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Post-Liberalism and the Religious Turn

Blue Labour, Red Toryism and the
Return of the Common Good

Benjamin Wood

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Blue Labour, Red Toryism and the Politics of the Common Good

Benjamin J. Wood



Paper Summary: *This briefing paper explores the religious roots of a quiet revolution taking place in Britain's two main political parties in the form of Blue Labour and Red Toryism. Placing religious language at the centre of their conception of public life, these movements offer a decisive break with both Thatcherism and New Labour. By creatively drawing on strands of Catholic Social Thought, Burkean conservatism, Christian Socialism and Aristotle- post-liberal politics offers a challenging diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary politics.*

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Post-liberalism and the Religious Turn

Blue Labour, Red Toryism and the Politics of the Common Good

1.1 Introduction: This briefing paper is about a 'quiet revolution' taking place in British politics. In the aftermath of the 2008-9 financial crash, insiders in both Conservative and Labour parties began to ask whether the British establishment had been right to accept the Thatcherite consensus of political liberalism and free-market economics. Had a governing fascination with risky capitalism brought the country to ruin? And hadn't the embrace of a more liberal society made people feel more insecure around issues like national identity and immigration? In the light of these questions clusters within Cameron's inner-circle and those close to Ed Miliband began to suggest that what was required was a return to a pre-modern and religious conception of politics, which prioritised collective goods over individual rewards.

For the Conservatives, such a transformation has rested on a reappraisal of a rich communal strand of Toryism, which stresses both individual responsibilities aligned with social obligations. Drawing on a rich seam of Anglican, Burkean and Platonic politics, this new breed of 'Red Tories' are scornful of both Thatcherism and Social Democracy, stressing a return to voluntary, co-operative and ecclesial solutions to social problems. Emblematic of this changed mood was the foundation in 2007 of the **Conservative Cooperative Movement**. The core intension behind the organisation was to promote 'alternative forms of Capitalism'.

"It is not our common submission to the central state that will help us live together, but our various and overlapping memberships of a far larger and more diverse range of associations... Fraternity is the sphere of belonging. It is the sphere of society itself – the space between the liberal individual and the egalitarian state. In an age of big government and unbridled consumerism, people are searching for the local and particular, for a politics beyond power and money."
(Danny Kruger, former speech-writer to David Cameron)

For Labour such deep searching has involved uncovering an alternative vision for left-wing politics rooted in a return to religious-inspired ethics and language. Such thinkers now conclude that if the Labour Party is to rebuild itself, it must go on a journey which incorporates conscientious retrievals from its rich history of theological reflection and Church-inspired struggle. Manifestations of this religious sensibility are legion, from a renewed interest in ethical co-operatives and mutuals (Purple Labour) to a recovery of the language of 'community' and 'social solidarity' in the shaping of policy (Blue Labour). Key actors in giving shape to these trajectories in both parties are a group of thinkers I call 'post-liberal'. Central to post-liberal turn has been a revival of multiple languages of religion, patriotism and communal tradition in a political party which it has been argued, has become increasingly indifferent to all of these. But what is it particularly about liberalism that evokes the rejection of post-liberals? What might such a rejection mean for the future shape of British politics? And how should we respond to the public use of religious ideas and language? To open this discussion let's look at the post-liberal description more closely.

1.2. Postliberalism: How then should we understand the character and objectives of post-liberalism? Quite simply post-liberalism is an attempt to imagine a world after political liberalism. While liberals have traditionally stressed the importance of individual rights, privacy and choice in public life and the economy, post-liberals stress the significance of communal authority, tradition and personal relationships. Thus, what post-liberals want is a return to a society in which common values and not the economy are of primary social concern. For Labour this has meant a careful 'flag, faith and family' agenda' while Conservatives have become increasingly vexed with questions like family break-down and the failures of what is regarded as 'state-multiculturalism'.¹ Across both the Left and the Right then, post-liberals occupy a profoundly conservative and conserving space, yet such an attitude should not be straightforwardly identified with the politics of Margret Thatcher or the

¹ Oliver Wright & Jerome Taylor, 'Cameron: My war on multiculturalism', *The Independent*, Saturday 05 February 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/cameron-my-war-on-multiculturalism-2205074.html> [Accessed 26 June 2014]

New Right. In place of free markets, post-liberals prioritise 'social' markets which are rooted in local institutions like parish councils and voluntary groups.

1.3 Some Post-liberal Ideas: What affect are these ideas having on Labour and Conservative thinking? And in what way does a post-liberal facilitate the return of a religious politics? We'll explore the influence of post-liberalism on specific policies later on in this guide; but for now, a few headline points are worth considering. Firstly, to imagine British politics without or beyond liberalism means a fundamental re-imagining the relationship between state, society and the market. For the Conservatives, such re-formation has involved a frank acknowledgement of the limitations of both market and state approaches to social policy and economics. A central preoccupation for such post-liberal conservatives has been the escalation of executive pay at the top of companies as well as the problem of dwindling pay-packets for average-workers. For such Tories, it is not sufficient to justify these inequities according to the neo-liberal mantra of market-efficiency. Moral considerations must also have an impact on how government responds to these differentials. A leading light in this change of tone has been the Conservative MP **Matthew Hancock**, who has argued that- 'For those of us who believe in the power of capitalism, we must face the challenge posed by the popular horror at escalating pay at the top. We must change the culture to save the very free markets on which our prosperity depends.'² While Hancock's argument is a purely secular one, other post-liberal Tories have added an explicitly religious dimension to a call for fairness. As the philosopher and theologian **Philip Blond** contends, we should not divorce ethics from economic life, but rather fuse them together. In this vein, Blond castigates a plethora of institutions for failing to safeguard the moral character of the people. Denouncing the Sophist charlatans which constitute the political class ('the advertising executives, the spin-doctors, the pollsters'³) who feed citizens on a diet of pleasure and egotism, Blond hopes for 'a new Socrates' to deliver a

² Matthew Hancock, 'For markets to work properly, we need a change of culture at the top of big companies', Conservativehome, October 29, 2011, <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2011/10/matthew-hancock-mp-for-markets-to-work-properly-we-need-a-change-of-culture-at-the-top-of-big-compan.html>

³ Blond, *Red Tory: How Left and Right have Broken Britain and How we can Fix It*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), p.70

dilapidated culture from its modern quagmire (an elitist capable of re-animating the elite). Thus, in place of a liberal approach to matters of justice which emphasises non-interference, thinks Blond, we must recapture a Christian and Aristotelian language of public virtue, which demands self-restraint in both economic and personal affairs.

For Labour thinkers, the rejection of liberal ideas of self and society has been equally significant for the shape of debate and policy. Political liberals have always been an influential force in shaping Labour tradition and policy. A particularly significant part in Labour's liberal history centres on the work of the Fabian

"There's a kind of aspiration - you might call it a myth within the Labour party - that it can eradicate the postcode lottery. That aspiration can't be realised. And that's why we need to get away from this obsession with absolute fairness, with material equality".

Ed Miliband advisor Marc Stears (BBC Analysis Interview)

Society. Founded in 1884, the group quickly attracted middle-class activists who were committed to the achievement of Socialism through gradual reform. An enduring feature of Fabian politics is a belief in the efficacy of the state in securing social justice. As a result, Fabians have long supported universal public services, with the object of equalising material resources between rich and poor. In practical terms this has encouraged post-war Labour governments to enact policies in health, education and welfare designed to diminish income-disadvantage and improve life-chances. In contrast to this 'big state model', contemporary post-liberals see the idea of equality as a distraction from the more serious task of promoting social cohesion.

Vocal post-liberals like **Maurice Glasman** and **Jon Cruddas** argue that the goal of Labour politics should not be to end 'the postcode lottery' but instead to rescue civil society (trade unions, churches and community groups) from terminal decline.⁴ These organisations and not the welfare state are best placed to protect

⁴ Rowena Davies, *Tangled up in Blue: Blue Labour and the Struggle for Labour's Soul*, (London: Ruskin Publishing, 2011), p. 27

people against the excesses of Capitalism because they are more sensitive to local needs. Labour's embrace of the Conservative language of 'One Nation' and the consensual language of 'responsible Capitalism' represent significant nods in this post-egalitarian direction. Linked to this rejection of state-sponsored equality, is a reappraisal of the value of work. Despite the strong historical links between Labour and the Trade Union movement, Labour's liberals have tended to reject the suggestion that work possesses any inherent dignity. Shaped by the Bloomsbury liberalism of the British economist **John Maynard Keynes**, this wing of the Labour tradition has consistently argued that leisure, pleasure and material comfort are both the ends and the means of a Socialist society. These 'revisionists' (including **Anthony Crosland** and **Roy Jenkins**) turned their attention from core Labour concerns including workers' rights, towards an array of social issues, including the relaxation of laws on abortion, homosexuality and the abolition of the death penalty. In a radical departure from these concerns, post-liberals within Labour are agitating for the adoption of a living-wage across public and private sectors, as well as tighter controls on immigration to support the wages of local workers. Yet these policies are not merely a series of knee-jerk returns to the past for Labour's post-liberals. Rather, they are rooted in, and moulded by, a coherent set of religious sources which informs its language and political practice. As **Cruddas** reflected in an interview in 2012

When the music stops in autumn 2008... you sort of search for different traditions to reintroduce them. Different bodies, frameworks, ideas. One of which is Catholic Social Teaching, which I think is a rich theme in order to analyse the contemporary situation.⁵

In similar tones, Glasman now suggests that the Labour Party is able and willing to take religious (particularly Catholic) concerns seriously. What should we make of these turns to religious teaching and language? Are they strategic appropriations or the sign of something more significant happening within the two main parties? In the next section we shall consider what religious conceptions are

⁵ Matthew Taylor, 'Catholic teaching: The new zeitgeist for Britain's Left', *BBC News website*, 5 November 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20154986> [Accessed 18 September 2014].

being drawn on by post-liberals and how they are being applied in contemporary debate?

2. The Sources of Post-liberalism: Searching for the Common Good

2.1. The roots of Post-liberalism: As a conserving force on the political spectrum, post-liberals are instinctually attracted to religious language and institutions. Unlike many Communitarians or neo-conservatives however, post-liberals tend to see theological language as more than an instrumental source of community. Instead post-liberals (even those without a strongly defined religious commitment) take traditional Christian claims about the common good, the family and political stability ethically seriously. Of particular importance to post-liberals in this regard has been a careful engagement with **Catholic Social Teaching**. With its themes of subsidiary, reciprocity and material justice, post-liberals suggest that **Catholic Social Teaching** provides a model for an alternative society, which resists both an aggressive free-market Capitalism and an over-mighty state.⁶ The principle goal of such a settlement is the formation of a social order which promotes 'a balance of interests; where power is shared between government, citizens and various intermediate groups (like churches, unions and co-operatives). The ethical role of such groups has recently been re-emphasized by Pope Francis in **Evangelii Gaudium**. Calling Christians to work on a 'small-scale' in their own communities to initiate change, Francis suggests that a greater rootedness in our locality need not cut us off from our global responsibilities: 'The global need not stifle nor the particular prove barren.'⁷ Indeed, by more deeply investing ourselves in our locality, we have greater opportunity to develop the bonds of solidarity which is needed to counteract impersonal political or economic forces. In this regard, **Evangelii**

⁶ Rowena Davies, *Tangled up in Blue: Blue Labour and the Struggle for Labour's Soul*, (London: Ruskin Publishing, 2011), p. 29

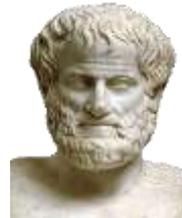
⁷ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013) p. 113

Gaudium rejects both the fundamentalism of free-market Capitalism and State Socialism in favor of an expansive middle course which stresses the centrality of a private-property economy which nonetheless includes the poor. As the document reflects:

Business is a vocation and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable to truly serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of the world and to make them more accessible to all....We can no-longer trust in the invisible forces and unseen hand of the market. Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth; it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality.⁸

By going beyond a 'welfare mentality', Francis refers to an old-style social democracy which prioritizes material compensations for the poor, without addressing the root causes of poverty and social exclusion. If we are to get to the deep causes of impoverishment, thinks Francis, we cannot merely construct efficient public

The Philosophy Behind Catholic Social Teaching



Catholic Social Teaching is rooted in the political and philosophical ideas of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) Aristotle argued that in order for society to prosper citizens had to possess useful character traits (virtues). Thus, Aristotle suggested that moral education was central in sustaining a cohesive and happy community. These ideas were later taken up by the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 C.E.) who argued that Aristotle's teachings were compatible with Christian ethics. Aquinas followed Aristotle in believing that only moral education could deliver a good society. These ideas were aborted into Catholic Social Teaching and its idea of promoting the common good.

⁸ Francis, *Evangeli Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013), p. 102-3

services. We must explore the values and habits which underlie our society, and consider how these might entrap people: 'Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual.'⁹ In particular **Evangeli Gaudium** is keen to contest a culture of mass consumerism which it argues, disrupts and cheapens human relationships. What is needed is a recovery of a culture of justice and mutuality. As we shall see these moral themes have had a significant impact on recent Labour and Conservative approaches to the economy and society.

The Anglican Angle: Alongside this Catholic inheritance, post-liberalism also draws on the thought of the Anglican theologian **John Milbank**. Milbank is a strong critic of the individualistic character of contemporary political liberalism, and argues that the only path to a good society and a just politics involves theological and political return to a holistic medieval conception of Christendom. In place of the liquid and acquisitive identities of postmodern capitalism, Milbank has proposed a return to a deeply holistic conception of the social order- one in which guilds, churches, universities and other community groups nurture a radical form of Christian politics; where the Capitalist rules of accumulation and exchange are superseded by the generous logic of Christian worship. In this way, Radical Orthodoxy asks us to imagine a world in which 'the citizens of New York chose to run their city according to...liturgical order' with 'a third of the days off a year for worship and feasting'¹⁰ and where public life is shaped by the notion that power is exercised for the purpose of promoting a Christ-like practice of service, wiping out damaging concentrations of social and economic power- including patriarchy. As Milbank suggests:

After the Fall, this mutuality and bestowing were contaminated and women especially were subordinated and degraded. But Christ the King restores to us the idea that to rule is to serve – he gives to us again the

⁹ Francis, *Evangeli Gaudium*, p. 95

¹⁰ John Milbank, 'The Gift of Ruling: Secularization and Political Authority', in *New Black Friars, Volume 85, Issue 996*, (March 2004), p. 223

munus regale itself. Today then, we need to surpass liberal democracy and search again for the common good in ceaseless circulation and creative development, a search that may involve laws, but more fundamentally involves charity beyond the law. Our poles of reference should not be the fantasised pure individual nor the pure sovereign state (natural or globalised) nor the pure free market. Instead we should both locate and form real groups pursuing real goods and exchanging real gifts amongst themselves and with each other according to measures judged to be intrinsically fair.¹¹

Underlying his vision of radical return, Milbank draws on a wide-range of theological and civil traditions including the thought of **John Ruskin** and **G.K. Chesterton** as well as the civic republicanism of Renaissance Florence. His goal is to construct a model of a 'Tory Socialism' which is conservative and communistic; communistic because he argues for the displacement of free-market Capitalism, yet conservative because such displacement depends upon a resurgence of civic pride, tradition and personal responsibility. This had a significant effect on the Red Toryism of Philip Blond, who has advocated this strongly theological conception of economic life.

2.2. Uses on the Right: How have such ideas been utilized on the political right? One way of appreciating the effect of post-liberalism on these issues is to consider the reception of **Edmund Burke** within the Conservative Party. For contemporary Tories (scarred by the market-turmoil of 2008) Burke's thought possesses two key insights. Firstly all human beings are embedded within particular traditions, which represent the cumulative wisdom of a culture. One cannot simply build a social order from scratch without destabilising the historical foundations on which social life is built. Thus, we must construct change concretely but carefully;

¹¹ Milbank, 'The Gift of Ruling: Secularization and Political Authority', in *New Black Friars, Volume 85, Issue 996*, (March 2004), pp. 337-8

Milbank, Blond and Ownership



One distinctive idea supported by both Milbank and Blond (which has been taken up by some post-liberals) is the recovery of Distributionism. Influential among socially-conscious Catholics early in the last century- distributionism is an economic theory which rejects both Capitalism and State Socialism. Premised upon the idea of small-scale ownership of property, distributionists want to see the widest possible dispersion of Capital in society as a means of overcoming poverty and economic exploitation. The task is to overcome 'the chasm between the mass who only receive or earn welfare... and the minority that own in excess.'¹²

taking into account practices and ways of life which predate the proposed reform. As Burke observes in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*:

When the useful parts of an old establishment are kept, and what is superadded is to be fitted to what is retained, a steady mind, persevering attention, vigorous powers of comparison and combination, and the resources of an understanding fruitful in expedients are to be exercised; they are to be

exercised in a continued conflict with the combined force of the opposite vices; with the obstinacy that rejects all improvement and the levity which is fatigued and disgusted with everything of which it is in possession.¹³

In other words, when considering political change, we must work with the grain of social attitudes and not against them. Burke's second insight involves an analysis of what makes society tick. Unlike contemporary Neo-liberals, Burke refuses to reduce either persons to the status of atomistic consumers, nor society to a series of market-based transactions.

¹² John Milbank, *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology*, (London: SCM Press, 2009), p. 80

¹³ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 169

The strength of a society depends upon bonds of mutual interest and fellowship among citizens, exemplified by voluntary associations. Understood together, both claims made Burke an advocate of political reform but within the limits of an overriding respect for custom, local variation and tradition. This, suggests Jesse Norman, is at the heart of the Conservative concept of the **Big Society**. Instead of an all-encompassing state directing social action, social change is best secured organically through grass-roots practices. In this account of society, the Church (both in its established and non-established form) is a key player in maintaining moral order and personal relationships among citizens. In this rather Burkean tone David Cameron noted earlier this year: 'I believe we should be more confident about our status as a Christian country, more ambitious about expanding the role of faith-based organizations, and, frankly, more evangelical about a faith that compels us to get out there and make a difference to people's lives'.¹⁴ Here religious faith serves as societal glue for civil society, charitable action and social cohesion.

Uses on the Left: This turn towards relationality and community on the Right is having a significant impact on how the Labour Party thinks of itself and its history. As Norman observes:

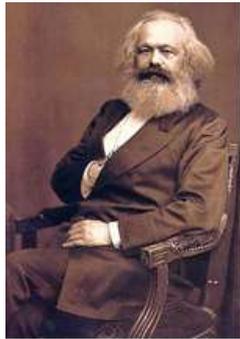
The Big Society is not, ultimately, a left or right-wing idea as much....In the early 20th century the British left a teeming mass of intellectual and social traditions, encompassing guild socialism; religious nonconformity; civil dissent and suffragism; many shades of Marxism and Communism; mutuals and co-operatives; and unions. There was no necessity for this astonishing plurality to yield a political party which for fifty years has emphasized centralized state provision of public services above all else.¹⁵

¹⁴ David Cameron, 'My faith in the Church of England', *the Church Times*, 16 Apr 2014, <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/17-april/comment/opinion/my-faith-in-the-church-of-england>

¹⁵ Jesse Norman, *Big Society: The Anatomy of the New Politics*, (Buckingham: The University of Buckingham Press, 2010), p. 5-6

Through dialogue with these strands of conservatism, Labour's post-liberals are re-discovering their party as well as democratic politics as tradition. This has had consequence of sensitizing some Labour thinkers to the importance of stable institutions and continuity across time. In this post-liberal mold, the function of the Labour Party is not to initiate head-long change, but to deepen people's attachment to their existing institutions and extend their benefits. Yet, such conservatism can

Is Conservatism Radical?



In what sense is the Left radically is conservative? Take Marxist Communism. In the Communist Manifesto (1848) Marx and Engels write that: 'The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand... has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation.' In this passage Capitalism stands for a disruptive force which uproots human relationship through the disciplines of mass production and industrialism. What the Communist wants is the preservation of the kind of sociality found in earlier cultures. Thus, in a peculiar fashion Marxism seeks to revolutionise society in order to preserve elements of the past.

be radical because it opposes all attempts at up-rooting community identity including Capitalism and globalization. In this vein radical threads of socialism can be read as profoundly conservative constructions. Thus, socialism in this mode seeks to preserve the personal against the impersonal.

3. Post-liberalism and Policy: Building the Common Good

3.1 Post-Liberal Possibilities: How are these post-liberal strands be shaping policy within the Conservative and Labour Parties? This question is bound up with a deeper existential question: what is politics for in a world after Thatcher and Blair? As we have seen, post-liberals are not going to provide conventional or comfortable answers to this question. The great crisis for post-liberalism is the decay of communities and the decline of civic participation. In the face of an impersonal state and a ruthless market the little bonds and solidarities citizens make with each other are under threat. Such dislocation cannot be repaired by either more state or more market. Such is the radical nature of post-liberalism's conservatism that a mere return some romantic impossibility (or the forward march of Thatcher and Blairism) will not do. Post-liberals want to utilize organic institutions to address contemporary conditions. At the core of this project is the notion of a tripartite politics in which the community keeps both the state and the market in check. These ideas have reached their most articulate form in the Blue Labour project of Maurice Glasman and the Red Tory articulation of Philip Blond. Key to their shared thinking is the retrieval of an august tradition of specifically English politics which seeks to dignify labour through democracy and secure freedom through the bounds of family, community and national affection. As Glasman writes:

The English tradition of liberty is far older than liberalism. Within three weeks of the Norman Conquest, more than half the land in England was owned by eleven Norman aristocrats, and it has been pretty much uphill ever since. Labour takes its place within a far longer national tradition of resistance that values a legal and a democratic order that is both reforming and traditional, in simultaneous motion. Parliamentary Socialism, the National Commonwealth – whichever way Labour chose to

describe itself in its first fifty years – each acknowledged its attachment to the language and sensibility of the politics of the Common Good, and a central role for the inherited institutions of governance that represented the interests of what used to be known as ‘the commons’, the House of Commons not being the least of those.¹⁶

Drawing on an old concept of Liberty still, Blond argues that the kind of freedom modern politics needs is that advocated by the Apostle Paul: ‘Liberty is manifestly positive and not negative and not negative; certain choices allow to you to become more free; others clearly prevent freedom. St Paul was right when he said that we are ‘set free’ only when we ‘know the truth’. And so we have to know the truth about ourselves and each other if we are to choose wisely’.¹⁷ How can we choose wisely? For Blond the ability to think and act well involves living one’s life in the contexts of institutions loyalties and traditions. We gain freedom, not by living for ourselves alone, but by living with others. We can see common linkage between these two conceptions when we consider the ideas of the British Chartists. Unlike many of their revolutionary contemporaries on the continent, many British Chartists rejected notion of violent revolution, preferring instead the extension of political participation through Parliament. Such civic moderation is given an appealing voice by George Elliot in her novel **Felix Holt**, where the title character seeks restitution for the wrongs suffered by working men through reform and not the overthrow of traditional institutions. Radicalism in this sense was concerned with giving people the means of contesting their poor conditions, not a doctrine of insurgency. How does Blue Labour and Red Toryism translate these general commitments into concrete policies?

3.2 Post-liberalism and Work: A key area of policy for post-liberals involves the sphere of work, for it is here that their religious and moral commitments become the most visible. For Red Toryism, work is that place, not merely of production, but of

¹⁶ Maurice Glasman, ‘Labour as a Radical Tradition’, in *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, Maurice Glasman, Jonathan Rutherford, Marc Stears, Stuart White (eds) p. 17 [http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/Labour tradition and the politics of paradox.pdf](http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/Labour%20tradition%20and%20the%20politics%20of%20paradox.pdf) (Accessed 12 March 2014)

¹⁷ Blond, *Red Tory: How Left and Right have Broken Britain and How we can Fix It*, p. 161-2

solidarity and relationship. To better facilitate this, Blond has suggested that the state should encourage greater employee-ownership in the private sector and more stake-hold participation in the public sector. Instead of dividing an enterprise between workers and managers, work-places need to be designed so the risks and benefits of work are more evenly distributed among the work-force as a whole. Moreover, there need to be more democratic models of management which allow workers to innovate and raise-concerns for the sake of themselves and those who use the worker's services. Taking public provision as a space ripe for such reform, Blond notes:

When the governments of the 1980s and 1990s sought to outsource services to the private sector, this raises the question of 'insourcing', devolving ownership and responsibility to the employees themselves, without some of the potentially disempowering and de incentivizing effects sometimes associated with privatization.¹⁸

Both state and private enterprise, according to Blond need to use more mutualistic and co-operative models of ownership, if workers are to feel empowered and represented. Equally, such workers will be more willing and able to respond to the needs of citizens if they feel they have a stake in what they do. Echoing Blond's call, Glasman has suggested that the Left needs to challenge both a faceless state and a rootless globalisation by building democratic work-places. While Labour's leftward flank has generally looked positively on the party's post-war commitments to nationalisation, public welfare and rational planning, Blue Labour proposes that such a technocratic politics bred a sense of powerlessness within families and communities. Instead of being considered a site of dignity, the worker became part of a series of public sector objectives. As Glasman writes:

While growing in status to be a full partner in the political governance of the nation, in the economy Labour remained excluded and subordinate..... For most of the time before that, co-operative

¹⁸ Blond, *Red Tory*, p. 258

firms, worker- and passenger-owned railways, mutualised waterways and worker-run mines were party policy. This was all but abandoned by the time Attlee became prime minister.¹⁹

What then is Blue Labour's solution to this powerlessness? Rallying against exploitative and dehumanising forms of labour Glasman argues alongside Blond, that unions, co-operatives and mutuals provide vital means of securing fulfilling occupations grounded in democratic ownership. Also in agreement with 'the small is beautiful' philosophy of the economist **E. F. Schumacher**, Blue Labour recognises the central role played by small-scale local businesses in contesting exploitative forms of employment by distributing wealth and power.

3.3. A Case for Small Business: Alongside a commitment to more democracy in the work-place both Blue Labour and Red Tory politics makes an impassioned plea for the importance of small-businesses as a way of spreading opportunity and wealth more widely. While the corporation rely on a passive and mechanic model of labour (overseen by a distant management structure) small businesses depend upon the active direction of a smaller-pool of workers and community-stakeholders to sustain themselves. Alongside a greater sense of ownership, smaller firms also tend to be more equitable in terms of pay differentials between bosses and workers. Moreover, instead of being ciphered off to a distant head-office, the wealth produced by small-firms is largely spent within the community, sustaining its economic and cultural life. Counted together, these features make small-businesses positive vehicles for the kinds of values Blue Labour and Red Toryism sees as central, including care, reciprocity and justice.

3.4 Welfare: Key to a post-liberal understanding of welfare is a recovery of notions of relationality, fraternity and care in the provision of social security and other public services. Eschewing top-down models of delivery, Glasman and Blond advocate local solutions to local problems, prioritising the relationships people have with their neighbours, friends and families. Where assistance greater needed the

¹⁹ Maurice Glasman, 'Labour as a radical Tradition', *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, Eds Maurice Glasman, Jonathan Rutherford et al (The Oxford London Seminars, 2010-2011), pp. 22-23 [6 March 2012, <http://www.soundings.org.uk/>]

state should support the inabilities of councils and community-groups, allowing local residents to organise their public services democratically so that civic structures meet the needs and character of the area. In Red Tory terms, such welfare localism requires the meaningful engagement of ordinary people through voluntary groups, Churches and local councils. Instead of making welfare a state-monopoly, Red Toryism would like to see a proliferation of providers offering support to vulnerable and disadvantaged people. As Blonds expressed this vision in *the Guardian* back in 2010:

It is about breaking up the concentration of power in the state and in the economy – it is a distribution and dispersal of capital and capacity throughout our society, so as to create multiple centres of wealth, innovation and ownership. For the public sector – it is about addressing state failure via a revival of our civil society through a radical decentralisation of budgets and power to our localities and communities. Opening up the state to genuine economic participation and co-operative endeavour by citizens through charities, social enterprises and civic groups can create new trust platforms, designing out the audit and compliance bureaucracies that cripple our public services.²⁰

Mirroring these priorities, Blue Labour has suggested the return of a relational form of welfare, which is rooted in grass-roots initiatives. Described by Ivana Bartoletti as 'a combination of Socialism and Catholicism', this new way of delivering welfare represents a move away from the rule of the expert and the planner. In its place Blue Labour looks to voluntary actions of diligent citizens- so that the poor, 'children and the elderly' are 'looked after by the community, under principles of solidarity and care.'²¹ This valorisation of local structures emerges of a board set of criticisms of Fabian conceptions of centralised poverty-assistance, in particular the issue of personal disempowerment. Not only do these institutions (Local Authorities,

²⁰ Philip Blond, 'The austerity drive must not derail the winning 'big society'', *The Guardian*, Sunday 3 October 2010 13.00 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/oct/03/cuts-big-society-treasury-civic-state> [Accessed 18 September 2014].

²¹ Ivana Bartoletti, 'One Nation and Feminism' in *One Nation Labour: Debating the Future*, ed. Jon Cruddas, (LabourList, 2013), p. 19

the NHS, and Jobcentre Plus) frequently patronise and dictate to claimants, they have not brought the egalitarian conditions their designers hoped. Poverty not merely persists but it has proliferated and fractured into multiple deprivations. In this way Post-liberals have powerfully picked up a failure of design which has been evident since the birth of the Welfare State in 1948. As the historian Kenneth O. Morgan notes in his masterful *Labour in Power: 1945-1951* (1985), while the Atlee government was successful in dealing with extreme poverty the principle of 'universality' at the heart of the original reforms meant that 'more affluent or middle-class people received substantial help from...welfare benefits' and 'the very extent and cost of the welfare state after 1945 meant that many of the new social reforms were financed by transfers of income within lower income groups themselves rather than by transfers from rich to poor'.²² Morgan concludes that the 'welfare measures of the Labour government did not, of themselves, produce a more equalitarian and open society. The profile of the class structure or even simply of the redistribution of wealth showed relatively little change between 1945 and 1951.'²³ The limits²⁴ of time and tested strategies have again found expression in the most recent period of Labour government 1997-2010. There is mounting economic evidence to suggest that while the policies of New Labour during in the early 2000s arguably moderated the gap between rich and poor, the Blair-Brown governments did not reverse the significant rise in inequality seen under Thatcher. As the above graph shows, two years before the last Labour government left office income inequality was actually higher than at any point since the 1970's.

With the limits of cash-transfer egalitarianism revealed, post-liberals in both parties argue for a radical reinterpretation of welfare as community-action. Instead of basing politics around the principle of equality, Post-liberalism seeks a return to the principle of *fraternity*. Fraternity does not require that we treat everyone the same. Indeed, fraternity both assumes and celebrates human differences of taste,

²² Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945-1951*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 185

²³ Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945-1951*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 184

²⁴ In the interest of balance, it should be acknowledged that increases in cash-transfers represented a successful method of reducing inequality in the Wilson government of 1964-1970. See Wilfred Beckerman, 'Objectives and Performance: An Overall View', in *The Labour Government's Economic Record, 1964-1970*, (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, 1972), p. 42

ability and wealth. What matters for the advocate of fraternalism is extending the respect for every human being, permitting their distinctiveness to flourish. Given this starting-point citizens should not be reduced to passive recipients of money-transfers (which bring them up to an arbitrary material level) but rather be encouraged to be fully-engaged citizens, working to overcome their own problems (in cooperation with others). Democracy and not benefit levels are central in improving people's lives, providing some with more and some with less, depending upon a balance between needs and contribution. Looking at *needs* alone may unhelpfully refashion the recipient as a silenced and incapable victim. Yet, an over-reliance upon contribution produces all manner of inequities which does not take into account inherited or environmental disadvantaged which could not be wholly overcome no-matter how much personal effort were applied.

What is required is a respect for personal agency while possessing a firm diagnosis of those things which prevent a person's participation in the democratic process. Thus, Blue Labour does not posit a spontaneous upsurge of civic energy. Rather, civic habits need to be fostered through shared institutions. This renewed interest in grass-roots activity has led both parties at local government level to support the notion of 'co-operative councils' (as in Corydon²⁵) Community-land Trusts (secure local housing-supply) and municipal youth unemployment schemes. Yet, alongside this democratic emphasis is also a practice of 'tough love' which expects working or unemployed recipients of welfare to make a contribution in restoring their own fortunes. According to this logic, those who are responsible with their finances, diligent in looking for work, providing for their families should be given preference in accessing social housing or other support. Indeed as a supporter of the Blue Labour project, David Goodhart notes: 'Post-liberalism is comfortable with the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving'²⁶- those who strive should be helped while those who are lazy or feckless should not expect support. What

²⁵ Steve Reed, 'Let's build a more co-operative Corydon' *The Corydon Citizen*, Tuesday 18th March, 2014, <http://thecroydoncitizen.com/politics-society/lets-build-co-operative-croydon/> [Accessed 20 June, 2014]

²⁶ David Goodhart, 'Welcome to the post-liberal majority', *Financial Times*, May 11, 2012 7:53 pm <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a992778e-9aa4-11e1-9c98-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3A59kYCvI> [11 August 2014].

is evidently being rejected is a left-liberal emphasis on *neutrality* and instead a renewed focus on the moral actions of individuals and institutions.

Immigration: Tied up with Post-liberalism's rejection of left-liberal neutrality in the case of welfare is a general scepticism regarding the benefits of the free movement of labour across national boundaries. Dominant in social democratic discourse over the last thirty years has been an ethnic and cultural universalism which has understood immigration as an opportunity for cultural enrichment, tolerance and greater global solidarity. Such universalism is particularly evident in the relation between European states, where citizens have the right to move freely between localities. The goal of such a framework is not merely to guarantee equal opportunities to economic prosperity, but also to weaken and blur traditional distinctions between nation-states. Yet for post-liberals such a project is deeply problematic, since it tends to ignore the economic needs and circumstances of local populations. As Goodhart puts it:

Returning to moderate levels of immigration, and creating a country in which ethnic minorities are flourishing and well-integrated, ought to be one of the great causes of today's centre-Left. It is, after all, the Left's 'people' — city dwellers on low and middling incomes of all races — who suffer most from the economic competition created by large-scale immigration, and from the high population turn-over in their local neighbourhoods.²⁷

This post-liberal critique emerges from a deeply Catholic and arguably communitarian insight. In order to sustain themselves, communities must have the resources both to meet their own needs, but also care for the needy and the stranger. A universalistic immigration policy can be seen to distort these priorities by breaking the links between community, contribution and care. People arrive and

²⁷ David Goodhart, 'Immigration and out-of-touch liberals who still censor debate: DAVID GOODHART on being banned from the Hay Festival for exposing some uncomfortable truths', *Mail Online*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2332986/Immigration-touch-liberals-censor-debate-DAVID-GOODHART-banned-Hay-Festival-exposing-uncomfortable-truths.html>, 23:55, 29 May 2013, Updated: 07:41, 30 May 2013 [Accessed 22 September 2014]

receive services, but such receipt does not take into account those already settled in a given area. What is being called for by post-liberals is a return to a 'particularistic' politics which takes account of concrete conditions and not just abstract principles. For Blond, these realities can only be tackled at their root; by challenging a pro-immigration business culture, which outsources jobs to secure profits, with minimal investment in workers. As Blond notes:

What few realise is that a vast reserve of migrant labour that can cross borders, bid down wages and maintain corporate profits is a right-wing idea. The traditional left has been silent no doubt because of misplaced fears of being accused of racism and genuine idealism about political asylum. But genuine asylum-seekers, who we treat abominably, make up only about three per cent of overall immigration. Mass immigration is good for big business and bad for everyone else.²⁸

Joining Blond against mass immigration, Glasman argues that a heavy influx of new migrant labour is placing an unacceptable strain on Britain's social fabric. In a stark move away from 'freedom of movement', Blue Labour advocates support significant reductions in the flow of immigration as well as greater support for exploited immigrant workers. Such a cluster of attitudes speaks to the scepticism with which post-liberalism views the present European project. As Glasman suggests, free-movement treaties with Europe should be renegotiated²⁹ while the government should temporarily freeze 'on immigration and a policy that only lets in a very few highly skilled migrants'.³⁰

The Family: In common with many on the traditional Right, post-liberals are unabashed about their defence of family life. For both Blond and Glasman, the

²⁸ Philip Blond, 'Labour's right-wing immigration policy' in *The Week*, 01:00 Tue 1 Apr 2008, <http://www.theweek.co.uk/27307/labour%E2%80%99s-right-wing-immigration-policy> [Accessed 22 September 2014].

²⁹ Allegra Stratton, 'Blue Labour peer returns with call to look again at European immigration', *The Guardian*, Monday 26 September 2011 21.31 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/sep/26/maurice-glasman-european-immigration>

³⁰ Anthony Painter, 'Blue Labour's immigration stance is toxic', *The Guardian*, Tuesday 19 July 2011 15.31 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jul/19/blue-labour-immigration>

threat to the family comes in a number of forms; cultural, governmental and economic. On the cultural front, post-liberals fear that family structures are now under pressure from a pervasive individualism, which prioritises personal pleasure over the demands which stable family life requires. As Blond sets out the moral function of the family:

[The family] offers the site of both caring and nurture; it is where people learn to limit their desires and give to the greater good. It is the site of character formation and life orientation. In short, the family is a profoundly relational institution and, since it places individuals in a context of obligation and responsibility, it embodies the essence of mutuality.³¹

The family, according to this definition, is a profoundly anti-liberal institution; requiring us to contest and go beyond narrow notions of self-interest. In a similar vein, Blue Labour supporters have been particularly contemptuous of the claims of liberals and feminists, who have sought to define the family as a domain of personal autonomy. Seeing the intrusive hand of consumerist logic in the workings of an organic institution, Blue Labour seeks a concerted return to a language of duty and obligation. In an effort to give voice to such conscientious moral retrieval, the Blue Labour thinker Jonathan Rutherford has suggested that our culture needs to reclaim the centrality of the patriarchal vision of family life:

The narrative of a patriarchal social order...ensured the reproduction of normative family and social relations, status hierarchies and moral values. They transmitted a common life down through the generations – mankind, fraternity, masterful, sons of free men, faith of our fathers. This patrimony has now been fragmented and disrupted by changing cultural attitudes, new patterns of work and the growing independence of women.³²

³¹ Blond, *Red Tory*, p. 91

³² Jonathan Rutherford, 'The Future is Conservative', in *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, Maurice Glasman, Jonathan Rutherford, Marc Stears, Stuart White (eds) p. 100
[http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/Labour tradition and the politics of paradox.pdf](http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/Labour%20tradition%20and%20the%20politics%20of%20paradox.pdf)

In the absence of such an ethic, both Red Tory and Blue Labour have observed what they regard as the slow erosion of the autonomy of the family through various state-agencies. Once the ethic of consumption intrudes on the logic family, argues post-liberals, more of its functions are 'contracted out' to the government- with officials, teachers and health-workers, becoming the final arbiters of the family's wellbeing rather than parents. As Blond reports grimly, 'After the Second World War the state increasingly saw itself as a proxy parent, operating in loco *parentis*.³³ Yet, if the family is becoming increasingly 'nationalised' for Blue Labour and Red Toryism, then it is also internally threatened by an economy which prioritises individual freedom and choice above all else. Such an objective, argue post-liberals, leads invariably to the absorption of the family into the economic sphere. In the midst of the cultural wreckage life by hedonism, both men and women are now open to multiple forms of oppression and disorientation. For Blond this is most graphically demonstrated by the unrealistic social demands which are now placed on women. As Blond notes on unmarried women in particular: 'unmarried women have it worse three-times over; they have to work externally, labour domestically and look after the children entirely by themselves.'³⁴ On this issue, Blue Labour has also been deeply critical. While greater independence is said to benefit women, Rutherford suggests that the breakdown of what he calls 'patrimony', have left many women open to exploitation, economic inequality and commercialisation on a massive scale. For men, the breakdown of traditional family structures has been similarly catastrophic for men, with young boys becoming socially, emotionally and sexually disorientated. Summarising this fundamental disruption of male identity, Rutherford writes:

The loss of patrimony, the rise of single-parent households, and women's challenge to men's traditional roles, have led to recurring moral panics about a crisis in masculinity, family and fatherhood. The 1990s witnessed a growing consensus of opinion in

³³ Blond, *Red Tory*, p. 85

³⁴ Blond, *Red Tory*, p. 85

the media and popular literature that men were emotionally inarticulate, socially and personally disoriented and demoralised.³⁵

How then should society be reordered? While Blond and Rutherford do not provide us with a set of simple solutions, the answer seems clear from their shared premises. There must be a renewed emphasis, not merely on the value of work and family, but also a re-moralisation of men, so that young boys can grow up with a sense of self-worth and direction. Taking up this theme of re-moralisation of men, Glasman has suggested that in a profound sense his Blue Labour project is deeply feminist³⁶ in that the old socialist practices of solidarity and co-operation are capable of contesting a laddish and objectifying culture which diminishes and de-humanises women. Yet such a validation does not come about through the marginalisation of femininity or domesticity, but rather by esteeming the virtues which these patterns personify. In this respect, Marc Stears has suggested that Blue Labour's feminism is found in its fondness for the idea emotional attachment as the core of 'real politics'.³⁷ Here in post-liberalism's strange mix of conservatism and radicalism, there is something of the radical Feminism of Shelia Rowbootham. Evoking a rich politics of affection and intimate relationship, she argues that any workable political project must be rooted in a sense of human warmth and sentimentality. Speaking from the Left, Shelia Rowbootham claims:

The fear seems to be that cosiness means people get cut off from the real politics. I think this should be put the other way round. If a version of socialism is insisted upon which banishes cosiness given the attachment of most people working class men and women in-cluded to having a fair degree of it around in their lives this

³⁵ Rutherford, 'The Future is Conservative', in *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox*, Maurice Glasman, Jonathan Rutherford, Marc Stears, Stuart White (eds) p. 100

[http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/Labour tradition and the politics of paradox.pdf](http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/Labour%20tradition%20and%20the%20politics%20of%20paradox.pdf)

³⁶ Ivana Bartoletti, 'Glasman: women are central to Blue Labour', *Fabian Women*, Friday, 15 July 2011, <http://www.nextleft.org/2011/07/glasman-women-are-central-to-blue.html> [Accessed August 11 2014].

³⁷ Marc Stears, 'These attacks on Blue Labour are hollow', *The Guardian*, Wednesday 29 June 2011 09.05 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jun/29/blue-labour-attacks> [Accessed 23 September, 2014]

socialism will not attract or keep most people. Why should the ruling class have a monopoly of cosiness?³⁸

Indeed, it is this politics of the affections which prevents the Blue Labour and Red Tory love of family becoming a static or oppressive conception. Treating our primary relationships seriously means acknowledging the beauty and diversity of attachments and seeking out social and political dimensions in each. In line with this implicit generosity, Glasman has warmly welcomed the legal recognition of same-sex relationships, while Blond (although critical of same-sex marriage) wants gay relationships to be acknowledged and respected. As Blond notes in the *Res Publica* report, *Marriage Union for the future or contract for the present* (with Roger Scrutton):

Christian accounts of reality include an end and a goal (a teleology) for all creatures and a perfection for all beings. What then is the teleology for a gay life? How should homosexuals live with their own created nature and live unto God as well? Since gay people clearly fall in love and form lifelong commitments, should this not be part of Christian teaching and practice for them also? And whilst we recognise that Christian discernment is struggling with these issues, is it not right and proper that permanent and loving homosexual relationships be given Christian public recognition and celebration? We urge the Church to explore the teleology of same sex relationships. If there ever is to be proper Christian care of homosexual people, it must craft a good life for them also – so as to make for them a place of permanent stability and reciprocal love and genuine recognition. We say then to the churches: offer more than a civil partnership – offer a civil union celebrated in Church as a distinctive form of social and theological realisation for gay people that all Christians would want to see. This really would be a union that would be far more

³⁸Shelia Rowbootham, 'The Women's Movement and Organisation for Socialism' in *Radical America: Feminism and Leninism*, Vol. 13. No. 5, p. 12

radical than anything currently on offer, and it would be a step towards social reconciliation of the kind preached in the Gospels.³⁹

Thus, the essence of the family for post-liberals is not found in merely repeating the past or retrieving ancient forms, but consolidating heart-felt commitment in a variety of guises. In this respect, both Blue Labour and Red Toryism can be understood as conservative movements, yet capable of internal criticism and transformation.

4. Conclusion: The Paradox of Post-Liberalism

4.1. A New Religious Politics? In exploring the diverse ways in which post-liberal themes and attitudes are influencing the British politics, one is struck by an implicit revival of Christianity religiosity at their heart, which defies conventional wisdom. We have become used to commentators telling us how marginal Christianity has become in British life. And yet two the most significant political projects of the last decade find themselves steeped in the theological and ethical resources of a Christian past. This has created a new space on the political spectrum not merely for a genuinely 'public' Christianity, but also for a kind of political reasoning which is both conservative and pragmatic. Possessing a profound scepticism of the central state and an over-dominant market, post-liberalism challenges us to think of new ways of building up our communities and institutions. Instead of retreating into the abstractions of public planning or market-efficiency, post-liberals look instead look to grass-roots solutions to local problems. In an effort to flesh out this commitment, they draw on a wealth of organisations and practices, from trade-unionism to

³⁹ Roger Scruton & Philip Blond, 'Marriage Union for the future or contract for the present', *Res Publica Green Papers*, 2014, p. 10 http://respublica.org.uk/documents/thr_Marriage-%20Union%20for%20the%20future%20or%20contract%20for%20the%20present%20pdf.pdf [Accessed 22 September 2014]

cooperatives, from social enterprises to local action groups; in a bid to mend broken relationships and solidly communities. If such eclecticism is motivated by any sort of ideology is that of a 'faith in people' to organise and respond to their deepest needs, using democracy as a base. It presents a romantic and idealised vision of local politics; one intended to galvanise and inspire grass-roots activity. In this respect, we can see post-liberalism as an attempt to keep both the Conservative and Labour Party's faithful to their most mutualistic, organic and co-operative instincts. And in accord with the post-liberal agenda of radical conservatism, such faithfulness requires a return and a break with the past.

4.2. The Challenge of Post-Liberalism for the Parties: For the Conservatives, post-liberal reconstruction means being both being faithful to and critical of Thatcherism. Faithful because post-liberalism recognizes the value which Thatcher herself contributed both to voluntary organisations (including the Church). Indeed it was the value of self-help which animated both Conservative tax-policy and social policy from 1979 onwards. As the scholar of modern Conservatism E.H.H. Green remarks on this point: 'Thatcher herself consistently argued that an essential part of the general shift from (state) 'dependency' to an 'enterprise' culture was not only to reduce both the cost and scope of the welfare State, but to acknowledge and enhance the contribution of the voluntary sector.'⁴⁰ And yet in reclaiming this piece of Thatcherism, Blond in particular has been highly damning of an uncritical attitude among the New Right in regard to the socially damaging effects of monopolistic forms of Capitalism. Castigating the prevalence of an unthinking neo-liberalism in today's Tory Party, Blond challenges his fellow Conservatives to reach back even further to the romantic politics of Benjamin Disraeli. Of particular interest to Blond and his Red Tories is Disraeli's passionate dislike of a liberal logic of utility which forgets the importance of cultivating moral, cultural and aesthetic values. Horrified by the de-humanising nature of the factory-Capitalism so lauded by the Old Whigs, Disraeli condemned materialist conceptions of human beings which had nothing to say concerning love, beauty and connection. The soulful aristocrat in Disraeli wanted

⁴⁰ E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 277

nothing less than a radical conservatism which brought passion and friendship back into politics.

If post-liberal Tories seek a measure of romantic renewal, Labour too is fundamentally transformed by the post-liberal sensibility. Again, this post-liberal turn is both paradoxically familiar and strange: Familiar because the post-liberal return to community echoes early strands in New Labour thinking. It is now forgotten that Blair and Brown's embryonic pitch to the electorate was rooted in an appropriation of co-operate forms of Christian Socialism. Indeed, in the early years New Labour, front-line politicians were keen to stress the value of local accountability in public services as well as the responsiveness of small-scale civic participation as a means of tackling social breakdown and crime. To achieve these ends the notion of the stakeholder was a key ingredient. Instead of public services being distantly administered from a Local Authority or Whitehall, local residents would be encouraged to participate in forming and directing the delivery and character of state-run provision. At his election in 1994, Tony Blair declared he wanted to create a "stakeholder society" in which workers, customers and trade-unions would play a role in running both public and private sectors. As Blair observed:

The economics of the centre and centre left today should be geared to the creation of a Stakeholder Economy which involves all our people, not a privileged few or even a better off 30 or 40 or 50 per cent. If we fail in that, we waste talent, squeeze potential wealth creating ability and deny the basis of trust upon which a cohesive society One Nation (sic) is built. If people feel they have no stake in society, they feel little responsibility towards it and little or no incentive to work for its success.... The creation of an economy where we are inventing and producing goods and services of quality needs the engagement of the whole country (in) ...a Stakeholder Economy in which opportunity is available to all, advancement

through merit and from which no group or class is set apart or excluded.⁴¹

Yet, it was Labour's failure in government to devolve and diversify power in this way, which leads to areas of significant divergence between New and Blue Labour. While New Labour esteemed local engagement it produced large organisations. In counterbalance to these trends the post-liberals in Labour want to make a stakeholder economy real and enduring; pushing the party well beyond its statist comfort zone. To do this, Labour's 'true blues' argue that there needs to be a revival of experiments in municipal ownership; the use of mutuals and co-operatives to make connections between the work of the community and the work of the state. Behind these moves there is a concern with something which far transcends debates around political structures. The goal of such a politics is to reinvigorate notions of civic virtue, participation and connection. Instead of being disengaged consumers, Labour's post-liberals want to retrieve a distinctly Christian moral universe; where we live for one another, act together and seek the good together. Can such a vision, whether Socialist or Tory become a reality? At the very least the omens for the discussion of such a project appear hopeful, at least within the Labour Party. Yet the behaviour of the present Coalition government provides an object lesson for those seeking to put a post-liberal politics into operation. As Blond laments:

The PM has given up something for nothing, ceding all his strategic and visionary thinking to George Osborne's tactical and failing approach to the deficit. A new conservatism has been strangled at birth; a failure to rethink the party's economic offer means that old economics have killed new politics.⁴²

These remarks get to the heart of the issue. The 'Big Society', 'mutualism or 'Christian Socialism' maybe romantically appealing, yet these proposals are hard to

⁴¹ Paul Seaman, 'Wither stakeholder doctrine?' 8 April 2010, <http://paulseaman.eu/2010/04/wither-stakeholder-doctrine/> [Accessed 15 September, 2014]

⁴² Philip Blond, 'David Cameron has lost his chance to redefine the Tories' in The Guardian, Wednesday 3 October 2012 21.00 BST, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/03/cameron-one-nation-u-turn-tory-tragedy> [22 September 2014]

reconcile with a party-politics which has become increasingly process-driven and deeply utilitarian. Any attempt to enact post-liberal policies will inevitably come up against state and corporate interests, for whom a politics of the grass-roots is an affront to both governmental and economic orthodoxy. If the post-liberal analysis right we appear at present to be within a rock and a hard-place; with monopolistic capitalism and a destructive state as existing co-dependently. Beyond some local initiatives and some political posturing, it is hard to see any weakening of the social or economic status-quo. Post-liberalism in this sense continues to be rhetorically powerful yet politically marginal. While it paints a new economy and society in vivid colours, it is difficult to see how these visions are to become transformative in the context of day-to-day state-craft. But perhaps such anxieties miss the point. Perhaps post-liberalism is in the end less of a coherent political program, but rather kind of political mood which rallies against the dominance of a certain liberal-elitist way of doing politics. In this way, perhaps the role of post-liberalism is not formative but prophetic: pointing people towards a different kind of politics and equipping with the energy and the rhetoric to progress towards this vision. Time will tell if this political mood bears fruit.