

Progressive

Libertarian

# Liberalism

Classical Liberalism

Anarcho-Capitalism

Social Liberalism

Social Democracy

Green Liberalism

Libertarian Conservatism

Democratic Socialism

Green Socialism

Conservative Liberalism

Libertarian Socialism

Green Conservatism

Syndicalism

Social Conservatism

Communism

National Socialism

National Conservatism

Fascism

# Socialism

# Conservatism

Statist

Conservative



# Liberalism: introduction

Centres on the belief in individual freedom.

Two main schools of thought:

**Classical liberalism** – also known as economic liberalism or neoliberalism.

**Modern liberalism** – also known as social or welfare liberalism

Core themes:

- **Rational** – Human nature is rational but self-interested
- **Individualism** – The rights & interests of every individual are of primary importance
- **Freedom** – radical individuals are deserving of economic, social & political freedoms



# Liberalism: Core themes

**Rationalism** – A product of the ‘age of reason’ (C18th Enlightenment).

- Rejects beliefs that humans were governed by instinct, emotion & prejudice. Humans are creatures of reason & logic.
- Views/beliefs based upon evidence, not faith/dogma.
- Humans have the ability & right to change their own lives – to make their own decisions.
- Rational humans should also be able to resolve disputes through peaceful discussion/debate, not violence.

## *Implications of rationalism:*

Individual freedom

representative democracy

Tolerance

international peace & harmony 

# Liberalism: Core themes

**Individualism** – *a belief in the primacy of the rights & interests of the individual over any group, society or state.*

- Every individual is unique in his/her character.
- Liberals therefore believe in **foundational equality** (that every individual, despite different skills/talents is of equal moral worth, therefore deserving of the same fundamental human rights).
- These rival ideas of the uniqueness & equality of every individual have generated tensions within liberal philosophy.



# Liberalism: Core themes

**Freedom** – *the ability to think or act as one wishes.*

- Belief in the supreme importance of the individual leads logically to a commitment to individual freedom
- Early liberals (e.g. **John Locke**, 1632-1704) saw it as one of three ‘natural rights’ (Life, Liberty & Property).
- Unlike feudal times, individuals should make their own decisions about how they live, what they do, what they buy
- ‘Over himself, over his own body & mind, the individual is sovereign’ (**J.S.Mill**)
  - This does not mean a licence to harm others.

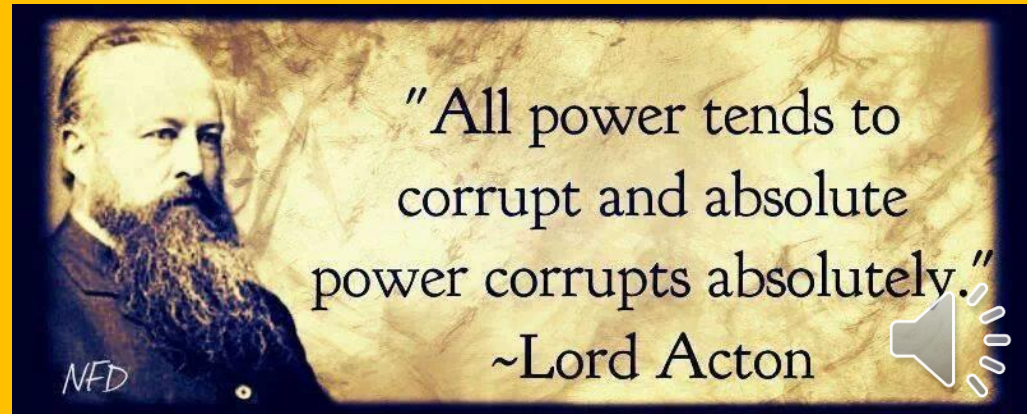


# Liberalism: View of government

All liberals subscribe to the **mechanistic model** of state and society. This is the belief that the state is like an artificial machine, created by individuals to serve and protect the freedoms of the individuals within it.

## Government is a necessary evil:

- Govt is necessary to protect self-serving individuals from one another
- Govt is evil in that embodies state power, which can be coercive and oppressive
- Power corrupts...



# Liberalism: View of government

## Limited Government:

- **Constitutionalism –Rule of law**
- **Separation of powers**
- **Bicameralism**
- **Political & economic pluralism**
- **Private property**
- **Consent (representative government)**
- **Political equality**
- **Civil rights & liberties**
- **Decentralisation**
- **Equal opportunities**
- **Open government & society**
- **Negative freedom**
- **Private spheres**
- **Tolerance**
- **Your go! (see handout 1)**



# Liberalism: View of government

1. Define constitutionalism and explain why liberals support it.
2. Define 'pluralism' and explain why liberals support it.
3. In what sphere do modern liberals value negative freedom?





# Liberalism: View of government

4. Write one quote that illustrates the liberal view on tolerance.

5. Why do liberals experience a conflict of values over attempts to control racism?

# Liberalism: View of government

6. Which of the checks upon government power listed below are 'external' (i.e. setting limits and boundaries to power); and which are 'internal' (i.e. fragmenting and dispersing power)?

For each tick the appropriate column & state why:

Limits to power	External check	Internal check	Reason/example
Constitutionalism			
Bicameralism			
Pluralism			
Rule of law			
Separation of powers			
Federalism			

# Liberalism: Classical liberalism

- Classical liberalism is the older strand.
- Politically, it advocated constitutional government based on consent & the rule of law.
  - **Negative freedom** - esp. from the state ('realm of coercion'). Private/civil society ('realm of freedom')
  - John Locke's 'night-watchman state'; Thomas Jefferson's 'government is best which governs least'
- Economically, it advocated *laissez-faire*, free-market capitalism. This economic dimension has been abandoned by modern liberals and taken up by neo-liberal conservatives.
  - Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' vs the 'dead hand of the state'



# Liberalism: Classical liberalism

6. What is meant by *laissez-faire* economy?
7. What did John Locke mean by the 'night-watchman' state?
8. What did Adam Smith mean by the 'invisible hand'?



# Liberalism: Classical liberalism

9. Why do classical liberals favour a substantial degree of economic inequality?

10. Explain what is meant by 'egotistical individualism'?

# Liberalism: Modern liberalism & freedom

- Maintains an emphasis on individual freedom & on constitutional & representative govt., but now looks favourably upon state economic intervention & welfare.
- Shared doctrines of classical liberalism:
  - The **mechanistic theory** of the state
  - Human nature as rational & self-interested, therefore corruptible
  - Belief in individual freedom
  - Belief in private property as a natural right



# Liberalism: Modern liberalism & freedom

- Have come to perceive that negative freedom can penalise certain individuals through no fault of their own
  - e.g. in free-market economy, 'survival of the fittest' undermines equality of opportunity, social justice, economic efficiency & social harmony
- Core doctrine is **positive individual freedom**
  - T.H. Green (1836-82) achieving one's potential & personal development (fulfilment) *with* state help & intervention
  - A mixed economy (health, education, rule of law, individual rights (Bill of Rights))



# Liberalism: Modern liberalism & the economy

- Rejects free-market in favour of a mixed economy
- Often described as **Keynesian economics** (1930s)
- In UK, post-war welfare state based upon 1942 Beveridge Report's '5 giants':
  - Want (poverty & hunger)
  - Disease (sickness)
  - Ignorance (lack of education)
  - Squalor (dirt & filth)
  - Idleness (unemployment)
- Proscribe '**developmental individualism**'
- 'Hand up', NOT 'hand out' (reject 'cradle to the grave')





# What is the main difference between classical liberalism & modern liberalism?

(see handout 2)

Classical liberalism	Modern liberalism



**11. What do modern liberals see as the proper role of the state?**

**12. Give three examples of how the liberal state may promote positive freedom:**



# Liberalism & democracy

**Warning!** A common assertion is that liberalism is unequivocally in favour of democracy.

An assumption (in the West) is liberal democracy is the only form of democracy... **Is it?**

## **Liberals are wary of democracy because:**

- Majoritarianism ('tyranny of the majority' can undermine individual sovereignty & minority & property rights
- Gives a voice to the uneducated & propertyless
- May generate growing state intervention & control
- May limit economic freedom & growth
- May produce dangerously powerful demagogues
- Power tends to corrupt innately self-seeking humans



# Liberalism & democracy

**Modern Liberals support democracy because:**

- **Power should be based upon legitimate authority**
- **Consent is necessary for legitimacy**
- **The people can constrain/influence the power of government & the state**
- **It helps to ensure political representation**
- **It may enhance pluralism (diffusion of power between competing groups)**
- **It can be used to enhance civil liberties**
- **It may be educative**
- **It may promote individual self-development**
- **It promotes social harmony (conflicts mediated/reconciled)**



# Liberalism & democracy

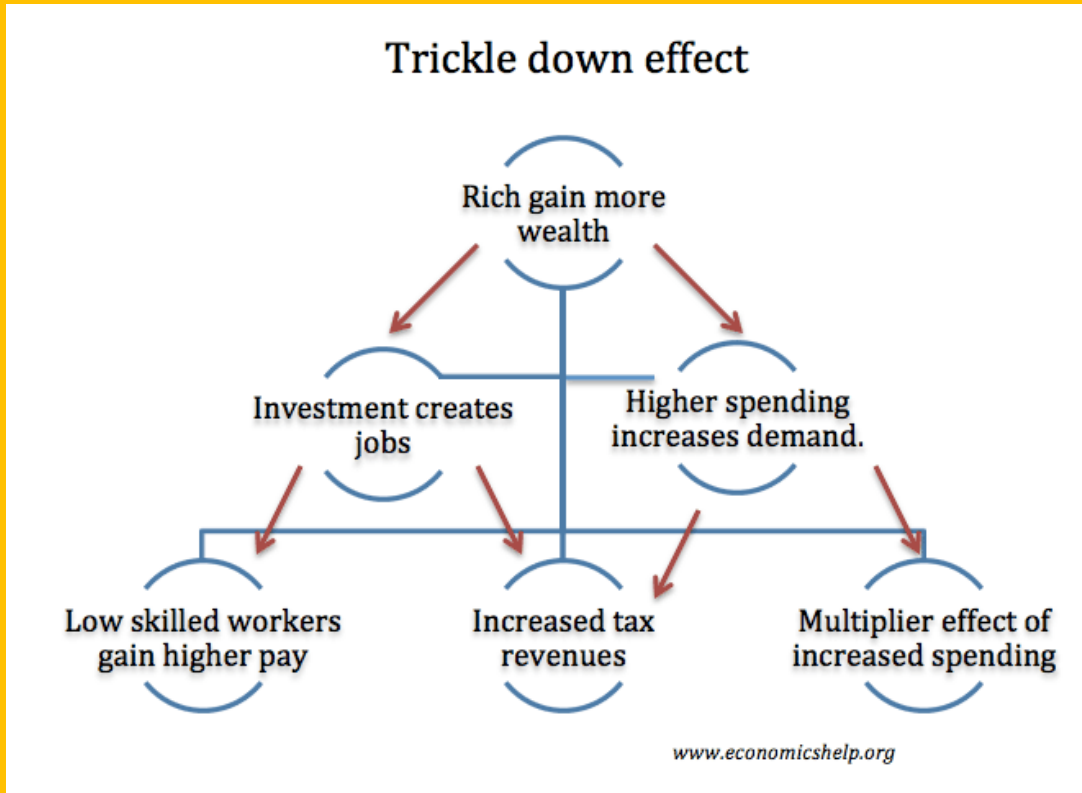
13. Why might the concept of 'liberal democracy' be a contradiction in terms?



# Influence of Liberalism – other philosophies

## On conservatism:

Thatcherism (& Reaganomics, 1970s-80s) adopted the free-market economics & atomistic individualism of classical liberalism (New Right, or neo-liberalism).



# Influence of Liberalism – other philosophies

## On socialism:

Post-war social democracy was influenced more by liberalism than socialism. It advocated a mixed, Keynesian, economy (like modern liberalism, but not individualist).

New Labour adopted a liberal form of **communitarianism**, emphasis on individual rights/entitlements balanced with social duty & moral responsibility, e.g.:

- Welfare reforms' *rights-and-responsibilities agenda*
- Constitutional reforms, were influenced by constitutional liberalism – with its belief on decentralising/fragmenting power.

