

ANDREW HEYWOOD

**POLITICAL
THEORY
AN INTRODUCTION**

FOURTH EDITION

Political Theory

Andrew Heywood

Political Theory

An Introduction

4th edition



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HIGHER EDUCATION



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For Helen and Jessie

If one listens one may be convinced; and a man who allows himself to be convinced by an argument is a thoroughly unreasonable person.

— **Oscar Wilde**, *An Ideal Husband*

‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean. Neither more or less.’

‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’

‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘who is the master. That is all.’

— **Lewis Carroll**, *Alice in Wonderland*

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Preface to the Fourth Edition

The aim of this book is to provide a primer in political theory by exploring the use and significance of the major concepts encountered in political analysis, clustered into related groups. In addition to general updating throughout, three broad changes have been made for this new edition. First, the focus of the book has been extended to take a much fuller account of the international/global dimension of politics, reflecting the fact that the disciplinary divide between politics and international relations has become increasingly difficult to sustain. In this light, a new chapter (Chapter 12, Security, War and World Order) deals with conceptual and theoretical issues related to key aspects of world politics. 'Thinking globally' features have been introduced to consider where, how and how meaningfully political ideas and concepts have been revised in the light of globalizing trends (global governance, cosmopolitan democracy, global social justice and so on). Chapter 4 has been revised to include a discussion of both the concept of transnationalism and the implications of nationalism for world politics. New 'tradition' boxes have also been included on cosmopolitanism, nationalism and realism.

Second, greater attention has been paid to non-Western and postcolonial approaches to political theory, helping to temper (but certainly not remove altogether) the book's essentially Western-centric orientation. 'Beyond the West' features have been introduced, each of which examines a particular non-Western approach to the topic or issue under consideration, drawing on Islamic, Buddhist, Chinese, Indian, African, Latin American and other traditions of thought. A new 'tradition' box has also been added focusing on postcolonialism. Third, the focus on the politics of difference has been expanded, in the light of the increased salience of the issues of identity and diversity. Chapter 9 has been revised to reflect in greater depth on the concept of identity, allowing for, among other things, a consideration of important debates about gender and multiculturalism.

Among the other changes in this edition are a more extensive discussion of the nature and development of political theory in Chapter 1, and the inclusion of questions for discussion at the end of each chapter. Additional materials can be found in the book's companion website. I would like to express my thanks for

their advice, support and encouragement to my publishers at Palgrave, Steven Kennedy and Stephen Wenham, and to Maddy Hamey-Thomas for providing editorial assistance throughout. This book is dedicated to my daughters-in-law, Helen and Jessie.

ANDREW HEYWOOD

1

What is Political Theory?

-
- DEFINING POLITICAL THEORY
Politics as science, philosophy and theory • Political theory in transition
 - USES AND ABUSES OF POLITICAL CONCEPTS
Normative and descriptive concepts • Contested concepts • Words and things
 - HOW TO USE THIS BOOK
-

Preview

It would be misleading, indeed patently foolish, to suggest that political conflict reflects nothing more than confusion in the words we use. It is certainly true that enemies often argue, fight and even go to war, both claiming to be 'defending liberty' or 'upholding democracy', or that 'justice is on our side'. The intervention of some Great Lexicographer descending from the skies to demand that the parties to the dispute define their terms before they proceed, stating precisely what each means by 'liberty', 'democracy' and 'justice', would surely be to no avail. The argument, fight or war would take place anyway. Politics, in other words, can never be reduced to mere semantics. And yet there is also a sense in which sloppiness in the use of language may help to protect ignorance and preserve misunderstanding. Language is both a tool with which we think and a means by which we communicate with others. If the language we use is confused or poorly understood, it is not only difficult to express our views and opinions with any degree of accuracy but it is also impossible to know the contents of our own minds.

The least, and some would say the most, we can do is be clear about the words we use and the meanings we assign to them. The goal is the one George Orwell outlined in his seminal essay, 'Politics and the English Language' (1957): language should be 'an instrument for expressing and not concealing or preventing thought'. This book sets out to clarify and examine the major ideas, concepts and doctrines used in political analysis, and, in so doing, to provide an introduction to some of the most recurrent controversies in political theory. This introductory chapter discusses the nature and parameters of political theory, and explores some of the difficulties encountered in the study of political concepts. How does political theory differ from both political science and political philosophy? Why are political concepts so often the subject of intellectual and ideological controversy?

Defining political theory

Politics as science, philosophy and theory

The study of politics is usually seen to encompass two, and some would say three, distinct subdivisions. On the one hand, there is what is called political science and, on the other, political theory and political philosophy – terms that are often used interchangeably but between which distinctions are sometimes drawn. Although political science was a child of the twentieth century, it drew on roots which date back to the empiricism of the seventeenth century. ‘Science’ refers to a means of acquiring knowledge through observation, experimentation and measurement. Its central feature, the ‘scientific method’, involves verifying or falsifying hypotheses by testing them against empirical evidence, preferably using repeatable experiments. The almost unquestioned status which science has come to enjoy in the modern world is based on its claim to be objective and value-free, and so to be the only reliable means of disclosing truth. Political science is therefore essentially empirical, claiming to describe, analyze and explain government and other political institutions in a rigorous and impartial manner. The high point of enthusiasm for a ‘science of politics’ came in the 1950s and 1960s with the emergence, most strongly in the USA, of a form of political analysis that drew heavily on behaviouralism. Behaviouralism developed as a school of psychology (known as behaviourism) which, as the name implies, studies only the observable and measurable behaviour of human beings. This encouraged political analysts such as David Easton (1979, 1981) to believe that political science could adopt the methodology of the natural sciences, leading to a proliferation of studies in areas like voting behaviour where systematic and quantifiable data were readily available.

Political theory and political philosophy may overlap, but a difference of emphasis can nevertheless be identified. Anything from a plan to a piece of abstract knowledge can be described as a ‘theory’. In academic discourse, however, a theory is an explanatory proposition, an idea or set of ideas that in some way seeks to impose order or meaning on phenomena. As such, all enquiry proceeds through the construction of theories, sometimes thought of as hypotheses – that is, explanatory propositions waiting to be tested. Political science, no less than the natural sciences and other social sciences, therefore has an important theoretical component. For example, theories, such as that social class is the principal determinant of voting behaviour, or that revolutions occur at times of rising expectations, are essential if sense is to be made of empirical evidence. This is what is called empirical political theory.

Political theory is, however, usually regarded as a distinctive approach to the subject, even though, particularly in the USA, it is seen as a subfield of political science. Political theory involves the analytical study of ideas and concepts that

have been central to political thought. Traditionally, this has taken the form of a history of political thought, focusing on a collection of ‘major’ thinkers – from, for instance, Plato to Marx – and a canon of ‘classic’ texts, an approach once widely seen as *the* defining aspect of the discipline of politics. As it studies the ends and means of political action, political theory is clearly concerned with ethical or normative questions, such as ‘Why should I obey the state?’, ‘How should rewards be distributed?’ and ‘What should be the limits of individual liberty?’ This traditional approach has about it the character of literary analysis: it is primarily interested in examining what major thinkers said, how they developed or justified their views, and the intellectual context in which they worked.

An alternative approach has been called formal political theory. This draws on the example of economic theory in building up models based on procedural rules, usually about the rationally self-interested behaviour of the individuals involved. Most firmly established in the USA and associated in particular with the Virginia School, formal political theory has attempted to understand better the behaviour of actors like voters, politicians, lobbyists and bureaucrats, and has spawned ‘rational choice’, ‘public choice’ and ‘social choice’ schools of thought (see p. 168). Although its proponents believe it to be strictly neutral, its individualist and egoistical assumptions have led some to suggest that it has an inbuilt bias towards conservative values.

The term ‘political philosophy’ can be used loosely to cover any abstract thought about politics, law or society – philosophy being, in general terms, the search for wisdom and understanding. However, philosophy has also been seen more specifically as a *second-order* discipline, in contrast to *first-order* disciplines which deal with empirical subjects. In other words, philosophy is not so much concerned with revealing truth in the manner of science, as with asking secondary questions about how knowledge is acquired and how understanding is expressed. For instance, whereas a political scientist may examine the democratic processes at work within a particular system, a political philosopher will be interested in clarifying what is meant by ‘democracy’. Political philosophy therefore addresses itself to two main tasks. First, it is concerned with the critical evaluation of political beliefs, paying attention to both inductive and deductive forms of reasoning. Second, it attempts to clarify and refine the concepts employed in political discourse. What this means is that, despite the best efforts of political philosophers to remain impartial and objective, they are inevitably concerned with justifying certain political viewpoints at the expense of others and with upholding a particular understanding of a concept rather than alternative ones. From this point of view, the present book can be seen primarily as a work of political theory and not political philosophy. Although the writings of political philosophers provide much of its material, its objective is to analyze and explain political ideas and concepts rather than advance any particular beliefs or interpretations.

Political theory in transition

Western political thought has gone through various phases of development since its inception in classical or ancient times (see [Table 1.1](#)). However, since its revival in the 1970s, following a period during which an almost unquestioned faith in science was often taken to imply that normative theorizing is meaningless, political theory has been reshaped in a number of ways. In the first place, modern political theory tends to place a greater emphasis than did earlier manifestations on the role of history and culture in structuring political understanding. This implies, for instance, that what, say, Plato (see p. 22), Rousseau (see p. 165) or Marx (see p. 317) wrote may tell us more about the societies in which they lived than it does about supposedly timeless political and moral issues. While few would conclude from this that the study of ‘major’ thinkers and ‘classic’ texts is worthless, most now accept that any interpretation of theories and beliefs developed in the past must take account of the context in which they were generated, as well as of the extent to which any such interpretations are entangled with our own values and assumptions. Second, political theory has become increasingly diffuse and fragmented in character. From the early modern period onwards, political thought acquired an unmistakably liberal character, to such an extent that liberalism (see p. 18) and political theory came to be virtually coextensive. However, since the 1960s, a range of rival political traditions have emerged as critiques of, or alternatives to, liberal theory, examples including radical feminism (see p. 56), communitarianism (see p. 33), green politics (see p. 218) and multiculturalism (see p. 178). Growing interest in non-Western political traditions is also evidence of this trend, as is the wider acceptance that no tradition possesses a monopoly of political wisdom.

Third, conventional political theory has been challenged by the emergence of an ‘anti-foundationalist’ critique that questions the rationalism that lay at its heart. Most clearly linked to postmodernism (see p. 119), but also associated, albeit in different ways, with traditions such as feminism, critical theory (see p. 116) and postcolonialism (see p. 214), anti-foundationalism emphasizes the contingent nature of all principles, doctrines and theories, based on the belief that there is no moral and rational high point from which they can be judged. This has been reflected in, amongst other things, a change in the way that theory has been used. Instead of using it as a device for analyzing or explaining events (empirical theory), or as a means of defining our ethical horizons (normative theory), anti-foundationalist theorists use theory as a way of widening or deepening our perceptual field (‘interpretive’ theory), in the belief that that the ‘real world’ is, in an important sense, constituted *through* theory. Finally, political theory has attempted, in various ways, to come to terms with the heightened interdependence that ‘accelerated’ globalization has brought, particularly since the 1980s. This has meant, for example, that political theory’s tendency to frame

Table 1.1 The development of Western political thought

<i>Period</i>	<i>Thinkers</i>	<i>Common themes</i>
Classical/Ancient	Thucydides Plato Aristotle Cicero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal society • Justice • City-state • Citizenship
Medieval (<i>circa</i> 500–1500)	Augustine John of Salisbury Thomas Aquinas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian politics • True republic • Natural law • Just war
Early modern (<i>circa</i> 1500–1789)	Niccolò Machiavelli Thomas Hobbes John Locke C.-L. Montesquieu J.-J. Rousseau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovereignty • The state • Natural rights • Political obligation • Republicanism • Constitutionalism
Modern (after 1789)	Edmund Burke Karl Marx John Stuart Mill James Madison Friedrich Nietzsche	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberty • Equality • Nationalism • Capitalism • Socialism • Democracy
Contemporary (since 1970s)	John Rawls Robert Nozick Michel Foucault Jürgen Habermas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free market • Gender • Culture • Identity • Diversity • Global justice

issues and problems in the context of the nation-state has been modified by a growing awareness of the phenomenon of ‘transnationalism’ (addressed in Chapter 4). Another response to heightened interdependence involves attempts to ‘think globally’, either by recasting political ideas and concepts by placing them in a world or global framework (as in the case of ‘global justice’, ‘world society’, ‘global citizenship’ and so on), or by exploring the possibility of redefining political community on a cosmopolitan basis (see p. 105).

Uses and abuses of political concepts

This book examines political theory by exploring the use and significance of key political concepts, clustered into related groups. However, concepts are

often slippery customers, and this is particularly the case in relation to political concepts. In its simplest sense, a concept is a general idea about something, usually expressed in a single word or a short phrase. A concept is more than a proper noun or the name of a thing. There is, for example, a difference between talking about a cat (a particular and unique cat) and having a general concept of a 'cat'. The concept of a cat is not a 'thing' but an 'idea', an idea composed of the various attributes that give a cat its distinctive character – 'a furry mammal', 'small', 'domesticated', 'catches mice', and so on. Concepts are therefore 'general' in the sense that they can refer to a number of objects, indeed to any object that complies with the general idea itself.

Concept formation is an essential step in the process of reasoning. Concepts are the tools with which we think, criticize, argue, explain and analyze. Merely perceiving the external world does not in itself give us knowledge about it. In order to make sense of the world we must, in a sense, impose meaning on it, and we do this through the construction of concepts. Quite simply, to treat a cat as a cat, we must first have a concept of what it is. Precisely the same applies to the process of political reasoning: we build up our knowledge of the political world not simply by looking at it, but by developing and refining concepts which help us make sense of it. Political concepts are therefore political thought's basic units of meaning. A series of difficulties nevertheless beset political concepts.

Normative and descriptive concepts

The first problem encountered with political concepts is that they are often, and some would argue always, difficult to disentangle from the moral and philosophical views of those who advance them. This is explicitly acknowledged in the case of prescriptive or normative concepts, usually categorized as 'values'. Values refer to moral principles or ideals: that which *should*, *ought to* or *must* be brought about. Examples of political values include 'justice', 'liberty', 'human rights', 'equality' and 'toleration'. By contrast, another range of concepts, usually termed descriptive or positive concepts, are supposedly more securely anchored in that they refer to 'facts' which have an objective and demonstrable existence: they refer to what *is*. Concepts such as 'power', 'authority', 'order' and 'law' are categorized in this sense as descriptive rather than normative. As facts can be proved to be either true or false, descriptive concepts are often portrayed as neutral or value-free.

However, in politics, facts and values are invariably interlinked, and even apparently descriptive concepts tend to be loaded with moral and ideological implications. This can be seen, for instance, in the case of 'authority'. If authority

is defined as ‘the right to influence the behaviour of others’, it is certainly possible to use the concept descriptively to say who possesses authority and who does not, and to examine the basis on which it is exercised. Nevertheless, it is impossible completely to divorce the concept from value judgements about when, how and why authority *should* be exercised. In short, no one is neutral about authority. For example, whereas conservatives, who emphasize the importance of order and discipline, tend to regard authority as rightful and healthy, anarchists, who believe all systems of rule to be intrinsically corrupt, reject authority as nakedly oppressive. All political concepts, descriptive as well as normative, therefore need to be understood in the light of the ideological perspective of those who use them.

Contested concepts

A further problem is that political concepts often become the subject of intellectual and ideological controversy. Politics is, in part, a struggle over the legitimate meaning of terms and concepts. This is reflected in attempts to establish a particular conception of a concept as objectively correct, as in the case of *true* democracy, *true* freedom, *true* justice and so on. A way out of this dilemma was suggested by W.B. Gallie (1955/6), who suggested that in the case of concepts such as ‘power’, ‘justice’ and ‘freedom’ controversy runs so deep that no neutral or settled definition can ever be developed. These concepts should be recognized, he argued, as ‘essentially contested concepts’. In effect, each term encompasses a number of rival concepts, none of which can be accepted as its ‘true’ meaning. To acknowledge that a concept is ‘essentially contested’ is not, however, to abandon the attempt to understand it, but rather to recognize that competing versions of the concept may be equally valid.

This view has, however, been subject to two forms of criticism (Ball, 1988). First, many theorists who attempt to apply Gallie’s insights (see, for example, Lukes (2005) in relation to ‘power’) continue to defend their preferred interpretation of a concept against its rivals. This refusal to accept that all versions of the concept are equally valid produces ongoing debate and argument which could, at some stage in the future, lead to the emergence of a single, agreed concept. Second, certain concepts are now contested which were once the subject of widespread agreement. For instance, the wide-ranging and deep disagreement that currently surrounds ‘democracy’ only emerged from the late eighteenth century onwards alongside new forms of ideological thinking. As a result, it is perhaps better to treat contested concepts as ‘currently’ contested (Birch, 2007) or as ‘contingently’ contested (Ball, 1997).

Words and things

The final problem with political concepts is what may be called the fetishism of concepts. This occurs when concepts are treated as though they have a concrete existence separate from, and, in some senses, holding sway over, the human beings who use them. In short, words are treated as things, rather than as devices for understanding things. The German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) attempted to deal with the problem of the limited explanatory power of concepts by classifying particular terms as ‘ideal types’. An ideal type is a mental construct in which an attempt is made to draw out meaning from an otherwise almost infinitely complex reality through the presentation of a logical extreme. Ideal types are therefore explanatory tools, not approximations of reality; they neither ‘exhaust reality’ nor do they offer an ethical ideal. Concepts such as ‘democracy’, ‘human rights’ and ‘capitalism’ are thus more rounded and coherent than the unshapely realities they seek to describe. Weber himself treated ‘authority’ and ‘bureaucracy’ as ideal types. The importance of recognizing particular concepts as ideal types is that it underlines the fact that concepts are only analytical tools. For this reason, it is better to think of concepts or ideal types not as being ‘true’ or ‘false’, but merely as more or less ‘useful’.

Further attempts to emphasize the contingent nature of political concepts have, as noted earlier, been associated with postmodernism and other forms of anti-foundationalism. These have rejected the ‘traditional’ search for universal values acceptable to everyone, arguing instead that there is a plurality of legitimate ethical and political positions, and that our language and political concepts are valid only in terms of the context in which they are generated and employed. In its extreme version, as, for example, advanced in the ‘deconstructive’ writings of Jacques Derrida (see p. 120), it is an illusion to believe that language, and therefore concepts, can in any sense be said to ‘fit’ the world. All we can do, from this perspective, is to recognize how reality is constructed by and for us through our language; as Derrida put it, ‘there is nothing outside the text’. However, perhaps the most radical critique of concepts is developed in the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism. This distinguishes between ‘conventional’ truth, which constitutes nothing more than a literary convention in that it is based on a willingness among people to use concepts in a particular way, and ‘absolute’ truth, which involves the penetration of reality through direct experience and so transcends conceptualization. In this view, thinking of all kinds amounts to a projection imposed on reality, and therefore constitutes a form of delusion. If we mistake words for things we are in danger, as the Zen saying puts it, of mistaking the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself.

How to use this book

This book provides an introduction to political theory by considering the major concepts and ideas around which political debate and argument have revolved. It therefore reflects on how the terms have been used and the meanings that have been assigned to them, as well as the role they have played in political thought. The concepts discussed are grouped into sets of three interrelated terms to enable each chapter to deal with a distinctive theme, the nature of which is outlined in the Preview. The ordering of the chapters nevertheless conforms to an unfolding logic, as explained below.

The first group of chapters analyzes concepts that can be thought of as foundational within political theory; these concepts relate to cornerstone debates and issues within the field:

- Chapter 2 examines the relationship between the individual and society, a theme touched on in almost all political debates and controversies and one that is typically linked to competing models of human nature.
- Chapter 3 focuses on how and why politics differs from other activities, and considers the parameters of ‘the political’, particularly by reflecting on the nature and significance of government and the state.
- Chapter 4 discusses the territorial configuration of political rule, considering why political rule is so often associated with claims about sovereignty and national identity, as well as how far the nation has been subverted by rising transnationalism.
- Chapter 5 examines issues related to how, and on what basis, people influence one another, reflecting on whether this is done through the exercise of power or the exercise of authority, and how far each is able to establish legitimacy.

The next group of chapters focuses on issues and concepts that have provoked recurrent political debate, constituting the stock themes of political theory:

- Chapter 6 discusses who should rule, looking especially at democracy and the notion of popular rule, together with the related ideas of representation and the public interest.
- Chapter 7 considers the nature and role of law, reflecting on the extent to which law is required to ensure order, as well as the complex issue of the relationship between law and justice.
- Chapter 8 examines debates concerning the proper relationship between the individual and the state, especially as these relate to the interlocking ideas of rights, obligations and citizenship.

- Chapter 9 discusses the nature, and proper extent, of freedom, and also focuses on issues that can be seen as manifestations of freedom, notably toleration and identity.
- Chapter 10 considers the nature and implications of equality, reflecting in particular on debates about social justice and welfare, and thus on the issue of the proper distribution of wealth or material rewards in society.

The final group of chapters considers a range of wider issues and themes that, nevertheless, fall within the parameters of political theory:

- Chapter 11 considers the theme of political economy by discussing competing notions of property distribution and the rival merits of the two key forms of economic organization: the market and planning.
- Chapter 12 considers theoretical issues in the field of international politics, examining debates about the issues of security and war, and considering competing models of twenty-first-century world order.
- Chapter 13 concludes the book by reflecting on the issue of political change and thus the linkage between theory and practice, and by focusing on the contrasting ideas of tradition, progress and utopia.

Throughout the book, additional material is provided through boxed features. Each of these has a particular role and purpose.

- **‘Tradition’ boxes**

These provide an introduction to the major approaches to, or perspectives on, political theory, each offering a distinctive ‘lens’ on the political world. These traditions not only shape our understanding of political concepts but also structure political argument and debate across a range of issues. Many may be classified as ‘ideologies’, in that they are aligned to determinate political ends.

- **‘Thinker’ boxes**

These provide brief biographical information about major figures in political thought and discuss the nature and significance of their contribution to political theory. An overview of the ideas of other key theorists can be found at the end of each tradition box.

- **‘Thinking globally’ boxes**

These reflect on where, how and how meaningfully key political ideas and concepts have been revised in the light of globalizing tendencies. They therefore examine how political theory is adapting in the light of the challenge of increased interconnectedness, as well as how far it should adapt.

- **'Beyond the West' boxes**

These attempt to temper the essentially Western approach to political theory adopted in the book by examining particular non-Western approaches to an issue or topic under consideration. The purpose of contrasting Western and non-Western thought is to help to deepen our grasp of the former, while stimulating reflection on what may be learnt from the latter.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- In what sense does political science have a theoretical component?
- Should political theory be viewed as a subfield of political science?
- How does political theory differ from political philosophy?
- What is a concept?
- In what sense are political concepts political thought's basic units of meaning?
- To what extent can a distinction be made between descriptive concepts and normative concepts?
- Why are political concepts so often the subject of intellectual and ideological controversy?
- Is it helpful to treat certain political concepts as 'essentially' contested?
- What are the implications of regarding particular concepts as 'ideal types'?
- What has postmodernism contributed to our understanding of political concepts?

FURTHER READING

Ball, T., Farr, J. and Hanson R. (eds) *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (1989). A book that discusses the relationship between concepts and political beliefs and behaviour, and analyzes the evolution of thirteen particular concepts.

Dryzek, J., Honig, B. and Phillips, A. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (2008). A comprehensive and stimulating collection of essays that review the current state of political theory, and include a consideration of non-Western and postcolonial thought.

Leopold, D. and Stears, M. (eds) *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches* (2008). A collection of essays that examine the methods and approaches employed in political theory, and reflect on the relationship between political theory and adjacent subjects.

Ryan, A. *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present* (2013). An erudite and highly readable account of the full sweep of Western political thought, which reflects on different approaches to human governance.

2

Human Nature, the Individual and Society

- HUMAN NATURE

Nature versus nurture • Intellect versus instinct • Competition versus cooperation

- THE INDIVIDUAL

Individualism • Individual and community • The individual in politics

- SOCIETY

Collectivism • Theories of society • Social cleavages

Preview

Throughout this book, and indeed throughout political theory, there is a recurrent theme: the relationship between the individual and society. This is touched on by almost all political debates and controversies – the nature of justice, the proper realm of freedom, the desirability of equality, the value of politics, and so forth. At the heart of this issue lies the idea of human nature, that which makes human beings 'human'. Almost all political doctrines and beliefs are based, at some level, on a theory of human nature, sometimes explicitly formulated but in many cases simply implied. To do otherwise would be to take the complex and perhaps unpredictable human element out of politics.

However, the concept of human nature has also been a source of great difficulty for political theorists. Models of human nature have varied considerably, and each model has radically different implications for how social and political life should be organized. Are human beings, for instance, selfish or sociable, rational or irrational, essentially moral or basically corrupt? Are they, at heart, political animals or private beings? The answers to these and other such questions bear heavily on the relationship between the individual and society. In particular, how much of human behaviour is shaped by natural or innate forces, and how much is conditioned by the social environment? Are human beings 'individuals', independent from one another and possessed of separate and unique characters, or are they social beings, whose identity and behaviour are shaped by the groups to which they belong? Such questions have not only been enduring topics of philosophical debate – the choice between 'nurture' and 'nature' – but have also been the cornerstone of what may be the deepest of all ideological divisions: the rivalry between individualism and collectivism.

Human nature

All too often the idea of human nature is employed in a generalized and simplistic fashion, as a kind of shorthand for 'this is what people are really like'. In practice, however, to speak of 'human nature' is to make a number of important assumptions about both human beings and the societies in which they live. Although opinions may differ about the *content* of human nature, the concept itself has a clear and coherent meaning. Human nature refers to the essential and immutable character of all human beings. It highlights what is innate and 'natural' about human life, as opposed to what human beings have gained from education or through social experience. This does not, however, mean that those who believe that human behaviour is shaped more by society than by unchanging and inborn characteristics have abandoned the idea of human nature altogether. Indeed, this very assertion is based on clear assumptions about innate human qualities, in this case, the capacity to be shaped or moulded by external factors. A limited number of political thinkers have, nevertheless, openly rejected the idea of human nature. For instance, the French existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80), argued that there was no such thing as a given 'human nature' determining how people act or behave. In Sartre's view, existence comes before essence, meaning that human beings enjoy the freedom to define themselves through their own actions and deeds, in which case the assertion of any concept of human nature is an affront to that freedom.

To employ a concept of human nature is not, however, to reduce human life to a one-dimensional caricature. Most political thinkers are clearly aware that human beings are complex, multi-faceted creatures, made up of biological, physical, psychological, intellectual, social and perhaps spiritual elements. The concept of human nature does not conceal or overlook this complexity so much as attempt to impose order on it by designating certain features as 'natural' or 'essential'. It would seem reasonable, moreover, that if such a thing as a human core exists it should be manifest in human behaviour. Human nature should therefore be reflected in behavioural patterns that are regular and distinctively human. However, this may not always be the case. Some theorists have argued that people behave in ways that deny their 'true' natures. For instance, despite abundant evidence of greedy and selfish behaviour, socialists still hold to the belief that human beings are cooperative and sociable, arguing that such behaviour is socially conditioned and not natural. In this light, it is important to remember that in no sense is human nature a descriptive or scientific concept. Even though theories of human nature may claim an empirical or scientific basis, no experiment or surgical investigation is able to uncover the human 'essence'. All models of human nature are therefore normative: they are constructed out of philosophical and moral assumptions, and are therefore in principle untestable.

Endless discussion has taken place about the nature of human beings. Certain debates have nevertheless been particularly relevant to political theory. Central among these is what is usually called the ‘nature/nurture’ debate. Are human beings the product of innate or biological factors, or are they fashioned by education and social experience? Clearly, such a question has profound implications for the relationship between the individual and society. Important questions have also been asked about the degree to which human behaviour is determined by reason, questions which bear heavily on issues such as individual liberty and personal autonomy. Are human beings rational creatures, guided by reason, argument and calculation, or are they in some way prisoners of non-rational drives and passions? Finally, there are questions about the impulses or motivations which dominate human behaviour. In particular, are human beings naturally selfish and egoistical, or are they essentially cooperative, altruistic and sociable? Such considerations are crucial in determining the proper organization of economic and social life, including the distribution of wealth and other resources.

Nature versus nurture

The most recurrent, and perhaps most fundamental, debate about human nature relates to what factors or forces shape it. Is the essential core of human nature fixed or given, fashioned by ‘nature’, or is it moulded or structured by the influence of social experience or ‘nurture’? ‘Nature’, in this case, stands for biological or genetic factors, suggesting that there is an established and unchanging human core. The political significance of such a belief is considerable. In the first place, it implies that political and social theories should be constructed on the basis of a pre-established concept of human nature. Quite simply, human beings do not reflect society, society reflects human nature. Secondly, it suggests that the roots of political understanding lie in the natural sciences in general, and in biology in particular. Political arguments should therefore be constructed on the basis of biological theories, giving such arguments a ‘scientific’ character.

Without doubt, the biological theory that has had greatest impact on political and social thought has been the theory of natural selection, developed by the British scientist Charles Darwin (1809–82) in *On the Origin of Species* ([1859] 1986). Darwin’s goal was to explain the almost infinite variety of species which have existed on earth. He suggested that each species develops through a series of random genetic mutations, some of which fit the species to survive and prosper, while other, less fortunate species become extinct. Although Darwin appears to have recognized that his theories had radical political implications, he chose not to develop them himself. The first attempt to advance a theory of social Darwinism was undertaken by Herbert Spencer (see p. 19) in *The Man*

Versus the State ([1884] 1940). Spencer coined the term ‘the survival of the fittest’ to describe what he believed to be an endless struggle among human beings, through which those best fitted by nature to survive rise to the top, and those less favoured by nature sink to the bottom. Success and failure, wealth and poverty are, in this sense, biologically determined; and tampering with this process of natural selection will only serve to weaken the species. Such ideas deeply influenced classical liberalism (see p. 18), giving it biological grounds for opposing state intervention in economic and social life. Social Darwinism also helped to shape the fascist belief in an unending struggle among the various nations or races of the world.

In the twentieth century, political theories were increasingly influenced by biological ideas. For example, ethologists such as Konrad Lorenz (1903–89) and Niko Tinbergen (1907–88) advanced theories about human behaviour on the basis of detailed studies of animal behaviour. In *On Aggression* ([1963] 2002), Lorenz suggested that as aggression is a form of biologically adapted behaviour which has developed through the process of evolution, it is a natural drive found in all species, including the human species. Such ideas had considerable impact on explanations of war and social violence by presenting such behaviour as instinctual and territorial. The emergence of sociobiology in the 1970s and the subsequent development of evolutionary psychology, which gained impetus from the so-called ‘biotech revolution’ and the unravelling of human DNA, has made it increasingly fashionable to explain social behaviour in terms of biological programming linked to our supposed evolutionary inheritance. One of the most influential works of sociobiology has been Richard Dawkins’s *The Selfish Gene* ([1979] 2006), which explains man as a ‘gene machine’. Dawkins suggested that both selfishness and altruism have their origins in biology.

In most cases, these biological theories embrace universalism; they hold that human beings share a common or universal character, based on their genetic inheritance. Other theories, however, hold that there are fundamental biological differences among human beings, and that these are of political significance. This applies in the case of racialist theories which treat the various races as if they are distinct species. Racialists suggest that there are basic genetic differences among the races of the world, reflected in their unequal physical, psychological and intellectual inheritance. In its most extreme version, racialism was expressed in the Nazi doctrine of Aryanism, the belief that the Germanic peoples were a ‘master race’. Some difference feminists (see p. 56) also believe that there are biological and unchangeable differences among human beings, in this case between men and women. This theory is called ‘essentialism’ because it asserts that the difference between women and men is rooted in their ‘essential’ natures. Sexual inequality is not therefore based on social conditioning but rather on the biological disposition of the male sex to dominate, exploit and oppress the female sex. For example, in *Against Our Will* (1975), Susan Brownmiller

suggested that 'all men' are biologically programmed to dominate 'all women', and that they do so through rape or the fear of rape, a conclusion which, from a different perspective, certain theories of evolutionary psychology also support.

In marked contrast, other theories of human nature place greater emphasis on 'nurture', the influence of the social environment or experience on the human character. Clearly, such views play down the importance of fixed and unchanging biological factors, emphasizing instead the malleable quality of human nature, or what has been called its 'plasticity'. The significance of such theories is to shift political understanding away from biology and towards sociology. Political behaviour tells us less about an immutable human essence than it does about the structure of society. Moreover, by releasing humankind from its biological chains, such theories often have optimistic, if not openly utopian, implications. When human nature is 'given', the possibility of progress and social advancement is clearly limited; however, if human nature is 'plastic', the opportunities confronting human beings immediately expand and perhaps become infinite. Evils such as poverty, social conflict, political oppression and gender inequality can be overcome precisely because their origins are social and therefore capable of being changed.

The idea that human nature is 'plastic', shaped by external forces, is central to many socialist theories. For instance, in *A New View of Society* ([1816] 2013), the British socialist Robert Owen (see p.370) advanced the simple principle that 'any general character from the best to the worst, from the ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community'. In the writings of Karl Marx (see p. 317), this idea was developed through an attempt to outline why and how the social environment conditions human behaviour. Marx ([1856] 1968) proclaimed that, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness'. Marx, and subsequent Marxists, have believed that social, political and intellectual life is conditioned by 'the mode of production of material life', the existing economic system. However, Marx did not believe human nature to be a passive reflection of its material environment. Rather, human beings are workers, *homo faber*, constantly engaged in shaping and reshaping the world in which they live. Thus, in Marx's view, human nature is formed through a dynamic or 'dialectical' relationship between humankind and the material world. The majority of feminists also subscribe to the view that human behaviour is in most cases conditioned by social factors. For example, in her seminal work, *The Second Sex* ([1949] 2010), Simone de Beauvoir (see p. 57) declared that, 'One is not born a woman: one becomes a woman'. In rejecting the notion of 'essential' differences between women and men, feminists have accepted a basically androgynous, or sexless, image of human nature. Because sexism has been 'bred' through a process of social conditioning, particularly in the family, it can be challenged and eventually overthrown.

LIBERALISM: THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Classical liberalism was the earliest liberal tradition. Liberal ideas resulted from the breakdown of feudalism in Europe and the growth, in its place, of a market capitalist society. In its earliest form, liberalism was a political doctrine, which attacked absolutism (see p. 188) and feudal privilege, instead advocating constitutional and, later, representative government. By the nineteenth century, a distinctively liberal political creed had developed that extolled the virtues of *laissez-faire* capitalism and condemned all forms of economic and social intervention. Although classical liberalism is sometimes dubbed 'nineteenth-century liberalism', its ideas and theories have had growing appeal from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, in the form of what is called neo-liberalism or neo-classical liberalism.

Classical liberalism has taken a variety of forms but it exhibits a number of common characteristics. First, classical liberalism reflects a commitment to egoistical individualism, rooted in either natural rights theory or utilitarianism (see p. 362). The classical liberal perspective sees human beings as rationally self-interested creatures, who have a pronounced capacity for self-reliance. Such a view of human nature implies that society is atomistic, in that it amounts to nothing more than a collection of essentially self-sufficient individuals. Second, classical liberals believe in 'negative' freedom. The individual is therefore free insofar as he or she is left alone, not interfered with or coerced by others, a stance that has important implications for the proper extent of public authority. Third, classical liberals view the state as, in Thomas Paine's words, a 'necessary evil'. It is necessary in that, at the very least, it lays down the conditions for orderly existence, but it is evil in that it imposes a collective will on society, thereby limiting the freedom and responsibilities of the individual. Fourth, classical liberalism is closely associated with the idea of a self-regulating capitalist economy, extolling the virtues of the free market and free trade. Not only does classical liberal economics underpin the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, in which all forms of economic intervention are doomed to be self-defeating, but it also implies that the spread of free trade will bring peace and international harmony, as argued by so-called 'commercial' liberals.

The great virtue of classical liberalism is its unwavering commitment to individual freedom. It advocates a stripped-down or 'minimal' political order within which individuals enjoy the widest possible capacity to pursue their own interests and ambitions. The enduring appeal of such thinking is evident in the extent to which rival political traditions have embraced classical liberal ideas, not least in the form of the conservative New Right and neo-revisionist socialism. Modern liberals (see p. 248), however, have criticized classical liberalism for overstating the extent to which human beings are the architects of their own fortune or misfortune, and for a failure to recognize the defects or limitations of unregulated capitalism. Others, indeed, portray classical liberals as crude apologists for the market order, who, knowingly or unknowingly, serve the interests of corporations and the wealthy in general.

Key figures

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) A British political economist and clergyman, Malthus is best known for the views he set out in his pamphlet *Essay on Population* (1798). Its key argument was that (unchecked) population growth will always exceed the growth of the means of subsistence, because population growth is exponential while the growth in the supply of food and other essentials is merely arithmetical. Population growth would therefore always result in famine, disease and war. Attempts to alleviate poverty, in this view, are always self-defeating.

Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832) A French economist and businessman, Say is best known for Say's Law. Although it has various formulations, Say's Law states that 'supply creates its own demand'. This suggests that through the production of commodities a market is created that ensures that those commodities are also consumed. This is a belief that supports *laissez-faire*, in that it implies that economic growth is a consequence of the decision of businesses to increase output, and that any attempts to boost the economy by stimulating consumption is doomed to failure.

David Ricardo (1770–1823) A British political economist and politician, Ricardo was one of the founding figures of classical economics, expanding on the ideas of Adam Smith. In *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817), and in later editions, he outlined a labour theory of value (that later influenced Marx's thinking), developed the theory of comparative advantage (which provided an economic justification for free trade), and warned that increases in net labour may undermine capital accumulation. Ricardo was a rigorous and fairly uncompromising advocate of *laissez-faire* capitalism.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1904) A British philosopher and social theorist, Spencer developed a vigorous defence of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, drawing on Darwin's theory of evolution. Spencer coined the notion of 'the survival of the fittest' to suggest that people who are best suited by nature to survive, rise to the top, while the less fit fall to the bottom. Inequalities of wealth, social position and political power are therefore natural and inevitable, and no attempt should be made by government to interfere with them. Spencer's best-known work is *The Man Versus the State* (1884).

Milton Friedman (1912–2006) A US economist, Friedman, together with Hayek played a key role in regenerating classical economic thinking in the second half of the twentieth century. A fierce opponent of the economic role of government, Friedman's main target of criticism was the Keynesian idea that demand management is the best way of maintaining full employment. In his view 'tax and spend' policies merely fuelled inflation without, in the process, affecting the 'natural rate' of unemployment. Friedman's main works include *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) and (with his wife, Rose) *Free to Choose* (1980).

See also John Locke (p. 255), **Thomas Jefferson** (p. 212), **Adam Smith** (p. 313) and **Friedrich Hayek** (p. 313)

The picture of human nature as essentially malleable, shaped by social factors, has also been endorsed by behavioural psychologists, such as I. V. Pavlov (1849–1936), John Watson (1878–1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904–90). They argued that human behaviour is explicable simply in terms of conditioned reactions or reflexes, for which reason human nature bears the imprint of its environment. Pavlov, for instance, demonstrated how animals could learn through a strict process of conditioning, by being rewarded for exhibiting ‘correct’ behaviour. Such ideas became the basis of psychology in the Soviet Union, where crude behaviourism was thought to provide scientific proof for Marx’s social theories. The US psychologist B.F. Skinner discounted internal processes altogether, describing the human organism as a ‘black box’. In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), Skinner presented a highly deterministic picture of human nature, denied any form of free will, and entitled, Skinner suggested, to no more dignity or self-respect than Pavlov’s dog. Such ideas have widely been used to support the idea of social engineering, the idea that we can ‘make’ the human beings we want simply by constructing the appropriate social environment.

Intellect versus instinct

The second debate centres on the role of rationality in human life. This does not, however, come down to a choice between rationalism and irrationalism. The real issue is the degree to which the reasoning mind influences human conduct, suggesting a distinction between those who emphasize thinking, analysis and rational calculation, and those who highlight the role of impulse, instincts or other non-rational drives. To acknowledge the importance of the non-rational does not amount to turning one’s back on reason altogether. Indeed, many such theories are advanced in eminently rationalist, even scientific, terms.

Faith in the power of human reason reached its high point during the Enlightenment, the so-called Age of Reason, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During that period, philosophers and political thinkers turned away from religious dogmas and faith, and instead based their ideas on rationalism, the belief that the workings of the physical and social world can be explained by the exercise of reason alone. In this view, human beings are essentially rational creatures, guided by intellect and a process of argument, analysis and debate. Such an idea was expressed with particular clarity in the dualism advanced by the French philosopher, René Descartes (1596–1650). In declaring ‘*Cogito ergo sum* [I think, therefore I am]’, Descartes in effect portrayed human beings as thinking machines, implying that the mind is quite distinct from the body. Rationalism implies that human beings possess the capacity to fashion their own lives and their own worlds. If human beings are reason-driven creatures they clearly enjoy free will and self-determination: people are what they choose to

make of themselves. Rationalist theories of human nature therefore tend to underline the importance of individual freedom and autonomy. In addition, rationalism often underpins radical or revolutionary political doctrines. To the extent that human beings possess the capacity to understand their world, they have the ability also to improve or reform it. Reason is thus linked to progress (as discussed in Chapter 13).

The earliest rationalist ideas were developed by the philosophers of Ancient Greece. Plato (see p. 22), for example, argued that the best possible form of government would be an enlightened despotism, rule by an intellectual elite, the philosopher-kings. Rationalist ideas were also prominent in the emergence in the nineteenth century of liberal and socialist doctrines. Liberal thinkers, such as J. S. Mill (see p. 241), largely based their theories on the idea that human beings are rational. This, for instance, explains why Mill himself placed so much faith in individual liberty: guided by reason, individuals would be able to seek happiness and self-realization. In the same way, he argued in favour of female suffrage, on the grounds that, like men, women are rational and so are entitled to exercise political influence. In turn, socialist theories also built on rationalist foundations. This was most evident in the writings of Marx and Engels (see p. 76), who developed what the latter referred to as ‘scientific socialism’. Rather than indulging in ethical analysis and moral assertion, the province of so-called ‘utopian socialism’, Marx and Engels strove to uncover the dynamics of history and society through a process of scientific analysis. When they predicted the ultimate demise of capitalism, for example, this was not because they believed it to be morally ‘bad’, in the sense that it *deserved* to be overthrown, but instead because their analysis indicated that this was what was *destined* to happen, this was the direction in which history was moving.

This vision of human beings as thinking machines has, however, attracted growing criticism since the late nineteenth century. The Enlightenment dream of an ordered, rational and tolerant world was badly dented by the persistence of conflict and social deprivation and the emergence of powerful and seemingly non-rational forces such as nationalism and racialism. This led to growing interest in the influence which emotion, instinct and other psychological drives exert on politics. In some respects, however, this development built on an established tradition, found mainly among conservative thinkers, that had always disparaged the mania for rationalism. Edmund Burke (see p. 354), for example, had emphasized the intellectual imperfection of human beings, especially when they are confronted by the almost infinite complexity of social life. In short, the world is unfathomable, too intricate and too confusing for the human mind fully to unravel. Such a view has deeply conservative implications. If the rationalist theories dreamed up by liberals and socialists are unconvincing, human beings are wise to place their faith in tradition and custom, the known. Revolution and even reform are a journey into the unknown; the maps reason gives us are simply unreliable.

PLATO (427–347 BCE)

Greek philosopher. Plato was born of an aristocratic family. He became a follower of Socrates, who is the principal figure in his ethical and philosophical dialogues. After Socrates' death in 399 BCE, Plato founded his Academy in order to train the new Athenian ruling class, which might be considered the first 'university'.

Plato taught that the material world consists of imperfect copies of abstract and eternal 'ideas'. His political philosophy, as expounded in *The Republic* (1955), is an attempt to describe the 'ideal state' in terms of a theory of justice. Plato's just state was decidedly authoritarian and was based on a strict division of labour that supposedly reflected different character types and human attributes. He argued that government should be exercised exclusively by a small collection of philosopher-kings, supported by the auxiliaries (collectively termed the Guardians), whose education and communistic way of life would ensure that they ruled on the basis of wisdom. In his view, knowledge and virtue are one. In *The Laws*, he advocated a system of mixed government, but continued to emphasize the subordination of the individual to the state and law. Plato's work has exerted wide influence on Christianity and on European culture in general.

At the same time, conservative theorists were among the first to acknowledge the power of the non-rational. Thomas Hobbes (see p. 111), for instance, believed in the power of human reason, but only as a means to an end. In his view, human beings are driven by non-rational appetites: aversions, fears, hopes and desires, the strongest of which is the desire to exercise power over others. This essentially pessimistic view of human nature led Hobbes to conclude that only strong, autocratic government can prevent society descending into chaos and disorder. Burke also emphasized the degree to which unreasoned sentiments and even prejudice play a role in structuring social life. While what he called 'naked reason' offers little guidance, prejudice, being born of natural instincts, provides people with security and a sense of social identity.

Some of the most influential theories to stress the impact of non-rational drives on human behaviour have been associated with Freudian psychology, developed in the early twentieth century. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) drew attention to the distinction between the conscious mind, which carried out rational calculations and judgements, and the unconscious mind, which contained repressed memories and a range of powerful psychological drives. In particular, Freud highlighted the importance of human sexuality, represented by the *id*, the most primitive instinct within the unconscious, and *libido*, psychic energies emanating from the *id* and usually associated with sexual desire or energy. While Freud himself emphasized the therapeutic aspect of these ideas, developing a series of techniques, popularly known as psychoanalysis, others

have seized on their political significance. Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957), one of Freud's later disciples, developed an explanation of fascism based on the idea of repressed sexuality (Reich, 1997). Freudian thinking was embraced by New Left theorists like Herbert Marcuse (see p. 117) and also helped shape the ideas of psychoanalytical feminism, as developed by figures such as Juliet Mitchell ([1974] 2000) and Julia Kristeva (1982).

Competition versus cooperation

The third area of disagreement centres on whether human beings are essentially self-seeking and egoistical, or naturally sociable and cooperative. This debate is of fundamental political importance because these contrasting theories of human nature support radically different forms of economic and social organization. If human beings are naturally self-interested, competition among them is an inevitable feature of social life and, in certain respects, a healthy one. Such a theory of human nature is, moreover, closely linked to individualist ideas such as natural rights and private property, and has often been used as a justification for a market or capitalist economic order, within which, supposedly, individuals have the best opportunity to pursue their own interests.

Theories which portray human nature as self-interested or self-seeking can be found among the Ancient Greeks, expressed particularly by some of the Sophists. However, they were developed most systematically in the early modern period. In political thought this was reflected in the growth of natural rights theories, which suggested that each individual has been invested by God with a set of inalienable rights. These rights belong to the individual and to the individual alone. Utilitarianism (see p. 362), developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, attempted to provide an objective, even scientific, explanation of human selfishness. Jeremy Bentham (see p. 363) painted a picture of human beings as essentially pleasure-seeking creatures. In Bentham's view, pleasure or happiness are self-evidently 'good', and pain or unhappiness self-evidently 'bad'. Individuals therefore act to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, calculating each in terms of 'utility' – in its simplest sense, use-value. This view of human nature has had considerable impact on both economic and political theories. Economics is based very largely on the model of 'economic man', a materially self-interested 'utility maximizer'. Such philosophical assumptions are used, for example, to explain the vigour and efficiency of market capitalism. They also underpin political theories ranging from the social-contract theories of the seventeenth century to 'rational-choice' (see p. 168) and 'public-choice' schools of modern political science.

Scientific support for human self-interestedness has often drawn on Darwinian thinking, discussed earlier, and especially on the notion of the strug-

gle for survival. This, however, can have different implications. For writers such as Lorenz ([1963] 2002), each individual member of a species is biologically programmed to ensure the survival of the species itself. Such a view suggests that animals, including human beings, ultimately act 'for the good of the species', an idea reflected in the willingness of a mother to sacrifice herself in the hope of protecting her young. In other words, individuals will exhibit cooperative and sociable behaviour to the extent that they put the species before themselves. Dawkins (2006), on the other hand, argued that every gene, including those unique to the separate individual, has a selfish streak and seeks its own survival. Such a theory suggests that selfishness and competition among individuals is essentially a form of biologically programmed behaviour. This is not to say, however, that human beings are blindly selfish. Although Dawkins accepted that individuals are 'born selfish', he emphasized that such behaviour can be modified if we 'teach generosity and altruism'.

A very different image of human nature is, however, presented by the major world religions. Monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism offer a picture of humankind as the product of divine creation. The human essence is therefore conceived as spiritual rather than mental or physical, and is represented in Christianity by the idea of a 'soul'. The notion that human beings are moral creatures, bound together by divine providence, has had considerable influence on socialist doctrines which stress the importance of compassion, natural sympathy and a common humanity. Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism lay considerable emphasis on the oneness of all forms of life, contributing once again to the idea of a common humanity, as well as a philosophy of non-violence. In the case of Buddhism, such thinking is closely associated with the doctrine of 'no-self' (see p. 28). It is little surprise, therefore, that religious doctrines have often underpinned the theories of ethical socialism. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that all religious theories have socialist implications. For instance, the Protestant belief in individual salvation and its stress on the moral value of personal striving and hard work, often called the 'Protestant ethic', is more clearly linked to the ideas of self-help and the free market than it is to socialist compassion.

Secular theories have also attempted to draw attention to the 'social essence' of human nature. These have traditionally stressed the importance of social being, drawing attention to the fact that individuals both live and work collectively, as members of a community. Selfishness and competition are in no way 'natural'; rather, they have been cultivated by a capitalist society that rewards and encourages self-striving. The human essence is sociable, gregarious and cooperative, a theory which clearly lends itself to either the communist goal of collective ownership, or the more modest socialist ideal of a welfare state. One of the few attempts to develop a scientific theory of human nature along the lines of sociability and cooperativeness was undertaken by Peter Kropotkin (see p. 24).

PETER KROPOTKIN (1842–1921)

Russian geographer and anarchist theorist. The son of a noble family who first entered the service of Tsar Alexander II, Kropotkin encountered anarchist ideas while working in the Jura region on the French–Swiss border. On returning to Russia he became involved in revolutionary activity through the Populist movement, leading to his imprisonment in St Petersburg, 1874–6. After a spectacular escape from prison he remained in exile in Western Europe, returning to Russia after the 1917 revolution.

Kropotkin's anarchism was shaped by both his Russian experience, and particularly his admiration for the popular self-management that he believed to operate in the traditional Russian peasant commune, and by the desire to give his work a secure rational foundation grounded in the scientific spirit. His scientific anarchism, outlined in his most famous book, *Mutual Aid* ([1897] 1988), amounted to a reworking of the Darwinian theory of evolution, in which cooperation and social solidarity, rather than competition and struggle, were portrayed as the principal means of human and animal development. Kropotkin was a powerful advocate of anarcho-communism, regarding capitalism and the state as interlinked obstacles to humankind's natural sociability. In works such as *Fields, Factories and Workshops* ([1901] 1912) and *The Conquest of Bread* ([1906] 1926), he envisaged an anarchic society consisting of a collection of largely self-sufficient communes, and also addressed problems such as how crime and laziness would be contained within such a society.

Kropotkin accepted the evolutionary ideas that had dominated biology since Darwin, but had no sympathy for the doctrine of 'the survival of the fittest'. In *Mutual Aid* ([1897] 1988), he developed an evolutionary theory that fundamentally challenged Darwinism. Instead of accepting that survival is the result of struggle or competition, Kropotkin suggested that what distinguishes the human species from less successful species is its highly developed capacity for cooperation or 'mutual aid'. Cooperation is therefore not merely an ethical or religious ideal, it is a practical necessity which the evolutionary process has made an essential part of human nature. On this basis, Kropotkin argued in favour of both a communist society, in which wealth would be owned in common by all, and a form of anarchism in which human beings could manage their own affairs cooperatively and peacefully.

The individual

The term 'the individual' is so widely used in everyday language that its implications and political significance are often ignored. In the most obvious sense, an individual is a single human being. Nevertheless, the concept suggests rather

more. First of all, it implies that the single human being is an independent and meaningful entity, possessing an identity in himself or herself. In other words, to talk of people as individuals is to suggest that they are autonomous creatures, acting according to personal choice rather than as members of a social group or collective body. Second, individuals are not merely independent; they are also distinct, even unique. This is what is implied, for example, by the term ‘individuality’, which refers to what is particular and original about each and every human being. To see society as a collection of individuals is therefore to understand human beings in personal terms and to judge them according to their particular qualities, such as character, personality, talents, skills and so on. Each individual has a ‘personal’ identity. Third, to understand human beings as individuals is usually to believe in universalism, to accept that human beings everywhere share certain fundamental characteristics. In that sense, individuals are not defined by social background, race, religion, gender or any other ‘accident of birth’, but by what they share with people everywhere: their moral worth, their personal identity and their uniqueness.

Nevertheless, the concept of the individual has also provoked philosophical debate and deep ideological divisions. For instance, what does it mean to believe in the individual, to be committed to individualism? Does individualism imply a clear and distinctive style of political thought, or can it be used to support a wide range of positions and policies? Moreover, no political thinker sees the individual as entirely self-reliant; all acknowledge that, to some degree, social factors sustain and influence the individual. But where does the balance between the individual and the community lie, and where should it lie? Finally, how significant are individuals in political life? Is politics, in reality, shaped by the decisions and actions of separate individuals, or do only social groups, organizations and institutions matter? In short, can the individual make a difference?

Individualism

Individualism does not simply imply a belief in the existence of individuals. Rather, it refers to a belief in the primacy of the individual over any social group or collective body, suggesting that the individual is central to any political theory or social explanation. However, individualism does not have a clear political character. Although it has often been linked to the classical liberal tradition, and ideas such as limited government and the free market, it has also been used to justify state intervention and has, at times, been embraced by socialists. While some view individualism and collectivism as polar opposites, representing the traditional battle lines between capitalism and socialism, others argue that the two are complementary, even inseparable: individual goals can only be fulfilled through collective action. The problem is that there is no agreement about the

nature of the 'individual'. The various forms which individualism has taken therefore reflect the range of views about the content of human nature.

All individualist doctrines extol the intrinsic value of the individual, emphasizing the dignity, personal worth, even sacredness, of each human being. What they disagree about, however, is how these qualities can best be realized. Early liberals expressed their individualism in the doctrine of natural rights, which holds that the purpose of social organization is to protect the inalienable rights of the individual. Social-contract theory can, for instance, be seen as a form of political individualism. Government is seen to arise out of the consent of individual citizens, and its role is limited to the protection of their rights. However, if this form of individualism is pushed to its logical extreme, it can have libertarian and even anarchist implications. For example, American individualists such as Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) and Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) believed that no individual should sacrifice his or her conscience to the judgement of politicians, elected or otherwise, a position which denies that government can ever exercise rightful authority over the individual.

This anti-statist individualist tradition has also been closely linked to the defence of market capitalism. Such individualism has usually been based on the assumption that individual human beings are self-reliant and self-interested. C. B. Macpherson (1973) termed this 'possessive individualism', which he defined as 'a conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them'. If individuals are essentially egoistical, placing their own interests before those of fellow human beings or society, economic individualism is clearly linked to the right of private property, the freedom to acquire, use and dispose of property however the individual may choose. As such, individualism became, in the UK and the USA in particular, an article of faith for those who revered *laissez-faire* capitalism. Laws which regulate economic and social life – by stipulating wage levels, the length of the working day, interfering with working conditions or introducing benefits and pensions – are, from this point of view, a threat to individualism.

Very different implications, however, have sometimes been drawn from the doctrine of individualism. For example, modern liberals, such as T. H. Green (see p. 249) and L. T. Hobhouse (1864–1929), used individualism to construct arguments in favour of social welfare and state intervention. They saw the individual not as narrowly self-interested, but as socially responsible; above all, in this view, individuals have the ability to grow or flourish, the capacity to achieve fulfilment and realize whatever potential they may possess. Individualism was therefore transformed from a doctrine of individual greed to a philosophy of individual self-development; egotistical individualism gave way to developmental individualism. As a result, modern liberals have been prepared to support government action designed to promote equality of opportunity and protect individuals from the social evils that blight their lives, such as unemployment,

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF 'NO-SELF'

The doctrine of 'no-self' (*anatman* in Sanskrit) is not only the bedrock of Buddhist thought, but it also distinguishes Buddhism from all other religions, creeds and systems of philosophy. The doctrine further serves as a powerful critique of the principle of individualism, as the latter is grounded in the notion of a separate, distinctive, enduring and unified self. Buddhist teaching sets out to examine what we conventionally call 'myself'; it concludes that no such entity can be found, but only a 'bundle' of phenomena. These are the five *skandhas* (or 'heaps'): form (the body), feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness. Moreover, as each of these is temporary and ever-changing, it is 'empty' in that it lacks 'own-being'. Buddhists thus treat consciousness, the last of the *skandhas*, not as a 'thing' in itself, as in the Western notion of 'mind' (usually seen as the location of the self), but merely as the mental processes that enable us to be aware of the other four *skandhas*. In this sense, Buddhists hold that there can be thoughts without a 'thinker'.

The doctrine of no-self underpins a wide variety of Buddhist beliefs. For example, the origins of suffering and unhappiness are traced back to the delusion of a separate and substantive self, for this gives rise to cravings and ambitions that can never be satisfied because they are only replaced by other cravings and ambitions. The path to happiness and spiritual enlightenment (very much the same thing in Buddhism) therefore involves the progressive abandonment of attempts to defend, bolster or enrich the self. The most politically significant aspects of Buddhist thinking about the self stem from its emphasis on interdependence. Not only does abandoning the self/other divide imply that the natural relationship between people is one of caring and compassion, a belief that has clear implications for welfare and economic organization (see 'Buddhist economics', p. 303), but, in suggesting that there is an intrinsic relationship between humankind and the natural world, it also has distinctly green or ecological overtones.

poverty and ignorance. Some socialist thinkers have embraced the notion of individualism for the same reason. If human beings are, as socialists argue, naturally sociable and gregarious, individualism stands not for possessiveness and self-interest but for fraternal cooperation and, perhaps, communal living. This is why the French socialist Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) could proclaim, 'socialism is the logical completion of individualism'. So-called 'third-way' thinkers, such as Anthony Giddens (1998), have attempted a similar reconciliation in embracing the idea of 'new' individualism, which stresses that autonomous individuals operate within a context of interdependence and reciprocity.

Individualism is not, however, only of importance as a normative principle; it has also been widely used as a methodological device. In other words, social or political theories have been constructed on the basis of a pre-established model of the human individual, taking account of whatever needs, drives, aspirations and so forth the individual is thought to possess. Such ‘methodological individualism’ was employed in the seventeenth century to construct social-contract theories and in the twentieth century has become the basis for rational-choice models of political science. The individualist method underpinned classical and neo-classical economic theories, and has been championed in the modern period by writers such as Friedrich Hayek (see p. 313). In each case, conclusions have been drawn from assumptions about a ‘fixed’ or ‘given’ human nature, usually highlighting the capacity for rationally self-interested behaviour. However, the drawback of any form of methodological individualism is that it is both asocial and ahistorical. By building political theories on the basis of a pre-established model of human nature, individualists ignore the fact that human behaviour varies from society to society, and from one historical period to the next. If historical and social factors shape the content of human nature, as advocates of ‘nurture’ theories suggest, the human individual should be seen as a product of society, not the other way around.

Individual and community

Support for individualism has not been universal, however. Political thought is deeply divided about the relationship between the individual and the community: should the individual be encouraged to be independent and self-reliant, or will this make social solidarity impossible and leave individuals isolated and insecure? Advocates of the former position have normally subscribed to a particular Anglo-American tradition of individualism, described by US President Herbert Hoover as ‘rugged individualism’. This tradition can be thought of as an extreme form of individualism, its roots being found in classical liberalism. It sees the individual as almost entirely separate from society, and so discounts or downgrades the importance of community. It is based on the belief that individuals not only possess the capacity for self-reliance and hard work, but also that individual effort is the source of moral and personal development. Not only *can* individuals look after themselves, but they *should* do.

The seminal work of this individualist tradition is Samuel Smiles’s *Self-Help* ([1859] 2008), which proclaimed that, ‘The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual’. Smiles (1812–1904) extolled the Victorian virtues of enterprise, application and perseverance, underpinned by the belief that ‘energy accomplishes more than genius’. While self-help promotes the mental and moral development of the individual, and through promoting the

entrepreneurial spirit benefits the entire nation, 'help from without', by which Smiles meant social welfare, enfeebles the individual by removing the incentive, or even need, to work. Such ideas found their highest expression in the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer and his followers. For them, individualism had a biological basis in the form of a struggle for survival among all individuals. Those fitted by nature to survive should succeed; the weak and lazy should go to the wall.

Such ideas have had considerable impact on New Right thinking, and in particular on its attitude towards the welfare state. Stridently advanced during the 1980s through Reaganism in the USA and Thatcherism in the UK, the New Right attacked the 'dependency culture' which over-generous welfare support had supposedly created. The poor, disadvantaged and unemployed had been turned into 'welfare junkies', robbed of the desire to work and denied dignity and self-respect. From this perspective, the solution is to bring about a shift from social responsibility to individual responsibility, encouraging people to 'stand on their own two feet'. This has been reflected since the 1980s in the reshaping of the US and UK benefits systems, through, for instance, reductions in benefit levels, a greater emphasis on means-testing rather than universal benefits, and attempts to make the receipt of benefits conditional on a willingness to undertake training or carry out work. Critics of such policies, however, point out that so long as social inequality and deprivation continue to exist, it is difficult to see how individuals can be held to be entirely responsible for their own circumstances. This line of argument shifts attention away from the individual and towards the community.

A wide range of political thinkers – socialists, conservatives, nationalists and, most emphatically, fascists – have, at different times, styled themselves as anti-individualists. In most cases, anti-individualism is based on a commitment to the importance of community and the belief that self-help and individual responsibility are a threat to social solidarity. 'Community' may refer, very loosely, to a collection of people in a given location, as when the populations of a particular town, city or nation are described as a community. However, in social and political thought the term usually has deeper implications, suggesting a social group, a neighbourhood, town, region, group of workers or whatever, within which there are strong ties and a collective identity. A genuine community is therefore distinguished by the bonds of comradeship, loyalty and duty. In that sense, community refers to the social roots of individual identity.

Among the modern critics of liberal individualism have been communitarian theorists (see p. 33) who dismiss the very idea of the 'unencumbered self', arguing that the self is always constituted through the community. Not surprisingly, socialists have also taken up the cause of community, seeing it as a means of strengthening social responsibility and harnessing collective energies. This is why socialists have often rejected individualism, especially when it is narrowly

linked to self-interest and self-reliance. Although modern social democrats acknowledge the importance of individual enterprise and market competition, they nevertheless seek to balance these against the cooperation and altruism which only a sense of community can foster. Individualism has also been regarded with suspicion by many conservative theorists. From their point of view, unrestrained individualism is destructive of the social fabric. Individuals are timid and insecure creatures, who seek the rootedness and stability which only a community identity can provide. If individualism promotes a philosophy of 'each for his own' it will simply lead to 'atomism', and produce a society of vulnerable and isolated individuals. This has, for example, encouraged conservative thinkers, such as Irving Kristol (see p. 259) in the USA and Roger Scruton (2001) in the UK, to distance themselves from the free-market enthusiasms of the liberal New Right.

Socialist and conservative concepts of community have been influenced at several points by academic sociology. Sociologists have distinguished between the forms of community life which develop within traditional or rural societies, and those found in modern urban societies. The most influential such theory was that developed by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936), who distinguished between what he called *Gemeinschaft* or 'community', and *Gesellschaft* or 'association'. Tönnies suggested that *Gemeinschaft* relationships, typically found in rural communities, are based on the strong bonds of natural affection and mutual respect. This traditional sense of 'community' was, however, threatened by the spread of industrialization and urbanization, both of which encouraged a growth of egoism and competition. The *Gesellschaft* relationships which develop in urban societies are, by contrast, artificial and contractual; they reflect the desire for personal gain rather than any meaningful social loyalty. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) also contributed to the understanding of community by developing the concept of *anomie* to denote a condition in which the framework of social codes and norms breaks down entirely. In *Suicide* ([1897] 1951), Durkheim argued that, since human desires are unlimited, the breakdown of community, weakening social and moral norms about which forms of behaviour are acceptable and which are not, is likely to lead to greater unhappiness and, ultimately, more suicides. Once again, community rather than individualism was seen as the basis for social stability and individual happiness.

On the other hand, it is clear that an emphasis on community rather than the individual may also entail dangers. In particular, it can lead to individual rights and liberties being violated in the name of the community or collective body. This was most graphically demonstrated through the experience of fascist rule. In many ways, fascism is the antithesis of individualism: in its German form it proclaimed the supreme importance of the *Volksgemeinschaft* or 'national community', and aimed to dissolve individuality, and indeed personal existence,

within the social whole. This goal, distinctive to fascism, was expressed in the Nazi slogan 'Strength through Unity'. The method used to achieve this end in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy was totalitarian terror: a police state employing repression, persecution and widespread brutality. Although the fascist conception of community may be little more than a grotesque misrepresentation of the socialist idea of voluntary cooperation, extreme individualists have sometimes warned that any stress on the collective has oppressive implications since it threatens to downgrade the importance of the individual.

The individual in politics


Questions about the role of the individual in history have engaged generations of philosophers and thinkers. Clearly, such questions are of no less importance to the study of politics. Should political analysis focus on the aspirations, convictions and deeds of leading individuals, or should it rather examine the 'impersonal forces' that structure individual behaviour? At the outset, two fundamentally different approaches to this issue can be dismissed. The first sees politics entirely in personal terms. It holds that history is made by human individuals who, in effect, impress their own wills on the political process. Such an approach is evident in the emphasis on 'great men' and their deeds. From this perspective, political analysis boils down to little more than biography, as attention focuses on the lives of major leaders, people such as F. D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Mao Zedong and Nelson Mandela. In its most extreme form, this approach to politics has led to the fascist *Führerprinzip*, or 'leader principle'. Influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's (see p. 35) idea of the 'superman', fascists portrayed leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler as supremely gifted individuals, all-powerful and all-knowing. However, to see politics exclusively in terms of leadership and personality is to ignore the wealth of cultural, economic, social and historical factors that undoubtedly help to shape political developments. Moreover, it tends to imply that the individual comes into the world ready formed, owing nothing to society for his or her talents, qualities, attributes or whatever.

The second approach discounts the individual altogether. History is shaped by social, economic and other factors, meaning that individual actors are either irrelevant or merely act as puppets. An example of this approach to politics was found in the crude and mechanical Marxist theories that developed in the Soviet Union and other communist states. This amounted to a belief in economic determinism: political, legal, intellectual and cultural life were thought to be *determined* by the 'economic mode of production'. All of history and every aspect of individual behaviour was therefore understood in terms of the developing class struggle. Such theories, however, imply a belief in historical inevitability, which

COMMUNITARIANISM

The communitarian tradition has its origins in the nineteenth-century socialist utopianism of thinkers such as Robert Owen (see p. 370) and Peter Kropotkin (see p. 24). Indeed, a concern with community can be seen as one of the enduring themes in modern political thought, expressed variously in the socialist stress on fraternity and cooperation, the Marxist (see p. 75) belief in a classless communist society, the conservative (see p. 358) view of society as an organic whole, bound together by mutual obligations, and even in the fascist commitment to an indivisible national community. However, communitarianism as a school of thought articulating a particular political philosophy emerged only in the 1980s and 1990s. It developed specifically as a critique of liberalism, highlighting the damage done to the public culture of liberal societies by their emphasis on individual rights and liberties over the needs of the community. This resulted in the so-called liberal–communitarian debate.

From the communitarian perspective, the central defect of liberalism is its view of the individual as an asocial, atomized, 'unencumbered self'. Such a view is evident in the utilitarian (see p. 362) assumption that human beings are rationally self-seeking creatures. Communitarians emphasize, by contrast, that the self is embedded in the community, in the sense that each individual is a kind of embodiment of the society that has shaped his or her desires, values and purposes. This draws attention not merely to the process of socialization, but also to the conceptual impossibility of separating an individual's experiences and beliefs from the social context that assigns them meaning. The communitarian stance has particular implications for our understanding of justice. Liberal theories of justice tend to be based on assumptions about personal choice and individual behaviour that, communitarians argue, make no sense because they apply to a disembodied subject. Universalist theories of justice must therefore give way to ones that are strictly local and particular, a position similar to that advanced by postmodern theories (see p. 119).

Communitarians argue that their aim is to rectify an imbalance in modern society and political thought in which individuals, unconstrained by social duty and moral responsibility, have been allowed or encouraged to take account only of their own interests and their own rights. In this moral vacuum, society, quite literally, disintegrates. The communitarian project thus attempts to restore to society its moral voice and, in a tradition that can be traced back to Aristotle (see p. 62), to construct a 'politics of the common good'. Critics of communitarianism, however, allege that it has both conservative and authoritarian implications. Communitarianism has a conservative disposition in that it amounts to a defence of *existing* social structures and moral codes. Feminists, for example, have criticized communitarianism for attempting to bolster traditional sex roles under the guise of defending the family. The authoritarian features of communitarianism stem from its tendency to emphasize the duties and responsibilities of the individual over his or her rights and entitlements. 

Key figures

Alasdair MacIntyre (born 1929) A Scottish-born moral philosopher, MacIntyre developed a neo-classical and anti-liberal communitarian philosophy. In his view, liberalism preaches moral relativism and so is unable to provide a moral basis for social order. Arguing that notions of justice and virtue are specific to particular intellectual traditions, he developed a model of the good life that is rooted in Aristotle, and the Christian tradition of Augustine (see p. 83) and Aquinas (see p. 181). MacIntyre's major works include *After Virtue* (1981) and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988).

Michael Walzer (born 1935) A US political theorist, Walzer has developed a form of communitarian and pluralistic liberalism. He rejects as misguided the quest for a universal theory of justice, arguing instead for the principle of 'complex equality', according to which different rules should apply to the distribution of different social goods, thereby establishing separate 'spheres' of justice. He nevertheless evinces sympathy for a form of democratic socialism. Walzer's major works include *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977), *Spheres of Justice* (1983) and *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (1987).

Michael Sandel (born 1953) A US political theorist, Sandel has fiercely criticized individualism and the notion of the 'unencumbered self'. He argues for conceptions of moral and social life that are firmly embedded in distinctive communities, and emphasizes that individual choice and identity are structured by the 'moral ties' of the community. An advocate of 'civic republicanism' (see p. 132), Sandel has also warned that a lack of embeddedness may undermine democracy. His most influential works include *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982) and *Democracy's Discontent* (1996).

See also Charles Taylor (p. 179)

even a passing knowledge of politics would bring into doubt. But where does this leave us? If individuals are neither the masters of history nor puppets controlled by it, what scope is left to the individual action? In all circumstances a balance must exist between personal and impersonal factors.

If individuals 'make politics' they do so under certain, very specific conditions, intellectual, institutional, social and historical. In the first place there is the relationship between individuals and their cultural inheritance. Political leaders are rarely major or original thinkers, examples like V. I. Lenin (see p. 76) being very much the exception. Practical politicians are therefore guided in their behaviour and decision-making, often unknowingly, by what the economist Keynes referred to as 'academic scribblers'. Margaret Thatcher did not invent Thatcherism, any more than Ronald Reagan was responsible for Reaganism. In both cases, their ideas relied on the classical economics of Adam Smith (see p. 313) and David Ricardo (1772–1823), as updated by twentieth-century economists such as Hayek

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844–1900)

German philosopher. Nietzsche was a professor of Greek by the age of twenty-five. He abandoned theology for philology and, influenced by the ideas of Schopenhauer (1788–1860), he attempted to develop a critique of traditional religious and philosophical thought. Deteriorating health and growing insanity after 1889 brought him under the control of his sister Elizabeth, who edited (and distorted) his writings.

Nietzsche's complex and ambitious work stressed the importance of will, especially the 'will to power', and it anticipated modern existentialism in emphasizing that people create their own worlds and make their own values. In his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche argued that Greek civilization had reached its peak before Socrates and was most clearly embodied in its art. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883–5) developed the notion of the 'superman', an idea much misrepresented by twentieth-century fascists, but which Nietzsche used to refer to a person capable of generating their own values and living beyond the constraints of conventional morality. In works such as *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), he mounted a fierce attack on Christianity and ideologies derived from it, including liberalism and socialism, arguing that they had fostered a slave morality as opposed to the master morality of the classical world. He summed up this view in the declaration that 'God is dead'.

and Milton Friedman (see p. 19). Ideas, philosophies and ideologies are clearly no less important in political life than power, leadership and personality. This is not, however, to say that politics is simply shaped by those individuals who dream up the ideas in the first place. Without doubt, the ideas of thinkers such as Rousseau (see p. 165), Marx, Keynes and Hayek have 'changed history', by both inspiring and guiding political action. Nevertheless, at the same time, these individual thinkers were themselves influenced by the intellectual traditions of their time, as well as by the reigning historical and social circumstances.

Second, there is the relationship between individuals and institutions. It is widely argued in the modern context that the power wielded by presidents, prime ministers and other leading figures stems primarily from the office they hold rather than their personality. Max Weber (1864–1920) thus proclaimed that in modern industrial societies legal-rational authority had largely displaced charismatic and traditional forms of authority (as discussed in Chapter 5). Individual political leaders may therefore be of less importance than the parties they lead, the government institutions they control, or the constitutional arrangements within which they work. On the other hand, however, it is difficult to deny that institutional powers are to some extent elastic, capable of being stretched or enlarged by leaders who possess particular drive, energy and conviction. Charismatic and determined leaders have effectively redefined the

offices they hold, as F. D. Roosevelt did in the 1930s with the US presidency and Margaret Thatcher did in the 1980s with the UK premiership. Other leaders have founded or recast the institutions they lead, as occurred in the case of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. In the case of dictators like Hitler in Germany, Perón in Argentina and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, leaders have sought to wield absolute power by emancipating themselves from any constitutionally defined notion of leadership, attempting to rule on the basis of charismatic authority alone.

Third, there is the individual's relationship with society. There is a sense in which no individual can be understood in isolation from his or her social environment: no one comes into the world ready formed. Those who, like socialists, emphasize the importance of a 'social essence' are particularly inclined to see individual behaviour as representative of social forces or interests. In its extreme form, such a view sees the individual as nothing more than a plaything of impersonal social and historical forces. Although Marx himself did not subscribe to a narrow determinism, he certainly believed that the scope for individual action was limited, warning that 'the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living'. Politics, however, has an infinite capacity to surprise and to confound all predictions precisely because it is a personal activity. Ultimately, politics is 'made' by individuals, individuals who are clearly part of the historical process but who, nevertheless, possess some kind of capacity to shape events according to their own dreams and inclinations. It is impossible, for example, to believe that the course of Russian history would have been unaffected had V. I. Lenin never been born. Similarly, if F. D. Roosevelt had died from polio in 1920 instead of being paralyzed, would America have responded as it did to the Great Depression and the outbreak of World War II?

Society

However resilient and independent individuals may be, human existence outside society is unthinkable. Human beings are not isolated Robinson Crusoes, able to live in complete and permanent isolation – even the skills and knowledge which enabled Robinson Crusoe to survive were acquired through education and social interaction before his shipwreck. However, the concept of society is often little better understood than that of the individual. In its most general sense, 'society' denotes a collection of people occupying the same territorial area. Not just any group of people, however, constitutes a society. Societies are characterized by regular patterns of social interaction, suggesting the existence of some kind of social 'structure'. Moreover, 'social' relationships involve mutual awareness and at least some measure of cooperation. Warring tribes, for example, do not constitute a 'society', even though they may live in close proximity to one another and interact on a regular basis. On the other hand, the internationalization of

tourism and of economic life, and the spread of transnational cultural and intellectual exchange, has created the idea of an emerging 'world society' (see p. 39). Nevertheless, the cooperative interaction that defines 'social' behaviour need not necessarily be reinforced by a common identity or sense of loyalty. This is what distinguishes 'society' from the stronger notion of 'community', which requires at least a measure of affinity or social solidarity, an identification with the community.

However, the nature and significance of the sphere of social interaction has been a matter of considerable dispute. This often revolves around the relationship between the individual and collective bodies or entities. Can individualism and collectivism be reconciled, or must 'the individual' and 'society' always stand in opposition to one another? Moreover, society itself has been understood in a bewildering number of ways, each of which has important political implications. Is society, for example, a human artifact or an organic entity? And is it based on consensus or conflict? Finally, attention is often drawn to the political significance of social divisions or cleavages, linked, in particular, to social class, race or ethnicity, and religion. In some cases, these are thought to hold the key to political understanding. Why, and to what extent, do social cleavages have an impact on politics?

Collectivism

Few political terms have caused as much confusion as collectivism, or been accorded such a broad range of meanings. For some, collectivism refers to the actions of the state and reached its highest form of development in the centrally planned economies of orthodox communist states, so-called 'state collectivism'. Others, however, use collectivism to refer to communitarianism, a preference for community action rather than self-striving, an idea that has had libertarian, even anarchist, implications, as in the 'collectivist anarchism' of Michael Bakunin (1814–76). In addition, collectivism is sometimes used as a synonym for socialism, though, to confuse matters further, this is done by critics of socialism to highlight what they see as its statist tendencies, while socialists themselves employ the term to underline their commitment to the shared or collective interests of humanity. Nevertheless, it is possible to point to a common core of collectivist ideas, as well as to identify a number of competing interpretations and traditions.

At heart, collectivism stresses the capacity of human beings for collective action, stressing their willingness and ability to pursue goals by working together rather than striving for personal self-interest. All forms of collectivism therefore subscribe to the notion that human beings are social animals, identifying with fellow human beings and bound together by a collective identity. The social

group, whatever it might be, is meaningful, even essential, to human existence. This form of collectivism is found in a wide range of political ideologies. It is, quite clearly, fundamental to socialism. An emphasis on social identity and the importance of collective action is evident in the use of the term 'comrade' to denote the common identity of those who work for social change; in the notion of 'class solidarity' to highlight the common interests of all working people; and, of course, in the idea of a 'common humanity'. Feminism also embraces collectivist ideas in stressing the importance of 'gender' and 'sisterhood', acknowledging the common identity which all women share and underlining their capacity to undertake collective political action. Similarly, nationalist and racist doctrines draw on a collectivist vision by interpreting humanity in terms of 'nations' or 'races'. All forms of collectivism are therefore at odds with the extreme form of individualism that portrays human beings as independent and self-striving creatures. If, however, people are thought to be naturally sociable and cooperative, collectivism may be a source of personal fulfilment rather than a denial of individuality.

The link between collectivism and the state is not, however, accidental. The state (discussed in more detail in Chapter 3) has often been seen as the agency through which collective action is organized, in which case it represents the collective interests of society rather than those of any individual. This is why New Right theorists in particular tend to portray state intervention in its various forms as evidence of collectivism. The growth of social welfare, the advance of economic management and the extension of nationalization have thus been interpreted as the 'rise of collectivism'. Collectivism, in this statist sense, is often regarded as the antithesis of individualism. As the state represents sovereign, compulsory and coercive authority, it is always the enemy of individual liberty. Where the state commands, individual initiative and freedom of choice are constrained. However, this is to view the state in exclusively negative terms. If, on the other hand, the state advances the cause of individual self-development, say, by providing education or social welfare, collectivism could be regarded as entirely compatible with individualism, if not as its fulfilment.

Any collectivist doctrine that links it exclusively to the state must, however, be misleading. The state is, at best, only an agency through which collective action is organized. The danger of the state is that it can substitute itself for 'the collective', taking decisions and responsibilities away from ordinary citizens. In that sense, collectivism stands for collective action undertaken by free individuals out of a recognition that they possess common interests or a collective identity. This broader form of collectivism is more closely linked to the idea of self-management than it is to state control. Self-managing collectivism has been particularly attractive to anarchists and libertarian socialists. Bakunin, for instance, looked towards the creation of a stateless society in which the economy would be organized according to the principles of workers' self-management,

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

WORLD SOCIETY

The notion of society has been applied to the study of international politics in a tradition that dates back to the Dutch jurist and philosopher Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and maybe to Thomas Aquinas (see p. 181). Modern exponents of this so-called 'international society' tradition have modified the emphasis within realist theory (see p. 327) on power politics and international anarchy by suggesting the existence of a 'society of states' rather than simply a 'system of states'. However, the notion of 'world society' is more inclusive and has more radical implications.

An early attempt to advance the idea of world society was made by Marshall McLuhan (1964) in the notion of the 'global village'. By this, McLuhan sought to draw attention to the existence of a single, interconnected world, made possible by rapid developments in communications technology which made possible the instantaneous flow of information around the world. As well as bringing about a massive increase in the scale of human connectedness (with more people interacting with more other people), this also led to a substantial change in the nature of human connectedness, as face-to-face interaction was increasingly superseded by media-based (and particularly internet-based) interaction. This created the phenomenon of 'time/space compression', meaning that barriers to communication once imposed by time and space have significantly reduced. While some have welcomed this on the grounds that knowledge flows have greatly increased, widening opportunities for personal and social development, others have warned that the use of modern technology results in 'thinner' levels of social connectedness. The concept of world society has been more explicitly developed in the writings of John Burton (1972) and Barry Buzan (2004). In their view, world society transcends nation-state boundaries and comprises individuals, non-state organizations and, ultimately, the global population as a whole. Evidence of the growth of global societal connectedness can be seen in the emergence of global events, events that have a worldwide reach, audience and impact; examples include the September 11 terrorist attacks, the 1984–85 Ethiopian famine and the 2004 Asian tsunami.

However, the notion of world society has also attracted criticism. Not only do social bonds and civic allegiances worldwide continue to be orientated much more around the nation than the globe, with nationalism (see p. 95) stubbornly refusing to be subdued by cosmopolitanism (see p. 105), but the 'global age' may also be characterized less by homogenization and integration and more by polarization and diversity. A deeper problem may be that, at over 7 billion and still growing, the global population is simply too large to constitute a meaningful 'society', any sense of global consciousness, or 'globality' (see p. 373), being so 'thin' that it must remain morally and politically irrelevant.

and clearly distinguished this collectivist vision from what he saw as the authoritarianism implicit in Marxist socialism. It is also the form of collectivism that inspired the *kibbutz* system in Israel. Needless to say, these collectivist ideas share no similarity whatsoever with styles of individualism which emphasize personal self-reliance and individual self-interest. However, by remaining faithful to the ideals of self-management and voluntary action, this form of collectivism need not have anti-individualist implications.

Theories of society

A theory of society is of no less importance to political analysis than is a conception of human nature. Political life is intimately related to social life; politics is, after all, little more than a reflection of the tensions and conflicts which society generates. However, the interaction between politics, society and the individual is a matter of deep ideological controversy. What conflicts exist in society? Who are these conflicts between? Can these conflicts be overcome, or are they a permanent feature of political existence?

A first range of theories is based on an individualist conception of society. These assume that society is a human artifact, constructed by individuals to serve their interests or purposes. In its extreme form this can lead to the belief, often associated with Margaret Thatcher, but based on the ideas of Jeremy Bentham (see p. 363), that ‘there is no such thing as society’. In other words, all social and political behaviour can be understood in terms of the choices made by self-interested individuals, without reference to collective entities such as ‘society’. The clearest example of such a theory is found in classical liberalism, which is committed to the goal of achieving the greatest possible individual freedom. Although a state is needed to guarantee a framework of order, individuals should, as far as possible, be able to pursue their own interests in their own way. This has often been described as an ‘atomistic’ theory of society, in that it implies that society is nothing more than a collection of individual units or atoms.

Such a view does not, however, ignore the fact that individuals pursue their interests through the formation of groups and associations, businesses, trade unions, clubs, and so forth. The cement which holds this society together, though, is self-interest, the recognition that private interests overlap, making possible the construction of contracts or voluntary agreements. Clearly, this notion of society is founded on a strong belief in consensus, the belief that there is a natural balance or harmony among the competing individuals and groups in society. This was expressed in Adam Smith’s idea of an ‘invisible hand’ operating in the marketplace, later interpreted by Hayek as the ‘spontaneous order’ of economic life. Although workers and employers seek conflicting goals – the

worker wants higher wages and the employer lower costs – they are nevertheless bound together by the fact that workers need jobs and employers need labour. Such a view of society has very clear political implications. In particular, if society can afford individuals the opportunity to pursue self-interest without generating fundamental conflict, surely Thomas Jefferson's (see p. 212) motto that 'That government is best which governs least' is correct.

A fundamentally different theory of society is based on an organic analogy. Instead of being constructed by rational individuals to satisfy their personal interests, society may operate as an 'organic whole,' exhibiting properties more normally associated with living organisms – a human being or plant. This suggests a holistic approach to society, emphasizing that societies are complex networks of relationships which ultimately exist to maintain the whole: the whole is more important than its individual parts. The organic analogy was first used by Ancient Greek thinkers who referred to the 'body politic'. Some anthropologists and sociologists have subscribed to similar ideas in developing the functionalist view of society. This assumes that all social activity plays some part in maintaining the basic structures of society, and can therefore be understood in terms of its 'function'. The organic view of society has been accepted by a wide range of political thinkers, notably traditional conservatives and fascists, particularly those who have supported corporatism. There is, indeed, a sense in which organicism has clearly conservative implications. In particular, it tends to legitimize the existing moral and social order, implying that it has been constructed by the forces of natural necessity. Institutions such as the family, the church and the aristocracy, as well as traditional values and culture, therefore serve to underpin social stability. Moreover, this view implies that society is naturally hierarchic. The various elements of society – social classes, sexes, economic bodies, political institutions, and the like – each have a specific role to play, a particular 'station in life'. Equality among them is as absurd as the idea that the heart, liver, stomach, brain and lungs are equal within the body; they may be equally important but clearly fulfil entirely different functions and purposes.

While both individualist and organic theories of society suggest the existence of an underlying social consensus, rival theories highlight the role of conflict. This can be seen, for instance, in the pluralist theory of society which draws attention to conflict between the various groups and interests in society. However, pluralists do not see such conflict as fundamental because, in the final analysis, they believe that an open and competitive political system is capable of ensuring social balance and of preventing a descent into unrest and violence. Elite theories of society, on the other hand, highlight the concentration of power in the hands of a small minority, and so underline the existence of conflict between 'the elite' and 'the masses'. Elite theorists are therefore more prepared to explain social order in terms of organizational advantage, manipulation and open coercion rather than consensus. The most influential conflict theory of

society, however, has been Marxism. Marx believed that the roots of social conflict lie in the existence of private property, leading to fundamental and irreconcilable class conflict. Quite simply, those who produce wealth in any society, the workers, are systematically exploited and oppressed by the property owners. Marx argued that workers are not paid in accordance with their contribution to the productive process, their 'surplus value' being expropriated. In the view of orthodox Marxists, fundamental class conflict influences every aspect of social existence. Politics, for instance, is not so much a process through which rival interests are balanced against one another, as a means of perpetuating class exploitation.

Social cleavages

With the exception of extreme individualists, all political thinkers recognize the importance of social groups or collective entities. They have been concerned with the 'make-up' or composition of society. This is reflected in the attempt to explain how particular social cleavages help to structure political life. A 'social cleavage' is a split or division in society, reflecting the diversity of social formations within it. Such cleavages are born out of an unequal distribution of political influence, economic power or social status. To interpret politics in terms of social cleavages is to recognize particular social bonds, be they economic, racial, religious, cultural or sexual, as politically important, and to treat the group concerned as a major political actor. These cleavages, however, can be interpreted in a number of different ways. For some, they are fundamental and permanent divisions, rooted either in human nature or in the organic structure of society. Others, by contrast, argue that these cleavages are temporary and removable. In the same way, these divisions can be thought of as healthy and desirable, or as evidence of social injustice and oppression. Modern political theorists sometimes prefer the language of identity and difference to that of social cleavages, practising what has come to be called 'identity politics'. This is discussed in Chapter 9, with a particular focus on differences rooted in gender and culture. The present chapter examines the political significance of social class, race and religion.

Social class is the cleavage that has traditionally been most closely associated with politics. Class reflects economic and social divisions, based on an unequal distribution of wealth, income or social status. A 'social class' is therefore a group of people who share a similar economic and social position, and who are thus united by a common economic interest. However, political theorists have not always agreed about the significance of social class, or about how class can be defined. Marxists, for example, have regarded class as the most fundamental of social cleavages and politically the most significant. Marxists understand class in

terms of economic power, the ownership of the means of production. The 'bourgeoisie' is the capitalist class, the owners of capital or productive wealth; while the 'proletariat', which owns no wealth, is forced to sell its labour power to survive, its members being reduced to the status of 'wage slaves'. In Marx's view, classes are major political actors, possessed of the capacity to change history. The proletariat is destined to be the 'gravedigger of capitalism', a destiny it will fulfil once it achieves revolutionary 'class consciousness'. However, the Marxist two-class model has been discredited by the failure of Marx's predictions to materialize, and by declining evidence of class struggle, at least in advanced capitalist societies. Post-Marxists, such as Laclau and Mouffe (1985), came to accept that the priority traditionally accorded to social class, and the central position of the working class in bringing about social change, are no longer sustainable.

Non-Marxist definitions of social class are usually based on income and status differences among occupational groups. Distinctions are thus made between 'middle-class' (or non-manual) workers and 'working-class' (or manual) workers. Although such divisions were less deeply entrenched than those recognized by Marxists, and allowed for the amelioration of class conflict through government efforts to redistribute wealth, they were assigned profound political significance, being viewed in many countries as the key determinant of voting behaviour and party alignment. The link between occupational class and politics nevertheless weakened from the 1970s onwards as advanced societies became increasingly 'post-industrial'. As service industries expanded at the expense of manufacturing, the ranks of the middle classes grew and the 'traditional' working class shrank, its sense of class solidarity also being undermined. Nevertheless, social divisions undoubtedly persist even in the most affluent of modern societies, though these are often referred to in terms of an 'underclass', a group of people who through endemic disadvantage and deprivation are consigned to the margins of conventional society.

Racial ethnic cleavages have also been significant in politics. 'Race' refers to genetic differences among humankind which supposedly distinguish people from one another on biological grounds like skin or hair colour, physique, physiognomy and the like. In practice, racial categories are largely based on cultural stereotypes and have little or no foundation in genetics. The term 'ethnicity' is therefore preferred by many because it refers to cultural, linguistic and social differences, not necessarily rooted in biology. Racial or ethnic cleavages have influenced political thought in two radically different ways. The first racially based political theories emerged in the nineteenth century, against the background of European imperialism. Works such as Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* ([1855] 1970) and H. S. Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* ([1899] 1913) provided a pseudo-scientific justification for the dominance of the 'white' European races over the 'black', 'brown' and 'yellow' peoples of Africa and Asia. The most grotesque twentieth-century mani-

festation of such racialism was, of course, found in the race theories of Nazism, which gave rise to the 'final solution', the attempt to exterminate European Jewry. Racist doctrines and movements have re-emerged in various parts of Europe since the late twentieth century, stimulated in part by the insecurity and political instability generated by the collapse of communism.

Very different forms of racial ethnic politics have, however, developed out of the struggle against colonialism in particular, and against racial discrimination in general. Ethnic minorities in many Western societies are excluded from political influence and suffer from disadvantage in both the workplace and public life. This has generated new styles of political activism. The 1960s, for instance, witnessed the emergence of the civil rights movement under Martin Luther King (1929–68), and the growth of more militant organizations like the Black Power movement and the Black Muslims under Malcolm X (1926–65). In many of these cases, racial divisions are seen as eradicable, the task facing anti-racists being one of reform: the construction of a more equitable and tolerant society. Where they are seen to be fundamental, as in the case of the Black Muslims (renamed the Nation of Islam), this has generated doctrines of racial separation.

The impact of religion on political life had been progressively restricted by the spread of liberal ideas and culture, a process that has been particularly prominent in the industrial West. However, the emergence of new, and often more assertive, forms of religiosity, the increasing impact of religious movements, and, most importantly, a closer relationship between religion and politics, especially since the 1970s, has confounded the so-called 'secularization thesis'. This holds that modernization is invariably accompanied by the victory of reason over religion and the displacement of spiritual values by secular ones. Religious revivalism was most dramatically demonstrated by the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, which brought Ayatollah Khomeini (see p. 215) to power. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that this is not an exclusively Islamic development, as 'fundamentalist' movements emerged in Christianity, particularly in the form of the 'new Christian Right' in the USA, within Hinduism and Sikhism in India, and within Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Other manifestations of this trend include the spread of US-style Pentecostalism in Latin America, Africa and East Asia; the growth in China of Falun Gong, a spiritual movement that has been taken by the authorities to express anti-communism and is reportedly supported by 70 million people; and the regeneration of Orthodox Christianity in post-communist Russia.

The link between religion and politics has been clearest in relation to Islam, where it has been reflected in an upsurge of Islamic fundamentalism, often termed 'Islamism'. Fundamentalism in Islam does not imply a belief in the literal truth of the Koran, for this is accepted by all Muslims and, in that sense, all Muslims are fundamentalists. Instead, it means an intense and militant faith in Islamist beliefs as the overriding principles of social life and politics, as well as of

personal morality. Islamic fundamentalists wish to establish the primacy of religion over politics. In practice, this means the founding of an 'Islamic state' (see p. 72) and the application of the *shari'a*, divine Islamic law, based on principles expressed in the Koran. However, Islam should be distinguished from Islamism. Islamism refers either to a political creed based on Islamic ideas and principles, or to a political movement that has been inspired by that creed. Its core aims are the promotion of pan-Islamic unity (distinguishing Islamism from conventional political nationalism (see p. 95)), the purification of the Islamic world through the overthrow of 'apostate' leaders of Muslim states (secularized or pro-Western leaders), and the removal of Western, and especially US, influence from the Islamic world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- To what does the concept of 'human nature' refer?
- Must all political thought be grounded in a concept of human nature, and if so, why?
- To what extent is human nature 'plastic', shaped by external forces?
- What are the implications of assuming that human beings are largely driven by non-rational impulses?
- On what grounds have people been portrayed as naturally cooperative?
- Is individualism a necessarily anti-statist doctrine?
- Can individualism and social belonging be reconciled?
- To what extent do individuals 'make politics'?
- Why, and with what justification, are collectivism and collectivization linked?
- Is society based on conflict or consensus?
- Has the theory of class politics ceased to be relevant?
- Is race a myth?

FURTHER READING

Avineri, S. and de-Shalit, A. (eds) *Communitarianism and Individualism* (1992).

A wide-ranging collection of essays that reflect on the debate between communitarianism and individualism as rival approaches to political theory.

Lukes, S. *Individualism* (2006). A classic examination of what individualism has meant in different national tradition and provinces of thought, which argues that it has come to play a malign ideological role.

Stevenson, L. *Ten Theories of Human Nature* (1998). An account of competing theories of human nature that considers views ranging from ancient religious traditions to modern scientific theorizing.

Taylor, C. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (1992). A stimulating, if philosophically demanding, account of the making of identity that argues that modern subjectivity is the result of long efforts to define and attain the good.

3

Politics, Government and the State

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- POLITICS
The art of government • Public affairs • Power and resources
 - GOVERNMENT
Why have government? • Governments and governance • Political systems
 - THE STATE
Government and the state • Theories of the state • Role of the state
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Preview

In the early stages of academic study, students are invariably encouraged to reflect on what the subject itself is about, usually by being asked questions such as 'What is Physics?', 'What is History?' or 'What is Economics?' Such reflections have the virtue of letting students know what they are in for: what they are about to study and what issues and topics are going to be raised. Unfortunately for the student of politics, however, the question 'What is Politics?' is more likely to generate confusion than bring comfort or reassurance. The problem with politics is that debate, controversy and disagreement lie at its very heart, and the definition of 'the political' is no exception.

The debate about 'What is Politics?' exposes some of the deepest and most intractable conflicts in political thought. The attempt to define politics raises a series of difficult questions. For example, is politics a restricted activity confined to what goes on within government or the state, or does it occur in all areas of social life? Does politics, in other words, take place within families, schools, colleges and in the workplace? Similarly, is politics, as many believe, a corrupting and dishonest activity, or is it, rather, a healthy and ennobling one? Can politics be brought to an end? Should politics be brought to an end? A further range of arguments and debates are associated with the institution of government. Is government necessary or can societies be stable and successful in the absence of government? What form should government take, and how does government relate to broader political processes, usually called the political system? Finally, deep controversy also surrounds the nature and role of the state. For instance, since the terms 'government' and 'state' are often used interchangeably, can a meaningful distinction be established between them? Is state power benevolent or oppressive: does it operate in the interests of all citizens or is it biased in favour of a narrow elite or ruling class? Moreover, what should the state do? Which responsibilities should we look to the state to fulfil and which ones should be left in the hands of private individuals?

Politics

There are almost as many definitions of politics as there are authorities willing to offer an opinion on the subject. Politics has been portrayed as the exercise of power or authority, as a process of collective decision-making, as the allocation of scarce resources, as an arena of deception or manipulation, and so forth. A number of characteristic themes nevertheless crop up in most, if not all, these definitions. In the first place, politics is an activity. Although politics is also an academic subject, sometimes indicated by the use of 'Politics' with a capital letter P, it is clearly the study of the activity of 'politics'. Second, politics is a social activity; it arises out of interaction between or among people, and did not, for example, occur on Robinson Crusoe's island – though it certainly did once Man Friday appeared. Third, politics develops out of diversity, the existence of a range of opinions, wants, needs or interests. Fourth, this diversity is closely linked to the existence of conflict: politics involves the expression of differing opinions, competition between rival goals or a clash of irreconcilable interests. Where spontaneous agreement or natural harmony occurs, politics cannot be found. Finally, politics is about decisions, collective decisions which are in some way regarded as binding on a group of people. It is through such decisions that conflict is resolved. However, politics is better thought of as the search for conflict resolution rather than its achievement, since not all conflicts are, or can be, resolved.

However, this is where agreement ends. There are profound differences about when, how, where, and in relation to whom, this 'politics' takes place. For instance, which conflicts can be called 'political'? What forms of conflict resolution can be described as 'political'? And where is this activity of 'politics' located? Three clearly distinct conceptions of politics can be identified. In the first place, politics has long been associated with the formal institutions of government and the activities which take place therein. Second, politics is commonly linked to public life and public activities, in contrast to what is thought of as private or personal. Third, politics has been related to the distribution of power, wealth and resources, something that takes place within all institutions and at every level of social existence.

The art of government

Bismarck declared that 'politics is not a science ... but an art'. The art he had in mind was the art of government, the exercise of control within society through the making and enforcement of collective decisions. This is perhaps the classical definition of politics, having developed from the original meaning of the term in Ancient Greece. The word 'politics' is derived from *polis*, which literally means

city-state. Ancient Greek society was divided into a collection of independent city-states, each of which possessed its own system of government. The largest and most influential of these was Athens, often portrayed as the model of classical democracy. All male citizens were entitled to attend the Assembly or *ecclesia*, very similar to a town-meeting, which met at least ten times a year, and most other public offices were filled by citizens selected on the basis of lot or rota. Nevertheless, Athenian society was based on a rigidly hierarchical system which excluded the overwhelming majority – women, slaves and foreign residents – from political life.

In this light, politics can be understood to refer to the affairs of the *polis*; it literally means ‘what concerns the *polis*’. The modern equivalent of this definition is ‘what concerns the state’. This is a definition which academic political science has undoubtedly helped to perpetuate through its traditional focus on the personnel and machinery of government. Furthermore, it is how the term ‘politics’ is commonly used in everyday language. For example, a person is said to be ‘in politics’ when they hold a public office, or to be ‘entering politics’ when they seek to do so. Such a definition of ‘the political’ links it very closely to the exercise of authority, the right of a person or institution to make decisions on behalf of the community. This was made clear in the writings of the influential US political scientist, David Easton (1981), who defined politics as the ‘authoritative allocation of values’. Politics has therefore come to be associated with ‘policy’, formal or authoritative decisions that establish a plan of action for the community. Moreover, it takes place within a ‘polity’, a system of social organization centred on the machinery of government. It should be noted, however, that this definition is highly restrictive. Politics, in this sense, is confined to governmental institutions: it takes place in cabinet rooms, legislative chambers, government departments and the like, and it is engaged in by limited and specific groups of people, notably politicians, civil servants and lobbyists. Most people, most institutions and most social activities can thus be regarded as ‘outside’ politics.

For some commentators, however, politics refers not simply to the making of authoritative decisions by government but rather to the particular means by which these decisions are made. Politics has often been portrayed as ‘the art of the possible’, as a means of resolving conflict by compromise, conciliation and negotiation. Such a view was advanced by Bernard Crick in *In Defence of Politics* ([1962] 2000), in which politics is seen as ‘that solution to the problem of order which chooses conciliation rather than violence and coercion’. The conciliation of competing interests or groups requires that power is widely dispersed throughout society and apportioned according to the importance of each to the welfare and survival of the whole community. Politics is, then, no utopian solution, but only the recognition that if human beings cannot solve problems by compromise and debate they will resort to brutality. As the essence of politics is

discussion, Crick asserted that the enemy of politics is ‘the desire for certainty at any cost’, whether this comes in the form of a closed ideology, blind faith in democracy, rabid nationalism or the promise of science to disclose objective knowledge.

Once again, such a definition of politics can clearly be found in the common usage of the term. For instance, a ‘political’ solution to a problem implies negotiation and rational debate, in contrast to a ‘military’ solution. In this light, the use of violence, force or intimidation can be seen as ‘non-political’, indeed as the breakdown of the political process itself. At heart, the definition of politics as compromise and conciliation has an essentially liberal character. In the first place, it reflects a deep faith in human reason and in the efficacy of debate and discussion. Second, it is based on an underlying belief in consensus rather than conflict, evident in the assumption that disagreements can be settled without resort to naked power. In effect, there are no irreconcilable conflicts.

The link between politics and the affairs of the state has, however, also generated deeply negative conceptions of what politics is about. For many, politics is quite simply a ‘dirty’ word. It implies deception, dishonesty and even corruption. Such an image of politics stems from the association between politics and the behaviour of politicians, sometimes said to be rooted in the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli. In *The Prince* ([1531] 1961), Machiavelli attempted to develop a strictly realistic account of politics in terms of the pursuit and exercise of power, drawing on his observations of Cesare Borgia. Because he drew attention to the use by political leaders of cunning, cruelty and manipulation, the adjective ‘Machiavellian’ has come to stand for underhand and deceitful behaviour.

Politicians themselves are typically held in low esteem because they are perceived to be power-seeking hypocrites who conceal personal ambition behind the rhetoric of public service and ideological conviction. A conception of politics has thus taken root which associates it with self-seeking, two-faced and unprincipled behaviour, clearly evident in the use of derogatory phrases like ‘office politics’ and ‘politicking’. Such an image of politics also has a liberal character. Liberals have long warned that, since individuals are self-interested, the possession of political power will be corrupting in itself, encouraging those ‘in power’ to exploit their position for personal advantage and at the expense of others. This is clearly reflected in the British historian Lord Acton’s (1834–1902) famous aphorism: ‘power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely’.

Public affairs

The second and broader conception of politics moves it beyond the narrow realm of government to what is typically thought of as ‘public life’ or ‘public

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI (1469–1527)

Italian politician and author. The son of a civil lawyer, Machiavelli's knowledge of public life was gained from a sometimes precarious existence in politically unstable Florence. He served as Second Chancellor, 1498–1512, and was dispatched on missions to France, Germany and throughout Italy. After a brief period of imprisonment and the restoration of Medici rule, Machiavelli embarked on a literary career.

Machiavelli's major work, *The Prince*, written in 1513 and published in 1531, was intended to provide guidance for the ruler of a future united Italy, and drew heavily on his first-hand observations of the statecraft of Cesare Borgia and the power politics that dominated his period. His 'scientific method' portrayed politics in strictly realistic terms and highlighted the use by the political leaders of cunning, cruelty and manipulation. This emphasis, and attacks on him that led to his excommunication, meant that the term 'Machiavellian' subsequently came to mean scheming and duplicitous. His *Discourses*, written in 1513–17 and published in 1531, provides a fuller account of Machiavelli's republicanism, but commentators have disagreed about whether it should be considered as an elaboration of or a departure from the ideas outlined in *The Prince*.

affairs'. In other words, the distinction between 'the political' and 'the non-political' coincides with the division between an essentially public sphere of life and what is thought of as a private sphere. Such a view of politics is rooted in the work of Aristotle (see p. 62). In *Politics*, written between 335 and 323 BCE, Aristotle declared that 'Man is by nature a political animal', by which he meant that it is only within a political community that human beings can live 'the good life'. Politics is therefore the 'master science'; it is an ethical activity concerned ultimately with creating a 'just society'. According to this view, politics goes on within 'public' bodies such as government itself, political parties, trade unions, community groups and so on, but does not take place within the 'private' domain of, say, the home, family life and personal relationships. However, it is sometimes difficult in practice to establish where the line between 'public' life and 'private' life should be drawn, and to explain why it should be maintained.

The traditional distinction between the public realm and the private realm conforms to the division between the state and society. The characteristics of the state are discussed in more detail in the final main section of this chapter, but for the time being the state can be defined as a political association which exercises sovereign power within a defined territorial area. In everyday language, the state is often taken to refer to a cluster of institutions, centring on the apparatus of government but including the courts, the police, the army, nationalized industries, the social security system and so forth. These institutions can be viewed as 'public' in the sense that they are responsible for the collective organization of

community life and are thus funded at the public's expense, out of taxation. By contrast, society consists of a collection of autonomous groups and associations, embracing family and kinship groups, private businesses, trade unions, clubs, community groups and the like. Such institutions are 'private' in the sense that they are set up and funded by individual citizens to satisfy their own interests rather than those of the larger society. On the basis of this 'public/private' dichotomy, politics is restricted to the activities of the state itself and the responsibilities which are properly exercised by public bodies. Those areas of life in which individuals can and do manage for themselves – economic, social, domestic, personal, cultural, artistic and so forth – are therefore clearly 'non-political'.

However, the 'public/private' divide is sometimes used to express a further and more subtle distinction, namely between 'the political' and 'the personal'. Although society can be distinguished from the state, it nevertheless contains a range of institutions that may be thought of as 'public' in the wider sense that they are open institutions, operating in public and to which the public has access. This encouraged Hegel (see p. 54), for example, to use the more specific term, 'civil society', to refer to an intermediate socio-economic realm, distinct from the state on one hand and the family on the other (although most later thinkers have used the term to refer to *all* autonomous groups and associations, including the family). By comparison with domestic life, private businesses and trade unions can therefore be seen to have a public character. From this point of view, politics as a public activity stops only when it infringes on 'personal' affairs and institutions. For this reason, while many people are prepared to accept that a form of politics takes place in the workplace, they may be offended and even threatened by the idea that politics intrudes into family, domestic and personal life.

The importance of the distinction between political and private life has been underlined by both conservative and liberal thinkers. Conservatives such as Michael Oakshott (see p. 259) have, for instance, insisted that politics be regarded as a strictly limited activity, focused on the maintenance of order and the regulation of public life. In *Rationalism in Politics* ([1962] 1991), he supported this by advancing an essentially non-political view of human nature, which emphasizes that, far from being Aristotle's 'political animals', most people are security-seeking, cautious and dependent creatures. From this perspective, the inner core of human existence is a 'private' world of family, home, domesticity and personal relationships. Oakshott therefore viewed the rough and tumble of political life as inhospitable, even intimidating. From a liberal viewpoint, the maintenance of the 'public/private' distinction is vital to the preservation of individual liberty, typically understood as a form of privacy or non-interference. If politics is an essentially 'public' activity, centred on the state, it will always have a coercive character: the state has the power to compel the obedience of its citizens. On the other hand, 'private' life is a realm of choice, freedom and individ-

ual responsibility. Liberals therefore have a clear preference for society over the state, for 'the private' over 'the public', and have thus feared the encroachment of politics on the rights and liberties of the individual. Indeed, all too often, politics conjures up an image of unwanted and unwarranted interference, its only legitimate purpose being to establish an orderly environment in which individuals can live their lives as each thinks best.

Not all political thinkers, however, have had such a clear preference for society over the state. There is, for instance, a tradition which portrays politics favourably precisely because it is a 'public' activity. Dating back to Aristotle, this tradition has been kept alive by writers such as Hannah Arendt (see p. 129). In her major philosophical work *The Human Condition* (1958) Arendt placed 'action' above both 'labour' and 'work' in what she saw as a hierarchy of worldly activities. She argued that politics is the most important form of human activity because it involves interaction among free and equal citizens, and so both gives meaning to life and affirms the uniqueness of each individual. Advocates of participatory democracy have also portrayed politics as a moral, healthy and even noble activity. In the view of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see p. 165), political participation is the very stuff of freedom itself. Only through the direct and continuous participation of all citizens in political life can the state be bound to the common good, or what Rousseau called the 'general will'. John Stuart Mill (see p. 241) took up the cause of political participation in the nineteenth century, arguing that involvement in 'public' affairs is educational in that it promotes the personal, moral and intellectual development of the individual. Rather than seeing politics as a dishonest and corrupting activity, such a view presents politics as a form of public service, benefiting practitioners and recipients alike.

A further optimistic conception of politics stems from a preference for the state rather than civil society. Whereas liberals have seen 'private' life as a realm of harmony and freedom, socialists have often regarded it as a system of injustice and inequality. Socialists have consequently argued for an extension of the state's responsibilities in order to rectify the defects of civil society, seeing 'politics' as the solution to economic injustice. From a different perspective, Hegel portrayed the state as an ethical idea, morally superior to civil society. In *Philosophy of Right* ([1821] 1942), the state is treated with uncritical reverence as a realm of altruism and mutual sympathy, whereas civil society is taken to be dominated by narrow self-interest. Although such thinking helped to encourage modern liberals such as T. H. Green (see p. 249) to adopt a more positive attitude to the state, it was embraced in its most extreme form by fascist theorists who extolled the virtues of the 'totalitarian' state. Conforming to the formula expressed by the Italian idealist philosopher Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944): 'Everything for the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state', this sought nothing less than the 'politicization' of every aspect of social existence, literally the abolition of 'the private'.

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL (1770–1831)

German philosopher. Hegel was the founder of modern idealism and developed the notion that consciousness and material objects are in fact unified. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* ([1807] 1977), he sought to develop a rational system that would substitute for traditional Christianity by interpreting the entire process of human history, and indeed the universe itself, in terms of the progress of Absolute Mind towards self-realization. In his view, history is, in essence, a march of the human spirit towards a determinant end-point.

Hegel's principal political work, *Philosophy of Right* ([1821] 1942), advanced an organic theory of the state that portrayed it as the highest expression of human freedom. He identified three 'moments' of social existence: the family, civil society and the state. Within the family, he argued, a 'particular altruism' operates, encouraging people to set aside their own interests for the good of their relatives. He viewed civil society as a sphere of 'universal egoism' in which individuals place their own interests before those of others. However, he held that the state is an ethical community underpinned by mutual sympathy, and is thus characterized by 'universal altruism'. This stance was reflected in Hegel's admiration for the Prussian state of his day, and helped to convert liberal thinkers to the cause of state intervention. Hegel's philosophy also had considerable impact on Marx (see p. 317) and other so-called 'young Hegelians'.

Power and resources

Each of the earlier two conceptions of politics view it as intrinsically related to a particular set of institutions or social sphere, in the first place the machinery of government and, second, the arena of public life. By contrast, the third and most radical definition of politics regards it as a distinctive form of social activity, but one that pervades every corner of human existence. As Adrian Leftwich insists in *What is Politics?* (2004), 'politics is at the heart of *all* collective social activity, formal and informal, public and private, in *all* human groups, institutions and societies'. In the view of the German political and legal theorist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985), politics reflects an immutable reality of human existence: the distinction between friend and enemy. In most accounts, this notion of 'the political' is linked to the production, distribution and use of resources in the course of social existence. Politics thus arises out of the existence of scarcity, out of the simple fact that while human needs and desires are infinite, the resources available to satisfy them are always limited. Politics therefore comprises any form of activity through which conflict about resource allocation takes place. This implies, for instance, that politics is no longer confined, as Crick argued, to rational debate and peaceful conciliation, but can also encompass threats, intimidation and violence. This is summed up in Clausewitz's famous dictum, 'War is nothing more than the continuation of

politics by other means'. In essence, politics is power, the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means. Harold Lasswell neatly summed up this aspect of politics in the title of his book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?* ([1936] 1958). Such a conception of politics has been advanced by a variety of theorists, amongst the most influential of whom have been Marxists and modern feminists.

In the Marxist view, politics, together with law and culture, is part of the 'superstructure', distinct from the economic 'base' which is the real foundation of social life. However, Marx (see p. 317) did not see the economic base and the political and legal superstructure as discrete entities, but believed that the superstructure arose out of, and reflected, the economic base. Political power is rooted in the class system; or, as Lenin (see p. 76) put it, 'politics is the most concentrated expression of economics'. Far from believing that politics is confined to the state and a narrow public sphere, Marxists may be said to hold that 'the economic is political'. Indeed, civil society, based as it is on a system of class antagonism, is the very heart of politics. However, Marx did not think that politics is an inevitable feature of social existence and he looked towards what he clearly hoped would be an end of politics. This would occur, he anticipated, once a classless, communist society came into existence, leaving no scope for class conflict, and therefore no scope for politics.

Particularly intense interest in the nature of politics has been expressed by modern feminist thinkers. Whereas nineteenth-century feminists accepted an essentially liberal conception of politics as 'public' affairs, and focused especially on the campaign for female suffrage, radical feminists have been concerned to extend the boundaries of 'the political'. They argue that conventional definitions of politics, in effect, exclude women. Women have traditionally been confined to a 'private' existence, centred on the family and domestic responsibilities; men, by contrast, have always dominated conventional politics and other areas of 'public' life. Radical feminists have therefore attacked the 'public/private' dichotomy, proclaiming instead the slogan 'the personal is the political'. Although this slogan has provoked considerable controversy and a variety of interpretations, it undoubtedly encapsulates the belief that what goes on in domestic, family and personal life is intensely political. Behind this, however, stands a more radical notion of politics, defined by Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* ([1970] 1990) as 'power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another'. Politics therefore takes place whenever and wherever power and other resources are unequally distributed. From this viewpoint, it is possible to talk about 'the politics of everyday life', suggesting that relationships within the family, between husbands and wives or between parents and children, are every bit as political as relationships between employers and workers, or between government and its citizens. Such a broadening of the realm of politics has, on the other hand, deeply alarmed liberal theorists, who fear that it will encourage public authority to encroach on the privacy and liberties of the individual.

FEMINISM

Feminist political thought has been concerned with two key issues. First, it analyzes the institutions, processes and practices through which women have been subordinated to men; and second, it explores the most appropriate and effective ways in which this subordination can be challenged. The 'first wave' of feminism was closely associated with the women's suffrage movement, which emerged in the 1840s and 1850s. Feminism's 'second wave' arose during the 1960s and expressed the more radical and sometimes revolutionary demands of the growing Women's Liberation Movement. Although feminist politics has fragmented and undergone a process of de-radicalization since the early 1970s, feminism has nevertheless gained growing respectability as a distinctive school of political theory.

Feminist thinking has traditionally been broken down into liberal, socialist and radical sub-traditions. Liberal feminism, which dominated early forms of feminism, is shaped by a commitment to individualism and equal rights. This 'equal-rights feminism' is concerned to enhance the legal and political status of women, and to improve their educational and career prospects. Socialist feminism, largely derived from Marxism (see p. 75), highlights links between female subordination and the capitalist mode of production, drawing attention to the economic significance of women being confined to the family or domestic life. Radical feminism, for its part, moves beyond the perspectives of existing political traditions. It portrays gender divisions as the most fundamental and politically significant cleavages in society, and calls for the radical restructuring of personal, domestic and family life, under the slogan: 'The personal is the political'. In this view, all societies, contemporary and historical, are characterized by patriarchy, or institutionalized male power. However, the threefold division has become increasingly redundant since the 1970s as feminist thought has become yet more sophisticated and diverse. This is reflected in the growth, variously, of black feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, ecofeminism and postmodern feminism, and in the rise of so-called 'difference feminism', which rejects goal of gender equality on the grounds that it encourages women to be 'like men'. In this view, there are deep and perhaps ineradicable differences between women and men.

The major strength of feminist political theory is that it provides a perspective on political understanding that is uncontaminated by the gender biases that pervade conventional thought. Feminism has not merely reinterpreted the contribution of major theorists and shed new light on established concepts such as power, domination and equality, but also introduced a new sensitivity and language into political theory related to ideas such as connection, voice and difference. Feminism has nevertheless been criticized on the grounds that its internal divisions are now so sharp that feminist theory has lost all coherence and unity. Postmodern feminists, for example, even questioned whether 'woman' is a meaningful category. Others suggest that feminist theory has become disengaged from a society that is increasingly post-feminist, in that, largely thanks to feminism, the domestic, professional and public roles of women, at least in developed societies, have undergone a major transformation.

Key figures

Simone de Beauvoir (1906–86) A French novelist, playwright and social critic, Beauvoir helped to reopen the issue of gender politics and foreshadowed some of the themes later developed in radical feminism. In *The Second Sex* (1949), she highlighted the extent to which the masculine is represented as the positive or the norm, while the feminine is portrayed as 'other'. Such 'otherness' fundamentally limits women's freedom and prevents them from expressing their full humanity. Beauvoir placed her faith in rationality and critical analysis as the means of exposing this process.

Betty Friedan (1921–2006) A US political activist, Friedan is sometimes seen as the 'mother' of women's liberation. In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) (often credited with having stimulated the emergence of second-wave feminism) she attacked the cultural myths that sustained domesticity, highlighting the frustration and despair that afflicted suburban American women confined to the role of housewife and mother. In *The Second Stage* (1983), Friedan modified her liberal feminism by warning that the quest for 'personhood' should not encourage women to deny the importance of children, home and the family.

Kate Millett (born 1934) A US writer and sculptor, Millett developed radical feminism into a systematic theory that clearly stood apart from established liberal and socialist traditions. In her major work of feminist theory, *Sexual Politics* ([1970] 1990), Millett portrayed patriarchy as a 'social constant' running through all political, social and economic structures, and grounded in a process of conditioning that operates largely through the family, 'patriarchy's chief institution'. She supported consciousness-raising as a means of challenging patriarchal oppression, and advocated the abolition and replacement of the conventional family.

Juliet Mitchell (born 1940) A New Zealand-born British writer, Mitchell is a key theorist of socialist feminism. Adopting a modern Marxist perspective that allows for the interplay of economic, social, political and cultural forces in society, she warned that, since patriarchy has cultural and ideological roots, it cannot be overthrown simply by replacing capitalism with socialism. Mitchell was also one of the first feminists to use psychoanalytical theory as a means of explaining sexual difference. Her major works included *Women's Estate* (1971), *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* ([1974] 2000) and *Feminine Sexuality* (1985).

Catherine A. MacKinnon (born 1946) A US academic, lawyer and activist, MacKinnon has made a major contribution to feminist legal theory. In her view, law is one of the principal devices through which women's silence and subordination is maintained, as it defines the 'normal' status of women through the application of male values and practices. Other themes she has addressed include pornography, rape, domestic violence and international human rights. MacKinnon's major works include *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State* (1989), *Only Words* (1993) and *Are Women Human?* (2006).

See also Mary Wollstonecraft (p. 272)

Government

However politics is defined, government is undoubtedly central to it. To 'govern', in its broadest sense, is to rule or exercise control over others. The activity of government therefore involves the ability to make decisions and to ensure that they are carried out. In that sense, a form of government can be identified within most social institutions. For instance, in the family it is apparent in the control that parents exercise over children; in schools it operates through discipline and rules imposed by teachers; and in the workplace it is maintained by regulations drawn up by managers or employers. Government therefore exists whenever and wherever ordered rule occurs. However, the term 'government' is usually understood more narrowly to refer to formal and institutional processes by which rule is exercised at sub-national, national and international levels. As such, government can be identified with a set of established and permanent institutions whose function is to maintain public order and undertake collective action.

All systems of government encompass three basic functions: the making of laws, or legislation; the implementation of laws, or execution; and the interpretation of law, or adjudication. In some systems of government these functions are carried out by separate institutions – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary – but in others they may all come under the responsibility of a single body, which may range from a 'ruling' party to a single individual, a dictator. In some cases, however, the executive branch of government alone is referred to as 'the Government', making government almost synonymous with 'the rulers' or 'the governors'. Government is thus identified more narrowly with a specific group of ministers or secretaries, operating under the leadership of a chief executive, usually a prime minister. This typically occurs in parliamentary systems of government.

A number of controversial issues, however, surround the concept of government. In the first place, although the need for some kind of government enjoys near-universal acceptance, there are those who argue that government of any kind is both oppressive and unnecessary. Moreover, government comes in such bewildering varieties that it is difficult to categorize or classify its different forms. Government, for instance, can be democratic or authoritarian, constitutional or dictatorial, centralized or fragmented and so forth. Finally, government cannot be understood in isolation, separate from the society over which it rules. Governments operate within political systems, networks of relationships usually involving parties, elections, pressure groups and the media, through which government can both respond to popular pressures and exercise political control.

Why have government?

People in every part of the world recognize the concept of government and would, in the overwhelming majority of cases, be able to identify institutions in

their society that constitute government. Furthermore, most people accept without question that government is necessary, assuming that without it orderly and civilized existence would be impossible. Although they may disagree about the organization of government and the role it should play, they are nevertheless convinced of the need for some kind of government. However, the widespread occurrence of government and its almost uncritical acceptance worldwide does not in itself prove that an ordered and just society can only exist through the agency of government. Indeed, one particular school of political thought is dedicated precisely to establishing that government is unnecessary, and to bringing about its abolition. This is anarchism, anarchy literally meaning ‘without rule’.

The classic argument in favour of government is found in social-contract theories, first proposed by seventeenth-century philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (see p. 111) and John Locke (see p. 255). Social-contract theory, in fact, constitutes the basis of modern political thought. In *Leviathan* ([1651] 1968), Hobbes advanced the view that rational human beings should respect and obey their government because without it society would descend into a civil war ‘of every man against every man’. Social-contract theorists develop their argument with reference to an assumed or hypothetical society without government, a so-called ‘state of nature’. Hobbes graphically described life in the state of nature as being ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short’. In his view, human beings were essentially power-seeking and selfish creatures, who would, if unrestrained by law, seek to advance their own interests at the expense of fellow humans. Even the strongest would never be strong enough to live in security and without fear: the weak would unite against them before turning on one another. Quite simply, without government to restrain selfish impulses, order and stability would be impossible. Hobbes suggested that, recognizing this, rational individuals would seek to escape from chaos and disorder by entering into an agreement with one another, a ‘social contract’, through which a system of government could be established.

Social-contract theorists see government as a necessary defence against evil and barbarity, their view of human nature being essentially pessimistic. An alternative tradition exists, however, which portrays government as intrinsically benign, as a means of promoting good and not just of avoiding harm. This can be seen in the writings of Aristotle, whose philosophy had a profound effect on medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (see p. 181). In ‘The Treatise of Law’, part of *Summa Theologiae* (1963), begun in 1265, Aquinas portrayed the state as the ‘perfect community’ and argued that the proper effect of law was to make its subjects good. He was clear, for instance, that government and law would be necessary for human beings even in the absence of original sin. This benign view of government as an instrument which enables people to cooperate for mutual benefit has been kept alive in modern politics by the social-democratic tradition (see p. 276).

In the anarchist view, however, government and all forms of political authority are not only evil but also unnecessary. Anarchists advanced this argument by turning social-contract theory on its head and offering a very different portrait of the state of nature. Social-contract theorists assume, to varying degrees, that if human beings are left to their own devices, rivalry, competition and open conflict will be the inevitable result. Anarchists, on the other hand, have a more optimistic conception of human nature, stressing the capacity for rational understanding, compassion and cooperation. As William Godwin (see p. 313), whose *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* ([1793] 1976) gave the first clear statement of anarchist principles, declared, ‘Man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement’. In the state of nature a ‘natural’ order will therefore prevail, making a ‘political’ order quite unnecessary. Social harmony will spontaneously develop as individuals recognize that the common interests that bind them are stronger than the selfish interests that divide them, and when disagreements do occur they can be resolved peacefully through rational debate and discussion. Indeed, anarchists see government not as a safeguard against disorder, but as the cause of conflict, unrest and violence. By imposing rule from above, government represses freedom, breeding resentment and promoting inequality.

Anarchists have often supported their arguments by the use of historical examples, such as the medieval city-states revered by Peter Kropotkin (see p. 24) or the Russian peasant commune admired by the novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), in which social order was supposedly maintained by rational agreement and mutual sympathy. They have also looked to traditional societies in which order and stability reign despite the absence of what would normally be recognized as government. Clearly, it is impossible to generalize about the nature of traditional societies, some of which are hierarchic and repressive, quite unappealing to anarchists. Nevertheless, sociologists have also identified highly egalitarian societies, such as that of the Bushmen of the Kalahari, where differences appear to be resolved through informal processes and personal contacts, without the need for any formal government machinery. However, there are clear problems in trying to sustain anarchist arguments on the basis of the structure of traditional societies, so greatly do the latter differ from the complex, urbanized and industrialized societies in which most of the world’s population now live.

Governments and governance

Although all governments have the objective of ensuring orderly rule, they do so in very different ways and have assumed a wide variety of institutional and political forms. Absolute monarchies of old are, for instance, often distinguished from modern forms of constitutional and democratic government. Similarly,

during the Cold War period it was common for regimes to be classified as belonging to the First World, the Second World or the Third World. Political thinkers have attempted to establish such classifications with one of two purposes in mind. In the case of political philosophers, they have been anxious to evaluate forms of government on normative grounds in the hope of identifying the 'ideal' constitution. Modern political scientists, however, have attempted to develop a 'science of government' in order to study the activities of government in different countries without making value judgements about them. Ideological considerations nevertheless tend to intrude. An example of this is the use of the term 'democratic' to describe a particular system of government, a term that indicates general approval by suggesting that in such societies government is carried out both *by* and *for* the people.

One of the earliest attempts to classify forms of government was undertaken by Aristotle. In his view, governments can be categorized on the basis of 'Who rules?' and 'Who benefits from rule?' Government can be placed in the hands of a single individual, a small group or the many. In each case, however, government can be conducted either in the selfish interests of the rulers or for the benefit of the entire community. As a result, Aristotle identified six forms of government. Tyranny, oligarchy and democracy are all, he suggested, debased or perverted forms of rule in which, respectively, a single person, a small group and the masses govern in their own interests and therefore at the expense of others. By contrast, monarchy, aristocracy and polity are to be preferred because the single individual, small group or the masses govern in the interests of all. Aristotle declared that tyranny is clearly the worst of all possible constitutions since it reduces all citizens to the status of slaves. Monarchy and aristocracy are, on the other hand, impractical because they are based on a god-like willingness to place the good of the community before one's own interests. Aristotle accepted that polity, rule by the many in the interests of all, is the most practicable of constitutions, but feared that the masses may resent the wealth of the few and too easily come under the sway of a demagogue. He therefore advocated a 'mixed' constitution which would leave government in the hands of the 'middle classes', those who are neither rich nor poor.

Modern government, however, is far too complex to be classified simply on an Aristotelian basis. Moreover, the simplistic classification of regimes as first-world, second-world and third-world has become impossible to sustain in the light of the political, ideological and economic changes that have occurred since the collapse of communism in the revolutions of 1989–91. What used to be called first-world regimes are better categorized as 'liberal democracies'. Their heartland was the industrialized West – North America, Europe and Australasia – but they now exist in most parts of the world as a result of successive waves of democratization, the first between the 1820s and the 1920s, the second after 1945, and the third since 1989 (Huntington, 1991).

ARISTOTLE (384–322 BCE)

Greek philosopher. Aristotle was a student of Plato and the tutor of the young Alexander the Great. He established his own school of philosophy in Athens in 335 BCE. This was called the 'peripatetic school' after his tendency to walk up and down as he talked.

Aristotle's twenty-two surviving treatises were compiled as lecture notes and range over logic, physics, metaphysics, astronomy, meteorology, biology, ethics and politics. His best-known political work is *Politics* (2000), a comprehensive study of the nature of political life and the forms it may take. In describing politics as the 'master science', he emphasized that it is in the public not private domain that human beings strive for justice and live the 'good life'. Aristotle's taxonomy of forms of government led him to prefer those that aim at the common good over those that benefit sectional interests, and to recommend a mixture of democracy and oligarchy, in the form of what he called polity. The communitarianism (see p. 33) of *Politics*, in which the citizen is portrayed as strictly part of the political community, is qualified by an insistence on choice and autonomy in works such as *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the middle ages, Aristotle's work became the foundation of Islamic philosophy, and it was later incorporated into Christian theology.

Such systems of government are 'liberal' in the sense that they respect the principle of limited government; individual rights and liberties enjoy some form of protection from government. Limited government is typically upheld in three ways. In the first place, liberal-democratic government is constitutional. A constitution defines the duties, responsibilities and functions of the various institutions of government and establishes the relationship between government and the individual. Second, government is limited by the fact that power is fragmented and dispersed throughout a number of institutions, creating internal tensions or 'checks and balances'. Third, government is limited by the existence of a vigorous and independent civil society, consisting of autonomous groups such as businesses, trade unions, pressure groups and so forth. Liberal democracies are 'democratic' in the sense that government rests on the consent of the governed. This implies a form of representative democracy in which the right to exercise government power is gained by success in regular and competitive elections. Typically, such systems possess universal adult suffrage and secret-ballot elections, and respect a range of democratic rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of movement. The cornerstone of liberal-democratic government is political pluralism, the existence of a variety of political creeds, ideologies or philosophies and of open competition for power amongst a number of parties. The democratic credentials of such a system are examined in greater depth in Chapter 6.

There are, however, a number of differences among liberal-democratic systems of government. Some of them, like the USA and France, are republics, whose heads of state are elected, while countries such as the UK and the Netherlands are constitutional monarchies. Most liberal democracies have a parliamentary system of government in which legislative and executive power is fused. In countries such as the UK, Germany, India and Australia, the government is both drawn from the legislature and accountable to it, in the sense that it can be removed by an adverse vote. The USA, on the other hand, is the classic example of a presidential system of government, based as it is on a strict separation of powers between the legislature and the executive, as advocated by Montesquieu (see p. 133). The President and Congress are separately elected and each possesses a range of constitutional powers, enabling it to check the other. Some liberal democracies possess majoritarian governments. These occur when a single party, either because of its electoral support or the nature of the electoral system, is able to form a government on its own. Typically, majoritarian democracies possess two-party systems in which power alternates between two major parties, as has traditionally occurred, for instance, in the USA, the UK and New Zealand. In continental Europe, on the other hand, coalition government has been the norm, the focal point of which is a continual process of bargaining among the parties that share government power and the interests they represent.

However, despite the advance of democratization since the 1980s, a number of alternatives to the Western liberal model of government can be identified. These include 'new' democracies, East Asian government, Islamic government and military government. New democracies, many of which are in postcommunist, or 'transition', countries, assume an outwardly liberal-democratic form, with the adoption of multi-party elections and the introduction of market-based economic reforms. Nevertheless, to varying degrees, they lack democratic consolidation, exhibiting 'flaws' such as a weak or undeveloped civil culture, inadequate checks on executive power, fragmented or unstable party systems, or a general weakness of state power. Governmental forms in East Asia, notably in Japan and the so-called 'tiger' economies of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, have tended to be characterized by the priority given to boosting growth and delivering prosperity over considerations such as individual freedom in the Western sense of civil liberty. They often exhibit broad support for 'strong' government, sometimes exercised through powerful leaders or 'ruling' parties, underpinned by widely respected Confucian principles such as loyalty, discipline and duty.

Islamic government contains both fundamentalist and pluralist forms. The fundamentalist version of political Islam is most commonly associated with Iran and Afghanistan under the Taliban, where theocracies have been constructed in which political and other affairs have been structured according to 'higher' religious principles and political office has been closely linked to religious status. By

contrast, in states such as Malaysia, Islam has the status of an official state religion but operates alongside a form of 'guided' democracy. Despite a general trend towards civilian government and some form of electoral democracy, military government continues to be important in Africa, the Middle East and parts of South-East Asia and Latin America. The classic form of military government is the junta, a clique of senior officers that seizes power through a revolution or *coup d'état*. Other forms of military government include military-backed personalized dictatorships and regimes in which military leaders content themselves with 'pulling the strings' behind the scenes.

In the modern period, political analysts have often shifted their attention from the structures of government to the broader activities and processes of governing. This has been reflected in wider interest in the phenomenon of 'governance'. Although it still has no settled or agreed definition, governance refers, in its widest sense, to the various ways in which social life is coordinated. Government can therefore be seen as merely one of the institutions involved in governance; it is possible to have 'governance without government' (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). From this perspective, a number of modes of governance can be identified, each of which helps to coordinate social life in its own way. Hierarchies, markets and networks (informal relationships and associations) offer alternative means of making collective decisions. The growing emphasis on governance has resulted from two important shifts in modern government and, indeed, the wider society. In the first place, the boundaries between the state and civil society have become increasingly blurred through, for example, the growth of public/private partnerships, the wider use within public bodies and state institutions of private-sector management techniques, and the increasing importance of so-called policy networks. Second, government can no longer be thought of as a specific activity which takes place within discrete societies. This has led to 'multi-level governance'. Multi-level governance highlights a shift in policy-making responsibility away from national government, as power is both 'drawn down' and 'sucked up', creating a complex process of interactions. The former trend involves the strengthening of sub-national bodies through a process of localization or devolution; the latter reflects the growing importance of international bodies, often interpreted as the emergence of 'global governance' (see p. 65).

Political systems

Classifications of government are clearly linked to what are called 'political systems'. However, the notion that politics is a 'system' is relatively new, only emerging in the 1950s, influenced by the development of systems theory and its application in works like Talcott Parsons's *The Social System* (1951). It has, nevertheless, brought about a significant shift in the understanding of governmental

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The notion of global governance emerged in the context of the growing importance, especially since 1945, of organizations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Union and so on. In this light, the traditional assumption that international politics operates in a context of anarchy, with no authority being higher than the nation-state, became more difficult to sustain. On the other hand, global governance stops well short of world government, in which all of humankind is united under one common political authority. Global governance can thus be defined as the management of international politics in the absence of world government.

Global governance is nevertheless a complex phenomenon that defies simple definitions or explanations. Global governance is more a *field* than an object of study: although it can be associated with particular institutions and identifiable actors, it is essentially a process or a complex of processes, with the following features. First, global governance is multiple rather than singular: despite the UN's overarching role within the modern global government system, it comprises different institutional frameworks and decision-making mechanisms in different issue areas. Second, states and national governments retain considerable influence within the global governance system, reflecting international organizations' general disposition towards consensual decision-making and their usually weak powers of enforcement. Third, in common with governance at the national level, global governance blurs the public/private divide, in that it embraces non-governmental organizations and other institutions of so-called global civil society. Finally, global governance does not operate just at the global level; instead, it features interactions between groups and institutions at various levels (sub-national, national, regional and global), with no single level enjoying predominance over the others.

Global governance has been at the heart of debates of two kinds. Normative controversies have raged over whether the advance of global governance should be welcomed or feared. Liberals have supported global governance on the grounds that it provides a mechanism through which states can cooperate without, it seems, abandoning sovereignty, helping, in the process, to reduce levels of suspicion and distrust in the international system. Realists, by contrast, have warned that international organizations inevitably develop interests separate from their state members, in which case global governance amounts to a form of proto-world government. Empirical debate about global governance focuses on its practical significance. Some argue that the unmistakable growth in the number and importance of international organizations since 1945 provides irrefutable evidence of a greater willingness among states to cooperate and engage in collective action. Others, however, suggest that, to the extent that states maintain sovereignty despite the paraphernalia of global governance, international anarchy continues to reign. In short, states pursue self-interest, regardless of the context in which they operate.

processes. Traditional approaches to government focused on the machinery of the state and examined the constitutional rules and institutional structure of a particular system of government. Systems analysis has, however, broadened the understanding of government by highlighting the complex interaction between it and the larger society. A 'system' is an organized or complex whole, a set of interrelated and interdependent parts that form a collective entity. Systems analysis therefore rejects a piecemeal approach to politics in favour of an overall approach: the whole is more important than its individual parts. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of relationships, implying that each part only has meaning in terms of its function within the whole. A political system therefore extends far beyond the institutions of government themselves and encompasses all those processes, relationships and institutions through which government is linked to the governed.

The seminal work in this area was David Easton's *The Political System* ([1953] 1981). In defining politics as 'the authoritative allocation of values', Easton drew attention to all those processes which shape the making of binding decisions. A political system consists of a linkage between what Easton called 'inputs' and 'outputs'. Inputs into the political system consist of both demands and supports. Demands can take the form of the desire for higher living standards, improved employment prospects or welfare benefits, greater participation in politics, protection for minority and individual rights and so forth. Supports, on the other hand, are the ways in which the public contributes to the political system by paying taxes, offering compliance and being willing to participate in public life. Outputs consist of the decisions and actions of government, including the making of policy, the passing of laws, the imposition of taxes and the allocation of public funds. Clearly, these outputs generate 'feedback' which in turn will shape further demands and supports. As Easton conceived it, the political system is thus a dynamic process, within which stability is achieved only if outputs bear some relationship to inputs. In other words, if policy outputs do not satisfy popular demands these will progressively increase until the point when 'systemic breakdown' will occur. The capacity to achieve such stability is based on how the flow of inputs into the political system is regulated by 'gatekeepers', such as interest groups and political parties, and the success of government itself in converting inputs into outputs.

Some political systems will be far more successful in achieving stability than others. It is sometimes argued that this explains the survival and spread of liberal-democratic forms of government. Liberal democracies contain a number of institutional mechanisms which force government to pay heed to popular demands, creating channels of communication between government and the governed. For instance, the existence of competitive party systems means that government power is gained by that set of politicians whose policies most closely correspond to the preferences of the general public. Even if politicians are self-

seeking careerists, they must respond to electoral pressures to have any chance of winning office. Demands that are not expressed by parties or articulated at election time can be championed by interest groups or other lobbyists. Further, the institutional fragmentation typically found in liberal democracies offers competing interests a number of points of access to government.

On the other hand, stress can also build up within liberal-democratic systems. Electoral democracy, for example, may degenerate into a tyranny of the majority, depriving economic, ethnic or religious minorities of an effective voice. Similarly, parties and interest groups may be far more successful in advancing the demands of the wealthy, the educated and the articulate than they are in representing the poor and disadvantaged. Nevertheless, by comparison with liberal democracies, communist regimes operated within political systems that were clearly less stable. In the absence of party competition and independent pressure groups, the dominant party-state apparatus simply lacked mechanisms through which demands could be articulated, so preventing policy outputs from coming into line with inputs. Tensions built up in these systems, first expressed in dissent and later in open protest, fuelled by the emergence of better educated and more sophisticated urban populations and by the material affluence and political liberty apparently enjoyed in Western liberal democracies.

The analysis of government as a systemic process is, however, not without its critics. Although systems analysis is portrayed as a neutral and scientific approach to government, normative and ideological biases undoubtedly operate within it. Easton's work, for example, reflects an essentially liberal conception of politics. In the first place, it is based on a consensus model of society that suggests that any conflicts or tensions that occur can be reconciled through the political process. This implies that an underlying social harmony exists within liberal capitalist societies. Furthermore, Easton's model assumes that a fundamental bias operates within the political system in favour of stability and balance. Systems are self-regulating mechanisms which seek to perpetuate their own existence, and the political system is no exception. Once again, this reflects the liberal theory that government institutions are neutral, in the sense that they are willing and able to respond to all interests and groups in society. Such beliefs are linked not only to a particular conception of society but also to a distinctive view of the nature of state power.

The state

The term 'state' can be used to refer to a bewildering range of things: a collection of institutions, a territorial unit, a historical entity, a philosophical idea and so on. In everyday language, the state is often confused with the government, the two terms being used interchangeably. However, although some form of govern-

ment has probably always existed, at least within large communities, the state in its modern form did not emerge until about the fifteenth century. The precise relationship between state and government is, nevertheless, highly complex. Government is part of the state, and in some respects is its most important part, but it is only an element within a much larger and more powerful entity. So powerful and extensive is the modern state that its nature has become the centre-piece of political argument and ideological debate. This is reflected, in the first place, in disagreement about the nature of state power and the interests it represents, that is, competing theories of the state. Second, there are profound differences about the proper function or role of the state: what should be done by the state and what should be left to private individuals?

Government and the state

The state is often defined narrowly as a separate institution or set of institutions, as what is commonly thought of as ‘the state’. For example when Louis XIV supposedly declared, ‘*L’état c’est moi*’, he was referring to the absolute power that was vested in himself as monarch. The state therefore stands for the apparatus of government in its broadest sense, for those institutions that are recognizably ‘public’ in that they are responsible for the collective organization of communal life and are funded at the public’s expense. Thus the state is usually distinguished from civil society. The state comprises the various institutions of government, the bureaucracy, the military, police, courts, social security system and so forth; it can be identified with the entire ‘body politic’. It is in this sense, for instance, that it is possible to talk about ‘rolling forward’ or ‘rolling back’ the state, by which is meant expanding or contracting the responsibilities of state institutions and, in the process, enlarging or reducing the machinery of the state. However, such an institutional definition fails to take account of the fact that, in their capacity as citizens, individuals are also part of the political community, members of the state. Moreover, the state has a vital territorial component, its authority being confined to a precise geographical area. This is why the state is best thought of not just as a set of institutions but as a particular kind of political association, specifically one that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders. In that sense, its institutional apparatus merely gives expression to state authority.

The defining feature of the state is sovereignty, its absolute and unrestricted power, discussed at greater length in Chapter 4. The state commands supreme power in that it stands above all other associations and groups in society; its laws demand the compliance of all those who live within the territory. Hobbes conveyed this image of the state as the supreme power by portraying it as a ‘Leviathan’, a gigantic monster, usually represented as a sea creature. It is

precisely its sovereignty which distinguishes the modern state from earlier forms of political association. In medieval times, for instance, rulers exercised power but only alongside a range of other bodies, notably the church, the nobility, and the feudal guilds. Indeed, it was widely accepted that religious authority, centring on the Pope, stood above the temporal authority of any earthly ruler. The modern state, however, which first emerged in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe, took the form of a system of centralized rule that succeeded in subordinating all other institutions and groups, spiritual and temporal. Although such a state is now the most common form of political community worldwide, usually taking the form of the nation-state, there are still examples of stateless societies. For example, a state can break down when its claim to exercise sovereign power is successfully challenged by another group or body, as occurs at times of civil war. In this way, Lebanon in the 1980s, racked by war among rival militias and invaded by Israeli and Syrian armies, and the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, can both be classified as stateless societies.

In addition to sovereignty, states can be distinguished by the particular form of authority that they exercise. In the first place, state authority is territorially limited: states claim sovereignty only within their own borders and thus regulate the flow of persons and goods across these borders. In most cases these are land borders, but they may also extend several miles into the sea. Second, the jurisdiction of the state within its borders is universal, that is, everyone living within a state is subject to its authority. This is usually expressed through citizenship, literally membership of the state, which entails both rights and duties. Non-citizens resident in a state may not be entitled to certain rights, like the right to vote or hold public office, and may be exempt from particular obligations, such as jury service or military service, but they are nevertheless still subject to the law of the land.

Third, states exercise compulsory jurisdiction. Those living within a state rarely exercise choice about whether or not to accept its authority. Most people become subject to the authority of a state by virtue of being born within its borders; in other cases, this may be a result of conquest. Immigrants and naturalized citizens are here exceptions since they alone can be said to have voluntarily accepted the authority of a state. Finally, state authority is backed up by coercion: the state must have the capacity to ensure that its laws are obeyed, which in practice means that it must possess the ability to punish transgressors. Max Weber (1864–1920) suggested in ‘Politics as a Vocation’ (1948) that ‘the state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory’. By this he meant not only that the state had the ability to ensure the obedience of its citizens but also the acknowledged *right* to do so. A monopoly of ‘legitimate violence’ is therefore the practical expression of state sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the state and government remains complex. The state is an inclusive association, which in a sense embraces the

entire community and encompasses those institutions that constitute the public sphere. Government can thus be seen as merely part of the state. Moreover, the state is a continuing, even permanent, entity. By contrast, government is temporary: governments come and go and systems of government can be remodelled. On the other hand, although government may be possible without a state, the state is inconceivable in the absence of government. As a mechanism through which collective decisions are enacted, government is responsible for making and implementing state policy. Government is, in effect, ‘the brains’ of the state: it gives authoritative expression to the state. In this way, government is usually thought to dictate to and control other state bodies, the police and military, educational and welfare systems and the like. By implementing the various state functions, government serves to maintain the state itself in existence.

The distinction between state and government is not, however, simply an academic refinement; it goes to the very heart of constitutional rule. Government power can only be held in check when the government of the day is prevented from encroaching on the absolute and unlimited authority of the state. This is particularly important given the conflicting interests which the state and the government represent. The state supposedly reflects the permanent interests of society – the maintenance of public order, social stability, long-term prosperity and national security – while government is inevitably influenced by the partisan sympathies and ideological preferences of the politicians who happen to be in power. If government succeeds in harnessing the sovereign power of the state to its own partisan goals, dictatorship is the likely result. Liberal-democratic regimes have sought to counter this possibility by creating a clear divide between the personnel and machinery of government on the one hand, and the personnel and machinery of the state on the other. Thus the personnel of state institutions, like the civil service, the courts and the military, are recruited and trained in a bureaucratic manner, and are expected to observe strict political neutrality, enabling them to resist the ideological enthusiasms of the government of the day. However, such are the powers of patronage possessed by modern chief executives like the US president and the UK prime minister that this apparently clear division is often blurred in practice.

Theories of the state

Although the state has assumed a variety of forms – the ‘absolutist’ state, the ‘workers’ or ‘socialist’ state, the ‘Islamic’ state (see p. 72) and so on – debate about the nature of the state has largely focused on the model of the state found in modern Western societies. This state possesses clear liberal-democratic features, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Although there is broad agreement about the characteristics of the liberal-democratic state, there is far less agreement about the

nature of state power and the interests that it represents. Controversy about the nature of the state has, in fact, increasingly dominated modern political theory and goes to the very heart of ideological disagreement. In this sense, the state is an 'essentially contested' concept: there are a number of rival theories of the state, each offering a different account of its origins, development and impact.

Mainstream political theory is dominated by the liberal theory of the state. This emerged out of the writings of social-contract theorists such as Hobbes and Locke. Social-contract theory has been used not only to explain why orderly and civilized existence is impossible in the absence of government, but also to advance a theory of the nature of state power. Although the accounts of the origins of the state advanced by Hobbes and Locke were hypothetical, rather than historical – their purpose had been to persuade citizens to treat the state *as though* it had been created by a voluntary agreement among them – the fact that every citizen benefited from escaping the disorder and chaos of the 'state of nature' implied that the state acts in the interests of all and represents what can be called the 'common good' or 'public interest.' In liberal theory, the state is thus a neutral arbiter among competing groups and individuals in society; it is an 'umpire' or 'referee', capable of protecting each citizen from the encroachment of his or her fellow citizens.

This basic theory has been elaborated by modern writers into a pluralist theory of the state. Pluralism is, at heart, the theory that political power is dispersed amongst a wide variety of social groups rather than an elite or ruling class. It is related to what Robert Dahl (see p. 145) termed 'polyarchy', rule by the many. Although distinct from the classical conception of democracy as popular self-government, this nevertheless accepts that democratic processes are at work within the modern state: electoral choice ensures that government must respond to public opinion, and organized interests offer all citizens a voice in political life. Above all, pluralists believe that a rough equality exists among organized groups and interests, in that each enjoys some measure of access to government and that government is prepared to listen impartially to all. At the hub of the liberal-democratic state stand elected politicians who are publicly accountable because they operate within an open and competitive system. Non-elected state bodies like the civil service, judiciary, police, army, and so on, carry out their responsibilities with strict impartiality, and are in any case subordinate to their elected political masters.

An alternative, neo-pluralist theory of the state has been developed by writers such as J. K. Galbraith (see p. 277) and Charles Lindblom (1977). In their view, the modern industrialized state is both more complex and less responsive to popular pressures than the classic pluralist model suggests. While not dispensing altogether with the notion of the state as an umpire acting in the public interest or common good, they insist that this picture needs qualifying. It is commonly argued by neo-pluralists, for instance, that it is impossible to portray all organized interests as equally powerful since in a capitalist economy business enjoys advantages which other groups clearly cannot rival. In *The Affluent Society* ([1958]

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

THE ISLAMIC STATE

Islam has given an unusual degree of attention to the state for both historical and theological reasons. The establishment of Islam was closely associated with the creation of a system of rule dedicated to its protection and promotion, in the form of the Caliphate, founded in Medina in 622 CE and extended to Mecca in 630. The Caliphate was an Islamic state whose leader (the caliph, meaning literally 'successor' to the prophet Mohammad) combined supreme religious and political authority. The theoretical basis for the Islamic state is that, by outlining a complete way of life based on a set of rules and principles that are eternal, divinely ordained and independent of the will of its followers, Islam refuses to distinguish between the sacred and the secular, religion and politics. In the Islamic ideal, the church and the state are inseparable, a stance that has clearly theocratic implications.

Nevertheless, an explicit concept of the Islamic state did not feature in Islamic theology until the twentieth century and the emergence of attempts to transform Islam into a politico-religious ideology, often termed political Islam or Islamism. Fundamentalist Islamic states had previously existed – most notably in Saudi Arabia since the eighteenth century – but the new version went beyond the adoption of the *shari'a* (sacred Islamic law) as the basis of the legal system, and saw the state as an instrument of social and political regeneration. The Islamic state was embraced as a means of 'purifying' Islam by returning it to its supposed original values and practices, and by countering Western influence generally, in part through a revolt against the secular and 'corrupt' Western state. Such thinking provided the basis for the reconstruction of Iran following the 1979 Islamic Revolution and influenced the adoption of Islamic states in countries such as Sudan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, the Iranian political system is a complex mix of democratic and theocratic elements, the former represented by an elected president and parliament, and the latter by the highly powerful Supreme Leader (since 1989, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei).

1998), Galbraith emphasized the ability of business to shape public tastes and wants through the power of advertising, and drew attention to the domination of major corporations over small firms and, in some cases, government bodies. Lindblom, in *Politics and Markets* (1977), pointed out that, as the major investor and largest employer in society, business is bound to exercise considerable sway over any government, whatever its ideological leanings or manifesto promises.

New Right ideas and theories became increasingly influential from the 1970s onwards. Like neo-pluralism, they built on traditional liberal foundations but now constitute a major rival to classic pluralism. The New Right, or at least its neo-liberal or libertarian wing, is distinguished by strong antipathy towards

government intervention in economic and social life, born of the belief that the state is a parasitic growth which threatens both individual liberty and economic security. The state is no longer an impartial referee but has become a self-serving monster, a 'nanny' or 'leviathan' state, interfering in every aspect of life. New Right thinkers have tried, in particular, to highlight the forces that have led to the growth of state intervention and which, in their view, must be countered. Criticism has, for instance, focused on the process of party competition, or what Samuel Brittan (1977) called 'the economic consequences of democracy'. In this view, the democratic process encourages politicians to outbid one another by making vote-winning promises to the electorate, who, in turn, vote on the basis of short-term self-interest rather than long-term well-being. Equally, closer links between government and major economic interests, business and trade unions in particular, have greatly increased pressure for subsidies, grants, public investment, higher wages, welfare benefits and so forth, so leading to the problem of 'government overload'. Public choice theorists such as William Niskanen (see p. 169) have also argued that 'big' government has been generated by pressures from within the state, notably by the career self-interest of civil servants and other public officials, who recognize that it will bring them job security, higher pay and improved promotion prospects.

Pluralism has been more radically rejected by elitist thinkers who believe that behind the facade of liberal democracy there lies the permanent power of a 'ruling elite'. Classical elitists such as Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923) and Robert Michels (1876–1936) were concerned to demonstrate that political power *always* lies in the hands of a small elite and that egalitarian ideas, such as socialism and democracy, are a myth. Modern elitists, by contrast, have put forward strictly empirical theories about the distribution of power in particular societies, but have nevertheless drawn the conclusion that political power is concentrated in the hands of the few. An example of this was Joseph Schumpeter (see p. 145), whose *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* ([1944] 1994) suggested the theory of democratic elitism. Schumpeter described democracy as 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'. The electorate can decide which elite rules, but cannot change the fact that the power is always exercised by an elite. Radical elite theorists have gone further and decried the importance of elections altogether. In *The Managerial Revolution* (1941), James Burnham suggested that a 'managerial class' dominated all industrial societies, both capitalist and communist, by virtue of its technical and scientific knowledge and its administrative skills. Perhaps the most influential of modern elite theorists, C. Wright Mills, argued in *The Power Elite* (1956) that US politics is dominated by big business and the military, commonly referred to as the 'military-industrial complex', which dictated government policy, largely immune from electoral pressure.

Marxism (see p. 75) offers an analysis of state power that fundamentally challenges the liberal image of the state as a neutral arbiter or umpire. Marxists argue that the state cannot be understood separate from the economic structure of society: the state emerges out of the class system, its function being to maintain and defend class domination and exploitation. The classic Marxist view is expressed in Marx and Engels' often-quoted dictum from *The Communist Manifesto* ([1848] 1976): 'the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. This view was stated still more starkly by Lenin (see p. 76) in *The State and Revolution* ([1917] 1973), who referred to the state simply as 'an instrument for the oppression of the exploited class'. Whereas classical Marxists stressed the state's clear alignment with the interests of the bourgeoisie and its essentially coercive role, modern Marxists have been forced to take account of the apparent legitimacy of the 'bourgeois' state, particularly in the light of the achievement of universal suffrage and the development of the welfare state. This has encouraged some to argue that the state can enjoy 'relative autonomy' from the ruling class and so can respond, at times, to the interests of other classes. Nicos Poulantzas (1973) thus portrayed the state as a 'unifying social formation', capable of diluting class tensions through, for example, the spread of political rights and welfare benefits. However, although this neo-Marxist theory echoes liberalism in seeing the state as an arbiter, it nevertheless emphasizes the class character of the modern state by pointing out that it operates in the long-term interests of capitalism and therefore perpetuates a system of unequal class power.

The most radical condemnation of state power is, however, found in the writings of anarchists. Anarchists believe that all forms of political authority are intrinsically oppressive, and regard the state as a concentrated form of evil. Such thinking is rooted in the assumption that political power is, by its nature, corrupt and corrupting, those in power being impelled to subordinate others for their own benefit, regardless of the constitutional arrangements within which they operate. The state is thus, in the words of the Russian anarchist, Michael Bakunin (1814–76), 'the most flagrant, the most cynical and the most complete negation of humanity'. Even modern anarcho-capitalists, such as Murray Rothbard (see p. 313), simply dismiss the state as a 'criminal band' or 'protection racket', which has no legitimate claim to exercise authority over the individual. Many modern anarchists are nevertheless less willing than classic anarchist thinkers to denounce the state as nothing more than an instrument of organized violence. In *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), for instance, Murray Bookchin (see p. 219) described the state as 'an instilled mentality for ordering reality', emphasizing that in addition to its bureaucratic and coercive institutions the state is also a state of mind.

MARXISM

Marxism as a theoretical system developed out of, and drew inspiration from, the writings of Karl Marx. However, 'Marxism' as a codified body of thought came into existence only after Marx's death. It was the product of the attempt by later Marxists to condense Marx's ideas and theories into a systematic and comprehensive world-view that suited the needs of the growing socialist movement. However, a variety of Marxist traditions can be identified, including 'classical' Marxism (the Marxism of Marx), 'orthodox' Marxism or 'dialectical materialism' (the mechanistic form of Marxism that served as the basis for twentieth-century communism) and 'Western', 'modern' or 'neo-Marxism' (which tend to view Marxism as a humanist philosophy and are sceptical about its scientific and determinist pretensions). Neo-Marxism, mixed with Hegelian philosophy and Freudian psychology, provides the basis for critical theory (see p. 116).

The cornerstone of Marxist philosophy is what Engels called the 'materialist conception of history'. This highlights the importance of economic life and the conditions under which people produce and reproduce their means of subsistence, reflected, simplistically, in the belief that the economic 'base', consisting essentially of the 'mode of production', or economic system, conditions or determines the ideological and political 'superstructure'. Marxist theory therefore explains social, historical and cultural development in terms of material and class factors. The basis of the Marxist tradition is Marx's teleological theory of history, which suggests that history is driven forward through a dialectical process in which internal contradictions within each mode of production are reflected in class antagonism. Capitalism, then, is only the most technologically advanced of class societies, and is itself destined to be overthrown in a proletarian revolution which will culminate, after creation of a transitional 'dictatorship of the proletariat', in the establishment of a classless, communist society. This would bring what Marx called the 'pre-history of mankind' to an end.

Marxism has constituted for most of the modern period the principal alternative to liberalism (see p. 18) as the basis for political thought. Its intellectual attraction is that it embodies a remarkable breadth of vision, offering to understand and explain virtually all aspects of social and political existence and uncovering the significance of processes that conventional theory ignores. Politically, it has attacked exploitation and oppression, and had a particularly strong appeal to disadvantaged groups and peoples. However, Marxism's star has dimmed markedly since the late twentieth century. To some extent, this occurred as the tyrannical and dictatorial features of communist regimes themselves were traced back to Marx's ideas and assumptions. Marxist theories were, for instance, seen as implicitly monistic in that rival belief systems were dismissed as ideological. The crisis of Marxism, however, intensified as a result of the collapse of communism in the revolutions of 1989–91. This suggested that if the social and political forms which Marxism had inspired (however unfaithful they may have been to Marx's original ideas) no longer exist, Marxism as a world historical force is effectively dead.



Key figures

Friedrich Engels (1820–95) A German industrialist and life-long friend and collaborator of Marx, Engels elaborated Marx's ideas and theories for the benefit of the growing socialist movement. By emphasizing the role of the dialectic as a force operating in both social life and nature, he helped to establish dialectical materialism as a distinct brand of Marxism, portraying Marxism in terms of a specific set of historical laws. Engels' major works include *Anti-Dühring* (1877–8), *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) and *Dialectics of Nature* (1925).

Vladimir Illich Lenin (1870–1924) A Russian revolutionary and leader of Russia/USSR, 1917–24, Lenin's primary theoretical concern was with the issues of organization and revolution, emphasizing the central importance of a tightly organized 'vanguard' party to lead and guide the proletarian class. He analyzed colonialism as an economic phenomenon and was also firmly committed to the 'insurrectionary road' to socialism, rejecting electoral democracy as 'parliamentary cretinism'. Lenin's best-known works include *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) and *The State and Revolution* (1917).

Leon Trotsky (1879–1940) A Russian revolutionary and theorist, Trotsky founded and commanded the Red Army, but was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929 and was assassinated in Mexico on the orders of Stalin. Trotsky's theoretical contribution to Marxism centres on the theory of permanent revolution, which suggested that a socialist revolution could take place in still feudal Russia. Trotsky gave unwavering support to internationalism, and denounced Stalinism as a form of bureaucratic degeneration. Trotsky's major writings include *Results and Prospects* (1906) and *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936).

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) An Italian Marxist and social theorist, Gramsci tried to redress the emphasis within orthodox Marxism on economic and material factors. He rejected any form of 'scientific' determinism by stressing, through the theory of hegemony (the dominance of bourgeois ideas and beliefs), the importance of the political and intellectual struggle. Gramsci highlighted the degree to which ideology is embedded at every level in society and called for the establishment of a rival 'proletarian hegemony', based on socialist principles and values. Gramsci's major work is *Prison Notebooks* ([1929–35] 1971).

Mao Zedong (1893–1976) A Chinese Marxist theorist and leader of the People's Republic of China, 1949–76, Mao adapted Marxism-Leninism to the needs of an overwhelmingly agricultural and still traditional society. His ideological legacy is often associated with the 1966–71 Cultural Revolution, which denounced elitism and 'capitalist roaders'. Maoism emphasizes the radical zeal of the masses, the need for opposition and conflict, and the importance of community over hierarchy. Mao's main works include *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship* (1949) and *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among People* (1957).

See also **Karl Marx** (p. 317)

Role of the state

With the exception of anarchists, all political thinkers have regarded the state as, in some sense, a worthwhile or necessary association. Even revolutionary socialists have accepted the need for a proletarian state to preside over the transition from capitalism to communism, in the form of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Thinkers have, however, profoundly disagreed about the exact role that the state should play in society. This has often been portrayed as the balance between the state and civil society.

At one extreme in this debate, classical liberals (see p. 18) and, with greater emphasis, libertarians (see p. 312) have argued that individuals should enjoy the widest possible liberty and have therefore insisted that the state be confined to a minimal role. This minimal role is simply to provide a framework of peace and social order within which private citizens can conduct their lives as they think best. The state therefore acts, as Locke put it, as a nightwatchman, whose services are called on only when orderly existence is threatened. What is called the 'minimal' or 'nightwatchman' state nevertheless has three core functions: the maintenance of domestic order, the enforcement of contracts and the provision of protection against external attack. Such minimal states, with institutional apparatus restricted to little more than a police force, a court system and an army, commonly existed in the nineteenth century, but became increasingly rare during the twentieth. However, since the 1980s, particularly in association with the pressures generated by globalization, there has been a worldwide tendency to minimize, or 'roll back', state power. The minimal state is the ideal of the liberal New Right, which argues that economic and social matters should be left entirely in the hands of individuals or private businesses. In their view, the state's economic responsibilities should be restricted to creating conditions within which market forces can most effectively operate. In practice, this means that the state should only promote competition and ensure stable prices by regulating the supply of money.

For much of the twentieth century, however, there was a general tendency for the state's role progressively to expand. This was supported by a broad ideological coalition including social democrats (see p. 276), modern liberals (see p. 248) and paternalistic conservatives. The principal field of government activism was the provision of welfare designed to reduce poverty and social inequality. The form which social welfare has taken has, however, varied considerably. In some cases, social security systems have operated as little more than a 'safety net' intended to alleviate the worst incidents of hardship. In the USA, Australia and, increasingly, the UK, welfare provision usually emphasizes self-reliance, and targets benefits on those in demonstrable need. On the other hand, developed welfare states have been established and, to some extent, persist in many Western European countries. These attempt to bring about a wholesale redistribution of

wealth through a comprehensive system of public services and state benefits, financed through progressive taxation. Controversies over welfare are examined in greater depth in Chapter 10.

The other major form state intervention has taken is economic management. Economic management is based on the belief that the market is the only reliable means of generating wealth, but it requires oversight or external control if it is to function properly. In short, the market is a good servant but a poor master. This implies that the state's economic responsibilities go well beyond ensuring the effective operation of market forces. For example, social democrats and modern liberals have, since 1945, endorsed Keynesian economic policies aimed at reducing unemployment and promoting growth. Under their influence, public expenditure grew and the state became the most influential of economic actors. Nationalization, also adopted more widely after World War II, led to the development of so-called 'mixed economies.' In these, the state controlled key strategic industries, the so-called 'commanding heights of the economy', directly, and had an indirect influence over the rest of the economy. Enthusiasm for both Keynesianism and nationalization has nevertheless waned since the 1980s, reflecting, in part, the pressures generated by intensified global competition.

A more extensive form of state intervention, however, developed in orthodox communist countries such as the Soviet Union. These sought to abolish private enterprise altogether and set up centrally planned economies, administered by a network of economic ministries and planning committees. The economy was thus transferred entirely from civil society to the state, creating collectivized states. The justification for collectivizing economic life lies in the Marxist belief that capitalism is a system of class exploitation, suggesting that central planning is both morally superior and economically more efficient. The experience of communist regimes in the second half of the twentieth century, however, suggested that state collectivization struggles to produce the levels of economic growth and general prosperity that Western capitalist countries have achieved. Without doubt, the failure of central planning contributed to the collapse of orthodox communism in the Eastern European revolutions of 1989–91. The respective merits of the market and planning are examined more closely in Chapter 11.

The most extreme form of state control is found in totalitarian states. The essence of totalitarianism is the construction of an all-embracing state, whose influence penetrates every aspect of human existence, the economy, education, culture, religion, family life and so forth. Totalitarian states are characterized by a pervasive system of ideological manipulation and a comprehensive process of surveillance and terroristic policing. Clearly, all the mechanisms through which opposition can be expressed – competitive elections, political parties, pressure groups and free media – have to be weakened or removed. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union under Stalin are often seen as the classic examples of such

regimes. In effect, totalitarianism amounts to the outright abolition of civil society, the abolition of 'the private', a goal which only fascists, who wish to dissolve individual identity within the social whole, are prepared openly to endorse. In one sense, totalitarianism sets out to politicize every aspect of human existence: it seeks to establish comprehensive state control. However, in another sense, it can be viewed as the death of politics, in that its goal is a monolithic society in which individuality, diversity and conflict are abolished.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Is all social activity, at some level, 'political'?
- Does politics deserve its reputation as a 'dirty' word?
- In what sense did Aristotle call politics the 'master science'?
- Where should the distinction between 'public' and 'private' life be drawn?
- Is politics, at heart, always about power?
- On what grounds do anarchists argue that government is unnecessary?
- Does social-contract theory advance a convincing argument for obeying government?
- How does governance differ from government?
- Can a meaningful distinction be drawn between government and the state?
- To what extent is the state 'neutral' in relation to the competing groups in society?
- What are the implications of the neo-Marxist belief in the 'relative autonomy' of the state?
- What should be the 'proper' role of the state?

FURTHER READING

Fukuyama, F. *The Origins of Political Order: From Pre-human Times to the French Revolution* (2012). A sweeping account of how modern political institutions developed, spanning history, evolutionary biology, archaeology and economics.

Hay, C., Lister, M. and Marsh D. (eds) *The State: Theories and Issues* (2006). An accessible and comprehensive introduction to theoretical perspectives on the state, which highlights key issues and controversies.

Leftwich, A. (ed.) *What is Politics? The Activity and its Study* (2004). A very useful collection of essays examining different concepts of politics as well as contrasting views of the discipline.

Pierre, J. and Peters B. Guy *Governance, Politics and the State* (2000). A systematic analysis of the phenomenon of governance, and of its implications for the nature and role of the state.

4

Sovereignty, the Nation and Transnationalism

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- SOVEREIGNTY
Legal and political sovereignty • Internal sovereignty • External sovereignty
 - THE NATION
What is a nation? • In defence of the nation • Nationalism and world politics
 - TRANSNATIONALISM
Globalization and post-sovereignty • Transnational communities and diasporas • Towards a cosmopolitan future?
-

Preview

The state emerged in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe as a system of centralized rule that succeeded in subordinating all other groups and associations, temporal and spiritual. The claim that the state exercised absolute and unrestricted authority within its borders was expressed in a new language of sovereignty, specifically territorial sovereignty. Politics thus acquired a distinct spatial character; in short, borders and boundaries mattered. This especially applied in the case of the distinction between 'domestic' politics, which was concerned with the state's role in maintaining order and carrying out regulation within its own borders, and 'international' politics, which was concerned with relations between and/or among states. The domestic/international divide effectively demarcated the extent of political rule.

However, it was less clear what the proper or appropriate unit of political rule might be. In other words, over what population group and within what territorial boundaries should state power operate? For the last two hundred years the dominant answer to that question has been 'the nation'. It has almost been taken for granted that the nation is the only legitimate political community and therefore that the nation-state is the highest form of political organization. Nevertheless, the model of a world composed of a collection of sovereign nation-states has come under pressure as a result of recent trends and developments, not least those associated with globalization. In particular, there has been a substantial growth in cross-border, or 'transnational', flows and movements – movements of goods, money, people, information and ideas. This so-called transnationalism has cast doubt on many conventional assumptions about politics. For example, if state borders are becoming increasingly 'porous', the domestic/international divide may have been fatally undermined, requiring, perhaps, that the concept of sovereignty be abandoned. Similarly, the days of the nation-state may be numbered, and nationalism may be in the process of succumbing to cosmopolitanism.

Sovereignty

The concept of sovereignty was born in the sixteenth century, as a result of the emergence in Europe of the modern state. In the medieval period, princes, kings and emperors had acknowledged a higher authority than themselves in the form of God – the ‘King of Kings’ – and the Papacy. Moreover, authority was divided, in particular between spiritual and temporal sources of authority. However, as feudalism faded in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the authority of transnational institutions, such as the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire, was replaced by that of centralizing monarchies. In England this was achieved under the Tudor dynasty, in France under the Bourbons, in Spain under the Habsburgs and so on. For the first time, secular rulers were able to claim to exercise supreme power, and this they did in a new language of sovereignty.

Sovereignty means absolute and unlimited power. This apparently simple principle nevertheless conceals a wealth of confusion, misunderstanding and disagreement. In the first place, it is unclear what this absolute power consists of. Sovereignty can either refer to supreme legal authority or to unchallengeable political power. This controversy relates to the distinction between two kinds of sovereignty, termed by the nineteenth-century constitutional theorist A. V. Dicey ([1885] 1939) ‘legal sovereignty’ and ‘political sovereignty’. The concept of sovereignty has also been used in two contrasting ways. In the form of internal sovereignty it refers to the distribution of power within the state, and leads to questions about the need for supreme power and its location within the political system. In the form of external sovereignty it is related to the state’s role within the international order and to whether or not it is able to operate as an independent and autonomous actor.

Legal and political sovereignty

The distinction between legal sovereignty and political sovereignty is often traced back to a difference of emphasis found in the writings of the classical exponents of the principle, Jean Bodin (see p. 189) and Thomas Hobbes (see p. 111). In *The Six Books of the Commonwealth* ([1576] 1962), Bodin argued for a sovereign who made laws but was not himself bound by those laws. Law, according to this view, amounted to little more than the command of the sovereign, and subjects were required simply to obey. Bodin did not, however, advocate or justify despotic rule, but claimed, rather, that the sovereign monarch was constrained by the existence of a higher law, in the form of the will of God or natural law. The sovereignty of temporal rulers was therefore underpinned by divine authority. Hobbes, on the other hand, described sovereignty in terms of power rather than authority. He built on a tradition dating back to Augustine

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (354–430)

Theologian and political philosopher. Born in North Africa, Augustine moved to Rome where he became professor of rhetoric. He converted to Christianity in 386 and returned to North Africa as the Bishop of Hippo. He wrote against the backdrop of the sacking of Rome by the Goths in 410.

Augustine's defence of Christianity drew on neo-Platonic philosophy, Christian doctrine and biblical history. His major work, *City of God* (413–25), considers the relationship between church and state and examines the characteristics of two symbolic cities, the earthly city and the heavenly city, Jerusalem and Babylon. The heavenly city is based on spiritual grace and a love of God, and binds both rulers and subjects to the 'common good'; its members will be saved and will go to Heaven hereafter. By contrast, the earthly city is shaped by a love of self and is characterized by absolute power or sovereignty; its members are reprobates and will suffer eternal damnation. Augustine believed that fallen humanity is tainted by original sin and that without sin there would be no need for government. Government can curb sinful conduct by the threat or use of punishment, but it cannot cure original sin. Although Augustine insisted that the church should obey the laws of the state, his emphasis on the moral superiority of Christian principles over political society, and his belief that the church should imbue society with these principles, has been interpreted as a justification for theocracy.

which explained the need for a sovereign in terms of the moral evil that resides within humankind. In *Leviathan* ([1651] 1968), Hobbes defined sovereignty as a monopoly of coercive power and advocated that it be vested in the hands of a single ruler. Although Hobbes's preferred form of government was a monarchy, he was prepared to accept that, so long as it was unchallengeable, the sovereign could be an oligarchic group or even a democratic assembly.

This distinction therefore reflects the one between authority and power. Legal sovereignty is based on the belief that ultimate and final authority resides in the laws of the state. This is *de jure* sovereignty, supreme power defined in terms of legal authority. In other words, it is based on the *right* to require somebody to comply, as defined by law. By contrast, political sovereignty is not in any way based on a claim to legal authority but is concerned simply about the actual distribution of power, that is, *de facto* sovereignty. Political sovereignty therefore refers to the existence of a supreme political power, possessed of the *ability* to command obedience because it monopolizes coercive force. However, although these two concepts can be distinguished analytically, they are closely related in practice. There are reasons to believe that on their own neither constitutes a viable form of sovereignty.

In a sense, sovereignty always involves a claim to exercise legal authority, a claim to exercise power by right and not merely by virtue of force. All substantial

claims to sovereignty therefore have a crucial legal dimension. The sovereignty of modern states, for example, is reflected in the supremacy of law: families, clubs, trade unions, businesses and so on, can establish rules which command authority, but only within limits defined by law. Nevertheless, law on its own does not secure compliance. No society has yet been constructed in which law is universally obeyed and crime entirely unheard of. This is evident in the simple fact that systems of law are everywhere backed up by a machinery of punishment, involving the police, courts and prison system. Legal authority, in other words, is underpinned by the exercise of power. Lacking the ability to enforce a command, a claim to legal sovereignty will carry only moral weight, as, for example, the peoples of the Baltic States – Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania – recognized between their invasion by the Soviet Union in 1940 and their eventual achievement of independence in 1991.

A very similar lesson applies to the political conception of sovereignty. Although all states seek a monopoly of coercive power and prevent, or at least limit, their citizens' access to it, very few rule through the use of force alone. Constitutional and democratic government has, in part, come into existence in an attempt to persuade citizens that the state has the right to rule, to exercise authority and not merely power. Perhaps the most obvious exceptions to this have been brutally repressive states, such as those in Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia or Pol Pot's Cambodia, which came close to establishing an exclusively political form of sovereignty because they ruled largely through their ability to repress, manipulate and coerce. However, even in these cases it is doubtful that such states were ever sovereign in the sense of being supreme and unchallengeable; none of them, for instance, was enduringly successful, and their very use of open terror bears witness to the survival of opposition and resistance. Moreover, in building up vast ideological apparatuses, totalitarian leaders such as Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot clearly recognized the need to give their regimes at least the mantle of legal authority.

Internal sovereignty

Internal sovereignty refers to the internal affairs of the state and the location of supreme power within it. An internal sovereign is therefore a political body that possesses ultimate, final and independent authority; one whose decisions are binding on all citizens, groups and institutions in society. Much of political theory has been an attempt to decide precisely where such sovereignty should be located. Early thinkers, as already noted, were inclined to the belief that sovereignty should be vested in the hands of a single person, a monarch. Absolute monarchs described themselves as 'sovereigns', and could declare, as did Louis XIV of France in the seventeenth century, that they *were* the state. The overrid-

ing merit of vesting sovereignty in a single individual was that sovereignty would then be indivisible; it would be expressed in a single voice that could claim final authority. The most radical departure from this absolutist notion of sovereignty came in the eighteenth century with Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see p. 165). Rousseau rejected monarchical rule in favour of the notion of popular sovereignty, the belief that ultimate authority is vested in the people themselves, expressed in the idea of the 'general will'. The doctrine of popular sovereignty has often been seen as the basis of modern democratic theory. However, sovereignty has also been located in legislative bodies. For example, the UK legal philosopher John Austin (1790–1859) argued that sovereignty in the UK was vested neither in the Crown nor in the people but in the 'Monarch in Parliament'. This was the origin of the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty, usually seen as the fundamental principle of the British constitution.

What all such thinkers, however, had in common is that they believed that sovereignty could be, and should be, located in a determinant body. They believed that political rule requires the existence of an ultimate authority, and only disagreed about who or what this ultimate authority should be. This has come to be known as the 'traditional' doctrine of sovereignty. In an age of pluralistic and democratic government, however, the traditional doctrine has come in for growing criticism. Its opponents argue either that it is intrinsically linked to its absolutist past and so is frankly undesirable, or that it is no longer applicable to modern systems of government which operate according to a network of checks and balances. It has been suggested, for instance, that liberal-democratic principles are the very antithesis of sovereignty in that they argue for a distribution of power among a number of institutions, none of which can meaningfully claim to be sovereign. This applies even in the case of popular sovereignty. Although Rousseau never wavered from the belief that sovereignty resides with the people, he acknowledged that the 'general will' was an indivisible whole which could only be articulated by a single individual, whom he called 'the legislator'. This has encouraged commentators such as J. L. Talmon ([1952] 1970) to suggest that Rousseau is the principal intellectual forebear of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Similar claims have been made regarding the UK principle of parliamentary sovereignty. Governments that achieve majority control of the House of Commons gain access to unlimited constitutional authority, creating what has been called an 'elective dictatorship' or 'modern autocracy'.

The task of locating an internal sovereign in modern government is particularly difficult. This is clearest in the case of federal states, such as the USA, Canada, Australia and India, where government is divided into two levels, each of which exercises a range of autonomous powers. Federalism is often said to involve a sharing of sovereignty between these two levels, between the centre and the periphery. However, in developing the notion of a shared or divided sovereignty, federalism moves the concept away from the classical belief in a

single and indivisible sovereign power. It may, furthermore, suggest that neither level of government can finally be described as sovereign because sovereignty rests with the document which apportions power to each level: the constitution. The government of the USA offers a particularly good example of such complexities.

It can certainly be argued that in the USA legal sovereignty resides in the Constitution because it defines the powers of federal government by allocating duties, powers and functions to Congress, the Presidency and the Supreme Court, and so defines the nature of the federal system. Nevertheless, by possessing the power to interpret the Constitution it can be suggested that sovereignty resides with the Supreme Court. In effect, the Constitution means what a majority of the nine Supreme Court Justices say it means. The Supreme Court, however, cannot properly be portrayed as the supreme constitutional arbiter since its interpretation of the Constitution can be overturned by amendments to the original document. In this sense, sovereignty can be said to reside with the mechanism empowered to amend the Constitution: two-thirds majorities in both Houses of Congress and three-quarters of the USA's state legislatures, or in a convention specifically called for the purpose. On the other hand, one clause of the Constitution – the state's representation in the Senate – specifically forbids amendment. To complicate matters further, it can be argued that sovereignty in the USA is ultimately vested in the American people themselves. This is expressed in the US Constitution, 1787, which opens with the words 'We the people ...' and in its Tenth Amendment which stipulates that powers not otherwise allocated belong 'to the states respectively, or to the people'. In view of these complexities, a polycentric concept of sovereignty has taken root in the USA that is clearly distinct from its European counterpart.

By contrast, it has long been argued that in the UK a single, unchallengeable legal authority exists in the form of the Westminster Parliament. In the words of John Stuart Mill (see p. 241), 'Parliament can do anything except turn a man into a woman'. The UK Parliament appears to enjoy unlimited legal power; it can make, amend and repeal any law it wishes. It possesses this power because the UK, unlike the vast majority of states, does not possess a 'written' or codified constitution that defines the powers of government institutions, Parliament included. Moreover, since the UK possesses a unitary rather than federal system of government, no rival legislatures exist to challenge the authority of Parliament; all legislation derives from a single source. Parliament-made law (that is, statute law) is also the highest law of the land, and will therefore prevail over other kinds of law, common law, case law, judge-made law and so forth. Finally, no Parliament is able to bind its successors, since to do so would restrict the laws which any future Parliament could introduce and curtail its sovereign power.

It can be argued, however, that in reality the UK Parliament enjoys neither legal nor political sovereignty. Its legal sovereignty has been compromised by

membership of the European Union. As an EU member, the UK is obliged to conform to European law and is thus subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. This was underlined in the *Factortame* case of 1991 when for the first time the European Court of Justice declared UK legislation to be unlawful, in this case the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, because it contravened European laws guaranteeing free movement of goods and persons within the European Community (as it then was). If Parliament can any longer be described as legally sovereign it is only by virtue of the fact that it retains the legal right to withdraw from the EU, or on the basis of the idea that by working in concert EU member states have 'pooled' their sovereignty. In political terms, it is unlikely that Parliament has ever enjoyed sovereignty; it cannot simply act as it pleases. In practice, a wide range of institutions constrain its behaviour, including the electorate, devolved bodies, organized interests, particularly those which possess financial or economic muscle, major trading partners, international organizations, treaties and so forth.

External sovereignty

External sovereignty refers to the state's place in the international order and therefore to its sovereign independence in relation to other states. This principle was first outlined in the Peace of Westphalia (1648), a series of treaties that brought the Thirty Years War (1618–48) to an end. In this view, a state can be considered sovereign over its people and territory despite the fact that no sovereign figures in its internal structure of government. External sovereignty can thus be respected even though internal sovereignty may be a matter of dispute or confusion. Moreover, while questions about internal sovereignty have in a democratic age appeared increasingly outdated, the issue of external sovereignty has become absolutely vital. Indeed, some of the deepest divisions in modern politics involve disputed claims to such sovereignty. The Arab–Israeli conflict, for example, turns on the question of sovereignty. The Palestinians have long sought to establish a homeland and ultimately a sovereign state in territory still claimed by Israel; in turn, Israel has traditionally seen such demands as a challenge to its own sovereignty. The continuing importance of external sovereignty was also underlined by the disintegration of multinational states such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union effectively ceased to exist when, in August 1991, each of its fifteen republics asserted its independence by proclaiming itself to be a sovereign state. Similarly, in 1992 the Yugoslav republics, led by Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia, broke away from the federation by declaring their sovereignty. This was, however, fiercely resisted by the most powerful republic, Serbia, which, initially at least, presented itself as the defender of Yugoslav sovereignty.

Historically, this notion of sovereignty has been closely linked to the struggle for popular government, the two ideas fusing to create the modern notion of 'national sovereignty'. External sovereignty has thus come to embody the principles of national independence and self-government. Only if a nation is sovereign are its people capable of fashioning their own destiny in accordance with their particular needs and interests. To ask a nation to surrender its sovereignty is tantamount to asking its people to give up their freedom. This is why external or national sovereignty is so keenly felt and, when it is threatened, so fiercely defended. The potent appeal of political nationalism (see p. 95) is the best evidence of this.

Although the principle of external sovereignty is widely recognized, and indeed enshrined as a basic principle of international law, it is not without its critics. Some have pointed out, for instance, the sinister implications of granting each state exclusive jurisdiction over its own territory and the capacity to treat its citizens in whatever way it may choose. There is, unfortunately, abundant evidence of the capacity of states to abuse, terrorize and even exterminate their own citizens. As a result, it is now widely accepted that states should conform to a higher set of moral principles, usually expressed in the doctrine of human rights. The phenomenon of 'humanitarian intervention', as was evident in NATO aerial campaigns in 1999 to remove Serbian forces from Kosovo, and in 2011 against Libyan forces loyal to President Gaddafi, is sometimes seen as a reflection of the fact that a commitment to human rights now supersedes a concern for national sovereignty. Moreover, it is sometimes suggested that the classical argument for sovereignty points beyond national sovereignty. Thinkers such as Bodin and Hobbes emphasized that sovereignty was the only alternative to disorder, chaos and anarchy. Yet this is precisely what a rigorous application of the principle of national sovereignty would turn international politics into. In the absence of some supreme international authority, disputes between rival states will surely lead to armed conflict and war, just as without an internal sovereign conflict among individuals leads to brutality and injustice. In this way, the classical doctrine of sovereignty can be turned into an argument for a global state.

Finally, if sovereignty is understood in political terms, it is difficult to see how many, or perhaps any, states can be said to be externally sovereign. Coercive power is clearly distributed unequally among the states of the world. For much of the post-1945 period the world was dominated by two mighty 'superpowers', the USA and the Soviet Union, which not only possessed the bulk of the world's nuclear weaponry but also developed a network of alliances to bolster their power. It could therefore be argued that only these two states were sovereign, in that only they possessed the economic and military might to enjoy genuine independence. On the other hand, the mere existence of the other superpower served to deny either of them sovereignty, forcing both the USA and the Soviet Union to, for example, press ahead with more costly military programmes than would

otherwise have been the case. Nor is it possible to argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union finally made a reality of political sovereignty by creating a world dominated by a single all-powerful state, the USA. This was demonstrated by the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, and by the difficulty the USA experienced in ‘winning’ protracted counter-insurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The nation

For over two hundred years the nation has been regarded as the proper, indeed only legitimate, unit of political rule. This belief has been reflected in the remarkable appeal of nationalism, without doubt the most influential of the world’s political creeds during the last two hundred years. Nationalism is, at heart, the doctrine that each nation is entitled to self-determination, reflected in the belief that, as far as possible, the boundaries of the nation and those of the state should coincide. Thus the idea of a ‘nation’ has been used as a way of establishing a non-arbitrary basis for the boundaries of the state. This implies that the highest form of political organization is the nation-state; in effect, the nation, each nation, is a sovereign entity.

Nationalism has redrawn the map of the world and continues to do so, from the process of European nation-building in the nineteenth century, through the national liberation struggles of the post-1945 period, to the creation of a slate of new nations in the aftermath of the collapse of communism and the fall of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the nation and nationalism continue to be the focus of significant theoretical and ideological debate. This applies not least because of disagreements over how the nation should be understood. What are the defining features of the nation? Are nations cultural entities or political entities? Similarly, the benefits of the nation and national identity are often taken for granted rather than explicitly elaborated. How can the nation be defended? Finally, particular controversy has surrounded the impact of nationalism on world politics. Does nationalism bring international peace and stability, or is it a recipe for expansionism and war?

What is a nation?

All too frequently, the term ‘nation’ is confused with ‘country’ or ‘state’. This is evident, for example, when ‘nationality’ is used to indicate membership of a particular state, more properly called ‘citizenship’. The confusion is also found in the title of the United Nations, an organization that is clearly one of states rather than nations or peoples. At the most basic level, a nation is a cultural entity, a

body of people bound together by a shared cultural heritage. It is not, therefore, a political association, nor is it necessarily linked to a particular territorial area. Nations may lack statehood either because, like all African and many Asian nations in the early years of the twentieth century, they are the subjects of a foreign imperial power, or because they are incorporated into multinational states such as the UK and the Soviet Union of old. Nations may also be landless, as the Jews were in modern times until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and as the Palestinians are currently.

The cultural factors that define a nation are usually a common language, religion, traditions, historical consciousness and so on. These are *objective* characteristics but they do not in any sense provide a blueprint for deciding when a nation exists, and when one does not. There are, in other words, many examples of enduring and successful nations which contain, like Switzerland, several languages, or, like Indonesia, more than one religion, or, as in the case of the USA, a diverse range of historical traditions and ethnic backgrounds. Ultimately, nations can only be defined *subjectively*, that is by a people's awareness of its nationality or what may be called their national consciousness. This consciousness clearly encompasses a sense of belonging or loyalty to a particular community, usually referred to as 'patriotism', literally a love of one's country. Theorists such as Ernest Gellner (see p. 96) have, however, insisted that the defining feature of national consciousness is not merely the sentiment of loyalty towards or affection for one's nation but the aspiration to self-government and independence. In effect, a nation defines itself by its quest for independent statehood; if it is contained within an existing larger state it seeks to separate from it and redraw state boundaries. An alternative school of thought, however, sees the quest for statehood as merely one expression of nationalist sentiment, the defining feature of nationalism being its capacity to represent the material or economic interests of a national group. This view would accept, for example, that the desire of the French Basques to preserve their language and culture is every bit as 'nationalist' as the openly separatist struggle waged by Basques in Spain.

Because the assertion of nationhood often carries with it significant political demands, the definition of 'nation' tends to be fiercely contested. Many of the most enduring political conflicts turn on whether a particular group is, or should be regarded as, a nation. This is evident in the Sikh struggle for an independent homeland, 'Khalistan', in the Indian state of Punjab, the campaign in Quebec to break away from Canada, and demands by the Scottish National Party (SNP) for independence within Europe. Not infrequently, national identities overlap and are difficult to disentangle from one another. This is particularly clear in the UK, which could be regarded either as a single British nation or as four separate nations, the English, the Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish, or indeed as five nations if divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are taken into account. Such complications occur because the

balance between the political and cultural components of nationhood is almost infinitely variable. The German historian Friedrich Meinecke ([1907] 1970) tried to resolve this issue by distinguishing between what he called 'cultural nations' and 'political nations', but when cultural and political considerations are so closely interlinked this task is notoriously difficult.

There are strong reasons for believing that to some degree all nations have been shaped by historical, cultural or ethnic factors. In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), Anthony Smith stressed the extent to which modern nations emerged by drawing on the symbolism and mythology of pre-modern ethnic communities, which he calls 'ethnies'. In this 'primordialist' view, nations are historically embedded; they are rooted in a common cultural heritage and language that may long predate the achievement of statehood or even the quest for national independence. Modern nations thus came into existence when these established ethnies were linked to the emerging doctrine of popular sovereignty and associated with a historic homeland. This explains why national identity is so often expressed in the traditions and customs of past generations, as clearly occurs in the case of the Greeks, the Germans, the Russians, the English, the Irish, and so on. From this perspective, nations can be regarded as 'organic', in that they have been fashioned by natural or historical forces rather than by political ones. This may, in turn, mean that 'cultural' nations are stable and cohesive, bound together by a powerful and historical sense of national unity.

Some forms of nationalism are very clearly cultural rather than political in character. For instance, despite the demands of Plaid Cymru for a separate Welsh state, nationalism in Wales consists largely of the desire to defend Welsh culture and, in particular, preserve the Welsh language. Equally, the nationalist pride of the Breton peoples of Brittany is expressed as a cultural movement rather than in any attempt to secede from France. Cultural nationalism is perhaps best thought of as a form of ethnocentrism, an attachment to a particular culture as a source of identity and explanatory frame of reference. Like nations, ethnic groups such as the Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean communities of the USA and UK share a distinct, and often highly developed, cultural identity. However, unlike nations, ethnic groups are usually content to preserve their cultural identity without demanding political independence. In practice, however, the distinction between an 'ethnic minority' and a fully fledged 'nation' may be blurred. This is especially the case in multicultural societies, which lack the ethnic and cultural unity that has traditionally provided the basis for national identity. In one form, multiculturalism (see p. 178) may establish the ethnic group, rather than the nation, as the primary source of personal and political identity. However, the idea of multicultural nationalism suggests that national identity can remain relevant as a set of 'higher' cultural and civic allegiances. Such matters have stimulated particular debate in relation to aboriginal or indigenous peoples, sometimes called 'First Nations' (see p. 93).

In other cases, national identity has been forged by circumstances that are more clearly political. The UK, the USA and France have often been seen as the classic examples of this. In the UK's case, the British nation was founded on the union of what, in effect, were four 'cultural' nations: the English, the Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish. The USA is, in a sense, a 'land of immigrants' and so contains peoples from literally all round the world. In such circumstances, a sense of US nationhood has developed more out of a common allegiance to the liberal-democratic principles expressed by the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution than out of a recognition of cultural or historical ties. French national identity is based largely on traditions linked to the 1789 Revolution and the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity which underlay it. Such nations have, in theory, been founded on a voluntary acceptance of a common set of principles or goals as opposed to an already existing cultural identity. It is sometimes argued that the style of nationalism which develops in such societies is typically tolerant and democratic. The USA has, for example, sustained a remarkable degree of social harmony and political unity against a background of profound religious, linguistic, cultural and racial diversity. On the other hand, 'political' nations can at times fail to generate the social solidarity and sense of historical unity which is found in 'cultural' nations. This can be seen in the UK, particularly since the introduction of devolution, in the strengthening Scottish and Welsh nationalism and the rise of 'Englishness', but the decline of a sense of 'Britishness'.

Particular problems have been encountered by developing-world states struggling to achieve a national identity. Developing-world nations can be seen as 'political' in one of two senses. In the first place, in many cases they achieved statehood only after a struggle against colonial rule, for which reason their national identity is deeply influenced by the unifying quest for 'national liberation'. Nationalism in the developing world therefore took the form of anticolonialism and, in the de-colonial period, has assumed a distinctively postcolonial character (see p. 214). Second, these nations have often been shaped by territorial boundaries inherited from their former colonial rulers. This is particularly evident in Africa, whose 'nations' often encompass a wide range of ethnic, religious and regional groups, bound together by little more than a common colonial past and state borders shaped by long defunct imperial rivalries. In many cases, the inheritance of ethnic and tribal tensions was exacerbated by colonial powers' use of 'divide-and-rule' policies.

In defence of the nation

The nation and nationalism have been the focus of ideological and theoretical debate that goes well beyond how nations should be understood. Perhaps the most common justification advanced for the nation is that national identity


BEYOND THE WEST . . .

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS 'FIRST NATIONS'

The term 'First Nation' was first used in the 1970s to refer to the indigenous people of Canada, other than the Inuit and Métis, a collection of over 630 groups or bands. Subsequently, it has been used to refer to indigenous peoples in all parts of the world (also called 'aboriginal', 'native' or 'tribal' peoples). It is estimated that there are more than 370 million indigenous people (roughly five per cent of the world's population) spread across 90 countries worldwide. In view of the diversity of indigenous peoples, no official definition of 'indigenous' has been adopted by the UN, leading to a general reliance instead on self-identification at both an individual and community level. The idea that these groups are 'first' peoples or nations nevertheless acknowledges that they are made up of the descendants of those who inhabited a country or geographical region in pre-colonial or pre-settler times. Their distinct language, art, music, and social and economic practices are therefore deeply historically embedded, often having existed for over a thousand years. Conventional nations, by contrast, came into existence only from the late eighteenth century onwards, and were commonly based on traditions and customs that were 'invented', mainly in the nineteenth century (Hobsbawm, 1983).

To portray indigenous peoples as 'nations' is to assert that they are, at some level, political entities that are entitled to rights that go beyond those usually associated with ethnic or cultural minorities. These have included the right to self-government, possibly extending to the ability of indigenous communities to restrict the mobility, property and voting rights of non-indigenous people, thereby bringing collective rights into conflict with traditional individual rights. Ownership rights have commonly also been claimed over land or territory, including surrounding natural resources, to which indigenous peoples have been tied in various ways. Nevertheless, such demands have typically not been based on a quest for full independence, in part because, as they have rarely had experience of centralized rule, the notion of sovereignty plays little or no part in the political consciousness of indigenous peoples.

provides the surest basis for identity and solidarity. This is because nations are, in essence, organic communities. In this view, humankind is naturally divided into a collection of nations, each of which possesses a distinctive character and a separate identity. This, nationalists argue, is why a 'higher' loyalty and deeper political significance attaches to the nation than to any other social group or collective body. Whereas, for instance, class, gender, religion and language may be important in particular societies, or may come into prominence in particular circumstances, the bonds of nationhood are more fundamental. National ties

and loyalties are found in all societies, they endure over time, and they operate at an instinctual, even primordial, level.


Strong and successful societies are therefore founded on a clear sense of national consciousness. Indeed, 'modernist' approaches to nationalism have suggested that, rather than being historically embedded, nations emerged in response to socio-economic changes that undermine the sense of social belonging. Gellner (1983), for example, emphasized the degree to which nationalism is linked to the process of industrialization. He suggested that, while pre-modern or 'agro-literate' societies were structured by a network of feudal bonds and loyalties, emerging industrial societies promoted social mobility, self-striving and competition, and so required a new source of social solidarity. This was provided by nationalism, especially through the device of the nation-state. The great strength of the nation-state is that it offers the prospect of both cultural cohesion and political unity. When a people who share a common cultural or ethnic identity gain the right to self-government, nationality and citizenship coincide. In this light, attempts to promote national patriotism, through national anthems, national flags, commemorative days and oaths of allegiance, can be seen to have advantages for the individual and the wider society alike. This view also implies that immigrants should take on at least essential elements of national character, as the growth of multiculturalism (see p. 178) threatens to make society more fractured and conflict-ridden.

The nation may also be defended on the grounds that it is a key means of ensuring freedom. This was evident at the birth of nationalism, during the French Revolution, when the idea of national community encountered the doctrine of popular sovereignty, as influenced by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Using Rousseau's idea of the 'general will', revolutionaries in France argued that government should be based not on the absolute power of a monarch, but on the indivisible collective will of the entire community. Sovereign power thus resided in the 'French nation'. In this tradition of nationalism, nationhood and statehood are intrinsically linked. The litmus test of national identity is the desire to attain or maintain political independence, usually expressed in the principle of national self-determination. Nationalism is therefore orientated around the nation-state ideal, expressed by J. S. Mill in the principle that 'the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationality'. Such thinking, most clearly elaborated in the tradition of liberal nationalism, accords the nation a moral status broadly equivalent to that of the individual, in that both are endowed with basic rights. National self-determination is therefore a collective expression of individual freedom, nationalism being an essentially liberating force that opposes all forms of foreign domination, whether by multinational empires or colonial powers. Moreover, self-determination has implications for the domestic organization of government power, establishing a clear link between nationalism and democracy.

NATIONALISM

The idea of nationalism was born during the French Revolution, as people who had once been treated as 'subjects of the crown' were encouraged to think of themselves as 'citizens of France'. Nationalism can broadly be defined as the belief that the nation is the central principle of political organization. As such, it is based on two core assumptions. First, humankind is naturally divided into distinct nations and, second, the nation is the most appropriate, and perhaps only legitimate, unit of political rule. Classical political nationalism therefore set out to bring the borders of the state into line with the boundaries of the nation. Within so-called nation-states, nationality and citizenship would therefore coincide. However, nationalism is a complex and highly diverse ideological phenomenon. Not only are there distinctive political, cultural and ethnic forms of nationalism, but the political implications of nationalism have been wide-ranging and sometimes contradictory.

Liberal nationalism is a principled form of nationalism. Instead of upholding the interests of one nation over other nations, it proclaims that nations are equal in their rights to freedom and self-determination. Looking to construct a world of sovereign nation-states, liberal nationalism views nationalism as a mechanism for securing a peaceful and stable world order. Conservative nationalism is concerned less with universal self-determination, and more with the promise of social cohesion and public order embodied in the sentiment of national patriotism. Above all, conservatives see the nation as an organic entity emerging out of a basic desire of humans to gravitate towards those who have the same views, habits, lifestyles and appearances as themselves. Chauvinistic or expansionist nationalism is based on the belief that one's own nation is special or unique, in some way a 'chosen people', its superiority usually being demonstrated by militarism and aggression. Such thinking is often linked to doctrines of racial superiority or inferiority, other nations being viewed as a source of fear or hatred. Anticolonial nationalism overlaps with liberal nationalism except that it was typically associated with revolutionary Marxism-Leninism and sought to fuse national liberation with the goal of social development.

Nationalism can, with some justification, be viewed as the most potent of political creeds. It has caused the birth of new states, the disintegration of empires and the redrawing of borders. Not only, over the last 200 years, has the political world been reconfigured largely on the basis of the nation-state ideal, but this has been underpinned by international law which is based on the assumption that nations, like individuals, have inviolable rights. However, nationalism has always attracted deep hostility. Critics, for example, have alleged that all forms of nationalism are regressive, intolerant, at least implicitly chauvinistic, and morally impoverished (in that ethical obligations are limited to our 'own' people). Nationalism has also been viewed as increasingly anachronistic, either because, in a world of nation-states, the task of nationalism has been largely accomplished, or because the advance of globalization has fatally compromised the nation-state. 

Key figures

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) A German poet, critic and philosopher, Herder is often portrayed as the father of cultural nationalism. A leading intellectual opponent of the Enlightenment, Herder's emphasis on the nation as an organic group characterized by a distinctive language, culture and spirit (*Volksgeist*) helped both to found cultural history and to give rise to a form of nationalism that stresses the intrinsic value of national culture. Herder's major work is *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784–91).

Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72) An Italian nationalist, often portrayed as the prophet of Italian unification, Mazzini practised a form of liberal nationalism that fused a belief in the nation as a distinctive linguistic and cultural community with the principles of liberal republicanism. In this view, nations are effectively sublimated individuals endowed with the right to self-government, a right to which all nations are equally entitled. Mazzini was one of the earliest thinkers to link nationalism to the prospect of perpetual peace. His writings include *On Nationality* (1852).

Ernest Gellner (1925–95) A British social philosopher and anthropologist, Gellner made major contributions to a variety of academic fields, including social anthropology, sociology and political philosophy. The most prominent figure in the modernist camp in the study of nationalism, Gellner has explained the rise of nationalism in terms of the need of industrial societies, unlike agrarian ones, for homogeneous languages and cultures in order to work efficiently. Gellner's major writings include *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), *Culture, Identity and Politics* (1987) and *Reason and Culture* (1992).

Benedict Anderson (born 1936) Born in China but brought up mainly in California, Anderson's main publication on nationalism is the celebrated *Imagined Communities* (1991). He views nationalities and nationalism as cultural artifacts of a particular kind, defining the nation as an 'imagined community', in the sense that it generates a deep, horizontal comradeship regardless of actual inequalities within the nation and despite the fact that it is not a face-to-face community. Anderson's other publications in the field include *The Specters of Comparison* (1998) and *Under Three Flags* (2005).

See also J.-J. Rousseau (p. 165), J. S. Mill (p. 241) and Gandhi (p. 203)

The final ground on which the nation can be defended is that it constitutes an ethical community and provides an effective basis for moral conduct. This can be seen in at least three ways. In the first place, a sense of moral concern, possibly extending to moral obligation, arises most easily amongst people who share a common cultural identity, those who speak the same language and practice a similar way of life. This suggests that it is only within national communities, where people accept a social responsibility for one another, that welfare provision and systems of redistribution are possible. Second, the nation gives morality

an important collective dimension and helps to liberate people from narrow self-interest. A sense of loyalty and duty is an important component of national consciousness, a recognition of the benefits nationhood brings in making personal existence more meaningful and social existence more stable and secure. This sense of duty is so strong that it can at times extend to a willingness to fight, kill and possibly die in order to 'save the nation'. Finally, ethical nationalism, the theory that the rights of, and obligations towards, members of one's own nation should enjoy moral priority over those related to members of other nations, makes morality more robust and realistic. In part, this applies because, as communitarian theorists (see p. 33) argue, morality only makes sense when it is locally based, grounded in the communities to which we belong and which have shaped our lives and values. The simple fact is that people everywhere give moral priority to those they know best, most obviously their family and close friends and, beyond that, members of their local community and then those with whom they share a national identity. As Walzer (1994) argued, a 'thick' sense of morality can only operate within a single culture. This not only implies that morality is fashioned by the distinctive history, culture and traditions of a particular society, but also explains why it is difficult for obligations to extend beyond those who share a similar ethical (or national) framework.

Nationalism and world politics

The deepest controversies that surround nationalism concern its implications for international peace and stability. Two starkly contrasting visions have been presented, one in which nationalism is a sure guarantee of peace and order and the other in which it is inherently aggressive and expansionist. This reflects both the highly contested nature of nationalism as an ideological phenomenon and also the extent to which nationalism has been fused with and absorbed by other political doctrines, thereby creating a series of 'rival nationalisms'. The belief that a world of independent nation-states would be characterized by peace and stability is most clearly associated with liberal nationalism. This reflects an underlying liberal faith in the principle of balance or natural harmony, which applies not only to businesses in the economy and groups in society, but also to the nations of the world. Although such thinking can be found in the writings of Giuseppe Mazzini (see p. 96) and may be traced back to Immanuel Kant (see p. 241), it was perhaps most famously articulated by US President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) during World War I and during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. For Wilson, World War I had been caused by an 'old order', dominated by autocratic and militaristic empires. Democratic nation-states, on the other hand, would respect the national sovereignty of their neighbours and have no incentive to wage war or subjugate others. For a liberal, nationalism does not divide

nations from one another, promoting distrust, rivalry and possibly war. Rather, it is a force that is capable of promoting both unity within each nation and brotherhood amongst all nations on the basis of mutual respect for national rights and characteristics.

That said, liberals have long accepted that national self-determination is a mixed blessing. While it preserves self-government and forbids foreign control, it also creates a world of sovereign nation-states in which each nation has the freedom to pursue its own interests, possibly at the expense of other nations. Liberal nationalists have certainly accepted that constitutionalism and democracy reduce the tendency towards militarism and war, but when sovereign nations operate within conditions of ‘international anarchy’, self-restraint alone may not be sufficient to ensure what Kant called ‘perpetual peace’. Liberals have generally proposed two means of preventing a recourse to conquest and plunder. The first is national interdependence, aimed at promoting mutual understanding and cooperation. This was why liberals have traditionally supported a policy of free trade: economic interdependence means that the material costs of international conflict are so great that warfare becomes virtually unthinkable. Second, liberals have proposed that national ambition should be checked by the construction of international organizations capable of bringing order to an otherwise lawless international scene. This explains Woodrow Wilson’s support for the first, if flawed, experiment in world government, the League of Nations, set up in 1919, and far wider support for its successor, the United Nations, founded in 1945.

Critics of liberal nationalism have nevertheless alleged that it ignores the darker face of nationalism, and especially the irrational bonds or tribalism that distinguish ‘us’ from a foreign and threatening ‘them’. Liberals see nationalism as a universal principle, but have less understanding of its emotional power. Through its capacity to generate restless ambition expressed in projects of military expansion, nationalism has been seen as a major component in explaining, amongst other things, European imperialism in the nineteenth century and the outbreak of both World War I and World War II. The recurrent, and, many would argue, defining, theme of this form of expansionist nationalism is the idea of national chauvinism. Derived from the name of Nicholas Chauvin, a (possibly apocryphal) French soldier noted for his fanatical devotion to Napoleon and the cause of France, chauvinism is underpinned by the belief that nations have particular characteristics and qualities and so have very different destinies. Some nations are suited to rule; others are suited to be ruled.

Typically, this form of nationalism is articulated through doctrines of ethnic or racial superiority, thereby fusing nationalism and racialism. The chauvinist’s own people are seen as unique and special, in some way a ‘chosen people’, while other peoples are viewed either as weak and inferior, or as hostile and threatening. An extreme example of this can be found in the case of the German Nazis,

whose Aryanism portrayed the German people (the Aryan race) as a 'master race' destined for world domination, backed up by virulent anti-Semitism. Fascism has been associated, more widely, with a form of populist ultra-nationalism, which fuels myths about past national greatness and the prospect of national renewal or reawakening. Charles Maurras (1868–1952), a leading figure in the French far-right political movement *Action Française*, called this form of nationalism 'integral nationalism', an intense, even hysterical, form of nationalistic enthusiasm in which individual identity is absorbed within the national community. Some, however, argue that such tendencies are not restricted to 'illiberal' or 'expansionist' forms of nationalism, as all forms of nationalism are based on partisanship, a preference for one's own nation over other nations, underpinned by the belief that it has special or unique qualities. In this view, nationalism is inherently chauvinistic and embodies, at minimum, a potential for aggression.

Transnationalism

Nationalism has traditionally been contrasted with 'internationalism'. Internationalism is the theory or practice of politics based on cooperation between nations or states. It is rooted in universalist assumptions about human nature that put it at odds with political nationalism, the latter emphasizing the degree to which political identity is shaped by nationality. However, internationalism is compatible with nationalism, in the sense that it calls for cooperation or solidarity among pre-existing nations, rather than for the removal or abandonment of national identities altogether. Internationalism thus differs from 'transnationalism'. Transnationalism refers to sustained relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations that cross national borders. As such, transnationalism implies that the domestic/international divide in politics has been fatally undermined, casting doubt on the continuing importance of both sovereignty and the state.

However, transnationalism comes in a variety of shapes and forms, and may be more relevant to some areas of human existence than to others. Most debate about transnationalism centres on its relationship to globalization, which is commonly viewed either as the chief cause of transnationalism or as its primary manifestation. What is globalization, and what have been its main implications? An alternative form of transnationalism has emerged from the upsurge in recent decades, partly fuelled by globalization, of international migration. This has led to speculation about the growth of 'transnational communities'. Are territorial nation-states giving way to deterritorialized transnational communities? Finally, the most radical implication of transnationalism is that in stimulating increased global interconnectedness it has the potential to reconfigure identities, loyalties

and obligations around the world as a whole, based on the vision of the global population as a single moral community. Could cosmopolitanism (see p. 105) ever become a reality?

Globalization and post-sovereignty

Globalization is a complex, elusive and controversial term. It has been used to refer to a process, a policy, a marketing strategy, a predicament or even an ideology. Some have tried to bring greater clarity to the debate about the nature of globalization by distinguishing between globalization as a *process* or set of processes (highlighting the dynamics of change) and 'globality' as a *condition* (highlighting the end-state of globalization, a totally interconnected whole). Others have used the term 'globalism' to refer to the *ideology* of globalization, the theories, values and assumptions that have guided or driven the process (Ralston Saul, 2009). The problem with globalization is that it is not so much an 'it' as a 'them': it is not a single process but a complex of processes, sometimes overlapping and interlocking but also, at times, contradictory and oppositional. It is therefore difficult to reduce globalization to a single theme. Nevertheless, the various developments and manifestations that are associated with globalization, or indeed globality, can be traced back to the underlying phenomenon of interconnectedness. Globalization, regardless of its forms or impact, forges connections between previously unconnected people, communities, institutions and societies. Held *et al.* (1999) thus defined globalization as 'the widening, intensifying, speeding up and growing impact of worldwide interconnectedness'.

The interconnectedness that globalization has spawned is multidimensional and operates through distinctive economic and cultural processes, giving globalization a number of dimensions or 'faces'. Although some commentators have been primarily concerned with what is called 'cultural globalization' (see p. 101), most of the debate about the advance of transnationalism centres on the globalization of economic life. Economic globalization refers to the process whereby all national economies have, to a greater or lesser extent, been absorbed into an interlocking global economy. However, economic globalization should be distinguished from 'internationalization'. The latter results in intensive interdependence between national economies, brought about, for instance, by increased international trade. This so-called 'shallow' integration forces national economies to work more closely together but does not mean that they lose their national character. The former marks a qualitative shift towards 'deep' integration, transcending territorial borders through the construction of a consolidated global market place for production, distribution and consumption. In that sense, globalization can be thought of as a comprehensive system of economic transnationalism.

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION

Cultural globalization is the process whereby information, commodities and images produced in one part of the world enter into a global flow that tends to 'flatten out' cultural differences between nations, regions and individuals. It is closely linked to and emerged in association with economic globalization and the communications and information revolution.

One of the chief implications of this form of globalization is that, in weakening the cultural distinctiveness of the nation-state, it undermines, perhaps fatally, the capacity of the nation to generate social solidarity and political allegiance. The dominant image of cultural globalization is one of homogenization, the establishment of a single global system that imprints itself on all parts of the world, creating, in effect, a global monoculture. From this perspective, cultural globalization amounts to a form of cultural imperialism, emphasizing the cultural flows that take place between unequal partners and are used as a means through which powerful states exert domination over weak states. Some therefore portray cultural globalization as 'Westernization' or, more specifically, as 'Americanization'. The two main ingredients of cultural globalization have been the spread of consumerism and the growth of individualism. The former is evident in the worldwide advance of a culture of consumer capitalism, sometimes seen as 'turbo-consumerism'. One aspect of this is 'Coca-colonization', referring to the emergence of global goods and global brands (Coca-Cola being a prime example) that have come to dominate economic markets in more and more parts of the world, creating an image of bland uniformity. The latter, the rise of individualism, is widely seen as a consequence of the establishment of industrial capitalism as the dominant mode of social organization, first in Western societies and, thanks to globalization, beyond. Although liberal theorists have associated rising individualism with the spread of progressive, even enlightened social values, notably toleration and equality of opportunity, communitarians have warned that it profoundly weakens community and our sense of social belonging.

The image of globalization as homogenization is at best a partial one, however. The fear or threat of homogenization, especially when it is perceived to be 'from above', or 'from outside', has provoked cultural and political resistance. This can be seen in the resurgence of interest in declining languages and minority cultures as well as in the spread of religious fundamentalism. Barber (2003) thus advanced an image of world culture shaped by symbiotic links between 'McWorld', which seeks to turn the world into a 'commercially homogeneous theme park', and 'Jihad', representing the forces of religious militancy. There is evidence, moreover, that all societies, including economically and politically powerful ones, are becoming more varied and diverse through the growth of 'hybridity' and creolization (the cross-fertilization that takes place when different cultures interact).

It is very difficult to argue that the state and sovereignty have been unaffected by the forces of globalization. This particularly applies in the case of the territorial jurisdiction of the state. The principle of external sovereignty was based on the idea that states had supreme control over what took place within their borders, implying that they also controlled what crossed their borders. Economic globalization, however, has led to the rise of 'supraterritoriality', reflected in the declining importance of territorial locations, geographical distance and state borders. This is particularly clear in relation to financial markets that have become increasingly globalized, in that capital flows around the world seemingly instantaneously meaning, for example, that no state can be insulated from the impact of financial crises that take place in other parts of the world. It is also evident in the changing balance between the power of territorial states and deterritorialized transnational corporations, which can switch investment and production to other parts of the world if state policy is not conducive to profit maximization and the pursuit of corporate interests. Economic sovereignty, then, may no longer be meaningful in what Ohmae (1990) called a 'borderless world', national government having given way to 'post-sovereign governance' (Scholte, 2005). In the most extreme version of this argument advanced by hyperglobalists, the state is seen to be so 'hollowed out' as to have become, in effect, redundant.

However, the rhetoric of a 'borderless' global economy can be taken too far. For example, there is evidence that, while globalization may have changed the strategies that states adopt to ensure economic success, it has by no means rendered the state redundant as an economic actor. Indeed, rather than globalization having been foisted on unwilling states by forces beyond their control, economic globalization has largely been created by states and for states. This was evident in the role that the USA played in the 1970s and 1980s in bringing about a shift towards a more open and 'liberalized' world trading system, and in the enthusiasm of China, the 'rising hegemon', for globalized economic arrangements. Moreover, although states when acting separately may have a diminished capacity to control transnational economic activity, they retain the facility to do so through macro frameworks of economic regulation, as provided by the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund.

Transnational communities and diasporas

A transnational community is a community whose cultural identity, political allegiances and psychological orientations cut across national borders. In that sense, transnational communities challenge the nation-state ideal, which clearly links political-cultural identity to a specific territory or 'homeland'.

Transnational communities have therefore been thought of as 'deterritorialized nations' or 'global tribes.' There is, of course, nothing new about scattered communities that have nevertheless maintained their cultural distinctiveness and resisted pressure for assimilation. The Jewish diaspora (literally meaning 'dispersion'), which can be traced back to the eighth century BCE, is the classic example of a transnational community. Ironically, the remarkable resilience of Judaism and the Hebrew language in the absence of a Jewish homeland can be significantly explained by a history of discrimination and persecution through various forms of anti-Semitism. Other examples include the Armenians, many of whom have been forced into exile by successive invasions and conquests, dating back to the Byzantine Empire. However, many argue that the emergence of transnational communities is one of the chief features of the modern, globalized world.

An increase in international migration does not in itself create new, transnational social spaces. For transnational communities to be established, immigrant groups must forge and, crucially, sustain relations that link their societies of origin and of settlement. This is made easier in the modern world by a variety of developments. Whereas, say, Irish immigrants to the USA in the nineteenth century had little prospect of returning home and only a postal service to keep them in touch with their friends and families, modern communities of Filipinos in the Gulf states, Indonesians in Australia and Bangladeshis in the UK benefit from cheap transport and improved communications. Air travel enables people to return 'home' on a regular basis, creating fluid communities that are bound neither to their society of origin nor their society of settlement. The near-ubiquitous mobile phone has also become a basic resource for new immigrants, helping to explain, amongst other things, its increased penetration in the developing world, including the rural parts of Asia and Africa. Transnational communities, moreover, are bound together by a network of family ties and economic flows. Migration, for example, may maintain rather than weaken extended kinship links, as early immigrants provide a base and sometimes working opportunities for other members of their families or village who may subsequently emigrate.

The idea of a transition from territorial nation-states to deterritorialized transnational communities should not be over-stated, however. The impact of modern migration patterns, and of globalization in its various forms, is more complex than is implied by the simple notion of transnationalism. In the first place, the homogeneous nation that has supposedly been put at risk by the emergence of transnational communities is always, to some extent, a myth, a myth created by the ideology of nationalism itself. In other words, there is nothing new about cultural mixing, which long pre-dates the emergence of the modern hyper-mobile planet. Second, transnational communities are characterized as much by difference and division as they are by commonality and solidarity. The

most obvious divisions within diaspora communities are those of gender and social class, but other divisions may run along the lines of ethnicity, religion, age and generation. Third, it is by no means clear that transnational loyalties are as stable and enduring as those built around the nation. Quite simply, social ties that are not territorially rooted and geographically defined may not be viable in the long term. Finally, it is misleading to suggest that transnationalism has somehow displaced nationalism when, in reality, each has influenced the other, creating a complex web of hybrid identities. Hybridity, or 'creolization', has thus become one of the major features of modern society. It is examined in Chapter 9, in relation to multiculturalism.

Towards a cosmopolitan future?

The global interconnectedness that globalization has spawned does not merely challenge us in terms of how we understand the world, but also, perhaps, in terms of our moral relationships. The advance of globalization has had an ethical dimension, in that it has renewed interest in forms of cosmopolitanism, often expressed through growing interest in ideas such as global justice, or world ethics. As the world has 'shrunk', in the sense of people having a greater awareness of other people living in other countries, often at a great distance from themselves, it has become more difficult to confine their moral obligations simply to a single political society. The more they know, the more they care. For cosmopolitan theorists, this implies that the world has come to constitute a single moral community. People thus have obligations (potentially) towards all other people in the world, regardless of nationality, religion, ethnicity and so forth. Such thinking is informed by a critique of nationalism that has two dimensions. In the first, in line with the constructivist approach to nationalism, nations are seen as 'imagined' or 'invented', not as organic or 'natural' communities. National identity is not rooted in social psychology, but is very largely an ideological construct, and usually one that serves the interests of powerful groups. In the second, nationalism is seen to inculcate narrow or demeaning moral thinking. In giving moral preference to members of one's 'own' nation, it not only treats non-nationals as not fully human but also encourages us to deny our own humanity. Human beings, therefore, *can* and *should* evolve beyond nationalism.

A distinction is commonly drawn between political cosmopolitanism and moral cosmopolitanism, with cultural cosmopolitanism also sometimes being recognized, often in the form of 'cosmopolitan multiculturalism' (see p. 265). Nevertheless, it can be argued that cosmopolitanism always has moral and political components, in that political theorizing is invariably underpinned by moral assumptions, and moral theorizing cannot but extend to a consideration of the

COSMOPOLITANISM

Cosmopolitanism can be traced back to the Cynic movement in Ancient Greece, and the assertion by Diogenes of Sinope (400–323 BCE) that he was a 'citizen of the world'. Interest in cosmopolitan themes revived during the Enlightenment and was expressed most influentially in Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795), which outlined the proposal for a 'league of nations'. Contemporary cosmopolitanism is largely shaped by the desire to explore the moral and political implications of increased interdependence in an age of globalization.

Cosmopolitanism literally means a belief in a *cosmopolis* or 'world state'. Although contemporary cosmopolitanism has a primarily moral orientation, being particularly concerned with the idea of humanity as a single moral community, it also deals with political and institutional themes, not least the need to reform the existing system of global governance (see p. 65) to bring it into line with cosmopolitan moral principles. Cosmopolitan thinking has drawn, variously, on Kantianism, utilitarianism and the doctrine of human rights. For Kant (see p. 341), the obligation to treat people as 'ends in themselves' and not merely as means for the achievement of the ends of others was a 'categorical imperative', dictated by practical reason. On this basis, he argued that we have a universal duty of hospitality towards foreigners, recognizing that, as citizens of the world, we should treat every human being with consideration and respect. The cosmopolitan implications of utilitarianism derive from the belief that, in making moral judgements on the basis of maximizing happiness, 'everybody counts as one, nobody as more than one'. The principle of utility is therefore no respecter of borders, a stance that has, for example, underpinned calls for the eradication of world poverty (Singer, 1993). Most contemporary cosmopolitan theorizing is nevertheless based on the doctrine of human rights. Human rights have cosmopolitan implications because they emphasize that rights are universal, in the sense that they belong to human beings everywhere, regardless of culture, citizenship, gender or other differences. Such thinking has, among other things, underpinned the idea of global social justice (see p. 285) and provided a justification for humanitarian intervention based on a 'responsibility to protect' citizens of other states from large-scale suffering or loss of life.

Cosmopolitanism has many detractors, however. For instance, communitarians and others have taken issue with the moral universalism that underpins cosmopolitanism, arguing that moral systems are only workable when they operate within a cultural or national context. From this perspective, any assistance that is provided to 'strangers' is based on charity alone and cannot be viewed as a moral obligation. Others have argued that moral cosmopolitanism amounts to little more than 'wishful thinking' in a world that lacks an institutional framework capable of upholding its principles. This problem is compounded by the fact that it is difficult to see how such a framework, even if it could be established, could either enjoy a meaningful degree of democratic legitimacy or avoid turning into an emergent world government.



Key figures

Ulrich Beck (born 1944) A German sociologist, Beck's work has covered the perils of globalization and challenges to the global power of capital. In *The Risk Society* (1992), he analyzed the tendency of the globalizing economy to generate uncertainty and insecurity. This thinking was updated in *World at Risk* (1999), in which he argued that an awareness of common global risks helps to cultivate a universal belief in a globally shared collective future. In a 'world risk society', cosmopolitanism is not only possible but it becomes a political and sociological necessity.

Martha Nussbaum (born 1947) A US philosopher and public intellectual, Nussbaum has written prolifically on subjects such as education, gender, sexuality, religious tolerance and human rights. Nussbaum has championed a form of cosmopolitanism that is rooted in Stoic thinking and stresses that being a world citizen does not mean giving up local identifications, as both are a source of enrichment. She has, in particular, criticized patriotism for having encouraged people to ignore issues of common humanity. Nussbaum's best-known works include *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986) and *The Therapy of Desire* (1994).

Charles Beitz (born 1949) A US political theorist, Beitz has made important contributions to international political theory, democratic theory and the theory of human rights. Beitz has defended the idea of global justice by applying John Rawls's (see p. 282) principles of distributive justice to the world economy. This enables him to argue that affluent countries have an obligation to poorer people and that these obligations go beyond acts of mere humanitarian assistance and extend to the global redistribution of wealth. Beitz's key work in this area is *Political Theory and International Relations* (1979).

Thomas Pogge (born 1953) A German philosopher, Pogge's areas of interest include Kant, moral and political philosophy, especially global justice and, more recently, global health. Pogge has developed a rights-based approach to global justice which allows people to make moral claims on social institutions that impact substantially on their lives, accepting that these claims can only be addressed through global institutional reform. Unjust global structures must therefore be reconstructed in line with the requirements of justice and basic human rights. Pogge's key work in this area is *World Poverty and Human Rights* (2008).

Daniele Archibugi (born 1958) An Italian economic and political theorist, Archibugi has developed a form of cosmopolitanism that stresses the importance of cosmopolitan democracy, based on the argument that democratic principles that apply within national communities should also be extended beyond their borders. Criticizing what he sees as unaccountable, undemocratic and failed global institutions, he has outlined the constitutional architecture of a cosmopolitan alternative. Archibugi's chief works include (with D. Held) *Cosmopolitan Democracy* (1995) and *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens* (2008).

See also Immanuel Kant (p. 341)

political arrangements most conducive to promoting it. That said, contemporary cosmopolitanism tends to focus primarily on moral issues, because political cosmopolitanism (sometimes called 'legal' or 'institutional' cosmopolitanism) is associated with the distinctly unfashionable idea of world government. At the core of moral cosmopolitanism is the idea of a common humanity, within which ethical sensibilities are expanded to embrace all people in the world. Thomas Pogge (2008) broke this basic ethical orientation into three elements. First, cosmopolitanism believes in individualism, in that human beings, or persons, are the ultimate unit of moral concern. Second, it embraces egalitarianism, in that it holds that moral concern attaches to every living human equally. And third, it acknowledges universalism, in that moral concern applies to everybody everywhere, taking all people to be citizens of the world. Other forms of cosmopolitanism have been advanced, however. Onora O'Neill (1996) thus used the Kantian notion that we should act on principles that we would be willing to apply to all people in all circumstances to argue that people have a commitment not to injure others and that this commitment has a universal scope. Peter Singer (2002), on the other hand, used utilitarianism (see p. 362) to argue that the ethics of globalization demand that we should act so as to reduce the overall level of global suffering, thinking in terms of 'one world' rather than a collection of discrete countries or peoples.

Moral cosmopolitanism has its critics, however. Radical critics of cosmopolitanism reject ideas such as global justice or world ethics on the grounds that it is impossible to establish universal values that are binding on all people and all societies. This cultural relativism is often used to argue that human rights in particular are essentially a Western ideal and therefore have no place in non-Western cultures. Communitarian critics of cosmopolitanism argue that moral values only make sense when they are grounded in a particular society in a particular historical period. This implies that human beings are morally constituted to favour the needs and interests of those with whom they share a cultural and national identity. In this light, the notion that cosmopolitanism could ever supplant nationalism would appear to be baseless. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that the advent of a global age may be leading to a revival, rather than a decline, of nationalism. In addition to the resurgence of ethnic nationalism in the aftermath of the fall of communism, nationalism has gained renewed impetus since the late twentieth century as a means of resistance against immigration and globalization, and as a part of modernization projects in rising states such as China and Russia.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the link between sovereignty and the modern state?
- To what extent can the distinction between legal sovereignty and political sovereignty be upheld in practice?
- Can sovereignty be reconciled with democracy?
- Why is it possible for external sovereignty to exist in the absence of internal sovereignty?
- Is external sovereignty any longer a meaningful principle?
- If nations are ultimately defined subjectively, by their members, can any group of people declare themselves to be a nation?
- How convincing is the distinction between cultural nations and political nations?
- On what grounds are nations entitled to self-determination?
- What are the implications of nationalism for international politics?
- How does transnationalism differ from internationalism?
- Has globalization resulted in the creation of a 'borderless' world?
- Does cosmopolitanism have the capacity to displace nationalism?

FURTHER READING

Cerny, P. *Rethinking World Politics: A Theory of Transnational Neopluralism* (2010). A wide-ranging examination of how globalization has transformed world politics, which uses neo-pluralism to explain the emergence of transnational webs of power.

Jackson, R. *Sovereignty: The Evolution of an Idea* (2007). An accessible account of the development of the concept of sovereignty, which examines both historical and contemporary debates about its nature and significance.

Özkirimli, U. *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (2010). A comprehensive and insightful introduction to the key theories of nationalism, which exams the major criticisms that have been levelled at each.

Miller, D. *National Responsibility and Global Justices* (2012). An analysis of the moral claims that have been made on behalf of the nation, which also advances a non-cosmopolitan theory of global justice that gives nationhood a central place.

5

Power, Authority and Legitimacy

- POWER

Decision-making • Agenda-setting • Thought control

- AUTHORITY

Power and authority • Kinds of authority • Defenders and detractors

- LEGITIMACY

Constitutionalism and consent • Ideological hegemony • Legitimation crises

Preview

All politics is about power. The practice of politics is often portrayed as little more than the exercise of power, and the academic subject as, in essence, the study of power. Without doubt, students of politics are students of power: they seek to know who has it, how it is used and on what basis it is exercised. Such concerns are particularly apparent in deep and recurrent disagreements about the distribution of power within modern society. Is power distributed widely and evenly dispersed, or is it concentrated in the hands of the few, a 'power elite' or 'ruling class'? Is power essentially benign, enabling people to achieve their collective goals, or is it a form of oppression or domination? Such questions are, however, bedevilled by the difficult task of defining power. Perhaps because power is so central to the understanding of politics, fierce controversy has surrounded its meaning. Some have gone as far as to suggest that there is no single, agreed concept of power but rather a number of competing concepts or theories.

Moreover, the notion that power is a form of domination or control that forces one person to obey another, runs into the problem that in political life power is very commonly exercised through the acceptance and willing obedience of the public. Those 'in power' do not merely possess the *ability* to enforce compliance, but are usually thought to have the *right* to do so as well. This highlights the distinction between power and authority. What is it, however, that transforms power into authority, and on what basis can authority be rightfully exercised? This leads, finally, to questions about legitimacy, the perception that power is exercised in a manner that is rightful, justified or acceptable. Legitimacy is usually seen as the basis of stable government, being linked to the capacity of a regime to command the allegiance and support of its citizens. All governments seek legitimacy, but on what basis do they gain it, and what happens when their legitimacy is called into question?

Power

Concepts of power abound. In the natural sciences, power is usually understood as 'force' or 'energy'. In the social sciences, the most general concept of power links it to the ability to achieve a desired outcome, sometimes referred to as power *to*. This could include the accomplishment of actions as simple as walking across a room or buying a newspaper. In most cases, however, power is thought of as a relationship, as the exercise of control by one person over another, or as power *over*. A distinction is, nevertheless, sometimes drawn between forms of such control, between what is termed 'power' and what is thought of as 'influence'. Power is here seen as the capacity to make formal decisions which are in some way binding on others, whether these are made by teachers in the classroom, parents in the family or by government ministers in relation to the whole of society. Influence, by contrast, is the ability to affect the content of these decisions through some form of external pressure, highlighting the fact that formal and binding decisions are not made in a vacuum. Influence may therefore involve anything from organized lobbying and rational persuasion, through to open intimidation. This, further, raises questions about whether the exercise of power must always be deliberate or intentional. May advertising be said to exert power by promoting the spread of materialistic values, even though advertisers themselves might only be concerned about selling their products? In the same way, there is a controversy between the 'intentionalist' and 'structuralist' understandings of power. The former holds that power is always an attribute of an identifiable agent, be it an interest group, political party, major corporation or whatever. The latter sees power as a feature of a social system as a whole.

One attempt to resolve these controversies is to accept that power is an 'essentially contested' concept and to highlight its various concepts or conception, acknowledging that no settled or agreed definition can ever be developed. This is the approach adopted by Steven Lukes in *Power: A Radical View* ([1975] 2005), which distinguishes between three 'faces' or 'dimensions' of power. In practice, a perfectly acceptable, if broad, definition of power can encompass all its various manifestations: if A gets B to do something A wants but which B would not have chosen to do, power is being exercised. In other words, power is the ability to get someone to do what they would not otherwise have done. Lukes's distinctions are nevertheless of value in drawing attention to how power is exercised in the real world, to the various ways in which A can influence B's behaviour. In this light, power can be said to have three faces. First, it can involve the ability to influence the making of decisions; second, it may be reflected in the capacity to shape the political agenda and thus prevent decisions being made; and third, it may take the form of controlling people's thoughts by the manipulation of their perceptions and preferences.

THOMAS HOBBS (1588–1679)

English political philosopher. Hobbes was the son of a minor clergyman who subsequently abandoned his family. He became tutor to the exiled Prince of Wales, Charles Stuart, and lived under the patronage of the Cavendish family. Writing at a time of uncertainty and civil strife, precipitated by the English Revolution, Hobbes developed the first comprehensive theory of nature and human behaviour since Aristotle.

Hobbes' major work *Leviathan* ([1651] 1968) defended absolutist government as the only alternative to anarchy and disorder. He portrayed life in a stateless society, the state of nature, as 'a war of all against all', based on the belief that human beings are essentially power-seeking and self-interested creatures. In Hobbes' view, citizens have an unqualified obligation towards the state, on the grounds that to limit the power of government is to risk a descent into the state of nature. Any system of political rule, however tyrannical, is preferable to no rule at all. Hobbes thus provided a rationalist defence for absolutism (see p. 188); however, because he based authority on consent and allowed that sovereign authority may take forms other than monarchy, he upset supporters of the divine right of kings. Hobbes's pessimistic view of human nature and his emphasis on the vital importance of authority had considerable impact on conservative thought (see p. 258); but his individualist methodology and the use he made of social-contract theory prefigured early liberalism (see p. 18).

Decision-making

The first 'face' of power dates back to Thomas Hobbes's suggestion that power is the ability of an 'agent' to affect the behaviour of a 'patient'. This notion is in fact analogous to the idea of physical or mechanical power, in that it implies that power involves being 'pulled' or 'pushed' against one's will. Such a notion of power has been central to conventional political science, its classic statement being found in Robert Dahl's 'A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model' (1958). Dahl (see p. 145) was deeply critical of suggestions that in the USA power was concentrated in the hands of a 'ruling elite', arguing that such theories had largely been developed on the basis of reputation: asking where power was believed or reputed to be located. He wished, instead, to base the understanding of power on systematic and testable hypotheses. To this end, Dahl proposed three criteria that had to be fulfilled before the 'ruling elite' thesis could be validated. First, the ruling elite, if it existed at all, must be a well-defined group. Second, a number of 'key political decisions' must be identified over which the preferences of the ruling elite run counter to those of any other group. Third, there must be evidence that the preferences of the elite regularly prevail over those of other groups. In effect, Dahl treated power as the ability to influence

the decision-making process, an approach he believed to be both objective and quantifiable.

According to this view, power is a question of who gets their way, how often they get their way, and over what issues they get their way. The attraction of this treatment of power is that it corresponds to the commonsense belief that power is somehow about getting things done, and is therefore most clearly reflected in decisions and how they are made. It also has the advantage, as Dahl pointed out, that it makes possible an empirical, even scientific, study of the distribution of power within any group, community or society. The method of study was clear: select a number of 'key' decision-making areas; identify the actors involved and discover their preferences; and, finally, analyze the decisions made and compare these with the known preferences of the actors. This procedure was enthusiastically adopted by political scientists and sociologists, especially in the USA, in the late 1950s and 1960s, and spawned a large number of community power studies. The most famous such study was Dahl's own analysis of the distribution of power in New Haven, Connecticut, described in *Who Governs?* ([1963] 2005). These studies focused on local communities, usually cities, on the grounds that they provided more manageable units for empirical study than did national politics, but also on the assumption that conclusions about the distribution of power at the national level could reasonably be drawn from knowledge of its local distribution.

In New Haven, Dahl selected three 'key' policy areas to study: urban renewal, public education and the nomination of political candidates. In each area, he acknowledged that there was a wide disparity between the influence exerted, on the one hand, by the politically privileged and the economically powerful, and, on the other hand, by ordinary citizens. However, he nevertheless claimed to find evidence that different elite groups determined policy in different issue areas, dismissing any idea of a ruling or permanent elite. His conclusion was that 'New Haven is an example of a democratic system, warts and all'. Indeed, so commonly have community power studies reached the conclusion that power is widely dispersed throughout society, that the face of power they recognize – the ability to influence decisions – is often referred to as the 'pluralist' view of power, suggesting the existence of plural or many centres of power. This is, however, misleading: pluralist conclusions are not built into this understanding of power, nor into its methodology for identifying power. There is no reason, for example, why elitist conclusions could not be drawn if the preferences of a single cohesive group are seen to prevail over those of other groups on a regular basis. However, a more telling criticism is that by focusing exclusively on decisions, this approach recognizes only one face of power and, in particular, ignores those circumstances in which decisions are prevented from happening, the area of non-decision-making.

Agenda-setting

To define power simply as the ability to influence the content of decisions raises a number of difficulties. First of all, there are obviously problems about how hypotheses about the distribution of power can be reliably tested. For example, on what basis can ‘key’ decisions, which are studied, be distinguished from ‘routine’ ones, which are ignored; and is it reasonable to assume that the distribution of power at the national level will reflect that found at the community level? Furthermore, this view of power focuses exclusively on behaviour, the *exercise* of power by A over B. In so doing, it ignores the extent to which power is a possession, reflected perhaps in wealth, political position, social status and so forth; power may exist but not be exercised. Groups may, for example, have the capacity to influence decision-making but choose not to involve themselves for the simple reason that they do not anticipate that the decisions made will adversely affect them. In this way, private businesses may show little interest in issues like health, housing and education – unless, of course, increased welfare spending threatens to push up taxes. In the same way, there are circumstances in which people defer to a superior by anticipating his or her wishes without the need for explicit instructions, the so-called ‘law of anticipated reactions’. A further problem, however, is that this first approach disregards an entirely different face of power.

In their seminal essay ‘The Two Faces of Power’ ([1962] 1981), P. Bachrach and M. Baratz described non-decision-making as the ‘second face of power’. Although Bachrach and Baratz accepted that power is reflected in the decision-making process, they insisted that ‘to the extent that a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power’. As E. E. Schattschneider (1960) succinctly put it, ‘Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out’; power, quite simply, is the ability to set the political agenda. This form of power may be more difficult but not impossible to identify, requiring as it does an understanding of the dynamics of non-decision-making. Whereas the decision-making approach to power encourages attention to focus on the active participation of groups in the process, non-decisions highlight the importance of political organization in blocking the participation of certain groups and the expression of particular opinions. Schattschneider summed this up in his famous assertion that ‘organization is the mobilization of bias’. In the view of Bachrach and Baratz, any adequate understanding of power must take full account of ‘the dominant values and the political myths, rituals and institutions which tend to favour the vested interests of one or more groups, relative to others’.

A process of non-decision-making can be seen to operate within liberal-democratic systems in a number of respects. For example, although political

parties are normally seen as vehicles through which interests are expressed or demands articulated, they can just as easily block particular views and opinions. This can happen either when all major parties disregard an issue or policy option, or when parties fundamentally agree, in which case the issue is never raised. This applies to problems such as debt in the developing world, divisions between the global North and the global South and the environmental crisis, which are not typically viewed as priority issues by mainstream political parties. Similar biases operate within interest-group politics, favouring the articulation of certain views and interests while restricting the expression of others. Interest groups that represent the well-informed, the prosperous and the articulate stand a better chance of shaping the political agenda than groups such as the unemployed, the homeless, the poor, the elderly and the young.

The analysis of power as non-decision-making has often generated elitist rather than pluralist conclusions. Bachrach and Baratz, for instance, pointed out that the 'mobilization of bias' in conventional politics normally operates in the interests of what they call 'status quo defenders', privileged or elite groups. Elitists have, indeed, sometimes portrayed liberal-democratic politics as a series of filters through which radical proposals are weeded out and kept off the political agenda. However, it is, once again, a mistake to believe that a particular approach to the study of power predetermines its empirical conclusions. Even if a 'mobilization of bias' can be seen to operate within a political system, there are times when popular pressures can, and do, prevail over 'vested interests', as is demonstrated by the success of campaigns for welfare rights and improved consumer and environmental protection. A further problem nevertheless exists. Even though agenda setting may be recognized with decision-making as an important face of power, neither takes account of the fact that power can also be wielded through the manipulation of what people think.

Thought control

The two previous approaches to power – as decision-making and non-decision-making – share the basic assumption that what individuals and groups want is what they say they want. This applies even though they may lack the capacity to achieve their goals or, perhaps, get their objectives on to the political agenda. Indeed, both perspectives agree that it is only when groups have clearly stated preferences that it is possible to say who has power and who does not. The problem with such a position, however, is that it treats individuals and groups as rational and autonomous actors, capable of knowing their own interests and of articulating them clearly. In reality, no human being possesses an entirely independent mind; the ideas, opinions and preferences of all are structured and shaped by social experience, through the influence of family, peer groups,

school, the workplace, the mass media, political parties and so forth. Vance Packard, for instance, described this ability to manipulate human behaviour by the creation of needs in his classic study of the power of advertising, *The Hidden Persuaders* ([1957] 1967).

This suggests a third, and most insidious, ‘face’ of power: the ability of A to exercise power over B, not by getting B to do what he would not otherwise do, but, in Steven Lukes’s words, by ‘influencing, shaping or determining his very wants.’ Such thinking is derived from Marxist analysis, as developed by Gramsci (see p. 76) and especially within critical theory (see p. 116). In *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Herbert Marcuse (see p. 117) thus highlighted the totalitarian character of advanced industrial societies, based not on terror and open brutality, as in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, but on their ability to exert control through the pervasive manipulation of needs, made possible by modern technology. This created what Marcuse called ‘a comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom.’ In such circumstances, the absence of conflict in society may not attest to general contentment and a wide dispersal of power. Rather, a ‘society without opposition’ may be evidence of the success of an insidious process of indoctrination and psychological control. This is what Lukes termed the ‘radical view’ of power.

A central theme in the radical view of power is the distinction between truth and falsehood, reflected in the difference between subjective or ‘felt’ interests, and objective or ‘real’ interests. People, quite simply, do not always know their own minds. This is a conception of power that has been particularly attractive to Marxists and postmodern theorists (see p. 119). Capitalism, Marxists argue, is a system of class exploitation and oppression, within which power is concentrated in the hands of a ‘ruling class’, the bourgeoisie. The power of the bourgeoisie is ideological, as well as economic and political. In Marx’s view, the dominant ideas, values and beliefs of any society are the ideas of its ruling class. Thus the exploited class, the proletariat, is deluded by the weight of bourgeois ideas and theories and comes to suffer from what Engels (see p. 76) termed ‘false consciousness’. In effect, it is prevented from recognizing the fact of its own exploitation. In this way, the objective or ‘real’ interests of the proletariat, which would be served only by the abolition of capitalism, differ from their subjective or ‘felt’ interests. Lenin (see p. 76) argued that the power of ‘bourgeois ideology’ was such that, left to its own devices, the proletariat would be able to achieve only ‘trade union consciousness’, the desire to improve their material conditions but within the capitalist system. Such theories are discussed at greater length in relation to ideological hegemony in the final part of this chapter.

Postmodern thinkers, influenced in particular by the writings of Michel Foucault (see p. 120), have also drawn attention to the link between power and systems of thought through the idea of a ‘discourse of power’. A discourse is a system of social relations and practices that assign meaning and therefore iden-

CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory refers to the work of the so-called Frankfurt School, the Institute of Social Research, which was established in Frankfurt in 1923, relocated to the USA in the 1930s, and was re-established in Frankfurt in the early 1950s. The Institute was dissolved in 1969. Two phases in the development of critical theory can be identified. The first was associated with the theorists who dominated the Institute's work in the pre-war and early post-war period, notably Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. The second phase stems from the work of the major post-war exponent of critical theory, Habermas.

Critical theory does not and has never constituted a unified body of work. However, certain general themes tend to distinguish Frankfurt thinkers as a school. The original intellectual and political inspiration for critical theory was Marxism (see p. 75). However, critical theorists were repelled by Stalinism, criticized the determinist and scientific tendencies in orthodox Marxism, and were disillusioned by the failure of Marx's predictions about the inevitable collapse of capitalism. Frankfurt thinkers therefore developed a form of neo-Marxism that focused more heavily on the analysis of ideology than on economics and no longer treated the proletariat as the revolutionary agent. They also blended Marxist insights with the ideas of thinkers such as Kant (see p. 341), Hegel (see p. 54), Weber and Freud. Critical theory is characterized by the attempt to extend the notion of critique to all social practices by linking substantive social research to philosophy. In so doing, it does not merely look beyond the classical principles and methodology of Marxism but also cuts across a range of traditionally discrete disciplines, including economics, sociology, philosophy, psychology and literary criticism. While early Frankfurt thinkers were primarily concerned with the analysis of discrete societies, later theorists have often applied critical theory to the study of international politics. In this respect, critical theorists have adopted an explicit commitment to emancipatory politics, being concerned to uncover structures of oppression and injustice in global politics in order to advance the cause of individual and collective freedom. Sometimes this has also encouraged critical theorists to a question of the conventional association within international theory between political community and the state, in so doing opening up the possibility of a more inclusive, and perhaps even cosmopolitan, notion of political identity.

Critical theory has itself attracted criticism, however. 'First-generation' Frankfurt thinkers in particular were criticized for advancing a theory of social transformation that was often disengaged from the ongoing social struggle. Moreover, they were accused of over-emphasizing the capacity of capitalism to absorb oppositional forces, and thus of underestimating the crisis tendencies within capitalist society. On the other hand, critical theory has brought about important political and social insights through the cross-fertilization of academic disciplines and by straddling the divide between Marxism and conventional social theory. It has also provided a continually fertile and imaginative perspective from which the problems and contradictions of existing society can be explored.

Key figures

Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) A German philosopher and social psychologist, Horkheimer pioneered the interdisciplinary approach that was to become characteristic of critical theory. His principal concern was to analyze the psychic and ideological mechanisms through which class societies contain conflict. He explained totalitarianism in terms of the psychological, racial and political tendencies of liberal capitalism, and argued that the advent of 'mass society' had made old ideological divisions irrelevant. Horkheimer's major works include *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (with Theodor Adorno) (1944) and *The Eclipse of Reason* (1974).

Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) A German political philosopher and social theorist, Marcuse portrayed advanced industrial society as an all-encompassing system of repression, which subdues argument and debate and absorbs all forms of opposition. Against this 'one-dimensional society', he held up the unashamedly utopian prospect of personal and sexual liberation, highlighting the revolutionary potential of groups such as students, ethnic minorities, women and workers in the developing world. Marcuse's key works include *Reason and Revolution* (1941), *Eros and Civilization* ([1955] 1969) and *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).

Theodor Adorno (1903–69) A German philosopher, sociologist and musicologist, Adorno made important contributions to the critique of mass culture. With Horkheimer, he developed a new socio-cultural theory that centred on the advance of 'instrumental reason' rather than the class struggle. Adorno interpreted culture and mass communication as political instruments through which dominant ideologies are imposed on society, producing conformism and paralyzing individual thought and behaviour. Adorno's best-known writings include *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), *Minima Moralia* (1951) and *Negative Dialectics* (1966).

Jürgen Habermas (born 1929) A German philosopher and social theorist, Habermas is the leading exponent of the 'second generation' of the Frankfurt School. Habermas's work ranges over epistemology, the dynamics of advanced capitalism, the nature of rationality, and the relationship between social science and philosophy. He has highlighted tensions in capitalist societies between capital accumulation and democracy. During the 1970s, he developed critical theory into what has become a theory of 'communicative action'. Habermas's main works include *Towards Rational Society* (1970) and *The Theory of Communicative Competence* (1984, 1988).

tities to those who live or work within it. Anything from institutionalized psychiatry and the prison service, as in Foucault's case, to academic disciplines and political ideologies can be regarded as discourses in this sense. Discourses are a form of power in that they set up antagonisms and structure relations between people, who are defined as subjects or objects, as 'insiders' or 'outsiders'. These identities are then internalized, meaning that those who are subject to domination, as in the Marxist view, are unaware of the fact or extent of that domination.

Whereas Marxists associate power as thought control with the attempt to maintain class inequality, postmodern theorists come close to seeing power as ubiquitous, all systems of knowledge being viewed as manifestations of power.

This 'radical' view of power also has its critics, however. It is impossible to argue that people's perceptions and preferences are a delusion, that their 'felt' needs are not their 'real' needs, without a standard of truth against which to judge them. If people's stated preferences are not to be relied on, how is it possible to prove what their 'real' interests might be? For example, if class antagonisms are submerged under the influence of bourgeois ideology, how can the Marxist notion of a 'ruling class' ever be tested? Marxism has traditionally relied for these purposes on its credentials as a form of 'scientific socialism'; however, the claim to scientific status has been abandoned by many modern Marxists and certainly by post-Marxists. One of the problems of the postmodern view that knowledge is socially determined and, usually or always, contaminated with power, is that all claims to truth are at best relative. This position questions not only the status of scientific theories but also the status of the postmodern theories that attack science. Lukes's solution to this problem is to suggest that people's real interests are 'what they would want and prefer were they able to make the choice'. In other words, only rational and autonomous individuals are capable of identifying their own 'real' interests. The problem with such a position, however, is that it begs the question: how are we to decide when individuals are capable of making rational and autonomous judgements?

Authority

Although politics is traditionally concerned with the exercise of power, it is often more narrowly interested in the phenomenon called 'authority', and especially 'political authority'. In its broadest sense, authority is a form of power; it is a means through which one person can influence the behaviour of another. However, more usually, power and authority are distinguished from one another as contrasting means through which compliance or obedience is achieved. Whereas power can be defined as the *ability* to influence the behaviour of another, authority can be understood as the *right* to do so. Power brings about compliance through persuasion, pressure, threats, coercion or violence. Authority, on the other hand, is based on a perceived 'right to rule' and brings about compliance through a moral obligation on the part of the ruled to obey. Although political philosophers have disputed the basis on which authority rests, they have nevertheless agreed that it always has a moral character. This implies that it is less important that authority *is* obeyed than that it *should* be obeyed. In this sense, a teacher can be said to have the authority to demand homework from students even if they persistently disobey.

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is a controversial and confusing term that was first used to describe experimental movements in Western architecture and cultural development in general.

Postmodern thought originated principally in continental Europe, especially France, and constitutes a challenge to the type of academic political theory that has come to be the norm in the Anglo-American world. Postmodern and poststructural political theories had their greatest impact during the period from the 1970s onwards. Their basis lies in a perceived social shift – from modernity to postmodernity – and a related cultural and intellectual shift – from modernism to postmodernism. Modern societies were seen to be structured by industrialization and class solidarity, social identity being largely determined by one's position within the productive system. Postmodern societies, on the other hand, are viewed as increasingly fragmented and pluralistic 'information' societies in which individuals are transformed from producers to consumers, and individualism replaces class, religious and ethnic loyalties.

Modernism, the cultural form of modernity, stemmed largely from Enlightenment ideas and theories, and was expressed politically in ideological traditions that offer rival conceptions of the good life. Liberalism (see p. 18) and Marxism (see p. 75) are the clearest examples of such 'metanarratives'. Modernist thought is characterized by foundationalism – the belief that it is possible to establish objective truths and universal values, usually associated with a strong faith in reason and progress. By contrast, the central theme of postmodernism is that there is no such thing as certainty: the idea of absolute and universal truth should be discarded as an arrogant pretence, a stance that is often termed anti-foundationalist. Although, by its nature, postmodernism does not constitute a unified body of thought, its critical attitude to truth claims stems from the assumption that all knowledge is partial and local, a view it shares with some communitarian thinkers (see p. 33).

Poststructuralism, a term sometimes used interchangeably with postmodernism, emphasizes that all ideas and concepts are expressed in language which itself is enmeshed in complex relations of power. Political theory, then, does not stand above power relations and bestow dispassionate understanding; it is an intrinsic part of the power relations it claims to analyze.

Postmodernist thought has been criticized from two angles. In the first place, it has been accused of relativism, in that it holds that different modes of knowing are equally valid and thus rejects the idea that even science is able reliably to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Second, it has been charged with conservatism, on the grounds that an anti-foundationalist political stance offers no perspective from which the existing order may be criticized and no basis for the construction of an alternative social order. Nevertheless, the attraction of postmodern theory is its remorseless questioning of apparently solid realities and accepted beliefs. Its general emphasis on discourse, debate and democracy reflects the fact that to reject hierarchies of ideas is also to reject any political and social hierarchies.



Key figures

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) A German philosopher and precursor of postmodernism, Heidegger had a major influence on the development of phenomenology and existentialism. Fundamental to his philosophical system was the question of the meaning of 'Being', or self-conscious existence. All previous political philosophies had made the mistake of starting out from a conception of human nature rather than recognizing the 'human essence' as a 'realm of disclosure', thereby leading to the dominance of technology over human existence. Heidegger's most famous work is *Being and Time* (1927).

Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98) A French philosopher, Lyotard was primarily responsible for popularizing the term postmodernism, giving it its most succinct definition: 'incredulity towards meta-narratives'. By this he meant scepticism about all creeds and ideologies that are based on universal theories of history which view society as a coherent totality. This had occurred largely due to science's loss of authority. Lyotard's post-Marxism also reflected his belief that communism had been eliminated as an alternative to liberal capitalism. His most important work is *The Postmodern Condition* (1979).

Michel Foucault (1926–84) A French philosopher and radical intellectual, Foucault had a major impact on emerging poststructuralism. Foucault was principally concerned with forms of knowledge and the construction of the human subject. His early work analyzed different branches of knowledge as 'archaeologies', leading to an emphasis on discourse, or what he later called 'discursive formations'. Central to this was his belief that knowledge is enmeshed in power, truth always being a social construct. Foucault's key works include *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Order of Things* (1966) and *History of Sexuality* (1976).

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) A French philosopher, Derrida was the main proponent of deconstruction. Sometimes used interchangeably with poststructuralism, deconstruction is the task of raising questions about the 'texts' that constitute cultural life, exposing complications and contradictions of which their 'authors' are not fully conscious and for which they are not fully responsible. Derrida's concept of 'difference' allows for a constant sliding between meanings in that there are no polar opposites. His major works include *Writing and Difference* (1967), *Margins of Philosophy* (1972) and *Specters of Marx* (1993).

Richard Rorty (1931–2007) A US philosopher, Rorty focused increasingly on political issues, having established his reputation in the analysis of language and mind. Rejecting the idea that there is an objective, transcendental standpoint from which beliefs can be judged, he concluded that philosophy should be understood as nothing more than a conversation. Nevertheless, he supported a pragmatic brand of liberalism that overlapped at times with social democracy. Rorty's best-known works include *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982) and *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989).

See also Friedrich Nietzsche (p. 35)

A very different notion of authority has, however, been employed by modern sociologists. This is largely derived from the writings of the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). Weber was concerned to explain why, and under what circumstances, people were prepared to accept the exercise of power as rightful or legitimate. In other words, he defined authority simply as a matter of people's belief about its rightfulness, regardless of where that belief came from and whether or not it is morally justified. Weber's approach treats authority as a form of power; authority is 'legitimate power', power cloaked in legitimacy. According to this view, a government that is obeyed can be said to exercise authority, even though that obedience may have been brought about by systematic indoctrination and propaganda.

The relationship between authority and an acknowledged 'right to rule' explains why the concept is so central to the practice of government: in the absence of willing compliance, governments are only able to maintain order by the use of fear, intimidation and violence. Nevertheless, the concept of authority is both complex and controversial. For example, although power and authority can be distinguished analytically, in practice the two tend to overlap and be confused with one another. Furthermore, since authority is obeyed for a variety of reasons and in contrasting circumstances, it is important to distinguish between the different forms it can take. Finally, authority is by no means the subject of universal approval. While many have regarded authority as an essential guarantee of order and stability, lamenting what they see as the 'decline of authority' in modern society, others have warned that authority is closely linked to authoritarianism and can easily become the enemy of liberty and democracy.

Power and authority

Power and authority are mutually exclusive notions, but ones that are often difficult in practice to disentangle. Authority can best be understood as a means of gaining compliance which avoids both persuasion and rational argument, on the one hand, and any form of pressure or coercion on the other. Persuasion is an effective and widely used means of influencing the behaviour of another, but, strictly speaking, it does not involve the exercise of authority. Much of electoral politics amounts to an exercise in persuasion: political parties campaign, advertise, organize meetings and rallies, all in the hope of influencing voters on election day. Persuasion either takes the form of rational argument and attempts to show that a particular set of policies 'make sense', or appeals to self-interest and tries to demonstrate that voters will be 'better off' under one party than another. In both cases, electors' decisions about how to vote are contingent on the issues competing parties address, the arguments they put forward and the way they put them across. Quite simply, parties at election time are not exercising authority,

since voters need to be persuaded. Because it is based on an acknowledged 'duty to obey', the exercise of authority must be reflected in automatic and unquestioning obedience. In this case, political parties can only be said to exercise authority over their most loyal and obedient supporters – those who need no persuasion.

Similarly, in its Weberian sense, authority can be distinguished from the various manifestations of power. If authority involves the right to influence others, while power refers to the ability to do so, the exercise of power always draws on some kind of resources. In other words, power involves the ability to either reward or punish another. This applies whether power takes the form of pressure, intimidation, coercion or violence. Unlike rational argument or persuasion, pressure is reflected in the use of rewards and punishments, but ones that stop short of open coercion. This can be seen, for instance, in the activities of so-called pressure groups. Although pressure groups may seek to influence the political process through persuasion and argument, they also exercise power by, for example, making financial contributions to political parties or candidates, threatening strike action, holding marches and demonstrations and so on. Intimidation, coercion and violence contrast still more starkly with authority. Since it is based on the threat or exercise of force, coercion can be regarded as the antithesis of authority. When government exercises authority, its citizens obey the law peacefully and willingly; when obedience is not willingly offered, government is forced to compel it.

Nevertheless, although the concepts of power and authority can be distinguished analytically, the exercise of power and the exercise of authority often overlap. Authority is seldom exercised in the absence of power; and power usually involves the operation of at least a limited form of authority. For example, political leadership almost always calls for a blend of authority and power. A prime minister or president may, for instance, enjoy support from cabinet colleagues out of a sense of party loyalty, because of respect for the office held, or in recognition of the leader's personal achievements or qualities. In such cases, the prime minister or president concerned is exercising authority rather than power. However, political leadership never rests on authority alone. The support which a prime minister or president receives also reflects the power they command – exercised, for example, in their ability to reward colleagues by promoting them or to punish colleagues by sacking them. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 7, the authority of law rests, in part, on the power to enforce it. The obligation to live peacefully and within the law would perhaps be meaningless if law was not backed up by the machinery of coercion, a police force, court system, prison service and so forth.

A final difficulty in clarifying the meaning of authority arises from the contrasting uses of the term. For example, people can be described as being either 'in authority' or 'an authority'. To describe a person as being *in* authority is to refer to his or her position within an institutional hierarchy. A teacher,

policeman, civil servant, judge or minister exercises authority in precisely this sense. They are office-holders whose authority is based on the formal ‘powers’ of their post or position. By contrast, to be described as *an* authority is to be recognized as possessing superior knowledge or expertise, and to have one’s views treated with special respect as a result. People as varied as scientists, doctors, teachers, lawyers and academics may be thought of, in this sense, as ‘authorities’ and their pronouncements may be regarded as ‘authoritative’. This is what is usually described as ‘expert authority’.

Some commentators have argued that this distinction highlights two contrasting types of authority. To be *in* authority implies the right to command obedience in the sense that a police officer controlling traffic can require drivers to obey his or her instructions. To be *an* authority, on the other hand, undoubtedly implies that a person’s views will be respected and treated with special consideration, but by no means suggests that they will be automatically obeyed. In this way, a noted historian’s account of the origins of World War I will elicit a different response from academic colleagues than will his or her instruction to students to hand in their essays on time. In the first instance the historian is respected as *an* authority; in the second he or she is obeyed by virtue of being *in* authority. In the same way, a person who is respected as *an* authority is regarded as being in some sense ‘superior’ to others, whereas those who are merely *in* authority are not in themselves superior to those they command; it is only their office or post that sets them apart.

Kinds of authority

Without doubt, the most influential attempt to categorize types of authority was undertaken by Max Weber. Weber was concerned to categorize particular ‘systems of domination’, and to highlight in each case the grounds on which obedience was established. He did this by constructing three ‘ideal types’, which he accepted were only conceptual models but which, he hoped, would help to make sense of the highly complex nature of political rule. These ideal types were traditional authority, charismatic authority and legal-rational authority, each of which laid claim to exercise power legitimately on a very different basis. In identifying the different forms which political authority could take, Weber also sought to understand the transformation of society itself, contrasting the system of domination found in relatively simple, ‘traditional’ societies with those typically found in industrialized and highly bureaucratic modern ones.

Weber suggested that in traditional societies authority is based on respect for long-established customs and traditions. In effect, traditional authority is regarded as legitimate because it has ‘always existed’ and was accepted by earlier generations. This form of authority is therefore sanctified by history and is based

on 'immemorial custom.' In practice, it tends to operate through a hierarchical system which allocates to each person within the society a particular status. However, the 'status' of a person, unlike modern posts or offices, is not precisely defined and so grants those in authority what Weber referred to as a sphere of 'free grace'. Such authority is nevertheless constrained by a body of concrete rules, fixed and unquestioned customs that do not need to be justified because they reflect the way things always have been. The most obvious examples of traditional authority are found among tribes or small groups, in the form of 'patriarchalism' – the domination of the father within the family or the 'master' over his servants – and 'gerontocracy' – the rule of the aged, normally reflected in the authority of village 'elders'. Traditional authority is thus closely tied up with hereditary systems of power and privilege. Few examples of traditional authority have survived in modern industrial societies, both because the impact of tradition has diminished with the enormous increase in the pace of social change, and because it is difficult to square the idea of hereditary status with modern principles like democratic government and equal opportunities. Nevertheless, vestiges of traditional authority can be found in the survival of the institution of monarchy, even in advanced industrial societies such as the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain. Although parallels have sometimes been drawn between the idea of traditional authority and Confucian thinking on the subject (see p. 125), the latter is deeply rooted in the notion of moral excellence.

Weber's second form of legitimate domination was charismatic authority. This form of authority is based entirely on the power of an individual's personality, his or her 'charisma'. The word itself is derived from Christianity and refers to divinely bestowed power, a 'gift of grace', reflected in the power which Jesus exerted over his disciples. Charismatic authority owes nothing to a person's status, social position or office, and everything to his or her personal qualities and, in particular, the ability to make a direct and personal appeal to others. This form of authority must always have operated in political life because all forms of leadership require the ability to communicate and the capacity to inspire loyalty. In some cases, political leadership is constructed almost entirely on the basis of charismatic authority, as in the case of fascist leaders such as Mussolini and Hitler, each of whom, in portraying himself as 'The Leader', deliberately sought to achieve unrestricted power by emancipating himself from any constitutionally defined notion of leadership. It would be a mistake, nevertheless, to think of charismatic authority simply as a gift or natural propensity. Political leaders often try to 'manufacture' charisma, either by cultivating their media image and sharpening their oratorical skills or, in cases such as Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler and Mao Zedong (see p. 76), by orchestrating an elaborate 'cult of personality' through the control of a propaganda machine.

Whether natural or manufactured, charismatic authority is often looked on with suspicion. This reflects the belief that it is invariably linked to authoritari-

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

CONFUCIANISM AND AUTHORITY

Confucianism is a system of ethics formulated by Confucius (Kong Fuzi) (551–479 BCE) and his disciples that was primarily outlined in the *Analects*. The dominant philosophical tradition in imperial China, Confucianism shaped almost every aspect of Chinese education until the early twentieth century, with interest in it having revived alongside the process of 'modernization' since the 1980s. Confucian thought has concerned itself with the twin themes of human relations and the cultivation of the self. The emphasis on *ren* ('humanity' or 'love') has usually been interpreted as implying support for traditional ideas and values, notably filial piety, respect, loyalty and benevolence. The stress on *junzi* (the virtuous person) suggests a capacity for human development and potential for perfection, realized, in particular, through education.

Confucian thinking about authority is best reflected in the vision of a hierarchical society in which there is a well-defined role for every member. This is based on the belief that there are three categories of people – sages (who embody and transmit wisdom, but are very few in number), nobles or 'gentlemen' (who predominate in 'dealings with the world'; gentlemen constantly strive to do what is right and to follow the path of self-cultivation) and the 'small men' (the mass of society, who have little concern for morality but will diligently follow the exemplary ruler). However, although this hierarchical model reflects the essentially conservative idea that moral responsibility increases with social status, it is founded on strictly meritocratic principles: Confucius believed that people are equal at birth and advocated a system of education that is open to all. People thus rise or fall in society on the basis of their inner qualities, wealth or family background being irrelevant. Moreover, in the Confucian view, authority is essentially benevolent. As a ruling group, the gentlemen are distinguished, above all, by a sincere concern for the welfare of others, recognizing also that this engenders political stability – 'If you desire good, the people will be good'.

anism, the demand for unquestioning obedience, the imposition of authority regardless of consent. Since it is based on personality rather than status or office, charismatic authority is not confined by any rules or procedures and may thus create the spectre of 'total power'. Furthermore, charismatic authority demands from its followers not only willing obedience but also discipleship, even devotion. Ultimately, the charismatic leader is obeyed because submission carries with it the prospect that one's life can be transformed. Charismatic authority has frequently therefore had an intense, messianic quality; leaders such as Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin each presented themselves as a 'messiah' come to save, liberate

or otherwise transform their countries. This form of authority may be less crucial in liberal-democratic regimes where the limits of leadership are constitutionally defined, but is nevertheless still significant. It is important to remember, moreover, that charismatic qualities are not only evident in the assertive and, at times, abrasive leadership of Margaret Thatcher or Charles de Gaulle, but also in the more modest, but no less effective, 'fireside chats' of F. D. Roosevelt and the practised televisual skills of almost all modern leaders.

The third form of domination Weber identified was what he called legal-rational authority. This was the most important kind of authority since, in Weber's view, it had almost entirely displaced traditional authority and become the dominant mode of organization within modern industrial societies. In particular, Weber suggested that legal-rational authority was characteristic of the large-scale, bureaucratic organizations that had come to dominate modern society. Legal-rational authority operates through the existence of a body of clearly defined rules; in effect, legal-rational authority attaches entirely to the office and its formal 'powers', and not to the office-holder. As such, legal-rational authority is clearly distinct from any form of charismatic authority; but it is also very different from traditional authority, based as it is on a clearly defined bureaucratic role rather than the broader notion of status.

Legal-rational authority arises out of respect for the 'rule of law', in that power is always clearly and legally defined, ensuring that those who exercise power do so within a framework of law. Modern government, for instance, can be said to operate very largely on the basis of legal-rational authority. The power which a president, prime minister or other government officer is able to exercise is determined in almost all circumstances by formal, constitutional rules, which constrain or limit what an office-holder is able to do. From Weber's point of view, this form of authority is certainly to be preferred to either traditional or charismatic authority. In the first place, in clearly defining the realm of authority and attaching it to an office rather than a person, bureaucratic authority is less likely to be abused or give rise to injustice. In addition, bureaucratic order is shaped, Weber believed, by the need for efficiency and a rational division of labour. In his view, the bureaucratic order that dominates modern society is supremely efficient. Yet he also recognized a darker side to the onward march of bureaucratic authority. The price of greater efficiency, he feared, was a more depersonalized and inhuman social environment, typified by the relentless spread of bureaucratic forms of organization.

An alternative means of identifying kinds of authority is the distinction between *de jure* authority (authority in law), and *de facto* authority (authority in practice). *De jure* authority operates according to a set of procedures or rules which designate who possesses authority, and over what issues. For example, anyone described as being 'in authority' can be said to possess *de jure* authority: their 'powers' can be traced back to a particular office. In that sense, both tradi-

tional and legal-rational authority, as defined by Weber, are forms of *de jure* authority. There are occasions, however, when authority is undoubtedly exercised but cannot be traced back to a set of procedural rules; this type of authority can be called *de facto* authority. Being ‘an authority’, for example, may be based on expertise in a definable area but it cannot be said to be based on a set of authorizing rules. This would also apply, for instance, in the case of a passer-by who spontaneously takes charge at the scene of a road accident, directing traffic and issuing instructions, but without having any official authorization to do so. The person concerned would be exercising *de facto* authority without possessing any legal right or *de jure* authority. All forms of charismatic authority are of this kind. They amount to *de facto* authority in that they are based entirely on an individual’s personality and do not in any sense refer to a set of external rules.

Defenders and detractors

The concept of authority is not only highly complex, but also deeply controversial. Questions about the need for authority, and whether it should be regarded as an unqualified blessing, go to the very heart of political theory and correspond closely to the debate about the need for government, discussed in Chapter 3. Since the late twentieth century, however, the issue of authority has become particularly contentious. On the one hand, the progressive expansion of individual rights and liberties in modern society, and the advance of a tolerant or permissive social ethic, have encouraged some to view authority in largely negative terms, seeing it either as outdated and unnecessary or as implicitly oppressive. On the other hand, this process has stimulated a backlash encouraging defenders of authority to reassert its importance. In their view, the erosion of authority in the home, the workplace, and in schools, colleges and universities, brings with it the danger of disorder, instability and social breakdown.

The social-contract theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provide a classic justification for authority. These proceed by constructing the image of a society without an established system of authority, a so-called ‘state of nature’, and emphasize that the result would be barbarity and injustice as individuals struggle against one another to achieve their various ends. This implies, however, an ambivalent attitude towards authority, an ambivalence that has been inherited by many liberal theorists. It suggests, in the first place, that the need for authority will be recognized by all rational individuals, who respect authority both because it establishes order and stability and because authority defends individual liberty from the encroachments of fellow citizens. In that sense, liberals always emphasize that authority arises ‘from below’: it is based on the consent of the governed. At the same time, however, authority necessarily constrains liberty and has the capacity to become a tyranny against the individual. As a

result, liberals insist that authority be constrained, preferring legal-rational forms of authority that operate within clearly defined legal or constitutional boundaries.

Conservative thinkers have traditionally adopted a rather different attitude to authority. In their view, authority is seldom based on consent but arises out of what Roger Scruton (2001) called 'natural necessity'. Authority is thus regarded as an essential feature of all social institutions; it reflects a basic need for leadership, guidance and support. Conservatives point out, for example, that the authority of parents within the family is in no meaningful sense based on the consent of children. Parental authority arises instead from the desire of parents to nurture, care for and love their children. In this sense, it is exercised 'from above' for the benefit of those below. From the conservative perspective, authority promotes social cohesion and serves to strengthen the fabric of society; it is the basis of any genuine community. This is why neo-conservatives have been so fiercely critical of the spread of permissiveness, believing that by undermining the authority of, say, parents, teachers and the police, it has created a 'pathless desert' leading to a rise in crime, delinquency and general discourtesy.

It has, further, been suggested that the erosion of authority can pave the way for totalitarian rule. Hannah Arendt (see p. 129), who was herself forced to flee Germany by the rise of Nazism, argued that society is, in effect, held together by respect for traditional authority. Strong traditional norms, reflected in standards of moral and social behaviour, act as a form of cement binding society together. The virtue of authority is that it provides individuals with a sense of social identity, stability and reassurance; the 'collapse of authority' leaves them lonely and disorientated, prey to the entreaties of demagogues and would-be dictators. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Arendt suggested that the decline of traditional values and hierarchies was one of the factors which explained the advent of Nazism and Stalinism. In her view, a clear distinction exists between authoritarian and totalitarian societies. In the former, political opposition and civil liberty may routinely be suppressed but a considerable degree of individual freedom is nevertheless permitted, at least in the realm of economic, social and cultural life. By comparison, totalitarian regimes stamp out individual freedom altogether by controlling every aspect of human existence, thereby establishing 'total power'.

Authority has also, however, been regarded with deep suspicion and sometimes open hostility. The central theme of this argument is that authority is the enemy of liberty. All forms of authority may be regarded as a threat to the individual, in that authority, by definition, calls for unquestioning obedience. In that sense, there is always a trade-off between liberty and authority: as the sphere of authority expands, liberty is necessarily constrained. Thus there may be every reason to celebrate the decline of authority. If parents, teachers and the state no longer command unquestionable authority, surely this is reflected in the growing

HANNAH ARENDT (1906–75)

German political theorist and philosopher. Arendt was brought up in a middle-class Jewish family. She fled Germany in 1933 to escape from Nazism, and finally settled in the United States, where her major work was produced.

Arendt's wide-ranging, even idiosyncratic, writing was influenced by the existentialism of Heidegger (see p. 119) and Jaspers (1883–1969); she described it as 'thinking without barriers'. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), which attempted to examine the nature of both Nazism and Stalinism, she developed a critique of modern mass society, pointing out the link between its tendency to alienation and atomization, caused by the breakdown of traditional norms, and the rise of totalitarian movements. Her most important philosophical work, *The Human Condition* (1958), develops Aristotle (see p. 62) in arguing that political action is the central part of a proper human life. She portrayed the public sphere as the realm in which freedom and autonomy are expressed, and meaning is given to private endeavours. She analyzed the American and French revolutions in *On Revolution* (1963b), arguing that each had abandoned the 'lost treasure' of the revolutionary tradition, the former by leaving the mass of citizens outside the political arena, the latter by its concentration on the 'social question' rather than freedom. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963a), Arendt used the fate of the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann as a basis for discussing the 'banality of evil'.

responsibilities and freedom of, respectively, children, students and individual citizens. From this point of view, there is particular cause to fear forms of authority that have an unlimited character. Charismatic authority, and indeed any notion that authority is exercised 'from above', create the spectre of unchecked power. What, for instance, restricts the authority which parents can rightfully exercise over their children if that authority is not based on consent?

Authority can, furthermore, be seen as a threat to reason and critical understanding. Authority demands unconditional, unquestioning obedience, and can therefore engender a climate of deference, an abdication of responsibility, and an uncritical trust in the judgement of others. Such tendencies have been highlighted by psychological studies that have linked the exercise of authority to the development of authoritarian character traits: the inclination towards either domination or submission. The Austrian psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957), presented an account of the origins of fascism in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* ([1933] 1977) that drew attention to the damaging repression brought about by the domination of fathers within traditionally authoritarian families. This analysis was taken further by Theodor Adorno (see p. 116) and others in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950). They claimed to find evidence that individuals who ranked high on the 'F-scale', indicating fascist tendencies, included

those who had a strong propensity to defer to authority. The US social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1974) claimed to find support for this theory in his controversial experiment on obedience to authority. This, he claimed, showed that people with a strong inclination to obey authority can more easily be induced to behave in a barbaric fashion, for example, by inflicting what they believe to be considerable amounts of pain on others. Milgram argued that his evidence helps to explain the inhuman behaviour of guards in Nazi death camps, as well as atrocities that were carried out by the US military during the Vietnam War.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is usually defined simply as ‘rightfulness’. As such, it is crucial to the distinction between power and authority. Legitimacy is the quality that transforms naked power into rightful authority; it confers on an order or command an authoritative or binding character, ensuring that it is obeyed out of duty rather than because of fear. Clearly, there is a close relationship between legitimacy and authority, the two terms sometimes being used synonymously. As they are most commonly used, however, people are said to have authority, whereas it is political systems that are described as legitimate. Indeed, much of political theory amounts to a discussion about when, and on what grounds, a system of rule can command legitimacy. This question is of vital importance because, as noted earlier, in the absence of legitimacy, government can only be sustained by fear, intimidation and violence. As Rousseau (see p. 165) put it in *The Social Contract* ([1762] 1969), ‘The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master unless he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty’.

Deep disagreement nevertheless surrounds the concept of legitimacy. The most widely used meaning of the term is drawn, once again, from Weber. Weber took legitimacy to refer to nothing more or less than a belief in the ‘right to rule’, a *belief* in legitimacy. In other words, providing its peoples are prepared to comply with it, a system of rule can be described as legitimate. This contrasts sharply with the inclination of most political philosophers, which is to try to identify a moral or rational basis for legitimacy, clearly demarcating legitimate forms of rule from illegitimate ones. Aristotle (see p. 62), for instance, argued that rule was legitimate only when it operated to the benefit of the whole society rather than in the selfish interests of the rulers, while Rousseau argued that government was legitimate if it was based on the ‘general will’. In *The Legitimation of Power* (2013), David Beetham attempted to develop a social-scientific concept of legitimacy but one that departs significantly from Weber’s. In Beetham’s view, to define legitimacy as nothing more than a ‘belief in legitimacy’ is to ignore how it is brought about. This leaves the matter largely in the

hands of the powerful, who may be able to manufacture rightfulness by public relations campaigns and the like. He therefore proposed that power can be said to be legitimate only if three conditions are fulfilled. First, power must be exercised according to established rules, whether embodied in formal legal codes or informal conventions. Second, these rules must be justified in terms of the shared beliefs of the government and the governed. Third, legitimacy must be demonstrated by the expression of consent on the part of the governed.

In addition to disagreement about the meaning of the term, there is also debate about the *means* through which power is legitimized, reflecting very different views about the nature of the 'legitimation process'. In the liberal tradition, and in keeping with Beetham's conditions, legitimacy emerges when power is exercised according to established and accepted principles, and when rule is based on popular consent. Legitimacy thus arises, in a sense, 'from below'. On the other hand, radical theorists, particularly those influenced by Marxist thinking (see p. 75), have tended to argue that legitimacy arises 'from above', as most, and perhaps all, regimes seek to manufacture legitimacy by manipulating what their citizens know, think or believe. In effect, legitimacy may simply be a form of ideological hegemony or dominance. Moreover, there are also questions about when, how and why political systems lose their legitimacy and suffer what are called 'legitimation crises'. A legitimation crisis is particularly serious since it casts doubt on the very survival of the regime or political system: no regime has so far endured permanently through the exercise of coercion alone.

Constitutionalism and consent

'End of history' theorists, such as Francis Fukuyama (1992), have portrayed liberal democracy as the only stable and enduringly successful form of government. Its virtue, its supporters argue, is that it contains the means of its own preservation, in that it is able to guarantee continued legitimacy. This is achieved through two principal mechanisms: constitutionalism and consent. Constitutionalism plays a central role in both liberal and republican thought (see p. 132). It can be defined as the practice of limited government brought about by the existence of a constitution, a constitution, in its simplest sense, being the rules that govern the government. Constitutionalism can therefore be said to exist whenever government institutions and political processes are effectively constrained by constitutional rules. More broadly, constitutionalism refers to a set of political values and devices that fragment power, thereby creating a network of checks and balances within government. Examples of such devices include bills of rights, the separation of powers, bicameralism and federalism. However, constitutional systems take a variety of different forms. In most countries, and virtually all liberal democracies, so-called 'written' or codified consti-

REPUBLICANISM

Republican political thought can be traced back to the ancient Roman Republic, its earliest version being Cicero's defence of mixed government developed in *The Republic*. It was revived in Renaissance Italy as a model for the organization of Italian city-states that supposedly balanced civic freedom against political stability. Further forms of republicanism were born out of the English, American and French revolutions. Although republican ideas subsequently fell out of fashion as a result of the spread of liberalism, and the emphasis on freedom as privacy and non-interference, there has been growing interest in 'civic republicanism' since the 1960s, particularly amongst thinkers influenced by communitarian thought (see p. 33).

Republicanism is most simply defined in contrast to monarchy. However, the term republic suggests not merely the absence of a monarch but, in the light of its Latin root, *res publica*, it implies that the people (*populus*, giving the adjective *publicus*) should have a decisive say in the organization of the public realm. The central theme of republican political theory is a concern with a particular form of freedom. In the view of Pettit (1999), republican freedom, or 'freedom as non-domination', combines liberty in the sense of protection against arbitrary or tyrannical government with full and active participation in public and political life. Republican thinkers have discussed this view of freedom in relation to either moral precepts or constitutional structures. The moral concern of republicanism is expressed in a belief in civic virtue, understood to include public-spiritedness, honour and patriotism. Above all, it is linked to a stress on public activity over private activity, as articulated in the twentieth century in the work of Hannah Arendt (see p. 129). The constitutional focus of republicanism has shifted its emphasis over time. Whereas classical republicanism was usually associated with a mixed constitution, which combined monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements, the American and French revolutions reshaped republicanism by applying it to whole nations rather than small communities, and by considering the implications of modern democratic government.

Republican political theory has the attraction that it offers an alternative to individualistic liberalism. In espousing a form of civic humanism, it attempts to re-establish the public domain as the source of personal fulfilment, and thus to resist the privatization and marketization of politics as encouraged, for instance, by rational-choice theory (see p. 168). However, the weakness of republicanism is that it may be theoretically unclear and its political prescriptions may be uncertain. Republican theory has been criticized either because it subscribes to an essentially 'positive' theory of freedom (which is the characteristic position of 'civic republicanism'), or because it attempts, perhaps incoherently, to straddle the 'negative/positive' freedom divide. Politically, republicanism may be associated with a wide variety of political forms, including 'Westminster-style' parliamentary government within a constitutional monarchy, radical democracy on the French model, and divided government on the US model, which incorporates the principles of federalism, bicameralism and the separation of powers.

Key figures

Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689–1755) A French political philosopher, Montesquieu championed a form of parliamentary liberalism that was based on the writings of Locke (see p. 255) and, to some extent, a misreading of English political experience. Montesquieu's masterpiece, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), is an extended examination of legal and political issues. Its most influential theme was the need to resist tyranny by fragmenting government power particularly through the separation of powers, which would create a network of checks and balances between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.

Thomas Paine (1737–1809) A British-born writer and revolutionary, Paine was a fierce opponent of the monarchical system and a fervent supporter of the republican cause. He developed a radical strand within liberal thought that fused an emphasis on individual rights with a belief in popular sovereignty. He also attacked established religion and subscribed to an egalitarianism that laid down an early model for the welfare state and the redistribution of wealth. Paine's most important writings include *Common Sense* (1776), *The Rights of Man* (1791–2) and *Age of Reason* (1794).

Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) A French politician and writer, Constant is best known for his defence of constitutionalism and his analysis of liberty. He distinguished between the 'liberty of the ancients' and the 'liberty of the moderns', identifying the former with the ideas of direct participation and self-government, and the latter with non-interference and private rights. Whereas Rousseau (see p. 165) and the Jacobins had emphasized ancient liberty, Constant recommended a balance between ancient and modern liberty achieved through representation and constitutional checks. Constant's main work is *Principles of Politics* (1815).

See also Niccolò Machiavelli (p. 51) and **James Madison** (p. 154)

tutions exist. These draw together major constitutional rules in a single authoritative document, 'the constitution', which constitutes 'higher' or supreme law. The earliest example of such a document was the US Constitution, drawn up at the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. In a small number of liberal democracies – the UK and Israel are now the only examples – no such codified document exists. In these so-called 'unwritten' constitutions, supreme constitutional authority rests, in theory, with the legislature, in the UK's case Parliament.

Constitutions confer legitimacy on regimes by making government a rule-bound activity. Constitutional governments therefore exercise legal-rational authority; their powers are authorized by constitutional law. Historically, the demand for constitutional government arose when the earlier claim that legitimacy was based on the will of God – the divine right of kings – was called into

question. However, the mere existence of a constitution does not in itself ensure that government power is rightfully exercised. In other words, constitutions do not merely confer legitimacy; they are themselves bodies of rules whose legitimacy can be questioned. As Beetham insisted, a constitution confers legitimacy only when its principles reflect values and beliefs which are widely held in society at large. Government power is therefore legitimate if it is exercised in accordance with rules that are reasonable and acceptable in the eyes of the governed. For instance, despite the enactment of four successive constitutions – in 1918, 1924, 1936 and 1977 – the Soviet Union strove with limited success to achieve legitimacy. This occurred both because many of the provisions of the constitution, notably those stipulating individual rights, were never upheld in practice, and because major principles such as the Communist Party's monopoly of power did not correspond with the values and aspirations of the mass of the Soviet people.

Conformity to accepted rules may be a necessary condition for legitimacy, but it is not a sufficient one. Constitutional governments may nevertheless fail to establish legitimacy if they do not, in some way, ensure that government rests on the consent or agreement of the people. The idea of consent arose out of social-contract theory and the belief that government had somehow arisen out of a voluntary agreement undertaken by free individuals. John Locke (see p. 255), for instance, was perfectly aware that government had not in practice developed out of a social contract, but argued, rather, that citizens ought to behave as if it had. He therefore developed the notion of 'tacit consent', an implied agreement among citizens to obey the law and respect government. However, for consent to confer legitimacy on a regime it must take the form not of an implied agreement but of voluntary and active participation in the political life of the community. Political participation is thus the active expression of consent.

Many forms of political rule have sought legitimacy through encouraging expressions of popular consent. This applies even in the case of dictatorships like Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, where considerable effort was put into mobilizing mass support for the regime by plebiscites, rallies, marches and demonstrations. The most common way in which popular consent can be demonstrated, however, is through elections. Even single-party dictatorships have found it helpful to maintain elections in the hope of generating legitimacy. However, as these are single-party and single-candidate elections, it is difficult to view them as an opportunity to express willing consent, and their significance seldom extends beyond their propaganda value. By contrast, the open and competitive elections that are typically found in liberal democracies offer citizens a meaningful choice, at least amongst major parties. Most importantly, they provide the public with a means of removing politicians and parties that are thought to have failed. In such circumstances, the act of voting can be seen as a genuine expression of active consent. Liberal-democratic regimes, in this view,

maintain legitimacy through their willingness to share power with the general public.

Ideological hegemony

The conventional image of liberal democracies is that they enjoy legitimacy because they both respect individual liberty and are responsive to public opinion. Critics, however, suggest that constitutionalism and democracy are little more than a facade concealing the domination of a 'power elite' or 'ruling class'. Neo-Marxists such as Ralph Miliband (1982) have, for example, portrayed liberal democracy as a 'capitalist democracy', suggesting that within it there are biases which serve the interests of private property and ensure the long-term stability of capitalism. Since the capitalist system is based on unequal class power, Marxists have been reluctant to accept that the legitimacy of such regimes is genuinely based on willing obedience and rational consent. Radical thinkers in the Marxist and anarchist traditions have, as a result, adopted a more critical approach to the legitimation process, one which emphasizes the degree to which legitimacy is produced by ideological manipulation and indoctrination.

It is widely accepted that ideological control can be used to maintain stability and build legitimacy. This is reflected, for example, in Lukes's radical view of power, discussed earlier, which highlights the capacity to manipulate human needs. The clearest examples of ideological manipulation are found in totalitarian regimes which propagate an 'official ideology' and ruthlessly suppress all rival creeds, doctrines and beliefs. The means through which this is achieved are also clear: education is reduced to a process of ideological indoctrination; the mass media are turned into a propaganda machine; 'unreliable' beliefs are strictly censored; political opposition is brutally stamped out, and so on. In this way, national socialism became a state religion in Nazi Germany, as did Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union.

Marxists, however, claim to identify a similar process at work within liberal democracies. Despite the existence of competitive party systems, autonomous pressure groups, a free press and constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties, Marxists argue that liberal democracies are nevertheless dominated by 'bourgeois ideology'. The concept of 'ideology' has had a chequered history, not least because it has been ascribed such very different meanings. The term itself was coined by Destutt de Tracy in 1796 to describe a new 'science of ideas'. This meaning did not, however, long survive the French Revolution, and the term was taken up in the nineteenth century in the writings of Karl Marx (see p. 317). In the Marxist tradition, 'ideology' denotes sets of ideas which tend to conceal the contradictions on which all class societies were based. Ideologies therefore propagate falsehood, delusion and mystification. They nevertheless serve a powerful

social function, in that they stabilize and consolidate the class system by reconciling the exploited to their exploitation. Ideology thus operates in the interests of a 'ruling class', which controls the process of intellectual production as completely as it controls the process of material production. In a capitalist society, for example, the bourgeoisie dominates educational, cultural, intellectual and artistic life. As Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology* ([1846] 1970), 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.'

This is not, however, to suggest that these 'ruling ideas' monopolize intellectual life and exclude all rival views. Indeed, modern Marxists have clearly acknowledged that cultural, ideological and political competition does exist, but stress that this competition is unequal, in that the ideas and views which uphold the capitalist order enjoy a crushing advantage over the ideas and theories which question or challenge it. Such indoctrination may, in fact, be far more successful precisely because it operates behind the illusion of free speech, open competition and political pluralism. The most influential exponent of such a view has been Antonio Gramsci ([1929–35] 1971), who drew attention to the degree to which the class system was upheld not simply by unequal economic and political power but also by what he termed bourgeois 'hegemony', the ascendancy or domination of bourgeois ideas in every sphere of life. The implications of ideological domination are clear: deluded by bourgeois theories and philosophies, the proletariat will be incapable of achieving class-consciousness and will be unable to realize its revolutionary potential. It would remain a 'class in itself' and never become what Marx called a 'class for itself'. The concept of hegemony has also been applied to international or world politics, in the form of the idea of 'global hegemony' (see p. 137).

A similar line of thought has been pursued by what is called the 'sociology of knowledge'. This has sometimes been seen as an alternative to the Marxist belief in a 'dominant' or ruling ideology. One of the founding fathers of this school of sociology, Karl Mannheim (1893–1947), described its goal as uncovering the 'social roots of our knowledge'. Mannheim (1960) held that 'how men actually think' can be traced back to their position in society and the social groups to which they belong, each of which has its own distinctive way of looking at the world. Ideologies, therefore, are 'socially determined' and reflect the social circumstances and aspirations of the groups which develop them. In *The Social Construction of Reality* (1991), Berger and Luckmann broadened this analysis by suggesting that not only organized creeds and ideologies but everything that passes for 'knowledge' in society is socially constructed. The political significance of such an analysis is to highlight the extent to which human beings see the world not as it is, but as they *think* it is, or as society tells them it is. The sociology of knowledge has radical implications for any notion of legitimacy since it implies that individuals cannot be regarded simply as independent and rational actors, capable of distinguishing legitimate forms of rule from non-legitimate ones. In short, legitimacy is always a 'social construction'.

THINKING GLOBALLY ...

GLOBAL HEGEMONY

Hegemony, in its simplest sense, is the leadership or domination of one element of a system over others. Gramsci (see p. 76) used the term to refer to the ideological dimension of the bourgeoisie's domination over subordinate classes. Although the term global hegemony has only been widely used since the 1980s, it may refer to a phenomenon that long predates the contemporary phase of globalization. Global hegemony, nevertheless, is used in at least three different ways.

Each of the first two conceptions of global hegemony is state-centric, in that it treats hegemony as an attribute specifically of a state, a 'hegemon' being the leading state within a collection of states. Hegemony thus exists when there is but a single great power, the clearest examples being the UK in the nineteenth century and the USA since 1945, but especially after 1991, when the fall of the Soviet Union left the USA as the world's sole superpower. From a realist perspective (see p. 327), hegemony has both malign and benign implications. It is malign in that unipolarity generates structural tensions within the international system, promoting power-seeking behaviour on the part of the hegemon, as well as fear, resentment and hostility among other actors. Hegemony may nevertheless be benign, in that only a dominant military and economic power is able to guarantee stability and prosperity within a liberal world economy. By contrast, radical theorists such as Noam Chomsky (2003) have viewed global hegemony in entirely negative terms, arguing that the more powerful the state, the greater will be its tendency towards tyranny and oppression. Such an analysis has often focused on the dangers represented by the 'American empire', which, through the growth of corporate power and the spread of neocolonialism, as well as by large- and small-scale military intervention, has extended its influence across the globe. The USA has thus been portrayed as a 'rogue superpower'.

The third model of global hegemony emerged out of neo-Marxist theory, and draws significantly on Gramscian thinking. It differs from the state-centric model in two respects. First, it treats hegemony not as an attribute of a state, but as a feature of the global capitalist system. As such, it is more concerned with the process of economic exploitation and the dynamics of the global class system than it is with the politico-military dominance of a single state (Cox, 1987). Second, global hegemony highlights the interplay in international affairs between economic, political, military and ideological forces. In the neo-Marxist view, global hegemony largely operates through the near-worldwide ascendancy of neo-liberal economic thinking, which helps to legitimize the global capitalist system (see p. 308) and the structural injustices and inequalities that flow from it.

One of the most influential modern accounts of the process of ideological manipulation has been developed by the US radical intellectual and anarchist theorist, Noam Chomsky. In works such as (with Edward Herman) *Manufacturing Consent* (1994), Chomsky developed a 'propaganda model' of the mass media which explains how news and political coverage are distorted by the very structures of the media. This distortion operates through a series of 'filters', such as the impact of private ownership of media outlets, a sensitivity to the views and concerns of advertisers and sponsors, and the sourcing of news and information from 'agents of power' such as governments and business-backed think-tanks. Chomsky's analysis emphasizes the degree to which the mass media can subvert or 'deter' democracy, helping, in the USA in particular, to mobilize popular support for imperialist foreign policy goals. The dominant-ideology model of the mass media has nevertheless also been subject to criticism. Objections to it include that it underestimates the extent to which the press and broadcasters, particularly public service broadcasters, pay attention to counter-establishment views and movements. Moreover, the assumption that media output shapes political attitudes is determinist and neglects the role played by people's own values in filtering, and possibly resisting, media messages.

Legitimation crises

Whether legitimacy is conferred by willing consent or is manufactured by ideological indoctrination, it is, as already emphasized, essential for the maintenance of any system of political rule. Attention has therefore focused not only on the machinery through which legitimacy is maintained but also on the circumstances in which the legitimacy of a regime is called into question and, ultimately, collapses. In *Legitimation Crisis* (1988), Jürgen Habermas (see p. 117) argued that within liberal democracies there are 'crisis tendencies' which challenge the stability of such regimes by undermining legitimacy. The core of this argument was the tension between a private-enterprise or capitalist economy, on one hand, and a democratic political system, on the other; in effect, the system of capitalist democracy may be inherently unstable.

The democratic process forces governments to respond to popular pressures, either because political parties outbid each other in attempting to get into power or because pressure groups make unrelenting demands on politicians once in power. This is reflected in the inexorable rise of public spending and the progressive expansion of the state's responsibilities, especially in economic and social life. Anthony King (1975) described this problem as one of government 'overload'. Government was overloaded quite simply because in attempting to meet the demands made of them, democratic politicians came to pursue policies which threatened the health and long-term survival of the capitalist economic

order. For instance, growing public spending created a fiscal crisis in which high taxes became a disincentive to enterprise, and ever-rising government borrowing led to permanently high inflation. Habermas's analysis suggests that liberal democracies cannot permanently satisfy both popular demands for social security and welfare rights, and the requirements of a market economy based on private profit. Forced either to resist democratic pressures or to risk economic collapse, capitalist democracies will, in his view, find it increasingly difficult to maintain legitimacy.

To some extent, fears of a legitimization crisis painted an over-gloomy picture of Western liberal-democratic politics in the 1970s. Habermas claimed to identify 'crisis tendencies' which are beyond the capacity of liberal democracies to control. In practice, however, the electoral mechanism allows liberal democracies to adjust policy in response to competing demands, thus enabling the system as a whole to retain a high degree of legitimacy, even though particular policies may attract criticism and provoke unpopularity. Much of liberal-democratic politics therefore amounts to shifts from interventionist policies to free-market ones and then back again, as power alternates between left-wing and right-wing governments. There is a sense, however, in which the rise of the New Right since the 1970s can be seen as a response to a legitimization crisis. In the first place, the New Right recognized that the problem of 'overload' arose, in part, out of the perception that government could, and would, solve all problems, economic and social problems as well as political ones. As a consequence, governments influenced by New Right thinking sought to lower popular expectations of what government can do. This they did largely by shifting responsibilities from the state to the individual, whether this was in the benefits system, pensions, health, housing or employment. More radically, the New Right attempted to challenge and finally displace the theories and values which had previously legitimized the progressive expansion of the state's responsibilities. In this sense, the New Right amounted to a 'hegemonic project' that tried to transform a political culture that had once emphasized social justice, welfare rights and public responsibilities into one in which choice, enterprise, competition and individual responsibility were given prominence.

While democratic regimes in the industrialized West have remained relatively immune from legitimization crises, the same cannot be said of democratic governments in the developing world. Few developing-world countries have found it easy to sustain political systems based on an open and competitive struggle for power and respect for a significant range of civil liberties. Although a growing number have developed liberal-democratic features, enduringly successful ones such as India are still rare. Liberal-democratic experiments have sometimes culminated in military coups or the emergence of single-party rule. Such developments have about them some of the characteristics of a legitimization crisis. For example, structural problems, such as chronic underdevelopment, an over-

reliance on cash crops, indebtedness to Western banks, and so on, make it difficult, and perhaps impossible, for developing-world regimes to satisfy the expectations which democratic governance creates. Furthermore, multi-party democracy often appears inappropriate, and may even be regarded as an obstacle, when society is confronted by the single, overriding goal: the need for social development. From another point of view, however, it is questionable whether such regimes ever enjoyed legitimacy, in which case their fall can hardly be described as a legitimation crisis.

The collapse of orthodox communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 provides a particularly good example of a legitimation crisis or a series of legitimation crises. These crises had a political, economic and social dimension. Politically, orthodox communist regimes were one-party states dominated by 'ruling' communist parties whose influence extended over virtually all groups in society. Economically, the centrally planned economies that operated within such regimes proved to be highly inefficient and incapable of generating the widespread, if unequal, prosperity found in the capitalist West. Socially, orthodox communist regimes were undermined by their very achievements: industrialization and the expansion of mass education created a better informed and increasingly sophisticated body of citizens whose demands for the civil liberties and consumer goods thought to be available in the West simply outstripped the capacity of the regime to respond. Such factors progressively undermined the rightfulness or legitimacy of orthodox communism, eventually precipitating mass demonstrations, in 1989 throughout Eastern Europe, and in the Soviet Union in 1991.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How does power differ from influence?
- What are the limitations of the view of power as the ability to affect decision-making?
- Why does power as non-decision-making have elitist implications?
- If power consists of thought control, how can we prove its existence?
- How does authority differ from power?
- Can authority exist in the absence of power?
- Should charismatic authority always be treated with suspicion?
- On what grounds has authority been defended?
- Can legitimacy be defined simply as a 'belief in legitimacy'?
- Why and how has legitimacy been linked to constitutionalism?
- Does legitimacy serve the interests of the rulers rather than the ruled?
- Are capitalist democracies inevitably susceptible to legitimization crises?

FURTHER READING

Beetham, D. *The Legitimation of Power* (2013). A comprehensive and influential introduction to the concept of legitimacy as applied to political systems, which now also considers the issue of legitimacy beyond the state.

Furedi, F. *Authority: A Sociological History* (2013). A study of the notion of authority throughout the history of social and political thought, which examines successive (and always contested) attempts to establish foundations for authority.

Hearn, J. *Theorizing Power* (2012). A clear and critical evaluation of how power is defined, conceptualized and theorized, which highlights the significance of power across all areas of social life, including gender, religion, morality and identity.

Lukes, S. *Power: A Radical View* (2004). In this expanded version of a classic text on power, the author reconsiders his three-dimension theory of power in the light of recent debates and criticisms of his original argument.

6

Democracy, Representation and the Public Interest

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- DEMOCRACY
Direct and indirect democracy • Liberal democracy • Virtues and vices of democracy
 - REPRESENTATION
Representative or delegates? • Elections and mandates • Characteristic representation
 - THE PUBLIC INTEREST
Private and public interests • Is there a public interest? • Dilemmas of democracy
-

Preview

Since the dawn of political thought the question 'Who should rule?' has been a recurrent issue for argument and debate. Since the twentieth century, however, the question has tended to elicit a single, almost universally accepted, response: the people should govern. Perhaps no other political ideal is accorded the unquestioning approval, even reverence, currently enjoyed by democracy. Whether they are liberals, conservatives, socialists, communists or even fascists, politicians everywhere are eager to proclaim their democratic credentials and to commit themselves to the democratic ideal. And yet it is its very popularity that makes democracy a difficult concept to understand. When a term means anything to anyone it is in danger of becoming entirely meaningless. Democracy may now be nothing more than a 'hurrah word', endlessly repeated by politicians, but denoting little of substance.

In reality, a number of competing models of democracy have developed in different historical periods and in various parts of the world. These have included direct and indirect democracy, political and social democracy, pluralist and totalitarian democracy and so on. What forms of government can reasonably be described as 'democratic', and why? Moreover, why is democracy so widely valued, and can it be regarded as an unqualified good? Modern ideas of democracy are, however, rarely based on the classical idea of popular self-government. Rather, they are founded on the belief that politicians in some sense 'represent' the people and act on their behalf. This raises questions about what representation means and how it is accomplished. What, for instance, is being represented: the views of the people, their best interests, or the various groups which make up the people? Is representation a necessary feature of democracy, or is it merely a substitute for it? Finally, democratic governments claim to rule in the national or public interest. However, what is meant by the 'public interest'? And can the people ever be said to have a single, collective interest? Even if such a collective interest exists, how can it in practice be defined?

Democracy

The term democracy and the classical conception of democratic rule are firmly rooted in Ancient Greece. Like other words that end in ‘cracy’ – such as autocracy, aristocracy and bureaucracy – democracy is derived from the ancient Greek word *kratos*, meaning ‘power’ or ‘rule’. Democracy therefore means ‘rule by the *demos*’, *demos* standing for ‘the many’ or ‘the people’. In contrast to its modern usage, democracy was originally a negative or pejorative term, denoting not so much rule by all, as rule by the propertyless and uneducated masses. Democracy was therefore thought to be the enemy of liberty and wisdom. While thinkers such as Aristotle (see p.62) were prepared to recognize the virtues of popular participation, they nevertheless feared that unrestrained democracy would degenerate into a form of ‘mob rule’. Indeed, such pejorative implications continued to be attached to democracy until well into the twentieth century.

Democratic government has, however, varied considerably over the centuries. Perhaps the most fundamental distinction is between democratic systems, like those in Ancient Greece, that are based on direct popular participation in government, and those that operate through some kind of representative mechanism. This highlights two contrasting models of democracy: direct democracy and representative democracy. Moreover, the modern understanding of democracy is dominated by the form of electoral democracy that has developed in the industrialized West, often called liberal democracy. Despite its undoubted success, liberal democracy is only one of a number of possible models of democracy, and one whose democratic credentials have sometimes been called into question. Finally, the near-universal approval which democracy currently elicits should not obscure the fact that the merits of democracy have been fiercely debated over the centuries and that, in certain respects, this debate has intensified since the late twentieth century. In other words, democracy may have its vices as well as its virtues.

Direct and indirect democracy

In the Gettysburg Address, delivered at the time of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln extolled the virtues of what he called ‘government of the people, by the people, and for the people’. In so doing, he drew a distinction between two contrasting notions of democracy. The first, ‘government by the people’, is based on the idea that the public participates in government and indeed governs itself: popular self-government. The second, ‘government *for* the people’, is linked to the notion of the public interest and the idea that government benefits the people, whether or not they themselves rule. The classical conception of democracy, which endured well into the nineteenth century, was firmly

DEMOCRACY

Although the democratic political tradition can be traced back to Ancient Greece, the cause of democracy was not widely taken up by political thinkers until the nineteenth century. Until then, democracy was generally dismissed as rule by the ignorant and unenlightened masses. Now, however, it seems that we are all democratic. Liberals, conservatives, socialists, communists, anarchists and even fascists have been eager to proclaim the virtues of democracy and to demonstrate their democratic credentials.

This emphasizes the fact that the democratic tradition does not advance a single and agreed ideal of popular rule, but is rather an arena of debate in which the notion of popular rule is discussed. These debates have tended to revolve around three central questions. First, who are the people? As no one would extend political participation to *all* the people, the question is: on what basis should it be limited – in relation to age, education, gender, social background and so on? Second, how should the people rule? This relates not only to the choice between direct and indirect democratic forms, but also to debates about forms of representation and different electoral systems. Third, to which areas or institutions should democratic decision-making be applied? Should democracy be confined just to politics and specifically to key governing bodies, or should the realm of democracy extend to the family, the classroom, the workplace, or perhaps the economy as a whole?

Democracy, then, is not a single, unambiguous phenomenon. In reality, there are a number of theories or models of democracy, each offering its own version of popular rule. There are not merely a number of democratic forms and mechanisms but also, more fundamentally, quite different grounds on which democratic rule can be justified. Classical democracy, based on the Athenian model, is characterized by the direct and continuous participation of citizens in the processes of government. Protective democracy is a limited and indirect form of democratic rule designed to provide individuals with a means of defence against government. As such, it is linked to natural rights theory and utilitarianism (see p. 362).

Developmental democracy is associated with attempts to broaden popular participation on the basis that it advances freedom and individual flourishing. Such ideas were taken up by New Left thinkers from the 1960s onwards in the form of radical or participatory democracy. Finally, deliberative democracy highlights the importance of public debate and discussion in shaping citizens' identities and interests, and in strengthening their sense of the common good.

Critics of democracy have adopted various positions. They have warned that democracy fails to recognize that some people's views are more worthwhile than others'; that democracy upholds majority views at the expense of minority views and interests; that democratic rule tends to threaten individual rights by fuelling the growth of government; and that democracy is based on the bogus notion of a public interest or common good, ideas that have been further weakened by the pluralistic nature of modern society.

Key figures

Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) A Moravian-born US economist and sociologist, Schumpeter's work profoundly affected political theory. His theory of democracy offered an alternative to the 'classical doctrine', which was based on the idea of a shared notion of the common good; it portrayed the democratic process as an arena of struggle between power-seeking politicians intent on winning the people's vote. The view that political democracy is analogous to an economic market had considerable influence on later rational-choice theories. Schumpeter's most important political work is *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* ([1942] 1994).

Robert Dahl (1915–2014) A US political scientist, Dahl was a leading exponent of pluralist theory. He contrasted modern democratic systems with the classical democracy of Ancient Greece, using the term 'polyarchy' to refer to rule by the many, as distinct from rule by all citizens. His empirical studies led him to conclude that the system of competitive elections prevents any permanent elite from emerging and ensures wide, if imperfect, access to the political process. Dahl's major works include *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (1956) and *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (1982).

Benjamin Barber (born 1939) A US political theorist, Barber's *Strong Democracy* (1984) champions the idea of the participation of all the people in some aspect of self-government at least some of the time. Rejecting the idea that an excess of democracy can undo liberal institutions, he argues, rather, that an excess of liberalism is undermining democratic institutions. Liberal or 'thin' democracy is therefore contributing to growing cynicism about politics and the paralysis of public institutions. Barber's other key works include *Jihad vs McWorld* (1995) and *A Passion for Democracy* (1998).

Carole Pateman (born 1940) A British feminist and political theorist, Pateman's *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970) did much to revive interest in participatory politics. Influenced by Rousseau, she argued that classical theories of democracy that place participation at their core are preferable to revisionist theories that minimize its role, as the former alone are able to resolve the inconsistency between universal formal rights and class inequality. In *The Disorder of Women* (1989), Pateman explored problems surrounding women's participation and consent, and their relation to the social-contract tradition.

See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau (p. 165), J. S. Mill (p.241) and James Madison (p. 154)

rooted in the ideal of popular participation and drew heavily on the example of Athenian democracy. The cornerstone of Athenian democracy was the direct and continuous participation of all citizens in the life of their *polis* or city-state. As described in Chapter 3, this amounted to a form of government by mass meeting, and each citizen was qualified to hold public office if selected to do so by lot or

rota. Athenian democracy was therefore a system of 'direct democracy' or what is sometimes referred to as 'participatory democracy'. By removing the need for a separate class of professional politicians, the citizens themselves were able to rule directly, obliterating the distinction between government and the governed and between the state and civil society. Similar systems of 'town-meeting democracy' continue to be practised at a local level in some parts of the USA, notably in New England, and in the communal assemblies employed in Switzerland.

The town meeting is, however, not the only means through which direct democracy can operate. The most obvious of these is the plebiscite or referendum, a popular vote on a specific issue which enables electors to make decisions directly, instead of selecting politicians to do so on their behalf. Referendums are widely used at every level in Switzerland, and are employed in countries such as Ireland to ratify constitutional amendments. The frequency with which referendums have been used in the UK since the 1975 referendum on continued membership of the then European Community has convinced some that there is now a constitutional convention that major constitutional reforms should be endorsed through an affirmative vote in a referendum. In the USA, referendums have increasingly been used in local politics in the form of 'propositions' or popular initiatives. A form of direct democracy has also survived in modern societies in the practice of selecting juries on the basis of lot or rota, as public offices were filled in Athenian times. Advocates of direct democracy further point out that the development of modern technology has opened up broader possibilities for popular participation in government. In particular, the use of so-called interactive television could enable citizens to both watch public debates and engage in voting without ever leaving their homes. Experiments with such technology are under way in some local communities in the United States and elsewhere.

Needless to say, modern government bears little resemblance to the Athenian model of direct democracy. Government is left in the hands of professional politicians who are invested with the responsibility for making decisions on behalf of the people. Representative democracy is, at best, a limited and indirect form of democracy. It is limited in the sense that popular participation is both infrequent and brief, being reduced to the act of voting every few years, depending on the length of the political term. It is indirect in the sense that the public is kept at arm's length from government: the public participates only through the choice of who should govern it, and never, or only rarely, exercises power itself. Representative democracy may nevertheless qualify as a form of democracy on the grounds that, however limited and ritualized it may appear, the act of voting remains a vital source of popular power. Quite simply, the public has the ability to 'kick the rascals out', a fact that ensures public accountability. Although representative democracy may not fully realize the classical goal of 'government *by* the people', it may nevertheless make possible a form of 'government *for* the people'.

Some advocates of representative democracy acknowledge its limitations, but argue that it is the only practicable form of democracy in modern conditions. A high level of popular participation is possible within relatively small communities, such as Greek city-states or small towns, because face-to-face communication can take place between and amongst citizens. However, the idea of government by mass meeting being conducted in modern nation-states containing tens, and possibly hundreds of millions of citizens is frankly absurd. Moreover, to consult the general public on each and every issue, and permit wide-ranging debate and discussion, threatens to paralyze the decision-making process and make a country virtually ungovernable. The most fundamental objection to direct democracy is, however, that ordinary people lack the time, maturity and specialist knowledge to rule wisely on their own behalf. In this sense, representative democracy merely applies the advantages of the division of labour to politics: specialist politicians, able to devote all their time and energy to the activity of government, can clearly do a better job than would the general public. Nevertheless, since the 1960s there has been a revival of interest in classical democracy and, in particular, in the idea of participation. This reflects growing disenchantment with the bureaucratic and unresponsive nature of modern government, as well as declining respect for professional politicians, who have increasingly been viewed as self-serving careerists. In addition, the act of voting is often seen as a meaningless ritual that has little impact on the policy process, making a mockery of the democratic ideal. Civic disengagement and declining electoral turnout in many parts of the world are thus sometimes viewed as symptoms of the malaise of representative democracy.

Liberal democracy

Bernard Crick (2000) has pointed out that democracy is the most promiscuous of political terms. No settled or agreed model of democracy exists, only a number of competing models. Beyond the direct/representative democracy (or classical/modern democracy) divide, these include social democracy, workers' democracy and deliberative democracy, as well as various non-Western democratic forms, such as those found in African political thought (see p. 149). Nevertheless, a particular model of democracy has come to dominate thinking on the matter, to the extent that many in the West treat it as the only feasible or meaningful form of democracy. This is liberal democracy. It is found in almost all advanced capitalist societies and now extends, in one form or another, into parts of the former communist world and the developing world. Indeed, in the light of the collapse of communism, Francis Fukuyama (1992), proclaimed the worldwide triumph of liberal democracy, describing it as the 'end of history', by which he meant the struggle between political ideas. Such triumphalism,

however, should not obscure the fact that, despite its attractions, liberal democracy is not the only model of democratic government, and, like all concepts of democracy, it has its critics and detractors.

The 'liberal' element in liberal democracy emerged historically some time before such states could genuinely be described as democratic. Many Western states, for instance, developed forms of constitutional government in the nineteenth century, at a time when the franchise was still restricted to propertied males. In fact, women's suffrage was not introduced at a federal level in Switzerland until 1971. A liberal state is based on the principle of limited government, the idea that the individual should enjoy some measure of protection from the state. From the liberal perspective, government is a necessary evil, always liable to become a tyranny against the individual if government power is not checked. This leads to support for devices designed to constrain government, such as a constitution, a Bill of Rights, an independent judiciary and a network of checks and balances among the institutions of government. Liberal democracies, moreover, respect the existence of a vigorous and healthy civil society, based on respect for civil liberties and property rights. Liberal-democratic rule therefore typically coexists with a capitalist economic order.

However, although these features may be a necessary precondition for democracy, they should not be mistaken for democracy itself. The 'democratic' element in liberal democracy is the idea of popular consent, expressed in practice through the act of voting. Liberal democracy is thus a form of electoral democracy, in that popular election is seen as the only legitimate source of political authority. Such elections must, however, respect the principle of political equality; they must be based on universal suffrage and the idea of 'one person, one vote; one vote, one value'. For this reason, any system that restricts voting rights on grounds of gender, race, religion, economic status or whatever, fails the democratic test. Finally, in order to be fully democratic, elections must be regular, open and, above all, competitive. The core of the democratic process is the capacity of the people to call politicians to account. Political pluralism – open competition between political philosophies, movements, parties and so on – is thus the essence of democracy from the liberal perspective.

The attraction of liberal democracy is its capacity to blend elite rule with a significant measure of popular participation. Government is entrusted to professional politicians, but these politicians are forced to respond to popular pressures by the simple fact that the public put them there in the first place, and can later remove them. Joseph Schumpeter (see p. 145) summed this up by describing the democratic method as 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote' (Schumpeter ([1942] 1994)). Thus the virtues of elite rule – government by experts, the educated or well-informed – are balanced against the need for public accountability. Indeed, such a view


BEYOND THE WEST . . .

DEMOCRACY IN AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

There are two main traditions of African political thought. The first consists of indigenous African thought, which developed during the so-called golden age of African history and refers to the governance of ancient kingdoms and empires (such as Egypt, Kush/Nubia, Ghana, Mali and Songhay). The second tradition emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, against a backdrop of colonialism. It was developed by scholars and statesmen who had, in some way, encountered Western political ideas or structures, but sought to reshape these in the light of the values, traditions and historical circumstances found in Africa. The two most influential sub-traditions this produced were African nationalism and African socialism, and, although indigenous African thought played a more marginal role in these, it was seldom irrelevant. This, for example, enabled Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, 1964–85, to declare that, 'We, in Africa, have no more need to be "converted" to socialism than we have of being "taught" democracy'.

Indigenous African political systems often featured mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness that helped to sustain a broadly democratic culture (Martin, 2012). In the first place, they tended to incorporate elaborate systems of checks and balances, with institutions such as the Inner or Privy Council and the Council of Elders acting as an effective check on the abuse of power by leaders (chiefs, kings or emperors). Second, political succession was carefully institutionalized in such a way that family, clan and ethnic competition for power was minimized and (physically or mentally) unfit would-be leaders were automatically eliminated. Third, the basic political unit was the village assembly, which made most major decisions concerning society and allowed ordinary people to express their opinions and participate actively in a decision-making process based on majority rule. Fourth, as bodies such as the Council of Elders tended to make decisions through consensus, minority views had to be considered. Finally, women played a key role in traditional African societies. In Ancient Egypt, for instance, women were masters of their homes and senior to their husbands, and children were named after them.

implies that in liberal democracies political power is ultimately wielded by voters at election time. The voter exercises the same power in the political market as the consumer does in economic markets. This process of accountability is strengthened by the existence of a vigorous civil society, allowing citizens to exert influence on government through pressure groups of various kinds. Liberal democracies are therefore described as pluralist democracies: within them political power is widely dispersed among a number of competing groups and interests, each of which has access to government.

Nevertheless, liberal democracy does not command universal approval or respect. Its principal critics have been elitists, Marxists (see p. 75) and radical democrats. Elitists are distinguished by their belief that political power is concentrated in the hands of the few, the elite. Whereas classical elitists believed this to be a necessary and, in many cases, desirable feature of political life, modern elitists have developed an essentially empirical analysis and have usually regretted the concentration of political power. In a sense, Schumpeter advanced a form of democratic elitism in suggesting that, though power is always exercised by an elite, competition among a number of elites ensures that the popular voice is heard. In the view of C. Wright Mills ([1956] 2000), however, industrialized societies like the USA are dominated by a 'power elite', a small cohesive group that commands 'the major hierarchies and organizations of modern society'. Such a theory suggests that power is institutional in character and largely vested in the non-elected bodies of the state system, including the military, the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the police. Mills argued, in fact, that the means for exercising power are more narrowly concentrated in a few hands in such societies than at any earlier time in history. From this perspective, the principle of political equality and the process of electoral competition on which liberal democracy is founded are nothing more than a sham.

The traditional Marxist critique of liberal democracy has focused on the inherent tension between democracy and capitalism. For liberals and conservatives, the right to own property is almost the cornerstone of democratic rule as it provides an essential guarantee of individual liberty. Democracy can exist only when citizens are able to stand on their own two feet and make up their own minds; in other words, capitalism is a necessary precondition for democracy. Orthodox Marxists have fiercely disagreed, arguing that there is inherent tension between the political equality which liberal democracy proclaims and the social inequality which a capitalist economy inevitably generates. Liberal democracies are thus 'capitalist' or 'bourgeois' democracies, manipulated and controlled by the entrenched power of private property. Such an analysis inclined revolutionary Marxists such as Lenin (see p. 76) and Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919) to reject the idea that there can be a 'democratic road' to socialism. An alternative tradition nevertheless recognizes that electoral democracy gives the working masses a voice and may even be a vehicle for far-reaching social change. The German socialist leader Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) was an exponent of this view, as were later Euro-communists. However, even when socialists have embraced the ballot box, they have been critical of the narrow conception of political equality as nothing more than equal voting rights. If political power reflects the distribution of wealth, genuine democracy can only be brought about through the achievement of social equality, or what early Marxists termed 'social democracy'.

Finally, radical democrats have attacked liberal democracy as a form of facade democracy. They have returned to the classical conception of democracy as

popular self-government, and emphasized the need for popular political participation. The ideal of direct or participatory democracy has attracted support from Karl Marx (see p. 317), most anarchist thinkers, and from theorists such as Carole Pateman (see p. 145) and Benjamin Barber (see p. 145). The essence of the radical democracy critique is that liberal democracy has reduced participation to a meaningless ritual: casting a vote every few years for politicians who can only be replaced by electing another set of self-serving politicians. In short, the people never rule, and the growing gulf between government and the people is reflected in the spread of inertia, apathy and the breakdown of community. Radical democrats therefore underline the benefits that political participation brings, often by reference to the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see p. 165) and John Stuart Mill (see p. 241). While they suggest no single alternative to liberal democracy they have usually been prepared to endorse any reforms through which grassroots democracy can be brought about. These include not only the use of referendums and information technology, already discussed, but also the radical decentralization of power and the wider use of activist and campaigning pressure groups rather than bureaucratic and hierarchic political parties.

Virtues and vices of democracy

In modern politics, there is a strange and perhaps unhealthy silence on the issue of democracy. So broad is respect for democracy that it has come to be taken for granted; its virtues are seldom questioned and its vices rarely exposed. This is very different from the period of the English, American and French revolutions, which witnessed fierce and recurrent debate about the merits of democracy. Indeed, during the nineteenth century, when democracy was regarded as a radical, egalitarian and even revolutionary creed, no issue polarized political opinion so dramatically. The present unanimity about democracy should not, however, disguise the fact that democrats have defended their views in very different ways at different times.

Until the nineteenth century, democracy, or at least the right to vote, was usually regarded as a means of protecting the individual against over-mighty government. Perhaps the most basic of democratic sentiments was expressed in the Roman poet Juvenal's question, '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*' [Who will guard the guardians?]' Seventeenth-century social-contract theorists also saw democracy as a way in which individuals could check government power. In the eyes of John Locke (see p. 255), for instance, the right to vote was based on natural rights and, in particular, the right to property. If government, through taxation, possessed the power to expropriate property, citizens were entitled to protect themselves, which they did by controlling the composition of the tax-

making body. In other words, there should be 'no taxation without representation'. To limit the franchise to property owners would not, however, qualify as democracy by more modern standards. The more radical notion of universal suffrage was advanced by utilitarian theorists like Jeremy Bentham (see p. 363). In his early writings Bentham advocated an enlightened despotism, believing that this would be able to promote 'the greatest happiness'. However, he subsequently came to support universal suffrage in the belief that each individual's interests were of equal value, and that only they could be trusted to pursue their own interests.

A more radical case for democracy is, however, suggested by theorists who regard political participation as a good in itself. As noted earlier, Rousseau and Mill have usually been seen as the principal exponents of this position. For Rousseau, democracy was a means through which human beings achieved freedom or autonomy. Individuals are, according to this view, free only when they obey laws which they themselves have made. Rousseau therefore extolled the merits of their active and continuous participation in the life of their community. Such an idea, however, moves well beyond the conventional notion of electoral democracy and offers support for the more radical ideal of direct democracy. Rousseau ([1762] 1969), for example, derided the practice of elections employed in England, arguing that 'the people of England are only free when they elect their Member of Parliament; as soon as they are elected, the people are slaves, they are nothing'. Although Mill did not go so far, remaining an advocate of electoral democracy, he nevertheless believed that political participation was beneficial to both the individual and society. Mill proposed votes for women and the extension of the franchise to include all except illiterates, on educational grounds, suggesting that it would foster among individuals intellectual development, moral virtue and practical understanding. This, in turn, would create a more balanced and harmonious society and promote 'the general mental advancement of the community'.

Other arguments in favour of democracy are more clearly based on its advantages for the community rather than for the individual. Democracy can, for instance, create a sense of social solidarity by giving all members a stake in the community by virtue of having a voice in the decision-making process. Rousseau expressed this very idea in his belief that government should be based on the 'general will', or common good, rather than on the private or selfish will of each citizen. Political participation therefore increases the feeling amongst individual citizens that they 'belong' to their community. Very similar considerations have inclined socialists and Marxists to support democracy, albeit in the form of 'social democracy' and not merely political democracy. From this perspective, democracy can be seen as an egalitarian force standing in opposition to any form of privilege or hierarchy. Democracy represents the community rather than the individual, the collective interest rather than the particular.

Even as the battle for democracy was being waged, however, strident voices were raised against it. The most fundamental argument against democracy is that ordinary members of the public are simply not competent to rule wisely in their own interests. The earliest version of this argument was put by Plato (see p. 22) who advanced the idea of rule by the virtuous, government being carried out by a class of philosopher-kings, the Guardians. In sharp contrast to democratic theorists, Plato believed in a radical form of natural inequality: human beings were born with souls of gold, silver or bronze, and were therefore disposed towards very different stations in life. Whereas Plato suggested that democracy would deliver bad government, classical elitists – notably Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941) and Robert Michels (1876–1936) – argued that it was simply impossible. Democracy is no more than a foolish delusion because political power is always exercised by an elite, a privileged minority. In *The Ruling Class* ([1896] 1939), Mosca proclaimed that in all societies ‘two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled’. In his view, the resources or attributes that are necessary for rule are always unequally distributed and, further, a cohesive minority will always be able to manipulate and control the masses, even in a parliamentary democracy. Pareto suggested that the qualities needed to rule conform to one of two psychological types: ‘foxes’, who rule by cunning and are able to manipulate the consent of the masses; and ‘lions’, whose domination is typically based on coercion and violence. Michels proposed that elite rule followed from what he called ‘the iron law of oligarchy’. This states that it is in the nature of all organizations, however democratic they may appear, for power to concentrate in the hands of a small group of dominant figures, who can organize and make decisions, rather than in the hands of the apathetic rank and file.

A further argument against democracy sees it as the enemy of individual liberty. This fear arises out of the fact that ‘the people’ is not a single entity but rather a collection of individuals and groups, possessed of differing opinions and opposing interests. The ‘democratic solution’ to conflict is a recourse to numbers and the application of majority rule – the rule of the majority, or greatest number, should prevail over the minority. Democracy, in other words, comes down to the rule of the 51 per cent, a prospect which Alexis de Tocqueville (see p. 259) famously described as ‘the tyranny of the majority’. Individual liberty and minority rights can thus both be crushed in the name of the people. A similar analysis was advanced by J. S. Mill. Mill believed not only that democratic election was no way of determining the truth – wisdom cannot be determined by a show of hands – but also that majoritarianism would damage intellectual life by promoting uniformity and dull conformism. A similar view was also expressed by James Madison (see p. 154) at the US Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787. Madison argued that the best defence against such tyranny was a network of checks and balances, creating a highly fragmented system of government, often referred to as the ‘Madisonian system’.

JAMES MADISON (1751–1836)

US statesman and political theorist. Madison was a Virginian who was a keen advocate of American nationalism at the Continental Congress, 1774 and 1775. He helped to set up the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and played a major role in writing the Constitution. Madison served as Jefferson's Secretary of State, 1801–9, and was the fourth president of the United States, 1809–17.

Madison's best-known political writings are his contributions to *The Federalist* (1787–8), which campaigned for constitutional ratification. He was a leading proponent of pluralism and divided government, believing that 'ambition must be made to counteract ambition'. He therefore urged the adoption of federalism, bicameralism and the separation of powers. Madisonianism thus implies a strong emphasis on checks and balances as the principal means of preventing tyranny. Nevertheless, when in office, Madison was prepared to strengthen the powers of national government. His views on democracy, often referred to as 'Madisonian democracy', stressed the need to resist majoritarianism by recognizing the existence of diversity or multiplicity in society, and highlighted the need for a disinterested and informed elite independent from competing individual and sectional interests. Madison's ideas have influenced liberal, republican and pluralist thought.

In other cases, a fear of democracy has sprung not so much from the danger of majority rule as from the nature of the majority in most, if not all, societies. Echoing ancient reservations about popular rule, such theories suggest that democracy places power in the hands of those least qualified to govern: the uneducated masses, those likely to be ruled by passion and instinct rather than wisdom. In *The Revolt of the Masses* ([1930] 1961), for instance, Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) warned that the arrival of mass democracy had led to the overthrow of civilized society and the moral order, paving the way for authoritarian rulers to come to power by appealing to the basest instincts of the masses. Whereas democrats subscribe to egalitarian principles, critics such as Ortega tend to embrace the more conservative notion of natural hierarchy. For many, this critique is particularly directed at participatory forms of democracy, which place little or no check on the appetites of the masses. J. L. Talmon ([1952] 1970), for example, argued that in the French Revolution the radically democratic theories of Rousseau made possible the unrestrained brutality of the Terror, a phenomenon Talmon termed 'totalitarian democracy'. Many have seen similar lessons in the plebiscitary forms of democracy which developed in twentieth-century fascist states, which sought to establish a direct and immediate relationship between the leader and the people through rallies, marches, demonstrations and other forms of political agitation.

Representation

Modern democratic theories are closely bound to the idea of representation. As stressed earlier, when citizens no longer rule directly, democracy is based on the claim that politicians serve as the people's representatives. However, what does it mean to say that one person 'represents' another? In ordinary language, to represent means to portray or make present, as when a picture is said to represent a scene or person. In politics, representation suggests that an individual or group somehow stands for, or on behalf of, a larger collection of people. Political representation therefore acknowledges a link between two otherwise separate entities – government and the governed – and implies that through this link the people's views are articulated or their interests are secured. The precise nature of this link is, nevertheless, a matter of deep disagreement, as is the capacity of representation ever to ensure democratic government.

In practice, there is no single, agreed model of representation but rather a number of competing theories, each based on particular ideological and political assumptions. Representatives have sometimes been seen as people who 'know better' than others, and can therefore act wisely in their interests. This implies that politicians should not be tied like delegates to the views of their constituents, but should have the capacity to think for themselves and use personal judgement. For many, however, elections are the basis of the representative mechanism, elected politicians being able to call themselves representatives on the grounds that they have been mandated by the people. What this mandate means and how it authorizes politicians to act is, however, a highly contentious matter. Finally, there is the altogether different idea that a representative is not a person acting on behalf of another, but one who is typical or characteristic of a group or society. Politicians are representatives, then, if they resemble their society in terms of age, gender, social class, ethnic background and so forth. To insist that politicians are a microcosm of society is to call for radical changes in the personnel of government in every country of the world.

Representatives or delegates?

In his famous speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774 Edmund Burke (see p. 354) informed his would-be constituents that 'your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion' (Burke, 1975). For Burke, the essence of representation was to serve one's constituents by the exercise of 'mature judgement' and 'enlightened conscience'. In short, representation is a moral duty: those with the good fortune to possess education and understanding should act in the interests of those who are less fortunate. In Burke's view, this position was justified by the

fear that if MPs acted as ambassadors who took instructions directly from their constituents, Parliament would become a battleground for contending local interests, leaving no one to speak on behalf of the nation. 'Parliament,' Burke emphasized, 'is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole.'

A similar position was adopted in the nineteenth century by J. S. Mill, whose ideas constitute the basis of the liberal theory of representation. Though a firm believer in extending the franchise to working-class men, and an early advocate of female suffrage, Mill nevertheless rejected the idea that all political opinions are of equal value. In particular, he believed that the opinions of the educated are worth more than those of the uneducated or illiterate. This encouraged him, for instance, to propose a system of plural voting, allocating four or five votes to holders of learned diplomas or degrees, two or three to skilled or managerial workers, a single vote to ordinary workers and none at all to those who are illiterate. In addition, like Burke, he insisted that, once elected, representatives should think for themselves and not sacrifice their judgement to their constituents. Indeed, he argued that rational voters would wish for candidates with greater understanding than they possess themselves, ones who have had specialist knowledge, extensive education and broad experience. They will want politicians who can act wisely on their behalf, not ones who merely reflect their own views.

This theory of representation portrays professional politicians as representatives in so far as they are an educated elite. It is based on the belief that knowledge and understanding are unequally distributed in society, in the sense that not all citizens are capable of perceiving their own best interests. If politicians therefore act as delegates, who, like ambassadors, receive instructions from a higher authority without having the capacity to question them, they may succumb to the irrational prejudices and ill-formed judgements of the masses. On the other hand, to advocate representation in preference to delegation is also to invite serious criticism. In the first place, the basic principles of this theory have anti-democratic implications: if politicians should think for themselves rather than reflect the views of the represented because the public is ignorant, poorly educated or deluded, surely it is a mistake to allow them to choose their representatives in the first place. Indeed, if education is the basis of representation, it could be argued that government should be entrusted to non-elected experts, selected, like the Mandarins of Imperial China, on the basis of examination success. Mill, in fact, did accept the need for a non-elected executive on such grounds. Furthermore, the link between representation and education is questionable. Whereas education may certainly be necessary to aid an understanding of intricate political and economic issues, it is far less clear that it helps politicians to make moral judgements about the interests of others. There is little evidence, for example, to support the belief which underpinned J. S. Mill's

theory, and by implication those of Burke, that education gives people a broader sense of social responsibility and a greater willingness to act altruistically.

The most serious criticism of this theory of representation is, however, that it grants representatives considerable latitude in controlling the lives of others. In particular, there is a danger that, to the degree to which politicians are encouraged to think for themselves, they may become insulated from popular pressures and end up acting in their own selfish interests. In this way, representation could become a substitute for democracy. This fear had traditionally been expressed by radical democrats such as Thomas Paine (see p. 133). As a keen advocate of the democratic doctrine of popular sovereignty, Paine actively involved himself in both the American and French revolutions. Unlike Rousseau, however, he recognized the need for some form of representation. Nevertheless, the theory of representation he advocated in *Common Sense* ([1776] 1987) came close to the ideal of delegation. Paine proposed 'frequent interchange' between representatives and their constituents in the form of regular elections designed to ensure that 'the elected might never form to themselves an interest separate from the electors'. In addition to frequent elections, radical democrats have also supported the idea of popular initiatives, a system through which the general public can make legislative proposals, and the right of recall, which entitles the electorate to call unsatisfactory elected officials to account and ultimately to remove them. From this point of view, the democratic ideal is realized only if representatives are bound as closely as possible to the views of the represented. Finally, some have argued that representation is only meaningful if representatives are physically 'close' to those whom they represent and that constituency sizes should be relatively small. Such a stance suggests not only that decentralization is a key democratic principle, but also that it is deeply unwise to attempt to apply democracy beyond the parameters of the nation, as in the case of 'cosmopolitan democracy' (see p. 159).

Elections and mandates

For most people, representation is intimately tied up with elections, to such an extent that politicians are commonly referred to as representatives simply by virtue of having been elected. This does not, however, explain how elections serve as a representative mechanism, or how they link the elected to the views of the electors. An election is a device for filling public offices by reference to popular preferences. That said, electoral systems are widely divergent, some being seen as more democratic or representative than others. It is difficult, for instance, to argue that non-competitive elections, in which only a single candidate is placed before the electorate, can be regarded as democratic, as they offer no electoral choice and no opportunity to remove office-holders. However, there

are also differences among competitive electoral systems. In countries such as the UK, the USA and India, plurality systems exist, based on the 'first-past-the-post' rule – the victorious candidate needs only to acquire more votes than any single rival. Such systems do not seek to equate the overall number of seats won by each party with the number of votes it gains in the election. Typically, plurality systems 'over-represent' large parties and 'under-represent' smaller ones. In the 2010 general election in the UK, for example, the Conservative Party gained 47 per cent of parliamentary seats with 36 per cent of the vote, the Labour Party won 40 per cent of the seats with 29 per cent of the vote, and the Liberal Democrats gained merely 9 per cent representation with 23 per cent of the vote. By contrast, proportional electoral systems, used throughout continental Europe, employ various devices to ensure a direct, or at least closer, relationship between the votes cast for each party and the seats eventually won.

Regardless of the system employed, there are problems in seeing any form of election as the basis of representation. An election is only representative if its results can be interpreted as granting popular authority for particular forms of government action. In other words, an election must have a meaning. The most common way of imposing meaning on an election result is to interpret it as providing a 'mandate' for the winning candidate or party, an idea that has been developed into a theory of representation, often called the doctrine of the mandate. A mandate is an authoritative instruction or command. The doctrine of the mandate is based, first of all, on the willingness of parties or candidates to set out their policy proposals through speeches or by the publication of manifestos. These proposals are, in effect, electoral promises, indicating what the party or candidate is committed to doing if elected. The act of voting can thus be understood as the expression of a preference from amongst the various policy programmes on offer. Victory in the election is therefore a reflection of the popularity of one set of proposals over its rivals. In this light, it can be argued that the winning party not only enjoys a popular mandate to carry out its manifesto pledges but has a duty to do so. This, in turn, provides an obvious justification for a system of party discipline, as the act of representation in effect involves politicians remaining faithful to the policies on which they were elected.

The great merit of the mandate doctrine is that it seems to impose some kind of meaning on an election, and so offers popular guidance to those who exercise government power. However, the doctrine also has its drawbacks. For example, if strictly applied, it acts as a straightjacket, limiting government policies to those positions and proposals the party adopted during the previous election, leaving politicians with very little capacity to adjust policies in the light of ever-changing circumstances. The doctrine is therefore of no value in relation to events like international and economic crises which crop up unexpectedly. As a result, the more flexible notion of a 'mandate to rule' has sometimes been advanced in place of the conventional 'policy mandate'. The idea of a mandate to rule is, however,

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

COSMOPOLITAN DEMOCRACY

The idea of cosmopolitan democracy has attracted growing attention due to the advance of globalization and evidence of the 'hollowing out' of domestic democratic processes focused on the nation-state. If policy-making authority has shifted from national governments to international organizations, surely democracy should be recast in line with this? Rival models of cosmopolitan democracy have nevertheless been advanced.

The first model involves the construction of, in effect, a world parliament, a body whose role would be to introduce greater scrutiny and openness to the process of global decision-making by calling established international organizations (such as the United Nations, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank) to account. Very few advocates of such an idea contemplate the creation of a fully-fledged world government or global state; most, instead, favour a multilevel system of post-sovereign governance in which supra-state bodies, state-level bodies and sub-state bodies would interact without any of them exercising final authority. David Held (1995) thus proposed the establishment of a 'global parliament', reformed and more accountable regional and global political bodies, and the 'permanent shift of a growing proportion of a nation state's coercive capacity to regional and global institutions'. The second model of cosmopolitan democracy is less ambitious and formalized; it looks to reform existing international bodies, rather than construct new ones. This could be done, in particular, by boosting the role within international organizations of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other citizens' bodies, helping at least to counter-balance the influence of transnational corporations and global markets. Such 'globalization from below' would be effective to the extent that NGOs and transnational social movements are able to introduce an element of public scrutiny and accountability to the working of international bodies, conferences, summits and the like, providing a channel of communications between the individual and global institutions.

The idea of cosmopolitan democracy may be entirely misconceived, however. Any global institution, however structured and composed, that is tasked with ensuring public accountability may be doomed to failure. The inevitable gulf (geographical and political) between popularly elected global political institutions and ordinary citizens around the world means that any claim that such institutions are representative or democratic would be hollow. In this light, democracy is perhaps only meaningful if it is local or national in character, any international body, whether regional or global, being destined to suffer from a debilitating 'democratic deficit'. Moreover, the democratic credentials of NGOs and social movements may simply be bogus. For instance, how can NGOs be in the forefront of democratization when they are entirely non-elected and self-appointed bodies? NGOs and social movements cannot, thus, be said to exercise democratic authority, especially as there is no way of testing the weight of their views against those of the global population as a whole.

hopelessly vague and comes close to investing politicians with unrestricted authority simply because they have won an election.

It has, furthermore, been suggested that the doctrine of the mandate is based on a highly questionable model of electoral behaviour. Specifically, it portrays voters as rational creatures, whose political preferences are determined by issues and policy proposals. In reality, there is abundant evidence to suggest that many voters are poorly informed about political issues and possess little knowledge of the content of manifestos. Voters are also influenced, perhaps to a significant extent, by 'irrational' factors such as the personality of party leaders, the image of parties, or habitual allegiances formed through social conditioning. Indeed, modern electoral campaigns fought largely on television have strengthened such tendencies by focusing on personalities rather than policies, and on images rather than issues. In no way, therefore, can a vote for a party be interpreted simply as an endorsement of its manifesto's contents or any other set of policies. Moreover, even if voters are influenced by policies, it is likely that they will be attracted by certain manifesto commitments, but may be less interested in or even opposed to others. A vote for a party cannot therefore be taken to indicate approval of its entire manifesto. Apart from those rare occasions when an election campaign is dominated by a single, overriding issue, elections are inherently vague and provide no reliable guide about which policies led one party to victory and others to defeat.

Finally, countries with plurality electoral systems have the further problem that governments can be formed on the basis of a plurality of votes rather than an overall majority. For instance, in the UK in 2005 Labour gained an overall majority in the House of Commons of 66 seats with only 35 per cent of the vote. When more voters oppose the elected government or administration than support it, it seems frankly absurd to claim that it enjoys a mandate from the people. On the other hand, proportional systems, which tend to lead to the formation of coalition governments, also get in the way of mandate democracy. In such cases, government policies are often hammered out through post-election deals negotiated by coalition partners. In the process, the policies which may have attracted support in the first place may be amended or traded off as a compromise package of policies is constructed. There is, therefore, no basis for assuming that all those who voted for one of the coalition parties will be satisfied by the eventual government programme. Indeed, it can be argued that such a package enjoys no mandate whatsoever because no set of voters has been asked to endorse it.

Characteristic representation

A final theory of representation is based less on the manner in which representatives are selected than on whether or not they typify or resemble the group

they claim to represent. This notion of representation is embodied in the idea of a 'representative cross-section', employed by market researchers and opinion pollsters. To be 'representative' in this sense it is necessary to be drawn from a particular group and to share its characteristics. A representative government would therefore be a microcosm of the larger society, containing members drawn from all groups and sections in society, in terms of social class, gender, religion, ethnicity, age and so on, and in numbers that are proportional to their strength in society at large.

This theory of representation has enjoyed support amongst a broad range of theorists and political activists. It has, for instance, been accepted by many socialists, who have long argued that a key obstacle to democracy exists in the fact that the political elite – ministers, senior civil servants, judges, police and military chiefs, and the like – are drawn disproportionately from the ranks of the privileged and prosperous. Because the working classes, the poor and the disadvantaged are 'under-represented' in the corridors of power, their interests tend to be marginalized or ignored altogether. Feminist theorists (see p. 56) also show sympathy for this notion of representation, suggesting that patriarchy, the dominance by the male sex, operates in part through the exclusion of women from the ranks of the powerful and influential in all sectors of life, a bias they have sought to challenge. Anti-racist and multiculturalist campaigners argue, similarly, that disadvantage is perpetuated by the 'under-representation' of ethnic and cultural minorities in government and elsewhere.

Characteristic representation is based on the belief that only people who are drawn from a particular group can genuinely articulate its interests. To represent means to speak for, or on behalf of, others, something that is impossible if representatives do not have intimate and personal knowledge of the people they represent. In its crudest form, this argument suggests that people are merely conditioned by their backgrounds and are incapable of or unwilling to understand the views of people different from themselves. In its more sophisticated form, however, it draws a distinction between the capacity to empathize or 'put oneself in the shoes of another' through an act of imagination, and, on the other hand, direct and personal experience of what other people go through, something which engages a deeper level of emotional response. This implies, for example, that although the so-called New Man or 'pro-feminist' male, may sympathize with women's interests and support the principle of sexual equality, he will never be able to take women's problems as seriously as women do themselves. Men will therefore not regard the crime of rape as seriously as do women, since they are much less likely to be a victim of rape. In the same way, white liberals may show a laudable concern for the plight of ethnic minorities but, never having experienced racism, their attitude towards it is unlikely to match the passion and commitment that many members of minority communities feel.

Nevertheless, the belief that representatives should resemble the represented, and that government should be a microcosm of the people, is by no means universally accepted. Many, in fact, regard it as a positive threat to democracy rather than as a necessary precondition. It could be argued, first, that people simply do not want to be ruled by politicians like themselves. Nowhere in the world can government be described as a representative cross-section of the governed and, ironically, the countries that have come closest to this ideal, orthodox communist regimes, were one-party states. Moreover, if politicians are selected on the basis that they are typical or characteristic of the larger society, government itself may simply reflect the limitations of that society. What is the advantage, for instance, of government resembling society when the majority of the population is apathetic, ill-informed and little educated? Critics of this idea of representation point out, as J. S. Mill emphasized, that good government requires politicians to be drawn from the ranks of the educated, the able and the successful.

A further danger is that this theory sees representation in exclusive or narrow terms. Only a woman can represent women; only a black can represent other blacks; only a member of the working class can represent the working classes, and so on. If all representatives are concerned to advance the interests of the sectional groups from which they come, who is prepared to defend the common good or advance the national interest? Indeed, this form of representation may simply be a recipe for social division and conflict. In addition to this, characteristic representation must confront the problem of how its objective is to be achieved. If the goal is to make government a microcosm of the governed, the only way of achieving this is to impose powerful constraints on electoral choice and individual freedom. For instance, political parties may have to be forced to select a quota of female and minority candidates; or certain constituencies may be set aside for candidates from particular backgrounds; or, more dramatically, the electorate may have to be divided on the basis of class, gender, race and so on, and only allowed to vote for candidates from their own group.

The public interest

When the opportunity for direct popular participation is limited, as it is in any representative system, the claim to rule democratically is based on the idea that, in some way, government serves the people or acts in their interests. Politicians in almost every political system are eager to claim that they work for the 'common good' or in the 'public interest'. Indeed, the constant repetition of such phrases has devalued them, rendering them almost meaningless. Too often the notion of the public interest serves merely to give a politician's views or actions a cloak of moral respectability. Yet the notion of a collective or public interest has

played a vital role in political theory, and constitutes a major plank of the democratic ideal, in the form of ‘government *for* the people.’ The idea of a public interest has, however, been subjected to stern and often hostile scrutiny, especially since the late twentieth century. It has been pointed out, for example, that it is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to distinguish between the private interests of each citizen and what can be thought of as their collective or public interests. In the view of some commentators, the concept itself is misleading or simply incoherent. Moreover, attention has been given to how the public interest can in practice be defined. This has precipitated debate about what has been called the ‘dilemma of democracy’, and led to the suggestion that, though democratic rule may be desirable, there may be no constitutional and electoral mechanism through which it can be brought about.

Private and public interests

Political argument often turns on whether a particular action or policy is thought to be in somebody’s interest, with little or no attention being paid to what that interest might be, or why it should be regarded as important. In its broadest sense, an ‘interest’ denotes some kind of benefit or advantage; the public interest is, then, what is ‘good’ for the people. However, what does this ‘good’ consist of, and who can define it? Interests may be nothing more than wishes or desires, defined subjectively by each individual for himself or herself. If so, interests have to be consciously acknowledged or manifest in some form of behaviour. Sociologists, for example, identify interests as the ‘*revealed* preferences’ of individuals. On the other hand, an interest can be thought of as a need, requirement or even necessity, of which the individual may personally be entirely unconscious. This suggests the distinction, discussed in Chapter 5, between ‘felt’ or subjective interests and genuine or ‘real’ interests which have some objective basis.

The problem of defining interests runs through any discussion of the public interest, shrouding the issue in ideological debate and disagreement. Those who insist that all interests are ‘felt’ interests, or revealed preferences, hold that individuals are the only, or best, judges of what is good for them. By contrast, theorists who employ the notion of ‘real’ interests may argue that the public is incapable of identifying its own best interests because it is ignorant, deluded or has in some way been manipulated. However, Brian Barry (2011) attempted to bridge the gap between these two concepts by defining a person’s interests as ‘that which increases his or her opportunities to get what he or she wants.’ This accepts that interests are ‘wants’ that can only be defined subjectively by the individual, but suggests that those individuals who fail to select rational or appropriate means of achieving their ends cannot be said to recognize their own best interests.

What are called 'private' interests are normally thought to be the selfish, and usually materialistic, interests of particular individuals or groups. This idea is based on long-established liberal beliefs about human nature, in which individuals are seen as separate and independent agents, each bent on advancing his or her perceived interests. In short, individuals are egoistical and self-interested. Such a notion of private interests is inevitably linked to conflict, or at least competition. If private individuals act rationally, they can be assumed to prefer their own interests to those of others, to strive above all for their own 'good'. Socialists, however, have typically rejected such a notion. Rather than being narrowly self-interested, socialists believe human beings to be sociable and gregarious, bound to one another by the existence of a common humanity. The belief that human nature is essentially social has profound implications for any notion of private interests. To the extent that individuals are concerned about the 'good' of their fellow human beings, their private interests become indistinguishable from the collective interests of all. In other words, socialists challenge the very distinction between private and public interests, a position that inclines them towards a belief in natural social harmony, rather than conflict and competition.

Most political theorists, however, have accepted that a distinction can be drawn between private interests and the public interest. Any concept of the public interest must, in the first place, be based on a clear understanding of what 'public' means. 'The public' stands for *all* members of a community, not merely the largest number or even overall majority. Whereas private interests are multiple and competing, the public interest is single and indivisible; it is that which benefits each and every member of the public. However, there are two, rather different, conceptions of what might constitute the public interest, the first of which is based on the idea of shared or common interests. In this view, individuals can be said to share an interest if they perceive that the same action or policy will benefit each of them, in the sense that their interests overlap. The public interest therefore constitutes those private interests which all members of the community hold in common. An obvious example of this would be defence against external aggression, a goal which all citizens could reasonably be expected to recognize as being of benefit to them.

The alternative and more radical notion of the public interest is based not so much on shared private interests as on the interests of the public as a collective body. Instead of seeing the public as a collection of individuals, whose interests may or may not overlap, this view portrays the public as a collective entity possessed of distinct common interests. The classic proponent of this idea was Rousseau, who advanced it in the form of the 'general will'. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau defined the general will as that 'which tends always to the preservation and welfare of the whole'. The general will therefore represents the collective interests of society; it will benefit all citizens, rather than merely

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712–78)

Geneva-born French moral and political philosopher. Rousseau was entirely self-taught. He moved to Paris in 1742, and became an intimate of leading members of the French Enlightenment, especially Diderot. His autobiography, *Confessions* (1770), examines his life with remarkable candour and demonstrates a willingness to expose his faults and weaknesses.

Rousseau was perhaps the principal intellectual influence on the French Revolution. His writings, which ranged over education, the arts, science, literature and philosophy, reflected a deep belief in the goodness of 'natural man' and corruption of 'social man'. Rousseau's political teaching, summarized in *Émile* ([1762] 1978) and developed in *The Social Contract* ([1762] 1969), advocates a radical form of democracy which has influenced liberal, socialist, anarchist and, some would argue, fascist thought. He departed from earlier social-contract theories in being unwilling to separate free individuals from the process of government. His aim was to devise a form of authority to which the people can be subject without losing their freedom. In this light, he proposed that government be based on the 'general will', reflecting the collective good of the community as opposed to the 'particular', and selfish, will of each citizen. Rousseau believed that freedom consists in political participation, obedience to the general will, meaning that he was prepared to argue that individuals can be 'forced to be free'. He envisaged such a political system operating in small, relatively egalitarian communities united by a shared civil religion.

private individuals. Rousseau thus drew a clear distinction between the general will and the selfish, private will of each citizen. The general will is, in effect, what the people would wish if they were to act selflessly. The problem with such a notion of the public interest is that, so long as they persist in being selfish, it cannot be constructed on the basis of the revealed preferences of individual citizens. It is possible, in other words, that citizens may not recognize the general will as their own, even though Rousseau clearly believed that it reflected the 'higher' interests of each and every member of society.

Is there a public interest?

Despite the continued popularity of terms such as the 'common good' and the 'national interest', the idea of a public interest has been subject to growing criticism. Critics have suggested not only that politicians are prone to using such terms cynically but also that the concept itself may simply not stand up: the public may not have a collective interest. The principal advocates of such a view have subscribed to individualist or classical liberal creeds. Jeremy Bentham, for example, developed a moral and political philosophy on the basis that individu-

als sought to maximize what he called 'utility', calculated in terms of the quantity of pleasure over pain experienced by each individual. In other words, only individuals have interests, and each individual alone is able to define what that interest is. From this perspective, any notion of a public interest is bogus; the interests of the community are at best what Bentham called 'the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it'. The notion of a public interest as shared private interests therefore makes little sense simply because each member of the community will strive for something different: a collection of private interests does not add up to a coherent 'public interest'.

Individualists suggest that the issues over which all, or even most, citizens would agree, such as the need for public order or for defence against external aggression, are few and far between. Even when there is general agreement about a broad goal, such as maintaining domestic order, there will be profound differences about how that goal can best be achieved. For instance, is order more likely to be promoted by social equality and respect for civil liberty, or by stiff penalties and strict policing? Bentham's views contrast even more starkly with Rousseau's alternative notion of the public interest as the collective interests of the community. The idea of the general will is meaningless quite simply because collective entities like 'society', the 'community' and the 'public' do not exist. The nearest Bentham came to acknowledging the public interest was in his notion of general utility, defined as 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number'. However, this formula merely accepts that public policy should be designed to satisfy the 'greatest number' of private interests, not that it can ever serve the interests of all members of the public.

Similar ideas have been developed by modern pluralist theorists, who view politics in terms of competition between various groups and interests. The emergence of organized groups is explained by 'rational-choice' (see p. 168) or 'public-choice' theorists in terms of rational, self-interested behaviour. Individuals who may be powerless when they act separately can nevertheless exert influence by acting collectively with others who share a similar interest. Such an analysis, for example, can explain the emergence of trade unionism: the threat of strike action by a single worker can be disregarded by an employer, but an all-out strike by the entire workforce cannot. This interpretation acknowledges the existence of shared interests and the importance of collective action. However, it challenges the conventional idea of a public interest. Interest groups are 'sectional' pressure groups, representing a section or part of society, ethnic or religious groups, trade unions, professional associations, employer's groups and so on. Each sectional group has a distinctive interest, which it seeks to advance through a process of campaigning and lobbying. This leaves no room, however, for a public interest: each group places its interest before those of the whole society. Indeed, the pluralist view of society as a collection of competing interests does not allow for society itself to have any collective interests.

Despite growing criticism, the concept of a public interest has not been abandoned by all theorists. Its defence takes one of two forms. The first rejects the philosophical assumptions on which the individualist attack is based. In particular, this questions the image of human beings as being resolutely self-interested. It is clear, for example, that Rousseau regarded selfishness not as a natural impulse but as evidence of social corruption; human beings are, in Rousseau's view, essentially moral, even noble, creatures, whose genuine character is revealed only when they act as members of the community. Socialists uphold the idea of the public interest on the same grounds. The concept of the public interest, from a socialist perspective, gives expression to the fact that individuals are not separate and isolated creatures vying against one another, but social animals who share a genuine concern about fellow human beings and are bound together by common human needs.

Second, it is possible to defend the concept of the public interest from the perspective of rational-choice theory, without relying on socialist assumptions about human nature. This can be done through reference to what economists call 'public goods', goods or services from which all individuals derive benefit but which none has an incentive to produce. Environmental concerns such as energy conservation and pollution demonstrate very clearly the existence of a public interest. The avoidance of pollution and the conservation of finite energy resources are undoubtedly public goods in that they are vital for both human health and, possibly, the long-term survival of the human species. These can therefore be said to constitute the 'real' interest of the individuals concerned rather than their 'felt' interests. However, following Barry, this can perhaps be seen as a case of individuals and groups demonstrating that they do not recognize their own best interests. All people acknowledge the need for a clean and healthy environment, but, left to their own devices, they may not act to secure one. In such circumstances, the public interest can only be safeguarded by government intervention, designed to curb the pursuit of private interests for the collective benefit of the whole society.

Dilemmas of democracy

The drawback of any concept of the public interest derived from an abstract notion like the general will is that by distancing government from the revealed preferences of its citizens it allows politicians to define the public interest in almost whatever way they please. This danger was most grotesquely illustrated by the 'totalitarian democracies' which developed under fascist dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler, in which the democratic credentials of the regime were based on the claim that 'the Leader', and the leader alone, articulated the genuine interests of the people. In this way, fascist leaders identified a 'true' democracy as

RATIONAL-CHOICE THEORY

Rational-choice theory, with its various subdivisions including public choice theory, social choice theory and game theory, emerged as a tool of political analysis in the 1950s and gained greater prominence from the 1970s onwards. Sometimes called formal political theory, it is modelled on precisely the same assumptions as neo-classical economics. Its broad approach is therefore to build up models based on procedural rules, most particularly about the rationally self-interested behaviour of individuals. Most firmly established in the United States, and associated in particular with the so-called Virginia School, rational-choice theory has been used to provide insights into the actions of voters, lobbyists, bureaucrats and politicians. It has had its broadest impact on political analysis in the form of what is called institutional public choice theory.

Using an approach to theorizing that dates back to Hobbes (see p. 111) and is employed in utilitarian theorizing (see p. 362), rational-choice theory proceeds on the basis of a number of key assumptions. Individual actors are the basic units of analysis; as instrumental utility maximizers, individuals consistently choose the most rational and efficient means to achieve their various ends; and as individuals have a clear and 'transitive' hierarchy of preference, in any given context only one optimal course of action is available to them. In the form of public choice theory, rational-choice thinking is concerned with the provision of so-called public goods, goods that are delivered by government rather than the market, because, as with clean air, their benefit cannot be withheld from individuals who choose not to contribute to their provision (so-called 'free riders'). In the form of social choice theory, it focuses on the problem of how individual choices can be aggregated so as to make choices for society as a whole. In the form of game theory, it has developed more from the field of mathematics than from the assumptions of neo-classical economics, and entails the use of first principles to analyze puzzles about individual behaviour. The best-known example of game theory is the Prisoner's Dilemma, which demonstrates that rationally self-interested behaviour can be generally less beneficial than cooperation.

Supporters of rational-choice theory argue that it has imported the rigour and predictive power of neo-classical economics into political analysis, significantly strengthening its ability to develop explanatory models. By no means, however, has the rational-choice approach to political analysis been universally accepted. It has been criticized for overestimating human rationality, in that it ignores the fact that people seldom possess clear sets of preferred goals and rarely make decisions in the light of full and accurate knowledge. Furthermore, in proceeding from an abstract model of the individual, rational-choice theory pays insufficient attention to social and historical factors, failing to recognize, among other things, that human self-interestedness may be socially conditioned, and not innate. Finally, rational-choice theory is sometimes seen to have a conservative value bias, stemming from its initial assumptions about human behaviour.

Key figures

James Buchanan (1919–2013) A US economist, Buchanan used public choice theory to defend the free market and the minimal state. He developed the idea of constitutional economics to examine the social and economic implications of contrasting constitutional arrangements. This led to an analysis of the defects and economic distortions of democracy which emphasizes, for instance, the ability of interest groups to make gains at the expense of the larger community. Buchanan's main works include (with Tulloch, G.) *The Calculus of Consent* (1962) and *Liberty, Market and the State* (1985).

Anthony Downs (born 1930) A US economist and political analyst, Downs developed a theory of democracy based on the assumptions of economic theory. His 'spatial model' of political behaviour, a sub-set of rational-choice theory, presupposes a 'policy space' in which political actors, candidates and voters can measure where they stand in relation to other political actors. Influenced by Schumpeter (see p. 145), Downs portrayed parties as vote-maximizing machines, anxious to develop whatever policies offer the best prospect of winning power. Downs's key political work is *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957).

Mancur Olson (1932–98) A US political scientist, Olson used public choice theory to analyze group behaviour. Highlighting the 'free-rider' problem, in which individuals reap the benefits of group action without incurring the cost of membership, Olson argued that there is no guarantee that the existence of a common interest will lead to the formation of an organization to defend that interest, casting doubt on pluralist thinking about the distribution of power. His best-known works include *The Logic of Collective Action* (1968) and *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (1982).

William A. Niskanen (1933–2011) A US economist and architect of 'Reaganomics', Niskanen developed a highly influential critique of bureaucratic power and government over-supply informed by public choice theory. Niskanen argued that as budgetary control in legislatures such as the US Congress is typically weak, the task of budget-making is largely shaped by the interests of government agencies and senior bureaucrats. In this view, bureaucratic self-interest inevitably supports 'big' government and state intervention. Niskanen's key work is *Bureaucracy and Representative Government* (1971).

See also Jeremy Bentham (p. 363)

an absolute dictatorship. In reality, however, no viable form of democratic rule can be based exclusively on a claim to articulate the public interest – that claim must be subject to some form of public accountability. In short, no definition of the public interest is meaningful unless it corresponds at some point and in some way to the revealed preferences of the general public. This correspondence can only be ensured through the mechanism of popular elections.

One of the most influential attempts to explain how the electoral process ensures government in the public interest was undertaken by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957). Downs explained the democratic process by drawing on ideas from economic theory. He believed that electoral competition creates, in effect, a political market, in which politicians act as entrepreneurs bent on achieving government power, and individual voters behave rather like consumers, voting for the party whose policies most closely reflect their preferences. Downs believed that a system of open and competitive elections serves to guarantee democratic rule because it places government in the hands of the party whose philosophy, values and policies most closely correspond to the preferences of the largest group of voters. Moreover, democratic competition creates a powerful incentive for the emergence of a policy consensus, in that parties will be encouraged to shift their policies towards the 'centre ground', in the hope of appealing to the largest possible number of electors. Although the 'economic theory of democracy' does not contain an explicit concept of the public interest, it is nevertheless an attempt to explain how electoral competition ensures that government pays regular attention to the preferences of at least a majority of the enfranchised population. This, indeed, may serve as at least a rough approximation of the public interest.

Downs's model of democratic politics was not meant to be an exact description of the real world, but rather, like economic theories, a sufficiently close approximation to help us understand how such a system works. Nevertheless, it has its limits. In the first place, it assumes a relatively homogeneous society, forcing parties to develop moderate or centrist policies that will have broad electoral appeal. Clearly, in societies deeply divided on racial or religious lines, or by social inequality, party competition may simply ensure government in the interests of the largest sectional group. Moreover, as a general tendency, it could be argued that party competition shifts politics away from any notion of the public interest since it encourages parties to frame policies which appeal to the immediate private and sectional interests of voters rather than to their more abstract, shared interests. For example, parties are noticeably reluctant to propose tax increases that will discourage the use of finite fossil fuels, or to tackle problems like global warming and ozone depletion, because such policies, though in the long-term public interest, will not win votes at the next election.

Downs's model may also be based on questionable assumptions about the rationality of the electorate and the pragmatic nature of electoral politics. As discussed in the previous section, voters may be poorly informed about political issues and their electoral preferences may be shaped by a range of 'irrational' factors like habit, social conditioning, the image of the party and the personality of its leader. Similarly, parties are not always prepared to construct policies simply on the basis of their electoral appeal; to some extent, they attempt to shape the political agenda and influence the values and preferences of ordinary

voters. The workings of the political market can, for instance, be distorted as effectively by party propaganda as economic markets are by the use of advertising. Finally, the responsiveness of the political market to voters' preferences may also be affected by the level of party competition, or lack of it. In countries such as Japan and Sweden where single parties have enjoyed long periods of uninterrupted power, the political market is distorted by strong monopolistic tendencies. Two-party systems, as exist in the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, can be described as duopolistic. Even the multiparty systems of continental Europe can be seen, at best, as oligopolistic, since coalition partners operate rather like cartels in that they try to restrict competition and block entry into the market.

A further, and some would argue more intractable, problem is that no constitutional or elective mechanism may be able reliably to give expression to the collective or public interest. Downs's 'economic' version of democratic politics operates on the assumption that voters only have a single preference because traditional electoral systems offer them a single vote. However, in the complex area of government policy, where a wide range of policy options are usually available, it is reasonable to assume that voters will have a scale of favoured options which could be indicated through a preferential voting system. The significance of such preferences was first highlighted in the field of welfare economics by Kenneth Arrow, whose *Social Choice and Individual Values* ([1951] 2013) discussed the problem of 'transitivity'. This suggests that when voters are able to express a number of preferences it may be impossible to establish which option genuinely enjoys public support. Take, for instance, the example of an election in which candidate A gains 40 per cent of the vote, candidate B receives 34 per cent, and candidate C gets 26 per cent. In such a situation it is clearly possible to argue that no party represents the public interest because none receives an overall majority of votes – though candidate A could obviously make the strongest claim to do so on the grounds of achieving a plurality, more votes than any other single candidate. Nevertheless, the situation may become still more confused when second preferences are taken into account.

Let us assume that the second preferences of all candidate A supporters go to candidate C, the second preferences of candidate B favour candidate A, and the second preferences of candidate C go to candidate B. This creates a situation in which each candidate could claim to be preferred by a majority of voters. The combined first and second preferences for candidate A add up to 74 per cent (40 per cent plus B's 34 per cent); candidate B could claim 60 per cent support from the electorate (34 per cent plus C's 26 per cent); and candidate C could claim 66 per cent support (26 per cent plus A's 40 per cent). In other words, an examination of the second or subsequent preferences of individual voters can lead to the problem of 'cyclical majorities' in which it is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to arrive at a collective choice which could reasonably be described as being in the

public interest. Although A's claim to office may still be the strongest, it is severely compromised by the majorities that B and C also enjoy. Arrow described this as the 'impossibility theorem.' It suggests that even if the concept of a public interest is meaningful and coherent, it may be impossible to define that interest in practice through any existing constitutional or electoral arrangements.

The implications of Arrow's work for democratic theory are profound and depressing. If no reliable link can be made between individual preferences and collective choices, two possibilities are available. The first option, proposed by James Buchanan and Gordon Tulloch in *The Calculus of Consent* (1962), is that the range of issues decided by collective choice should be extremely limited, leaving as many as possible in the hands of free individuals. Buchanan and Tulloch propose that collective decisions are appropriate only where policies elicit unanimous agreement, at least among elected representatives, a position which would be consistent with only the most minimal state. The alternative is to accept that, since election results cannot speak for themselves, politicians who use the term 'public interest' always impose their own meaning on it. All references to the public interest are therefore, to some extent, arbitrary. Nevertheless, this latitude is not unlimited because there is the possibility of calling politicians to account at the next election. For this point of view, the democratic process may simply be a means of reducing this arbitrary element by ensuring that politicians who claim *for* the public must ultimately be judged *by* the public.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why did the concept of democracy once convey pejorative implications?
- Is indirect democracy the only genuine form of democracy?
- Why has liberal democracy been portrayed as a contradiction in terms?
- Is democratic government the foundation stone for good government?
- Is representation a precondition for democracy, or a substitute for democracy?
- On what grounds can it be argued that representatives should disregard the views of those they represent?
- Does electoral success entitle the winning party to claim a popular mandate?
- Should rulers, as far as possible, resemble the people they rule over?
- Can a meaningful distinction be drawn between private interest and the public interest?
- Why has the notion of the public interest been viewed as illiberal?
- Why is it difficult to establish the public interest through the use of electoral means?
- Is it possible to have government *for* the people without having government *by* the people?

FURTHER READING

Archibugi, D., Keonig-Archibugi, M. and Marchetti, R. (eds) *Global Democracy: Empirical and Normative Perspectives* (2011). A collection of essays that analyze key issues including globalizing democracy and democratizing globalization.

Held, D. *Models of Democracy* (2006). A lucid and cogent introduction to central accounts of democracy from classical Greece to the present, which also contains a wide-ranging discussion of what democracy should mean today.

Vieira, M. B. and Runciman, D. *Representation* (2007). A very clear account of the concept of representation, which considers its history, different analytical approaches to it, and related contemporary issues including representation beyond the state.

Weale, A. *Democracy* (2007) A comprehensive text that identifies and assesses the main conceptions of democracy from participatory to elitist, and, in this context, examines key issues in democratic theory.

7

Law, Order and Justice

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- LAW
The rule of law • Natural and positive law • Law and liberty
 - ORDER
Discipline and control • Natural harmony • Justifying punishment
 - JUSTICE
Procedural justice • Substantive justice • Justifying law-breaking?
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Preview

Law is found in all modern societies, and is usually regarded as the bedrock of civilized existence. Law commands citizens, telling them what they *must* do; it lays down prohibitions indicating what citizens *cannot* do; and it allocates entitlements defining what citizens have the *right* to do. Although it is widely accepted that law is a necessary feature of any healthy and stable society, there is considerable debate about the nature and role of law. Opinions, for instance, conflict about the origins and purpose of law. Does law liberate or oppress? Do laws exist to safeguard all individuals and promote the common good, or do they merely serve the interests of the propertied and privileged few? Moreover, there is controversy about the relationship between law and morality. Does law enforce moral standards; should it try to? How much freedom should the law allow the individual, and over what issues?

Such questions also relate to the need for personal security and social order. Indeed, in the mouths of politicians, the concepts of order and law often appear to be fused into the composite notion of 'law-and-order'. Rolling these two ideas together sees law as the principal device through which order is maintained, but raises a series of further problems. In particular, is order only secured through a system of rule enforcement and punishment, or can it emerge naturally through the influence of social solidarity and rational good sense? In other words, can order arise 'from below' or does it always have to be imposed 'from above'? Finally, there is the complex problem of the relationship between law and justice. Is the purpose of law to see that justice is done, and, anyway, what would that entail? This matter is complicated by the fact that justice can be understood in either a procedural or a substantive sense. Does legal justice relate to how rules are made and applied, or rather to the moral content of the rules themselves; or are both judgements relevant? Furthermore, how is it possible to distinguish between just and unjust laws, and, in particular, does the distinction suggest that in certain circumstances it may be justifiable to break the law?

Law

The term 'law' has been used in a wide variety of ways. In the first place, there are scientific laws or what are called descriptive laws. These describe regular or necessary patterns of behaviour found in either natural or social life. The most obvious examples are found in the natural sciences; for instance, in the laws of motion and thermodynamics advanced by physicists. But this notion of law has also been employed by social theorists, in an attempt to highlight predictable, even inevitable, patterns of social behaviour. This can be seen in Engels's assertion that Marx (see p. 317) uncovered the 'laws of historical and social development', and in the so-called 'laws of demand and supply' which underlie economic theory. An alternative use, however, treats law generally as a means of enforcing norms or standards of social behaviour. Sociologists have thus seen forms of law at work in all organized societies, ranging from informal processes usually found in traditional societies to the formal legal systems typical of modern societies.

By contrast, political theorists have tended to understand law more specifically, seeing it as a distinctive social institution clearly separate from other social rules or norms and only found in modern societies. In this sense, law constitutes a set of rules, including, as said earlier, commands, prohibitions and entitlements. However, what is it that distinguishes law from other social rules? First, law is made by the government and so applies throughout society. In that way, law reflects the 'will of the state' and therefore takes precedence over all other norms and social rules. For instance, conformity to the rules of a sports club, church or trade union does not provide citizens with immunity if they have broken the 'law of the land'. Second, law is compulsory; citizens are not allowed to choose which laws to obey and which to ignore, because law is backed up by a system of coercion and punishment. Third, law has a 'public' quality in that it consists of published and recognized rules. This is, in part, achieved by enacting law through a formal, and usually public, legislative process. Moreover, the punishments handed down for law-breaking are predictable and can be anticipated, whereas arbitrary arrest or imprisonment has a random and dictatorial character. Fourth, law is usually recognized as binding on those to whom it applies, even if particular laws may be regarded as 'unjust' or 'unfair'. Law is therefore more than simply a set of enforced commands; it also embodies moral claims, implying that legal rules *should* be obeyed.

The rule of law

The rule of law is a constitutional principle respected with almost devotional intensity in liberal-democratic states. At heart, it is quite simply the principle

that the law should ‘rule’, in the sense that it establishes a framework within which all citizens should act and beyond which no one, neither private citizen nor government official, should go. The principle of the rule of law developed out of a long-established liberal theory of law. From John Locke (see p. 255) onwards, liberals have regarded law not as a constraint on the individual but as an essential guarantee of liberty. Without the protection of law, each person is constantly under threat from every other member of society, as indeed they are from him or her. The danger of unrestrained individual conduct was graphically represented by the barbarism of the ‘state of nature.’ The fundamental purpose of law is therefore to protect individual rights, which, in Locke’s view, meant the right to life, liberty and property.

The supreme virtue of the rule of law is therefore that it serves to protect the individual citizen from the state; it ensures a ‘government of laws and not of men.’ Such an idea is enshrined in the German concept of the *Rechtsstaat*, a state based on law, which came to be widely adopted throughout continental Europe and encouraged the development of codified and professional legal systems. The rule of law, however, has a distinctively Anglo-American character. In the USA, the supremacy of law is emphasized by the status of the US Constitution, by the checks and balances it establishes and the individual rights outlined in the Bill of Rights. This is made clear in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution, which specifically forbid federal or state government to deny any person life, liberty and property without ‘due process of law.’ The doctrine of ‘due process’ not only restricts the discretionary power of public officials but also enshrines a number of individual rights, notably the right to a fair trial and to equal treatment under the law. Nevertheless, it also vests considerable power in the hands of judges who, by interpreting the law, effectively determine the proper realm of government action.

The UK has traditionally been taken to represent an alternative conception of the rule of law. The classic account of this view is outlined in A. V. Dicey’s *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* ([1885] 1939). In Dicey’s account, the rule of law embraces four features. First, no one should be punished except for breaches of law. Second, the rule of law requires what Dicey called ‘equal subjection’ to the law, more commonly understood as equality before the law. Third, when law is broken there must be a certainty of punishment. Finally, the rule of law requires that the rights and liberties of the individual are embodied in the ‘ordinary law’ of the land. The passage of the Human Rights Act (1989), which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK statute law, nevertheless brought the US and UK approaches to the rule of law closer together, in particular by reducing the reliance of the latter on common law rights and duties. However, the UK continues to offer a weak example of the rule of law. This is because parliamentary sovereignty, the central principle of the UK’s uncodified constitution, can be seen to violate the very idea

of the rule of law. It is difficult to suggest that the law 'rules' if the legislature itself is not bound by any external constraints. Thus, despite the introduction of the Human Rights Act, Parliament, rather than the courts, can still play the ultimate role in determining the extent of civil liberty in the UK.

In its broad sense, the rule of law is a core liberal-democratic principle, embodying ideas such as constitutionalism and limited government to which most modern states aspire. In particular, the rule of law imposes significant constraints on how law is made and how it is adjudicated. For example, it suggests that all laws should be 'general' in the sense that they apply to all citizens and do not select particular individuals or groups for special treatment, good or bad. It is, further, vital that citizens know 'where they stand'; laws should therefore be precisely framed and accessible to the public. Retrospective legislation, for instance, is clearly unacceptable on such grounds, as it allows citizens to be punished for actions that were legal at the time they occurred. In the same way, the rule of law is usually thought to be irreconcilable with cruel and inhuman forms of punishment. Above all, the principle implies that the courts should be impartial and accessible to all. This can only be achieved if the judiciary, whose role it is to interpret law and adjudicate between the parties to a dispute, enjoys independence from government. The independence of the judiciary is designed to ensure that judges are 'above' or 'outside' the machinery of government. Law, in other words, must be kept strictly separate from politics.

Nevertheless, the rule of law also has its critics. Some have, for instance, suggested that it is a truism: to say that the law 'rules' may acknowledge nothing more than that citizens are compelled to obey it. In this narrow sense, the rule of law is reduced to the statement that 'everybody must obey the law'. Others have argued that the principle pays little attention to the content of law. Some have therefore claimed that the rule of law was observed in the Third Reich and in the Soviet Union simply because oppression wore the cloak of legality. Even its keenest defenders will acknowledge that although the rule of law may be a necessary condition for just government, it is not in itself a sufficient one. Marxist critics go further, however. Marxists (see p. 75) have traditionally regarded law not as a safeguard for individual liberty but as a means for securing property rights and protecting the capitalist system. For Marx, law, like politics and ideology, was part of a 'superstructure' conditioned by the economic 'base', in this case the capitalist mode of production. Law thus protects private property, social inequality and class domination. Feminists (see p. 56) have also drawn attention to biases that operate through the system of law, in this case biases that favour the interests of men at the expense of women as a result, for instance, of a predominantly male judiciary and legal profession. Multicultural theorists (see p. 178) have, for their part, argued that law reflects the values and attitudes of the dominant cultural group and so is insensitive to the values and concerns of minority groups.

MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism first emerged as a theoretical stance through the activities of the black consciousness movement of the 1960s, primarily in the USA. During this phase it was largely concerned with establishing black pride, often through re-establishing a distinctive African identity, and overlapped in many ways with postcolonialism (see p. 214). It has also been shaped by the growing political assertiveness, sometimes expressed through ethnocultural nationalism, of established cultural groups in various parts of the world and by the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of many Western societies.

Multiculturalism reflects, most basically, a positive endorsement of communal diversity, usually arising from racial, ethnic and language differences. As such, multiculturalism is more a distinctive political stance than a coherent and programmatic political doctrine. One key source of multicultural thinking stems from the attempt to refashion liberal beliefs in order to take account of the importance of communal belonging. In this view, individuals are seen as culturally embedded creatures, who derive their understanding of the world and their framework of moral beliefs and sense of personal identity largely from the culture in which they live and develop. Distinctive cultures therefore deserve to be protected or strengthened, particularly when they belong to minority or vulnerable groups. This leads to an emphasis on the politics of recognition and support for minority or multicultural rights, which, in the case of national minorities, or 'First Nations', may extend to the right to self-determination (see p. 93). However, a more radical strain within multicultural thinking endorses a form of value pluralism which holds that, as people are bound to disagree about the ultimate ends of life, liberal and non-liberal, or even illiberal, beliefs and practices are equally legitimate. From this pluralist or 'post-liberal' perspective, liberalism 'absolutizes' values such as toleration and personal autonomy so provides an inadequate basis for diversity. A further strain within multicultural theory attempts to reconcile multiculturalism with cosmopolitanism (see p. 105), placing a particular emphasis on hybridity and cultural mixing (see p. 265).

The attraction of multiculturalism is that it seeks to offer solutions to challenges of cultural diversity which cannot be addressed in any other way. Only enforced assimilation or the expulsion of ethnic or cultural minorities will re-establish monocultural nation-states. Indeed, in some respects, multiculturalism has advanced hand in hand with the seemingly irresistible forces of globalization. However, multiculturalism is by no means universally accepted. Its critics argue that, since it regards values and practices as acceptable so long as they generate a sense of group identity, non-liberal forms of multiculturalism may endorse reactionary and oppressive practices, particularly ones that subordinate women. Moreover, multiculturalism's model of group identity pays insufficient attention to diversity within cultural or religious groups and risks defining people on the basis of group membership alone. The most common criticism of multiculturalism is nevertheless that it is the enemy of civic cohesion. In this view, shared values and a common culture are a necessary precondition for a stable and successful society.

Key figures

Charles Taylor (born 1931) A Canadian political philosopher, Taylor has been primarily concerned with the issue of the construction of the self. His communitarian portrayal of persons as 'embodied individuals' enabled him to argue in favour of the politics of recognition, based on the belief that individuals need to be the object of others' positive attitudes and that cultures have their own unique, authentic essences. Taylor has sought to reconcile such thinking with liberalism. His key works include *Sources of the Self* (1992) and *Multiculturalism and 'the Politics of Recognition'* (1994).

Bhikhu Parekh (born 1935) A British political theorist, Parekh has advanced a pluralist theory of cultural diversity which highlights the limitations of liberal multiculturalism. Parekh's multiculturalism is based on a dialectical interplay between human nature and culture, in which human beings are culturally constituted in the sense that their attitudes, behaviour and ways of life are shaped by the groups to which they belong. The complexity of human nature is thus reflected in the diversity of cultures. Parekh's works include *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000) and *A New Politics of Identity* (2008)

James Tully (born 1946) A Canadian political theorist, Tully has championed a plural form of political society that accommodates the needs and interests of indigenous peoples. He portrayed modern constitutionalism, which stresses sovereignty and uniformity, as a form of imperialism that denies indigenous modes of self-government and land appropriation. In its place, he advocated 'ancient constitutionalism' which respects diversity and pluralism, and allows traditional values and practices to be accepted as legitimate. Tully's key work in this area is *Strange Multiplicity* (1995).

Jeremy Waldron (born 1953) A New Zealand legal and political theorist, Waldron has developed a cosmopolitan understanding of multiculturalism that stresses the rise of 'hybridity'. Waldron's emphasis on the fluid, multifarious and often fractured nature of the human self provided the basis for the development of cosmopolitanism as a normative philosophy that challenges both liberalism and communitarianism. It rejects the 'rigid' liberal perception of what it means to lead an autonomous life, as well as the tendency within communitarianism to confine people within a single 'authentic' culture.

Will Kymlicka (born 1962) A Canadian political theorist, Kymlicka has sought to reconcile liberalism with the ideas of community and cultural membership. He has advanced the idea of multicultural citizenship, based on the belief that cultures are valuable and distinct, and provide a context in which individuals are provided with meaning, identity and belonging. Kymlicka nevertheless distinguishes between the self-government rights of national minorities and the 'polyethnic' rights of cultural groups formed through immigration. Kymlicka's main works include *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) and *Multicultural Odysseys* (2007).

See also Isaiah Berlin (p. 244)

Natural and positive law

The relationship between law and morality is one of the thorniest problems in political theory. Philosophers have long been taxed by questions related to the nature of law, its origins and purpose. Does law, for instance, merely give effect to a set of higher moral principles, or is there a clear distinction between law and morality? How far does, or should, the law of the community seek to enforce standards of ethical behaviour? Such questions go to the heart of the distinction between two contrasting theories of law: natural law and positive law.

On the surface, law and morality are very different things. Law refers to a distinctive form of social control backed up by the means of enforcement; it therefore defines what *can* and what *cannot* be done. Morality, on the other hand, is concerned with ethical questions and the difference between 'right' and 'wrong'; it thus prescribes what *should* and what *should not* be done. In one important respect, however, law is an easier concept to grasp than morality. Law can be understood as a social fact, it has an objective character that can be studied and analyzed. In contrast, morality is by its very nature a subjective entity, a matter of opinion or personal judgement. For this reason, it is often unclear what the term 'morality' refers to. Are morals simply the customs and conventions which reign within a particular community, its mores? Need morality be based on clearly defined and well-established principles, rational or religious, which sanction certain forms of behaviour while condemning others? Are moral ideals those that each individual is entitled to impose on himself or herself; is morality, in short, of concern only to the individual?

Those thinkers who insist that law is, or should be, rooted in a moral system subscribe to some kind of theory of 'natural law'. Theories of natural law date back to Plato (see p. 22) and Aristotle (see p. 62). Plato believed that behind the ever-changing forms of social and political life lay unchanging archetypal forms, the Ideas, of which only an enlightened elite, the philosopher-kings, had knowledge. A 'just' society was therefore one in which human laws conformed as far as possible to this transcendental wisdom. This line of thought was continued by Aristotle, who believed that the purpose of law and organized social life was to encourage humankind to live in accordance with virtue. In his view, there was a perfect law, fixed for all time, which would provide the basis for citizenship and all other forms of social behaviour. Medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas (see p. 181) also took it for granted that human laws had a moral basis. Natural law, he argued, could be penetrated through our God-given natural reason and guides us towards the attainment of the good life on Earth.

The demands of natural law came to be expressed through the idea of natural rights. Natural rights were thought to have been invested in humankind either by God or by nature. Thinkers such as Locke and Thomas Jefferson (see p. 212) proposed that the purpose of human-made law was to protect these God-given

THOMAS AQUINAS (1224–74)

Italian Dominican monk, theologian and philosopher. Born near Naples, the son of a noble family, Aquinas joined the Dominican order against his family's wishes. He was canonized in 1324, and in the nineteenth century Pope Leo XIII recognized Aquinas' writings as the basis of Catholic theology.

Aquinas took part in the theological debates of the day, arguing that reason and faith are compatible, and defending the admission of Aristotle (see p. 62) into the university curriculum. His vast but unfinished *Summa Theologiae* (1963), begun in 1265, deals with the nature of God, morality and law – eternal, divine, natural and human. He viewed 'natural law' as the basic moral rules on which political society depends, believing that these can be elaborated by rational reflection on human nature. As, in Aquinas' view, human law should be framed in accordance with natural law, its purpose is ultimately to 'lead men to virtue', reflecting his belief that law, government and the state are natural features of the human condition rather than (as Augustine (see p. 83) had argued) consequences of original sin. Aquinas nevertheless recognized that human law is an imperfect instrument, in that some moral faults cannot be legally prohibited and attempts to prohibit others may cause more harm than good. The political tradition that Aquinas founded has come to be known as Thomism, with neo-Thomism, since the late nineteenth century, attempting to keep alive the spirit of the 'angelic doctor'.

and inalienable rights. However, the rise of rationalism and scientific thought served by the nineteenth century to make natural law theories distinctly unfashionable. Nevertheless, the twentieth century witnessed a revival of such ideas, precipitated, in part, by the cloak of legality behind which Nazi and Stalinist terror took place. The desire to establish a higher set of moral values against which national law could be judged was, for example, one of the problems which the Nuremberg Trials (1945–6) sought to address. Under the auspices of the newly created United Nations, major Nazi figures were prosecuted for war crimes, even though in many cases they had acted legally in the eyes of the Nazi regime itself. This was made possible by reference to the notion of natural law, albeit dressed up in the modern language of human rights, as discussed in Chapter 8. Indeed, it is now widely accepted that both national and international law should conform to the higher moral principles set out in the doctrine of human rights. In the case of international law, this has given rise to the controversial notion of 'supranational' law or 'world' law (see p. 183).

The central theme of all conceptions of natural law is that law should conform to some prior moral standards, implying that the purpose of law is to enforce those standards. This notion, however, came under attack in the nineteenth century from what was called the 'science of positive law'. The idea of positive law sought to free the understanding of law from moral, religious and mystical

assumptions. Many have seen its roots in Thomas Hobbes's (see p. 111) command theory of law: 'law is the word of him that by right hath command over others'. In effect, law is nothing more than the will of the sovereign. By the nineteenth century, John Austin (1790–1859) had developed this into the theory of 'legal positivism', which saw the defining feature of law not as its conformity to higher moral or religious principles, but in the fact that it is established and enforced by a political superior, a 'sovereign person or body'. This boils down to the belief that law is law because it is obeyed. This view, for instance, casts grave doubt on the notion of international law. If the treaties and UN resolutions that constitute what is called 'international law' cannot be enforced, they should be regarded as a collection of moral principles and ideals, and not as law. A modern attempt to refine legal positivism was undertaken in H. L. A. Hart's *The Concept of Law* ([1961] 2013). Hart was concerned to explain law not in terms of moral principles but by reference to its purpose within human society. Law, he suggested, stems from the 'union of primary and secondary rules', each of which serves a particular function. The role of primary rules is to regulate social behaviour; these can be thought of as the 'content' of the legal system, for instance, criminal law. Secondary rules, on the other hand, are rules which confer powers on the institutions of government; they lay down how primary rules are made, enforced and adjudicated, and so determine their validity.

While natural law theories are criticized as being hopelessly philosophical, positive law theories threaten to divorce law entirely from morality. The most extreme case of this was Hobbes, who insisted that citizens had an obligation to obey all laws, however oppressive, as to do otherwise would risk a descent into the chaos of the state of nature. However, other legal positivists allow that law can, and should, be subject to moral scrutiny, and perhaps that it should be changed if it is morally faulty. Their position, however, is simply that moral questions do not affect whether law is law. In other words, whereas natural law theorists seek to run together the issues 'what the law is' and 'what the law ought to be', legal positivists treat these matters as strictly separate. An alternative view of law, however, was associated with the ideas of the famous American jurist, Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–94). This is legal realism, the theory that it is really judges who make law because it is they who decide how cases are to be resolved. In this sense, all laws can be thought to be judge-made. However, as judges are, in the vast majority of cases, non-elected, this view has disturbing implications for the prospect of democratic governance.

Law and liberty

While political philosophers have been concerned about broad questions such as the nature of law, everyday debates about the relationship between law and morality

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

WORLD LAW

In its traditional or 'classical' conception, international law has been firmly state-centric. This is the sense in which it is properly called 'international' law: it is a form of law that governs states and determines the relations amongst states, its primary purpose being to facilitate international order. In this view, state sovereignty is the foundational principle of international law. States thus relate to one another legally in a purely horizontal sense, recognizing the principle of sovereign equality. Not only is there no world government, international community or public interest that can impose its higher authority on the state-system, but legal obligations, determined by treaties and conventions, are entirely an expression of the will of states. This classical view of international law is exemplified by the role and powers of the International Court of Justice, established in 1945.

However, due in part to the advent of industrialized warfare and the experience of the two world wars of the twentieth century, the classical conception of international law has increasingly been challenged by attempts to found a world constitutional order. This conception of international law is 'constitutional' in the sense that it aims to enmesh states within a framework of rules and norms that have a higher and binding authority, in the manner of a constitution. In investing law with *supranational* authority, it transforms 'international' law into 'world' law. The implications of this are far-reaching. In particular, it suggests that the scope of international law extends well beyond the maintenance of international order, and now includes the maintenance of at least minimum standards of global justice. This has been evident not only in attempts to establish international standards in areas such as women's rights, environmental protection and the treatment of refugees, but also in moves to enforce international criminal law through the use of *ad hoc* international tribunals and, since 2002, the International Criminal Court.

Realist theorists (see p. 327) have nevertheless criticized the trend towards world law, arguing that any attempt to construct a world constitutional order threatens to weaken state sovereignty and puts international order at risk. In this view, once international law ceases to be rooted in a commitment to state sovereignty, it ceases to be legitimate. Furthermore, tensions and confusion have resulted from the fact that 'world' law, if it exists at all, incorporates and extends 'international' law; it has not replaced it. International law thus continues to acknowledge the cornerstone importance of state sovereignty, while at the same time embracing the doctrine of human rights and the need for humanitarian standard-setting. Such confusion is particularly evident over the contested legality of humanitarian intervention, which is seen either as a duty to 'save strangers' because they are human, or as a violation of state sovereignty.

have tended to focus on the moral content of specific laws. Which laws are morally justified, and which ones are not? How far, if at all, should the law seek to 'teach morals'? Such questions often arise out of the moral controversies of the day, and seek to know whether the law should permit or prohibit practices such as abortion, prostitution, pornography, drug-taking, genetic engineering, voluntary euthanasia and so on. At the heart of these questions is the issue of individual liberty and the balance between those moral choices that should properly be made by the individual and those that should be decided by society and enforced through law.

In many ways the classic contribution to this debate was made in the nineteenth century by John Stuart Mill (see p. 241), who, in *On Liberty* ([1859] 1972), asserted that 'The only purpose for which power can rightfully be exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will is to prevent harm to others'. Mill's position on law was libertarian: he wanted the individual to enjoy the broadest possible realm of freedom. 'Over himself', Mill proclaimed, 'over his own body and mind the individual is sovereign'. However, such a principle, often referred to as the 'harm principle', implies a very clear distinction between actions that are 'self-regarding', whose impact is largely or entirely confined to the person in question, and those that can be thought of as 'other-regarding'. In Mill's view, the law has no right to interfere with 'self-regarding' actions; in this realm individuals are entitled to exercise unrestrained liberty. Law should therefore only restrict the individual in the realm of 'other-regarding' actions, and then only in the event of harm being done to others. The strict application of this principle would clearly challenge a wide range of laws currently in existence, notably those that are paternalistic. For instance, laws prohibiting suicide and prostitution are clearly unacceptable, as their primary intent is to prevent people damaging or harming themselves. The same could be said of laws prohibiting drug-taking or enforcing the use of seatbelts or crash helmets, to the extent that these reflect a concern about the individuals concerned as opposed to the costs (harm) imposed on society.

Mill's ideas reflect a fierce commitment to individual liberty, born out of a faith in human reason and the conviction that only through the exercise of personal choice would human beings develop and achieve 'individuality'. His ideas, however, raise a number of difficulties. In the first place, what is meant by 'harm'? Mill clearly understood harm to mean physical harm, but there are at least grounds for extending the notion of harm to include psychological, mental, moral and even spiritual harm. For example, although blasphemy clearly does not cause physical harm it may, nevertheless, cause 'offence'; it may challenge the most sacred principles of a religious group and so threaten its security. Just such an argument was used by Muslim fundamentalists in their campaign against the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988). In the same way, it could be argued that in economic life price agreements between firms should be illegal because they harm both the interests of consumers, who end up paying higher prices, and those of competitor firms. Second, who counts as the 'others'

who should not be harmed? This question is most obviously raised by issues like abortion and embryo research where it is the status of the unborn which is in question. As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 8, if a human embryo is treated as an 'other', interfering with it or harming it in any way is morally reprehensible. However, if the embryo remains part of the mother until it is born she has a perfect right to do with it what she pleases.

A third problem relates to individual autonomy. Mill undoubtedly wanted people to exercise the greatest possible degree of control over their own destinies, but even he recognized that this could not always be achieved, as, for instance, in the case of children. Children, he accepted, possessed neither the experience nor the understanding to make wise decisions on their own behalf; as a result, he regarded the exercise of parental authority as perfectly acceptable. However, this principle can also be applied on grounds other than age, for example, in relation to alcohol consumption and drug-taking. On the face of it, these are 'self-regarding' actions, unless, of course, the principle of 'harm' is extended to include the distress caused to the family involved or the healthcare costs incurred by society. Nevertheless, the use of addictive substances raises the additional problem that they rob the user of free will and so deprive him or her of the capacity to make rational decisions. Paternalistic legislation may well be justifiable on precisely these grounds. Indeed, the principle could be extended almost indefinitely. For example, it could perhaps be argued that smoking should be banned in any context, on the grounds that nicotine is physically and psychologically addictive, and that those who endanger their health through smoking must either be poorly informed or be incapable of making wise judgements on their own behalf. In short, they must be saved from themselves.

An alternative basis for establishing the relationship between law and morality is by considering not the claims of individual liberty but the damage which unrestrained liberty can do to the fabric of society. At issue here is the moral and cultural diversity which the Millian view permits or even encourages. A classic statement of this position was advanced by Patrick Devlin in *The Enforcement of Morals* (1968), which argues that there is a 'public morality' which society had a right to enforce through the instrument of law. Devlin's concern with this issue was raised by the legalization of homosexuality and other pieces of so-called 'permissive' legislation in the 1960s. Underlying his position is the belief that society is held together by a 'shared' morality, a fundamental agreement about what is 'good' and what is 'evil'. Law therefore has the right to 'enforce morals' when changes in lifestyle and moral behaviour threaten the social fabric and the security of all citizens living within it. Such a view, however, differs from paternalism in that the latter is more narrowly concerned with making people do what is in their interests, though in cases like banning pornography it can be argued that paternalism and the enforcement of morals coincide. Devlin can be said to have extended Mill's notion of harm to include 'offence', at least when

actions provoke what Devlin called ‘real feelings of revulsion’ rather than simply dislike. Such a position has also been adopted by the conservative New Right since the 1970s in relation to what it regards as ‘moral pollution.’ This is reflected in anxiety about the portrayal of sex and violence on television and the spread of gay and lesbian rights. Against the twin threats of permissiveness and multiculturalism, conservative thinkers (see p. 258) have usually extolled the virtues of ‘traditional morality’ and ‘family values.’

The central theme of such arguments is that morality is simply too important to be left to the individual. Where the interests of ‘society’ and those of the ‘individual’ conflict, law must always take the side of the former. Such a position, however, raises some serious questions. First, is there any such thing as a ‘public morality’? Is there a set of ‘majority’ values which can be distinguished from ‘minority’ ones? Apart from acts like murder, physical violence, rape and theft, moral views in fact diverge considerably from generation to generation, from social group to social group, and indeed from individual to individual. This ethical pluralism is particularly evident in those areas of personal and sexual morality – homosexuality, abortion, violence on television and so on – with which the moral New Right has been especially concerned. Second, there is a danger that under the banner of traditional morality, law is doing little more than enforcing social prejudice. If acts are banned simply because they cause offence to the majority, this comes close to saying that morality boils down to a show of hands. Surely, moral judgements must always be critical, at least in the sense that they are based on clear and rational principles rather than just conventional wisdom. Do laws persecuting Jewish people, for instance, become morally acceptable simply because anti-Semitic beliefs are widely held in society? Finally, it is by no means clear that a healthy and stable society can only exist where a shared morality prevails. This stance, for example, calls the very idea of a multicultural and multi-faith society into question. However, this issue is best pursued by an analysis of social order and the conditions that maintain it.

Order

Fear of disorder and social instability has been perhaps the most fundamental and abiding concern of Western political philosophy. Dating back to the social-contract theories of the seventeenth century, political thinkers have grappled with the problem of order and sought ways of preventing human existence degenerating into chaos and confusion. Without order and stability, human life would, in Hobbes’s words, be ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.’ Such fears are also evident in the everyday use of the word ‘anarchy’ to imply disorder, chaos and violence. For these reasons, order has attracted almost unqualified approval from political theorists, at least in so far as none of them are prepared

to defend 'disorder'. At the same time, however, the term order conjures up very different images for different political thinkers. At one extreme, traditional conservatives believe that order is inseparable from notions like control, discipline and obedience; at the other, anarchists have suggested that order is related to natural harmony, equilibrium and balance. Such ideological divisions reflect profound disagreement not only about the concept of order but also about how it can be established and upheld.

While there may be competing conceptions of order, certain common characteristics can nevertheless be identified. Order, in everyday language, refers to regular and tidy patterns, as when soldiers are said to stand 'in order' or the universe is described as being 'ordered'. In social life, order describes regular, stable and predictable forms of behaviour, for which reason social order suggests continuity, even permanence. Social disorder, by contrast, implies chaotic, random and violent behaviour, that is by its very nature unstable and constantly changing. Above all, the virtue that is associated with order is personal security, both physical security, freedom from intimidation and violence and the fear of such, and psychological security, the comfort and stability which only regular and familiar circumstances engender.

Discipline and control

Order is often linked to the ideas of discipline, regulation and authority. In this sense, order comes to stand for a form of social control which has, in some way, to be imposed 'from above'. Social order has to be imposed because, quite simply, it does not occur naturally. All notions of order are based on a conception of disorder and of the forces that cause it. What causes delinquency, vandalism, crime and social unrest? Those who believe that order is impossible without the exercise of control or discipline usually locate the roots of disorder in the human individual. In other words, human beings are naturally corrupt and, if not restrained or controlled, they will behave in an anti-social and uncivilized fashion. Such ideas are sometimes religious in origin, as in the case of the Christian doctrine of 'original sin'. In other cases, they are explained by the belief that human beings are essentially self-seeking or egoistical. If left to their own devices, individuals act to further their own interests or ends, and will do so at the expense of fellow human beings. One of the most pessimistic such accounts of human nature is found in the writings of absolutist thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, who in *Leviathan* ([1651] 1968) described the principal human inclination as 'a perpetual and restless desire for power after power, that ceaseth only in death'. This explains why his description of the state of nature is so graphic. In his view, its dominant feature would be war, a barbaric and unending war of 'every man against every man'.

ABSOLUTISM

Absolutism is the theory or practice of absolute government. Government is 'absolute' in the sense that it possesses unfettered power: government cannot be constrained by a body external to itself. Absolute government is usually associated with the political forms that dominated Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its most prominent manifestation being the absolute monarchy. The absolutist principle is thus encapsulated in King Louis XIV of France's famous declaration: '*L'état, c'est moi*' (the state – that's me). However, there is no necessary connection between monarchy and absolute government. Although unfettered power can be placed in the hands of the monarch, it can also be vested in a collective body such as a supreme legislature. Absolutism, nevertheless, differs from modern versions of dictatorship, notably totalitarianism. Whereas absolutist regimes aspired to a monopoly of political power, usually achieved by excluding the masses from politics, totalitarianism involves the establishment of 'total power' through the politicization of every aspect of social and personal existence. Absolutist theory thus differs significantly from, for instance, fascist doctrines.

Absolute government and absolute power are not the same thing, however. The absolutist principle resides in the claim to an unlimited right to rule, rather than in the exercise of unchallengeable power. This is why absolutist theories are closely linked to the concept of sovereignty, representing an unchallengeable and indivisible source of legal authority. There are both rationalist and theological versions of absolutist theory. Rationalist theories of absolutism generally advance the belief that only absolute government can guarantee order and social stability. Divided sovereignty or challengeable power is therefore a recipe for chaos and disorder. Theological theories of absolutism have often been based on the doctrine of divine right, according to which the absolute control a monarch exercises over his or her subjects derives from, and is analogous to, the power of God over his creation. Monarchical power is therefore unchallengeable because it is the temporal expression of God's authority. In the Islamist version of theological absolutism, temporal authority is dispensed with altogether as rule is assumed by senior cleric, absolutism taking the form of theocracy.

Absolutist theories have the virtue that they articulate some enduring political truths. In particular, they emphasize the central importance to politics of order, and remind us that the primary objective of political society is to maintain stability and security. Absolutist theories can nevertheless be criticized as being both politically redundant and ideologically objectionable. Absolutist government collapsed in the face of the advance of constitutionalism and representation, and where dictatorship has survived it has assumed a quite different political character. Indeed, by the time that the term absolutism was coined in the nineteenth century, the phenomenon itself had largely disappeared. The objectionable feature of absolutism is that it is now widely seen as merely a cloak for tyranny and arbitrary government. Modern political thought, linked to ideas such as individual rights and democratic accountability, is largely an attempt to protect against the dangers of absolutism.

Key figures

Jean Bodin (1530–96) A French political philosopher, Bodin was the first important theorist of sovereignty, which he defined as 'the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth'. In his view, the only guarantee of political and social stability is the existence of a sovereign with final lawmaking power; in that sense, law reflects the 'will' of the sovereign. Although the sovereign is above the law, Bodin recognized the limitation imposed by what he termed 'fundamental laws'. Bodin's most important work is *The Six Books of the Commonweal* ([1576] 1962).

Robert Filmer, Sir (1588–1653) An English country knight, Filmer defended the doctrine of divine right by developing a theory of patriarchalism. In *Patriarcha*, written in 1632 but not published until 1680, when it was taken up by leading royalists from the English Civil War period, Filmer argued that the authority of the king is the authority of fathers, handed down from Adam, the father of all of us. This implied that the will of the monarch, expressed in positive law, should be treated as absolute, arbitrary and not bequeathable.

Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) A French aristocrat and political thinker, Maistre was a fierce critic of the French Revolution. His political philosophy was based on willing and complete subordination to 'the master'. Maistre believed that society is organic, and would fragment or collapse if it were not bound together by the twin principles of 'throne and altar'. In his view, earthly monarchies are ultimately subject to the supreme spiritual power of the Pope. Maistre's chief political works include *Considerations sur la France* (1796) and *Du Pape* (1817).

See also Thomas Hobbes (p. 111)

The traditional conservative conception of order has been deeply influenced by this pessimistic view of human nature. Conservatives have, for example, typically shown very little patience with attempts to explain crime by reference to poverty or social deprivation. Crime, and for that matter most other forms of anti-social behaviour – hooliganism, vandalism, delinquency and even plain rudeness – is nothing more than an individual phenomenon reflecting the moral corruption that lies within each human being. The criminal is therefore a morally 'bad' person, and deserves to be treated as such. This is why conservatives tend to see an intrinsic link between the notions of order and law, and are inclined to refer to the fused concept of law-and-order. In effect, public order is quite unthinkable without clearly enforced laws. Conservatives have therefore often been in the forefront of campaigns to strengthen the powers of the police and calls for stiffer penalties against criminals and vandals. This has, in some cases, even led to them viewing criminal justice in quasi-military terms, as in the notion of the 'war on drugs', first popularized in the early 1970s by US President Richard Nixon.

The conservative analysis, nevertheless, goes further. Conservatives hold not only that human beings are morally corrupt but also emphasize the degree to which social order, and indeed human civilization itself, is fragile. In accordance with the ideas of Edmund Burke (see p. 354), conservatives have traditionally portrayed society as 'organic', as a living entity within which each element is linked in a delicate balance to every other element. The 'social whole' is therefore more than simply a collection of its individual parts, and if any part is damaged the whole is threatened. In particular, conservatives have emphasized that society is held together by the maintenance of traditional institutions such as the family and by respect for an established culture, based on religion, tradition and custom. The defence of the 'fabric' of society became one of the central themes of neo-conservatism, advanced in the United States by social theorists such as Irving Kristol (see p. 259) and Daniel Bell, who have warned against the destruction of spiritual values brought about by both market pressures and the permissive ethic. From this perspective, law can be seen not only as a way of maintaining order by threatening the wrong-doer with punishment but also as a means of upholding traditional values and established beliefs. This is why conservatives have usually agreed with Patrick Devlin in believing that the proper function of law is to 'teach morality'.

Order has, finally, been defended on psychological grounds. This view emphasizes that human beings are limited and psychologically insecure creatures. Above all, people seek safety and security; they are drawn naturally towards the familiar, the known, the traditional. Order is therefore a vital, perhaps the most vital, of human needs. This implies that human beings will recoil from the unfamiliar, the new, the alien. In this way, for example, Edmund Burke was able to portray prejudice against people different from ourselves as both natural and beneficial, arguing that it gives individuals a sense of security and a social identity. Such a view, however, has very radical implications for the maintenance of order. It may, for instance, be entirely at odds with the multicultural and multi-faith nature of many contemporary societies, suggesting that disorder and insecurity must always lie close to the surface in such societies. As a result, many conservatives have objected to unchecked immigration, or demanded that immigrants be encouraged to assimilate into the culture of their 'host' country.

Natural harmony

A very different conception of order emerges from the writings of socialists and anarchists. Anarchists, for instance, advocate the abolition of the state and all forms of political authority, including, of course, the machinery of law and order. Marxist socialists have also sympathized with this utopian vision. Marx himself believed that the state, and with it law and other forms of social control, would

gradually 'wither away' once social inequality was abolished. Parliamentary socialists and modern liberals have made more modest proposals, but they have nevertheless been critical of the belief that order can only be maintained by strict laws and stiff penalties. Although such views are critical of the conventional notion of 'law and order', they do not amount to an outright rejection of 'order' itself. Rather, they are based on the alternative belief that social order can take the form of spontaneous harmony, regulated only by the natural good sense of individuals themselves.

Such a concept of order is based on the assumption that disorder is rooted not in the individual himself or herself but in the structure of society. Human beings are not born corrupt, tainted by 'original sin'; rather, they are corrupted by society. This image is portrayed in the famous opening words of Rousseau's *Social Contract* ([1762] 1969), 'Man is born free but is everywhere in chains.' This is the most basic assumption of utopian political thought, examined in more detail in Chapter 13. Society can corrupt individuals in a number of ways. Socialists and many liberals point to a link between crime and social deprivation, arguing that laws which protect property are bound to be broken so long as poverty and social inequality persist. Such a view suggests that order can best be promoted not by a fear of punishment but through a programme of social reform designed, amongst other things, to improve housing, counter urban decay and reduce unemployment. Marxists and classical anarchists have taken such arguments further and called for a social revolution. In their view, crime and disorder are rooted in the institution of private property and in the economic inequality which it gives rise to.

In addition, socialists have suggested that the selfish and acquisitive behaviour that is so often blamed for social disorder is, in reality, bred by society itself. Capitalism encourages human beings to be self-seeking and competitive, and indeed rewards them for putting their own interests before those of fellow human beings. Socialists therefore argue that social order can more easily be maintained in a society which encourages and rewards social solidarity and cooperative behaviour, one based on collective principles rather than selfishness. Anarchists, for their part, have pointed the finger at law itself, accusing it of being the principal cause of disorder and crime. Peter Kropotkin (see p. 24) argued in 'Law and Authority' ([1886] 1977), for instance, that, 'the main supports of crime are idleness, law and authority'. For anarchists, law is not simply a means of protecting property from the propertyless but it is also a form of 'organized violence', as the Russian author Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) put it. Law is the naked exercise of power over others; all laws are oppressive. This is why law can only be maintained through a system of coercion and punishment, in Tolstoy's view: 'by blows, by deprivation of liberty and by murder'. The solution to the problem of social disorder is therefore simple: abolish all laws and allow people to act freely.

Such beliefs are rooted in very clear assumptions about human behaviour. Rather than needing to be disciplined or controlled, people are thought to be capable of living together in peace and natural harmony. Order is thus ‘natural’ in the sense that it arises spontaneously out of the actions of free individuals. The belief in ‘natural order’ is based on one of two theories of human nature. In the first, human beings are portrayed as rational beings, capable of solving whatever disagreements may arise between them through debate, negotiation and compromise rather than violence. It was, for instance, his deep faith in reason which encouraged J. S. Mill to advocate that law be restricted to the limited task of preventing us from harming each other. Anarchist thinkers such as William Godwin (see p. 313), went further, declaring that ‘sound reason and truth’ would in all circumstances prevent conflict from leading to disorder. The alternative theory of human nature is the essentially socialist belief that people are naturally disposed to be sociable, cooperative and gregarious. No dominant culture or traditional morality, nor any form of social control exercised from above, is needed to secure order and stability. Rather, this will emerge naturally and irresistibly out of the sympathy, compassion and concern which each person feels for all fellow human beings. Similar conclusions have also been reached on the basis of non-Western traditions, notably Daoism (see p. 193).

Justifying punishment

Discussions about order invariably address the question of punishment. For example, politicians who use the phrase ‘law and order’ often employ it as a euphemism for strict punishment and harsh penalties. In the same way, when politicians are described as being ‘tough’ on law and order, this means that they are likely to support the wider use of custodial sentences, longer jail terms, harsh prison regimes and the like. Since the 1980s, such ‘toughness’ has become increasingly fashionable (support for it having extended well beyond conservative parties and politicians) as crime and disorder have become more prominent political issues, sometimes leading to a spiralling of prison populations. Very frequently, however, punishment is advocated without a clear idea of its aim or purpose.

‘Punishment’ refers to a penalty inflicted on a person for a crime or offence. Unlike revenge, which can be random and arbitrary, punishment is formal in the sense that specific punishments are linked to particular kinds of offence. Moreover, punishment has a moral character that distinguishes it, for instance, from simple vindictiveness. Punishment is not motivated by spite or the desire to inflict pain, discomfort or inconvenience for its own sake, but rather because a ‘wrong’ has been done. This is why what are thought of as cruel or inhuman punishments, such as torture and perhaps the death penalty, are often prohib-

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

DAOISM AND NATURAL HARMONY

Daoism (Taoism) is a mystic religion and philosophical tradition that, with Confucianism and Buddhism, constitutes one of the three key schools of Chinese thought. As Daoist texts became more familiar in the West from the nineteenth century onwards, their association with the forces of revolt and opposition led to Daoism being drawn into the orbit of Western anarchist discourse (Clarke, 2000). The link between Daoism and anarchism was established by a shared belief in natural harmony and spontaneous order, as well as what appeared to be a common commitment to minimal government. As the sixth-century BCE Daoist sage Laozi (Lao Tzu) put it, 'Governing a great state is like cooking a small fish'.

However, the Daoist conception of natural harmony differs in important respects from the Western anarchist conception. Whereas the anarchist model of natural harmony is anthropocentric (human-centred), in that it is based on a theory of human nature that stresses sociability and cooperation, the Daoist model of natural harmony is cosmological. Spontaneous order is seen to be implicit in the universe itself and so embraces both nature and humankind. For Daoists, cosmic harmony is reflected in an exact balance of opposites: good and evil, light and dark, motion and stillness, feminine and masculine, negative and positive. This notion is represented by the symbol of *yin* and *yang*: a circle formed by two intercoiled, tadpole-like shapes, one dark, the other light. The *yin* is dark, feminine and negative; the *yang* is light, masculine and positive. Everything that exists is a balance of *yin* and *yang* and only so long as that balance is maintained, can there be universal harmony. In this light, Daoism is not so much concerned with reducing or abolishing state power for its own sake. Rather, it is a source of guidance for rulers, hoping to ensure that they rule in harmony with the *Dao* (the Way) and thus act to remove supposedly artificial hindrances to the spontaneous and natural workings of the state.

ited. However, if punishment has a moral character it must be justified in moral terms. Three such justifications have normally been proposed, based respectively on the ideas of retribution, deterrence and rehabilitation. Each of these is founded on very different moral and philosophical principles, and each serves to endorse very different forms of punishment. Though the tensions between them are clear, it is nevertheless possible in practice to develop a philosophy of punishment that draws from two or more of them.

In many ways, the most ancient justification for punishment is based on the idea of retribution. Retribution means to take vengeance against a wrong-doer. The idea is rooted in the religious notion of sin, the belief that there is a

discernible quality of 'evil' about particular actions and, possibly, certain thoughts. This is a view that has been attractive to conservative thinkers, who have stressed that human beings are imperfect and unperfectable creatures. In this case, punishment for wrong-doing is a moral judgement, which demarcates firmly between 'good' and 'evil'. Wrong-doers *deserve* to be punished; punishment is their 'just desert'. Modern attempts to present the retribution argument often point out, in addition, that its benefits extend to society at large. To punish wrong-doers is not merely to treat them as they deserve to be treated, but also expresses the revulsion of society towards their crime. In so doing, punishment strengthens the 'moral fabric' of society by underlining for all the difference between right and wrong.

Retribution theory suggests some very specific forms of punishment. Precisely because punishment is vengeance it should be proportional to the wrong done. In short, 'the punishment should fit the crime'. The most famous expression of this principle is found in the Old Testament of the Bible which declares, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. Retribution theory therefore provides a clear justification for the death penalty in the case of murder. Someone who has killed thereby forfeits their own right to life; death is his or her 'just desert'. Indeed, retribution suggests that, in a sense, society has a moral obligation to kill a murderer in an attempt to give expression to society's abhorrence of the crime. Such principles, however, rely on an established and rigid moral framework within which 'right' is clearly distinguishable from 'wrong'. Retribution theory is therefore of greatest value in societies where traditional moral principles, usually based on religious belief, are still widely respected; but it may be less applicable in the secularized and pluralistic societies of the developed West. Moreover, in locating responsibility for wrong-doing entirely in the human individual, indeed in the phenomenon of 'personal evil', retribution theory is unable to take account of social and other external influences on the individual, and is thus incapable of understanding the complexity of crime in the modern world.

The second major theory of punishment is based on the idea of deterrence. This is less concerned with punishment as a just reward for wrong-doing than with using punishment to shape the future conduct of others. As Jeremy Bentham (see p. 363) put it, 'General prevention ought to be the chief end of punishment as it is its real justification'. Punishment is thus a device which aims to deter people from crime or anti-social behaviour by making them aware of the consequences of their actions. Fear of punishment is therefore the key to order and social stability. Whereas retribution was based on clear and fixed moral principles, deterrence may be thought of as simply a form of social engineering. Crime, in other words, may not be an expression of personal evil which deserves to be punished, so much as a kind of anti-social behaviour which it is prudent to discourage. In utilitarian terms, punishment is a means of promoting the general happiness of society.

Unlike retribution theory, deterrence does not point to specific forms of punishment. In practice, it suggests that the punishment selected should have the capacity to deter other potential wrong-doers. For this reason, deterrence theory may at times justify far stricter and even crueller punishments than retribution ever can. To punish the wrong-doer is to 'set an example' to others; the more dramatic that example, the more effective its deterrence value. This may, for instance, justify cutting off the hand of a petty thief, as is recommended in Islamic *shari'a* law, in the hope of preventing future thieving. The severity of the penalty imposed on one individual must be balanced against the benefit of preventing similar crimes occurring in future. The problem, however, is that the idea of deterrence comes dangerously close to divorcing the wrong that has been done from the punishment meted out, and so runs the risk of victimizing the initial wrong-doer. Indeed, deterrence theory sets no limits to the form of punishment that may be applied, even for the most trivial offence.

A further difficulty with deterrence is that it assumes that criminals and wrong-doers act rationally, at least in so far as they weigh up the likely consequences of their actions. When this is not the case, deterrence theory collapses. There is reason to believe, for example, that many murderers will not be deterred by the threat of punishment, even capital punishment. This is because murder is often a domestic affair in the sense that it takes place within the family unit, and its perpetrators usually act under the most severe psychological and emotional strain. In such circumstances, the people concerned may not be capable of making balanced judgements, still less of examining the likely consequences of their actions. If such people acted in a rational and calculating fashion, crimes of passion like these would simply never occur in the first place.

The final justification for punishment is based on the idea of reform or rehabilitation. This theory shifts responsibility for wrong-doing away from the individual and towards society. The criminal is not thought of as somebody who is morally evil or who should be made an example of; rather, the criminal should be helped, supported and, indeed, educated. Such an idea contrasts sharply with that of retribution because it is based on an essentially optimistic conception of human nature that makes little or no allowance for the notion of 'personal evil'. That is why it is attractive to liberals and socialists, who stress the benefits of education and the possibilities for personal self-development. Hooliganism, vandalism and crime highlight the failings of society and not the defects of the individual. In effect, crime and disorder are 'bred' by social problems such as unemployment, poverty, poor housing and inequality. The only exception to this which rehabilitation theory would recognize is people who are mad in the traditional sense and are responding to non-rational psychological impulses. However, even in this case, people cannot be held personally responsible for their actions.

Quite clearly, rehabilitation suggests very different forms of punishment from either retribution or deterrence. In fact, if the goal is to 'reform' the wrong-doer,

punishment moves some way from the popular image of it as a penalty involving the infliction of pain, deprivation or, at the very least, inconvenience. Certainly, no justification can be found in rehabilitation theory for capital punishment – in any circumstances. Moreover, if the purpose of punishment is to educate rather than penalize, non-custodial sentences should be preferred to custodial ones; community service will be preferred to prison; and prison regimes should be designed to promote self-esteem and personal development, and should give transgressors the opportunity to acquire the skills and qualifications which will help them re-integrate into society after their release. A modern and increasingly fashionable version of rehabilitation theory can be found in the notion of restorative justice. This sets out to give wrong-doers an insight into the nature and impact of their crimes by forcing them to ‘make good’ any damage or harm caused, and possibly to meet with the victims of their crimes.

One difficulty with general rehabilitation theory, however, is that it views punishment as a form of personal engineering, designed to produce ‘better people’ through a process of re-education. In so doing, it seeks to mould and remould human nature itself. Furthermore, by dismissing the notion of personal evil, rehabilitation theories come close to absolving the individual from any moral responsibility whatsoever. To say ‘hate the crime but love the criminal’ is to run the risk of blaming society for all forms of unpleasantness and wrongdoing. This is to confuse explanation and justification. There is little doubt, for instance, that human beings act under a wide range of social pressures, but to ‘blame’ society for everything they do is to suggest that they are nothing more than robots, incapable of exercising any form of free will. To decide precisely when the individual is acting as an independent agent, morally responsible for his or her own actions, is nevertheless one of the most difficult questions, not just in relation to punishment, but in political theory itself.

Justice

Justice has been of central importance to political philosophy for over two thousand years. Through the ages, political thinkers have portrayed the ‘good society’ as a ‘just’ society. However, there has been far less agreement about what justice stands for. In everyday language, in fact, justice is used so imprecisely that it is taken to mean ‘fairness’, ‘rightness’ or, simply, that which is ‘morally correct’. Without doubt, justice is a moral or normative concept: that which is ‘just’ is certainly morally ‘good’, and to call something ‘unjust’ is to condemn it as morally ‘bad’. But justice does not simply mean ‘moral’. Rather, it denotes a particular kind of moral judgement, specifically one about the distribution of rewards and punishments. Justice, in short, is about giving each person what he or she is ‘due’. However, it is much more difficult to define what that ‘due’ might

be. Justice is thus perhaps the archetypal example of an 'essentially contested' concept. .

The issue is further complicated by the fact that although the notion of justice could be applied to almost anything – wealth, income, leisure, liberty, friendship, sexual love and so on – there is no reason why the same principle of distribution should be considered 'just' in each case. For example, those who may advocate an equal distribution of material wealth may nevertheless regard the idea of an equal distribution of sexual love as quite bizarre, if not as frankly unjust. In that sense, it is quite impossible to construct an overriding principle of justice applicable to all areas of life. As Walzer (see p. 34) argued, different principles of justice may therefore be appropriate in different spheres of life. During the twentieth century, for instance, justice came to be discussed usually in relation to social life in general, and the distribution of material rewards in particular. This is what is usually termed 'social justice', and is examined at greater length in Chapter 10.

In this chapter, justice is discussed primarily in relation to law, and therefore through the concept of 'legal justice'. Legal justice is concerned with the way in which law distributes penalties for wrong-doing, or allocates compensation in the case of injury or damage. Two forms of justice can nevertheless be identified at work in the legal process. First, there is procedural justice, which relates to how the rules are made and applied. Second, there is substantive justice, which is concerned with the rules themselves and whether they are 'just' or 'unjust'. Questions about justice in either of these senses are crucial because they bear on the issue of legitimacy. People recognize law as binding, and so acknowledge an obligation to obey it, precisely because they believe it to be just. If, however, law is not administered in accordance with justice, or law itself is seen to be unjust, citizens may possess a moral justification for breaking the law.

Procedural justice

Procedural or 'formal' justice refers to the manner in which decisions or outcomes are achieved, as opposed to the content of the decisions themselves. There are those, for instance, who suggest that legal justice is not so much concerned with the outcomes of law – judgements, verdicts, sentences and so on – as with how these outcomes are arrived at. There is no doubt that on certain occasions justice is entirely a procedural matter: a just and acceptable outcome is guaranteed by the application of particular procedural rules. This clearly applies, for example, in the case of sporting competition. The object of a running race is to establish, quite simply, who is the fastest runner. Justice in this respect is achieved if procedural rules are applied which ensure that all factors other than running talent are irrelevant to the outcome of the race. Thus justice

demands that every competitor runs the same distance, that they start at the same time, that none enjoys an unfair advantage gained through performance-enhancing drugs, that officials adjudicating the race are impartial, and so forth.

Legal systems can claim to be just in precisely the same way: they operate according to an established set of rules designed to ensure a just outcome. In short, justice is 'seen to be done'. These procedural rules can, however, take one of two forms. In the case of what John Rawls (see p. 282) called 'pure procedural justice', the question of justice is solely determined by the application of just procedures, as with the example of a running race or a lottery. In a court of law, on the other hand, there is prior knowledge of what would constitute a just outcome, in which case the justice of the procedures consists of their tendency to produce that outcome. For example, in a criminal trial the procedural rules are designed to ensure that the guilty are punished, that punishment fits the crime, and so on.

Many of these procedural rules are, however, not exclusive to the legal system but also apply to other areas of life, ranging from formal debate in legislative chambers or committees to informal discussions among friends or family. Indeed, it is often suggested that these rules reflect a widely held and perhaps innate sense of what is fair or reasonable, what is usually called 'natural' justice. This can be seen, for instance, in the widespread belief that it is fair in argument and debate for all parties to have the opportunity to express their views, or when decisions are taken for those affected by them to be consulted beforehand. Because the fairness of such rules is considered by many to be self-evident, there is often considerable agreement about what makes the administration of law procedurally just.

At the heart of procedural justice stands the principle of formal equality. The law should be applied in a manner that does not discriminate between individuals on grounds like gender, race, religion or social background. This, in turn, requires that law is impartially applied, which can only be achieved if judges are strictly independent and unbiased. Where the judiciary has clear political sympathies, as in the case of the US Supreme Court, or when judges are thought to be biased because they are predominantly male, white and wealthy, this may be seen as a cause of injustice. The widespread use of the jury system, at least in criminal cases, may also be justified in terms of procedural justice. The virtue of trial by jury is that juries are randomly selected and so are likely to be impartial and to be capable of applying a standard of justice commonly held in society at large. The defendant is thus judged by his or her 'peers'.

Moreover, the legal system must acknowledge the possibility that mistakes can be made and provide some machinery through which these can be rectified. This is achieved in practice through a hierarchy of courts, higher courts being able to consider appeals from lower courts. However, miscarriages of justice may be more difficult to rectify when the process of appeal is placed entirely in the

hands of the judges, who may fear bringing the court system, and the judiciary itself, into disrepute. This was highlighted in the UK by the cases of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, whose convictions for terrorism were overturned in 1989 and 1991, but only after they had served 14 and 16 years in jail respectively. Procedural justice is also said to require the presumption that the accused is 'innocent until proved guilty'. This has been described as the 'golden thread' running through the English legal system and those derived from it. The presumption of innocence ensures that the mere fact of an accusation does not in itself constitute proof; the onus is on the prosecution to offer evidence which can prove guilt 'beyond reasonable doubt'. This is also why certain evidence, for instance about the accused's previous criminal record, may be inadmissible in court, as it could taint the jury's views and prevent a verdict being reached on the facts of the case. In the same way, an accused person has traditionally been accorded a right to silence, on the grounds that it is the prosecution's job to establish guilt. In the USA, for example, this is enshrined in the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution which guarantees the right to avoid self-incrimination.

The principle of equal treatment has applications at every point in the legal process. For example, it suggests that ordinary citizens should not be disadvantaged by their ignorance when dealing with the police, the prosecution or the judiciary. It is normally accepted, therefore, that an accused person should be clearly informed about the charges made, and that he or she should be informed at the outset about their rights, notably their right to legal advice. Such rules of procedural justice have been most clearly defined in the USA. For example, in *Miranda v Arizona* (1966), the Supreme Court laid down very strict procedures which the police have to follow when questioning suspects. In other cases, however, governments have ignored such principles in the belief that they unnecessarily hamper the pursuit of criminals or others who threaten public order. For instance, a series of anti-terrorist laws in the UK in the 2000s allowed suspected terrorists to be held for up to 28 days (later reduced to 14 days), while in the USA the Patriot Act (2001) permits the indefinite detention of immigrants.

Substantive justice

As pointed out earlier, the requirements of legal justice cannot be entirely met by the application of procedural rules, however fair they may be and however scrupulously applied. This is the sense in which law differs from competitive sport; its outcomes, and not merely its procedures, are claimed to be just. The legal process may thus generate injustice not because law is unfairly applied but because law itself is unjust. For instance, laws which prohibit women from

voting, or which ban ethnic minorities from owning property, are not made 'just' by the fact that they are applied by courts whose procedures are fair and impartial. The content of law must therefore be judged in the light of a principle of substantive or 'concrete' justice.

Whereas there is considerable agreement about the rules of procedural justice, the same cannot be said of substantive justice. Legal justice has traditionally been linked to the idea that law aims to treat people according to their 'just deserts', or, in the words of the Roman Emperor Justinian, justice means 'giving each man his due'. The difficulty of doing this was illustrated by the earlier discussion of competing theories of punishment. Supporters of retribution may argue that in principle justice demands that the murderer's life be forfeit in punishment for his crime; those who advocate deterrence may accept capital punishment but only when empirical evidence indicates that it will reduce the number of murders; rehabilitation theorists reject capital punishment in all circumstances, regarding it as little more than a form of legalized murder. No amount of debate and analysis is likely to shift any of these positions because they are based on fundamentally different moral principles. The same applies to attempts to distribute material rewards justly. While some argue that social justice requires a high level of material equality on the grounds that wealth should be distributed according to individual needs, others are willing to defend wide material inequalities, so long as they are based on the unequal talents of the people involved.

One way round this problem may be to try to relate justice to a set of dominant or commonly held values in society. This is precisely what Patrick Devlin (1968) meant when he proposed that law should 'enforce morality'. In Devlin's view, law is based on the moral values of the average citizen or, in his words, 'the man on the Clapham omnibus'. Thus he proposed a distinction between what he called 'consensus laws' and 'non-consensus laws'. Consensus laws are ones which conform to commonly held standards of fairness or justice; they are laws which, in Devlin's view, people are 'prepared to put up with'. On the other hand, non-consensus laws are ones widely regarded as unacceptable or unjust, normally reflected in the fact of widespread disobedience. Devlin did not go as far as to suggest that breaking non-consensus laws was justified, but he nevertheless warned that their enforcement would only bring the judiciary and the legal process into disrepute. The 'poll tax' in the UK has sometimes been viewed as an example of a non-consensus law since its introduction in England and Wales in 1990 provoked a widespread campaign of protest and non-payment, based on the belief that as it took no account of people's ability to pay, it was socially unjust.

Devlin believed that judges, who are strictly impartial and stand apart from the political process, are in the best position to apply the distinction between consensus and non-consensus law. After all, judges have had years of experience adjudicating disputes and arbitrating between conflicting interpretations of law.

However, this form of judicial activism has proved to be highly controversial, allowing as it does non-elected judges to make decisions that have a clear moral and political content. The issue has been particularly relevant in the United States in view of the widely acknowledged role of the Supreme Court in making public policy. During the New Deal period of the 1930s, for instance, the Court struck down important social welfare programmes. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, the Warren Court was responsible for advancing civil rights on a number of fronts. The danger of such 'activism', however, is that there is no way of knowing whether judges' interpretations of law reflect widely held views about what is right or acceptable, or simply their own personal beliefs. It is clear that, as they are not elected, their definition of consensus morality enjoys no electoral mandate. Moreover, in the light of the socially unrepresentative nature of the judiciary, it is questionable that the judges know much about what Devlin called 'the man on the Clapham omnibus'.

Regardless of who is empowered to define consensus morality, there are reasons to believe that the idea itself may not stand up to serious scrutiny. In the first place, it implies that a reliable distinction can be made between consensus and non-consensus laws. In practice, few, if any, issues provoke widespread agreement, still less unanimity. All governments pass legislation that is politically controversial in that it provokes protest or at least a significant measure of criticism. This could be applied to almost every area of government policy, economic management, taxation, industrial relations, education, health, housing, law and order, race relations and so on. The danger of Devlin's argument is that it threatens to classify most laws as non-consensus on the grounds that somebody or other is not 'prepared to put up with' them. This leads to difficult questions about how many people need to object, and what form their objections need to take, before a law can be regarded as non-consensus. Such difficulties, however, merely reflect a deeper problem. In many respects, the idea of a consensus morality is simply a hangover from the days of traditional and homogeneous communities. In modern societies, characterized by ethnic, religious, racial, cultural and moral pluralism, any attempt to identify consensus beliefs may be doomed to failure.

Justifying law-breaking?

In most cases, laws are broken by people described, rather quaintly, as 'common criminals'. However reluctant they may be to be caught or prosecuted, common criminals usually acknowledge that they *should* have obeyed the law, and so recognize the law as binding. This is very different from incidents of law-breaking which are principled and, maybe, justifiable in moral or political terms. The moral justification for law-breaking can be examined in two ways. One is to ask

the question: 'Why should I obey the law?' This raises the issue of political obligation and is addressed more fully in Chapter 8. The alternative is to stand the question on its head and ask: 'What justification is there for breaking the law?' This raises the issue of what is called civil disobedience, law-breaking that is justified by reference to religious, moral or political principles. Civil disobedience has a long and respectable heritage, drawing as it does on the ideas of writers such as Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) and the example of political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (1929–68). Under Gandhi's influence, non-violent civil disobedience became a powerful weapon in the campaign for Indian independence, finally granted in 1947. In the early 1960s, Martin Luther King adopted similar political tactics in the struggle for black civil rights in the American South.

Civil disobedience is an overt and public act: it aims to break a law in order to 'make a point' rather than in an attempt to get away with it. Civil disobedience is thus distinguished from other criminal acts by its motives, which are conscientious or principled, in the sense that they aim to bring about some kind of legal or political change; it does not merely serve the interests of the law-breaker himself or herself. Indeed, in many cases it is precisely the willing acceptance of the penalties which law-breaking involves that gives civil disobedience its moral authority and emotional power. Finally, at least in the tradition of Thoreau, Gandhi and King, civil disobedience is non-violent, a fact which helps to underline the moral character of the act itself. Gandhi was particularly insistent on this, calling his form of non-violent non-cooperation *satyagraha*, literally meaning defence of, and by, the truth. Civil disobedience thus stands apart from a very different tradition of political law-breaking, which takes the form of popular revolt, terrorism and revolution.

In some cases, civil disobedience may involve the breaking of laws which are themselves considered to be wicked or unjust, its aim being to protest against the law in question and achieve its removal. In other cases, however, it involves breaking the law in order to protest against a wider injustice, even though the law being broken may not itself be objectionable. An example of the former would be the burning of draft cards or the refusal to pay that proportion of taxation which is devoted to military purposes, forms of protest adopted by opponents of the Vietnam War in the USA. Similarly, Sikhs in the UK openly flouted the law compelling motorcyclists to wear crash helmets because it threatened their religious duty to wear turbans. On the other hand, Thoreau, who refused all payment of tax in an act of protest against the Mexican–American War of the 1840s and the continuation of slavery in the South, is an example of the latter.

Whether designed to attack a particular law or advance a wider cause, all acts of civil disobedience are justified by asserting a distinction between law and justice. At the heart of civil disobedience stands the belief that the individual rather than government is the ultimate moral authority; to believe otherwise

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI (1869–1948)

Indian spiritual and political leader. Later called Mahatma ('Great Soul'), Gandhi trained as a lawyer in the UK and developed his political philosophy whilst working in South Africa where he organized protests against discrimination. After returning to India in 1915, he became the leader of the nationalist movement, campaigning tirelessly for independence, finally achieved in 1947. Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a fanatical Hindu, becoming a victim of the ferocious Hindu–Moslem violence which followed independence.

Gandhi's ethic of non-violent resistance, *satyagraha*, reinforced by his ascetic lifestyle, gave the movement for Indian independence enormous moral authority and provided a model for later civil-rights activists. First outlined in *Hind Swaraj (Home Rule)* (1909), it was based on a philosophy ultimately derived from Hinduism in which the universe is regulated by the primacy of truth, or *satya*. As humankind is 'ultimately one', love, care and a concern for others is the natural basis for human relations; indeed, he described love as 'the law of our being'. For Gandhi, non-violence not only expressed the proper moral relationship among people, but also, when linked to self-sacrifice, or *tapasya*, constituted a powerful social and political programme. He condemned Western civilization for its materialism and moral weakness, and regarded it as the source of violence and injustice. Gandhi favoured small, self-governing and largely self-sufficient rural communities, and gave support to the redistribution of land and the promotion of social justice.

would be to imply that all laws are just and to reduce justice to mere legality. The distinction between law and justice has usually, in the modern period, been based on the doctrine of human rights, asserting as it does that there is a set of higher moral principles against which human law can be judged and to which it should conform. Individuals are therefore justified in breaking the law to highlight violations of human rights or to challenge laws which themselves threaten human rights. Arguments about the existence of such rights, and about how they can be defined, are examined in the next chapter.

Other justifications for civil disobedience focus on the nature of the political process and the lack of alternative – legal – opportunities for expressing views and exerting pressure. For example, few would fail to sympathize with the actions of those who in Nazi Germany broke the law by sheltering Jews or assisting their passage out of the country. This applies not only because of the morally objectionable nature of the laws concerned but also because in a fascist dictatorship no form of legal or constitutional protest was possible. Similarly, the use of civil disobedience to gain votes for women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be justified by the simple fact that, deprived of the right to vote, women had no other way of making their voices heard. Civil disobedience campaigns were also used to achieve black suffrage in the American South in the

1960s and in apartheid-era South Africa. Even when universal suffrage exists it can perhaps be argued that the ballot box alone does not ensure that individual and minority rights are respected. A permanent minority, such as the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, may therefore turn to civil disobedience, and at times support political violence, even though they may possess formal political rights. Finally, it is sometimes argued that democratic and electoral politics may simply be too slow or time-consuming to provide an adequate means of exerting political pressure when human life itself is under imminent threat. This is, for example, the case made out by anti-nuclear campaigners and by environmental activists, both of whom believe that the urgency of their cause overrides what by comparison appears to be the almost trivial obligation to obey the law.

Since the 1960s civil disobedience has become more widespread and politically acceptable. In some respects, it is now regarded as a constitutional act which aims to correct a specific wrong and is prepared to conform to a set of established rules, notably about peaceful non-violence. Civil disobedience is, for example, now accepted by many as a legitimate weapon available to pressure groups. Sit-ins or sit-down protests help to attract publicity and demonstrate the strength of protesters' convictions, and may, in turn, help to promote public sympathy. Of course, such acts may also be counter-productive, making the individuals or group concerned appear irresponsible or extremist. In these cases, the question of civil disobedience becomes a tactical matter rather than a moral one. Critics of the principle nevertheless argue that it brings with it a number of insidious dangers. The first of these is that as civil disobedience becomes fashionable it threatens to undermine respect for alternative, legal and democratic means of exerting influence. At a deeper level, however, the spread of civil disobedience may ultimately threaten both social order and political stability by eroding the fear of illegality. When people cease obeying the law automatically and only do so out of personal choice, the authority of law itself is brought into question. As a result, acts of civil disobedience may gradually weaken the principles on which a regime is based and so be linked to rebellion and even revolution.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How does law differ from other social rules?
- What are the key features of the rule of law, and why has the principle been so highly valued?
- On what grounds have the ideas of natural law and positive law been criticized?
- Why, and to what extent, should law uphold individual freedom?
- Why has the fear of disorder and social instability been such an abiding concern in Western political thought?
- Is order inseparable from law and the fear of punishment?
- On what grounds has order been seen to arise naturally and spontaneously?
- Which theory of punishment is the most persuasive, and why?
- What kind of moral judgement does justice denote?
- What are the chief requirements of procedural legal justice?
- Is it possible to establish agreed standards of substantive legal justice?
- When and why is it justifiable to break the law?

FURTHER READING

Bingham, T. *The Rule of Law* (2011). A clear and very readable defence of the rule of law as the best means for securing peace and cooperation, which reflects on the history of the principle and the conditions most conducive for its operation.

Campbell, T. *Justice* (2010). A succinct and lucid introduction to the concept of justice, which provides a detailed elaboration of nine broad approaches to justice as exemplified in the work of major theorists.

Honderich, T. *Punishment: The Supposed Justifications Revisited* (2006). An updated and enlarged edition of a classic text on the justifications put forward by the state for punishment, which holds that the key principle of punishment should be humanity.

Wacks, R. *Philosophy of Law: A Very Short Introduction* (2006). A clear and concise exploration of the nature of law and its role in our lives, which looks at key questions behind legal theory and law's relationship to justice, morality and democracy.

8

Rights, Obligations and Citizenship

- RIGHTS

Legal and moral rights • Human rights • Animal and other rights?

- OBLIGATIONS

Contractual obligations • Natural duty • Rebellion and the limits of obligation

- CITIZENSHIP

Elements of citizenship • Social or active citizenship? • Universal citizenship and diversity

Preview

Since antiquity, political thinkers have debated the proper relationship between the individual and the state. In Ancient Greece, this relationship was embodied in the notion of the 'citizen', literally a member of the state. Within Greek city-states, citizenship was restricted to a small minority living in such states, in effect, free-born propertied males. The modern concept of citizenship is, by contrast, founded on the principle of universal rights and obligations. Its roots lie in seventeenth-century ideas about natural rights, elaborated in the twentieth century into the doctrine of human rights. However, it is less than clear what the term 'rights' refers to and how it should be used. For instance, what does it mean to say that somebody 'has a right'? On what basis can they be said to enjoy it? And how far, and to whom, does this doctrine of rights extend?

Citizens are not, however, merely bearers of rights; they also have duties and obligations towards the state that has protected, nurtured and cared for them. These obligations may include compulsory military service, entailing the duty to fight, kill and possibly die in defence of one's state. Once again, however, this raises difficult questions. In particular, what are the origins of such obligations, and what kind of claim do they make on the citizen? Are these claims absolute, or can citizens, in certain circumstances, be released from them? All such questions are linked to the idea of citizenship, the notion of a proper balance between the rights and obligations of the citizen. However, the concept of citizenship invariably carries heavy ideological baggage. Is the 'good citizen', for example, a self-reliant and hard-working individual who makes few demands on his or her community, or is it a person who is able to participate fully in its public and political life? Moreover, is the idea of universal citizenship any longer applicable in the light of growing cultural and other forms of diversity?

Rights

Political debate is littered with references to rights – the right to work, the right to education, the right to abortion, the right to life, the right to free speech, the right to own property and so forth. The idea is no less important in everyday language: children may claim the ‘right’ to stay up late or choose their own clothes; parents, for their part, may insist on their ‘right’ to control what their children eat or watch on television. In its original meaning, the term ‘right’ stood for a power or privilege, as in the right of the nobility, the right of the clergy, and, of course, the divine right of kings. However, in its modern sense, it refers to an entitlement to act or be treated in a particular way. Although it would be wrong to suggest that the doctrine of rights is universally accepted, most modern political thinkers have been prepared to express their ideas in terms of rights or entitlements. The concept of rights is, in that sense, politically less contentious than, say, equality or social justice. However, there is far less agreement about the grounds on which these rights are based, who should possess them, and which ones they should have.

There is, in the first place, a distinction between legal and moral rights. Some rights are laid down in law or in a system of formal rules and so are enforceable; others, however, exist only as moral or philosophical claims. Furthermore, particular problems surround the notion of human rights. Who, for instance, is to be regarded as ‘human’? Does this extend to children and embryos as well as to adults? Are particular groups of people, perhaps women and ethnic minorities, entitled to special rights by virtue either of their biological needs or social position? Finally, the conventional understanding of rights has been challenged by the emergence of the green and animal liberation movements, which have raised questions about the rights of non-humans, the rights of animals and other species. Are there rational grounds for refusing to extend rights to all species, or is this merely an irrational prejudice akin to sexism or racism?

Legal and moral rights

Legal rights are rights which are enshrined in law and are therefore enforceable through the courts. They have been described as ‘positive’ rights, in that they are enjoyed or upheld regardless of their moral content, in keeping with the idea of ‘positive law’ discussed in Chapter 7. Indeed, some legal rights remain in force for many years even though they are widely regarded as immoral. This can be said, for instance, about the legal right enjoyed by husbands in the UK until 1992 to rape their wives. Legal rights extend over a broad range of legal relationships. A classic attempt to categorize such rights was undertaken by Wesley Hohfeld in *Fundamental Legal Conceptions* (1923). Hohfeld identified four types of legal

right. First, there are privileges or liberty-rights. These allow a person to do something in the simple sense that they have no obligation *not* to do it; they are 'at liberty' to do it – for instance, to use the public highway. Second, there are claim-rights, on the basis of which another person owes another a corresponding duty – for example, the right of one person not to be assaulted by another. Third, there are legal powers. These are best thought of as legal abilities, empowering someone to do something – for example, the right to get married or the right to vote. Fourth, there are immunities, according to which one person can avoid being subject to the power of another – for instance, the right of young, elderly and disabled people not to be drafted into the army.

The status which these legal rights enjoy within a political system varies considerably from country to country. In the UK, the content of legal rights has traditionally been vague and their status questionable. Before the passage of the Human Rights Act 1998, most individual rights in the UK were 'residual' rights; that is, they were not embodied in statute law but, rather, were based on the common law assumption that 'everything is permitted that is not prohibited'. This led to situations in which individual rights commonly lacked clear legal definition, and were difficult or impossible to uphold in court. Although the Human Rights Act introduced greater clarity in the definition of rights, it did not give them entrenched status, allowing Parliament, albeit by a special procedure, to infringe the Act. By contrast, a bill of rights operates in the USA and many other states. A bill of rights is a codified set of individual rights and liberties, enshrined in constitutional or 'higher' law. The US Bill of Rights thus consists of the first ten Amendments of the Constitution, although it is sometimes said also to include the Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments. Bills of rights are usually said to 'entrench' individual rights because they are enshrined in documents that are complicated or difficult to amend. The key advantage of a bill of rights is that it establishes a mechanism through which rights can be legally defended and thus protects the individual from over-mighty government. This occurs because, as bills of rights are enshrined in constitutional law, judges rather than politicians are tasked with upholding individual rights, and they also possess the power of 'judicial review', allowing them to check the power of other public bodies if they should infringe on individual rights.

A bill of rights, nevertheless, may also bring disadvantages. Conservatives in the UK have, for instance, traditionally argued that individual rights are best protected by common law because rights are then rooted in customs and traditions that lie at the very heart of the legal system. By comparison, a bill of rights may appear both inflexible and artificial. On the other hand, socialists have often objected to bills of rights on the grounds that they serve to protect class interests and so preserve social inequality. This can occur through the entrenchment of property rights, making nationalization impossible and blocking radical social reform. One of the most serious drawbacks of a bill of rights is, however, that it

dramatically enlarges the authority of the judiciary. Given the typically vague or broad formulation of rights, judges end up deciding the proper scope of these, which, in effect, means that political decisions are taken by judges rather than by democratically elected politicians. Finally, it is clear that the mere existence of a bill of rights does not in itself guarantee that individual liberty will be respected. The Soviet Constitutions of 1936 and 1977, for example, established a truly impressive array of individual rights; but the subordination of the Soviet judiciary to the Communist Party ensured that few of these rights were upheld in practice. Similarly, despite the enactment in 1870 of the Fifteenth Amendment of the US Constitution granting the right to vote regardless of race, colour or previous condition of servitude, blacks in many Southern states were not able to vote until the 1960s.

A different range of rights, however, may have no legal substance but only exist as moral claims. The simplest example of this is a promise. A promise, freely and rationally made, invests one person with a moral obligation to fulfil its terms, and so grants the other party the right that it *should* be fulfilled. Unless the promise takes the form of a legally binding contract, it is enforced by moral considerations alone. It is, quite simply, the fact that it is freely made that creates the expectation that a promise will be, and should be, fulfilled. In most cases, however, moral rights are based, rather, on their content. In other words, moral rights are more commonly ‘ideal’ rights, which bestow on a person a benefit that they need or deserve. Moral rights therefore reflect what a person *should* have, from the perspective of a particular ethical or religious system.

The danger with moral rights is, however, that they may become impossibly vague and degenerate into little more than an expression of what is morally desirable. This was precisely the view taken by Jeremy Bentham (see p. 363), who rejected the very idea of moral rights, believing them to be nothing more than a mistaken way of describing legal rights that *ought* to exist. Nevertheless, despite Bentham’s scepticism, most systems of legal rights are underpinned, at least in theory, by some kind of moral considerations. For example, legal documents like the US Bill of Rights, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) have all developed out of attempts by philosophers to define the ‘Rights of Man’. In order to investigate moral rights further it is necessary to examine the most influential form of moral rights – human rights.

Human rights

The idea of human rights developed out of the ‘natural rights’ theories of the early modern period. Such theories arose, primarily, out of the desire to establish some limits on how individuals may be treated by others, especially by those

who wield political power. However, if rights are to act as a check on political authority, they must in a sense be 'pre-legal', law being merely the creation of political authority. In the seventeenth century, John Locke (see p. 255) identified as natural rights the right to 'life, liberty and property'; a century later, Thomas Jefferson (see p. 212) defined them as the right to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'. Such rights were described as 'natural' in that they were thought to be God-given and therefore to be part of the very core of human nature. Natural rights did not exist simply as moral claims but were, rather, considered to reflect the most fundamental inner human drives; they were the basic conditions for leading a truly human existence. As such, natural rights theories were psychological models every bit as much as they were ethical systems.

By the twentieth century, the decline of religious belief had led to the secularization of natural rights theories, which were reborn in the form of 'human' rights. Human rights are rights to which people are entitled by virtue of being human. They are therefore 'universal' rights. This means that they belong to all human beings rather than to members of any particular nation, race, religion or culture, although attempts have been made to qualify this universality, notably through the idea of 'Asian values' (see p. 211). Human rights are also 'fundamental' rights in that they are inalienable: they cannot be traded away or revoked. This was clearly expressed in the words of the American Declaration of Independence (1776), written by Jefferson, which proclaimed, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights'. Many have further suggested that human rights are 'absolute' rights in that they must be upheld at all times and in all circumstances. However, this view is more difficult to sustain since in practice rights are often balanced against one another. For example, does the assertion of a right to life rule out capital punishment and all forms of warfare, whatever the provocation? The right to life cannot be absolute if a right to self-defence is also acknowledged.

The concept of human rights raises a number of very different questions, about both who can be regarded as 'human' and the rights to which human beings are entitled. There is, for example, fierce controversy about the point at which 'human' life begins and so the point at which individuals acquire entitlements or rights. In particular, does human life begin at the moment of conception or does it begin at birth? Those who hold the former view uphold what they see as the rights of the unborn and reject absolutely practices like abortion and embryo research. On the other hand, however, if human life is thought to start at birth, abortion is quite acceptable since it reflects a woman's right to control her own body. Such contrasting positions not only reflect different conceptions of life but also allocate rights to human beings on very different grounds. Those who regard embryos as 'human', in the same sense as adults, draw on the belief that life is sacred. According to this view, all living things are entitled to rights,

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

ASIAN VALUES

The idea that Asian culture and beliefs may constitute an alternative to Western ones gained momentum during the 1980s and 1990s, fuelled by the emergence of Japan as an economic superpower and the success of the so-called 'tiger' economies of East and Southeast Asia – Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore. This position was outlined most clearly by the Bangkok Declaration of 1993, when Asian state representatives from Iran to Mongolia, meeting in preparation for the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993), issued a bold statement in favour of what they called 'Asian values'. These are values that supposedly reflect the history, culture and religious backgrounds of Asian societies, examples of Asian values including social harmony, duty, respect for authority and a belief in the family. Particularly keen advocates of this view included Mahathir Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew, at that time the prime ministers, respectively, of Malaysia and Singapore.

While not rejecting the idea of universal human rights, the notion of Asian values drew attention to supposed differences between Western and Asian value systems as part of an argument in favour of taking cultural difference into account in formulating human rights. From this perspective, human rights had traditionally been constructed on the basis of culturally biased Western assumptions. In particular, individualism had been emphasized over the interests of the community; rights had been given preference over duties; and civic and political freedoms had been extolled above socio-economic well-being. The recognition of Asian values sought to rectify this. At their heart was a vision of social harmony and cooperation grounded in loyalty and respect for all forms of authority – towards parents within the family, teachers at school and the government within society as a whole. Allied to a keen work ethic and thrift, these values were seen as a recipe for social stability and economic success. Although the idea of Asian values was dealt a damaging blow by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98, the rise of China has revived interest in it, particularly in the light of its association with Confucianism (see p. 125).

regardless of the form or quality of life with which they may be blessed. However, if life itself is regarded as the basis for rights it becomes difficult to see why rights should be restricted to humans and not extended to animals and other forms of life, as discussed in the next section. To argue, by contrast, that 'human' life begins only at birth is to establish a narrower basis for allocating rights, such as the ability to live independently, to enjoy a measure of self-consciousness, or the ability to make rational or moral choices. If such criteria are employed, however, it is difficult to see how human rights can be granted to groups of people who do not themselves fulfil such requirements, for example, children and people with mental or physical disabilities.

THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826)

US statesman and political philosopher. A wealthy Virginian planter who was governor of Virginia, 1779–81, Jefferson served as the first US Secretary of State, 1789–94. He was the third president of the USA, 1801–9. Jefferson was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence (1776), and wrote a vast number of addresses and letters.

Jefferson articulated a strong Enlightenment faith in the perfectibility of humankind and the capacity to solve political problems through the application of scientific method. He used the natural rights ideas of Locke (see p. 255) to develop a classic defence of national independence and government by consent. Jeffersonianism is usually viewed as a democratic form of agrarianism that sought to blend a belief in rule by a natural aristocracy with a commitment to limited government and *laissez-faire*, reflecting the belief that 'That government is best which governs least'. He nevertheless demonstrated sympathy for social reform, favouring the extension of public education, the abolition of slavery, and greater economic equality. Although Jefferson is regarded as one of the founders of the Democratic coalition, he was fiercely critical of parties and factions, believing that they would promote conflict and destroy the underlying unity of society.

A further problem arises from the fact that while human rights are universal, human beings are not identical. This can clearly be seen in the notion that women in some sense enjoy rights that are different from men's. To advance the cause of 'women's rights' may simply be to argue that human rights, initially developed with men in mind, should also be extended to women. This would apply in the case of women's right to education, their right to enter particular professions, their right to equal pay and so on. However, the idea of women's rights may also be based on the fact that women have specific needs and capacities which entitle them to rights which in relation to men would be unnecessary or simply meaningless. Such rights would include those related to childbirth or childcare, such as the right to perinatal maternity leave. More controversial, however, is the notion that women are entitled to a set of rights in addition to men's in an attempt to compensate them for their unequal treatment by society. For example, social conventions that link child-bearing and child-rearing and so channel women into a domestic realm of motherhood and housework undermine their capacity to gain an education and pursue a career. In such circumstances, women's rights could extend to a form of reverse discrimination which seeks to rectify past injustices by, say, establishing quotas for the number of women in higher education or in senior positions in business, politics or certain professions. In so far as such rights are based on a commitment to equal treatment it can be argued that they draw on the notion of human rights. However, it is difficult to regard women's rights in

this sense as fundamental human rights since they are not allocated to all human beings. Rights that arise out of unequal or unjust treatment will be meaningful only so long as the inequality or injustice that justifies their existence persists.

Even when such controversies are set aside, there are very deep divisions about what rights human beings should enjoy. The idea that rights-based theories in some way stand above ideological and political differences is clearly misguided. From the outset, the idea of natural rights was closely linked to the liberal notion of limited government. The traditional formulation that human beings are entitled to the right to life, liberty and property, or the pursuit of happiness, regarded rights as a private sphere within which the individual could enjoy independence from the encroachments of other individuals and, more particularly, from the interference of the state. These rights are therefore 'negative' rights or 'forbearance' rights; they can be enjoyed only if constraints are placed on others. For instance, the right to property requires that limits be set to the government's ability to tax, an idea reflected in the principle of 'no taxation without representation'.

As the twentieth century progressed, however, another range of rights came to be added to these traditional liberal ones, an acknowledgement of government's growing responsibility for economic and social life. These are economic, social and cultural rights, and they are 'positive' in the sense that they demand not forbearance but active government intervention. The right to health care, for example, requires some form of health insurance, if not a publicly funded system of health provision. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes not only classical 'negative' rights, like the right to 'freedom of thought, conscience and religion' (Article 18), but also 'positive' rights such as the 'right to work' (Article 23) and the 'right to education' (Article 26). Such economic and social rights have nevertheless provoked fierce disagreement, particularly between socialists and conservatives, leading to the development of two contrasting models of citizenship, as examined in the final section of the chapter.

Finally, the very idea of natural or human rights has been attacked, notably by utilitarians (see p. 362), Marxists (see p. 75) and postcolonial theorists (see p. 214). As pointed out earlier, Jeremy Bentham was prepared to acknowledge only the existence of 'positive' or legal rights. Natural rights were subjective or metaphysical entities, which Bentham dismissed as 'nonsense on stilts'. Marx (see p. 317), on the other hand, regarded the doctrine of 'the Rights of Man' as little more than a means of advancing the interests of private property. In his view, every right was a 'right of inequality' since it applied an equal standard to unequal individuals. For instance, the right to property can be regarded as a 'bourgeois' right because it has very different implications for the rich and the poor. Postcolonial theorists have criticized human rights on two grounds. First,

POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonial thinking developed out of the collapse of the European empires in the early post-World War II period. Its characteristic feature was that it sought to give the developing world a distinctive political voice separate from the universalist pretensions of Western thought, particularly as represented by liberalism and socialism. An early but highly influential attempt to do this was undertaken at the Bandung Conference of 1955, when 29 mostly newly independent African and Asian countries, including Egypt, Pakistan, India and Indonesia, initiated what later became known as the Non-Aligned Movement. Member states avoided formal political and economic affiliation to either of the Cold War power blocs, but instead sought to offer a distinctive 'Third-World' perspective on global political, economic and cultural priorities. This 'third-worldism' defined itself in contradistinction to both Western and Soviet models of development. A more militant form of third-world politics nevertheless emerged from the Tricontinental Conference held in Havana in 1966. For the first time, this brought Latin America (including the Caribbean) together with Africa and Asia – hence the name 'tricontinental'.

As a theoretical stance, postcolonialism originated as a trend in literary and cultural studies that sought to address the cultural conditions characteristic of newly independent societies. From the 1970s onwards, however, postcolonial thinking acquired an increasingly political orientation, coming to be used to expose and overturn the cultural and psychological dimensions of colonial rule. Crucial to this was the recognition that 'inner' subjugation can persist long after the political structures of colonialism have been removed. A major thrust of postcolonialism has been to establish the legitimacy of non-Western and sometimes anti-Western political ideas and traditions. However, as it draws inspiration from indigenous religions, cultures and traditions, postcolonial theory tends to be highly disparate. It has been reflected in Gandhi's attempt to fuse Indian nationalism with an ethic of non-violence ultimately rooted in Hinduism, as well as in forms of religious fundamentalism, especially Islamic fundamentalism. Postcolonialism has perhaps had its greatest influence as a means of examining how Eurocentric values and theories have helped to establish and maintain Western cultural and political hegemony over the rest of the world, especially through the device of Orientalism. Orientalism consists of stereotypical depictions of 'the Orient', or Eastern culture generally, which are based on distorted and invariably demeaning Western assumptions.

Postcolonialism has had a far-reaching impact on political theory. By attempting to give the developing world a distinctive political voice, it has encouraged a broader reassessment within political thought, in that, for instance, Islamic and liberal ideas are increasingly considered to be equally legitimate in articulating the traditions and values of their own communities. Critics, nevertheless, have argued that, in turning its back on the Western intellectual tradition, it has abandoned progressive politics and been used, too often, as a justification for traditional values and authority structures. This has been evident, for instance, in tension between the demands of cultural authenticity and calls for women's rights.

Key figures

Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) A Jamaican political thinker and activist, Garvey was a pioneer of black nationalism and an early advocate of pan-Africanism. His political message mixed a call for black pride with an insistence on economic self-sufficiency. A leader of the 'back to Africa' movement, Garvey developed a philosophy based on racial segregation and the re-establishment of black consciousness through an emphasis on African culture and identity. Garvey's ideas helped to shape the Black Power movement of the 1960s and influenced groups such as the Nation of Islam.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900–89) An Iranian cleric and leader of Iran, 1979–89, Khomeini was the foremost modern exponent of militant political Islam. His world-view was rooted in a clear division between the oppressed (understood largely as the poor and excluded of the developing world) and the oppressors (seen as the twin Satans: the United States and the Soviet Union). Khomeini's theo-political project aimed at the establishment of an 'Islamic republic' as a system of institutionalized clerical rule, recognizing that this was based on a novel interpretation of Islamic doctrine.

Franz Fanon (1926–61) A Martinique-born French revolutionary theorist, Fanon is best known for his emphasis on violence as a feature of the anti-colonial struggle. His theory of imperialism emphasized the psychological dimension of colonial subjugation. Decolonialization is therefore not merely a political process, but one through which a new 'species' of man is created. Fanon argued that only the cathartic experience of violence is powerful enough to bring about this psycho-political regeneration. Fanon's major works include *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1962).

Edward Said (1935–2003) A Jerusalem-born US academic and literary critic, Said was a leading advocate of the Palestinian cause and a major influence on postcolonial theory. He developed a humanist critique of the Western Enlightenment that uncovered its links to colonialism and highlighted 'narratives of oppression', cultural and ideological biases that that disempowered colonized peoples by representing them as the non-Western 'other'. Most influentially, he portrayed 'Orientalism' as a form of cultural imperialism. His best-known works include *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

See also Mohandas Gandhi (p. 203)

in line with communitarian (see p. 33) and postmodern (see p. 119) thinking, they have argued that circumstances vary so much from society to society, and from culture to culture, as to require differing moral values and, at least, differing conceptions of human rights. Second, and more radically, postcolonial theorists have portrayed universal values in general, and human rights in particular, as a form of cultural imperialism.

Animal and other rights?

The final decades of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the animal welfare and animal liberation movements as part of the broader growth of green politics (see p. 218). These have campaigned, for instance, in favour of vegetarianism and improved treatment of farm animals, and against the fur trade and animal experiments. Such campaigns have typically been carried out under the banner of 'animal rights'. This amounts to the assertion that animals have rights in the same sense that human beings do; indeed, it implies that once human beings are invested with rights it is impossible not to extend these rights to certain animals at least. In effect, the doctrine of human rights leads irresistibly in the direction of animal rights. However, on what basis can animals be said to have rights, and is the notion of animal rights at all meaningful or coherent?

Traditional attitudes towards animals and nature in general in the West were shaped by the Christian belief that human beings enjoyed a God-given dominion over the world, reflected in their stewardship over all other species. In medieval Europe, it was not uncommon for animals to be tried before ecclesiastical courts for alleged wrong-doing, on the grounds that as God's creatures they, like humans, were subject to 'natural law'. At the same time, however, Christianity taught that humankind was the centrepiece of creation and that animals had been placed on the Earth for the sole purpose of providing for human needs. Since they do not possess immortal souls, animals can in no sense be regarded as equal to humans. Green theories, by contrast, hold that human beings are neither above nor beyond the natural world but are, rather, an inseparable part of it. This belief is much closer to the pagan notion of an Earth Mother and to the emphasis found in Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism on the oneness of all forms of life. In the process, the clear distinction once thought to exist between humans and animals has come under increasing pressure.

It is important, however, to distinguish between the notion of 'animal welfare' and the more radical idea of 'animal rights'. Animal welfare reflects an altruistic concern for the well-being of other species, but not one which necessarily places them on the same level as humans. Such an argument was, for example, advanced by Peter Singer (see p. 363) in *Animal Liberation* (1995). Singer argued that concern for the welfare of animals is based on the fact that as sentient beings they are capable of suffering. Like humans, animals clearly have an interest in avoiding physical pain. For Singer, the interests of animals and humans in this respect are equal, and he condemns any attempt to place the interests of humans above those of animals as 'speciesism', an arbitrary and irrational prejudice not unlike sexism or racism. The animal welfare argument emphasizes the need to treat animals with respect and to try, whenever possible, to minimize their suffering. It may, nevertheless, acknowledge that it is natural or inevitable for humans, like all species, to prefer their own kind and to place human interests

before those of other species. The animal welfare movement may therefore oppose factory farming because it is cruel to animals, but not go as far as to insist on vegetarianism. Altruistic concern does not imply equal treatment. The animal rights argument, on the other hand, has more radical implications precisely because it is derived directly from human rights theories.

Animal rights theories commence by examining the grounds on which rights are allocated to humans. One possibility is that rights spring out of the existence of life itself: human beings have rights because they are living individuals. If this is true, however, it naturally follows that the same rights should be granted to other living creatures. For instance, Tom Regan argued in *The Case for Animal Rights* (2004) that all creatures that are 'the subject of a life' qualify for rights. He therefore suggested that, as the right to life is the most fundamental of all rights, the killing of an animal, however painless, is as morally indefensible as the killing of a human being. Regan acknowledged, however, that in some cases rights are invested in human beings on very different grounds, notably that they, unlike animals, are capable of rational thought and moral autonomy. The right to free speech, freedom of worship and to gain an education may seem absurd if invested in animals. Regan nevertheless pointed out that such an argument fails to draw a clear distinction between the animal and human worlds. There are, for instance, what Regan called 'marginal cases,' human beings who because of mental disability have very little capacity to exercise reason or enjoy autonomy. If rights are invested on the grounds of rational and moral capacity rather than life itself, surely such humans can be treated as animals traditionally have been: they can be used for food, clothing, scientific experimentation and so on. At the same time, there are clearly animals that possess mental capacities more normally associated with humans; for instance, research has shown dolphin communication systems to be every bit as sophisticated as human language. Logically pursued, therefore, this argument may justify the allocation to some animals of rights which are nevertheless denied to 'marginal' humans.

It is difficult, however, to see how these ideas can be confined to animals alone. If the distinction between humans and animals is called into question, how adequate are distinctions between mammals and fish, or between animals and plants? Evidence from biologists such as Lyall Watson (1973) suggests that, in contrast to conventional assumptions, plant life may possess the capacity to experience physical pain. What is clear is that if rights belong to humans and animals it is absurd to deny them to fish on the grounds that they live in water, or to deny them to plants simply because they do not run around on two legs or four. Although such ideas seem bizarre from the conventional Western standpoint, they merely restate a belief in the interconnectedness of all forms of life long expressed by Eastern religions and acknowledged by pre-Christian 'pagan' creeds. On the other hand, it is reasonable to remember that the material and social progress that the human species has made has been achieved, in part,

GREEN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Green political thought is rooted in the idea of ecology, a term coined by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866 and defined as 'the investigations of the total relations of the animal both to its organic and its inorganic environment'. Green politics, or ecologism, can be traced back to the nineteenth-century backlash against the spread of industrialization and urbanization. Modern green politics emerged during the 1960s along with renewed concern about the damage done to the environment by pollution, resource depletion, overpopulation and so on. Such concerns have been articulated politically by a growing number of green parties which now operate in most developed societies and, in cases such as the German Greens, have shared government power, and through the influence of a powerful environmentalist lobby.

Green politics is based on the idea that nature is an interconnected whole, embracing humans and non-humans as well as the inanimate world. This view is expressed in the adoption of an ecocentric or biocentric perspective that accords priority to nature or the planet and thus differs from the anthropocentric, or human-centred, perspective of conventional political thought. Nevertheless, two strains of green politics are normally identified. 'Deep' ecology goes beyond the perspective of conventional political creeds, completely rejecting the belief that the human species is in some way superior to, or more important than, any other species – or, indeed, nature itself. By contrast, 'shallow', or humanist, ecology accepts the lessons of ecology but harnesses them to human needs and ends. In other words, it preaches that if we can serve and cherish the natural world, it will, in turn, continue to sustain human life. Shallow is compatible with a number of other creeds, creating hybrid political traditions. Ecosocialism, usually influenced by modern Marxism (see p. 75), explains environmental destruction in terms of capitalism's rapacious quest for profit; eco-anarchism draws parallels between natural equilibrium in nature and in human communities, using the idea of social ecology; and ecofeminism has portrayed patriarchy as the source of the ecological crisis.

One of the key strengths of green politics is that it draws attention to an imbalance in the relationship between humans and the natural world that is manifest in a growing catalogue of threats to the well-being of both. Moreover, it has gone further than any other tradition in questioning and transcending the limited focus of Western political thought. As the nearest thing political theory has to a world philosophy, green politics has allowed political thought to be fertilized by insights from pagan religions, native cultures and eastern religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Daoism. The drawbacks of green politics nevertheless include the limited attraction of its anti-growth, or at least sustainable growth, economic model, and that its critique of industrial society is sometimes advanced from a pastoral and anti-technology perspective that is quite out of step with the modern world. Some, as a result, dismiss green politics as simply an urban fad, a form of post-industrial romanticism.

Key figures

Ernst Friedrich Schumacher (1911–77) A German-born UK economist and environmental theorist, 'Fritz' Schumacher championed the cause of human-scale production and helped to develop an ecological philosophy. His notion of 'Buddhist economics' (see p. 303), or 'economics as if people mattered', stressed the importance of morality and 'right livelihood', and warned against the depletion of finite energy sources. Though an opponent of industrial giantism, Schumacher believed in 'appropriate' scale production, and was a keen advocate of 'intermediate' technology. His seminal work is *Small is Beautiful* (1974).

James Lovelock (born 1919) A UK atmospheric chemist, inventor and environmental theorist, Lovelock is best known for having developed the Gaia hypothesis. This portrays the Earth's biosphere as a complex, self-regulating, living 'being', called Gaia after the Greek goddess of the Earth. Although the Gaia hypothesis extends the ecological idea by applying it to the planet as an ecosystem, Lovelock supports technology and industrialization and is an opponent of 'back to nature' mysticism and ideas such as Earth worship. His major writings include *Gaia* (1979) and *A Rough Ride to the Future* (2014).

Murray Bookchin (born 1921) A US anarchist social philosopher and environmentalist, Bookchin was the leading proponent of 'social ecology'. As an anarchist he emphasized the potential for non-hierarchical cooperation within conditions of post-scarcity. His principle of social ecology propounds the view that ecological principles can be applied to social organization and argues that the environmental crisis is a result of the breakdown of the organic fabric of both society and nature. Bookchin's major works include *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971) and *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982).

Rudolph Bahro (1936–98) A German writer and Green activist, Bahro attempted to reconcile socialism with ecological theories. His argument that capitalism is the root cause of environmental problems led him to assert that those concerned with human survival should convert to socialism, and that people who support social justice must take account of ecological sustainability. Bahro subsequently moved beyond conventional ecosocialism, accepting that the ecological crisis must take precedence over the class struggle. Bahro's chief works include *Socialism and Survival* (1982) and *From Red to Green* (1984).

Carolyn Merchant (born 1936) A US ecofeminist philosopher, Merchant's work has highlighted links between gender oppression and the 'death of nature'. She developed a socialist feminist critique of the scientific revolution that links environmental destruction to the mechanistic view of nature that is favoured by men. On this basis, she argued that a global ecological revolution requires a radical restructuring of gender relations as well as of the relationship between humans and nature. Merchant's chief works include *The Death of Nature* (1980) and *Radical Ecology* (1991).

because of a willingness to treat other species, and indeed the natural world, as a resource available for human use. To alter this relationship by acknowledging the rights of other species has profound implications not only for moral conduct but also for the material and social organization of human life.

Obligations

An obligation is a requirement or duty to act in a particular way. H. L. A. Hart ([1961] 2013) distinguished between ‘being obliged’ to do something, which implies an element of coercion, and ‘having an obligation’ to do something, which suggests only a moral duty. Though a cashier in a bank may feel obliged to hand over money to a gunman, he is under no obligation, in the second sense, to do so. This can be seen in the distinction between legal and moral obligations. Legal obligations, such as the requirement to pay taxes and observe other laws, are enforceable through the courts and backed up by a system of penalties. Such obligations may be upheld on grounds of simple prudence: whether laws are right or wrong they are obeyed out of a fear of punishment. Moral obligations, with which this chapter is concerned, are fulfilled not because it is sensible to do so but because such conduct is thought to be rightful or morally correct. To give a promise, for example, is to be under a moral obligation to carry it out, regardless of the consequences which breaking the promise would entail.

In a sense, rights and obligations are the reverse sides of the same coin. To possess a right usually places someone else under an obligation to uphold or respect that right. In that sense, the individual rights discussed in the previous section place heavy obligations on the state. If the right to life is meaningful, for instance, then government is subject to an obligation to maintain public order and ensure personal security. ‘Negative’ rights entail an obligation on the part of the state to limit or constrain its power; ‘positive’ rights oblige the state to manage economic life, provide a range of welfare services and so on. However, if citizens are bearers of rights alone and all obligations fall on the state, orderly and civilized life would be impossible: individuals who possess rights but acknowledge no obligations would be lawless and unrestrained. Citizenship, therefore, entails a blend of rights and obligations, the most basic of which has traditionally been described as ‘political obligation’, the duty of the citizen to acknowledge the authority of the state and obey its laws.

The only political thinkers who are prepared to reject political obligation out of hand are philosophical anarchists such as Robert Paul Wolff ([1970] 1998), who insist on absolute respect for individual autonomy. Others, however, have been more interested in debating not whether political obligation exists, but the grounds on which it can be advanced. The classic explanation of political obligation is found in the idea of a ‘social contract’, the belief that there are clear rational and moral grounds for respecting state authority. Other thinkers, however, have gone further and suggested that obligations, responsibilities and duties are not merely contractual but are instead an intrinsic feature of any stable society. Nevertheless, few theorists have been prepared to regard political obligation as absolute. What they disagree about, however, is where the limits of political obligation can be drawn. At what point can the dutiful citizen be

released from his or her obligation to obey the state and exercise, by contrast, a right of rebellion?

Contractual obligations

Social-contract theory is as ancient as political philosophy itself. Some form of social contract can be found in the writings of Plato (see p. 22); it was the cornerstone of early modern thinkers like Thomas Hobbes (see p. 111), John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see p. 165); and it has resurfaced in modern times in the writings of theorists such as John Rawls (see p. 282). A 'contract' is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Contracts, however, are a specific kind of agreement, entered into voluntarily and on mutually agreed terms. To enter into a contract is, in effect, to make a promise to abide by its terms; it therefore entails a moral as well as sometimes a legal obligation. A 'social contract' is an agreement made either among citizens, or between citizens and the state, through which they accept the authority of the state in return for benefits which only a sovereign power can provide. However, the basis of this contract and the obligations it entails have been the source of profound disagreement.

The earliest form of social-contract theory was outlined starkly in Plato's *Crito*. After his trial for corrupting the youth of Athens, and facing certain death, Socrates explains his refusal to escape from prison to his old friend Crito. Socrates points out that by choosing to live in Athens and by enjoying the privileges of being an Athenian citizen, he had, in effect, promised to obey Athenian law, and he intended to keep his promise even at the cost of his own life. From this perspective, political obligation arises out of the benefits derived from living within an organized community. The obligation to obey the state is based on an implicit promise made by the simple fact that citizens choose to remain within its borders. This argument, however, runs into difficulties. In the first place, it is not easy to demonstrate that natural-born citizens have made a promise or entered into an agreement, even an implicit one. The only citizens who have made a clear promise and entered into a 'contract of citizenship' are naturalized citizens, who may even have signed a formal oath to that effect. Moreover, citizens living within a state may claim either that they receive no benefit from it and are therefore under no obligation, or that the state's influence on their lives is largely brutal and repressive. Socrates' notion of political obligation is unconditional, in that it does not take into account how the state is formed or how it behaves. Finally, Socrates appears to have assumed that citizens dissatisfied with one state would easily be able to take up residence in another, which, in practice, may not be possible.

The social-contract theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3, advance, by contrast, a more conditional basis for political obligation. Thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke were

concerned to explain how political authority arose amongst human beings who are morally free and equal. In their view, the right to rule had to be based on the consent of the governed. This they explained by analyzing the nature of a hypothetical society without government, a so-called 'state of nature'. Their portrait of the state of nature was distinctly unattractive: a barbaric civil war of all against all, brought about by the unrestrained pursuit of power and wealth. They therefore suggested that rational individuals would be prepared to enter into an agreement, a social contract, through which a common authority could be established and order guaranteed. This contract was clearly the basis of political obligation, implying as it did a duty to respect law and the state. In very few cases, however, did contractarian theorists believe that the social contract was a historical fact, whose terms could subsequently be scrutinized and examined. Rather, it was employed as a philosophical device through which theorists could discuss the grounds on which citizens should obey their state. The conclusions they arrived at, however, vary significantly.

In *Leviathan* ([1651] 1968), Hobbes argued that citizens have an absolute obligation to obey political authority, regardless of how government may behave. In effect, Hobbes believed that though citizens were obliged to obey their state, the state itself was not subject to any reciprocal obligations. This was because Hobbes believed that the existence of any state, however oppressive, is preferable to the existence of no state at all, which would lead to a descent into chaos and barbarism. Clearly, Hobbes's views reflect a heightened concern about the dangers of instability and disorder, perhaps resulting from the fear and insecurity he himself experienced during the English Civil War. However, it is difficult to accept his belief that any form of protest, any limit on political obligation, would occasion the collapse of all authority and the re-establishment of the state of nature. For Hobbes, citizens are confronted by a stark choice between absolutism and anarchy.

An alternative and more balanced view of political obligation is found in the writings of Locke. Locke's ([1690] 1965) account of the origins of political obligation involve the establishment of two contracts. The first, the social contract proper, was undertaken by all the individuals who form a society. In effect, they volunteered to sacrifice a portion of their liberty in order to secure the order and stability which only a political community can offer. The second contract, or 'trust', was undertaken between a society and its government, through which the latter was authorized to protect the natural rights of its citizens. This implied that obedience to government was conditional on the state fulfilling its side of the contract. If the state becomes a tyranny against the individual, the individual could exercise the right of rebellion, which is precisely what Locke believed had occurred in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, which brought monarchical absolutism in Britain to an end. However, in Locke's account, rebellion consists of the removal by a society of its government rather than the dissolution of the social contract and a return to the state of nature.

A very different form of social-contract theory was developed by Rousseau in *The Social Contract* ([1762] 1969). Whereas Hobbes and Locke had assumed human beings to be power-seeking and narrowly self-interested, Rousseau held a far more optimistic view of human nature. He was attracted by the notion of the 'noble savage' and believed that the roots of injustice lay not in the human individual but rather in society itself. In Rousseau's view, government should be based on what he called the 'general will', reflecting the common interests of society as opposed to the 'private will', or selfish wishes of each member. In a sense, Rousseau espoused an orthodox social-contract theory in that he said that an individual is bound by the rules of a society, including its general will, only if he himself has consented to be a member of that society. At the same time, however, the general will alone can also be seen as a ground for political obligation. By articulating the general will, the state is, in effect, acting in the 'real' interests of each of its members. In this way, political obligation can be interpreted as a means of obeying one's own higher or 'true' self. Such a theory of obligation, however, moves away from the idea of government by consent. Being blinded by ignorance and selfishness, citizens may not recognize that the general will embodies their 'real' interests. In such circumstances, Rousseau acknowledged that citizens should be 'forced to be free'; in other words they should be forced to obey their own 'true' selves.

Natural duty

Social-contract theories of whatever kind share the common belief that there are rational or moral grounds for obeying state authority. They therefore hold that political obligation is based on individual choice and decision, on a specific act of voluntary commitment. Such voluntaristic theories are, however, by no means universally accepted. Some point out, for instance, that many of the obligations to which the individual is subject do not, and often cannot, arise out of contractual agreements. Not only does this apply in most cases to political obligation, but it is even more clear in relation to social duties, like those of children towards parents, which arise long before the children have any meaningful ability to enter into a contract. In addition, social-contract theories are based on individualistic assumptions, implying that society is a human creation or artefact, fashioned by the rational undertakings of independent individuals. This may fundamentally misconceive the nature of society and fail to recognize the degree to which society helps to shape its members and invest them with duties and responsibilities.

There are two principal alternatives to contract theory as a ground of political obligation. The first of these encompasses theories that are usually described as teleological, from the Greek *telos*, meaning a purpose or goal. Such theories suggest that the duty of citizens to respect the state and obey its commands is

based on the benefits or goods which the state provides. This can be seen in any suggestion that political obligation arises from the fact that the state acts in the common good or public interest, perhaps presented in terms of Rousseau's general will. The most influential teleological theory has been utilitarianism (see p. 362), which implies, in simple terms, that citizens should obey government because it strives to achieve 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number'.

The second set of theories, however, relate to the idea that membership of a particular society is somehow 'natural', in which case political obligation can be thought of as a natural duty. To conceive of political obligation in this way is to move away from the idea of voluntary behaviour. A duty is a task or action that a person is *bound* to perform for moral reasons; it is not just a morally preferable action. Thus the debt of gratitude which Socrates claimed he owed Athens did not allow him to challenge or resist its laws, even at the cost of his own life. The idea of natural duty has been particularly attractive to conservative thinkers, who have stressed the degree to which all social groups, including political communities, are held together by the recognition of mutual obligations and responsibilities.

Conservatives have traditionally shied away from doctrines like 'the Rights of Man', not only because they are thought to be abstract and worthless but also because they treat the individual as pre-social, implying that human beings can be conceived of outside or beyond society. By contrast, conservatives have preferred to understand society as organic, and to recognize that it is shaped by internal forces beyond the capacity of any individual to control. Human institutions such as the family, the church and government have not therefore been constructed in accordance with individual wishes or needs but by the forces of natural necessity which help to sustain society itself. Individuals are therefore supported, educated, nurtured and moulded by society, and as a result inherit a broad range of responsibilities, obligations and duties. These include not merely the obligation to obey the law and respect the liberties of others, but also wider social duties such as to uphold established authority and, if appropriate, to shoulder the burden of public office. In this way, conservatives argue that the obligation of citizens towards their government has the same character as the duty and respect that children owe their parents.

The cause of social duty has also been taken up by socialist and social-democratic (see p. 276) theorists. Socialists have traditionally underlined the need for community and cooperation, emphasizing that human beings are essentially sociable and gregarious creatures. Social duty can therefore be understood as the practical expression of community; it reflects the responsibility of every human being towards every other member of society. This may, for instance, incline socialists to place heavier responsibilities on the citizen than liberals would be prepared to do. These could include the obligation to work for the community, perhaps through some kind of public service, and the duty to provide welfare support for those who are not able to look after themselves. A society in which

individuals possess only rights but recognize no duties or obligations would be one in which the strong may prosper but the weak would go to the wall. Such a line of argument can even be discerned among communitarian anarchists. Although classical anarchists such as Proudhon (see p. 370), Bakunin (1814–76) and Kropotkin (see p. 24) rejected the claims of political authority, they nevertheless recognized that a healthy society demands sociable, cooperative and respectful behaviour from its members. This amounts to a theory of ‘social’ obligation that in some ways parallels the more traditional notion of political obligation.

Rebellion and the limits of obligation

Political obligation denotes not a duty to obey a particular law but rather the citizen’s duty to respect and obey the state itself. When the limits of political obligation are reached, the citizen is not merely released from a duty to obey the state but, in effect, gains an entitlement: the right to rebel. A rebellion is an attempt to overthrow state power, usually involving a substantial body of citizens as well as, in most cases, the use of violence. Although any major uprising against government can be described as a rebellion, the term is often used in contrast to revolution to describe the attempt to overthrow a government rather than replace an entire political regime. Rebellion can be justified in different ways. In some cases, the act of rebellion reflects a belief that government does not, and never has, exercised legitimate authority. This can be seen, for example, in the case of colonial rule, where government amounts to little more than domination: it is imposed by force and maintained by systematic coercion. The anti-colonial uprisings in Asia and Africa during the post-1945 period did not thus need to be justified in terms of political obligation. Quite simply, no duty to obey the colonial ruler had ever been acknowledged, so no limit to obligation had been reached. In the case of the American Revolution of 1776, however, the rebellion of the thirteen former British colonies was justified explicitly in terms of a right of rebellion rooted in a theory of political obligation.

The American revolutionaries drew heavily on the ideas Locke had developed in *Two Treatises on Civil Government* ([1690] 1965). Locke had emphasized that political obligation was conditional on respect for natural rights. On these grounds he gave support to the English ‘Glorious Revolution’ and established a constitutional monarchy under William and Mary. The American Declaration of Independence was imbued with classic social-contract principles. In the first place, it portrays government as a human artefact, created by men to serve their purposes; the powers of government are therefore derived from the ‘consent of the governed’. However, the contract on which government is based is very specific: human beings are endowed with certain ‘inalienable rights’ including the right to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’, and it is the purpose of

government to secure and protect these rights. Clearly, therefore, political obligation is not absolute; citizens have an obligation to obey government only so long as it respects these fundamental rights. When government becomes an 'absolute despotism', the Declaration of Independence states that 'it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government'. In other words, the limits of political obligation have been reached and citizens have a right, indeed a duty, to rebel against such a government and to 'provide new guards for their future security'.

Such Lockean principles are rooted very deeply in liberal ideas and assumptions. Social-contract theories imply that since the state is created by an agreement among rational individuals it must serve the interests of all citizens and so be neutral or impartial. By the same token, if the state fails in its fundamental task of protecting individual rights, it fails all its citizens and not just certain groups or sections. Conservatives, by contrast, have been far less willing to acknowledge that political obligation is conditional. Authoritarian conservatives, following Hobbes, warn that any challenge to established authority risks the complete collapse of orderly existence. This is what led Joseph de Maistre (see p. 189), a fierce critic of the French Revolution, to suggest that politics is based on a willing and complete subordination to 'the master'. In this view, the very notion of a limit to political obligation is dangerous and insidious.

Marxists and anarchists, however, have a very different attitude towards political obligation. Classical Marxists have discounted any idea of a social contract, believing instead that the state is an instrument of class oppression; it is a 'bourgeois state'. The function of the state is therefore not to protect individual rights so much as to defend or advance the interests of the 'ruling class'. Indeed, Marxists have traditionally regarded social-contract theories as 'ideological', in the sense that they serve class interests by concealing the contradictions on which capitalism and all class societies are based. In this light, the notion of political obligation is a myth or delusion whose only purpose is to reconcile the working masses to their continued exploitation. Although anarchists may be prepared to accept the notion of 'social' obligation, the idea of 'political' obligation is, in their view, entirely unfounded. If the state is an oppressive, exploitative and coercive body, the idea that individuals may have a moral obligation to accept its authority is quite absurd. Political obligation, in other words, amounts to nothing more than servitude.

Citizenship

As already noted, the concept of citizenship is rooted in the political thought of Ancient Greece. Citizenship has also been one of the central themes of the republican political tradition (see p. 132). In its simplest form, a 'citizen' is a

member of a political community who is endowed with a set of rights and a set of obligations. Citizenship therefore represents a relationship between the individual and the state, in which the two are bound together by reciprocal rights and obligations. However, the precise nature of this relationship is the subject of considerable argument and dispute. For example, some view citizenship as a legal status which can be defined objectively, while others see it as an identity, a sense of loyalty or belonging. The most contentious question, however, relates to the precise nature of citizen's rights and obligations, and the balance between the two. Although citizenship often appears to be 'above politics' in the sense that most, if not all, theorists are prepared to endorse it, in practice there are competing concepts of citizenship. The most important of these have been social citizenship and active citizenship. Finally, the emergence of modern pluralistic societies has led some to question whether the doctrine of universal citizenship any longer helps to emancipate disadvantaged groups.

Elements of citizenship

To define the citizen simply as 'a member of a political community' is hopelessly vague. One attempt to refine the notion of citizenship is to define its legal substance, by reference to the specific rights and obligations which a state invests in its members. 'Citizens' can therefore be distinguished from 'aliens'. The most fundamental right of citizenship is thus the right to live and work in a country, something which 'aliens' or 'foreign citizens' may or may not be permitted to do, and then only under certain conditions and for a limited period. Citizens may also be allowed to vote, stand for election and enter certain occupations, notably military or state service, which may not be open to non-citizens. However, legal citizenship only designates a formal status, without in any way indicating that the citizen *feels* that he or she is a member of a political community. In that sense, citizenship must always have a subjective or psychological component: the citizen is distinguished by a frame of mind, a sense of loyalty towards his or her state, even a willingness to act in its defence. The mere possession of legal rights does not in itself ensure that individuals will feel themselves to be citizens of that country. Members of groups that feel alienated from their state, perhaps because of social disadvantage or racial discrimination, cannot properly be thought of as 'full citizens', even though they may enjoy a range of formal entitlements. Not uncommonly, such people regard themselves as 'second-class citizens', if not as 'third-class citizens'.

Undoubtedly, however, citizenship is linked to the capacity to enjoy a set of rights. The classic contribution to the study of citizenship rights was undertaken by T. H. Marshall in *Citizenship and Social Class* ([1950] 1997). Marshall defined citizenship as 'full membership of a community' and attempted to outline the

process through which it was achieved. Though modelled exclusively on UK experience, Marshall's analysis has had far broader influence in discriminating between the various rights of citizenship. In Marshall's view, the first rights to develop were 'civil rights', broadly defined as 'rights necessary for individual freedom'. These include freedom of speech, assembly, movement, conscience, the right to equality before the law, to own property, enter into contracts and so on. Civil rights are therefore rights exercised within civil society, and their existence depends on the establishment of limited government, government that respects the autonomy of the individual. Second, there are 'political rights' which provide the individual with the opportunity to participate in political life. The central political rights are obviously the right to vote, to stand for election and to hold public office. The provision of political rights clearly requires the development of universal suffrage, political equality and democratic government. Finally, Marshall identified a range of 'social rights' which guarantee the citizen a minimum social status. These rights are diverse but, in Marshall's opinion, include the right to basic economic welfare, social security and what he described, rather vaguely, as the right 'to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society'.

Marshall's attempt to break down citizenship into three 'bundles of rights' – civil, political and social – has nevertheless been subject to criticism. The idea of social rights has, for instance, been ferociously attacked by the New Right, an issue that will be more fully examined in connection with social citizenship. In addition, other sets of rights may also be added to Marshall's list. Although he included the right to own property under the heading of civil rights, Marshall did not acknowledge a broader range of economic rights demanded in particular by the trade union movement, such as the right to union membership, the right to strike and picket, and possibly the right to exercise some form of control within the workplace. Feminist theorists (see p. 56) have argued that full citizenship should also take account of gender inequality and grant an additional set of women's rights and, more specifically, a set of reproduction rights, the right to contraception, the right to abortion and so on. Furthermore, because Marshall's work was developed with the nation-state in mind, it failed to take account of the growing significance of the international dimension of citizenship, including the notion of 'global citizenship' (see p. 230).

Nevertheless, citizenship cannot narrowly be understood as a 'citizenship of entitlements', however those entitlements may be defined. Citizenship necessarily makes demands of the individual in terms of duties and responsibilities. To some extent, the obligations of the citizen can be said to match and, perhaps, balance the rights of citizenship. For example, the citizen's right to enjoy a sphere of privacy and personal autonomy surely implies an obligation to respect the privacy of fellow citizens. Similarly political rights could be said to entail not merely the right to participate in political life but also the duty to do so. In Ancient Greece,

this was reflected in the willingness of citizens to hold public office if selected by lot or rota. In modern societies, it can be found in the obligation to undertake jury service and, in countries such as Australia, Belgium and Italy, in a legal obligation to vote. Such duties and obligations must be underpinned by what Derek Heater (1999) called 'civic virtue', a sense of loyalty towards one's state and a willing acceptance of the responsibilities that living within a community entails. This is why citizenship is frequently linked with education: civic virtue does not develop naturally but, like an understanding of the rights of citizenship, must be inculcated and encouraged. In a wide range of countries, 'citizenship education' is thus a significant feature of public educational provision.

Finally, it must be recognized that citizenship is merely one of a number of identities which the individual possesses. This is what Heater termed 'multiple citizenship', an idea that acknowledges that citizens have a broader range of loyalties and responsibilities than simply to their nation-state. This can take into account the geographical dimension of citizenship, allowing citizens to identify with international bodies and even with the global community, as well as with their particular region or locality. Moreover, citizenship may not always correspond with national identity. In multinational states such as the UK it may be possible for each constituent nation to foster a sense of patriotic loyalty, but at the same time for a unifying civic identity to survive. In the same way, racial, ethnic and cultural groups possess their own identities and also make specific demands on their members. By acknowledging that the individual's relationship to the state is merely one of a number of meaningful identities, liberal democracies can be said to subscribe to the notion of 'limited citizenship'. These other areas of life are, and should remain, in this sense, 'non-political'. By contrast, totalitarian states like Nazi Germany, in which the individual's responsibilities to the state were absolute and unlimited, can be said to practise 'total citizenship'.

Social or active citizenship?

The idea of social citizenship arose out of the writings of T. H. Marshall and the emphasis he placed on social rights. For Marshall, citizenship was a universal quality enjoyed by all members of the community and therefore demanded equal rights and entitlements. This was particularly evident in the stress he placed on the relationship between citizenship and the achievement of social equality. In Marshall's view, citizenship is ultimately a social status. Citizens have to enjoy freedom from poverty, ignorance and despair if they are to participate fully in the affairs of their community, an idea embodied in the concept of social rights. Marshall therefore believed that citizenship is incompatible with the class inequalities typically found in a capitalist system; citizenship and social class are 'opposing principles'.



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The idea that people are 'citizens of the world' has a history that can be traced back, through Kant (see p. 341) and other Enlightenment thinking, to the Stoics of Ancient Greece. For most of this period, however, the notion of world citizenship had an essentially moral, rather than political, orientation, being used to convey a belief in a common humanity, the central assumption of cosmopolitan thought (see p. 105). The emergence of 'accelerated' globalization from the 1980s onwards nevertheless made it possible, perhaps for the first time, to think of civic and political belonging in global, as opposed to national, terms. However, whereas national citizenship has a formal and legal meaning, being rooted in the idea of membership of a state, this cannot apply in the case of global citizenship, because of the absence of world government or a global state. The term global citizenship is therefore, in some sense, always metaphorical.

Global citizenship has nevertheless been conceived in three contrasting ways. In its first, and most minimal, conception, global citizenship is little more than one of the consequences of globalization. In this view, we are global citizens in the sense that, living in a world of global cause and effect, our actions increasingly affect, and are affected by, people in other parts of the world. The second notion of global citizenship is founded on the doctrine of human rights, which implies that people have rights and reciprocal duties that bind them to all other people in the world. Whatever else global citizens are, they are bearers of human rights (Dower, 2003). Global citizenship, in this sense, only became a meaningful concept through the establishment of a body of international human rights, at the heart of which stands the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, founded by the UN in 1948. The third conception of global citizenship implies that people are not just passive holders of human rights, but have a duty to be politically engaged and active in global affairs. In this view, global citizens are people who act to promote human rights globally; for example, those who are engaged in some form of peace, development or environmental activism.

And yet, it can be argued that each of these conceptions of global citizenship is flawed. The minimal conception fails to explain how or why the fact of interconnectedness generates moral obligations. The idea that we are global citizens by virtue of bearing human rights is undoubtedly more substantial, but it is undermined by the fact that international human rights amount to little more than moral claims and lack enforceability. Finally, the activist conception of global citizenship is brought into question by the tiny proportion of the world's population to whom it could be applied.

During the twentieth century, social citizenship came to be more widely accepted and the notion of social rights was treated as part of the currency of political argument and debate. Civil rights movements no longer confined themselves to legal or political demands, but also readily addressed social issues. For instance, from the 1960s onwards the US civil rights movement campaigned for urban development and improved job and educational opportunities for blacks, as well as for their right to vote and hold political office. Groups such as women, ethnic minorities, the poor and the unemployed, came to regard themselves as 'second-class citizens' because social disadvantage prevents their full participation in the life of the community. Moreover, the inclusion in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of a battery of social rights invested the idea of social citizenship with the authority of international law. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the principal means through which social citizenship was established was by the progressive expansion of the welfare state. In Marshall's view, social rights were inextricably bound up with welfare provision and the capacity of the welfare state to ensure that all citizens enjoy a 'modicum of economic welfare and security'.

The principal advocates of social citizenship have been social democrats, socialists and modern liberals (see p. 248). They have insisted on the vital need for 'positive' rights, delivered through government intervention, in addition to traditional 'negative' rights like freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. The case for social rights is based on the belief that economic inequality is more a product of the capitalist economy than it is a reflection of natural differences amongst human beings. For modern liberals, social disadvantages like homelessness, unemployment and sickness not only thwart personal development but also undermine a sense of citizenship. Full citizenship therefore requires equality of opportunity, the ability of each citizen to rise or fall according to his or her own talents and hard work. Social democrats have regarded economic and social rights not merely as legitimate rights of citizenship but as the very foundations of a civilized life. Individuals who lack food, shelter or a means of material subsistence will set very little store by their right to enjoy freedom of speech or exercise their freedom of religious worship.

The sternest critics of social citizenship have been on the political right. Right-wing libertarians (see p. 312) have been firm opponents of the idea of social rights and believe that social welfare is fundamentally misconceived. Some have argued that the doctrine of rights and entitlements, and in particular social rights, has encouraged citizens to have an unrealistic view of the capacities of government. The result of this has been a relentless growth in the responsibilities of government which, by pushing up taxes and widening budget deficits, has severely damaged economic prospects. In addition, it has been argued that the notion of social citizenship has undermined enterprise and individual initiative, creating the impression that the state will always 'pick up the bill'. This view has

been advanced in terms of an alternative model of citizenship, sometimes called 'active citizenship'. The idea of the 'active citizen' developed out of an emerging New Right model of citizenship, outlined first in the USA but soon taken up by politicians in Europe and elsewhere. However, since the New Right has drawn on two contrasting traditions – economic liberalism and social conservatism – active citizenship has two faces. On the one hand, it represents a classical liberal emphasis on self-reliance and 'standing on one's own two feet'; on the other, it underlines a traditionally conservative stress on duty and responsibility.

The liberal New Right, or neo-liberalism, is committed to rigorous individualism; its overriding goal is to 'roll back the frontiers of the state'. As noted earlier, in its view the relationship between the individual and the state has become dangerously unbalanced. Government intervention in economic and social life has allowed the state to dwarf, even dominate, the citizen, robbing him or her of liberty and self-respect. The essence of active citizenship, from this perspective, is enterprise, hard work and self-reliance. Neo-liberals believe that individual responsibility makes both economic and moral sense. In economic terms, active citizenship relieves the burden that social welfare imposes on public finances and community resources. Self-reliant individuals will work hard because they know that at the end of the day there is no welfare state to pick up the bill. In moral terms, active citizenship promotes dignity and self-respect because individuals are forced to support themselves and their own families. However, it is questionable whether self-reliance can in any proper sense be said to constitute a theory of citizenship. The 'good citizen' may certainly be hard-working and independent, but is it possible to suggest that these essentially 'private' qualities are the ones on which citizenship is based?

The other face of the New Right, the conservative New Right or neo-conservatism, advocates a close relationship between the state and the individual citizen. The neo-conservative concept of citizenship is distinguished by its emphasis on civil obligations and a rejection of entitlement-based concepts of citizenship. Most neo-conservatives, for instance, would gladly endorse the words of John F. Kennedy, used in his presidential inaugural address in January 1961: 'Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.' Neo-conservatives believe that Marshall's 'citizenship of entitlement' has created a society in which individuals know only their rights and do not recognize their duties or responsibilities. Such a society is fraught with the dangers of permissiveness and social fragmentation. Unrestrained liberty will lead to selfishness, greed and a lack of respect for both social institutions and fellow human beings.

This concern about the erosion of civic engagement through a focus on rights rather than responsibilities has attracted wider support since the 1980s, being taken up, in particular, by communitarian thinkers. It has produced a shift in thinking that has, for example, resulted in the replacement of higher-education

grants with a system of student loans in a growing number of countries, including the USA, Australia and the UK; and the introduction of tuition fees for university students, in both cases justified by the aim of strengthening civil obligations. Students, in this view, have a duty to pay for education; they do not merely have a right of access to it. This version of active citizenship nevertheless also has its critics. Some have argued that it is in danger of replacing one imbalance with an imbalance of a new kind: the emphasis on civic duty may displace a concern for rights and entitlements. Others point out that, just as social citizenship is linked to the attempt to modify class inequalities, active citizenship may be turned into a philosophy of ‘pay your way’, which simply reinforces existing inequalities.

Universal citizenship and diversity

Traditional conceptions of citizenship, regardless of the rights they highlight or the balance they imply between entitlements and duties, are united in emphasizing the universality of citizenship. In so far as people are classified as citizens, each is entitled to the same rights and expected to shoulder the same obligations as every other citizen. This notion of universal citizenship is rooted in the liberal idea of a distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ life, in which differences between and among people – linked, for instance, to factors such as gender, ethnicity and religion – are seen as ‘private’ matters and so are irrelevant to a person’s ‘public’ status and standing. Liberalism is, as a result, sometimes portrayed as ‘difference-blind’: it treats those factors that distinguish people from one another as secondary, because all of us share the same core identity as individuals and citizens. Indeed, it is this emphasis on universality that has given the idea of citizenship its radical and emancipatory character. For instance, the civil rights movements that sprang up from the 1960s onwards to articulate the interests of disadvantaged groups, such as women, ethnic and religious minorities, gays and lesbians, and disabled people, articulated their demands in the language of universal citizenship. If these groups were, or felt themselves to be, ‘second-class citizens’, the solution was to establish full citizenship, meaning in particular the right to equal treatment and to equal participation.

An increasing awareness of the diverse and pluralistic nature of modern societies has, however, encouraged some to question and even reject the idea of universal citizenship. Iris Marion Young (2011) championed the notion of ‘differentiated’ citizenship as a means of taking account of group differences. From this perspective, the traditional conception of citizenship has its drawbacks. These include that the link between citizenship and inclusion can imply homogeneity, particularly when citizens are seen to be united by a undifferentiated ‘general will’ or collective interest, which is increasingly difficult to identify

in modern pluralistic societies. In addition, societies' 'blindness' to race, gender and other group differences may not prevent equal treatment being constructed according to the norms and values of dominant groups, meaning that racist, sexist, homophobic and other attitudes, which prevent disadvantaged groups from taking full advantage of their formally equal status, may continue unchecked.

Universal citizenship may thus help to conceal or perpetuate disadvantage and unequal participation rather than redress them. Young, as a result, called for the recognition, alongside universal rights, of 'special rights', rights that are special in that they apply only to specific categories of people. One basis for special rights, increasingly widely accepted in modern societies, is linked to biological and bodily factors, as in the case of women's rights, considered earlier in the chapter, and rights for persons with physical and mental disabilities or for the elderly. A more controversial basis of the special rights is that they are justified either by the need to protect the distinctive identities of particular groups or in order to counter cultural and attitudinal obstacles to their full participation in society. This has occurred most prominently in relation to the issue of cultural recognition, as addressed by multicultural theorists (see p. 178).

Attempts to reconcile citizenship with cultural diversity have usually focused on the issue of minority rights, special group-specific measures for accommodating national and ethnic differences. In his liberal theory of minority rights, Will Kymlicka (1995) identified three kinds of such rights: self-government rights, polyethnic rights and representation rights. Self-government rights belong, Kymlicka argued, to what he calls national minorities, peoples who are territorially concentrated, possess a shared language and are characterized by a 'meaningful way of life across the full range of human activities'. This applies to indigenous peoples found in many parts of the world, sometimes called 'First Nations' (see p. 93). In these cases, the right to self-government should involve the devolution of political power, usually through federalism, to political units that are substantially controlled by the members of the national minority, although it may extend to the right of secession and, therefore, to sovereign independence.

Polyethnic rights are rights that help ethnic groups and religious minorities that have developed through immigration, to express and maintain their cultural distinctiveness. They would, for instance, provide the basis for legal exemptions, such as the exemption of Jews and Muslims from animal slaughtering laws, the exemption of Sikh men from wearing motorcycle helmets, and exemption of Muslim girls from school dress codes. Special representation rights attempt to redress the under-representation of minority or disadvantaged groups in education and in senior positions in political and public life. Such rights imply a form of reverse or 'positive' discrimination, which attempts to compensate for past discrimination or continuing cultural subordination. Their justification is not

only that they ensure full and equal participation, but also that they are the only means of guaranteeing that public policy reflects the interests of all groups and peoples and not merely those of traditionally dominant groups.

However, minority or multicultural rights may also have drawbacks. For instance, in *Culture and Equality* (2002), Brian Barry questioned whether the 'deep diversity' which a recognition of minority rights would lead to is compatible with the survival of a liberal polity. Most clearly, this is because the value pluralism that lies at the heart of radical forms of multiculturalism may serve to legitimize cultural practices, such as female circumcision, that are in themselves illiberal and oppressive. In such circumstances, liberals tend to place respect for human rights and civil liberties above concerns about group identity and traditional values. Polyethnic rights, moreover, have the drawback that, as they may require legal or civic adjustments to be made to take account of cultural distinctiveness, as in the case of legal exemptions, they weaken the sense of civic and political cohesion. As a result, forms of religious dress and religious symbols have been banned from schools in France and elsewhere, both in order to preserve the distinction between the church and the state, and to counter gender inequality.

Finally, particular anxiety has surrounded the issue of 'offence' and the idea that religious groups in particular have a right not to be offended, as supposedly occurs when beliefs that go to the very heart of their identity are criticized, insulted or somehow ridiculed. This issue was raised in 1998 by the 'Rushdie affair', in which Ayatollah Khomeini (see p. 215) issued a *fatwa*, or religious order, sentencing to death the author Salman Rushdie for the publication of his book, *The Satanic Verses*. The basis of the *fatwa* was that the book offended against the most cherished Islamic principle, the sacred image of the Prophet Mohammed. From the traditional liberal viewpoint, however, the *fatwa* amounted to a gross violation of Rushdie's rights as a human individual as well as of the principles of free speech and toleration (discussed in Chapter 9). The liberal position is often associated with the famous declaration of the French writer Voltaire (1694–1778): 'I detest what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it.'

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Do the advantages of a bill of rights outweigh the disadvantages?
- How do human rights differ from other kinds of rights?
- Are economic and social rights genuine human rights?
- Do animals have rights in the same sense as human beings?
- In what sense are rights and obligations the reverse sides of the same coin?
- How do the social-contract theories advanced by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau differ?
- On what grounds has political obligation been portrayed as a natural duty?
- In what circumstances, if any, do people have a right of rebellion?
- How does citizenship differ from nationality?
- Which rights and obligations should citizenship entail?
- Why, and with what justification, has the 'citizenship of entitlements' been criticized?
- To what extent should the concept of citizenship be recast in the light of cultural and other forms of diversity?

FURTHER READING

Bellamy, R. *Citizenship: A Very Short Introduction* (2008). A succinct and accessible exploration of the nature of citizenship in modern, complex societies, which reflects on the importance of citizenship and whether it can be created and tested for.

Freeden, M. *Rights* (1991). A clear and insightful investigation of political and philosophical theorizing about rights, which treats rights as protective capsules intended to secure essential aspects of human nature and social relations.

Horton, J. *Political Obligation* (2010). A thorough and perceptive assessment of the major theories of political obligation, which explores the strengths and weaknesses of each and takes account of contemporary issues and perspectives.

Woods, K. *Human Rights* (2014). A comprehensive account of the nature of, and basis for, human rights, which also examines their role in contemporary debates on issues such as religion, multiculturalism and the environment.

9

Freedom, Toleration and Identity

- FREEDOM

Liberty and licence • Negative freedom • Positive freedom

- TOLERATION

Toleration and difference • The case for toleration • The limits of toleration?

- IDENTITY

Identity and the politics of recognition • Gender and identity • Culture and identity

Preview

The principle of freedom has customarily been treated by political thinkers with a degree of reverence that borders on religious devotion. Political literature is littered with proclamations that humankind should break free from some form of enslavement. Yet the popularity of freedom is often matched by confusion about what the term actually means, and why it is so widely respected. Is freedom, for instance, an unconditional good, or does it have costs or drawbacks? How much freedom should individuals and groups enjoy? At the heart of such questions, however, lies a debate about precisely what it means to be 'free'. Does freedom mean being left alone to act as one chooses, or does it imply some kind of fulfilment, self-realization or personal development?

Confusion is also caused by the fact that freedom is often associated with a range of other ideas, including toleration and identity. Toleration differs from freedom, but there is a sense in which it can also be thought of as a manifestation of freedom. As the willingness to put up with actions or opinions with which we may disagree, toleration broadens people's opportunity to live as they wish or please. Nevertheless, is toleration a precondition for civic harmony, guaranteeing that we can live together without encroaching on one another's rights and liberties, or may it go too far and encourage people to tolerate the intolerable? Since the late twentieth century, however, new thinking about freedom has emerged in association with what has been called 'identity politics'. This is a style of politics that seeks to counter group marginalization by embracing a positive and assertive sense of collective identity. Freedom has thus been reborn as a process of politico-cultural self-assertion, aimed at establishing respect and recognition for marginalized groups. But how does recognition differ from more conventional ways of overcoming group subordination? And how, and how successfully, has identity politics been advanced in relation to gender and culture?

Freedom

Freedom is a difficult term to discuss because it is employed by social scientists and philosophers as commonly as by political theorists. In philosophy, freedom is usually examined as a property of the will. Do individuals possess ‘free will’ or are their actions entirely determined? In economics and sociology, freedom is invariably thought of as a social relationship. To what extent are individuals ‘free agents’ in social life, able to exercise choice and enjoy privileges in relation to others? By contrast, political theorists often treat freedom as an ethical ideal or normative principle, perhaps as the most vital such principle. In many cases, however, they separate the definition of what freedom is from questions about its value, allowing them to employ an essentially social-scientific definition of the term. Nevertheless, as a popular political slogan ‘freedom’ undoubtedly functions as an ideal – but it is one which cries out for analytical attention and clarity.

Perhaps the best way of giving shape to freedom is by distinguishing it from ‘unfreedom.’ Most people are willing, for instance, to accept a difference between ‘liberty’ and what is called ‘licence.’ However, where that distinction should be drawn is the source of considerable controversy. Furthermore, it is by no means clear what we mean by the term ‘freedom.’ For example, political thinkers have long treated freedom as an ‘essentially contested’ concept, highlighting the rival forms it may take. Benjamin Constant (see p. 133) thus distinguished between the ‘liberty of the ancients’ (which he identified with the ideas of direct participation and self-government) and the ‘liberty of the moderns’ (which he identified with non-interference and private rights). The most influential modern attempt to do this was undertaken by Isaiah Berlin in ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’ ([1958] 2002). Berlin (see p. 244) claimed to identify a ‘positive’ concept of freedom and a ‘negative’ concept of freedom. In everyday language, this has sometimes been understood as a distinction between being ‘free to’ do something, and being ‘free from’ something.

Such a distinction has, however, been widely criticized. For instance, the difference between freedom to and freedom *from* is merely a confusion of language: each example of freedom can be described in both ways. Being ‘free to’ gain an education is equivalent to being ‘free from’ ignorance; being ‘free from’ excessive taxation simply means being ‘free to’ spend one’s money as one wishes. G. C. MacCallum (1972) went further and proposed a single, value-free concept of freedom in the form: ‘X is free from Y to do or be Z.’ MacCallum’s formula helps to clarify thought about freedom in a number of ways. For instance, it suggests that the apparently deep question ‘Are we free?’ is meaningless, and should be replaced by a more complete and specific statement about what we are free from, and what we are free to do. For instance, it brings out the fact that while we may be free from one obstacle, like physical assault, we are not free from others, such as laws which prevent us assaulting fellow citizens. Similarly,

we can be free from the same obstacle, Y, in this case the law, to do one thing – smoke tobacco – but not another, like smoking marijuana. Finally, it helps to explain how people disagree about freedom. Most commonly, this occurs over what can count as an obstacle to freedom, what can count as Y. For example, while some argue that freedom can be restricted only by physical or legal obstacles, others insist that a lack of material resources, social deprivation and inadequate education may be a cause of unfreedom.

Liberty and licence

In its simplest sense, freedom means to do as one wishes or act as one chooses. In everyday language, for example, being ‘free’ suggests the absence of constraints or restrictions, as in ‘freedom of speech’, an unchecked ability to say whatever one pleases. However, few people are prepared to support the removal of all restrictions or constraints on the individual. As R. H. Tawney (see p. 277) pointed out, ‘The freedom of the pike is death to the minnows’. Only anarchists, who reject all forms of political authority as unnecessary and undesirable, are prepared to endorse unlimited freedom. Others insist on a distinction between two kinds of self-willed action, between ‘liberty’ and ‘licence’. This distinction can nevertheless create confusion. For example, it implies that only morally correct conduct can be dignified with the title ‘freedom’ or ‘liberty’. However, as many political theorists employ a value-free or social-scientific understanding of such terms, they are quite prepared to accept that certain freedoms – such as the freedom to murder – should be constrained. In that sense, the liberty/licence distinction merely promotes the question: which freedoms are we willing to approve, and which ones are we justified in curtailing?

‘Licence’ means the abuse of freedom; it is the point at which freedom becomes ‘excessive’. Whereas liberty is usually thought to be wholesome, desirable and morally enlightening, licence is oppressive, objectionable and morally corrupt. There is, however, deep ideological controversy about the point at which liberty starts to become licence. Libertarians, for instance, seek to maximize the realm of individual freedom and so reduce to a minimum those actions which are regarded as licence. Although both socialists and liberals have at times been attracted to libertarianism (see p. 312), since the late twentieth century it has increasingly been linked to the defence of private property and the cause of free-market capitalism. Right-wing libertarians such as Robert Nozick (see p. 299) and Milton Friedman (see p. 313) have seen freedom in essentially economic terms and advocated the greatest possible freedom of choice in the marketplace. An employer’s ability to set wage levels, alter conditions of work, and to decide who to employ or not employ, is therefore seen as manifestations of liberty. On the other hand, socialists have often regarded such behaviour as

licence, on the grounds that the freedom of the employer may mean nothing more than misery and oppression for his or her workers. Fundamentalist socialists may go so far as to portray all forms of private property as licence, as they inevitably lead to the exploitation of the poor or propertyless. Clear ethical grounds must therefore be established in order to distinguish between what can be commended as liberty and what should be condemned as licence.

The problem with establishing the desirable realm of liberty is that there is a bewildering number of grounds on which freedom can be upheld. In much liberal political thought, freedom is closely related to the notion of rights. As pointed out earlier, this occurs because the tendency is to treat freedom as a right or entitlement. Indeed, the two concepts become almost fused, as when 'rights' are described as 'liberties'. One of the attractions of a rights-based theory of freedom, whether these are thought to be 'natural', 'human' or 'civil' rights, is that it enables a clear distinction to be made between liberty and licence. In short, liberty means acting according to or within one's rights, whereas licence means to act beyond one's rights or, more particularly, to abuse the rights of others. For example, employers are exercising liberty when they are acting on the basis of their rights, derived perhaps from the ownership of property or a contract of employment, but they stray into the realm of licence when they start to infringe the rights of their employees.

However, this distinction becomes more complex when it is examined closely. In the first place, rights are always balanced against one another, in the sense that most actions can have adverse consequences for other people. In this sense, freedom is a zero-sum game: when one person, an employer, gains more freedom, someone else, an employee, loses it. It is impossible, therefore, to ensure that the rights of all are respected. More serious, however, is the problem of defining who has rights and why. As emphasized in Chapter 8, individual rights are the subject of deep political and ideological controversy. For example, whereas socialists and modern liberals uphold social rights such as the right to health care and education, supporters of the New Right typically argue that such matters are the responsibility of individuals alone.

An alternative means of distinguishing between liberty and licence was proposed by J. S. Mill (see p. 241). As a libertarian who believed that individual freedom was the basis for moral self-development, Mill proposed that individuals should enjoy the greatest possible realm of liberty. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, Mill also recognized that unrestrained liberty could become oppressive, even tyrannical. In *On Liberty* ([1859] 1972), he proposed a distinction between 'self-regarding' actions and 'other-regarding' actions, suggesting that each individual should have sovereign control over the former, and therefore over his or her own body or life. The only justification for constraining the individual, Mill argued, was in the event of 'harm' being done to others. In effect, the 'harm principle' indicates the point at which freedom becomes 'excessive', the point at which liberty becomes licence.

JOHN STUART MILL (1806–73)

British philosopher, economist and politician. Mill was subjected to an intense and austere regime of education by his father, the utilitarian theorist James Mill, graphically described in his *Autobiography* (1873). This resulted in a mental collapse at the age of 20, after which he developed a more human philosophy influenced by the writings of Coleridge and the German Idealists. He founded and edited the *London Review* and was MP for Westminster, 1865–8.

Mill's work was crucial to the development of liberalism because it straddled the divide between classical and modern theories. In *On Liberty* ([1859] 1972) he advanced an eloquent defence of freedom based on the principle that the only justification for restricting individual freedom is to prevent 'harm to others'. His opposition to collectivist tendencies and traditions, including those embodied in majoritarian democracy, was rooted in a commitment to 'individuality'. His essay, *Utilitarianism* ([1861] 1972), was designed to outline the basic themes of the utilitarian tradition (see p. 362), but departed from them in emphasizing the difference between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures. In *Considerations on Representative Government* ([1861] 1972), Mill discussed the representative and electoral mechanisms he believed would balance broader participation against the need for an intellectual and moral elite. *The Subjection of Women* (1869), written in collaboration with his wife Harriet Taylor, proposed that women should enjoy the same rights and liberties as men, including the right to vote.

Although this distinction may appear to be clear and reliable, the notion of 'harm' being more concrete than the idea of 'rights', it nevertheless provokes controversy. This largely centres on what is meant by 'harm'. If the principle is understood, as Mill intended it to be, to refer merely to physical harm, it allows a very broad range of actions to be regarded as liberty. Mill was clearly prepared to allow individuals absolute freedom to think, write and say whatever they wish, and also to allow them to undertake harmful actions, so long as they are self-regarding. Mill would not, therefore, have tolerated any form of censorship or restrictions on the use of dangerous drugs. However, if the notion of 'harm' is broadened to include psychological, moral and even spiritual harm, it can be used to classify a far more extensive range of actions as licence. For example, the portrayal of violence or pornography on television may be regarded as morally harmful in the sense that it is corrupting and offensive. Similarly, if 'harm' is taken to include economic or social disadvantage, it could be applied to the imposition of a pay freeze by an employer. This may not harm his or her employees in a physical sense, but it undoubtedly harms their interests. Further concerns about Mill's views on freedom have emerged due to problems with the notion of a self-regarding/other-regarding divide, which enjoys little support in

non-Western thought and runs counter to theories such as the Indian doctrine of *karma* (see p. 243).

Most attempts to distinguish between liberty and licence refer in some way to the principle of equality. If liberty is thought to be a fundamental value, surely it is one to which all human beings are entitled. Thus, those who employ a rights-based theory of freedom invariably acknowledge the importance of 'equal rights'; and Mill insisted that the 'harm principle' applied equally to all citizens. This implies that another way of distinguishing between liberty and licence is through the application of the principle of equal liberty. In other words, liberty becomes licence not when the rights of another are violated, or when harm is done to others, but when liberty is unequally shared out. John Rawls (see p. 282) expressed this in the principle that each person is entitled to the greatest possible liberty compatible with a like liberty for all. However, the doctrine of equal liberty is bedevilled by problems about how freedom is construed. If freedom boils down to possessing a set of formal rights, the task of ensuring that freedom is equally distributed is easy: it is necessary simply to ensure that no individual or group enjoys special privileges or suffers from particular disadvantages. This can be achieved by the establishment of formal equality, equality before the law. The matter becomes more complicated, however, if freedom is understood not in terms of formal rights, but in terms of capacity or the opportunity to take advantage of these rights. Modern liberals (see p. 248) and social democrats (see p. 276), for example, argue that the principle of equal liberty points to the need to go beyond rights and to bring about at least some measure of wealth or income redistribution. Such disagreements go to the very heart of the debate about the nature of freedom and, in particular, to the difference between negative and positive freedom.

Negative freedom

Freedom has been described as 'negative' in two different senses. In the first, law is seen as the main obstacle to freedom. Such a view is negative in the sense that freedom is limited only by what others deliberately prevent us from doing. Thomas Hobbes (see p. 111), for instance, described freedom as the 'silence of the laws'. This contrasts with 'positive' freedom, as modern liberals and socialists use the term, which focuses on the *ability* to act, and so, for instance, sees a lack of material resources as a source of unfreedom. Isaiah Berlin, on the other hand, used the term in a different way. He defined negative freedom as 'an area within which a man can act unobstructed by others'; freedom therefore consists of a realm of unimpeded action. However, so to define negative freedom is, however, to include within its bounds the socialist view outlined above. What is in question is the nature not so much of freedom as of the obstacles which impede that

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

THE INDIAN DOCTRINE OF KARMA

The concept of *karma* is found in Hindu thought as well as in Jainism and Buddhism. *Karma* literally means 'action', although the term refers, variously, to the consequences of an action, the accumulated consequences of all of an individual's past actions, or a supposed universal law of cause and effect. The key implication of *karma* is that all actions have consequences for the person who performs them. Not only is virtue its own reward, but evil is its own punishment: there is no way of escaping moral 'pay back' (Phillips, 1999). In many cases, the doctrine of *karma* is inseparable from the theory of reincarnation. Hindus thus believe that actions performed by a person in one lifetime will influence what happens to that person beyond death, on the grounds that the consequences that have yet to mature from earlier *karma* must work themselves out in future lives. While an accumulation of 'good' *karma* ensures a favourable rebirth, an accumulation of 'bad' *karma* results in an unfavourable one.

The doctrine of *karma* may nevertheless be seen to provide a basis for either radical individualism or deep altruism. On the one hand, *karma* implies that individuals are entirely the architects of their own destiny, each getting exactly what he or she deserves. Compassion towards those who are born poor, weak or disabled, or even as lesser animals, is therefore entirely misplaced. On the other hand, the Hindu, Jain and Buddhist traditions are in agreement that actions motivated by compassion, caring and love are rewarded, while actions motivated by selfishness, anger or hatred are punished. This provides a powerful incentive to place the interests of others before one's own interests. Debate has also focused on the extent to which *karma* implies fatalism, leading people to believe that their destinies are predetermined. From one perspective, people are the 'victims' of the karmic inheritance from their past lives; but, in Buddhism in particular, *karma* also draws attention to our capacity to bring about personal transformation, even enlightenment.

freedom – laws or social circumstances? As a result, Berlin used the term positive freedom to refer to autonomy or self-mastery, an idea that will be discussed more fully in the next section.

Although some have portrayed negative conceptions of freedom as value-free, it is difficult to deny that they have clear moral and ideological implications. If freedom refers, in some way, to the absence of external constraints on the individual, a commitment to liberty implies that definite limits should be placed on both law and government. Law, by definition, constrains individuals and groups because, through the threat of punishment, it forces them to obey and to

ISAIAH BERLIN (1909–97)

British historian of ideas and philosopher. Born in Riga, Latvia, and brought up in St Petersburg, Berlin came to the UK in 1921. In the 1930s he became a member of a group of Oxford philosophers, which included A. J. Ayer, Stuart Hampshire and John Austin, who were distinguished by their staunch support for empiricism.

Berlin developed a form of liberal pluralism that was influenced by counter-Enlightenment thinkers such as Vico (1668–1744), Herder (1744–1803) and Herzen (1812–70). The central flaw of Enlightenment thought, for Berlin, was its monism, a defect that he traced back to Plato (see p. 22). In Berlin's view, since moral beliefs are not susceptible to rational analysis, the world must contain an indeterminate number of values, and these values are often incommensurate and irreconcilable. People, in short, will always disagree about the ultimate ends of life. This encouraged him to warn against the dangers of 'positive liberty' understood as self-mastery or self-realization. Whereas positive liberty can be used to map out the potentially totalitarian idea of a rationally ordained human future, 'negative liberty', understood as non-interference, is the best guarantee of freedom of choice and personal independence. Berlin's best-known works include *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (1959), *Four Essays on Freedom* (1969) and *Against the Current* (1979).

conform. To advocate that freedom should be maximized does not, however, mean that law should be abolished, but only that it should be restricted to the protection of one person's liberty from the encroachments of others. This is what John Locke (see p. 255) meant when he suggested that law does not restrict liberty so much as defend or enlarge it. Government should similarly be restricted to a 'minimal' role, amounting in practice to little more than the maintenance of domestic order and personal security. For this reason, advocates of negative freedom have usually supported the minimal state and sympathized with *laissez-faire* capitalism. This is not to say, however, that state intervention in the form of economic management or social welfare can never be justified, but only that it cannot be justified in terms of freedom.

The notion of negative freedom has often been portrayed in the form of 'freedom of choice'. For example, in *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) by Milton Friedman, 'economic freedom' consists of freedom of choice in the marketplace – the freedom of the consumer to choose what to buy, the freedom of the worker to choose a job or profession, the freedom of a producer to choose what to make and who to employ. The attraction of 'choice' to theorists of freedom is that it highlights an important aspect of individual liberty. To choose implies that the individual makes a voluntary or unhindered selection from among a range of alternatives or options. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that a choice reflects a person's genuine preferences, wants or needs. Quite simply, they are in

a position to act otherwise if they so wish. When a worker, for instance, selects one job rather than another this surely indicates that that job is the one which best satisfies his or her inclinations and interests. However, if freedom is reflected in the exercise of choice, the options available to the individual must be reasonable ones. What might be considered a 'reasonable' option may in practice be difficult to establish. For example, at times of high unemployment, or when most available jobs are poorly paid, is it possible to regard a worker's choice of a job as a voluntary and self-willed action? Indeed, classical Marxists (see p. 75) argue that since workers have no other means of subsistence they are best thought of as 'wage slaves': the likely alternative to work is poverty and destitution.

To conceive of freedom in negative terms, as the absence of external interference, links freedom very closely to the idea of privacy. Privacy is a deeply respected principle in Western societies, and is regarded by many as a core liberal-democratic value. Privacy suggests a distinction between a 'private' or personal realm of existence, and some kind of 'public' world. Advocates of negative freedom often regard this private sphere of life, consisting very largely of family and personal relationships, as a realm within which people can 'be themselves'. It is an arena in which individuals should therefore be left alone to do, say and think whatever they please. Any intrusion into the privacy of a person is, in this sense, an infringement of their liberty. To prize negative freedom is clearly to prefer the 'private' to the 'public', and to wish to enlarge the scope of the former at the expense of the latter. Matters such as education, the arts, social welfare and economic life should therefore be entirely 'private' and so be left to individuals to determine as they see fit. A very different tradition of political thought, however, sees public life not as a realm of duty and unfreedom, but as an arena within which altruism and social solidarity are promoted. From this perspective, the demand for privacy may simply reflect a flight from social responsibility into isolation, insularity and selfishness.

Finally, the case for negative freedom is based very firmly on faith in the human individual and, in particular, human rationality. Free from interference, coercion and even guidance, individuals are able to make their own decisions and fashion their own lives; they are trusted to identify their own interests. Any form of paternalism, however well intentioned, robs the individual of responsibility for his or her own life, and so infringes their liberty. This is not, of course, to argue that left to their own devices individuals will not make mistakes, both intellectual and moral, but simply to say that if they are in a position to learn from their mistakes they have a better opportunity to develop and grow as human beings. In short, morality can never be taught or imposed; it can only arise through voluntary action. Opponents of negative freedom have nevertheless suggested that when individuals are simply 'left alone' they may fall prey to economic misfortune or the arbitrary justice of the market; and so be in no position to make rational or informed choices. Negative freedom may thus amount

to the 'freedom to starve'. Such thinking has led to the emergence of a rival, 'positive' conception of freedom.

Positive freedom

As indicated earlier, positive freedom, no less than negative freedom, can be understood in two ways. For Berlin, positive freedom consists of 'being one's own master'. It is therefore equivalent to democracy – a people is said to be free if it is self-governing, and unfree if it is not. Thus freedom is concerned with the question 'By whom am I governed?' rather than 'How much am I governed?'. Indeed, a *demos* that imposes many restrictive laws on itself may be positively free but negatively quite unfree. In its other sense, however, positive freedom relates to the capacity of people to realize their potential and achieve fulfilment. This conception of freedom is often concerned with the distribution of material or economic resources and an expansion, rather than a contraction, of state power. However, the notion of positive freedom encompasses a broad range of theories and principles, whose political implications are diverse and sometimes contradictory. In effect, freedom may be positive in that it stands for effective power, self-realization, self-mastery or autonomy, moral or 'inner' freedom, or even spiritual freedom.

One of the earliest critiques of negative freedom was developed by modern liberals in the late nineteenth century who found the stark injustices of industrial capitalism increasingly difficult to justify. Capitalism had swept away feudal obligations and legal restrictions but still left the mass of working people subject to poverty, unemployment, sickness and disease. Surely such social circumstances constrained freedom every bit as much as laws and other forms of social control? Behind such an argument, however, lies a very different conception of freedom, often traced back to the ideas of J. S. Mill. Although Mill appeared to endorse a negative conception of freedom, the individual's sovereign control over his or her own body and mind, he nevertheless asserted that the purpose of freedom was to encourage the attainment of individuality. 'Individuality' refers to the distinctive and unique character of each human individual, meaning that freedom comes to stand for personal growth or self-development. One of the first modern liberals openly to embrace a 'positive' conception of freedom was T. H. Green (see p. 249), who defined freedom as the ability of people 'to make the most and best of themselves'. This freedom consists not merely in being left alone but in having the effective power to act, shifting attention towards the opportunities available to each human individual.

In the hands of modern liberals and social democrats, this conception of freedom has provided a justification for social welfare. The welfare state, in other words, enlarges freedom by 'empowering' individuals and freeing them from the

social evils that blight their lives – unemployment, homelessness, poverty, ignorance, disease and so on. However, to define freedom as effective power is not to abandon negative freedom altogether. All liberals, even modern ones, prefer individuals to make their own decisions and to expand the realm of personal responsibility. The state, therefore, only acts to enlarge liberty when it ‘helps individuals to help themselves.’ Once social disadvantage and hardship are overcome, citizens should be left alone to take responsibility for their own lives. Nevertheless, this doctrine of positive freedom has also been roundly criticized. Some commentators, for example, see it simply as a confusion in the use of language. Individuality, personal growth and self-development may be *consequences* of freedom, but they are not freedom itself. In other words, freedom is here being mistaken for ‘power’ or ‘opportunity’. Moreover, other critics, particularly among the New Right, have argued that this doctrine has given rise to new forms of servitude since, by justifying broader state powers, it has robbed individuals of control over their own economic and social circumstances. This position is discussed at greater length in Chapter 10, in relation to welfare.

Freedom has also been portrayed in the form of self-realization or self-fulfilment. Freedom in this sense is positive because it is based on want-satisfaction or need-fulfilment. Socialists, for example, have traditionally portrayed freedom in this way, seeing it as the realization of one’s own ‘true’ nature. Karl Marx (see p. 317), for instance, described the true realm of freedom as the ‘development of human potential for its own sake.’ This potential could be realized, Marx believed, only by the experience of creative labour, working together with others to satisfy our needs. From this point of view, Robinson Crusoe, who enjoyed the greatest possible measure of negative freedom since no one else on his island could check or constrain him, was a stunted and unfree individual, deprived of the social relationships through which human beings achieve fulfilment. This notion of freedom is clearly reflected in Marx’s concept of ‘alienation.’ Under capitalism, labour is reduced to being a mere commodity, controlled and shaped by de-personalized market forces. In Marx’s view, capitalist workers suffer from alienation, in that they are separated from their own genuine or essential natures: they are alienated from the product of their labour; from the process of labour itself; from their fellow human beings; and, finally, from their ‘true’ selves. Freedom is therefore linked to the personal fulfilment which only unalienated labour can bring about.

There is no necessary link, however, between this conception of positive freedom and the expanded responsibilities of the state. Indeed, this form of freedom could be perfectly compatible with some form of negative freedom: the absence of external constraints may be a necessary condition for the achievement of self-realization. In the case of anarchism, for example, the call for the abolition of all forms of political authority casts freedom in starkly negative terms, but the accompanying belief in cooperation and social solidarity gives it

MODERN LIBERAL THOUGHT

Modern liberalism is a sub-tradition within liberal ideology that emerged from the late nineteenth century onwards and dominated liberal thinking through much of the twentieth century. It looked to revise the ideas and doctrines of early or classical liberalism (see p. 18), on the grounds that the further development of industrialization appeared to deliver not general prosperity and liberty for all, but the spread of urban poverty and a growing class divide.

Modern liberal thought is distinguished, most basically, by a more sympathetic attitude towards state intervention, abandoning the emphasis within classical liberalism on a minimal, or 'nightwatchman' state. This shift was underpinned theoretically by a re-evaluation of human nature. Modern liberals are more willing than classical liberals to accept that egoism is balanced against social responsibility, with an emphasis being placed less on the quest for wealth and material satisfaction, and more on individuals' intellectual, moral and even aesthetic development. Such thinking has often been expressed through a broader, 'positive' view of freedom. Instead of implying that individuals should rise or fall in society strictly on the basis of their talents and willingness to work, freedom came to be equated with human flourishing and the realization of individual potential. As such, it provides a justification for social and economic intervention. The purpose of social intervention is to safeguard individuals from the social evils that would otherwise blight their existence – disease, poverty, ignorance, squalor and so on. The purpose of economic intervention is to rectify the inequities and imbalances of *laissez-faire* capitalism, especially the problem of long-term unemployment. Nevertheless, modern liberal support for collective provision and state intervention has always been conditional. The goal of modern liberalism is essentially to help people to help themselves. This means raising the weak and vulnerable to the point where they can, once again, make their own moral choices.

Modern liberals have always been at pains to point out that they built on, rather than betrayed, classical liberalism. Modern liberals, thus, do not so much recommend that negative freedom is replaced by positive freedom, as endorse whichever form of freedom is more appropriate in the circumstances. Similarly, they support economic management not in order to displace market capitalism, but to make it work more effectively. However, from the classical liberal perspective, modern liberalism has abandoned individualism and embraced collectivism, effectively breaking with the defining theme of liberal ideology. Furthermore, while classical liberalism is characterized by clear theoretical consistency, modern liberalism embodies ideological and theoretical tensions. At best, modern liberalism may represent a marriage between 'old' and 'new' liberalism, drawing on the strengths of each tradition. But at worst, it may simply perpetrate confusion and incoherence, particularly in relation to the proper role of the state.

Key figures

T. H. (Thomas Hill) Green (1836–82) A British philosopher and social theorist, Green highlighted the limitations of early liberal doctrines and particularly *laissez-faire*. Influenced by Aristotle (see p. 62) and Hegel (see p. 54), he argued that humans are by nature social creatures, a position that helped liberalism reach an accommodation with welfarism and social justice. Green's idea of 'positive' freedom provided the foundation for the emergence of so-called 'new' liberalism in the UK. His chief works include *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (1879–80) and *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883).

William Beveridge (1879–1963) A British economist and social reformer, Beveridge is best known as the author of *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (1942), (known as the Beveridge Report), which served as the basis for the expansion of the UK's welfare state. Using the ideas of modern liberalism, the report set out to attack the so-called 'five giants' – want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness, and memorably promised to protect citizens 'from the cradle to the grave'. Beveridge's 1944 report, *Full Employment in a Free Society*, endorsed the use of Keynesian demand management.

John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) A British economist, Keynes' reputation was established by his critique of the Treaty of Versailles, outlined in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919). His major work, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* ([1936] 1965), departed significantly from neo-classical economic theories, and went a long way to establishing the discipline now known as macroeconomics. By challenging *laissez-faire* principles, he provided a theoretical basis for the policy of demand management, widely adopted by Western governments in the post-WWII period.

John Kenneth Galbraith (1908–2006) A Canadian economist and social theorist and political commentator, Galbraith was a leading exponent of Keynesian economics, and certainly its most innovative advocate. In *The Affluent Society* (1962), he highlighted the contrast between private affluence and public squalor, arguing that economic resources are often used in the wasteful gratification of trivial wants. *The New Industrial State* (1967) advanced a trenchant critique of corporate power in the USA. Galbraith's other major works include *American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power* (1952).

See also J. S. Mill (p. 241) and John Rawls (p. 282)

also a strongly positive character. For Marx, unalienated labour would be possible only within a classless, communist society in which the state, and with it all forms of political authority, had 'withered away'. Advocates of negative freedom, however, may nevertheless firmly reject this and other conceptions of positive freedom. By imposing a model of human nature on the individual – assuming, in this case, sociable and cooperative behaviour – such ideas do not allow people simply to seek fulfilment in whatever way they may choose.

A final conception of positive freedom links the idea of liberty to the notions of personal autonomy and democracy. This is clearly reflected in the writings of Rousseau (see p. 165), who in *The Social Contract* ([1762] 1969) described liberty as ‘obedience to a law one prescribes to oneself’. In Rousseau’s view, freedom means self-determination, the ability to control and fashion one’s own destiny. In other words, citizens are only ‘free’ when they participate directly and continuously in shaping the life of their community. This is the essence of what Berlin called ‘positive freedom’ and Constant referred to as the ‘liberty of the ancients’. Both, however, argued that this conception of freedom is a serious threat to personal independence and civil liberty in the modern, negative sense, even though some republican theorists (see p. 132) have attempted uncover an alternative to both negative and positive freedom in the form of freedom as non-oppression, sometimes seen as ‘republican freedom’.

For Rousseau, freedom ultimately meant obedience to the general will, in effect, the common good of the community. In that sense, Rousseau believed the general will to be the ‘true’ will of each individual citizen, in contrast to their ‘private’ or selfish will. By obeying the general will, citizens are therefore doing nothing other than obeying their own ‘true’ natures. It follows, therefore, that those who refuse to obey the general will, so denying their own ‘true’ wills, should be compelled to do so by the community; they should, in Rousseau’s words, be ‘forced to be free’. Rousseau thus distinguished between a ‘higher’ and a ‘lower’ self, and identified freedom with moral or ‘inner’ liberty: a freedom from internal constraints like ignorance, selfishness, greed and so on. However, if citizens can be ‘forced to be free’, they are no longer in a position to determine for themselves what is freedom and what is unfreedom. The definition of freedom may therefore be placed in the hands of another. The most grotesque manifestation of this conception of freedom is found in fascist theory, where the community is portrayed as an indivisible organic whole, its interests being articulated by a single all-powerful leader. In such circumstances, ‘true’ freedom comes to mean absolute submission to the will of the leader.

Toleration

Debate about the proper realm of individual freedom often centres on the idea of toleration. How far should we tolerate the actions of our neighbours, and when, if ever, are we justified in constraining what they might do, think or say? By the same token, what kind of behaviour, opinions and beliefs should society be prepared to put up with? Toleration is both an ethical ideal and a social principle. On the one hand, it represents the goal of personal autonomy, but, on the other, it establishes a set of rules about how human beings should interact with each another. In neither case, however, does toleration simply mean allowing people to act in what-

ever way they please. Toleration is a complex principle, whose meaning is often confused with related terms such as ‘permissiveness’ and ‘indifference’. However, like freedom, the value of tolerance is often taken for granted; it is regarded as little more than a ‘good thing’. What is the case for toleration, what advantages or benefits does it bring, either to society or to the individual? Nevertheless, toleration is rarely considered to be an absolute ideal: at some point a line must be drawn between actions and views that are acceptable and ones that are simply ‘intolerable’. What are the limits of toleration? Where should the line be drawn?

Toleration and difference

In everyday language, tolerance, the quality of being tolerant, is often understood to mean a willingness to ‘leave alone’ or ‘let be’, with little reflection on the motives that lie behind such a stance. Indeed, from this perspective, toleration suggests inaction, a refusal to interfere or willingness to ‘put up with’ something. Toleration, however, refers to a particular form of inaction, based on moral reasoning and a specific set of circumstances. In particular, toleration must be distinguished from permissiveness, blind indifference and willing indulgence. For example, a parent who simply ignores the unruly behaviour of his or her children, or a passer-by who chooses not to interfere to apprehend a mugger, may not be said to be exhibiting ‘tolerance’.

Toleration has been closely associated with the liberal tradition, although support for it has extended more broadly. Toleration implies a refusal to interfere with, constrain or check the behaviour or beliefs of others. However, this non-interference exists in spite of the fact that the behaviour and beliefs in question are disapproved of, or simply disliked. Toleration, in other words, is not morally neutral. In that sense, toleration is a form of forbearance: it exists when there is a clear capacity to impose one’s views on another but a deliberate refusal to do so. Putting up with what cannot be changed is clearly not toleration. It would be absurd, for example, to describe a slave as tolerant of his servitude simply because he chooses not to rebel. Similarly, a battered wife who stays with her abusive husband out of fear can hardly be said to tolerate his behaviour.

Although toleration means forbearance, a refusal to impose one’s will on others, it does not simply mean non-interference. The fact that a moral judgement is made leaves the opportunity open for influence to be exerted over others, but only in the form of rational persuasion. There is undoubtedly a difference, for example, between ‘permitting’ a person to smoke and ‘tolerating’ their smoking. In the latter case, the fact that smoking is disapproved of, or disliked, may be registered, and an attempt made to persuade the person to stop or even give up smoking. However, toleration demands that forms of persuasion be restricted to rational argument and debate, because once any form of cost or

punishment is imposed, even in the form of social ostracism, the behaviour in question is being constrained. It is difficult, for instance, to argue that smoking is being tolerated if it leads to the loss of friendship or to damaged career prospects, or if it can only take place in a restricted area. In fact, these are better examples of intolerant behaviour.

Intolerance refers, quite obviously, to a refusal to accept the actions, views or beliefs of others. Not only is there moral disapproval or simple dislike, but there is also some kind of attempt to impose constraints on others. However, the term intolerance undoubtedly has pejorative connotations. Whereas 'tolerance' is usually thought to be laudable and even enlightened – a tolerant person is seen as patient, forgiving and philosophical – 'intolerance' suggests an unreasoned and unjustified objection to the views or actions of another, bringing it close to bigotry or naked prejudice. Intolerance suggests an objection to that which *should have been* tolerated. Thus laws which discriminate against people on grounds of race, colour, religion, gender or sexual preference, are often described as intolerant. The imposition of dress codes on women and their exclusion from professional and public life in fundamentalist Islamic states are thus examples of sexual intolerance. On the other hand, there is also a sense in which tolerance can imply weakness or simply a lack of moral courage. If something is 'wrong', surely it should be stopped. This aspect of tolerance is conveyed by the term 'intolerable', meaning that something should no longer be accepted and, indeed, *can* no longer be accepted. There are, quite simply, no grounds for tolerating the intolerable. In certain circumstances, therefore, intolerance may not only be defensible – it may even be a moral duty.

Since the late twentieth century, however, some political thinkers have gone beyond liberal toleration and endorsed the more radical idea of difference. Difference goes further than toleration in endorsing forms of diversity, in that it is based on the idea of moral neutrality. Whereas liberals have traditionally sought to uncover a set of fundamental values that allow personal autonomy to coexist with political order, pluralist thinkers have been more concerned to create conditions in which people with different moral and material priorities can live together peacefully and profitably. Such a view is based on the belief, expressed most forcibly in the writings of Isaiah Berlin, that conflicts of value are intrinsic to human life. People, in short, are bound to disagree about the ultimate ends of life. The pluralist stance has been upheld in one of two ways. The first of these accepts moral relativism, the idea that there are no absolute values or standards, implying that ethics is a matter of personal judgement for each human being. From this perspective, for example, homosexuality, smoking, abortion or conformity to a dress code can be regarded as morally correct in that the freely chosen behaviour of the people concerned makes it so. The alternative position regards large areas of life as being morally indifferent. In this case, the acceptance of homosexuality, smoking, abortion or a dress code may simply reflect the

belief that there is nothing morally wrong with these practices; they are not matters about which moral judgements should be made. The politics of difference thus implies what John Gray (1996) termed a 'post-liberal' position in which liberal values, institutions and regimes no longer enjoy a monopoly of legitimacy. This, in turn, undermines any attempt to discourage or forbid beliefs or practices on the grounds that they are intolerant or illiberal.

The case for toleration

Toleration is one of the core values of Western culture and may even be its defining one. Indeed, it is commonly believed that human and social progress is tied up with the advance of toleration and that intolerance is somehow 'backward'. For example, it is widely argued that as Western societies have abandoned restrictions on religious worship, ceased to confine women to subordinate social roles, and tried to counter racial discrimination and prejudice, they have thereby become more 'socially enlightened'. As the climate of toleration has spread from religious to moral and political life, it has enlarged the realm of what is usually taken to be individual liberty. The cherished civil liberties which underpin liberal-democratic political systems – freedom of speech, association, religious worship and so on – are all, in effect, guarantees of toleration. Moreover, although it may be impossible to legislate bigotry and prejudice out of existence, the law has increasingly been used to extend toleration rather than constrain it, as in the case of legislation prohibiting discrimination on grounds of race, religion, gender and sexual preference. What this does not demonstrate, however, is why toleration has been so highly regarded in the first place.

The case for toleration first emerged during the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a time when the rising Protestant sects challenged the authority of the Pope and the established Catholic Church. Preaching the new and radical doctrine of 'individual salvation', Protestantism generated a strong tradition of religious dissent, reflected in the work of writers such as John Milton (1608–74) and John Locke. In *A Letter Concerning Toleration* ([1689] 1963), Locke advanced a number of arguments in favour of toleration. He suggested, for instance, that as the proper function of the state is to protect life, liberty and property, it has no right to meddle in 'the care of men's souls'. However, Locke's central argument was based on a belief in human rationality. 'Truth' will only emerge out of free competition among ideas and beliefs and must therefore be left to 'shift for herself'. Religious truth can only be established by the individual for himself or herself; it cannot be taught, and should not be imposed by government. Indeed, Locke pointed out that even if religious truths could be known, they should not be imposed on dissenters because religious belief is ultimately a matter of personal faith.

Locke's argument amounts to a restatement of the case for privacy, and has been widely accepted in liberal democracies within which the distinction between public and private life is regarded as vital. Toleration should be extended to all matters regarded as 'private' on the grounds that, like religion, they fall within a realm of personal faith rather than revealed truth. Many would argue, therefore, that moral questions should be left to the individual to decide simply because no government is in a position to define 'truth,' and even if it were it would have no right to impose it on its citizens. In 'public' affairs, however, where the interests of society are at stake, there is a clearer case for limiting toleration. Locke, for example, was not prepared to extend the principle of toleration to Roman Catholics, who, in his view, were a threat to national sovereignty since they gave allegiance to a foreign Pope.

Perhaps the most famous defence of toleration was made in the nineteenth century in J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* ([1859] 1972). For Mill, toleration was of fundamental importance to both the individual and society. Whereas Locke outlined a distinctive case for toleration in itself, Mill saw toleration as little more than one face of individual liberty. At the heart of Mill's case for toleration lies a belief in individuals as autonomous agents, free to exercise sovereign control over their own lives and circumstances. Autonomy, in his view, is an essential condition for any form of personal or moral development; it therefore follows that intolerance, restricting the range of individual choice, can only debase and corrupt the individual. Mill was, for this reason, particularly fearful of the threat to autonomy posed by the spread of democracy and what he called the 'despotism of custom'. The greatest threat to individual freedom lay not in restrictions imposed by formal laws but in the influence of public opinion in a majoritarian age. Mill feared that the spread of 'conventional wisdom' would promote dull conformity and encourage individuals to submit their rational faculties to the popular prejudices of the age. As a result, he extolled the virtues of individuality and even eccentricity.

In Mill's view, toleration is not only vital for the individual but it is also an essential condition for social harmony and progress. Toleration provides the necessary underpinning for any balanced and healthy society. As with other liberals, Mill subscribed to an empiricist theory of knowledge, which suggests that 'truth' will only emerge out of constant argument, discussion and debate. If society is to progress, good ideas have to displace bad ones, truth has to conquer falsehood. This is the virtue of cultural and political diversity: it ensures that all theories will be 'tested' in free competition against rival ideas and doctrines. Moreover, this process has to be intense and continuous because no final or absolute truth can ever be established. Even democratic elections provide no reliable means of establishing truth because, as Mill argued, the majority may be wrong. The intellectual development and moral health of society therefore demand the scrupulous maintenance of toleration. Mill expressed this most starkly by insisting that if the whole of society apart from a single individual held

JOHN LOCKE (1632–1704)

English philosopher and politician. Born in Somerset, Locke studied medicine at Oxford before becoming secretary to Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftsbury. His political views were developed against the background of, and were shaped by, the English Revolution.

Locke was a consistent opponent of absolutism (see p. 188) and is often portrayed as the philosopher of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, which established a constitutional monarchy in England. He is usually seen as a key thinker of early liberalism. His *Two Treatises of Civil Government* ([1690] 1965) used social-contract theory to emphasize the importance of natural rights, identified as the right to 'life, liberty and estate (property)'. As the purpose of government is to protect such rights, government should be limited and representative; however, the priority he accorded property rights prevented him from endorsing political equality or democracy in the modern sense. His *A Letter Concerning Toleration* ([1689] 1963) defends freedom of religious conscience on the grounds that rulers are always uncertain about the meaning of true religion; but he allowed that religion could be constrained if it threatened order, which meant, Locke argued, not extending toleration to atheists or Roman Catholics.

the same opinion, they would have no more right to impose their views on the individual than the individual would have to impose his or her views on society.

The limits of toleration?

Although widely regarded in Western societies as an enlightened quality, toleration is rarely taken to be an absolute virtue. Toleration should be limited simply because it can become 'excessive'. This is particularly clear in relation to actions that are abusive or damaging. Very few would advocate, for instance, that toleration should be extended to actions which, in Mill's words, do 'harm to others'. However, what people believe, what they say or may write about, raises much more difficult questions. One line of argument, usually associated with the liberal tradition, suggests that what people think and the words they use are entirely their own business. Words, after all, do no harm. To interfere with freedom of conscience, or freedom of expression, is simply to violate personal autonomy. On the other hand, it is possible to argue that both the individual and society may be endangered by the failure to set limits to what people can say or believe. For example, toleration itself may need to be protected from intolerant ideas and opinions. In addition, it is possible that words themselves may be harmful, either in the sense that they can cause anxiety, alarm or offence, or in that they may foster aggressive or damaging forms of behaviour.

Political toleration is usually regarded as an essential condition for both liberty and democracy. Political pluralism, the unrestricted expression of all political philosophies, ideologies and values, ensures that individuals are able to develop their own views within an entirely free market of ideas, and that political parties compete for power on a level playing field. However, should toleration be extended to the intolerant? Should parties which reject political pluralism and which, if elected to power, would ban other parties and suppress open debate, be allowed to operate legally? The basis for banning such parties is surely that toleration is not granted automatically; it has to be earned. In that sense, all moral values are reciprocal: only the tolerant deserve to be tolerated, only political parties which accept the rules of the democratic game have a right to participate in it. The danger of failing to appreciate this point was dramatically underlined by the example of Hitler and the German Nazis, who, despite the failed Munich *Putsch* in 1923, were allowed to operate legally and succeeded in being elected to power in 1933. Yet the charade of democratic respectability was abandoned within weeks of their achieving power, as the Nazis took the first steps towards the construction of what eventually became a one-party Nazi dictatorship.

On the other hand, to ban political parties or suppress the expression of political views, even in defence of toleration, may simply contribute to the disease itself. Intolerance in the name of toleration is certainly ambiguous and may be impossible. In the first place, political intolerance of any kind can lead to witch-hunts and stimulate a climate of suspicion and paranoia. This occurred in the USA in the 1950s when Senator Joseph McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee's attempt to root out 'card-carrying communists' turned into an purge against democratic socialists, left liberals and progressives of all kinds. Second, it is often argued that to ban parties for the expression of bigoted, insulting or offensive views does little to combat them, but, by driving them underground, may actually help them to grow stronger. Intolerance cannot be combated by intolerance; the best way of tackling it is to expose it to criticism and defeat it in argument. At the heart of such an argument lies faith in the power of human reason: if the competition is fair, good ideas will push out bad ones. The problem is, however, as demonstrated by the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, that at times of economic crisis and political instability 'bad' ideas can possess a remarkable potency.

The issue of censorship raises similar questions about the limits of toleration. The traditional liberal position is that what a person reads or watches, and how a person conducts his or her personal life and sexual relationships, is entirely a matter of individual choice. No 'harm' is done to anyone – so long as only 'consenting adults' are involved – or to society. Others argue, however, that tolerance amounts to nothing more than the right to allow that which is 'wrong'. Mere disapproval of immorality is no way of fighting evil. Such a view has been, for example, advanced in the USA since the 1980s by groups such as Moral Majority

and by a growing number of neo-conservative critics, who warned that a society that is not bound together by a common culture and shared beliefs faces the likely prospect of decay and disintegration. This position, however, is based on the assumption that there exists an authoritative moral system – in this case, usually fundamentalist Christianity – which is capable of distinguishing between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. In the absence of an objective definition of ‘evil’, society is in no position to save the individual from moral corruption.

A further argument in favour of censorship is based on the belief that what people read, hear or think is likely to shape their social behaviour. In the case of pornography, for example, an unlikely alliance has been forged between feminist groups concerned about violence against women, and neo-conservatives who support what has been called the ‘New Puritanism’. Both groups believe that the debased and demeaning portrayal of women in newspapers, on television and in the cinema has contributed to a rise in the number of rapes and other crimes against women. Such a link between the expression of views and social behaviour has long been accepted in the case of racism. The incitement of racial hatred has been made illegal in the UK and many other liberal democracies on the grounds that it encourages, or at least legitimizes, racist attacks and creates a climate of genuine apprehension within minority communities. However, unlike racist literature which may openly call for attacks on minority groups, the link between the portrayal of women in the media, in advertising and throughout popular culture, and the abusive or criminal behaviour of men, may be more difficult to establish. The processes at work in the latter case are largely insidious and unconscious, not easily susceptible to empirical investigation.

Identity

Identity, in its most general sense, refers to a relatively stable and enduring sense of selfhood. Parekh (2008) nevertheless points out that an individual’s identity is three-dimensional, or has three inseparable components – personal, social and human. To think about human beings in terms of *personal* identity is to treat them, first and foremost, as individuals. This implies that each person is separate and unique. As discussed in Chapter 2, individuals are defined by ‘inner’ qualities and attributes that are specific to themselves, but such thinking is also universalist, in that it implies that, as individuals, all human beings share the same status and so are entitled to the same rights and opportunities. To think about human beings in terms of *social* identity is to suggest that they are shaped by the qualities and attributes of the ethnic, religious, cultural, national and other groups to which they belong. In the collectivist version of such thinking, identity arises from social experience and a process of conditioning, allowing us to treat social groups as political actors in their own right. To think of human

CONSERVATISM

Conservative ideas and doctrines first emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a reaction against the growing pace of economic and political change, which was in many ways symbolized by the French Revolution. From the outset, however, divisions in conservative thought were apparent. While an authoritarian and reactionary form of conservatism took root in continental Europe, a more cautious, more flexible, and ultimately more successful form of conservatism developed in the Anglo-American world, prudently accepting 'natural' change, or 'change in order to conserve'. This stance enabled conservatives from the late nineteenth century onwards to embrace qualified social reform under the banner of paternalism and social duty. Such ideas nevertheless came under pressure from the 1970s onwards due to the growth of the New Right.

Conservatives have typically distrusted the developed theories and abstract principles which characterize other political traditions, placing their faith instead in tradition, history and experience. An enduring theme in conservative thought is the perception of society as a moral community, held together by shared values and beliefs, and functioning as an organic whole. Although traditional conservatives have been firm supporters of private property, they have typically advocated a non-ideological and pragmatic attitude to the relationship between the state and the individual. Whereas conservatism in the USA carries with it the implication of limited government, the paternalistic tradition, evident in 'One Nation conservatism' in the UK and Christian Democracy in continental Europe, overlaps with the welfarist and interventionist beliefs found in modern liberalism (see p. 248) and social democracy (see p. 276). The New Right encompasses distinct and, some would argue, conflicting traditions. The liberal New Right, or neo-liberalism, draws heavily on classical liberalism (see p. 18) and advocates rolling back the frontiers of the state in the name of private enterprise, the free market and individual responsibility. Neo-liberalism is often seen as a form of libertarianism (see p. 312). The conservative New Right, or neo-conservatism, highlights society's deep fragility, and warns against the spread of liberal and 'progressive' values, and the growth of moral and cultural diversity. Neo-conservatives typically call for a restoration of authority and social discipline, and a strengthening of traditional values and national identity.

Conservative political thought has always been open to the charge that it legitimizes the status quo and so defends the interests of dominant or elite groups. Other critics allege that divisions between traditional conservatism and the New Right run so deep that the conservative tradition has become entirely incoherent. Conservatives, in their defence, argue that they are merely advancing certain enduring, if unpalatable, truths about human nature and the societies we live in. That human beings are morally and intellectually imperfect, and seek the security that only tradition, authority and a shared culture can offer, merely underlines the wisdom of 'travelling light' in theoretical terms. Experience and history will always provide a sounder basis for political theory than will principles such as liberty, equality and justice.

Key figures

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59) A French politician, political theorist and historian, de Tocqueville gave an ambivalent account of an emerging democratic society which has had a profound effect on both conservative and liberal theory. In his epic *Democracy in America* ([1835–40] 1954), de Tocqueville highlighted the dangers of greater equality of opportunity and social mobility. In particular, he warned that atomized individualism would undermine traditional social bonds, and that democracy would result in a 'tyranny of the majority', discouraging independent thought and fuelling the rise of demagogic politics.

Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) A German legal and political theorist, Schmitt adopted a political realism that harked back to Hobbes and influenced generations of conservative theorists. In *The Concept of the Political* (1927), he attacked 'liberal-neutralist' and 'utopian' notions of politics, arguing that the basic characteristic of political life is the distinction between friend and enemy, and that political conflict is an immutable reality. For Schmitt, the state was the decisive institution, as it only can ensure domestic peace and order, as well as protect its citizens from enemies abroad.

Michael Oakeshott (1901–90) A British political philosopher, Oakeshott made a major contribution to conservative traditionalism. By highlighting the importance of civil association and insisting on the limited province of politics, he developed themes closely associated with liberal thought. Oakeshott outlined a powerful defence of a non-ideological style of politics, arguing in favour of traditional values and established customs on the grounds that the conservative disposition is 'to prefer the familiar to the unknown'. Oakeshott's key works include *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (1962) and *On Human Conduct* (1975).

Irving Kristol (1920–2009) A US journalist and social critic, Kristol was a member of a group of intellectuals and academics, centred around journals such as *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*, who in the 1970s abandoned liberalism and became increasingly critical of the spread of welfarism and the 'counterculture'. While accepting the need for a predominantly market economy and fiercely rejecting socialism, he criticized libertarianism in the marketplace as well as in morality. Kristol's best-known writings include *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (1978) and *Reflections of a Neo-Conservative* (1983).

See also Thomas Hobbes (p. 111) and Edmund Burke (p. 354)

beings in terms of *human* identity is to treat them as members of a distinct species, drawing attention to the qualities and attributes that all members of their species exemplify. The notion that our identity is rooted in a common humanity suggests that the characteristics that human beings share are more significant than any individual or social differences that may divide them. This is a key assumption of both socialism and cosmopolitanism (see p. 105).

However, thinking about the nature and role of identity has been significantly advanced since the 1970s as the result of the emergence of 'identity politics' or, more broadly, the 'politics of difference'. Whereas collectivism encouraged us to treat social groups as entities in their own right, this new thinking linked the personal to the social, in seeing individuals as 'embedded' in a particular cultural, social, institutional or ideological context. Identity thus acknowledges that how people see themselves is shaped by a web of social and other relationships that distinguish them from other people, identity therefore implying difference; an awareness of difference sharpens or clarifies our sense of identity. Such a line of thought has revised our understanding of freedom, linking it in particular to ideas such as respect, recognition and authenticity. Amongst the theorists who have embraced identity politics with greatest enthusiasm are feminists, for whom it highlights the political significance of gender, and multiculturalists, for whom it highlights the political significance of culture.

Identity and the politics of recognition

Identity politics is associated with the advancement of marginalized, disadvantaged or oppressed groups. However, it draws from a novel approach to such matters, one that departs from conventional approaches to social advancement. Three contrasting approaches can be adopted, based, respectively, on the ideas of rights, redistribution and recognition. The notion of the politics of rights derives largely from liberalism, although it has also been embraced by republican thinkers (see p. 132). From a liberal perspective, disadvantage is largely understood in terms of legal and political exclusion, denial of certain groups of rights that are enjoyed by their fellow citizens. Liberals are therefore committed to the principle of universal citizenship, striving to ensure that all members of society enjoy the same status and entitlements. In this sense, liberalism can be said to be 'difference-blind': it views difference as 'the problem' (because it leads to discriminatory or unfair treatment) and proposes that difference be banished or transcended in the name of equality. Liberals therefore believe that social advancement can be brought about primarily through the establishment of formal equality, guaranteeing that people enjoy the same status in society, especially in terms of legal and political rights. First-wave feminism, (see p. 56) thus had a distinctive liberal character, in that its campaign for female emancipation focused on the struggle for votes for women and equal access for women and men to education, careers and public life in general. The anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa was similarly committed to universal citizenship, as its goal was the construction of a non-racial democracy in which all restrictions on people based on their race or ethnicity would be swept away.

The contrasting idea of the politics of redistribution is most clearly rooted in socialist thought, with alternative versions being advanced by social democrats (see p. 276) and Marxists (see p. 75). The broad notion arose out of the belief that universal citizenship and formal equality are not sufficient, in themselves, to tackle the problems of subordination and marginalization. People are held back not merely by legal and political exclusion, but also, and more importantly, by social disadvantage – poverty, unemployment, poor housing, lack of education and so on. To paraphrase Richard Tawney (see p. 277), the right to eat at The Ritz is meaningless if you cannot afford to pay the bill. From the social democratic perspective, the key idea here is the principle of equal opportunities, the belief in a ‘level playing field’ that allows people to rise or fall in society strictly on the basis of personal ability or their willingness to work. This implies a shift from legal egalitarianism to social egalitarianism, the latter involving a system of social engineering that redistributes wealth so as to alleviate poverty and overcome disadvantage. In such an approach, difference is acknowledged as it highlights the existence of social injustice. Nevertheless, this amounts to no more than a provisional or temporary acknowledgement of difference, in that different groups are identified only in order to expose unfair practices and structures, which can then be reformed or removed. In the Marxist version of this argument, this can only be achieved through the abolition of the class system and the establishment of a classless society.

Identity politics, for its part, developed out of the belief that group marginalization often has yet deeper origins. Influenced by postcolonialism (see p. 214) and black nationalism, group marginalization is understood not merely as a legal, political or social phenomenon but is, rather, a cultural phenomenon. It operates through stereotypes and values developed by dominant groups that structure how marginalized groups see themselves and are seen by others. Conventional notions of identity therefore inculcate a sense of inferiority, even shame, helping to entrench marginalized groups in their subordination. From this perspective, egalitarianism has limited value, in both its legal and social forms, and it may even be part of the problem, in that it conceals deeper structures of cultural marginalization. In this light, those who embrace identity politics as an orientation towards social theorizing and political practice are inclined to emphasize difference rather than equality. This is reflected in the politics of recognition, which involves a positive endorsement, even celebration, of cultural difference, allowing marginalized groups to assert themselves by claiming an authentic sense of cultural identity.

According to Charles Taylor (see p. 179), the politics of recognition is underpinned by the assumption that human beings make sense of the world through ‘frameworks’, or broad networks, of values that are constructed between people with the same cultural background. On this basis, recognition amounts to a process of politico-cultural self-assertion, as subordination is challenged by

reshaping identity to give the group concerned a sense of usually publicly proclaimed pride and self-respect, for example, 'black is beautiful', 'gay pride' and so on. Embracing and proclaiming a positive social identity thus serves as an act of defiance or liberation, freeing people from others' power to determine their identity. Moreover, it is an assertion of group solidarity, in that it encourages people to identify with those who share the same identity as themselves. Nevertheless, the politics of recognition has also attracted criticism. In the first place, it has been seen to threaten individual freedom and personal self-development, based on the belief that cultural belonging is a form of captivity. Amartya Sen (2006) developed a particularly sustained attack on what he called the 'solitaristic' theory which suggests that human identities are formed by membership of a *single* social group. This, Sen argued, leads not only to the 'miniaturization' of humanity, but also makes conflict more likely, as people identify only with their own monoculture and fail to recognize the rights and integrity of people from other cultural groups. A further criticism is that, as identity can be reshaped around many principles – gender, sexuality, culture, ethnicity, religion and so on – recognition may have contradictory implications. This has been particularly evident in tension between the women's movement and patriarchal cultural groups.

Gender and identity

Since the late 1970s, feminism has been increasingly concerned with issues of identity and recognition, so much so that second-wave feminism has been seen as a form of identity politics. This has happened as a distinction has opened up within feminism over whether it is defined by the quest for equality or by the recognition of difference. Feminism has traditionally been closely associated with, some would say defined by, the quest for gender equality, whether this means the achievement of equal rights (liberal feminism), social equality (socialist feminism) or equal personal power (radical feminism). In what may broadly be called equality feminism, 'difference' implies oppression or subordination; it highlights legal, political, social or other advantages that men enjoy but which are denied to women. Women, in that sense, must be liberated *from* difference. Such thinking is based on the belief that human nature is basically androgynous. All human beings, regardless of their sex, possess the genetic inheritance of a mother and a father, and therefore embody a blend of both female and male attributes and traits. Women and men should therefore not be judged by their sex, but as individuals, as 'persons'. In this view, a very clear distinction is drawn between sex and gender. 'Sex', in this sense, refers to biological differences between females and males, usually linked to reproduction; these differences are natural and therefore are unalterable. 'Gender', on the other hand, is a social

construct, a product of culture, not nature. Gender differences are typically imposed through contrasting stereotypes of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. As Simone de Beauvoir (see p. 57) put it, 'Women are made, they are not born'.

The idea that gender is a social construct was originally conceived as a means of refuting biological determinism, the notion, favoured by many anti-feminists, that 'biology is destiny', implying that women's domestic or 'private' role is an inevitable consequence of their physical and biological make-up. However, it can also imply that gender differences are more deep-rooted, grounded in the quite different material and psychosexual experiences of women and men. This has led to what has been called 'standpoint feminism', in which the world is understood from the unique perspective – or 'standpoint' – of women's experience (Tickner, 1992). Standpoint feminists hold, in particular, that women's experience at the margins of political life have given them a distinctive perspective on social and other issues. Although not necessarily superior to those of men, women's views nevertheless constitute valid and worthwhile insights into the complex world of politics. In other cases, forms of difference feminism have attempted to link social and cultural differences between women and men to deeper biological differences. They thus offer an essentialist account of gender that rests on the assumption that there is an 'essence' of man/woman which determines their gendered behaviours regardless of socialization.

However, regardless of whether they have biological, politico-cultural or psychosexual origins, a belief in deep-rooted and possibly ineradicable differences between women and men has significant implications for feminist theory. In particular, it suggests that the traditional goal of gender equality is misguided or simply undesirable. To want to be equal to a man implies that women are 'male-identified', in that they define their goals in terms of what men are or what men have. The demand for equality therefore embodies the desire to be 'like men', adopting, for instance, the competitive and aggressive behaviour that characterizes male society. Difference feminists, by contrast, argue that women should be 'female-identified': women should seek liberation not as supposedly sexless 'persons' but as developed and fulfilled women, celebrating female values and characteristics. In that sense, women gain liberation *through* difference.

This emphasis on difference rather than equality has deepened through the emergence since the 1990s of 'third-wave' thinking within feminism. Whereas earlier forms of feminism had tended to emphasize that women are different *from* men, more modern strains in feminism tend to be concerned with differences *between* women. In so doing, third-wave feminists have tried to rectify the over-emphasis within feminism on the aspirations and experience of middle-class, white women in developed societies. This has allowed the voices of, among others, low-income women, women in the developing world and 'women of colour' to be heard more effectively. Black feminism has been particularly significant in this respect, challenging the tendency within conventional forms of

feminism to ignore racial differences and to suggest that women endure a common oppression by virtue of their sex. Especially in the USA, black feminism portrays sexism and racism as linked systems of oppression, and highlights the particular and complex range of gender, racial and economic disadvantages that confront women of colour.

Culture and identity

Thinking about the relationship between culture and identity has been profoundly shaped by the emergence, since the 1970s, of multicultural theories. Multiculturalism addresses the political, social and cultural issues that arise from the pluralistic nature of many modern societies, reflected in growing evidence of communal diversity and identity-related difference. Although such diversity may be linked to age, social class, gender or sexuality, multiculturalism is usually associated with cultural differentiation. Culture, in its broadest sense, is the way of life of a people, reflected in their beliefs, values and practices. Sociologists tend to distinguish between 'culture' and 'nature', the former encompassing that which is passed on from one generation to the next by learning, rather than through biological inheritance. Culture therefore embodies language, religion, traditions, social norms and moral principles.

From the multiculturalist perspective, culture is basic to political and social identity, an idea influenced by communitarian thinking (see p. 33). In this view, a pride in one's culture, and especially a public acknowledgement of one's cultural identity, gives people a sense of social and historical rootedness. By contrast, a weak, fractured or 'inauthentic' sense of cultural identity leaves people feeling isolated or confused. In its most extreme form, such thinking can result in 'culturalism', which portrays people as culturally defined (rather than merely culturally embedded) creatures. Culturalism is evident in the work of figures such as Montesquieu (see p. 133) and Herder (see p. 96). What gives multiculturalism its distinctive character is, nevertheless, that it holds that cultural diversity is compatible with, and may even provide the best basis for, political cohesion. Multiculturalism is therefore characterized by a steadfast refusal to link diversity to conflict and instability. All forms of multiculturalism are based on the assumption that diversity and unity can, and should, be blended with one another: they are not opposing forces. Iris Marion Young (2011) summed this up in the idea of 'togetherness in difference'.

Multicultural thought nevertheless offers alternative ways in which diversity and unity can be reconciled. The two dominant traditions within multiculturalism are linked, respectively, to liberalism and pluralism, although some theorists have also associated multiculturalism with cosmopolitanism (see p. 265). Liberal multiculturalism tends to stress the importance of unity, arguing that diversity

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

COSMOPOLITAN MULTICULTURALISM

Cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism can be seen as entirely distinct, even conflicting, political traditions. Whereas cosmopolitanism (see p. 105) encourages people to adopt a global consciousness that emphasizes that ethical responsibility should not be confined by national borders, multiculturalism (see p. 178) appears to particularize moral sensibilities, focusing on the specific needs and interests of distinctive cultural groups. While the former stresses the existence of a common humanity, the latter emphasizes cultural belonging.

However, for theorists such as Jeremy Waldron (see p. 179) multiculturalism can effectively be equated with cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitan multiculturalists endorse cultural diversity and identity politics, but they view them more as transitional states in a larger reconstruction of political sensibilities and priorities. This position celebrates diversity on the ground of what each culture can learn from other cultures, and because of the prospects for personal self-development that are offered by a world of wider cultural opportunities and options. This results in what has been called a pick-and-mix multiculturalism, in which cultural exchange and cultural mixing are positively encouraged. People may, for instance, eat Indian food, practise yoga, enjoy African music and show an interest in world religions. Such a lifestyle may, in fact, be the only appropriate response to the highly diverse but also increasingly interconnected modern world in which we live. From this perspective, culture is fluid and responsive to changing social circumstances and personal needs; it is not fixed and historically embedded, as more traditional multiculturalists tend to argue. A multicultural society is thus a 'melting pot' of different ideas, values and traditions, rather than a 'cultural mosaic' of separate ethnic and religious groups. In particular, the cosmopolitan stance positively embraces the idea of multiple identity or hybridity, a condition of social and cultural mixing. This recognizes that, in the modern world, individual identity cannot be explained in terms of a single cultural structure, but rather exists, in Waldron's words, as a 'mélange' of commitments, affiliations and roles. Indeed, for Waldron (1995), from a cosmopolitan point of view, immersion in the traditions of a particular culture is like living in Disneyland and thinking that one's surroundings epitomize what it is for a culture to exist.

If we are all now, to some degree, cultural 'mongrels', multiculturalism is as much an 'inner' condition as it is a feature of modern society. The benefit of this form of multiculturalism is that broadens moral and political sensibilities, ultimately leading to the emergence of a 'one world' perspective. However, multiculturalists from rival traditions criticize the cosmopolitan stance for stressing unity at the expense of diversity. To treat cultural identity as a matter of self-definition, and to encourage hybridity and cultural mixing, is, arguably, to weaken any genuine sense of cultural belonging.

can and should be confined to the private sphere, in which case the public sphere is essentially a realm of integration. Moral, cultural and lifestyle choices are thus largely left to the individual, while common political and civil allegiances help to bind people together, regardless of their different cultural backgrounds. However, as liberals are only prepared to endorse beliefs, values and social practices that are consistent with the principles of autonomy and toleration, they subscribe to what has been called 'diversity within a liberal framework'. Pluralist multiculturalism, on the other hand, provides a firmer foundation for a theory of cultural diversity, because it is based on the idea of value pluralism, and so it may accept liberal, non-liberal, and even anti-liberal values and practices as equally valid. In that sense, pluralists refuse to 'absolutize' liberalism, endorsing difference rather than toleration, in line with the distinction discussed earlier in the chapter.

The conception of culture employed by multiculturalist theorists does not command universal respect, however. Sociologists, for example, often point out that cultures are fluid and constantly evolving social forms. By contrast, as multiculturalism has tended to be used to defend traditional values and practices, the notion of culture that underpins it tends to emphasize continuity with the past, rather than a willingness to accommodate the new or the modern. In extreme cases, cultures are treated as fossilized. Moreover, the fluidity of cultures commonly derives from a process of cultural mixing that occurs as different cultures interact and learn from one another. The ideas of Aristotle thus had a considerable impact on the development of Islamic thought. It is, therefore, as much of a mistake to treat cultures as though they are 'hermetically sealed' as it is to suggest that their core values and ideas are always incommensurable. The 'fault-lines' between cultures are often, at best, blurred. Finally, cultures are not homogeneous and unified blocs, but are, rather, complex and internally differentiated. To view, say, 'Chinese culture' or 'African culture' as entities in their own right is therefore to fail to take account of significant cultural, philosophical and historical divisions within each, as well as to ignore cross-cutting cleavages that arise as a result of gender, age, locations and so on.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Is preventing 'harm' to others the only legitimate justification for restricting individual freedom?
- Does negative freedom necessarily have anti-statist implications?
- On what grounds has the concept of positive freedom been criticized?
- Is it possible, as Rousseau put it, to be 'forced to be free'?
- Where should the line be drawn between liberty and licence?
- How does toleration differ from permissiveness?
- Why has toleration sometimes been viewed as an inadequate basis for upholding diversity?
- At what point does toleration become 'excessive'?
- How does the notion of 'identity' differ from traditional collectivism?
- In what sense does the politics of recognition go beyond egalitarianism?
- Do women and men have the same 'essential' nature?
- Are liberal values and non- or anti-liberal values equally valid?

FURTHER READING

Cohen, A. J. *Toleration* (2014). A comprehensive introduction to the issue of toleration that investigates what should be tolerated and why, as well as the proper limits of toleration, using clear examples.

Galeotti, A. E. *Toleration as Recognition* (2002). An examination of the problems which toleration encounters, which argues that, by treating toleration as recognition, account can be taken of the unequal status of different social groups.

Miller, D. (ed.) *The Liberty Reader* (2006). A collection of important and insightful essays on liberty that have been chosen to reflect a wide range of political perspectives – liberal, libertarian, socialist, feminist and republican.

Parekh, B. *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World* (2008). A thought-provoking assessment of the fate of a range of identities, which considers how these could be reconstituted in a global age.

10

Equality, Social Justice and Welfare

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- EQUALITY
Formal equality • Equality of opportunity • Equality of outcome
 - SOCIAL JUSTICE
According to needs • According to rights • According to deserts
 - WELFARE
Welfare, poverty and social exclusion • In praise of welfare • Welfare: roll-back or reform?
-

Preview

The idea of equality is perhaps the defining feature of modern political thought. Whereas classical and medieval thinkers took it for granted that hierarchy is natural or inevitable, modern ones have started out from the assumption that all human beings are, in some important sense, equal. Nevertheless, few political principles are as contentious as equality or polarize opinion so effectively. Many, for example, have seen the traditional left/right political spectrum as a reflection of differing attitudes towards equality. Yet so remorseless has been the advance of egalitarianism that few, if any, modern thinkers have not been prepared to subscribe to some form of it, be it in relation to legal rights, political participation, life chances or opportunities, or any other aspect of life. The modern battle about equality is therefore fought not between those who support the principle and those who reject it, but between those with different views about where, how and to what equality should be applied.

The issue of equality has provoked particularly intense debate when it has been applied to the distribution of wealth or income in society, what is commonly referred to as 'social justice'. How should the cake of society's resources be cut? Whereas some insist that an equal, or at least more equal, distribution of material rewards and benefits is desirable, others argue that this risks ignoring significant natural differences among people. However, in almost all parts of the world, the cause of equality and social justice has been associated with calls for the growth of some kind of social welfare. During the twentieth century, a 'welfare consensus' emerged, in which welfare provision was widely seen as a cornerstone of a stable and harmonious society. Since the late twentieth century, however, the consensus has broken down, leaving welfare at the heart of a bitter ideological dispute that, in many ways, echoes earlier political battles over equality. What are the attractions of the welfare state? And why has the principle of welfare come to be so stridently criticized?

Equality

The earliest use of the term 'equal', still widely adopted in everyday language, was to refer to identical physical characteristics. In this sense, two cups can be said to contain 'equal' quantities of water; a runner is said to 'equal' the 100-metre world record; and the price of a bottle of expensive wine may 'equal' the cost of a television set. In political theory, however, a clear distinction is made between equality and ideas such as 'uniformity' and 'sameness'. Although some critics of equality have tried to ease their task by reducing equality to simple uniformity, linking it thereby to regimentation and social engineering, no serious political thinker has ever advocated *absolute* equality in all things. Equality is not the enemy of human diversity, nor is its goal to make everyone alike. Indeed, egalitarians (from the French *égalité*) may accept the uniqueness of each human individual, and perhaps also acknowledge that people are born with different talents, skills, attributes and so on. Their goal, though, is to establish the legal, political or social conditions in which people would be able to enjoy equally worthwhile and satisfying lives. Equality, in other words, is not about blanket uniformity, but rather is about 'levelling' those conditions of social existence which are thought to be crucial to human well-being. However, equality is in danger of degenerating into a mere political slogan unless we are able to answer the question 'equality of what?' In what should people be equal, when, how, where and why?

There are as many forms of equality as there are ways of comparing the conditions of human existence. It is thus possible to talk about moral equality, legal equality, political equality, social equality, sexual equality, racial equality and so on. Moreover, the principle of equality has assumed a number of forms, the most significant of which have been formal equality, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. Although the ideas of equal opportunities and equal outcome developed out of an original commitment to formal equality, there are times when they point in very different directions. For instance, supporters of legal equality may roundly denounce equality of opportunities when this implies discrimination in favour of the poor or disadvantaged. Similarly, advocates of social equality may attack the notion of equal opportunities on the grounds that it amounts to the right to be unequal. Egalitarianism thus encompasses a broad range of views, and its political character has been the subject of deep disagreement.

Formal equality

The earliest notion of equality to have had an impact on political thought is what may be called 'foundational' equality, suggesting that all people are equal by virtue of their shared human essence. Such an idea arose out of the natural rights theories that dominated political thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. The American Declaration of Independence (1776), for example, declares simply that, 'All men are created equal', and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen (1789) states that, 'Men are born and remain free and equal in rights'. However, what form of equality did such high-sounding declarations endorse? They certainly did not constitute descriptive statements about the human condition, as the eighteenth century was a period of ingrained privilege and stark social inequality. Rather, these were normative assertions about the moral worth of each human life. Human beings are 'equal' in the simple sense that they are all 'human'. They are 'born' or 'created' equal; they are equal 'in the sight of God'. But what does this form of equality imply in practice?

In the early modern period, foundational equality was most definitely not associated with the idea of equal opportunities, still less with any notion of equal wealth and social position. Thinkers such as John Locke (see p. 255) saw no contradiction in endorsing the idea that 'all men are created equal' at the same time as defending absolute property rights and the restriction of the franchise to property owners – to say nothing of the exclusion of the entire female sex from the category of 'human beings'. 'Men' are equal only in the sense that all human beings are invested with identical natural rights, however these might be defined. The idea that all human beings are possessors of equal rights is the basis of what is usually called 'formal' equality. Formal equality implies that, by virtue of their common humanity, each person is entitled to be treated equally by the rules of social practice. As such, it is a procedural rule which grants each person equal freedom to act however they may choose and to make of their lives whatever they are capable of doing, without regard to the opportunities, resources or wealth they start with.

The most obvious, and perhaps most important, manifestation of formal equality is the principle of legal equality, or 'equality before the law'. This holds that the law should treat each person as an individual, showing no regard to their social background, religion, race, colour, gender and so forth. Justice, in this sense, should be 'blind' to all factors other than those relevant to the case before the court, and notably the evidence presented. Legal equality is thus the cornerstone of the rule of law, discussed in Chapter 7. The principle of formal equality is, however, essentially negative: it is very largely confined to the task of eradicating special privileges. This was evident in the fact that calls for formal equality were first made in the hope of breaking down the hierarchy of ranks and orders which had survived from feudal times; its enemy was aristocratic privilege. It also explains why formal equality meets with near-universal approval, enjoying support from conservatives (see p. 258) and liberals (see p. 18) no less than from socialists. Indeed, this is one form of equality that is seldom thought to need justification: privileges granted to one class of persons on grounds of 'accidents of birth' such as gender, colour, creed or religion, are now widely regarded as simple bigotry or irrational prejudice.

Nevertheless, many regard formal equality as a very limited notion, one which, if left on its own, may be incapable of fostering genuine equality. This is what the French novelist Anatole France sought to convey when in *The Red Lily* (1894) he ridiculed ‘the majestic equality of the law which forbids rich and poor alike to steal bread and to sleep under bridges’. The limitations of formal equality can be seen in relation to both racial and sexual equality. Formal equality requires that no one should be disadvantaged on grounds of their race or gender, and would be consistent, for instance, with laws prohibiting such discrimination. However, merely to ban racial discrimination does not necessarily counter culturally ingrained or ‘institutionalized’ racism, nor does it address the economic or social disadvantages from which racial minorities may suffer. Karl Marx (see p. 317) examined this problem in his essay ‘On the Jewish Question’ ([1844] 1967). Marx belittled attempts to bring about Jewish ‘political emancipation’ through the acquisition of equal civil rights and liberties, advocating instead ‘human emancipation’, the emancipation not only of the Jews but of all people from the tyranny of class oppression. Marxists have thus portrayed legal equality as ‘market’ or ‘bourgeois’ equality, arguing that it operates as little more than a façade, serving to disguise the reality of exploitation and economic inequality.

The struggle for sexual equality has also involved the call for legal equality, or ‘equal rights’. Early feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft (see p. 272) and J. S. Mill (see p. 241), for instance, based their arguments on liberal individualism, holding that gender is irrelevant to public life because each ‘person’ is entitled to the same rights in education, law, politics and so on. Wollstonecraft thus argued that women should be judged as human beings, regardless of the ‘distinction of sex’. However, although women have gone a long way to achieving formal equality with men in many modern societies, significant cultural, social and political inequalities persist. Many modern feminists have, as a result, moved beyond the idea of equal rights and endorsed more radical notions of equality. Socialist feminists, for example, seek to bring about the advancement of women largely through social equality. They highlight the economic inequalities which enable men to be ‘breadwinners’ while women may remain either unwaged housewives or be confined to low-paid and poor-status occupations. Radical feminists, for their part, argue that formal equality is inadequate because it applies only to public life and ignores the fact that patriarchy, ‘rule by the male’, is rooted in the unequal structure of family and personal life.

Equality of opportunity

The more radical notion of equal opportunities is often thought to have followed naturally from the idea of formal equality. Despite links between the two, they can have very different implications, and, as will become apparent later, a consis-

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759–97)

British social theorist and feminist. Drawn into radical politics by the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft was part of a creative and intellectual circle that included her husband, the anarchist William Godwin (see p. 313). She died giving birth to her daughter, Mary, who later married the poet Shelley and wrote *Frankenstein*.

Wollstonecraft developed the first systematic feminist critique some 50 years before the emergence of the female suffrage movement. Her feminism, which was influenced by Lockean liberalism as well as by the democratic radicalism of Rousseau (see p. 165), even though she objected to his exclusion of women from citizenship, was characterized by a belief in reason and a radical humanist commitment to equality. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) she criticized the structures and practices of British government from the standpoint of what she called the 'rights of humanity'. Her best-known work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* ([1792] 1967), emphasized the equal rights of women on the basis of the notion of 'personhood'. She claimed that the 'distinction of sex' would become unimportant in political and social life as women gained access to education and were regarded as rational creatures in their own right. However, Wollstonecraft's work did not merely stress civil and political rights but also developed a more complex analysis of women as the objects and subjects of desire, and also presented the domestic sphere as a model of community and social order.

tent application of equality of opportunity may be in danger of violating the principle of formal equality. The idea of equal opportunities can be found in the writings of Plato (see p. 22), who proposed that social position should be based strictly on individual ability and effort, and that the educational system should offer all children an equal chance to realize their talents. The concept is widely endorsed by modern ideologies and is embraced as a fundamental principle by political parties of almost every shade of opinion. Social democrats (see p. 276) and modern liberals (see p. 248) believe that equal opportunity is the cornerstone of social justice, and modern conservatives, late converts to the cause, now extol the virtues of what they call a 'classless society', meaning a society based on individual effort, not, as Marx used the term, common ownership.

Formal equality focuses on the status people enjoy either as human beings or in the eyes of the law; it does not address their 'opportunities', the circumstances in which they live and the chances or prospects available to them. Equality of opportunity is concerned principally with initial conditions, with the starting point of life. Very often sporting metaphors are employed to convey this, such as an 'equal start' in life, or that life should be played on a 'level playing field'. To confine equality to the initial circumstances of life, however, can have radically inegalitarian implications. Advocates of equal opportunities do not expect all runners to finish a race in line together, simply because they left the starting

blocks at the same time. Indeed, in the eyes of many, it is precisely the 'equal start' to the race which legitimizes its unequal outcome, the difference between winning and losing. Unequal performance can be put down, quite simply, to differences in natural ability. In effect, the principle of equal opportunity implies an 'equal opportunity to realize one's unequal potential'. This notion is based on the belief that there are two forms of equality, one acceptable, the other unacceptable. Natural inequality, arising from personal talents, skills, hard work and so on, is considered to be either inevitable or morally 'right'; people, in this sense, have a 'right to be unequal'. However, inequalities that are bred by social circumstances, such as poverty, homelessness or unemployment, are morally 'wrong', because they allow some to start the race of life halfway down the running track while other competitors may not even have arrived at the stadium.

Equality of opportunity points towards an egalitarian ideal, but a very particular one: a meritocratic society. The term meritocracy was coined by Michael Young (1958) to refer to rule by a talented or intellectual elite, merit being defined as IQ + effort (although Young used the term satirically). In a meritocratic society, both success and failure are 'personal' achievements, reflecting the simple fact that while some are born with skills and a willingness to work hard, others either lack talent or are lazy. Not only is such inequality morally justified, but it also provides a powerful incentive to individual effort by encouraging people to realize whatever talents they may possess. However, the idea of meritocracy relies heavily on the ability clearly to distinguish between 'natural' and 'social' causes of inequality. Psychologists such as Hans Eysenck (1973) and Arthur Jensen (1980) championed the cause of natural inequality and advocated the use of so-called IQ tests which they claimed could measure innate intelligence. In practice, however, performance in such tests is influenced by a wide range of social and cultural factors which contaminate any estimate of 'natural' ability. Thus, wherever systems of selective education have been introduced, based on examination, they invariably result in a process of social selection, which systematically favours children from middle-class homes, whose parents have themselves usually done well at school. The problem is that if natural talent cannot reliably be disentangled from social influences the very idea of 'natural inequality' may have to be abandoned, and with it the principle of meritocracy.

The attraction of equality of opportunity is nevertheless potent. In particular, it offers the prospect of maximizing an equal liberty for all. Equal opportunities means, put simply, the removal of obstacles that stand in the way of personal development and self-realization, a right that should surely be enjoyed by all citizens. Many applications of the principle are no longer controversial. It is widely accepted, for instance, that careers should be open to talent and that promotion should be based on ability. However, some have argued that a rigorous and consistent application of the principle may lead to widespread state intervention in social and personal life, threatening individual liberty and perhaps violating

the principle of formal equality. For example, the family could be regarded as one of the major obstacles to the achievement of equal opportunities. Through the inheritance of wealth and the provision of different levels of parental encouragement, social stability and material affluence, the family ensures that people do not have an equal start in life. To push equality of opportunity to its extreme would mean contemplating the banning of inheritance and regulating family life through a wide range of compensatory programmes. In this sense, there may be a trade-off between equality and freedom, with the need for a balance to be struck between the demand to equalize opportunities on the one hand, and the need to protect individual rights and freedoms on the other.

One particularly difficult issue which the principle of equal opportunity leads to is that of reverse or 'positive' discrimination. This is a policy, in an early form associated with 'affirmative action' on race issues in the USA, which discriminates in favour of disadvantaged groups in the hope of compensating for past injustices. Such a policy can clearly be justified in terms of equal opportunity. When, in this case, racial minorities are socially underprivileged, merely to grant them formal equality does not give them a meaningful opportunity to gain an education, pursue a career or enter political life. This was recognized, for instance, in the US Supreme Court case *Regents of the University of California v Bakke* (1978), which upheld the principle of reverse discrimination in educational admissions. In this sense, reverse discrimination operates rather like the handicap system in golf to ensure fair and equal competition between unequal parties. Some argue that this application of the principle amounts to 'equal but different' treatment and so conforms to the strictures of formal equality. Others, however, suggest that unequal treatment, albeit in an attempt to compensate for previous disadvantage, must of necessity violate the principle of equal rights. In the *Bakke* case, for example, a student was denied a university place by the admission of other candidates with poorer educational records than his own.

Equality of outcome

The idea of an equality of outcome is the most radical and controversial face of egalitarianism. Whereas equal opportunities requires that significant steps are taken towards achieving greater social and economic equality, far more dramatic changes are necessary if 'outcomes' are to be equalized. This is a goal which uncovers a fundamental ideological divide: socialists, communists and some anarchists regard a high level of social equality as a fundamental goal, while conservatives and liberals believe that it is immoral or unnatural.

A concern with 'outcomes' rather than 'opportunities' shifts attention away from the starting point of life to its end results, from chances to rewards. Equality of outcome implies that all runners *finish* the race in line together,

regardless of their starting point and the speed at which they run. As such, equality of outcomes does not merely differ from formal equality and equal opportunities but may positively contradict them. Although it is sometimes unclear whether 'outcome' refers to resources or to levels of welfare or fulfilment, the demand for equal outcomes is most commonly associated with the idea of material or social equality, an equality of social circumstances, living conditions and possibly even wages. For many, however, material equality is merely one of a number of desirable goals, and a trade-off must be negotiated between social equality and concerns such as individual liberty and economic incentives. This was, for instance, reflected in the stance of J.-J. Rousseau (see p. 165), who, though a keen advocate of private property, proposed that 'no citizen shall be rich enough to buy another and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself'. This principle is consistent with the modern idea of a redistribution of wealth from rich to poor, which aims to narrow 'distributive' inequalities rather than eradicate them altogether. This results in a theory of *relative* equality, which accepts rather that social equality can become 'excessive', for example when it discourages individual effort and hard work.

Fundamentalist socialists, however, have believed a far higher degree of social equality to be both possible and desirable, and have even, at times, endorsed a theory of *absolute* equality. A key goal of Marxism (see p. 75) has therefore been the abolition of the class system brought about by the collectivization of productive wealth. Perhaps the most famous experiment in such radical egalitarianism took place in China, under the so-called 'Cultural Revolution' (1966–69). During this period, not only did militant Red Guards attack 'capitalist roaders' and denounce wage differentials and all forms of privilege and hierarchy, but even competitive sports like football were banned. Supporters of equality of outcome, whether in its moderate or radical sense, usually argue that it is the most vital form of equality, since, without it, other forms of equality are a sham. Equal legal and civil rights are, for example, of little benefit to citizens who do not possess a secure job, a decent wage, a roof over their head and so on. Moreover, the doctrine of equal opportunities is commonly used to defend material inequalities by creating the myth that these reflect 'natural' rather than 'social' factors. Although defenders of social equality rarely call on the concept of 'natural' equality, they commonly argue that differences among human beings more often result from unequal treatment by society than they do from unequal natural endowment.

Equality of outcome can also be justified on the grounds that it is a prerequisite for securing individual liberty. As far as the individual is concerned, a certain level of material prosperity is essential if people are to lead worthwhile and fulfilled lives, an expectation to which each of us is surely entitled. Rousseau feared that material inequality would lead, in effect, to the enslavement of the poor and deprive them of both moral and intellectual autonomy. At the same time, inequality would corrupt the rich, helping to make them selfish, acquisitive

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

The term social democracy was originally used by Marxists to distinguish the narrow goal of political democracy from the more fundamental objectives of socialism. However, its modern usage was shaped by the tendency, from the late nineteenth century onwards, of democratic socialist parties to abandon the goal of abolishing capitalism and embrace the more modest objective of reforming or 'humanizing' capitalism. Social democracy, then, stands for a balance between the market and the state, a balance between the individual and the community. The chief task of social-democratic theory has therefore been to establish a compromise between, on the one hand, an acceptance of capitalism as the only reliable mechanism for generating wealth and, on the other, a desire to distribute wealth in accordance with moral, rather than market, principles.

The characteristic emphasis of social-democratic thought is a concern for the underdog in society, the weak and vulnerable. This can, in most cases, be seen as a development of the socialist tradition, either being shaped by attempts to revise or update Marxism (see p.75) or emerging out of ethical or utopian socialism. Such developments usually involved the re-examination of capitalism and the rejection of the Marxist belief that the capitalist mode of production is characterized by systematic class oppression. Nevertheless, social democracy lacks the theoretical coherence of Marxism and may, anyway, not be firmly or exclusively rooted in socialism. In particular, social democrats have drawn so heavily on modern liberal ideas such as positive freedom and equality of opportunity that it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between social democracy and modern liberalism (see p. 18). More recent developments within social democracy have involved an accommodation with principles such as community, social partnership and moral responsibility, reflecting parallels between 'modernized' social democracy and communitarianism (see p. 33). Some 'new' social democrats have adopted the idea of the 'third way' to highlight the need to revise traditional social democracy to take account of the pressures generated by globalized capitalism.

The attraction of social democracy is that it has kept alive the humanist tradition within socialist thought, offering an alternative to the dogmatism and narrow 'economism' of orthodox Marxism. Its attempt to achieve a balance between equality and efficiency has been, after all, the centre ground towards which politics in most developed societies has tended to gravitate, even though the balance in recent decades has tended to favour the latter. From a Marxist perspective, however, social democracy amounts to a betrayal of socialist principles, an attempt to prop up a defective capitalist system in the name of socialist ideals. Nevertheless, social democracy's central weakness is its lack of firm theoretical roots. Although social democrats have evinced an enduring commitment to equality and social justice, the kind and extent of equality they support and the specific meaning they have given to social justice have constantly been revised. This is particularly evident in the case of 'third-way' thinking, which may be simply ideologically incoherent.

Key figures

Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) A German socialist politician and theorist, Bernstein was responsible for the first systematic revision of Marxism. He drew attention to the failure of Marx's predictions about the collapse of capitalism, pointing out that economic crises were becoming less, not more, acute. Bernstein rejected revolution and called for alliances with the liberal middle class and the peasantry, emphasizing the possibility of a gradual and peaceful transition to socialism. He later abandoned all semblance of Marxism. Bernstein's most significant work is *Evolutionary Socialism* ([1898] 1962).

Richard Henry Tawney (1880–1962) A British social philosopher and historian, Tawney championed a form of socialism firmly rooted in a Christian social moralism unconnected with Marxist class analysis. The disorders of capitalism, he argued, derived from the absence of a 'moral ideal', leading to unchecked acquisitiveness and widespread material inequality. The project of socialism is therefore to build a 'common culture' that will provide the basis for social cohesion and solidarity. Tawney's major works include *The Acquisitive Society* (1921), *Equality* ([1931] 1969) and *The Radical Tradition* (1964).

Anthony Crosland (1918–77) A British politician and socialist theorist, Crosland built on Bernstein in attempting to give social democracy a theoretical basis. He argued that capitalism no longer needed to be abolished as the ownership of wealth had become divorced from its control, and major economic decisions were made by salaried managers rather than by the bourgeoisie of old. The task of socialism is thus to narrow distributive inequalities, rather than to restructure the system of ownership. Crosland's best-known works include *The Future of Socialism* ([1956] 2006) and *Socialism Now* (1974).

and vain. Furthermore, a high level of social equality is sometimes regarded as vital for social harmony and stability. In *Equality* ([1931] 1969), R. H. Tawney argued that social equality constitutes the practical foundation for a 'common culture', one founded on the unifying force of 'fellowship'. By contrast, he castigated equality of opportunity as the 'tadpole philosophy': although all may start out from the same position, they are then left to the vagaries of the market, meaning that some will succeed but many will fail. Marxist support for the collectivization of productive wealth similarly reflects the desire to build a society that is founded on a unifying, common interest.

Critics, however, point out that the pursuit of equality of outcome leads to stagnation, injustice and, ultimately, tyranny. Stagnation results from the fact that social 'levelling' serves to cap aspirations and remove the incentive for enterprise and hard work. To the extent that a society moves towards the goal of social equality it will therefore pay a heavy price in terms of sterility and inertia. The economic cost of equality is, however, less forbidding than the moral price that has to be paid. This is a lesson which thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek (see p. 313)

and Keith Joseph (1979) have been at pains to teach. In their view, the socialist principle of equality is based on little more than social envy, the desire to have what the wealthy already possess. Policies that aim to promote equality by redistributing wealth do little more than rob the rich in order to pay the poor. The simple fact is, Hayek argued, that people are very different and have different aspirations, talents, dispositions and so on, and to treat them as equals must therefore result in inequality. As Aristotle (see p. 62) put it, injustice arises not only when equals are treated unequally, but also when unequals are treated equally.

It may be a sad fact, but not all people can run at the same speed; some will be faster, some stronger, some will have more stamina. Equality of outcome can thus be seen as an 'unnatural' result which can only be achieved by massive interference and the violation of any notion of a 'fair' race. Faster runners will have to be handicapped, perhaps run further than slower runners, start after them, or be forced to negotiate a series of obstacles. In this view, talent is penalized and an equal result is achieved by a process of 'levelling downwards'. To achieve equality of outcome in society at large would require a similarly extensive system of manipulation, often derided as 'social engineering'. The drive for equality therefore involves the growth of regimentation, discrimination and coercion. From this perspective, it was no coincidence that the Cultural Revolution was accompanied by chaos, social paralysis and the deaths of about a half a million people.

Social justice

The term 'social justice' is beset by political controversy. For some, it is inextricably linked to egalitarianism and acts as little more than a cipher for equality. As a result, the political right recoils from using the term, except in a negative or derogatory sense. Hayek, for instance, regarded social justice as a 'weasel word', a term used intentionally to evade or mislead. Social-democratic and modern liberal thinkers, on the other hand, treat social justice more favourably, believing that it refers to the attempt to reconstruct the social order in accordance with moral principles, the attempt to rectify social injustice. However, there is no necessary link, either political or logical, between social justice and the idea of equality. As will become apparent later, all theories of social justice can be used to justify inequality, and some are profoundly inegalitarian.

A distinctive concept of 'social justice', as opposed to the more ancient ideal of 'justice', first emerged in the early nineteenth century. Social justice refers to a morally defensible distribution of benefits or rewards in society, evaluated in terms of wages, profits, housing, medical care, welfare benefits and so forth. Social justice is therefore about 'who *should* get what'. For example, when, if ever, do income differentials become so wide they can be condemned as 'unjust'? Or, on an international level, are there grounds for arguing that the unequal distri-

bution of wealth between the developed North and the developing South is 'immoral'? In the view of some commentators, however, the very notion of social justice is mistaken. They argue that the distribution of material benefits has nothing whatsoever to do with moral principles like justice, but can only be evaluated in the light of economic criteria, such as efficiency and growth. Hayek's antipathy towards the term can, for example, be explained by his belief that justice can only be evaluated in terms of individual considerations, in which case broader 'social' principles are meaningless.

Most people, nevertheless, are unwilling to reduce material distribution to mere economics, and indeed many would argue that this is perhaps the most important area in which justice must be seen to be done. The problem, however, is that political thinkers so seldom agree about what is a just distribution of material rewards. Like justice itself, social justice is an 'essentially contested' concept; there is no universally agreed notion of what is socially just. In *Social Justice* (1979), David Miller therefore identified a number of contrasting principles of social justice. These are 'to each according to his *needs*', 'to each according to his *rights*' and 'to each according to his *deserts*'.

According to needs

The idea that material benefits should be distributed on the basis of need has most commonly been proposed by socialist thinkers, and is sometimes regarded as the socialist theory of justice. Its most famous expression is found in *Critique of the Gotha Programme* ([1875] 1968), in which Karl Marx proclaimed that a fully communist society would inscribe on its banners the formula: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!' It would be a mistake, however, to reduce socialist conceptions of social justice to a simplistic theory of need satisfaction. Marx himself, for example, distinguished between the distributive principle that was appropriate to full communism and the one which should be adopted in the transitional 'socialist' society. Marx accepted that capitalist practices could not be swept away overnight, and that many of them, such as material incentives, would linger on in a socialist society. He therefore recognized that under socialism labour would be paid according to its individual contribution and that this would vary according to the worker's physical or mental capacities. In effect, in Marx's view, the 'socialist' principle of justice amounted to 'to each according to his *work*'. The criterion of need can be said to be the basis of the 'communist' principle of justice, because, according to Marx, it is appropriate only to a future society of such material abundance that questions about the distribution of wealth become almost irrelevant.

Needs differ from both wants and preferences. A 'need' is a necessity, it *demand*s satisfaction; it is not simply a frivolous wish or a passing fancy. For this

reason, needs are often regarded as 'basic' to human beings, their satisfaction is the foundation of any fully human life. While 'wants' are a matter of personal judgement, shaped by social and cultural factors, needs are objective and universal, belonging to all people regardless of gender, nationality, religion, social background and so on. The attraction of a needs-based theory of social justice is that it addresses the most fundamental requirements of the human condition. Such a theory accepts as a moral imperative that all people are entitled to the satisfaction of basic needs because, quite simply, worthwhile human existence would otherwise be impossible. Attempts to identify human rights are, for instance, often grounded in some notion of basic needs. One of the most influential attempts to identify such needs was undertaken by the psychologist Abraham Maslow in 'A Theory of Human Motivation' (1943), which proposed the idea of a 'hierarchy of needs'. The most basic of these needs are physiological considerations like hunger and sleep, which are followed by the need for safety, belonging and love, then there is the need for self-esteem, and finally what Maslow (1908–70) referred to as 'self-actualization'.

Any needs-based theory of social justice clearly has egalitarian implications. If needs are the same the world over, material resources should be distributed so as to satisfy at least the basic needs of each and every person. This means, surely, that every person is entitled to food and water, a roof over his or her head, adequate health care and some form of personal security. To allow people, wherever in the world they may live, to be hungry, thirsty, homeless, sick or to live in fear, when the resources exist to make them otherwise is therefore immoral. The need criterion implies that people who live in the prosperous West have a moral obligation to relieve suffering and starvation in other parts of the world. Indeed, it suggests a clear case for a global redistribution of wealth, in line with the principle of global social justice (see p. 285). In the same way, it is unjust to afford equally sick people unequal health care. Distribution according to need therefore points towards the public provision of welfare services, free at the point of delivery, rather than towards any system of private provision which would have to take account of the ability to pay. Nevertheless, a needs-based theory of justice does not in all cases lead to an equal distribution of resources, because needs themselves may sometimes be unequal. For example, if need is the criterion, the only proper basis for distributing health care is ill-health. The sick should receive a greater proportion of the nation's resources than the healthy, simply because they are sick.

Distribution according to human needs has, however, come in for fierce attack, largely because needs are notoriously difficult to define. Conservative and sometime liberal thinkers have tended to criticize the concept of 'needs' on the grounds that it is an abstract and almost metaphysical category, divorced from the desires and behaviour of actual people. They argue that resource allocation should instead correspond to the more concrete 'preferences' which individuals

express, for instance, through market behaviour. It is also pointed out that if needs exist they are in fact conditioned by the historical, social and cultural context in which they arise. If this is true, the notion of universal 'human' needs, as with the idea of universal 'human' rights, is simple nonsense. People in different parts of the world, people brought up in different social conditions, may have different needs. Finally, the idea that the needs of one person constitute a moral imperative on another, encouraging him or her to forego material benefits, is based on particular moral and philosophical assumptions. The most obvious of these is that human beings have a social responsibility for one another, a belief normally linked to the notion of a common humanity. While such a belief is fundamental to socialism and many of the world's major religions, it is foreign to many conservatives and classical liberals, who see human beings as essentially self-striving.

Although the ideas of need and equality have often gone hand in hand, modern egalitarian theories have sometimes drawn on a broader range of arguments. The most influential of these, John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971), has helped to shape both modern liberal and social-democratic concepts of social justice. Though not strictly a needs theorist, Rawls (see p. 282) nevertheless employed an instrumental notion of needs in his idea of primary goods. These are conceived of as the universal means for the attainment of human ends. The question of social justice therefore concerns how these primary goods, or needs-resources, are to be distributed. Rawls proposed a theory of 'justice as fairness', based on two principles:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:
 - (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged; and
 - (b) attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

The first principle reflects a traditional liberal commitment to formal equality, the second, the so-called 'difference principle', points towards a significant measure of social equality. By no means, however, does this justify absolute social equality. Rawls fully recognized the importance of material inequality as an economic incentive. Nevertheless, he made an important presumption in favour of equality, in that he insisted that material inequalities are only justifiable when they work to the advantage of the least well-off. This is a position compatible with a market economy in which wealth is redistributed through the tax and welfare system up to the point that this becomes a disincentive to enterprise and so disadvantages even the poor. Rawls' egalitarianism is, however, based on a kind of social-contract theory, rather than any evaluation of objective human needs. He imagined a hypothetical situation in which people, deprived of knowl-

JOHN RAWLS (1921–2002)

US academic and political philosopher. Rawls's major work, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), is regarded as the most important work of political philosophy written in English since World War II. It has influenced the modern liberal and social democratic traditions alike, and is sometimes credited with having re-established the status of normative political theory.

Rawls employed the device of the social contract to develop an ethical theory which represents an alternative to utilitarianism (see p. 362). His theory of 'justice as fairness' is based on principles that he believed people would support if they were placed behind a veil of ignorance which deprived them of knowledge of their own social position and status. He proposed that social inequality is justified only if it works to the benefit of the least advantaged (in that it strengthens incentives and enlarges the size of the social cake). This presumption in favour of equality is rooted in the belief that people cooperating together for mutual advantage should have an equal claim to the fruits of their cooperation and should not be penalized as a result of factors, such as gender, race and genetic inheritance, over which they have no control. Redistribution and welfare are therefore 'just' because they conform to a widely held view of what is fair. Rawls developed a similar justification for the principles of equal liberty and equality of opportunity. In *The Law of Peoples* (1999), he sought to apply his theory of justice to the larger world of 'peoples', and thus explored how, and how far, the international realm could be reformed.

edge about their own talents and abilities, are confronted by a choice between living in an egalitarian society or an inegalitarian one. In Rawls's view, people are likely to opt to live in an egalitarian society simply because, however enticing the prospect of being rich might be, it would never counterbalance the fear people have of being poor or disadvantaged. Thus Rawls started out by making traditionally liberal assumptions about human nature, believing individuals to be rationally self-interested, but concluded that a broadly egalitarian distribution of wealth is what most people would regard as 'fair'.

According to rights

The period since the late twentieth century has nevertheless witnessed a backlash against the drift towards egalitarianism and welfarism, in many ways led by the ideas propounded by Robert Nozick (see p. 299) in *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974). Right-wing theorists have rejected both the needs-based principle of justice and any presumption in favour of equality, and instead championed a principle of justice based on the idea of 'rights', 'entitlements' or, in some cases, 'deserts'. In so doing, they built on a tradition of distributive thought dating back to Plato and Aristotle, which suggests that material benefits should in some way

correspond to personal 'worth'. This was also the cornerstone of the classical liberal concept of social justice, advocated by writers such as John Locke and David Hume (1711–76). Just as the concept of 'needs' provides the foundation for a socialist principle of justice, so 'rights' has usually served as the basis for a rival, liberal principle of justice.

Discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8, 'rights' are moral entitlements to act or be treated in a particular way. In distributive theory, however, rights have usually been regarded as entitlements that have in some way been 'earned', usually through hard work and the exercise of skills or talents. This can be seen, for instance, in the classical liberal belief that the right to own property is based on the expenditure of human labour. Those who work hard are *entitled* to the wealth they produce. In that sense, rights-based theories are not so much concerned with 'outcomes' – who has what – but with *how* that outcome is arrived at. Rights-based theories are thus based on a theory of procedural justice. By contrast, needs-based theories are concerned with substantive justice because they focus on outcomes, not on how those outcomes are achieved. Rights theories are therefore properly thought of as non-egalitarian rather than egalitarian: in themselves, they endorse neither equality nor inequality. From this perspective, material inequality is justified only if talents and the willingness to work are unequally distributed among humankind. This contrasts with Rawls's theory of justice which, though he claims it to be procedural, has broadly egalitarian outcomes built into its major principles.

The most influential modern rights-based theory of justice is that of Robert Nozick. Nozick (1974) distinguished between historical principles of justice and end-state principles. Historical principles relate to past circumstances or historical actions that have created differential entitlements. In his view, end-state principles like social equality and human needs are irrelevant to the distribution of rewards. Nozick's objective was to identify a set of historical principles through which we can determine if a particular distribution of wealth is just. He suggested three 'justice-preserving' rules. First, wealth has to be justly acquired in the first place; that is, it should not have been stolen and the rights of others should not have been infringed. Second, wealth has to be justly transferred from one responsible person to another. Third, if wealth has been acquired or transferred unjustly this injustice should be rectified.

These rules can clearly be used to justify gross inequalities in the distribution of wealth and rewards. Nozick rejected absolutely the idea that there is a moral basis for redistributing wealth in the name of equality or 'social justice', a term of which he, in common with most libertarian theorists, was deeply suspicious. If wealth is transferred from rich to poor, either within a society or between societies, it is only as an act of private charity, undertaken through personal choice rather than moral obligation. On the other hand, Nozick's third principle, the so-called 'rectification principle', could have dramatically egalitarian

implications, especially if the origin of personal wealth lies in acts of duplicity or corruption.

There have, nevertheless, been a number of major objections to any rights-based theory. Any exclusively procedural theory of justice is, for instance, forced to disregard end-state conditions altogether. This may, in practice, mean that circumstances of undeniable human suffering are regarded as 'just'. A just society may be one in which the many are unemployed, destitute or even starve, while the few live in luxury – providing, of course, that wealth has been acquired and transferred justly. Furthermore, any historical theory of justice, such as Nozick's, must explain how rights are acquired in the first place. The crucial first step in Nozick's account is the assertion that individuals can acquire rights over natural resources, yet he fails to demonstrate how this comes about. An additional objection to rights-based theories of justice is that they are grounded in what C. B. Macpherson (1973) called 'possessive individualism'. Individuals are seen to be the sole possessors of their own talents and capacities, and on this basis they are thought to be morally entitled to own whatever their talents produce. The weakness of such a notion is that it abstracts the individual from his or her social context, and so ignores the contribution which society has made to cultivating individual skills and talents in the first place. Some would also point out that to treat individuals in this way is, in effect, to reward them for selfishness and to encourage egoism rather than altruism.

According to deserts

It is common to identify two major traditions of social justice, one based on needs and inclined towards equality, the other based on some consideration of merit and more inclined to tolerate inequality. In practice, however, merit-based theories are not all alike. The idea of distributing benefits according to rights, discussed in the last section, relates distribution to entitlements that arise out of historical actions such as work, and are in some cases established in law. Deserts-based theories undoubtedly resemble rights-based theories in a number of ways, notably in rejecting any presumption in favour of equality. Nevertheless, the idea of deserts suggests a rather different basis for material distribution. While the notion of 'needs' has usually been understood as a socialist principle, and 'rights' has often been linked to liberal theories, the idea of 'deserts' has commonly been employed by conservative thinkers intent on justifying not an abstract concept of 'social justice', but what they regard as the more concrete idea of 'natural justice'. However, the ideological leanings of deserts theories are difficult to tie down because of the broad, even slippery, nature of the concept itself.

A 'desert' is a just reward or punishment, reflecting what a person is 'due' or 'deserves'. In this wide sense, all principles of justice can be said to be based on

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

GLOBAL SOCIAL JUSTICE

Theories of justice have traditionally focused almost entirely on justice within particular states or communities. Since the 1980s, however, attempts have been made to extend arguments for justice, and especially social justice, originally conceived for the limited context of the nation-state, to the global arena. This has happened against the backdrop of 'accelerated' globalization, and especially in view of the perception that economic globalization has deepened global inequality.

Two contrasting principles of global social justice have been advanced. The first is grounded in humanitarianism and reflects a basic moral duty to alleviate suffering and attend to those in severe need. This 'humanitarian' model of social justice focuses on the limited, if politically pressing, task of eradicating poverty. Peter Singer (1993) thus argued that the citizens and governments of rich countries have a basic obligation to end absolute poverty in other countries on the grounds that (1) if we can prevent something bad without sacrificing anything of comparable significance, we ought to do it, and (2) absolute poverty is bad because it causes suffering and death. The second conception of global social justice is rooted in cosmopolitanism (see p. 105) and goes beyond the problem of poverty by seeking to reduce, or perhaps remove, global inequality. The 'cosmopolitan' model of social justice is therefore linked to a substantial redistribution of wealth and resources from rich countries to poor countries. Most accounts of 'cosmopolitan' social justice have emerged out of attempts to extend Rawls's (see p. 282) theory of justice, developed in relation to the domestic realm, to the global realm. A globalized version of Rawls's 'difference principle' has thus been used to justify major constraints on economic and social inequality by requiring that the global order operates to the greatest advantage of the worst-off. Influenced by such thinking, Pogge (2008) argued that the existing global system is unjust and in need of radical reform, because it is structured around the interests of rich countries.

The idea of global social justice has attracted significant criticism, however. For example, some have dismissed the idea on the grounds that social justice is only meaningful if it is applied to a substantive political community, usually a nation-state. Rawls (1971) thus applied his theory of justice only to the state, on the grounds that it constitutes a closed and self-sufficient system of social cooperation. Moreover, even if global social justice were deemed to be desirable, it is entirely unfeasible in that rich countries have never shown a willingness to make the sacrifices that it implies. Finally, the principle of global social justice perpetuates the idea that poor countries are somehow 'victims' of global injustice, who need to be rescued by others, rather than masters of their own destiny.

deserts, justice meaning, most simply, giving each person what he or she is 'due'. It is possible, therefore, to encompass both needs-based and rights-based theories within the broader notion of just deserts. For example, it can be said that the hungry 'deserve' food, and that the worker is 'due' a wage. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a narrower concept of deserts. This is related to the idea of innate or moral worth, that people should be treated in accordance with their 'inner' qualities. For example, the theory that punishment is a form of retribution is based on the idea of deserts, because the wrong-doer is thought to 'deserve' punishment not simply as a result of his actions, but in view of the quality of evil lying within him or her. Conservatives have been attracted to the notion of deserts precisely because it appears to ground justice in the 'natural order of things', rather than in principles dreamt up by philosophers or social theorists. To hold that justice is somehow rooted in nature, or has been ordained by God, is to believe that its principles are unalterable and inevitable.

The concept of natural justice has been prominent in conservative attempts to defend free-market capitalism. Theorists who write within the liberal tradition, such as Locke or Nozick, have usually enlisted principled arguments about property rights to justify the distribution of wealth found in such economies. By contrast, conservative thinkers have often followed Edmund Burke (see p. 354) in regarding the market order as little more than the 'laws of nature' or the 'laws of God'. Although Burke accepted the classical economics of Adam Smith (see p. 313) which suggested that intervention in the market would result in inefficiency, he also believed that government regulation of working conditions or assistance for the poor amounts to interference with Divine Providence. If the prevailing distribution of wealth, however unequal, can be regarded as the 'natural course of things', it is also, in Burke's view, 'just'. Herbert Spencer (see p. 19) also developed a theory of distributive justice that relies heavily on 'natural' factors. In Spencer's view, people, like animals, are biologically programmed with a range of capacities and skills which determined what they were able to make of their lives. In *The Principles of Ethics* ([1892–3] 1982), he therefore argued that 'each individual ought to receive the benefits and the evils of his own nature and consequent conduct', a formula that underpinned his belief in the 'survival of the fittest'. In other words, there is little point in defining justice in terms of abstract concepts such as 'needs' or 'rights' when material benefits simply reflected the 'natural' endowments of each individual.

When material distribution reflects 'the workings of nature' there is little purpose in, or justification for, human beings interfering with it, even if this means tolerating starvation, destitution and other forms of human suffering. Some have employed precisely this argument in criticism of attempts to mount famine or disaster relief. Although the more fortunate may like to feel they can relieve the suffering of others, if in doing so they are working against nature itself their efforts will ultimately be to no avail and may even be counter-productive.

An early exponent of such a view was the British economist Thomas Malthus (see p. 19), who warned that all attempts to relieve poverty were pointless. In *An Essay on the Principles of Population* ([1798] 1971), he argued that all improvements in living conditions tend to promote increases in population size which then quickly outstrip the resources available to sustain them. War, famine and disease are therefore necessary checks on population size; any attempt by government, however well-intentioned, to relieve poverty will simply court disaster.

The idea that justice boils down to natural deserts has, however, been subject to severe criticism. At best, this can be regarded as a harsh and unforgiving principle of justice, what is sometimes referred to as ‘rough justice’. Material circumstances are put down to the roll of nature’s dice: the fact that some countries possess more natural resources and a more hospitable climate than others is nobody’s fault, and nothing can be done about it. The simple fact is that some are lucky, and others are not. Many would argue, however, that this is not a moral theory at all, but rather a way of avoiding moral judgements. There is no room for justice in nature, and to base moral principles on the workings of nature is simply absurd. Indeed, to do so is to distort our understanding of both ‘justice’ and ‘nature’. To portray something as ‘natural’ is to suggest that it has been fashioned by forces beyond human control, and possibly beyond human understanding. In other words, to suggest that a particular distribution of benefits is ‘natural’ is to imply that it is inevitable and unchallengeable, not that it is morally ‘right’. Moreover, what in the past may have appeared to be unalterable may no longer be so. Modern, technologically advanced societies undoubtedly possess a greater capacity to tackle problems such as poverty, unemployment and famine, which Burke and Malthus had regarded as ‘natural’. To portray the prevailing distribution of material resources in terms of ‘natural deserts’ may therefore be no more than an attempt to find justification for ignoring the suffering of fellow human beings.

Welfare

Since the early twentieth century, debate about equality and social justice has tended to focus on the issue of welfare. In its simplest form, ‘welfare’ refers to happiness, prosperity and well-being in general; it implies not mere physical survival but some measure of health and contentment as well. As such, ‘general well-being’ is an almost universally accepted political ideal: few political parties would wish to be associated with the prospect of poverty and deprivation. Although there is clearly room to debate what constitutes ‘well-being’, ‘prosperity’ or ‘happiness’, what gives the concept of welfare its genuinely contentious character is that it has come to be linked to a particular means of achieving

general well-being: collectively provided welfare, delivered by government through what is called the 'welfare state'. The welfare state is linked to the idea of equality in that, in broad terms, it aims to secure a basic level of equal well-being for all citizens. In many cases, it is also seen as one of the basic requirements of social justice, at least from the perspective of needs theorists. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which welfare is a narrower concept than either equality or social justice. Whereas theories of social justice usually relate to how the whole cake of society's resources is distributed, the notion of welfare is more concerned with providing a minimum quality of life for all, accepting that much wealth and income is distributed through the market.

In political debate, welfare is invariably a collectivist principle, standing for the belief that government has a responsibility to promote the social well-being of its citizens. This principle of welfare is sometimes termed 'social welfare'. However, two other principles of welfare have been employed, each of which continues to be relevant to ideological debate. The first is the individualist theory of welfare, which holds that general well-being is more likely to result from the pursuit of individual self-interest, regulated by the market, than it is from any system of public provision. This notion of 'welfare individualism' is rooted in the classical economics of Adam Smith but has been revived by New Right thinkers such as Hayek and Friedman (see p. 19). Second, attempts have been made to develop a 'third way' in welfare thinking. This seeks a balance between collectivism and individualism, based on the recognition that citizens have both welfare rights and moral responsibilities.

Welfare, poverty and social exclusion

The term welfare state came into being in the twentieth century to describe the broader social responsibilities of government. However, the term is used in at least two contrasting senses, one broad, the other narrow. The broad meaning, in the form of '*a* welfare state', draws attention to the provision of welfare as a prominent, if not the predominant, function of the state. This is how William Temple, Archbishop of York, first used the term in English in 1941 to distinguish Western 'welfare states', orientated around the promotion of social well-being, from what he called the 'power states' of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. This is also the sense in which modern welfare states can be contrasted with the minimal or 'nightwatchman' states, whose domestic functions were largely confined to the maintenance of domestic order.

However, the term is more commonly used in the narrower sense, in the form of '*the* welfare state'. As such, it describes the policies and, more specifically, the institutions through which the goal of welfare is delivered. Thus institutions like the social security system, health service and public education are often referred

to collectively as 'the welfare state'. It is, nevertheless, sometimes difficult to determine which institutions and policies can be said to be part of the welfare state in this sense, because a very wide range of public policies can be said to have a 'welfare' goal. The most common image of the welfare state is of positive welfare provision, the delivery of services such as pensions, benefits, housing, health and education, which the market either does not provide or does not provide adequately. In this sense, the welfare state is an attempt to supplement or, in some cases, replace a system of private provision. This was the form of welfare state constructed in the post-1945 period in the UK, modelled on the Beveridge Report (1942), and subsequently adopted throughout much of Western Europe. However, welfare provision can also be negative, in the sense that it attempts to promote social well-being not by the provision of services but through the regulation of market behaviour. For example, any attempt by government to influence working conditions – legal protection for trade unions in industrial action, minimum wage legislation and regulations about health and safety – can be said to serve a welfare purpose.

It is often difficult, however, to determine if a state *is*, or *has*, a welfare state. This problem is particularly apparent in the USA. On the one hand, the USA clearly does not possess the developed and comprehensive institutions typically found in European states; on the other, a wide range of benefits are available in the form of social insurance, based on the Social Security Act 1935, Medicare and Medicaid, the food stamps programme and so on. Following Gosta Esping-Anderson (1990), it is possible to identify three distinct forms of welfare provision found in developed industrialized states. The US, Canadian and Australian systems can be described as liberal (or limited) welfare states since they aim to provide little more than a 'safety net' for those in need. In countries such as Germany, conservative (or corporate) welfare states provide a more extensive range of services but depend heavily on the 'paying in' principle and link benefit closely to jobs. Social-democratic (or Beveridge) welfare states, such as the classical Swedish and the original UK system, are, by contrast, based on universal benefits and the maintenance of full employment. Nevertheless, the distinctions between these models have become increasingly blurred since the 1990s, as a result of the tendency towards welfare reform, discussed later in the chapter.

All systems of welfare are nevertheless concerned with the question of poverty. Although welfare states may address broader and more ambitious goals, the eradication of poverty is their most fundamental objective. But what is 'poverty'? On the face of it, poverty means being deprived of the 'necessities of life', sufficient food, fuel and clothing to maintain 'physical efficiency'. In its original sense, this was seen as an *absolute* standard, below which human existence became difficult to sustain. From this perspective, poverty hardly exists in developed states like the USA, Canada, the UK and Australia; even the poor in such countries live better than much of the world's population. However, to regard as

‘poor’ only those who are starving is to ignore the fact that poverty may also consist in being deprived of the standards, conditions and pleasures enjoyed by the majority in society. This is the notion of *relative* poverty, defined as not having ‘the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the society to which they belong’ (Townsend, 1974). In this sense, the poor are the ‘less well-off’ rather than the ‘needy’. The concept of relative poverty is nevertheless politically contentious, because it establishes a link between poverty and inequality, and, in so doing, suggests that the welfare state’s task of eradicating poverty can only be achieved through the redistribution of wealth and the promotion of social equality. .

Modern debates about welfare, however, often focus on the issue of social exclusion rather than the question of poverty. The traditional idea of poverty has two important implications. It suggests that disadvantage is an essentially economic issue linked to material deprivation, whether absolute or relative; and that disadvantage is a structural matter; in effect, the poor are the ‘victims’ of some form of social injustice. ‘Social exclusion’, on the other hand, is a broader concept: it is about all the processes and conditions that detach individuals and groups from the social mainstream. The socially excluded thus suffer from multiple deprivation, in that, although they may be materially poor, they may also be marginalized by educational failure, crime or anti-social behaviour, a dysfunctional family, or the absence of the work ethic. In short, cultural factors may be as important as economic ones in explaining social disadvantage, and perhaps more important. The language of social exclusion has shifted thinking on welfare in important ways. For instance, whereas a concern with poverty tends to link the provision of welfare to the pursuit of social equality achieved through the redistribution of wealth, a concern with social exclusion is more commonly associated with attempts to boost life chances, not least by improving education and skills and widening access to work. Equality is therefore redefined as social *in*clusion.

In praise of welfare

Welfarism, in its traditional sense, is the belief that social well-being is properly the responsibility of the community and that this responsibility should be met through government. In the post-1945 period, a ‘welfare consensus’ developed across much of the world, which saw parties of the left, right and centre competing to establish their welfarist credentials, backed up by a wider body of thought that, albeit in different ways, emphasized the alleviation of poverty, including ‘liberation theology’ in Latin America (see p. 291). This consensus was underpinned by powerful electoral factors, as a large body of voters recognized that the welfare state provided social safeguards which free-market capitalism could

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

'LIBERATION THEOLOGY' IN LATIN AMERICA THOUGHT

Liberation theology is a movement in the Roman Catholic Church which arose in the 1960s, mainly in Latin America. The central theme in liberation theology is that there is a special duty of the believing Christian to work for the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, based on the belief that Christ came not merely to redeem us, but also to liberate us. This was expressed through the idea of a 'preferential option for the poor'. Liberation theology gained its distinctive theoretical character from attempts to merge Christian theology with aspects of Marxism. While liberation theology drew on moral imperatives that were supposedly rooted in Catholicism, Marxist class analysis was used as an analytical tool to explain poverty and oppression in Latin America and elsewhere, and to suggest how it should be addressed.

In *A Theology of Liberation* (1971), Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian priest often portrayed as the founder of liberation theology, argued that the social context of human existence plays an important, if not the primary, role in mediating between the will of God and humankind. This implied that religious truth must be interpreted in the light of changing social conditions. Some nevertheless went further than Gutiérrez, in holding that socialist revolution was the only option for Christians, a position adopted, for example, by the Christians for Socialism movement, founded in 1972. However, under Pope John Paul II (1978–2005), the Vatican sought to stamp out what it called the 'singular heresy of liberation theology', a task entrusted to Cardinal Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI (2005–12). This coincided with a tendency towards de-radicalization, as leading liberation theologians moved their writings in a more spiritual and communitarian direction, distancing themselves from Marxism and abandoning calls for revolution. Since 2012, however, Pope Francis, a former Argentine bishop and the first pope to come from Latin America, has placed a particular emphasis on leading a 'church for the poor', suggesting that liberation theology, shorn of its Marxist dimensions, may be back in fashion and may even have entered the Catholic mainstream.

never match. Nevertheless, welfarism is by no means a coherent philosophy. Although liberals, conservatives and socialists have each recognized its attractions, they have often been drawn to welfare by different considerations and have endorsed different systems of welfare provision.

One of the earliest reasons for interest in social welfare had more to do with national efficiency than with principles like justice and equality. When a country's workforce is sickly and undernourished it is in no position to build up a prosperous economy, still less to develop an effective army. It is therefore no

coincidence that in countries like Germany and the UK the foundations of the welfare state were laid in the decades leading up to the outbreak of World War I, a period of colonial expansion and growing international rivalry. Although such motives have little to do with altruism and compassion, it can clearly be argued that in the long run a healthy and productive workforce is beneficial for the whole of society. Indeed, it is often suggested that the growth of social welfare is linked to a particular stage of economic development. Whereas early industrialization makes use of a largely unskilled, unthinking manual workforce, further industrial progress requires educated and trained workers, who are capable of understanding and utilizing modern technology. It is the function of the welfare state to bring such a workforce into existence.

Welfare has also been linked to the prospect of social cohesion and national unity. This concern has been close to the heart of conservative thinkers, who have feared that grinding poverty and social deprivation will generate civil unrest and, possibly, revolution. In the UK, the Conservative statesman Benjamin Disraeli (1804–81) thus justified social reform on the grounds of so-called ‘one nation’ principles, arguing that it would counter the prospect of the country being divided into ‘two nations: the Rich and the Poor’. Similar concerns underpinned the construction of the world’s first modern welfare state, in Germany during the 1880s, as Chancellor Bismarck’s aim was to wean the working masses away from socialism (the ‘Red menace’) by improving their living and working conditions. The conservative welfare tradition is based on a combination of prudence and principle. Prudence is evident in the recognition that reform is preferable to revolution; concessions made to the working class, in terms of welfare rights, therefore help to uphold established institutions and serve the long-term interests of the rich. Such thinking is nevertheless linked to the principle of paternalism and belief that the ‘price’ of privilege is an obligation to help the less fortunate, the ‘deserving poor’. This is a stance that is sometimes rooted in the neo-feudal idea of *noblesse oblige*, the obligations of the aristocracy to be honourable and generous.

The liberal case for welfare, by contrast, has very largely been based on political principles, and in particular the belief that welfare can broaden the realm of freedom. Although early liberals feared that social reform would sap initiative and discourage hard work, modern liberals have seen it as an essential guarantee of individual self-development. Such a theory was advanced in the late nineteenth century by the so-called ‘new’ liberals, people such as T. H. Green (see p. 249), Leonard Hobhouse (1864–1929) and J. A. Hobson (1858–1940), whose views created the intellectual climate which made the Asquith reforms possible. The central aspect of liberal welfarism is the desire to safeguard individuals from the social evils which can blight their lives, evils such as deprivation, unemployment, sickness and so on. The Beveridge Report (1942) thus set out to tackle the ‘five giants’ – want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness – and promised to

protect citizens 'from the cradle to the grave'. Very similar motives influenced the introduction of social welfare in the USA in the 1930s, under F. D. Roosevelt's 'New Deal', as well as Lyndon Johnson's 'War on Poverty' in the 1960s. The liberal welfarism is, nevertheless, always qualified: its ultimate purpose is enable individuals to make their own moral decisions, to help individuals to help themselves. Once deprivation has been alleviated, liberals hope that individuals will once again be able to take responsibility for their own economic and social circumstances and 'stand on their own two feet'.

The socialist or social-democratic case for welfare, however, goes further. Although social-democratic politicians have increasingly come to adopt the language of liberal welfarism, they have traditionally based their support for welfare on two more radical principles: communitarianism and equality. Social democrats have, for example, seen welfare provision as a means of promoting the bonds of sympathy and compassion which characterize a genuine community. In *The Gift Relationship* (1970), for example, Richard Titmuss suggested that the welfare state is, in essence, an ethical system, based on reciprocal obligations amongst citizens. People should receive welfare as if it is a gift from a 'stranger', as an expression of human sympathy and mutual affection, as in the case of blood donations. In the alternative argument, social democrats have linked welfare to equality, portraying the welfare state as a counterweight to the injustices and 'inhumanity' of market capitalism. Social welfare is therefore viewed as a redistributive mechanism, which transfers wealth from rich to poor, through a benefits system that is financed by progressive taxation. Such a vision, for example, was outlined in Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* ([1956 2006]), which defined socialism in terms of equality as opposed to common ownership. Nevertheless, it is clear that the welfare state can never bring about absolute social equality; its goal is rather to 'humanize' capitalism by reducing distributive inequalities. As such, though, social-democratic welfarism is dedicated not merely to fostering equal opportunities but also to bringing about a greater measure of equality of outcome.

Welfare: roll-back or reform?

The welfare consensus which had underpinned a steady rise in the social budget has broken down since the 1970s, precipitated, in large part, by a fiscal crisis of the welfare state. As the 'long boom' of the post-1945 period petered out, governments across the developed world were confronted with the problem of how to sustain their welfare programmes at a time of falling tax revenues. Two options were available to them: push up taxes or cut the welfare budget. Against this background, a growing body of anti-welfarist thinking emerged. Nevertheless, this 'turn against welfare' has been every bit as ideologically diverse as welfarism

itself. Although attacks on welfare have been led by New Right theorists, so-called 'new' social democrats and 'third-way' thinkers have focused on the need to rethink welfare provision and reform the welfare state.

New Right criticisms of welfare range over moral, political and economic considerations. The centrepiece of the New Right's libertarian critique is, however, the idea that the welfare state in effect enslaves the poor by creating dependency and turning them into 'welfare junkies'. George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* (1982) and Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* (1984) were among the most influential attempts to portray welfare as counter-productive. Job creation programmes, for instance, had only pushed up unemployment by weakening individual initiative; and classifying people as 'unemployed', 'handicapped' or 'disadvantaged' merely convinced them that they were 'victims of circumstance'. In this way, a welfare-dependent underclass had come into existence, lacking the work ethic, self-respect and the supportive structures of conventional family life.

By suggesting that the less well-off can, and should, be responsible for their own lives, the New Right revived the idea of the 'undeserving poor'. In its extreme form, this implies that the poor are simply lazy and inadequate, those who are more interested in living off the charity of others than in working for themselves. However, in its more sophisticated form, it suggests that, regardless of the causes of poverty, only the individual can get himself or herself out of it; society cannot be held responsible. Welfare should therefore be provided in such a way as to promote and reward individual responsibility. The welfare state, for instance, should be nothing more than a 'safety net', designed to relieve absolute poverty, and benefits should be 'targeted' at cases of genuine deprivation. When welfare is turned into a system of rights or entitlements, people are sucked into dependency rather than encouraged to get out of it. The New Right has consequently placed a heavy stress on civil obligations, believing that welfare in some way has to be 'earned'. This is why many in the New Right have been attracted by the idea of 'workfare', which forces those in receipt of state support to work for their benefit. A further proposal, popularized by Milton Friedman (1962), was that all forms of welfare should be replaced by a 'negative income tax'. This would mean that all those below a certain income would *receive* money from the tax authorities instead of having to *pay* tax (as those above this level have to do).

The New Right has objected to welfare on a variety of other grounds. The welfare state has, for example, been blamed for declining levels of economic growth. This was, in part, because high welfare spending penalizes those in work or in business, who were crushed by an ever higher tax burden. While benefits create an incentive to idleness, the taxes needed to finance them constitute a disincentive to enterprise. The New Right has therefore been interested in squeezing the welfare budget by cutting benefits and encouraging a shift towards private welfare provision. For both ideological and economic reasons, the New Right favours the privatization of welfare in areas such as education, health care,

pensions and so forth. Where privatization is ruled out by electoral constraints, they have advocated reforms designed to make public provision conform to market principles. Examples of this can be seen in the 'internal markets' that have been introduced in education and health care in the UK since the 1990s. The New Right, moreover, claims that the 'rolling back' of the welfare provision and the shift towards privatization and marketization bring benefit to all social groups, including the poor. This is sometimes explained through the controversial idea of 'trickle down', which suggests that while reduced welfare spending may increase inequality, it stimulates enterprise and so economic growth, pushing up general living standards.

However, the new politics of welfare in the USA and the UK that developed during the Reagan–Thatcher years has not been confined to the New Right or to these countries. The 'golden age of the welfare state' appears to have ended and been replaced by a passion for welfare reform in almost all states, even though countries such as the UK, Australia and New Zealand have pursued it with greater vigour than many in continental Europe. The idea of welfare reform emerged out of the search for a middle way between the stand-on-your-own-feet anti-welfarism of the New Right, and the cradle-to-grave welfarism of social democracy, reflecting, as it does, the desire to rethink strategies for promoting personal independence and economic and social dynamism. In a sense, traditional social democrats believe that the poor are poor because they do not have enough money, in which case the solution is to redistribute wealth through the social security system; while the New Right holds that the poor are poor because they have too much money, in which case the solution is to scale down over-generous welfare support. Advocates of welfare reform argue, by contrast, that the poor are poor because they lack the opportunities and cultural resources to achieve full participation and inclusion in society. The purpose of welfare reform, from this perspective, is to replace 'curative' welfare policies with 'preventative' ones. Programmes of welfare reform therefore often focus on ideas such as 'workfare' and 'welfare to work', as well as on attempts to boost citizens' employability by improving their access to education and training.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How does equality differ from ‘sameness’?
- What does it mean to suggest that people are ‘born’ equal?
- In what sense does equality of opportunity seek to uphold inequality?
- Is equality of outcome simply a manifestation of the politics of envy?
- Does the notion of social justice necessarily imply a bias towards equality?
- On what grounds is it sometimes argued that the distribution of wealth cannot be evaluated in terms of justice?
- How egalitarian is Rawls’ theory of justice?
- Which provides the soundest basis for social justice: needs, rights or deserts?
- Are poverty and inequality necessarily linked?
- What are the advantages of thinking about welfare in terms of promoting social inclusion?
- What is the strongest justification for welfare?
- Does ‘welfare reform’ seek to defend the principle of welfare, or to undermine it?

FURTHER READING

Barry, B. *Why Social Justice Matters* (2005). A book that emphasizes the importance of social justice and examines both its economic and political feasibility in the light of recent attempts to subvert its meaning and application.

Miller, D. *Principles of Social Justice* (2001). A useful, thorough and innovative overview of social justice, which examines the implications of the competing principles of desert, need and equality.

Pierson, C. Castle, F. and Naumann, I. (eds) *The Welfare State Reader* (2014). A very useful and wide-ranging collection of readings that discuss contrasting approaches to welfare, recent challenges to the welfare state, and emerging thinking on the subject.

White, S. *Equality* (2006). A clear and accessible introduction to the concept of equality and to the debates, both historical and contemporary, that surround it, which explains how the demand for equality arises in different spheres.

Property, the Market and Planning

- PROPERTY

Private property • Common property • State property

- THE MARKET

The market mechanism • Miracle of the market • Market flaws and failures

- PLANNING

The planning process • Promise of planning • Perils of planning

Preview

At almost every level, politics is intertwined with economics. For instance, election results are widely thought to be determined by economic factors, and party politics is invariably dominated by economic issues: parties compete against each other by promising higher rates of economic growth, increased prosperity, lower inflation and so on. The influence of economics has been no less significant in political theory. For almost two hundred years, ideological debate revolved around a battle between capitalism and socialism, a clash between two rival economic philosophies. This struggle was regarded as fundamental to the political spectrum itself, right-wing ideas being sympathetic towards capitalism, left-wing ones being broadly socialist. In effect, this tendency reduced politics to a debate about the ownership of property and the desirability of one economic system over another. Should property be owned by private individuals and be used to satisfy personal interests? Or should it be owned collectively, by either the community or the state, and be harnessed to the common good?

Questions about property are closely related to conflicting models of economic organization, notably the rival economic systems that dominated much of twentieth-century history: market capitalism and central planning. At times, politics has been simplified to a choice between the market and the plan. The idea of the market has undoubtedly been in the ascendancy since the late twentieth century, being aligned to economic globalization and the spread of a worldwide market culture. What is it that has made market-based systems of economic organization so successful? But why, nevertheless, has there been a continual need for government to intervene in economic life to supplement or regulate the market? Although forms of planning have been adopted in a wide range of countries, the principle was applied most rigorously in orthodox communist states. What are the strengths or attractions of the planning process? But why, also, has planning often failed or been abruptly abandoned?

Property

The most common misunderstanding in any discussion of property is the everyday use of the term to refer to inanimate objects or 'things.' Property is in fact a social institution, and so is defined by custom, convention and, in most cases, by law. To describe something as 'property' is to acknowledge that a relationship of *ownership* exists between the object in question and the person or group to whom it belongs. In that sense, there is a clear distinction between property and simply making use of an object as a possession. For example, to pick up a pebble from a beach, to borrow a pen, or drive away someone else's car, does not establish ownership. Property is thus an established and enforceable claim to an object or possession; it is a 'right,' not a 'thing.' The ownership of an object is therefore reflected in the existence of rights and powers over it and also the acceptance of duties and liabilities in relation to it. From this perspective, property may confer the ability to use and dispose of an object, but it may also involve the responsibility to conserve or repair it.

The range of objects that can be designated as property has varied considerably. Primitive societies, like those of the Native Americans, may have little or no conception of property. In such societies, inanimate objects, and especially land, are thought to belong to nature; human beings do not *own* property, they are at best its custodians. The modern notion of property dates from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and stems from the growth in Western societies of a commercialized economy. As material objects increasingly came to be regarded as economic resources – as the 'means of production' or as 'commodities' capable of being bought or sold – the question of ownership became absolutely vital. The natural world was turned into 'property' to enable it to be exploited for human benefit. Nevertheless, property has not only been restricted to material objects. Human beings, for instance, have been thought of as property, most obviously in the institution of slavery but also in legal systems which have regarded wives as the 'chattels' of their husbands. However, different forms of property have developed, depending on who or what was entitled to make a claim of ownership: private property, common property and state property. Each form of property has radically different implications for the organization of economic and social life, and each has been justified by reference to very particular moral and economic principles.

Private property

So deeply is the notion of private property embedded in Western culture that it is not uncommon for all property to be thought of as 'private.' Nevertheless, private property is a distinctive form of property, defined by C. B. Macpherson

ROBERT NOZICK (1938–2002)

US academic and political philosopher. Nozick's major work, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974) is widely seen as one of the most important modern works of political philosophy, and has had a profound influence on New Right theories and beliefs.

Nozick's work is often interpreted as a response to the ideas of John Rawls (see p. 282), and is seen, more broadly, as part of a right-wing backlash against the post-1945 growth in state power. He developed a form of libertarianism (see p. 312) that draws on the ideas of Locke (see p. 255) and was influenced by nineteenth-century US individualists such as Spooner (1808–87) and Tucker (1854–1939). At its core is an entitlement theory of justice that takes certain rights to be inviolable, and rejects the notion that social justice requires that a society's income and wealth be distributed according to a particular pattern. In particular, Nozick argued that property rights should be strictly upheld, provided that wealth has been justly acquired in the first place or has been justly transferred from one person to another. In short, 'whatever arises from a just situation by just steps is itself just'. On this basis, he rejected all forms of welfare and redistribution as theft. Nozick nevertheless supported a 'minimal state', which he believed would inevitably develop from a hypothetical state of nature. Some of the conclusions of *Anarchy, State and Utopia* were moderated in *The Examined Life* (1989).

(1973) as the right of an individual or institution to 'exclude others' from the use or benefit of something. The 'right to exclude' does not, of course, necessarily deny access. Someone else can use 'my' car – but only with my permission. The notion of property as 'private' developed in the early modern period and provided a legal framework within which commercial activity could take place. Private property thus became the cornerstone of the growing market or capitalist economic order.

Liberal (see p. 18) and conservative (see p. 258) theorists have been the most committed defenders of private property, but its justification has taken a number of forms. One of the earliest arguments in favour of private property was advanced in the seventeenth century by natural-rights theorists such as John Locke (see p. 255). A very similar position has been adopted since the mid-twentieth century by theorists such as Robert Nozick. The basis of this argument is a belief in 'self-ownership', that each individual has a right to own his or her own person or body. If, as Locke argued, each person has exclusive rights over his or her self, it follows that they have an exclusive right to the product of their own labour – that is, what they personally have crafted, produced or created. Property rights are therefore based on the idea that inanimate objects have been 'mixed' with human labour and so become the exclusive property of the labourer. This argument justifies not only exclusive property rights but also unlimited ones;

individuals have an absolute right to use or dispose of property in whatever way they wish. This is evident in Nozick's theory of distribution, discussed in Chapter 10. According to Nozick, providing property has been acquired or transferred 'justly', there is no justification for infringing property rights, whether in the cause of social justice or in the interests of the larger society. Such a position, for example, sets very clear limits to the capacity of government to regulate economic life or even to tax its citizens.

Often linked to the idea of natural rights is the justification of private property as an incentive to labour. Found in Aristotle (see p. 62) and developed by utilitarian (see p. 362) and economic theorists, this defence of private property is based less on moral principles than it is on the promise of economic efficiency. In short, it is only the possibility of acquiring and consuming wealth, in the form of private property, which encourages people to work hard and develop the skills and talents they were born with. Economists point out, moreover, that through the mechanism of market competition private property ensures that economic resources are attracted to their most efficient use, ensuring a productive and growing economy. Such an argument is based on the belief that human beings are self-seeking and that work is essentially instrumental. In other words, work is at best a means to an end. The driving force behind productive activity is simply the desire for material consumption. Individuals will be encouraged to devote their time and energy to work only if there is the compensating prospect of acquiring material wealth.

Private property has also been linked to the promotion of important political values, notably individual liberty. Property ownership gives citizens a degree of independence and self-reliance, enabling them to 'stand on their own two feet'. By contrast, the propertyless can easily be manipulated and controlled, either by the wealthy or by government. Thus, even political theorists who feared the emergence of economic inequality, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see p. 165), the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (see p. 370) and modern social democrats (see p. 276), have been unwilling to contemplate the abolition of private property. This argument has, however, been put particularly forcefully by free-market economists, such as Friedrich Hayek (see p. 313). In *The Road to Serfdom* ([1944] 1976) Hayek portrayed property ownership as the most fundamental of civil liberties, and argued that personal freedom can reign only within a capitalist economic system. In his view, government intervention in economic life necessarily escalates to the point where all aspects of social existence are brought under state control. In effect, any encroachment on private property contains the seeds of totalitarian oppression.

In addition to its economic and political advantages, private property also brings social and personal benefits. Private property, for instance, promotes a range of important social values. Property owners have a 'stake' in society, an incentive to maintain order, be law-abiding and behave respectfully.

Conservatives and liberals have, as a result, praised the notion of a 'property-owning democracy'. Such thinking underpinned Ackerman and Alstott's (1999) proposal that all young Americans should be given a financial stake in society in the form of a capital sum of \$80,000 (the estimated cost of a four-year education at a top US university). This attempt to establish a 'stakeholder society' clearly rejects the idea that property is an individual right based on merit or just transfer. Indeed, it seeks to counter the unfairness that results from rights-based property ownership, which allows for wide and entrenched inequalities in the distribution of wealth, and so in life chances, resulting from the inheritance of property or its 'just' transfer. The stakeholder justification for private property is, by contrast, that asset ownership engenders freedom and responsibility, widening opportunities for young people in particular, and encouraging people to think and act in accordance with longer-term considerations.

A final justification for private property sees property not as an economic resource or as consumable wealth, but rather as a source of personal fulfilment. In this sense, the enjoyment and satisfaction that property ownership brings may be as much a psychological fact as it is an economic one. At one level, this can be seen in the capacity of property to provide security in an insecure world, giving people 'something to fall back on'. Beyond this, however, property may bring a form of 'inner' satisfaction, even serving as an exteriorization of an individual's personality. People are thus attached to their personal possessions in a deep emotional sense: they 'realize' themselves through, even 'see' themselves in, what they own – their cars, houses, books and the like. This dimension of property ownership also helps to explain why, aside from the physical loss of possessions, the crime of burglary often leaves its victims with a sense that they have been personally violated.

The case against private property has been advanced principally by socialists, although others have also at times recognized the need to limit property rights. The most common approach has been to view private property not as the cornerstone of liberty, but as a fundamental threat to it. One version of this argument warns that unfettered property rights can lead to a grossly unequal distribution of wealth, allowing property to become a means of controlling, even enslaving, others. This idea was expressed most graphically in Proudhon's ([1840] 1970) famous dictum, 'Property is theft'. What Proudhon meant by this was not so much that individuals have no right to property but simply that the accumulation of wealth in private hands can allow the rich to exploit and oppress the poor. Marxists nevertheless take the notion of 'theft' more literally. Adopting a labour theory of value that was based on the writings of Locke, Marx (see p. 317) drew a stark distinction between those who create wealth through their labour, the proletariat, and those who own it, the bourgeoisie. The production and accumulation of wealth, or capital, therefore involves

exploitation and class oppression; as Marx put it, the bourgeoisie extracts 'surplus value' from the labour of the proletariat. In *The Communist Manifesto* ([1848] 1976), Marx and Engels thus summed up the theory of communism in a single phrase: 'Abolition of private property'. Further concerns about private property have focused on its tendency to distort human nature by breeding acquisitiveness and greed. This is a stance that has been adopted not only by socialists but also by traditional conservatives, who have emphasized that, as custodians, not owners, of property, we have a duty to preserve it for the benefit of future generations. Similar thinking is evident in green political theory (see p. 218) in the idea of 'ecological stewardship', sometimes linked to the notion of 'Buddhist economics' (see p. 303).

Common property

Despite the common misconception of property as private property, the common or collective ownership of wealth has a history which long predates modern socialist thought. Plato (see p. 22) recommended that among the philosopher-kings who should be entrusted to rule, property should be owned in common; and Thomas More's *Utopia* ([1516] 2012) portrays a society without private property, in some respects pre-figuring ideas later developed in *The Communist Manifesto*. Whereas private property is based on the right to exclude others from use, common property can be defined, in Macpherson's (1973) words, as 'the right not to exclude others'. In other words, a right of access to property is shared by the members of a collective body and no member is entitled to detach a portion from the common wealth and exclude others, thereby establishing 'private' domain over it. This does not necessarily mean, however, that no one is excluded from use of common property. The right of common ownership may be restricted to the members of a cooperative of some kind, a commune or a locality. For example, access to common land may be restricted to people designated as 'commoners', 'non-commoners' being excluded, just as the free use of 'public' facilities like libraries, museums and schools may not be extended to 'non-citizens'. In other cases, common ownership may be universal in the sense that no human being is, or can be, excluded from use, as has sometimes been advocated in the case of land.

The case in favour of collective property has usually been advanced by socialists, communists and communitarian anarchists. At the heart of this usually lies a theory of labour, but one very different from Locke's. Locke believed that the right to private property could be traced to the labour of an independent and specifiable individual. Supporters of common property, on the other hand, have typically regarded labour as a social or collective activity, depending in almost all cases on group cooperation rather than independent

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

BUDDHIST ECONOMICS

The idea of Buddhist economics was popularized by E. F. Schumacher in his pioneering work, *Small is Beautiful* (1974). In this, he set out to expose the philosophical underpinnings of the Western economic system and to examine what the economy would look like if it were based, alternatively, on Buddhist principles. According to Schumacher, Western economists suffer from a kind of 'metaphysical blindness', in which their own beliefs are treated as 'absolute and invariable truths'. One of these 'truths' is that consumption is the sole purpose of economic activity, labour being nothing more than a means to an end, and having no value in itself. The aim of the economic system is thus to maximize consumption by achieving ever higher levels of production.

The Buddhist approach to economics is founded, by contrast, on the idea of 'right livelihood', which forms part of the so-called Eightfold Path, the path to enlightenment. For labour to constitute 'right livelihood', it must conform to a number of requirements. First, and most basically, in the Buddhist tradition work is not a 'disutility' (a sacrifice we make that is only compensated for by the wages we receive); rather, it is an opportunity to utilize and develop our faculties. Work should therefore be stimulating and creative, not meaningless or stultifying. Second, by facilitating social interaction and cooperation, work should help people overcome ego-centredness. This suggests that work should be non-exploitative, although there is no agreement in Buddhism about how, in practice, this should be achieved. Third, while it is acknowledged that one of the purposes of work is to produce goods and services, these should be sufficient only to provide people with a decent existence, and not to foster greed or consumerism. This reflects the emphasis in Buddhism on 'simple living'. Finally, for Schumacher and others, 'right livelihood' implies ecological awareness, and especially the need for production to be balanced with an appreciation of the long-term interests of the environment, other species and future generations of humans.

effort. It follows, therefore, that the wealth so produced should be owned in common and should be used to promote the collective good. Common property has also been justified on grounds of social cohesion and solidarity. When property is owned in common, anti-social instincts like selfishness and competition are kept at bay, while social harmony and a sense of collective identity is strengthened. Plato, for instance, believed common ownership to be essential because it would ensure that the class of rulers would act as a united and selfless whole. Socialists have typically seen common property as a way of ensuring that *all* citizens are full members of society, in which case it harnesses the collective energies of the community, rather than the narrow and selfish drives of the individual.

Common property has also attracted severe criticism, however. Opponents allege that in robbing the individual of a 'private' domain of personal possessions, common ownership creates a depersonalized and insecure social environment. Some socialists have implicitly acknowledged this problem in drawing a distinction between *productive* property, the 'means of production', which they believe should be collectively owned, and *personal* property, the 'means of consumption', which can still remain in private hands. Others argue that common property is inherently inefficient in that it fails to provide individuals with a material incentive to work and to realize their talents. A final problem with collective property is that it embodies no mechanism for restricting access to scarce resources, except a reliance on natural good sense and cooperation. Garrett Hardin (1968) explained this by reference to what he called the 'tragedy of the commons'. Before the enclosure of land, all commoners had an unrestricted right of access to it, being able to graze as many animals as they wished. The problem was that in many cases land was over-grazed and became unproductive, a tragedy which affected all commoners. Systems of private property ownership get round this problem by allowing the market to ration scarce resources through the price mechanism. Where systems of common ownership have been introduced, however, access to scarce resources has usually been restricted by the imposition of some form of political authority. Common ownership has thus often in practice taken the form of state ownership.

State property

The notions of common property and state property are often confused. Terms such as 'public ownership' or 'social ownership' appear to refer to property owned collectively by all citizens, but in practice usually describe property that is owned and controlled by the state. 'Nationalization' similarly implies ownership by the nation but through a system of state control. Nevertheless, state property constitutes a form of property that is distinct from both private and common property, although, confusingly, it exhibits characteristics of each. The resemblance between state property and common property is borne out by the fact that, unlike, for instance, private corporations, the state acts in the name of the people and supposedly in the public interest. A distinction is sometimes therefore made between the ownership and control of state property: ownership, nominally at least, is in the hands of 'the people', while control clearly rests with the government of the day. In other respects, however, state property is more akin to private property. Ordinary citizens, for example, have no more right of access to state property, such as police cars, than they do to any other private vehicle. Moreover, state institutions like schools, public libraries and government

offices guard their property no less jealously than private corporations. However, the extent of state property ownership varies considerably from society to society. All states own some range of property to enable them to carry out their basic legislative, executive and judicial functions, but in some countries state property may encompass an extensive range of economic resources and even entire industries. In the case of state collectivization, as found in orthodox communist regimes such as the Soviet Union, all economic resources – the means of production, distribution and exchange – were designated as ‘socialist state property’.

Arguments for state property have often drawn on those which also favour common ownership. If state property is thus regarded as ‘public’, it reflects the fact that collective social energy was expended in its production, and, unlike private property, it promotes cooperation and cohesion rather than conflict and competition. However, state property may also be said to enjoy advantages to which common property cannot aspire. In particular, the state can act as a mechanism through which access to, and the use of, scarce resources is controlled, thereby avoiding the ‘tragedy of the commons’. In the case of state property, however, the right of access to economic resources is limited not for private gain but in the long-term interests of the community. Furthermore, unlike common property, state property can be organized along rational and efficient lines. This is usually made possible by some form of planning system, as discussed in the final main section of the chapter.

State property has nevertheless been sternly criticized. Advocates of common ownership normally point out that state property is neither ‘public’ nor ‘social’ in any meaningful sense. When resources are controlled by state officials they may engender precisely the same alienation as occurs in the case of private property. There is little evidence, for example, that workers in nationalized industries feel in any way ‘closer’ to the service they provide, or more in control of the process of work, than do those who work for a privately owned company. In addition, state property has often been linked to centralization, bureaucracy and inefficiency. Whereas private property leaves the organization of economic life to the vagaries of the market, and common ownership relies on the sociable and cooperative instincts of ordinary people, state property places its faith in a centralized and supposedly rational system of economic planning. However, all too frequently planning systems have become hopelessly unwieldy and inherently inefficient. Massive numbers of state officials are needed to direct the economy and there is a strong tendency for them to become out of touch with both the needs of the economy and the wishes of the consumer. Moreover, there is the danger that the state can develop interests separate from those of the people themselves, as when state property is used to benefit bureaucrats and state officials rather than the public at large. Collectivist regimes have sometimes, therefore, been portrayed as examples of state capitalism.

The market

The need for some kind of economic organization arises out of the simple fact of scarcity: while human needs and wants are infinite, the material resources available to satisfy them clearly are not. In a world of abundant wealth and general prosperity, economics would be irrelevant; but in circumstances of scarcity, economic issues threaten to dominate all others, political ones included. As already noted, the heart of the economic question has traditionally been posed as a choice between two fundamentally different economic systems – capitalism and socialism – and therefore between two rival mechanisms for allocating resources within the economy: the market or the plan.

A market, in its everyday sense, is a place where goods are bought or sold, such as a fish market or a meat market. In economic theory, however, the term ‘market’ refers not so much to a geographical location as to the commercial activity which takes place there. In that sense, a market is a system of commercial exchange in which buyers wishing to acquire a good or service are brought into contact with sellers offering the same for purchase. Although transactions can obviously take the form of barter, a system of good-for-good exchange, commercial activity more usually involves the use of money serving as a convenient means of exchange. The market has usually been regarded as the central feature of a capitalist economy. Capitalism is, in Marx’s words, a ‘generalized system of commodity production’, a ‘commodity’ being a good or service produced for exchange; that is, it has market value. The market is therefore the organizational principle which operates within capitalism, allocating resources, determining what is produced, setting price and wage levels and so on. Indeed, many have regarded the market as the source of capitalism’s dynamism and success, at both a national and a global level. Not only did the collapse of communism in the Eastern European Revolutions of 1989–91 lead to the near universalization of market-based economic forms, even precipitating far-reaching market reform in still nominally communist states such as China, but the advance of economic globalization has led to the emergence of what is called ‘global capitalism’ (see p. 308). Nevertheless, despite the market’s success in having, seemingly, vanquished its principal rival and absorbed national economic structures into a single global economy, its attractions are by no means universally accepted.

The market mechanism

The earliest attempts to analyze the workings of the market was undertaken by the Scottish economist, Adam Smith (see p. 313), in *The Wealth of Nations* ([1776] 1930). Though significantly refined and elaborated by subsequent thinkers, Smith’s work still constitutes the basis for much academic economic

theory. Smith attacked constraints on economic activity, such as the survival of feudal guilds and mercantilist restrictions on trade, arguing that as far as possible the economy should function as a self-regulating market. He believed that market competition would act as an 'invisible hand', helping, as if by magic, to organize economic life without the need for external control. As he put it, 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest'. Although Smith did not subscribe to the crude view that human beings are blindly self-interested, and indeed in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ([1759] 1976) developed a complex theory of motivation, he nevertheless emphasized that, by pursuing our own ends, we unintentionally achieve broader social goals. In this sense, he was a firm believer in the idea of natural order. This notion of unregulated social order, arising out of the pursuit of private interests, was also expressed in Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* ([1714] 1924), which emphasizes that the success of the hive is based on the bees giving in to their 'vices', that is, their passionate and egoistical natures.

Smith suggested that wealth is created through a process of market competition. Later economists have developed this idea into the model of 'perfect competition'. This assumes that in the economy there are an infinite number of producers and an infinite number of consumers, each possessed of perfect knowledge about what is going on in every part of the economy. In such circumstances, the economy will be regulated by the price mechanism, responding as it does to 'market forces', the forces of demand and supply. 'Demand' is the willingness and ability to buy a particular good or service at a particular price; 'supply' refers to the quantity of a good or service that will be available for purchase at a particular price. Prices thus reflect the interaction between demand and supply. When demand exceeds supply, the market price rises, encouraging producers to step up output. Similarly, new and cheaper methods of producing television sets will increase supply and allow prices to fall, thereby encouraging more people to buy televisions. Although decision-making in such an economy is highly decentralized, lying in the hands of an incalculable number of producers and consumers, these are not random decisions. An unseen force is at work within the market serving to ensure stability and balance – Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. Ultimately, market competition tends towards equilibrium because demand and supply will tend to come into line with one another. The price of shoes will, for instance, settle at the level where the number of people willing and able to buy shoes equals the number of shoes available for sale, and will only change when the conditions of demand or supply alter.

A market economy is nothing more than a vast network of commercial relationships, in which both consumers and producers indicate their wishes through the price mechanism. The clear implication of this is that government is relieved of the need to regulate or plan economic activity; economic organization can

THINKING GLOBALLY . . .

GLOBAL CAPITALISM

The term 'global capitalism' suggests that capitalism has been reconstructed, particularly since the 1980s, through the integration of national capitalist structures into a single, interlocking world economy. This has occurred through the development of transborder and transnational economic structures, of which three have been particularly important. There has been an enormous expansion in the scale and scope of the international trading system; transnational corporations (TNCs) have come to dominate more and more economic sectors and now account for most of the world's production; and a global financial system has emerged that allows money and capital to flow round the world, literally, at 'the speed of thought'.

However, two starkly different images of global capitalism have been advanced. From a liberal perspective, a globalized economy is essentially a consequence of the tendency within the market to break down the barriers to production, distribution and exchange that arise from the existence of sovereign nation-states. In this view, global capitalism promotes prosperity and opportunity for all. Although it makes the rich richer, it also makes the poor less poor. This occurs, for example, because international trade allows countries to specialize in the production of goods and services in which they have a 'comparative advantage', with other benefits accruing from the economies of scale that specialization makes possible. Similarly, transnational production is a force for good, as TNCs spread wealth, widen employment opportunities and improve access to modern technology in the developing world. Neo-Marxists, by contrast, have drawn attention to inequalities and asymmetries that operate within global capitalism. World-systems theorists, for instance, argue that the interlocking capitalist system is characterized by structural inequalities that are based on exploitation and a tendency towards instability and crisis that is rooted in economic contradictions. From this perspective, 'core' areas in the developed North benefit from concentrations of capital, high wages and advanced technology, while 'peripheral' areas in the less developed South are exploited by the core through their dependency on the export of raw materials, subsistence wages and weak frameworks of state protection. Global capitalism thus perpetuates global poverty.

Nevertheless, the demise of national capitalism may have been greatly exaggerated. Not only does the bulk of economic activity worldwide continue to take place within a national framework, but the image of economic globalization as an irresistible force may serve largely ideological purposes, in making the trend towards the free market seem to be inevitable (Hirst and Thompson, 1999). However, rather than dismissing the very idea of global capitalism, whether in its liberating or exploitative guise, as a myth, it is perhaps better to think of it as part of a more complex and differentiated reality, which combines national, regional and global elements.

simply be left to the market itself. Indeed, if government interferes with economic life, it runs the risk of upsetting the delicate balance of the market. In short, the economy works best when left alone by government. In its extreme form, this leads to the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, literally meaning 'allow to do', suggesting that the economy should be entirely free from the influence of government. However, only anarcho-capitalists believe that the market can in all respects replace government. Most free-market economists follow Adam Smith in acknowledging that the government has a vital, if limited, role to play.

This role, in almost all cases, involves the acceptance that only a sovereign state can provide a stable context within which the economy can operate, specifically by deterring external aggression, maintaining public order and enforcing contracts. In this respect, free-market economics merely restates the need for a minimal or 'nightwatchman' state. Its proponents may also acknowledge, however, that government has a legitimate economic function, though one largely confined to the maintenance of the market mechanism. For example, government must police the economy to prevent competition being restricted by unfair practices like price agreements and the emergence of 'trusts' or monopolies. Moreover, government is responsible for ensuring stable prices. A market economy relies above all on 'sound money', in other words, a stable means of exchange. By controlling the supply of money, governments are therefore able to keep inflation at bay.

Miracle of the market

The principal attraction of the market has been as a mechanism for creating wealth. This is a task it accomplishes by generating an unrelenting thirst for enterprise, innovation and growth, and by ensuring that resources are put to their most efficient use. The market is a gigantic and highly sophisticated communication system, constantly sending messages or 'signals' from consumers to producers, producers to consumers and so on. The price mechanism, in effect, acts as the central nervous system of the economy, transmitting signals in terms of fluctuating prices. For example, a rise in the price of saucepans conveys to consumers the message 'buy fewer saucepans', while producers receive the message 'produce more saucepans.' The market is thus able to accomplish what no rational allocation system could possibly achieve, because it places economic decision-making in the hands of individual producers and individual consumers.

As a result, market economies constantly adapt to changes in commercial behaviour and in economic circumstance. In particular, economic resources are used efficiently because resources are drawn, irresistibly, to their most profitable use. New and expanding industries will therefore win out against old and ineffi-

cient ones, as healthy profit levels attract capital investment and labour is drawn by the prospect of high wages. In this way, producers are encouraged to calculate costs in terms of 'opportunity costs'; that is, in terms of the alternative uses to which each factor of production could be put. Only a market economy is therefore capable of meeting the criterion of economic efficiency proposed by the Italian economist and elite theorist Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), that resources are allocated in such a way that no possible change could make someone better off and no one worse off.

Efficiency also operates at the level of the individual firm, once again dictated by the profit motive. The market effectively decentralizes economic power by allowing vital decisions about what to produce, how much to produce, and at what price to sell, to be made separately by each business. However, capitalist enterprises operate in a market environment which rewards the efficient and punishes the inefficient. In order to compete in the marketplace, firms must keep their prices low and so are forced to keep costs down. Market disciplines therefore eradicate waste, over-manning and low productivity. There is no doubt that in certain respects the disciplines imposed by the market are harsh – the collapse of failed businesses and the decline of unprofitable industries – but in the long run this is the price that has to be paid for a vibrant and prosperous economy. This is precisely why viable forms of market socialism are so difficult to construct. As once practised in Yugoslavia and Hungary, market socialism tried to encourage self-managing enterprise to operate competitively in a market environment, in theory promoting hard work and efficiency, while also preventing exploitation and inequality. However, such enterprises were reluctant to accept market disciplines because self-management dictated that they responded first and foremost to the interests of the workforce. Free-market economists have, as a result, usually argued that only hierarchically organized private businesses are capable of responding consistently to the dictates of the market.

Market economies are characterized not only by efficiency and high growth but also by responsiveness to the consumer. In a competitive market, the crucial output decisions – what to produce, and in what quantity – are taken in the light of what consumers are willing and able to buy. In other words, the consumer is sovereign. The market is thus a democratic mechanism, ultimately governed by the purchase decisions, or 'votes', of individual consumers. This is reflected in the bewildering variety of consumer products available in capitalist economies and the range of choice confronting potential purchasers. Moreover, consumer sovereignty creates an unrelenting drive for technological innovation and advance by encouraging firms to develop new products and improved methods of production, so keeping 'ahead of the market'. The market has been the dynamic force behind the most sustained period of technological progress in human history, from the emergence of the iron and steel industries in the late

eighteenth century to the development of digital, genetic and other technologies in the twentieth-first century.

Although the market has usually been defended on economic grounds, libertarian theorists insist that it can also be supported for moral and political reasons. For instance, the market can be seen as morally desirable in so far as it provides a mechanism through which people are able to satisfy their own desires. In this sense, market capitalism is justified in utilitarian terms: it leaves the definition of pleasure and pain, and therefore of 'good' and 'bad', firmly in the hands of the individual. This, in turn, is clearly linked to individual liberty. Within the market, individuals are able to exercise freedom of choice: they choose what to buy and where to work; they may choose to set up in business, and if so, choose what to produce, who to employ and so on. Furthermore, market freedom is closely linked to equality. Quite simply, the market is no respecter of persons. In a market economy, people are evaluated on the basis of individual merit, their talent and willingness to work hard; all other considerations – race, colour, religion, gender and so on – are simply irrelevant. In addition, it can be argued that the market tends to strengthen moral standards and, indeed, could not exist outside an ethical context. For example, successful employer–worker relations demand reliability and integrity from both parties, while business agreements and commercial transactions would be very difficult to conclude in the absence of honesty and trust. The market is thus a training ground for ethical behaviour.

Market flaws and failures

The success of the market as a system for creating wealth has been widely accepted, even by Marx and Engels, who, in *The Communist Manifesto*, acknowledged that capitalism had brought about previously undreamed of technological progress. Nevertheless, the market system has also been severely criticized. Some critics, like Marx himself, have believed the market to be fundamentally flawed and in need of abolition. Others, however, recognize the strengths of the market but warn against its unregulated use. In short, they believe that the market is a good servant but a bad master.

The idea of a 'pure' market system is a myth, as impurities have been present in all market-based economies. The most obvious of these impurities is government intervention. Indeed, through much of the twentieth century, the predominant economic trend in the capitalist West was for *laissez-faire* to be abandoned as governments assumed ever wider responsibilities for economic and social life. Welfare states were established that affected the workings of the labour market by providing a 'social wage'; governments 'managed' their economies through fiscal and monetary policies; and, in a growing number of cases, government

LIBERTARIANISM

A distinctively libertarian strand of political thought emerged from the late eighteenth century onwards, occupying a theoretical position that ranged from classical liberalism to individualist anarchism. The libertarian tradition is characterized by the strict priority that is allocated to liberty (understood in negative terms) over other values, such as authority, tradition and equality. Libertarians thus seek to maximize the realm of individual freedom and minimize the scope of public authority, typically seeing government or the state as the principal threat to liberty. This anti-statism differs from classical anarchist doctrines, in that it is based on an uncompromising individualism that places little or no emphasis on human sociability or cooperation.

The two best-known libertarian traditions are rooted in, respectively, the idea of individual rights and *laissez-faire* economic doctrines. Libertarian theories of rights generally stress that the individual is the owner of his or her person and thus that people have an absolute entitlement to the property that their labour produces. Libertarian economic theories emphasize the self-regulating nature of the market mechanism and portray government intervention as always unnecessary and counter-productive. Although all libertarians reject government's attempts to redistribute wealth and deliver social justice, a division can nevertheless be drawn between those libertarians who subscribe to anarcho-capitalism and view the state as an unnecessary evil, and those who recognize the need for a minimal state, sometimes styling themselves as 'minarchists'. The relationship between libertarianism and liberalism (see p. 18) is complex and contested. An important tendency in modern libertarianism is revived interest in ideas and principles that are associated with classical liberalism, such as spontaneous market order and a rights-based theory of social justice. Most libertarians nevertheless argue that liberalism, even in its classical form, refuses to give priority to liberty over order and therefore does not exhibit the same hostility to the state that is found in libertarianism. On the other hand, it has often been pointed out that New Right thinking within conservatism (see p. 258) contains an unmistakable libertarian emphasis. Outside the realm of economics, however, libertarians and conservatives have differed sharply over foreign policy and issues related to individual liberty.

Libertarian theories are founded on an extreme faith in the individual and in freedom. Their virtue is that they provide a constant reminder of the oppressive potential that resides within all the actions of government, encouraging us, as a result, to adopt a posture towards public authority of vigilant suspicion. However, criticisms of libertarianism fall into one of two general categories. The first of these sees the rejection of any form of welfare or redistribution as an example of capitalist ideology, linked to the interests of the business community and private wealth. The second highlights the imbalance in a libertarian philosophy that allows it to stress rights but ignore responsibilities, and which values individual effort and ability but fails to take account of the extent to which these are a product of the social environment.

Key figures

Adam Smith (1723–90) Scottish economist and philosopher, Smith was a strong critic of mercantilism and made the first systematic attempt to explain the workings of the economy in market terms, emphasizing the role of the 'invisible hand' of market competition. A classical liberal rather than a libertarian, his theory of motivation tried to reconcile human self-interestedness with unregulated social order. Smith was nevertheless aware of the limitations of *laissez-faire*. His best-known works include *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ([1759] 1976) and *The Wealth of Nations* ([1776] 1930).

William Godwin (1756–1836) An English philosopher and novelist, Godwin developed a thorough-going critique of authoritarianism that amounted to the first full exposition of anarchist beliefs. His extreme form of liberal rationalism readjusted traditional social-contract theory in portraying government as the source of, not cure for, disorder in society. Godwin relied on a theory of human perfectibility based on education and social conditioning. Though an individualist, he believed that humans are capable of genuinely disinterested benevolence. Godwin's chief political work is *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* ([1793] 1976).

Max Stirner (1806–56) A German philosopher, Stirner developed an extreme form of individualism based on egoism. Stirner saw egoism as a philosophy that places the individual self at the centre of the moral universe, implying that individual action should be unconstrained by law, social convention or moral and religious principles. Such a position points clearly in the direction of atheism and individualist anarchism, even though Stirner gave little attention to the nature of the stateless society. His most important political work is *The Ego and His Own* ([1845] 1963).

Friedrich Hayek (1899–1992) An Austrian economist and political philosopher, Hayek was the most influential of modern free-market theorists. An exponent of the so-called Austrian School, he portrayed the market as the only means of ensuring economic efficiency, and attacked government intervention as implicitly totalitarian. Hayek was a classical liberal rather than a conventional libertarian, supporting a modified form of traditionalism and upholding an Anglo-American version of constitutionalism. Hayek's best-known works include *The Road to Serfdom* ([1944] 1976), *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960) and *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (1979).

Murray Rothbard (1926–95) A US economist and political activist, Rothbard was a leading theorist of modern anarcho-capitalism. He combined a belief in an unrestricted system of *laissez-faire* capitalism with a 'basic libertarian code of the inviolate right of person and property' and, on that basis, rejected the state as a 'protection racket'. In Rothbard's libertarian society of the future there would be no legal possibility for coercive aggression against the person or the property of any individual. His major writings include *Power and Market* (1970) and *For a New Liberty* (1973).

See also John Stuart Mill (p. 241) and Robert Nozick (p. 299)

exerted direct influence on the economy by taking industries into public ownership. Some have gone as far as to suggest that it was precisely this willingness by government to intervene and control, rather than leave the economy to the whim of the market, that explains the widespread prosperity enjoyed in advanced capitalist states. It is notable, for instance, that even though, in many ways, this trend has been reversed since the 1980s, in no country has this meant the resurrection of the minimal or 'nightwatchman' state.

Economic intervention has largely resulted from a recognition of 'market failures', circumstances to which the market does not, or cannot, respond. For instance, the market is not able to take account of what economists call externalities, or 'social costs'. These are costs of productive activity which affect society in general but are disregarded by the firm that makes them because they are 'external' – they do not show up on its balance sheet. An example of a social cost is pollution. Market forces may encourage private business to pollute even though this damages the environment, threatens other industries and endangers the health of neighbouring communities. Only government intervention can force businesses to take account of social costs, in this case either by prohibiting pollution or by ensuring that the polluter pays for the environmental damage they cause. In the same way, markets fail to deliver what economists refer to as 'public goods'. These are goods which it is in everybody's interest to produce but, because it is difficult or impossible to exclude people from their benefit, are not provided by the market. Lighthouses are an example of this. Ships coming within sight of a lighthouse are able to respond to its warning, but the owners of the lighthouse have no way of extracting payment for the service received. Because the service is available to all, ships thus have an incentive to act as 'free-riders'. As the market cannot respond, public goods have to be provided by government, an argument that could be extended to public health, transport, education, the major utilities and so on, as each of these could be seen as a public good.

Criticism has also been levelled at the consumer responsiveness of the market and, in particular, its ability to address genuine human needs. This occurs, in the first place, because of a powerful tendency towards monopoly. The internal logic of the market is, by contrast with normal expectations, to reward cooperative behaviour and punish competition. Just as individual workers gain power in relation to their employer by acting collectively, private businesses have an incentive to form cartels, make pricing agreements and exclude potential competitors. Most economic markets are therefore dominated by a small number of major corporations. Not only does this restrict the range of consumer choice, but it also gives corporations, through advertising, the ability to manipulate consumer appetites and desires. As economists such as J. K. Galbraith (see p. 277) have warned, consumer sovereignty may be an illusion. Moreover, it is clear that the market responds not to human needs but to 'effective demand', demand backed up by the ability to pay. The market dictates that economic resources are drawn to what it

is profitable to produce. However, this often means that vital resources are devoted to producing expensive cars, high fashion and other luxuries for the rich, rather than providing decent housing and an adequate diet for the mass of society. Quite simply, the poor have little market power.

Despite Adam Smith's faith in natural order, the market may also be incapable of regulating itself. This was, in essence, the lesson John Maynard Keynes (see p. 248) outlined in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* ([1936] 1965). Against the background of the Great Depression, Keynes argued that there were circumstances in which the capitalist market could spiral downwards into deepening unemployment, without having the capacity to reverse the trend. He suggested that the level of economic activity was geared to 'aggregate demand', the total level of demand in the economy. As unemployment grows, market forces dictate a cut in wages which, Keynes pointed out, merely reduces demand and so leads to the loss of yet more jobs. By no means did Keynes reject the market altogether, but what he did insist on was that a successful market economy has to be regulated by government. In particular, government must manage the level of demand, increasing it by higher public spending when economic activity falls, leading to a rise in unemployment, but reducing it when the economy is in danger of 'overheating'. Although the highpoint of enthusiasm for Keynesianism came during the 'long boom' of the 1950s and 1960s, its influence, albeit in modified form, continues to be evident.

Finally, a moral and political case has been made out against the market. Neo-conservatives as well as socialists have, for instance, argued that the market is destructive of social values. By rewarding selfishness and greed, the market creates atomized and isolated individuals, who have little incentive to fulfil their social or civic responsibilities. Moral condemnation of the market, however, usually focuses on its relationship with deep social inequality. Fundamentalist socialists, who seek the abolition and replacement of capitalism, link this to the institution of private property and the unequal economic power of those who own wealth and those who do not. Nevertheless, an unregulated market will also generate wide income differentials. It is a mistake to believe, for example, that the market is a level playing field on which each is judged simply according to individual merit. Rather, the distribution of both wealth and income is influenced by factors such as inheritance, social background and education. Moreover, rewards reflect market value rather than any consideration of benefit to the larger society. This means, amongst other things, that sports stars, media personalities and the like are enormously better paid than, say, nurses, doctors and teachers. Any economic system that relies on material incentives will inevitably generate inequalities. Many of those who praise the market as a means of creating wealth are nevertheless reluctant to endorse it as a mechanism for distributing wealth. The solution to this is to supplement the market with a system of welfare provision, as discussed in Chapter 10.

Planning

The key alternative to the spontaneous and unregulated workings of the market is the rational organization of economic life on the basis of some form of planning. To 'plan' is to draw up a scheme or devise a method for achieving a specified goal. In effect, it is to think before one acts. All forms of planning must therefore have two essential features. In the first place, planning is a purposeful activity; planning presupposes the existence of clear and definable objectives, something that it is desirable to achieve or accomplish. These goals may be highly specific, as in the case of the output targets set in Soviet-style central planning, or they may be broader and more generalized; for example, an increase in economic growth, a reduction in unemployment and so on. Second, planning is a rational activity. It is based on the assumption that economic and social problems are capable of being solved through the exercise of human reason and ingenuity. At the heart of economic planning therefore lies a belief that the problem of scarcity can best be overcome by constructing a rational mechanism of resource allocation, geared to established human goals. However, the idea of planning is often poorly understood, being linked in many people's minds only to the machinery of central planning once found in orthodox communist states. Yet planning has assumed a wide variety of forms, having been employed by states in the developing world as well as by some advanced industrial countries. Moreover, although some argue that historical developments have entirely discredited the planning process, it is difficult to see how economic activity can take place without some element of planning.

The planning process

The idea of planning has traditionally been associated with socialist economics, particularly with Marxism (see p. 75). However, Marx never laid down a blueprint for the organization of a future socialist society and, believing that it was impossible to envisage in detail how a historically different society would work, he restricted himself to a number of broad principles. His central belief was that private property should be abolished and replaced by a system of collective or social ownership. At this point, the 'relations of production', the sum total of social relationships, would cease being a fetter on the further development of the 'forces of production', meaning that a communist society would be characterized by material abundance. This would finally solve the problem of scarcity, allowing economic resources to be geared, for the first time, to the satisfaction of human needs, a requirement that presupposes some kind of planning arrangement. Unfortunately, Marx did not specify what form that arrangement would take. What is certain, however, is that neither Marx nor Engels envisaged the level of

KARL MARX (1818–83)

German philosopher, economist and political thinker. After a brief career as a university teacher, Marx took up journalism and became increasingly involved with the socialist movement. He moved to Paris in 1843, later spent three years in Brussels and finally, in 1849, settled in London. Marx worked for the rest of his life as an active revolutionary and writer, supported by his friend and life-long collaborator Friedrich Engels (see p. 76). He is usually portrayed as the father of twentieth-century communism.

Marx's work provides the basis for the Marxist political tradition (see p. 75). It was derived from a synthesis of Hegelian philosophy, British political economy and French socialism. His early writings, known as the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* ([1844] 1967), outlined a humanist conception of communism based on the prospect of unalienated labour in conditions of free and cooperative production. The ideas of historical materialism started to take shape in *The German Ideology* ([1846] 1970) and are given their most succinct expression in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Marx's best-known and most accessible work is *The Communist Manifesto* (with Engels) ([1848] 1976), which summarizes his critique of capitalism and highlights its transitional nature by drawing attention to systematic inequality and instability. Marx's classic work is the three-volume *Capital* (1867, 1885 and 1894), which painstakingly analyzes the capitalist process of production and is based, some argue, on economic determinism.

central control and bureaucratic complexity that characterized the planning process in the Soviet Union. Marx consistently supported broad popular participation at every level in society, and his prediction that the state would 'wither away' as full communism was established suggests support for common property and self-management rather than for state collectivization.

There is little doubt that the planning process reached its highest stage of development in the Soviet Union, a model later adopted by state socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. In his famous phrase Lenin (see p. 76) described communism as 'Soviet power plus electrification', indicating a broad commitment to modernization and the task of bringing the economy under democratic control. This vision, however, was not realized until the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in 1928 and the collectivization of Soviet agriculture, which started the next year. This led to the construction of a centrally planned economy. With the exception of private plots of land, supposedly for the personal use of peasants, all economic resources came under the control of the state. Under Stalin a 'command economy' was established, which involved a system of so-called 'directive' planning operating through a hierarchy of party and state institutions. Overall control of economic policy lay in the hands of the highest organs of the Communist Party, the Politburo and the Central Committee. Gosplan, the State Planning Committee, was responsible for

drawing up Five-Year Plans, which were then implemented by a sprawling network of economic ministries.

In other countries, however, planning has been seen as a way of supplementing the market rather than replacing it. In such cases, a system of so-called 'indicative' planning has developed in which plans do not establish directives instructing enterprises what to produce and how much to produce, but rather seek to influence the economy indirectly. Economists sometimes refer to this form of government intervention as economic 'management' to distinguish it from Soviet-style 'planning'; nevertheless, it still seeks to exercise a purposeful and rational influence over the organization of economic life. After 1945, state intervention became increasingly commonplace in the West as governments sought to meet a broad range of economic objectives: maintaining a high level of economic growth, controlling inflation, boosting international trade, ensuring full employment and a fair distribution of wealth, and so on. In countries such as the UK and France this led to the nationalization of strategic industries and the construction of mixed economies, allowing government to exert growing influence over economic life.

Formal systems of planning were also set up. In the UK, faltering steps were taken in this direction under the National Plan, drawn up in 1966 by the ill-fated Department of Economic Affairs. However, in France and the Netherlands in particular, more developed and far more successful systems were introduced. A form of planning was also applied in Japan, clearly distinguishing it from the free-market model of economic development found in the USA. The 'economic miracle' Japan experienced in the 1950s and 1960s was overseen by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, which guided the investment policies of private industry, helped to identify growth industries and targeted export markets. A similar system of careful government intervention to promote export-led growth was adopted elsewhere in East Asia, notably by the 'tiger' economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. India, however, developed a system of planning that drew unashamedly from Soviet experience, with the Indian Planning Commission, set up in 1947, drawing up Five-Year Plans, assisted by the Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank of India. Although this planning system gave the Indian government considerable influence over investment and trade, it did not amount to direct control over the private sector of the economy.

Promise of planning

The attraction of planning rests on economic, political and moral considerations. Central to these arguments is the fact that planning is a rational process, implying that no economic problem is beyond human ingenuity to solve. In short, planning places the economy firmly in human hands, rather than leaving it to the impersonal and sometimes capricious whims of the market. This is

particularly important in establishing overall economic goals – what to produce, and how much to produce. Being relieved of the drive for profit, planners are able to organize a system of ‘production for use’ geared to the satisfaction of human needs, instead of a system of ‘production for exchange’ that responds only to market forces.

Although human needs are highly complex and infinitely variable, especially in the areas of consumer taste and popular fashion, there is broad agreement about what constitutes the basic necessities of life. These surely include shelter, a subsistence diet, primary health care and basic education. Unlike capitalist countries, state socialist regimes orientated their economies around the satisfaction of such needs. Although the central planning systems employed in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe failed dismally in their attempts to produce Western-style consumer goods, they were nevertheless often successful in eradicating homelessness, unemployment and absolute poverty, problems that continue to blight the inner cities in some advanced capitalist countries. Such achievements required not only that economic resources were channelled into the construction industry, agriculture and the building of schools and hospitals, but also that the prices of basic necessities were subsidized and controlled by the planning process, delivering cheap food and affordable housing, as well as free education and health care.

‘Planning for need’ also offers the prospect of efficiency. Having decided what to produce, planning offers a rational solution to the problem of how to produce, distribute and exchange the goods and services that are desired. In this respect, planning draws on the experience of capitalist firms which have long organized production on rational lines. Although private corporations respond to external market conditions, their internal organization is planned and directed by a team of senior managers, whose task is to ensure the efficient use of resources. In a sense, Soviet planning was an attempt to transfer this mechanism of rational control from the private corporation to the entire economy. In this way, planning was able to avoid some of the irrationalities of market capitalism. For instance, planning systems can avoid the scourge of unemployment and the gross waste of economic resources which this represents. Unemployment means that the most vital of all resources, human labour, lies idle while important social needs, such as the building of houses or the improvement of schools and hospitals, may go unmet.

A system of planning also means that the economy can be organized in line with long-term goals rather than short-term profit. This has been particularly important in the global South where market pressures can seriously distort economic prospects, as the dependence of many developing states on cash crops clearly demonstrates. Soviet economic development in the 1930s was based largely on the priority planners gave to building up heavy industries and the steel industry in particular, seeing these as the basis for both national security and future economic progress. By 1941, the central planning system had created a

sufficiently strong industrial base to enable the Soviet Union to withstand the Nazi invasion. Similarly, in the 1950s, Japanese planners rejected the advice of economists to concentrate resources in traditional, labour-intensive industries like agriculture in which Japan had a 'comparative advantage', but instead promoted capital-intensive industries such as steel, automobiles and electrical and electronic goods, which they believed, correctly as it turned out, were to become the industries of the future.

The political case for planning largely rests on the prospect of bringing the economy under political, and therefore democratic, control. Market capitalism strives to separate economics from politics in the sense that the economy is driven by internal, market forces not by government regulation. The economy is therefore accountable to the owners of private businesses, in whose interests decisions are taken, rather than to the public. Planning, by contrast, can be seen as a means of creating a democratic economy. Undoubtedly, the image of planning has been tainted by its association with the authoritarian political structures of orthodox communism. Planning has thus been portrayed as a step towards the construction of a Soviet-style command economy. However, it would appear that there is no necessary link between planning and authoritarianism. Indicative planning, as practised in countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, is carried out in stable parliamentary democracies in which economic decisions are open to genuine public scrutiny, argument and debate.

A moral case can, finally, be made out in favour of planning. As an alternative to private enterprise, planning, in whatever form, attempts to serve public or collective interests rather than particular or selfish ones. That actual systems of planning have failed in this respect, notably the Soviet system of central planning, may have more to do with political circumstances than with the planning process itself. If the planning mechanism is subject to open and democratic accountability and thus addresses genuine human needs, it will give all citizens a 'stake' in their economy. Planning can therefore foster social solidarity and strengthen the bonds of community, in contrast to capitalism which encourages only self-striving and avarice. There is, moreover, a clear link between planning and egalitarianism, which helps to explain why planning has been so attractive to socialists. Not only does planning often go hand in hand with collective ownership, bringing to an end structural inequalities that are rooted in the class system, but planned economies are also likely to be characterized by more egalitarian systems of distribution, as material rewards reflect social needs rather than individual productivity.

Perils of planning

Despite its attractions, planning undoubtedly has a number of serious drawbacks. Indeed, planning has never stood alone as a principle of economic organ-

ization, but has always been sustained by market ‘impurities’. This is perfectly obvious in the capitalist West, where planning has sought to sustain market capitalism by compensating for its failures rather than trying to replace it. However, market impurities also existed in the Soviet Union. For example, private consumption was never controlled, allowing a measure of consumer choice to survive; except in wartime, a market in labour was tolerated; peasants’ ‘private plots’ supplied almost half the potatoes and 15 per cent of the vegetables in the Soviet Union; and thriving ‘black’ markets developed in goods which the official Soviet system failed to produce.

However, the central problems that have confronted planned economies have been economic inefficiency and low growth. While the gap between the Soviet Union and the capitalist West continued to diminish until the 1950s, allowing Khrushchev to predict that the Soviet Union would ‘bury the West’, thereafter growth levels declined to the point that in the early 1980s the Soviet economy was actually shrinking. There is no doubt that the sluggish performance of centrally planned economies, particularly in contrast to an increasingly affluent West, was a major factor contributing to the fall of communism in the revolutions of 1989–91. One of the first attempts to develop a critique of planning was undertaken by Friedrich Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom* ([1944] 1976). In an analysis elaborated in later writings, Hayek suggested that planning was inherently inefficient because planners were confronted by a range and complexity of information that was simply beyond their capacity to handle. Central planning means making ‘output’ decisions about what each and every enterprise is to produce, and therefore also ‘input’ decisions which allocate resources to them. However, given that there were over 12 million products in the Soviet economy, some of which came in hundreds, if not thousands, of varieties, the volume of information within the planning system was frankly staggering. Economists have, for example, estimated that even a relatively small central planning system is confronted by a range of options which exceeds the number of atoms in the entire universe. However competent and committed the planners may be, and however well-served by modern technology, any system of central planning is therefore doomed to inefficiency.

A further explanation of the poor economic performance of planned economies is their failure to reward or encourage enterprise. An egalitarian system of distribution may be attractive in moral or ideological terms, but does little to promote economic efficiency. Although centrally planned economies achieved full employment, they typically suffered from high levels of absenteeism, low productivity and a general lack of innovation and enterprise. All Soviet workers, for example, had a job, but it was more difficult to ensure that they actually worked. This problem was acknowledged in the Soviet Union, where an initial emphasis on moral incentives, based on medals and social prestige, soon gave way to a system of differential wage levels and material rewards,

albeit one more egalitarian than in capitalist countries. Some have gone further, however, and argued that, to the extent that incentives exist in planned economies, these tend to inhibit growth rather than stimulate it. Because the overriding goal in such an economy is to fulfil planning targets, industrial managers are encouraged to underestimate their productive capacity in the hope of being set more achievable output targets. In the same way, planners themselves are likely to set modest targets since promotion, prestige and other rewards are linked to the successful completion of the plan. The planning machine is thus biased in favour of low growth.

Finally, planning has been attacked on political and moral grounds. Planned economies have, in particular, been associated with bureaucracy, privilege and corruption. In the absence of market competition, planners are able to impose their own preferences and values on society at large. This can lead to the 'tyranny of the planners', as economic and social priorities are determined 'from above', without the wishes of ordinary people being understood, still less being taken into account. Centrally planned economies have certainly suffered from the problem of bureaucratization as vast armies of state officials, estimated at over 20 million in the Soviet Union, came to enjoy privileges and rewards which set them apart from the mass of the population. Milovan Djilas (1957) termed this sprawling state bureaucracy the 'new class', drawing parallels between its position and the privileges enjoyed by the capitalist class in Western societies. At the very least, the concentration of economic power in the hands of state officials and industrial managers fostered widespread corruption, a problem that became endemic in state socialist regimes. The fiercest attack on planning, however, was undertaken by Hayek, who argued that it contains the seeds of totalitarian oppression. Once economic life is regulated, all other aspects of human existence will be brought under (often brutal) state control. In this view, Gosplan led to the gulags, the labour camps.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What turns an object into ‘property’?
- On what grounds can private property be defended?
- Why have Marxists and others viewed property as ‘theft’?
- Can the problem of the ‘tragedy of the commons’ be overcome by state ownership?
- What is the relationship between capitalism and the market?
- How, supposedly, does the market mechanism generate economic equilibrium?
- Do market economies operate on the basis of consumer sovereignty?
- Does demand management aim to uphold capitalism, or to displace it?
- What is the relationship between socialism and planning?
- How does ‘indicative planning’ differ from ‘directive planning’?
- How has planning been upheld on moral grounds?
- Are planned economies doomed to fail?

FURTHER READING

Hall, P. and Soskice, D. (eds) *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (2001). A stimulating examination of differences among national economies and of the impact of economic globalization.

Ingham, G. *Capitalism* (2008). An accessible introduction to classical accounts of capitalism in the works of Smith, Marx, Schumpeter, Weber and Keynes, which goes on to analyze capitalism’s key institutions and their interactions.

Ryan, A. *Property* (1988). A clear and insightful introduction to some of the moral, political and sociological issues associated with the institution of ownership, reflecting an underlying concern with the relationship between property and liberty.

Stilwell, F. *Political Economy: The Contest of Economic Ideas* (2011). A comprehensive overview of political economy and its connections with social concerns that investigates the main traditions of economic thought.

12

Security, War and World Order

- SECURITY

National security • Collective security • Human security

- WAR

War as a continuation of politics • 'Old' wars to 'new' wars? • Just and unjust wars

- WORLD ORDER

Multipolarity and world order • Civilizations in conflict? • Multilateralism and perpetual peace

Preview

Upholding security is sometimes seen as the most basic task of politics, reflecting, as it does, the desire of people to live safe from (usually physical) harm or threats. It is a concern that has often been felt most acutely in relation to international politics. Whereas threats to security originating from within the domestic realm confront a state which, by definition, enjoys a monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, no such supreme power exists in the international realm. An abiding concern of the academic discipline of international relations, which emerged in the aftermath of World War I, has therefore been to find ways of safeguarding people and states from the fear, intimidation and violence that are sometimes believed to be rooted in the international system itself. However, debate surrounds both the nature of security, and how it is best maintained. For instance, does 'national' security provide nation-states with vital protection, or is it essentially self-defeating? Under what conditions is 'collective' security effective? What are the implications of the notion of 'human' security?

Debates about security are nevertheless commonly linked to questions about war. Military power is the traditional currency of international politics. States and other actors have exercised influence over each other through the threat or use of force, making war a ubiquitous feature of human history, found in all ages, all cultures and all societies. Nevertheless, has the nature of warfare changed in the contemporary period, traditional or 'old' wars having declined and been replaced by so-called 'new' wars? Does the ubiquity of war prove that it is an inevitable feature of the human condition, or could the scourge of war be banished? On what grounds, if ever, can war be justified? Finally, the wider balance between conflict and cooperation in the international system is shaped by the distribution of power among states and other actors, or what is called 'world order'. How has twenty-first-century world order been conceived, and does it offer the prospect of peace and stability, or of greater rivalry and bitterness?

Security

Security is the deepest and most abiding issue in politics. At its heart is the question: how can people live a decent and worthwhile existence, free from threats, intimidation and violence? The search for security is therefore linked to the pursuit of order, and the establishment of relative peace and stability amongst individuals and groups with differing needs and interests. These concerns are commonly thought to be resolved in the domestic realm by the existence of a sovereign state, a body capable of imposing its will on all the groups and institutions within its borders. Security, in this sense, refers to the relationship between the state and non-state actors, ranging from criminal gangs to dissident groups and protest movements. However, the issue of security is often considered to be especially pressing in international politics. Whereas state sovereignty supports security in the domestic realm, it makes the maintenance of security in the international realm deeply problematic. As sovereignty in this context implies that there is no authority higher than the state, international politics is conducted in an environment that is anarchical, in the sense that it lacks enforceable rules or a pre-eminent power. It is commonly argued that this creates a bias in international politics in favour of insecurity, rather than security. However, are the challenges that arise from this best met by thinking of security in 'national', 'collective' or 'human' terms?

National security

Security in international politics has conventionally been thought of in terms of 'national security'. National security refers to the security of a particular nation or state; it is a strictly partisan notion of security, reflecting an appraisal of what is in the national interest. The idea of national security is stressed in particular by realist theorists (see p. 327), who argue that states cannot but accord survival and security the utmost priority, usually forcing them to build up their military capacity in order to deter aggression. This has been explained in two ways. Classical realists have stressed the role of human nature in shaping state behaviour. Influenced by thinkers such as Machiavelli (see p. 51), they have argued that, as states are composed of, and led by, people who are inherently selfish, greedy and power-seeking, they must exhibit the same characteristics. Human egoism therefore dictates state egoism; or, as Hans Morgenthau (1948) put it, 'the social world [is] but a projection of human nature on to the collective plane'. Just as human egoism leads to unending conflict among individuals and groups, state egoism is marked by inevitable competition and rivalry. As essentially self-interested actors, the ultimate concern of each state is for survival, which thereby becomes the first priority of its leaders. As all states pursue security through the

use of military and strategic means, and where possible seek to gain advantage at the expense of other states, international politics is characterized by an irresistible tendency towards conflict.

Neorealists (sometimes called 'structural realists') have nevertheless reached similar conclusions through the use of systems theory. Using the approach outlined in Kenneth Waltz's pioneering *The Theory of International Politics* (1979), neorealists shifted their attention from the state to the international system, and placed their emphasis on the implications of anarchy. The characteristics of international life are thus taken to stem from the fact that states (and other actors) operate within a domain which has no formal central authority. Neorealists argue that international anarchy necessarily tends towards tension, conflict and the unavoidable possibility of war for two main reasons. In the first place, as states are separate, autonomous and formally equal political units, they must ultimately rely on their own resources to realize their interest. International anarchy therefore results in a system of 'self-help', because states cannot rely on anyone else to 'take care of them'. Second, relationships between states are characterized by uncertainty and suspicion. This is best explained through the 'security dilemma', the dilemma that arises from the tendency for a build-up of military capacity for defensive reasons by one state to be interpreted as aggressive by other states. Uncertainty about motives therefore forces states to treat all other states as enemies, meaning that permanent insecurity is the inescapable consequence of living in conditions of anarchy.

However, it would be a mistake to assume that national security can only be promoted by military or strategic means. Classical realists and, in the modern period, post-neorealists have emphasized the role played by statecraft. The key guide to statecraft in the realist tradition is the national interest, the foreign policy goals, objectives and policy preferences that supposedly benefit a society as a whole (the foreign policy equivalent of the public interest, as discussed in Chapter 6). Calculations about the national interest guide, for instance, decisions about when, where and why wars should be fought. As important, if not more important, they suggest when wars should be avoided, either because they are unwinnable, or because the costs incurred in fighting outweigh the benefits that may come from victory. In such circumstances, the best course of action is to use prudent statecraft to establish a balance of power. Power, in other words, is used to deter power. Neorealists nevertheless view the balance of power less as a policy and more as a system, as a set of arrangements that arise fortuitously, rather than through the self-willed actions of policy makers. This can be seen in the case of neorealist stability theory, examined in the final main section of the chapter.

The state-centric ideas of national security and an inescapable security dilemma have also been challenged. Some, for example, have argued that, in a context of growing interdependence, attention should shift away from idea of

REALISM

The realist tradition, sometimes called 'political realism', can claim to be the oldest theory of international politics. It can be traced back to Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War (431 BCE), and to Sun Tzu's classic work on strategy, *The Art of War*, written at roughly the same time in China. Other significant figures in the realist tradition are Machiavelli (see p. 51) and Thomas Hobbes (see p. 111). Realism was the dominant theory of international relations during the Cold War period.

Realism offers an account of international affairs that is 'realistic' in the sense that it is hard-headed and (as realists see it) devoid of wishful thinking and deluded moralizing. For realists, international politics is, first and last, about power and self-interest. The realist power-politics model of international politics is based on two core assumptions. First, human nature is characterized by selfishness and greed, meaning that states, the dominant actors on the international stage, exhibit essentially the same characteristics. Second, as states operate in a context of anarchy, they are forced to rely on self-help and so prioritize security and survival. Realist theory can therefore be summed up in the equation: egoism plus anarchy equals power politics. Some have suggested that the formulation betrays a basic theoretical fault line within realism, dividing it into two distinct schools of thought. One of these – classical realism – explains power politics in terms of egoism, while the other – neorealism, or structural realism – explains it in terms of anarchy. However, these alternative approaches reflect more a difference of emphasis within realism rather than a division into rival 'schools', as the central assumptions of realism are common to most realist theorists, even though they may disagree about which factors are ultimately the most important. By no means, however, do realists assume that the combination of egoism and anarchy must result in restless conflict and unending war. Instead, realists insist that the pattern of conflict and cooperation within the international system conforms largely to the requirements of a balance of power.

Realism's pre-eminence during much of the post-WWII period stemmed from the fact that the politics of power and security appeared to be undeniably relevant and insightful during an era of superpower rivalry. However, in a process that began during the 1970s, but was significantly accelerated by the end of the Cold War, more and more aspects of world politics came to be shaped by developments that either ran counter to realist expectations or highlighted the limitations of realist analysis. These included the end of the Cold War itself, the growing impact of non-state actors, the advance of globalization and the increased significance of human rights. Critics of realism have also objected to its tendency to divorce politics from morality, arguing that this has tended to legitimize military escalation and the hegemonic ambitions of great powers. Nevertheless, realism continues to form a part of the analytical toolkit of most serious students of international politics.



Key figures

Thucydides (ca. 460–406 BCE) A Greek historian with philosophical interests, Thucydides in his great work, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, explained the conflict in terms of the dynamics of power politics and the relative power of the rival city-states. As such he developed the first sustained realist explanation of international conflict and, arguably, propounded the earliest theory of international relations. In the Melian dialogue, quoted in *Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides showed how power politics is indifferent to moral argument, a lesson sometimes taken to be a universal truth.

E. H. (Edward Hallett) Carr (1892–1982) A British historian and international relations theorist, Carr is best known for *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939* (1939), a critique of the entire peace process of 1919 and the wider influence of 'utopianism' on diplomatic affairs, especially a reliance on international bodies such as the League of Nations. Often viewed as one of the key realist theorists, Carr drew attention to the need to manage (rather than ignore) conflict between 'have' and 'have-not' states. Nevertheless, he condemned cynical *realpolitik* for lacking moral judgement.

Hans Morgenthau (1904–80) A German-born US international relations theorist, Morgenthau developed a 'science of power politics' based on the belief, clearly echoing Machiavelli and Hobbes, that what he called 'political man' is an innately selfish creature with an insatiable urge to dominate others. Rejecting 'moralistic' approaches to international politics, he advocated an emphasis on 'realistic' diplomacy, based on an analysis of the balance of power and the need to promote the national interest. Morgenthau's major writings include *Politics Amongst Nations* (1948), *In Defence of the National Interest* (1951) and *The Purpose of American Politics* (1960).

Kenneth Waltz (1924–2013) A US international relations theorist, Waltz's (1979) was the principal influence behind the development of neorealism. In *Theory of International Politics*, he used systems theory to explain how international anarchy shapes the actions of states, changes in the international system occurring through changes in the distribution of capabilities between and amongst states. Waltz's analysis was closely associated with the Cold War and the belief that bipolarity is more stable and provides a better guarantee of peace and security than does multipolarity. His other works include *Man, the State, and War* (1959).

John Mearsheimer (born 1947) A US international relations theorist, Mearsheimer is one of the leading exponents of 'offensive' realism and a key architect of neorealist stability theory. In 'Back to the Future' (1990) he argued that the Cold War had been largely responsible for maintaining peace in Europe, warning that the end of Cold War bipolarity created the prospect of increased international conflict. In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001), Mearsheimer argued that great powers will always seek to achieve hegemony, behaving aggressively when they believe that they enjoy a power advantage over their rivals.

See also Niccolò Machiavelli (p. 51) and Thomas Hobbes (p. 111)

national security towards the broader notion of 'international' security. International security suggests a search not for the conditions in which the survival and safety of a particular state are secured, but for the conditions in which the mutual survival and security of states are secured. Others have gone further and proposed that, in view of the emergence of new security challenges and other developments, international security should give way to 'global' security (see p. 331). A particular critique of national security has emerged out of feminist analysis (Tickner, 1992). This has been advanced on two grounds. First, the military-based concept of national security is premised on masculinist assumptions about rivalry, competition and inevitable conflict, arising from a tendency to view the world in terms of interactions between power-seeking, autonomous actors. Second, the conventional idea of national security tends to be self-defeating, as a result of the 'security paradox'. This is the paradox that attempts to build up military capacity only encourage other states to adopt more threatening and hostile postures, thus creating what has been called the 'insecurity of security'. Finally, liberal theorists have long argued that security should have a 'collective' rather than 'national' dimension.

Collective security

Liberalism (see p. 18) offers an essentially optimistic vision of international politics, based, ultimately, on a belief in human rationality and moral goodness. This inclines liberal theorists to believe that the principle of balance or harmony operates in all forms of social interaction, including international affairs. However, it is important to note that the liberal paradigm is not clearly distinct from realism, as both of them share certain mainstream assumptions about how international politics works. Most significantly, liberals and realists both accept that the international system is, and perhaps must always remain, decentralized, in the sense that no authority is capable of imposing its will on the sovereign state. The difference, nevertheless, is that liberals believe that the tendency within this international 'state of nature' towards rivalry and competition can be countered. This can be achieved in three main ways. It can be done through the expansion of free trade, which generates increased economic interdependence; through the spread of democracy, which reduces the likelihood of war (at least between democratic states); and through the growth of international organizations, which, among other things, facilitate the emergence of systems of collective security.

The idea of collective security, simply stated, is that aggression can best be resisted by united action taken by a number of states. National security, by contrast, is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Collective security suggests that states, so long as they pledge themselves to defend one another,

have the capacity either to deter aggression in the first place, or to punish the transgressor, if international order has already been breached. Such a pledge can, for instance, be seen in Article 5 of the NATO Charter, which states that an attack on one or several members will be considered an attack on all. Successful collective security nevertheless requires that three conditions are met. First, there are advantages in the states involved having roughly equal capabilities, helping to promote cooperation because members experience similar levels of vulnerability and the burden of defence can be relatively evenly shared. Second, all states must be willing, as well as able, to bear the cost of defending one another. This requires that each of the states involved adopts an enlightened conception of the national interest. Third, collective security depends on the existence of an international body that has the moral authority and military capacity to take effective action.

The first international organization that was constructed on the basis of a vision of collective security and world peace was the ill-starred League of Nations, founded by the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Not only did the League never properly become a 'league of nations' – the world's leading power, the USA, refused to join, and other key states, including Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union, either left or were expelled – but it also lacked effective power, being only able to make recommendations, and then only in the event of unanimous agreement. The United Nations, established by the San Francisco Conference of 1945, undoubtedly marked an advance on the League of Nations. The United Nations is the most important international body created to date, and the only truly global organization ever constructed. Its principal aim, expressed by Article 1 of the UN Charter, is to maintain 'international peace and security' by banishing the 'scourge of war'. The UN nevertheless demonstrates how difficult it is, despite high-sounding rhetoric, to operate an effective collective-security system. The capacity of the UN to enforce a system of collective security has been severely limited by the fact that it is essentially a creature of its members: it can do no more than its members, and particularly the permanent members of the Security Council (the so-called 'P5': China, the USA, Russia, France and the UK), permit. Recurrent disagreement among the P5 has usually meant that the UN has stood by paralyzed as major events have erupted across the globe. The UN's role has, in effect, been confined to providing a mechanism that facilitates the peaceful resolution of international crises, and, even in this respect, its record has been patchy.

Human security

Since the end of the Cold War, new thinking has emerged about the nature of security, particularly associated with the notion of 'human security'. In its broad-

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

GLOBAL SECURITY

Security has conventionally been understood on the basis of the domestic/international divide. The task of upholding security in the domestic sphere is thus different in nature from the task in the international sphere. While the domestic sphere has typically been thought of as an arena of order and security, by virtue of the state's sovereign authority within its own borders, the international sphere has commonly been thought of as an arena of disorder and insecurity, by virtue of the absence of an overriding authority. The maintenance of 'national' or 'state' security has therefore usually been taken to be more problematical than the maintenance of 'homeland' security.

However, such thinking has increasingly been called into question as the advance of globalization has made borders more 'porous', undermining the domestic/international divide and the conventional distinction between 'national' security and 'homeland' security. As what happens outside the state affects, to a greater degree, what happens inside the state, security perhaps has to be recast in terms of 'global' security, security in a de-territorialized world. This has been most apparent in relation to terrorism, and especially the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, widely seen as the event that heralded the birth of terrorism as a genuinely transnational, if not global, phenomenon. The key development in this respect was that increased cross-border flows of people, goods, money, technology and ideas have generally benefited non-state actors at the expense of states, and that terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda have proved to be particularly adept at exploiting this hyper-mobility. The sense of alarm and anxiety that terrorism generates greatly increases if terrorists can, literally, strike anywhere, any time. And if the world's greatest power can be struck such a devastating blow to its largest city and its national capital by a terrorist network, what chance did other states have?

The image that underpins the idea of global security, in which a global threat requires a global response, may nevertheless be questionable. For example, many in the Islamist movement may be better thought of as religious nationalists, or perhaps pan-Islamic nationalists, rather than global revolutionaries. Similarly, although terrorism has affected many countries, the vast majority of terrorist attacks take place in a relatively small number of countries that are beset by intense political conflict, leaving much of the world largely unaffected by terrorism. Finally, the response of the USA and other Western countries to the threat of terrorism has involved, in the main, a conventional attempt to build up state power, both at home (through strengthened 'homeland' security) and abroad (through increased military spending and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq). National-security strategies have thus predominated over global-security strategies, whatever the latter may be.

est sense, human security refers to the security of individuals rather than states. As such, it differs from both national security and collective security, and from the narrow emphasis within both on the threat of conventional inter-state war. Among the keenest supporters of such a shift have been feminist theorists, who have long been concerned about violence against women in family and domestic life, and about threats to women arising from practices such as sex slavery. Human security recasts the concept of security by taking on board the idea of human development, which, since the 1990s, has been used by the UN, the World Bank and other international bodies. Human development is a standard of well-being that reflects people's ability to develop their full potential, and lead fulfilled and creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests, an idea that has roots in the positive conception of freedom, discussed in Chapter 9. Interest in the idea of human development has encouraged a shift from economic-based conceptions of poverty (for example, using an income of 'a dollar a day') to conceptions built around human capabilities, such as the ability to acquire knowledge, access resources, achieve gender equality and so on. Human security thus takes account not only of the extent to which threats posed by armed conflict have changed and, in some senses, intensified (as discussed in the next main section, in relation to 'new' wars), but also the degree to which modern armed conflict is entangled with issues of poverty and under-development.

Human security nevertheless has a variety of dimensions. Many, for example, extend the conception of human security beyond 'freedom from fear' (in which case the key threats to security would be armed conflict and human-made physical violence) to encompass 'freedom from want' (in which case poverty, inequality and structural violence become key threats). Specific forms of human security include economic security (having an assured basic income), food security (physical and economic access to basic food), health security (protection from disease and unhealthy lifestyles), environmental security (protection from human-induced environmental degradation) and personal security (protection from all forms of physical violence). One of the key implications of these and other forms of human security has been to increase the pressure on the international community to assume a more interventionist stance. This can be seen in a greater willingness to undertake humanitarian interventions since the early 1990s, in support for the establishment of international tribunals and courts to investigate breaches of 'world law' (see p. 183), and in pressure to tackle global poverty through an increase in international aid.

However, the concept of human security has also been criticized. Some have argued, for instance, that human security has widened and deepened the concept of security to such an extent that that it has become virtually meaningless. Not only are the parameters of human security, at best, unclear, but, by extending security to include the notion of 'want' as well as the notion of 'fear', the respon-

sibility for upholding human security appears to have become unlimited. Furthermore, the notion of human security may create false expectations about the international community's capacity to banish violence and insecurity. Finally, intervention by the international community intended to promote human security has proved to be highly controversial. For instance, post-colonial theorists (see p. 214) have seen intervention, in whatever form, as an example of neocolonialism, arguing that the notion of human security serves to perpetuate the image of people in the developing world as 'victims' who can only be saved by the benevolence of the developed world.

War

War can be distinguished from other forms of violence – murder, crime, gang attacks, genocide and so on – in a number of ways. First, war is a conflict between or amongst political groups. Traditionally, these groups have been states, with inter-state war, often over territory or resources – 'wars of plunder' – being thought of as the archetypal form of war. However, inter-state war has become significantly less common in recent years, most modern wars being civil wars, featuring the involvement of non-state actors such as guerrilla groups, resistance movements and terrorist organizations. Second, war is organized, in that it is carried out by armed forces or trained fighters who operate in accordance with some kind of strategy, as opposed to carrying out random and sporadic attacks. Conventional warfare, in fact, is a highly organized and disciplined affair, involving military personnel subject to uniforms, drills, saluting and ranks, and even acknowledging that war should be a rule-governed activity as set out by the so-called 'laws of war'. Modern warfare has, nevertheless, become less organized in nature. It involves more irregular fighters who are loosely organized and may refuse to 'fight by the rules', developments that tend to blur the distinction between 'military' and 'civilian' life, as discussed later in the chapter.

Third, war is usually distinguished by its scale or magnitude. A series of small-scale attacks that involve only a handful of deaths is seldom referred to as a war. The United Nations defines a 'major conflict' as one in which at least 1,000 deaths occur annually. However, this is an arbitrary figure, which would, for example, exclude the Falklands War of 1982, which is almost universally regarded as a war. Finally, as they involve a series of battles or attacks, wars usually take place over a considerable period of time. That said, some wars are very short, such as the Six-Day War of 1967 between Israel and the neighbouring states of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Other wars are nevertheless so protracted, sometimes involving significant periods of peace, that there may be confusion about exactly when a war starts and ends. For example, the Hundred Years' War

was in fact a series of wars between England and France dated by convention 1337–1453, which formed part of a longer conflict that began when England was linked to Normandy (1066). Similarly, although World War I and World War II are usually portrayed as separate conflicts, some historians prefer to view them as part of a single conflict interrupted by a twenty-year truce. Nevertheless, many debates have sprung up around the issue of war. These include whether war is best understood as a political phenomenon, whether, in contemporary conditions, the nature of war has changed in a qualitative sense, and whether, if ever, war can be justified.

War as a continuation of politics

The most influential theory of war was developed by the Prussian general and military strategist Karl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) in his master work, *On War* ([1831] 1976). In Clausewitz's view, all wars have the same 'objective' character: 'War is merely a continuation of politics (or policy) by other means'. War is therefore a means to an end, a way of forcing an opponent to submit to one's will. Such a stance emphasizes the continuity between war and peace. Both war and peace are characterized by the rational pursuit of self-interest, and therefore by conflict; the only difference between them is the means selected to achieve one's goals, and that is decided on an instrumental basis (Howard, 1983). States thus go to war when they calculate that it is in their interest to do so. This implied use of a form of cost–benefit analysis is entirely in line with the realist view of war as a policy instrument.

The Clausewitzian, or 'political', conception of war is often seen as a product of the European state-system that emerged after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), a series of treaties that brought an end to the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). In the so-called 'Westphalian system' international affairs were shaped by relations between and amongst independent and territorially sovereign states (an idea discussed in Chapter 4, in relation to external sovereignty). The image of war as the 'rational' pursuit of state interest was particularly attractive in the nineteenth century when wars were overwhelmingly fought between opposing states and roughly four-fifths of all wars were won by the state that started them. Moreover, although a level of popular hostility towards the enemy was helpful in sustaining a war, wars were fought by armies and therefore affected formal combatants much more than the larger civilian population. This made the 'costs' of warfare more limited and easier to calculate.

The Clausewitzian conception of war has nevertheless attracted growing criticism. Some of these criticisms are moral in character. For example, Clausewitz has been condemned for presenting war as a 'normal' and inevitable condition, one, furthermore, that can be justified by reference to narrow state interest rather than

to wider principles such as justice. This therefore suggests that if war serves legitimate political purposes its moral implications can be ignored, a position discussed in later in this chapter, in relation to 'just-war' theory. On the other hand, had Clausewitz's suggestion that the recourse to war be based on rational analysis and a careful calculation of likely outcomes been followed more consistently, many modern wars may not have taken place. Other criticisms of the Clausewitzian conception of war emphasize that it is outdated, relevant to the Napoleonic era but much less so in the light of modern circumstances and developments. First, the spread of democratic governance and the deepening of economic interdependence due to globalization may dictate that war is a less effective, and perhaps an obsolete, policy instrument. If trade offers a cheaper and more effective route to national prosperity than does war, military power may have become irrelevant in world affairs. Second, the advent of industrialized warfare, and particularly the phenomenon of 'total war', war that has major implications for civilians and civilian life, has made calculations about the likely costs and benefits of war much less reliable. If this is the case, war may have ceased to be an appropriate means of achieving political ends. Finally, most of the criticisms of Clausewitz highlight changes in the nature of war that make the Clausewitzian paradigm of war no longer applicable. To what extent are modern wars post-Clausewitzian wars?

'Old' wars to 'new' wars?

One of the most widely debated features of the post-Cold War era is how it has affected war and warfare. Conventional or 'old' wars were armed conflicts between opposing states, which were fought between uniformed, organized bodies of men – national armies, navies and air forces. A body of norms or rules also developed to regulate such conflicts, including formal declarations of war and declarations of neutrality, peace treaties and the 'laws of war'. However, starting with the tactics employed in the 1950s and 1960s by national liberation movements in places such as Algeria, Vietnam and Palestine, and then extending to conflicts in countries such as Somalia, Liberia, Sudan and the Congo, and later to the conflict that broke out following the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, a new style of warfare has developed, possibly even redefining war itself. Mary Kaldor (2012) called these wars 'new wars' – although they have also been described as 'postmodern', 'post-Clausewitzian' or 'post-Westphalian' wars – their chief characteristics being that they are violent struggles to gain access to or control the state that take place in a context of globalization and often lead to massive violations of human rights. In what sense are these wars 'new', and how clear is the distinction between 'new' wars and 'old' wars?

In the first place, modern wars tend to be civil wars rather than inter-state wars. About 95 per cent of armed conflicts since the mid-1990s have been fought

within states, not between states. This has reflected the tendency since 1945 for armed conflict to be increasingly concentrated in parts of the developing world, sometimes dubbed 'zones of turmoil'. These areas have been particularly susceptible to civil war because colonialism has tended to leave a heritage of ethnic or tribal rivalry, economic under-development and weak state power, leading to the emergence of 'quasi-states' or 'failed states', classic examples being Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Congo. Second, whereas earlier wars were usually fought over geopolitical or economic goals, modern wars have often been 'identity wars', wars that have arisen in large part from cultural or religious discord expressed in terms of rival identities. The wars that broke out in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and particularly the Bosnian War; conflicts between Muslims and Hindus in the Indian subcontinent; the *Intifada* in the 'occupied territories' of Israel; and the 'war on terror' in general and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars in particular, can be viewed as identity wars in this respect. Because identity wars are ultimately based on how people see themselves, they are often fought with unusual passion and ferocity. They also tend to be long-standing and may appear to be intractable, rendering the traditional notion of 'victory' redundant.

Third, whereas inter-state war usually took place between opponents at a relatively similar level of economic development, modern wars are frequently asymmetrical, pitting industrially advanced and militarily sophisticated states against enemies who appear to be 'third-rate'. This applied in the case of US, or US-led, wars in Vietnam, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the case of the Russian war against Chechnya. 'Asymmetrical wars' are characterized by the use of strategies and tactics that aim less to defeat the enemy in military terms (something that may be impossible), but rather to demoralize the enemy and break its popular will. Examples of this include guerrilla warfare, which places a premium on manoeuvre and surprise, and relies on small-scale raids, ambushes and attacks; terrorism, ranging from roadside bombs to suicide attacks; and insurgency, which involves a popular uprising spearheaded by irregular soldiers.

Fourth, modern wars often blur the distinction between combatants and civilians, which had been relatively easy to respect while warfare was largely confined to the battlefield and military personnel. The civilian/military divide has been breached in a number of ways. For instance, modern warfare typically takes place 'among the people', the use of small-scale, low-intensity tactics meaning that the conventional idea of a battlefield has become redundant. This helps to explain why 'new' wars are so often accompanied by refugee crises. Civilian populations are also commonly the target of military action, its objective being to create economic and social dislocation and to destroy the enemy's resolve and appetite for war. Similarly, the nature of armies has changed, with guerrilla armies being made up of irregular soldiers or armed bands of volunteers. Finally, 'new' wars have often been seen as more barbaric and horrific than 'old' ones, as

the rules that have constrained conventional inter-state warfare have been set aside. Practices such as kidnapping, torture, systematic rape and the indiscriminate killings that result from landmines, car bombs and suicide attacks have become routine features of modern warfare.

However, it is by no means clear that 'new' wars are as new as they appear. In the first place, inter-communal strife has always existed, and may simply be a feature of the end of major empires, such as the Soviet empire and its satellite states. The shift towards 'new' wars may therefore not necessarily be part of an ongoing or developing trend, but may instead mark a transitional phase in the development of the international system. Second, there is nothing new about large-scale disruption of civilian life and mass civilian casualties. Civilian casualties of war have consistently outnumbered military ones since the advent of total war in the early twentieth century. Third, earlier wars have also been asymmetrical; examples include the Spanish–American War (1898) and the Boer War (1899–1902), with irregular troops sometimes using unconventional tactics. For example, Spanish and Portuguese irregulars, fighting alongside the British army, used guerrilla tactics during the Peninsular War (1808–14) against Napoleon. Finally, the image of 'old' wars as 'gentlemanly' affairs, based on rules and respect for the enemy, is largely a myth. Massacres, rape and indiscriminate slaughter have been features of warfare throughout the ages.

Just and unjust wars

While the nature of war and warfare have changed enormously over time, debates about whether, and in what circumstances, war can be justified have a much more enduring character, dating back to Ancient Rome and including medieval European philosophers such as Augustine of Hippo (see p. 83), Thomas Aquinas (see p. 181) and, later, Hugo Grotius (see p. 338). These debates have typically focused on the notion of a 'just war'. A just war is a war that in its purpose and conduct meets certain ethical standards, and so is (allegedly) morally justified. However, just-war theory is more a field of philosophical or ethical reflection, rather than a settled doctrine.

Can standards of justice be applied to war, and what are the implications of doing so? Those who subscribe to the just-war tradition base their thinking on two assumptions. First, human nature is composed of an unchangeable mixture of good and evil components. People may strive to be good, but they are always capable of immoral acts, and these acts include killing other human beings. War, in other words, is inevitable. Second, the suffering that war leads to can be ameliorated by subjecting warfare to moral constraints. As politicians, the armed forces and civilian populations become sensitized to the principles of a just war and the 'laws of war', fewer wars will occur and the harm done by warfare will be

HUGO GROTIUS (1583–1645)

Dutch jurist, philosopher and writer. Grotius was born in Delft into a family of professional lawyers. A prodigious learner, he entered the University of Leiden at the age of just eleven and published his first book at sixteen. Grotius became a diplomat and political adviser and held a number of political offices.

In his magnum opus, *On the Law of War and Peace*, first published in 1625, Grotius developed a secular basis for international law, arguing that it is grounded not in theology but in reason. This was largely accomplished by constructing a theory of the just war, based on the belief that those who hold that anything goes in war are as deluded as those who think that force is never justified. For Grotius, there were four causes of a just war: (1) self-defence, (2) to enforce rights, (3) to seek reparation for injury and (4) to punish a wrong-doer. By restricting the right of states to go to war for political purposes, Grotius emphasized the common goals of the international community. In so doing, he helped to found the idea of international society, later developed by the English School of international relations, sometimes called the 'Grotian school'.

reduced. Just-war theorists therefore argue that the purpose of war must be to re-establish peace and justice. But has a war ever fulfilled these high ideals? WWII is often identified as the classic example of a just war. The Nazis' record of growing aggression in the 1930s leaves little doubt about Hitler's determination to pursue bold and far-reaching expansionist goals, and possibly even world domination. The murder of 6 million Jewish people and others during the war itself demonstrates clearly the brutality and terror that Nazi domination would have entailed.

Just-war theory addresses two separate but related issues. The first of these deals with the right to go to war in the first place, or what in Latin is called *jus ad bellum* (just recourse to war). The second deals with the right conduct of warfare, or *jus in bello* (just conduct in war). Although these branches of just-war thinking complement one another, they may have quite different implications. For example, a state fighting for a just cause may use unjust methods. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether, for a war to be just, it must fulfil all the conditions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, or merely a substantial number. Similarly, just-war theorists sometimes disagree about the priority that should be accorded the various conditions. For instance, there has been debate about whether the greatest emphasis should be placed on the requirement that war is waged for a 'just cause' or on ensuring that the recourse to war is always a last resort; others, indeed, have argued more broadly that the conditions for *jus ad bellum* have greater moral purchase than the principles of *jus in bello*, on the grounds that the ends justify the means. Furthermore, modern developments in warfare have encouraged some to propose that conventional just-war theory should be extended

to embrace *jus post bellum* (justice after war), perhaps by making a willingness to engage in post-conflict peace-building a condition for having entered into war in the first place. Finally, although the requirements of a just war may appear to be straightforward, they often raise some difficult political, moral and philosophical problems when they are applied in practice. For example, the principle that war should only be fought as a 'last resort' fails to take account of the possibility that, by delaying the use of force, an enemy may become stronger, thereby leading to substantially greater bloodshed when confrontation eventually occurs. This, arguably, happened in the case of Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

A range of deeper criticisms have nevertheless been levelled at just-war theory. In the first place, however desirable they may be, the elements that make up a just war may set states standards with which it is impossible to comply. It is questionable whether there has ever been a war in which one side at least has followed fully all the rules of a just war. Even in a 'good war' such as WWII, saturation bombing tactics were used against German cities such as Dresden, which were of no military importance, in order to terrorize the civilian population. The war against Japan was ended by the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing, overwhelmingly, civilians. Second, attempts to apply just-war principles may result in the 'wrong' outcome. This could happen as the requirements of *jus in bello* may contradict those of *jus ad bellum*, in the sense that a party with a just cause risks defeat because it is fighting with 'its hands tied behind its back'. Surely, once a war has started, military tactics should be determined by practical considerations, aimed at ensuring a swift and certain victory, rather than moral considerations? This issue has become particularly topical in relation to the issue of combating terrorism, sometimes linked to the idea of 'dirty hands', which recognizes that politicians may need to transgress accepted moral codes for the sake of the political community, making it right to do wrong. Michael Walzer (2007), for example, drew attention to the 'ticking-bomb scenario', in which a politician orders the torture of a terrorist suspect to extract information about the location of a bomb, thus saving the lives of hundreds of people. Finally, just-war thinking may be applicable only in circumstances in which the parties to a dispute share the same or similar cultural and moral beliefs. As many modern wars, such as those that have been fought under the banner of the 'war on terror', are cross-cultural wars, if not civilizational struggles, this requirement may no longer be achievable.

World order

World order refers to the distribution of power between and among states and other key actors giving rise to a relatively stable pattern of relationships and behaviours. The issue of world order is vitally important because it affects the

balance within the international system between conflict and cooperation, and so has powerful implications for security and war. Nevertheless, since the end of the Cold War there has been deep debate about the nature of world order. An early view was that the end of the superpower era had given rise to a 'new world order', characterized by peace and international cooperation. However, the wave of optimism and idealism that greeted the birth of the post-Cold War world order did not last long, particularly as the collapse of communism unleashed centrifugal pressure and led to prolonged bloodshed in the 1990s amongst Serbs, Croats and Muslims in former Yugoslavia. By the late 1990s, it was widely argued that the main significance of the end of the Cold War was the fall of the Soviet Union as a meaningful challenger to the USA, leaving the USA as the world's sole superpower. World order was therefore being recast around the global hegemony (see p. 137) of the USA.

As the twenty-first century unfolds, however, thinking about world order has focused increasingly on the idea of multipolarity, influenced by developments such as the rise of China and other 'emerging' powers, and the apparent decline of the USA. The latter development has been linked not least to the difficulties the USA experienced in winning protracted counter-insurgency wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nevertheless, it has been unclear whether a multipolar world order will bring peace and international cooperation, or new conflicts and heightened tension. Alternative models of world order have been offered, however. One of the most controversial of these focuses on the idea of a 'clash of civilizations', and suggests that conflict in the post-Cold War world will not primarily be ideological or economic but, rather, cultural in character. Another model, associated in particular with liberal theory, highlights the trend towards worldwide political and economic convergence, and even offers the prospect that Kant's (see p. 341) vision of 'perpetual peace' could become a reality.

Multipolarity and world order

The conventional approach to the analysis of world order has drawn heavily on neorealist stability theory. This examines the structural dynamics of the international system based on the distribution of power within it, or what is called 'polarity'. Polarity refers to the existence within a system of one or more great powers or 'poles', which affect the behaviour of other states and shape the contours of the system itself. For neorealists, the main factor that determines how the international system operates is the number of poles within it. Neorealists have generally associated bipolarity, an international system which revolves around two great powers, with stability and a reduced likelihood of war. This inclined them to view the Cold War period (1945–90), during which world

IMMANUEL KANT (1724–1804)

German philosopher. Kant spent his entire life in Königsberg (which was then in East Prussia), becoming professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg in 1770. Apart from his philosophical work, Kant's life was distinguished by its uneventfulness.

Kant's 'critical' philosophy holds that knowledge is not merely an aggregate of sense impressions; it depends on the conceptual apparatus of human understanding. His political thought was shaped by the central importance of morality. He believed that the 'law of reason' dictates certain categorical imperatives, the most important of which is the obligation to treat others as 'ends', and never only as 'means'. Freedom, for Kant, thus meant more than simply the absence of external constraints on the individual; it is a moral and rational freedom, the capacity to make moral choices. Kant's ethical individualism has had considerable impact on liberal thought. It also helped to inspire the idealistic tradition in international politics, in suggesting that reason and morality combine to dictate that there should be no war and that the future of humankind should be based on 'universal and lasting peace'. Kant's most important works include *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790).

politics was dominated by rivalry between a US-led capitalist West bloc and a Soviet-led communist East bloc, in broadly positive terms.

From the neorealist perspective, a bipolar world order has at least four key advantages. First, the existence of only two great powers encourages each to maintain the bipolar system as, in the process, they are maintaining themselves. Second, fewer great powers means that the possibility of great-power war is reduced. Third, the existence of only two great powers reduces the chances of miscalculation and makes it easier to operate a system of deterrence. Fourth, as the two great powers tend to divide the world into rival spheres of influence, power relationships become more stable because both find it more difficult to expand their power through the formation of new alliances. Thus, although Cold War bipolarity was characterized by a 'balance of terror', which saw the USA and the Soviet Union each acquire sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the world many times over, it nevertheless produced the 'long peace' of the post-WWII era. Wars continued to take place, but, unlike previous eras, these did not involve direct confrontation between major powers, meaning that the Cold War remained 'cold' (even though the incidence of 'proxy wars' between the superpowers grew, especially from the 1970s onwards).

Neorealists do not see unipolarity, an international system in which there is one pre-eminent state, so positively, however. The USA's rise to hegemony, which saw it assume, after 1945, a position of economic, political and military leadership within the capitalist West, and then become, after 1991, the unrivalled force

in world affairs, therefore alarmed many realist theorists. In the light of neorealist stability theory, unipolar world orders tend to be unstable and prone to conflict because they promote aggrandizing and possibly reckless behaviour on the part of the dominant actor, as well as fear, resentment and hostility among other actors. Realist theorists thus often expressed misgivings about the Bush administration's response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which witnessed a massive build-up of the USA's military capacity, intended to achieve a position of 'strength beyond challenge', and a policy of militarily-imposed 'democracy promotion', which resulted in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. In September 2002, as the USA was stepping up preparations for the invasion of Iraq the following year, some 33 international relations scholars, most of whom identified themselves as realists, signed a *New York Times* advertisement warning that 'War with Iraq is *not* in America's national interest'. Not only did they argue that military force should not be used in circumstances in which Iraq posed no immediate threat to the USA, but they also pointed out that an invasion would unleash a wave of anti-Americanism across the globe.

However, just as the 'liberal moment' in world affairs, associated with hopes for a 'new world order', may not have lasted long, the 'unipolar moment' in world affairs may have been similarly short-lived. It may have been restricted to a period in the 1990s characterized by economic weakness and political turmoil in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and before the implications of the rise of China were fully recognized. As these circumstances changed, and as the USA struggled to extricate itself from increasingly difficult wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, debate about the shape of world order shifted from an emphasis on unipolarity to a concern about 'rising multipolarity'. But if world order is going to be characterized by growing multipolarity, in which there are three or more power centres, what does this imply about the prospects for war, peace and global stability? Will the twenty-first century be marked by bloodshed and chaos, or by the advance of cooperation and prosperity?

There are two quite different models of a multipolar world order. The first highlights the pessimistic implications of a wider diffusion of power amongst global actors. Neorealists have been particularly prominent in warning against the dangers of multipolarity, seeing a tendency towards instability and chaos as the key feature of its structural dynamic. Mearsheimer (1990) thus lamented the end of Cold War bipolarity, warning that Europe's future in particular would be characterized by a 'back to the future' scenario. By this, he was referring to the multipolar world orders that, arguably, gave rise to WWI and WWII by allowing ambitious powers to pursue expansionist goals precisely because power balances within the international system remained fluid. In this view, multipolarity is inherently unstable, certainly by comparison with bipolarity. This applies because more actors increases the number of possible conflicts and creates higher levels of uncertainty, intensifying the security dilemma for all states. In

addition, shifting alliances amongst multiple actors means that changes in power balances are likely to be more frequent and possibly more dramatic. Such circumstances, so-called 'offensive' realists, who believe that states seek to maximize power rather than security, point out, encourage restlessness and ambition, making great powers more prone to indiscipline and risk-taking with inevitable consequences for global peace.

However, the alternative model of multipolarity is much more optimistic. In the first place, this model suggests that the emergence of new powers and the relative decline of the USA may be managed in a way that preserves peace and keeps rivalry under control. The USA's established approach to likely rivals has been to 'accommodate' them in line with enlightened self-interest and in order to discourage them from aspiring to a greater role. This was evident in US support for the post-1945 Japanese reconstruction and in consistent encouragement given to the process of integration in Europe. A similar approach has been adopted to China, India and, in the main, to Russia. Such an approach tends to encourage emerging powers to 'bandwagon' rather than 'balance', in the sense that they become part of the usually US-led global trading and financial system, rather than put up barriers against the USA. It also makes the prospects of a 'USA versus the Rest' conflict significantly less likely, as potential rivals are at least as concerned about each other as they are about the USA. A further argument is that, by reducing disparities of power among states, multipolarity creates a general willingness to cooperate, based on an awareness that interdependence brings more benefits than independence. This tendency is discussed in the final section of the chapter, in relation to multilateralism.

Civilizations in conflict?

The idea of civilizations in conflict emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War, through the 'clash of civilizations' thesis advanced by the US academic and political commentator Samuel Huntington (1996). Huntington's basic assertion was that a new era in international politics was emerging in which the civilization would be the primary force, a civilization being 'culture writ large'. As such, the 'clash of civilizations' thesis contrasted sharply with the liberal image of world affairs, which stresses the growth of interdependence, particularly in the light of globalization. Huntington's relationship to realism was more complex, however. Insofar as he accepted that traditional, power-driven states remain the key actors on the world stage, he was a realist, but his realism was modified by the insistence that the struggle for power now takes place within a larger framework of civilizational, rather than ideological, conflict. The idea of a 'clash of civilizations' attracted growing attention during the 1990s, as international politics was shaken by an upsurge in ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and

elsewhere. However, the thesis had its greatest impact after 11 September, when it was widely used as an explanation of the changing nature of world order as global terrorism was seen as a symptom of an emerging clash between Islam and the West. Nevertheless, the extent to which the thesis informed the Bush administration's approach to the 'war on terror' should not be exaggerated. For example, it certainly would not have encouraged the adoption of a strategy of 'democracy promotion' in Iraq and Afghanistan, as this was based on the assumption that democracy is a universal value applicable to all societies.

For Huntington, the emerging 'world of civilizations' would comprise nine major civilizations – Western, Sinic or Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, African, Latin American and Orthodox Christian. The rise of culture as the primary force in international politics had supposedly occurred due to the fading significance of ideology in a post-Cold War era, and because the advance of globalization had weakened the state's capacity to generate a sense of civic belonging. In this context, people are forced to define themselves increasingly in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values and customs; in short, in terms of culture. As Huntington put it, 'If not civilizations, what?' Crucial to the thesis, however, is the assumption that a stronger sense of cultural belonging can only lead to tension and conflict. This is because cultures and civilizations are incommensurate: they establish quite different values and meanings. In Huntington's view, cultural conflict is likely to occur at a 'micro' level and a 'macro' level. 'Micro-level' conflict will occur at the 'fault-lines' between civilizations, where one 'human tribe' clashes with another, possibly resulting in communal wars. In that sense, civilizations operate rather like 'tectonic plates' that rub up against one another at vulnerable points. At the 'macro' level, conflict may break out between the civilizations themselves, in all likelihood precipitated by clashes between their 'core' states. Although Huntington highlighted the potential for a variety of such conflicts, greatest interest has focused on the relationship between Islam and the West.

Although tensions between Islam and the West can be traced back to British India in the nineteenth century, if not earlier, its most significant modern manifestation was the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which replaced the deeply corrupt but pro-Western regime of the Shah with an 'Islamic Republic' under Ayatollah Khomeini (see p. 215). The Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979–89) then saw the growth of the Mujahideen, a loose collection of religiously inspired resistance groups, out of which developed both the Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, and the al-Qaeda terrorist network, led by Osama bin Laden. Such groups typically portrayed their commitment to Islam as a *jihad* (see p. 345), a struggle aimed, in particular, at the removal of Western influence, and especially the influence of the USA and Israel (the 'Jewish-Christian crusaders'), from the Muslim world. The 11 September al-Qaeda attacks on the USA, and the USA's response in launching the 'war on terror', not only gave the relationship between

BEYOND THE WEST . . .

THE ISLAMIC IDEA OF *JIHAD*

Jihad literally means to 'struggle' or 'strive'; it is used to refer to the religious duty of Muslims. However, the term has been used in at least two contrasting ways. In the form of the 'greater' *jihad*, it is understood as an inner or spiritual quest to overcome one's sinful nature. In the form of the 'lesser' *jihad*, struggle is understood more as an outer or physical struggle against the enemies of Islam. This is the sense in which *jihad* is translated (often unhelpfully) as 'holy war'. Bernard Lewis (2004) argued that *jihad* has a military meaning in the large majority of cases, although some scholars maintain it also refers to non-violent ways to struggle against the enemies of Islam.

The notion of military *jihad* has gained particular prominence since the 1970s, through the emergence of militant Islamist groups and movements. Religiously inspired guerillas fighting the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s thus portrayed themselves as the Mujahideen, denoting that they were engaged in *jihad*. In this context, *jihad* came to refer to an armed conflict aimed at 'purifying' the Islamic world through the removal of Western influence and by the overthrow of 'corrupt' or 'tyrannical' Muslim rulers. *Jihad*, in this sense, is part of a global struggle for supremacy, and places an obligation on Muslims everywhere to advance the cause of Islam, with, for militant Salafi Muslims in particular, an emphasis being placed on '*jihad* by the sword' (*jihad bis saif*). However, such issues are a matter of significant debate within Islam. Many authorities, for instance, argue that if Muslims live in a society ruled by non-Muslims but are under no threat and can perform their religious duties, then *jihad* is not obligatory. It is also perfectly permissible, in this view, for Islamic states to have harmonious relations with non-Muslim powers. In any event, it is wrong to use *jihad* to suggest that Islam is more bellicose than other world religions, as this is not supported by the historical record.

Islam and the West enormously greater prominence, but also encouraged many to interpret it in terms of civilizational conflict. From this perspective, the origins of Islamic militancy derive from a basic incompatibility between Islamic values and those of the liberal-democratic West. Such thinking was evident both in the militant Islamist belief that the 'godless' West and Western values are corrupt and corrupting, and in the tendency of neo-conservatives in the USA and elsewhere to view Islam as inherently totalitarian due to its belief that social life and politics, and not just personal morality, should conform to Islamic values.

This account of emerging and seemingly irresistible civilizational conflict has been severely criticized, however. For example, Huntington's 'tectonic' notion of civilizations presents them as being much more homogeneous, and therefore distinct from one another, than is in fact the case. In practice, civilizations have

always interpenetrated one another, giving rise to blurred or hybrid cultural identities. There is, for example, at least as much evidence of dialogue and overlap between Islamic and Western civilizations, as there is evidence of rivalry or disagreement. Furthermore, Huntington made the mistake of 'culturalism', in that he portrayed culture as the universal basis for personal and social identity, and so failed to recognize the extent to which cultural identities are shaped by political, economic and other circumstances. What appears to be a cultural conflict may therefore have a quite different, and more complex, explanation. For instance, the ethnic conflicts that broke out in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s were not so much a product of 'natural' hatreds and tensions rising to the surface, but were rather a consequence of the growth of nationalist and racist doctrines in the power vacuum that had been created by the collapse of communism. Similarly, conflict between civilizations may be more an expression of perceived economic and political injustice than of cultural rivalry. The rise of militant Islamism may thus be better explained by tensions and crises in the Middle East in general and in the Arab world in particular, linked to the inheritance of colonialism, the Arab–Israeli conflict, the survival of unpopular but often oil-rich autocratic regimes, and urban poverty and unemployment, rather than by cultural incompatibility between Western and Islamic value systems.

Multilateralism and perpetual peace

Whereas multipolarity has been used to highlight a potential for conflict and disharmony in the international system, and the 'clash of civilizations' thesis portrays the tendency towards culturally based conflict as inevitable, multilateralism offers a distinctly more optimistic image of a world order characterized by peace and cooperation. Multilateralism can be defined as a process that coordinates behaviour among three or more countries on the basis of generalized principles of conduct (Ruggie, 1993). For a process to be genuinely multilateral, it must conform to three principles. These are non-discrimination (all participating countries must be treated alike), indivisibility (participating countries must behave as if they were a single entity, as in collective security, discussed earlier) and diffuse reciprocity (obligations among countries must have a general and enduring character, rather than being examples of one-off cooperation). Multilateralism may be either formal, reflecting the acceptance of common norms and rules by three or more countries, or it may be informal and therefore institutional. Regardless of the form it takes, three broad developments increase the likelihood that twenty-first-century world order will be characterized by multilateralism and enduring peace: the advance of globalization, the spread of democracy and the growth in the role and significance of international organizations.

Perhaps the most important implication of globalization, in its various forms, is that states are increasingly confronted by challenges that are, by their nature, beyond the capacity of even the strongest state to meet on its own. In an increasingly interdependent world, states must find ways of working together, if necessary finding global solutions to global problems. This recognition has been most apparent in the economic sphere, helping to explain why, since 1945, international cooperation has progressed further and faster in economic areas than in any other area. An example of this is the growing worldwide acceptance of the benefits of free trade, which even survived the challenge posed by the 2007–09 global financial crisis and stands in marked contrast to the ‘beggar-thy-neighbour’ policies of competitive protectionism that characterized the inter-war period. One of the key reasons why the tendency towards economic multilateralism has been particularly prominent is that states are usually more concerned in economic matters with making ‘absolute’ gains (improvements in a state’s position in absolute terms) than with making ‘relative’ gains (improvements in a state’s position relative to other states). This applies because, unlike growing military disparities, widening economic disparities generally do not pose a threat to the survival of a state. Moreover, trust and transparency are easier to develop in matters of economic cooperation, where tariffs or other forms of protectionism are more difficult to conceal than the development of, for instance, new weapons systems.

The advance of globalization may also have been a key factor in reducing the incidence of inter-state war. This has happened for a number of reasons. One of these is that states no longer need to make economic gains by conquest because globalization offers them a cheaper and easier route to national prosperity in the form of trade. Although it would be an exaggeration to suggest that all inter-state wars have been wars of plunder, the expectation of making material gains – whether through territorial expansion, seizing control of economic resources or the opening up of new markets – invariably plays a part in the decision to go to war. Furthermore, by significantly increasing levels of economic interdependence, globalization makes war almost unthinkable because of the high economic costs involved – trade partnerships destroyed, external investment lost, and so on. Such thinking can be traced back to the ideas of nineteenth-century so-called ‘commercial’ liberals, such as Richard Cobden (1804–65) and John Bright (1811–89), who argued that free trade would draw people of different races, creeds and languages together in what Cobden described as ‘the bonds of eternal peace’. Not only would free trade maintain peace for negative reasons (the fear of being deprived of vital goods), but it would also have positive benefits in ensuring that different peoples are united by shared values and a common commercial culture, and so have a better understanding of one another. Such factors, for example, help to explain why the rise of China has been, and is likely to remain, peaceful. As China benefits enormously from transnational production patterns,

the existence of an open trading system and the wider liberal order that the USA established after 1945, it has little incentive to put these at risk through the threat of war (Ikenberry, 2008).

The second factor that helps to explain the trend towards multilateralism and the decline of war is the spread of democratic governance. Such a stance is rooted in the assumptions of what is called 'republican' liberalism, which holds that the external behaviour of states is crucially influenced by their political and constitutional make-up. While autocratic or authoritarian states are inherently militaristic and aggressive, democratic states are naturally peaceful, especially in their dealings with other democratic states. The aggressive character of authoritarian regimes stems from the fact that they are immunized from popular pressure and typically have strong and politically powerful armies. As they are accustomed to the use of force to maintain themselves in power, force becomes the natural mechanism through which they deal with the wider world and resolve disputes with other states. Liberals, moreover, hold that authoritarian states are inherently unstable, because they lack the institutional mechanisms for responding to popular pressure and balancing rival interests, and so are impelled towards foreign policy adventurism as a means of regime consolidation. If the support of the people cannot ensure participation and popular consent, 'patriotic' war may provide the only solution.

In this light, liberals have emphasized the link between peace and democracy through the 'democratic peace' thesis. Much of the support for this is based on empirical analysis. As democracy has spread, 'zones of peace' have emerged, extending across most of the developed world. History, then, seems to suggest that wars do not break out between democratic states, although, as proponents of the democratic peace thesis accept, war continues to occur between democratic and authoritarian states. This tendency for democracy and peace to be linked can be explained in three main ways. First, liberals argue that wars are caused by governments, not by the people. As citizens themselves are likely to be war's victims – they are the ones who will do the killing and dying, and who will suffer disruption and hardship – the greater their involvement in politics, the less likely states will be to go to war. Second, the essence of democratic governance is a process of compromise, conciliation and negotiation, through which rival interests or groups find a way of living together, rather than resorting to force and the use of naked power. Not only is it likely that regimes based on compromise and conciliation will apply such an approach to foreign policy as well as domestic policy, but governments unused to using force to resolve civil conflict will be less inclined to use force to resolve international conflicts. Third, cultural ties develop amongst democracies because democratic rule tends to foster particular norms and values. By virtue of sharing common moral foundations, democracies are inclined to view each other as friends rather than foes, meaning that peaceful coexistence amongst them appears to be a 'natural' condition.

The third factor that serves to promote cooperation and discourage war is the growing significance of international organizations. This reflects the liberal institutionalist belief that the best way of safeguarding citizens from the chaos and barbarity of the anarchic international system is the establishment of the rule of law, which, as US President Woodrow Wilson (1913–21) put it, would turn the ‘jungle’ of international politics into a ‘zoo’. The trend towards integration and cooperation in world affairs that has seen a steady growth in the number and role of international organizations since 1945 has been explained by Keohane and Nye (1977) in terms of the advance of ‘complex interdependence’. Complex interdependence offers an alternative to the realist model of international politics in which states have ceased to be autonomous international actors, economic and other issues have become more prominent in world affairs, and military force has become a less reliable and less important policy option. Although such trends have often given rise to formal institutional arrangements, as in the case of the institutions of global economic governance – the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization – they are sometimes expressed less formally in the establishment of international regimes. A regime, in this sense, is a set of principles, procedures, norms or rules that govern the interactions of states and non-state actors in particular issue areas within international politics. In the case of ‘security regimes’, states have responded to the security dilemma by constructing frameworks of cooperation to manage disputes and help to avoid war. Such frameworks thus offer the prospect that fear and suspicion in international politics can be displaced by trust and mutual support.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why is concern with the issue of security usually thought to be more pressing in the international sphere than the domestic sphere?
- Can national security only be promoted by military and strategic means?
- What is the rationale behind the idea of collective security?
- Does 'human security' widen the concept of security to such an extent that it becomes meaningless?
- How does war differ from other forms of violence?
- Can all wars be thought of as 'political', or only some?
- How, and to what extent, do 'new' wars differ from traditional wars?
- Does the distinction between just wars and unjust wars stand up to examination?
- Are multipolar global systems inherently unstable and prone to conflict?
- Do tensions between Islam and the West have a civilizational character?
- Why and how has free trade been associated with the prospect of international peace?
- Will the spread of democracy promote international order and help to make military power obsolete?

FURTHER READING

Booth, K. and Wheeler, N. J. *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (2008). An clear and authoritative theoretical contribution to understanding the security dilemma and its implications for international relations.

Evans, M. (ed) *Just War Theory: A Reappraisal* (2005). A collection of essays that examine the idea of just war within the context of moral theory, applying the notion of justice to issues related to the cause, conduct and end of war.

Ikenberry, G. J. (ed.) *Power, Order and Change in World Politics* (2014). A collection of essays that analyze the rise and decline of leading powers and the international orders they create, which also reflect on the theoretical ideas that shape how we think about great powers.

Kaldor, M. *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention* (2007). A wide-ranging and stimulating discussion of human security in the context of the changing nature of economic relations and of war and warfare.

13

Tradition, Progress and Utopia

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- TRADITION
Defending the status quo • Reclaiming the past • Change in order to conserve
 - PROGRESS
The forward march of history • Progress through reform • Progress through revolution
 - UTOPIA
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Preview

Political debate and argument can never be confined to cloistered academics, because political theories are concerned ultimately with reshaping and remodelling the world itself. Change therefore lies at the very heart of politics. Many would sympathize, for instance, with Marx's assertion in 'Theses on Feuerbach' ([1845] 1968) that 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it'. This concluding chapter examines the difficult questions that arise from the issue of change, and from the inevitable linkage in politics between theory and practice. Yet the desire to change the world raises a number of difficult questions.

In the first place, is change desirable? Does change involve growth or decline, progress or decay; should it be welcomed or resisted? Some have turned their faces firmly against change in the name of tradition and continuity. But this has meant anything from a simple wish to remain faithful to the past to an acceptance of 'natural' change or the desire to return to a kind of earlier 'golden age'. Such traditionalist views, however, became increasingly unfashionable as the modern idea of progress took root. This implies that human history is marked by an advance in knowledge and the achievement of ever higher levels of civilization: all change is for the good. Nevertheless, even if change is to be welcomed, what form should it take? This has usually been posed as a choice between two contrasting notions of change: reform or revolution. Whether they are reformist or revolutionary, projects of social or political change have tended to be based on a model of a desired future society. The most radical such projects have looked, ultimately, to the construction of a perfect society, a utopia. But what is utopianism, and which political doctrines have utopian characteristics? More importantly, is utopian thinking vital for the success of any progressive political project, or is it a recipe for repression or even totalitarianism?

Tradition

Tradition, in the words of Edward Shils (1981), encompasses ‘anything transmitted or handed down from the past to the present’. Therefore, anything from long-standing customs and practices to an institution, political or social system, or a body of beliefs, can be regarded as a tradition. However, it may be very difficult to determine precisely how long a belief, practice or institution has to survive before it can be regarded as a tradition. Traditions have usually been thought to denote continuity between generations, things that have been transmitted from one generation to the next, but the line between the traditional and the merely fashionable is often indistinct. Whereas the Christian religion is undoubtedly a tradition, having endured for two thousand years, can the same be said of industrial capitalism, which dates back only to the nineteenth century, or of the welfare state, which first emerged in the early twentieth century? At what point, for instance, did universal adult suffrage become a tradition?

However, a traditionalist stance can take at least three different forms. First, and most clearly, tradition can be associated with continuity with the past, the maintenance of established ways and institutions. Tradition, in this sense, seeks to eradicate change. Second, traditionalism can involve an attempt to reclaim the past, in effect, to ‘turn the clock back’. Such a position endorses change providing it is backward-looking or regressive, a goal often inspired by the notion of a ‘golden age’. Third, traditionalism can recognize the need for change as a means of preservation, adopting a philosophy of ‘change in order to conserve’. This implies a belief in ‘natural’ change. If certain changes are inevitable, any attempt to resist them risks precipitating more far-reaching and damaging change.

Defending the status quo

The ‘desire to conserve’ has been a core feature of the Anglo-American conservative tradition (see p. 258). Instead of advocating a lurch backwards into the past, it preaches the need for preservation, the need for continuity with the past. In essence, this amounts to a defence of the status quo, the existing state of affairs. For some, this desire to resist or avoid change is deeply rooted in human psychology. In his essay ‘Rationalism in Politics’ ([1962] 1991), for example, Michael Oakeshott (see p. 259) argued that to be a conservative is ‘to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss’. By this, Oakeshott did not suggest that the present is in any way perfect or even better than any other condition that might exist. Rather, the present is valued on account of its familiarity, a familiarity that engenders a sense

of reassurance, stability and security. Change, on the other hand, will always appear threatening and uncertain: a journey into the unknown. This is why conservative theorists have usually placed so much emphasis on the importance of custom and tradition.

Customs are long-established and habitual practices. In traditional societies which lack the formal machinery of law, custom often serves as the basis for order and social control. In developed societies, custom has sometimes been accorded the status of law itself in the form of so-called common law. In the English tradition of common law, for example, customs are recognized as having legal authority if they have existed without interruption since 'time immemorial', in theory since 1189 but in practice as far back as can reasonably be established. The reason why custom embodies moral and sometimes legal authority is that it is thought to reflect popular consent: people accept something as rightful because 'it has always been that way'. Custom shapes expectations and aspirations and so helps to determine what people think is reasonable and acceptable: familiarity breeds legitimacy. This is why people's sense of natural fairness is often offended when long-established patterns of behaviour are disrupted; their appeal is thus to 'custom and practice'.

The classic defence of tradition in the conservative tradition is found in the writings of Edmund Burke (see p. 354), and in particular in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* ([1790] 1968). Burke acknowledged that society is founded on a contract, but not one made only by those who happen to be alive at present. In Burke's words, society is a partnership 'between those who are living, those who are dead and those who are to be born'. Tradition therefore reflects the accumulated wisdom of the past, beliefs and practices that have literally been 'tested by time' and have been proved to have worked. This is what G. K. Chesterton ([1908] 2008) referred to as a 'democracy of the dead'. If those who 'merely happen to be walking around' turn their backs on tradition they are, in effect, disenfranchising earlier generations – the majority – whose contribution and understanding is simply being ignored. As what Burke called 'the collected reason of ages', tradition provides both the only reliable guide for present conduct and the most valuable inheritance we can pass on to future generations. From Oakeshott's point of view, tradition does not merely reflect our attachment to the familiar, but also ensures that social institutions work better because they operate in a context of established rules and practices.

Critics have, nevertheless, viewed custom and tradition in a very different light. Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* ([1791–2] 1987) was written in part as a reply to Burke. Paine (see p. 133) argued that Burke had placed 'the authority of the dead over the rights and freedoms of the living'. In other words, to revere tradition merely on the grounds that it has long endured is to enslave the present generation to the past, condemning it to accepting the evils of the past as well as its virtues. Furthermore, the assertion that values, practices and institutions have

EDMUND BURKE (1729–97)

Dublin-born British statesman and political theorist. Burke is often seen as the father of the Anglo-American conservative tradition. Although he was a Whig politician, and expressed views sympathetic towards the American Revolution of 1776, he earned his reputation through the staunch criticism of the 1789 French Revolution that he developed in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* ([1790] 1968).

The central themes in Burke's writings are a distrust of abstract principle and the need for political action to be rooted in tradition and experience. He was deeply opposed to the attempt to recast French politics in accordance with the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, arguing that wisdom resides largely in history and, in particular, in institutions and practices that have survived through time. Burke was nevertheless not a reactionary: he held that the French monarchy had been partly responsible for its own fate, as it had refused to 'change in order to conserve', a core feature of the pragmatic conservatism with which he is associated. He had a gloomy view of government, recognizing that, although it may prevent evil, it rarely promotes good. He also supported the classical economics of Adam Smith (see p. 313), regarding market forces as an example of 'natural law', and supported a principle of representation that stresses the need for representatives to use their own mature judgement. Burke's political views were further developed in works such as *An Appeal from New to Old Whigs* (1791) and *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796–7).

survived only because they have worked is highly questionable. Such a view sees in human history a process of 'natural selection': those institutions and practices that have been of benefit to humankind are preserved, while those of little or no value have declined or become extinct. This comes down to a belief in the survival of the fittest. Clearly, however, institutions and beliefs may have survived for very different reasons. For instance, they may have been preserved because they have been of benefit to powerful elites or a ruling class. Finally, custom and tradition may be an affront to rational debate and intellectual enquiry. To revere 'what is' simply because it marks continuity with the past forecloses debate about 'what could be' and perhaps even 'what should be'. From this perspective, tradition tends to inculcate an uncritical, unreasoned and unquestioning acceptance of the status quo and leave the mind in the thrall of the past. J. S. Mill (see p. 241) referred to this danger as the 'despotism of custom'.

Reclaiming the past

A more radical form of traditionalist politics looks not to continuity and preservation, but rather embraces the idea of backward-looking change. Some, indeed,

draw a clear distinction between tradition and reaction, reaction literally meaning to respond to an action or stimulus, to react. A reactionary style of politics has little to do with tradition as continuity, because tradition in this sense is concerned with the maintenance of a status quo which radical reactionaries are intent on destroying. Far from upholding the importance of the familiar and the stable, reaction can, at times, have a revolutionary character. For example, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran can be regarded as a reactionary revolution in that it marked a dramatic break with the immediate past, designed to prepare the way for the re-establishment of more ancient Islamic principles. This form of reaction is based on a very clear picture of human history. Whereas traditionalism sees in history the threads of continuity, binding one generation to the next, reaction sees a process of decay and corruption. At its heart, therefore, lies the image of an earlier period in history – a golden age – from which point human society has steadily declined.

The call for backward-looking change clearly reflects dissatisfaction with the present, as well as distrust of the future. This style of politics, which condemns the existing state of affairs by comparing it to an idealized past, can be found in many historical periods. For example, conservatism in continental Europe exhibited a strong reactionary character throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. In countries such as France, Germany and Russia, conservatives remained faithful to autocratic and aristocratic principles long after these had been displaced by constitutional and representative forms of government. This was well reflected in the writings of Joseph de Maistre (see p. 189) and in the statecraft of the early nineteenth-century Austrian chancellor, Metternich, both of whom rejected any concession to reformism and strove instead to re-establish an *ancien régime*. Fascist doctrines in the twentieth century also tended to be backward-looking. Mussolini and the Italian Fascists, for instance, glorified the military might and political discipline of Imperial Rome. In the case of Hitler and the Nazis, this was reflected in an idealization of the 'First Reich', Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire. Similarly, reactionary leanings can be found in the modern period in the radicalism of the New Right. In embracing the notion of the 'frontier ideology' in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan harked back to the conquest of the American West and the virtues of self-reliance, hard work and adventurousness which he believed it exemplified, while in the UK, during the same period, Margaret Thatcher extolled the importance of what she called 'Victorian values'.

The desire to 'turn the clock back' is based on a simple historical comparison between the past and the present. Forward-looking or progressive reform means a march into an unknown future, with all the uncertainty and insecurity which that must involve. By comparison, the past is known and understood and therefore offers a firmer foundation for remodelling the present. This does not, however, imply blind reverence for history or a determination to maintain insti-

tutions and practices simply because they have survived. On the contrary, by breaking with traditionalism, radical reactionaries adopt a more critical and questioning attitude towards the past, taking from it what is of value to the present and leaving what is not. For example, the New Right recommends the re-establishment of *laissez-faire* economic principles, not on the grounds that they have been ‘sanctified by history’ but because, when applied in the nineteenth century, they promoted growth, innovation and individual responsibility.

However, the prospect of backward-looking change can also have less favourable implications. For instance, the golden age is at best a selective portrait of the past and at worst a thoroughly distorted picture of what life was really like. The conquest of the American West, for example, could be linked as easily with the near-genocide of the native Americans as it is with the rugged individualism of the frontier settlers. Moreover, the desire to ‘turn the clock back’ may be based on little more than nostalgia, a yearning for a mythical past of stability and security. All too often reaction embraces a naive and romanticized image of the past, against which the present appears to be squalid, corrupt or simply charmless. In a sense, all ages are susceptible to the same delusion: there never was a golden age. A final concern is that, even if meaningful lessons can be learnt from the past, it is questionable whether these can be applied to the present. Historical circumstances are the product of a complex network of interconnected social, economic, cultural and political factors. To identify a particular feature of the past as admirable does not mean it would necessarily have the same character in the present, even if it could be reproduced in its original form. All institutions and ideas may be specific to the period in which they arise. For instance, although *laissez-faire* policies may have promoted vigorous growth, enterprise and innovation in the nineteenth century, their impact if applied in a contemporary setting may be quite different.

Change in order to conserve

The final face of tradition is, ironically, a progressive one. Traditionalists have not always set their faces firmly against change, or only endorsed change when it has a regressive character. On some occasions they have accepted that the onward march of history is irresistible. Quite simply, to try to block inevitable change may be as pointless as King Canute’s alleged attempt to stop the flow of the tide. More seriously, blinkered traditionalism that does not recognize that, at times, change can be natural and inevitable runs the risk of precipitating a still more dramatic upheaval. The motto of this form of progressive conservatism is therefore that reform is preferable to revolution. This amounts to a form of enlightened traditionalism, which recognizes that, though it may be desirable to preserve the status quo, an implacable resistance to change is likely to be self-

defeating. It is better to be the willow that bends before the storm than the proud oak which risks being uprooted and destroyed.

This progressive form of conservatism is usually linked to the ideas of Edmund Burke. In contrast to the reactionary conservatism widely found in continental Europe, Burke argued that the French monarchy's stubborn commitment to absolutism (see p. 188) had helped to precipitate revolution in the first place. 'A state without the means of some change,' Burke ([1790] 1968) proclaimed, 'is without the means of its conservation.' This lesson was borne out by the English monarchy which in general had survived precisely because it had been prepared to accept constitutional constraints on its power. The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, which brought the English Revolution to an end with the establishment of a constitutional monarchy under William and Mary, was a classic example of conservative reform. The wisdom of such pragmatism is evident in the fact that, while reactionary conservatism often failed to survive the nineteenth century and was finally brought down by its association with fascism in the twentieth century, the Anglo-American tradition of Burkean conservatism has been far more successful. The philosophy of 'change in order to conserve' has, for example, enabled conservatives to come to terms with constitutionalism, democracy and, at times, social welfare and economic intervention.

Enlightened traditionalism is based on a view of history which differs from both conventional traditionalism and backward-looking reaction. Traditionalism has conventionally emphasized the stable and unchanging nature of human history; backward-looking reaction has a deeply pessimistic view of history, reflecting the fear that 'things get worse'. Enlightened traditionalism, by contrast with the other two, is based on the idea of inevitable change which, because it is 'natural', is neither to be applauded nor regretted, only accepted. This suggests a view of history as being largely beyond human control and dictated by what Burke called 'the pattern of Nature'. For Burke, such a view was linked to the belief that human affairs are shaped by the will of God and so are beyond the capacity of humankind to fathom. In the same way, the process of history may simply be too complex and intricate for the human mind adequately to grasp, still less to control. In other words, when the tide of history is flowing, wisdom dictates that human beings swim with it, rather than against it.

However, even when it is intended to conserve, change can create difficulties for a conservative. In the first place, there is the problem of distinguishing between 'natural' changes, which if not to be welcomed should at least be accepted, and other forms of change which should still be resisted. This is a much simpler task to accomplish, as Burke did, with the advantage of hindsight. It is much easier to point out that the failure to introduce prudent reform was likely to lead to violent revolution after that revolution has occurred. Quite clearly, it is much more difficult at the time to know which of the many changes

being demanded are resistible and which ones are irresistible. A further problem is that, far from promoting stability and contentment, reform may pave the way for more radical change. In some respects, abject poverty is more likely to generate resignation and apathy than revolutionary fervour. On the other hand, improving political or social conditions may heighten expectations and stimulate the appetite for change. This is perhaps what happened in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, when Gorbachev's reforms merely succeeded in hastening the demise of the regime itself by highlighting the deficiencies of central planning and allowing criticism and discontent to be more widely expressed.

Progress

Progress literally means an advance, a movement forward. The idea that human history is marked by progress originated in the seventeenth century and reflected the growth of rationalist and scientific thought. A belief in progress, the 'forward march of history', subsequently became one of the basic tenets of the Western intellectual tradition. Liberal thinkers, for instance, believed that humankind was progressively emancipating itself from the chains of poverty, ignorance and superstition. In the UK, this was manifest in the emergence of the so-called 'Whig interpretation of history', which portrayed history as a process of intellectual and material development. In 1848, for instance, in the first chapter of his immensely influential *History of England*, Thomas Macaulay thus wrote that 'The history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral and of intellectual improvement'. The optimism implied by the idea of progress also influenced socialists who believed that a socialist society would emerge out of, or be built on, the foundations of liberal capitalism. Faith in progress has often amounted to a form of historicism, in that it portrays human history as an inevitable process, leading humankind from lower levels of civilization to higher ones. Not uncommonly, this is reflected in the use of biological metaphors like 'growth' or 'evolution' to describe the process of historical change. However, on what basis is it possible to portray history as remorseless and irresistible progress? And should progress be steady, evolutionary and reformist, or dramatic, far-reaching and revolutionary?

The forward march of history

The idea of progress was a product of the scientific revolution and has gone hand in hand with the growth of rationalism. Science provided a rational and reliable form of enquiry through which human beings could acquire objective knowledge of the world around them. As such, it emancipated human beings from the

religious doctrines and dogmas that had previously shackled intellectual enquiry, and promoted the secularization of Western thought. Armed with reason, human beings could for the first time not only explain the natural world but also start to understand the society in which they live and interpret the process of history itself. The power of reason gave human beings the capacity to take charge of their own lives and shape their own destinies. When problems exist, solutions can be found; when obstacles block human advance, these can be overcome; when defects are identified, remedies are available. Rationalism therefore emancipates humankind from the grip of the past, and so from the weight of custom and tradition. Instead, it teaches that it is possible to learn from the past, its successes and failures, and move forward. The process of history is thus marked by the accumulation of human knowledge and the deepening of wisdom. Each new generation is able to advance beyond the last.

A belief in inevitable progress is reflected in the tendency to interpret economic, social and political change in terms of 'modernization' and 'development'. The political and social upheavals through which advanced industrial societies came into existence have, for instance, often been described as a process of modernization. To be 'modern' means not only being contemporary, being 'of the present', but it also implies an advance in relation to the past, a movement away from the 'old-fashioned' or 'out of date'. Political modernization is usually thought to involve the emergence of constitutional government, the safeguarding of civil liberties and the extension of democratic rights. In short, a 'modern' political system is a liberal-democratic one. Social modernization, in turn, is closely linked to the spread of industrialization and urbanization. 'Modern' societies possess efficient industrialized economies and a high level of material affluence. In the same way, Western industrialized societies are often described as 'developed' by comparison with the 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' world. Such terminology clearly implies that the liberal-democratic political systems and industrialized economies typically found in the West mark a higher level of civilization compared with the more traditional structures found in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In such cases, 'traditional' implies backwardness. Moreover, to describe the process of modernization in the West as 'development' suggests that it is the likely, if not inevitable, path that non-Western societies will also tread. Human history is therefore portrayed as an onward march with Western societies in the vanguard. They map out a route which other societies are destined to follow.

Faith in the idea of progress is not, however, universal. Many in the developing world, for example, point out that to interpret political and social progress in exclusively Western terms both fails to appreciate the distinctive culture and traditions of non-Western societies and ignores the possibility that there may be other models of development. More fundamentally, the very idea of progress has been called into question. Such a position, usually adopted by conservative theo-

rists, suggests that faith in rationality is often misplaced. As Burke suggested, the world is simply too vast and too complicated for the human mind to comprehend fully. If this is true, 'systems of thought', typically devised by liberal and socialist theorists, will inevitably simplify or distort the reality they set out to explain. Quite simply, no reliable 'blueprint' exists which enables human beings to remodel or reform their world. Where attempts have been made to improve political and social circumstances, whether through reform or revolution, conservatives often warn, in Oakeshott's words, that 'the cure may be worse than the disease'.

Progress through reform

The earliest meaning of 'reform' was literally to re-form, to form again, as when soldiers re-form their lines. This meaning of reform, ironically, has a reactionary character since it implies the recapturing of the past, the restoration of something to its original order. This backward-looking aspect of reform was evident in the use of the term 'Reformation' to describe the establishment of the Protestant churches in the sixteenth century, because its supporters saw it as a movement to restore an older and supposedly purer form of spiritual experience. However, in modern usage, reform is more commonly associated with innovation rather than restoration; it means to make anew, to create a new form, as opposed to returning to an older one. Reform is now inextricably linked to the ideas of progress. For example, to 'reform your ways' means to mend your ways; a 'reformed character' is a person who has abandoned his or her bad habits; and a 'reformatory' is a place which is meant to help correct anti-social behaviour. For this reason, the term 'reform' always carries positive overtones, implying betterment or improvement. Strictly speaking, therefore, it is contradictory to condemn or criticize what is acknowledged to be a reform.

Nevertheless, reform denotes a particular kind of improvement. Reform indicates changes within a person, institution or system which may remove their undesirable qualities, but which do not alter their fundamental character: in essence, they remain the same person, institution and system. For instance, to demand the reform of an institution is to call for, say, the reorganization of its structure, the alteration of its powers or the change to its functions, but not the wholesale abolition of the institution and its replacement. In that sense, reform stands clearly in opposition to revolution: it represents change within continuity. Indeed, in order to advocate reform it is necessary to believe that the person, institution or system in question has within it the *capacity* to be saved or improved. Political reform therefore stands for changes such as the extension of the franchise and institutional adjustments which take place within the existing constitutional structure. Reform thus amounts to a qualified endorsement of the

status quo; it suggests that, provided they are improved, existing institutions, structures and systems are preferable to the qualitatively new ones that could replace them.

To advocate reform is to prefer evolutionary change to revolutionary change, a stance adopted in particular by liberals and parliamentary socialists. Liberal reformism is often associated with the utilitarianism (see p. 362) of Jeremy Bentham (see p. 363). This provided the basis for what was called 'philosophic radicalism'. Founded on the utilitarian assumption that all individuals seek to maximize their own happiness, and applying the goal of general utility – 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number' – the Philosophic Radicals advocated a wide range of legal, economic and political reforms. These included proposals to codify laws and put the legal system on a soundly rational basis, to remove barriers to trade and economic competition, and to extend democracy by introducing more frequent elections, the secret ballot and universal suffrage. Socialist reformism, which emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, consciously built on these liberal foundations. The Fabian Society, for instance, founded in 1884 and named after the Roman general, Fabius Maximus, famous for the patient and delaying tactics with which he defeated Hannibal, placed its faith in 'the inevitability of gradualism'. The Fabians openly rejected the ideas of revolutionary socialism, represented by Marxism (see p. 75), and proposed instead that a socialist society would gradually emerge out of liberal capitalism through a process of incremental and deliberate reform. Such ideas were widely taken up by parliamentary socialists in Europe and elsewhere. In Germany, Eduard Bernstein's (see p. 277) *Evolutionary Socialism* ([1898] 1962) marked the first major critique of orthodox Marxism, and championed the idea of a gradual and peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism.

Reform has two key advantages over revolution. In the first place, by trying to balance change against continuity, reform can be brought about peacefully and without disrupting social cohesion. Even when the cumulative effect of reform amounts to fundamental change, because it is brought about in a piecemeal fashion, bit by bit, and over an extended period, it is more likely to be acceptable, even to those who are at first unsympathetic. This was apparent in the establishment of political democracy in most Western societies through the gradual extension of the franchise, first to working-class men, and finally to women. Second, reform is founded on the best empirical traditions of scientific enquiry. Reform is an incremental process: it advances by a series of relatively small steps. The virtue of incrementalism is that it proceeds through a process of 'trial and error'. As reforms are introduced, their impact can be assessed and adjustments can be made through a further set of reforms. If progress is founded on a belief in rationalism, reform is simply a way of bringing about progress through ongoing experimentation and observation. Evolutionary change is therefore a

UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarian theory emerged in the late eighteenth century as a supposedly scientific alternative to natural-rights theories. In the UK, during the nineteenth century, utilitarianism provided the basis for a wide range of social, political and legal reforms, advanced by the so-called Philosophic Radicals. Utilitarianism provided one of the major foundations for classical liberalism (see p. 18) and remains perhaps the most important branch of moral philosophy, certainly in terms of its impact on political issues.

Utilitarianism suggests that the 'rightness' of an action, policy or institution can be established by its tendency to promote happiness. This is based on the assumption that individuals are motivated by self-interest and that these interests can be defined as the desire for pleasure, or happiness, and a wish to avoid pain. Individuals thus calculate the quantities of pleasure and pain that each possible action would generate, and choose whichever course promises the greatest amount of pleasure over pain. Utilitarian thinkers believe that it is possible to quantify pleasure and pain in terms of utility, taking account of their intensity, duration and so forth. Human beings are therefore utility maximizers. The principle of utility can be applied to society at large using the principle of 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number'. However, utilitarianism has developed into a cluster of theories. Classical utilitarianism, or act-utilitarianism, judges an act to be right if its consequences produce at least as much pleasure over pain as those of any alternative act. Rule-utilitarianism, rather, judges an act to be right if it conforms to a rule which, if generally followed, would produce good consequences. What is called utilitarian generalization assesses an act's rightfulness not in terms of its own consequences, but on the basis of its consequences were the act to be universally performed. Motive-utilitarianism places emphasis on the intentions of the actor rather than on the consequences of each action.

The attraction of utilitarianism is its capacity to establish supposedly objective grounds on which moral judgements can be made. Rather than imposing values on society, it allows each individual to make his or her own moral choices as each alone is able to define what is pleasurable and what is painful. Utilitarian theory thus upholds diversity and freedom, and demands that we respect others as pleasure-seeking creatures. Its drawbacks are philosophical and moral. Philosophically, utilitarianism is based on a view of human nature that is both asocial and ahistorical. It is by no means certain, for instance, that consistently self-interested behaviour is a universal feature of human society. Morally, utilitarianism may be nothing more than crass hedonism. Although he subscribed to a modified form of utilitarianism, J. S. Mill (see p. 241) thus insisted that pleasures that promote personal development are 'higher' than other ones. Utilitarianism has also been criticized for endorsing acts that are widely considered wrong, such as the violation of basic human rights, if they serve to maximize the general utility of society.

Key figures

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) A British philosopher and legal reformer, Bentham was the founder of utilitarianism. Rejecting natural-rights theory, his moral and philosophical system assumed that human beings are rationally self-interested creatures who calculate pleasure and pain in terms of utility. Using the 'greatest happiness' principle, he developed a justification for *laissez-faire* economics, advocated a wide range of legal and constitutional reforms, and, in later life, supported universal manhood suffrage. Bentham's key work in this area is *Introduction to Principles of Morals and Legislation* ([1789] 1948).

James Mill (1773–1836) A Scottish philosopher, historian and economist, Mill helped to turn utilitarianism into a radical reform movement. Using Benthamite philosophy, he attacked mercantilism, the church, the established legal system and, especially, the system of aristocratic government. Mill supported what he called 'pure democracy' as the only means of achieving good government, defined as government in the interests of the 'greatest number'. On this basis, he recommended a progressive widening of the franchise, frequent elections and a secret ballot. Mill's best-known work is *Essay on Government* (1820).

Peter Singer (born 1945) An Australian philosopher, Singer has employed utilitarianism to consider a range of political issues. He has argued in favour of animal welfare on the grounds that an altruistic concern for the well-being of other species derives from the fact that, as sentient beings, they are capable of suffering. Singer has also used utilitarianism to uphold the cosmopolitan belief that people have a duty to alleviate suffering and promote well-being, regardless of national identity. Singer's major works include *Animal Liberation* (1975), *How Are We to Live?* (1993) and *One World* (2004).

means of expanding and refining human knowledge. To rely on reform rather than revolution is to ensure that our desire to change the world does not outstrip our knowledge about how it works.

Progress through revolution

Revolution represents the most dramatic and far-reaching form of change. In its most common sense, revolution refers to the overthrow and replacement of a system of government, quite distinct from reform or evolution where change takes place within an enduring constitutional framework. However, the earliest notions of revolution, developed in the fourteenth century, denoted not so much fundamental change as the restoration of proper political order, usually thought of as 'natural' order. This created the idea of revolution as cyclical change,

evident in the verb 'to revolve'. Thus, in the case of both the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 in Britain, which established a constitutional monarchy, and the American Revolution, through which the American colonies gained independence, the revolutionaries themselves believed that they were re-establishing a lost moral order rather than creating a historically new one.

The modern concept of revolution, however, was most clearly influenced by the French Revolution of 1789, which set out, openly and deliberately, to destroy the *ancien régime* or old order. The French Revolution became the archetypal model for the European revolutions which broke out in the nineteenth century, like those of 1830 and 1848, and decisively influenced the revolutionary theories of thinkers such as Marx (see p. 317). In the same way, the Russian Revolution (1917), the first 'socialist' revolution, dominated revolutionary theory and practice for much of the twentieth century, providing an example which inspired among others the Chinese Revolution (1949), the Vietnamese Revolution (1959), the Cuban Revolution (1945) and the Nicaraguan Revolution (1979).

Competing theories of revolution tend to lean heavily on particular revolutions to bear out the characteristic features of their model. Hannah Arendt's (see p. 129) *On Revolution* (1963b), for example, focused heavily on the English and American Revolutions in developing the essentially liberal view that revolutions reflect a quest for freedom and so highlight the failings of the existing political system. Marx, on the other hand, looking to the example of the French Revolution, regarded revolution as a stage in the inevitable march of history, reflecting the contradictions which exist in all class societies. In reality, however, no two revolutions are alike; each is a highly complex historical phenomenon, containing a mix of political, social and cultural features that is, perhaps, unique, as can be seen in the case of the Maoist revolutionary tradition in China (see p. 365). The Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran represented, for its part, a backward-looking movement attempting to establish theocratic absolutism, quite at odds with the Western idea of revolution as progressive change. The Eastern European revolutions (1989–91), which saw the overthrow or collapse of orthodox communist regimes in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, created the spectacle of a socialist revolution being itself overthrown by a revolution, which, to some extent, sought to resurrect pre-socialist principles. Among other things, this cast grave doubt on the conventional notion of historical progress.

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a number of features which are characteristic of most, if not all, revolutions. First, revolutions are periods of dramatic and sudden change. Revolutions involve a major upheaval which takes place within a limited time span. In some cases, however, an initial and sudden upheaval may give way to a longer and more evolutionary process of change. In that sense, the Russian Revolution started in 1917 but continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, its goal of 'building communism' still not having been completed. Second, revolutions are usually violent. By challenging


BEYOND THE WEST . . .

THE MAOIST REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION IN CHINA

Although Marxism is a distinctively Western political tradition, in a process that began in the late 1920s but accelerated significantly once China broke with the Soviet Union in 1960, the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary tradition was Sinicized, largely through the efforts of Mao Zedong (see p. 76). The earliest shift involved a focus on the peasantry as the revolutionary class, as opposed to the traditional Marxist emphasis on the urban proletariat. In Mao's 'peasant Marxism', an essentially peasant army was used to liberate a proletariat that had remained mostly politically passive. Mao also developed a theory of dialectical change that went some way beyond the ideas of Marx (see p. 317) or Engels (see p. 76). In 'On Contradiction' ([1937] 1971), Mao identified dialectics, or the 'law of the unity of opposites', as the fundamental law of thought ('If there were no contradictions there would be no world'), a stance that has drawn parallels with Daoist thinking (see p. 193).

However, Mao's major contribution to the theory and practice of revolution was an extreme voluntarism, which stressed the subjective dimension of historical change ('man's conscious action'), and was unwilling to interpret the class struggle only in terms of objective circumstances. For Mao, revolution was primarily a political, rather than an economic, process. Indeed, Maoist thought reflects an impatience with history allied to the capacity of the people, armed with the proper will and spirit, to transform social reality in accordance with the dictates of their consciousness. In this view, economic backwardness may even have advantages in the advancement of socialism, as Mao implied in celebrating the alleged Chinese virtues of being 'poor and blank'. Motivated by the utopian belief that it is possible to escape the burdens of history, the Mao era in China (1949–76) was therefore characterized by a series of major upheavals designed to hasten the 'transition to socialism'. These included the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign (1956–57), the 'Great Leap Forward' (1958–60) and the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' (1966–69).

the existing regime, revolutionaries are forced to operate outside the existing constitutional framework, which means resorting to an armed struggle or even civil war. There are nevertheless many examples of revolutions brought about with little bloodshed. For example, only three people died in the events that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. Third, revolutions are popular uprisings, usually involving demonstrations, strikes, marches, riots or some other form of mass participation. David Beetham (2013) suggested that the defining feature of revolution is extra-legal mass action. The level of popular

involvement in revolutions differs markedly, however. The Russian Revolution of November 1917 may thus have been more a *coup d'état* than a popular revolution, as power was seized by a tightly knit band of Bolshevik revolutionaries rather than by mass action.

The key virtue of revolution is that it deals with the foundational character of a problem: if the system itself is defective, only revolutionary, or systemic, change is appropriate. From this perspective, reformism can be condemned on two counts. First, it misses the target: it addresses superficial problems but not deeper ones. For instance, while revolutionary socialists have argued that exploitation and oppression are rooted in the institution of private property and thus in the capitalist system, reformists have devoted their attention to other issues such as improved wages and job security, welfare rights and the struggle for political democracy. Even when such reforms have improved living and working conditions, they have failed to bring about root-and-branch change because the capitalist class system is left intact. Second, reform may not only fail to address fundamental problems, it may be part of the problem itself. Revolutionaries have alleged that reform may actually strengthen capitalism; indeed, capitalism's susceptibility to reform may be the secret of its survival and success. From this perspective, the development of political democracy and the introduction of a welfare state have effectively served to reconcile the working masses to their exploitation, persuading them that their society is just and fair. In that sense, perhaps all reform has a conservative character. Such a line of thought clearly has an appeal that extends well beyond socialism, and has led to the emergence of revolutionary forms of doctrines such as anarchism, nationalism (see p. 95), feminism (see p. 56) and religious fundamentalism.

Utopia

The term utopia was coined by the English scholar and Lord Chancellor, Thomas More (1478–1535), and was first used in his *Utopia* ([1516] 2012). More's work purported to describe a perfect society supposedly set on an idyllic South Sea island. Commentators, however, have disagreed about whether his purpose in writing the book was advocacy or satire, and whether his primary concern was religious or political. The word 'utopia' is derived from two sources, the Greek *outopia*, meaning 'no place', and the Greek *eutopia*, meaning 'good place'. In everyday language, a utopia is an ideal or perfect society. The ambiguity in More's term nevertheless lives on. The term 'utopian' is often used pejoratively to refer to beliefs that are impossible or unrealistic, linked to unachievably high goals. It is therefore unclear whether utopia as 'no place' implies that no such society *yet* exists or that no such society *could* exist. A series of further controversies surround utopia and utopianism. For example, does utopian thinking

have to conform to a particular structure or have a particular function, or do all projects of political or social enhancement have a utopian character? Moreover, which political doctrines offer the most fertile ground for utopian thinking, and how varied have been the models of a political utopia? Finally, is the utopian style of thinking healthy or unhealthy, and why has it been largely abandoned by contemporary political theorists?

Features of utopianism

Utopias are, among other things, imagined worlds. Imagined worlds have a long history in literature, religion, folklore and philosophy. Most traditional societies and many religions have been based on a myth of a golden age or a Paradise. In most cases, these myths conjure up the image of a past state of perfection which gives existing society a set of authoritative values and helps to build a shared sense of identity. In other cases, these myths also embody expectations about the future. For example, the Garden of Eden in Judeo-Christianity represents a state of earthly perfection that existed before humankind's 'fall'; however, this idea of the 'Kingdom of God on Earth' has been kept alive by millenarianism, the belief in a future thousand-year period of divine rule, which will be inaugurated by Christ's second coming. Plato's *Republic* is often seen as the first clearly political utopia. In it, Plato (see p. 22) describes a society that combines wisdom, justice and order, in that philosopher-kings, the Guardians, rule; the military class, the Auxiliaries, maintain order and provide defence; and the common citizenry, the Producers, attend to the material basis of society.

However, utopian thinking in its modern form has more specific cultural and historical roots. Utopianism, as a style of social and political theorizing, is essentially a Western phenomenon that emerged from the eighteenth century onwards in association with the Enlightenment. Not only did a faith in reason encourage thinkers to view human history in terms of progress, but it also – perhaps for the first time – allowed them to think of human and social development in terms of unbounded possibilities. Armed with reason, humankind could remake society and also itself, and this process was, potentially, endless. The idea of social perfection was, then, no longer unthinkable. The impossible dream had thus become an achievable goal. This new style of thinking was given powerful impetus by the French Revolution of 1789, which, as a project of wholesale social and political transformation, appeared to suggest that all things were possible. Examples of this emerging utopian impulse can be found in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* ([1762] 1969), which advocated a radical form of democracy based, ultimately, on the goodness of 'natural man'; Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* ([1791–2] 1987), which defended popular sovereignty and individual rights over hereditary privilege; and Robert Owen's *A New View*

of *Society* ([1816] 2013), which advocated a 'rational system of society' based on cooperation and communal ownership.

Utopianism is therefore a very particular style of social theorizing. Its central theme is that it develops a critique of the existing order by constructing a model of an ideal or perfect alternative. As such, it usually exhibits three features. First, it embodies a radical and comprehensive rejection of the status quo; present society and political arrangements are deemed to be fundamentally defective and in need of root-and-branch change. Utopian political projects have therefore tended to be revolutionary rather than reformist. Second, utopian thought highlights the potential for human self-development, based either on highly optimistic assumptions about human nature or on optimistic assumptions about the capacity of economic, social and political institutions to ameliorate baser human drives and instincts. Society cannot be made perfect unless human beings are perfectible (if they were perfect already there would be no need for utopianism; utopia would exist already). Third, utopianism usually transcends the public/private divide in that it suggests the possibility of complete, or near-complete, personal fulfilment. For the alternative society to be ideal, it must offer the prospect of emancipation in the personal realm as well as in the political or public realm. This explains why much utopian theory has gone beyond conventional political thought and addressed wider psycho-social and even psycho-sexual issues, as in the writings of theorists such as Herbert Marcuse (see p. 117), Erich Fromm ([1955] 1971) and Paul Goodman (see p. 370).

An alternative to conventional utopian thinking has been developed in the form of 'dystopias', inverted or negative utopias whose purpose is to highlight dangerous or damaging trends in existing society. The two best-known literary dystopias are Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ([1949] 1954). Orwell's vision of excessive state control, relentless surveillance and pervasive propaganda drew attention to tendencies that were evident in twentieth-century totalitarianism. In many ways, however, Huxley's vision has proved to be more prescient, in that it envisaged the mass production of human beings in laboratories and the suppression of freedom through the use of drugs and prevalent indoctrination. A further example of a dystopian analysis was Evgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1920), which developed a powerful critique of Soviet society by taking some of the implications of the 1917 revolution to what he believed to be their logical – and inevitable – conclusion.

Political utopias

Political utopianism is defined more by its structure than its content. Although only a minority of utopian thinkers have set out to describe a utopia, by providing a full and detailed picture of a future ideal society, all of them have employed

UTOPIANISM

A utopia is literally an ideal or perfect society. The term was first used in *Utopia* ([1516] 2012) by Thomas More. Utopianism is a style of social theorizing that develops a critique of the existing order by constructing a model of an ideal or perfect alternative. In the same way, 'dystopias', or negative utopias, have sometimes been used to examine what it would be like for an 'ideal' to be realized, thereby criticizing it, as in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *1984*.

However, utopianism is neither a political philosophy nor an ideological tradition. Substantive utopias differ from one another, and utopian thinkers have not advanced a common conception of the good life. Nevertheless, most utopias are characterized by the abolition of want, the absence of conflict, and the avoidance of violence and oppression, underpinned by a belief in human perfectibility. Socialism in general, and anarchism and Marxism (see p. 75) in particular, have a marked disposition towards utopianism, reflecting their belief in the human potential for sociable, cooperative and gregarious behaviour. Socialist utopias, as a result, are strongly egalitarian and typically characterized by collective property ownership and a reduction in, or eradication of, political authority. Cosmopolitanism (see p. 105), feminism (see p. 56) and green politics (see p. 218) have also spawned utopian theories. Liberalism's (see p. 18) capacity to generate utopian thought is restricted by its stress on human self-interestedness and competition; however, an extreme belief in free-market capitalism can be viewed as a form of market utopianism. Other utopias have been based on faith in the benign influence of government and political authority. Plato's (see p. 22) *Republic* (1955), the earliest example of political utopianism, advocated enlightened despotism, while More's society was hierarchical, authoritarian and patriarchal, albeit within a context of economic equality.

The strength of utopianism is that it enables political theory to think beyond the present and to challenge the 'boundaries of the possible'. The establishment of 'concrete' utopias is a way of uncovering the potential for growth and development within existing circumstances. Without a vision of what could be, political theory may simply be overwhelmed by what is, and thereby lose its critical edge. Criticisms of utopian thought nevertheless fall into two categories. The first (in line with the pejorative, everyday use of the term utopian) suggests that utopianism is deluded or fanciful thinking, a belief in an unrealistic and unachievable goal. Marx (see p. 317), for instance, denounced 'utopian socialism' on the grounds that it advances a moral vision that is in no way grounded in historical and social realities. By contrast, 'scientific socialism' sought to explain how and why a socialist society would come into being (Marxism's utopian character is nevertheless evident in the nature of its ultimate goal: the construction of a classless, communist society). The second category of criticisms holds that utopianism is implicitly totalitarian, in that it promotes a single set of indisputable values and so is intolerant of free debate and diversity.



Key figures

Robert Owen (1771–1858) A Welsh socialist, industrialist and pioneer of the cooperative movement, Owen's thought was based on the belief that human character is formed by the social environment, and he therefore asserted that progress requires the construction of a 'rational system of society'. He particularly opposed organized religion, the conventional institution of marriage and private property. Owen advocated the construction of small-scale cooperative communities in which property would be communally owned and essential goods freely distributed. Owen's principal work is *A New View of Society* ([1816] 2013).

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) A French anarchist, Proudhon attacked both traditional property rights and communism, arguing instead for mutualism, a cooperative productive system geared towards need rather than profit and organized within self-governing communities. His famous dictum, 'property is theft', rejected the accumulation of wealth but allowed for small-scale property ownership in the form of 'possessions', a vital source of independence and initiative. Proudhon's major works include *What Is Property?* (1840), *Philosophy of Poverty* (an attack on Marx) (1846) and *The Federal Principle* (1863).

Paul Goodman (1911–72) A US writer and social critic, Goodman's anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas had a considerable impact on the New Left of the 1960s. His enduring concern with personal growth and human well-being, reflected, in part, in his interest in Gestalt therapy, led him to support a communitarian brand of anarchism, progressive education, pacifism, an ethic of sexual liberation, and the reconstruction of communities to facilitate local autonomy and face-to-face interaction. Goodman's major works include *Growing Up Absurd* (1960) and *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals* (1962).

See also Peter Kropotkin (p. 24)

the idea of at least a radically improved society to draw attention to the deficiencies of existing society and to map out possibilities for personal, social and political development. There is no agreement, however, about what utopia will look like. Each model of the perfect society reflects the values and assumptions of a particular thinker and a particular political tradition. Nevertheless, as all utopias are supposedly perfect, certain common themes tend to recur in utopian thought.

For political and social arrangements to be perfect, what features have to be in place? In the first place, want must be banished. It would be difficult to regard a society as perfect if significant levels of poverty exist. Most utopias are therefore characterized by material abundance and the abolition of poverty. For example, Karl Marx's conception of communism was based on the assumption that, no longer fettered by the class system, technology would develop to a point that material need would be eradicated. Communism is, then, a post-scarcity society.

However, this does not necessarily mean that all utopias must be materially prosperous. Want may be abolished as easily by banishing materialism and greed as by ensuring material abundance, a stance that has allowed many green utopias to be constructed on the basis of 'simple living'.

Second, utopian societies are usually characterized by social harmony and the absence of conflict. Conflict between individuals and groups, and, for that matter, conflict *within* the individual between competing values and impulses, is difficult to reconcile with perfection, because it will result in winners and losers. A society characterized by competing interests is doomed to imperfection both because it is unstable and because not all interests can be fully satisfied. In order to sustain the idea of conflict-free social harmony, utopian thinkers have usually had to make highly optimistic assumptions about human nature, or highly optimistic assumptions about particular social institutions.

Third, utopian societies offer the prospect of full emancipation and unbounded personal freedom. Repression and all forms of unfreedom are, by definition, social imperfections, in that citizens are unable to act as they would choose to act. The only exception to this would be in the case of restrictions on freedom that supposedly serve the long-term interests of individuals, as in Rousseau's belief that people can be 'forced to be free'. Most utopian theories therefore envisage only a limited role for government and perhaps no government at all.

A variety of political traditions have exhibited such utopian features. Feminism, for instance, stresses the possibility of constructing a post-patriarchal society, green politics (see p. 218) emphasizes harmony between humankind and nature, and cosmopolitanism (see p. 105) looks to the creation of 'one world' based on global consciousness, or 'globality' (see p. 373). However, most utopian thinking has been linked to either socialism or liberalism, the two political traditions that most clearly embody the optimism of the Enlightenment. The utopian impulse is particularly strong in the case of socialism. Socialism is based on the belief that human beings are essentially sociable, cooperative and gregarious creatures. Greed, competition and anti-social behaviour therefore exist only because humans have been corrupted by society, and in particular by capitalism and its associated evils – poverty and social inequality. For many socialists, indeed, socialism has, in effect, served as a model of a realistic utopia. So-called utopian socialists, such as Charles Fourier (1772–1837) and Robert Owen, carried out practical experiments in socialist utopianism by setting up small-scale communities, organized on the basis of love, cooperation and collective ownership. The Marxist tradition gave this utopianism a supposedly scientific basis, in explaining how and why classless and stateless communism would ensure full and free social development. Although the dominant trend within socialism during much of the twentieth century and beyond has been to abandon utopianism, as social democrats have sought to accommodate their

principles with the (enduring) realities of capitalism, the rise of the New Left in the 1960s marked a re-engagement with youthful idealism and radical critique. This was evident in, for example, the explicitly utopian ideas of neo-Marxist thinkers such as Ernst Bloch ([1959] 1986) and Herbert Marcuse (1964, 1969), which did much to influence the counter-cultural radicalism of the period.

The relationship between liberalism and utopianism is more ambiguous. The stress within liberal theory on egoism and self-interest has usually kept the utopian impulse at bay. Indeed, the social-contract theories that underlie much of liberal thinking about the state and government are based precisely on the need for a compromise between pursuit of freedom and the maintenance of order. However, the liberal belief in reason, and the associated faith in education, create a potential for utopianism, based on the possibility of human self-development and social betterment. A social-contract theorist such as John Locke (see p. 255) could therefore express a near-utopian idealism when discussing the issue of education. The link between rationalism and utopianism was developed very clearly in the work of the individualist anarchist William Godwin (see p. 313), who argued that education and enlightened judgement would allow people in a stateless society to live in accordance with truth and universal moral laws. In other circumstances, liberal utopianism has drawn on the idea of a self-regulating market, taking Adam Smith's (see p. 313) idea of the 'invisible hand' of capitalism to its logical conclusion. Thus, although human beings are essentially self-seeking creatures whose economic interests conflict, the market works in such a way as to ensure equilibrium and general prosperity, because people can only satisfy their interests by, unwittingly, satisfying the interests of others. In the writings of thinkers such as Murray Rothbard (see p. 313), this has led to the construction of anarcho-capitalist utopias in which unrestricted market competition reconciles economic dynamism with social justice and political freedom.

End of utopia?

Enthusiasm for utopian thinking has peaked during very particular periods: the late eighteenth century, particularly in the years following the 1789 French Revolution; the 1830s and 1840s, a period of early industrialization and rapid social change; and the 1960s, coinciding with an upsurge in student radicalism and the emergence of new social movements. However, utopianism has always been a minority political concern, and it has attracted, at times, fierce criticism. Most political doctrines are non-utopian and some are explicitly anti-utopian. Anti-utopianism in fact grew steadily during the twentieth century, fuelled in particular by disillusionment with 'actually existing' socialist utopianism in the form of orthodox communism, what began to be portrayed as 'the god that failed'. Some commentators, indeed, traced the seeds of totalitarianism back to

 THINKING GLOBALLY ...

GLOBALITY

While the processes involved in globalization have long historical roots, going back to the Age of Discovery in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and European colonialism in the late nineteenth century, the contemporary phase of globalization may be marked by the emergence of a new phenomenon, in the form of 'globality'. Globality refers to the 'consciousness of the (problem of) the world as a single place' (Robertson, 1992). While globalization is a *process* or set of processes (highlighting the dynamics of transformation or change), globality is a *condition* (indicating a set of circumstances that globalization has brought about). Globality, or global consciousness, can therefore be seen as the end-state of globalization.

Globality has a variety of manifestations, however. One of these is the growing tendency to think of ourselves collectively, as 'humanity' rather than in terms of ethnic, national, religious or other identities. This has given rise to a form of moral globality that has clearly utopian characteristics, in that it is grounded in cosmopolitanism (see p. 105) and based on the assumption that the world's population as a whole constitutes a single moral community. Evidence of this can be found in the growing appeal of the doctrine of human rights. Second, globality is evident in cultural trends that have led to a wider acceptance of cultural diversity, while also strengthening the belief that the emergence of a set of shared norms and values is desirable. Robertson (1992) highlighted such trends in the processes of 'relativization', through which local cultures and global pressures mix, and 'glocalization', through which global pressures are forced to conform to local conditions. Third, globality has been advanced by, and is evident in, the growth of social reflexivity. This reflects a widening of the range of choice and opportunity that confronts the individual in conditions of increasing interdependence, and has had a major impact on, for example, the nature of family life, intimate relations and sexuality.

Reservations have nevertheless been expressed about the concept of globality. It is clearly a mistake, for instance, to suggest that global consciousness is a mass phenomenon. Indeed, globality is a quality that is largely confined to richer, 'core' countries and areas rather than the poorer 'periphery'. Even within the core, it is far more prevalent amongst the cosmopolitan elite and, to a lesser extent, the cosmopolitan middle classes than it is amongst the working classes. Others have cast globality in a darker light, associating it not with toleration, choice and opportunity, but with increased risk and uncertainty (Beck, 1992). From the perspective of chaos theory, the expansion of connectedness across the global creates the prospect of a 'world beyond controllability', a development illustrated in particular by the inherent instability of global financial markets.

the structure of utopian thought. Moreover, since the late twentieth century, it has become increasingly fashionable to see the future less in terms of hope and expectation, and more in terms of impending crisis, even doom. Has utopia been finally removed from the map of possible human futures?

Critics of utopianism have attacked it in various ways. For example, although Marxism has clearly utopian features, Marx and Engels dismissed anarchism and the ideas of ethical socialists such as Owen and Fourier as examples of 'utopian socialism' rather than 'scientific socialism'. According to Marx, the former amounted to mere wishful thinking, the construction of morally attractive visions of socialism without consideration being given to how capitalism was to be overthrown and how socialism was to be constructed. By contrast, 'scientific socialism', or Marxism, was based on a theory of history that supposedly demonstrated not only that socialism is *desirable* but also that it is *inevitable*. The danger of utopianism, from this perspective, is that it channels the political energies of the proletariat away from the only strategies which can, in the long run, bring about social emancipation. In this light, Marx's clearly utopian early writings, such as the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* ([1844] 1968), which stress the moral benefits of communism, can be distinguished from his mature 'scientific' work, which is grounded in historical materialism.

A more thoroughgoing critique of utopianism, however, has been advanced by conservative thinkers. Conservatives oppose utopianism on two grounds. In the first place, they view human nature as imperfect and unperfectable, rejecting one of the foundation stones of utopian theory. People are innately selfish and greedy, driven by non-rational impulses and desires, and no project of social engineering is going to alter these stubborn realities and establish universal 'goodness'. All human societies are therefore characterized by imperfections such as conflict and strife, delinquency and crime. Second, utopian projects invariably suffer from the arrogance of rationalism: they claim to understand what is, frankly, incomprehensible. As all models of the desired future are doomed to be defective, political projects that aim to establish a perfect society are destined to produce outcomes quite different from the ideals that inspired them. This can, for example, be seen in the mismatch between Marx's model of communism and the realities of twentieth-century communism.

The most damning criticisms of utopianism have been produced by liberal thinkers such as Karl Popper (1963) and Isaiah Berlin (see p. 244), both of whom were influenced by the experience of twentieth-century totalitarianism. For Popper, utopianism was dangerous and pernicious because it is self-defeating and leads to violence. He defined the utopian method as a way of reasoning in which, rationally, means are selected in the light of an ultimate political end. Rational political action must therefore be based on a blueprint of an ideal state and of a particular historical path. This form of reasoning is self-defeating because it is impossible to determine ends scientifically: whereas means may be

rational or irrational, ends are not susceptible to rational analysis. Moreover, this style of reasoning will result in violence because, lacking a scientific or rational basis for defending ends, people with conflicting ends will not be able to resolve their differences through debate and discussion alone. Political projects that are linked to ultimate ends are thus destined to clash with other such political projects.

Berlin's critique of utopianism associated it with monistic tendencies he believed were embodied in the Enlightenment tradition. The Enlightenment belief in universal reason resulted in the search for fundamental values that would be applicable to all societies and all historical periods. Rationalistic doctrines therefore tend to advance a single true path to perfection, thereby denying legitimacy to alternative paths and rival theories. In practice, this leads to intolerance and political repression. Berlin asserted that conflicts of values are intrinsic to human life; not only will people always disagree about the ultimate ends of life, but each human being struggles to find a balance between incommensurable values. Such a view demonstrates that utopia is, in principle, impossible. From this perspective, the purpose of politics is not to uncover a single path to perfection but, rather, to create conditions in which people with different moral and material priorities can live together in conditions of reasonable peace.

Quite apart from attacks on utopianism, there has been an unmistakable turning away from utopianism since the 1960s and early 1970s. The decline in such thinking, however, has been associated with a general process of de-radicalization which has had a particular impact on socialism. It is notable that modern protest movements, such as the anti-globalization or anti-corporate movement, devote most of their energies to highlighting the failings of existing society, but give far less attention to analyzing the nature of the desired future society. Growing dystopian pessimism about the future has been shaped by a variety of factors. One of these has undoubtedly been the collapse of communism and the decline of the idea that there is a viable alternative to capitalism and the market, narrowing economic options to, at best, a choice between alternative forms of capitalism. This has had profound implications for utopianism because it implies that socialist collectivism, traditionally the most fertile ground for utopian thinking, is no longer practicable.

An additional source of pessimism about humankind's prospects stems from a sense of impending ecological disaster. This has been particularly evident in relation to the issue of climate change, which has thrown up 'doomsday scenarios' of various kinds and created the impression of a world out of control. Much dystopian gloom in the twenty-first century has focused on the impact of science on humankind and society. Once one of the foundation stones of utopianism, science has come to be seen by many as a growing threat. Francis Fukuyama (2002) expressed such concerns about the consequences of the biotechnological revolution. In particular, he warned that the ability to manipulate the DNA of

one's descendants would have profound implications for what it means to be human and will, potentially, have terrible consequences for the political order. John Gray (2002) used these and other developments to argue that humans should be viewed in the same way as any other animal. Free will is thus an illusion and, as with animals, the destiny of humans is determined by factors quite beyond their control. From this perspective, not only all utopian projects, but also any thought of progress, should be set to one side.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How long does a belief, practice or institution have to have existed in order to be regarded as a 'tradition'?
- On what grounds has continuity with the past been upheld?
- Is reaction always based on a misrepresentation of the past?
- Is 'conservative reform' a contradiction in terms?
- Is human history actually marked by progress, and if so, why?
- What, supposedly, are the advantages of reform as a means of bringing about change?
- Is there a single theory of revolution, or are all revolutions essentially different?
- Why has revolution sometimes been preferred to reform?
- To what extent do political utopias exhibit similar features?
- On what grounds has utopian thinking been defended?
- Why has utopianism been linked to the prospect of repression and tyranny?
- Does all utopian thought amount to simple wishful thinking?

FURTHER READING

Calvert, P. *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (1990). A sustained examination of the place of revolution in modern social theory, which acknowledges that, by its nature, revolution must be disputed.

Levitas, R. *The Concept of Utopia* (2011). An accessible and insightful introduction to the concept of utopia and to the work of theorists who have been associated with utopianism, by a leading figure in the field of utopia studies.

Nisbet, R. *History and the Idea of Progress* (2008). A book that traces the idea of progress from its origins in Greek, Roman and medieval civilization to modern times, and critically evaluates the ingredients of the modern idea of progress.

Oakeshott, M. *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (1991). A classic and elegantly written conservative critique of all rationally based projects of political change which emphasizes the wisdom implicit in history and tradition.

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