

P R O B L E M S

**(formerly: Problems Of Capitalism & Socialism,
Problems Of Communism)**

Power To All Our Friends!

by Gwydion M Williams

The Climate Crisis began with a steady rise in average global temperatures from the 1980s. And it gets steadily worse, with a series of no-longer-rare weather disasters. Crises that are even worse than if we had a simple increase of one or two degrees in the average in an otherwise unchanged pattern of global weather.

Civilisation is certain to survive, but perhaps with some decades of hardship and an actual shrinkage of population. And a probable ending of Western hegemony, with the New Right probably reclassified as wreckers of what they'd inherited.

The BBC should have a prime-time Weather World once a week, showing global patterns and listing any recent disasters. This would help change public opinion by continuous drips of alarming news.

The Western elite are finally reacting. But still give priority to their own power and privilege.

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The Climate Crisis began with a steady rise in average global temperatures from the 1980s. And it gets steadily worse, with a series of no-longer-rare weather disasters. Crises that are even worse than if we had a simple increase of one or two degrees in the average in an otherwise unchanged pattern of global weather.

Like the Fall of the Roman Empire, it is a series of crises rather than a single drastic event. And like the Fall of the Roman Empire, even the worst crises would leave a lot to continue on a reduced basis in the core areas.

And outside those core areas, perhaps no great damage. The Dark Ages for Christian Europe saw centuries of brilliance for the Islamic World. And Chinese civilisation in its Han Dynasty version fell apart before Rome fell, but bounced back with the Tang Dynasty from the 7th century.

Civilisation is certain to survive, but perhaps with some decades of hardship and an actual shrinkage of population. And a probable ending of Western hegemony, with the New Right probably reclassified as wreckers of what they'd inherited. Reclassified as Brezhnev has been, though for most of his rule he was either feared or praised as a brilliant stabiliser of the Soviet system.

When I wrote about the Texas Freeze back in March, I explained how the article had got too big and I'd have to continue it.¹

As I'd expected, memories of the freeze soon faded. But Texas has been hit again. Now it suffers because of a heatwave

that is much worse in California.²

Green Energy is part President Biden's new wish-list for massive government spending. A useful step away from the Clinton-Obama tradition of timidity towards business interests.

Here, I will explain why we need to think hard about power grids and power storage, as well as Green Energy.

And argue that the BBC should have a prime-time Weather World once a week, showing global patterns and listing any recent disasters. This would help change public opinion by continuous drips of alarming news.

And looking more widely, the 'Short Counter-Revolution' from the 1980s should be seen as a repeat of the outbreak of greed by the upper classes that occurred in the later stages of the 18th century Industrial Revolution.³

Class War is a feature of all advanced societies, just as Marx said. At times it can be a Cold War – both sides keep it limited. The Western working classes did well when the global Cold War meant a home-grown Cold War in which the Upper Classes accepted a smaller slice of economic growth. But by the 1980s the Soviet Union had become an unattractive model. The Upper Classes – the richest 1%, many of them of ordinary origin – began waging war on the modest incomes of the rest of society. 90% of the population got less of the increase wealth than they'd earned. *Nothing at all* in the USA, where most of them had been convinced that they would flourish as Free Individuals in an economy dominated by Free Enterprise.

Greed in a Makeshift Society

Most people can get greedy. And I'm certainly not immune to it, though I *am* more aware than most of the harm I might do to people I've never met.

Most people resent a rule that stops them doing things they like. Myself rather more than the average: but again I now see the wider context.

All human communities impose curbs. They could not exist otherwise. And most of us are not net gainers when the society relaxes some of the economic rules. Hardly ever for rules that are not discriminatory against your particular sort of person, whatever that is.

With 1980s deregulation and talk of freedom, the rich gained more power than most to indulge their greed. More power to water down rules that get in the way of their particular self-indulgence. Or that prevents them from piling up even more wealth.

The 1980s saw the rich re-assert themselves, when they saw the Soviet Union weakening and China apparently on their side. They revived Adam Smith's dogmatic claim that in profit-based economic matters there is an Invisible Hand that stops anyone damaging the general welfare. A doctrine that implied that economic activity by the state was bad and best avoided. Likewise state regulation.

Adam Smith's claim in *The Wealth of Nations* was slipped into his wider analysis without any supporting arguments. He asserts that whatever is profitable for an individual employer will also increase the wealth of the whole society. I've shown in detail why this was phoney, for those interested or who see a need to prove it.⁴

² <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/texas-california-call-power-restraint-during-heatwave-2021-06-17/>

³ I explain 'Short Counter-Revolution' in the last article

⁴ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/48-economics/037-adam-smith-misleading-adam-smith-faked-his-most-famous-claim/>

Let me emphasise that I'm talking just about the crude accumulation of material wealth. There are good reasons for thinking about other things besides that: moral and spiritual and capable of long-term survival. But the claim that Free Markets are always the best for the crude accumulation of material wealth rests on nothing very much.

Successful economies have never followed this 'wisdom'. Smith asserted that the British economy had grown *despite* the fast expansion of the British state in the same era. Yet every other successful take-off has followed exactly the same pattern, with one exception. The exception being China, where the very fast growth under Deng followed on from reducing the role of a state that had controlled or collectivised everything under Mao. But China under Mao had grown faster than the UK or USA in the same era.⁵ I've not yet seen a Western expert who specifically denied this, which is what the generally accepted data shows. They simply mention particular errors, and fail to mention the far more numerous successes. And then dogmatically claim that state control must be burdening the economy. But the Chinese state remains far more dominant than any state has been in the West, even at the height of Keynesianism.

Yet even on the left, most Western politicians accept the 'wisdom' that successful wealth-creation happens *despite* a large state keeping the society harmonious. Foreigners are advised to run down their state machine, even though the USA and their close allies haven't actually done so. And it continues to be viewed as wisdom in the West, despite shrinking the economy and alienating most voters in post-Soviet Russia.⁶ Despite having helped the rise of Illiberal Democracy in a Middle-Europe now free of Russian occupation.

Such 'despite' arguments are common on the right, though not unknown on the left. Especially favoured by Trotskyists, whose rise has neatly matched the left's decline in the West. Rather than learn from real events, you decide that the outcomes you like happened *despite* the work of leaders or procedures you don't care for.

You could also argue that if you wake up with a hangover after a night's heavy drinking, it is *despite* the drinking rather than because of it. Few are quite that foolish, though addicts to hard drugs, gambling etc. may try it.

The actual circumstances of Britain's Industrial Revolution was the expansion of a highly regulatory state, as well as a spread of capitalism at the expense of commerce dominated by social values. And the pure capitalists have generally not dominated. Real-world bankers are quite often dishonest, but very seldom the superhuman plotters of some people's imagination. And in the actual rise of British Industry from 1760 to 1830, the old elite dominated. The growth of industry mostly happened well away from London and other old centres of power: independent but largely accepting that the old elite should be in charge.

The actual rulers always regarded business as a useful 'cash cow'. A provider of taxes for the gentry and military functions that they cared most about.

And did it begin with business interests? My view is that Britain's Industrial Revolution was made possible by the earlier emergence of science. Not Webber's notion of a world-transforming Protestant Ethic – many of the early scientists were devout Roman Catholics, including Galileo. Most of the later great scientists were atheists or skeptics, as scientific truths emerged that clearly contradicted Christianity and every other existing religion. But what mattered was the free sharing of discoveries and opinions, in contrast to older habits of making them secrets and mysteries. And an agreement that facts and careful measurements were decisive.

5 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/recent-issues/2019-11-magazine/2019-11/>

6 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/46-globalisation/1473-2/>

Knowledge by itself means nothing. The famous phrase '*knowledge is power*' misleads. It was better in its presumed Biblical source:

"A wise man is strong, a man of knowledge increaseth strength".⁷

The wise are often vulnerable, and people with knowledge and gifts can often be foolish. Can be quite self-destructive. Knowledge may lie idle and unloved: valued only by those who care for knowledge as such. Translation into power needs individuals who pick up potentially useful knowledge – most of them add nothing new to the knowledge as such. They perform the vital task of turning potential into actual power. And they sometimes grow rich, but more often have a novelty that *almost* works, with less creative individuals picking up the idea and making it a source of profit.

And this is helped by the regulators of the society being tolerant of disruptive ideas that also make money. In all of human history, not many ruling elites have actually seen it so.

Schools of materialist philosophy are known to have existed in Classical Greece, and separate but similar schools definitely existed in China and India, and perhaps other places. Had the ancient Jews not lasted at least long enough to get their Sacred Writings translated into Greek, we would have no idea that such a thing ever existed. They would be another obscure people mentioned in passing by the monuments of Egypt, Assyria etc.

Whole bodies of religious, philosophical and materialist thought may have existed without leaving any trace in the surviving record.

What *isn't* plausible are claims for ancient lost technology. No one borrowed the various useful New World food crops before regular European contacts. Cities leave clear evidence of their existence, and they begin in West Asia from about 9000 years ago. Çatalhöyük, the oldest know, was an oddity that lacked streets and in various ways suggests an early dead-ending experiment by people who had no idea of what a city should be.

In actual history, all of the materialist schools lost out, with most of their writings lost. Science inherently leads you towards atheism and towards an uncomfortable view of the universe. A universe that we are strangers in. The lucky little exception in an unthinking world. One *not* ruled by a God or Great Spirit who guarantees the moral principles that your society runs on. Nature rambles and the moon don't care.

Theologians mostly viewed science with suspicion, and were right to do so. And there was a widespread habit of translating early scientific ideas into production only when this did not disrupt the existing society. The occasional entrepreneur who wanted to translate scientific knowledge into something disruptive would usually be discouraged or prevented.

James Watt was able to produce a much better steam engine because he had a basic understanding of heat, based on the work of early scientist Joseph Black. Even so, he came close to failing. And this was despite the ideal circumstances of a flourishing British Industrial Revolution.

An Industrial Revolution probably needs three things – flourishing commerce, a useful shared body of scientific knowledge and a state machine that is both powerful and tolerant of the social disruption of early industrialism.

China had the first of these – Adam Smith correctly describes it as richer than any part of Europe, but also static whereas Europe was advancing. And Italy, France and Germany had flourishing science, though it was successfully suppressed by the Counter-Reformation in Italy. Britain was also strong in science, with the Scots producing a disproportionate amount of the new thinking during the lifetime of Adam Smith. Two of his closest associates were major scientific figures: James Hutton the geologist, and the physicist and chemist Joseph Black. Economists of left and

7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientia_potentia_est

right ignore this connection or are ignorant of it. It was left to me as an outsider without preconceived notions to find it. Back in the year 2000 I detailed my findings in a book that everyone ignored, even though it seems to be the only left-wing study of Adam Smith that has ever been written in English. (Or any other language, as far as I know.)

The most relevant portions are on-line, along with the tragic case of John Robison, inventor of the first modern Conspiracy Theory.⁸

Scottish intellectuals were almost all at odds with the hard-line Protestantism of the official Church of Scotland. And the existence of *two* official Churches in Britain with contradictory theology must have led to general skepticism and a willingness to ignore Christian traditions.

The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 had been a pragmatic settlement after the expulsion of James the Second and Seventh, who was undeniably the lawful king of England, Ireland and Scotland. Ireland had been made an English possession, originally with Papal approval. Wales at that time had no distinct legal existence.

Since then, the monarch has been head of both the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Moderate-Protestant Church of England, which also was the official religion for Wales and Ireland. Scotland had no bishops, seeing them as anti-Christian, but the rest of Britain had them. This was blatantly based on power politics, and Britain after 1688 was a state with no solid religious roots.

Tradition was further weakened when the Tudor line died out with the childless Queen Anne. This unfortunate lady had seventeen pregnancies but only five live births.⁹ The longest-lived of these was a promising boy, who however died at age 11. Anyone who still believed in the Christian God must have wondered what on earth God was up to. And many indeed became broadly skeptical.

Having disturbed all tradition by bringing in the distantly-related Hanoverian line ahead of many Roman Catholics with a better claim, it was easy to be lax about the profitable undermining of the traditional economy by new inventions and the factory system.

This wasn't the first time in English history in which the traditional view of a helpful all-powerful God had been strained. The Tudor dynasty had brought stability to England after a long civil war, but then died out in the third generation. I've done an article about this: *The Tudors: a Mangled Fairy-Story*.¹⁰ Had Catherine of Aragon produced a male heir, England would almost certainly have stayed Roman Catholic. And had her daughter Mary Tudor had any sort of heir, her restoration of the Old Religion would probably have succeeded. But she only got the chance because of the early death of Edward the Sixth, who favoured hard-line Protestant values.

The disorders of the Stuart Dynasty – the 'Great Rebellion' and the English Commonwealth – were made more likely by the Stuarts being seen as Makeshift Kings by most of the English.¹¹ To Scots they were ancient and established – but Scottish rebels had killed many of them across the centuries. James the Sixth was preceded by five other kings called James, but was the first

to die of old age.

All of this made Britain the perfect place for the radical new departure of the Industrial Revolution. A place where the state was both powerful and uncertain of its legitimacy.

Greedy is untrustworthy. But is there a God who is a trustworthy alternative? Many doubted it in the 18th century.

Class War by the Upper Classes

The standard view of Britain's Industrial Revolution is that it happened from 1760 to 1830. That's to say, it happened entirely within the reign of George 3rd and his sons. They were never fully in control. George 3rd had come close, but he had been decisively defeated by the American War of Independence and the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots. The 1832 Reform Act moved control of the House of Commons from a couple of hundred rich families to about 20% of the population. A fifth of the adult male population of the core of the British Empire, and of course no women till 1918 – but the class interests of rich and conventional women were largely looked after.

It was also a reassertion of the externals of Christian faith, with most of the new voters being sincere believers. The ruling class had anyway had a bad scare with the French Revolution. Edmund Burke, who came from Whig politics even though he helped create the later Tory tradition, had warned that if the rich undermined religion and claimed to be rational, other people might see it as irrational for so much power and wealth to belong to an hereditary aristocracy. So religion was no longer sneered at by the rulers. The moderately privilege were drafted in as supporters of the very rich elite.

I've written elsewhere about how trying to set the 1% against the 99% is not realistic. Between the 1% of winners and the 90% of losers are the *Next Nine*, who might also be called either the Middle Class or Upper Middle Class. I've set out details as *The Next Nine and the Damaged Majority*.¹² Also evidence that there is always a large element of luck about who ends up in Overclass and who remains in the Next Nine. I did a study referencing a recent book: *Outliers – 101 Candidates To Be Bill Gates*.¹³

The Next Nine are not on the bread-line, or in much danger of going there. They can imagine that they will soon have a lucky break and be promoted into the Overclass. And they may well vote in favour of those above them. Be keen to hold down those below them. And I'd suppose that it was much the same in the early 19th century – especially since voting was open and public until the 1880s, which was also the first time that a numerical majority of British men could vote.¹⁴ Before the secret ballot, anyone without a secure independent income would be cautious about voting against the local Big Man.

The average talents of individuals in the Next Nine are almost certainly equal to that of the average member of the Overclass. They probably work just as hard, particularly if you note that many devote large efforts to things they don't get paid for. They manage fine without the vast boost in wealth and incomes the Overclass have been given, supposedly as a reward for skill and hard work. But they have also not been losers: at least not in terms of cold cash.

The key to politics is probably shifting the views of this group. And they are increasingly offended by the visible results of the Thatcher / Reagan reversion to pre-1914 economic values.

8 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/998-from-labour-affairs/the-french-revolution-and-its-unstable-politics/040-politics/the-original-conspiracy-theory/>

9 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne,_Queen_of_Great_Britain#Pregnancies_and_issue

10 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/before-2018/labour-affairs-before-2014/mary-tudor-and-elizabeth-almost-a-beautiful-story/>

11 I borrow this phrase from the English translation of the novels of Maurice Druon. These are about the start of the Hundred Years War, which followed from the ending of the previous long-running direct male line of monarchs.

12 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/The-Next-Nine-and-the-Damaged-Majority>. Part of a wider study called *Why Spontaneous Politics Mostly Fails*, which you can find at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/problems-43-tragedy-and-ai.pdf>.

13 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/before-2018/labour-affairs-before-2014/business-success-a-mix-of-skill-and-luck/>

14 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/40-britain/665-2/>

It would be nice if the vast majority could spontaneously get together to look after their own interests. Or do so while remaining detached 'sovereign individuals', as anarchists hope for. But in fact this very rarely happens. Wat Tyler's Peasants' Revolt failed, and anyway may have been dominated by the Next Nine of that era.

Trade Unionism was the main movement that helped the majority. The loss of large secure work-places has damaged it. And much productive industry has been shifted away from Western Europe and the USA. Massive unemployment has returned, based on a ruling class belief that Communism was no longer attractive. A confidence that right-wing populists who might loosely be called fascist would not be a menace to the rich. Not likely to be vicious against some of the rich, which Hitler was; but I think he was the only one.

Popular power rested heavily on a mass of industrial workers organised as Trade Unions. Notions that it could be otherwise have not worked out.

But on the positive side, there are also visible signs of failure in the ultra-capitalist values that the New Right pushed. Values that Bill Clinton and Tony Blair weakly surrendered to; and Mr Starmer is determined to continue to make Labour abase itself before. Even the example of President Biden with his very centrist background has not made Labour bold again.

After Starmer losing the traditional Labour seat of Hartlepool and generally falling below Corbyn's level, things might change. But elsewhere in Western Europe, major parties of the centre-left have dwindled down to tiny rumps without having the least idea what might be wrong.

Misunderstanding the present is based on misreading the past.

The early stages of Britain's Industrial Revolution may indeed have been a 'tide that lifted all boats', at least in Britain. But the growth of the factory system shifted the benefits to just a few individuals:

"The factory system has no single beginning, but Richard Arkwright was a major contributor. Someone who did more than any other single individual to create a system in which a few people controlled the work of many. He also shows the typical features – hard-working and clever, but also a man who stole other people's ideas. A man who turned the work of many into wealth for just himself."¹⁵

Some among the elite disliked it when the rich squeezed the poor beyond traditional limits. Several years back, I noted one 'road not taken':

"There was a time when society might have been consolidated on some other basis. Britain might have modernised and industrialised while still remaining a Christian country. There were many who wanted to keep it Christian, not in the sense of restricting or persecuting other religions, but simply by treating its own official creed with a greater degree of seriousness. As one writer put it, in the economic depression just after the end of the Napoleonic Wars :-

"If we are a Christian nation, we must learn to act nationally, as well as individually, as Christians. We must remove half-truths, the most dangerous of errors (as those of the poor visionaries called Spenceans) by the whole truth.'

"The writer was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, mostly remembered now for his poetry, which seemed very strange and irregular in his own day. For a long time, his philosophical writings counted for at least as much as the poems. But his challenge to act seriously as Christians was not taken up. Society moved in other directions,

15 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/40-britain/arkwright-and-the-rise-of-the-factory-system/>

turning his philosophy into an historic curio." (Coleridge and the end of Christian economics.)¹⁶

Spenceans had similar ideas but were radicals, whereas Coleridge was hoping that the elite would become modest and reasonable. Also Coleridge had become appalled by the radicalism of the later French Revolution.

Spenceans, the followers of Thomas Spence, were radicals who could be seen as early socialists. They operated well before the word came into use. They are left out or downplayed by histories of socialism, mostly written by deists or atheists. But the ideas are similar:

"Thomas Spence ... 1750 –1814) was an English Radical and advocate of the common ownership of land and a democratic equality of the sexes. Spence was one of the leading revolutionaries of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He was born in poverty and died the same way, after long periods of imprisonment, in 1814...

"He kept a book-stall in High Holborn. In 1794, with other members of the London Corresponding Society, he spent seven months in Newgate Gaol on a charge of high treason, and in 1801 he was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for seditious libel...

"Spence may have been the first Englishman to speak of 'the rights of man'.

"Spence proposes the introduction of an unconditional basic income to all members of the community."¹⁷

Spence merits a film about his life. But currently there doesn't seem to be even a good biography. There's a Thomas Spence society that sounds anarchist and does not mention socialism. But he was part of the movement that later blossomed into socialism and communism, as well as both pro-capitalist and anti-capitalist anarchism.

The 20% of British men who had the vote after 1832 would have paid both national taxes and local taxes called Rates – an ancient system that Thatcher abolished in 1990. They and their wives were also in little danger of needing Poor Relief. So they shouted out that their modest taxes were an intolerable burden. Ensured that the new workhouse system inflicted cruelties on those who could not escape it, so that as many as possible kept outside it. And declared that the suffering of the poor was caused by idleness and waste.

You can always find a few wastrels among the poor. The question is how many. Usually it would be only two or three per hundred. This is not a good reason to deny help to the other ninety-seven or more. But it *is* a fine excuse for the greedy. A pretext for class war waged by the rich against the rest of society. And workhouses were a particularly bad example.

You can find a thoroughly misleading and whitewashing account of workhouses on the Wikipedia.¹⁸ The New Right have an undue influence on this all-volunteer encyclopedia. The Wikipedia consensus also insists on describing Beijing's re-assertion of its authority in Tibet as *annexation*, even though annexation unambiguously means the seizure of territory that was part or all of some other sovereignty.¹⁹ Governments in Lhasa did intermittently claim independence, but no sovereign government or international body ever recognised them as such.²⁰ Ruling Tibetan factions also intermittently worked

16 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/48-economics/037-adam-smith-misleading/coleridges-alternative-for-the-british-economy/>

17 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Spence

18 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workhouse#1834_Act as at 8th April 2021.

19 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annexation_of_Tibet_by_the_People%27s_Republic_of_China

20 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/42-china/tibet/tibet-and-international-law/>

with the Central Government and agreed that they were part of China. This was very much the case with the 1940 inauguration of the present Dalai Lama.²¹ There were several candidates, but the Central Government used its authority to avoid the Golden Urn test, which was imposed to avoid fraud and ensure that the real Dalai Lama was selected by drawing one name from the names of all candidates put into the urn. But unless Tibetan saints have powers of reincarnation not shared by Buddhists or Hindus in the rest of the world, it is *all* fraud. Probably a clever child coached to recognise objects owned by the person whose soul they supposedly have inherited, and thus able to pick them out in an open test. And probably forgetting it when they grow up, as children mostly do.

(Someone with a clever and trusting child might see if they could duplicate the probable fraud, filming it all and showing how it was done. Show the child selecting as their own just a few objects from a random selection taken from charity shops. But then demonstrating that they had earlier been coached and had genuinely forgotten it.)

Beijing reunified a divided China after proclaiming the People's Republic in 1949. Naturally this included everything that International Law still recognised as Chinese territory. So when the self-appointed International Commission of Jurists took the side of the Dalai Lama against Beijing, there was a deafening silence about his claim that Tibet had always been an independent nation. They knew which side they were on, but they were also not going to make a claim that any lawyer would see as blatantly ridiculous. They condemned the actual measures used against the Tibetan Rebellion, but anyone can do that for almost any government facing a separatist movement.

Tibet was not annexed, despite what the Wikipedia currently says, and despite this falsehood being believed by most Westerners who take an interest. And it must offend 99% of those Chinese who take an interest in the matter. Like most of the West's current anti-China campaign, it is definitely *anti-China* and not just anti-Beijing. It asks them to despise the whole of recent Chinese history, and outside of Hong Kong they are not going to do this. It's been a 'rough wooing' by the West, and an ineffective one.²²

If dedicated volunteer encyclopaedists prefer to be propagandists for New Right obsessions rather than being a reliable and neutral source, that is their choice. In the long run it will cost them. Since no one owns the content, a properly funded international body might feed it all to its own version and then run it with more professional standards. Meantime the Wiki is better than most reference books. It is best to trust it when it includes nothing on which Western contributors might be biased or misled. When it does, you need to cross-check.

There are a number of reliable books that describe the workhouse system, for those in any doubt about how bad it was. Plus a deservedly bad reputation from works of fiction.

It was a denial of 2000 years of kindness towards the poor that had been the core of Christian values. The separate Christian obsession with limiting other people's sex lives was always secondary, though understandable given that the Judaism from which Christianity emerged had been locked in a long cultural battle with the heirs of Alexander the Great.

You might think that this last is entirely separate from Climate Change. Or if you agree that all things are connected at some level, you might think the link remote. But that particular battle shaped the version of Judaism that Christianity emerged from: one hostile to Pagan Greek ideas. Judaism after the destruction of the Jewish temple could settle down as a minority living its

own life and accepting whatever state ruled them. Christianity in theory should include everyone, but could exist as a minority who expected to be saved when the End of the World came. But then a compromising version of Christianity became the official religion of a Roman state that kept many of the old forms. This tension was a crack in the foundations of modern Western thinking.

Sex, Slaves, Farmers, and Jewish Wars

The US insult '**you're history**' shows the vast foolishness of those who say it.

All of us are *history made flesh*. One example: just to speak English is to be the heir to a whole chain of violent events:

1. The conquest of both Europe and the lands from Persia down into the Indian subcontinent by chariot-riding warriors speaking Indo-European languages.
2. The conquest of most of the island of Britain by warrior-farmers after the Roman Empire withdrew. They spoke Germanic dialects close to modern Dutch and Frisian. This was part of an expansion of similar peoples when the Roman Empire weakened.
3. Conquered Britain saw the consolidation of the Angles and Saxons and Jutes into one kingdom by three generations of remarkable leaders from Alfred the Great to Athelstan. The Wessex dialect took over in a new enlarged kingdom called England.
4. The Norman conquest hijacked this state, leading to a simplified English that absorbed many Norman-French words.
5. The British Empire spread the language globally, mostly by conquest.
6. The USA has continued the process. Partly by dominating global trade. But also by undermining and occasionally invading countries that had not accepted their global hegemony.

Walter Scott, speaking a Lowland-Scot version of Saxon that was different from the English made by Wessex in the far south, drew attention to the long-term results of the Norman conquest in his novel *Ivanhoe*. None of the adventurous events involving the man called Ivanhoe are remotely historic, but it ends with a declaration that Norman and Saxon have merged and are now all English. I'd suppose that he saw it as a notion that might ease the merger of Scots and English into a single British identity. That was something he helped more substantially by getting King George 4th to support his romanticised history by wearing a tartan kilt when he visited Scotland.²³ This also served to ease the historic tensions between Scottish Highlander and Lowlander. Highlanders were mostly driven out by their own clan leaders, but the general merger was doing fine until Thatcher. Despite the strong radicalism of some older industrial areas, it used to be a Tory stronghold.

As for the merger of Saxon and Norman, Richard the First almost certainly had no such aim. Apart from wanting to be an international Christian hero by recovering Jerusalem from Saladin, he identified most strongly with his mother's territory of Aquitaine:

"Little is known about Richard's education. Although he was born in Oxford and brought up in England up to his eighth year, it is not known to what extent he used or understood English; he was an educated man who composed poetry and wrote in Limousin (lenga d'òc) and also in French. During his captivity, English prejudice against foreigners was used in a calculated way by his

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visit_of_King_George_IV_to_Scotland

²¹ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/tibet/the-truth-about-the-dalai-lama/>

²² 'Rough wooing' was a Scottish phrase from the time when Henry 8th tried to persuade the Scots to have the infant Mary Queen of Scots marry his son, the short-lived future Edward the Sixth. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rough_Wooing for more.

brother John to help destroy the authority of Richard's chancellor, William Longchamp, who was a Norman. One of the specific charges laid against Longchamp, by John's supporter Hugh Nonant, was that he could not speak English. This indicates that by the late 12th century a knowledge of English was expected of those in positions of authority in England."²⁴

Scott actually knew a lot of history, even though he was ready to change it for the sake of a good story. In *Old Mortality*, he gives a fairly accurate account of an uprising by Scottish Covenantors, lower-class originators of the Scottish branch of the later rival creeds of the Whigs and Radicals. And includes the odd detail of salmon then being so common that servants in Scotland insisted on a rule to guard them from being fed salmon more than three times a week.

On the English language, Scott may have been the first to notice the significance of the fact that Standard English has Saxon words for most farm animals, but Norman-French words for the meat. Pig and pork, cow and beef, sheep and mutton. Based on who it was who ate most of the meat, obviously. And not necessarily the way the language was at the time of Richard the Lionheart. The re-emergence of English as a language of power certainly happened later:

"Documents written in English are found in the Crown's archive during the medieval period but they are rare before the growing standardisation of written English by the Crown's secretariat - the chancery - during Henry V's reign (1413-22)."²⁵

We also say 'farmer' rather than peasant for someone who works the land. But check the word's origins and you find that a 'farmer' was originally a powerful upper-class figure who collected taxes from a region and was supposed to hand over most of them to the central government - an early case of privatisation. A system that Britain abolished, and which was hated enough in France before the Revolution to get the pioneering chemist Lavoisier executed by a revolutionary tribunal on account of his involvement. English accounts mostly hide the off-message facts and treat the tragic event as a bit of French lunacy.

'Farmer' in the 14th century also included a bailiff or steward, directing the work of ordinary people on behalf of a distant owner. Only in the 17th century did it become the common term for anyone who worked the land as either an owner or a tenant. And not just the richer sort: people who'd be called peasants elsewhere in the world are Small Farmers in normal English usage.

Something similar happened with Estate Agent. This originally referred to a person responsible for managing a landed estate. Those handling the buying and selling of homes were 'House Agents', and there were 'Land Agents' for plots of land. But in the 20th century, they all upgraded to be 'Estate Agents'.²⁶

The official culture and its expression in most public media are always encouraging people to identify themselves with those well above them in the real social order.

Official power in the English-language media has a large role in shaping who its speakers are and how they think. Also globally, and its dominance seems now certain to outlast the declining power of the Anglosphere. Both Spanish and Standard Chinese (Mandarin) have more native speakers, but far fewer learn them as a second language. China insists on all of its citizens becoming fluent in Standard Chinese, but accepts English for communication with foreigners. Visitors will see

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_I_of_England

²⁵ <https://history.blog.gov.uk/2017/04/19/the-language-of-government-and-the-power-of-plain-english/>

²⁶ This is one of many useful details that can be found in the full *Oxford English Dictionary*, which is conveniently available either by subscription or as purchased software.

public signs written in Chinese ideograms and English. Just occasionally in Standard Chinese written in the Latin alphabet, which is anyway confusing if you don't use a number to indicate the *tone*, which can change the entire meaning. For instance 'Mao' as in Chairman Mao means 'hair', but with a different tone it can mean other things, including cat.²⁷

And one oddity no one else seems to have noticed. Caesar also means hair. Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar were a mix of politician and military leader. Between them they put the Roman Empire on a stable basis, just as Mao did for China. Augustus also killed far more of his political enemies than Mao did, having learned from Julius Caesar's assassination that the Roman ruling class would not accept a ruler who tried to rule while also being moderate and forgiving.

China has accepted English for global usage, and as something all children are expected to learn. And India at a national level has English as an official language along with Hindi, which is a baffling foreign language to many of its citizens. Currently recognised regional languages are Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Kokborok, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Mizo, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.²⁸ Another 38 languages have been proposed for this useful status within India's complex federal system of government.

Something similar exists for most of the rest of the world.

Looking back far beyond the origins of English, disputes between Greeks and several factions of Jews lie at the root of the shared Latin-Christian civilisation that gave rise to the modern world. And it would probably not have happened without the unusual culture of the Greeks, developed when they were a collection of city-states.

The Persian Empire that Alexander overthrew had been tolerant of anyone who paid their taxes and kept the peace. The Greek kingdoms made by the heirs of Alexander combined lax sexuality with vast oppression of the poor, with a majority of rural workers becoming slaves on vast estates. And there was also sexual exploitation of domestic slaves, including rape. Only the rich could choose what they did or did not do sexually.

These Greek-Macedonian rulers also did their best to stamp out distinctive cultural identities: either merging with them or destroying them. In Bactria, they managed a genuine fusion with ideas from the Indian subcontinent:

"One of the last Greco-Bactrian kings ... issued remarkable Indian-standard square coins bearing the first known representations of Indian deities, which have been variously interpreted as Vishnu, Shiva, Vasudeva, Buddha or Balarama. ... These coins seem to be the first known representations of Vedic deities on coins."²⁹

I can't confirm the claim that there were no older Hindu images. But it is generally agreed that Bactra produced the first representations of Gautama Buddha in human form.³⁰ Images of the Greek sun-god Apollo are believed to have morphed into the familiar Buddha we know today.

The Greeks also viewed Apollo as a pioneer of homosexuality. And while Greek homosexuality was mostly between social equals, almost all of the Greek deities were rapists and inflictors of horrible punishments for reasons that were often petty. Buddhism is strictly celibate for its monks and nuns, and also originally non-violent, though this got compromised. But ordinary believers are mostly not made to feel guilty about sex.

Success in Bactra stands in marked contrast to bitter

²⁷ <https://gwydionmadawc.com/030-human-dynamics/dont-confuse-mao-with-mao/>

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eighth_Schedule_to_the_Constitution_of_India as at April 2021.

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Bactrian_Kingdom#First_visual_representations_of_Indian_deities

³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Buddhist_art

antagonism between Greek and Jewish values in the former Jewish kingdom of Judea. Persians were content to be a ruling elite, while the Greek city-states were mostly content to remain just that. But the Macedonian-Greek hybrid of the heirs of Alexander had a strong notion of imposing their own cultural values.

The regional ruler of Judea under Imperial authority after the restoration of the Jewish temple by Babylonian exiles was the High Priest of that temple. We have no record of this causing trouble before the 2nd century BC – though it is good to remember that history is selective. Not always written by the winners, but in practice only the viewpoints of the winners and the major losers has survived through multiple copies to be available to us.

There seems to have been both a struggle between orthodox and reformist Jews, and a determination by the rulers of the Seleucid dynasty to stamp out Judaism entirely. The result was an independent kingdom ruled by the Hasmonean dynasty which went beyond the traditional Judea to conquer most of what is claimed to have been the kingdom of David and Solomon. There are no independent records of any rulers before Omri and Ahab, and the stories in the *Book of Kings* are probably a distortion of real historic events.³¹ In the case of the *First Book of Maccabees*, we can check against Greek histories and find it generally accurate.

There is less in popular culture about the Maccabee Rebellion than you'd expect. Nor much in popular histories either. Of course this was a war between two roots of modern European culture, and a successful rebellion against an established ruler. It seems most people prefer not to think about it.

It needs to be thought about, if Western culture is to be understood. The version of Judaism that much later emerged within the Roman Empire was fairly sensible about sex, and rabbis as religious authorities were expected to be married. But Christianity came out of an alternative hard-line version that was crushed in its homeland, along with the destruction of the Jewish Temple.

Jews who survived in the Roman Empire learned to live their own lives and co-exist with the wider society. Christianity survived because it ceased to be a Jewish movement and became an anti-Establishment cult among the poor and the discontented.

All of this was an historic accident.

The independent kingdom created by the heirs of the Maccabee Revolt was fairly successful. But it was swept up by the general conquest of West Asia by the Romans. Romans took over from Greeks and had absorbed Greek culture, so the relationship between Greek and Roman was relatively easy. Mithradates the Great could be seen as a re-assertion of Greek values against Roman conquest, with perhaps elements of the older cultures that Alexander had conquered. I was impressed by Alfred Duggan's popular history, and it's regrettable that it's not been published since 1976. You can get a slightly expensive version through Amazon:³² the sort of thing that keeps me using Amazon despite their bad labour practices. And it's also a sad fact that surviving alternatives are no better, except perhaps if you live in London or some other global city and can conveniently use a small independent bookshop.

After the death of Mithradates, Greeks settled down as a privileged strata within the Roman Empire. It increasingly became *their* empire after it was split into East and West. Even more when much of the West was overrun by tribal invaders. The use of Greek became the norm, and Justinian the Great in the 6th century may have been the last Roman emperor who was a native speaker of Latin.³³ And there were plenty of Jews who

assimilated Greek and Roman culture, notably the historian Titus Flavius Josephus, who was born as Yosef ben Matityahu.

Josephus was actually involved in the massive Jewish revolt that ended with the destruction of the Jewish temple and the conversion of Jerusalem into a Pagan-Greek city. His own account has him as a leader who cunningly survived a collective suicide when his men preferred this to surrender. I doubt he was particularly truthful, and I am also fairly confident that his supposed endorsement of Early Christianity was a later forgery. Perhaps a rewrite by one copyist of some scornful remarks that other copyists left out completely. Most pagans who noticed Christianity before it became the State Religion saw it as a silly cult that flourished among the ignorant.

Flourished among the people who were losers in the Roman Empire: squeezed by the rich and maybe better off when it started falling apart. And a collapsing Rome incorporated a version of Christianity when it managed to save itself as a smaller Eastern Roman Empire centred on Byzantium, re-named Constantinople.

Late Paganism had tried to impose a pooled version of traditional religions. Possibly something like what Hinduism became when it replaced Buddhism on the Indian Subcontinent. But Buddhism had never denied the Hindu gods, never mind classing them as demons. Christianity did, but also incorporated a great deal of Pagan practice, including incorporating the Mother-Goddess tradition as the Virgin Mary. The actual bible has very little about Jesus's mother, who at the time would have been known as Mariam mother of Yeshua.

The real nature of Early Christianity is not what most people think. You can find details and hard evidence in Kautsky's *Foundations of Christianity*. This remains in print in a good English translation, and you can even get it for free on-line.³⁴ He gives lots of evidence that the original teaching of Jesus fitted within the wider tradition of armed Jewish resistance to Rome. He was part of the hopeful and calmly rationalist version of Marxist Socialism that was flourishing in Germany and more widely before 1914. And he largely wasted the rest of his life by not recognising that the Great War had made this impossible. He opposed Lenin, but was left stranded between militant Communism and a Social Democracy that failed to cope with the new world in the 1920s.

Kautsky is only one of many sources that show that the conventional story of Christian origins cannot be true. But he's much the most readable source I've found, after some extensive reading.

What we now understand as Christianity was defined by Paul of Tarsus, and is clearly partisan. He operated mostly among Greek speakers and was a Roman citizen, suggesting a huge distance from the anti-Roman tradition that the creed had almost certainly come from. And though Jewish, his movement soon distanced itself from Jews who would not become Christians and be lost to Judaism.

I'm suspicious of the romantic story in *Acts of the Apostles* that he witnessed the stoning by Jewish elders of Saint Stephen, a pioneer of Christianity among Greek-influenced Jews. Also that he was a major figure in a persecution before his famous conversion on the Road to Damascus. There is no independent evidence that Saint Stephen even existed, and a lot of the story may have been invented by Paul or by those who followed him.

I also find it suspicious that the story breaks off just before Paul reaches Rome – would it originally have given a version of Roman Christian beginnings that did not match later doctrine? The claim that Saint Peter was its founder rests wholly on later traditions. And outright frauds were used later on, most notably the 'Donation of Constantine', a blatant forgery from the 8th century used to boost papal power.³⁵

34 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1908/christ/>
35 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donation_of_Constantine

31 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/True-Stories-in-the-Old-Testament>

32 Various as 'He Died Old' and 'He Died Old: Mithradates Eupator; King of Pontus'.

33 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinian_I#Life

Whatever Paul intended – he probably believed that the End of the World was near – his successors produced a version of Christianity that could support the rulers within later Latin-Christian and Greek-Christian states. Could carry this over to other peoples: Celts and Germanic peoples and the various Slav-speakers. Occasionally beyond, with Nestorian Christianity that got as far as China, but later faded and became one of many small scattered Christian sects.³⁶ Some of which were safe in Saddam's Iraq but have had to flee after 'liberation' by the USA.

The invasion of Iraq was based on a silly belief that Western values were 'normal' and would flourish once repressive regimes were removed. But what actually emerged were the very un-Western values that Saddam had been repressing. That other secular authoritarians in other Islamic states had been repressing until the USA chose to treat them as 'surplus to requirements'.

It is unsurprising that Francis Fukuyama produced a book full of nonsense, given his unusual background:

"Francis Fukuyama was born in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois, United States. His paternal grandfather fled the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and started a shop on the west coast before being interned in the Second World War. His father, Yoshio Fukuyama, a second-generation Japanese American, was trained as a minister in the Congregational Church... Francis grew up in Manhattan as an only child, had little contact with Japanese culture, and did not learn Japanese"

Fukuyama was also visibly East Asian in a society where they were always viewed as alien, though also clever and mostly useful. It is disappointing but hardly surprising that he told the mainstream society what they wanted to hear with *The End of History and the Last Man*. What is surprising is that so many people believed him.

They were vulnerable because they were convinced after the Soviet collapse that Marxism had been entirely an error and that its insights must be rejected. Do that and you will be lost in a mental fog with no sensible way out, especially if you think 'Christian values' are the answer.

Christianity in its Latin-Christian and Greek-Christian version had a built-in tension. It incorporated Pagan Greek ideas and notably the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, yet they were never really at home within it. Greek mythology remained highly respected, mostly with the Roman names added to Greek originals: Jupiter for Zeus and Venus for Aphrodite, etc. But the tension was always there, and surfaced first in the Renaissance and then the Enlightenment. Sandwiched between the two was the Protestant Reformation, which claimed to be restoring Original Christianity but did not do so. And then the Counter-Reformation that cleaned up Roman Catholic practice but also incorporated many dubious ideas, notably Papal Absolutism and Transubstantiation.

Jesuits were the most notable ideologues in the Counter-Reformation. Trained to use reason, but also trained to skilfully evade unwanted conclusions that reason might lead them to. Similar things worked in other civilisations, but within Christianity they were always vulnerable to attack.

Pascal's *Lettres provinciales* neatly exposed the dishonesty of Jesuit reasoning. But if you look at his alternative it is honest but completely at variance with modern thinking. Weirdly disgusted with any form of sex and with physical existence as a whole.

Confusion within the Latin-Christian tradition helped produce modern science and modern politics – both of which are at odds with its core values. It helped that those core Christian values had always been confused, and were not accepted by most of those who thought deeply about the matter.

It also mattered for future history that Paul's followers became Greek-speaking communities that were hostile to those Jews who would not convert to Jesus's version of Judaism. It was mostly ideological, not ethnic. The founders had been entirely ethnic Jews, and a lot of the bitterness was down to them being rivals in the same tradition.

Had Buddhism managed to spread west in the same way it spread east, world history would have been very different. The exact origins of the historic Gautama Buddha are disputed, but he was born either within present-day Nepal or close to it. But his later followers lived almost entirely east of Persia, and it later lost most lands west of Nepal. There are records of a small sect in Roman Egypt that might have been Buddhist, but it certainly never amounted to much.

In Late Paganism, Jews had been accepted and Christians were not. Gradually they became scornful of Christianity, seeing it as something they should distance themselves from. There was mutual antagonism that continued when Constantine co-opted a compromising version of Christianity to help stabilise the Empire.

Saint Paul had defined Greek-speaking Christianity. Truthfully or otherwise, he also insisted on a Christian hostility to sex. Every other major religion saw sex as a normal human function that needed sensible rules. Some also encouraged celibacy among their religious specialists, which also meant that they trained the best successors rather than their own children. But Christianity stands almost alone in tending to deny that there is any such thing as normal sex.

My Freedom and Our Freedoms

France under Louis 14th defeated the Spanish Empire and limited the Counter-Reformation. Neuroticism about sex lingered on among Roman Catholics, but it was a voluntary obsession which most people opted out of. Bishops kept everything within decent limits. Many were private sceptics who accepted Enlightenment values.

It was otherwise in Britain. There were huge numbers of Hard-Line Protestants. They were commonly called Nonconformists, but in Scotland they were the official Church of Scotland, where there were no bishops to preach moderation. Wales, denied its own government and mostly with stronger economic and social ties to regions of England than to other parts of Wales, largely followed the English pattern. It helped that there was a strong movement of Welsh-speaking Protestantism, mostly Nonconformist.

Curiously, something similar almost happened in Ireland. As well as the settlement of Lowland Scots speaking their own version of English, there was a short-lived movement of Gaelic-speaking Protestants. I've not seen a proper history of this: maybe there is none. What happened is that Irish Catholics noticed the danger and managed to re-absorb them. So Irish politics diverged as soon as the electoral system for the British Isles became partly democratic, which happened in the 1870s and 1880s.³⁷ The key breakthrough was the 1872 Secret Ballot Act, which allowed voters with a modest amount of property to defy the wishes of the local elite. This had immediate importance in Ireland, with a Home Rule party coming from nowhere to win 60 out of 100 Irish seats in 1874. And it was led by a Protestant and former Tory called Isaac Butt,³⁸ whose aims were modest. But as it happened, there was resistance. Irish Nationalism became more Roman Catholic and more hard-line with each delay.

The British ruling class is smart in day-to-day and year-to-year politics. But when it comes to decade-by-decade politics, the shaping of a society beyond the career of any individual

37 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/40-britain/665-2/>

38 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Butt#Political_career

36 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestorianism>

politician, they often hang on to older patterns that they should have accepted as doomed. The long refusal to grant Irish Home Rule was a repeat of the blunders that caused the American War of Independence. And led on to a foolish willingness to become involved in World War One.³⁹

From the Battle of the Boyne in the 1690s down to the American War of Independence in the 1770s, the main internal threat to the British state was a vast mass of hard-line Protestants. Highlanders in 1745 were a blip: after giving everyone a big shock they were soon driven out or converted into cannon-fodder for the British Empire. They looked to Clan Leaders, and those were all subverted once they accepted that the Jacobite cause was doomed.

The threat was a mass of Hard-Line Protestants, and an even more alarming minority of radicals who had decided that Christianity as such was an historic error. Private skepticism among the elite was normal, but became alarming when it spread to those with no vote and with a willingness to challenge the wealth and dominance of the ruling class.

In Britain's North American colonies, governments of the sort that George Washington was part of had become real democracies by the standards of the time. It wasn't a matter of votes for everyone, or even for all white males. There were property qualifications, but the Next Nine could easily buy enough land to qualify. And when it came to an armed uprising against the lawful government, it was never forgotten that the Hanoverian kings were an irregular monarchy. Makeshift Kings, as I said earlier. Virginia's leading families included many who had come there in the time of the Commonwealth. And in New England, there were many who had gone there when Charles the First had successfully set aside Parliament:

"It would appear that in 1634 Cromwell attempted to emigrate to what was to become the Connecticut Colony in the Americas, but was prevented by the government from leaving."⁴⁰

There were many more after the restoration of Charles the Second. And the elite in British North America were mostly radical about anything that was no obvious threat to the wealth and authority of the rich.

This led onto the American Revolution – really a secession by the bulk of the elite who were already running Britain's major North American colonies with limited interference from British-appointed Governors. And like many successful revolutions, it began as a protest against the traditional rulers failing to do their traditional jobs. In this case, the immediate task was to incorporate the local elite, as the Roman Empire had done, and as many other successful Empires had done. But in the case of the British Empire, even those classed as part of the White Race were never really admitted to the ranks of the Top People. A notable example was a refusal to let George Washington become an officer in the regular British Army, even though his talents in leadership had been noted.

This foolishness has continued into modern times, particularly with those who see the Anglo tradition as something uniquely wonderful. Who will not learn from foreign examples.

The New Right and the broader movement of Coolhearts who came out of 1960s radicalism seek to evade the notion that governments have a broad responsibility for the welfare of those they rule.⁴¹ What's been fashionable from the 1980s is *laissez-faire*.

'Let things drift' is the best translation of the French *laissez-*

39 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/problems-magazine-older-issues/how-the-british-establishment-planned-world-war-one/>

40 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Cromwell#Crisis_and_recovery

41 For the meaning of Coolheart, see <https://labouraffairsmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/problem-44-coolheart-sickening.pdf>

faire, which is why its fans prefer not to translate it. Easy to dress up a foolish belief with the glamour and mystery of a foreign language. *Status Quo, Dulce et Decorum Est*, and so on. My comment is *cloaca est* – it is sewage, or the south side of a hen.

Let a ship drift, and you may be lucky and get somewhere safe. But shipwreck is much more likely. And those who can steer a ship will always try to do so.

Laissez-faire could also be translated as *let it be*. Which is fine when everything is going in a sensible direction, but it is also all too easy to use such sentiments to ignore injustice and the sufferings of others. And it can also be ruinous: it was the belief of 18th century French intellectuals, who were very surprised when it all blew up in violence and deadly political conflicts in the French Revolution.

Doubts about the usefulness of power are common: a nice way to dodge the awkward matter of governments sometimes having to be harsh in order to avoid something worse. Tolstoy in *War and Peace* declares that Napoleon was in no sense in control at the Battle of Austerlitz. But every military expert I've come across regards it as the very best example of his generalship. Even if Napoleon's control was never *exact*, it was always *effective*. It was only in the Waterloo campaign that his intentions ceased to be effective: one reason was probably the absence of a subordinate who had specialised in translating Napoleon's general intentions into specific orders that the various parts of the army could confidently obey. In the two battles before Waterloo, one large French unit marched between the two with contradictory orders, and joined neither. Later analysis suggests that their presence at either would have made success in the whole campaign much more likely.

Tolstoy fastened on to the lack of *precise* control as a reason to think it was all a matter of God handling it all, for some reason that God Alone Knows. But Napoleon at Austerlitz got the broad result he had been aiming at – a massive defeat inflicted on much larger enemy army.

It is not in fact true that '*no plan survives contact with the enemy*'. This is a misleading summary of the views of Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, who was the main planner of Prussia's remarkable 1870 victory over France. It is worth getting details, sensibly summarised on the Wikipedia:

"Moltke also realized that the expansion in the size of armies since the 1820s made it essentially impossible to exercise detailed control over the entire force (as Napoleon or Wellington had done in battle). Subordinates would have to use initiative and independent judgment for the forces to be effective in battle. Therefore, overall campaign and battle plans should encourage and take advantage of the decentralization that would be necessary in any case. In this new concept, commanders of distant detachments were required to exercise initiative in their decision-making and von Moltke emphasized the benefits of developing officers who could do this within the limits of the senior commander's intent.

"He accomplished this by means of directives stating his intentions, rather than detailed orders, and he was willing to accept deviations from a directive provided that it was within the general framework of the mission. Von Moltke held this view firmly and it later became a fundamental of all German military theory...

"Moltke's main thesis was that military strategy had to be understood as a system of options, since it was only possible to plan the beginning of a military operation. As a result, he considered the main task of military leaders to consist in the extensive preparation of all possible outcomes. His thesis can be summed up by two statements, one famous and one less so, translated into English as 'No plan of operations extends with certainty

beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main strength' (or 'no plan survives contact with the enemy') and 'Strategy is a system of expedients'.⁴²

Saying 'No plan of operations extends *with certainty* beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main strength' is very different from supposing that it simply breaks down. Good generalship gets the basics done. Does not get too detailed in control. Recognises limits.

In other contexts, I've tried summarising this as **life is a negotiation with necessity**.

You also have to be a good negotiator. Know which points to stick to. Moltke's nephew is commonly viewed as having caused the failure of the Schlieffen Plan by weakening the main thrust from an understandable wish to have troops available to protect against other dangers.

Politicians of all shades recognise that life is a negotiation with necessity. The error many of them make is to think that you can also negotiate with a rampaging virus like Covid-19: that you can persuade it to be less extreme. Or that you can talk down the massive shift in the Earth's weather caused by global warming. More specifically, they treat the actual dangers as if they were things dreamed up by rival politicians. Demands that with determination can be successfully resisted.

Marxist Materialism seems to me to be unclear on this point. You *can* extract this meaning from things said by Marx, Engels etc.; but also find something else. It is a better guide than rival systems of thought – the New Right has assuredly crippled itself by its dogmatic rejection of all of the ideas it classifies as Marxist. But more clarity is needed, and I made a contribution at the level of High Abstraction in an essay called *The Muon and the Green Great Dragon*.⁴³ This detailed how a subatomic particle called the muon was a complete surprise, contradicting notions that physicists might be *creating* reality by thinking about it. This is unlike rules of grammar, which in English include a complex set of rules about the correct order of adjectives. Any native speaker would know that you should speak of a *large blue van* rather than a *blue large van*, but would find it hard to explain why. These are rules of grammar that we pick up at an early age.

Since I wrote, there have also been serious claims that the detailed behaviour of muons will force a major rethink of Sub-Atomic Physics.⁴⁴ I find this interesting, though not currently confirmed, and also not really relevant to the points I was making.

The essay has an alternative title: *In a Hole In a Hole Dwelt a Nothingness*. It tackles the notion that 'nothing is real'. Shows that the real pattern is intense concentrations of matter and energy set within successively smaller surrounding voids.

The material world has fixed patterns of behaviour. The human world is infinitely variable, but limited by the reluctance of most people to make necessary changes. Sometimes change as such, but more often changes that cost them, hurt them or which they view as threatening. So real politics is a complex business.

For Tolstoy, there was no point seeking a Negotiation With Necessity. God had decided it all and you should patiently accept this. To me, it seems to resolve the old Christian debate over Free Will by saying that God gives you Free Will, but will send you to hell if you try doing anything much with it.

When faced with the awkward reality of political breakdown in Russia in 1917, this view was of no use at all. It did allow Boris Pasternak to write *Doctor Zhivago*. And it seems Stalin

saw it as something that he could live with:

"Pasternak appealed directly to Stalin, describing his family's strong Tolstoyan convictions and putting his own life at Stalin's disposal; he said that he could not stand as a self-appointed judge of life and death. Pasternak was certain that he would be arrested, but instead Stalin is said to have crossed Pasternak's name off an execution list, reportedly declaring, 'Do not touch this cloud dweller' (or, in another version, 'Leave that holy fool alone!')"⁴⁵

Note also that the Great Purge occurred at a time when fascism was spreading and looked likely to take over the entire world. If Stalin damaged the military command structure, he also made the Soviet Union strong enough to survive Hitler's armies, which no one else managed. To the end, the bulk of the German army was on the Eastern Front. That was where they suffered more than half of their losses for the entire war.⁴⁶

The general public has been given the impression that Stalin was a senseless bungler and that the USA deserves most of the credit for defeating Hitler. But I've not seen anyone try applying this to actual histories of the actual war. I don't think anyone could do it without sounding ridiculous.

You can sound plausible by writing just about the errors of a disliked target. You avoid mentioning the successes. This method is also used against Mao, as I have detailed elsewhere.⁴⁷

You can also shed fog and darkness onto wider issues by saying 'it's complex', avoiding general truths that could not be doubted if you tried to give an overall view. But spreading fog and darkness also means that when your own side tries to be guided by this 'wisdom', frequent blunders occur.

The failure of the West's grand drive to remake the world after the Soviet collapse has never seemed puzzling to me. There is an old American saying: **It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.**⁴⁸ And while the New Right wrap up their false knowledge in fancy talk, it was indeed disastrous for their cause.

The Soviet Union was not a failure until it took a wrong turning after Stalin's death.

Stalin wasn't correct all the time. But he was right often enough to score a grand triumph.

A successful leader might have superior judgement 50% of the time, competent judgement 35% of the time and be wrong 15% of the time. You can make them look bad by concentrating on the 15% of errors. But that means you learn nothing, or learn the wrong things.

It is notable that the Hard Left in the West flourished for as long as it saw Stalin as competent but perhaps too ruthless. When they insisted that a lot of it had been justified by the need to defeat fascism.

When everything shifted and they bad-mouthed him but pretended Lenin was something different, the status of the Hard Left took a nose-dive. Suffered a decline that has not yet ended.

China took a view of Mao's errors and unexpected successes that has led to continuing success for their political system. Khrushchev was incoherent. Brezhnev refused to let the matter be thought about, and stabilised the Soviet system by suppressing everything that might have saved it in the longer run.

For the Soviet Union in the 1930s, one also has to wonder what the purged generals would have done had they been heroes

45 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Pasternak#Great_Purge

46 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Nazi-Germany-Was-Defeated-in-Russia>

47 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/recent-issues/2019-11-magazine/2019-11/> and <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/china-three-bitter-years-1959-to-1961/>

48 <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2018/11/18/know-trouble/>.

Credited to Mark Twain, but probably wrongly.

42 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helmuth_von_Moltke_the_Elder#Moltke's_theory_of_war

43 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/in-a-hole-in-a-hole-dwelt-a-nothingness/>

44 <https://physics.aps.org/articles/v14/54>

of a more successful war: one where Hitler was stopped sooner. I've noticed the significant absence of an English biography of Tukhachevsky, the most notable of the purged military leaders. If he could be plausibly presented as a great lost hero, would not someone have done so? I have hazy memories of pro-Stalin writings from decades back that claim he had considerable sympathies with fascism. I do not recall details, and it would be nice if someone else could unearth this material. Or better, if a Russian or someone fluent in that language could write on the basis of all the extra material that should now be available. Or translate stuff from Russian into English, which is unofficially the language shared by the entire world.

Sadly, most Western researchers go looking just for data that shows Stalin to have been *wrong*. When they bump into anything that suggests he was mostly right, I'd suppose they evade it. They certainly evade it for Mao, and hang on like limpets to the view that it is a baffling mystery that China flourishes while continuing to accept Mao as an admirable restorer of Chinese strength.

It is also significant that the army after Stalin was decisive in choosing which of the rival political leaders should take power. They helped raise up Khrushchev, and they helped topple him. They burdened the economy with gigantic military spending. And did a lot to cause the system's collapse, whereas People's China was able to downsize its military and continues to flourish.

Tolstoy's overall view of war and politics was nonsense. Of course *War and Peace* still deserves its status as one of the world's great novels. And oddly, I've never seen anyone try to tackle the monumental silliness about Austerlitz by a respected writer who is often looked on as a Spiritual Guide. Maybe such a study exists, perhaps not in English. If anyone knows of one, please let me know. Regardless, I see it as a vital point. An example of a very seductive folly.

I see Tolstoy as a gifted writer with excellent intentions. But a man who ran through several different world-views that were supposed to fix everything, and not one of them had any hope of working. Those guided by him are indeed Holy Fools, or sometimes just fools.

I'm also fairly sure that no one has ever applied Tolstoy's view to the actual conduct of a war. But it can be used to evade awkward choices at a higher level. And it seems to me that in the US Civil War, General Lee failed to properly react to looming defeat. The war became unwinnable when he was stalemated by Meade and then driven back by Grant. From his viewpoint – Moderate Racism and a strong commitment to elite control – a negotiated peace giving up independence would have been wise. But also hugely unpopular. And thinking it was all 'In God's Hands' must have been an easy way to avoid the problem. He fought on until the undeniable military defeat of his army, causing deaths that should have been avoided.

There's a more general point to be learned. Excellent intentions are useless unless you do something effective to make the intentions real. Warfare, having huge benefits if you win and huge penalties if you lose, is a place where realism tends to win out.

Not that war is good in itself. If you can avoid it, do so. And even if you can't, the wrong methods to win a war may lose you more in the longer run. Military victories by the USA in Afghanistan and Iraq have produced nothing much that they wanted.

What war should teach is that life is a negotiation with necessity. And in real life, you either negotiate or else seek dictatorial power. It being contrary to human nature to put yourself at risk in order to harm people you have no quarrel with, authoritarian methods have been maintained for the military, even as they are dismantled in the wider society.

Warfare also shows that collective action is much more

efficient than heroic individual actions. War fiction mostly ignores it, with *The Red Badge of Courage* a notable exception. But reports from actual warfare are almost unanimous in finding that the units are critical and impose their identity on the individuals who serve.

Outside of warfare, milder methods may well serve. But only if the real dangers are recognised.

Liberation By Stages of History

Was modern industry a mistake?

Was civilisation a mistake?

Was agriculture a mistake?

Are humans as such a mistake, spoiling the beauty of the natural world?

I am familiar with all of these views, and the arguments behind them. And reject them all.

The problem is human greed and aggression. This much is now widely accepted – far more than it was in the 1980s.

I am flatly against the Western 'Coolheart' view. 'Coolheart' is my term for the 1970s cynicism that came out of 1960s radicalism. People who decided that the state as such was the problem. And while it spawned many useful protest movements, the New Right was the only effective power politics that came out of it.

Effective at taking power in the West, as in the old Gulf Wars joke that '*the New Right triumphantly pacify Washington*'. But not so good at decade-by-decade politics.

There is an old joke about there being one reliable way to go gambling in Las Vegas and return with a small fortune. You go there with a *large* fortune.

This could sum up the New Right. They came out of 1960s radicalism with politics that could easily be adapted to serve the rich and powerful. The promises of low taxes and a smaller state remain empty and unmet after four decades of extraordinary power for them, though they have no problem blaming someone else. But the demand to give more power and money to the rich was naturally greeted with enthusiasm by the rich. Only now is this enthusiasm being lost, as the West continues to lose global influence.

The New Right haven't just given the rich a larger slice of the cake. They've also helped produce a 'cake' that is smaller than it should be. I've detailed this elsewhere as *Feed-the-Rich Economics*.⁴⁹ I explained how the Mixed Economy won the Cold War, and then was denounced when the rich felt safe.

As it happened, the 'geniuses' of the New Right also comprehensively lost the 1990s aftermath, when they should have been dominant. The vehement hostility towards Putin in Russia and Xi in China is mostly to cover up the gross incompetence of Western leaders in the 1990s. Their advice turned Boris Yeltsin from a hero into a joke. He chose Putin as his successor when he finally understood what had been done to him.⁵⁰ And in China they never got another leader as friendly towards them as Jiang Zemin was. Western pressure was for him to make much larger concessions to Western power than he wished for, which helps explain why later leaders were much more suspicious of New Right economic advice.

Nor is it just the two main products of 20th century Leninism that they have lost. They have also lost in places little touched by Leninism. Often with politics dominated by vehement foes of Leninism, and sometimes of socialism in general. This too I

49 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

50 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/46-globalisation/1473-2/>

have studied in detail, as *The West Fails in Five Civilisations*.⁵¹

Not that the New Right have ever had a problem explaining away off-message facts. Methods that were pioneered by Plato, and then set at the heart of Western culture. He was always able to present his politics and Socrates' influence as wise, even if in a mundane sense they could be called failures. And if you want a quick guide, try two intelligent and highly readable historic novels, *The Last of the Wine* and *The Mask of Apollo*. Both written by Mary Renault, who was also noted for treating homosexuality as normal and not vulgar or amoral. We now know that she was a lesbian who found a nice refuge in Apartheid South Africa, and was careful in her use of history. Much more respectful of Plato and Socrates than I am,⁵² but she does set out the basic issues.

The New Right are falling, but being replaced by what?

As I see it, the reasons for the climate crisis lie with current politics. Not just the New Right, but the wider Coolheart outlook – a lack of concern for others. And more importantly, a silly self-defeating hostility to state power by most of the left in Western countries.

The problem is that far too much of the world's Adjustable Wealth has been tied up in the selfish purposes of the rich. Moved into their hands thanks to the New Right, and they have proved as bad at serving long-term interests as any sensible person would expect.

People do not in fact know what's best to do with their own money. They can be wildly wrong even about their own selfish interests, such as investing with Bernie Madoff. They can fail badly looking after wider matters, as the Texas Freeze demonstrated.

Nor is it really *their* money, apart from a dwindling number of authentically independent farmers. And in any case, there are now remarkably few of these in either the USA or Western Europe. Almost all are given huge subsidies and could not live without them.⁵³

You may be wondering what I mean by 'Adjustable Wealth'. It roughly covers what's called Venture Capitalism in the private sector. Money that can be moved into something that is not currently essential or profitable, and may never in fact prove useful.

At the level of a household, for instance, you have to go on buying food. But if you have money left over after the essentials, you can choose whether you go on holiday, fit solar panels, fit mains-connected battery storage. Or borrow to do some or all of these things.

Venture Capitalists do this for schemes that quite often swallow millions and produce no profit at all. Or the state may fund such things, not expecting a commercial profit but expecting the society as a whole to benefit. Or an established company may do so, ploughing profits into projects that often fail.

A classic example of successful wealth-creation that was a capitalist failure is the Palo Alto Research Center, once known as Xerox PARC:

"Xerox PARC has been at the heart of numerous revolutionary computer developments as laser printing, Ethernet, the modern personal computer, graphical user interface (GUI) and desktop paradigm, object-oriented programming, ubiquitous computing, electronic paper, amorphous silicon

(a-Si) applications, the computer mouse, and advancing very-large-scale integration (VLSI) for semiconductors... Aimed to develop future technologies; it was not intended to reproduce the already existing Xerox's research laboratory in Rochester, New York, which focused on refining and expanding the company's copier business. Instead, Xerox PARC was a site for pioneering work in advanced physics, materials science, and computer science applications."⁵⁴

Most of the good ideas went elsewhere. A 1973 machine called the Xerox Alto was the first to resemble the easy-to-use Personal Computers and Smart Telephones that almost everyone in the West now has.⁵⁵ But the benefits went first to Apple Computers, and then later to Microsoft with Windows. And even Apple had problems: a machine called the *Lisa* had the features but never sold well. Thankfully market signals were ignored and more effort was put in to produce the enormously successful Apple Macintosh.

This was commercial, but commerce that was dominated by the idea of making useful products and with profit as secondary. Meantime the *Internet* in the strict sense of the term was invented by researchers given a free hand by the US military to develop crazy ideas: in this case Packet Switching.⁵⁶ The separate idea of a World Wide Web was a personal project by Tim Berners-Lee while working at CERN, a centre for subatomic research that has always been entirely government-funded.⁵⁷ The Web gets confused with the Internet, but the Web is a service that operates over the Internet, just as emails are. Similar functions were offered on a small scale over a conventional telephone service by Britain's Prestel in the 1980s. This might have been a gigantic breakthrough for Britain.⁵⁸ But it was attached to British Telecom and was never viewed with much enthusiasm in an era of spreading Thatcherism. Meantime a similar system called Minitel did much better in France, but it was French-language and so never spread much beyond those already fluent in French.⁵⁹

The internet itself has thoroughly disproved the romantic notion of webs of human interconnection flourishing without protection from those nasty State Machines. State Machines are imperfect, but when they are excluded or hampered the alternative is mostly worse. The reality of an internet without Internet Passports or similar control has been a massive growth of internet giants with a dubious social role. And a clear demonstration in China and elsewhere that a state that sees the need to act can very easily get control. This last is something I warned about back in 2000,⁶⁰ but like most of my other warnings it got no positive results that I know of.⁶¹

I'm certain that saving the planet must start from accepting that the state looks after the long-term interests of real humans. That a serious radical should be positive about it unless that state has some aim that you are strongly against. Or frustrates something you are strongly for, and can hope to achieve, as with Secession.

It is also useless to look to international bodies, except as

51 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations-2/>

52 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/whats-wrong-with-socrates/>

53 <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/Rural-Socialism-in-Britain-and-the-USA>

54 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PARC_\(company\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PARC_(company))

55 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerox_Alto

56 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Internet#ARPANET

57 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_World_Wide_Web

58 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prestel>

59 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minitel>

60 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/about/about-2/998-from-labour-affairs/the-french-revolution-and-its-unstable-politics/against-globalisation/the-web-is-always-insecure/>

61 <https://www.quora.com/q/pwgwxusqvnzrlzm/Hong-Kong-Committing-Suicide> and <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/My-Forecasts-Over-Past-Years>

forums that sovereign states will sometimes use to pool their separate selfish interests. Each of them would be better off not following agreements if others take the burden. But all of them are better off if everyone has to keep agreed rules.

This is the sort of collectivist thinking that the New Right denounce as 'socialism'. Which in a way it really is. The clearest understanding of the main themes of modern life comes from a mix of Socialism and Historical Materialism. It offers an understanding that works for decade-by-decade politics. That lets you understand how changes are enabled, permitted or prevented. And if you understand it as an accurate *description*, you can also borrow some ideas from socialism to serve right-wing purposes. Or almost any purpose.

Limiting greenhouse gases is essential to avoid an escalating series of crisis that may shrink the world's total material wealth. Just as the Covid-19 crisis has done, briefly, for those countries that were slack about controlling it.

Texas: Slaves, Horses and Tumbleweed

When a man is tired of Texas, he is ready for civilisation.

And if that long-running series *Dallas* is anything like the reality, that's also true of the women. Women are mostly agents of civilisation, but not all of them see it as necessary.

The image of rugged macho Texas ignores how artificial it all is. How dependent on a complex continental system in which the Federal government played a vital role.

And a lot of dirty politics.

I was of course joking when I said that Texas needed to be 'ready for civilisation'. Playing games with the meanings of the word. *Civilised* can mean polite conduct that lets humans live well within an existing civilisation. But it always has been a matter of an Advanced Agricultural Civilisation that reliably turns some fortunate villages into towns and then cities.⁶² Leaves most villages as villages, and possibly worse off. But it mostly isn't the city *as such* that dominates. Usually power is *centred* in the cities, but military force often rests with aristocrats who command the obedience of rougher tougher rural folk. Or occasionally by city-trained radicals who mobilise them.

Civilisations are erected on top of acts of successful violence. And will always produce things that could be seen as justifying that violence – but also perhaps not.

History is always used in a partisan way. People mostly think:

'If it's good I'll take the credit. If it's bad, I'm not to blame'.

This could be a song, using the tune of the classic *She Was Poor but She Was Honest*.⁶³ I'm not up to it, but the idea is there for anyone interested.

Stripping history of its comfortable rightist myths is my game.

Texas was part of Mexico when the Mexican-born population threw off Spanish rule. And sadly, Spanish culture was very bad at producing effective modern governments, with electoral democracy and autocratic rule both tending to fail. Texas remained mostly inhabited by Native Americans with no interest in entering a civilisation that anyway had mostly killed them or enslaved them. Settlers from the USA were initially welcomed by Mexico. But most of them came from the US South and brought slaves with them. Mexico with Republican enthusiasm had outlawed slavery, but had been willing to compromise. But the Anglo settlers didn't want to be ruled by Latinos, regardless. They declared independence in 1836, and successfully established it in a brief war.

Texans also mostly wanted to join the USA: in the end the US

Congress decided it was safer to just annex them. It's always been ambiguous if the inhabitants of a distinct region can vote themselves out of the state they are in, for independence or to join another state. The United Nations charter speaks of rights to both 'self-determination' and 'territorial integrity', without explaining what to do if they clash. In practice it has always been power politics, and quite often war. Several of the founder members of the UN were colonial empires whose non-white populations had no real say in their politics. The concept of non-self-governing territories was invented to push decolonisation without giving a green light for separatists in the new states.⁶⁴ But all of the major powers have been dishonest about separatist movements, helping some and approving of the suppression of others.

For Texas, annexation in 1845 provoked the Mexican-American War. This ended with the USA taking quite a bit more, most notably Upper California as the US state of California. Settlers from the US North managed to get control and keep out slavery, which was part of the long-running crisis that led to the Civil War. Texas itself was overwhelmingly pro-slavery.

It was also mostly rural, but with an economy entirely dependent on the wider and industrialising economy of the USA:

"Statehood brought many new settlers. Because of the long Spanish presence in Mexico and various failed colonization efforts by the Spanish and Mexicans in northern Mexico, there were large herds of Longhorn cattle that roamed the state. Hardy by nature, but also suitable for slaughtering and consumption, they represented an economic opportunity many entrepreneurs seized upon, thus creating the cowboy culture for which Texas is famous."⁶⁵

Both horses and cattle were European imports. The ancestors of horses had done their main evolution in North America, but early humans were hunters and killed them all off. And this was almost inevitable: humans had been agricultural for thousands of years before horses were finally tamed. Humans had already domesticated dogs, pigs, sheep, cattle, cats, and donkeys before someone managed it with horses.⁶⁶ It was probably very tough, since a horse is big enough to be very dangerous if it attacks a human. Fast enough to run away successfully if you don't have tame horses to help. Genetic studies suggest that a relatively small group of horses were domesticated. Studies of Y chromosomes also indicate that the original stock had far fewer stallions than mares. Early humans may have had just a few stallions under control, and the practice of castrating the less tractable males probably came early. I'd suppose that newly captured mares were more likely to accept that this was a new herd where they had to fit in and breed more foals for human use. In the wild, the stallions dominate at the level of immediate physical violence.

"DNA studies indicate that there may have been multiple domestication events for mares, as the number of female lines required to account for the genetic diversity of the modern horse suggests a minimum of 77 different ancestral mares, divided into 17 distinct lineages. On the other hand, genetic evidence with regard to the domestication of stallions points at a single domestication event for a limited number of stallions combined with repeated restocking of wild females into the domesticated herds."⁶⁷

This also meant that the Native Americans of North America

64 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_list_of_Non-Self-Governing_Territories

65 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas#Statehood>

66 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_domesticated_animals

67 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestication_of_the_horse#Genetic_evidence

62 https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/?page_id=3737

63 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/She_Was_Poor_but_She_Was_Honest

had to learn it. Contrary to what you see in Westerns, most of them didn't ride well enough to fight from horseback. When raiding, they would usually dismount before attacking.

The other Western classic, the dramatic tumbleweed, is an even more recent import. For most of the history of the Wild West, these remarkable 'rolling ghosts' would have been absent:

"*Kali tragus* is a species of flowering plant in the family *Amaranthaceae*. It is known by various common names such as prickly Russian thistle, windwitch, or common saltwort. It is widely known simply as tumbleweed because in many regions of the United States, it is the most common and most conspicuous plant species that produces tumbleweeds.

"*Kali tragus* is native to Eurasia, but in the 1870s, it appeared in South Dakota when flaxseed from Russia turned out to be contaminated with *Kali* seeds. Although it is the best-known of this group of weeds, and was at first thought to be a single well-defined species, it now is known to have included more than one species plus some hybrids.

The tumbling bundles of stems are all dead, but contain seeds that it disperses to places where they may grow and flourish. One of many oddities of the natural world.

A World Without Whales?

Sadly, the loss of the beauties of the natural world is something that industrial society could survive. Just as France could carry on just fine if they burnt the *Mona Lisa* and all the other fine cultural relics in their possession. Or Britain could demolish Stonehenge, Westminster Abbey and other valued parts of our long heritage.

You can sensibly say that these are part of what make life worthwhile. It is better to argue on this basis, rather than pretend that such things are needed for crude survival.

There is an intentionally shocking story by Isaac Asimov in which a stable and happy world-state has destroyed all wildlife. The authorities insist on also killing off the last non-human animals to create 'perfection'.

"The zoo was much larger once... Year by year we've had to get rid of so many. All the large animals. All the carnivores. The trees. There's nothing left but small plants, tiny creatures. Let them be.'

"What is there to do with them? No one wants to see them. Mankind is against you.'... The last living things on Earth that were neither humans nor food for humans."⁶⁸

It was published in 1970, at a time when what we now call Green attitudes were much weaker. Indeed, the term may have entered politics with a different meaning. Quite apart from 'green' as the colour of Irish Nationalism, 1970 also saw a strange book called *The Greening of America*, which was left-wing but included ideas that the New Right later pushed. The Wiki summarises it as follows:

"The book's argument rests on three separate types of world view:

- "'Consciousness I' applies to the typical values and opinions of rural farmers and small businesspeople which dominated society in 19th century America.
- "'Consciousness II' represents a viewpoint of 'an organizational society', featuring meritocracy and improvement through various large institutions, the ethos of the New Deal, World War II and the 1950s Silent Generation.
- "'Consciousness III' represents the worldview of the 1960s counterculture, focusing on personal

freedom, egalitarianism, and recreational drugs.

"The book mixed sociological analysis with panegyrics to rock music, cannabis, and blue jeans, arguing that these fashions embodied a fundamental social shift."⁶⁹

I've no idea if there was any specific link. But some of the New Right pioneers must have read a book that was briefly very popular.

There was also a genuine leftist radicalism in the book, and 1970s conservatives were offended. The New Right did better by sounding as if it were going to restore the values of 'Consciousness I'. By not mentioning drugs or recreational sex, though limits on these were quietly eroded.

Dozens of things that might have benefited 'Consciousness I' people have not been done, including making the rich pay their fair share of taxes. Or preventing them profiting by being slow to pay their debts to small producers with limited market clout.

Discarding 'Consciousness II' was not in fact possible. And if the Soviet Bloc in the late 1960s had followed the lead set by long-term Communists like Alexander Dubcek, a genuine global unity might have happened.

But I also doubt that a genuine World State would have emerged, regardless. The concept was in many ways an idealised version of 19th century Imperialism – specifically British Imperialism for H G Wells. Wells was much the most influential of them, and the only one with a large readership in today's world.

If you include various traditionalist states that were functionally independent, then World War One saw an all-time minimum for sovereign states:

"Using the lists for each year and counting only states listed as definitely sovereign, I found 118 independent state for 1870. 88 for 1890. 77 for 1900. 65 for 1910. 56 for 1913, if the five Dominions of the British Empire do not count."⁷⁰

"By the 1960s there were at least 145 independent state. 195 are fully recognised as of 2017. There might be even more, were it not that existing states and the United Nations normally refuse to recognise any general right of secession for minority regions within existing states."⁷¹

The big trouble with Europe's empires was White Racism. They liked to compare themselves to the Roman Empire, but they ignored its best features. They largely refused equal treatment to non-white individuals under their rule. Would not grant equal status to those who had absorbed the culture, as the Romans did. They foolishly wanted to keep unearned privileges for the core population. Conservatives in the Late Roman Republic had also tried to do this, but Julius Caesar and Augustus ended it.

The British Empire was always rigidly racist. The French Empire allowed a few, but very few. And in both cases, the elite were baffled when their Empires fell apart much sooner than Rome had. *Cloaca Est*.

Spain and Portugal were slightly different – mixed-race children of the early settlers were incorporated. But there was still an ethnic hierarchy. And Spain in its colonies made exactly the same errors as Britain in North America: they rated anyone born overseas as inferior, even if they were of pure Spanish descent.

There were looser ethnic rules in the Tsarist Empire. But they were rigid about not ending aristocratic privileges, and their

68 <https://vdocuments.site/asimov-isaac-2430-ad-buy-jupiter-19.html>

69 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Greening_of_America

70 <https://gwydionmadawc.com/040-politics/what-was-the-minimum-for-sovereign-states/>

71 <https://mrwgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/The-Historic-Minimum-for-Sovereign-States>

hostility to Jews was very damaging.

The Empires as they existed in 1914 were doomed. A possible successor in many separate states was fascism, which applied at home the methods of repression developed in the colonies. Which denied that equality was either wise or possible, so a permanent ethnic hierarchy using modern technology might have been possible.

The strength of a third alternative in the Soviet Union shaped the modern world.

And in this modern world, both sides in the Cold War were callous about the natural world. What we have now is a global system in which rich nations prefer to dump their problems on the poor.

Poor countries are asked to hamper their own development by conserving the wild creatures and wild places that have almost wholly vanished in Europe, and are largely gone in the USA. But for the most part they are not offered proper financial compensation. And big Western companies push in, corrupt the elected politicians and take out gigantic profits from raw materials.

The rich world has the wealth to save the world. But the richest people within the rich world have got their paws on most of the 'Adjustable Wealth'. They mostly spend it on their own pleasures, or on making themselves richer. Some good spending on charity is done, but nothing like enough.

It's understandable that Western values are being widely rejected.

But also regrettable.

The ancient civilisations that Europe subverted had their positives, but also many negatives. Imperial China had massive inequality and the dynasty was decaying when Europeans got a good look at it in the 18th century. It also had a four-layer caste system: Manchus, Central Asians (including Tibetans), North Chinese and South Chinese. Individuals from any of these *could* rise to the top of China's government, under the Emperor. But life was made much easier for those nearest the top, and this was hung onto till the actual overthrow of the dynasty.⁷²

India was worse, with a gigantic complex system of caste privilege that was highly oppressive for those at the bottom. A system that the Indian Congress Party tried to cure with moderate reforms, and is now being defended with the dominance of Hindu hard-liners.

Everywhere except Imperial China, the flame of innovation had been definitely quenched. You could argue about Qing China: there was certainly social rigidity, but crops from the New World were accepted, and so was glass, which the Chinese had never paid much attention to. But even at its best, Imperial China never had a system of modern science. It never had the immense rush of successful inventions that the West had after 1500.

For all of its faults, the Western breakthrough was liberating.

The *Communist Manifesto's* notion of a liberating capitalism that would then be replaced by socialism and communism was broadly correct, even if many of the details were wrong. Marx and Engels were influenced by Europe's global imperialism and failed to recognise that social factors would normally control economics and prevent capitalism. That capitalism in Britain was in many ways the result of a breakdown in social controls. A breakdown I've just been describing.

One oddity was that the Greeks and Romans had taken slavery to an extreme. Christianity inherited the Jewish traditions that they had been slaves in Egypt and that they should therefore show respect for those currently in slavery. Not to the extent of making it illegal, but slaves within Judaism had considerable

rights. Far more than the Romans gave them, until after the Roman Empire was Christianised.

Christianity when it became a state religion was suspicious of slavery and ended up rejecting it for Western Europe when it edged towards Industrial Capitalism. There was always a definite feeling that 'our own people' should be free. It did not necessarily apply to people who looked different and initially had an alien culture. But it was the crack in the system that allowed for general liberation.

A liberation done mostly by socialists, or by conservatives scared by the prospect of losing everything if their own society went Communist.

I earlier cited Coleridge's forgotten work as the end of Christian economics. Something that would not have been allowed where Roman Catholicism dominated. But Roman Catholic culture by the 18th century was also a cultural dead end. Though it had encouraged early science, the Church authorities took a hard line against Galileo when he tried to ease them into an acceptance that the Earth went round the sun.

Britain in the 18th century was the weakest link in traditional civilisations. And fell *forward* into something much richer and potentially much better. But Christianity could make no sense of this. And Christianity as such cannot save it.

"Be Free, But Only My Way"

My father Raymond Williams wrote some wonderful and informative books about the cultural shifts. These include *Keywords*, which has a very useful account of the shifting meanings of many words, including *democracy* and *individualism*. But I recently noticed that **Free** was missing, and needed to be there.

Most of us in Western culture think of *free* as being something clear and obvious, except that other people mysteriously misunderstand it.

I found the world making a lot more sense if you accept that **Free** is a word with many valid meanings. People all across the political spectrum will claim to be defenders of freedom. And by their own very different understandings of **Acceptable Freedoms**, they have a point.

The correct response to differences should be *well, that's not my understanding of freedom*. And then try to justify your own set of Acceptable Freedoms as being better than the alternatives.

Which the New Right would have trouble doing. They tend to cast fog and darkness on the matter, and make wild claims for the benefits of Market Forces.

*

Having a version of the full *Oxford English Dictionary* on my computer, I decided to go through and get the key variations:

"The primary sense of the adj. is 'dear'; the Germanic and Celtic sense comes of its having been applied as the distinctive epithet of those members of the household who were connected by ties of kindred with the head, as opposed to the slaves. The converse process of sense-development appears in Lat. *liberī* 'children', literally the 'free' members of the household...

"A.A. adj. I.A.I Not in bondage to another.

"1. a.A.I.1.a Of persons: Not bound or subject as a slave is to his master; enjoying personal rights and liberty of action as a member of a society or state...

"2. a.A.I.2.a Of a state, its citizens, institutions, etc.: Enjoying civil liberty; existing under a government which is not arbitrary or despotic, and does not encroach upon individual rights. Also, not subject to foreign dominion...

"b.A.I.2.b Colloq. phr. it's a free country: a catch-phrase asserting a person's rights as an individual, implying that the action proposed is not illegal...

72 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/traditional-china-resisted-modernisation/>

"c.A.I.2.c In recent specific collocations. (i) Used in titles to denote those who continued resistance to Germany in the 1939–45 war after the capitulation of their respective countries...

"(ii) free world: a name used of themselves collectively by non-communist countries; so free Europe...

"(iii) In various other collocations, e.g. of or pertaining to subversive movements inside a country.

"1968 N.Y. Rev. Books 11 July 34/3 *We have been unimpressed by the supposedly free universities established on the peripheries of major universities. . . What is wanted are really new ways of learning, not additional courses taught by Marxists and acidheads.* 1969 *Guardian* 16 Sept. 11/3 *The absurd romanticism of Free Belfast.*

"†3.A.I.3 Noble, honourable, of gentle birth and breeding. In ME. a stock epithet of compliment. Often in alliterative phr. fair and free. Obs...

"†4.A.I.4 a.A.I.4.a Hence in regard to character and conduct: Noble, honourable, generous, magnanimous. Obs...

"II.A.II Released, loose, unrestricted. ...

"5. a.A.II.5.a At liberty; allowed to go where one wishes, not kept in confinement or custody...

"b.A.II.5.b Of animals: Not kept in confinement, at liberty to range abroad...

"6. a.A.II.6.a Released from ties, obligations, or constraints upon one's action...

"8. a.A.II.8.a Of actions, activity, motion, etc.: Unimpeded, unrestrained, unrestricted, unhampered. Also of persons: Unfettered in their action."

There's a lot more, but that covers the main meanings with political significance. And we know that it was never unlimited freedom. Always there were understood limits, sometimes drastically different from modern ideas.

Saying 'free' is a shorthand for saying **my idea of Acceptable Freedoms, and not including other things that other people might sincerely view as acceptable.**

Or rather, that's the sensible version. The more common versions fail to recognise that differing views might be sincere. They must be wicked, or else in love with tyranny.

Socialists in the 1960s and 1970s were expanding the freedom of individuals on sexual matters. Not just decriminalising male homosexuality and giving security to lesbians – lesbianism was never illegal in the UK but there was much discrimination. But advancing women's rights in general, including rights to divorce, abortion and contraception.

The argument in that era was that 'Democratic Socialism' was the Party of Freedom. Which was a risky argument, since we were undoubtedly seeking to prevent other things that might be viewed as Acceptable Freedoms.

Cutting back on it in cases where one individual's freedom harms others.

Now this can get tricky. Obviously there is no freedom for one individual to harm or kill another while driving their automobile. It is a criminal offence, though perhaps treated too leniently compared to other sorts of violence. And there have always been laws aimed at preventing things likely to cause an accident. But an extension of rules for the public good will mostly be denounced as **Against Freedom** when it is first introduced. There will be cries of 'nanny state' – though never 'nurturing state' or 'motherly state'. Nannies in Britain were low-status women hired to nurture the children of the rich before they were sent away from home at age eight to be hardened in strange institutions called Prep Schools.⁷³ Taught to scorn the softness that the nannies had given them. It was

73 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preparatory_school_\(United_Kingdom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preparatory_school_(United_Kingdom))

a weird system of child-raising, though it did produce people good at running the British Empire for as long as it lasted. And also too alienated from outsiders to broaden that Empire in a way that might have kept it alive for longer. Latin was their in-group patter, but the reality was *cloaca est*.

All talk of 'nanny state' should be ridiculed.

The community should care. And legally enforceable rules are the main way to change existing views on Acceptable Freedoms.

Extending the rules gets questioned, then is found tolerable, and then gradually it ceases to be questioned. I've seen this happen in Britain for parking metres, tests for drunk drivers and speed limits.

This happened in more complex ways for the status of homosexuals. Legalisation in Britain was done by a free vote in 1967, but with a sympathetic Labour government. Roy Jenkins was Home Secretary: he himself had an open marriage and it has been claimed he was bisexual.⁷⁴ It remained covert, and the real sexuality of some film and television stars remained secret until after their deaths.

The reform could also have been done by a popular vote, unlike the abolition of the death penalty, which remains unpopular. Public opinion in 1967 was unsympathetic: but as one comic put it, locking up homosexuals with several hundred other men in a prison that excluded women didn't seem a sensible answer. Some prison systems allow 'conjugal visits' by wives, but Britain never has.

Parliament in 1967 reflected public opinion in decriminalising male homosexuality, but keeping it unequal. And of course did little for legal but badly-treated lesbians:

"In 1957, the committee published the Wolfenden report, which recommended the decriminalisation of homosexual activity between men above the age of 21... However, the government of Harold Macmillan did not act upon its recommendations, due to fears of public backlash.

"In 1965 ... public opinion had shifted in favour. A 1965 opinion poll commissioned by the Daily Mail found that 63% of respondents did not believe that homosexuality should be a crime while only 36% agreed it should, even though 93% agreed that homosexual men were "in need of medical or psychiatric treatment."⁷⁵

A long slow shift in public attitudes occurred. My view of Tony Blair is that he foolishly accepted Thatcher's twisting of a system that remained Mixed Economy. But on the positive side, he was the first to give top jobs to individuals who were openly homosexual. He also greatly increased the number of women in top jobs, forcing the Tories to follow suit. John Major's final cabinet had just two women in it.⁷⁶ Tony Blair's first had five.⁷⁷

Meantime defenders of tradition shot themselves in the foot by refusing the sensible compromise of same-sex Civil Partnerships. This would have given them the rights of married couples but preserved the mystique attached to the name. If they could not figure out that the likely outcome was the more radical demand for actual homosexual marriage, they should not have been in politics at all. Like the ancient Roman Cato the Younger, whom many right-wingers admire, they were so rigid that they almost guaranteed failure.

(Strictly speaking, the Cato Institute derives from *Cato's Letters*: essays by British writers first published from 1720 to 1723 and referencing Cato the Younger.⁷⁸ Letters which

74 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Jenkins#Marriage_and_personal_life

75 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_Offences_Act_1967#Background

76 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Major_ministry

77 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Blair_ministry#Cabinet

78 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cato%27s_Letters

influenced the American War of Independence. But there is no excuse for not knowing that the original Cato was defending an undemocratic Republic that was also falling apart thanks to the greed of its rich elite. Or that he was more mean-minded about his slaves than most Romans. But this probably didn't bother the slave-owning elite in British North America, who broke from Britain mostly because similar people in Britain were not giving them a fair share.)

To return to modern struggles, I hadn't really expected homosexual marriage to become a reality. It happened under a Tory government that must have included many individuals with something to hide. And I commented at the time that it was ridiculous for David Cameron to claim it was a conservative thing to do. It punctured the mystique attached to marriage, while giving homosexuals an equal share of this diminished entity. I wasn't particularly against this: I have said elsewhere that I expect much more radical shifts in human reproduction and sex to happen in the next few decades. And to happen regardless of my wishes, so I concentrate on issues where I can hope to just possibly make a difference.

Gay Marriage in England and Wales started happening from 2014. And in 2016, a majority in England voted to quit the European Union. I'd suppose it was one of the things that annoyed the traditionalists, who also deserted Labour in 2019. And since Labour has not ceased to be the party of radicalism on sexual matters, it is unsurprising that Starmer actually lost Labour voters in the recent Hartlepool by-election. Falling from 52.5 in 2015 and 37.7 in 2019 to 28.7 in 2021.⁷⁹

Cameron was anyway a fool to allow Brexit to happen without requiring a Super-Majority: maybe the 40% of the total electorate that Scottish devolution failed to get in 1979. He might have demanded 60% of votes in favour, to thwart what was largely a vote of incoherent protest.

Economic Liberation

The various reforms and liberations sometimes cut across left-right divisions. But on the whole, the left favours the protection of ordinary people.

On economic matters, a vast range of controls had been introduced in the 1930s with the US New Deal, and in Britain during the war against Nazi Germany. These became the norm for the West during the Cold War. They were generally known as Keynesianism or the Mixed Economy. Thatcher in the 1970s promised to overturn these in the name of Freedom. And the Tory Party under her leadership managed the impressive feat of winning over some Labour voters who had traditional views of sex and marriage, but without losing the more modern sort of voter who took a more libertarian view. Actual history has favoured the libertarians. My view has always been that most of the Tory leadership knew this and welcomed it. And Thatcher herself was entirely unwilling to follow her stated principles in the case of Cecil Parkinson.⁸⁰

But Thatcher and her heirs got away with it. No one at all was bothered that Boris Johnson was slow to marry his current wife, being still caught up in a divorce from a previous one. Roman Catholics are wondering how he got a church-blessed marriage after being married before, but that is a separate issue.

It is also unimportant that New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern is currently an Unmarried Mother, though latest reports are that she will marry her partner sometime this summer.⁸¹ Fascinatingly, her family were part of *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-*

day Saints in New Zealand (Mormons).⁸² An extremist religious upbringing is quite often a sound basis for a more modern view.

All of the various sexual and social freedoms were once left-wing policies, and too radical for some in past decades. There, the left has won.

So why have we lost so badly on other matters?

The left is hampered by an irrational belief that just letting people be 'free' will solve it all. Back in October 2020 I explained in detail why this had failed. I wrote of *The Tragic Failures of Spontaneous Politics*. And I made it clear that there were some sound ideas: it is just never a complete solution. And some controls can be too harsh:

"Do I want limits on freedom?

"Of course I do.

"And so do you.

"The trick normally is to hive off unwanted instances of freedom as not being really freedom. This gets rid of unwanted freedoms like drug abuse, gun ownership for Britons, free commerce with currently unpopular countries, under-age individuals who feel they are ready for sex, and much else."⁸³

But obviously controls and coercion can go too far:

"Imagine adding the nation of 'Mythistan' to the real and rather authoritarian countries of former Soviet Central Asia. Having it dominated by the Church of Reformed Manichaeism and speakers of a Tocharian language, neither of which currently exist in the real world. But might exist in some world where history went a little differently.

"In reaction to the high number of road traffic deaths, the government authorises the Mythistan Road Traffic Death Squad. These stop a random selection of dangerous drivers. If the person is not a doctor, law enforcer, government official or well-connected business person, they are beheaded. Their severed heads are then displayed at petrol stations, as a stark warning to other drivers.

"The weird thing is, this would almost certainly work. It would save far more lives than it took.

"It does fit the Utilitarian rule, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.

"But it is also blatantly unjust."⁸⁴

In the real world, most Britons would think it excessive that People's China executes rapists. But demanding *Human Rights for Rapists* would not play well, though logically it is what the Human Rights brigade should be saying.

The same applies to the execution of drug smugglers, applied in China and Singapore and other places. Harsh but effective. So how does 'freedom' reconcile with that? Because plainly drug addicts have lost most of their essential freedoms.

But there is room for debate about what is essential. I've blogged about an automated system in the UK that can spot if you've been drinking, calling it *Big Brother Is Sniffing You*.

"I haven't heard a huge protest from the Civil Libertarians. Maybe because they are more likely to be victims of drunks. Mostly not brawlers, and able to be dead drunk at home when they feel like it."⁸⁵

People who get involved in brawls tend to resent *all* authority. But also to figure that 'might is right', so they mostly despise the Civil Libertarians. Some drunkards might even be glad to

79 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Labour-in-Britain-Starmer-the-Vote-Loser>

80 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Parkinson#Member_of_Parliament

81 <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/new-zealands-pm-jacinda-ardern-finally-has-a-date-for-her-wedding-with-clarke-gayford.html>

82 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacinda_Ardern#Personal_life

83 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/problems-43-tragedy-and-ai.pdf>

84 Ibid.

85 <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/Big-Brother-Is-Sniffing-You>

have a curb – but I notice the scheme is not voluntary.

When it comes to economics, the West has been getting it wrong for the last four decades. And the left's unrealistic belief in Spontaneous Politics as a general fix has undermined us.

It is impossible to curb the rich just by wishing it. Nor by relying on the occasional benevolent rich individual, as writers like Dickens did, ignoring how few of them there are in real life. How even those with good intentions may be curbed by the pressure of events.

For social control of the rich, two methods have been shown to actually work:

1. An oppressive popular culture that has irregular pressure and punishment of the rich and of other offenders against the established norm.
2. State power, also based on law and punishment, but much more regular and predictable.

Protestors against these choices are protesting against the nature of reality. This reliably fails. The right answer is a *negotiation with necessity*: change what you can and when you can sensibly hope to change it.

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Having given the basics of the global Class Struggle, I can now present issues of Green Power in their proper context.

It's not a struggle to prevent human extinction, or to save modern society from collapsing into another Dark Age. The wealth is there to prevent this, and will be mobilised when the threat gets close, as it has been in the Covid-19 crisis. As it was in Britain and the USA in both World Wars, in which the 'impossible' aims of full employment and massive state spending were achieved. When very few asked 'where will the money come from', because the ruling class had a strong desire to win those wars.

It can be done, and isn't even that hard once the political will is there. But while economics and politics are dominated by the Richest 1%, many ordinary people will suffer and necessary actions be delayed.

We can sensibly fear a run of disasters that could kill hundreds of millions and knock back the economy by years or decades in much of the world.

Our species is too robust to actually get wiped out. But a lot of people may die. And the current trend to a separation of humanity into several incompatible cultures is likely to continue. Most likely with an agreement that these had best co-exist, which is already the policy of China.

Power For All?

I took the title of this article from an old pop song that I remembered. *Power to All Our Friends* is a song by Cliff Richard which was chosen as the British entry to the 1973 Eurovision Song Contest, and came third.⁸⁶ A song full of hazy good intentions:

"Power to all our friends, to the music that never ends
To the people we want to be, baby power to you and me
There's one old man spends his life growing flowers
And caring for the bees - power to the bees
There's one old lady, spent her days making wine
The wine tasted fine
Power to the wine"

The bit about bees is good, but the full song also has older attitudes that would offend nowadays. It speaks of '*the boys who played rock and roll*', probably not expecting that woman would in time be doing the same. And most people nowadays would not see Monte Carlo as an excellent place for a young

woman to be laying down in.⁸⁷ Still, it was a late example of 1960s optimism. A movement that created a lot of the freedoms that later generations see as part of the Natural Order.

As for '*power to the wine*' – these days, it is more '*power to the whine*'. New Right economics does that, suggesting that selfishness is best and that attempts to make things better only make things worse. This excuses them for having actually made things worse since they '*pacified Washington*' in the 1980s.

And given the current legitimate concern about underage sex, I am aware that Cliff Richard was brushed by it, but also not found guilty of anything. It's not absurd to suppose that the police were fed false information to weaken investigations into real offenders. *Line of Duty* with its fixed belief in high level corruption might have mentioned the possibility when they alluded to the matter. I'm inclined to believe the version given on the Wiki: someone who would not want sex without romance, and could not find a viable relationship along with the pressures of popstar lifestyle.⁸⁸ Enough other popstars have had a series of failed and often very unhappy relationships.

It's also a fact that a lot of our best works of art have come from maladjusted individuals, sometimes unhappy and sometimes not nice people.

The song itself could be updated a bit and used for the general cure of our modern ills.

Saying '*friends*' shows a willingness to include everyone who does not offend, or who will make up for it.

*

Going back to the pre-industrial world is not feasible, even if you thought it a good idea. The best we could hope for is a sympathetic state that made life easier for a simple-life minority.

Humans before agriculture numbered no more than ten million globally. Improving agriculture raised us from maybe 275 million in 1000 AD to 610 million in 1700, one billion in 1804 and 1.6 billion in 1900, as industry spread.⁸⁹ And as of March 2020, there are 7.8 billion of us, with a peak of nine billion likely.⁹⁰ To go back to something pre-modern would mean almost everyone dying, as Dorris Lessing imagines in her *Canopus in Argos* series.⁹¹ She also places the giant star Canopus in the ancient Greek city of **Argos**, rather than the discontinued but valid constellation of **Argo Navis** where it sits from a human point of view.⁹² Yet she's one of the more serious and popular thinkers of that sort of view. I will not take them seriously except as entertainers with some nice aspirations.

I feel that the best aspects of the modern world can be saved and will be saved.

And a reliable supply of electricity is enormously liberating.

Humans mostly lived without electric power before the 20th century. But at the time, we were set up to live that way. And we also died rather younger.

We now depend on it:

"A resting human being requires about the same amount of energy as an old-fashioned incandescent light bulb to sustain their metabolism - about 90 watts (joules per second).

"But the average human being in a developed country uses more like 100 times that amount, if you add in the energy needed to get around, build and heat our homes, grow our food and all the other things our species gets

⁸⁷ <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Cliff-Richard/Power-To-All-Our-Friends>

⁸⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cliff_Richard#Personal_life

⁸⁹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/world-population-by-year/>

⁹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population

⁹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canopus_in_Argos

⁹² <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/20-science/constellations-a-human-invention/>

⁸⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_to_All_Our_Friends

up to.

"The average American, for example, consumes about 10,000 watts."⁹³

Going carbon-neutral will increase the need for electricity. Electric vehicles, and an end to gas central heating.

A break from all the complexities of modern life can also be nice. But only a break: not many would wish to live that way without hope of escape.

And the stresses are caused mostly by greed. Mostly expressed through capitalism, but other systems can also be stressful.

The Soviet Union was until its last days a state that saw itself as the core of a future World State that would uplift mankind. H G Wells imagined it so in 1933 in *The Shape of Things to Come*, imagining a future in which the old order breaks down. And Arthur C. Clarke had milder versions of the same in most of his SF novels, imagining that the Soviet Bloc and the West in their Mixed-Economy mode would peacefully merge. Merge within the nice and always unreal framework of the United Nations.

It could have happened. The second solution would have been likely if the Soviet leadership in 1968 had followed the example of Czechoslovakia's *Prague Spring*, rather than crushing it. But at that time, I suppose they still believe Khrushchev's claim that Lenin had created a perfect system that Stalin had mishandled. That with the fixes made by Khrushchev it would now work fine.

Meantime the West incorporated Western rebels from the 1960s, and the New Right managed to fool a lot of people into going off in the wrong direction.

Something we are only now recovering from.

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I'll quickly remind readers of the problems which I have detailed elsewhere.

We now have a realistic summary from the USA. Bad news that Trump would not listen to, but is now the view that dominates politically:

"US environmental agency releases climate report delayed by Trump..."

"A press officer for the EPA told the BBC that until Wednesday's report, the agency had never before - not even during the Obama years - attributed global warming at least in part to human activities..."

"Coastal flooding is becoming more common, especially in cities along the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. Floods are now five times more common in the cities surveyed than in the 1950s.

"Arctic sea ice is thinning, and the minimum extent of its coverage has been getting smaller each summer. September 2020 saw the second smallest amount of Arctic sea ice ever recorded.

"The average decrease for that month amounts to about 900,000 sq miles (1,450,000 sq km) - 'a difference three and a half times the size of Texas', the report says.

"Ocean temperatures also hit a record-breaking high in 2020 and the water has grown more acidic over the past decade.

"Wildfire season and pollen season are both starting earlier and lasting longer.

"Heat waves are occurring about three times more often than in the 1960s.

"The amount of energy use in the summer has nearly doubled since 1973. In 2015, air conditioning accounted for 17% of the average American household's energy consumption.

"Incidents of Lyme disease have nearly doubled since 1991. It comes as ticks, the blood-sucking insects that spread the virus, appear in regions such as parts of Canada where they were previously unable to survive the cold."⁹⁴

Fear of Climate Change is finally becoming mainstream. And the answers are many.

Grids And Super-Grids

Privatised grids did for electricity supply what that famous film *Thelma & Louise* did for road safety.

A fantasy that could never actually happen.

So what's the reality?

"How Does the Electricity Grid Work?..."

"Let's consider a real-life example, as illustrated below. When people are sleeping at night, electricity demand is low and steady, so the big coal and nuclear plants can match demand without any help from the natural gas and hydro plants. A night owl in Community 1 turns on their TV at 4 AM, but the difference is tiny compared to the big power plants, so the 60 Hertz frequency is barely affected. But after 7 AM, people in all three communities are starting their day and turning things on, causing a rapid increase in electricity demand. The big power plants cannot respond to this change quickly enough, so the 60 Hertz frequency starts to drop. But the more agile natural gas and hydro plants sense this, and pedal hard to match the rising demand and maintain the grid at 60 Hertz. When electricity demand decreases later in the day, the natural gas and hydro plants must then reduce their output to keep the grid in balance."⁹⁵

Maintaining a grid is not like putting in a plug. For that matter, your house network may have odd links – switching on one light may bring down a circuit, for instance.

A large-scale grid is very vulnerable, and can collapse:

"Rather than a constant flow of current in a single direction (called direct current or DC), the vast majority of the power grid uses alternating current or AC, where the direction of voltage and current are constantly switching, 60 times per second in North America. The major advantage of AC power is that it's easy to step up and down voltages, a critical part of efficiently and safely moving electricity from producer to consumer. The device that performs this important role, called a transformer, is as simple as a pair of coils next to each other. A varying voltage in one coil induces a voltage in the other coil proportional to the number of turns in each one. If the current doesn't vary, like in direct current, the transformer can't do any transforming."⁹⁶

It is also very hard to restart electrical systems without nearby electric power. The crisis in Texas at the start of 2021 could easily have been far worse. And the next one might be.

The specifics of the US system are based on past ideas, plus an intense struggle for commercial profit. This gets in the way of it doing its proper job, with Texas an extreme:

"The blame game for the massive power outages in Texas last month continues. The dominant argument is that renewables had an ignorable part to play in the crisis, with natural gas and coal the indirect culprits due to their reduced availability resulting from infrastructure freezing and diverting supplies for heating purposes.

"Yet what the real problem actually lies in, not just in Texas but everywhere where energy demand is growing, is

93 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-56544239>

94 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-57095347>

95 <https://www.nsenvironmentalnetwork.com/blog/how-does-the-electricity-grid-work>

96 <https://practical.engineering/blog/2019/6/24/how-does-the-power-grid-work>

grid reliability and resiliency.

“When it comes to the U.S. electrical grid, it is the largest interconnected machine on Earth: 200,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines and 5.5 million miles of local distribution lines, linking thousands of generating plants to factories, homes and businesses’...

“This is one massive system, and the sources that feed it electricity have become increasingly diversified. And while the shortage of natural gas was a big reason for the power outages in Texas, it was certainly not a shortage of gas that caused the blackouts in California last summer during a heatwave. Grid reliability has come to the fore because the decarbonization of electricity generation is not all fun, games, and zero-emission power.”⁹⁷

Electricity grids grow within existing populations, and often cross the borders of sovereign states. North of Mexico, there are six large independent grids. In Alaska, one authority has two separate grids, each covering a small portion of that gigantic thinly-populated state. The bulk of the USA is covered by the Western Interconnection and Eastern Connection, which also extend north to parts of Canada. But there are six separate authorities within the Eastern Connection. And much of Canada is covered by its own grid, based on vast hydroelectric schemes in Canada.

The Canadian scheme is called the Hydro-Québec, or ‘Quebec interconnection’ for those who get confused by even a brief use of French. It is centred on Quebec, but extends into nearby parts of the USA:

“Hydro-Québec’s electricity transmission system (also known as the Quebec interconnection) is an international power transmission system centred in Quebec, Canada. The system pioneered the use of very high voltage 735 kV alternating current (AC) power lines that link the population centres of Montreal and Quebec City to distant hydroelectric power stations like the Daniel-Johnson Dam and the James Bay Project in northwestern Quebec and the Churchill Falls Generating Station in Labrador (which is not part of the Quebec interconnection)...

“It has 17 interconnectors with the systems in Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and the Northeastern United States and 6,025 MW of interconnector import capacity and 7,974 MW of interconnector export capacity.”⁹⁸

It is a public company, owned by the regional government of Quebec:

“It was established by the Government of Quebec in 1944 from the expropriation of private firms. This was followed by massive investment in hydro-electric projects like the James Bay Project. Today, with 63 hydroelectric power stations, the combined output capacity is 37,370 megawatts. Extra power is exported from the province and Hydro-Québec supplies 10 per cent of New England’s power requirements.”⁹⁹

I’d assume this system is fine as it is. It would be set up for Canada’s bitterly cold winters, and probably for the occasional bouts of unseasonal warmth that can now be expected.

And then there’s Texas, all on its own. Resistant to the Federal Government that fought a war with Mexico to bring it in as part of the slavery-dependent US South.¹⁰⁰

I’m relying on the Wiki for most of this, but I notice that an article entitled *North American power transmission grid* stops at the southern US border and ignores Mexico. As I said earlier, it is a useful reference work that suffers from an infestation of libertarians, who mostly have Anglo-chauvinist views. It remains enormously useful where they have not interfered, or might even have done

good work. And since it is open to everyone, there are many like me who have put some effort into getting solid uncontroversial facts into this shared resource.

For electric power, the USA might sensibly encourage more hydroelectric power in Canada by offering a guaranteed market for it. Also maybe wind power: I assume it is too northerly for large-scale solar power to be a sensible idea. And as well as power *generation*, there should be more scope for Hydro-storage. Water pumped up to a high lake and then flowing down to a low one is a convenient way to store excess power and release it in times of need. One way or another these could be substitutes for the polluting Canadian Oil Sands that are currently being pushed.

Maybe in ten years’ time, the Texan authorities could respond to another cold snap by phoning Canada and asking them to release stored water and create fresh electricity that Texas could tap from a continental super-grid.

There ought also to be scope for power generation in Mexico well beyond Mexico’s own current needs. Solar power, obviously. Also on-shore wind power, which poor communities would be more tolerant of. For all I know, there might be scope for hydro-electric and hydro-storage schemes.

All of this would mean major links between what are currently separate grids. Separate grids may already exchange small amounts of power, but not enough to be useful in a major crisis. But the technology for massive links is already there, and improving all the time. A breakthrough into major superconducting power-lines would be very useful, but is not essential.

If Texas continues to use its rights as a state within the US system to keep out non-Texan electricity, there is nothing much that Biden or any future US President could do about it. The US South since losing their Civil War have shown an amazing ability to learn nothing and forget nothing. And wider links can be made without them, if it comes to that.

In the wider world, there have long been schemes for super-grids. North Africa has vast almost uninhabited tracts suitable for solar power. This would need a huge investment in a super-grid to move it to Europe, or possibly make hydrogen from seawater on the coast. A lot is happening, but it is currently hampered by the need to promise a commercial profit. Inhibited by the broad belief that the market will fix it, even though it is visibly not doing so.

Power Sources and Storage

More nuclear power is a sensible idea, from a purely technical point of view. But within Western culture, opposition to nuclear power has reached a religious level of fervour. And there were mistakes: unsafe designs that were initially developed for nuclear submarines. The whole idea is also part of a lost world of self-confident Technocratic views. For Western politics, it is a non-starter.

More hopeful is Green Hydrogen:

“As of 2020 most of hydrogen is produced from fossil fuels, resulting in carbon emissions. This is often referred to as grey hydrogen when emissions are released to the atmosphere, and blue hydrogen when emissions are captured through Carbon Capture and Storage CCS.

“Hydrogen produced using the newer non-polluting technology methane pyrolysis[90] is often referred to as turquoise hydrogen. High quality hydrogen is produced directly from natural gas and the associated non-polluting solid carbon is not released into the atmosphere and can then be sold for industrial use or stored in landfill.

“Hydrogen produced from renewable energy sources is often referred to as green hydrogen. There are two practical ways of producing hydrogen from renewable energy sources. One is to use power to gas, in which electric power is used to produce hydrogen from electrolysis, and the other is to use landfill gas to produce hydrogen in a steam reformer. Hydrogen fuel, when produced by renewable sources of energy like wind or

⁹⁷ <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Energy-General/The-US-Grid-Isnt-Ready-For-A-Major-Shift-To-Renewables.html>

⁹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydro-Qu%C3%A9bec%27s_electricity_transmission_system

⁹⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydro-Qu%C3%A9bec>

¹⁰⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_American_power_transmission_grid

solar power, is a renewable fuel.”¹⁰¹

It allows us to keep a lot of what we already have. I rather like my quick convenient gas-fired central heating, and it’s one of the things where my own views align with the mainstream:

“Hydrogen burns like natural gas without the carbon dioxide emissions and can be produced by separating water molecules using electricity. This excites engineers pursuing a solution to the variability of solar and wind power as it spreads across electric grids.

“They say surplus renewable electricity produced during hours of slack demand can power electrolysis machines to make hydrogen, eventually providing a store of carbon-free energy for dispatch when demand is strongest.”¹⁰²

But batteries are also becoming cheaper. The push to get rid of petrol and diesel engines has also improved the technology enough to make it sensible to attach batteries to wind farms or solar power systems. Store electricity when the grid has enough and sell it when power is needed.

Lithium can be a source of contention – but there is some hope for large-scale use of batteries based on sodium. These tend to be twice as big, but when used in the home or for a power plant that is acceptable:

“Sodium-ion batteries have received much academic and commercial interest in the 2010s and 2020s as a possible complementary technology to lithium-ion batteries, largely due to the uneven geographic distribution, high environmental impact and high cost of many of the elements required for lithium-ion batteries. Chief among these are lithium, cobalt, copper and nickel, which are not strictly required for many types of sodium-ion batteries. The largest advantage of sodium-ion batteries is the high natural abundance of sodium. This would make commercial production of sodium-ion batteries extremely cheap.”¹⁰³

Sodium is the sixth most abundant element on Earth, and ordinary salt is one source. And sodium batteries are not expected to share lithium’s unhappy habit of causing batteries to burst into flame. Mostly they do not: your smartphone would be using them without risk. But sodium might end the entire issue.

There are other battery systems that might also be good substitutes for lithium.

But older methods remain relevant. As I mentioned earlier, Hydro-storage has long been used. They pump it up to the top of the hill and they flow it down again:

“When thinking about electricity storage, most people think of lithium-ion batteries. However, over 90 per cent of the world’s electricity grid storage today is in the form of pumped storage hydropower. It has had a crucial role in keeping electricity flowing during the pandemic. Pumped storage stations have been hailed as the ‘first line of defence in the battle to keep Britain’s lights on’ during the coronavirus crisis. They also helped prevent a large-scale blackout in Europe in January after the Croatian grid was overloaded.”¹⁰⁴

There are other ideas, including *vertical* wind turbines that may be safer and cheaper than the current sort. Or making ammonium, which is bulkier and easier to transport before being turned back into hydrogen and nitrogen. I have accumulated a vast number of references, too much for one article. I have

¹⁰¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen_production#Environmental_impact

¹⁰² <https://www.ft.com/content/c3526a2e-cdc5-444f-940c-0b3376f38069>

¹⁰³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodium-ion_battery

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/6b59dece-302c-4b4f-a397-f1ef051aea80> (pay site)

instead put them on a web page accessible from the appendix to this article, for those interested.

Doom and Mars

Many wild ideas are about. I will consider a few of the more popular.

Giving up meat would make a gigantic difference to the world economy. It would vastly reduce the human ‘climate footprint’. But it is unlikely that it could be imposed, despite the growing popularity of vegetarianism. I would support it and suppress my current fondness for meat, if it became a serious possibility. For now, I do not see a need to make purely personal gestures. I do not believe that purely personal gestures are the answer.

In politics, the key arena is the USA:

“Down to the wire: Biden’s green goals face a power grid reckoning

“The U.S. will need new electric transmission lines to meet the president’s aim of eliminating the power sector’s net carbon pollution. But public opposition has doomed many such projects...

“But he’ll have to contend with a major obstacle: Americans who hate seeing these kinds of projects anywhere near their backyards. Power companies’ efforts to build long-range transmission lines have failed repeatedly in recent decades, mired in legal and political fights from Maine to Arkansas, because of opposition from states and communities along the projects’ paths...

“Additional lines would also allow different regions to share power in times of crisis, including extreme weather driven by climate change, and could lower electric rates by reducing congestion on the grid. The extra capacity on the grid could also enable a massive switch to electricity-powered cars and home heating.”¹⁰⁵

That’s why it’s good to have China as a counter-example. And the current propaganda war against China can be used as a cover for social reform. Just as the War Against Hitler was for the West, and then the Cold War.

I am confident no one wants to risk war with a state that has nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. Mao secured both in the 1960s, which probably saved China from invasion. And what China now has is vastly more powerful.

That’s assuming no one wants to wreck the world and no one expects it to be wrecked. I see this as a safe bet.

Chatter comparing the USA to the Fall of Rome is popular but ill-informed. The ‘Fall’ of Rome was a series of crises including two sacks of the city and a slow regression of urban culture in Western Europe. East of Italy, civilisation continued fine in the lands centred on Constantinople, and then Islamic culture. And a similar pattern of empires rising, falling and re-appearing had existed long before the rise of the Roman Empire. Continued long afterwards. Western Europe gets a distorted view, based on the odd failure to re-create the Roman Empire. Instead Europe had a unique pattern of empires spreading all round the world, but never able to subdue their immediate neighbours. And after the fragmentation of these empires in two World Wars and then the Cold War, we now have something else again. I mentioned earlier that a general trend to consolidate sovereign states into empires lasted till the First World War and then reversed.¹⁰⁶

Popular culture shows a regrettable lack of interest in objective facts that don’t flatter popular feelings. Possibly a decay-product of 1960s radicalism, though Hollywood films from before then were sometimes worse. A recent *Sky* series called *Domina* gives a gripping account of the rise of Livia,

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/04/08/biden-green-goals-power-grid-480446>

¹⁰⁶ <https://mrqwydionmwilliams.quora.com/The-Historic-Minimum-for-Sovereign-States>

famous or infamous wife of Emperor Augustus. But its script-writers seem content with an encyclopaedic ignorance: they make errors that a decent source book or just the Wiki would correct:

- A) Livia's father is supposedly ashamed of ancestors holding the office of Dictator, which was respectable for most of Roman history.

"A dictator was a magistrate of the Roman Republic, entrusted with the full authority of the state to deal with a military emergency or to undertake a specific duty. All other magistrates were subordinate to his imperium, and the right of the plebeian tribunes to veto his actions or of the people to appeal from them was extremely limited. In order to prevent the dictatorship from threatening the state itself, severe limitations were placed upon its powers, as a dictator could only act within his intended sphere of authority, and was obliged to resign his office once his appointed task had been accomplished, or at the expiration of six months. Dictators were frequently appointed from the earliest period of the Republic down to the Second Punic War (218–201 BC), but the magistracy then went into abeyance for over a century, until it was revived in a significantly modified form, first by Sulla between 82 and 79 BC, and then by Julius Caesar between 49 and 44 BC. The office was formally abolished after the death of Caesar, and not revived under the Empire."¹⁰⁷

- B) A woman freed from slavery instantly becomes a Roman Citizen. There were actually many layers. Patricians and Plebians among citizens. Lesser forms of citizenship allowed by Rome. Subjects of the Roman Republic without special rights. Freedmen and Freed-women, who remained partly dependant on their former owners. Slaves. And at all levels, women counted for less:

"Roman women had a limited form of citizenship. They were not allowed to vote or stand for civil or public office. The rich might participate in public life by funding building projects or sponsoring religious ceremonies and other events. Women had the right to own property, to engage in business, and to obtain a divorce, but their legal rights varied over time. Marriages were an important form of political alliance during the Republic."¹⁰⁸

- C) It omits the first steps in the rise of Octavius: his alliance with Cicero and assertion of his rights as Caesar's heir, including a battle against Marcus Antonius. One in which both Consuls perished, giving him extra power, and this may have been fixed.

The historic Cicero was not the nice old dodderer that popular histories mostly make him. A passably honest series based on his actual career would be just as much a Game-of-Thrones drama as the one about Livia has been. It might cure notions that the replacement of Rome's aristocratic republic was a bad thing.

Coming back to modern politics, pessimism is not really justified:

"Climatologist Michael E Mann: 'Good people fall victim to doomism. I do too sometimes'...

"You are a battle-scarred veteran of many climate campaigns. What's new about the climate war?

"For more than two decades I was in the crosshairs of climate change deniers, fossil fuel industry groups and those advocating for them – conservative politicians and media outlets. This was part of a larger effort to discredit the science of climate change that is arguably the most well-funded, most organised PR campaign in history. Now we finally have reached the point where it is not

credible to deny climate change because people can see it playing out in real time in front of their eyes...

"You can see from the talking points of inactivists that they are really in retreat. Republican pollsters like Frank Luntz have advised clients in the fossil fuel industry and the politicians who carry water for them that you can't get away with denying climate change any more. It doesn't pass the sniff test with the public. Instead they are looking at other things they can do."¹⁰⁹

Some real fears are now answered. At one time it seemed possible that the expected warming of the world would in the near future switch off the Gulf Stream. This keeps north-west Europe warmer than other places at a similar distance from the Arctic. A loss would not be as drastic as the thriller film *The Day After Tomorrow*, though this does mention the leakage of ultra-cold air from the arctic, which actually happen on a much smaller scale with the Texas freeze. But a sudden dangerous cooling was feared. Thankfully, further studies show that it will happen over decades and is not an immediate threat.

"If global warming persists at its current pace, the Gulf Stream could pass a critical "tipping point" by the year 2100, lead study author Levke Caesar, a climatologist at Maynooth University in Ireland, said, potentially causing the current to grind to a halt, regardless of the climate.

"This disruption could unleash rising sea levels along the coasts of North America and northwestern Europe, and usher in more extreme weather such as heat waves and cyclones."¹¹⁰

Green politics can be abused, as with the notorious Cash for Ash scandal in Northern Ireland.¹¹¹ A slew of nice-sounding schemes included a subsidy for burning wood deemed 'renewable fuel'. But it still applied where the subsidy was more than the cost of the fuel, so some of it was wastefully burnt just to get the subsidy. People set up wood-burning stoves in outbuilding where no heat was normally provided. And I find it very unlikely that no one noticed the loophole before the law was passed. But proving which individual offended would be almost impossible, and so far no one has been held responsible.

Looking more widely, the notion that we face extinction is damaging. If we were likely to perish, then for most people it would make sense to have fun while you can.

Likewise we should opposed the notion we can flee to Mars:

"Elon Musk's plans to 'colonise Mars' a distraction from Earth's dire climate problems, experts tell UAE summit...

"British astrophysicist Martin Rees and American astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson spoke on Wednesday during the second day of the World Government Summit, hosted by Dubai.

"The duo disagreed with SpaceX founder Elon Musk and late physicist Stephen Hawking's idea of using Mars as a backup planet...

"Mars is a very hostile environment,' Mr Rees said. 'What I certainly don't buy is an idea espoused by Elon Musk and by my late colleague, Stephen Hawking, that we should expect that literally millions of people will go and settle on Mars as a way of escaping Earth problems.

"I think that's a dangerous delusion because dealing with climate change on Earth is a doddle compared to making Mars habitable.'

"He said living on Mars is 'no better than living at the South Pole, the ocean bed or on top of Everest'.

109 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/27/climatologist-michael-e-mann-doomism-climate-crisis-interview>

110 <https://www.livescience.com/gulf-stream-slowing-climate-change.html>

111 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_Heat_Incentive_scandal

107 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_dictator

108 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_citizenship

“However, Mr Rees said he did believe that humans could be living on space stations in future...

“If you want to do that [terraform Mars] to escape climate change and problems here on Earth, consider that whatever it takes to turn Mars into Earth, that’s probably a bigger task than to turn Earth back into Earth.”¹¹²

Anyone who can run a gigantic corporation ought to be able to figure that this is no solution for most people. It might let the elite abandon most of the human race, though I’d have thought a gigantic rotating wheel in near-Earth space would be more practical even for that ignoble end. We could get the first steps if China’s space station flourishes and if the ISS gets abandoned in 2030.

The rich are already making shelters and getting residency rights in Australia and New Zealand. I might myself if I had the money. Or was younger than 70: it is virtually certain that Britain’s current comforts for the better-off will last longer than I will.

Meantime I fight to limit the damage. And would be content to pay more tax on my own comfortable pension, if something serious were done with the money.

Weather Wherever You Are

I regularly watch global news services. Among other things, I’ve found reports of Global Weather quite interesting. And for the BBC, I regularly record the late-night in-depths weather forecasts that are better than the short bulletins attached to the news. Good for the British Isles, though in line with long-standing practice they seldom mention weather in the Irish Republic. I remember from the time when they drew lines with a pen that the forecaster would always draw a little line that very roughly matched the border of Northern Ireland.

On *Al-Jazeera*, they have a decent few minutes on weather in one region or another. I record the one that shows Europe, and find it interesting.

When Cyclone Tauktae hit India and killed at least 90, BBC Online made it just the third item on the World page.¹¹³ Not worthy of the Home page (which is not the same as the UK page). Cyclone Yaas, hitting the other side of India, seems to rate even lower.¹¹⁴ And back in 2020, major rain and flood disasters in Japan and China

¹¹² <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/science/elon-musk-s-plans-to-colonise-mars-a-distraction-from-earth-s-dire-climate-problems-experts-tell-uae-summit-1.1181887>

¹¹³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57139989>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-57237953>

got little attention.¹¹⁵ Only weather disasters hitting the USA or Australia are seen as major news.

But the problem is global. And with Biden as US President pointing the way, Britain’s mainstream politicians may finally have the guts to say what they should have been saying from the 1990s.

What I’d suggest is that the BBC have a mainstream program on BBC One at a sensible time, giving ten minutes on global weather. Report disasters – there are usually some somewhere. And always show which places are above or below average, for temperature and rain.

It is also a matter on which the existing system of petitions to Parliament would be useful, since it is Parliamentary opinions that are the ultimate guide for the BBC. I’m not going to try starting one: my other opinions would burden such a project. But it is open to anyone else who’s a British citizen. Get at least a footnote in history, and do good for the world in general.

The global struggle to contain Climate Change may cost as much as the 20th century World Wars, or perhaps even more. Survival I see as certain, but there is much that needs to be done.

Appendix – For Deeper Study

Whatever its faults, Google is excellent for delivering your immediate needs. I got a lot of interesting stuff via a news service that came with my Huawei smart phone. (That was before the US bans limited what future models can do.) It’s far more than I’ve used here, but for those interested I have placed the links on pages on my website.

You can find it at <https://gwydionmadawc.com/030-human-dynamics/references-on-green-issues/>.

¹¹⁵ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/East-Asian-Flood-Disasters>

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