

government? On this question John Stuart Mill parts company with fundamentalists such as Taliban members and Patrick J. Buchanan. For Mill, individuals judge best for themselves how to live. For fundamentalists such as Buchanan, governments have an obligation to pass laws that discourage what fundamentalism defines as immoral choices.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is an allegory?
2. Explain Plato's allegory of the cave: What is the setting, who are the characters, and what major events transpire? What does this allegory teach about the process of gaining enlightenment?
3. How does Plato describe justice? What are the three classes residing in the just society? How does Plato describe injustice?
4. What is the purpose of the state according to Hobbes? How does his answer to this question relate to his understanding of human nature?
5. Discuss Aristotle's concept of equality, and relate this concept to the six-part classification of governments outlined by Aristotle. Of the six types of government, which are proper (and why) and which are improper (and why)?
6. Jefferson, Tecumseh, and Mendes teach the benefits of equality; however,

each writer may be viewed as anti-Aristotelian in conceptualizing equality. Explain this anti-Aristotelian element in Jefferson, Tecumseh, and Mendes by noting how Jefferson, Tecumseh, and Mendes separately define and explain equality.

7. How do the works of Nietzsche and Vonnegut offer a critique of equality? How does Nietzsche's discussion of equality relate to his analysis of slave morality?
8. How does Machiavelli describe effective states? How does Madison disagree with Machiavelli?
9. Compare and contrast answers given by Mill and the fundamentalists to the following question: Should governments pass laws to make citizens ethical?
10. Discuss three decrees introduced by the Taliban.

### FOLLOWING UP THROUGH INTERNET SOURCES

#### *Ethics and Politics:*

- Ethics Updates, edited by Lawrence M. Hinman (<http://ethics.acusd.edu/index.html>). Links to discussions of diverse issues on ethics and politics.
- American Civil Liberties Union (<http://www.aclu.org>). An organization that follows an approach to ethics and politics similar to John Stuart Mill's theory, emphasizing individualism.
- American Center for Law and Justice (<http://www.aclj.org>). An organization that follows an approach to ethics and politics similar to fundamentalist theory, emphasizing traditional Christian morality.
- Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) (<http://www.rawa.org>). Updates, news, and background on RAWA's opposition to Taliban fundamentalist politics.



## Political Ideologies I

### Liberalism, Conservatism, and Socialism

Chapter 4 discussed some of the ethical questions central to the history of political theory. This subfield of political science, focusing on normative issues, is the study of how thinkers have sought to analyze difficult questions relating to such issues as equality, state power, and justice. This chapter continues the examination of political theory but shifts the focus to an analysis of political ideologies. Political ideologies are pragmatic applications of normative theories. Liberalism, conservatism, socialism, fascism, feminism, and environmentalism are examples of political ideologies. Each ideology draws on the history of political theory and seeks to apply the lessons of this history to the present. Thus, many conservatives look to the eighteenth-century writings of Edmund Burke to find solutions to the problems of immorality in politics, just as many socialists look to the nineteenth-century writings of Marx to find solutions to the problem of class conflict under capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

Ideological debates are fascinating testimony to the diversity of the human imagination. We will examine each ideology by looking at its origins and development.

#### LIBERALISM

Liberalism is a term rooted in the Latin word *liber*. *Liber* means free. **Liberalism** advocates liberty, another word linguistically related to *liber*.<sup>2</sup> The theoretical roots of liberalism can be found in the seventeenth-century writings of John Locke and

the eighteenth-century works of Adam Smith. These early liberals are known as **classical liberals**. In the nineteenth century, liberalism was modified by theorists such as T. H. Green and Jane Addams. This later form of liberalism is termed **modern liberalism**.<sup>3</sup>

### Classical Liberalism

John Locke (1632–1704) was an English philosopher who is often credited with being the originator of liberalism. Locke lived during a period of political turmoil. In his lifetime, one king was executed and the institution of the monarchy was, in turn, abolished, reinstated, and restricted in its powers. Despite the disorder surrounding him, Locke's personal life was one of accomplishment and success. He graduated from Oxford in 1656, taught philosophy, and published works on philosophy, politics, religion, and education.<sup>4</sup>

In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), Locke argues in favor of limited government and protection for individual rights. He builds a logical case for both propositions by extensively discussing human nature, the state of nature, laws of nature, and the origins of states. Locke's discussion of these topics culminates in his rejection of the political theory of English writer Robert Filmer (1588–1653), a very popular theorist who supported the doctrine of the divine right of kings. According to Filmer, God gives monarchs absolute authority over citizens. As Filmer saw it, citizens were born into subjection to the monarchy and had the duty to be faithful subjects. In contrast, Locke believed that people created governments by freely consenting to those governments and that governments should serve citizens, not hold them in subjection.<sup>5</sup>

Locke begins his liberal theory by examining human nature. He writes of human nature in reference to what he calls a *state of nature*. The state of nature was a period of time prior to the creation of governments. It was a time in human history when women and men lived in small groups and communities, and for Locke it was a very revealing period of human history. What was so important about the state of nature? Individuals living in this state of nature had not been influenced or shaped by laws or political decrees, because governments themselves did not yet exist. Consequently, Locke contends, we can look to individuals living in this natural state to see what humans are like at their most natural level. We can look into the state of nature to observe human nature itself.

If you find it unusual that Locke would refer to a long-ago state of nature in his discussion of contemporary politics, recall that Locke was writing before the development of modern geology and evolutionary biology. For Locke, therefore, history did not consist of a very long timeline. In fact, all human history was assumed to consist of a few thousand years. Thus it made sense to Locke to assume that one could trace back the existing generation to a not-so-remote state of nature.<sup>6</sup>

According to Locke, what we learn from a study of the state of nature is that human nature is characterized by freedom, equality, and reason. Humans are naturally free, born with the duty to submit to no one. That is, in the state of nature are no natural rulers to whom we owe obedience. On the contrary, each person is naturally equal to all others, according to Locke. Each person is born equally free and equally in possession of certain natural rights (natural rights are rights we have just by virtue of being human). These rights are an element of our natural

### BOX 5.1 Classical and Modern Liberalism

#### *Classical Liberalism Teaches That*

- The individual is more important than the state and becomes a citizen of the state only through consent.
- The individual is rational and capable of making his or her own decisions; this makes the individual capable of autonomy and self-government.
- Progress is possible in political affairs, so change is not to be feared.
- State power should be limited.
- Economic inequality is not necessarily bad.
- Economic freedom (individual freedom to make economic choices) is more important than economic equality.

#### *Modern Liberalism Teaches That*

- Government intervention into individual and social life is sometimes necessary to prevent some individuals from denying freedom to others.
- Liberty should be understood in broad, expansive, positive terms: as the liberty to seek out ways to develop human potential and contribute in a meaningful way to society.
- Economic inequality is to be regarded with suspicion, as a condition likely to undermine the welfare of those who have lower incomes and thus to erode their chances of being free (freedom being defined as expansive liberty).

human nature. Locke believed that our natural rights include the right to life, liberty, and property.<sup>7</sup> Insofar as each of us is equally human, each of us has an equal claim to enjoy these rights, freely.

As you can see, the concepts of natural equality, natural right, and natural freedom are logically connected in Locke's theory. These ideas are also closely related to Locke's concept of natural reason. Humans possess a natural capacity to reason and can use this reason to deduce a set of ethical codes by which to live. Locke calls these ethical principles the *laws of nature*. Notice the logic of his terminology. He has told us that reason is rooted in human nature; therefore, that which is deducible by reason is natural. It is a reflection of and product of nature. Laws of nature are commonsensical codes, ones that are obviously correct to reasoning men and women. Locke identified three specific laws of nature:

- *Preserve yourself.* Take care of yourself and your needs. Work to promote your own survival.
- *Do not harm others.* Do not seek out trouble by starting conflicts and wars. If you do seek to harm others, this will put you at risk of being harmed and will thus violate the first law of nature.
- *Help others if possible.* Help others if you can help them without putting yourself at risk.<sup>8</sup>

According to Locke, each of these laws is self-evident to any thinking person. It makes sense to take care of yourself, to avoid creating dangerous situations in which you may die, and to help people who may later remember your good deeds and help you. Through his discussion of the laws of nature, Locke comes to a very important conclusion: People are capable of running their own lives because they have common sense. Government does not make people rational. Government

does not make people fit for each other's company. People have within their own natural makeup the capacity for rational existence.

Governments are formed because rational people see that they are useful. In the state of nature, certain annoyances may arise. Individuals pursuing their own preservation and betterment (consistent with the first law of nature) may act in self-serving ways at times. In disputes, individuals may be biased in favor of their own positions. These biases may make it difficult to resolve disputes in an impartial manner that is fair to all parties. In addition, an individual may act contrary to reason. An individual may, on occasion, violate the laws of nature. Lockean theory, in positing that reason is a part of human nature itself, suggests that such acts of irrationality may not be so frequent as to become routine, but even if infrequent, such acts of irrationality create serious problems. If someone violates a law of nature—for example, if someone steals the property belonging to another—in the state of nature, individuals themselves must be the ones to enforce the laws of nature. In the case of the thief, individuals must find the thief, adjudicate any disputes over the thief's actions, and then execute the laws of nature to discourage future theft. These tasks are cumbersome and time consuming. Would it not be nice to get rid of these annoyances? Would it not be nice to assign someone the task of enforcing the laws of nature so that those individuals who abide by the laws of nature need not do the enforcing? The desire for such a convenient arrangement is the motivation for creating government. Government can do the job of legislating, adjudicating, and enforcing rules in conformity with the laws of nature.<sup>9</sup>

Government is created when individuals come together and give clear, direct, explicit consent to the formation of the state. Only those who freely give their direct consent to the state are considered citizens of this state. That is, no one is forced to leave the state of nature, so no one's natural freedom is violated. In creating the state, Locke explains, citizens give it power, but only limited power. The state has the limited tasks of making civil laws (human-made laws), which uphold the laws of nature. In this way, natural rights are protected and made more secure by the existence of an institution (the state) with the specific responsibility of making and enforcing laws to protect life, liberty, and property. If the state ever exceeds its appropriate authority, it violates these rights. Locke calls such a state tyrannical, authoritarian, illegitimate. After all, such a state is making war against reason and the laws of nature. Such a state has lost its integrity and is not worthy of obedience.<sup>10</sup>

In this discussion, Locke has made several points central to classical liberalism. First, he has established that *the individual is more important than the state*. The individual is the creator of the state and state authority. Without the explicit consent of individuals, states would not exist. Second, Locke has concluded that *the individual is capable of independence and self-determination*. Freedom is natural. Self-control and self-direction are natural to people because people can figure out the laws of nature. People are capable of making decisions for themselves and living their lives as they please and for the most part can do so without causing problems for others. Third, Locke has established an ideological basis for believing that *progress is possible in human affairs*. Because people are rational, they can take positive steps to improve and reform their societies. Change is not to be feared, because rational humans can direct and steer change in ways that will promote

well-being. Fourth, the logic of Locke's theory proposes that *state power should be limited*. States make our lives more convenient, because they take on the burden of enforcing the laws of nature. This enforcement offers protection to us as we enjoy our natural rights. However, states are not in existence to make us moral, or make us rational, or tell us how to live. Each individual, as long as he or she does not violate the laws of nature, should be left alone by the state, so that the individual can decide how best to enjoy his or her natural freedom.<sup>11</sup> Thus, with reference to the debates discussed in Chapter 4, classical liberals such as Locke side with Madison over Machiavelli on questions of state power and with Mill over the fundamentalists on issues involving morality and politics.

Classical liberalism was elaborated on by Adam Smith (1723–1790). Smith was a Scottish moral philosopher whose economic writings offer an elaborate justification of both classical liberalism and capitalism. Indeed, in Smith's theory liberalism and capitalism are mutually reinforcing social arrangements. Liberalism and capitalism share a conceptual basis—both are founded on the premise of individual rationality. According to Smith, individuals pursue rational self-interest. In terms of economics, for example, individuals seek to satisfy their interests and needs by exchanging objects (money, goods, services), and each party to the exchange seeks to better his or her position. If A desires object X and can obtain X on terms more favorable from B than from C, A's rational self-interest will incline A to exchange with B. B is rewarded and C is encouraged to improve his or her objects of exchange in order to benefit from future transactions. Capitalism—an economic arrangement in which individuals exchange their private properties according to their own self-interest with little or no state interference—is thus justified by Smith.<sup>12</sup>

Consider the parallels with Locke. Both writers argue that individuals are rational enough to decide what is best for themselves. Think back to the preceding example: A can figure out how best to meet his or her needs—trade with B, not C. Government is not needed to direct A's decision. Individuals deduce for themselves how to live well.<sup>13</sup> In short, both Smith and Locke agree that because individuals are so very rational, expansive regulatory governments are unnecessary. The departure from Filmer is a radical one; free individuals have no need of absolute monarchies. According to Smith, government's role should be restricted to providing security and public services such as public roads, bridges, and schools.

Under classical liberalism, natural equality does not lead to economic equality. Although Locke and Smith proclaim that individuals are naturally equal (that is, when individuals are born no one has any natural or preordained political authority over any other person), they conclude that individuals living in society will come to be divided into different economic groups. Locke asserts that economic classes of rich and poor will emerge as an economy develops. Locke attributes this class division to the use of money. He outlines his argument by explaining that, in the early stages of economic development in any country, individuals tend to barter and exchange perishable objects. One person trades apples for beans, for instance. Because these objects of exchange are perishable, hoarding them for the purpose of stockpiling large quantities is very difficult. As a result, people's possessions remain relatively equal, because no one can stockpile and acquire significantly more than anyone else. With economic development, however, societies begin to use money as a medium of exchange. Money does not spoil and can be hoarded.

Some individuals can be expected to take advantage of the imperishable quality of money and start to store up increasingly large amounts. In this way, classes of rich and poor begin to appear.

According to Locke, this emergence of economic inequality does *not* create injustice or render the society illegitimate. Why? By using money, individuals imply that they are willingly consenting to the consequences of money. Economic inequality is consented to by rational individuals, whom Locke considers to be perfectly capable of deciding for themselves how to manage their own lives. Notice something very important in Locke's theory: The same logic that is used to justify limited government is used to justify economic inequality—namely, the notion that individuals know best, that individuals should be left alone to make their own choices.<sup>14</sup> If individuals consent to having economic inequality within their communities, then so be it.

Smith also argues that natural equality is not sufficient to produce economic equality. Smith's discussion is very candid.<sup>15</sup> He points out that, at birth, children are basically equal in terms of natural abilities. As children grow up, however, they enter different worlds. One pursues education, and the other does not. Consequently, as adults, they earn different returns on the labors they exchange. Physicians earn more than unskilled laborers. Like Locke, Smith accepts economic inequality. He sees society as making a rational tradeoff when it embraces the capitalism in which the physician's and the unskilled laborer's lives are so very different. In return for economic inequality, society gains all the creative output from individuals producing goods and services as diverse as those created by physicians, unskilled laborers, and the other occupational groups comprising the economic sector.

Locke and Smith have arrived at some important conclusions, which go on to serve as basic precepts of classical liberalism's approach to economic policy. First, economic inequality is not necessarily unjust or unfair. Economic inequality is not a violation of natural equality. Instead, it arises from the free choices made by rational individuals sorting out the options available to them. Second, individual freedom is not to be sacrificed for the creation of economic equality. States are not to intrude into the economic interactions of individuals and mandate equal outcomes in terms of salaries, wages, prices, or property values. States are not to become "despotic" in order to give people equal incomes.

Over the years, classical liberalism has appealed to women and men who are drawn to its arguments in favor of keeping government small and limited. Classical liberalism has been praised by many for upholding individual liberty and freedom of choice in politics and economics.

Yet some writers have seen in classical liberalism something terribly flawed—even sinister. Is classical liberalism too comfortable with economic inequality, they ask? Does classical liberalism's concern with limiting state power turn it into an ideology that is insensitive to matters of social justice? Questions such as these led to critical disagreements among liberals. Out of the debate modern liberalism emerged.

### Modern Liberalism

English philosopher T. H. Green (1836–1882) was an advocate of modern liberalism. Modern liberals make the following revisions to liberal theory: They argue in

favor of interventionist government and expansive liberty. **Interventionist government** is government that takes a role in regulating economic and social interactions. **Expansive liberty** is the objective sought by the interventionist government.

Green justifies his revised form of liberalism by pointing to what he considers to be the unacceptable implications of classical liberalism. Classical liberalism, he writes, views freedom in terms of freedom from state intervention. Someone is free, as the classical liberals see it, if he or she is not being regulated by or dictated to by government. For Green, this definition of freedom is too narrow. He prefers to define freedom as broader, more expansive, and more inclusive. Green's liberty is freedom to expand the boundaries of human potential and make a creative contribution to society.<sup>16</sup> Modern liberalism's expanded outlook conceptualizes liberty as maximizing individual potential and using that potential to be a contributing member of a society. It is a liberty involving living fully and actively, using one's talents and fulfilling one's potential.

Consider the ramifications of this revised definition of freedom. Think about hypothetical person Mary Smith. Let's say that she is unemployed and living in a homeless shelter. She is free to make personal choices in terms of where to look for a job, what kind of job to seek out, and how many hours to spend at the shelter or looking for employment. Of course, she is also free to make choices on private matters of conscience—whether to believe in God or not, whether to support capital punishment or not, and so on. Despite her freedom of thought and opinion, however, let's say she is demoralized by her poverty and feels defeated and hopeless.

Is person Mary Smith free? From a classical liberal standpoint, because she is not having choices dictated by an intrusive government and is not being interfered with, she is free. She is not happy, but she is free, and classical liberals would expect her to use her rationality to find a path out of this desperate, unhappy existence. From Green's perspective, however, Mary Smith is not free. Her potential to participate as a contributing member of society is being wasted. How very different her life appears, depending on how one defines liberty. If one moves from a classical liberal definition to a modern one, hypothetical person Mary Smith is transformed from a free person into an unfree (oppressed) one.

Green argues that an interventionist state is needed to promote the cause of this new expansive liberty, which is often called "positive liberty." States should not be limited to the protection of individualism (Locke and Smith are incorrect), but should intervene in society on behalf of those whose positive liberty is violated. Modern liberals such as Green supported government action to help those who lacked the resources needed to develop their own potential. Modern liberals have called for government assistance to working women and men who could not, in the absence of laws supporting them, demand that employers provide safe working conditions and increased wages. Modern liberals have also proposed that laws be enacted to regulate the amount of hours that employees could be required to work, and that laws be passed to promote regulations to further public health. Did such laws interfere with negative liberty? Of course, they did, Green argued. It was government's job to intervene in society and restrict the liberty of one person or group if that person or group happened to be carrying out actions that denied others the opportunities of pursuing the fullest realization of human potential (expansive liberty).<sup>17</sup>

Green's theory provides insights on the logic of modern liberal ideology. First, we can see from Green's writings that modern liberals believe that state intervention can promote and enhance individual freedom. Defining freedom as expansive liberty, modern liberals assert that state regulations protecting health, education, workplace conditions, and generally promoting the well-being of the less powerful sectors of society prevent exploitation and the denial of (positive) liberty. Increased state intervention in society can lead to increased levels of expansive liberty. Second, modern liberals are not as willing as are classical liberals to accept economic inequality. According to modern liberals, someone who is poor may have a difficult time realizing his or her potential; therefore, poverty is an impediment to expansive liberty and should be remedied by laws enacted by the interventionist state. In other words, modern liberals believe in both natural equality and economic equality. Third, modern liberalism promotes the social welfare of society. Indeed, we can see the parallels between Green's ideology and the logic of welfare policies designed to help the marginalized to achieve their potential.

Jane Addams (1860–1935) advanced the cause of modern liberalism in the United States. Addams was a founder of Hull House in Chicago. Hull House was a community center that offered assistance to immigrants, workers, young women, and others in need of social services. In addition, Addams campaigned for legislation to support social welfare programs, women's rights, consumer protection, and economic equality. Specifically, she worked on behalf of the eight-hour workday, the prohibition of child labor, and the right of workers to strike. Addams viewed these reforms in quintessentially modern liberal terms: If the state intervened to help those in need, this would take away the freedom of the powerful to exploit the weak and would therefore replace exploitation with expansive liberty. Thus when Hull House and/or the state intervened to help the needy, this intervention advanced the welfare and freedom of the powerless.<sup>18</sup> If classical liberals were correct in saying that individual freedom is a wonderful thing, shouldn't the powerless enjoy it as well and thus become empowered? To Addams, the answer was obvious, and the state was needed to act as advocate and enforcer of expansive liberty.

Modern liberalism is reflected in many of the New Deal policies of the Roosevelt era. Franklin Roosevelt (1882–1945) was president from 1933 to 1945. During the years of the Great Depression, his administration established the following federal agencies and/or policies:

- *Federal Emergency Relief Administration*. Provided federal funds to state governments to finance relief programs to help the unemployed.
- *Works Progress Administration (WPA)*. Created federally funded jobs for the unemployed.
- *Banking Act of 1935*. Established governmental controls over the banking industry.
- *National Labor Relations Act*. Provided federal government protection for workers who wished to unionize and prohibited employers from a number of antiunion activities.
- *Social Security Act*. Established a federal pension and unemployment insurance system.

Notice the logic of these New Deal programs. Through the New Deal, the state intervened in society to protect individuals from the loss of expansive liberty.

### Classical and Modern Liberalism Today

Think about how disturbing the ideas of Green, Addams, and Roosevelt must have seemed to the classical liberals of the period. Modern liberals were advocating the very outcome that classical liberals fought so fiercely against: big government. Addams's defense of state intervention sounded tyrannical to many classical liberals, just as Filmer's defense of monarchy had sounded authoritarian to Locke in the 1600s. Not surprisingly, classical liberals disassociated themselves from this new liberalism. Many classical liberals started calling themselves *conservatives* because they did not wish to be identified with what was passing for liberalism.

This trend continues. Thus, in the United States many of the Republican Party's positions resemble classical liberalism in criticizing what Republicans see as "big government," although the Republican Party calls itself **conservative**.<sup>19</sup> We can also see classical liberal ideas reflected in the British Conservative Party. For instance, in his 1996 New Year's message, Conservative John Major reminded British citizens that the Conservative Party viewed the individual as more important than the state and believed the state's powers should be limited.<sup>20</sup> The individual should live as free from state intervention as possible, Major asserted. Major himself was merely recapitulating the classical liberal ideology of his predecessor, Conservative and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who described herself as a Lockean-inspired conservative.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, in the United States the Democratic Party represents itself as the liberal alternative to the Republicans, but its liberalism is for the most part the later version of liberalism—modern liberalism.<sup>22</sup>

Some contemporary classical liberals call themselves **libertarians**. The Libertarian Party of Canada, for example, explicitly identifies itself with classical liberal ideology.<sup>23</sup> Like early classical liberals, libertarians favor strict limits on state action.<sup>24</sup> For example, the Libertarian Party of the United States supports the following policies:

- Legalization of drugs
- Legalization of prostitution
- Abolition of Congressional subpoena powers
- Prohibition of censorship of books and movies
- Legalization of suicide
- Abolition of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
- Support for abortion rights
- Support for gay rights<sup>25</sup>

Each of these policies, the Libertarian Party argues, would return power to individuals and take it away from government. Smoking marijuana, watching certain movies, engaging in sex for money—these and other actions should not be forced on anyone, but neither should they be denied as choices to naturally free, rational individuals.

In contrast to the libertarianism just noted, recent platforms of the Democratic Party reflect many ideas of modern liberal ideology. This party's platforms have argued for a government that intervenes in society to help the disadvantaged. It has often accused the Republicans of believing that the state has no responsibility for coming up with solutions to social problems such as poverty; in contrast, the Democratic Party has put forth a vision of using government policy to give citizens more power and equality in their lives. In 1992, for example, the party's platform supported laws to improve workplace safety, to provide universal public health care, to expand public transportation, to support Medicaid, to advance women's rights (including the right to obtain an abortion), and to protect civil rights. Although sharing classical liberalism's concern with freedom of conscience and personal choice (negative liberty) in many areas, the Democratic Party expresses modern liberalism's argument that people are not fully free unless positive liberty exists. Thus one sees the influence of thinkers such as Green and Addams in the Democratic Party's positions.<sup>26</sup>

Summing up liberalism, we can see how the two forms of liberalism diverge in applying the lessons of political theory to the present. In terms of the debates over the ethical foundations of politics discussed in Chapter 4, classical liberals and modern liberals have very different views on how to leave the cave and achieve enlightenment. Although neither embraces Hobbes's call for authoritarianism, neither accepts Plato's concept of justice either. Classical liberals find justice and fairness in limited states, whereas modern liberals find it in interventionist states. Classical liberalism upholds natural equality but not economic equality, whereas modern liberalism advocates both kinds of equality. Neither form of liberalism is Machiavellian; however, clearly, on questions of state mobilization of power, modern liberals are more supportive of expanding state power than are classical liberals. Both classical and modern liberals advocate individual liberty, and as a result both tend to claim John Stuart Mill as an ally. Thus, we see, both types of liberalism draw on the history of political theory, but they disagree radically in terms of using that history to come up with pragmatic solutions for contemporary problems.

## CONSERVATISM

Conservatism is an ideology that is generally thought of as seeking to *conserve* or preserve some reality. Like liberalism, however, conservative ideology is complex and multidimensional.<sup>27</sup> There is no single form of conservatism. Indeed, we have already discussed one type of conservatism—classical liberal conservatism. Classical liberal conservatives argue for small government and thriving capitalism.

However, a second group of conservatives draw their ideas from the eighteenth-century teachings of Edmund Burke. These Burkean conservatives are called **traditional conservatives**, and their ideology differs dramatically from that of the classical liberal conservatives.

### Traditional Conservatism

British philosopher Edmund Burke (1729–1797) was both a scholar and a member of the British parliament. In both capacities, he opposed what he saw as the er-

### Box 5.2 Conservatism: Classical Liberal Conservatism and Burkean Traditional Conservatism

#### Classical Liberal Conservatism

- Makes the arguments of classical liberalism (see Box 4.1)

#### Burkean Traditional Conservatism

- Asserts that because of the profound human tendency toward irrational behavior, humans need guidance and direction from traditional authorities for society to enjoy peace and stability

- Argues that traditional authorities should pass on long-standing moral teachings through the family, religious institutions, and governmental laws
- Insists that compliance with traditional morality is more important than individual liberty; in other words, people should not have the freedom to violate moral precepts

rors of liberalism. His most famous work is *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which he uses the occasion of the French Revolution to comment on the importance of conserving tradition, authority, and moral values. Upholding traditional values is very important to Burkean conservatives. Indeed, as we will see, it is the driving force of their conservatism.

Burke begins his discussion of political ideology with a critical analysis of *human nature*. He emphasizes two points. First, Burke argues that human nature is not characterized by rational supremacy. Although individuals have the ability to reason, according to Burke, the ability is severely limited. Most people do not reason clearly. On observing history, Burke believes, one sees that people are often irrational, emotional, and unpredictable. Individuals most certainly do *not* possess the kind of reasoning capacity accorded to them by Locke and the classical liberals. In short, Burke explains, individuals are incapable of using their reason to run their own lives smoothly.<sup>28</sup>

Not only are people less rational than liberals believe them to be, but they are also naturally *unequal*, according to Burke. Burke asserts that differences in natural talents divide people into different levels of abilities. Recall that classical liberals, although never stating that people are equal in terms of all their abilities, argued in favor of the notion that people are naturally equal in terms of possessing natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Traditional conservatives such as Burke seek to emphasize a different point, namely that people naturally differ in political capacity. Some individuals are more capable of ruling than others; some individuals are better suited for political decision making than are others. Thus society is best arranged when individuals who are natural rulers do the ruling. To call for equality in the laws and to demand that all people be placed on the same (equal) level of decision making would be erroneous, according to Burke.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, Burke rejects classical liberalism's emphasis on natural rights. Classical liberals are wrong when they contend that the purpose of government is the protection of natural rights. This emphasis on rights confuses citizens, Burke asserts. People hear about having natural rights, and they begin to mistake rights for promises of power. As Burke explains it, if someone is told he or she has a right to something, he or she begins to expect it, begins to demand it. These demands

place undue pressures on society, as people clamor for the power to enjoy all that they're told they have a natural right to possess. Thus, Burke concludes, although natural rights technically exist in an abstract, analytical sense, they should not be the basis of government decision making, nor should they be stressed in political speeches and platforms. If governments stress rights, they engender grandiose expectations among the populace.<sup>30</sup>

Government should take care of human needs, rather than protect natural rights, according to Burke. Burke believes that humans have a fundamental need for order and control. Given the less than fully rational impulses of human nature, Burke writes, people have a fundamental need for stability, for a guiding direction in their lives to render social existence meaningful and harmonious.<sup>31</sup>

Burke gives long consideration to the implications of these insights. For example, he instructs his readers to ponder the ramifications of limits of reason. If reason is fragile, it is unreliable. Therefore, he concludes, classical liberalism must be wrong on two additional points. First, because reason is weak, it is impossible to deduce ethics (laws of nature) from reason. We need something other than reason to show us right from wrong. In looking to our reason to decide what to believe on euthanasia, for example, we can probably think of rational arguments in its favor. However, we can also probably imagine rational arguments against it. Yet if reason can justify either position, what good is it for deciding moral questions? This is Burke's point. Reason cannot be considered a trustworthy guide to ethical decision making because reason alone is insufficient to generate ethical clarity. Second, if reason is so very weak, reason is inadequate as the primary or only basis for individual decision making and self-guidance. If an individual cannot depend on reason to deduce any laws of nature, to figure out the consequences of any potential decisions, or to logically select between any possible alternatives, then this individual's reason has left him or her completely helpless.

Something beyond reason is needed. Something solid and trustworthy is needed. Traditional values are needed. Instead of looking to reason for answers, look to the moral guidelines passed down by generations of women and men. These guidelines have comforted humanity, provided solace during periods of crisis, represented moral clarity during times of uncertainty, and offered encouragement and strength during times of ethical confusion. Which sounds more reliable, traditional conservatives ask, trying to rationally deduce your life from scratch as you go along, or learning how to live well by following the ethical rules that have served humanity across the ages?

From the standpoint of political ideology, Burke has told us something very important. Traditional conservatives do not glorify traditional values just to be "old fashioned." They challenge us to conserve traditional morality because, without traditional morality, we lose our connection with ethical certainty. Traditional values teach us right from wrong in a way that reason, as we saw earlier, cannot. Reason can only confuse us by suggesting that there are no moral absolutes (because any side of any ethical dilemma can be made to look rational).

We are wise, Burkeans believe, if we come to know the difference between trends and traditional moral values. A trend is something new and different, such as a fashion or a fad. Traditional moral values, in contrast, are based on what endures after fads are long forgotten. Morality should not be like fashion. It should

not go out of style just because it is old. Indeed, the older the moral teachings, Burke argues, the more trustworthy those teachings tend to be. Hence, Burkeans are conservatives in a very literal sense, seeking to preserve older, tradition-oriented moralities, not replace them with something new in the name of progress.<sup>32</sup>

Civil institutions should teach traditional morality, according to Burke. Civil institutions are nongovernment organizations within society. Examples include families and religious institutions. By passing along long-standing moral values from one generation to the next, civil institutions prepare individuals to live peacefully and orderly. When civil institutions are operating in this manner, society functions smoothly, without the violence and disruption caused by upheavals such as the French Revolution. Governments are to support civil institutions by providing a secure setting in which they can operate. In protecting and nourishing these institutions, governments become part of a larger mission, participating in the grand process whereby each generation connects itself to those who came before, as the teachings of the past are conserved.<sup>33</sup>

Each of these points leads Burke to another conclusion. Morality is more important than unencumbered individual freedom. Individual freedom must be compromised so that individuals conform to the teachings of traditional values. Freedom should not include the freedom to act in an immoral manner. People should not insist on the freedom to act out any impulse or desire. Thus traditional conservatives believe in freedom, but freedom with boundaries.<sup>34</sup> It is not to someone's benefit, for example, to go out and do whatever is pleasing but destructive. It is not your true need to indulge your irrational and impulsive self. That would be comparable to living so boundlessly that you destroy yourself.

In the nineteenth century, English Cardinal John Henry Newman expressed this idea by contrasting good uses of liberty with bad ones. With regard to freedom of opinion, for example, Cardinal Newman explained that proper uses of liberty upheld morality, whereas improper exercises of liberty violated moral traditions.<sup>35</sup> Bad or improper liberty recognized no rules. For example, contemporary traditional conservatives might argue that pornography is a form of such liberty. Someone who publishes pornography and claims that doing so is a part of freedom of the press is taking freedom too far; he or she is exercising liberty of choice when he or she should be acknowledging traditional moral proscriptions against such behavior.

Thus, traditional conservatives favor freedom limited by an acknowledgment of the duty to live in compliance with goodness. Burke describes the society he favors in a revealing passage from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. In the good society, we live according to the laws of God, as passed from one generation to the next by traditional authorities.<sup>36</sup>

### Traditional Conservatism Today

Contemporary traditional conservatives share Burke's goal of elevating the moral lives of their societies. For example, one can look to the Conservative party of Norway and find Burkean concerns expressed throughout the party's program. In 1992, the Conservative party program expressed support for Christian values and

committed itself to the preservation of the moral values of the country. Like Burke, the party proclaimed that individuals require the guidance provided by the teachings of traditional institutions. Very significantly, the party rejected the classical liberal conservative call for limited government. The state's role should not be minimal, because the state's purpose is to support strong civil institutions that can provide the moral certainties needed by Norway's citizens.<sup>37</sup>

In contemporary U.S. politics, traditional conservative ideology has many proponents. Burkean ideology is reflected in conservative writer William Bennett's concern over the weakening of civil institutions, because such institutions are vital, Bennett believes, to the moral well-being of any society.<sup>38</sup> Burkean ideals are also articulated in many anti-abortion arguments made in recent years by Republicans such as Robert K. Dornan of California.<sup>39</sup>

Alan L. Keyes organized his 2000 Republican presidential bid around anti-abortion politics and traditional conservatism.<sup>40</sup> The Family Research Council (FRC) has also maintained a Burkean conservative posture in U.S. political debates in recent years. FRC members closely monitor candidates for office and assess their degree of compliance with what the group considers to be pro-family positions. The FRC defines "pro-family" in ways it defends as traditional; specifically, the FRC opposes gay civil rights, criticizes cohabitation by unmarried people, opposes no-fault divorce, and supports the view that children should be cared for by mothers, not commercial day care centers.<sup>41</sup>

Yet perhaps no group is more closely associated with traditional conservatism in U.S. politics than is the Christian Coalition. Formed in 1988, largely through the efforts of television minister Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition has affiliates in all 50 states. The Christian Coalition has embraced the following positions:

- Anti-abortion policy
- Opposition to legalization of gay rights, such as gay marriage
- Support for school prayer
- Opposition to sex education in the public schools
- Opposition to sidewalk sales of pornography

Notice the parallels with Burkean ideals. Individual freedom, it is believed, should be curtailed if that freedom veers into areas in which ethical taboos are violated.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, in a 1995 survey of the Christian Coalition, more than 60 percent of the Coalition's members stated that immorality was the most serious problem in the United States.<sup>43</sup>

Ironically, if by immorality one means support for individual choice on matters of abortion and sexuality, one of the greatest contributors to immorality is arguably conservatism itself—classical liberal conservatism, to be more specific. Lockeans have been in the forefront of arguing that individuals are the best judges in matters pertaining to their own lives. Because many Lockeans have called themselves *conservatives* since the late 1800s, they and the Burkeans share an ideological label, but not much else. As a result, conservative ideology is deeply divided, with classical liberal conservatives seeking to minimize state actions and traditional conservatives seeking to use the state's authority to make society more



Conservatives like the ones shown here display Burkean concerns over what they see as the loss of traditional morality. How would classical liberal conservatives view their protests?

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moral.<sup>44</sup> Classical liberals have been trying to convince individuals to be self-reliant, whereas Burkeans have been trying to convince people to submit to traditional authority. Not surprisingly, conservatives often come into conflict, as we see on examination of some recent controversies in conservative political ideology.

### Traditional Conservatism and Classical Liberal Conservatism in Conflict

Tensions between traditional conservatives and classical liberal conservatives have recently developed over issues relating to governmental regulation, the Contract With America, financial contributions to the 1996 Dole and 2000 George W. Bush presidential campaigns, and Republican relations with conservative stalwart Barry Goldwater. With respect to the first controversy, conservatives recently split over the issue of governmental regulation of the pharmaceutical industry. In 1995, the House Commerce Committee considered measures to ease such regulations.



Doing so would be consistent with classical liberal conservative arguments in favor of limited government. Indeed, Republican Thomas Bliley, Jr., chair of the committee, and Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich made stirring speeches in support of reducing regulations and fighting to end "big government." However, in 1995, other conservatives began pressuring the House Commerce Committee to *expand* federal regulation of drug companies in one particular area; these conservatives wanted massive regulations covering a drug called RU-486. This drug can be taken orally and can be used to induce abortions. Americans United for Life, a conservative pro-life group, lobbied vigorously for the committee to require extensive testing of the drug. They hoped that federal regulations in the form of innumerable testing and review procedures would effectively stall the pharmaceutical industry's plans to market RU-486. Here, classical liberal conservative goals of stripping government of excess power came into direct opposition to traditional conservative objectives of upholding traditional pro-life morality.<sup>45</sup>

Conservative ideology also became an arena of conflict and dissent during debates over the conservative-sponsored Contract With America. The Contract With America was put forward in Congress in 1995 as a means of reducing government spending and controlling taxes. Many conservatives believed that these two measures would spur economic growth and contribute to the country's financial strength. This made perfect sense from a Lockean/Smithian perspective. After all, who better than classical liberal conservatives can understand the need to work to create a society in which women and men pursue their rational self-interest without the meddlesome intrusions of an overspending government supported by excessive taxation?<sup>46</sup> However, as part of Contract With America's efforts to cut government spending, some conservatives proposed cutting the welfare benefits of children of single mothers as well as cutting payments to mothers who had additional children while on welfare. These provisions caused alarm among a number of traditional conservatives, who feared that such cuts would encourage women to have abortions. Indeed, some traditional-minded conservatives pronounced the Contract With America immoral.<sup>47</sup> Again, we see the complexity of conservative ideology: A conservative drawn to the ideology by Locke's arguments may have major conflicts with a conservative who identifies with Burke.

Bob Dole's 1996 presidential campaign was beset by conflicts involving contradictory pressures from classical liberal conservatives and traditional ones. In 1995, the Dole campaign received a contribution from a conservative group known as the Log Cabin Republicans (LCR). The Log Cabin Republicans support the Lockean/Smithian principles of capitalist economics and small government. They are also gay activists. To the LCR, government has no more business regulating sex lives than it does regulating business. Members of this organization liked Dole's commitment to rolling back taxes and government programs. Contributing to his campaign seemed rational and commonsensical. However, to some traditional conservatives, it seemed unacceptable for the Republican nominee for the presidency to be affiliated with a gay rights group. Dole's campaign returned the donation out of fear of antagonizing conservatives more Burkean than Lockean on the issue of gay rights; however, Dole himself later criticized his staff's de-

cision to return the money. Dole attempted to strike a compromise between the Log Cabin conservatives and the traditional conservatives such as Gary Bauer, who attacked what he saw as Dole's indecisive wavering on an issue involving moral absolutes. In the 2000 presidential campaign of George W. Bush, during the Republican primaries the Log Cabin Republicans criticized Bush for being too much of a traditional conservative. The group accused him of being dominated by the Burkean wing of the Republican Party and insensitive to the Lockean who were also depending on him for conservative representation. Responding to the criticism, Bush met with LCR members, and although the two sides continued to disagree on gay civil rights, LCR decided to endorse Bush. Indeed, LCR paid for \$250,000 in pro-Bush radio ads to help him defeat Al Gore.<sup>48</sup>

Conservative criticism of Dole and George W. Bush may be somewhat surprising, but recent conservative attacks on another long-standing Republican leader were downright shocking to some observers. One might think that if anyone could earn immunity from conservative reproach, Barry Goldwater would have been that person. Goldwater was the Republican nominee for the presidency in 1964. He was considered so conservative that many mainstream commentators charged him with extremism. Goldwater took it as a compliment. More recently, however, Goldwater was called a traitor by a number of fellow Republicans. He provoked their ire by stating that the genuinely conservative position on abortion is the pro-choice one and that the genuinely conservative position on gay issues is the pro-gay rights one. Goldwater's conservatism is clearly the conservatism of Locke and Smith. It is similar to the conservatism of Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman, who is pro-choice, pro-gay rights, and pro-affirmative action but at odds with the ideology of the Christian Coalition and the Family Research Council.<sup>49</sup>

As these examples illustrate, traditional conservatives often disagree with their classical liberal counterparts as much as they disagree with modern liberals. Traditional conservatives challenge both classical liberals and modern liberals to learn from the allegory of the cave and avoid the misleading shadows represented by an erroneous faith in reason, equality, and unrestrained individualism. Traditional conservatives share with Plato a belief that the well-ordered society is one in which each group learns its place and fulfills its natural calling, even though this implies that groups do not exist on a level of natural equality. In fact, traditional conservatives reject the concept of natural equality for many of the reasons conveyed in Vonnegut's fictional account in "Harrison Bergeron." A society that tries to make people equal simply ends up pushing everybody down to the lowest level. Traditional conservatives are closer to fundamentalism than John Stuart Mill on the matter of government and morality. Mill's freewheeling tolerance would be disastrous for a society of irrational and impulsive individuals, traditionalists contend. Finally, although traditional conservatives abhor Machiavellian calls for abandoning morality in favor of expediency, they do believe in empowering states so that states are effective at safeguarding the well-being of civil institutions. They would view with alarm any measure to weaken state power through excessive Madisonian checks and balances, if such weakening left the state powerless to support their pro-family and pro-morality measures.