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Conservatism & the morality of impulse

by [Kenneth Minogue](#)

On the challenges of responding to modernist morality.

Conservatism is a form of political wisdom that consists in thinking that the present can best be understood through what the past reveals. It is a way of “accessing” political reality, often obscured beneath confusing talk, the chatter and “noise” of the moment. That is why the historian Maurice Cowling thought that conservatism was a kind of historical method, a discovery procedure. Conventional academics may find this view absurd. How can a practical, value-laden idea like conservatism play an explanatory role? The answer is that it can help us avoid falling into at least some illusions. I propose to follow this thought in asking: What is the reality of early twenty-first-century Anglophone life?

I take my bearing from the last decade of the nineteenth century—from Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897, or perhaps in American terms from the Spanish-American War of 1899. Queen Victoria and Teddy Roo ...

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