

Monday April 4th 2011.

[Extremist?](#) Me?? Now let's see. Which of my public opinions might Gillard take to be extreme? My anti-militarism I guess, for one thing. For I agree with Nietzsche (*Human All-Too Human* "[Wanderer and His Shadow](#)" (part two of part two of HATH) §284 - on page 337 of the edition on Project Gutenberg) regarding "the means to real peace." A culture's development can be measured by the relative importance it gives to the military. Primitive cultures are marred by the endless skirmish of warring tribes, and ancient cultures are dominated by the rise of the militaristic organisation of these destructive energies. These cultures were repeatedly destroyed by their own militarism, wiping themselves out in insane war after insane war. As history progressed, reason arose in fits and starts, and being reasonable has slowly caught on in various imperfect ways.

Being reasonable always means less fighting and more thinking, less shouting and more talking, less soldiers and more diplomats. But by "diplomats" I don't just mean career civil servants and politicians. I mean people who actually speak the relevant language and know the customs, not just a little, but really know them, from the inside. Multicultural Australia should and could be the world's leader in producing such real diplomats. Where are the sixth-generation Afghanis whose ancestors came to Australia in the 1830s, 40s and 50s with their camel trains to cross the deserts? Surely these people know and love both lands, both tongues, both cultures. These people and others like them should and could be leading and orienting our aid of various kinds to Afghanistan, not [racist Facebook morons](#) with machine guns and [bawdy pirates on the high seas](#). But that wouldn't make billions of dollars for the arms manufacturers now, would it?

Closely connected to the militaristic agenda attempting to drag Australia back to the middle ages is the issue of coal-fired power stations, and perhaps Gillard would call my comments concerning the august Sir John Monash "extreme." But how many people know that upon returning from the First World War, John Monash became the Australian spokesman for a new idea he had picked up in Germany, of brown coal-fired power stations? With militaristic style, Monash crushed the alternative proposal of an extensive network of dams for hydro-electric power generation and water-storage appropriate in the drought-flood-drought Australian environment, and stuck to his guns with a soldier's zeal for victory (see Cecil Edwards *John Monash* chapters 8-10, and also his book [Brown Power](#)). Its not that that Monash's zeal in and of itself was a bad thing (loyalty, bravery, trustworthiness – these are all core values), but it does highlight why the military make bad leaders of a country. What the military are good at is getting a job done once it's decided what needs to be done. But what the military are very bad at is deciding what needs to be done. This is why we wince when we see the military taking over the government in any country.

John Monash did not understand where burning coal for electricity would lead us, because he couldn't see the big picture. Nevertheless, it was he whom the military appointed to direct the CSIRO when it was set up around the end of the first world war, cementing the ties between the military and the science community. Modernity in the twentieth century struggled against the backward pull of militarism, failing often, but still leaving us far in advance of the position we were in in 1911. We now know that those who warned us about the dangers of the pollution caused by burning coal – those crushed by Monash – were far more right than they could possibly have known. For they were warning against events of local spoilage – the beautiful coastal valleys of East Gippsland being turned into open-cut mines, and the air round-about being fouled by the fumes of burning coal. But in that century, as we flew to the moon and continually looked at pictures of the Earth from space, it began to dawn on us that our world was finite, and not infinite, as it seems from the inside.

We will always need coal for turning iron into steel, and it would indeed be an insane extremist who argued that coal mining should be banned per se. I in contrast maintain only that Australia should stop burning coal to generate electricity and build geothermal power stations to generate electricity from the heat of lava far underground. This would not exclude solar and wind power, but rather “beef up” other renewable options with a 24-hour-365-days-per-year base-line able to keep the wheels of industry turning.

But Gillard has made other plans with Rupert Murdoch, a John Monash of Media, a man who invades not countries but minds with his opium-of-the-people. “Sixty Minutes” and *The Australian* tell us we need nuclear power. We ask – what about the Fukushima catastrophe? For week after week, we are told its all fine, no more radiation than a trip to the dentists. Now that not only the ground-water but also the sea-water contains radioactive Iodine in concentrations tens of thousands if not millions of times in excess of the safe limits, Rupert Murdoch's media simply turns its back.

Nuclear power will never be de-militarised. Each and every power plant is a potential bomb factory, not to mention an accident waiting to happen, due to natural or human causes. If an earthquake hit a geothermal power-plant, the worst outcome would be a disabled power-plant (which is why the solar and wind diversity is important). But what no-one is mentioning with regard to Fukushima is that the worry is not so much how much direct radiation it is safe to be exposed to; the real problem is the bio-accumulation of even faintly radioactive iodine in the thyroid gland, leading to thyroid cancer in ten, twenty, thirty or forty years time for people who are children or even embryos now.

But by then, the politicians will have changed, the company will have dissolved, and the media will have slotted the disaster into its trivial simplistic history of everything. All will be forgotten and forgiven and the docile will vote how their television tells them to. The military-industrial complex, unable to think or to see the whole, will continually crush and destroy all attempts to demonstrate an alternative to the militaristic backslide into medieval warmongering and bigotry, and the potential for humans as a whole to discover the inconceivable benefits of real peace and sustainability will in all likelihood be squandered as we return to family-based dynasties and a Machiavellian politics which is itself nothing but a kind of perpetual low-level war.

The Labor Party's white paper on Australia's energy future is currently being written up by the military to the detriment of us all. Not because they're bad guys, or because they want to do bad things, but because they cannot see the whole, and do not realise where they are leading us. If it is extreme to oppose nuclear power in Australia, then the situation is already very far gone – the military have recruited the government to enforce its agenda. But I can't believe that Gillard has gone so far in her contorted attempt to distinguish herself from Pauline Hanson by attacking Bob Brown that she would be fool enough to embrace nuclear power.

So if a pacifist who wants to define their country not by military actions (à la Gallipoli) but by the (admittedly imperfect) pursuit of justice (à la Eureka Stockade) is defined as an extremist, then this can only be because the political environment in Australia has suddenly become so extremely hostile to open debate, and to the necessary labour of honest, thoughtful, respectful dialogue. I know what Australian values are: honesty, openness, justice for all, multiculturalism (a reality since 1788), a fresh start avoiding the mistakes of the old world, fresh air and unspoiled nature, compassion for one another in the face of hardship without descending into sentimentality. But to say that the Greens are against 1. family values and 2. national patriotism is just plain 1. wrong and 2. stupid.

The Greens are trying to increase the number of families in this country by allowing gay marriage. What Julia Gillard means is that the Greens don't share her vision of what gets to count as a family.

What counts as a family for Julia Gillard is being unmarried with neither natural nor adopted children and the current partner of convenience. But I think that many Australians (the Greens included) would agree with me, and disagree with her, that a loving gay couple with adopted or surrogate children is a lot more of a family than a lonely life at the top will ever be.

The second accusation was lack of national spirit, and here we need to be very careful indeed. As I've said elsewhere in this blog, I think it is crucial is to distinguish nationalism on the one hand, from patriotism (and matriotism) on the other. Respect for one's elders of both genders is a core value. However, so much evil has been done worldwide in the name of nationalism, that this word is loaded, and a dangerous one to introduce into political discussion. Of course the Australian Greens love Australia – that's why they are trying to save it from being destroyed by the rapacious greed of short-sighted billionaires. Although I hasten to add that I do not presume to speak on behalf of the Greens – hell, I haven't even got enough money to renew my membership of the party, so I'm not even a paid-up member. I speak as an individual stating what to me is obvious.

And it's obvious that the Greens love Australia in a way the multinational mining and media magnates can't even understand. They know Australia from the inside, from the tranquillity of bush, from the infinity of the desert, from the sublimity of the sea. The Greens represent these people, and if a Welsh migrant from the industrial wasteland of Altona thinks that she speaks on behalf some kind of 'real' or 'true' Australia then she is looking no less deluded than Pauline Hanson. The ignorant Pauline Hanson is unaware that Australia has been multicultural from the word go (despite periodic concerted attempts to make it monocultural, and to rewrite history to pretend it had always been so), and that this multicultural diversity, along with the presence of the oldest living indigenous culture on Earth, are the two greatest cultural strengths that this country has. Racists like Hanson are the unAustralian ones – just like racists from every country other than England as well, for racism, in a sad irony, is the one true universal problem. But we Australians tolerate racists just as we tolerate all people with problems – not to condone their problems, but rather to help them mature into adults and get over their racism, and become true, tolerant, peace-loving Australians, secure in their own identity and able to enjoy the contrast of differences, and to realise that creativity arises from mixtures and cross-overs, not “pure” races and cultural bigotry.

I think we can see who the extreme one really is, as Julia Gillard slides further to the right day by day. She's jittery because she knows that the faceless men and women pulling her strings are about to make her dance to the tune of nuclear power and more uranium mines. Ross Garnaut is the only public figure with the guts to use the word “geothermal,” and the ABC follows Rupert Murdoch's – sorry - Murdoch's lead unthinkingly here. Ignore the meltdown at Fukushima. The radioactive seawater is fine. No radiation will bio-accumulate from the algae up to the shark and into all sorts of food-chains over the decades, because all fish have been ordered out of an 80-km radius of the plant, and Japanese fish are very obedient. There will not be cascades of cancers in all sorts of unknown and never-reported individuals years from now. That will not happen because it will not be reported, therefore will not be on TV, therefore will not be real to those whose opinions are uncritically engineered by the TV. But those of us left in the real world see through this situation, dominated by simple greed and fuelled by man's famous inhumanity to man.

One great thing about Monash is that his spectacularly successful career demonstrates that the evil of anti-Semitism was not a feature (or at least not a dominant one) of mainstream Australian culture a century ago, any more than it is today. Sadly there are racisms abroad in Australia, but anti-Semitism is not one of them, and the Marrickville Greens were insane, and way out of line, to try to play this particular race card like this, and would probably have been elected otherwise. Let's hope the Marakville Greens live and learn. I do agree that military excesses, like the Israeli use of phosphorous bombs on Palestinians, ought to be condemned; and as I've also said, I do agree that anti-Semitism and criticisms of Israel are two different things, lest we elevate Israel above all

criticism, a place no country should occupy. But if the Marakville Greens want us to boycott every country guilty of war crimes, then we'll have to boycott half the world. They should think less about trying to run the world, and more about trying to run the little patch of it they are in with justice and compassion for all. Australians should stick to criticising the Australian military. It's not as if we're short on things to criticise the Australian military for, given they take the lion's share of the tax dollar.

So here's my admitted extremes: I'm extremely unfond of racism, hypocrisy, and totalitarian thinking. I am extremely suspicious of militarism and nationalism, and what these ideologies bring out in a country, so to speak. I am extremely fond of freedom, bio-cultural diversity, and unspoiled wilderness. I think that lot makes me fairly, if not extremely, reasonable.