

Do you want to write a book review?

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One of the many discussions that we have had here of late has been about how to get more people talking about politics for people, and so involved in advancing the politics of care.

I do rather hope that this will be one of the subjects for discussion in the closing session of our event in Cambridge in just over a week's time.

That said, one of the ideas we have had, which might, I hope, be popular, is to include book reviews on this blog written by you, the readers.

I readily admit that, like many people who have been in academia, I rarely manage to read any book on a topic related to the themes we discuss here from cover to cover. I simply do not have enough time to do that as often as I would like. I do, as a consequence, have to resort to the age-old technique of reading the introduction, the closing chapter, and those parts in between that stand out as containing the major arguments that I need to understand.

I am not especially apologetic for that. It is, in fact, in part, one of the reasons why I keep thinking about writing books and then fail to do so, precisely because I know that so many other people read in this way.

But, that said, I also know that there are those who approach a book in a very different fashion, reading it diligently, considering every nuance and implication, and then forming an opinion on what the author set out to achieve. If you are one of those people, I hope you are the target audience for this blog post. You might be one of the many people who might, I hope, want to write book reviews for this blog.

What I stress is that I am not looking for an academic analysis of whatever an author has written. In fact, that is probably the exact opposite of what I want. Instead, I hope people will review books that have had a particular influence on them and that they think might help readers of this blog better understand politics for people and the politics of care.

As a consequence, I am looking for reviews that are likely split into the following sections.

The book

First, I need a very brief opening description of the book, including:

- * Its title.
- * The name of its author(s), and, in all likelihood, their qualifications to comment, because I always want to know this before I invest considerable time reading someone's views, and
- * Who publishes it, plus
- * How long the book is.

Description

Then I need a description of why the reviewer thinks the book might be relevant to someone who reads this blog and is interested in the subjects discussed here. I stress that this does not mean the book needs to align with my sentiments, or even with those of many readers.

To use an example, you might decide to review Friedrich Hayek's '[**The Road to Serfdom**](#)', **suggesting that this is important precisely because it sets out a philosophy that you do not agree with, but which you think it is important to know about to understand where we need to go.**

The point is that, in this paragraph, you have a chance to hook the Funding the Future reader into the idea that the book you enjoyed might be worth their while reading.

The arguments

Next, I am interested in a summary of what the main arguments of the book might be, in your words, highlighting the issues that you thought most important.

If truth be told, the majority of books are built around just a few ideas, at most, and spend a great deal of time padding that thinking out, so this section is about identifying those ideas.

As an example, I might suggest that Clara Mattei's book '[**The Capital Order: How Economists Invented Austerity and Paved the Way to Fascism**](#)' **can be summarised, rather bluntly, as follows:**

*

Austerity is about power, not arithmetic.

*

Fiscal policy is always political.

*

Economic narratives shape social outcomes.

*

Alternatives to austerity exist - but require democratic courage.

*** Austerity can create a situation in which fascism might develop.**

You might not wish to be that curt, but nor am I looking for an extended essay. If the entire review much exceeds 1,000 words, it is probably too long. This post is almost exactly that length.

Your opinion

Finally, there is the question of what you think of the book. The whole point here is to explain how reading this book:

- * Changed your thinking.
- * Advanced your understanding.
- * Provided insight you had not previously enjoyed.
- * Left you disappointed, and why, or
- * Whatever else you might want to say.

This is where you share your learning so others can benefit from it, even if they never get to read the book itself.

What to do

I know I face the risk, by making this suggestion, that we might be inundated with contributions.

Saying that, I stress that we would have to review any contribution offered to ensure it is relevant and flows in a way we think readers can follow. I am, therefore, reserving the right to edit. Doing so, we would, however, always want to check back with the author of the piece to make sure that they were happy with the outcome.

And I also know, from having read far too many journals over many years, that it is much more likely that I will be underwhelmed by the response to this suggestion, because so few people are willing to put pen to paper. In that context, please accept my assurance that we are not looking for masterpieces. We are looking for your thoughts. If you can put them together, even in draft, send them anyway. We can always polish them, if required.

Please feel free to comment below, suggesting books you might be interested in reviewing. It would be a shame to have duplicates early on. And then send your material to me at richard.murphy [at] taxresearch.org.uk.

I live in hope!