

How do we get real politicians, not people cosplaying t...

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The video [I published yesterday](#), in which I suggested that almost all politicians are engaged in that occupation for the dopamine that it provides them with, was not, I think, that widely understood. That, I accept, must be my fault. The video was an exercise in thinking out loud. Whether YouTube is a place to do that is a question I have not answered as yet.

The question that I was musing on when preparing to make that video was not unrelated to the themes in my 2011 book, [The Courageous State](#). In that book, I suggested that neoliberalism had reduced politics to the point where strategy had disappeared, and all that was left was managerialism, with almost every politician believing the mantra that neoliberalism dictated that whatever the issue the politician might be asked to address, the market would have a better solution.

If this is the malaise that has reduced politics to its current state - and I still think it is - then those engaged in politics cannot be doing so for the sake of achieving a strategic goal. They will have persuaded themselves long before reaching office that there is no such goal that they can achieve. As a consequence, they will, instead, at best think that it is their task to manage the state within the constraints imposed upon it by the private sector and those with wealth and that there will be a wide range of issues that they must not question when undertaking this management role for fear of contradicting the power structures that they believe exist. They are reduced to playing a game of politics which lacks any substance, with their only reward (apart from those that might come when they have left office) being the dopamine hits that they get as a consequence of the appearance of their being in power.

The result is that these politicians - and as we have discussed here, often, they effectively form a single transferable party - believe that they can only use wealth created by the private sector because the state is, in their opinion, incapable of adding value by its own actions.

They also believe that money is created by the same private sector, and the state has no role in doing so.

In addition, they seem, without exception, to think that the economic problem of resource allocation relates purely to financial matters and not to the actual meeting of needs, which is what economics should be about. They have distorted not just politics as a result of their beliefs but the modern perception of what economics is all about.

As a result, this question of resource allocation is not allowed to do three things.

Firstly, it may not challenge the right of private enterprise to profit at whatever cost to anyone else.

Secondly, it must not challenge the existing allocation of wealth and rewards within society.

Thirdly, the state must not challenge the role of banks as the sole funder of economic activity, meaning it must not run deficits or create money, this being a task reserved for private sector banks alone. The inevitable consequence is, of course, that the state must also balance its books.

It is fair to ask whether there is some supra-power that imposes these requirements on politicians or whether they have, as a byproduct of the process of their learning of neoliberal thought, constantly spoonfed to them at the universities (or, in the main, the single university) that they attended, voluntarily subjected themselves to them, but it makes relatively little difference. Whichever of those beliefs you hold, and I tend towards the second whilst recognising the power of corporate money to make it look as if the first is in operation, what is apparent is that politicians are so frightened of the alienation, which they think will happen as a consequence of stepping out of line, that they obey the neoliberal line.

It also makes little difference whether they genuinely believe that they have no choice but to live within the constraints I note or feel that they have no choice but to do so. The net effect is identical. And so, feeling powerless to control much, they resort to managing a news agenda and get their dopamine hits from that whilst cosplaying as politicians, which they really are not.

The question is, how do we break this paralysis within our politics where doing nothing is the only option that politicians feel they have available to them when I am quite certain that this is not the case and that politics remains as potentially as much under the control of democratically elected people as once it was if only those people had the conviction to take back control of that system? Of course, breaking the stranglehold of neoliberal thinking is key to that, but that is not enough. This is the problem I am working on and will be working on into 2025. I think that those alternatives can be found. But that will take a lot of work.