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## Disability and Right-Post-Liberalism: The Common Ground of the Common Good

### INTRODUCTION

The liberal worldview within which Western politics has sat since the Second World War, and particularly in the aftermath of the Cold War is under greater strain than ever before. This is even more the case on the Right, where ideas and beliefs that have been taken for granted are now subject to greater scrutiny and interrogation than at any time for decades. It is clear that something has to change. The crises at home and abroad in politics, economics and culture that are obvious to anyone who has a look around them at the world demand something different to what came before.

What does any of this have to do with being disabled? Simply this: the whole point of government is to uphold “the duty of state”.<sup>1</sup> Rooted in natural law and expressed through the Anglo-American tradition, the goals of “good government are abundance, peace and justice”.<sup>2</sup> The right-neo-liberalism of the last 13 years of Conservative Party rule has failed in these duties, with Britain a poorer, less cohesive and more unequal country. This is particularly so for the disabled, myself among them. The economic, political and cultural consequences of Conservative rule have left disabled Britons poorer, disenfranchised and alienated.

However, these failings are not merely because of various political decisions taken at different times, but stem from the fundamental flaws in the worldview that these political decisions articulated. It is this chapter’s contention that liberalism is inimical to the flourishing of the disabled due to

<sup>1</sup> PAPPIN 2022a.

<sup>2</sup> PAPPIN 2022b.

its denigration of limits, embodiment, our social interdependence, and the ties across time that bind the generations. In order to enable the recovery of the common ground of the common good, British right-wing politics must move away from being a party of right-neo-liberalism to right-post-liberalism. Those whose physical infirmity leaves them at greater risk when the structures that undergird the common life grow unstable have as much interest in those in government fulfilling their duty of state. The need for such a recovery and restoration are urgent.

In light of this, this chapter will, in part one, consider the origins of liberal principles that undergird liberal practice. Part two will reflect on the flaws in liberal premises as it concerns disabled people, and how this works in the world. Part three will turn to the aforementioned common good post-liberal alternative, looking at how it differs to the right-neo-liberalism practiced by the current Tory party. This part will briefly detail how this worldview can better provide for the flourishing of disabled people, not as a hermetically sealed identity, but as part of the common life rooted in the common good. A new British right-post-liberalism, a national politics of the common good, is the way forward for all people regardless of whether they are disabled or able-bodied.

#### LIBERALISM: DESCRIPTION AND DIAGNOSIS

The word “liberalism” signifies a philosophy the foundation of which is liberty. But this is liberty not as understood by the ancient Greco-Roman world, of restraint of man’s lower animal nature in service to the articulation of man’s higher, rational nature. Christianity adopted this view, but leavened the Greco-Roman emphasis on will to achieve one’s higher nature, and universalised the potential of such an attainment, through the instrument of grace that stemmed from the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that redeemed anyone who repented and chose Him. The key to this liberation from one’s lower self was constraint, gained through cultivation into the lifeways of a family and education in the

wider tradition. Liberty “had long been believed to be the condition of self-rule that forestalled tyranny, within both the polity and the individual soul”.<sup>3</sup>

Liberalism saw liberty not as placing limits on one’s baser desires in service to pursuing excellence, practicing virtue and receiving the glory of God through grace. Instead, “liberalism is most fundamentally constituted by a pair of deeper anthropological assumptions that give liberal institutions a particular orientation and cast: (1) anthropological individualism and the voluntarist conception of choice, and (2) human separation from and opposition to nature. These two revolutions in the understanding of human nature and society constitute ‘liberalism’ inasmuch as they introduce a radically new definition of ‘liberty’.”<sup>4</sup>

A succession of thinkers, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, built upon “three basic revolutions of thought” that redefined “liberty as the liberation of humans from established authority”, saw the goal of politics and economics as the “emancipation from arbitrary culture and tradition”, both achieved through “the expansion of human power and dominion over nature through advancing scientific discovery and economic prosperity”.<sup>5</sup> These philosophical principles, along with their political, cultural and economic expressions, are ultimately inimical to the flourishing of disabled people as part of a national community engaged in building a common life together.

This anthropology and its practical implications is seen in the work of the philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Hobbes prepared the ground for liberalism’s new vision of liberty. He attempted to solve the problem of religious strife and political authority by removing any sense of human life and politics being ordered towards the transcendent good, over which the monarch, the head of the state Leviathan, was now sovereign. For Hobbes, the people do not constitute a whole, with a culture and society that stretches backwards and forwards in time. Rather, the basic needs shared by all isolated individuals of security and peace comprise the foundation of political legitimacy, which guarantees such

<sup>3</sup> DENEEN 2018.

<sup>4</sup> DENEEN 2018.

<sup>5</sup> DENEEN 2018.

individual needs.<sup>6</sup> These atomistic individuals consent to obedience towards the sovereign to escape the state of nature, where one finds oneself outside obedience to the city state or Church. From here, individuals can construct a monarchical political organism that solves the theological-political problem.<sup>7</sup> Hobbes called the insecurity that preceded such a resolution the “war of all against all”.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Hobbes can be labelled liberalism’s founder because of his articulation of the “liberal interpretation of the law, a pure human device, rigorously external to everybody. Such a law does not transform or inform the individual atoms whose peaceful coexistence it is limited to guaranteeing.”<sup>9</sup> The result is that Hobbesian thought provides the underlying framework of modern democracy and liberalism. This is “because it develops the notion of sovereignty established on each subject’s consent. It founds the liberal idea because it develops the notion of the law as device external to individuals.”<sup>10</sup>

The upshot is that Hobbes develops a new view of society. Power, resting in the Leviathan, is employed by solitary individuals to secure their rights. Hobbes anticipates and prepares the way for what became liberalism. It will entail giving the Hobbesian idea of political power “its full scope by modifying its beginning and its end”.<sup>11</sup> Individuals acquire intrinsic rights, for which power will be limited in service to their protection.<sup>12</sup> Hobbes was followed by John Locke (1632–1704). Locke begins in the same way: a state of nature from which individuals wish to secure their existence. For Locke the primary threat is not violence from others, but hunger. For Locke, the solitary individual’s right to the fruits of the land is inherent, independent of consent in order to survive as an individual. Ownership of such resources is gained via mixing one’s individual, private labour latent in one’s owned person with these fruits to satisfy one’s hunger, conferring legitimate ownership. One’s labour, the product of

<sup>6</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>7</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>8</sup> HOBBS 2009 [1651].

<sup>9</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>10</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>11</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>12</sup> MANENT 1994.

one's owned personhood, introduces property to the world.<sup>13</sup> Liberty makes the ownership of property, through the ownership of one's person and their labour, the basis of society for it nourishes the individual and protects him from the hunger in the state of nature.

Later, the product of one's labour and the monetary value attached would take precedence as the grounding for political economy.<sup>14</sup> This had implications for Locke's political philosophy. In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke writes that individuals are born in "perfect" freedom and equality.<sup>15</sup> For Locke, one enters political society for the pursuit of life, liberty and property. These are attained and secured through a social contract between individuals rooted in consent, which allows the formation of civil society and from which a legislative assembly can be formed.<sup>16</sup> Over this sits the executive, possessor of ultimate sovereignty and guarantor, in conjunction with the constraining assembly, of justice as right to property.<sup>17</sup> This can be derived from universal principles, must be applicable everywhere and always, accessible to individual reason.

For Locke, individual rationality and knowledge are sufficient for social and political formation. The bonds of family, community and nation that comprise mutual loyalty<sup>18</sup> are stripped away in a placeless, timeless, universal void. And yet, "Locke's approach [to political justice] is just as 'absolutist' as Hobbes's. The original right [to property] of each person is essentially above discursive reasoning, above any objection, because it is based on a solitary and silent activity: labour for consumption."<sup>19</sup> The power of the legislature "is the direct extension of the individual's desire for self-preservation. And it is sovereign or 'supreme' because it directly expresses the desire for preserving property, the origin of the political institution."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>14</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>15</sup> LOCKE 1988 [1689].

<sup>16</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>17</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>18</sup> HAZONY 2018.

<sup>19</sup> MANENT 1994.

<sup>20</sup> MANENT 1994.

The individualist and voluntarist anthropology of Hobbes, Locke and their descendants is utilitarian, designed to amplify autonomy and choice through self-interest. Anglo-American law and culture have over time adopted this anthropology and expressed it in the political-legal structures of the state. Liberalism, as argued for by its advocates, sounds like the means to the best political regime possible. Regime simply “means that whole, which we today are in the habit of viewing primarily in a fragmentized form; regime means simultaneously the form of life of a society, its style of life, its moral taste, form of society, form of state, form of government, spirit of laws”.<sup>21</sup> Yet, Plato argued that political regimes became more themselves over time. Their deepest presuppositions and contradictions come to the fore. In trying to reconcile these contradictions, regimes fall away from the heights promised by those who implement them: in their success lies their failure.<sup>22</sup> As Arta Moeini has written, liberalism suffers from three sets of contradictions inherent to it and present from the beginning. The first seeming contradiction is between *domination* and *autonomy*. As has been shown, the end goal of liberalism has been to secure the autonomy of the atomised liberal subject, in order to secure his life, liberty and property as the foundation of justice in a world where a shared conception of the highest good is no longer possible. With the human agent as ultimate authority over his life’s *telos*, is achieved via a “a project of systemic liberation from the encumbering or oppressive hierarchies and norms of the past so that a new order based on the autonomy and agency of the individual can be created”.<sup>23</sup> However, as liberalism’s later instantiations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries would demonstrate, the need for autonomy and the means to achieve it lends itself to domination by those who proclaim their ability to deliver it, whether through brute force, or more usually, soft coercion. Perhaps this is not such a contradiction after all.

For Moeini, the second contradiction is between liberalism’s purported *universalism*, and its *subjectivist* ethics.<sup>24</sup> As noted, liberal principles for

<sup>21</sup> STRAUSS 1988 [1959].

<sup>22</sup> DENEEN 2018.

<sup>23</sup> MOEINI 2023.

<sup>24</sup> MOEINI 2023.

achieving a just society through the fulfilment of liberal anthropology are held by Locke and liberals onwards to be universal in scope, applicable in all times and places to *those capable of achieving the reason to enact it*. However, setting up the self-creating self, stripped of cultural, traditional, religious and social context as the measure of morality, in practice introduces a subjectivist ethical view that risks devolution into atomisation and moral solipsism,<sup>25</sup> evident in today's cultural obsession with self-validation and the politics of identity. Indeed, some argue that post-modernity, far from a revolt against liberalism, is its ideological child.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, liberalism's conception of time presents a paradox which it cannot revolve. As Deneen argues, liberalism, through its instrument of the state of nature, presents man as a past-less, futureless and placeless being, stripped of all connection to place and time, for such limits as these constrain the realisation of one's autonomy.<sup>27</sup> According to Mocini, "in its philosophical idealism, liberalism thus privileges the perennality of man as a nominal, ideational, and unchanging category over man in real life". But, as others have also argued, the "liturgy"<sup>28</sup> of "sacramental liberalism",<sup>29</sup> rooted in its internal premises, means that liberalism has an inevitably progressive dynamic. There are always more inherited moral, cultural and socio-political strictures that prevent the increase of liberty and autonomy to remove. This *progressive* view of history conflicts with the *perennial* view of man's universal nature. Consequently, "the goal of history must be human progress toward a society, wherein all are completely equal and man is fully rational, entirely free, and perfectly productive".<sup>30</sup>

Given such a state of affairs is never finally achieved, liberalism's theology of progress takes on an increasingly apocalyptic cast, while those who are unwilling, or in the case of the disabled, unable to proceed along this path,

<sup>25</sup> McMANUS 2022.

<sup>26</sup> SHULLENBERGER 2020.

<sup>27</sup> DENEEN 2018.

<sup>28</sup> VERMEULE 2017.

<sup>29</sup> VERMEULE 2019.

<sup>30</sup> MOEINI 2023.

are increasingly seen as barriers to eternal improvement, and therefore needful of correction, containment, or curtailment. The implications of this for the disabled is where we now turn.

### LIBERALISM AND ITS DISABLED DISCONTENTS

Having a disability throws into stark relief the fundamental flaws in liberal premises and their articulation in political and economic practice. Liberal anthropology and its implications for life are revealed as fatuous thought experiments by those whose “social contract theories are views of childless men who must have forgotten their own childhood”.<sup>31</sup> The detached individual, gaining security or bodily surcease and therefore justice through the individually consented to social contract describes nothing resembling the able-bodied human person, never mind those with disabilities. Liberalism is shown as an ideology, a blueprint that forces the world to conform to its dictates, rendered increasingly unstable by its contradictions and tyrannical by its attempt to implement its vision of the good, a good it denies in its very core.<sup>32</sup>

I was born with a rare genetic fragile skin condition, recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa.<sup>33</sup> This has meant that liberalism, and its right-neoliberal iteration, is a conceptual and practical impossibility. As I have written elsewhere,<sup>34</sup> my condition – with five thousand total sufferers in the UK, 500 with my subtype – is part of a wider tapestry of 14 million disabled people in Britain.<sup>35</sup> The fact of intrinsic limits is immediately seen in practice. Half of disabled people are in work as opposed to 81% of the able-bodied. One quarter have a degree, while 13% had no qualifications.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> JOUVENEL 2000 [1963].

<sup>32</sup> DENEEN 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children 2020.

<sup>34</sup> GEORGE 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Scope 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Office for National Statistics 2022.



The corollary of this is that disabled people are more likely to be subject to “want”. Disabled people are poorer in terms of money and membership, the frayed social bonds inducing an isolation that compounds the material want.<sup>37</sup> 15% of disabled were “often or always lonely” as opposed to just over 3.5% of able-bodied people,<sup>38</sup> a state of affairs I can attest to. My condition and the constraints of a broken body often prevent a normal social life, while others have often feel uncomfortable around such a disability.

The Conservative-led coalition government pursued a policy of austerity that ran from 2010–2015, which stemmed from the foundational ideological orientation of those in power, producing a “chartered libertarianism for the strong”.<sup>39</sup> It fell disproportionately on the disabled, those shoulders least able to bear the weight. Benefits sanctions and cuts threw many into dire circumstances.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, who had helped make such cuts in return for pushing his Living Wage through Parliament, resigned in 2016 over yet more cuts to the social safety net for disabled people.<sup>41</sup>

In the wider world abuse and neglect are common. A government National Disability Strategy from 2021 showed that more than half of disabled people worried about insults or harassment when out in public or on transport. Moreover, disabled children aged 10 to 15 were shown to be almost twice as likely to be victims of crime than able-bodied children.<sup>42</sup> As a result of all this, it is perhaps not surprising that disabled Britons had average anxiety levels than able-bodied people, at 4.6 out of 10 as opposed to 3.0 out of 10.<sup>43</sup>

Given the ideological underpinnings of our ruling class and the world they have attempted to make, none of the consequences of policy choices and political

<sup>37</sup> Resolution Foundation 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Office for National Statistics 2022.

<sup>39</sup> JOUVENEL 1993 [1945].

<sup>40</sup> RYAN 2018.

<sup>41</sup> MASON et al. 2016. See also PITT 2023: 171–194 for an academic analysis of the welfare policies from 2015 to 2020.

<sup>42</sup> UK Government 2022.

<sup>43</sup> Office for National Statistics 2022.

decisions should be surprising. The guiding light of the Conservative governments of the last 13 years, barring a brief hiatus under Theresa May, has been what Michael Lind calls “technocratic neoliberalism”, of which Conservative party politics is its right-wing expression. This is “a synthesis of the free-market economic liberalism of the libertarian right and the cultural liberalism of the bohemian/academic left”.<sup>44</sup>

In economic terms, this has meant corporations “promot[ing] deunionisation and labour market deregulation to the detriment of workers”. Moreover, corporate oligarchies “have also embraced global labour arbitrage, in the form of offshoring production to poor workers abroad or employing immigrant workers, to weaken unions and escape the constraints of national labour regulations”.<sup>45</sup> In political terms, national parties that were conglomerations of localised organisations comprised of mass memberships are now bankrolled and controlled by corporate donors, directed by “comms” consultants. This domestic depoliticisation is mirrored on the transnational level, with national legislative powers, subject to democratic control having been hollowed out by the multiplying organs of the managerial state, the courts, and transnational bodies like the EU and WTO. As a result of education polarisation, the university educated professional managerial class have gained far greater influence and control than most ordinary voters.<sup>46</sup> This political hollowing out is reflected in a cultural disintegration, where intermediating institutions have been steadily eroded by the march of the market on one side, and the expansion of the central state on the other. This redounds to the benefit of what Joel Kotkin calls the new “Clerisy”, those “bourgeois bohemians”<sup>47</sup> in the white collar world of culture, tech, media, law, public and corporate administration.<sup>48</sup> This top 15% serve to legitimate the policies and actions of what Lind calls the “Overclass”, the top 5 to 10% of the socio-economic strata.

<sup>44</sup> LIND 2020.

<sup>45</sup> LIND 2020.

<sup>46</sup> LIND 2020.

<sup>47</sup> BROOKS 2000.

<sup>48</sup> KOTKIN 2020.

Under this ideological regime, disabled people are collateral damage in the great march of Progress. If a decent society and a conservatism of the common good is one that secures abundance, peace and justice, for those in the dawn, twilight and shadows of life,<sup>49</sup> Britain has failed. Deneen describes how “statism enables individualism, individualism demands statism”.<sup>50</sup> My dealings with the depersonalised face of the managerial state through welfare officials performing box-ticking benefit assessments, along with all the other arms of the state a disabled person must deal with and rely on are testament to this reality.

The right-neo-liberalism of our managerial overclass promises liberation but delivers economic and social incarceration for the many, the disabled in particular. Under the regime of right-neo-liberalism, “each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart”.<sup>51</sup> The disabled are left alone and adrift in liberalism’s “anticulture”, “a tradition-destroying and custom-undermining dynamic that replaces cultural practices, memory, and beliefs”<sup>52</sup> that sustain and console those less fortunate or able.

This anticulture springs from what O. Carter Snead argues is an Anglo-American law and culture grounded in an anthropology of “expressive individualism”. The roots of this anthropology in liberalism’s soil are clear. Expressive individualism bespeaks a disposition “in which persons are conceived merely as atomized individual wills whose highest flourishing consists in interrogating the interior depths of the self in order to express and freely follow the original truths discovered therein toward one’s self-invented destiny”. Therefore, “expressive individualism [...] equates being fully human with finding the unique truth within ourselves and freely constructing our individual lives to reflect it”.<sup>53</sup>

As I have written elsewhere, “this conception of the human person privileges cognition, will, rationality and autonomy in defining full personhood”,

<sup>49</sup> CONNOLLY 2018.

<sup>50</sup> DENEEN 2018.

<sup>51</sup> TOCQUEVILLE 2003.

<sup>52</sup> DENEEN 2018.

<sup>53</sup> SNEAD 2020.

ignoring the limits of our embodiment and social embeddedness.<sup>54</sup> Expressive individualism instantiates what evolutionary psychology writer Rob Henderson calls a “luxury belief”. These are beliefs “held by the upper classes [...] are ideas and opinions that confer status on the rich at very little cost, whilst taking a toll on the lower class” and disabled people.<sup>55</sup>

Expressive individualism is one such luxury belief, enabled by the liquefying force of the market and by the managerial state. It represents John Stuart Mill’s call for “experiments in living”. According to Mill, “the human faculties of perception, judgement, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice. He who does anything because it is a custom, makes no choice.” Therefore, that “which threatens human nature is not the excess, but the deficiency, of personal impulses and preferences”. Those with the capacity to conduct these experiments are “more individual than any other people” and less capable of “fitting themselves, without hurtful compression, into any of the small number of moulds which society provides”; therefore they require “an atmosphere of freedom”.<sup>56</sup>

This is simply the voluntarist, individualist anthropology of Hobbes, Locke and their ideological children given new shape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while expressive individualism updates this with the language of psychology, diversity, equity and inclusivity. Mill’s goal was the unravelling and deposition of the old elite based in kin ties and attached to people and place by social hierarchies. Mill’s new rational, clear-sighted elite represented the Lockean new elite of the “industrious and the rational”, who would overthrow and replace the old aristocratic elite. Representing the “querulous and contentious”.<sup>57</sup>

Our supposedly “industrious and rational” elite, lacking a conception of the highest good beyond Progress, view “the vaunted freedom of the individual” as choosing “either the necessity of finding one’s role in the public engineering

<sup>54</sup> GEORGE 2022.

<sup>55</sup> HENDERSON 2019.

<sup>56</sup> MILL 2015.

<sup>57</sup> DENEEN 2018.

or the necessity of retreating into the privacy of pleasure”.<sup>58</sup> The end of life becomes not virtue but a therapeutic utilitarianism, based in state-engineered harm reduction and happiness maximisation. The yawning chasm between our Clerical elite’s conception of the good life and the embodied reality of disability is revealed. The “unencumbered self”<sup>59</sup> was always an ideological illusion, shattered by the reality limits inherent to disability. Right-neo-liberalism, and its expressive individualist articulation fail to secure the common good for disabled people because they are “forgetful of the body”.<sup>60</sup>

For the Overclass and Clerisy, as Christopher Lasch put it, belief in the “social construction of reality [...] reflects the experience of living in an artificial environment from which everything that resists human control (unavoidably, everything familiar and reassuring as well) has been rigorously excluded. Control has become their obsession. In their drive to insulate themselves against risk and contingency – against the unpredictable hazards that afflict human life – the thinking classes have seceded not just from the common world around them but from reality itself.”<sup>61</sup> This control of reality reaches its denouement in euthanasia portrayed as compassionate for the disabled.

By contrast, those lower down the scale of socio-economic and bodily autonomy realise that “there are inherent limits on human control over the course of social development, over nature and the body, over the tragic elements in human life and history”.<sup>62</sup> Rather than a tragedy of oppression, the key conservative insight, reinforced by living with a disability, is that the acceptance of such existential limits can in fact be liberating, enabling a view of the common life, rooted in mutual loyalty and obligation, reciprocity and duty, oriented to the common good. To this we now turn.

<sup>58</sup> GRANT 2005.

<sup>59</sup> SANDEL 2005.

<sup>60</sup> MACINTYRE 1999.

<sup>61</sup> LASCH 1995.

<sup>62</sup> LASCH 1995.

## DISABILITY AND A RIGHT-WING POLITICS OF THE COMMON GOOD

To move away from the disembedding, atomising and disorientating forces of technocratic neo-liberalism, the Right needs to restore the foundational idea of limits. The rooted universality that a truly post-liberal Right affirms will serve the common good far better than liberalism and its technocratic form ever could. This kind of post-liberal Right represents the best chance at a synthesis between the particularities of the disabled condition, and the universality of human experience, mediated by families, communities and the British nation. This view not only reaches across to bind human subjects into a wider whole today, but looks back to the inheritance of the British past, mediates it in the present, and passes it on as a legacy for the future. We are “situated beings”,<sup>63</sup> our characters and sense of self formed through the ability to pursue virtue inculcated by family, friends, community and nation. As Edmund Burke wrote, our interdependence extends through a trans-generational covenant that, undergirded by our traditions, links the dead, the living and those yet to be born.<sup>64</sup> Inheritance and legacy are basic to our sense of self and purpose, encouraging reflection and commitment, a responsibility to practice gratitude to what we have been given and a duty to improve or mitigate in our own sphere of action the wrongs that we can. We do not enter the world *ex nihilo*, and do not form society or culture through contract. We are born into social, cultural and, nearly always, political orders. We are imprinted by those who have gone before. As Roger Scruton writes, we “enter a world marked by the joys and sufferings of those who are making room for us”.<sup>65</sup>

This web of relationships, in which we “enjoy protection in our early years and opportunities in our maturity”,<sup>66</sup> gives us the “language” of identity that enables us to say who we are, where we come from, and where we might go.

<sup>63</sup> SCIALABBA 2018.

<sup>64</sup> BURKE 1968.

<sup>65</sup> SCRUTON 2017a.

<sup>66</sup> SCRUTON 2017a.

Part of the “woke” New Moral Order’s appeal lies in providing such a sense of self, rooted in identitarian communities of ideological affinity, when our families and kin-networks break down, as they do all too often today.<sup>67</sup> When our familial and social circles are rightly ordered we can develop the extended self that becomes bonded with one’s wider community and nation. As Roger Scruton has argued so persuasively, the “me” of a grounded identity grows out of and in turn reinforces the sense of a “we”, a sense that comes from a feeling of lineage from the past, and duty to leave a worthy legacy for the future.<sup>68</sup> This sense of a “we” allows for peaceful, civilised politics in a democratic nation, enabling people to live together with fellow feeling and bonds of mutual loyalty.<sup>69</sup> This sense of a “we” holds the key to integrating the disabled into the common life of the nation, lifting them out of their alienated isolation, building attachment to past, present and future, ensuring a place in Chesterton’s democracy of the dead.

This post-liberalism of the Right is therefore “a standpoint that regards the recovery, restoration, elaboration, and repair of national and religious traditions as the key to maintaining a nation and strengthening it through time”,<sup>70</sup> because it “arises directly from the sense that one belongs to some continuing, and pre-existing social order, and that this fact is all-important in determining what to do”.<sup>71</sup> The extended sense of self described above is one that has been a source of great consolation in my own life, not only for the support and strength gained from the relationships and reciprocal ties to those around me. Those in the Overclass and Clerisy who sneer at those like me who value their culture, traditions and sense of belonging to a living past forget that for the less fortunate, such elements of life are essential. As Tim Stanley writes, “[i]f you are destitute or bedridden, memory is all the more precious because it is free: no one can take it away from you”.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> EBERSTADT 2019.

<sup>68</sup> SCRUTON 2017b.

<sup>69</sup> SCRUTON 2000.

<sup>70</sup> HAZONY 2022.

<sup>71</sup> SCRUTON 2014.

<sup>72</sup> STANLEY 2021.

This is so because “the life of a social arrangement may become mingled with the lives of its members. They may feel in themselves the persistence of the will that surrounds them. The conservative instinct is founded in that feeling: it is the enactment of historical vitality, the individual’s sense of his society’s will to live.”<sup>73</sup> For me, a post-liberalism of the Right, rests in the realisation drawn from slow acculturation and initiation into a moral tradition that there is hope and consolation in such a situated view of life, easing the isolation often attendant on a life lived with greater physical constraints. Tradition, and the customs that give it voice, are a chance for us to join the song of our spirit, however great or small, in the eternal choir of history that carries the song of the past down to us and carries the meaning of our lives and deeds into the future.

This Right post-liberalism, even if affirmed by those who are not themselves believers, holds the innate dignity of the human person as rooted in their being made in the image of God. However, with this comes the moral realism of the acceptance of our fallen nature, and the sin we all carry. The brokenness of our being in a fallen world might encourage a sense of hopelessness. But the possibility of redemption retains the hope of the survival and thriving of the good, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn saw: “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either – but right through every human heart – and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained.”<sup>74</sup>

Far from inducing despair, such a view reminds us, disabled or not, of the limits and constraints that give a sense of what is of value, what is better or worse. This is in contrast with the liberal self-creating self, where unlimited choice paralyses and brings a sense of drowning for lack of authority as to *what* to choose, and for what purpose. A Right post-liberalism is therefore the constrained view of life,<sup>75</sup> as “[f]reedom is comprehensible as a social goal only when subordinate to something else, to an organization or arrangement

<sup>73</sup> SCRUTON 2014.

<sup>74</sup> SOLZHENITSYN 2018 [1973].

<sup>75</sup> SOWELL 2007.



which defines the individual aim. Hence to aim at freedom is at the same time to aim at the constraint which is its precondition.”<sup>76</sup>

The ability to reconcile with the reality of limits is enabled by “connections to and reliance upon memory, virtue, limits, and humility, and, finally, of [it]s source in the spiritual discipline of religion”.<sup>77</sup> The Right post-liberal insight is that virtue comprises “modes of proper responsiveness to that which is of intrinsic value (or goodness) and which makes normative demands upon us, and in being properly responsive the virtues constitute for us the good life, that is, our human fulfilment understood as a normatively higher, nobler, more meaningful form of life”.<sup>78</sup> Such limiting virtues include “humility, reverence, moderation, contentment, neighbourliness, and loyalty”.<sup>79</sup>

These are achieved through extended cultivation and habituation in family and community and are maintained by the soul’s “inner check”.<sup>80</sup> As such, limits are the way to the greater liberation. Aided by grace, they raise us from our lower, animal nature to the higher, civilised nature. This is achieved through the participation in the traditions of the past, themselves based in the universality of the good, true and beautiful, but revealed and practiced in particular times and places.<sup>81</sup>

Rather than the deductive rationality of liberalism, through experience that shapes our will and intuition I have found that this post-liberal conservative view of man, his beginning, his purpose and his end, resonates in much greater harmony with the experience of living with my condition than liberalism’s fantasies ever could. Having RDEB viscerally reveals the truth of post-liberal conservatism’s moral realism and its situated human anthropology. Liberalism, whether classical or right-neo-liberal, denigrates and discounts the givenness of our human condition, in all its tragedy and triumph, in its vitality

<sup>76</sup> SCRUTON 2014.

<sup>77</sup> DENEEN 2004.

<sup>78</sup> MCPHERSON 2021.

<sup>79</sup> MCPHERSON 2021.

<sup>80</sup> RYN 2019.

<sup>81</sup> RYN 2019.

and existential frailty. Post-liberal conservatism speaks to the synthesis of the universality of our relational nature, with particularity of our interdependence demonstrated in intensified form by the disabled life.

Conservatism is thus no longer enough, for if it conserves the neo-liberal political order, and the liberal philosophical foundations of such an order, then the duty of state will continue to be shirked. The securing of abundance, peace and justice not only for disabled people, but for all of us in our British national home, will continue to be sacrificed on the altar of individualism, with the psalms of Progress chanted while doing so. Instead, a restoration of economy and politics by those in government upholding their obligations and duties to govern in service to the common good, will service disabled people, not only as a discreet identity, but as an intrinsic part of the common life of the whole national community.

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