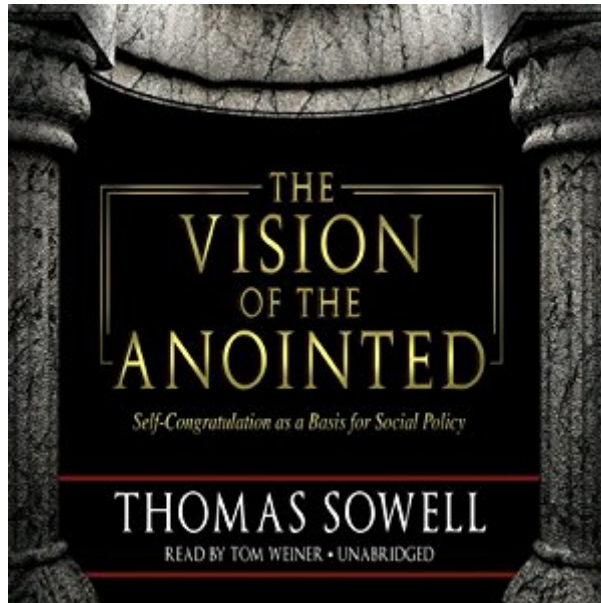


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The Vision Of The Anointed: Self-Congratulation As A Basis For Social Policy



Synopsis

In this devastating critique of the mindset behind the failed social policies of the past 30 years, Thomas Sowell sees what has happened not as a series of isolated mistakes, but as a logical consequence of a vision whose defects have led to disasters in education, crime, family disintegration, and more. This is an empirical study in which "politically correct" theory is repeatedly confronted with facts, and the sharp contradictions between the two are explained in terms of a set of self-congratulatory assumptions held by political and intellectual elites. These elites - the anointed - often consider themselves "thinking people," but this thinking is actually rhetorical assertion, followed by evasions of mounting evidence against these assertions. The vision of the anointed is seen not merely as a failure but as a fatal danger to the values and the future of American society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is very rare that I will write more than one review for a book. I wrote one for "Vision of the Anointed" a few years ago, and is by now buried in the heap of 5 star reviews below. In it, I praised Sowell for walking us through some of the rhetorical tricks used predominantly by the left wing (though since reading the book, I've become sensitive to the 'right' using similar arguments). I stand by that review. So why am I writing a new one? I've recently picked up the book again after 2 or so years and have read through some - not all - of the chapters again and...it really hit me. The most important thing about this book is not simply the 'expose of the left'; rather, the predominant

message seems to be about how the left (and I would argue, the right) ignore why 'tradeoffs' have to be made. To put it more philosophically, the politicians dream is the policy that has no downsides. Sowell realizes that in a nation of many millions, every policy has negatives and that politicians should, instead of being focused on perfection, should be focused on taking the most gain for the least loss. This, Sowell says, is capitalism and markets. Yes, there are some losers. But there will be more winners and less losers through markets than there will through a regulatory state. Now, let's put Sowell's argument into modern context (the issue that made me pick the book up again). Lately, companies have been moving overseas and this, says the Dems (and to a lesser degree the Reps) is a problem. The solution being proposed? Let's pass laws to keep them here. The problem with that is that it ignores the real problem (by refusing to look at tradeoffs).

Ever wonder why liberals are so emotionally in favor of gun control even though it's a conclusive fact that gun control doesn't reduce gun violence? Or why they support the bilingual education programs that do so much damage to immigrant children? Or why they favor rent controls that make housing unavailable to the poor people for whom they supposedly have so much sympathy? Or why they want to make it illegal for a person to be employed if (s)he lacks the skills to do more than \$7 worth of work every hour? If the motives of liberals were truly what they say they are, then these positions would never gather the support that they now enjoy from the liberal community. Liberals are not uninformed; they read the same books, newspapers and academic journals as conservatives or libertarians. So why do they so consistently advocate policies whose results are demonstrably contrary to the results they claim to want? Sowell explains the answer in this wonderful book. The reason, he says, is that the real motives of liberals have nothing to do with the welfare of other people. Instead, they have two related goals: first, to establish themselves as morally and intellectually superior to the rather distasteful population of common people, and second, to gather as much power as possible to tell those distasteful common people how they must live their lives. If a policy moves them closer to those two goals, they will find a reason to advocate it, regardless of how harmful the consequences of that policy may be. Once you read this book, the dishonest posturing of liberals becomes far more understandable. They engage in a preposterous circular argument: They are wiser and more moral than others because they "understand" the need for the policies they advocate.

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