Edward McLaren 30/08/2021

Conservatism Notes

1 What is Conservatism?

1.1 Word Etymology

OED

conservatism, *n.*

Origin: Formed within English, by derivation. **Etymons:** conservative *adj.*, -ism *suffix*.

Etymology: < *conservat-* (in conservative *adj.*) + -ism *suffix*. Compare slightly
earlier conservatist *n.* and slightly later conservatist *adj.* Compare also slightly later conservativism *n.*

 1.

 a. The holding of conservative principles; the tendency to resist great or sudden change, esp. in politics; adherence to traditional values and ideas. Sometimes opposed to liberalism *n.*

 b. *spec.* (frequently with capital initial). The doctrine or practice of the Conservative Party of Great Britain, or a similar party elsewhere; Toryism.

 2. *Biology.* The tendency to resist evolutionary change.

1.12 Left-Right Etymology

Nicolls p.252

> Second, the category 'Right' (along with 'Left') is no evidence of some ultimate coalescence, nor is it an eternal verity. It is both a historically quite recent term and a quite limited spatial metaphor, originating in an accident of architecture of the Revolutionary French National Assembly. It came into being to designate oppostion to the Revolution, extended to opposition to the Enlightenment, then extended to the opposition of capital to labour, and subsequently has been ever more ambiguously applied, to deal with all sorts of contingent events, with virtually no overall coherence.

 p.253 –general argument

"'Right' and 'conservatism' in America are centres of confusion rather than of enlightenment: they probably are irredeemable. But such widely current, general political categories rarely die from intellectual critique. They rather pass away with the dissolution of the particular impulses to tie things together which gave rise to them, impulses with a particularly activistic point. And activists rarely abandon a general political category unless they gain an alternative. As in America, familiar ideological categories can endure indefinitely, despite their intellectual deficiencies."

•   Conservatism as a typically ideological thought-virus; it endures even when emptied of meaning.

•   The transition from the state of divided 'meaning' to untied 'non-meaning' is arguably best represented in the political accomplishments and positions of Buckley. (p.245): Indeed, his pronouncements were so rife with antitheses and antinomies that they are best shown in detail before being subjected to more explicit analysis.

1.2 Enduring Principles: Anti-Rationalism, Self-Consciousness and Nomos

Anti-Rationalism

Stanford: Oakeshott on Rationalism v Tradition

A plan to resist all planning may be better than its opposite, but it belongs to the same style of politics. And only in a society already deeply infected with Rationalism will the conversion of the traditional resources of resistance to the tyranny of Rationalism into a self-conscious ideology be considered a strengthening of those resources. It seems that now, in order to participate in politics [one must have] a doctrine…. (Oakeshott 1991 [1962]: 212)

Anti-Utopianism

According to critics of utopianism such as Schiller, indeed, one should not even sacrifice oneself for a utopian vision, as do members of revolutionary organisations, such as Nelson Mandela and Joe Slovo of the ANC. Schiller, and Goethe, also provided conservative critiques of French Revolutionary ideals and practices.

Conservatives reject revolutionary Jacobinism's espousal of political rationalism, which attempts to reconstruct society from abstract principles or general blueprint, without reference to tradition. Conservatives view society not as a machine but as a highly complex organism, and hold therefore that "without the aid of experience, reason cannot prescribe political ideals that can be realised in practice" (Beiser 1992: 283). Present generations possess duties and responsibilities whose original reasons, if they were ever apparent, are now lost. Tradition represents for conservatives a continuum enmeshing the individual and social, and is immune to reasoned critique

The Difference between Conservative Non-Rationalism and Nietzschean/Freudian Irrationalism

This is not the irrationalism of Nietzsche or Freud, for whom much of human behaviour is irrationally driven, but rather, a non-rationalist standpoint. It is sceptical about proposals of reform based on a priori commitment to a value such as freedom or equality. (See 2.3 on Burke below) In elucidating conservatism, one should distinguish between the metaethical claim that abstract values do not exist or are not worth pursuing, and the epistemic challenge "how are these values be accessed in practice?" Conservatism is primarily an epistemic standpoint. Conservatives believe that values of justice, freedom, and truth are important and should be pursued by the state, but they interpret those values in a concrete fashion.

From Stanford Dictionary, again:

Anti-consequentialism: Means-end thinking concerning the state is particularly inappropriate, as we have no choice but to belong to it, Oakeshott maintains. In an important statement, Oakeshott regards politics as an "art" not a "science".

Nomos

Carl Schmitt

Tradition in politics as representing the authority transferred from former theological structures-Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development - in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent god became the omnipotent lawgiver - but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts. The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries.

Schmitt Nomos -analysis article: http://www.telospress.com/carl-schmitt-the-fundamental-meanings-of-nomos/

The three basic meanings of nomos are appropriation, distribution, and production (54–55). The broad scope of these meanings can be indicated by the fact that in German, as in Russian, the root relating to appropriation is involved in words meaning to understand, though the translator of Schmitt's piece reminds us that its derivatives in English include also "economy, antinomy, nomology, nomothetic," and even "nomad" (54, note 4). For Schmitt, distribution means, abstractly, "law and property, i.e., the part or share of goods." Concretely, it means "for example, the chicken every peasant living under a good king has in his pot every Sunday; the piece of land he cultivates as his property; the car every worker in the US has parked in front of his house" (55). Production, for its part, means "to pasture, to run a household, to use, to produce" (ibid.). "To use" is perhaps the most accurate sense, since, for Schmitt, use includes, as does this meaning of nomos, both production and consumption (ibid.).

These categories are basic and comprehensive for the following reason: "Prior to every legal, economic, and social order, prior to every legal, economic, or social theory, there is this simple question: Where and how was it appropriated? Where and how was it divided? Where and how was it produced?" (56, italics in original). Schmitt presents and discusses numerous permutations of the order of these three categories. Different emphases and evaluations "both practically and morally in human consciousness" of these aspects of nomos follow both real historical changes and "even the image human beings have of themselves, of their world and of their historical situation" (ibid.).

In one case, land appropriation is the basis of the social order. "All known and famous appropriations in history, all great conquests—wars and occupations, colonizations, migrations and discoveries—indicate the fundamental precedence of appropriation over distribution and production" (56–57).

Also Schmitt… Tradition in politics as representing the authority transferred from former theological structures- Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty

Self-Consciousness

Stanford: Broad sense Conservatism

Conservatism in a broad sense, as a social attitude, has always existed. It expresses the instinctive human fear of sudden change, and tendency to habitual action. Cecil, for instance, contrasts "modern Conservatism" with the "natural conservatism" from which it arises and depends on, found "in almost every human mind" (Cecil, 1912: 8). The arch-royalist and anti-populist Earl of Clarendon, writing the history of the 17th century English Civil War soon after it happened, was instinctively conservative in this broader, un-self-conscious sense. Thus Beiser contrasts the "conservatism [that] had always existed in Germany as a social attitude", with a self-conscious conservatism that developed as a social force in the 1790s, opposed to the Aufklärung or Enlightenment, and in reaction to the French Revolution (Beiser 1992: 281). "Self-conscious" here means not merely implicit in behaviour, but consciously avowed, and ascribed to others. The most distinctive and historically important version of this narrower, self-conscious conservatism rests on scepticism concerning reason in politics.

Confucius and Aristotle as precursors to 'self-conscious Conservatism' –human experience over generations as the main source of knowledge

Proto-Conservative Judge Edward Coke (1552-1634) believed in the English common law notion of precedent. Hoppit says:

Tory, or what would now be called 'conservative', political thought remained alive and well [in England] in the 1690s and 1700s….Thomas Sherlock [wrote] in 1704, 'To maintain the Establish'd Form of Government, is the First and Highest Duty of Men Acting in Society'. (Hoppit 2000: 196)

…

1.3 Academic Summaries of Conservatism

Gray's Summary of Conservatism

circumstances give every political principle its colour. (Cobban 1960: 75)

Conservatives tend to reject the Enlightenment-modernist requirement that practical rationality is liberated from all particularism (Beveridge and Turnbull 1997).

Gray's Platonic(?) summary

According to Gray, conservatism's fundamental insight is that

persons' identities cannot be matters of choice, but are conferred on them by their unchosen histories, so that what is most essential about them is…what is most accidental. The conservative vision is that people will come to value the privileges of choice…when they see how much in their lives must always remain unchosen. (2010: 159)

…

Stanford Dictionary of Philosophical Terms Summary

Stanford –Dictionary of Philosophical Terms (2019)

It is contested both what conservatism is, and what it could or ought to be—both among the public and politicians, and among the philosophers and political theorists that this article focuses on. Popularly, "conservative" is a generic term for "right-wing viewpoint occupying the political

spectrum between liberalism and fascism". Philosophical commentators offer a more distinctive characterisation. Many treat it as a standpoint that is sceptical of abstract reasoning in politics, and that appeals instead to living tradition, allowing for the possibility of limited political reform. On this view, conservatism is neither dogmatic reaction, nor the right-wing radicalism of Margaret Thatcher or contemporary American "neo-conservatives". Other commentators, however, contrast this "pragmatic conservatism" with a universalist "rational conservatism" that is not sceptical of reason, and that regards a community with a hierarchy of authority as most conducive to human well-being (Skorupski 2015).

Compared to liberalism and socialism, conservatism has suffered philosophical neglect (Broad 1913: 396–7). Many deny that it is an ideology, or even a political philosophy, regarding it instead as a disposition that resists theoretical expression—a "non-ideology" that attempts to avoid the errors of ideologies (Graham 1986: 172; in contrast, Nisbet 1986). Is it an ancient attitude, or one that developed only in response to Enlightenment rationality and its political products, liberalism and socialism? How is it related to contemporary "neo-conservatism"? Is it a coherent position, or does it, as many have argued, fail to distinguish what is worth conserving from what is not? These are some of the questions commonly raised about conservatism, and explored here.

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Summary from The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought

p.151- Noel O'Sullivan: 'Conservatism' –Summary of Enduring Principles

Although conservatism in the twentieth century has yielded a diverse body of literature, it is unified by a common object of hostility: namely, the progressive view of humankind and society. The main conservative objection to this view is that it vastly exaggerates the directive power of human reason, on the one hand, and the creative power of human will, on the other. Reason, as the British conservative Michael Oakeshott maintained, is always parasitic on tradition, which it can only ever 'abridge' (Oakeshott 1991 [1962]). So far as the relative impotence of human will is concerned, the American thinker John P. East strikes a characteristically conservative note when he writes (in the course of a sympathetic exposition of the thought of Leo Strauss) that: 'man is not the Creator, he is the creature; he is not the potter, he is the clay. It is then man who adapts to creation, not creation to man – to propose the latter is to propose perverting the natural order of things' (East 1988, p.265)

The critique of rationalism and voluntarism is supported by the conviction that twentieth-century politics is dominated by a conception of human nature which mistakenly implies that humans are malleable and perhaps perfectible creatures of infinite possibilities. Such a view permits any existing social order to be portrayed as a system of oppression, regardless of the fact that a majority of its members may support it.

If conservatives generally agree on what they reject, they are less untied on what they support. Traditionally, they have favoured an organic theory of society, in which individual reason and will do not construct but are produced by the social order. As soon as they develop the organic ideal in more detail, however, conflicting opinions emerge – to such an extent, as will become apparent, that in some forms of conservatism the organic ideal all but disappears. (i.e. relativistic v non-relativistic, free market capitalist v statist/planned economist)

Nicoll's Categories

Ray Nicholls - 'Conservatism' and 'the right' in America: Ideological conflict, categories and language, Journal of Political Ideologies, 2:3, 239-257, DOI: 10.1080/13569319708420762, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569319708420762

Great set of categories he proposes but practically never uses (p.240):

(1) *Traditionalist Conservatism*, seeing collective existence as a fragile web connecting generations, believing in the superiority of accumulated tradition over individual reason and innovation, supporting 'organic' change, continuity, and order (exemplified by Russell Kirk, Peter Viereck, George Will).

(2) *Moralist Libertarianism*, a derivation of classic liberalism, opposing state power, taking individual liberty as the ultimate end, the stuff of self-development and happiness (Ayn Rand, Murray Rothbard, Robert Nozick).

(3) *Instrumentalist Libertarianism*, an alternative anti-statist derivation, market oriented, taking individual liberty as the means to efficiency, productivity and plenty (Milton Friedman, F. A. von Hayek, James Buchanan).

(4) *Neoclassic Metaphysics*, particularly inspired by Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, subscribing to philosophical universalism, embodied in natural law and transcendental theology (Richard Weaver, Harry Jaffa, Allan Bloom).

(5) *Radical Rightism*, conspiratorial, authoritarian and xenophobic, violent in rhetoric and sometimes in action (the Ku Klux Klan, John Birch Society, Aryan Nations).

*category of Transhumanist Right (Nick Land , Dugin and Yuk Hu) is missing. Distinguished as a kind of post-Marxism so deterritorialized from the left it arrived on the opposite end of the political spectrum i.e. not just Neoclassic or Platonist: important to consider.

2 Historical Development

2.11 Proto-Conservatives: Greece (Aristotle)

Aristotle's Politics

> Vv- Why Democracies are Overthrown

In democracies the most potent cause of revolution is the unprincipled character of popular leaders. Sometimes they bring malicious prosecutions against the owners of possessions one by one, and so cause them to join forces; for common fear makes the bitterest of foes cooperate. At other times they openly egg on the multitude against them. There are many instances of the kind of thing I mean…in order to win the favour of the multitude they treat the notables unjustly and cause them to unite. Sometimes they make them split up their possessions of income in order to finance their public duties; sometimes they bring slanderous accusations against the rich with a view to confiscating their money.

> VI iv

The Best Democracy

This is the earliest version of the idealistic traditionalist view of an agrarian democratic pastoral, the kind which seems implicit in most secular, non-monarchist conservative arguments as an idyll that cannot be returned back to/ is perfect for keeping the mass under control in. -EM

Of the four democracies the best is that which is first in order…An agrarian people is the best; so that it is possible to construct a democracy, too, anywhere where the population subsists on agriculture or pasturing stock. For having no great abundance of possessions, they are kept busy and rarely attend the assembly; and since they lack the necessities of life they are constantly at work in the fields, and do not covet the possessions of others. They find more satisfaction in working on the land than in ruling and in engaging in public affairs, so long as there are no great gains to be made out of holding office; for the many are more interested in making a profit than in winning honour.

VI v

How Democracies May Be Preserved

The task confronting the lawgiver, and all who seek to set up a constitution of such a kind, is not only, or even mainly, to establish it, but rather to ensure that it is preserved intact.

Proto-conservatism Aristotle's Politics –Book One Part 1

Every state is a communi9ty of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.

Some people think that the qualifications of a statesman, king, house-holder, and master are the same, and that they differ, not in kind, but only in the number of their subjects. For example, the ruler over a few is called a master; over more, the manager of a household; over a still a still larger number, a statesman or king, as if there were no difference between a great household and small state. The distinction which is made between the king and the statesman is as follows: When the government is personal, the ruler is a king; when, according to the rules of the political science, the citizens rule and are ruled in turn, then he is called a statesman.

State as natural and inherent –from Part 2

Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that…The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors*.

…But justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.

From part 3:

Seeing that the state is made up of households, before speaking of the state we msut speak of the management of the household.

*no wonder Aquinas used Aristotle to justify Catholic worship of God.

2.12 Proto-Conservatives: England

Scruton on the word 'Tory' –p.20 of 'Conservatism'

Hobbes and Harrington wrote during a century of civil conflict, in which opinion was radically divided between the Parliamentary and Royalist factions. It was during the course of this conflict that the term 'Tory' was invented, to denote the traditionalist and loyalist sentiments that animated the Royalist factions in government. (The term comes from Irish toraighe, a pursuer, used at the time to denote the dispossessed Irish who were attacking and molesting the English settlers.) Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 the term entered general use to denote politicians and thinkers who were attached to the established customs and institutions of England – the monarchy and the Anglican Church especially- and who saw legitimacy as given by inheritance rather than created by choice.

On Toryism

Toryism was not so much a philosophy as a political practice, which pited tradition and loyalty to the crown against the advocacy of liberal reforms. These reforms were calculated to capture power from the monarchy and distribute it to the modernising aristocracy – the 'Whig' faction in Parliament. (The term comes from Scots 'whiggamor' meaning a cattle driver, and used derisively by the Whigs' opponents, as the term 'Tory' has been used derisively by the Whigs.) The Glorious Revolution led to a century-long Whig ascendancy, though ti was only with the formation of political parties In the nineteenth century – with the Tories becoming the Conservative Party and the Whigs the Liberals – that there was a hard and fast ideological division between the Parliamentary factions. (Thus the greatest of British conservative thinkers, Edmund Burke, was a Parliamentary Whig.)

Hume the Pessimist Tory p.21: Scruton

Hume described himself as a Tory, not meaning to imply, however, that he subscribed either to the doctrine of the Anglican Church or to the divine right of the English kings, who by then were not English at all. He was almost certainly an atheist and believed in the established church and the established monarchy precisely because they were established, embodying in their structure and history the solutions to social conflicts and the tacit instructions for carrying on.

Hume's political philosophy is contained in his posthumously collected essays and in his six-volume History of England (1744) and is more fragmentary than the empiricist theory of knowledge for which he is nowadays more famous.

Scruton's big idea –an aesthetic-political interpretation of Adam Smith's invisible hand p.34/35

The argument tells us that, in conditions of normal social interaction, self-interested individuals, acting freely, will promote outcomes that benefit them all. They do not intend these outcomes, still less do they plan them. The outcomes are the unintended by-product of decisions that make no reference to them. Invisible-hand effects are not observed only in the economic sphere. The beauty of traditional villages built with local materials is the unintended by-product of the desire for durable shelter at the lowest cost. Peace between nations is the unintended by-product of trade between their citizens. And so on, for other unintended but repeatable consequences, both good and bad. But the point of Smith's argument is deeper than that suggests. For him the invisible-hand mechanism is not just an explanation of the market: it is a justification too. It is precisely because the price (or 'exchange value') of goods in a market issues from the free transactions of individuals that it is a sure guide to trade. It is a distillation of social knowledge, which enables each participant in the market to respond to the desires and needs of every other.

2.2 The Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution

The French Revolution

As far as the evolution of conservatism is concerned, the French Revolution was key. For many contemporary writers, that Revolution was a liberation of the human spirit, an assertion of reason against irrational feudal authority. The Revolution reflected an Enlightenment attitude towards history, which it regarded not as the inevitable realisation of a divine plan, but as open to direction by enlightened reason, expressed in social and educational reform. Although conservative thinkers opposed the French Revolution, their attitude towards the Enlightenment is debated. Burke, as we will see the leading conservative thinker, is often associated with what Isaiah Berlin called the "Counter-Enlightenment", but he has also been seen as "an Enlightened figure, who saw himself defending Enlightened Europe against the gens de lettres and their revolutionary successors"—it was "one Enlightenment in conflict with another" (Pocock 1999: 7); "Burke was a lifelong student of the Enlightenment who saw in the French Revolution the ultimate threat to…modern, rational, libertarian, enlightened Whig values" (Clark 2001: 108). Bourke comments that historians have

mistaken Burke's enlightened opposition to doctrinaire attacks on organised religion for a…counter-enlightenment crusade… encouraged by a secular teleology [that reduces] enlightenment to the criticism of religion…Burke's espousal of sceptical Whiggism and Protestant toleration is curiously reinterpreted as hostile to the very principles of enlightenment he was in fact defending. (Bourke 2014: 28)

The Glorious Revolution

Stanford:

Revolutionary Jacobinism is conservatism's polar opposite and historic contender. The name comes from the Jacobin Club whose central figure, Robespierre, launched the French Revolutionary Terror. (On revolution and Jacobinism, see Graham 1986: 178–81.) Conservatives such as Burke contrast the French Revolution with England's more peaceful Glorious Revolution of 1688, which for them was a revolution in the original sense—a return to an alleged status quo prior to monarchical absolutism, as opposed to an overturning of traditional institutions in accord with a rational plan.

2.21 Burke: Relativistic and Non-relativistic Conservatism

Scruton p. 41 –Burke's 'little platoons'

'Little platoons' are the places where traditions form. Social traditions, Burke pointed out, are forms of knowledge. They contain the residues of many trials and errors, and the inherited solutions to problems that we all encounter. Like those cognitive abilities that pre-date civilisation they adaptations, but adaptations of the community rather than of the individual organism. Social traditions exist because they enable a society to reproduce itself. Destroy them heedlessly and you remove the guarantee offered by one generation to the next.

 p.39/40 –Burke's key objection to the French Revolutionaries

Burke's complaint against the revolutionaries was that they assumed the right to spend all trusts and endowments on their own self-made emergency. Schools, church foundations, hospitals – all institutions that had been founded by people, now dead, for the benefit of their successors – were expropriated or destroyed, the result being the total waste of accumulated savings, leading to massive

inflation, the collapse of education and the loss of the traditional forms of social and medical relief. In this way contempt for the dead leads to the disenfranchisement of the unborn, and although that result is not, perhaps, inevitable, it has been repeated by all subsequent revolutions.

Stanford Article -Burke and Prejudice

Rejecting the dominant individualist cognitive tradition in Western epistemology, Burke regards political reason as historically accumulated in developed social institutions—including an unwritten constitution, practices of representation, and dispositions notably of compromise. According to Himmelfarb, there is for Burke good reason—reason itself—to praise prejudice, which exists on a continuum with theoretical reason (Himmelfarb 2008b).

-Influence of Burke in Germany, although constitutionalism became a Liberal ideology over there.

In Germany, Burke's Reflections were translated three times before 1793, implying an influence on such conservatives as Gentz, Rehberg and Brandes. (Though Beiser (1992) argues that they arrived at their position independently.) August Wilhelm Rehberg (1757–1836) was a founder of German reformist conservatism, whose penetrating critique of the French Revolution bears striking similarities to Burke's (see the entry on August Rehberg, sections 3 and 4). The historians von Savigny (1779–1861) and von Ranke (1795–1886) assumed a Burkean organic development of societies. German conservatives adopted positions from reformism to reaction, aiming to contain democratic forces—though not all of them were opposed to the Aufklärung or Enlightenment. To reiterate, reaction is not Burkean conservatism, however. De Maistre (1753–1821) was a reactionary critic of reason, intellectuals and universal rights. Burke attacked the revolutionaries of 1789 "for the sake of traditional liberties, [Maistre] for the sake of traditional authority" (Viereck 2009: 191). De Maistre praised Russian political culture as a spontaneous growth; in contrast, that of Western Europe had been "scribbled over" by Enlightenment philosophers (see Gray 1998: 122).

Stanford:

Burke as the key

The common assumption that conservatism rejects modernity is questioned by Scruton, for whom it "is itself a modernism… [that desires] to live fully in the present, to understand it in all its imperfections" (2007: 194). John Gray comments that Oakeshott's conservative thought is paradoxical in that he "is in no sense an anti-modernist: If anything, he is an uncompromising modernist, perhaps even a postmodernist" (Gray 2007, Other Internet Resources).

It is important to recognise that the precise appearance of conservatism after 1789 is disputed. For some writers argue, the ideology of conservatism was not articulated until the 1880s and 90s; only then was Burke established as conservatism's 'master intellectual' (Jones 2017). Jones cites MacCunn's The Political Philosophy of Burke (1913), which converted the Whig statesman into the originator of a political philosophy of conservatism. Cecil's Conservatism (1912) firmly established the connection, devoting a chapter to Burke as the founder of conservatism. In contrast, Clark places the appropriation earlier, arguing that "That new creation of the 1830s, 'conservatism', adopted Burke as its patron saint…If it was difficult after 1832 to build any systematic political theory around the historical Burke's principles, the social and political order having changed out of recognition, a Burkean style nevertheless passed into English discourse" (Clark, 2001: 109-10).

Burke's anti-rationalism

Kekes argues similarly that conservatism, with its defining scepticism and opposition to "rationalism" in politics, contrasts with liberalism and socialism in rejecting a priori value-commitments (Kekes 1997: 368). This position was enunciated most trenchantly by Burke, conservatism's "master intellectual", acknowledged by almost all subsequent conservatives. He rejected a priori reasoning in politics, notably claims to abstract natural rights, manifested most dramatically in the French Jacobin dream of destroying and rebuilding society. Burke holds that there is a practical wisdom in institutions that is mostly not articulable theoretically, certainly not in advance, but is passed down in culture and tradition.

Stanford: Burke on Precedent

I cannot [praise or blame] human actions…on a simple view of the object, as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction; (Burke, WS III: 58)

2.3 Hegel

Stanford:

Hegel

Hegel (1770–1831) is a key figure in the understanding of rational conservatism. Surprisingly for a standpoint that stresses the value of experience, conservatism—Hume excepted—has been associated more with Idealism than with empiricism; philosophical empiricists have commonly been radicals. Hegel has been claimed by conservatives, but his political affiliation has been disputed since his earliest disciples. For Left Hegelians including Marx, Hegel's concept of free thought was a defence of Enlightenment rationality, and a critique of traditional political authority. For them, Geist did not invoke a transcendent power, as some Right Hegelians maintained, but was an anthropological and historical process of emancipation, propelled by contradiction and struggle. In the 20th century, Hegel was regarded alternatively as a proto-totalitarian reactionary, a conservative, or a liberal. But the "old orthodoxy" that he is a conservative or reactionary—in Anglophone philosophy largely derived from Popper—has disappeared, and he is often seen as synthesising conservatism and liberalism (Fine 2001: 5).

Hegel was ambivalent towards the French Revolution, the world-historical event against which his generation thought out their political philosophy and stance towards the Enlightenment (Taylor 1977: 403). The German Constitution was critical, lamenting with Burke the "blind clamour for freedom" and radical egalitarianism (Hegel PW: 93); the abstract, Rousseauean notion of freedom, attempting to construct society on the basis of "subjective reason", caused a "fury of destruction". The "Preface" of Elements of the Philosophy of Right (1821) is a Burkean attack on those who suppose

that no state or constitution had ever previously existed…that we had now…to start right from the beginning. (Hegel 1821: 12)

The Revolution

…afforded the tremendous spectacle, for the first time we know of in human history, of the overthrow of all existing…conditions within an actual major state and the revision of its constitution from first principles…[on] what was supposed to be a purely rational basis…the most terrible and drastic event (Hegel 1821: §258R)

2.4 The New Right

2.41 Leo Strauss

Strauss 'On Tyranny'

p.75 -Tradition as a necessary and collective bulwark against tyranny

Tyranny at its best is still rule without laws and, according to Socrates' definition, justice is identical with legality or obedience to laws.88 Thus tyranny in any form seems to be irreconcilable with the requirement of justice. On the other hand, tyranny would become morally possible if the identification of "just" and "legal" were not absolutely correct, or if "everything according to law were (only) somehow (1rw~) just."89 The laws which determine what is legal are the rules of conduct upon which the citizens have agreed. 40 "The citizens" may be "the multitude" or "the few"; "the few" may be the rich or the virtuous. That is to say, the laws, and hence what is legal, depend on the political order of the community for which they are given

2.42 William F. Buckley

Nicolls: p.246: This is William F. Buckley: Regressive/ Paralysed Conservatism.

Conservatism is the tacit acknowledgement that all that is finally important in human experience is behind us; that the crucial explorations have been undertaken, and that it is given to man to know what are the great truths that emerged from them. Whatever is to come cannot outweigh the importance to man of what has gone before. .. . Certain problems have been disposed of. Certain questions are closed.

p. 247

> Market judgement' was not 'moral judgement': 'the market does not... necessarily reward the best, the brightest, and the most benevolent.'

p.248

'I believe that the duel between Christianity and atheism is the most important in the world. I further believe that the struggle between individualism and collectivism is the same struggle reproduced on another level'

3 Emerging Movements

3.1 The Internet: The Alt-Right

Angela Nagle: 'Kill All Normies' p. 38: Gramsci and the Right

There were two major figures of the online culture wars Trumpian right who wrote glowingly about the hard core of the alt-right in a heavily quoted piece in Breitbart called 'An Establishment Conservative's Guide To The Alt-Right'. These were Milo Yiannopoulos and Allum Bokhari, who traced the intellectual roots of the amorphous alt-right back, in quite a flattering portrayal of the movement, to a number of key intellectuals and schools of thought. They singled out Oswald Spengler, the German philosopher who wrote The Decline of the West in 1918, who influenced the whole discourse civilizational decline and advocated a nationalist nonMarxist socialism and authoritarianism, H. L. Mencken, the deeply elitist but undeniably brilliant anti-New Deal US satirist

and cultural critic, who also made Nietzschean criticisms of religion and representative democracy, Julius Evola, the Italian philosopher loved by the Italian fascist movement, who advanced traditionalist and masculinist values and believed modern man lived in a Dark Age, Samuel Francis, the paleoconservative US columnist and critic of procapitalist neoconservatism and lastly, the French New Right, who importantly were sometimes called 'Gramscians of the right'. The French New Right or Nouvelle Droite adapted the theories of Antonio Gramsci that political change follows cultural and social change. Andrew Breitbart's phrase was that politics is always 'downstream from culture', and was often quoted by Milo. Belgian farright anti-immigration party Vlaams Blok leader Filip Dewinter put it like this: 'the ideological majority is more important than the parliamentary majority.' Prior to 1968, the right had taken the view that 'ordinary people' were still inherently conservative, which you can see echoed today in the 'silent majority' rhetoric of modern establishment conservatives. The French New Right's Gramscian aim, which the alt-right today also shares, was to break with the view that defeat of radical elites or vanguards would enable the restoration of a popular traditional order and instead took stock of how profoundly the 60s had changed the general population and become hegemonic.

3.2 Technology and the Transhuman Right

3.21 Technology (Heidegger)

Heidegger –The Question Concerning Technology

p.26

The destining of revealing is in itself not just any danger, but danger as such. Yet when destining reigns in the mode of Enframing, it is the supreme danger. This danger attests itself to us in two ways. As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as

p.27

object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of it precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve.

Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself. Heisenberg has with complete correctness pointed out that the real must present itself to contemporary man in this way. * In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence. Man stands so decisively in attendance on the challenging-forth of Enframing that he does not apprehend Enframing as a claim, that he fails to see himself as the one spoken to, and hence also fails in every way to hear in what respect he ek-sists, from out of his essence, in the realm of an exhortation or address, and thus can never encounter only himself.

Closing-off of alternate (democratic) futures:

But Enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering. Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. Above all, Enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of poiesis, lets what presences come forth into appearance.

p.28

Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding-sway of truth. The destinil1g that sends into ordering is consequently the extreme danger. What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry in technology, but rather there is the mystery of its essence.

…

The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence. The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. Thus, where Enframing reigns, there is danger in the highest sense.

(Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. (p.24))

p.32 –The enrichment of Enframing, and potentially general technological development: light

The granting that sends in one way or another into revealing is as such the saving power. For the saving power lets man see and enter into the highest dignity of his essence. This dignity lies in keeping watch over the unconcealment-and with it, from the first, the concealment-of all coming to presence on this earth. It is precisely in Enframing, which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the supposed single way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of the surrender of his free essence-it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the coming to presence of technology.

Thus the coming to presence of technology harbors in itself what we least suspect, the possible arising of the saving power.

p.34 Heidegger hilariously, but beautifully falls into mourning the loss of the old techne himself, while promising a route to the saving power.

There was a time when it was not technology alone that bore the name techne. Once that revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearing also was called techne. Once there was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called techne. And the poiesis of the fine arts also was called techne.

In Greece, at the outset of the destining of the West, the arts soared to the supreme height of the revealing granted them. They brought the presence [Gegenwart] of the gods, brought the dialogue of divine and human destinings, to radiance. And art was simply called techne. It was a single, manifold revealing. It was pious, promos, i.e., yielding to the holding-sway and the safekeeping of truth.

The arts were not derived from the artistic. Art works were not enjoyed aesthetically. Art was not a sector of cultural activity.

What, then, was art-perhaps only for that brief but magnificent time? Why did art bear the modest name techne? Because it was a revealing that brought forth and hither, and therefore belonged within poiesis. It was finally that revealing which holds complete sway in all the fine arts, in poetry, and in everything poetical that obtained poiesis as its proper name.

p.35 In a more serious way, it is art that saves technology from nihilism. (pro-AI integration?)

the frenziedness of technology may entrench itself everywhere to such an extent that someday, throughout everything technological, the essence of technology may come to presence in the coming-to-pass of truth.

…

Such a realm is art.

p. 35 –divine!

Yet the more questioningly we ponder the essence of technology, the more mysterious the essence of art becomes. The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought.

3.22 The Transhuman Right (Nick Land v Yuk Hui)

Why the Transhuman Right is Unique

I tend to think about left-right ideologies as magnetised by either the past or the future; the right is usually by the past.

Those that believe we have reached the endpoint of western development in technology for human use, following Spengler and Heidegger, and desire AI integration are magnetised by the future. Many of them are also strangely Conservative. They think of an AI God as worth sacrificing time, money, and pleasure for (in a sense attributing the ideological basis of Traditionalism to Futurism). Unless we count Fascism as an embodiment of similar semi-Nietzschean principles, meaning the particular reading of the overman as machinic, there is no ideological precedent for the Transhuman right. Consequently, it is vital that we talk about it in order to establish one or to clarify this particular strand as unique.

Nick Land -Meltdown

Philosophy has an affinity with despotism, due to its predilection for Platonic-fascist top-down solutions that always screw up viciously. Schizoanalysis works differently. It avoids Ideas, and sticks to diagrams: networking software for accessing bodies without organs. BWOs, machinic singularities, or tractor fields emerge through the combination of parts with (rather than into) their whole; arranging composite individuations in a virtual/ actual circuit. They are additive rather than substitutive, and immanent rather than transcendent: executed by functional complexes of currents, switches, and loops, caught in scaling reverberations, and fleeing through intercommunications, from the level of the integrated planetary system to that of atomic assemblages. Multiplicities captured by singularities interconnect as desiring-machines…Nothing human makes it out of the future.

        -Post-Marxist, Deleuzian argument for AI integration/human sacrifice to give birth to an AI capable of fulfilling 'Platonic-fascist top-down solutions'. Hyper-Libertarianism and systemic reduction of humankind in order to arrive at the 'ends' of Western culture. Naturally, this overlaps with Heidegger's argument about the 'Enframing' of technology permitting the foundation of an all-encompassing zone for artistic expression.

Naturally, the argument is racist because it relies on the conception of one singularity: a Western dasein that is natural and inevitable, rather than Dugin's multiple.

Now that Land has moved to China and believes in their form of State Capitalism/ Free-Market Marxism this indicated opinion of his may have changed.

Yuk Hui and Technology -Techno-diversity, a Conversation with Yuk Hui -LA Review of Books https://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article/on-technodiversity-a-conversation-with-yuk-hui/

Heidegger's Essay on Technology as the key to pro-tech conservatism

In Recursivity and Contingency, you speak about the need to "recosmicize the world." You borrow this term from Augustin Berque, who pointed out that the modern world no longer has a cosmos, understood as a moral and meaningful order, and that colonization by the West has robbed other cultures of their distinctive conceptions of the cosmos. He says that the universe, as it is described in science, has nothing to do with the classical cosmos, since scientific explanation has no moral significance whatsoever. Does this mean that we are faced with the task of recosmicizing not only our world, but the universe itself? Is the universe, discovered by astronomy, still waiting to be given a proper moral significance?

When we think of astrophysics, we see the universe as a thermodynamic system that inexorably moves toward destruction and heat-death, where stars are nothing but basic elements in nuclear reactions and where their twinkling has nothing to do with us. In this sense, it seems absurd to recosmicize the Earth and the universe; it can't lead to anything but superficial mysticism and naïveté. Astrophysics only informs us of certain facts about the universe. It has no ambitions of telling us how to live. What kind of life should we imagine in light of recent astrophysical discoveries? Physics has no ambition to answer these questions.

"Recosmicizing" doesn't mean giving some mystique back to the stars and cosmos, or giving technology a mystical meaning, but rather understanding that we must develop ways of life that solve the conflict between modern science and tradition, between technology and mysticism — whether we choose to talk about the Chinese Dao or Heidegger's Sein. We must give the non-rational a place in a culture that is otherwise rational — the way, for example, that poetry gives the unknown a place in communication through an unconventional and paradoxical use of language. Art and philosophy can't choose science as their point of departure. If they do, they become footnotes to positivism. They should not abandon science either, but rather tend to it and show the way to other modes of understanding the world. To paraphrase Georges Canguilhem, we must return technology to life.

Yuk argues for a Conservative, non-transhumanist attitude to space-travel/ life-prolongation tech

What about people who want to develop new technologies in order to establish a new life in outer space? Does this also represent a cosmotechnics? For instance, the rocket billionaires, Bezos and Musk, who dream of colonies in space and a colonization of Mars?

There is a great passage in Nietzsche's The Gay Science (1882), where he talks about "the horizon of the infinite." It describes the moderns who have abandoned land for the pursuit of the infinite, yet, when they are in the middle of the ocean, there is nothing more fearful than the infinite — there is no more home to return to. The desire of the moderns, described by Nietzsche, continues to produce an effect of disorientation, while the sentiment that there is no longer any home to return to provides a

huge market for psychotherapy and spiritual salvation. The longing for the infinite transports us toward the inhuman.

For Jean-François Lyotard, there are both positive and negative infinities, which are connected to different forms of rationality. Positive inhumanity captures us in rigid technological systems, like we see in China with the social credit system. The positive inhuman is one that is "more interior in myself than me" — for example, God for St. Augustine. We humans carry something inhuman in us, which is irreducible to the human and which maintains the highest intimacy with us. At the outset of his book L'Inhumain (1998), Lyotard asks if the ultimate goal for science is not that of preparing for the death of the sun, which, granted, lies unimaginably in the future, but which also entails the destruction of all living beings on Earth.

Rocket billionaires, who are all transhumanists, want to overcome finitude: the finitude of human life and of life as such. This longing for the infinite also implies no limit to capital accumulation. Overcoming human limitations — the search for eternal life — also implies an infinite market. In a way, the same happens in space exploration: investors want to profit from the Earth losing its meaning, as if leaving the planet were a matter of leaving one spaceship to enter another. I don't think it is wrong to explore, or to try to understand the universe, but the conquest we see today seems to me to be merely a preparation for tomorrow's consumerism. Transhumanists impose on us a false choice because they connect the question of the future of human existence with the question of immortality and describe Earth as a mere spacecraft.

Blatant Chinese Techno-Conservatism

The progressives choose science and the reactionaries choose tradition, but we can also choose to follow a third path — the way of thinking

…

In The Question Concerning Technology in China, I try to find out how we can deploy Chinese philosophy to enable ourselves to think differently about the contradiction between tradition and modern technology. I hope to derive a Chinese technological thought from an interpretation of Qi and Dao, which should not be understood as mystical concepts but rather as frameworks for thinking about our relationship to the nonhuman — to the 10,000 beings that Lao-Tse talks about — whereby the use of technology must follow Dao, as a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of life.

Oakeshott's Anti-Rationalism re-emerges here

reducing the world is losing the world. This is what Heidegger calls forgetfulness of Being. Forgetfulness is not something that happens because we overlook Being, or because we fail to give Being a place in our understanding of the world, but rather because we think that the whole world is transparent and penetrable to our understanding — we think that everything can be calculated. The first thing we need to do is to reconsider the distinction between what is calculable and what is incalculable. Then we must learn anew how to approach the world as the Unknown.

Anti-Transhumanist Right Conservatism

the ideology of Silicon Valley increasingly sees freedom and democracy as irreconcilable goals. This is the case, in particular, for the investor Peter Thiel: for him, there is no doubt that freedom first and foremost means economic freedom, freedom for multinational corporations. The enormous investments in biotech are a preparation for a time when ethical limitations will be overcome or set

aside so that technologies of biological intervention can freely circulate in the market. This is a gigantic force that everyone feels, but nobody knows how it will manifest or how people will react. To me, this is the point where technodiversity becomes important and decisive. If we don't manage to demonstrate that there are other alternatives, the transhumanist ideology will conquer the whole world.

Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Political Thought- Paleo-Conservatism p.161

Its characteristic demand is for toughness, expressed above all in a desire for 'workfare' rather than welfare; in tough treatment of prisoners; a tough stand on immigration; a tough stand on positive discrimination; and tough protectionist measures. As this programme suggests, the paleo-conservative attitude to the state is somewhat ambiguous, veering between unqualified hostility at one extreme and willingness to invoke draconian state intervention at the other.

…Thus critics of welfare interventionism, for example, have found common ground with Christians outraged by such Supreme Court decisions as Roe v. Wade (1973), which declared a right to abortion on demand constitutional on grounds that it was entailed by the right to privacy; with secular defenders of 'family values' and the 're-moralisation' of American society; with defenders of film censorship; and with opponents of the legalisation of homosexuality and the decriminalisation of drugs.

Linking these disparate groups (Paleo-cons, Neo-cons and Neo-libs) is, in particular, the common conviction that key educational and judicial institutions have been hijacked by a liberal elite which is unrepresentative of the nation at large. *Implicit in Nixon's 'Silent Majority' rhetoric and Bush's anti-multi-cultural 'You're either with us or against us'.

4 Internal Tensions

4.1 The Decay of Nomos/ Cultural Conservatism

The Decay of Nomos (Spengler's Decline of the West Vol.2)

Spengler on World City/Cosmopolis

The stone Colossus "Cosmopolis" stands at the end of the life's course of every great Culture. The Culture-man whom the land has spiritually formed is seized and possessed by his own creation, the City, and is made into its creature, its executive organ, and finally its victim. This stony mass is the absolute city. Its image, as it appears with all its grandiose beauty in the light-world of the human eye, contains the whole noble death-symbolism of the definitive thing-become. The spirit-pervaded stone of Gothic buildings, after a millennium of style-evolution, has become the soulless material of this daemonic stone-desert.

These cities are wholly intellect.

dæmonic creations. The wheel of Destiny rolls on to its end; the birth of the City entails its death. Beginning and end, a peasant cottage and a tenement-block are related to one another as soul and intellect, as blood and stone. But "Time" is no abstract phrase, but a name for the actuality of Irreversibility. Here there is only forward, never back. Long, long ago the country bore the country-town and nourished it with her best blood. Now the giant city sucks the country dry, insatiably and incessantly demanding and devouring fresh streams of men, till it wearies and dies in the midst of an almost uninhabited waste of country. Once the full sinful beauty of this last marvel of all history has captured a victim, it never lets him go. Primitive folk can loose themselves from the soil and wander, but the intellectual nomad never. Homesickness for the great city is keener than any other nostalgia. Home is for him any one of these giant cities, but even the nearest village is alien territory. He would sooner die upon the pavement than go "back" to the land. Even disgust at this pretentiousness, weariness of the thousand-hued glitter, the *tædium vitæ* that in the end overcomes many, does not set them free. They take the City with them into the mountains or on the sea. They have lost the country within themselves and will never regain it outside.

What makes the man of the world-cities incapable of living on any but this artificial footing is that the cosmic beat in his being is ever decreasing, while the tensions of his waking-consciousness become more and more dangerous. It must be remembered that in a microcosm the animal, waking side supervenes upon the vegetable side, that of being, and not vice versa. Beat and

Stanford:

Cultural Conservatism

These cultural issues are central to G.A. Cohen's work on conservatism in political and cultural spheres. Cohen argues for a truth in Burkean conservatism that is compatible with liberalism and socialism, viz. that we should accept some things as given:

[the rationalist claim that] everything can, or should, be shaped to our aims and requirements…violates intrinsic value and contradicts our own spiritual requirements. (2007: 9)

In this sense, everyone is conservative to some degree—for instance, if they prefer to have cash in their pocket rather than converting to cashless payment. Thus a William Morris-based socialism is conservative in rejecting what planners and developers do to the environment that one loves; Robert Conquest allegedly commented that "everyone is conservative about what they know best" (quoted in Kates 2014). Conservation originated in the Victorian era. The Camden Society, in early Victorian Cambridge, was concerned with the "proper" and edifying construction and restoration of Gothic churches and other public buildings. Later in the 19th century, William Morris's "anti-scrape" campaign introduced the idea that good buildings of different periods complement each other and should be cherished. Morris argued that we should take delight in the history of old public buildings, and not seek to restore them to some pristine state of perfection.

4.2 Race, Religion and the Nation

Oswald Spengler race v capitalism

> Though the economic history of every Culture there runs a desperate conflict waged by the soil-rooted tradition of a race, by its *soul*, against the spirit of money. The peasant-wars of the beginning of a Late period (in the Classical, 700–500; in the Western, 1450–1650; in the Egyptian, end of Old Kingdom) are the first reaction of the blood against the money that is stretching forth its hand from the waxing cities over the soil.[2] Stein's warning that "he who mobilizes the soil dissolves it into dust" points to a danger common to *all* Cultures; if money is unable to attack possession, it insinuates itself into the thoughts of the noble and peasant possessors, until the inherited possession that has grown with the family's growth begins to seem like resources merely "put into" land and soil and, so far as their essence is concerned, mobile.[3] Money aims at mobilizing *all* things. World-economy is the actualized economy of values that are completely detached in thought from the land, and made fluid.[4] The Classical money-thinking, from Hannibal's day, transformed whole cities into coin and whole populations into slaves and thereby converted both into money that could be brought from everywhere to Rome, and used outwards from Rome as a power.

-A Moderate-conservative version of this argument would probably argue in favour of a Hegelian *Geist* as a superior guiding force (or the will of God, if religious) than this really quite dated adjunct.

Carl Schmitt

The Enemy: nasty expansion of the shy justifications of prejudice used by other Conservatives

The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgment of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party.

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Thoughts and discussion points – Conservatism

As Ed has already done a nice job in summarising his thoughts regarding "Conservatism" focused on its philosophical roots, development and current issues arising out of this philosophical tradition, I will only add some thoughts about further discussion points and applications of the philosophical ideas and their outcome for policies and polities.

Psychology, the human nature, and conservatism (/general political orientation)

- Political philosophers often assume conservatism to hail (directly or indirectly) from innate human features, which represent the basis for their expression in social orders (norms, customs, values, etc.)
- Behavioural, social, and clinical psychology has greatly advanced our understanding in these regards over the last couple of decades, often arguing along the predominant concept of the "big five personality traits" (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism)
- Findings in this area consistently show one pattern with respect to conservative voting behaviour: The trait "Conscientiousness" is the single trait strongly and significantly correlated with conservative voting behaviour
- Does this finding fit with explanations and conceptions by e.g., Burke? Yes (at least partially)! Conscientiousness represents the trait associated with rule-obeying, target/goal driven people, who seem to value given commitments (such as e.g., marriage), thus being inclined to tradition and social commitments resulting out of small-scale community integration (or "little platoons" in Burke's terms)
- So, if our personality does indeed influence our voting behaviour and political inclination, is it biological or social factors that we should focus on? As far as we know, genetical predisposition and social context/upbringing contribute about equally to the formation of our individual personality in respect to the big five. Thus, one could argue that there is indeed a biological predisposition in some humans towards conservative views and the cornerstones of its philosophy
- However, one could equally think about the effect of Zeitgeist and prevailing political and social narratives in mass media leaning toward either side of the political spectrum, as social contexts do contribute not only directly to the formation of political belief by social exposure, but also indirectly through their influence on personality formation
- *See for reference:*
    - *Jordan B Peterson (2019): 12 Rules for life. An Antidote to Chaos. Penguin.*
    - *https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/populist-personalities-the-big-five-personality-traits-and-party-choice-in-the-2015-uk-general-election/*
    - *https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-55834023*

The erosion of liberal principles in conservatism today?

- As pointed out e.g., by Scruton (2017), conservatism and liberalism are familiar in their treatment of personal, individual freedoms, although they may differ in the reasoning for their origination and extent
- Free market capitalism as associated with the United States and some extent the UK after the end of WWII and the continuous threat of the regime in the communist Soviet Union, has thus

been a feature of conservative policies (though in contrast to classic free market liberals with an emphasise on a strong state and state spending in regard to other fields of policy such as external defence, internal security etc.)

- Most prominent example of the height of this symbiosis still in mind and reproduced by popular news media is the "unleashing" of free markets in the Reagan and Thatcher administrations in the US and UK respectively
- However, in recent years (some claim the financial crisis of 2007/08 as a turning point in this regard) the affiliation of conservatives with free-market policies formerly advocated and dominating during the Cold War as eroding with conservative lawmakers in several major Western economies push for more protectionism, market regulation, extended public spending in areas such as infrastructure investment, or climate action
- Prominently in Germany, the minister for the economy (Peter Altmeier, CDU) advocates regarding the goal of climate-neutrality for a planned-economy on the European level with CO2-targets for industries and years set-up centrally by the EU
- In the UK for instance, PM Boris Johnson's famously announced his "New Deal" for rebuilding the British economy and economically less developed regions, especially in the North of England through big infrastructure investments
- *See for reference:*
    - *Roger Scruton (2017): Conservatism. An Invitation to the Great Tradition. All Points Books.*
    - *https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2019/10/conservatives-must-break-free-market-liberalism-or-they-will-perish*
    - *https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-12/new-conservatism-free-market*
    - *https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/04/how-britain-fell-out-of-love-with-the-free-market*

Loosing the news narrative and the public debate? – conservatism and Zeitgeist

- In several Western countries such as the US, the UK or Germany, there has been and still remains a debate about potential progressive or conservative bias in news media – a topic resulting in great controversy, since news media represent an integral part of large-scale democracies and help to form popular narratives (and more generally report, reproduce and thus influence on the Zeitgeist)
- Hard to compare in between countries as public narratives move differently in different society, depending on structure of news media and media consumption of population (e.g., in Germany, news consumption through internet outlets and sources only is catching up to more reliance on non-linear, non-traditional news media in countries such as the US or UK)
- But maybe some Indicative evidence? Popular complaints by major conservative parties (such as CDU in Germany, Republicans in US or Torys in UK) that publicly-owned media is biased towards a liberal/progressive consensus – in contrast complaints in these countries arguing for the opposite are rare
- Case of Germany – (non-representative?) poll of interns at one of the big publicly owned media companies (ARD) resulted in an astonishing left-leaning consensus (92% would vote for one of the left parties), while only 3% would vote for the conservative party – compared to consistent polling of the conservative party in the wider population of around 30-35% at the

time (2020). Even if controlling for age-dependant factors and socio-economic background, this would most likely represent an underrepresentation
- Case of US – see report by Barro (2004) on study by Groseclose and Milyo finding a significant progressive or liberal bias in many of the most popular news outlets in the US, compared to only one (Fox News) leaning conservative of the outlets in the study (though they are using politicians voting behaviour and their citation of think tanks as a proxy variable to construct a measure of conservative vs. liberal alliance)
- *See for reference:*
  o *https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/ard-volontaere-wie-divers-ist-die-ausbildungs-generation-17038169.html*
  o *https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/is-the-bbc-more-favourable-towards-labour-the-left-or-the-conservatives-the-right*
  o *https://scholar.harvard.edu/barro/files/04_0614_liberalmedia_bw.pdf (older but still a good read/interesting study with several replications)*

New political divide – conservatism, anywhere and somewhere

- The divide between "right-and-left" that has been stated as the most critical divide in politics form the French revolution onwards, has recently been questioned
- Political commentators and scientists increasingly find that the old allegiance, broadly speaking of the "working class" with liberal and progressive parties and the "bourgeois class" with conservative parties (to use the Marxian terminology) has eroded in the last years and in fact decades
- David Goodhart for example sees the new divide not along the classical spectrum of distribution of money and power anymore, that motivated the classical dichotomy between conservatism and liberalism (in its progressive understanding), but rather along lines that better fit a globalized world, between "Anywheres" and "Somewheres"
- Anywheres are at home in a globalized world, don't have strong local attachment and are happy to work and live independently in various locations; Somewheres on the other hand value their local community and life very highly; for them, the connection they have with the people, traditions, culture, and laws of the order around them is not easily substitutional as it is for Anywheres
- Though this is an interesting conception, it is all but new – thinking about it carefully, one realizes that Goodhart uses the classic Burkean emphasis on intimate social relations on a small-scale, connected to customs, traditions and homogeneity as his focus for the "somewhere" category
- *See for reference:*
  o *David Goodhart (2017): The road to somewhere. The New Tribes Shaping British Politics. Penguin.*
  o *https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-39293519*
  o *https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/22/the-road-to-somewhere-david-goodhart-populist-revolt-future-politics*