

The Conscience of a Progressive Stephen Klees

Political measures cannot cure problems of evolution. Progressivism won't work.

One's purpose for living establishes one's foundation of morality. What is the purpose of life? It may be enlightenment, self-realization or salvation. These three don't require material resources. Liberals say it is comfort, which does.

Articles 23-25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establish claims on community resources. The right to earn enough for food and housing to raise a family? The right to education, medical care and a pension? The resources to provide these things has to come from other people. Coercion is baked into liberalism.

Progressivism takes for granted that government will redistribute resources. The questions are (1) on what basis, (2) who decides and how much, and (3) how it will be enforced.

The conscience of a progressive must therefore justify compulsion. It must assume that under whatever political system prevails, certain greedy people have more than their share, which they have obtained by oppressing the rest. The political system must therefore be restructured to ensure a fair distribution.

Capitalism is the *bête noir* of progressives. Klees devotes Chapter 7 to describing it – and manages never to do so. He especially avoids defining the alternatives. Here is my own shot at what he should have done.

In a hunter gatherer society, everybody works the family. He hunts for game; she gathers roots and berries. They may work in groups, sharing and protecting what they collect. Status in society status in the tribe is directly connected with one's success as a hunter, gatherer, parent and warrior.

Agriculture made us sole proprietors. The productivity of family units defined success. Wage labor was engaged to help with the harvest. Capitalists – landowners - were more able to dictate terms. Wage labor, which assumes selling one's labor in a free market, is more benign than slavery, indentured servitude or sharecropping. Inequality abounds in all. As Jesus said "The poor will always be with you."

Private property – capital – is unequally distributed in every society because people are differently endowed with the ability to acquire it. In hunter-gatherer societies without material belongings the primary scarce resource is nubile women. The strongest men get more of them. Read Chagnon's *Noble Savages: My Life Among Two Dangerous Tribes -- the Yanomamo and the Anthropologists*] or Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall's work on the great apes.

The notion of pacific, share-and-share-alike societies in the stone age is Jean Jacques Rousseau's Enlightenment myth. No – it has always been survival of the fittest. Roy Baumeister writes in [Is There Anything Good About Men?: How Cultures Flourish by Exploiting Men](#)] that whereas 80% of women who have ever lived had children, only 40% of men have.

That's how evolution works. The sociable, intelligent and aggressive leave offspring. Others don't. Over seven million years, brain size has grown from the chimpanzees' third of a liter to the modern European's one and one third liter. Evolution was on steroids in the millennium leading up to the Industrial Revolution. Gregory Clark in [The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility](#).] reports a 10cc gain in that evolutionary blink of an eye. Intelligence is useful.

The modern alternative to capitalism has been communism, under which the state owns all property and determines how a person's labor is to be used. A communist subject owns neither his labor nor property. The Soviet Union made my brother-in-law a glassblower. Though glassblowing is no longer in demand, and he has silicosis, he sees himself not as the owner of his own labor but as a glassblower.

While Klees goes on at length about the shortcomings of capitalism, he does not talk about alternatives. Scandinavia offers the most successful models of a hybrid between capitalism and socialism. The Scandinavian people have been collectivist since Viking times, willingly supporting their weaker and less fortunate neighbors through hard times. The

state takes about half of everybody's income and in return provides healthcare, pensions, police protection, defense, infrastructure and unemployment benefits. The system has been copied throughout Europe, with increasingly less success as one goes south.

With the advent of widespread immigration all progressive systems in Europe are foundering. The immigrants are incapable of making much of a contribution. In any case, they do not contribute willingly because they do not see themselves as European. They remain hostile and unassimilated.

Progressivism works to the degree that there is substance to the false assumption that all people are equal. Thatcher was correct to note a half-century back that "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money." The more unequal the people, the quicker the "other people" rebel against being exploited.

The compulsion implicit in progressivism becomes more clear. Governments cannot allow citizens to speak freely about the differences among groups of citizens and the obvious problems that come of it. Governments make it difficult for citizens to transfer assets abroad or to emigrate. The Netherlands worked vehemently to prevent Gert Wilders from speaking. England has debanked Nigel Farage and locked up Tommy Robinson.

Klees owes it to the reader to propose an alternative as he condemns capitalism. Yes, it is not perfect. However, it is as good as anything that has been tried.

Intelligence

The unstated assumption undergirding every liberal or progressive argument is that people are born of equal ability. The corollary is that differences in outcomes are a result of prejudice, evil intent and oppression. The term IQ appears not in Klees' book. The word "intelligence" appears only once, in the false, unsupported claim that "So-called 'scientific' racism developed a hierarchy of intelligence and morality with white men at the top." Equally missing from the book are references to Charles Darwin and evolution.

It is not white men. Researchers for the past century have recognized that Northeast Asians are smarter on average than whites. Jews, when considered as a separate race, have higher IQs even than them.

Since the beginning IQ measurements have been anchored to an American/British average set at 100 and standard deviation of 15. In rough numbers, two thirds of whites are defined to have an IQ between 85 and 115, and 95% are between 70 and 130. The scale has shifted as the population average has decreased over the decades. Average people used to be smarter – significantly so, according to [At Our Wits End - Why We're Becoming Less Intelligent and What it Means for the Future](#)].

Naysayers claim that IQ is an abstract number, an artefact of meaningless tests. Not so. They are the best single predictor for success in academics, the workplace, marriage and life in general. Linda Gottfredson is the expert on the connection between measured intelligence and careers. Her description of the correlation among intelligence, training potential, jobs, and jobs is as follows:

- IQ 116 and above: Able to gather and synthesize information easily; can infer information and conclusions from on-the-job situations. Attorney, editor, advertising manager.
- IQ 113-120: Above average individuals can be trained with typical college format; able to learn much on their own, e.g., independent study or reading assignments. Copywriter, adjuster, purchasing agent.
- IQ 100-113: Able to learn routines quickly; train using a combination of written materials and actual or on-the-job experience. Insurance salesman, debt collector.
- IQ 93-104: Training potential: successful in elementary settings and would benefit from programmed or mastery learning approaches; important to allow enough time and hands-on experience previous to work. Policeman, receptionist, cashier.
- IQ 80-95: Training potential: needs to be "explicitly taught" most of what they must learn; successful approaches use apprenticeship programs; may not benefit from "book learning" training. Security guard, driver, unskilled labor.
- IQ 83 and below: Training potential: unlikely to benefit from formalized training setting; successful using simple tools under constant supervision. Custodian, packer, nurse's aide.

IQ, far and away the most important and useful psychometric tests, have been widely used and continually improved for more than a century. Eliminating racial and sexual bias has been a top priority. The tests do what they are supposed to do.

Intelligence tests have been administered to populations throughout the world. Per IQ and the Wealth of Nations]] and more up-to-date, viewoniq on the Internet, world average intelligence is about 83. Country averages span more than three standard deviations, ranging from the high 50s to 110 or so. However unpalatable liberals find them, nobody offers research to refute these claims.

Hundreds of authors over the course of two centuries have contributed to the literature Klees would casually dismiss as “scientific racism.” Even he would have to admit that there are visible, measurable differences among peoples from different parts of the world. Brain size measurements, which Stephen J Gould depreciated in his [The Mismeasure of Man \(Revised & Expanded\)\]\]](#) are indeed valid. Reaction time measurements correlate with measured IQ. The frequency of intelligence-related alleles in population DNA differs.

If one dismisses intelligence as an explanation for different outcomes, the alternative is the “evil white man” meme. Klees is an intelligent man. As a student in his class at Maryland I could identify which students were smart. Though not determined by, it had a statistical correlation with race. I'm sure Klees saw the same. Why can he not admit it? And why does he omit this most important variable from his analysis?

Evolution is Spinning Backwards

“Survival of the fittest” is a matter of leaving surviving offspring. Since the advent of the welfare state with Henry VIII's poor laws, vast improvements in hygiene, sanitation and diet since the Industrial Revolution, and the implementation of socialism, yesterday's “least fit” have become today's “fittest.” The stupid and improvident have the most children while smarter people seek wealth and career success and find other outlets for their sexuality.

With intelligence being hereditary, we have been getting dumber since the Industrial Revolution. Evolution is spinning backwards. See [At Our Wits End - Why We're Becoming Less Intelligent and What it Means for the Future\]\]](#) and [Breeding the Human Herd\]\]](#).

Moreover, the increasingly less intelligent European and Asian populations are being flooded with even less intelligent but more fertile immigrants.

This has significant implications for progressivism. An increasing percentage of the population is unwilling to pay taxes to support the poor. The government cannot tax the poor because they don't have the income. They can't do anything useful to earn it.

Evolution is the process of adaptation to changing niches in the ecology. Progressivism has created a huge niche – freeloading - which has filled rapidly. Nobody wants his work to support somebody else. This writer chose early retirement when the rules of the game changed to favor other ethnicities and genders. Maggie Thatcher's observation about “other people's money” is on the money. The “other people” stop letting themselves be played for suckers. They get out of town or start freeloading themselves. As we witness today, it is unsustainable. Cruel, harsh capitalism, on the other hand, has proven staying power.

Education

Education has been a public rather than a private good since nineteenth century Germany became rich enough to support an extensive civil service. Bismarck's objective was preparing workers, soldiers and taxpayers to serve the second Reich. They needed to be literate and numerate to build an industrial society, and to be indoctrinated to be patriotic and xenophobic servants of the state.

Education remains a public good in modern industrialized societies. As it has become ubiquitous, the population to be educated has changed. The young are becoming less capable of learning. This harsh critique is borne out by statistics. The US National Longitudinal Certain Survey of Youth, the PISA test, and IQ tests where there are allowed all show that the school-age population is not as capable as it used to be.

Klees attacks the 1968 Coleman Report and Reagan-era “Nation at Risk” for their pessimism about public schools and claims that government involvement won’t help. Unable for political reasons to consider native ability, the reports substitute “family background.” The message is the same. Some kids can’t learn. Because they cannot, and pride won’t let them admit that they cannot, they make excuses.

In the 19th century Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass were free to write that a “talented tenth” could benefit from education. That observation is not allowed today. This reviewer taught such children admitted to Washington DC private schools under diversity programs. Their excuses were many and fanciful. Ima, a Puerto Rican girl, was honest enough to say that she just couldn’t do it. In a huge concession, she wrote her essay on the coqui frog, emblem of Puerto Rico, in Spanish rather than English. She turned out to be illiterate in two languages. Yvette was more typical. Incapable of learning, she would daily disrupt the class to the point of getting sent to the headmaster. The school’s commitment to diversity prevented them from doing the obvious.

It is a waste of time trying to teach a person who lacks the capability to learn. If that person’s family has learned by life’s experience that you don’t need to work to get food in your mouth, it becomes impossible. That is the situation in much of the developed world today. People have lost the connection between working and eating. Education is superfluous because food is there, provided unbidden by the welfare state.

Even the employed fraction of the lower strata, driving trucks, stocking shelves, and so on, do not require reading or arithmetic. Most don’t frustrate themselves by trying.

Riffing on private education, Klees fears that “private schools may not offer the kind of broad curriculum that is necessary for a democratic society.” The point is moot. A broad curriculum is wasted on a kid who can’t read.

He observes, correctly, that “studies have shown that once you compare schools with students with similarly advantaged backgrounds, private and public schools do equally well.” What he fails to mention is that private schools are not forced to enroll children who cannot learn or pose discipline problems. Private schools, like public schools in rich neighborhoods, work because most students can and want to learn.

Klees totally overlooks the fastest growing alternative to public schools, home schooling. It is very popular with minority parents, those worst served by public schools.

Klees rightly attacks the testing mania in public schools. Because they cannot blame a failure to learn on the kid being dumb and undisciplined, they blame teachers, administrators, funding and everything else. The reign of terror resulting from a lack of discipline makes learning impossible. See [Judging School Discipline](#)].

Klees depreciates charter and private schools. KIPP, Uncommon Schools, Success Academy, YES Prep, and Achievement First are popular with black families because they do not enroll students who will not accept discipline. They create an environment in which kids can learn to the limits of their ability.

Klees pleads that public school teachers be treated as professionals and evaluated by their peers. That’s how it was in the 1950s. Since they unionized, they have reduced themselves to the status of mere labor and are treated as such.

Klees argues against Bill Gates’ Common Core and other top-down, one-size-fits-all formulas for delivering education. In this he is totally right. Unfortunately, it does not work in an environment in which administrators can get rid of neither unperforming teachers nor students. Private and home schools have freedom to choose curricula.

Klees writes “Schools for minority and poor children have fewer resources and more problems to deal with than suburban schools for middle - class families (Black or white)”. Right about the problems, generally wrong about the resources. See Chicago, Washington D.C., Denver, Seattle etc. for counterexamples.

Klees agrees with Frederick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute that “academics, activists, and the policy community live in a world where philanthropists are royalty ” leading to a “conspiracy of silence” about their faults.

Education Internationally

Klees ponders “Some attribute the success of Singapore and other Asian nations and territories to cultural differences or to their greater emphasis on testing throughout schooling.” No! Give the kids IQ tests and the answer pops out immediately.

Klees is totally correct about self-appointed experts: “For decades , the [World] Bank has downplayed its role in lending money, trying to position itself as the “Knowledge Bank,” the repository of best practice. This is arrogant and frightening. The Bank basically only looks at its own research and that of its adherents , basing its one-size-fits- all recommendations on ideology, not evidence. Like Gates and Rockefeller in the US.

Klees writes about Paulo Freire: “Critical pedagogy...broadly seeks to expose how relations of power and inequality (social, cultural, economic) in their myriad forms, combinations, and complexities, are manifest and challenged in the formal and informal education of children and adults.” Unfortunately, as Christopher Rufo writes in [America's Cultural Revolution: How the Radical Left Conquered Everything](#)], Freire is far more interested in the fourth R, revolution than the first three. Klees does not discuss the problems of teaching marginalized kids reading, writing and arithmetic. Revolution is only a career for the fortunate few like Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton. Learning the other three could lead to regular employment.

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Klees writes “The true extent of deprivation of so many people worldwide is barely captured in these appalling numbers.” Deprivation is a colored word, suggesting the taking of something people once had. Far more often they simply lack the education, and the intelligence required to absorb the education, needed to acquire things. It is tragic but not always the fault of the evil white man.

Klees writes that “In the 1990s, the miracle was the East Asian so-called “Tiger” countries – Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Malaysia” before adding that they suffered an economic crisis in the late 1990s. He fails to note the fact that they have bounced back, and why they bounced back. They are intelligent. The current situations of other “miracle countries” he cites, Ivory Coast and Brazil, are consistent with the correlations made in [IQ and the Wealth of Nations](#)].

Children are expensive to feed and more expensive to educate. Whatever “rights” they may have by the Universal Declaration, the resources have to come from somewhere. Fertility, a word which appears nowhere in Klees’ book, is directly correlated with individual wealth. The ability to feed them does not grow apace with the mouths to feed.

Klees writes “One is that we cannot and should not leave all decisions in the hands of individuals. We, as a society, have many decisions that must be made collectively because leaving them to individuals can result in harm.” This is disingenuous. “Collectives” don’t make decisions – people do. This paragraph assumes the existence of a class of people empowered to make decisions for others. In Orwell’s Animal Farm they were the pigs.

His thesis is that people are so stupid government needs to decide for them. But there is the agency problem: hubris and careerism. Who understands the problems? The progressives! Who should be in charge of addressing them? The selfless progressives, who are willing to serve the interests of the people. Who will see that selfish people do not interfere with the plan? The progressives. The word coercion does not appear in Klees book but it is implicit throughout

Klees looks with a jaundiced eye on the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are controlled by philanthropists, better described as philanthropaths, who despite platitudes to the contrary support their own selfish goals. The vast profits being made in renewable energy, electric cars, carbon credits

and vaccines go directly to the supposedly generous NGOs. Klees sees through many of them. However, in writing “Climate change is just the most deadly tip of the iceberg awaiting us – deterioration of air and water quality, extinction of species, soil depletion, threats of nuclear meltdowns, and more...” he fails to note that he has fallen into their trap.

He is on the money writing that “Education itself is also a wonderful scapegoat for politicians, researchers, World Bank staff, and others because education can’t be expected to fix the problem for many years, so they will never be held accountable for their advice.” This is equally true of species extinctions, global warming, exhaustion of natural resource endowments and many other panics of our day. These issues deserve attention from unbiased scholars, not bought-and-paid-for scientists funded by philanthropaths.

Klees supports the definition of progressivism as “democratic power over the allocation and use of productive resources.” To quote Franklin, it is more like “**two wolves and a lamb** voting on what to have for lunch.”

Klees notes, correctly, that “There is a history of left governments turning autocratic – Russia, China, Cuba are clear examples, but also countries like Nicaragua and Venezuela.” Some of his counterexamples are valid for now: Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. The first two recently had autocratic governments, which despite being despised by the left managed to create successful economies. Argentina, with an unsuccessful seventy-year run of socialism, just jerked abruptly to the right. The economies of the leftist-led Andean countries are struggling.

Klees is right that “Pharma is restricting drug development, spending way more on marketing than on R&D, and charging excessive amounts.” While he iterates as a progressive that “Health care is a human right, and we should all have the security of knowing that quality care is available and accessible when we need it.” He acknowledges that “The WHO reported in 2008 that... “small-scale unregulated fee-for-service health care ...now dominates the healthcare landscape from sub-Saharan Africa to the transitional economies in Asia or Europe.” True enough. Capitalism works. Leave it alone! Defining health, pensions, employment or housing as rights creates open-ended, unfunded obligations that can never be met. When they crash, as with the Soviet Union, they create great hardship.

Klees occasionally hints that he glimpses the truth, as in writing “The belief that such lethal violence is part of our genetic make - up rests primarily on studies of chimpanzees, our closest living relatives. Groups of male chimpanzees have been known to attack other groups of chimpanzees and kill some. ... I think it likely that there is the potential for aggression in our makeup, but, as with chimpanzees, there is also the potential for cooperation, altruism, empathy, reconciliation, and conflict resolution.”

He notes that “Young males in the US are four times more likely to be killed than in any other industrialized country.” He fails to note that US males of European and Asian extraction have lower rates of homicide than other industrialized countries, or that there are strong correlations among high crime, low IQ and ethnicity.

In another instance in which Klees hints that he understands the truth: “In order to separate out the impact of one factor from the many factors that can affect an outcome of interest, you need to somehow “control” for those other factors so you can isolate the impact of the one you are interested in. There are two ways that researchers think you can do so: one way is through statistical controls.” Thereafter follows a very long discussion of the shortcomings of statistics, after which no second way is mentioned.

Klees simply ignores aspects of the truth that are incompatible with progressivism. Many of the authors cited in this review make statistical arguments underscoring the fact that people are different, peoples are different, and that the condition of mankind is a product of evolution.

Political measures cannot cure problems of evolution. Progressivism won't work.