

June 30, 2015

Interesting post by John Tierney in Instapundit on how the left and right use language.

... But here's another way to look at the results. Liberals talk about politics in language that appeals to our primal socialist instincts, developed on the savanna when we belonged to small clans of hunter-gatherers who really did look out for their kin. Conservatives discuss politics in language that reflects modern reality: socialism doesn't work in groups larger than a clan, because people do not behave selflessly when they belong to a large group of unrelated strangers. Liberals believe in what the economist Daniel Klein calls "The People's Romance," but that fallacy has been exposed by Adam Smith, de Toqueville and Darth Vader, among others.

When liberals say that "government is the word we give to the things we choose to do together," they score high on affiliation, and some of them may even believe government is one big happy collaboration among equals. But conservatives know that philosophy just means giving one small group of people in the capital more power to boss and coerce the rest of us.

A couple of our favorites look at Greece. John Fund is first.

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I gave a series of lectures in Greece in May and am certainly not going to defend the magical thinking of many Greeks or their incompetent leftish government when it comes to economics. But let me say something in defense of Greece. Echoing my NRO colleague Andrew Stuttaford, I note that at least the Greeks are letting their people have a direct say in their future — a fitting move given that Greece gave birth to the democratic ideal.

The bureaucrats in Brussels and their counterparts in Europe's national governments are furious with the Greeks for daring to consult their own people. Daniel Hannan, a British member of the European parliament, sarcastically tweeted, "Calling a referendum is, to Eurocrats, the most offensive thing a politician can do." Stripped of their veneer, Eurocrats' arguments against all referendums amount to saying that referendums are a bad idea because they shift power from small cliques of unelected but wise rulers to an unsophisticated, nationalistic mob that might fall prey to populism, scare stories, and tabloid headlines. ...

Then Victor Davis Hanson.

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Athens has adopted the equality-of-result mentality that believes factors other than hard work, thrift, honesty, and competency make one nation poor and another rich. Instead, sheer luck, a stacked deck, greed, or a fickle inheritance better explain inequality. Fate or cosmic unfairness can result in good but poor people owing money to bad but wealthy people.

Default, then, is sometimes morally justified. The Greeks fault their most prominent creditor, Germany, for its cruel past Nazi occupation of Greece, for its cold obsessions with the financial bottom line, and for its ethnocentric manipulation of the euro and the EU itself.

Something similar to the Greek mindset arose during the U.S. housing bubble and collapse of 2008.

Millions of Americans unwisely took out subprime mortgages for houses they could not afford and then walked away from their debt when the economy tanked. They understandably blamed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, avaricious Wall Street speculators, rah-rah realtors, and dishonest banks that pushed overpriced homes and mortgages onto the unsuspecting.

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Margaret Wente in the Toronto Globe and Mail with a thoughtful post on our children - "precious little snowflakes."

The other day a proud father showed me a photo of his son's graduation. There was the beaming scholar, diploma in hand, tasselled mortarboard on head, ready to take on the world.

"Congratulations," I said. But something puzzled me. The kid is only three feet tall. He's graduating from nursery school.

"Since when do nursery schools have graduation ceremonies?" I asked.

"Oh, they have graduation ceremonies for everything these days," he said. "It was a big deal. All the parents came. Grandparents too. And of course the nannies."

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... The trouble is, snowflakes are not very resilient. They tend to melt when they hit the pavement. How will our snowflake children handle the routine stresses of the grownup world – the obnoxious colleagues, pointless meetings, promotions that don't come their way? How will they cope when no one thinks they're special any more?

I'm afraid they could be in for a hard landing.

Instapundit

THE LEFT-RIGHT GAP IN LANGUAGE:

by John Tierney

Liberals and conservatives use much different sets of words, according to an extensive [textual analysis of chat rooms, news websites and State of the Union speeches](#). The analysis, published in the current Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, draws on a psychological distinction between the basic needs for “affiliation” and “power.” Liberals manifest their yearning for social connectedness by using words like *care*, *help*, *kind*, *neighbor* and *volunteer* more often than conservatives do. Conservatives more frequently use power words like *boss*, *coerce*, *hero*, *strong* and *victory*.

The team of German and American researchers say this is the first study to reveal this difference. And, as usual in social science, the difference is presented in a way that looks bad for conservatives. Citing previous research, the authors write:

These results, although novel, seem intuitive in capturing a fundamental difference by political ideology.

For example, the policies more greatly favored by liberals include social welfare programs and affirmative action, both of which appear affiliation-oriented from a broader perspective. By contrast, the policies more greatly favored by conservatives include increased defense spending and the death penalty, both of which are consistent with a desire to be powerful.

Indeed, conservatives are often more invested in the trappings of power such as wealth and status.

Ah, those good-hearted liberals, uninterested in status and money. (The Obamas and their fellow liberals vacation on Martha’s Vineyard only because the beaches are so pretty.) And those deadly power-crazed conservatives, reluctant to even utter nice words like *volunteer*. (Never mind the studies showing that conservatives actually *do* more volunteer work than liberals do.)

But here’s another way to look at the results. Liberals talk about politics in language that appeals to our primal socialist instincts, developed on the savanna when we belonged to small clans of hunter-gatherers who really did look out for their kin. Conservatives discuss politics in language that reflects modern reality: socialism doesn’t work in groups larger than a clan, because people do not behave selflessly when they belong to a large group of unrelated strangers. Liberals believe in what the economist Daniel Klein calls [“The People’s Romance,”](#) but that fallacy has been exposed by [Adam Smith, de Toqueville and Darth Vader, among others](#).

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National Review

The Greek Crisis: Too Little Democracy, Too Much Bureaucracy

by John Fund

The grand project of European Union bureaucrats — bringing the united continent under ever tighter centralized control exercised from the EU capital of Brussels — is the real sick man of Europe.

Greece has closed its banks for at least a week, banned the cashing of checks, halted almost all payments outside the country, and limited the amount of money that an individual can withdraw from an ATM to \$66 per day.

All of this came after the European Central Bank ended more emergency loans needed to keep the Greek banking system afloat. That move was in retaliation for the decision by the far-left Greek government to reject new bank-bailout terms from its creditors and instead call a referendum on July 5. On that day, the Greek people will be asked to make a choice: either “surrender” and give in to cuts in pensions and higher taxes or refuse and perhaps be forced to exit the euro and go back to a depreciated drachma as their national currency.

There will be endless discussion about who bears the most blame for the Greek crisis: a series of profligate Greek governments that often veered into outright corruption or the euro-zone governments that allowed Greece to borrow at artificially low interest rates while they overlooked the obviously flawed statistics touting the health of the Greek economy.

I gave a series of lectures in Greece in May and am certainly not going to defend the magical thinking of many Greeks or their incompetent leftist government when it comes to economics. But let me say something in defense of Greece. Echoing my NRO colleague Andrew Stuttaford, I note that at least the Greeks are letting their people have a direct say in their future — a fitting move given that Greece gave birth to the democratic ideal.

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Hannan, familiar to National Review readers as one of his country’s most articulate conservatives, wrote to me today, saying that while the Greek tragedy will cause much unneeded pain, it also provides a valuable lesson about the perils of ever greater political centralization:

We can see, in Greece, how the EU project ends: in the almost total control of a country’s affairs by Brussels. Greeks now have a chance — as Britons soon will — to opt instead for independence. We have been told for decades that European integration was necessary to our economic well-being. When the euro was launched, the European Commission solemnly assured us that it would add an extra 1 percent of annual growth to every participating economy in perpetuity. As Sarah Palin might put it, “How’s that workin’ out for ya?”

It's not as if European voters have been blindly following their Brussels "betters" in pursuing unity at all costs and against common sense. In 2005, a new EU constitution, which aimed to centralize the continent under a "president" of Europe, was heavily rejected, first by a referendum in France, then by a Dutch referendum. Andrew Duff, a Liberal Democrat member of the European Parliament, gave voice to many of his colleagues when he ridiculed opponents of the proposed EU constitution as "an odd bunch of racists, xenophobes, nationalists, communists, the disappointed centre left, and the generally pissed off." Duff said it was unwise to "submit the EU constitution to a lottery of uncoordinated national plebiscites." After all, that would be democracy.

The EU shrugged off the French and Dutch defeats and proceeded to produce the Lisbon Treaty, another governing document that differed only in very minor details from the rejected one — but this time, the document wouldn't be trusted to most voters. The Irish government, however, followed its laws and allowed its citizens to vote on the Lisbon Treaty in a referendum in 2008 — and voters rejected the treaty. EU bureaucrats dismissed the result as the work of "populist demagogues" and forced the Irish — with a combination of threats and virtual bribes — to vote again on the issue. The second time, the EU prevailed.

Bureaucrats ignored all warning signals that the EU and the euro were on a dangerous path — and here we are, enmeshed in the Greek crisis. Once again the Eurocrats in Brussels remain defiantly unaccountable. Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the Dutch minister who chairs the Eurogroup monitoring the crisis, just announced that his group would hold "a meeting of the 18" — the Eurogroup without Greece. According to a Greek witness, when Dijsselbloem was asked how such a meeting could make decisions, he answered, "We can do what we like since we are an ad hoc body."

No one should pretend that the Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, called a referendum out of a sincere belief that the voters should be consulted. The Greek Communist newspaper *Rizopastis*, which opposes holding a referendum and is urging voters to spoil their ballots, properly points out that he is trying to avoid responsibility for making any decision. Indeed, Tsipras is clearly a shameless, opportunistic politician. He opposed a similar referendum when former center-left Greek prime minister George Papandreou proposed it in 2011.

But for all the perfidy of the Greek government, it is, at least in its moment of crisis, returning to the roots of the democratic ideal: that it is the people, not experts or elites or aristocrats, who should have the ultimate say on those matters that must ultimately be settled politically. Here's hoping the Greeks wake up their fellow Europeans to the fact that if they want to ensure a prosperous and free Europe for their children, politics is too important to be left to non-transparent Eurocrats.

National Review

[In Greece's Equality-of-Outcome Mentality, a Default Is Morally Justified](#)

by Victor Davis Hanson

For almost six years Greece has been on the cusp of financial disaster. Its Northern European and international creditors have extended loans, suspended interest payments, and forgiven some debt.

But European lenders have also stubbornly kept to the old-fashioned principle that debtors freely borrowed their money from lenders, and therefore most borrowed money must be paid back, regardless of the current financial status of the debtors.

Greece counters that after all sorts of austerity budgets, it simply can no longer inflict the necessary pain on its relatively tiny population to squeeze out enough cash to pay its well-off creditors. In other words, borrowed money only sometimes must be paid back — depending on the relative wealth of the respective borrower and lender.

Economists still bicker over what caused the crisis. Was it Greek structural inefficiencies coupled with appetites for expensive foreign imports that Greeks could not afford? In the last decade, high-priced Mercedes cars became as common in Athens as the swimming pools that dotted the Aegean landscape.

Was the Greek tragedy more due to endemic corruption, rampant tax evasion, and cronyism? Longtime residents of Greece knew that it was a national pastime to conduct business off the books, to give discounts for non-reportable cash payments, and to cram bloated state bureaucracies with friends and cronies.

Or maybe the borrow-and-spend spree could have continued were it not for the 2008 financial meltdown on Wall Street that stopped the merry-go-round of lending and borrowing?

Politicians likewise fight over the best ways to solve the crisis.

Write off the Greek debt but make Greece abandon the euro and perhaps the European Union as well? Or write off the debt but only in exchange for radical reforms in the Greek economy that will preclude another borrowing spree? Or write off the debt and just let Greece do as it pleases?

Behind all the acrimony is an unspoken Greek assumption that has nothing to do with either economics or politics, but reflects a growing trend around the world.

The thinking goes something like this. The rich Northern Europeans have more money per capita than do the Greeks. They could write off the entire Greek debt and not really miss what they lost. In the Greek redistributionist mindset, why should one group of affluent Europeans grow even wealthier off poorer Europeans?

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Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, avaricious Wall Street speculators, rah-rah realtors, and dishonest banks that pushed overpriced homes and mortgages onto the unsuspecting.

The current student-debt fiasco is also similar. Young people who have little money owe lots of it — \$1 trillion in aggregate — to banks that already have lots of it.

It no longer matters how the debt was incurred, only that poor students and ex-students are unlikely to pay most of it back.

Everybody but students is supposedly to blame. The universities constantly upped tuition costs while pushing loan packages on students. The weak economy offered few good jobs to the recently graduated and indebted. The government foolishly guaranteed the loans and thus greenlighted greedy campuses and banks to charge whatever they pleased.

Students are as likely to pay back their \$1 trillion as Greece is its \$350 billion.

The Obama administration is sympathetic to the mindset of debtors. Its sloganeering suggests that wealth creation is either not really the work of the individual (“you didn’t build that”) or something that reflects greed rather than thrift (“I do think at a certain point you’ve made enough money”).

Greece will not pay because an increasing number of nations in the Western world do not look at borrowed money as a contractual agreement that is central to a modern economy. Instead, they see renouncing debt as both a moral act and a reasonable method of wealth redistribution.

Payback depends not on who legally agreed to what with whom — but on who has money and who doesn’t.

In short, debt has been redefined as equality and fairness.

Toronto Globe and Mail

Our precious little snowflakes

by Margaret Wente

The other day a proud father showed me a photo of his son’s graduation. There was the beaming scholar, diploma in hand, tasselled mortarboard on head, ready to take on the world.

“Congratulations,” I said. But something puzzled me. The kid is only three feet tall. He’s graduating from nursery school.

“Since when do nursery schools have graduation ceremonies?” I asked.

“Oh, they have graduation ceremonies for everything these days,” he said. “It was a big deal. All the parents came. Grandparents too. And of course the nannies.”

This celebration of a child’s every accomplishment, however slight, is something new. By the time a kid reaches 18, she will have accumulated boxes and boxes of diplomas, medals, ribbons, trophies and certificates for just showing up — whether she’s any good at anything or not.

There's also a good chance that her parents will still be as heavily involved as ever – guiding, advising, applauding, and doing everything they can to protect their little snowflake from any sense of failure or rejection. The task of parental rescuing now extends well beyond the age the kid is old enough to vote.

A few weeks ago I found myself sharing a table with several business executives and a dean from a leading community college. All had stories to tell about overly protective parents. The dean described parents who help their kids write their essays (these kids are 20), and complain to him if they think their children's marks are too low. A bank executive told us that it's not uncommon for parents to call the HR department if they think their kid got an unfair performance appraisal. (He made me swear not to name the bank.) A manager with a major multinational told us how a mother called his office to complain about her son's too lowly job description.

"I hear stories all the time from recruiters," says Nate Laurie, who runs Jobpostings, Canada's leading online student job network. "Parents call the recruiter and ask if he got their child's resumé, or why their child didn't get the job. When the kid goes for an interview, they go with her and sit in the waiting room."

When baby boomer kids were young, there were so many of us that we were nothing special. Our parents never told us how exceptional we were. They never would have dreamed of complaining to the principal if we flunked math. They yelled at us instead. The threshold of adulthood was the day we got our bachelor's degree. After that, we were on our own.

Today people have fewer kids, so it's natural to be more invested in them. There is no such thing as an "average" child any more. Each one is a unique and special individual whose ego and talents must be nurtured like a hothouse flower so that she'll reach her full potential. Parents pay more attention to their children than ever before in history. And they're stuck to them like glue.

When I went to university I called home once a week, on Sunday night, on a pay phone at the end of the hall that I shared with 29 other girls. We talked for about three minutes. They knew nothing about my life, and that was fine with me. Today, parents (especially moms) text their kids 20 times a day. They know the smallest details of their children's lives.

"A lot of parents can't separate from their kids," says my friend Barbara Moses, who's a career counsellor. "Their identity is overly tied to their children's success and failure. I hear mothers say, 'We are having trouble finding a job.'"

One reason "we" are having trouble finding a job, according to Mr. Laurie, is that expectations are far too high. "Do what you love," we urge our children, as if there's a dream job out there just for them. But "do what you love" is probably the worst career advice in the world. It implants the notion that doing what you love can produce a sustainable livelihood – which isn't always the case, alas. It also sends the message that if you don't wind up doing what you love, then you're a flop. That's how you get freelance writers who are still living in a basement apartment at age 35 and wondering why things haven't worked out the way they were supposed to.

Sometimes you have to compromise in life, but we don't want to break this crushing news to our children. Personally, I've met far too many young adults who graduate from university with plans to work in development/save the world/find a career in environmental sustainability. There's nothing wrong with these noble aspirations. What's amazing is that no adults have ever levelled with them.

Reality will bite soon enough, of course. The idea that your job should be your passion is a misguided romantic notion that only the upper-middle-class can afford to entertain. In fact, most people wind up in areas that nobody ever talks about. "Insurance is a very interesting field," Mr. Laurie assured me. "But no one says 'I want to go into insurance.'"

The trouble is, snowflakes are not very resilient. They tend to melt when they hit the pavement. How will our snowflake children handle the routine stresses of the grownup world – the obnoxious colleagues, pointless meetings, promotions that don't come their way? How will they cope when no one thinks they're special any more?

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MOUNT OLYMPUS?
I GUESS YOU COULD
CALL IT THAT....

THE NEW GREEK GOD.... "ECONOMICUS"



I WANT A GIANT WALL...
WAIT, A GIANT ICE WALL
SEPARATING MEXICO AND
THE U.S....

WHERE IS
HE GETTING
THESE
★@#!'##
IDEAS?

UM.... GAME OF THRONES?

