that there were still some people around who believed in the propriety of marriage, wearing a shirt and tie, and minding one's English. One is hard pressed at times to deal with the reality of hard knock cases trying their damndest to become and remain respectable in a slavishly cynical society as ours can be. Such young men are so vulnerable. You never want to see their modest dreams upset, and wonder if they are properly self-possessed rather than merely enchanted by such a fearless leader as Minister Peterson.

Without going back into the sort of scathing exhortation I might have served up to Peterson in my early days of 'black' conservatism, I know that he is not the sort who inspire the loyalty of bloody sophisticates such as myself. So I'll not belabor the analogy to Fenway Park. But we are on the same side, and we root for the same team. Or perhaps I should say we are in the same American League. But, truth be told, I'm more of a Yankee fan.

The same kind of disdainful fellowship I share with those addicted to analogies to slavery when speaking of the fate of contemporary black Americans. Powerful, tired, over-freighted metaphors keep peppering the dialog - enough to make me sneeze. How many times have I heard 'off the plantation' or 'house vs field' or 'Uncle Tom'? But there it is. And so it is with 'Tea Party' and other symbols of liberty and freedom that are abstracted into abuse by every partisan who joins the fracas.

There's no way around the history. You can't avoid the terms, but I hope that Bryant and his collaborators can move beyond them quickly and smartly towards issues of import. Yet and still I know that it is impossible to corral all of the African American interest in the broad Right. So I'll be checking out the general progress of black conservative politics as it becomes manifest in its various ways, especially in Los Angeles.

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May 10, 2011

## The Difference Between Liberals and Conservatives

1. Protection

Liberals use the power of the state to protect against the dysfunctions of the family and community.

Conservatives use the power of the family and community to defend against the dysfunctions of the state.

## 2. Trust

Liberals tend to trust everybody in general, but nobody in particular.

Conservatives tend to distrust everybody in general, but trust particular individuals.

## 3. Authority

Liberals tend to want powerful entities to never meddle while reserving a superpower to crush powerful entities that do.

Conservatives want to let powerful entities meddle as they please so long as none of them becomes a superpower.

## 4. Conformity

Liberals tend to want radicalization when under threat. Let the most energetic wing win.

Conservatives tend to want conformity when under threat. Hunker down and ride out the storm.

## 5. History

Liberals expect to institutionalize the lessons of history and spread the benefits to as many as possible. They call for global education.

Conservatives distrust the overproductions of institutions. When liberals say 'education' conservatives hear 're-education'.

## 6. Progress

Liberals believe the purpose of civilization is to discover more and more value in human diversity and to defend and expand protections and rights for all.

Conservatives believe that people never change and rights are specific contracts between specific people and that the purpose of civilization is to maintain that minimal, well-defined set.

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May 01, 2011

## Breitbart

I know, I know. I'm supposed to be doing other things but today was the Festival of Books and I got the opportunity so I took it. I hung out with Andrew Breitbart today. This man is very interesting.

The first thing you notice about Breitbart is that he's a lot more energetic and natural in person than he's appeared to be in videos I recall of him. When he busted ACORN, I seem to recall him as smarter than the average bear and a lot more disciplined and articulate than the wildman he appears to be today. But I think he's just getting his groove. He's riding a large beast and has drawn a sword across the noses of some fierce enemies. But Breitbart has something very powerful going for him. He's genuine, and he's motivated to unite people.

What's more, in some important ways, we two think alike. We think alike about Hollywood. He sees the big cultural picture. It turns out that my day today was connected to David Mamet two ways. You see, I went to the FOB to see Breitbart and Ricky Jay. As Andrew and I were walking, he mentioned to me that there's a book coming out by David Mamet that's going to turn the country, or at least the chatting classes of it, on its ear. But wouldn't you know that Ricky Jay was a consultant via Deceptive Practices to David Mamet in a number of films I always loved but didn't know Mamet was involved in, including Ronin, House of Games and The Spanish Prisoner. Triple wow. What Breitbart and I see about Hollywood is that it makes you love the bad guy and turns Americans against each other, and that finally all of the wickedness in the entertainment industry is just become that banal evil. It's boring, that decades long rehash of acceptable rebellion.

Like me, Breitbart is a recycled liberal who thought his way out of the paper bag. He grew up in Santa Monica, and now finally looks the part - rather like we all want to look, perfectly comfortable with ourselves and other people on a sunny day in Southern Cal.

Breitbart is smart in the way that people who have a million connections to other people are smart. He's heads-up smart. I didn't see it today, but I can tell he can get things done through other people and that is because even though he is clearly a lightning rod, he's the first to connect dots and see what it is that other people do well. In the half hour we spent together, I had to make him talk about himself. I watched him get off the ETC stage where he had been rescheduled and hang out with friendly folks while other folks had stalking debates with him about controversies. On stage, he was polemical in the way you are for the media, offstage he was, quite literally, a man of the people. Kaus was in the audience. He noticed.

Breitbart's strategy is to disintermediate what he calls the Hollywood Democrat Media Complex or something like that. The Yang to Hillary Clinton's VRWC. But he's not so shrill about it and understands what he's up against. He's up against money and the inability for journalists to talk out of school. So he's going to use judo against them. He'll be nimble and he'll be quick and watch big media trip on it's own, eh petard. It worked for the ACORN videos, what else can it work for? Hard to say, but he's got common sense on his side. I think he could be too clever by half - I see he's in the middle of the whirlwind right now, but he doesn't show any signs of fatigue. I think it's because, even though he drinks from the media firehose, he's got a very good sense of when people are trying to snow him. I watched people walk by and call him a racist, I could see the smug contempt on their faces. I could anticipate them jumping to their conclusions. Breitbart doesn't try to be wonky and out-wonk them, and that's why he survives.

His dust jacket speaks of Commonsense Conservatism. He told me that he didn't set out to support the Tea Party, but that after 30 times seeing them all over the country he realized that they were people he couldn't deny any longer. He had come to know too many of them to let the lies go unanswered, and I think that's where he is at his center. He just hates the arrogance of the lies and he wants to bust the liars. He's got a big streak of honesty in him, and I think he genuinely loves people.

Breitbart walks around in big man's shoes. Almost anonymous in the crowd but the guys at McSweeney's know him. One of the booth dudes gives him a book for free so an author could sign it. It's some kind of in-joke I don't quite get, but Breitbart handles it smoothly. He reminds me of Dennis Miller when Miller knows some fan is buttering him up for the big snarky remark. He's got the sense of when people are being real or fake. He doesn't hate the fakes, but you can tell he's out to expose them. We went over to the RAND tent. He knew somebody in that organization and left his regards. He can distinguish the distractions from the serious stuff and didn't give Birther Madness much of his attention. He's working on bigger plans.

It took me a while to determine if and how I should approach him, and I'm glad I did. He doesn't strike me as a wonky guy, and my interest is much more political philosophy than media presence. But media presence is a critical part of the game - and the game is melioration of moral, honest ideas - something for which this is a false oligopoly in the Media Empire. Breitbart naturally understands it, and now he is a double agent. That's dangerous, of course, but he seems relentless and up to it. For now. He's going to be, through his websites, a force to reckon with.

Famously is an interesting beast. You cannot undo it. So Breitbart has to parlay his name into something that channels the common sense energy he sees in the Right into something that conveys the ability to see through the information conspiracy. I remember when I moved to NYC and tried to find more intellectual writing and all I heard was about The Nation. I had



nowhere to go and it took me 8 years to find it on my own. I too am sick of the Frankfurt School and am not a joiner. Breitbart is aiming to defeat the naysayers and put the Democrat Media Conspiracy on its heels and beat back the Marxist social experiment.

I'm on his side.

May 01, 2011 in [Conservatism](#), [Local Deeds](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

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April 15, 2011

## A Conservative View of the Shaquanda Cotton Story

From the archives. April 2007



One of the best discussions of a controversy at Cobb:

| [Shaquanda Cotton & You](#)

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April 03, 2011

## We Are Powerless Because We Are Landless

A Letter from Robert T. Bowen

Black World/ Negro Digest, August 1970

Dear Black Americans: . . . And now the tumultuous 60's are gone. All over this country and all over the world men are taking a look at what happened and what it means. Perhaps more than anything else the recurrent conclusion is one of intense and unprecedented human change. We have seen men do things which even in the occasional wildness of our dreams we did not see them do. New blood spilled, new tears cried. Change and struggle. Oppression and abuse. The order of the day, the law of too many places.

It is no coincidence that much attention during the 60's was on Black people in America. The high- pitched demand for freedom and justice was heard everyday and in countless forms.

And right now the decade which we have just entered is faced with the monumental task of resolving the imbalances which for too long had been a way of life for Blacks. What of it, one might say. The problem has always been here and there is little reason to think that drastic changes are just around the social-political corner. Perhaps so; but there is no precedent in human behavior which restricts man's thinking to *problems*. Progress and movement and development are each tied directly to *solutions*. If our concern, then, is legitimate and if we are truly worthy of the designation, Black men, our attention must shift to solutions. If human imagination was sacrificed during the 60's to poverty, employment, housing, education, etc., then the commitment of the 70's must be the reawakening of that same imagination. This we have to do, but not for the sake of proving that we are as good as somebody else or that we have not been totally defeated by all that has been heaped upon Blacks in America. At this point in history we really don't have to prove anything to anybody . . . except ourselves.

Now . . . what about ourselves? What are we supposed to do? Are we foolish enough to review the 60's and become so dismayed by our *actual* immobility that we idly follow the same useless pattern of getting nowhere with rapidity? Are we still going to demand better street lighting, faster rubbish collection, black Santa Clauses, and a host of other mundanities? Is this what the struggle has come to mean after all this time? Hopefully, we are able to respond in the negative.

Amidst all the rhetoric of the past 10 years we have heard talk of "self-determination." Basically this involves the "freedom" of a people to decide how they want to order their lives. This never was (nor is it presently) the choice open to Black people. For years most of us have missed this absolutely critical point. What we have been haplessly doing is *responding* to the dictates of others. Even integration is a response on our part! Responses to others is not self-determination.

The heart of the entire matter is our "position" of powerlessness. There is no haste on my part here to proudly allude to the phrase "Black Power." We saw the term move from a verbal dynamic to something short of a uniquely American joke; moreover, the fact of numbers (from 22 to 40 million Blacks) has certainly not been our salvation; and by now even the most outspoken elements of our people are fatigued with the diluted mystique of "soul."

I am not attempting here to negate each and every part of the putative Black Experience. I am suggesting, rather, that our historical trek has been unbelievably bogged down because of our reluctance or unwillingness to concern ourselves with the real bases for human freedom. It all comes down -or moves up- to one critical concern: LAND. It would not be an oversimplification of our plight to say that *we are powerless because we are landless*. A people not in control of the land they inhabit is a people at the mercy of others. Generally speaking, this in and of itself may not be so very bad. In the particular case of Blacks in America the matter has revealed itself to be both critical and dangerous. Black children in the rural South, for example, are not malnourished because white people are inherently evil. No, Black children "function" with little or no nourishment because Black adults don't grow the food. And unemployment figures are so high amongst us not because American industry and organized labor are infested with racism, but because we are not in control of the factories. We have always been at the mercy of those whose concern for our well-being could be questioned. And almost every significant statement we (individually or collectively) have ever made has been addressed to that same atmosphere of indifference.

In America we have become a clear and present social problem, and social problems are *never* solved. Furthermore, this country in reality has no obligation whatsoever to "resolve us," the key social problem. If our condition exists to prove that the American Constitution is a lie, then America can live with the lie with minimal difficulty. But the question is can we live with it? Are we willing to hang around and shout or write inanities simply for the purpose of demonstrating that what is proclaimed is not real? Our children would never forgive us and there is no cause for them to do so. For much too long we have declared our responsibility to "the country" without giving even a fleeting thought to our responsibility to ourselves. We should have done this willingly and consistently. It would have been obvious and common human sense. Has the American tragedy made us lose even that? Contrary to what is usually said there are not *many* ways of looking at our perpetual slippage. We have just exited the Era of Errors during which there were both blatant and subtle manifestations of folly. That we are still faced with the same issues clearly proves that all measures taken were stop-gap measures or less. We cannot allow this to happen again. If history must repeat itself, so be it; but let that repetition not be at our expense. *We must have land*. We must dedicate ourselves to building.

I have purposely avoided use of such terms as "states," "nation," "separation," "exodus," etc. Because of the great clouds of programmed confusion regarding words, most of us are immediately inclined to respond in the negative to these words. That's the way we have been trained, and up to now our behavior has been rather consistent with our training. In addition, I have not pointed to the experiences of other peoples who have taken control of their own destinies and have subsequently moved from the position of pawns to the status allorded to men. Again, we are inclined to say why *their* experience is so terribly different from *our own* here in America. And finally, I have not requested a written response or commitment from you (although I would be pleased to hear your ideas).

All that I do ask is that you psychologically remove yourself from the futile morass of American "race relations" long enough to consider the fact of land ownership and control by Black people. (The Kennedys, the Rockefellers, the Longs, "Indians" and hundreds of midwestern farmers understand exactly what this means. There is no reason whatsoever why we shouldn't as well.) Despite all the guilt-ridden optimism now in evidence, the 70's don't have to be years of promise. And in spite of the "great black hope" which from time to time swells our own hearts, we don't *have* to be free simply because America is attempting to search her troubled soul. Our victory-however we come to seriously define it-will come only because we have made the dedication to do what has to be done. Not in the tired terms of conferences and seminars and ever-growing organizations. Not by the questioned virtue of new legislation or expanded poverty programs or retraining projects.

We will truly know manhood and live as men are destined to live when the land on which we walk and watch our children grow is the land to which we can point and with deserved pride say, "This is ours." - Robert T. Bowen

Robert T. Bowen is founder of the Institute for Black Studies in Los Angeles, Calif.

April 03, 2011 in [Cobb's Diary, Conservatism, Peasant Theory](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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April 01, 2011

## Harold Cruse: The Last Organic

Harold Cruse was one of those rare scholars who wrote so much about things nobody ever talks about that you have to stop every 20 pages or so just to absorb it. It has been quite a while since I read 'The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual' and 'Plural But Equal' so it's difficult for me to disaggregate his lessons from my thinking. Very little of it seems to have distinguished itself in my memory as distinctly belonging to Cruse. But there are some distinct ideas.

Cruse was one of those who asserted that the Brown case was improperly decided. Separate and unequal was certainly a problem, but the problem was not with separate, but with unequal. Cruse argues that the law should have been used to force the equal funding of public schools in black communities, instead what arose in the ethos of integration was a double strike against blacks. Firstly, the very assertion by Brown that black and white kids be integrated degraded the quality of all public schools by generating white flight. Anywhere there were significant numbers of blacks, many whites left the public school system and created new private schools. It has been noted that many private schools around the South were founded in 1954. This not only hurt blacks but damaged the public support for public schools.

Secondly and somewhat more on point with how many black nationalists feel, the thrust of integration undermined black independence. The famous proximity premise, has by all measures pretty much been discredited. Black students don't become better people simply by sitting in the same schools as white students. The 'goodness' of whites doesn't 'rub off'. There are plenty ways to argue around the matter of the proximity premise, but I essentially don't buy it either. Some of the weakest ideas which have become ossified into the conventional thinking are the root of the fallacies surrounding the Diversity industry.

As many of you might guess, I could bust a gut talking about black political dependence on white liberal spew a la Howard Dean. There is a low intensity war between Integrationists and Aggregationists. (Separatists don't stand a chance.) Perhaps Cruse's passing will re-ignite a debate on the merits. As an Old Schooler, I might seem conflicted, but if you understand that I am an elitist than you'll see how I'm for Aggregation for me and those like me, and Integration for the rest of you who can't afford to do any better. I still say bomb the ghetto.

Many folks are acknowledging Cruse's way of seeing integration. The NAACP famously started questioning the wisdom of Brown along Cruse's line of thinking. What's odd about that is that they seem ill-prepared to do anything about it but give blackfolks a reason to complain. The NAACP is not organized to assist in aggregation, but perhaps they only see their job as 'raising the issue', which is fair. I'm not so sure anyone expects anything more. The question of aggregation is open, and I've seen some efforts going on here in Los Angeles, with regard to the charter school movement. These are mostly done in partnership with other non-whites with conservative lip service support.

Charter schools are all experiments as far as I can see and I'm all for school reform (primarily skills-based promotion starting at middle school). Cruse also speaks of the Blair Bill which, had it been implemented when the idea first arose, the progress of African America would have had a 100 year headstart. I agree with Cruse with respect to colorblindness. In fact I have spent many years arguing in public debates that colorblindness is the moral equivalent of racism in this country. It was most likely Cruse that got me started on this angle.

It's difficult for me to tell how and where Cruse might be influential, because quite frankly, black public intellectuals are not so ready to engage the public outside of the academy, or specifically here on the web. This is an old complaint of mine and I've worn a groove in my mind repeating it, even though it's not as true as I'd like it to be. But I think I've internalized enough of his ideas about pluralism and equality to be an adequate representative outside of the professoriate. I trust my man Spence's judgement that I have been

properly informed. If I had the time, I'd certainly reread him, and I'll probably do some skimming this weekend. I'm also going to take the opportunity to see where his name pops up in the 'sphere. Watch this spot for updates.

I think that the most important thing to understand about Cruse is that he regrets the amount of dependence blacks have assumed on the general fairness of society based upon the political alliances between the Negro leadership and white liberal race politics. It has resulted in laws and ideas that have suppressed the vigor of black independence. I agree with him there. Clearly I am interpreting him through an appreciative and conservative lens but I think when we get to the heart of arguments like matters of pluralism vs assimilation or what is meant when people talk about 'equality', Cruse's thought on the matter will be salient. Cruse is exceptional because he writes books that don't read like academic treatises, but deliver scholarship nonetheless. He's a comfort-busting individual thinker worthy of emulation and much respect. Ahh, I guess I can't just put him into the past tense so easily can I. None of us should.

via [cobb.typepad.com](http://cobb.typepad.com)

April 01, 2011 in [Conservatism](#), [Critical Theory](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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## Inverted Totalitarianism

A great phrase. Without looking at the definition Chauncy deVega uses to lament the devolution of the American body-politic into what he sees as Red State retardation, I have a very opposite (I think) view. Consider [his assertion](#) follows the setup:

Liberalism, which is stronger in richer, better-educated, more-diverse, and, especially, more prosperous places, is shrinking across the board and has fallen behind conservatism even in its biggest strongholds. This obviously poses big challenges for liberals, the Obama administration, and the Democratic Party moving forward.

But the much bigger, long-term danger is economic rather than political. This ideological state of affairs advantages the policy preferences of poorer, less innovative states over wealthier, more innovative, and productive ones. American politics is increasingly disconnected from its economic engine. And this deepening political divide has become perhaps the biggest bottleneck on the road to long-run prosperity.

This is the formula for a reactionary politics that does not serve the collective good. Here, the tail wags the dog and the most frightened, least resourced, and most backward voices rise out of the polity. Elites who have long been disconnected from the masses manipulate this anxiety into a politics that serves to gut the social safety net and chase down the chosen bugaboos of the Right--the "evil" unions, "liberals," "intellectuals," teachers, Muslims, immigrants, racial minorities, gays and lesbians, "overpaid" public employees, and/or anyone who is not a "real American."

I have come to regard the red state of mind according to its strengths which is precisely counter to totalitarianism. But I need you to start thinking about cheap trash properties out in the middle of nowhere and the habits people would need. Start with my John Boyd quote, that in order to be free you must either be rich or reduce your needs to zero. It never occurs to people dedicated to the collective good as deVega that one can be prosperous by reducing their needs to zero.

In the red state of mind, you \*should\* be disconnected from the masses. That's the only way you guarantee that you are not a party in their exploitation. You get out into the woods and you don't turn on the radio, so you don't miss public radio. Instead, you're growing your own vegetables, hunting your own meat, fishing for your own fish, tending your own herbs and spices. Mending your own wool sock rather than buying them from China inverts totalitarianism, global dependency, national dependency, community dependency. It makes one independent. It makes one king of his own castle, lord of his own land, master of all he surveys.

Poorer, less educated, less diverse all seem to be horrible deviations from a proper norm, but only in America. Because in the small towns just inside the Indiana border where the well-maintained Ohio roads suddenly get all gravelly, they still make more money than in 5/6ths of the world. They still have 12 years of free education, polio vaccines, orange juice in the winter, and electricity that hasn't failed in 75 years.

Of course liberalism is shrinking, because the promises it thinks it can make to Americans who cling to Bibles and guns are too expensive and its benefits are so marginal that it finally realizes(?) it will never change all of those minds. There is no more low hanging fruit. There are no more economic rabbits (except in IT industrialization and bioengineering) to pull out of hats. There are already so many chickens in so many pots that the Left has to attack the chicken industry for operating so cheaply.

Somebody wrote of the culture of Japan in the post-tsunami aftermath that of course there was no looting and that everyone cooperated. Japan pulls together into a uniquely cohesive society, but same thing makes it fragile because there are not hundreds of acceptable ways to do the same thing. Japanese make smaller cars and live in smaller houses because they prefer the urban lifestyle that brings millions of them together in the ways they prefer to organize. They like to follow the same rules for everyone, the exact opposite of the American cowboy spirit. 75 years ago there, they all serve an emperor.

America resists totalitarianism because we have the opportunity to get out of Dodge. There's someplace to go. We can migrate from the South to the North. We can move from East to West. And there are times when we want to be left alone, off the grid, answerable to nobody, off the plantation. It means we have to buy a truck that resists the dents and can go offroad, not a hybrid made for the carpool lane. It means we need to shop at the one Costco in the county once a month, not stroll through the galleria of shops in the CBD. It means we leave our email unanswered, not follow every tweet. It means we try not to follow the fashion of the top 40 as it changes every week, but maybe memorize something our great grandparents would have recognized. It means going downscale, spreading out and being robust and not being affected by the global supply chain that cascades its failures to every Tom, Dick and Harry because your name is Eustace.

There's a story about the MBA candidate who decided to accept at the Ivy League. Just after he graduated, he took a fishing vacation in a small village in Mexico and fell in love with the place. He moved to NY and worked on Wall Street to pay off his expensive loans. He hated his job after a time but kept it so that he could pay for a house in Connecticut near where he could fish. Still every summer he would fly with his friends down to Mexico and catch marlin but he never got the big one. He worked overtime and took Spanish classes at night so that he could retire early and buy that little house in the fishing village. He neglected his family to climb the ladder and become a partner in the firm. Finally when he was 45 he paid off his house, quit his job, divorced his trophy wife, lost the equity in the house, suffered a heart attack and moved to Mexico. His vacation finally became his life. He realized finally that he could have done the same thing 20 years ago. It was the price he was willing to pay ruining the lives of all the people he hated in NYC. He bought freedom very expensively only to reduce his needs to zero. It wasn't until he became the captain of his charter boat a few years later that he could see in the eyes of his old fishing buddies who still lived in NY how they were slowly dying. None of them made partner the way he did and every summer when they came to fish, they lamented that they would never be rich enough live in a Mexican fishing village.

We will never know if red state of mind, independent America is as happy with their disconnected lives as those in the urban liberal cosmopolitan feng shui. But we will always know that riches are limited and that everybody cannot be better educated, richer, and more sophisticated than average. We will always know that the road towards totalitarianism is straight, well-paved and is designed for mass transit.

What is conservatism? It's a lot of things. But it's important to understand the limits of centrally standardized, synchronized, culture of singular progress of upward mobility. It always needs the attention and support of the masses, and it fails spectacularly.

April 01, 2011 in [Conservatism](#), [Critical Theory](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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March 29, 2011

## A Simple Presidential Checklist

Not mine, but understandably Republican:

Turkey out of NATO  
 Eliminate existing United Nations  
 Secure Borders with Military



English as National Language  
 Term Limits for Congress  
 Repeal Obombacare  
 Reduce Federal Employees by attrition and freeze hiring  
 Freeze Federal Pay Raises and in grade increases and promotions  
 Eliminate the Department of Education  
 Eliminate or reduce substantially the Environmental Protection Agency  
 Tort Reform Legislation  
 Eliminate Affirmative Action  
 Balanced Budget Amendment  
 Initiate and expedite Drilling to become Energy Independent  
 Revamp Rules of Engagement for Military  
 Audit the Federal Reserve  
 Investigate and prosecute those that caused the Housing Crash  
 Mandatory drug testing for all Federal Employees including Congress  
 Eliminate Congressional Health Care Program  
 Eliminate Congressional Pension Plan - require Social Security Participation. Enforce Existing Immigration Laws  
 Reduce Corporate Tax Rate  
 No Citizenship for Illegal Aliens  
 Eliminate Death Tax on Estates  
 Make Bush Tax Cuts permanent  
 Cut or eliminate Capital Gains Tax  
 Require increased contributions to Federal Employee Health Care  
 Reduce 26 day vacation provision to Federal Employees (non-military)  
 Sell off unneeded Federal Assets Impose penalties for Lobbyists  
 Drill in Alaska  
 Drill off the Coasts  
 Drill in the Dakotas  
 Fast-track new refineries  
 Eliminate Fed subsidies to Colleges that won't allow ROTC  
 Fast track new nuclear Power Plants

March 29, 2011 in [Conservatism, Domestic Affairs](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(42\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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February 04, 2011

### Dear David Horowitz

You may or may not remember me, but I remember when you and I used to trade barbs over at Salon's open forum. It was in the early days of that online community, before you had begun Front Page. Most of our discussion surrounded attitudes and interpretations of the LA Riots and matters tangential to race and politics. It had to be over 9 years ago. I found you to be an admirable foil to my activism of the time and I can remember one particular compliment you gave to me, which was that I was a good writer and could probably capitalize on that.

I never was particularly interested in capitalizing my writing and there is no simple reason I could give as to why. Every writer's 'why' is certainly in itself a painstaking work. I'd rather simply just write. Moreover, I sought to become wise rather than to spend a great deal of time preaching. I was fortunate that the technology of blogging allowed me to do exactly the sort of writing I felt compelled to produce.

Today finds me looking up information on Pavel Stroilov and landed me at Frontpage. It strikes me at this odd moment that I have come around to your side of Americas red & blue duality. I am a reformed Progressive, and the result of my writing and quest for wisdom I have arrived at some conservative enlightenment. I can't describe all of the reasons, nor does that thing which I have previously referred to as my epiphany seem so extraordinary to me now. Still I am very clear and have settled a large number of questions and frustrations and find myself quite comfortable with what I now understand.

It occurred to me that I should reach out and let you know that as pointless as I may have found your arguments a decade ago, I am glad to have been the recipient of their reasonableness. You might find it interesting to read through my blog, which I have maintained since 2003, and observe how I acquired some of that wisdom. Whether or not you do, thanks for having been a stumbling block on my old road. Thinking is hard work, but the rewards are great.

February 04, 2011 in [Cobb's Diary, Conservatism](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

Tags: david horowitz

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January 28, 2011

### Obligatory SOTU Seriousness

Somebody said that Obama sounds like a college professor. Exactly. Which is why in the end I kinda had to stop listening. I find it quite difficult to find anything approaching much more than good sounding ideas that get squashed like bugs when they meet the real world and so he grabs sledgehammer style armtwisting power and makes a hash of what might have been good policy. Then like Spence says, he compromises his way out, cursing the devil in his loyal opposition and saying the best that could possibly be done has been done. That's the pattern.

I didn't hear a bad idea, not one, in all the time I listened. I just don't believe he can really do much very well. And what characterizes it for me were two things. 1. He wants to get rid of loopholes in the corporate tax code and reduce to a flatter lower corporate tax. 2. He went to some obscure place in the midwest to say he was going to spend a couple hundred million on some worthy cause. The second is obviously pandering, and with no real money to speak of. The first is impossible to do in two years without more of the same, professor.

I'm starting to think that at long last we have got our William Jennings Bryan / Adlai Stevenson President. All the leadership of a college town department egghead. All his drama is gone. He talked about high speed trains, fer chrissake. Didn't we hear that [Donald Fagen](#) song in 1982?

(Sigh)

It's a good thing I don't care about politics much. I'd be pretty bummed out right about now. I'm just waiting for the drama of chance. Did you hear there might be cold fusion? Did you hear Yemen and Tunisia might collapse? And why doesn't somebody just shoot Hosni Mubarak? I'm sick of his old ass. Meh. I'm listening to Hardcore History again, Rome, Nazis. Nothing contemporary has the shock and awe. Maybe Rand Paul is actually worth listening to.

OK I promised I'd be serious. But if the President is serious about taking loopholes out of the tax code, how does he expect to incent businesses to do anything? Is he just going to write executive order-style regulation like he tried with Wall Street compensation? Rule by fiat instead of incent with tax breaks? Really?

January 28, 2011 in [Conservatism](#), [Domestic Affairs](#), [Economics](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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December 12, 2010

## Weird Science

[Obsidian Wings](#) bloviates a bit about Science being Democrat.

I say the following:

Eugenics isn't science, right?

As a conservative, and as one who respects science but doesn't 'do' science, one always has to ask whether or not science is on the side of morality. The difference in political philosophy, if it is not a moral matter, is only a kind of self-interested partisanship. So therefore if there is a disconnect between principled science and principled conservatism one should ask which is more value laden. My implication is simple, scientific discovery is amoral, political philosophy is not. If we are to be moral human beings first, then don't let the tail of science wag the dog of humanity.

And remember Cliff Stoll.

What I don't understand is why this so-called 'scientific community' manifests itself so often in atheist partisanship. As Duff so ably illustrates, there is not often any 'scientific' argument for public schools to teach theology. So I am routinely amazed that this simpleminded creationism vs evolution argument rules the day, a la 'the science is in' and further discussion is terminated. But to be against teaching theology in public schools is nothing more or less than anti-intellectual. If this is the hallmark of what passes for healthy debate among the Republican-less scientific community, I'm not sure we're missing much.

I grew up as a Progressive and I understand the affinity between the sentiments of scientific discovery and progressive politics. But that too is a bias that shouldn't remain unquestioned. How it is that the spin initiated by the Kerry campaign managed to distort the truth about what actually transpired in the realm of stem cell research is a perfect example of how these biases have ossified into what folks in the intelligence business call 'pretexting'. Now it is almost an axiom of faith that Republicans are 'anti-science', and the open source Left blogosphere employs a million eyeballs to find bugs in the conservative system. What's so astonishing is the shallow level of bugtracking that satisfies their 'curiosity', which is why you know what Sarah Palin said last week about North, oops I mean South Korea. And why minds like Christopher Hitchens is fact-checking numbskulls like Glenn Beck, all as proxies for dealing with actual intellectual equals, such as those associated with Stanford and Claremont.

In the end, it doesn't really matter how many Republicans are doing what science we need, just as it didn't matter how many Hungarians were doing the math at Alamogordo. Unless you are filming a reality show.

I'm fresh from watching Dan Nocera's presentation on artificial photosynthesis, and I watch, TED, SALT and Fora.tv all the time. I am amazed at how much self-congratulation passes for intelligence in many of the audiences for such material in contrast with the real science that Nocera has demonstrated. It only goes to show me how so much of this obiter dicta serves the purposes of political and social engineering rather than real engineering. I think Nocera put it nicely. How did all of those audiences forget economics? Why did money become the enemy of the Left?

But let's migrate back a bit to the matter of political philosophy, because it is at that level we should ask the question of exactly how much science it is we actually need. Maybe it wasn't science or scientific for me as a kid to grow up and want to be an astronaut. Maybe the entire aerospace industry and NASA in particular was nothing more than a big fat barrel of pork and PR campaign designed as a cover for developing better ICBMs. After all, the whole thing went broke and we stopped way short of Arthur C. Clarke's imagination. Was manned space exploration science? Were we right to pursue it in the first place, or did we really get nothing more than 'space age' consumer goods out of that whole deal? Today, Elon Musk is the aeronautical ass kicker. He has individually out engineered Detroit and Houston for a fraction of the cost. How much science did we get out of that and how much do we really need? Where does all the money go for the great discoveries? Is Bill Gates really a friend of science? Then why is he trying to rid the world of malaria? Where is the cure?

What I'm getting at is how does this kind of logic survive, the logic that ignores economics and puts the entire edifice of Republicanism at the feet of 'Christianists'. How credible are such anti-Republican screeds when there are such simple matters they omit from their arguments? How indeed has this so-called 'scientific community' come to represent and defend such arch Lefty positions? I think it's because of something I implied today, which is that scientific Progressives are actually more Libertarian than they think and that they find more comfort with Democrats. But theirs is not a principled stand but one that is co-opted by a crafty Left Old Guard.

December 12, 2010 in [Conservatism](#), [Domestic Affairs](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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December 02, 2010

## The Locus of Humanity

Yesterday I found a new open source map website. I love looking at maps and over the past week or so have been eyeballing rivers in Africa and big waterfalls around the globe. This new map program shows something I hadn't seen in many years, the routes of the electric grid. So I followed the [Pacific DC Intertie](#) up to its source at the Columbia River at The Dalles. I remembered that Google built a data center up there to be close to abundant hydroelectric generation.

The northern terminus of the Pacific DC Intertie is a substation called Celilo. It is named after the falls on the Columbia river that were dammed up 50 years ago. There are videos of natives fishing there as a reminder of what went before and has been lost to modern technology. Where there once was a ramshackle array of wooden platforms and nets to allow people to fish there now stands a complex hydroelectric power plant, locks and spillways spanning the Columbia River. What used to feed a village for hundreds of years now provides electric power for millions. Man uses river.

Without getting deeply into Bentham or Mill, it is a standing axiom that there is something good in the ability for knowledge to be applied in harnessing the powers and bounties of nature for the benefit of mankind. Progress serves humanity. But where is humanity and which humanity should be served? In particular, why should it be considered right and proper to put a fisherman out of business and put a power company in business? I would say that the best use of the river would be the way that was chosen back in the 50s when the project was approved but there is the matter of consent.

Democratic consent is a tricky thing. At the heart of the matter of Julian Assange's assaults on diplomatic secrets is the question of informed consent and the democratic process. It necessarily brings to mind the matter of responsibility and accountability. Whenever the law and the government act to dispossess one party for the sake of another there are critical questions about standing.

Another way into this comes from Russell Kirk whose, *The Wise Men Know What Wicked Things Are Written on the Sky*, I have been listening to periodically. Kirk says that there are no such thing as human rights, but that there are only civil rights. This is a very consequential argument and I am tending to agree with him. I will spare you the details of the implications on my thinking, but suffice it to say that it will put me deeper on the side of radicals and undoes some of the foundations of the premises of the Old School. In short, Lincoln gets knocked down a peg and King up, for if there is no comfortable mezzanine of 'human rights', there is no excuse for the suppression of civil rights. Any constitutional republic should spell them all out and guarantee them, period. There is no comfort in being a 'person' who doesn't fully enjoy the full reciprocal diet of rights and responsibilities of the nation.

Let us then forget for a moment that there are currently maintained by our State Department at least 300 different status codes for foreign nationals who are granted permanent residency in the United States. Let us forget for the sake of argument the millions of illegal aliens protected as persons living in the US. Let's ignore the distinction in this essay between a prisoner of war and an enemy combatant. You are either a full citizen with full civil rights or you are not. You are either equally protected under the law or you are not. Does this black and white distinction appeal to you? If so, you are in the camp with Russell Kirk. It is thus consequentially hairy, then to consider the implications.

It is that hair suit that is itching me as I read through George W. Bush's memoirs. At stake is my reputation and fidelity to the cause of geopolitical neoconservatism. So far, what's likable about Bush among the many things, has little to do with any convincing he might do about the prospects for a philosophically sound foreign policy - but we already knew he depended on the PNACians. Still, if the endgame is, and I hear no one suggesting substantially otherwise, full citizenship in a democracy, neither Bush nor we need to get pedantic about the details. If 'human rights' of African slaves in America could ever be thought to be insufficient. If Reconstruction in America was a 'recognition of human rights' but still not enough, then by that same principle we should seek full and permanent enfranchisement for everyone everywhere. Black and White.

At Cobb, we've been over the matter of Westphalian sovereignty. I'm for it. I'm a nationalist. I'm against one world government. I'm for ethnic diversity. I'm for single national languages. I'm for full and equal citizenship for all with no permanent exceptions. That means no illegal aliens. That mean no Native American homelands. That means loyalty oaths. That means equal protection under the law. And if I had it my way, then there'd be a separate circuit of courts for everyone who is not a citizen. It might even mean conscription, but that's another debate. You might imagine why an American of African and French descent would be so adamant about a single standard of citizenship, given the this nation's history. The subtleties of legal standing are compromises of the American ideal.

This matters most when it comes to the issue of the legitimate use of legal and political power. Without the consent of full citizens, democratic rule is a farce. All good intentions, all brilliant ideas, all matters of fact have no moral force if they are applied without democratic recourse. That's supply without demand. That way lies tyranny.

So I think of those native fishermen standing on their rickety platforms across the mighty Columbia as I see them woefully presented in the videos about Celilo. I wonder if those who consider their fate with sympathy would grant them sovereignty over the fate of the river on a blood and soil basis, or if they would ask for a democratic show of hands. I think also, by the way, of the ill-fated [HavenCo in the Principality of Sealand](#). The global everything may be in question in these days of economic uncertainty, but the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States provides a standard towards which we have done the good work of liberty. If there is a greater standard somewhere encapsulating and empowering a nation to defend my civil rights, I doubt that I'll find it in the sentiments that would preserve a fish farm in the Pacific Northwest, or in the [statement of purpose of Wikileaks](#).

Let me remind you:

WikiLeaks is a not-for-profit media organisation. Our goal is to bring important news and information to the public. We provide an innovative, secure and anonymous way for sources to leak information to our journalists (our electronic drop box). One of our most important activities is to publish original source material alongside our news stories so readers and historians alike can see evidence of the truth. We are a young organisation that has grown very quickly, relying on a network of dedicated volunteers around the globe. Since 2007, when the organisation was officially launched, WikiLeaks has worked to report on and publish important information. We also develop and adapt technologies to support these activities.

WikiLeaks has sustained and triumphed against legal and political attacks designed to silence our publishing organisation, our journalists and our anonymous sources. The broader principles on which our work is based are the defence of freedom of speech and media publishing, the improvement of our common historical record and the support of the rights of all people to create new history. We derive these principles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular, Article 19 inspires the work of our journalists and other volunteers. It states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. We agree, and we seek to uphold this and the other Articles of the Declaration.

There is a simple question that must be asked. "You and what army?"

It will not be an army of soldiers, or an army of accounts, lawyers, academics or an army of spies. It will be an army of all of those and more supported by millions of people. That will comprise the necessary defense needed to maintain in the face of the collection of nations Assange has sought to embarrass and undermine. So it begins.

I'm prepared to call this Chapter Two in the ongoing drama awaiting the fate of the nation state. It comes at a time when economists are debating and governments in Europe are in the midst of a great crisis determining whether or not international unions can long endure. The odds are in favor of the nations, although it seemed a lot less clear on September Eleventh, Chapter One. Non-state actors may give us iPads or IEDs or state secrets. These things may portend to change the world, but do they really and are we really so loyal to those who produce them?

There are multinational corporations, there are NGOs, there is the World Court and there is the UN. There are all sorts of globalist enterprises. There are even things called Universities who have for centuries educated people from all over the planet and been the source of learning. But these are not things men have defended by their sacred honor and with their lives as home. This they have done for God, King or Country, usually requiring at least two out of the three.

In matters of international diplomacy, there's more at stake than fish and electricity. Any man who plays at this level needs to be prepared to die. When you say you're speaking for humanity, it's an awfully tall order. It helps if you have been democratically elected by full citizens. I believe that it's going to continue to be that way for at least two centuries to come.

December 02, 2010 in [Cobb's Diary](#), [Conservatism](#), [Critical Theory](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

Tags: assange, civil rights, democracy, eminent domain, legal standing, russell kirk, wikileaks

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November 19, 2010

## Urban Conservative Update

[Akindele](#), a charter member of the Conservative Brotherhood, was one of the key individuals laser-focused on local issues from a conservative perspective. Whenever people asked me the hackneyed question 'What are Republicans doing for the black community', I would point them his way. Nothing happening in Detroit escapes his scrutiny, and so if he didn't coin the term 'urban conservative' he always embodied it to me.

There have always been, and continue to be folks who expect that black Americans are shy when they crawl over to the right, but nothing puts the lie to shyness like a good 'blacker than thou' argument. People know what they are \*not\*. And so with that preface, the [quote of the day](#) from 'Afroconservative' [Vanessa Jean-Louis](#) representing the Urban Conservative:

Urban America doesn't need ideologues, urban America needs solution-oriented conservatism. Solution-oriented conservatism comes through public policy advocates and those who are invested in changing the paternalistic monopoly that's been a part of those communities for several decades. Conservatives of all colors and ethnicities need to put our heads together to save the inner cities in America. If constituents in the inner city can globally compete through education and economic expansion, America wins. Conservatism is clearly the answer. The time for textbook talking points that do nothing to address the real issues is over.

I've always been proud to have played my small part in getting black American bloggers off on the Right foot. Clearly, this movement has legs.

November 19, 2010 in [Conservatism](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

Tags: urban conservative

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November 09, 2010

## Tea Party Transparency

*Knowledge is the only commodity that needs redistributing.*

-- Tea Party Patriots

A thoughtful reader has forwarded information to me regarding a Tea Party related movement in support of government transparency. Sounds [very good to me](#):

A casual comment from my left-leaning, independent fiancé made me realize one of the missteps of the Republican Party, and I think we would do well to take it to heart. We were debating the merits of government sponsored, nationalized healthcare and he said, regarding the conservative claim that there are free market solutions, "Well, I just haven't actually seen any other solutions being discussed [besides a socialistic approach]." In that moment I realized the GOP's problem. We always talk about how the Democrats are socialists, or

their plans are socialistic, and we talk about how and why those are bad things. However, we never actually get anything off the ground and in the people's faces, providing our own, alternative solutions to problems. I do not remember our GOP leadership actually presenting viable solutions that we, the conservative base, could believe in and share with others. If they exist, they are buried somewhere, inaccessible to the masses.

I'm not saying alternative solutions that still mean big government, but rather solutions that real, everyday citizens could enact, without the government.

I believe we should have a "Solution Revolution." No more flowery language, no more rhetoric. GOP Solutions are straight-forward, real, alternative solutions to the problems we face. We need to sit down and actually create SOLUTIONS that are based in OUR principles like the free market, fiscal conservatism, individual freedom and liberty, self-responsibility, and the importance of family.

It's called the Sunshine Standard. I love their slogan. I've been affiliated with various [sunshine initiatives](#) for a year or so, and while I haven't had much of an opportunity to do as much as I would have liked with open source data, I expect to be doing more in the future as I work with tools & resources like **Gapminder**, **Infochimps** and open source BI projects.

November 09, 2010 in [Conservatism](#), [Domestic Affairs](#), [Health Care](#), [XRepublic & Digital Democracy](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

Tags: gapminder, infochimps, sunshine, tea party, transparency

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October 13, 2010

## Doing the Equality Math

A long time ago, I put together a manpower planning system for a Fortune 50 company. It was one of those opportunities for me to see something most people don't see. I learned some valuable lessons. I'd like to repeat one or two of them here. It's an old argument that I used to call 'Angry White Math' in defense of Affirmative Action. As it turns out I'm going to use that same math for another purpose which is to demonstrate why it is I believe that Progressives are shrill.

As we got into some details about my fact-free philosophical reconnoitering it was suggested that the numbers are on 'the side' of people who constantly argue against racism and sexism. So exactly how much of that argument is just self-righteous moralizing? Well that's a subjective question. But see if you can follow along with the following mathematical syllogism which I replicate in its original idiotic form from 12 years ago:

america 1998 - population approximately 260 million

black population approximately 32 million.

question: what is the effect of affirmative action on 'white' employment?

given: 1/2 of the population is the workforce

therefore the black workforce is 16 million

the non-black workforce is 114 million.

given: black unemployment is 50%, non-black unemployment is 0%

goal: using a zero-sum hardball forced affirmative action program to create 0% black unemployment.

find: what is the net effect on the non-black workforce?

so we have to find 8 million jobs, that would leave the non-black workforce with 98 million jobs.

therefore the net non-black unemployment rate would go from 50% down to 0%

the non-black unemployment rate would go from 0% to 7.017%

this is an absolutely ridiculous worse-case scenario. but several things become immediately clear which debunk a lot of angry white math against affirmative action.

1. under the worst of all circumstances, affirmative action could only affect about 1 out of every 14 non-black jobs.
2. black unemployment is nowhere near 50%, it's not even at 25%, it's closer to half that. so that makes the maximum reasonable number of zero-sum replacement jobs 2 million.
3. it is not a fair assumption that affirmative action is applied everywhere - at least 50% of all american employment comes from firms which are too small to be bound to affirmative action rules. that drops the maximum to 1 million.
4. those one million jobs against a black unemployment rate of 12.5% would cut black unemployment in half to 6.25%

so let's do another re-assessment.

given: non-black unemployment is 6.25% it would take something less than 1 million zero-sum jobs to give racial parity in employment. so far, affirmative action hasn't come close. so it stands to reason that white displacement is a myth, and that affirmative action has yet to cost non-black america one million jobs. out of a total workforce of 130 million, that is 7/10's of a percent of all american jobs.

but let's double it, just to be on the safe side. affirmative action covers less than 1.5% of all the jobs in america. which don't all belong to whites, but to asians and latinos as well. furthermore, everybody should know that the largest class of affirmative action beneficiaries are white women.

so i think i have pretty much destroyed the economic case for angry white math, proving once and for all that the primary obstacle to affirmative action is RESENTMENT, not ECONOMICS.

I welcome challenges to my syllogism.

So here we have to inject a little reality and update the numbers. Nationally, unemployment is somewhere around 9.5 percent. I don't know what black unemployment is. Let's guess that it is triple the national average. So let's say it's 28.5% Let us further assume that all the racism of America is expressed in the loss of black jobs. So let us therefore invent, under the Obama Administration, the Department of Racial Payback. If you are black and unemployed, it will be automatically assumed that racism is the cause. Show up at the office and the Department will get you a job. Boom. So how many jobs will the DRP have to produce to provide magical equality and destroy all of the effects of racism? How many if they are zero-sum jobs? How many if they are new jobs? OK well assuming we use the following figures.

Workforce: 150 million

Black Pop. 35 million

Black Workforce 17.5 ( about 12.5 M working 5 M not working)

Non-Zero Sum Parity requires 1.66M new jobs. I don't have a spreadsheet on this machine so I can't figure out the zero-sum parity. But it would be less than 1.66M. Now, what does it take to create somewhere around 1.66 new jobs, or fire around 1.4M folks and give their jobs to unemployed blacks? Something close to an act of God in either case, especially if in the second case you don't want riots in the streets.

It's obvious to me, as it should be to you, that x years Affirmative Action was insufficient to close the gap in black vs non-black unemployment. But it's also obvious to me that when you norm for education and class, the gap in black vs non-black unemployment drops significantly. I'm sure anyone focused on such mathematical ways of looking at people would provide us with those vetted statistics, right?

So how exactly do Progressives measure the effect of racism on their protected classes and how big are those gaps? It's not clear. But it's clear to me that the claim of a goal of statistical equality begs for acts of God. And what exactly are the areas in which Progressives get hyped about gaps explained by racism? Let me not put words in their mouths. But let us examine the costs of such things as zero sum Affirmative Action that will close the gap.

I think that an honest discussion of this, loaded to the gills with statistics will reveal several acts of God, not to mention acts of Congress and huge amounts of money. Then how is it that we maintain the status quo without riots in the streets? This is the great dilemma of the Progressive mindset. It is my opinion that they cannot quite understand why the outrage is always in their heads and not in the people, and that an economic accounting of all of the relevant factors shows that all of the outrage is priced out of the equation. In other words, just like there is Angry White Math over the existence of Affirmative Action, when you look at what's actually being done, the outrage is all out of proportion. On the exact other side of the coin, there is Angry Progressive Politics over the existence of disparities, but when you look at what it actually costs to eliminate those disparities to the standard of 'equality', and see how it is that society continues to function without that elimination, you see that the outrage is similarly out of proportion.

I specifically ask for ways and means to have solutions to these problems that are objective. If racism weighs six pounds, then the six pound adjustment cures racism and everybody can agree. The important question between liberals and conservatives is where you take those six pounds of flesh, from public or private hands. The answer I stereotypically expect is that the only way America can get six pounds of flesh for every victim of racism is through compelled state action. I would actually be happy to hear such a straight answer, because the six pounds would be quantified objectively.

Since 2001, and in dealing with the then-pressing issue of Reparations, I have looked at the economics. And my premise has been simple. We are at racial equilibrium in reality. But political resentment and outrage cannot accept that. I don't disagree that the outrage is moral, but that doesn't change the fact that it is insufficient to dramatically alter the status quo and provide funding for the solutions whatever they may be. This would not be a political problem if Progressives could see their way around to a privately funded solution. Instead their political opponents are blamed for \*all\* racism because of their refusal to consent to a state sponsored solution - whose dimensions if honestly reckoned with, would require an act of God.

So the challenge remains which is something you can unanimously get ascent to from 90% of the Right. If you can solve any problem with racism or sexism or both with a Federal tax ceiling of 20%, it gets done tomorrow. If it costs 40%, it gets done when hell freezes over. There's plenty room for negotiation, and that's how the parties go back and forth forever. But we still don't honestly know what the cost for the solution to racism is.

How about some facts?

October 13, 2010 in [Brain Spew, Conservatism, Race Man](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(128\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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October 05, 2010

### Claire Berlinski

Since life is not fair and one cannot become un-famous, unless I suppose one is a victim of a Communist purge, Claire Berlinski will likely live in the shadows of Michelle Malkin and Ann Coulter for the foreseeable future. That is, for the public mind. For me however, I have just been astonished to find her - another of the insightful writers at the Manhattan Institute.

She is genuinely of polymathic interest, one of the sorts of individuals I'm sure Gerard Vanderlue had in mind when he took it upon himself to found the Right Network, that thing coming to fruition that appeals to the Right American on more than just a urgent level. Nobody whose company I particularly enjoy is a huge fan of Rush Limbaugh, and for a certain uninitiated segment of the Polloi, there are perhaps six poles of conservative thought, three of whom I've already mentioned, the other three being Beck, Palin and Bush. But they forget the think tanks and serious policy wonks, and those that remember tend to forget that my favorite is Manhattan.

Well, now we add Berlinski. And she writes spy novels too!

So here, I reiterate the great gaping hole in Left thought that leaves them oblivious to the brain-dead obvious reason for my abandonment of Progressivism. Stalin. But I know the name doesn't quite resonate and more than a few Americans are guilty of oblivion. [Berlinski sees deeper into this dilemma.](#)

In the world's collective consciousness, the word "Nazi" is synonymous with evil. It is widely understood that the Nazis' ideology—nationalism, anti-Semitism, the autarkic ethnic state, the Führer principle—led directly to the furnaces of Auschwitz. It is not nearly as well understood that Communism led just as inexorably, everywhere on the globe where it was applied, to starvation, torture, and slave-labor camps. Nor is it widely acknowledged that Communism was responsible for the deaths of some 150 million human beings during the twentieth century. The world remains inexplicably indifferent and uncurious about the deadliest ideology in history.

For evidence of this indifference, consider the unread Soviet archives. Pavel Stroilov, a Russian exile in London, has on his computer 50,000 unpublished, untranslated, top-secret Kremlin documents, mostly dating from the close of the Cold War. He stole them in 2003 and fled Russia. Within living memory, they would have been worth millions to the CIA; they surely tell a story about Communism and its collapse that the world needs to know. Yet he can't get anyone to house them in a reputable library, publish them, or fund their translation. In fact, he can't get anyone to take much interest in them at all.

I'm not sure that I'm going to be able to get Google Alerts to find much, though I want to set it up to poke me when 'Pavel Stroilov' crosses its radar. It seems to me that it would be a no-brainer to get the right grant money to have this stuff translated if only for the probability that Condi will get her hands on it and add insight.

Martin Amis, it is rumored, is likely to ditch England to live over here in the States, and so we can expect him to do something altogether proper to alert us to what we've forgotten. One might hope that he can become our equivalent of Rudyard Kipling and bring the message of the appropriate Empire back into our consciousness.

In the meantime, Berlinski gets it in dimensions and flavors that awaken the senses without being so dour and sarcastic as the still funny Mark Steyn. As you can see, I like the literate sophisticates to illustrate the bad ideas against which we properly rail. Welcome Claire.

### Thatcher & More with Claire Berlinski: Chapter 3 ...



October 05, 2010 in [Conservatism](#), [Critical Theory](#), [Geopolitics](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

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September 01, 2010

### Hawley's Sack Lunches

Since I maintain red and blue friends I get nonsense and sense from both sides. And like most people with email, I get emotional spam from friends and family. Thinking briefly about some stuff I just heard about the Other-Americans on the Right, I thought I'd share the kind of stories that I get that bring people on the Right to tears. I'm not sure what Progressives think when they hear Glenn Beck talk about 'honor'. I think it's pretty hokey myself. Hokey like baseball, mom and apple pie. Here's a toast to the average, ordinary, hokey common decency of the common man who is a patriot, and a meme that's percolating through the Right, as we speak.

--

I put my carry-on in the luggage compartment and sat down in my assigned seat. It was going to be a long flight. 'I'm glad I have a good book to read. Perhaps I will get a short nap,' I thought. Just before take-off, a line of soldiers came down the aisle and filled all the vacant seats, totally surrounding me. I decided to start a conversation. 'Where are you headed?' I asked the soldier seated nearest to me. 'Petawawa. We'll be there for two weeks for special training, and then we're being deployed to Afghanistan

After flying for about an hour, an announcement was made that sack lunches were available for five dollars.. It would be several hours before we reached the east, and I quickly decided a lunch would help pass the time... As I reached for my wallet, I overheard a soldier ask his buddy if he planned to buy lunch. 'No, that seems like a lot of money for just a sack lunch. Probably wouldn't be worth five bucks. I'll wait till we get to base.'

His friend agreed. I looked around at the other soldiers. None were buying lunch. I walked to the back of the plane and handed the flight attendant a fifty dollar bill. 'Take a lunch to all those soldiers.' She grabbed my arms and squeezed tightly. Her eyes wet with tears, she thanked me. 'My son was a soldier in Iraq ; it's almost like you are doing it for him.'

Picking up ten sacks, she headed up the aisle to where the soldiers were seated. She stopped at my seat and asked, 'Which do you like best - beef or chicken?'

'Chicken,' I replied, wondering why she asked. She turned and went to the front of plane, returning a minute later with a dinner plate from first class. 'This is your thanks..!' After we finished eating, I went again to the back of the plane, heading for the rest room. A man stopped me. 'I saw what you did. I want to be part of it. Here, take this.' He handed me twenty-five dollars.

Soon after I returned to my seat, I saw the Flight Captain coming down the aisle, looking! at the aisle numbers as he walked, I hoped he was not looking for me, but noticed he was looking at the numbers only on my side of the plane. When he got to my row he stopped, smiled, held out his hand and said, 'I want to shake your hand.' Quickly unfastening my seatbelt, I stood and took the Captain's hand.. With a booming voice he said, 'I was a soldier and I was a military pilot.. Once, someone bought me a lunch. It was an act of kindness I never forgot..!' I was embarrassed when applause was heard from all of the passengers. Later I walked to the front of the plane so I could stretch my legs. A man who was seated about six rows in front of me reached out his hand, wanting to shake mine He left another twenty-five dollars in my palm.

When we landed I gathered my belongings and started to deplane. Waiting just inside the airplane door was a man who stopped me, put something in my shirt pocket, turned, and walked away without saying a word. Another twenty-five dollars!

Upon entering the terminal, I saw the soldiers gathering for their trip to the base.

I walked over to them and handed them seventy-five dollars. 'It will take you some time to reach the base... It will be about time for a sandwich .

God Bless You.' Ten young men left that flight feeling the love and respect of their fellow travelers.

As I walked briskly to my car, I whispered a prayer for their safe return. These soldiers were giving their all for our country. I could only give them a couple of meals. It seemed so little...

A veteran is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The United States of America ' for an amount of 'up to and including my life.' That is Honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it.'

September 01, 2010 in [Brain Spew](#), [Conservatism](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

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August 28, 2010



## US & Iraq: Dead

The Economist published a rather tepid estimation about the entire effort of Iraq. I have to admit that the President has done an admirable job of shutting down the war and shutting up everybody about it. From my perspective, the entire Iraq enterprise has basically faded into obscurity. I haven't thought about the entire enterprise in retrospect from a geopolitical standpoint for a number of reasons, mostly because I do not perceive a coherent theme in the Administration's actions which sustains active analysis. Obama is a canny balancing act among crushing themes of his own choosing, but he doesn't respond to the world I care about with anything more than a chummy populism.

What I have learned greatly about the past years of this sort of wartime America is that it passes beneath penetrating analysis on a set of minimally relevant, yet maximally memetic political themes. A stunningly obsessive amount of blather and ink has been wasted on the term 'WMD', something I noted that GWBush seemed to have invented and the entire political class digested as if they had been using it their entire lives. And so I have endured that polarizing debate more times than I care to remember.

There were endless tangents that occupied our attention as we occupied Iraq in the pre-sovereignty phase of Bremer's deBaathification disaster. It was during that period when I followed the paths of battles - First and Second Fallujah, and the fate of The Wanker, Moqtada al-Sadr. Like most supporters of the mission to liberate Iraq, I was acutely interested in the lack of battle reportage and the timidity of most reporters, embedded or otherwise. I was disappointed in the prejudice against the American military's abilities and conduct as exemplified by the outsized disgust over this or that looted antiquity and whose head got burned on that hot hood of a Hummer. And these mealy criticisms grew to a crescendo culminating most seriously in ultimately dismissed charges against Marines accused of a 'massacre' at Haditha.

I expected all American interest in this war to end rapidly as the number of troops killed surpassed the number of victims of the 9/11 attacks. But I didn't expect that so little of the nation's focus would be on matters tangential to the actual results of the most important fact of the war - that counter to the Baby Bin Ladin Theory which predicted conflicts breaking out all over the Middle East in response to the presence of American forces in the area, Iraq became the center of gravity for all of the region's Jihadis. In that regard, this was the war that Americans like me wanted, and our generals gave every Jihadi the opportunity of their suicidal desires. That we had to drain the swamp in Iraq amongst the deathly enmity of deBaathified Iraqis and civilians gave patriots and dissenters all of the moral ambiguity any war is bound to provide. Nothing exemplified the mess like the matter of Abu Grhaib.

The fundamental difference between Iraq and normal war seemed to be something most opponents I encountered didn't much bother to concern themselves with. What we never did in Iraq which we always do in 'Geneva Conventional War' is to treat every one of the enemy male population of fighting age a potential soldier. In that case, the American army would move through a town and capture or kill every one of them. That's how you capture a town and control territory. But in our pre-Surge ROE, we had a hybrid and failing approach which proved an ineffective counter-insurgency. We roused all those men from their beds, queried them on the spot and let them go, or cycled them through - based on our whims and reckoning - soon overcrowded prisons. The same ones Saddam used against his political enemies.

And so critics of the Bush Administration's war aims and conduct had a field day in the media accusing America of torture and breaking the Geneva Conventions. This all happened as a direct consequence of our troops NOT using artillery and continuing shock and awe. So we didn't kill, we mass arrested, taking sniper bullets and IEDs in the long, arduous and increasingly unpopular process. The spillover domestically with controversies surrounding AG Gonzales, warrentless wiretaps, GTMO and conspiracy theories and controversies around Dick Cheney, Valerie Plame, armor appropriations, John Murtha and a dozen other political fires smoldered for years as the entire nation politicized itself over the merest provocations, squabbling like brats while the Greatest Generation still lived.

For all that, you'd think that the following administration would make use of the successes and promise more than the previous. But that failed to be the case. No redeeming value has been articulated beyond the obvious. Saddam is dead and we're outta there. And so we are left to our own interpretations. There is obviously a great deal more I might say about the US in Iraq. I have long held that the great triumph of GW Bush, which I still hold to be the case, is that he managed to raise and keep high the respect most Americans have for its military. No longer were our primary military actions shrouded in secrecy and contemptible deniability. Bush said in front of the world, these are our enemies, this is what we intend to do, follow or get out of the way. That's the kind of leadership armies deserve and it is what they got. WMD might have been an abused and unfortunate term, but Axis of Evil remains potent and relevant to this day.

America showed success in both overwhelming global projection of shock and awe as well as success in COIN through the Sons of Iraq, and Petraeus has mastered that flexibility in extraordinary capability and style. We generated capabilities appropriate to the facts on the ground and executed, ultimately against tyranny and for democracy. But it was a failed revolution, and speaking for myself as a neocon, I have certainly come to understand that liberty's revolution can be sponsored best only after it is authored. Bush was not the author of Iraq's liberty - so his legacy as a liberator is dubious. But his leadership left no questions in American minds as to what lengths are required.

I may be chastened to know that liberty is not on the minds of many people on this planet as clearly and primarily as it is in mine and in those of my political cohort. That political statisticians at the Lancet could get people around the English speaking world exercised about 'excess death', and subversives like Assange at Wikileaks continue the counternarratives does not come as a surprise. I have found a new source of inspiration in the concept of revolution for liberty and armed struggle through my associations with new political allies to my left. There always remains that thing, encapsulated in our own American Revolution, worth fighting for. Today and soon those battles come to a close under our initiative and leadership on the ground in Iraq as the political promises and aims of the current President are fulfilled by closing that door. Our endgame is set and we leave the field of battle for freedom and come home to fiscal matters.

Iraq stands today with a sterling example of its future in un-partitioned Kurdistan, and the taste of freedom in its mouth behind its bloody face. I think this is the last war my generation will stand for the sake of anyone other than ourselves. It is the last gift that will stand without a much more imperial demand of self-interest. It is the last time we'll spend any money trying to clean up somebody else's mess. And in that regard marks the decline of America, an America that has managed to forget the purpose of its own freedom struggles. I am not convinced at all that this current political majority will gain strength and permanence. Those who understand the demands of liberty, including the two million who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are far too deeply immersed in that life and death understanding to suffer in silence under the political will of a majority inspired by notions of peace through speeches.

So after seven years I am sanguine about the details known by those who cared to find out, motivated and inspired by those elevating spirits that the quest for liberty always brings. Let those who care little mind their own business.

### I Fought For You



August 28, 2010 in [Conservatism](#), [Critical Theory](#), [Dead](#), [Domestic Affairs](#), [Geopolitics](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)  
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August 23, 2010

## Them, Not Us

Stop singing Abraham, Martin & John. It's a myth. We didn't kill 'Camelot', Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated the President of the US because Kennedy had the nerve to stare down Cuba and the Soviet Union. It figures that a hippie song recorded five years after the fact of JFK's death would promulgate the false notion that a whackjob prejudiced America was responsible. The NYT will charge you four bucks to see the rest of the article with the following headline from October of 1960:

CINCINNATI, Oct. 6 -- Senator John F. Kennedy linked Vice President Nixon tonight with a "glaring failure" in foreign policy responsible for Fidel Castro's rise to power in Cuba.

But when the director of the Manhattan Institute (my favorite think tank) says that Kennedy ran to the right of Nixon on anti-communism, he's not just blowing smoke.



It has been a while since I've checked out videos from Hoover, and I think it's appropriate that I bring them back to Cobb. This is really the level of political, economic and historical intercourse that fits my style and interest. This particular video is important to me because it raises important issues about the directions that liberals took as the 60s went countercultural and took a reasonable liberalism into the tank that the Left is now in. My inherited black Nationalism was never countercultural or particularly revolutionary. It was a cultural nationalism that was easy to make sense of in those days - but where some went the direction of the Watts Poets, others went the direction of Stanley Crouch. The Old School of Cobb has been about recovering Jazz and the Crouch / Murray / Marsalis end of things. And I find it personally interesting that I courted my future wife to Clifford Brown, the jazz master who didn't dabble in drugs.

Of course many folks know that it was my abandonment of the self-centered nature of black progressive politics in recognition of the much greater moral battles against communist totalitarianism that moved me to Conservatism. And here Piereson is noting that Reagan took up where Kennedy left off.

It is logical that if you buy into the romantic notions of Camelot and that the domestic agenda is more morally weighty than foreign policy - that the Civil Rights Movement was more important than the Cold War - then you are likely to buy into the rhetoric that supports the kind of politics I find lightweight. You are likely to say that the Birchers were the real evil in the world and that Reagan's association with them destroys all his moral credibility implying that a race relations agenda is the most important agenda. Piereson makes a heavy-duty charge that the romanticism of Liberals killed it and took away its forward looking attitude, as well as its hard-nosed geopolitical positions against totalitarians. This explains a lot.

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August 19, 2010

## New Threats To Freedom

In my world of problem solving there are four classes of work, puzzles, mysteries, rabbit holes and black holes. Puzzles are those problems where you have all the pieces and you know what the end result will look like. All you have to do to a puzzle is solve it. Puzzles are just a matter of time and effort. Mysteries are tougher. You don't know all of the pieces and you might have to build some of them to get the solution, so you know what things are supposed to be, but how to get from point A to point B is, well, a mystery. Mysteries unravel as time goes on and soon become puzzles, if you're crafty or lucky.

A rabbit hole is a problem whose solution begets more problems. When you begin to address it and solve one part, you create new parts. These new problems may be puzzles, they may be new mysteries. There may even be rabbit holes within rabbit holes. Often the wisest course of action when faced with a rabbit hole is to avoid it altogether. Alternatively, the wisest course is bravado, overkill and simplification. Don't even pretend that you can solve the problem with any finesse, just jump in and get busy.

The black hole might sound like an infinite rabbit hole from which there is no escape. But it's actually worse. It's a rabbit hole that you didn't know you were already in. In the argot of the intelligence business, it is the unknown unknown. Not only do you not understand the class of problem, you don't know if you have it, how long you've had it or what you've been doing all this time to make it better or worse. A black hole is where people in the Matrix live, who've never heard of the Matrix. One might equally call a black hole a black swan, but I'm trying to be original here and there is this subtle difference. Whereas a black swan is necessarily a future event upon which much or little might hang, a black hole is a present condition - one whose origins and ends are unknown. Leave it at that.

Threats to freedom are, to most Conservatives like me, mostly a puzzle. We can be fairly confident that we know what freedom is, what the absence of freedom is and how to get those things that make us unfree. That is because we in America are steeped in the history of freedom struggles. We recognize the puzzle pieces. But even without an educated guess or acquaintance with any such history, human beings have an innate sense of their own conditions of unfreedom. In that way, when we look at the question of 'threats to freedom' we do so with the presumption of interposing our will. After all, no American slave needed Frederick Douglass to know they were not free. Slaves had all the puzzle pieces right in front of them every day.

Sometimes, however, dealing with threats to freedom is a mystery, but that's generally because we don't have perfect understanding. Frederick Douglass was needed by the Abolitionists in order to flesh out their vague sentiments about the conditions of slavery. To the many in Douglass' day, the condition of slavery was a mystery. Douglass gave them the pieces to the puzzle. They could, informed, therefore take action - or at least fortify their lofty ideals. Likewise today sometimes there's a communications problem surrounding a mystery of freedom. And so as putative protectors of Liberty, we Conservatives cast about for some such testimonials, pampered as we are in a more or less stable situation of our own freedom. In that we are very much like the Abolitionists peeking at the Others. Are women free to have abortions? Are gays free to marry? The answers are yes and no, and so it's a mystery until we craft all the right

tools to make such things clear. The right book perhaps. The goodly pamphlet. The stirring essay. The proper Google search. If we can gather the right communicators we can clear up the mystery. But not every Limbaugh is a Douglass. Not every communicator is great.

What about freedom for Iraqis? Well that turned out to be quite a rabbit hole. Solving one problem, like arresting potential insurgents off the streets, caused another problem, overcrowding of prisons like Abu Graibh. Solving one problem, the legal theory of 'enemy combatants' caused another problem, the political fallout of GTMO. In the larger world, the burdens assumed by certain nations and factions within those nations in the West, the pursuit of freedom for larger slices of humanity sometimes fails. While we can always claim some high moral ground by our intentions, it's even more difficult to change regimes, and communicate what we know to be true about freedom across barriers of religion, culture, geography and language.

The black hole class of threats to freedom can be predicted by theory, but cannot be observed directly. By definition they are an unknown unknown. They are an anomaly to everything we normally expect. They might already be a present danger but they are not clear. And so we have to speculate about where the threat might arise so that we may have the energy to get us out of the rabbit hole, and the tools to turn mysteries into puzzles.

Since we know what freedom is, and as participants in a constant dialog about liberty and its defense, we Americans have a leg up. However there is a fine line between the reasonable and unreasonable preparedness. In a world full of potential black holes it's impossible to tell which is which. What we then have to do is use another kind of thinking. The best way to describe it is containment, or as Mr. Spock (or was it Sherlock Holmes (Hm a puzzle)) might say, when you have eliminated all of the false possibilities whatever remains, however unlikely, must be true.

So to handle the unknown unknowns, you handle the known ones first. Focus on the facts in the puzzle of freedom. Find great communicators to bridge the gaps to where freedom is a mystery. Be undaunted and give your best efforts for the sake of freedom, knowing full well that it will cause problems and unintended consequences. That is enough work.

When the black swans appear on the horizon, or the black hole reveals itself it will take us all by surprise, and so I would suggest that we focus on what we know. This is where I think there can be a particular advantage of being epistemologically modest, as proper conservatives are. We should not be so bold as to think we can take immediate or predictable advantage of crises and unprecedented events. After all, the conservative is happy making sense of what history has proven thus far - not in saying that there is an inevitable march of history but that in the untold trillions of possible universes, there is a good straight and narrow path.

So yes, there are certainly new threats to freedom. But there are also a lot of old recognizable threats as well and many of them are posing as something new and we believe it because we don't know our history. So let us not concern ourselves so much with new threats, but focus on the puzzles for which we have pieces, the mysteries for which we have clues, and the rabbit holes for which we have energy.

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August 14, 2010

### **Amy Wax & The Truck Driver**

I've heard this parable before. Have you?

Wax appeals to a parable in which a pedestrian is run over by a truck and must learn to walk again. The truck driver pays the pedestrian's medical bills, but the only way the pedestrian will walk again is through his own efforts. The pedestrian may insist that the driver do more, that justice has not occurred until the driver has himself made the pedestrian learn to walk again. But the sad fact is that justice, under this analysis, is impossible. The legal theory about remedies, Wax points out, grapples with this inconvenience—and the history of the descendants of African slaves, no matter how horrific, cannot upend its implacable logic. As she puts it, "That blacks did not, in an important sense, cause their current predicament does not preclude charging them with alleviating it if nothing else will work."

This is from [John McWhorter's recent review](#) of Amy Wax' latest book. [Race, Wrongs & Remedies](#).

I suppose that there are a couple dozen thousand people who need to read this whole book. I understand that implacable logic from experience.

Wax writes directly:

The government cannot make people watch less television, talk to their children, or read more books. It cannot ordain domestic order, harmony, tranquility, stability, or other conditions conducive to academic success and the development of sound character. Nor can it determine how families structure their interactions and routines or how family resources—including time and money—are expended. Large-scale programs are especially ineffective in changing attitudes and values toward learning, work, and marriage.

This is controversial only in a land of fools.

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August 03, 2010

### **A Brief Conservative Snipe at Multiculturalism**

Ultimately, what you have to ask yourself is what multiculturalism has delivered after twenty years. The answer is basically an anti-assimilation sentiment in the mainstream which has essentially fed social dislocation and identity politics.

For my part, I was a supporter of the idea that Americans all had lost identities that were sacrificed to assimilation into the mainstream - that it was a bad idea that Italian Americans no longer spoke Italian. But I have given up that premise. National identity and the national culture are always in need of repair and maintenance. And it is my opinion that what we need more than the relative autonomy of various cultural imperatives, is a social cohesion that defeats identity politics.

In short, I am against that thing I call 'radical autonomy'. I see radical autonomy as any collective group identity that seeks national recognition outside of the political process. That's about as deeply as I want to get into that.

Multiculturalism that demands its own channel of information to and from the mainstream is destructive.

'Diversity' is a meaningless term in today's society. It means race. It means gender. It means sexual preference. It means giving political meaning to identity absent any real difference in thought. It means giving preference to the body over the mind.

PC is the language of 'diversity' and multiculturalism. It is nothing more or less than Orwellian.

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July 29, 2010

### **Ted Hayes & America's Black Sheild**

Ted Hayes, that unique and persistent activist, is at it again. I think [Black Shield](#) is rather catchy, don't you?

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July 26, 2010

### **Very Little to be Tory About**

On the other side of the second mountain I stand on an uncertain plateau. On of the most striking lines in Hitchens memoir is his mention that his father was a Tory with very little to be Tory about. At the end of a career of service to the British Empire, Commander Hitchens was left with a pension inferior to those who never even served in battle. At the same time Hitchens professes an attitude that I've heard echoed in the modus of Warburg during and after the Nazi era, which is to operate in life on an 'As If' basis.

I'm hesitant to hang a great deal of weight on the As If hook. It works too conveniently in the face of evidence contrary to hope. And what is the point of engaging in politics if not to execute something that must be realized in one's own time? There needs to be a time limit on the 'As If'.

The longer I live, the more comfortable I become with something that unnerved me as a younger man, which is the contingent nature of transcendent values. Perhaps a better way to think about it is the inefficiency of practical living. You engage your mind in the business of the world but you can only get so much work out of your mind. And then you work but you can only get so many results out of that work. By the time things become tangible, you will have exercised quite a bit of thinking - to what avail. That depends upon how much you manage to convert at every level, thought to work, work to profit. Then after all that you don't always manage to keep the profits you earn. So what is the point of disciplining one's mind if you don't get to keep much after all is said and done? You have to apply the As If. Hope. Faith. It's all about what you want to be and how much you believe. Of course there is no guarantee against disappointment.

I think it is a very key thing to keep in mind that in choosing to think and discipline one's thinking about moral, economic and political subjects (or PPE - philosophy, politics & economics - as the Balloil crowd called it) one must consider the efficiency of one's society vis a vis the leverage one can expect from conforming to some pre-thunk thoughts, some work that's always available and some currency with lasting value. This is how one situates oneself into history. Outside of the context of history and society, one man can think his way to heaven - but then it's only his own heaven. That's the other side of 'As If'. It must be a shared, practical kind of hope, vision and faith. How long can one live estranged with a society of hope? Long but not well.

So perhaps it's not so horrid that one uses faith if one is in good company. But there still needs to be a time limit. What are we to do with the cynical, who dismiss those disciplines that don't work in one lifetime? Well haven't I nailed all the atheists in that? I'm not one of those, by the way, who expects all his profits in the next life and disciplines his mind towards worship to do that sort of worshipful work. My As If window is not infinite, nor is it life long. It runs about 4 years long as best I can tell, and I've gone through about 12 of them. That's actually rather impatient. But not so much that I would disregard so much as discount the discipline, work and profit of what I consider inefficient regimes of hope. This is my balancing act.

I've gone through a bit of drama over the past week or so about the existentials of black American conservatism, to the extent that I represent that. So the phrase 'little to be tory about' has been in the back of my mind. The inefficiency of our faiths is a sort of contingency we all live with. And there now is a bit more clarity about all that.

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July 21, 2010

### **Aristotle's Natural Slaves**

From [The New Criterion](#):

Our rulers are theoretically "our" representatives, but they are busy turning us into the instruments of the projects they keep dreaming up. The business of governments, one might think, is to supply the framework of law within which we may pursue happiness on our own account. Instead, we are constantly being summoned to reform ourselves. Debt, intemperance, and incompetence in rearing our children are no doubt regrettable, but they are vices, and left alone, they will soon lead to the pain that corrects. Life is a better teacher of virtue than politicians, and most sensible governments in the past left moral faults to the churches. But democratic citizenship in the twenty-first century means receiving a stream of improving "messages" from politicians. Some may forgive these intrusions because they are so well intentioned. Who would defend prejudice, debt, or excessive drinking? The point, however, is that our rulers have no business telling us how to live. They are tiresome enough in their exercise of authority—they are intolerable when they mount the pulpit. Nor should we be in any doubt that nationalizing the moral life is the first step towards totalitarianism.

Good article.

I don't subscribe to the paper version of The New Criterion. Somebody needs to get them webwise. This serves my purposes of getting epicurean in my age. Hmm. I haven't talked about that much.

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July 20, 2010

### **Reagan: A Time For Choosing**

Reconciling Hitchens protest and Christianity is something it is important for me to do because it will always be the case that we'll have more time to hear the echoes of our Christian society (as distinct from a purported Christian Nation or even Christian Society) than we are to hear the dons of Balloil. And since there is clearly no better International Socialist movement than there is a Prophetic Christian movement, we all are going to have to take our enlightenment and moral reinforcement where we can get it. That we must get it, Hitchens surely cannot be, witness to horrors that he is, some slavish Rousseauvian seeking some holistic, tattooed Natural world. Christianity can and does civilize. But here's the key and the thing I think that suggests that Hitch protests too much. There are many a slip between the act and the law, and Christianity in America - despite its reactionaries, does not approach the Christian Nation. Our secular law is not threatened by canon law and Christians understand and respect that. It is the ease with which American law and Christian ethics coexist in this, his adopted homeland that gives us security and enables the People a moral check on the balances of power. It is surely not only Christian ethics, but it has integrated better than any other religion.

I'm not sure how much Hitchens would have the State he knows, polluted by the likes of his enemies Kissinger and Stanley Baldwin, take more responsibility for the moral instruction of the populous, and seeing that he mentioned no scathing indictment of our free educational system to inculcate the greater values of the Enlightenment one wonders if he might be satisfied simply by the right and proper Great Man. For surely, like few others, Hitchens recognizes how the American Left has been reduced to pettiness. There has got to be more satisfaction than mere irony. Not if America falters enough to be done in by the certainty of devils.

There is a gap between Hitchens and the soldier he inspired to go to Iraq. It is a mediation Hitchens doesn't appear to know or connect with - not that it's his responsibility. I think he had bridged the gap admirably as an individual of palpably tender integrity. But we can't all fall in love with such a lovely man as he and do the necessary work of upholding liberty thought such mechanisms as email and like buttons on Facebook. There must be a democracy between us that works, and Hitchens seems to exist on the periphery of that democracy - or at least at a level far above my head where people actually read literature and use it to inform their sensibilities.

So I have puzzles to figure out, and perhaps in time will do so. This is the first set of questions that itch me, and so I will continue on to get to know Auden a bit more, as well as immediately continue his Contrarian Letter. But I do understand the man much better now, and I will seek the company of his literary fellows, maybe McEwan, certainly Conquest, and more Amis, especially since the latter has pronounced his fondness for Merkel, whom I like too.

This is why to this Hayekian, he is my kind of writer, whose not inconsiderable love an talent with English ought to make those who speak of 'critical thinking skills' absent beauty's content pause and discover that they are actually defending nothing. Hitchens has found a world worth defending and celebrating, the texture of which can only be approximated by the finest of writers.

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## "A Time for Choosing" by Ronald Reagan



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July 14, 2010

## Hayek on Moral Values & Altruism

### Hayek on Moral Values & Altruism



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July 13, 2010

## Hitch-22: First Look

The first thing I started doing as I put Hitch-22 on my MacBook Pro and broadcast the voice of the man reading his own memoir into my bedroom, was start to clean up. Like many, I have the reflex of picking things off the floor and earnestly cleaning up when I'm taking a browbeating. It comes from childhood of course, as Mom delivered her 'cyclone hit it' harangue as I cleaned up that mess I'd been making all day - taking the bedsheet tent down from the top bunk and removing the staples from the carpet.

Except with Hitchens, the reflex was not defensive against his words, rather my own sort of browbeating I give to myself. After all, it has been five months since I last downloaded an audiobook from Audible and I have been falling back in my reading. It all started tumbling back, that odd state of mind - peaceful and restlessly hungry at once that I once possessed back when I subscribed to Granta and poured over the shelves at Waterstones on Newberry Street.

There is a great deal that I have to say about Hitch, and that is because I come somewhat late to having an actual living intellectual hero, and it took me quite some time to get Cornel West out of my system. West is a teacher I should have had in my undergrad years so that I might get in touch with the ideas of the Pragmatists and understand how much of what I actually believed to be transcendentally true of life was actually welcome within the US. I suffered the neglect many students of 'social justice' do in recognizing virtues of Ralph Waldo Emerson were my own and not something, as multiculturalists would have us believe, completely alien to dead, white, European males. Since I spent my acculturative years in the streets and in the harder sciences, I didn't have much ammo to push back with, and so my tardiness and ignorance. So now having followed him and Amis, more or less for some time, I am convinced that he has the perspective often lacking in purer natural philosophers - which is the real world of dodgy and inspirational politics. Along with Niall Ferguson who provides the sensible attitude towards economics, I'm getting there. So there are places of coherence I would like to address Hitchens which will not be complete, but let me scatter my shot.

Firstly, by joining the Conservatives as a direct result of recognizing what Amis said so clearly about the evil excess of Stalin, I opened myself up to the Straussians. And so it comes as no surprise that I worry about Hitchens as an anti-theist, as God comes so clearly evident in the American Tory package. Suffice it to say that my model in this regard is John Adams. As brilliant and comprehensive a life as Hitchens has had, I don't think even he could consume enough of it to be charged by too many philosophies. Having read his memoir I understand that he simply couldn't be much more than a Trotskyite by study and habit, but it is a habit that might have been born by any other number of disciplines. At some point, you can't simply swap out your networks for an entirely new, and so his is what it is. Except that in the whole of his book with two chapters to go, I can't recall him quoting Trotsky at all. Rather, Hitchens is more appropriately a steward of the best impulses of Liberalism and is thus committed to the cause of Liberty itself. His is a character to be admired, and so he appropriately shines a light on those attributes of character which ought to be found in the leaders we want but more often exposes and excoriates those defects in the leaders we have. He does so without being small minded or petty and most importantly to a true Liberal without the godawful smugness of those with solutions to pimp. He is an intellectual who understands and respects moral and physical courage, something we seem to have lost in the scholar-squirrels of the postmoderner Left.