Contextomy, Eisegesis, and the Libertarian Calumny: Comment on Darity, Camara, and MacLean

Phillip W. Magness, American Institute for Economic Research

Art Carden, Samford University and American Institute for Economic Research

Ilia Murtazashvili, University of Pittsburgh

July 15, 2023

JEL Codes: B25, B31
Keywords: W.H. Hutt, apartheid, racism, libertarianism, James M. Buchanan

Abstract
William Darity, M’Balou Camara, and Nancy MacLean present an “irrefutable” argument that the economist W.H. Hutt was a white supremacist. We show that their “irrefutable” argument relies heavily on contextomy, defined as “the practice of misquoting someone by shortening the quotation or by leaving out surrounding words or sentences that would place the quotation in context.” Their sources refute their argument when read in context.
I. Introduction

**Contextomy:**
“1. the practice of misquoting someone by shortening the quotation or by leaving out surrounding words or sentences that would place the quotation in context.”
“2. An instance of this.”

**Eisegesis:**
“an interpretation, especially of Scripture, that expresses the interpreter’s own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text.”

Darity et al. (2023) claim that W.H. “Hutt’s opposition to state-mandated apartheid…was fully compatible with a commitment to white supremacy” (p. 11). We agree: opposing apartheid does not require a moral commitment to racial equality. There are racist libertarians, just like there are racist progressives (Leonard 2016). We (like Hutt) are willing to swallow hard and let them believe horrible things despite our efforts to persuade them. Individual dignity includes the right to be wrong, and we do not trust ourselves (or others) to suppress ideas we don’t like. But Darity et al. do not simply set themselves to the obvious and simple task of showing that one can be a white supremacist and a libertarian. They seek to establish that “Hutt was a white supremacist” (p. 1). When read in context, their documentary evidence refutes them.

Darity, Camara, and MacLean (2023) originally appeared as a working paper for the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) in 2022. In the published version, Darity et al. charge “neoliberal” scholars with “having contributed to anti-democratic thinking and to positions that lock in racial disadvantages or colonial inequities.” They extend MacLean’s criticism of James M. Buchanan (MacLean 2017) to the economist W.H. Hutt (1899-1988) by charging him with efforts to entrench white supremacy in South Africa. When their working paper circulated, two of the present authors documented its many errors (Magness and Carden, 2022). While the

---

published version of their paper corrects some of the errors in their working paper, they leave some errors uncorrected and introduce new ones. Each version of their paper is an exercise in *contextomy*—“the practice of misquoting someone by shortening the quotation or by leaving out surrounding words or sentences that would place the quotation in context”—and *eisegesis*—“an interpretation…that expresses the interpreter’s own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text”—that does not actually reckon “with the substance of the empirical, including archival, documentation” of Hutt’s words and ideas.

We borrow Darity et al.’s words as they accuse us of “defend[ing]” our assessment of MacLean’s thesis “without reckoning with the substance of the empirical, including archival, documentation adduced” from her work. Alas, we have spent an inordinate amount of time “reckoning with the substance of the empirical, including archival, documentation adduced” only to find little, if any, “substance.” MacLean’s suggestion that Buchanan conspired with *Richmond News Leader* editor James J. Kilpatrick, for example, is based on a citation error that incorrectly puts Buchanan and G. Warren Nutter’s “The Economics of Universal Education” in the *Richmond News Leader* when it was published in the Virginius Dabney-edited *Richmond Times Dispatch*. MacLean cited no correspondence between Buchanan and Kilpatrick to establish this association, and we reported evidence that Kilpatrick was unfamiliar with Buchanan’s work when they were supposedly conspiring (Magness et al. 2019:727-728).

Darity et al. (2023) respond specifically to Magness, Carden, and Geloso (2019), which documents misrepresentations and errors in MacLean (2017), and Magness, Carden, and Murtazashvili (2022), which examines Hutt’s theories about authoritarian threats to liberal, democratic institutions during post-colonial transitions. MacLean (2017) argued that Buchanan provided intellectual comfort and cover for those who led Virginia’s “Massive Resistance” to school desegregation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. She claims that Buchanan invited Hutt to the University of Virginia, where he spoke in 1962 on the economics of
Apartheid and where he was a visiting professor in 1965-1966, to serve Senator Harry Flood Byrd, Sr.’s segregationist political machine and the state’s anti-union interests. Magness et al. (2019) point out that inviting the fierce apartheid critic Hutt—who had devoted substantial time and energy to dismantling one of the twentieth century’s most conspicuous structures of oppression—to the University of Virginia at the height of the Civil Rights Movement is inconsistent with MacLean’s thesis that Buchanan was working behind the scenes to bolster the segregationist cause. It is not an “innocence by association” argument, as Darity et al. (2023) allege; rather, it is one piece of evidence among many that Buchanan was not colluding with the Byrd machine to reinforce racist institutions. We have tried and measured MacLean’s “empirical, including archival documentation” and found it wanting.

We do the same with Darity et al. (2023). Checking their claims against their sources and providing missing context shows they make their case using textual evidence stripped of context, selectively edited, maliciously interpreted, and (in at least one case) incorrectly documented. In his review of The Economics of the Colour Bar, Arnold Plant described Hutt as “a scrupulously honest, well-equipped and indefatigable seeker after truth” (Plant 1965:827). He could not write that about Darity et al. (2023).

We submit that a fair reading of Hutt’s words in context will show that Darity et al. are “misquoting someone by shortening the quotation or by leaving out surrounding words or sentences that would place the quotation in context” and offering “interpretation…that expresses the interpreter’s own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text.” In the interests of brevity, we confine our attention to their most substantial errors.

---

3 “Capetown Professor to Speak Tonight,” Charlottesville Daily Progress, March 21, 1962, p. 28. Hutt would carry the message to Wabash College, the academic home of the libertarian economist Benjamin Rogge, a few weeks later (“Hutt visits campus; says Apartheid doomed to failure,” Wabash Bachelor, April 13, 1962, p. 1).
II. Misrepresented Sources and Hutt’s “commitment to white supremacy”

Darity et al. (2023) accuse Hutt of harboring “a commitment to white supremacy” and claim to find it in his 1964 book *The Economics of the Colour Bar* (1964) and elsewhere. In their telling, Hutt opposed apartheid because he wanted to replace it with “neoliberal policies” that would “lock in” white supremacy, putting it “on more solid ground because ostensibly race-neutral injustice would be more challenging to contest” (pp. 1, 9). In this strange rendering, Hutt’s opposition to apartheid supports MacLean’s original thesis “that one of neoliberalism’s core aims has been to constrict democracy, including by packaging old prejudices in new and sturdier market-based protections” (p. 11). Are they suggesting Hutt opposed apartheid because he thought it was less effective than neoliberalism as a tool for white supremacy—*insufficiently* racist, in other words?

Whether this is their argument or not, Darity et al. purport to expose Hutt’s white supremacy with quotations from several sources. Context is king, and context suggests that Darity et al. attribute to Hutt things he either does not write or explicitly repudiates. Darity et al. (2023) point to several examples in Hutt’s 1966 article “Civil Rights and Young ‘Conservatives’” (Hutt 1966) and *The Economics of the Colour Bar*. Reading the passages in context, however, undermines their interpretation. Moreover, one of their charges mixes quotations from two documents—a problem pointed out in Magness and Carden (2022) that remains in the published version.

A. Hutt’s “libertarian defense of social segregation”

Darity et al. argue that Hutt’s lecture to “a summer gathering of young conservatives” offered “a libertarian defense of social segregation.” Darity et al. (2023:5) write: “‘The right of free association implies the right not to associate as well as to associate,’ he tutored them, pointing to exclusive clubs as aspects of a ‘free society.’”
Was Hutt offering “a libertarian defense of social segregation?” Here is the surrounding context, with the quoted words in bold (Hutt 1966:235):

“It is true (and this truth cannot be over-stressed) that the right of free association implies the right not to associate as well as to associate. In any free society, a club should have the right to restrict its membership to, say, women, teetotallers, veterans, Negroses, Baptists, Jews, or whites. Equally, clubs which wish to admit both whites and Negroes should, under the same rule, have the effective right to do so, and be protected from private coercion of the Ku Klux Klan type.”

Darity et al.’s (2023:5) use of the phrase “exclusive clubs,” combined with the accusation that he is tutoring the young conservatives in social segregation, suggests a carefully-cloaked defense of racial hierarchy. But in context, he is referring to any club with membership criteria. The two paragraphs that follow show what Hutt was doing (Hutt 1966:235-236):

“Judging from what I have observed (in the admittedly very different conditions of my own country), however, it is almost certain that more Negroes would like to join white clubs than whites would like to join Negro clubs. And will that not remain the position until equality of status has somehow been established? In view of past indignities, and antipathies based on color prejudice, the gesture of admitting acceptable Negroes, conspicuously and voluntarily adopted by at least some leading white clubs, could do much to dispel racial bitterness. Might not ‘conservatives’ encourage this? Compulsion, even if called ‘persuasion,’ would defeat the whole purpose. There may perhaps be other, even better, ways of proving equality of respect by those who feel that respect. But can we rationally expect Negroes to accept the right of freedom of association in its fullest
sense (with its implication of the right not to associate) unless the whites can offer them unchallengeable evidence that they are not regarded as social lepers?”

Is Hutt offering “a libertarian defense of social segregation?” Hardly: if anything, he is exhorting conservatives to take the lead in social integration.

### B. “contemptuous” conservatives, segregation, and the Warren Court

Darity et al. (2023:5) write:

“Hutt went further in his case to young right-wing activists, whom he described as ‘all’ being “contemptuous of current civil rights policy,” telling them that discrimination ‘implies injustice,’ while segregation ‘does not.’ Earlier, after implicitly rebuking the U.S. Supreme Court for exceeding its authority, Hutt argued that owing to the principle of free association the proscription of discrimination ‘does not mean that the courts must force…every white university to admit non-Whites’ (Hutt 1966:792-3; MacLean 2017).”

The citation is garbled: The first sentence quotes Hutt (1966), the second quotes Hutt (1965). The year in the citation describes the quotes from “Civil Rights and Young ‘Conservatives’” but the page numbers are to Hutt’s 1965 article “South Africa’s Salvation in Classic Liberalism,” which appears in the Italian journal *Il Politico*. That article discusses South African courts, and it can only be read as “implicitly rebuking the U.S. Supreme Court” by reading into Hutt’s article something that is anything but apparent. A reader who does not know these documents well would reasonably conclude that the quotes from Darity et al. (2023:5) appear in the same article. They do not.

What about Hutt’s audience, “all” of whom were “contemptuous of current civil rights policy”? Here is the context with a footnote removed and the quoted text in bold (Hutt 1966:231):

Electronic copy available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=4511816
“Admittedly, all present on this occasion were contemptuous of the current official civil rights policy which was held to be defective because its primary motivation has been immediate electoral advantage.”

Darity et al. omit an important qualifier. The students’ objections, Hutt explains, arose from the belief that “its primary motivation has been immediate electoral advantage”—a cynicism arising from Lyndon B. Johnson’s well-documented uses of civil rights policy as a political tool (Caro 2009, p. xv).

They also ignore the surrounding context, which directly contradicts their claim. “Although no simple consensus emerged from the discussion,” Hutt explains, “it was demonstrated beyond doubt that the great majority of those present were unequivocally sympathetic to Negro aspirations.” The conservatives and libertarians in his audience, he explains, “appear convinced that the Negro’s claim to full civil rights has the highest moral substance” (Hutt 1966:231). Darity et al. have not faithfully and accurately represented Hutt’s argument. They report (some of) Hutt’s words but in a way that distorts his meaning.

Did Hutt “implicitly rebuk[e]” the U.S. Supreme Court in his speech to the young conservatives? No. His comment about courts is from Hutt (1965), which deals exclusively with the South African context. Here is the relevant context with the quoted passages in bold (Hutt 1965:793):

“It will be especially important, however, in a country as complex as South Africa, that there shall be no misapprehension about the purpose. In no way should the right of every person to choose his associates be questioned. Because discrimination on grounds of sex, religion, race or colour is forbidden, that does not mean that the courts must force every women’s club to admit men, every Catholic club to admit non-Catholics, every
Jewish club to admit Gentiles or every white university to admit non-Whites. But to the extent to which the free choice of associates has indirectly the effect of excluding those of a particular group from economic opportunities, then persons who feel themselves materially prejudiced thereby should have the right to seek admission (if they are qualified on other grounds).”

As this passage shows, Hutt is commenting on the South African court system—not the U.S. Supreme Court. His discussion of university admissions concerns South African institutions under apartheid, not the U.S. Furthermore, Hutt qualifies his description by writing that those “materially prejudiced thereby should have the right to seek admission.”

Here, again, we find that Darity et al. substantially altered the meaning and even geography of Hutt’s comments by selectively excerpting its text and misattributing its source. Magness and Carden (2022:211-212) pointed this out. However, rather than unambiguously correcting the misattributed source, Darity et al. modified their description slightly—by adding “earlier” and “implicitly.” The lack of explicit textual evidence undermines their argument.4

C. Dismissing “Injustices” and “Oppressions”?

Darity, Camara, and MacLean (2023:7) condemn Hutt for “admonishing that ‘races which grumble about the “injustices” or “oppressions” to which they are subjected can often be observed to be inflicting not dissimilar injustices upon other races’ (Hutt 1964, 39).” They make much of the word “grumble” and the use of quotation marks around “injustices” and

4 After the publication of Darity et al. (2023), one of us directly asked Darity why he had failed to correct many of the errors with his INET paper, as documented in Magness and Carden (2022). Darity responded, “we addressed all of the reviewers’ comments to the editor’s satisfaction I think we met your reactions in full form.” In a follow-up comment, he stated, “And those alleged “problems,” many of which were niggling and insubstantial, are addressed in the refereed article. Even the niggling and insubstantial ones.” Some of the obvious documentation errors—Buchanan allegedly failing to mention The Economics of the Colour Bar in an interview with the Manhattan Institute, which archival evidence shows as a mistake—did not make it into the published paper.
“oppressions” to suggest that Hutt is dismissing non-Whites’ very real claims about actual injustices and oppressions. First, “injustice” or “injustices” appears about sixty times in The Economics of the Colour Bar, almost always without quotation marks and describing unqualified injustice. Read in context, we see this passage is not criticizing non-Whites, but white Afrikaners in a chapter titled “Injustices to Afrikaners” with Darity et al.’s quoted text in bold (Hutt 1964:39):

“Races which grumble about the ‘injustices’ or ‘oppressions’ to which they are subjected can often be observed to be inflicting not dissimilar injustices upon other races. We find a very clear case of this in any study of the grievances of the Afrikaners against ‘British imperialism’ and their fight against the threat of ‘Anglicisation.’ In their policies towards the non-Whites, they are inflicting injustices which are remarkably similar to those of which they themselves have complained.”

What was Hutt trying to do in this passage? Darity et al. write (2023:8):

“…Hutt aimed to undercut the legitimacy of apartheid’s black South African critics, who were gaining international support as he wrote. His aim can be readily inferred: to deny the victims of apartheid the moral high ground claimed by the anti-apartheid movement.”

When we take account of the quote’s context, Hutt’s aim can be more than “inferred” because he states it explicitly. Hutt tells white Afrikaners to clear the logs out of their eyes before seeking specks in others’. And what of Darity et al.? Their aim can be readily inferred: to deny Hutt a place at the table by attributing to him a claim he clearly did not make.

III. Foul Language?

Darity et al. are firmly committed to the idea that despite overwhelming textual evidence and testimony to the contrary, Hutt was a white supremacist who wished to keep black Africans
permanently subordinated to (and exploited by) the white minority. In this section, we highlight their specious claims about Buchanan’s use of the word “excludability” in his “The Economic Theory of Clubs” and Hutt’s use of language they suggest implies racist cultural or even genetic determinism.5

A. “Excludability” in “An Economic Theory of Clubs”

One of Darity et al.’s new claims in the published version of their paper takes a gratuitous swipe at one of Buchanan’s most distinguished contributions in their misrepresentation of Hutt’s 1966 article. Seeking to impugn their subjects’ motives further, they insinuate that Buchanan’s “An Economic Theory of Clubs” might have been inspired by “white flight” from public schools and, perhaps, can be interpreted as a covert defense of segregation (Darity et al. 2023:5):

“Buchanan had published his own ‘An Economic Theory of Clubs’ the year before, pointing to ‘excludability’ as a key feature, something on display in his own state and region. In the wake of the Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, many racist whites fled public facilities for private ones with the ability to exclude blacks.”

The suggested connection is wrong.6 “Excludability” in the taxonomy of private and public goods has its modern analytical origins in Samuelson (1954) and its rhetorical origins in Musgrave (1959).7 Musgrave (1959:9) explains:

“Exchange in the market depends on the existence of property titles to the things that are to be exchanged. If a consumer wishes to satisfy his desire for any particular commodity,

---

5 This section complements the analysis in Magness and Carden (2022:208ff).
6 See Marciano (2023) for a comment on Darity et al.’s analysis of “excludability.”
he must meet the terms of exchange set by those who happen to possess this particular commodity, and vice versa. That is to say, he is excluded from the enjoyment of any particular commodity or service unless he is willing to pay the stipulated price to the owner. This may be referred to as the *exclusion principle*. Where it applies, the consumer must bid for the commodities he wants. His offer reveals the value he assigns to them and tells the entrepreneur what to produce under given cost conditions.”

Reading racial politics into “The Economic Theory of Clubs” is impossible without simply importing them in defiance of textual evidence. In a footnote on the final page of his article, Buchanan explicitly writes that non-discrimination is implicit in “The Economic Theory of Clubs” (Buchanan 1965:13n):

“A note concerning one implicit assumption of the whole analysis is in order at this point. The possibility for the individual to choose among the various scales of consumption sharing arrangements has been incorporated into an orthodox model of individual behavior. The procedure implies that the individual remains indifferent as to which of his neighbours or fellow citizens join him in such arrangements. In other words, no attempt has been made to allow for personal selectivity or discrimination in the models. To incorporate this element, which is no doubt important in many instances, would introduce a wholly new dimension into the analysis, and additional tools to those employed here would be required.”

Earlier in the paper, he is even more explicit about what he is doing (Buchanan 1965:2): “The central question in a theory of clubs is that of determining the membership margin, so to speak, the size of the most desirable cost and consumption sharing arrangement.” The accompanying footnote reads:
“Note that the economic theory of clubs can strictly apply only to the extent that the motivation for joining in sharing arrangements is itself economic; that is, only if choices are made on the basis of costs and benefits of particular goods and services that are confronted by the individual. In so far as individuals join clubs for camaraderie, as such, the theory does not apply.”

Is “The Economic Theory of Clubs” inspired by or a defense of whites fleeing integrating schools? No, and the insinuation that it might be is reminiscent of MacLean’s mishandling of Buchanan’s “The Samaritan’s Dilemma” in her 2017 book, Darity et al.’s claim in their original working paper that Hutt picked up his language and use of italics from Virginia segregationist Leon Dure, and their self-contradictory description of a claim Hutt made endorsing Walter Williams’s work to Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi as simultaneously “obvious” and “grotesquely untrue” (Darity et al. 2023:9). Buchanan’s first wrestling with the idea of “clubs” came in response to a classroom discussion about trading off lower costs for higher congestion for swimming pools and his thoughts about “The Highway Network Considered as a Club” (Marciano 2018:714, Wagner 2017:181). The suggestion that “excludability” had anything to do with racial politics is unsubstantiated and flatly contradicted by a plain reading of the source documents.

B. Presentism and Asymmetry in the Use of Language

In condemning Hutt’s language, Darity et al. sidestep Hutt’s entire argument in The Economics of the Colour Bar, which dissects the legal and regulatory framework that led to apartheid. Hutt was unambiguous in attributing its visible discriminatory effects to these institutional factors, not allegedly innate African characteristics. Unwilling to take him at his
word, Darity et al. adopt an esoteric hermeneutic wherein Hutt’s passing use of antiquated terminology somehow obviates his institutional analysis and reveals hidden racist motives.

Darity et al. emphasize the terminology that Hutt used to describe postcolonial Africa. They write:

“[Hutt] deployed terms like ‘tribal superstitions and customs,’ ‘primitive background,’ and ‘backwardness of the indigenous peoples.’ He further adduced a ‘high “leisure preference” of Africans,’ owing to their ‘unacquisitive nature’ and general ‘wantlessness’” (Darity et al. 2023:7).

As they continue, “Through such language, Hutt propagated an idea that blacks were not efficient economic agents; they were lacking, and their irrational behaviours helped explain their position in society.”

Yes, Hutt used language that grates on modern ears. At the same time, their superficial language test is virtually guaranteed to generate what they would surely agree are false positives.

What if Hutt had written that the “Primitive man in Africa is found in the interior jungles and down at Land’s End in South Africa” or that “Turning now to Negro family and social life we find, as among all primitive peoples, polygamy and marriage by actual or simulated purchase;” if Hutt’s rhetorical flourishes had described African-Americans as “black, backward, and ungraceful” persons with “wildly weak and untrained minds;” or even if, in an ostensible display of paternalistic sympathy, Hutt had referenced the “fine work” of certain missionaries in “ameliorating the lot of backward people” in Africa? These excerpts are not from Hutt’s work, however. They appear in the writings of famed civil rights activist and avowed progressive W.E.B. Du Bois (1915, 1903, 1944), whom Darity et al. have effusively praised in their scholarship.

Electronic copy available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=4511816
Modern readers would also wince at historical depictions of Haiti’s “social backwardness and primitive conditions” in the aftermath of slavery or references to its “primitive and simple-minded” inhabitants. These are not Hutt’s words, however; they are from the Marxist historian C.L.R. James’s classic *The Black Jacobins* (1938), which Darity (1997) describes as a “marvelous book.” Had Hutt described apartheid as an example of “economic subjugation of the backward communities” of Africa, this no doubt would have appeared in the quote above as evidence of Hutt’s white supremacy and “cultural determinism.” Once again, though, these are not Hutt’s words. They are from Marxist theorist Rosa Luxemburg’s (1913) description of African colonialism, which Darity (1979) has also praised. Surely Hutt would be disqualified from polite academic society had he used the N-word. As far as we know, he didn’t—but Karl Marx did, along with other racist and colonialist tropes in his written correspondence.8

IV. Conclusion

Was W.H. Hutt a white supremacist? If we adopt a widely accepted definition like “the belief, theory, or doctrine that white people are inherently superior to people from all other racial and ethnic groups, especially Black people, and are therefore rightfully the dominant group in any society,” then the answer is a clear and unambiguous “no.”9 As he wrote (1964:13),

“May I assure hasty critics that I deplore colour discrimination no less than they do; the difference is that I believe it can be eradicated without bloodshed or the worse injustices that would accompany their methods.”10

---

8 See e.g. Moore (1974) for numerous examples of racist and colonialist language in the works of Marx and Engels.

9 The definition of “white supremacy” is from Dictionary.com: https://www.dictionary.com/browse/white-supremacy, last accessed July 5, 2023.

10 It is a common “Huttian” theme. See also Magness and Carden (2022) for more examples in which Hutt disavows white supremacy in plain language.
Ultimately, the only evidence remaining of Hutt’s white supremacy is its repeated assertion by Darity et al., the perhaps not-unreasonable belief that they wouldn’t have written an entire paper about it if there weren’t something there and the fact that Hutt was willing to hold his nose and let people believe horrible things as long as they were not actively interfering with others.

Hutt was no revolutionary like Frantz Fanon, but he nevertheless challenged discrimination, racism, and injustice. He did not deny that colonialism’s history—like most history—drips with blood and gore. He did deny that the postcolonial transition to a liberal, multiracial society must (Magness et al. 2022).

Darity et al. (2023) claim to have offered an “irrefutable” condemnation of the economist W.H. Hutt. They have not. Hutt did considerable academic and popular work to dismantle one of the twentieth century’s most infamous structures of oppression—South African apartheid; “locking in racial disadvantage” was not among his goals. Darity et al. have relied on carelessly (carefully?) edited selections from Hutt’s work that paint him as a demon when stripped from their context and interpreted maliciously.

In the epilogue to his book *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning*, Nigel Biggar discusses Fanon and writes (Biggar 2023:359),

“The lack of historical scrupulousness can reasonably be attributed to the ideas that ‘truth’ is whatever the anticolonialist revolution requires and that revolutionary vitality should be preferred to bourgeois reason. For those ideas make history no longer an authority that constrains what must be claimed, but merely an armoury to be ransacked in the interest of rhetorical advantage.”

“[R]ansacked in the interest of rhetorical advantage” describes how Darity et al. use Hutt’s work—and it describes much of the larger body of literature purporting to show that the ideas of...
Buchanan, Hutt, Milton Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, and others have grown in the soil of racism and exploitation.

This brings us to what they describe as a “stormy” response to MacLean (2017). It was “stormy” not because MacLean found skeletons in Buchanan’s closet but because her representation of his ideas was wildly inaccurate and because she responded to substantive criticism with sneers, insults, and a conspiracy theory about a “coordinated attack” (Carden 2017, Flaherty 2017). Their tactics are hallmarks of what Richard Hofstadter (1965 [2008]) called the “Paranoid Style,” whereby one sees a clearly delineated enemy as “a perfect model of malice, a kind of amoral superman” (p. 31) who is “not caught in the toils of the vast mechanism of history” (p. 32).

Such is the style of the academic literature that purports to locate the world’s problems, real and perceived, in the elaborate machinations of something called “neoliberalism” (Brennan and Magness, 2019). As Hofstadter warns, the paranoiac’s “enemy is on many counts the projection of the self” (p. 32). Darity et al. (2023) correct some of the most egregious errors in their working paper and, in adding page numbers to Hutt’s dedication of The Impoverishers, show us something we overlooked (Hutt 1984; Magness and Carden 2022:218). But they “correct” other misleading claims superficially at best, and they continue to evade “reckoning with the substance of the empirical, including archival, documentation” that challenges and contradicts their arguments.11

Critics of Democracy in Chains have used evidence rather than presumptions to show that Buchanan was not, in fact, a segregationist co-conspirator (Fleury and Marciano 2018; 2019). A few of the many examples of research pointing out these problems in MacLean (2017)’s treatment of Buchanan are Munger (2018), Carden and Magness (2017), Magness et al. (2019), Carden et al. (2022), and Fleury and Marciano (2019). Magness and Janaskie (2022) identify contextomy in Slobodian (2019) and report on similar patterns of quotation-editing that falsely depicts economist Ludwig von Mises as a racist.
Magness, Carden, and Geloso 2019; Carden, Geloso, and Magness 2022; Munger 2018). Now, we add to the literature showing that Hutt was, in fact, an *antiracist* (noun: “An opponent of racism”) who devoted considerable attention to *antiracist* (adjective: “Opposing or inhibiting racism”) scholarship and commentary.\(^\text{12}\) He passionately argued against the Colour Bar and Apartheid, called out unions for supporting racist policies, and devoted *The Economics of the Colour Bar* to refuting ideas about the “natural inferiority” of Black South Africans. It’s time to see classical liberalism for what it is. As McCloskey (2019) and Boettke (2021) put it, no slavery, no colonialism, full equality of opportunity, and recognition that markets are ultimately a source of both prosperity and a corrective to any ideas about anyone’s alleged “natural inferiority.”

References


Electronic copy available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=4511816

Marciano, Alain. 2023. Buchanan and clubs, how dubious was the concept? Comment on Darity, Camara, and MacLean. Working Paper: University of Montpellier.


