

Review of: "Liberalism Caused the Great Enrichment"

Terence Kealey¹

¹ The University of Buckingham

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This article is important for showing that many of the factors that are generally credited for promoting the Industrial Revolution are, at best, only necessary but not sufficient. And having ruled out so many false leads, and having identified from the history that the only sufficient factor is liberalism, Deidre McCloskey then generates an equation to describe that.

McCloskey is undoubtedly right in her thesis, and this paper can certainly stand alone as a contribution to scholarship from a scholar who has already made so many seminal contributions, yet the paper does raise a question: can she now select sufficient quantitative data from the literature to test her equation empirically? I.e., can D for dignity, say, be sufficiently measured across different countries during different eras and then be correlated with different rates of economic growth? If so, that would be fantastic. If not, then we need to be pointed towards the research that needs to be undertaken to provide the necessary data. After all, books from many centuries and from many countries can now be searched for key words such 'merchant', and the adjectives that modify such words can then be collated (McCloskey herself has written of how Jane Austen honours Mr Gardiner, the merchant in 'Pride and Prejudice'.) Such honour, however, has not been universal, and if McCloskey is right, its incidence should correlate with economic growth. It would be great to do the study.

Earlier reviews of this paper have been reassuringly positive, and I see no need to echo the details of the earlier praise: but it would be wonderful to confirm the thesis, if possible, quantitatively.