

New Right Utopias

Ruth Levitas

(i) 'Thatcherism'

Many commentators have noted that there are two different strands to New Right thinking, economic liberalism and political authoritarianism. This is clearest in the collection The Politics of Thatcherism <1>, where most of the contributors make similar assumptions: that Thatcherism exists (a point disputed by reviewers); that it is not primarily a product of Thatcher herself; that it is a conjuncture of two elements, whose synthesis is a new and damaging feature of British political and social life. Thus:

Thatcherite populism ... combines the resonant themes of organic Toryism - nation, family, duty, authority, standards, traditionalism - with the aggressive themes of a revived neo-liberalism - self-interest, competitive individualism, anti-statism.

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The precise character of Thatcherism is complex. Two clear elements, however, can be pinpointed. Firstly, there is a strong emphasis on a more traditional, arguably petty-bourgeois ideology - the virtues of the market, competition, elitism, individual initiative, the inequities of state intervention and bureaucracy.... Secondly, Thatcherism has successfully attempted to organise the diverse forces of the 'backlash' in favour of an essentially regressive and conservative solution embracing such themes as authority, law and order, patriotism, national unity, the family and individual freedom.... Thatcherism thus combines a neo-liberal economic strategy with reactionary and authoritarian populism.

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Crudely speaking ... Thatcherism = monetarism + authoritarian populism though the two threads of this ideology clearly complement each other.

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The New Right is the seedbed from which Thatcherism has grown and is composed of two rather different strands. There is the revival of liberal political economy, which seeks the abandonment of Keynesianism and any kinds of government intervention; and there is a new populism - the focusing on issues like immigration, crime and punishment, strikes, social security abuse, taxation and bureaucracy.... The real innovation of Thatcherism is the way it has linked traditional Conservative concern with the basis of authority in social institutions and the importance of internal order and external security, with a new emphasis upon re-establishing free markets and extending market criteria into new fields.

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(ii) 'The New Right'

The phrase 'the New Right' which is linked in this last quotation to the phenomenon of Thatcherism is as problematic as the term 'Thatcherism' itself. It is by no means clear that the New Right is a single entity, either socially or ideologically, nor is it clear that the two strands identifiable within it, neo-liberalism and authoritarianism, are complementary rather than contradictory - even though they may lead to similar policies in some areas. Some writers, notably Bosanquet, use 'the New Right' to refer solely to the neo-liberal, economic strand within Thatcherism <6>, and the authors he regards as informing the New Right are Adam Smith, de Tocqueville, Schumpeter, Hayek, Friedman and Joseph. The New Right is based 'in economics and on ideas about individualism and markets' <7>, and is to be contrasted with the Old Right which 'was based in political philosophy and on ideas about tradition and hierarchy' <8>.

One method of exploring the relationship between these strands of thought, and whether they have in fact been synthesised into a new ideology, is to look at the kinds of society these approaches imply - that is, at the utopias which can be extrapolated from contemporary expressions of each strand - and at the forms of legitimation involved. Extrapolation is of course a problematic method for considering the kind of society to which people aspire. In some cases it is inappropriate because particular policies may be espoused for pragmatic reasons, without any particular image of where this might lead to; and used maliciously it can impute to people aspirations with which they genuinely would not wish to be associated. It is, however, possible and justifiable in relation to the New Right, because one does not need to extrapolate very far; a characteristic of both strands within the New Right is the confident assertion of the nature of the good society.

This is clearest in relation to the neo-liberal New Right. In 1949, Hayek claimed that 'what we lack is a liberal Utopia' <9>, and he devoted much of the intervening years to describing one; and the Adam Smith Institute is currently producing a series of reports, collectively known as The Omega File, which constitutes a detailed set of policy proposals to establish just such a utopia <10>.

Bosanquet summarises neo-liberal New Right thinking in a series of propositions, under two headings, thesis and antithesis. The thesis refers to the integrating force of the market within society; producing order, justice, economic growth and constantly rising minimum incomes: inequality is the inevitable (and beneficial) outcome of individual freedom and initiative. The antithesis refers to short-term stresses generated by this long-term progress towards utopia, which produce politicisation and interference in the

workings of the market, in which democracy is a major culprit. Thus

Society is a battle ground between the forces of light working in the longer term through the economy and the forces of darkness working through the political process. Choices freely made in the economic sphere will nearly always be in society's interest - even if they turn out to be wrong they are the price of risk. But politics presents extreme dangers: attempts to bring about improvements through conscious design however well intentioned will almost always go wrong.

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The thesis is protected against empirical invalidation by its emphasis on the long run (which is why Keynes said that in the long run we are all dead). Schumpeter argues that 'since we are dealing with a process whose every element takes considerable time in revealing its true features and ultimate effects, there is no point in appraising the performance of that process *ex visu* of a given point in time' <12>, while Hayek says 'our faith in freedom does not rest on foreseeable results in particular circumstances, but on the belief that it will, on balance, release more force for the good than for the bad' <13>. This is paralleled by the present government's insistence that even if people are having a hard time at the moment, its policies will, in the long run, deliver the goods; no amount of visible ill-effects could demonstrate this to be false, since the claims are intrinsically impervious to empirical evidence.

The main contemporary exponent of the thesis (the virtues of the market) is Friedman, while the antithesis (the evils of intervention) is stressed by Hayek. Both writers are generally opposed to government intervention; both are opponents of the welfare state, although both recognise the need for some relief of poverty, Friedman favouring a negative income tax <14> and Hayek a minimum income with compulsory private insurance schemes <15>. Friedman's main objection to intervention is that it limits economic growth; Hayek fears that any such intervention, including attempts to redistribute wealth through progressive income tax, will lead not just to less growth, but to increasing public expenditure, politicisation, and totalitarianism <16>. Both essentially espouse (their own interpretations of) Adam Smith's view of the role of government:

According to the system of natural liberty, the sovereign has only three duties to attend to: ... first, the duty of protecting society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and thirdly, the duty of erecting certain public works and public institutions which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals to erect or maintain, because the profit could never repay the expenses to any individual or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society.

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(iii) From Adam to Omega

The themes elaborated by Hayek and Friedman are also the central themes in the work of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), the Centre for Policy Studies, and the Adam Smith Institute (ASI). The ASI's 'Omega Project' is the most ambitious attempt to spell out the implications of neo-liberalism for social policy, and thus is the main articulation of the liberal New Right's utopia. They say

The ASI's Omega project was conceived to fill a significant gap in the field of public policy research. Administrations entering office in democratic societies are often aware of the problems ... they face, but lack a well developed range of policy options.... The Omega project represents the most complete view of the activity of government ever

undertaken in Britain. It presents the most comprehensive range of policy initiative which has ever been researched under one programme.

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It should not be supposed that the proposals contained in the Omega reports are unlikely to be implemented, since there are connections between the ASI's organisers, the project's authors, and government. The ASI was set up by Madsen Pirie and Eamonn Butler, both graduates of St. Andrews, around the time of the 1979 election, and was intended to be comparable to the Heritage Institute in Washington, in which Butler's brother was working. At least part of its funding came from British United Industrialists, an organisation which channels company donations to free enterprise causes. The working parties include a number of MPs (including several newly elected in June 1983 who are also graduates of St. Andrews) <19>. The New Statesman claims that 'the Conservative Research Department ... received Omega progress reports at every stage in the last year' <20>, and that the report on Transport was very favourably received by the appropriate minister <21>. It is very difficult to attribute the proposals in the reports to particular individuals, or indeed to the ASI as a whole, since most contain a list of contributors accompanied by two separate caveats:

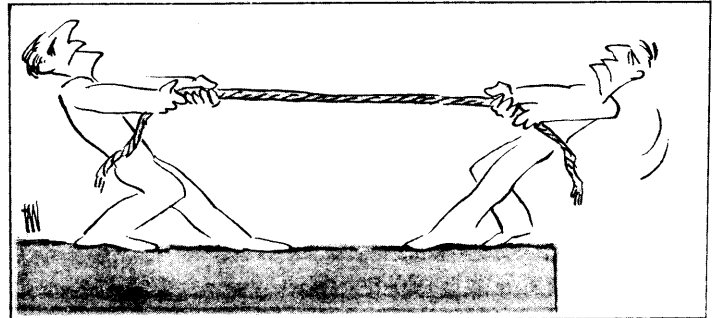
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All Omega Project reports are the edited summaries of the work of many different individuals, who have made contributions of various sizes over a lengthy period, and as such their contents should not be regarded as the definitive views of any one author.

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Nevertheless, the ASI seems, with these reports, to have established itself as precisely the kind of advisory body to government that it set out to be. However much it may pay lip service to the idea of policy options, it is clearly committed to removing restrictions on the market economy, and, of course, to privatisation, through the propagation of 'research'. It has, however, charitable status, which has been upheld in the face of challenge.



(Local) Anarchy, State and Utopia

Major themes throughout the reports are deregulation and privatisation <24>. Specific policy proposals are supported by appeals to accountability, efficiency and freedom, although several in fact involve a greater centralisation of control as a result of removing local government's power. Local government is generally criticised on two accounts - inefficiency and lack of accountability. Where accountability is concerned, a distinction is introduced between those who pay for services (ratepayers) and potential beneficiaries. The latter campaign for extensions of services, while the former 'vote only for a package of policies and services every few years, and can do little to express their views on the level or quality of particular services' <25>. The elision of accountability to the electorate between elections, and the section of the electorate which pays (but, by implication, does not benefit, or benefits less than

those who do not pay) rates, enables them to put their opponents in the apparent position of being against accountability. Their intentions are clarified in a discussion of local government finance. The present four sources of finance (rents and charges, domestic rates, commercial rates, and the Rate Support Grant) will be reduced to three, with the abolition of the Rate Support Grant and the transfer of responsibility for policing and education to central government. Rents and charges should be raised to economic levels and provide a greater proportion of income. Domestic rates should be replaced by a simple per capita tax on all adults consuming local authority services (not just rateable occupiers) <26>. It is unclear how this population is to be defined, since it can be argued to refer to those who live or work in the area; and the report also suggests that this local tax on adults could be 'routinely lumped together and paid by the head of household' <27>, which begs a number of questions about the nature of households and the reciprocal responsibilities of their members. Elsewhere, a tax on all electors is recommended <28>.

The most important proposals relate to commercial rates, which are described as taxation without representation. It is suggested that increases in these should be limited to increases in the RPI; that the surplus generated by the simultaneous abolition of the Rate Support Grant and responsibility for education and policing should be used to reduce commercial - not domestic - rates; and that a business vote, based on rateable value, should be introduced to represent the interests of commercial ratepayers <29>. No similar proposal is made in relation to Scotland <30>, although it is observed that 'more than sixty per cent of rates are paid by those who have no vote, while most electors in Scotland pay no rates' <31>. The argument that greater accountability can be achieved if the financial burdens are linked to those who can express their views by ballot <32> is simply a restatement of 'no taxation without representation', but the extension of this principle to organisations rather than individuals would be a step towards representation in proportion to taxation and the disenfranchisement of those unable to pay rates or taxes. Reference elsewhere to ballots of ratepayers <33> and to rights of ratepayers to petition through the courts for the compulsory sale of council property <34>, reinforce the impression that accountability is to those who pay.

It could be argued that, under their proposed rating scheme, the terms ratepayer and elector are synonymous as regards individuals. This is partly because they do not make detailed proposals here about low income groups, except to note that some form of exemption or rebate system will be necessary <35>. However, the concern with commercial ratepayers casts serious doubt on the interchangeability of these terms and thus upon their commitment to the existing franchise.

A major omission from the reports so far seen is any extended consideration of even the minimal need for the relief of poverty conceded by Friedman and Hayek. There is some discussion in the report on Health policy, where the principle of income support to enable recipients to purchase goods and services is affirmed. However, it is suggested that welfare recipients should also carry a 'medicard' entitling them to free basic health care; non-essential treatment would have to be paid for. They do raise the question here of how the welfare state can be restricted on market principles without some of the most needy slipping through the net. But, they continue,

We must not underestimate our ability to deal with it at the time.... It was the rhetoric, not the details, of the new social security regulations which first persuaded people that a welfare state was both moral and highly desirable. It is the desirability and superior morality of better health systems which should commend them....
<36>

Some problems are, therefore, reduced to a matter of detail, although the principle of income support is apparently conceded.

The main arguments for transforming the health service are an increase in public choice and efficiency, but (more surprisingly) demand limitation; it is argued that free health care (which is substantially life-enhancing rather than life-saving) creates an infinite demand <37>. It is suggested that charging would limit demand to what people are prepared to pay for - although it is also surmised that without the NHS 'people in the UK would probably have devoted more resources to health care, as they have in other countries' <38>.

The main proposals for reform of the Health Service begin with the abolition of Regional Health Authorities, contracting out of services, and charging for non-essential ambulance journeys (medicard holders can use public transport); non-essential drugs (including tranquillisers and appetite suppressants, free to no one); visits to GPs; 'hotel and general' services in hospitals, amounting to £5 per day for such 'inessentials' as cleaning, laundry and food; and treatment for injuries sustained while engaging in dangerous sports. Eventually, a comprehensive system of compulsory private insurance is proposed.

Things go better with education

Accountability is also a central theme of the report on education. It is proposed to finance State schools through a per capita grant to the school from the LEA <39>, to encourage parents to move to the private sector by means of tax rebates, since education vouchers seem to be politically unacceptable; and to increase the system's responsiveness to consumer demand by a system of school boards, chosen by and from parents, who would determine the school's policy and allocation of funds (including teachers' salaries). Parents would also be free to start new schools if they wished. A central inspectorate would be maintained to ensure adequate standards and lack of bias within a core curriculum, but beyond this there would be little control save that of market pressures. This is argued to facilitate innovations, such as shift systems (which require fewer teachers), charging for non-essential subjects, the use of teachers and parents to perform ancillary tasks on a voluntary basis and so on. Both for existing and new schools, a system of matching funds is suggested, whereby funds raised by parents will be supplemented by an equal amount from State funds. It is further suggested that local businesses may be allowed to allocate State funds to schools of their choice, or to make donations to schools tax-deductible <40>. These proposals would, of course, lead to far greater inequalities of opportunity within the education system. However, a further issue which is never explicitly confronted is who constitutes 'the consumer'. In the case of higher education, it is made quite clear that the student is the consumer, notwithstanding the recognition of the research role of universities <41>. In the case of schools, the accountability to the consumer means primarily parents, and secondarily employers. The interests of pupils are subsumed under those of their parents, in a footnote of most doubtful validity:

It is worth emphasising that parental choice effectively means family choice. The family, including the children, normally discuss and decide on educational matters, though the parents as legal guardians make the actual decision.
<42>

Proposals for the reform of teaching-training amount to its deprofessionalisation <43>. Non-parents are not 'consumers' of education and 'it is remarkable that a single person or childless couple should pay higher taxes in order to educate other people's children, when their interest in doing so is marginal' <44>. An idealised view of the family means children's interests need not be considered separately from parents. Accountability, then, is to parents (who also constitute a source of free or cheap labour), to employers, and to the State inspectorate.

Regarding the treatment of servants of the State

It is assumed that greater accountability will always be achieved by limiting the role of local government. For this reason, it is argued that local and national government employees should be debarred from organizing and standing in public elections. This is to prevent the coercion of junior employees to assist in campaigns and because government employees have a vested interest in the outcome - 'thus, the tendency of government to grow out of control because of increasing numbers who are dependent upon it will be partially checked' <45>. It is similarly necessary to limit the power of teachers over the education system, since they have a vested interest in obtaining more reward for less effort <46>. Privatisation also contributes to accountability because:

It must be remembered that independent providers are nearer to public demand than local authorities can ever be ... their perpetual search for profitability ... stimulates them to discover and produce what the consumer wants.... In this sense the market sector is more genuinely democratic than the public sector, involving the decisions of far more individuals and at much more frequent intervals. <47>

The main justification for privatisation, though, is that it is more efficient; where it does not obviously seem to be so, this is because of the accounting practices of local authorities, or their failure to choose the right contractor. A vast list of services are candidates for contracting out, including catering, cemeteries, emptying cesspools, snow-clearance, management of libraries, museums, pest control, provision of residential homes, refuse collection, schools meals and transport, and the sale of council housing. Some of these would in fact be compulsorily sold, since local government would not be permitted to provide non-essential services if they involved spending ratepayers' money; and even essential services which could not be made profitable would be contracted out on a least subsidy basis. Local authorities could either retain a small kernel of professional staff to monitor the system and ensure contracts were kept, or they could contract out this task itself <48>! Standards and guidelines for tendering would be laid down by the Audit Commission (one quango plainly not on the ASI's 'quango death list' <49>), which would also investigate complaints. Again, the abolition of local government involves centralisation of power. This is true also of the transition, which is to take a mere five years, during which the Secretary of State is to specify the rate at which local government services are to go out to tender. Local authorities would also be required to withdraw from the provision of non-essential services, and any organisation which believes it can undertake an existing service at lower cost than the local authority will have the right of appeal to the Secretary of State, the object being to help 'local tradesmen who feel that they are being unfairly crowded out by local authorities' <50>.

The picture that is implied here of small local firms being 'crowded out' by the monopolistic power of large authorities is of course misleading; organisations such as Pritchards who have benefited from the privatisation programme are neither small nor local. It is of some interest to note that the MP involved in the particular report also 'manages his own public relations firm, one of whose clients is Pritchards' <51>.

A principle which is invoked here, and in other reports (on transport, housing, education), is that of subsidies to individuals rather than to services. The proposed alternatives to raising rates or reducing services rely entirely upon the presumed greater efficiency of private industry - an article of faith - but nominally includes 'interauthority agreements, worksharing, contracting out, franchises, vouchers and grants to needy individuals to buy services in the market place, (and) volunteers' <52>. This is mentioned again in the context of providing transport tokens for the poor and removing transport subsidies <53>, but stressed particularly in relation to the deregulation of the housing

market. In an ideal world, the allocation of housing, like any other commodity, would be subject to the interaction of supply and demand; the problem is that in the public sector 'individual choice is arbitrarily limited by the imposition of politically inspired notions of "need"' <54>, and the subsidy on council housing causes demand to exceed supply. Discounts on the sale of council housing would therefore be increased, and the rent structure on any remaining housing stock adjusted to reflect the demand for different types of housing. Local authorities would only be permitted to undertake new building or renovation of old property for the provision of sheltered housing, and then only if they could demonstrate that this could not be contracted out <55>. In the private sector, two sets of changes are proposed. Firstly, an increase of subsidy by the abolition of stamp duty and the removal of the upper limits on mortgage tax relief, and, secondly, the removal of rent control and the abolition of security of tenure for all new tenancies <56>. This is not merely a device for increasing the supply of privately rented accommodation (which might well occur), but for giving the tenant greater choice - 'those current and future tenants who wish to avoid the economic and other costs of the restrictions should be allowed to do so if they choose' <57>.

Deregulation is to affect not just the housing market, but most areas of social organisation, including planning and the labour market. It is argued that the whole philosophy of planning rests on the principle that owners do not have the right to do what they like with their own property without the permission of the community; that this is not a just principle for a free society; and that it does not work, that planning is ineffective <58>. Controls would be retained for conservation areas and green belt land, but otherwise their role would be better carried out by a combination of economic forces acting to locate processes in the most appropriate areas, private institutions which would spring into being, and the law of nuisance (argued to be more effective than attempts at prior restraint) <59>. Even building regulations would be abolished since it is 'not necessary to prohibit private buildings of 'lower standard so that cheaper housing is available for those who need it' <60>, adequate control can be exerted through compulsory public liability insurance. Except in restricted zones which would be under direct ministerial protection, individuals would be specifically permitted to use residential or other property for any new purposes, unless and until a complaint was upheld that this use created a nuisance; otherwise, the only restrictions would be minimum standards (not specified) for safety and public health. Restrictive covenants might be used to enable property owners,



individually and collectively, to control the use of their own and adjoining property <61>.

Deregulation of the labour market is also proposed as a solution to the problem of unemployment. Much of the report on employment policy is concerned with limiting the power of trade unions, including removing the right to strike from public employees <62>. It also recommends the virtual abolition of the MSC and the introduction of training vouchers, although these could be phased out 'as the economy picks up and the quality of schooling improves' <63>. Almost all employment protection provisions should be removed at least from employees of small firms (i.e., those with less than 100 employees) <64>. The problems of unemployment are attributed to trade union activities, which artificially raise wage levels, especially those of the young; the regulation of the housing market, which diminishes mobility; government regulation of working conditions, compulsory redundancy payments, and minimum wage legislation; and the fact that wages 'cannot drop below the level of the benefit floor plus the premium necessary to induce people to work' <65>. There are no proposals in the report relating to the benefits system, although there is an indication that the need for it should diminish. In arguing for the redundancy of the MSC, its payment of interview and relocation expenses to the unemployed is argued firstly to apply only at the lower end of the market (since most companies pay such expenses themselves), and secondly to be likely to become increasingly unnecessary as the housing market and transport systems are themselves subject to deregulation <66>.

The three themes of accountability, efficiency and freedom which are used to legitimise the proposals in the reports involve very specific interpretations of these appealing ideals. Accountability means accountability to those who pay, particularly business interests - although they are at times deemed to deserve influence as 'consumers' of education even when they are not paying. Efficiency is conceived of as meeting effective demand, not in terms of effectiveness in meeting needs; indeed, needs which are not translated into effective demands can only be politically defined, and are thus regarded as inadmissible. Freedom is entirely negative freedom, the absence of restraint, deregulation - although ironically many proposals involve an increase in centralised power, and an increasing reliance on legal procedures for those who can afford them. Freedom is also seen in entirely economic terms, as 'economic freedom is the essence of personal freedom' <67>. Criticism of the proposals needs to concentrate not just on the practical outcomes of such measures, but on the interpretation of these legitimating formulae. Accountability and efficiency, however, are key words only for the neo-liberal New Right.

Authority defies logic

The authoritarian element which is noted in The Politics of Thatcherism, and which Bosanquet regards as the Old Right, is not particularly concerned with accountability and efficiency, and attaches a quite different meaning to the term 'freedom'. This corresponds to a view of the good society which differs in significant respects from the neo-liberal view. To illustrate this, one can turn to the views outlined in Conservative Essays, which explicitly oppose economic liberalism, and to those of Roger Scruton, one of the most vociferous representatives of the authoritarian New Right <68>.

Whereas the Omega File can be regarded as a utopian-proposal, corresponding to that utopia deriving from the systematic application of the idea of free economic competition (and whose existence even as utopia Utley denies <69>), conservatism finds it more difficult to appeal to a utopian future. Casey argues that 'it is characteristic of conservatism that unlike liberalism it does not aim to transcend history' <70>. Mannheim, who pointed to the tendency of conservatives to utopianise the past as manifested in the present rather than the future <71>, would doubtless

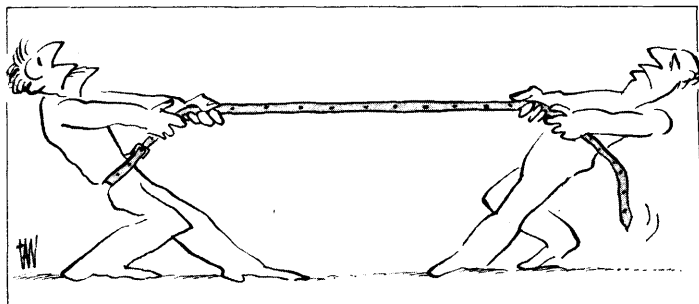
endorse Scruton's typification:

The conservative, unable as he is to appeal to a utopian future, or to any future that is not, as it were, already contained in the present and past, must avail himself of conceptions which are both directly applicable to things as they are and at the same time indicative of a motivating force in men. And this force must be as great as the desire for 'freedom' and 'social justice' offered by his rivals. <72>

Thus 'no utopian vision will have force for him compared to the force of present practice' <73>.

The nature of this immanent utopia is nevertheless made quite explicit. The freedom of the market is not regarded as the lynchpin of the good society, although it is not in itself attacked. Freedom as individual liberty is more explicitly opposed. Scruton claims that 'the value of individual liberty is not absolute, but stands subject to another and higher value, the authority of established government' <74>, while Worsthorne argues that 'social discipline ... is a much more fruitful ... theme for contemporary conservatism than individual freedom' <75>. Indeed, Worsthorne goes so far as to say that 'the urgent need today is for the State to regain control over "the people", to re-exert its authority, and it is useless to imagine that this will be helped by some libertarian mish-mash drawn from the writings of Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and the warmed-up milk of nineteenth century liberalism' <76>. Society is regarded as an organism, and power is an acceptable means, not to achieve justice, equality or freedom but, to 'maintain existing inequalities or restore lost ones' <77>, or even 'to command and coerce those who would otherwise reform or destroy' <78>.

The concepts which are appealed to in relation to this utopia are authority, allegiance and tradition (Scruton <79>); authority and tradition (Casey <80>), national identity and national security (Cowling <81>); and, overwhelmingly, 'nature'. Scruton explicitly rejects support for liberal ideals or the minimal state <82>, and, far from supporting the view that individual freedom should be curtailed only if this can be shown to be for the general good, argues that there should be constraint unless it can be shown that its removal will do no harm, thus reversing the burden of proof. In contrast to Hayek, who posits the existence of a protected domain of private life into which governmental authority should not intrude <83>, a view apparently shared by Mount <84>, he argues that it is legitimate for the law to intrude into 'any area of social life which is vital ... to the strength of the social bond' <85>. This makes it inevitable that there should be 'family law, planning laws, laws which regulate the days and times when men may work, drink, or seek recreation, even laws which control the nature of permitted intoxicant' <86>. This is in tension with the ASI's proposals to deregulate the labour market and abolish planning constraints, and also with Scruton's own statement that 'sections of local government must be simply eliminated - including most social service, planning, advisory, cultural and para-educational departments' <87>.



The priority of maintaining the social (i.e. national) bond is paramount. Cowling argues that 'the only permanent claims (on loyalty or attention) are those which arise from the national interest defined in terms of sovereignty, historic continuity and national identity, and beyond these no other focus of loyalty is either necessary or desirable' <88>. He stresses the threat from within to national security; this is repeated in Scruton's claim that it is not an 'insuperable defect' for a law of sedition to allow for 'imprisonment without a trial, a reduced judicial process, or summary execution' <89>. (Just as Utley's main anxiety is about industrial unrest, Scruton has argued that Scargill is guilty of sedition <90>.) For Scruton, the allegiance of citizen to state takes the form of a transcendent bond, akin to that between parent and child, thus giving the State the authority, responsibility and 'despotism' of parenthood <91>. A corollary of this is that the family is central to maintaining the State, since it is the main social institution in which the habits of allegiance are acquired <92>. In the same way, Burke argued that:

To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle, the germ as it were, of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind.

<93>

Casey argues that the State must not merely attract, but claim allegiance. He refers to Aquinas' concept of *pietas*, which he describes as 'forms of respect that arise from the individual's sense of his relation to something which comprehensively sustains and supports him' <94>, including parents, country and State. *Pietas* combines with tradition to produce loyalty, since an individual's sense of self is dependent upon the objectification of that self in the existing social institutions <95>.

Blood thicker than brain

In relation both to the bond between child and parent and that between citizen (or subject) and State, the principal legitimations are appeals to nature and to intuition. Berry argues that a particular view of nature is fundamental to the conservative position:

The family is ... necessarily a hierarchic authority structure, and this, as a natural consequence of the dependence of the human infant, is an integral component of a conservative vision.... Though the family is the prime source for authority and hierarchy, its very naturalness inclines conservatives to translate this model into other institutions. Hierarchy is the order of nature, and as such is ubiquitous.

<96>

Or, as Scruton puts it:

The family ... shares with civil society the ... quality of being non-contracted, of arising ... out of natural necessity. And ... it is obvious that the bond which ties the citizen to society is likewise not a voluntary but a kind of natural bond.

<97>

Human nature, the foundation of conservative politics, also underlies a connection between family and property. Private property is an 'absolute and ineradicable need', a knowledge derived from 'intuition ... which ... lies at the very centre of the social sense of man' <98>. Prejudice is a natural counterpart of allegiance and of the desire for the company of one's own kind <99>. Conservatism itself is natural, since 'instinct and self-interest coincide in the judgement that existing arrangements should be preserved' <100>. Or, more extremely:

There is a natural instinct in the unthinking man ... to accept and endorse through his actions the institutions and practices into which he is born. This instinct is rooted in human nature.

<101>

This reliance on nature and instinct is antagonistic to reason. Berry argues that the location of the cohesiveness of the family 'in instinct, feeling or affection ... means undercutting ... claims ... for the self-sufficiency of reason' <102>, and Scruton certainly elevates intuition and instinct over thought. In a Channel Four debate on capital punishment, he spoke in favour of its reintroduction. Most of the debate had centred on the issue of whether or not capital punishment is a deterrent to murder. He argued that the deterrent effect is irrelevant, as even if there is none, it remains the case that death is still the punishment which we all know to be the just and proper retribution; and he suggests elsewhere that in such matters, analysis and rational investigation are positively harmful:

It is useful that we do not substitute analytical rigour ... for the immediate perception of the horror of murder, for the prompt response to an insult, to an injustice, to an act of tyranny or violence. Mercifully most people do not go around thinking analytically about these responses. They arise out of our common human nature....

(103)

The authoritarians of the New Right are not alone in their appeal to nature. There are explicit and implicit assumptions about human nature underpinning the work of Hayek and of the neo-liberals. There is also, of course, a version of a right-wing utopia contained within sociobiology, consisting substantially of claims about what is natural. Yet nature is in fact used here in very different ways. Liberal economics assumes rationality (or at least economic rationality) on the part of the individual actor. This is why they are able to claim as a regrettable 'fact' that wages 'cannot drop below the level of the benefit floor plus the premium necessary to induce people to work' <104>; of course, this supposition of rationality is belied by the fact that in practice people do choose to work, even for wages lower than their benefit entitlement. The rationality of the economic competition favoured by neo-liberals and the genetic competition posited by sociobiologists is remarkably similar. The conservative use of nature and intuition, especially in Scruton's case, is in contrast, mystical rather than 'scientific'. Scruton shares with sociobiology an extreme sexism, and adds his own contempt for feminism. But whereas the sexism of sociobiology is underpinned by claims of genetic causation and natural selection, his is rooted in a pseudo-religiosity. It is

... one of the fundamental thoughts on which civilisation depends, the thought that there is a profound, mysterious, and beneficial difference between women and men. The thought that I exist as an individual independently of my sex, is one with the thought that my sex might have been chosen.

<105>

Sexuality, he claims, is reduced to an attribute rather than an essence, and ceases to determine the relations between men and women, which thus lose their clarity. 'Much passes from the world when sexuality takes on this aspect' <106>. This loss is part of the loss contained in secularisation; a firm established Church is what is needed, and 'the restoration of the Church may well become a serious political cause' <107>.

Hayek also uses nature as a legitimation, but in a different way. He too relies on intuition in relation to our sense of justice, which derives from complex rules which we follow but are unable to express in words. True law, as opposed to legislation, involves the codification of these intuited truths. Nevertheless, these evolved rules seem to be socially learned rather than instinctive <108>. His dismissal of socialism is partly on the grounds of its atavism: socialism 'is simply a reassertion of the tribal ethics' whose passing made modern society possible <109>. This morality was instinctive, but had to be restrained to make development possible, so that 'we often rebel against these new restraints and yearn for the easy socialism of the past' <110>. At least some of the time, Hayek's utopia is a triumph of culture over nature. It is, though, hardly a triumph of rationality, since he argues against institutional

change because existing arrangements contribute to social order in a way that is beyond our understanding, so that 'the only guide we have in what has worked in the past' <111>; the complexity of society is such that it is fundamentally unknowable and cannot be planned <112>.

Thatcherism reflects both the authoritarianism and appeal to intuitively held (Victorian) values which Scruton represents, and the free market approach of the ASI. Our initial question, however, was how far these doctrines are complementary, in terms of policies or electoral support.

The problems caused by the term 'freedom' are recognised by at least some of the New Right, and were discussed in an article in The Salisbury Review <113>. Here it is argued that 'the individualism which reached its apogee in the sixties ... could prove as inimical to Mrs Thatcher's purposes ... as the collectivism she so strenuously opposes' <114>. The idea that the pursuit of individual freedom leads to the general good was never very plausible, and more importantly, it is quite antithetical to Mrs Thatcher's views. Referring in particular to the family policy documents leaked to The Guardian in February 1983, the author points out that Thatcher has no taste for the freedom from social bonds implied in individualism, but rather seeks for 'a mode of freedom that is compatible with virtue' <115>. The stress on the role of the family here is very similar to that outlined above; freedom is redefined to coincide with Thatcher's view of a good (i.e. virtuous) society - a view of freedom which is in sharp contrast to that implied by liberalism and free market economics <116>. At the heart of the problem is the minimalist/maximalist distinction between those who support State intervention and those who reject it. For the mobilising myth of Thatcherism is 'freedom', both economic and political, and those who support present policies out of commitment to reducing government could, in theory, desert when the goods are not delivered. The Falklands, of course, provided a diversion from this by substituting the myth of nationhood, which is closer to Cowling's themes. It is at least arguable that the need to escalate the Cold War and the arms race are in part an attempt to keep nationalism at centre stage in order to marginalise the minimalist implications of the myth of freedom. This certainly creates difficulties for the ASI, who are, of course, committed to free trade, but see a conflict between these principles and the 'enemy' status of Eastern Europe:

Trade with Eastern bloc countries raises questions that go beyond those of economic efficiency. Even from a myopic national point of view, it could be dangerous to become dependent on imports from a potential enemy or to supply it with goods that increase the threat.
<117>

Tension between Min and Max

Enough has been said to show that there is a logical inconsistency between the two strands of New Right thinking. This does not in itself refute the claim that they have been synthesised into a new ideology. For the power of an ideology does not depend upon logical consistency, but on its relationship, at the level of myth and at the level of practice, to the interests and potential actions of the social groups at which it is directed <118>. At the level of myth, the inconsistencies of meaning in the term freedom are a positive advantage, and one of the strengths of Thatcherism is the truly ideological use of language to obscure contradictions. Inconsistencies are only of consequence if they are translated into conflicts over particular policies which cause dissension in the ideology's social base.

What holds it up?

What, then, is Thatcherism's social base, and how does it relate to the minimalist/maximalist contradiction? Ross has

recently argued that the Tory party is comprised of, financed by, and rules in, the interests of the established upper classes; that Thatcher's governments are no different in this respect; that the electoral support for the party of certain geographically distinct sections of the skilled working class is itself traditional, and that Thatcher's landslide victory is a 'fake', in that it is hardly a hiccup in a long term decline in Tory support, since the percentage of the vote gained by them in the 1983 election was only two per cent more than when they lost disastrously in 1945 <119>. If Ross were right, then to talk about the New Right, at least in relation to Thatcherism, would be nonsensical; it is just the Old Right. Yet this view is misleading in several ways. The analysis is economic, and gives no attention to the role of ideology, and thus ignores the fact that the political terrain involved may vary between elections. And however true it may be that the Tory Party serves the interests of the ruling class, there are interesting questions about the homogeneity of those interests, as well as the sustaining of enough of a hegemony to persuade others to support it. What is new about the New Right, in both its strands, is not that the ideas themselves are new, but that they are articulated in tandem, and with a confidence that those ideas will be implemented. They are also articulated by a different social group, for Ross is wrong to claim that the current composition of the Tory Party in Parliament is unchanged. The social background of the new Tory MPs in 1983 was significantly different from the traditional public school/Oxbridge/director mould, with a greatly increased input from grammar school/small business backgrounds <120>. Thatcher, Tebbit, and Parkinson all went to grammar schools (as did Scruton), although both Thatcher and Parkinson married into wealth. The ASI men are graduates of St. Andrews, not Oxbridge. Many of the new MPs had also had experience in local government, although it does not seem to have increased their enthusiasm for this institution.

The division between minimalists and maximalists, at least among the ideologues, does not seem to be clearly class-related. Scruton and the St. Andrews-clique are not socially dissimilar, are at opposite poles of the minimalist/-maximalist distinction, and share, above all, an arriviste arrogance. This is not to reduce the New Right to a style, for such assertiveness is bound up with the real opportunities for implementing their ideas. The new Tory MPs are maximalists on law and order issues; most voted to restore capital punishment <121>. And the Omega Reports involve a transfer of power to central government in order to establish a deregulated market, combined with an increased vote for the judiciary in resolving disputes between individuals. Indeed, the centrality of the law and legal procedures to both positions is an important link between them. The question is whether it is possible for the State to 'be strong in enforcing the rule of law and recovering and strengthening a sense of national identity' while resisting the temptation 'to meddle incessantly in the economic and commercial activities of its subjects' <122>, and whether the rhetoric of freedom will encourage demands for the preservation of individual liberty within and beyond the economic sphere.

One of the strange features of the phenomenon of Thatcherism and the New Right is that notwithstanding the appeal of the rhetoric, one would have expected its translation into policy to have already exposed contradictions in a way which would alienate support. (For example, women have become less free as a direct result of recent policies <123> - not to mention the present level of unemployment.) Perhaps, despite Thatcher's re-election, this is in fact so. Recent research shows that even in 1983 there was surprisingly little support for the social policies for which people appeared to be voting <124>! If the electorate does not want (either of the) New Right utopias, the more clearly these are outlined, the better. Thatcher's support would appear to be contingent upon the sustaining of a myth - the myth of freedom - for it is the contrasting meanings given to this that form the link between the two utopias.

And one of the problems for the Left in articulating the real aspirations of ordinary people is going to be the repossession of our language.

Addendum to Levitas article page 44

Footnotes

- 1 S. Hall and M. Jacques (eds.), The Politics of Thatcherism, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1983.
- 2 S. Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', ibid., p. 29.
- 3 M. Jacques, 'Thatcherism - Breaking Out of the Impasse', ibid., p. 53.
- 4 I. Gough, 'Thatcherism and the Welfare State', ibid., p. 154.
- 5 A. Gamble, 'Thatcherism and Conservative Politics', ibid., pp. 113, 121.
- 6 N. Bosanquet, After the New Right, London, Heinemann, 1983.
- 7 ibid., p. 1.
- 8 loc. cit.
- 9 Cited in E. Butler, Hayek, London, Temple Smith, 1983, p. 164.
- 10 The Omega File. A series of reports published by the Adam Smith Institute, 1983-4, on Defence; Transport; Agricultural Policy; Scotland; Local Government, Housing and Planning; Education; Communications; Employment; Trade. Other reports are still to be published.
- 11 Bosanquet, op. cit., p. 7.
- 12 Cited in Bosanquet, p. 13.
- 13 Cited in Butler, op. cit., p. 27.
- 14 M. and R. Friedman, Free to Choose, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980, Chapter 4.
- 15 Butler, op. cit., p. 27.
- 16 ibid., passim.
- 17 A. Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Bk. IV, Chapter ix.
- 18 This passage appears at the beginning of the foreword to each report. See, for example, Omega File: Trade Policy, Adam Smith Institute, 1984, p. iii.
- 19 D. Wade and J. Picardie, 'The Omega Project', New Statesman, 29 July 1983. See also Labour Research, February 1984, Vol. 73, No. 2, p. 37.
- 20 D. Wade and J. Picardie, op. cit., p. 8.
- 21 'Miscellany', New Statesman, 27 January 1984, p. 5.
- 22 Omega File: Communications, p. ii (for example).
- 23 ibid., pp. iii-iv.
- 24 See especially Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, ASI, 1983, and the report on Employment Policy.
- 25 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 1.
- 26 ibid., pp. 24-25.
- 27 ibid., p. 25.
- 28 Omega File: Scottish Policy, p. 17.
- 29 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 26.
- 30 Policy for Scotland is treated separately, in the Omega File: Scottish Policy, a report which includes proposals for the denationalisation of money.
- 31 ibid., p. 17.
- 32 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, pp. 25-27.
- 33 ibid., p. 27.
- 34 Omega File: Scottish Policy, p. 17.
- 35 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 25.
- 36 Omega File: Health Policy, p. 3.
- 37 ibid., pp. 14, 9.
- 38 ibid., p. 14.
- 39 Omega File: Education Policy, p. 6. This contradicts the proposals in the Local Government report for transferring education finance to central government.
- 40 ibid., pp. 20-21. A similar proposal, attributed to Digby Anderson, appears in the report on Scottish Policy, p. 29.
- 41 ibid., p. 28.
- 42 ibid., p. 5.
- 43 ibid., pp. 23-24. It is proposed that teacher training should consist of much less theory, and an apprenticeship system of one year's half-load with half-pay, followed by one year's full load on two-thirds pay. It is also suggested that outsiders (local businessmen, union officials, doctors, lawyers) should be invited into the schools (in the case of doctors, to talk about basic health care), on the grounds that general experience is more important than teaching experience.
- 44 ibid., p. 15. Besides the non-recognition of social interdependence, there is an idealised model of the family implied in the assumption that only (some) couples have children and single persons are childless.
- 45 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 27.
- 46 Omega File: Education Policy, pp. 1-3. This 'problem' is referred to as 'producer capture'.
- 47 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 13.
- 48 ibid., pp. 4-5.
- 49 ibid., p. 5. Quango Death List is a publication available from the ASI.
- 50 ibid., p. 11.
- 51 Labour Research, Vol. 73, No.2, February 1984, p. 8.
- 52 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 3.
- 53 Omega File: Scottish Policy, p. 27, and Omega File: Transport Policy, pp. 24-26.
- 54 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 52.
- 55 ibid., p. 57.
- 56 ibid., pp. 50 ff.
- 57 Omega File: Scottish Policy, p. 22.
- 58 Omega File: Local Government, Planning and Housing, p. 35.
- 59 ibid., pp. 39-40.
- 60 ibid., p. 42.
- 61 ibid., pp. 42-45.
- 62 Omega File: Employment Policy, pp. 16-21, esp. p. 19.
- 63 ibid., p. 12.
- 64 ibid., p. 29.
- 65 ibid., pp. 1-3.
- 66 ibid., p. 9.
- 67 Omega File: Scottish Policy, p. 1.
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- 70 J. Casey, 'Tradition and Authority' in Cowling, op. cit., p. 82.
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- 72 R. Scruton, The Meaning of Conservatism, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980, p. 27.
- 73 ibid., p. 36.
- 74 ibid., p. 19.
- 75 P. Worsthorpe, 'Too Much Freedom' in Cowling, op. cit., p. 150.
- 76 ibid., p. 149.
- 77 Cowling, op. cit., p. 9.
- 78 ibid., p. 25.
- 79 ibid., p. 27.
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- 81 Cowling, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
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- 83 Butler, op. cit., p. 31.
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- 88 Cowling, op. cit., p. 16.
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- 91 Scruton, The Meaning of Conservatism, p. 111.
- 92 ibid., p. 36.
- 93 Cited in Mount, op. cit., p. 172.
- 94 Casey, op. cit., p. 99.
- 95 ibid., pp. 99-100.
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- 97 Scruton, op. cit., p. 31.
- 98 ibid., p. 99.
- 99 ibid., pp. 68-69.
- 100 Cowling, op. cit., p. 11.
- 101 Scruton, op. cit., p. 119.
- 102 Berry, op. cit., p. 57.
- 103 R. Scruton, Politics of Culture, p. 167.
- 104 Omega File: Employment Policy, p. 2.
- 105 R. Scruton, The Meaning of Conservatism, p. 174.
- 106 loc. cit.
- 107 ibid., p. 175.
- 108 Butler, op. cit., p. 22.
- 109 ibid., p. 36.
- 110 loc. cit.
- 111 ibid., p. 19.
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- 113 I. Crowther, 'Mrs Thatcher's Idea of the Good Society', The Salisbury Review, No. 3, Spring 1983, pp. 41-43.
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