

The Vision of the Anointed
Thomas Sowell

An excellent book. It has stood the test of time.

This book has been out a long time and has been well reviewed; I do so only because Amazon prompts me. The fictions generated by the liberal elites who have so long run the country are becoming unraveled. It doesn't work. Obamacare doesn't work. The bogus statistics notwithstanding, unemployment is not falling, the standard of living is not rising, levels of education are not improving or becoming more equal.

What has become clear since the publication of this book is that the deceptions are worldwide. Governments everywhere are promoting the same self-serving untruths, and it is coming apart everywhere. These will be interesting times.

Some notes

Useful vocabulary

"Tragic View" -- Burke et al. Life is a series of tradeoffs.

"Vision of the Anointed" There are absolute wrongs and there can be absolute solutions.

Third party costs. I make a decision and if it's wrong it costs me nothing but it costs you plenty. Viz, decisions by Ted Kennedy on public school busing. His kids go to private school.

"incentive" vs. "disposition" Tragic view of man says we act in our own self interest. Give us incentives to do the right thing. Vision of the anointed says we can be brainwashed to change our dispositions regardless of our self-interest. Example is war. Anointed believe we can unilaterally disarm and persuade our enemies to do likewise. Tragic view is that we need the incentive of a the threat of retaliation.

Mascots. Homeless, criminals

Labeling the benighted:

Capitalism

Greed

Assume that people do things out of ignorance, that "raising their consciousness" or "growing" them will change their point of view. In fact, criminals and warmongers are quite rational. Change the disincentives and they will proceed with their acts.

The "global view" of justice. Problems. What is "fair" in a global sense, and even if it were known, how could policy be structured to implement it?

Media bias: Things that make good news. Single incidents. Cost is widespread, benefit is local.

My addition: Themes of the anointed replace religion in modern lives. In secular society, religious belief is held to be nothing but old-fashioned superstition. The fight to save endangered species, the fight against global warming, the fight for diversity, etc. are held to be goals supported by "scientific" evidence. The evidence is in fact highly mixed. Not that extinction is a good thing, but the case that it is a highly unusual or a terribly bad thing (from the point of view of humans, of course) is hard to make. The beliefs of the anointed make them feel superior in the same way that religion has made people feel superior over past centuries. We cringe when an evangelist grasps us by the lapels and asks "Are you saved?" We should cringe in the same way, with perhaps a greater level of fear, when somebody starts ranting about the "starving homeless in America". The evangelist will merely waste your time; the second will waste your time and pick your pocket.