A CONSERVATIVE EXPLAINS (NO SARC!) WHY CONSERVATIVES SHOULD LOVE AOC

RALPH BENKO

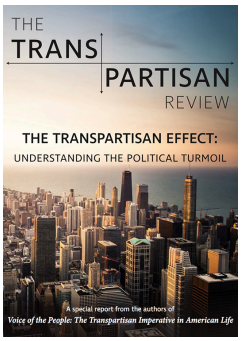
"To the best of my knowledge there are four certified – or at least certifiable – right wing nuts who love on Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez."

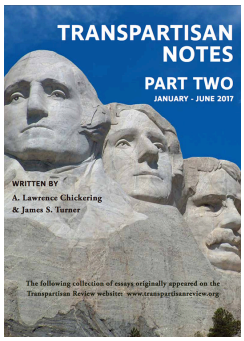
ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The Transpartisan Review's Stand-alone Series

A recurring feature of The Transpartisan Review (TTR) beginning in January 2019, TTR's second anniversary.

This series joins our weekly *Transpartisan Notes* series (now on note #114) begun July 4, 2016 and consists of important articles from the transpartisan community. The articles come from individuals such as *The Transpartisan Review's* advisors, colleagues, family, friends and commenters. We plan to publish such articles as they seem useful.





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AUGUST 2019

A Conservative Explains (No Sarc!) Why Conservatives Should Love AOC

Ralph Benko

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

The Transpartisan Review
Stand-alone Article #8

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

We are pleased to publish this extraordinary article by our colleague Ralph Benko on four 'right wing nuts' who love Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC). They are: Steve Bannon, who sees in her '"gameness" or competitive heart—the combination of grit, determination, fighting spirit that you can't coach'; 'Dilbert' creator Scott Adams, who called Trump's election because (per Politico) he 'had mastered the principles of hypnosis', and gave AOC A+ 'on her persuasion skills in a tweet'; himself as the fourth, with the third being a 'young, conservative Jedi', 'my cautious protégé'.

Benko relies on the great libertarian F.A. Hayek (The Road to Serfdom) to explain what libertarians might learn from socialists. Hayek focuses on the importance of socialists' 'visionary character'. '[T]he very courage to indulge in Utopian thought,' Hayek writes, 'is . . . a source of strength to the socialists which traditional liberalism sadly lacks [italics added].' Benko adds: '[C]arping on the impracticality of AOC's sweeping agenda [is] possibly fatal' to the conservative cause.

We invite you to read our response to this piece in ***Transpartisan Note #113*** on our site, *The Transpartisan Review*.

A Conservative Explains (No Sarc!) Why Conservatives Should Love AOC

by Ralph Benko

To the best of my knowledge there are four certified (or at least certifiable) right wing nuts who love on Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Number One is Steve Bannon. He unflinchingly praised AOC to *Politico* as reprised by ***Business Insider***:

Steve Bannon

> *"AOC has what I call 'gameness' or competitive heart — the combination of grit, determination, fighting spirit that you can't coach. You either have it or you don't, and she has it big league."*

Bannon has a jeweler's eye for political dynamics and talent. He also has a full measure of what psychologists call Fearless Dominance. He calls 'em as he sees 'em.

Number Two? Scott Adams. Per ***Politico***:

Scott Adams

> *"The self-described democratic socialist has also caught the attention of 'Dilbert' creator Scott Adams, a prominent pro-Trump voice on social media who began insisting in the summer of 2015 that the real estate mogul would win the presidential election, based in part on his belief that Trump had mastered the principles of **hypnosis**.*
>
> *"In November, Adams, who has studied the art of persuasion, gave Ocasio-Cortez an A+ grade on her persuasion skills in a tweet."*

As myself a master of hypnosis (recognized by the oldest, largest, and most respected professional association of nonclinical hypnotists, the National Guild, as one of the world's top ~100 hypnotists) I assure you that Adams here speaks with authority.

Number Three is a young conservative Jedi (and, by avocation, rapper) not long ago promoted from padawan status. He is closeted in his devotion to AOC for fear of becoming a political pariah and having his right-wing wings clipped. I refrain from doxxing my cautious protégé.

And then there's me. A few years ago I was ***extolled*** by *Washington Post Magazine* humorist Gene Weingarten for presenting myself as "the second most conservative man in the world" for my gold standard advocacy.

In the words of the Bard: *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*! Have I finally drifted from Supply-Side provocateur to heretic to sacrilege? Maybe not.

We report.
You decide.

Be reassured of my opposition to every word, including "and" and "the," of the Green New Deal. Undergirding my unalloyed admiration for AOC lies an observation made by F.A. Hayek. Hayek, of course, was one of the greatest of the classical liberals (meaning intellectual freedom-fighters and anti-socialist champions).

The proto-anarchist Cato Institute's auditorium is named in his honor. No Commie, Hayek.

Hayek wrote the Genesis Block of the modern Libertarian canon, ***The Road to Serfdom***. No one has greater street cred when it comes to being anti-socialist.

"Socialist thought owes its appeal to the young largely to its visionary character; the very courage to indulge in Utopian thought is in this respect a source of strength to the socialists which traditional liberalism sadly lacks."

– F.A. Hayek

That said, more people celebrate than read him. Hayek also wrote something directly pertinent to AOC in a luminous 1949 essay titled *The Intellectuals and Socialism*, reprinted to the Web courtesy of ***Mises.org***:

> *"A proper understanding of the reasons which tend to incline so many of the intellectuals toward socialism is thus most important. The first point here which those who do not share this bias [toward socialism] ought to face frankly is that it is neither selfish interests nor evil intentions but mostly honest convictions and good intentions which determine the intellectual's views. In fact, it is necessary to recognize that on the whole the typical intellectual is today more likely to be a socialist the more he is guided by good will and intelligence, and that on the plane of purely intellectual argument he will generally be able to make out a better case than the majority of his opponents within his class.*

F.A. Hayek

"If we still think him wrong, we must recognize that it may be genuine error which leads the well-meaning and intelligent people who occupy those key positions in our society to spread views which to us appear a threat to our civilization. Nothing could be more important than to try to understand the sources of this error in order that we should be able to counter it. Yet those who are generally regarded as the representatives of the existing order and who believe that they comprehend the dangers of socialism are usually very far from such understanding. They tend to regard the socialist intellectuals as nothing more than a pernicious bunch of highbrow radicals without appreciating their influence and, by their whole attitude to them, tend to drive them even further into opposition to the existing order."

"Nothing could be more important than to try to understand the sources of this error in order that we should be able to counter it." Rather than condemning AOC as a pernicious radical it behooves us to celebrate her honest convictions and good intentions.

Nor would Hayek have countenanced a dismissal of AOC as an intellectual. She squarely meets his criteria.

"The class does not consist of only journalists, teachers, ministers, lecturers, publicists, radio commentators, writers of fiction, cartoonists, and artists all of whom may be masters of the technique of conveying ideas but are usually amateurs so far as the substance of what they convey is concerned."

The implication of Hayek's argument is that the right-wing ridicule we direct at AOC is not merely infantile and wrong-headed. It is a losing, perhaps fatally so, tactic in a cultural counter-revolution of existential importance. (Meanwhile enjoy the irony of the right's wallowing in a tactic of another of its favorite hobgoblins, Saul Alinsky, whose Rule 5 notoriously states that "Ridicule is Man's Most Potent Weapon.")

Ridicule aside, it is counterproductive to carp about the impracticality of AOC's sweeping agenda. Hayek, again:

"Speculations about the possible entire reconstruction of society give the intellectual a fare much more to his taste than the more practical and short-run considerations of those who aim at a piecemeal improvement of the existing order. In particular, socialist thought owes its appeal to the young largely

> *to its visionary character; the very courage to indulge in Utopian thought is in this respect a source of strength to the socialists which traditional liberalism sadly lacks."*

There you have it, straight up: "socialist thought owes its appeal to the young largely to its visionary character…."

What is there to learn from AOC?

Hayek's prescription:

> *"The main lesson which the true liberal must learn from the success of the socialists is that it was their courage to be Utopian which gained them the support of the intellectuals and therefore an influence on public opinion which is daily making possible what only recently seemed utterly remote."*

AOC, with her "grit, determination, fighting spirit," her "visionary character" and "courage to indulge in Utopian thought" is by her character — not by her socialism — a beacon of human dignity and liberty.

So, I say to Rep. Ocasio-Cortez:

Welcome to town.
You are a breath of fresh air.
You challenge us to greatness.
An adversary of your quality is to be cherished.

And also, I say:

Game On!

Rep. Ocasio-Cortez

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ralph Benko

Ralph Benko, a former deputy general counsel in the Reagan White House, is the principal of the public affairs firm of ***RalphBenko.com***. He serves as editor-in-chief of the *Supply Side Blog*, was short-listed as Nonprofit Blogger of the Year for his work for the Lehrman Institute, is a member of the Advisory Board of *The Transpartisan Review*, and is a political columnist and professional blogger for a variety of outlets including ***American Spectator*** and ***Townhall.com***.

His cult classic on Web-based advocacy, *The Websters' Dictionary: How To Use The Web To Transform The World*, won the Trophée du Choix Des Internautes from the Paris-based World e-Democracy Society. He is a member, in retired status, of the Bar of the State of New York and is based in Washington, DC.

THE TRANSPARTISAN REVIEW

THE TRANSPARTISAN REVIEW is a digital journal of politics, society, and culture, exploring the apparent disintegration of the traditional political, social and cultural order from a transpartisan point of view. This stand-alone article, and the series it belongs to, shares this exploration of the transpartisan impulse.

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