

Dysfunctional Culture – a correction of a review  
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QJI no 3-4 2006 printed a review by Daniel Gustav Anderson of my book *Dysfunctional Culture. The Inadequacy of Cultural Liberalism as a Guide to Major Challenges of the 21st Century*, published by University Press of America 2005.

Reviews of books about ideologies often tend to be very positive or very negative, but seldom so far off the point of the text as in this case. I have detected more than twenty errors and misleading references in the review, but I will not go into all that. I do, however, ask for room for a brief commentary on what my book is really about. People who are seriously engaged in ideological analysis deserve to be informed about what books on the market are about.

The purpose of my book is to develop and, to some extent, test an analytical concept of ideologies as opposed to other culturally formed notions of society. Many writers have tried this before me, but most of these attempts have been criticized for being ideologically-based critiques of other ideologies. This is the background for my discussion, based on the literature, of five formal criteria for determining ideologies, which do not initially favor any particular ideology. In brief, the five criteria are these: a system of thought, interest-dependency, reality distortion, an adversely affected party, and self-immunization.

When notions about society fit these criteria, there is every reason to assume that they will lead to some sort of dysfunctional adjustments that are unlikely to be corrected by the spokesmen of the ideology in question. Instead of correcting false consciousness, an ideology may disguise important connections and nurture dysfunctional processes, leading to a crisis of one kind or another. This will eventually undermine the creditability of the ideology.

I feel I have shown that the criteria mentioned are sufficient to explain key processes that have led to the downfall of once dominant ideologies in Europe. I find the criteria to be useful both for explaining key aspects of the history of classical conservatism, of old liberalism, of fascism and of Marxist socialism; that

is, ideologies where the historical result of their influence is well known. I then turn to the new liberalism, an ideology whose historical consequences cannot yet be analyzed as empirical data. After having discussed the philosophical premises of various characteristics of the new liberal ideology, I go on to discuss whether we can expect this ideology to be a guide to unavoidable challenges that lie ahead: moral order, adequate reproduction and a responsible ecological adjustment.

After having compared the implications of these challenges with the notions of society compatible with the new liberal ideology, my conclusion is that even this new ideology falls short. In other words, we have not yet developed an ideology for modern times or reached the "end of history."

It is nonsense to characterize this very critical approach to contemporary political ideas as "conservative." The quotation cited by Anderson from page 43 of my book refers to how classical conservative spokesmen have presented their ideology - it is not my position. His review includes several misleading quotations of the same kind.

If someone wants to characterize my analysis, I think I come closest to a functional analytical tradition.