

RESPONSIBILITY WITH CLASS

Introduction

The English side of this website seeks primarily to present proposals of how political appointments and decisions might be arrived at in a way that is truly representative of the collected wisdom of a well-informed class of people, people whose voices are seldom heard and rarely acted on. It is about where we need to be going as a society and as a culture, the point of reference here being mainly Europe. This involves challenging conventional thought about democracy, markets and, indeed, the role of rules and the law.

As the name of the website suggests, it is also about the need for individuals to be held personally accountable for what they do and let. It does not do this in a vacuum. In the background, away from the political analyses and demands, is a conception of an ethical order that cannot be reduced to following rules; that, instead, asks why people should behave well; and which provides answers that recognise from the start how very different from each other we all are. (Are you seeking a sense of identity? Then seek out responsibilities that fit you and your best possibilities in life, and assume those responsibilities. Only then do you also have a right - and maybe a duty - to hold others to account.)

This project cannot be presented in a single sentence or on a single page, but neither is its presentation impossibly long. Challenging and changing one's habits of thought requires time and focus, but can be taken one step at a time, and the effort will prove personally rewarding apart from showing the way we (and maybe you) need to be going. Unless, that is, as a society, here in Europe and further afield, we are just to stumble blind from one crisis to the next.

The German side of the website is more elaborate than this (provisional) English side. This is in part because the severity of the crisis has not yet hit home in Germany, and there are certain realisations and insights that, while nearly commonplace elsewhere (for example, in the United Kingdom), have still not obtained currency in the German-speaking world. Germany being the economic and indeed the political powerhouse of Europe, it is here that these insights are most needed. But elsewhere in Europe, and the Anglo-Saxon world too, fundamental realisations would seem be largely absent. The overarching theses are:

Political parties are the enemies of democracy, and not its representatives. The solution is not to form a new, or reform an old, political party, but to understand that the very structure of party politics leads to many unsuitable people gaining power; leads to horse-trading; and prevents the electorate from registering considered opinions effectively.

Free speech (a culture of disclosure and discussion) does not mean that we have democracy, only that we have a precondition for democracy. Again & again, policies are imposed that have been thoroughly discredited among those who have considered them carefully. Repeatedly, individuals whose track record is derisible, if not despicable, persist in office, whether in politics, in business, in law, or indeed elsewhere where decisions are made. The handful of politicians (and, indeed, others) whose personal integrity and competence need not be questioned are helpless within these vicious circles: their hands are bound.

Moreover, the culture of disclosure and discussion is less vibrant than supposed. Everywhere the most important issues are dodged, with, one suspects, the deliberate creation of confusion (obfuscation). This is not least due to **the pernicious effects of advertising, the purpose of which is disinformation and consequently the undermining of market mechanisms, be these for products and services, or be they in the arena of ideas.** There is much that advertising would seem to subsidise. Yet: "There is no

such thing as a free lunch." And advertising (including so-called "public relations") is itself subsidised with massive tax breaks, unquestioned by a political establishment itself largely dependent on the subsidised culture of sound-bites and image.

Increasingly, as politics fails, remedies are sought in the law courts. Seldom are they forthcoming. Elsewhere, too, there is recourse to systems of rules, each more elaborate than the last. This, it is argued, not only on this website, is absolutely the wrong way to go. Rather, we need reliable and consensual ways of assessing character, and of placing judgement in the hands of individuals of proven good character. And of removing it from individuals who have proven unworthy. Let there be convictions for Arrogance (hubris), for Greed, and for Sloth (failure to think & act), with consequent exclusion from positions of responsibility. Let such convictions be spoken not by established (and therefore compromised) judicial representatives, but by persons chosen at random from a pool of citizens who have proven themselves worthy in other walks of life.

Let us return to the awakenings of democracy, in Europe, in the eastern Mediterranean, which always included a random element, an element ever present over a millienium in English law in the form of the jury. An element of chance is needed to confound the schemers, the careerists, the horse-traders and the confidence-tricksters. Regularly, we must reshuffle the cards and confound the artificial hierarchies.

The Irish bard wrote, sceptically, "Measurement began our might". But we have taken it too far. Precision has turned overheel. It no longer knows where or when to stop. It has become spurious, false, a means of exercising illegitimate power under the pretense of mathematical exactitude. Much in life can be assessed roughly, but not precisely. The attempt at precise measurement alters whatever is being measured. This applies, for us, in this context, with respect to candidates, be they for jobs or for election; or indeed in many other spheres.

On the grand scale of society, there is much we cannot decide rationally. And so we must have recourse to an element of chance. For example: Wherever there are a number of candidates of roughly equal standing for a post, whatever it is, let chance decide. Not quotas; nor popularity, celebrity and photogenic looks; but random selection as vouched for by due process. There is talent and wisdom enough everywhere, though not necessarily where one looks. Many upstanding, experienced and gifted persons have long since withdrawn. Let us summon them back.