

Wokeness is Inverted Fascism plus Hypocrisy: a Libertarian Perspective

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This is an attempt to clarify the nature of extreme, or complete, “wokeness” in its modern sense.¹ The central thesis is that it is an inverted form of fascism,² and thereby even worse than some of its critics assume. In fact, it is far worse than ordinary fascism³ whether or not it is correct to see it as an inverted form. As this is a thesis, it is not a definition. Therefore, this thesis could certainly be mistaken. But if it is, then sound criticisms of the explanation would be needed to refute it.

It will probably make things clearer to begin with explanations of libertarian private property and of political correctness. Private property that is acquired and used without initiating impositions on other people—or correcting or minimising any unavoidable initiated impositions—is the closest thing to interpersonal liberty-in-practice that is known.⁴ Political correctness, in its popular modern sense,⁵ is about prescribing and proscribing certain kinds of expression and association with respect to race, sex, sexual orientation, etc. If this occurs within the rules of any owners of libertarian private property, then it is entirely liberal⁶. Political correctness is illiberal when it is an initiated imposition of the state or—as is far less common—of individuals, groups, and private organisations. In such cases it is incompatible with the freedom of expression⁷ and freedom of association of any owners of libertarian private property.⁸ However, even when it is state-imposed, such political correctness is often defended as being polite, fair, or just. But it cannot be polite, fair, or just to prevent people from communicating and associating with other people within the limits of their own property when they are not thereby initiating impositions on other people and their property. Admittedly, even when it is all done on a private-property basis, some people clearly do resent that other people choose not to associate with certain categories of people and even resent the mere expression of some words or views. But any such resentment is both insignificant in itself and largely self-inflicted: such people choose to concern themselves with what some other consenting adults are doing or saying on their own property. Moreover, those other consenting adults could well have reciprocal resentment that is roughly balancing. All such resentments are trivial compared to the aggressive coercion that is required to suppress freedom of expression and to force people to associate with groups that they prefer to avoid. That initiates a huge imposition.

By analogy, perhaps some man resents the fact that a woman he likes has expressed her dislike of him and declines to associate with him. But this perceived slight is as nothing compared to aggressively coercing the woman into silence about the man and coercing her to suffer his company to

¹ The history of this word is not relevant here.

² Mussolini once defined fascism as “All within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state” (speech to Chamber of Deputies, 9 December 1928, quoted in *Propaganda and Dictatorship*, 2007, by Marx Fritz Morstein, p. 48). This has echoes in the totalitarian expression “The personal is political”, which arose in the student movement and second-wave feminism from the late 1960s.

³ This is not about the different ideology that is Nazism.

⁴ ‘Liberty’ in its most general sense is the absence of some constraint on something. Libertarian liberty-in-itself—i.e., at its most abstract—is here theorised as “the absence of interpersonal initiated constraints on want-satisfaction” (for short, “no initiated impositions”). For further explanation of this abstract theory of liberty-in-itself and how it relates to private property as liberty-in-practice, see Lester, J. C., “[Eleutheric-Conjectural Libertarianism: a Concise Philosophical Explanation](#)”, *MEST Journal* 10 (2): 111-123 (2022).

⁵ There is no need to discuss its earlier variations going back to the original sense in 1917 after the Russian Revolution.

⁶ In the classical liberal or libertarian sense; not the modern, especially US, sense of ‘liberal’ that means something like enforced political correctness plus welfare statism. See Klein, D. B., “The Liberal Christening”, July 9, 2022. *Svensk Tidskrift*, 2022. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4158563>.

⁷ Freedom of expression excludes plausibly effective incitements to violations of persons and their property. Even when these are contingently ineffective, they are an initiated imposed risk and also a significant source of initiated imposition in themselves: it is rarely trivial to be threatened with any kind of aggression. And the classic example of shouting “fire!” in a crowded theatre, when there is no fire, would break the owner’s (if only implicit) rules; hence this is not a restriction of freedom of expression in practice.

⁸ From an anarcho-libertarian viewpoint there ought not to be any non-libertarian property including any ‘public’ (state-owned) property.

any degree.⁹ Almost everyone understands and agrees about this situation. But so strong is the reaction to historical examples of state-imposed racism, sexism, etc., that many people—failing to see the analogy—advocate the very opposite impositions: going from compulsory racial segregation to compulsory racial integration, for instance. This is a form of overcorrection. Consequently, throughout the Western world, we have had legislation that still prohibits the freedoms of expression and association in such cases. This legislation ought immediately to be repealed. Unfortunately, many of the people who repudiate the label “politically correct” will say such things as, “Of course discrimination should not be allowed” or “There ought to be equal opportunities for everyone”.¹⁰ Even when politicians disagree with such legislation, few of them dare to speak against it for fear of jeopardising their careers, being ferociously criticised and traduced by the illiberal mass media,¹¹ or even physically attacked by politically correct thugs. This political correctness has more recently been pushed to new extremes that have become known as “wokeness”. Wokeness is orders of magnitude worse than political correctness, and may without exaggeration be called “inverted fascism”.

Inverted snobbery is a form of snobbery, as it is still about looking down on and seeking to disadvantage certain social groups; it just inverts the groups that snobbery values and disvalues. Similarly, inverted fascism is a form of fascism, as it aspires to use the fascist methods of the state allied with corporations to impose its totalitarian rule; but it more or less inverts the actual values of fascism. There is no official list of fascist values, but we can attempt a non-exhaustive and somewhat impressionistic description that might gain the assent of self-described fascists (although not all of these values are peculiar to fascism or dubious in themselves if promoted within a voluntaristic framework). Fascism, then, aims to promote and protect the nation, the dominant or indigenous ethnicity, culture, tradition, religion, heritage, history, law and order, traditional morality, male and female roles, and the traditional family. Inverted fascism aims—exactly as we have seen wokeness doing—to denigrate and destroy all of these things, but by similar totalitarian means. However, that would ultimately involve undermining the existing society as a whole. So, while fascism is diametrically opposed to libertarianism, inverted fascism (or ‘woke fascism’) is an even worse form: it would initiate impositions to a far greater degree.¹²

But there is another major aspect inherent in such woke fascism. As noted by some critics of wokeism, this is its flagrant hypocrisy. For many of the things that are ostensibly aimed at, such as anti-racism, anti-sexism, etc., are in effect the promotion of racism, sexism, etc., but imposed on the opposite groups: state-imposed discrimination against people who are white, male, heterosexual, etc., by privileging their opposites. And while woke fascists typically allege bigotry¹³ in the non-woke or anti-woke, they are themselves usually extremely bigoted. They have no wish to debate or even tolerate their opponents. Another example is what critics call “wokespeak” (by analogy with “Newspeak”, in George Orwell’s dystopian novel *1984*): it is hypocritical because it is presented as enlightened and unbiased when it is clearly sinister and bigoted. Certain words and expressions must never, or must always, be used. And they are constantly being changed to wrongfoot the people who are deemed not to be among the elect. For instance, it is currently always “people of colour” and never “coloured people”. What is the grammatical difference? There is none. This is equivalent to “trousers of corduroy” versus “corduroy trousers” (“Don’t call them ‘corduroy trousers’ you fabricist!”). In the UK, BAME (black, Asian, minority, ethnic) was for a while ‘in’ but now it appears to be going ‘out’. ‘Gender’ (grammatically and biologically this is masculine, feminine, or neuter) is used where ‘sex’ (male or female) can only be meant. Of course, the full woke idea seems to be that gender is a social construct and sex is a biological marker of no importance. So, presumably, the very word ‘sex’ must be banished, as it often (usually?) now is on many forms—official and otherwise. The expression “hate crime” (always dropping ‘hatred’

⁹ If the woman chooses to attend a party or work in a business where the owner allows both people, then she is opting in to that owner’s rules and not being aggressively coerced.

¹⁰ Both of these things are completely impracticable; and attempts to move towards them are both highly illiberal and economically destructive

¹¹ Sometimes funded by taxation; whether directly (as in the TV licensing fee) or indirectly (by receiving substantial advertising revenue from local authorities, for instance).

¹² The people calling themselves “Antifa” (anti-fascist), often appear to be such inverted fascists as well.

¹³ *Cambridge Dictionary* online defines this as, “the fact of having and expressing strong, unreasonable beliefs and disliking other people who have different beliefs or a different way of life”.

as the noun) is sometimes applied by the woke to the mildest of deviations from their agenda, but especially when these deviations are poking fun at wokeism itself: that is a form of blasphemy. And so-called “hate speech” is held to be akin to, or even literally, violence; thereby deserving of violent responses. Wikipedia (Wikipedia?) and some of the more modern dictionaries, especially in their online instantiations, quickly follow and push this by incorporating the new woke words and definitions. Increasingly, these define words in hypocritical and persuasive ways. For instance, “racism” is defined as impossible for non-whites, because they are “oppressed” due to “white supremacy”. And “white supremacy” is itself now defined to exist structurally rather than by conscious attitude; or why are non-whites not doing as well as whites in every area of life? (Where non-whites are clearly doing better—such as blacks in certain sports—this must be hypocritically ignored.) Part of the idea seems to be to make “wrongthink” (another 1984-inspired critical term) and “Thoughtcrime” (actually in 1984) impossible, as far as this can be achieved. And that, apparently, is quite far. For censorship and dishonest propaganda can be effective to a considerable degree.¹⁴

Apart from the error of seeing wokeness as no more than a desirable correction of the opposite state impositions, what are the attractions of woke fascism? As Bertrand Russell observed, “most people would die sooner than think—in fact, they do so”.¹⁵ How tedious it would be for woke barbarians to have to resort to careful argument or research to attempt to refute “bigots” who are “on the wrong side of history”. How much more exciting to shout them down, “cancel” them, “dox” them, and persecute them; if possible, by use of the state police and new state legislation. How pleasant it is for woke folk to revel in their unshakable moral superiority, righteous indignation, and virtue signalling. They also have desirably fashionable opinions. They hardly consider their truth, cost, or practicality. Thus, they are not the intellectually and morally enlightened people that they assume themselves to be. By analogy with yokels, the ignorance and naivety of woke fascists makes them “wokels”.

Then why are so many academics woke? Surely, they must be the opposite of wokels. Not, at least, in much of the humanities and the social sciences. The state monopolisation and regulation of the university-and-degree system and much of its funding, has inevitably led to the attraction and creation of a tax-parasitic class of state-intervention defenders and promoters. This system is corrupt and corrupting. It is the primary source and sustenance of the intellectual and moral rot.¹⁶ This is only the latest version of *La Trahison des Clercs*: “the age of the intellectual organisation of political hatreds”.

The left-wing, throughout the twentieth century, has been in favour of slightly more personal choice but a lot less economic choice. And the reverse has been the case with the modern right-wing. Woke fascists usually self-describe as “left-wing”. But what is even left-wing about them? They are totalitarian.¹⁷ Hence they are on the most authoritarian end of a libertarian-authoritarian axis that can be conceived as cutting through the centre of the modern left-right axis.¹⁸ Consider the popular joke already alluded to: the woke have mistaken George Orwell’s 1984 for a manual rather than a warning. We can now see clearly that this is not an exaggeration or caricature, as many people might suppose, but metaphorically entirely accurate.

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¹⁴ It ought to be added that the green movement is equivalently awful and full of the same, or analogous, faults. And there is nothing to stop a woke fascist from also being a green fascist (or totalitarian, at least), as many of them are (some fascist sympathisers in the 1930s were also much enamoured of environmentalism). But this brief essay has avoided trying to ride two horses at once.

¹⁵ *The ABC of Relativity*, 1925, p.166; although there have been similar versions of this idea before and since. More precisely, Bertrand Russell must have meant “think” in some such sense as ‘the rigorous conjecture and criticism of theories’: non-intellectuals are not literally thoughtless.

¹⁶ See Lester, J. C., 2018, “The Augean Stables of Academe: How to Remove the Authoritarian Bias in Universities”, online at <https://philpapers.org/rec/LESTAS>.

¹⁷ By aspiration, not yet the reality. The reality is only the tip of the woke fascist iceberg. But that has been bad enough for us to see that the ‘fascist’ ascription is, if anything, more euphemistic than hyperbolic.

¹⁸ See Lester, J. C. “[The political compass \(and why libertarianism is not right-wing\)](#)”, *Journal of Social Philosophy* 27 (2):176-186 (1996).