

CONSERVATISM MEANS PRIVILEGE

INDIVIDUALISM MEANS GREED

THEY GO TOGETHER

A LOOK AT TEN THOUGHT PROVOKING SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Below are a few links that I hope may stimulate discussion. For most of them I have written a short introduction. Occasionally I have gone on a bit longer. It bothers me that at times the pursuit of decent and humane values can produce results that are anything but decent and humane. Nevertheless, I choose imperfect humanity over perfect inhumanity. Working towards humanity is not easy and it is fraught with dangers. Attempting to define humanity is difficult enough. Working towards inhumanity is much easier. That is one reason that some politicians choose to do that, though they often wear a cloak labelled 'humanity'. It would not do to tell the truth.

1. *Political Freud, a history* (2015) by Eli Zaretsky

The influence of Freud goes far beyond the couch. His impact has fluctuated and extended into unexpected corners of life and his work has been deployed in different ways by different people and different movements at different times.

Below Jacobsen provides a comprehensive review of a fascinating book demonstrating not only how Freud has been used but also how he continues to provide us with an instrument for critical political sense making. The review was, I believe, written for fellow experts in the field.

<http://logosjournal.com/2016/jacobsen-2/>

2. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (1962) by C.B. Macpherson

When I was at university studying *Political Theory and Institutions*, a mouthful of a degree that might have been better called, *Government and Politics*, the work of C.B. Macpherson was drawn to my attention. As with so much that was offered to me back then I took far too long to recognise its value. In the link below, almost fifty years after the book was published, Christopher Hill reminds us how pertinent it continues to be.

<http://understandingsociety.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/possessive-individualism.html>

3. Selfishness pretends to be a philosophy and perverts politics and economics, to this day

Read about Ayn Rand and those that have claimed to follow or be influenced by her and you might scratch your head. You might burst out laughing. And yet some very powerful Americans continue to take her seriously.

Reading what Denise Cummins has to say below should help not only to make sense of Ayn Rand but also of her disciples. Alan Greenspan was one.

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/making-sense/column-this-is-what-happens-when-you-take-ayn-rand-seriously/>

4. George Monbiot on neo-liberalism and more

I once attended a seminar at which one of Margaret Thatcher's economic gurus made a presentation. Not being good at sums I struggled for a while under the misapprehension that the essence of what he was saying was lurking among the numbers. It wasn't. He was telling us that while poor people are motivated to work hard by the threat of yet more poverty rich people can only be motivated by the offer of yet more riches. Geddit?

We have to remember that the word **LIBERAL** as used here is not the philosophy of the later Gladstone who came to realise that not only did the state have the power to right social wrongs but that it also had the duty to do so. Charity alone could not do the job.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>

5. Pinochet in Piccadilly (2002) by Andy Beckett

The connection between Thatcher and Pinochet was based upon more than mutual personal respect. Chile provided the laboratory in which the experiment for what we later called Thatcherism or Reaganism was carried out. Did those economists in the University of Chicago think about the torture and murder that were essential to the experiment? Kissinger and the CIA were certainly not bothered. Here is a review of Beckett's book.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3578096/The-English-of-South-America.html>

6. And here is Ken Loach's eleven-minute film reminding us of another 9/11

I first saw this film in the presence of Chilean exiles, including a frail and weak old man who had been tortured and imprisoned by the government of Pinochet. It took a while to realise that this frail and weak old man was younger than me.

https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x415e_ken-loach-september-11_shortfilms

7. *The Locomotive of War* (2017) by Peter Clarke

William Ewart Gladstone was born in Liverpool in 1809. His family country retreat was at the mouth of the River Mersey in Seaforth, close to my primary school. By then the area had seen better days. At one time it was in the Crosby parliamentary constituency (mine) and Shirley Williams told me that it gave her a reason for being an MP. Still standing in nearby Waterloo is the house in which Frederick Engels stayed in order to recuperate from illness.

Forgive my meandering but Peter Clarke's book prompts such personal thoughts. I had underestimated the extent to which Gladstonian liberalism had played its part in causing Britain to go to war in 1914 in support of Belgium. It was not simply that in 1839 we had committed ourselves to protect Belgium. Gladstone's reiteration of that support was still fresh in the minds of the Liberal government and contributed to the decision.

I knew that Gladstone continued to sustain the values of prominent members of the British Liberal Party but I had little idea of the extent to which Woodrow Wilson's presidency shared them. If those values can be seen to have been one reason for Britain's entry into the war they can also be seen to have been a theme of the peace conference.

Picking up on the famous phrase of H.G. Wells, "The War to end War", (Wells himself recognised the irony) Archibald Wavell described the conference as the "Peace to end Peace." In terms of nationalistic self-determination and reparations that phrase is clearly appropriate. But Gladstone's values were evident not only in support for small countries but also in the establishment of the League of Nations and the development of a new economic language by Maynard Keynes (a Liberal).

Rejecting the greed and privilege inherent in what passes for the philosophy of the Conservative Party is not enough. Neither is it enough to treat the title of the Labour Party Manifesto, **FOR THE MANY, not the few**, as an unproblematic war cry. Boxing clever can help.

Although he was a great admirer of Gladstone it was not simply a commitment to his values that helped Harold Wilson say 'no' to the pressure exerted by

Lyndon Johnson for the UK to join the USA in Vietnam. It would have been wrong to join that war but also against our (selfish) interests.

The question for those working uncertainly towards humanity looks like,

“Is there a humane, inclusive and socially fair selfishness?”

Before I say any more about this here is a review of Clarke’s book.

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/books-in-brief-the-locomotive-of-war-by-peter-clarke>

8. Self-interest as a good

Walter Lippman was in London in late July 1914. He became famous for the acuity of his observation and analysis of foreign affairs and yet, that summer, he sensed no on-coming conflict. It was only when, taking a short trip in early August, he was turned back at the German border that he began to wonder if something was up. The war was a surprise and not only to him. By 1919 he was part of Woodrow Wilson’s team at the peace conference.

In 1942 he began to write a short book about US foreign policy. He reminds us that the Monroe Doctrine that was named after an American President was more a product of British foreign policy than anything else and was propped up by the Royal Navy. The USA, however, foolishly convinced itself that it was American exceptionalism that enabled it to draw the Pacific countries into its empire. This self-belief caused it to behave irrationally and against its own interests. He also makes the point that the post-war desire for peace produced a level of disarmament that made it difficult to maintain peace.

Perhaps the reviewer of his book lays too little emphasis upon Lippman’s hope that after WWII the USA would pursue a rational foreign policy that would be in its own interests. Here is the review.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1997-09-01/us-foreign-policy-shield-republic>

9. Harold Wilson, more Gladstonian than you might think

A former President of the old Liberal Party told me that, noticing Wilson had a picture of Gladstone on his wall, he asked him why he left the party to join Labour. Harold Wilson replied that he remained a liberal but it was only in the Labour Party that he could make things happen. He was not the only former Liberal Party member to have said that. He also said that he was really pleased that by establishing the Open University he was completing the work of Gladstone. It was in 1870 that Gladstone (the Forster Act) made free and compulsory schooling available to all.

Tony Blair seems to have disparaged Wilson who has been regarded as tacking one way and then the other but while Blair came into power telling us that his priority was *education, education, education*, his commitment to possessive individualism disconnected schools from local democracy, separated children according to religion and forced professional educators to work to targets set for them and, instead of enabling learning, focus upon test after test after test.

Below is a review of what is probably the latest book on Harold Wilson.

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2016/07/25/book-review-harold-wilson-the-unprincipled-prime-minister-reappraising-harold-wilson-edited-by-andrew-s-crines-and-kevin-hickson/>

10. Social criticality

I have used the following book with students from many different countries and continue to find powerful the notion that schools are part of society rather than preparers for society or for individualism. You may find a number of references to it on this website.

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED295339.pdf>

And finally

In order to encourage discussion and critique of my own work the following link may help.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/WebcriticalProfessionalConversation.pdf>

Cliff Jones, 27th May 2017