

# *The Conservative Critique of Liberalism*

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## **1. Philosophical Liberalism and Liberal Order**

Versions of conservatism

- (1) a tough-minded version of liberalism that places emphasis on free exchange, a small but strong state, private initiative and individual responsibility.
- (2) a practical, down-to-earth attitude which we can call practical conservatism. Practical conservatives see virtue in keeping the show on the road – conserving and when necessary refreshing institutions and habits that work, whatever they are.
- (3) conservatism in the sense of an attitude that sees continuity, community, tradition and hierarchy as organic elements of a good society, and gives ethical grounds for doing so.

*Liberal Order*: comprises (i) equal liberty for all citizens, of which an essential element is the right to act as one chooses subject to a law that protects the equal rights of others; (ii) a distinctive and special protection of liberty of thought and discussion, and (iii) the *entrenchment* of these principles, either in an effective legal framework that codifies them in basic laws or constitutional safeguards guaranteeing equality of every citizen under law, or (perhaps) in a common law tradition that effectively does the same.

*Philosophical liberalism*:

- Individualism in ethics. This is the view that all value and right reduces to value of or for individuals, or to the rights of individuals.
- A doctrine of equal respect for all human beings based on the belief that all are equally capable of self-governance.
- A doctrine of liberty of thought and discussion based on belief in the unrestricted autonomy of reason – that is, the rational capacities of individual people – as the sole and sufficient canon of objective truth.

## **2. The critique of philosophical liberalism (i) individualism**

## **3. The critique of philosophical liberalism (ii) equal respect and free thought**

## **4. The critique of philosophical liberalism (iii) the autonomy of reason**

## **[5. Sources of anti-liberal rage]**

## **6. Towards an assessment**