

## Idealism – Is It Good For Us?

### One Cheer For Idealism

Britain is currently in the grip of debate regarding next month's EU Referendum (do we stay in the EU, or leave?), and I have heard some of the stay-in ("Remain") supporters refer to the "European *ideal*". Obviously, it's for them to explain what they mean, but the word "ideal", to me, conjures up the old idea that things like revolutions (eg. French, Russian) can bring about a better world, and ideas (or ideals) of brotherhood and liberty can be made to flood human life, once some kind of repression or repressive regime has been removed, and while – it is normally acknowledged – such processes will involve some blood(perhaps a lot), the end result will be worth it, since goodness, equality, justice, and hope will flourish all around us, and make a perfect world (or at least, a world considerably better than the present one).

People believed these things then (the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), and occasionally – like now, perhaps – you discover that some people still believe in them today. Somehow, people are never *very* influenced by reality and experience; people do know quite a bit about the depressing facts of history (eg. the "Animal Farm" effect, as I call it) but rush to repeat it nonetheless. They know – they *must* know, surely – that idealism leads, in almost every case, to very bad things, that, in most cases, idealism is the father of tyranny; and yet - so irrationally - groundless hope eternally fills the human breast; not only the young are perpetually idealist and hopeful.

The big problem with all these hopes for improvement is that they are entirely man-made, all are purely-human ventures. My scepticism, realism concerning people, is based firmly, I consider, in the Christian, or Judeo-Christian, understanding of humanity. Human hopes and ideals will always fail because of the inherent nature of humans, as revealed by our religion, and as objective – *rational* – experience completely confirms. But does not God work within (ordain, as it were) certain nations, peoples, and institutions (perhaps, it might be, the EU – maybe the European ideal is valid after all?). I think not, and history shows that the Holy Spirit – the force and power of Christian truth, and evangelisation – moves on; after all, Europe was the powerhouse of Christianity - once. (An exception, of course (indeed, a totally different case) is the fact of "God's chosen people", the Jews, whose role, nature, and purpose was so different, and may become so again).

Humanity's salvation (moral/social "improvement", if you like) can never, will never, be a human creation, nor will it be achieved in this world. Oh, of course, I hear you say: "Well should we do nothing then, not try to improve things, just accept the worst?" Of course not! For if we do nothing, then badness will come over us with a vengeance. We simply have to have reasonable, not rosy, notions of what can be achieved, bearing in mind the way humans *are*. If our aims and efforts are reasonable and measured, we are likely to achieve *something*; if we cling to romantic ideas of achieving all, then we will surely bring down great evils upon us – as has happened so often before.

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