



Four Hypotheses About the Secular-Corporatist Global Elite

Description

Everyone has a theory about what is going on. But many are partial, or fragmentary, or too simple in explanation – attributing too much significance to ‘capitalism’ or ‘globalism’ or ‘opportunism’ or ‘unintended consequences’. We have to keep trying to make sense of the whole scenario. And I mean that while the exact and quantitative writers have to keep writing – as the *Daily Sceptic* regulars do – so do those of us who write about things less exact.

Let us begin with a few grand hypotheses about what is going on. Rene Guenon’s hypothesis, first sketched around 1930, was that all civilisations possess spiritual and temporal powers and so somehow incorporate a tension between the two: but that, for the first time in history, our modernity from any time after 1500 placed the temporal above the eternal, the material above the spiritual: in short, ‘state’ above ‘church’. There were a few related hypotheses offered at the same time: such as Julien Benda’s hypothesis that the *clercs*, or intellectuals, had shifted their concern: so the immense value they had always attributed to unworldly matters was now attributed to worldly matters. That was to say, the intellectuals were now corrupt, coming after filthy lucre.

An American friend of mine recently drew my attention to some of the recent writings of a novelist and essayist, Paul Kingsnorth. Originally an anti-capitalist, he thought he was on the Left, and now finds himself more or less on the Right. His hypothesis is that the decline of Christianity in our civilization – the decline of the eternal and spiritual – coincides and was probably ultimately caused by the rise of what he calls ‘the myth of progress’. Progress is the conviction that the world, *this* world, is getting better. This myth is the sort of thing we may associate with Francis Bacon or John Stuart Mill, or indeed Bayle, Mandeville, Voltaire, Smith, Hegel, Comte, Marx – more or less everyone of the 17th to 19th centuries but for the most extreme Bossuet or Maistre types, and but for Burke at the very end of his life. Kingsnorth builds a very effective vision of history on this hypothesis, which enables him to explain why leftists and corporatists are so agreed nowadays. They all, he says, want progress. They are all contributing to what he calls the Machine.

Let us accept these two hypotheses. But I have to add a third, which adds some inner complication to the second, and thus renders the whole scenario a bit more dynamic. It may even explain why there is so much confusion about what has gone on. The hypothesis is that there was never a single ‘myth of

progress': the power of the myth of progress was that it contained an inner diremption, as translators of Hegel used to call it: an inner division. There were two rival positions, which disagreed on the *how* even while they agreed on the *what*. The *what* was an absolute presupposition – something so fundamental it was never questioned by either side. As is ever the case, the disagreement in the foreground distracted from the deeper agreement which dominated everything in the background.

What they agreed on was that progress was happening and should happen. What they disagreed on was *how* this was supposed to take place. I am of course simplifying here, but to simplify an argument into two positions is a great deal less simple than simplifying it into one position.

On one side, there was the argument that progress was occurring whether we liked it or not. It was occurring through what Adam Smith called the invisible hand, what Samuel Johnson called the secret concatenation, what we now sometimes call the law of unintended consequences. This is the process by which many humans, in pursuit of their own individual interests, contributed to the emergence of a good which none had ever intended, and which none had anticipated, but which could be understood in retrospect.

On the other side, there was the argument that progress would only occur if we adopted the right rational beliefs, the correct enlightened views (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*, etc.), and set our minds to imposing on the world the policies or schemes suggested by the right rational beliefs and the correct enlightened views. This was to emphasise planning rather than unintended consequences: and planning could only be effective if it was carried out by those in power. So the powerful had to be subjugated by the experts in enlightenment.

The difference between these two positions is that one sees an *unconscious* process, the other sees a *conscious* impetus. These two positions have dominated political debate for two centuries: by and large, one side has favoured markets and independent private and apparently (but not actually or eventually) selfish activity, and the other side has favoured a cameralism, Colbertism or Comtism of scientific planning and collective public activity.

In practice, of course, the two have been mixed together, given a variety of names, and some people who began on one side have ended up on the other: consider John Stuart Mill's or T.H. Green's drift from liberalism to socialism; but also consider Kingsley Amis's, Paul Johnson's and John Osborne's drift in the other direction. Unpicking all this is the devil of a job: and it should be left to historians who have the patience for it. But historians usually leave everything only slightly less complicated than they found it: or, let's say, one step more complicated than previous historians left it. So all this requires some explaining: and explaining it in the abstract, as I do here, certainly makes it possible to explain why Liberals have sometimes been on one side or the other, and why Conservatives are just as quixotic: some Conservatives have favoured the plan; others favoured the invisible hand. There is no certain logic in any of this politics. No name in politics has any fixed meaning – except when we give it one.

The point of this hypothesis is to say that all of the politics of the last two centuries was dominated by arguments about whether progress would take place in the observance or in the breach, so to speak: whether it would have to be consciously theorised and then imposed by some careful policy, or whether it would have to arise without deliberate planning in such a way that only later historians would try to understand it fully. But this has come to an end. We are now at the next stage.

Part of this is because, as Kingsnorth says, the myth of progress – though not entirely dead – is having the last rites. Arguably it has been in trouble since the 1890s, and was jolted by the First World War; but has suffered its recent shocks since the 1970s, what with pollution, population, stagflation, ozone, carbon dioxide, subprime mortgages, and so on. For the moment, the globalists are unsure exactly how to square the circle of wanting ‘progress’ (or, at least, wanting to be ‘progressive’) and wanting ‘sustainability’ at the same time. If we have a myth at the moment it is surely the myth of sustainability. Perhaps the globalists and the localists like Kingsnorth will find that though they disagree on much – COVID-19, for instance – they agree on sustainability. The myth of sustainability is that by retreating to local life and luddism or by advancing to technological repurposing and rewilding and transhumanism we can settle on a mode of existence which will enable us to survive in a less frenetic, destructive, galloping manner.

But there is something to be added to this, a fourth hypothesis, and this is really the crowning hypothesis. I have said that for a few centuries there was planning versus *laissez-faire*, or consciousness versus unintended consequences – both trying to find out how to make the world, *this* world, better. But there is something else. The fourth hypothesis is that some figures in the early nineteenth century glimpsed that the two positions could be fused. Hegel was one of these figures; even Marx. There were others; and are many now. Fusion meant something like the following

Until now we have made the mistake of thinking that good can be imposed consciously – usually through religious precepts – but we have discovered, courtesy of Mandeville, Smith and the economists, that good can be achieved through unintended consequences. This, however, does not mean that we should adopt *laissez-faire* politics: on the contrary, *now that we understand unintended consequences*, we know how the whole unconscious system of the world works, and since we know how to incorporate our knowledge of this into our politics, we can finally achieve a perfect scientific-and-moral or evidential-and-justified world order.

Is this clear? The Scottish Enlightenment created the empirical expert, who was fused with the morally certain conscious progressive, to become the hope of the world. Doubtless, most of us have abandoned Hegelian and Marxist fantasies of ‘the end of history’ or of ‘emancipation’, but I think that the shadow of these fantasies survived and has come to final fruition in the recent scientific-and-moral majoritarianism seen clearly since COVID-19 arrived in the world.

If I am right about this fourth hypothesis, then it explains why we are so confused. We cannot make sense of our situation by using the old language of ‘collectivism’ versus ‘individualism’. The fact is that in our post-progressive era, the experts feel more justified than ever in imposing on everyone an ‘evidence-based’ and ‘morally-justified’ set of protocols and precepts. They feel more justified because they are combining *knowledge* of how things work individually (through modelling and observation of unconscious processes or of unintended consequences) with *certainly* about what it is right to do collectively (given that the old fantasies of progress have been modified by a puritanical and restraining ideology of sustainability and survival, plus diversity, equity and inclusion – which incidentally serves more as a restraining impetus than an anticipation of Marxist emancipation).

This is not only toxic but tangled. The levels of hypocrisy and self-deception involved in this are formidable. The globalists have an ironclad doctrine in their world-saving sustainable politics, or

'sustainability'. It is almost unassailable, since it draws on the greatest achievements of natural and moral science. It is of course powered by ancient acquisitive greed, but also by sentiment for those who require to be levelled up, or offered something in exchange for their lack of privilege; and, besides, it makes the world better, 'saves' the planet, and gilds the cages of the unprivileged and the palaces of the privileged in the same foolish golden moral lacquer.

Perhaps, as Guenon and Kingsnorth glimpse – also Delingpole and Hitchens – the truth is that we need to actually work our way back through the whole Age of Sustainability and Age of Progress to the Age of Faith. Certainly, someone or something needs to force these 'elites' to submit to a higher vision: and I think that the only way we can make sense of this at the moment is to imagine that a church or prophet or philosopher could strike down their state-corporate secularity, show them that their faith is just an ideology serving their interests, and that they should submit to a genuinely graceful doctrine that can admit fault, error, even sin. This would not be done by public apology, or hypocritical political display, but by interrogating their own souls.

I am certain not saying that this is what will happen, or even that it should happen (or that it could): but it is certainly the *type* of thing that needs to happen. That is, it is the type of thing we ought to imagine happening. What will happen will either be more of the same old White Swannery, or perhaps some unexpected 'Black Swan' event (not necessarily a good thing: we seem to be overly fond of crisis at the moment). But, either way, a reactionary sensibility seems to be the only one which is capable of exhibiting any awareness of what is going on.

For the sake of clarity, let me again state the four hypotheses about what has been going on:

1. Through all ages there has been a balance of spirituality and secularity. In our modernity, secularity is dominant. There is only *this* world.
2. For three or so centuries we have believed that this world is getting better and should get better. This is the 'myth of progress'.
3. There was always disagreement about progress: some supposed it was happening as a result of accident and individual interest; others supposed it could only happen as a result of deliberate design.
4. But we should not ignore that there has been a very clever fusion of the two positions: a fusion which has not faded away with the fading of the 'myth of progress' but which survives to support the strange and novel politics of what we could call the 'myth of sustainability'. This fusion is extremely condescending and sure of itself because it combines *scientific* certainty about what has gone on unconsciously to better the world with *moral* certainty about what should now be done consciously to better the world. It appears to harness the individual and the collective together in a way that is meant to make gainsaying impossible.

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Category

1. Crime-Justice-Terrorism-Corruption
2. Main
3. NWO-Deep State-Dictatorship-Tyrrany

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