

The Real Meaning of Conservatism

Andrew Belsey

After the Affluent Fifties, the Swinging Sixties and the Doubting Seventies, what - the Authoritarian Eighties? Events around the world - in the Soviet Union, in the United States, in Thatcherite Britain, in South America, in Iran, Korea, Turkey and plenty of other places - suggest that aggressive, repressive, militaristic, nationalistic authoritarianism is increasing everywhere. Roger Scruton* has spotted this trend and has decided to write a satire warning us against it, in some of its manifestations, at least. Perhaps the biggest joke was to call this semi-fascism 'conservatism', for the True Conservative, as I shall call Scruton's anti-hero, has little sympathy for the British Conservative Party or its present government. In spite of their undoubted authoritarian tendencies which Scruton does right to warn us against they are still far too liberal for the True Conservative.

Scruton has indeed conceived an excellent political joke, though the delivery of it could have done with the services of a more skilled midwife. He has imagined a nation called 'England', whose citizens are entirely men - male people. By crystallising the more fascist elements of Plato and Hegel, and adding touches of Machiavelli, Nietzsche and minor nineteenth century fascists where necessary, he has invented for this imaginary state a constitution and a set of institutions of a suitably repellent kind. In the true spirit of satire he has presented his obnoxious content with an equivalent style, at once haughty, ugly and violent in its paratactic authoritarianism. Indeed, so successful is he in aping the disgusting crudities of the semi-intellectual fascist that it is difficult to sustain the realisation that the whole thing is an elaborate joke. A clever idea, but perhaps too paradoxically convoluted for the average reader.

Nevertheless, the wants and beliefs of the True Conservative come across clearly. He (we have to get used to the idea that the True Conservative is always a 'he') is a patriot, believing in the history, culture, traditions, customs, ceremonies and rituals of his own nation, and relying on the prejudices that go with them. He also relies heavily on such terms as 'respect', 'loyalty' and 'discipline'. His world can in fact be seen as constructed solely from *tradition*, *authority* and *allegiance* [27]. The True Conservative is a relativist, believing that there are many conservatisms within these abstract limits, each with

its own 'national focus' [36].

His aversions too are just as clear. His 'principle enemy' is 'the philosophy of liberalism, with all its attendant trappings of individual autonomy and the "natural" rights of man' [16]. Freedom is an abstraction [16], democracy a contagion [53], as is egalitarianism [59]. Even equality of opportunity leaves him cold [156]. And such ideas as social justice [86] and progress [191] are just pathetic in their idiocy.

The True Conservative shows his colours most spectacularly in his attitude to the state. As we have just seen, the greatest threat to True Conservatism is not, as you might think, Communism (that is, the statist regimes of Eastern Europe), for any totalitarian system receives the natural sympathy of the True Conservative, but liberalism. Liberalism believes in the reality of individual autonomy, and therefore in the possibility and desirability of individual freedom in the political sense. The liberal - and this will include many who *call* themselves Liberals, Conservatives, Social Democrats, Socialists, Marxists, while the Anarchist merely takes liberalism to its logical conclusion - makes a strong separation in both theory and practice between *civil society* and the *state*, and approves of social links while deprecating and attempting to decrease the power and influence of the state.

The True Conservative, however, does not believe in any ultimate separability of state and society [27], and indeed prefers a term like 'nation' which neatly obscures the issue. The True Conservative believes that the state is an organism or even a person - it has will and personality to which the individual is 'subject', bound not by choice or consent but by a 'transcendent bond' which represents his determined acquiescence in the existing order [33]. The True Conservative is therefore totalitarian in two senses. First, in believing that the real political unit is not the individual of liberal humanism but the total, the state. Second, in giving to the state absolute power. The individual, according to the True Conservative, does not even exist, but in so far as he comes into existence at all, is *created* by the state, within limits imposed by the state. It is only through allegiance to the greater whole that individuality and self-identity exist [34, 38]. The state thus precedes the individual both ontologically and morally, and the idea of the individual asserting his 'rights' against the state is absurd. The state may grant *privileges*, but *rights* there are none.

* * Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*. Penguin Books, 1980. Pp. 205. £1.95. ISBN 0 14 02.2193 X. All page references in this article are to this book.

'... a society too has a will, and ... a rational man must be open to its persuasion. This will lies, for the conservative, enshrined in history, tradition, culture and prejudice. England, far from being a savage society that would justify the imposition of overarching decrees, is founded in the maturest of national cultures, and contains within itself all the principles of social life. The true conservative has his ear attuned to those principles, and tries to live, as a result, in friendship with the nation to which he owes his being. His own will to live, and the nation's will to live, are simply one and the same.' [24] Therefore the power of the state is, and must be, restricted. The 'minimal state' is no part of conservative thinking [33], and the 'liberal' contortions of a Friedman or a Joseph in the dismal science of economics will be laughed out of court [97]. The True Conservative will support capitalism mainly for pragmatic reasons [111], but knows the necessity of state discipline for both capital and labour [113]. The True Conservative will believe in 'man's absolute and ineradicable need of private property' [99], but does not suppose that the free market is the obvious method of meeting this need. Indeed, the True Conservative would obviously regard the capture by *capital*, a dynamic and progressive force (at least for a while), of *conservatism* as one of the more ironic triumphs of history. He prefers to quote Disraeli's remark that it is not feudalism that the conservative will advocate, but merely its 'main principle - that the tenure of property should be the fulfilment of duty' [115] - though with his tongue in cheek, no doubt. The True Conservative's ideal could well be called modern feudalism - a rigidly hierarchical society with an overwhelming state firmly in control at all levels.

There literally *cannot* be anything to restrict the state. The True Conservative, however, will recognise the need to dress this up a bit:

'... his desire is to see power standing not naked in the forum of politics, but clothed in constitution, operated always through an adequate system of law, so that its movement seems [*sic*] never barbarous or oppressive, but always controlled and inevitable, an expression of the civilized vitality through which allegiance is inspired. The constitution, therefore, and the institutions which sustain it, will always lie at the heart of conservative thinking.' [33]

Here we can see Scruton begin to twist his satirical knife, but delicately, just through the use of the word 'seems'. However, let us follow the True Conservative's line of thought on the constitution, this being defined as 'what guides, limits and authorises power, and thus manifests itself primarily through law, through the "style" of law, and through the position of the citizen as defined by law' [52]. The True Conservative thus puts much emphasis on law. Indeed, seeing the state as defined by its laws, he would sweep away any idea of the sovereignty of parliament and replace it with the sovereignty of law [63]. The True Conservative has little time for democratic parliament, especially the House of Commons [59]. The True Conservative is that rare figure, the unicameralist, though it is to the House of Lords, and especially the Law Lords, that he would entrust guidance of the ship of state [57].

So, in shaking his fist at democratic government, the True Conservative's delight in the law turns out to be somewhat hypocritical. Though he approves of the law, he has to find some reason to rule out much recently enacted law that he doesn't like; what he prefers is common law, equity and long-established statute. Though he cannot find a reason, he does find that the law comes to his, and its own, aid, and will manage to stymie the politician with the

temerity to enact reform. Here the True Conservative makes a valuable point which radicals and reformers should certainly take note of.

The average politician, being a hot-headed careerist, does not understand the real nature of law. He enacts a statute, and sees it as self-contained, written down in black and white, its meaning clear to all. He forgets that before it can have any effect it has to be inserted into the English legal system, where it is subjected to the due processes of that system, to interpretation by tradition, to judicial precedent and death by a thousand qualifications. As a result it often turns out to have little or no effect at all, to the naive surprise of the politician, and to the delight of the True Conservative [63]. In such a way does he look to the law to protect himself and his position from the madnesses involved in assaulting the constitution with new laws on equal opportunities, devolution, the Common Market, immigration and nationality. The politician may think of these as laws but the True Conservative knows them to be 'inapplicable, perhaps even illegitimate' [69].

The cracks in the True Conservative's edifice are now becoming apparent, subtly exposed by Scruton's careful probing. By declaring parliament's enactments 'perhaps illegitimate' the True Conservative is devouring himself, flying in the face of the constitution he claims to uphold, and in doing so proclaiming himself a social renegade. 'In England,' the True Conservative points out, 'there is a law which forbids the production and distribution of subversive material - the law of sedition' [17]. So the True Conservative now finds himself in the same position as the Soviet dissident, whom he professes to despise!

Actually, the True Conservative's attitude to the Soviet dissident is well worth examination, bringing out as it does the full extent of his disgraceful and disgusting hypocrisy. Rejecting as fantasy any notion of universal human rights, the True Conservative has no sympathy for the 'seditious utterance' of the dissenter [49]. Not surprisingly, the True Conservative has a Stalinist notion of freedom: it is 'comprehensible as a social goal only when subordinate to something else, to an organisation or arrangement which defines the individual aim' [19]. The citizen is 'subject' to the state [40], 'belongs' to it [47], whatever that state may be - provided only that it is true to its traditions, as the Soviet Union is. 'There can be no international charter for dissidents, and only one respectable [!] reason for one state to lend support to seditious utterance in another, which is the pursuit of power' [49]. The full view of the True Conservative on this matter is worth quoting at some length:

'In every legal system ... there must be provision against sedition, laws which enable the power of state to reassert itself against antagonists, and these laws may stand wholly outside the rule of natural justice, being determined by the principle of necessity alone. This truth is so evident that no political dogma can dispense with some soothing rhetoric that will serve to make it palatable. It is unquestionable that, if the power of the state is threatened, so too is its authority, and with it the structure of civil society. To sacrifice power for the sake of justice, is to make the exercise of justice impossible. It cannot, therefore, be an insuperable defect in a law of sedition that it provides for imprisonment without trial, a reduced judicial process, or summary execution. What matters is the extent to which such laws must be invoked. If this invocation constituted - as in Russia - a major portion of the judicial process, then clearly the power of state transcends the allegiance of the citizen. The whole

arrangement stands on the brink of illegitimacy.' [91]

Note the 'brink'. The True Conservative must regard the dissidents of the Soviet Union - or Argentina or South Africa - as rebels and traitors, deserving all they get. What they fail to realise is that dissent from the state is not merely a political inconvenience for the rulers, but a cosmic folly, the ultimate in idiotic hubris. All that is wrong is Russia is that the power of the state has outrun the allegiance of some of the citizens. The remedy, therefore, is not to reduce state power, but to *increase* it, and to obtain allegiance either through stronger repression, or through subtler ideological conditioning. This, then, is the reality behind the True Conservative's obeisance before 'order' [27].



The hypocrisy of the True Conservative can be further brought out by examining his views on power and authority. For the True Conservative power is all, yet paradoxically he knows the weakness of relying entirely on power. For since people (for reasons the True Conservative cannot explain) dislike bowing down before power, the True Conservative has the alchemic task of transforming power into authority, through legitimisation. But the True Conservative is honest enough to recognise that *there is no such thing as authority*; or rather, that *authority is only accepted power*. The True Conservative's aim is

'power to command and coerce those who would otherwise reform or destroy, and its justification must be found within itself, in an idea of legitimacy or established right.

The power which the statesman seeks must be, in other words, a power that is accepted. It must be regarded by the people as not just power, but authority.' [25-26]

The True Conservative is thus a phenomenologist; he knows that it is how people *see* things [29], how power *seems* to them [33], that it is *appearances* that matter [36] - and all these can be manipulated. Of course, the True Conservative will say that 'People have the *idea* of legitimacy, and see the world as coloured in its terms; and it is how they *see* the world which determines how they act on it' [36] - as if these ideas and visions were *natural* and hence unquestionable, when in fact he knows that the individual subject is *cultural* rather than natural, and created in the state's own image. So authority, or legitimate power, is for the True Conservative simply power that can exercise a hegemony sufficient to prevent any challenge from the powerless. In other words, the passage from power to authority is guaranteed by nothing other than *ideology*, and it is a guarantee which turns out to be decidedly insubstantial. The True Conservative will refer to the necessity of myth [169], or will appeal to the 'natural charm of military ceremony, where power, through its transformation into symbol, acquires the aspect [*sic*] of authority' [167], or will be reduced to mouthing empty slogans such as that tradition 'makes history into reason' [40], but having nothing more compelling with which to justify power can hardly expect to be taken seriously.

So authority is nothing more than power having put on the symbolic order of rhetoric or ritual, with sufficient show of plausibility to pull the wool over the eyes of the subjected citizens. The True Conservative will go on (and on and on) about 'tradition', 'history', 'culture', etc., in an effort to dress naked power in the robes of legitimacy, but it is a case of the Emperor's new clothes. But so confident, or cocksure, is he of the clothes' visibility that he will unabashedly produce the demolition of his own rickety structure in an unconscious homage to his Marxist opponent:

'Now the Marxist would see the dispute in quite other terms, seeking to demystify the ideal of "authority" and replace it with the realities of power. "Authority", for the Marxist, is merely the ideological representation of power - power imbued with the false aura of legitimacy, made absolute and unchangeable, translated from a historical reality into a sempiternal ideal.' [19-20]

'... For the Marxist, "authority", and the concept of "legitimacy" through which it dignifies itself, are merely parts of the ideology of class rule, concepts belonging to and inculcated by a ruling "hegemony".' [28]

And the funny thing is that in his heart-of-hearts, the True Conservative knows that the Marxist is correct!

But the True Conservative is a hypocrite and a liar. He knows that the myths that pretend to legitimate class rule are merely modern versions of the Platonic 'noble lie' [139-40], and he will have no hesitation in murdering the history of a nation to produce them. The True Conservative believes in an inegalitarian, hierarchical society, recognises that the stability of such a society requires acceptance by the unprivileged of their position, but reckons that such acceptance can be 'induced' [140]. This again can be arranged via ideology, especially 'the attempt to represent the unpleasant fact of inequality as a form of natural order and legitimate bond' [141]. So once again it will be the (rhetorical) 'representation' that veils ruling power and privilege.

So the foundation of the True Conservative's appeal to authority is nothing but a colourful display of flatulence, and Scruton brings this out nicely. But the fun gets even greater if we attempt to probe deeper into the basis of True Conservatism. For the True Conservative claims to be producing a work not of political philosophy but of dogmatics [9, 11]. But it is this gap between philosophy and dogma that makes the hole through which True Conservatism finally swallows itself. The testament of the True Conservative becomes the ultimate self-consuming text, marvellous in its self-contradiction, hollow in its abysmal emptiness, full of lies and hypocrisies, and in the end unable to prevent itself from revealing itself truthfully to the world.

The dogmatics of the True Conservative is 'systematic and reasonable'; yet it cannot be presented as such because 'the essence' of conservatism is inarticulate' [11]. To this contradiction is immediately added another: that in spite of its inarticulateness it is 'capable of expression' [11]. Ah, but the contradictions resolve themselves at a higher level. Reading the True Conservative's testament we find that he expresses himself mostly through allusions, images and examples, which allows a good deal of vagueness and imprecision into his discourse. Though 'it is of the nature of conservatism to avoid abstractions' [17], in fact it rarely descends from them, not even when offering an example, as it does not show how the example relates to the abstractions. We look for reason, we look for justification. All we find is a tottering tower

of rhetoric, which collapses at the first gentle impact of the critical probe. Conservative dogmatics is a fine example of what can be called 'the higher mystification'.

It is certainly not reasonable. Intuition, that eternal enemy of human rationality, is all the True Conservative has to fall back on:

'Like any political being, a conservative is "for" certain things: he is for them, not because he has arguments in their favour, but because he knows them, lives with them, and finds his identity threatened (often he knows not how) by the attempt to interfere with their operation.' [12-13]

But this is wool-pulling again. The True Conservative knows that it is not his identity but his power and his privilege that are threatened. But he cannot *say* this. Conservatism is literally *unspeakable*. And yet so ridiculous, almost pathetically so, is the True Conservative that he cannot stop himself giving the game away. He knows that the cupboard of justification is bare, but finds himself compelled (he knows not why) to open its door wide to the outside world:

'A political creed, in so far as it is formulated, is partly an exercise in rhetoric, to be revised and restated whenever the times demand that the ruling intuition be given its new dressing of necessity.' [20]

Yet since the creed 'provides no answers' to the abstract questions of political philosophy [11], we can remove the superfluous word 'partly', and reveal the True Conservative naked and exposed, flashing his meagre endowments in a laughable attempt to appear the stormtrooping superman. But *admitting* that 'the pursuit of truth leads one to doubt the myths' [190], he *knows* that the myths of authority and allegiance are merely lies. So what next? Well, the 'reflective conservative' (a rare breed, no doubt) can only perform the ultimate act of self-immolation:

'... the reasons he observes for sustaining the myths of society are reasons which he cannot propagate; to propagate his reasons is to instil the world with doubt. Having struggled for articulacy, he must recommend silence.' [191]

Now of course the testament of the True Conservative is here shown to be ridiculous. The True Conservative cannot give a true account of conservatism; this would be to give the game away, exposing it as a sham. Yet in admitting this, this is precisely what he has done! So the ridiculousness is for two reasons. The first is the obvious absurdity of gabbling through 190 pages of text to a conclusion recommending silence. But the second reason is even deeper. The 190 pages of text *are* silence; they say *nothing*; their value as any form or combination of speech-acts is *non-existent*. The text, representing the final testament of the True Conservative, has devoured itself. As a 'systematic and reasonable' account of conservatism it might just as well be replaced by 190 blank pages.



After this, anything further must be anti-climax. Yet the consummating act of self-abuse ripples throughout the text, so that we find similar contradictions everywhere. Take another of the True Conservative's attempts to provide some sort of reasoned support for conservatism. He will appeal to 'human nature' [66], 'natural prejudice' [68], 'normal feelings' [92], 'common intuition' [119], and will even pretend that the arrangements he recommends arise out of 'natural

necessity' [31]. But at the same time he knows that this is all fake; there are indeed prejudices, but that these are *not* normal, natural, common or instinctive but are *constructed* by the very society that they are supposed to justify. As the True Conservative says quite clearly:

'It is basic to the conservative view of things ... that the individual should seek and find his completion in society, and that he should find himself as part of an order that is greater than himself, in the sense of transcending anything that could have been brought about through his own enactment. He must see himself as the inheritor, not the creator, of the order in which he participates, so that he may derive from it (from the picture of its "objectivity") the conceptions and values which determine self-identity. He will see his extension in time from birth to death as taking on significance from civil stability: his world was not born with him, nor does he die when he departs from it.' [66]

Again the True Conservative has to expose himself. There are no natural instincts in such a constructed creature. There is only ideology; a 'picture', and its objectivity is only 'objective', a simulacrum determined by myth, and true only to its own lying essence.

And as if this were not enough, the True Conservative has the gall to ground not only *conservatism* in human nature, but also *dissent* from the authoritarian diktats of the True Conservative [91]. The True Conservative's model of human nature is thus not the real essence but a plastic imitation, infinite in its possibilities, able to accommodate even contradictions, nugatory in its explanatory function. Then take the True Conservative's attempted demolition of the central idea of liberalism: that power becomes legitimate authority only through contract, deliberation, choice; in other words, consent by autonomous agents. The True Conservative has the cheek to call this a myth [29]. But what is his real strategy? The True Conservative despises liberal consent: the free and genuine consent by responsible beings. Yet he is willing, nay, eager, to devote the power of the state to engineering its own acceptance through the creation of myths of authority and allegiance. Real consent is thus rejected, while manipulated consent replaces it. The True Conservative is thus in the pathetically absurd and contradictory position of scorning the genuine article while embracing and valuing the fake. Hardly a recipe for a successful journey through life, one might think.

Then there is the question of natural justice. The True Conservative is at first concerned lest he appear forced to support whatever power is established, however arbitrarily [84]. Is there an independent criterion by which the exercise of power can be judged? Natural justice first presents itself as the answer [89], but natural justice standing isolated is ineffective. It must be incorporated by the very power it is supposed to judge:

"Natural justice" is the slave of a ruling class. Where there is no such class (as in matters arising between nation states), then there is no natural justice to enact.' [90]

Natural justice, then, is simply another myth, and far from being an independent judge of state power, is but state power under a smiling mask. Of course, such a contradictory conclusion was to be expected, for the True Conservative must at all costs support his central contention that state power is incontestable. The idea of natural justice as an independent criterion is for the True Conservative a conceptual nonsense, and so power stands supreme and beyond criticism, whether it be Thatcher-power, Soviet power, Ayatollah-power, or Junta-power in South America.

The unreality of anything except power, and the emptiness of the True Conservative's rhetoric, is again shown up in his remarks on *devolution*. Given his emphasis on the *national* focus of conservatism [36], and his remark that 'it is only an unfortunate society that cannot lay claim to nationhood' [186], it might appear that the True Conservative would be a ('natural') supporter of devolution - of the claims of the Welsh, Scottish and Irish peoples for their own nations. For why should they, with their different traditions, be subject to the 'English' constitution? But no.

'A nation must necessarily have a centre and a periphery, and unless the periphery is governed with the same strength and resolution as the centre, the nation falls apart.' [67]

So if you happen to be one of the marginal people of the periphery, hard luck. You must defer to the True Conservative's instinct that devotion to English imperialism comes before truth to the consequences of his own professed principles.

So in addition to the ultimate self-consuming contradiction that produces silence, the True Conservative contradicts himself on human nature, on consent, on natural justice and on devolution. In showing this Scruton has obviously benefitted from the recent French delight in discursive deconstructions: this has enabled him to construct the ultimate in deconstructive texts, a testament which finally expires in a torrent of self-destruction. Scruton shows how the True Conservative, realising that people don't

want fascism, and that they can provide good reasons why they don't need it, has to blot out human reason in a welter of lies, which are then called ('natural') prejudice or instinct, when they are nothing but historically-distorting myths produced to support the True Conservative's own social dominance, his power and his privilege, myths hardly deserving to be dignified by the title 'ideology'.

Scruton's success in constructing and deconstructing the testament of the True Conservative, and showing it up as the pernicious rubbish it is, is considerable. Some might think that the construction is just *too* successful: it is almost as if Scruton really believes it. But this is a risk that a true satirist must take. And there certainly is a risk when we read the forceful expression of some of the True Conservative's more vicious visions:

'This decline in the very *idea* of sedition has been brought about not by popular agitation, but by the politics of power. The fact is, not that our society believes in freedom of speech and assembly, but rather that it is afraid to announce its disbelief. This disbelief is so entrenched in English law - in the common law as much as in statutory provisions - that it is impossible to doubt that it could be eradicated without wholly overthrowing the social order which the law enshrines.... Modern parliaments therefore constantly enact new and selective laws against freedom of speech and assembly, each of which may reflect some serious view as to where evil lies, but none of which is so bold as to recognise that a society really does have enemies, that those enemies seek to undermine it, and that it is the duty of the government, as it is the expectation of the citizen, that they should be prevented by every means to hand.' [18]

'But while it is a long-standing principle of British law that the formation of hatred (and hence of racial hatred) is a serious criminal offence, it is not clear that illiberal sentiments have to be forms of hatred, nor that they should

be treated in the high-handed way that is calculated to make them become so. On the contrary, they are sentiments which seem to arise inevitably from social consciousness: they involve natural prejudice, and a desire for the company of one's kind. That is hardly sufficient ground to condemn them as "racist"....' [68]

'What form ... should this "illiberal" system of punishment take? Are we to take our example from the cruel and emphatic law of Islam, and institute flogging and maiming as expressions of civic virtue? The answer cannot be determined abstractly.... Now the natural conclusion from these reflections is not always drawn, for fear of the barbarous and the primitive in men. But unfortunately, the barbarous and the primitive are there....' [84]

'The true civil servant is a servant. He may see himself, if the state allows, as a private employee, with private and contractual rights. He may exert against the state his "right" to strike. He (along with a million others) may engage in activities which, while legally sanctioned, are tantamount to rebellion. But when that is so the state is so weak to the point of non-existence. What policy can restore its power? One answer suggests itself. Reward extravagantly those servants who are essential; but make them servants. As for the others, let them strike, and permanently.' [111-12]



These are not exactly funny, but are clearly too ghastly to be taken seriously. It is this difficulty with the *tone* of the humour that is the main problem in this book.

For a joke it is certainly humourless for long stretches, but then there are one or two excellent and explicit gags. There is the reference to '*soi-disant* conservatives' [16] - presumably something to do with the alienation that the True Conservative is concerned about later in the book. There is the use of a case from *Scottish* law to

illustrate a claim about *English* self-consciousness [64]. There is a description of the 'degree' speech from *Troilus and Cressida* as one of Shakespeare's 'deepest reflections on the relation between public and private life' [179] - as if Shakespeare's own beliefs can be simply read off from the text, ignoring the role of the constructed 'Ulysses' in an artistic artefact. And then there are the women - or rather the lack of them. In spite of his constant emphasis on 'the family', the only three women in the life of the True Conservative are his Queen [38], his mother [144, 156] and his mistress [81], while his fantasy life is fully occupied by a vision of a 'willing' or even 'importunate schoolgirl' [77].

So much for the True Conservative's contact with reality - or rather his lack of it. He stands naked, surrounded only by myths, not only bankrupt but, in the word of Paul Jennings, 'bunkrapt'. Yet even though he may know the myths for the lies they are, he is a dedicated worshipper of power, and knows how important it is for his own privileged position that the rabble absorbs the myths and accepts the power. He is utterly barren, but appallingly barren, standing with gun in one hand and whip in the other, an image cloning itself throughout the torture-chambers of five continents.