

form of economic analysis you must go back beyond the Keynesian Revolution of the 1930s, and then go back beyond the marginal revolution of the 1870s, and submerge yourself in the economics of the classical economists.

Feel free to content yourself with the pallid and superficial economic theory of our own time if that suits you. But if not, then get yourself a copy of David Simpson's *The Rediscovery of Classical Economics*. And you don't have to be an economist for it to make perfect sense to you. written for the general public you will begin to see why economic policies so often nowadays tend to make things worse. It is only the overlay of that remaining classical residual that saves modern economic theory from being of absolutely no value at all.

**Reviewed by
Dr Steven Kates**



The Conservative Revolution

By Cory Bernardi
Connor Court, 2013
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(paperback)
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Some years ago, three friends and I formed a dining club. The idea arose from the realisation that we were all different but also had common characteristics, including a natural conservatism and respect for traditions, a love of good conversation aided by food and drink, an interest in politics but not politicians, and an interest in sport but not to the exclusion of the arts. What also cemented our friendship was our scepticism, in particular, who and what we did not like. We started a list of those we didn't like during a drink at a pub called the Palisade in The Rocks in Sydney. The list became so long that we divided the names into categories and, conscious of the double

meaning, called them stinkers. There were political stinkers, literary stinkers, sporting stinkers, poseur stinkers, male stinkers, female stinkers ... Gough Whitlam had the distinction of fitting into all categories except the sporting. Then we decided to form a dining club of likeminded people, with an invited speaker to present a paper at each dinner. I don't think anyone ever threw a bread roll down the table but as long as it was timely and hit the right target we would not have minded. There was a gentle encouragement of amusing interjections. The late Roddy Meagher was our first speaker and patron.

We might very well have called the club The Gadfly or The Contrarian, but we called it The Palisade. It seemed an appropriate name. The Palisade had wooden floors and a simple, unadorned interior, an absence of music and poker machines, and a smattering of blue-collar workers and city professionals. The pub was a preservation of the old, adapted and used for the present—the very definition of our type of conservatism. The name suggested a bulwark against what we did not like.

Now the docks over which The Palisade stood are soon to be Barangaroo'd into soullessness with ugly modern office towers, food courts, and a casino. Nobody will remember the atmosphere, or the view between the ramshackle streets of the Rocks to North Sydney and the Harbour Bridge, or the summer nor'easter that used to slink comfortably in through the French doors and around the main bar. We chatterers have been chained to our desks by the awful greyness of the post-GFC world and no longer have the luxury of a few 'misspent' hours of a summer's afternoon talking and drinking.

Why this long, personal introduction to Cory Bernardi's book? For me, being a conservative, believing in traditions, and 'conservatism' itself are not concepts that I can clearly write down. They do not amount to a creed or something that I especially recognise in others except in the broadest sense. My type of conservative actually lives in that moment where the past, present and future collide. It can be exciting but it can also be filled with a sense of thoughtful loss. This is a very personal concept, despite Bernardi's attempt to gather our thoughts, steal our hearts, draft a doctrine, and prepare us

for a revolution. It makes me wistfully remember The Palisade days.

Bernardi's book is personal in a rather different sense. It also seems everyone wants the book to be personal given the passionate views on it, from fawning neo-DLP acolytes to vitriol tossing left-wing rabble. Starting with the cover picture of Bernardi with his arms awkwardly folded to expose a wedding band, it is clear that this book is not going to be one of traditional, reticent conservatism. It is about Cory Bernardi. Flick a couple of pages in and one reaches the full page 'About the Author' section. There we learn about his political career, speaking engagements, publications, the Conservative Leadership Foundation, and that he lives in Adelaide with his family. The reader is also sent to Bernardi's personal website. Being a twenty-first century reader, and having my iPhone nearby, I obliged by looking at the website. More pictures of Bernardi are there, as well as the slogan 'Common Sense Lives Here,' and three big coloured boxes along the base: 'DONATE,' 'JOIN' and 'CONTACT.' Bernardi himself is encouraging a personal response.

Some may say these are trivial observations, perhaps even unfair. I say they are revealing in relation to a book that is meant to be about community engagement with conservative values. It is not meant to be about individuals or political activism, let alone Bernardi's careerism, but a helpful rallying point 'to empower and equip' conservatives, as Bernardi himself says. Bernardi positions this book as a corrective against leftists, 'progressives' and the self-indulgent rights-based approach that dominates the contemporary approach to national issues. Yet, we learn very quickly, and often, about the essential conservative doctrine according to Cory Bernardi.

Bernardi arbitrarily divides Australian society in three. There are the 'radicals' who are 'constantly trying to tear down our institutions and diminish our historical values' based on their worldview. For Bernardi, the radicals include leftists and "progressives" who create 'social dissolution, poverty and a sense of loss.' Bernardi uses quotation marks around 'progressives' deliberately as he believes their ideas represent the opposite of progress. The second group is the great bulk of the

people—Bernardi's 'Silent Majority.' Bernardi identifies the Silent Majority as the most important group because it decides the fate of society. He says that the members of this group do not have time for political activism and their wellbeing will be best served by restoring conservative values. Finally, there are the conservatives 'who seek to protect and defend the structures and values that have allowed our nation to achieve the traditional freedoms and prosperity that we enjoy today.'

What is the point of the book? Bernardi says the book 'explores the timeless principles from which some of those structures and values derive [those defended by the conservatives], and how they can be applied to social and economic policy.' The book also explores why the conservative is 'the natural representative of the aspirations of the majority.' For this reason, although Bernardi does not explicitly say so, the book appears to be directed largely at the conservative, 'to empower and equip the conservative with arguments to defeat the corrosive negativity of radicals and leftists.'

I still struggle with the point of the book. Bernardi is under no illusion that he can convince the leftists. I agree. From my observations, none of them is reading the book, even when they are reviewing it (just look at the venomous reviews on the Amazon website). The constituents of the Silent Majority are not going to read the book. They are silent not just because they are 'consumed' with daily life (as Bernardi generously excuses them), but because they also do not read or care very much. Let's be honest, many conservatives, even many leftists, 'progressives' and liberals (in the English sense of the word, not the American), who are politically and culturally engaged often lead busy, professional lives. The learned societies, think tanks, and great cultural institutions in the country continue to exist only because they are supported and patronised by a relatively small middle class sub-group and a few corporations that employ some from that group. These people still manage to participate in the community because they read and care. Some even come from generations of similar contributors to society. Bernardi's Silent Majority just hops from one plasma screen or SUV to another every two years or so.

So that leaves the conservatives. However, many of the conservatives might be like me and my fellow Palisaders, wondering why on earth this hysterical man from Adelaide is shouting at them and superficially explaining concepts they already understand. If only he just wandered into the club and sat in the next armchair. We'd hear him perfectly well. We might even find common ground and help one another if he just stopped rallying blue-collar conservatives to rise up against us.

I cannot disagree with Bernardi's summary of the basic conservative position on family, community, faith, liberty, responsibility, and the Constitution. This is not difficult when all he largely does is summarise the well-trodden path through a number of authors from Burke, Chesterton, Tocqueville and Lord Hugh Cecil to Oakeshott, Kirk, Minogue and Scruton. In reality, I do not dispute much of what Bernardi says is wrong with the world. I have long complained that while we celebrated winning the Cold War, the Fabian and Frankfurt School socialists in our midst (and others blindly following them) in schools, universities and bureaucracies, slowly changed everything under our noses. So Bernardi and I are as one on these fundamentals. But I am troubled when Bernardi ceases speaking with one of the conservative voices that I know and understand, and starts sounding like a muscular-Christian, reactionary DLP member at the bar of the local Catholic Club. That is where he not only loses me but also excludes me from his conservative circle.

For example, by page 14 of the book, I am apparently not one of Bernardi's conservatives. I am a 'progressive.' More than that, not only am I not a proper conservative but presumably I am not a proper Catholic despite my Anglicanism.

In his summary of Kirk's principle of imperfectability, Bernardi touches on the idea of 'utopia.' His clever schoolboy aside regarding the 'double negative' in the etymology of 'utopia' is typical of the book that wears its light learning on its sleeves in the delusion that it is erudite. It is, of course, less a double negative and more a double meaning if one considers the origins of the Latin *utopia* and the Greek 'ou' and 'eu,' or

if one reads Thomas More's *Utopia*, as Bernardi evidently has not. Referring to the etymology and *Utopia*, Bernardi says, "'Progressive' types didn't quite understand it then, and they don't understand it now.' From this point, Bernardi associates advocates of the Protestant Reformation with the radicals and leftists that he identified as enemies of social cohesion and prosperity (not to mention conservatism) at the start of the book. I should have known when he referred to More as 'lawyer, statesman and martyr,' therewith glossing over his role as persecutor of Protestants during his time as Lord Chancellor. As a proud descendant of the sixteenth century 'progressives,' I have to remind Bernardi that this was the group that made England the nation it was independent of corrupt papal Europe. It was the group that created the relatively free, prosperous and flourishing culture that colonised Australia. It effectively created the basis for the liberty, prosperity and values in Australia that Bernardi wants to preserve. This is the same collection of 'progressives' that created two fundamental texts in the English language—the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Elsewhere in the book, Bernardi tells us to read our children traditional stories from our cultural canon, and yet he disparages the 'progressives' who, in giving us just these two books, also gave so much of the language and ideas that have informed our culture. To borrow from my Anglo-Irish fellow traveller Yeats, 'We are no petty people.' I felt instantly like challenging Bernardi to a duel on the front oval of his proudly Protestant alma mater Prince Alfred College.

It seems to me that the type of conservatism with which Bernardi wants to empower and equip us springs from his Roman Catholicism and admits of no variation. There is not the space here to give more than a couple of examples. First, in relation to abortion, Bernardi says:

Morally offensive laws that force doctors to refer patients for abortions, even if they have a conscientious objection to the procedures, have been passed in the state of Victoria. (p. 40)

The section of the *Victorian Abortion Law Reform Act 2008* that Bernardi cites requires a doctor who has a conscientious objection in respect of abortion to pass the patient's request for abortion on to another doctor. Surely Bernardi has not misunderstood the legislation. This would be alarming given his role in the executive function of government. I can only assume that Bernardi does understand the legislation, and his view is that an abortion-seeking patient faced with a doctor who has a conscientious objection must roll over and accept the physician's dogmatic view on the matter. Put another way, Bernardi must be saying that a doctor with a conscientious objection should have no professional obligation to pass on a request for an abortion to another doctor to determine. Why do I feel again that Bernardi's conservatism is not only his own doctrine but largely influenced by the dogma of his church? At numerous points, not least during his discussion of abortion, I expected him to break into Monty Python's 'Every Sperm is Sacred.'

Second, Bernardi blindly praises what he clearly considers to be a papal concept of subsidiarity (p. 50). Presumably he is unaware of its Aristotelian origins before it was crudely adapted for papal purposes. More recently, it formed some of the intellectual architecture of the insidiously 'progressive' (in Bernardi's sense) European Union.

Apart from its narrow conservatism, a key problem with the book is that Bernardi wants a revolution but I am not sure entirely what this entails. Even on abortion, he just laments the number of abortions but does not appear to propose an answer short of stopping it completely. After a pedestrian introduction to conservative thinking and a summary of Russell Kirk's 10 pillars of conservatism, Bernardi starts offering his opinions on all manner of topics, including ADHD, abortion, single-parent families, the Constitution, taxation, small business, and employment law. He purports to explore these topics from a conservative perspective. Most of the time, when he is not Burke-and-Kirking it by leaning heavily on established conservative thinkers, Bernardi seems to shoot from the hip without much substantiation. It also does not help his cause that he gets basic matters embarrassingly wrong (such as the Victorian abortion law, aspects of employment law, and the

nature of ADHD). He is like a hyperactive taxi driver at election time. There is not much of the traditional conservative suppleness in this approach.

The book itself reads like the speaking notes of a travelling conservative salesman or a latter day medicine-man-lay-preacher agitating revolutionary cures by reactionary conservatism. Each chapter and many sub-headings end with a tambourine rattle of 'we need a conservative revolution.' As political theory and social commentary, the book is so lightweight that between the book and Bernardi's hot air talk, he could Phileas Fogg it around the globe with a soap-box unaided by technology. This is revealed in the unevenness of the material presented. Sometimes Bernardi gives more detail, especially in his undergraduate summary of Kirk's 10 pillars of conservatism, or B.A. Santamaria's eight-point apologia for Christian involvement in the political process. At other times, he just refers the reader to another source, such as directing the reader to Roger Scruton for a conservative take on environmental issues.

Perhaps the amount of detail reflects what interests Bernardi. For most of its 160-odd pages, *The Conservative Revolution* does not so much lead a revolution as lurch from quote to quote. To refashion Wodehouse, it reads as if a dictionary of conservative quotations had been poured into the book and Bernardi had forgotten to say 'when.' Later in the book, when Bernardi makes some limited suggestions as to how to effect a conservative revolution, his only standout practical suggestions are in relation to taxation and employment law, and both are in the context of helping small business. Interestingly, this section is not as thick with quotes from the great conservative thinkers as the first part of the book. One wonders whether we have finally hit the real Bernardi. Or Bernardi cut adrift from Burke and Kirk and thinking for himself.

Bernardi leans on Scruton to say it is necessary to outline a doctrine of conservatism to counter contemporary leftist theories. I think this rather overstates Scruton's point. Nevertheless, Scruton is one of the few philosopher-conservatives to propose practical measures from a conservative position. However, when Scruton does venture into the perilous territory of public policy and practical

conservatism (one would call it ‘applied conservatism,’ but for the possibility that Bernardi would hijack the term and start a school for it within the University of Notre Dame), his views are not the shrill, revolutionary talk of Bernardi.

Despite referencing Scruton’s book on environmental conservatism, I doubt Bernardi subscribes to Scruton’s thesis and solution. After all, Scruton largely accepts the concept of global warming and proposes a flat-rate carbon tax. Still less would Bernardi embrace Scruton’s suggestion, together with Phillip Bond of the ResPublica think tank, on same-sex marriage (*Marriage: Union for the Future or Contract for the Present*, 2013). Those conservative authors propose two strategies. First, the state should leave traditional marriage alone. Second, churches should recognise the demand for same-sex ‘marriage’ and offer a celebration of civil union ‘as a distinct form of social and theological realisation for gay people that all Christians would want to see.’ Now there’s a marmalade dropper for Bernardi from one of his favoured conservative authors. You see, we conservatives are a broad church. Bernardi says this in his book, but then he paints a very narrow picture of us.

I was expecting the last page of the book to replicate Bernardi’s blog page with boxes labelled ‘DONATE,’ ‘JOIN,’ ‘CONTACT.’ Instead, it ends with a whimper. Bernardi gives a list of practical steps that each of us can take for the conservative revolution. He even advocates joining a political party. Which one? Surely not his Liberal Party, which has supported much ‘progressive’ law reform such as in relation to anti-discrimination and anti-bullying laws? Bernardi ends the book with: ‘The choice is essentially yours to make. So make it well.’

There the book seems to end. But wait, there is more. The last page is headed ‘Our Australia.’ Under this are words with the appearance of a statement, a pledge, a poem or a song. It is hard to say. It does not scan as poetry. Bernardi does not nominate a tune, so I assume we do not sing the words. If it was meant to be a pledge or a momentous statement, then the tone and cadence are wrong. In this brave new world of conservatives as revolutionaries, perhaps

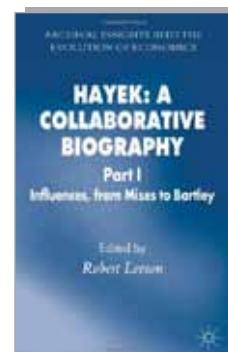
Bernardi has started something new, a post-amble? Whatever it is, the words are trite, the tone pedestrian, and the purpose dubious. In so many ways, the post-amble summarises the book.

Reviewed by
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**Hayek: A Collaborative
Biography: Part 1
Influences from Mises
to Bartley**

Robert Leeson (ed.)
Palgrave MacMillan, 2013
£60.00, 252 pages
ISBN 9780230301122



Friedrich Hayek was a key figure in the revival of interest in classical liberalism in the twentieth century, and he is still—and for good reason—widely referred to. His academic interests ranged from psychology, law and economics to the history of ideas, and his work drew on all these different fields—and more—to offer a striking case for classical liberalism. He offered powerful—if not unproblematic—arguments that stand in contrast to both rights-based and rational-choice (and more narrowly economic) cases for liberalism. The distinctive character of Hayek’s intellectual background poses challenges for Hayek’s readers—and in this context, information about his biography and intellectual development is most welcome.

The starting-point for the reader on these topics is Bruce Caldwell’s *Hayek’s Challenge*, supplemented by Caldwell’s editorial introductions to the volumes in Hayek’s *Collected Works* which he has edited, notably *The Road to Serfdom* and *Studies in the Abuse and Decline of Reason*. These can usefully be joined by Alan Ebenstein’s two books, *Hayek: A Biography* and *Hayek’s Journey*. These contain a lot of information but are not as well integrated