

Summary

This collection of essays addresses dubious expectations and contentions concerning the state, democracy, politics, politicians, intellectuals, economists and the public at large, while denouncing contemporary “cargo cults,” descriptions and widespread beliefs about desirable directions and means of social change: notions about “late capitalism,” “social justice,” “helicopter money,” “direct democracy,” “strategic investments,” “unconditional basic income” and the like. The cargo cults in the title refer to widespread expectations that somebody else should provide jobs and money for us, that somebody else is responsible if anything goes awry, and that mimicking external signs of success without much ado achieves success and public happiness. The essays examine and attack widespread ideas about the public good that rely on sacrifice and altruism “by the rich,” extensive state regulation and control, more taxation, various utopian ideas, the notion that “if only we put our heads together...” and, above all, the notions of desirable violence and revolutionary change.

The tongue-in-cheek approach used in the book toward Marxist, pseudo-Marxist and leftist political ideas (on both sides of the contemporary political spectrum) is contrasted with common literary proverbs in the form of the Adagia by Erasmus. The adagia in these essays suggest that people already possess the accumulated wisdom to counter a pseudo-intellectual and utopian way of thinking, with its blame-throwing and responsibility-shifting. Instead, a down-to-earth approach to contemporary social problems is proposed, with piecemeal solutions to social, economic and political tasks, and reliance primarily on personal accountability, individual virtues and duties in order to correct our mores, care for ourselves and the so-called “public good.” As for Croatians, the solutions are catching up with European standards and “getting to Denmark.”

Current European practices and intellectuals are not spared, either. Astonished Europeans are watching the same arena on a grander scale. “Why should debts be repaid?” is an example of such “wisdom.” “The Greek financial crisis is a crisis of European solidarity ... the anti-European referendum was a celebration of direct democracy” is another. “Capitalism and democracy are in deep crisis.” “We need more Europe.” “We need more regulation.” “Perhaps we should invent a new political and

economic combination—reflecting the 99%.” Since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008, we have been witnessing the birth (and rebirth) of a number of irresponsible ideas, concepts and movements, of which the most recent, the abortionist league in Poland and Hungarian authoritarianism, top them all.

Some of the cargo cults described are imports to Croatia, to be sure, but that is no excuse. It is one more reason to be alert and combat irresponsible ideas, wherever they find fertile ground.

The frame for the essay collection is provided by the hedgehog and fox story, Erasmus’ and Isaak Berlin’s adagium on desirable public and private ways of thinking. The fox knows many little things and the hedgehog knows one big thing. The author questions his own thinking, since the essays herein presented may have been read at the time of their first publication as public forecasts. Since Philip Tetlock has proven that foxes are far better at forecasting than hedgehogs, your essay-writer hesitates between trying to hide his hedgehog-like general idea and letting the essays speak for themselves. His impulse to hide the general idea of the book notwithstanding, he certainly hopes his critical libertarian vantage point will not be missed by the attentive reader.