



Eleventh Edition

Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal

Terence Ball • Richard Dagger • Daniel I. O'Neill



POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal analyzes political ideologies to help readers understand individual ideologies, and the concept of ideology, from a political science perspective. This best-selling title promotes open-mindedness and develops critical thinking skills. It covers a wide variety of political ideologies from the traditional liberalism and conservatism to recent developments in liberation politics, the emergence of the Alt-Right, and environmental politics.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Focus on the recent rise of populism and “illiberal democracy” and how this poses a real challenge to the pillars of Western liberal democracy;
- A look at early conservatives and the idea of “natural aristocracy” with focus on the thoughts of Edmund Burke;
- A new discussion of whether Donald Trump is really a conservative, and if so, to what extent this is true;
- An expanded look at Stalinism and the apparent rebirth of “Mao Zedong thought” in China alongside “Xi Jinping thought”;
- A more in-depth look at the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party and how “myth” was crucial to legitimizing both the man and the party;
- New section on the history of American fascism, from its origins to the recent emergence of the “Alt-Right”;
- Expansion of the discussion around the recent protest movements Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo, along with the repercussions of these movements;
- Discussion of the obstacles facing transgender people implemented in recent years, including the bathroom laws and the ban from US military service;
- Account of how Donald Trump has galvanized the environmental movement as never before, through his ardent anti-environment policies and appointments;

- In-depth look at how the effects of climate change are increasingly turning people into “environmental migrants” and how the presence of these people has fueled far-right movements across Europe and the US;
- Additional photos throughout;
- An updated, author-written Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank.

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To

Andrew, Alexandra, and Eliana Nicole Lopez Ball

Emily and Elizabeth Dagger

and

Cassidy and Jackson O'Neill

PRAISE FOR THE ELEVENTH EDITION

“The fact that this book enters its 11th edition says a lot. It’s well-done, well-written, and quite comprehensive. This edition adds new coverage of global populism, illiberal regimes, ISIS, new material on Xi Jinping’s thought, as well as more on free trade, the Alt-Right, transgender rights, the rights of Native Peoples, and so on.”

—**Ralph G. Carter**, *Professor of Political Science,
Texas Christian University*

“Terence Ball, Richard Dagger and Daniel I. O’Neill offer a superb analysis of political ideologies with thoughtful and compelling contemporary examples. The text invites students into the contemporary debates about political ideologies, and provides an opportunity to critically examine and challenge their own political views and understandings. The authors’ ability to balance the theoretical ideas with practical applications makes the eleventh edition even better than earlier versions of the text.”

—**Michael Cairo, Ph.D.**, *Professor of Political Science,
Transylvania University*

“It is a pleasure to see this classic volume admirably updated with perceptive new discussions of pressing topics such as populism, illiberal democracy, fascism, the alt-right, democratic socialism, the “Me-too” movement, to name but a few. These topics are engaged not simply as add-on novelties, but carefully interrogated in terms of the central concerns of the volume regarding ideology and the prospects for democratic life.”

—**Stephen K. White**, *James Hart Professor, Department of Politics,
University of Virginia*



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PREFACE

An ancient Chinese curse says, “May you live in interesting times.” That is, may you live in times of social, political, and economic upheaval, of mass misery, and maybe even of death. Some times are more trying and dangerous than others. We should all count ourselves fortunate for not living during a world war. But we *are* living in an era of national and international economic crises and trade wars, the rise of populism and the decline of liberal democracy, of global warming and environmental degradation, of domestic and international terror, of military coups and civil wars in Syria and elsewhere, of “ethnic cleansing” in Burma, of hot wars fought with weapons and culture wars fought with competing ideas. And because our world keeps changing and hurling new challenges at human beings, people’s ideas—and especially those systems of ideas called “ideologies”—change accordingly in hopes of helping people cope with those crises.

In this, the eleventh edition of *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, we have tried to track and take account of changes in our world and in how people interpret those changes with the aid of one or another ideology. This is no easy task, and we sometimes fear that any account, including our own, must fall short of the mark. Nevertheless, we have here done our best to offer a reasonably up-to-date and systematic account of the ideologies that have shaped and continue to reshape the world in which we live. As before, we have described in some detail the deeper historical background out of which these ideologies emerged and developed.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

In this eleventh edition, we have once again made numerous changes, large and small. Among the larger changes are the following:

- Updated discussion questions at the end of each chapter.
- Additional graphs and photos.
- In Chapter 1, we introduce a new section on populism, which is now making its mark on politics worldwide.
- In Chapter 2, we have added a new section on so-called illiberal democracy, which poses a stark challenge to Western liberal democracy with its protections for press freedom, individual and minority rights, an independent judiciary, and the like. We also ask whether there is an argument to be made in favor of “civics” or civic education in American classrooms.

- In Chapter 3, we offer a more extended discussion of Adam Smith's contributions to the liberal tradition, paying particular attention to the concepts of free trade and comparative advantage and the criticisms sometimes leveled at both.
- Chapter 4 includes an account of the idea of a "natural aristocracy" in the thought of Edmund Burke and other early conservatives. We also ask whether (or in what sense, if any) Donald Trump is a conservative.
- In Chapter 6, we discuss how the modern welfare state in effect short-circuits the revolutionary sequence as Marx envisioned it. We have expanded our discussion of Stalinism and examine the apparent rebirth of "Mao Zedong thought" in China and its supplementation by "Xi Jinping thought." With recent changes to the Chinese constitution, Xi is now the most powerful leader since Mao. We also provide an expanded discussion of the oddly idiosyncratic ideology of *Juche* in North Korea. We further examine *songbun*, North Korea's rigid caste system. We also ask why an increasing number of candidates for Congress and other offices are running as "democratic socialists" and why many young people, unlike their elders, do not find socialism objectionable.
- In Chapter 7, we have expanded our discussion of the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party and the role played by "myth" in legitimating the man and the party. We have also added sections on the history of American fascism from "America First" in the late 1930s to the newly emergent "Alt-Right" or white nationalist movement. We include a discussion of the thought of Julius Evola, a prominent fascist theorist who has influenced the American Alt-Right. We have also expanded our discussion of attempts to resist Hitler's Nazi regime. And, once again, we trace the increasing prominence—and electoral success—of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi parties in the wake of the refugee crisis in Europe and elsewhere.
- In Chapter 8, we examine the contention that black chattel slavery has made a return in the guise of public and for-profit prisons' use of (largely black) convict labor and expand our discussion of protests inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement. We likewise look at the impact of the new #MeToo movement as well as the online "Incel"—"involuntarily celibate" males—movement and the threat it poses to women as some of its members move from the screen to the streets. We also include an account of new obstacles facing transgender people, including so-called bathroom laws and being barred from military service. We discuss the *de facto* disenfranchisement of Native Americans and how native peoples liberationists are addressing this issue. Also included is a discussion of the rise of populist presidents and strongmen, and their attempts to roll back or reverse gains made by women and indigenous people. We provide an expanded account of liberation theology, especially under the aegis of Pope Francis. And, finally, we look at current controversies within the animal liberation movement, including the ongoing "pet debate" about the alleged immorality of pet ownership.
- Chapter 9 includes an account of "the Anthropocene," as well as President Trump's anti-environmental policies and their likely impacts, including the unintended effect of galvanizing the environmental movement as never before. We also consider how environmental degradation—climate change, with attendant rises in sea levels, droughts, and other maladies—are turning many people into "environmental

migrants” whose presence in turn fuels fascist and other far-right movements and parties in Europe and elsewhere. And we note the dangers, physical and otherwise, facing environmentalists in the Third World.

- In this new edition we have once again expanded the discussion of radical Islamism in Chapter 10, especially with regard to the varieties of Islamism (from legal-constitutional to violent jihadist), the rise and current status of the Islamic State (ISIS), and the effects of recent terrorist attacks on national and international politics.
- Finally, we have supplied a short summary and review in Chapter 11.

We have made these and many other changes to make the text as clear, accurate, readable, and up-to-date as we can.

FEATURES

As in previous editions, we have tried in this new one to improve upon *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal* without sacrificing the qualities that have made the book attractive to many students and teachers. Our principal aims continue to be the two that have guided us since we set out, in the late 1980s, to write the first edition. We try, first, to supply an informed and accessible overview of the major ideologies that shaped the political landscape of the twentieth century and now begin to give shape to that of the twenty-first. Our second aim is to show how these ideologies originated and how and why they have changed over time. In addition to examining the major modern “isms”—liberalism, conservatism, socialism, and fascism—we try to provide the reader with a sense of the history, structure, supporting arguments, and internal complexities of these and other, recently emerging ideologies.

The basic structure of the text remains the same as in previous editions. We begin by constructing a fourfold framework—a working definition of “ideology” and of the four functions that all ideologies perform—within which to compare, contrast, and analyze the various ideologies. We also show how each ideology interprets “democracy” and “freedom” in its own way. Democracy is not, in our view, simply one ideology among others; it is an *ideal* that different ideologies interpret in different ways. Each ideology also has its own particular conception of human nature and its own program for promoting freedom. We use a simple three-part model to illustrate this, comparing and contrasting each ideology’s view of freedom in terms of agent, obstacle, and goal. In every chapter devoted to a particular ideology, we explain its basic conception of freedom in terms of the triadic model, discuss the origin and development of the ideology, examine its interpretation of the democratic ideal, and conclude by showing how it performs the four functions of political ideologies. We do this not only with liberalism, conservatism, socialism, and fascism but also with newly emergent ideologies. These include “liberation ideologies”—black liberation, women’s liberation, gay liberation, native peoples’ liberation, liberation theology, and animal liberation—as well as the emerging environmental or “Green” ideology and the ideology of radical Islamism.

This text is twinned with an accompanying anthology, *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, also published in a newly revised eleventh edition by Routledge. Although each book can stand alone, they are arranged to supplement and complement each other. Other instructional materials are available from the publisher.

SUPPLEMENT

Instructor's Manual/Test Bank This resource includes learning objectives, lecture outlines, multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, and essay questions for each chapter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We first undertook this collaborative effort in the belief that two heads are better than one. We found in writing the first and subsequent editions that a project of this sort requires more, or better, heads than the authors could muster between themselves, and revising the book for the subsequent editions has only strengthened that conclusion. To those who shared their time, energy, and wisdom with us in preparing this new edition, especially our families and the staff at Routledge, we offer our deepest thanks. We would also like to thank Professor Jan-Werner Müller of Princeton University for commenting critically and helpfully on our new sections on populism and illiberal democracy, and Professor Jennet Kirkpatrick of Arizona State University for sage and sundry advice on a wide range of issues, Professor Tracy Munsil of Arizona Christian University for her advice regarding religious-right and “fusionist” conservatism in Chapter 4, and Dr. Jeffery Zavadil for his assistance on far-right and neo-Nazi parties in Europe in Chapter 7. We are once again indebted to Professor Mary Dietz of Northwestern University for extensive and astute advice on Chapter 8 (particularly feminism and LGBT). And for his helpful advice about the affinities among hunters, fishermen, and environmentalists, we again thank Steven Kingsbury.

We are no less indebted to our students and our far-flung student-readers in the United States and abroad, whose questions and requests for clarification of this or that point have led us time and again to improve our prose and clarify our meaning. This book is almost as much theirs as ours.

*Terence Ball
Richard Dagger
Daniel I. O'Neill*



TO THE READER

We want to call three features of this book to your attention. First, many of the primary works quoted or cited in the text are also reprinted, in whole or in part, in a companion volume edited by the authors, *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, Eleventh Edition. When we cite one of these primary works in this text, we include in the note at the end of the chapter a reference to the corresponding selection in *Ideals and Ideologies*.

Second, the study of political ideologies is in many ways the study of words. For this reason, we frequently call attention to the use political thinkers and leaders make of such terms as “democracy” and “freedom.” In doing so, we have found it convenient to adopt the philosophers’ convention of using quotation marks to mean the word—as in “democracy” and “freedom.”

Third, a number of key words and phrases in the text are set in boldface type. Definitions of these words and phrases appear in the Glossary at the back of the book, just before the Index.

We also invite you to send us any comments you have on this book or suggestions for improving it. You may email Terence Ball at tball@asu.edu, Richard Dagger at rdagger@richmond.edu, and Daniel O’Neill at doneill@ufl.edu.

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PART ONE

**IDEOLOGY AND
DEMOCRACY**



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IDEOLOGY AND IDEOLOGIES

It is what men think, that determines how they act.

John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*

On a warm June evening in 2015, a prayer service was beginning at “Mother Emanuel”—the Emanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina—when a 21-year-old white man entered and asked the black worshipers if he could join them. They welcomed him warmly. After nearly an hour of praying with them (or perhaps pretending to), the young man took out a newly purchased pistol and began to shoot the congregants without regard to age or sex and with regard only to the color of their skin. While shouting racist epithets and slogans, he killed nine people, including the pastor, and wounded another before fleeing into the night. Arrested the next day, he told police that he had hoped to start a “race war.” The investigation that followed showed the shooter to have been a racist, a white supremacist, and a neo-Nazi sympathizer. Photos posted on his Facebook page showed him holding weapons, flanked by a Confederate flag; in another photo he is burning an American flag. He had also written a 2,500-word “manifesto” denigrating African-Americans and defending white supremacy. The FBI deemed the crime an act of “domestic terrorism.” And, far from starting his hoped-for race war, the shooter’s murderous attack backfired. The conservative Republican governor and a majority of the Republican-led state legislature agreed to remove the Confederate flag from the state capitol grounds, where it had flown for decades. In the scale of things, this is a somewhat positive outcome of a negative act. Yet his was hardly the only instance of home-grown terrorism.

The annual Boston Marathon is a joyous occasion, attracting the best runners from across the country and around the world. But the 2013 Marathon, which had begun so happily on a sunny New England morning, ended abruptly and violently at 2:49 in the afternoon as two homemade bombs exploded near the finish line, killing three onlookers and grievously injuring 264 others. The bombers, two brothers who were self-radicalized Islamists, saw themselves as defenders of their faith, engaged in a *jihad*, or “holy war,” against its Western, and especially its American, enemies. Violent and deadly as they were, however, the Boston Marathon bombings pale in comparison to an earlier terrorist attack.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists hijacked four American airliners bound for California from the East Coast and turned them toward targets in

New York City and Washington, D.C. The hijackers crashed two of the airplanes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and a third into the Pentagon in Washington. Passengers in the fourth plane, which crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, thwarted the hijackers' attempt to fly it into another Washington target. In the end, nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists had taken the lives of nearly 3,000 innocent people. Fifteen of the terrorists came from Saudi Arabia; all nineteen professed to be devout Muslims fighting a "holy war" against Western, and particularly American, "infidels." Condemned in the West as an appalling act of terrorism, this concerted attack was openly applauded in certain Middle Eastern countries where al-Qaeda's now-deceased leader, Osama bin Laden, is widely regarded as a hero and its nineteen perpetrators as martyrs.

These terrorist attacks were not the first launched by radical Islamists, nor have they been the last. Since 9/11, Islamist bombings have taken more than 200 lives in Bali, more than 60 in Istanbul, more than 190 in Madrid, and more than 50 in London, to list several prominent examples. And in Syria and Iraq, ISIS (or Islamic State) has used social media to broadcast the beheadings and burnings-alive of its captives. How anyone could applaud or condone such deeds seems strange or even incomprehensible to most people in the West, just as the deeds themselves seem purely and simply evil. Evil they doubtless were. But the terrorists' motivation and their admirers' reasoning, however twisted, is quite comprehensible, as we shall see in the discussion of radical Islamism in Chapter 10 of this book.

Nor, as the racist church shooting in South Carolina with which we began this chapter demonstrates, should we think that all terrorists come from the Middle East or act in the name of Allah or Islam. For additional evidence to the contrary, we need only look back to 9:02 on the morning of April 19, 1995, when a powerful fertilizer bomb exploded in front of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. One hundred sixty-eight people, including nineteen children, died in that act of terror by American neo-Nazis. More than 500 people were seriously injured. The building was so badly damaged that it had to be demolished. The death and destruction attested not only to the power of the bomb but also to the power of ideas—of neo-Nazi ideas about "racial purity," "white power," Jews, and other "inferior" races and ethnic groups. At least one of the bombers had learned about these ideas from a novel, *The Turner Diaries* (discussed at length in Chapter 7). The ideas in this novel, and in contemporary neo-Nazi ideology generally, have a long history that predates even Hitler (to whom *The Turner Diaries* refers as "The Great One"). This history and these ideas continue to inspire various "skinheads" and militia groups in the United States and elsewhere.

These are dramatic, and horrific, examples of the power of ideas—and specifically of those systems of ideas called *ideologies*. As these examples of neo-Nazi and radical Islamic terrorism attest, ideologies are sets of ideas that shape people's thinking and actions with regard to race, nationality, the role and function of government, the relations between men and women, human responsibility for the natural environment, and many other matters. So powerful are these ideologies that Sir Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997), a distinguished philosopher and historian, concluded that there are

two factors that, above all others, have shaped human history in [the twentieth] century. One is the development of the natural sciences and technology. . . . The other, without doubt, consists in the great ideological storms that have altered the lives of virtually all mankind: the Russian Revolution and its aftermath—totalitarian tyrannies of both right and left and

the explosions of nationalism, racism, and, in places, of religious bigotry, which, interestingly enough, not one among the most perceptive social thinkers of the nineteenth century had ever predicted.

When our descendants, in two or three centuries' time (if mankind survives until then), come to look at our age, it is these two phenomena that will, I think, be held to be the outstanding characteristics of our century—the most demanding of explanation and analysis. But it is as well to realise that these great movements began with ideas in people's heads: ideas about what relations between men have been, are, might be, and should be; and to realise how they came to be transformed in the name of a vision of some supreme goal in the minds of the leaders, above all of the prophets with armies at their backs.¹

Acting upon various visions, these armed prophets—Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Mao, and many others—left the landscape of the twentieth century littered with many millions of corpses of those they regarded as inferior or dispensable, or both. As the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky said with some understatement, “anyone desiring a quiet life has done badly to be born in the twentieth century.”²

Nor do recent events, such as 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks, suggest that political ideologies will fade away and leave people to lead quiet lives in the twenty-first century. We may still hope that it will prove less murderous, but so far it appears that the twenty-first century will be even more complicated politically than the twentieth was. For most of the twentieth century, the clash of three political ideologies—liberalism, communism, and fascism—dominated world politics. In World War II, the communist regime of the Soviet Union joined forces with the liberal democracies of the West to defeat the fascist alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Following their triumph over fascist regimes, the communist and liberal allies soon became implacable enemies in a Cold War that lasted more than forty years. But the Cold War ended with the collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the terrifying but straightforward clash of ideologies seemed to be over. What President Ronald Reagan had called the “evil empire” of communism had all but vanished. Liberal democracy had won, and peace and prosperity seemed about to spread around the globe.

Or so it appeared for a short time in the early 1990s. In retrospect, however, the world of the Cold War has been replaced by a world no less terrifying and certainly more mystifying: a world of hot wars, fought by militant nationalists and racists bent on “ethnic cleansing”; a world of culture wars, waged by white racists and black Afrocentrists, by religious fundamentalists and secular humanists, by gay liberationists and “traditional values” groups, by feminists and antifeminists, and many others besides; and a world of suicide bombers and terrorists driven by a lethal combination of anger, humiliation, rage, and religious fervor. How are we, as students—and, more importantly, as citizens—to make sense of this new world with its bewildering clash of views and values? How are we to assess the merits of, and judge between, these very different points of view?

One way to gain the insight we need is to look closely at what the proponents of these opposing views have to say for themselves. Another is to put their words and deeds into context. Political ideologies and movements do not simply appear out of nowhere, for no apparent reason. To the contrary, they arise out of particular backgrounds and circumstances, and they typically grow out of some sense of grievance or injustice—some conviction that things are not as they could and should be. To understand the complicated political ideas and movements of the present, then, we must understand the contexts in which they have taken shape, and that requires understanding something of the past,

of history. To grasp the thinking of neo-Nazi skinheads, for example, we must study the thinking of their heroes and ideological ancestors, the earlier Nazis from whom the neo- (or “new-”) Nazis take their bearings. And the same is true for any other ideology or political movement.

Every ideology and every political movement has its origins in the ideas of some earlier thinker or thinkers. As the British economist John Maynard Keynes observed in the mid-1930s, when the fascist Benito Mussolini, the Nazi Adolf Hitler, and the communist Joseph Stalin all held power,

the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.³

In this book, we shall be looking not only at those “madmen in authority” but also at the “academic scribblers” whose ideas they borrowed and used—often with bloody and deadly results.

All ideologies and all political movements, then, have their roots in the past. To ignore or forget the past, as the philosopher George Santayana remarked, is to risk repeating its mistakes. If we are fortunate enough to avoid those mistakes, ignorance of the past will still keep us from understanding ourselves and the world in which we live. Our minds, our thoughts, our beliefs and attitudes—all have been forged in the fires and shaped on the anvil of earlier ideological conflicts. If we wish to act effectively and live peacefully, we need to know something about the political ideologies that have had such a profound influence on our own and other people’s political attitudes and actions.

Our aim in this book is to lay a foundation for this understanding. In this introductory chapter, our particular aim is to clarify the concept of ideology. In subsequent chapters, we will go on to examine the various ideologies that have played an important part in shaping and sometimes radically reshaping the political landscape on which we live. We will discuss liberalism, conservatism, socialism, fascism, and other ideologies in turn, and in each case, we will relate the birth and the growth of the ideology to its historical context. Arising as they do in particular historical circumstances—and typically in response to real or perceived crises—ideologies take shape and change in response to changes in those circumstances. These changes sometimes lead to perplexing results—for instance, today’s conservatives sometimes seem to have more in common with early liberals than today’s liberals do. Such perplexing results would not occur, of course, if political ideologies were fixed or frozen in place, but they are not. They respond to the changes in the world around them, including changes brought about by people acting to promote their political ideologies.

That is to say that ideologies do not react passively, like weather vanes, to every shift in the political winds. On the contrary, ideologies try to shape and direct social change. The men and women who follow and promote political ideologies—and almost all of us do this in one way or another—try to make sense of the world, to understand society and politics and economics, in order either to change it for the better or to resist changes that they think will make it worse. But to act upon the world in this way, they

must react to the changes that are always taking place, including the changes brought about by rival ideologies.

Political ideologies, then, are dynamic. They do not stand still, because they cannot do what they want to do—shape the world—if they fail to adjust to changing conditions. This dynamic character of ideologies can be frustrating for anyone who wishes to understand *exactly* what a liberal or a conservative is, for it makes it impossible to define liberalism or conservatism or any other ideology with mathematical precision. But once we recognize that political ideologies are rooted in, change with, and themselves help to change historical circumstances, we are on the way to grasping what any particular ideology is about.

WHY POLITICAL IDEOLOGY?

To answer this question, we first need to ask and answer another even more elementary question: why politics? The answer, quite simply, is that people cannot live solitary, self-sufficient lives; they need the presence of other people if they are to survive and flourish. But within any group of mutually interdependent people, differences will inevitably arise. Politics is the art of resolving these differences, ideally without resorting to force or coercion. At its best, politics is about discussion, debate, talking and listening, and compromise—the “political arts,” as they are sometimes called. But why political *ideologies*? The answer is that within or between societies, some differences—those based on ideas, ideals, and principles—are harder to resolve than more practical problems. An example might help here.

Imagine a town whose citizens agree that a new school is needed. The question arises as to where that school should be built. Some want it located on the west side of town, others on the east. A meeting is called to discuss and resolve the matter. Chances are that the townspeople will compromise and decide to locate the new school in the center of the town, if that option is open. This is a simple solution to a practical problem. But suppose that the question arises, should the school be a taxpayer-supported public school or a tuition-supported private school? Matters now cease to be purely practical, and ideological differences come quickly into play. Some citizens favor the former option, others the latter. Those in the first group contend that education is a shared public good that should be freely available to all alike, regardless of wealth, income, or social standing. Those in the second contend, on the contrary, that the only “real” goods are private ones, paid for by individuals according to what they wish and what they can afford for their children; other people’s children are not their concern. Here we have a very real and deep difference of outlook traceable to different *ideas*—to *ideological* differences—not only about education but about individual versus shared responsibility, about public versus private, and so on, through a long list. Such differences tend to be more intractable and perhaps even insoluble—in which case the citizens are likely to split the difference, compromise, and create a system in which public schools are available to those who want them, and private schools are available for those who do not.

Of course, matters are likely to be much more complicated than our simple example suggests. Consider, for example, differences arising over the school’s curriculum. What should students be taught about the origins and development of different species, including our own? Should Darwin’s theory of natural selection (often mistakenly called the theory of evolution) be taught alongside, or instead of, the theory of Intelligent Design?

Should there be sex education and, if so, of what should the curriculum consist and at what age should it be taught? Should prayers and other forms of religious practice be permitted in the classroom, in school assemblies, and at athletic contests? Needless to say, these are not hypothetical questions but ones debated in school districts all across the nation. And they are, in the end, not merely pedagogical questions but *political* questions that require some knowledge of ideologies and ideological differences if they are to be understood at all.

We now need to inquire into these enigmatic entities called “ideologies.” What are they? And how do they work?

A WORKING DEFINITION OF “IDEOLOGY”

There is at first sight something strange about the word “ideology.” Other terms ending in “-ology” refer to fields of scientific study. So, for example, “biology”—the prefix coming from the Greek *bios*, or “life”—is the scientific study of life. “Psychology” is the study of *psyche*, or mind. “Sociology” is the study of society. It seems only logical, then, that “ideology” would be the scientific study of ideas. And that is just what ideology originally meant when the term *ideologie* was coined in eighteenth-century France.⁴

Over the last two centuries, however, the meaning of the term has shifted considerably. Rather than denoting the scientific study of ideas, “ideology” has come to refer to a set or system of ideas that tries to link thought with action. That is, ideologies attempt to shape how people *think*—and therefore how they *act*.

As we shall use the term, then, *an ideology is a fairly coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that explains and evaluates social conditions, helps people understand their place in society, and provides a program for social and political action*. An ideology, more precisely, performs four functions for people who hold it: the (1) *explanatory*, (2) *evaluative*, (3) *orientative*, and (4) *programmatic* functions. Let us look more closely at these four functions.

Explanation. An ideology offers an explanation of why social, political, and economic conditions are as they are, particularly in times of crisis. At such times people will search, sometimes frantically, for some explanation of what is happening. Why are there wars? Why do depressions occur? What causes unemployment? Why are some people rich and others poor? Why are relations between different races so often strained, difficult, or hostile? To these and many other questions, different ideologies supply different answers. But in one way or another, every ideology tries to answer these questions and to make sense of the complicated world in which we live. A Marxist might explain wars as an outgrowth of capitalists’ competition for foreign markets, for instance, while a fascist is apt to explain them as tests of one nation’s “will” against another’s. A libertarian will probably explain inflation as the result of government interference in the marketplace, while a black liberationist will trace the roots of many if not most social problems to white racism. Their explanations are quite different, as these examples indicate, but all ideologies offer a way of looking at complex events and conditions that tries to make sense of them. Moreover, **ideologues**—people who try to persuade others to accept their ideology—typically want to reach as many people as possible, and this desire leads them to offer simple, and sometimes simplistic, explanations of puzzling events and circumstances.

Evaluation. The second function of ideologies is to supply standards for evaluating social conditions. There is a difference, after all, between explaining why certain things are happening and deciding whether those things are good or bad. Are all wars evils to be avoided, or are some morally justifiable? Are depressions a normal part of the business cycle or a symptom of a sick economic system? Is full employment a reasonable ideal or a naive pipe dream? Are vast disparities of wealth between rich and poor desirable or undesirable? Are racial tensions inevitable or avoidable? Again, an ideology supplies its followers with the criteria required for answering these and other questions. If you are a libertarian, for example, you are likely to evaluate a proposed policy by asking if it increases or decreases the role of government in the lives of individuals. If it increases government's role, it is undesirable. If you are a feminist, you will probably ask whether this proposed policy will work for or against the interests of women, and then either approve or disapprove of it on that basis. Or if you are a communist, you are apt to ask how this proposal affects the working class and whether it raises or lowers the prospects of their victory in the class struggle. This means that those who follow one ideology may evaluate favorably something that the followers of a different ideology greatly dislike—communists look upon class struggle as a good thing, for instance, while fascists regard it as an evil. Whatever the position may be, however, it is clear that all ideologies provide standards or cues that help people assess, judge, and appraise social policies and conditions so that they can decide whether those policies and conditions are good, bad, or indifferent.

Orientation. An ideology supplies its adherent with an orientation and a sense of identity—of who he or she is, the group (race, nation, sex, and so on) to which he or she belongs, and how he or she is related to the rest of the world. Just as hikers and travelers use maps, compasses, and landmarks to find their way in unfamiliar territory, so people need something to find their social identity and location. Like a compass, ideologies help people orient themselves—to gain a sense of where they are, who they are, and how they fit into a complicated world. If you are a communist, for example, you most likely think of yourself as a member of the working class who belongs to a party dedicated to freeing workers from capitalist exploitation and oppression, and you are therefore implacably opposed to the ruling capitalist class. Or if you are a Nazi, you probably think of yourself as a white person and member of a party dedicated to preserving racial purity and enslaving or even eliminating “inferior” races. Or if you are a feminist, you are apt to think of yourself as first and foremost a woman (or a man sympathetic to women's problems) who belongs to a movement aiming to end sexual oppression and exploitation. Other ideologies enable their adherents to orient themselves, to see their situation or position in society, in still other ways, but all perform the function of orientation.

Political Program. An ideology, finally, tells its followers what to do and how to do it. It performs a programmatic or prescriptive function by setting out a general program of social and political action. Just as doctors prescribe medicine for their patients and fitness trainers provide a program of exercise for their clients, so political ideologies prescribe remedies for sick societies and treatments designed to keep the healthy ones in good health. If an ideology provides a diagnosis of social conditions that leads you to believe that conditions are bad and growing worse, it will not be likely to win your support unless it can also supply a prescription or program for action that seems likely

to improve matters. This is exactly what ideologies try to do. If you are a communist, for example, you believe it important to raise working-class consciousness or awareness in order to prepare for the overthrow of capitalism, the seizure of state power, and the eventual creation of a cooperative, communist society. If you are a Nazi, however, you think it important for the “superior” white race to isolate, separate, subordinate—and perhaps exterminate—Jews, blacks, and other “inferior” peoples. If you are a libertarian, your political program will include proposals for reducing or eliminating government interference in people’s lives and liberties. But if you are a traditional conservative, you may want the state or government to intervene in order to promote morality or traditional values. Different ideologies recommend very different programs of action, as these examples demonstrate, but all recommend a program of some sort.

Political ideologies perform these four functions because they are trying to link thought—ideas and beliefs—to action. Every ideology provides a vision of the social and political world not only as it is, but as it *should* be, in hopes of inspiring people to act either to change or to preserve their way of life. If it does not do this—if it does not perform all four functions—it is not a political ideology. In this way our functional definition helps to sharpen our picture of what an ideology is by showing us what it is—and is not.

One thing an ideology is *not* is a scientific theory. To be sure, the distinction between an ideology and a scientific theory is sometimes difficult to draw. One reason for this is that the proponents of political ideologies often claim that their views are truly scientific. Another reason is that scientists, particularly social scientists, sometimes fail to see how their own ideological biases shape their theories. And political ideologies frequently borrow from scientific theories to help explain why the world is as it is. For example, some anarchists and some liberals have used Darwin’s theory of evolution for their own purposes, as have Nazis and some communists.

Difficult as it may sometimes be to separate the two, this does not mean that there is no difference between a theory, such as Darwin’s, and an ideology that draws on—and often distorts—that theory. Scientific theories are **empirical** in nature, which means that they are concerned with *describing* and explaining some feature or features of the world, not with *prescribing* what people *ought* to do. To the extent that these theories carry implications for how people *can* live, of course, they also carry implications for the **normative** problem of how people *should* live. This is especially true of theories of society, where empirical and normative concerns are remarkably difficult—some say impossible—to separate. But to say that scientific theories have implications for action is not to accept that they are ideologies. The scientist is not directly concerned *as a scientist* with these implications, but the ideologue certainly is.

We can also use our functional definition to distinguish political ideologies from some of the other “isms,” such as terrorism, that are occasionally mistaken for ideologies. Because the names of the most prominent ideologies end with the suffix “ism,” some people conclude that all “isms” must be political ideologies. This is clearly a mistake. Whatever else they are, alcoholism, magnetism, and hypnotism are not political ideologies. Nor is terrorism. Terrorism may offer a program for social and political action, thus performing the programmatic function, but it does not itself explain and evaluate conditions or provide people with an orientation. Terrorism is a strategy that some ideologues use to try to advance their causes, but it is not itself an ideology. Nor are **nationalism**, **populism**, and **anarchism**, as we shall see shortly.

This functional definition, finally, helps distinguish democracy from political ideologies. Unlike socialism, conservatism, and the other ideologies, democracy offers no explanation of why things are the way they are, and it is only in a very vague and loose sense that we can say that democracy serves the evaluative, orientative, or programmatic functions. Almost all political ideologies claim to be democratic, furthermore, which is something they could hardly do if democracy were an ideology itself. One can easily claim to be a conservative democrat, a liberal democrat, or a social(ist) democrat, for instance—much more easily than one can claim to be a socialist conservative, say, or a liberal fascist. This suggests that democracy, or rule by the people, is an *ideal* rather than an ideology—a topic to be pursued further in the next chapter.

In all of these cases, the functional definition helps to clarify what an ideology is by eliminating possibilities that do not perform all four functions. There are other cases, however, where our functional definition is not so helpful. The task of distinguishing a political theory or philosophy from an ideology is one of them. In this case, the functional definition offers little help, for political theories can also perform the same four functions. The chief difference is that they do so at a higher, more abstract, more principled, and perhaps more dispassionate level. The great works of political philosophy, such as Plato's *Republic* and Rousseau's *Social Contract*, certainly attempt to explain and evaluate social conditions, just as they try to provide the reader with a sense of his or her place in the world. They even prescribe programs for action of a very general sort. But these works and the other masterpieces of political philosophy tend to be highly abstract and complex—and not, therefore, the kind of writing that stirs great numbers of people into action. Political ideologies draw on the works of the great political philosophers, much as they draw on scientific theories to promote their causes. But because their concern to link thought to action is so immediate, political ideologies tend to simplify, and even to oversimplify, the ideas of political philosophers in order to make them accessible—and inspiring—to masses of ordinary people. The difference between a political philosophy and a political ideology, then, is largely a difference of degree. Although they can do the same things, political ideologies do them in much simpler, less abstract ways because their focus is more tightly fixed on the importance of action.⁵ This, in the end, marks an important difference between political theories, on the one hand, and political ideologies, on the other.

Similar problems arise with regard to religion. Most religions, perhaps all, perform the explanatory, evaluative, orientative, and programmatic functions for their followers. Does this mean they are ideologies? It does if we define an ideology to be simply a “belief system,” as some scholars propose.⁶ Many scholars and quite a few ideologues have noted, moreover, the ways in which political ideologies take on the characteristics of a religion for their followers; one account of communism by disillusioned ex-communists, for instance, is called *The God That Failed*.⁷ There is no denying that religious concerns have played, and continue to play, a major role in ideological conflicts—as we shall see in subsequent chapters. Still, there is an important difference between religions and political ideologies. Religions are often concerned with the supernatural and divine—with God (or gods) and the afterlife (or afterlives)—while ideologies are much more interested in the here and now, with this life on this earth. Rather than prepare people for a better life in the next world, in other words, political ideologies aim to help them live as well as possible in this one.

This difference, again, is a matter of degree. Most religions take an active interest in how people live on earth, but this is neither their only nor necessarily their main concern.

But for a political ideology, it is. Even so, drawing sharp and clear distinctions between political ideologies, on the one hand, and scientific theories, political philosophies, and religions, on the other, is not the most important point for someone who wants to understand ideologies. The most important point is to see how the different ideologies perform the four functions and how they make use of various theories, philosophies, and religious beliefs in order to do so.

HUMAN NATURE AND FREEDOM

For a political ideology to perform these four functions—the explanatory, evaluative, orientative, and programmatic—it must draw on some deeper conception of human potential, of what human beings are capable of achieving. This means that implicit in every ideology are two further features: (1) a set of basic beliefs about *human nature* and (2) a conception of *freedom*.

Human Nature

Some conception of human nature—some notion of basic human drives, motivations, limitations, and possibilities—is present, at least implicitly, in every ideology. Some ideologies assume that it is the “nature” of human beings to compete with one another in hopes of acquiring the greatest possible share of scarce resources; others hold that people are “naturally” inclined to cooperate with one another and to share what they have with others. So, for example, a classical liberal or a contemporary libertarian is likely to believe that human beings are “naturally” competitive and acquisitive. A communist, by contrast, will hold that competitiveness and acquisitiveness are “unnatural” and nasty vices nurtured by a deformed and deforming capitalist system—a system that warps people whose “true” nature is to be cooperative and generous. Still other ideologies take it for granted that human beings have a natural or innate racial consciousness that compels them to associate with their own kind and to avoid associating or even sympathizing with members of other races. Thus, Nazis maintain that it is “natural” for races to struggle for dominance and “unnatural” to seek interracial peace and harmony. They also deny that there is a single, universal human nature shared by all human beings; each race, they say, has its own unique “nature.”

These competing conceptions of human nature are important to the understanding of political ideologies because they play a large part in determining how each ideology performs the four functions that every ideology must perform. They are especially important because each ideology’s notion of human nature sets limits on what it considers to be politically possible. When a communist says that you ought to work to bring about a classless society, for instance, this implies that he or she believes that a classless society is something human beings are capable of achieving, and something, therefore, that human nature does not rule out. When a conservative urges you to cherish and defend traditional social arrangements, on the other hand, this implies that he or she believes that human beings are weak and fallible creatures whose schemes for reform are more likely to damage society than to improve it. Other ideologies take other views of human nature, but in every case the program a political ideology prescribes is directly related to its core conception of human nature—to its notion of what human beings are truly like and what they can achieve.

Freedom

Strange as it may seem, every ideology claims to defend and extend “freedom” (or “liberty,” its synonym). Freedom figures in the performance of both the evaluative and programmatic functions, with all ideologies condemning societies that do not promote freedom and promising to take steps to promote it themselves. But different ideologies define freedom in different ways. A classical conservative’s understanding of freedom differs from a classical liberal’s or contemporary libertarian’s understanding, for instance; both, in turn, disagree with a communist’s view of freedom; and all three diverge radically from a Nazi’s notion of freedom. This is because freedom is an **essentially contested concept**.⁸ What counts as being free is a matter of controversy, in other words, because there is no one indisputably correct definition of “freedom.”

Because every ideology claims to promote freedom, that concept provides a convenient basis for comparing and contrasting different ideologies. In later chapters, therefore, we will explicate each ideology’s conception of freedom by fitting it within the triadic, or three-cornered, model proposed by Gerald MacCallum. According to MacCallum,⁹ every conception of freedom includes three features: (A) an agent, (B) a barrier or obstacle blocking the agent, and (C) a goal at which the agent aims. And every statement about freedom can take the following form: “A is (or is not) free from B to achieve, be, or become C.”

To say that someone is free, in other words, is to say that he or she is *free from* something and therefore *free to do* something. The *agent* is the person or group that is or should be free. But an agent is not simply free; to be free, an agent must be *free to* pursue a *goal*, whether it is speaking one’s mind, practicing one’s religion, or merely going for a stroll in the park. No one can be free to pursue a goal, however, unless he or she is also free from particular *obstacles*, barriers, or restraints. These may take a wide variety of forms—walls, chains, prejudices, and poverty, to name a few—but the point is that no one can be free when there are obstacles that prevent him or her from doing what he or she wants to do. So “freedom” refers to a relationship involving an agent who is both free from some obstacle and free to achieve some goal.

We can visualize this relationship in a diagram (see Figure 1.1).

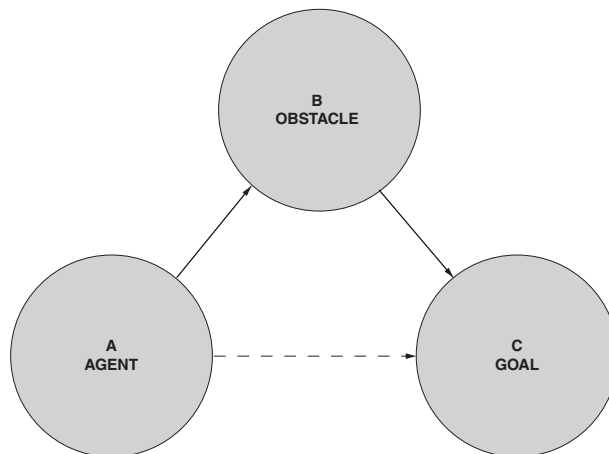


FIGURE 1.1 The triadic model of freedom.

Consider how these three aspects of freedom are present even in so ordinary a question as *Are you free tonight?* The agent in this case is “you,” the person being asked the question. There are no obvious obstacles or goals specified in the question, but that is because the point of the question is to learn whether some obstacle keeps the agent from pursuing a particular goal. That is, when we ask someone whether he or she is free tonight, we are trying to determine whether anything—such as the need to study for a test, to go to work, or to keep a promise to someone else—prevents that person from doing something. If not, then the agent in this instance is free.

But what of *political* freedom? According to MacCallum, people have different views of what counts as freedom in politics because they identify A, B, and C in different ways. Let us examine each of these, beginning with the agent, proceeding to a consideration of the agent’s goals, and returning to examine the barriers or obstacles facing the agent in pursuing those goals.

The Agent. The agent can be an individual, a class, a group, a nation, a sex, a race, or even a species. As we shall see in Chapter 3, liberals typically talk of freedom as the freedom of the individual. Marx and the Marxists, by contrast, focus their attention on the freedom of a particular class—the working class (Chapter 5). Mussolini and the Italian Fascists identified the agent as a nation-state, and German fascists (Nazis) identified it as a race (Chapter 7). For feminists, the gender identity of the agent is all important (Chapter 8). And other ideologies identify the agent in different ways.

The Goal. Agents have goals. Different kinds of agents have different kinds of goals. A Nazi’s goal is the “purity” and supremacy of the white race. A communist’s goal is the achievement of a classless communist society. A liberal’s goal is for everyone to live in his or her own way, without undue interference from others. A feminist’s goal is to live in a society that recognizes and rewards the capacities and worth of women. And so on for all other ideologies.

Obstacles. In pursuing their goals, agents often encounter obstacles in their path. These obstacles can take a variety of forms—material or physical conditions (poverty or physical disabilities, for instance); crime; or social, political, and economic ideas, ideologies, institutions, practices, traditions, and beliefs. Women confront sexism and sexual discrimination. Communists confront the apathy and “**false consciousness**” of the workers and the economic and political power of the capitalist class. Nazis confront Jews, blacks, and other so-called inferior races. Ideologies also frequently view other ideologies as obstacles or barriers to be removed. Fascists, for instance, see the liberal emphasis on the individual and the socialist emphasis on equality as obstacles in the way of a united, disciplined, and free society. Whatever form the obstacles take, they must be overcome or removed. The more obstacles these agents can remove, the freer they will be. To the degree that they are unable to overcome the barriers, they are not free but “unfree.” When the individuals—or class or race or gender—a political ideology identifies as its agent are not free to realize their goals, then the ideology will call for action to remove the obstacles to their freedom. Throughout the history of political ideologies, that action has often taken the form of revolution.

IDEOLOGY AND REVOLUTION

In its original political use, the word “**revolution**” referred to a return to an earlier condition. Like the revolution of the earth around the sun, or a wheel turning full circle, a political revolution was a revolving back to a starting point. But after the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century, “revolution” took on a more radical meaning. The American Revolution began as an attempt to *restore* the colonists’ rights as Englishmen, but it ended with the creation of a new country with a new system of government. Then, while that new system was still taking shape, the French Revolution began with the intention not of returning to the old ways but of introducing a radically new social and political order. As we shall see in Chapter 3, this revolution went further than the men who launched it intended, and it ended in a way that none of them wanted. But it did bring about sweeping changes in the social, economic, and political life of France. Indeed, the French Revolution sent shock waves through all of Europe and much of the rest of the world, waves so strong that their effects are still felt today. One sign of this is the way political positions are now commonly described as **left**, **right**, or **center**. These terms come from the seating arrangements in the National Assembly of the revolutionary period. Those who favored more or less radical change congregated on the left side or “wing” of the chamber, and those who resisted change gathered on the right. That is why, even today, we talk of the right wing, the left wing, and the moderate centrists in politics.

Modern revolutionaries do not simply want to replace one set of rulers or leaders with another or to make minor changes or reforms in the political structure. Their aim is to overthrow the old order, which they believe to be fundamentally rotten or corrupt. Changes or reforms are not enough, in their view, if the government and society are diseased at the roots. When this is the case, they say, the only solution is to uproot the whole social order and replace it with something better. This is literally a radical approach, for the word “radical” comes from the Latin *radix*, meaning “root.”

Of course, people will not undertake anything so radical as a revolution unless they believe that it is indeed possible to bring about a fundamental change for the better in society. This is why conservatives tend to be suspicious of revolutions; their low estimate of human nature generally leads them to believe that sweeping improvements in society are practically impossible. Conservatism differs from the other ideologies in this respect, however. Almost all of the others hold that human reason and action can bring about great advances in society, politics, and the quality of life. Each ideology has its own idea of what counts as an advance or improvement, to be sure, but all except traditional or classical conservatism have been generally optimistic about the possibility of dramatic progress and significant improvement in the quality of human life.

In this respect, political ideologies are products of the modern world. In earlier times, most people had every reason to believe that their lives would be much the same as their parents’ and grandparents’ lives. Most people made their living from the soil or the sea, and changes in their ways of life were so slow in coming that they usually had little reason to believe that their children’s or grandchildren’s lives would be significantly different from their own. In the modern world, however, the pace of change has become so rapid that we now have “futurists” (or futurologists), who make careers of anticipating the changes to come; others, meanwhile, fear that they will not be able to adjust or keep up with change as their jobs and perhaps even their attitudes become

obsolete. For better or worse, we live in an age of innovation. And ours, for better or worse, is also an age of ideology.

Ideologies and innovation are connected in an important way. The scientific, technical, and even artistic advances that mark the beginnings of the modern world in Europe instilled in many people a faith in progress, a belief that life on earth could become far more rewarding for many more people than it had ever been before. Before people could enjoy the fruits of progress, however, society itself would have to be reordered. The old ways of life retarded progress, especially when they prevented creative and vigorous individuals from using their energies and initiative to improve life for themselves and others. So the institutions that upheld the old ways of life—notably the Roman Catholic Church and the economic order of feudalism—came under attack from those who sought to free individuals to make the most of themselves in a new world of opportunity, progress, and reason. This attack took a number of forms, including the philosophical movement known as the **Enlightenment**, which saw the world as something to be comprehended by human reason and perfected by human action.

The attack on the old ways of life also took the form, even before the Enlightenment, of liberalism, the first of the political ideologies. How liberalism arose as a protest against religious conformity and feudalism in the name of tolerance and opportunity is a story told in Chapter 3. For now, the important point is that first liberalism and later all of the other political ideologies except conservatism grew out of a conviction that human life and society can and should be dramatically changed. It is this conviction that inspires people to lead or join movements to reshape and even revolutionize their societies. It is this conviction, in short, that gives rise to political ideologies.

NATIONALISM, POPULISM, AND ANARCHISM

Three important political forces remain to be discussed in this introductory chapter. These forces—**nationalism**, **populism**, and **anarchism**—are sometimes considered ideologies in their own right. We disagree. Nationalism, populism, and anarchism take so many forms and are so entwined with so many different ideologies that we think it better not to treat them as distinct ideologies. Few nationalists are simply nationalists, for instance. They are, instead, liberal or conservative or communist or fascist nationalists. Likewise, populism appears in many different forms—right/left, agrarian/industrial, and the like. Anarchists are also divided, with most of them following either liberalism or socialism to their extreme conclusions. For these reasons, it seems better to weave the discussions of nationalism, populism, and anarchism into the discussions of those ideologies most closely connected with them. But first we need to have some idea of what nationalism, populism, and anarchism are.

Nationalism

One of the most powerful forces in modern politics, nationalism grows out of the sense that the people of the world fall more or less naturally into distinct groups, or nations. A person's nationality, in this view, is not something he or she chooses but something acquired at birth. Indeed, "nation" and "nationality" come from the Latin word *natus*, meaning "birth." A nation, then, is a group of people who in some sense share a common birth. In this way, a person's nationality may be separate from his or her citizenship.

A member of the Cherokee nation, for example, may also be a citizen of the United States. From the perspective of the ardent nationalist, however, nationality and citizenship *should not* be separate. The people who share a common birth—who belong to the same nation—should also share citizenship in the same political unit, or state. This is the source of the idea of the **nation-state**, a sovereign, self-governing political unit that binds together and expresses the feelings and needs of a single nation.

Although nationalistic sentiments have been present through much of history, they became especially powerful following the Napoleonic Wars of the early 1800s. As Napoleon's French armies conquered most of Europe, they stirred the resentment, and sometimes the envy, of many of the conquered peoples. This was particularly true in Germany and Italy, neither of which was then a unified country. Germany was a scattered collection of separate political units, ranging in size and strength from the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austrian Empire to tiny duchies or baronies ruled by the local nobility. Even so, the people of these scattered communities spoke a common language and shared a common literature, as well as many customs and traditions. Italy's condition was similar. The victories of Napoleon's armies—the victories of the French *nation*—created a backlash of sorts, then, by inspiring many people in Germany, Italy, and elsewhere to recognize their respective nationalities and to struggle for unified nation-states of their own.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this nationalistic struggle spread to virtually every part of the globe. Nationalistic sentiments and antagonisms helped to provoke World Wars I and II, for example, as well as the anticolonial “wars of national liberation” in Asia and Africa. For all their emotional power and political force, however, the ideas of nation and nationalism are plagued by difficulties. One is the difficulty of determining just what a nation is. What is it that marks a group of people as members of the same nationality? There is no clear answer to this question, although nationalists often appeal to such characteristics as shared race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, customs, or history. These traits, however, are themselves notoriously difficult to define.

Even if we can determine what nationality is, another difficulty remains for nationalism. Many states—Canada, Switzerland, and the United States among them—include people of apparently different nationalities. Should each group have its own state? Should Switzerland be taken apart, for instance, with France, Germany, and Italy absorbing the French-speaking, German-speaking, and Italian-speaking parts, respectively? Should this happen even though the Swiss seem to be prospering under their present arrangement? Or should we say that together they form a new nation, the Swiss? If so, when and how did these people, with their different languages and cultures, become a single nation?

Despite these difficulties, there is no doubt that many people not only feel the pull of national sentiment but also identify and orient themselves primarily in terms of nationality. These sentiments have been especially evident in the events following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. When the communist regimes that held together the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia fell, both countries split apart into states divided largely along lines of nationality. In those areas where no national group was powerful enough to establish an independent state, as in the Bosnian section of the former Yugoslavia, bitter warfare between former neighbors was the result. The tug of nationalism even pulled apart Czechoslovakia, which in the 1990s peacefully divided itself into a Czech and a Slovakian state. For all the difficulties of defining what a nation is, then, nationalism remains a real and powerful force in politics. In the 21st century the rapidly rising tide of tribalism and nationalism is closely connected with populism.

Populism

With the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the rise of right-wing populist parties in Europe, **populism** received a great deal of attention in the media and elsewhere, where it was often referred to as an ideology. Yet, like nationalism, populism is not an ideology in its own right. And that is because it is an empty vessel waiting to be filled with whatever “the people”—or at any rate the “right” or “real” or “ordinary” people—want at the moment. They might want to stop illegal (and, for some, even legal) immigration. They might want to tear down long-standing institutions, including political parties perceived to be “elitist” or “out of touch.” Or they might want to attack non-Christians such as Muslims or Jews. Or they might want to make the United States a “white Christian nation” with a constitutional amendment stating as much. And so on, through a long list.

Populism relies on what some call “tribal thinking”—an Us versus Them mentality—and rests on a single striking social dichotomy: the “virtuous people” versus the “corrupt elites.” Each has diametrically opposed interests. Each is the natural enemy of the other.

Current-day populism identifies a number of enemies. First and foremost, populists perceive **liberal democracy**—that is, the kind of democracy in which there are constitutional and legal limitations on what the majority may do (or what their leaders do in their name)—to be their sworn enemy. From this it follows that the ideas and institutions that constitute liberal democracy—a free press, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, the rights of minorities, and multiculturalism—are also enemies. The form of government favored by populists is sometimes called **illiberal democracy**. We discuss illiberal democracy in Chapter 2.

The term “populism” was coined in nineteenth-century America and was meant to contrast with “elitism.” As a rule, populists—then as now—were clearer about what they were *against* than what they were *for*. In the late nineteenth century, farmers and ranchers in the American west and Midwest believed, with good reason, that wealthy “eastern elites”—bankers, railroad magnates, and others—were riding roughshod over their economic interests, and most especially their ability to make a living. This ability was undermined by banks charging exorbitant interest rates on loans and railroads excessively high fees for taking their products to market. To fight back, they formed the Populist Party in 1892. Its platform included planks calling for a constitutional amendment to nationalize the railroads, for the national currency to be backed by silver instead of gold (see William Jennings Bryan’s 1896 “Cross of Gold” speech), for a prohibition on land speculation (so as not to drive up the cost of farmland), and others. Thus, “the people” at that time wanted very different things than they supposedly do now. And since there is little or no continuity in identifying the people’s wants over time, populism is not a particular and readily identifiable ideology. Or, to put the point another way, populism does not readily (if at all) perform the four functions that any ideology must perform.

We shall say more about populism in Chapter 7.

Anarchism

Contrary to popular misconception, anarchy does not mean chaos or confusion, nor do anarchists favor chaos and confusion. The word comes from the Greek *an archos*, meaning “no rule” or “no government.” An anarchist, then, is someone who advocates

abolishing the state and replacing its coercive force with voluntary cooperation among freely consenting individuals. As the anarchist sees it, government by its very nature is immoral and evil. All governments force people to do things they do not want to do—pay taxes, fight in wars, follow orders, and so on—so all governments engage in immoral, coercive actions. One could agree with this assessment, of course, yet maintain that government or the state is simply a necessary evil that people should continue to obey. But the anarchist believes that the state is not necessary but is simply evil. Given the chance, anarchists insist, people can live together peacefully and prosperously with no coercive authority over them.

All anarchists agree, then, that the state is an evil to be abolished in favor of a system of voluntary cooperation. But there the agreement ends. Some anarchists are radical individualists who advocate a competitive, capitalist—but stateless—society. Others are communalists who detest capitalism and believe that anarchism requires the common ownership and control of property. Some anarchists advocate the violent overthrow of the state; others are pacifists who believe that only a peaceful path can lead to a cooperative society. In other words, anarchism takes so many different forms—right, left, communist, capitalist-libertarian, feminist, ecological, violent, non-violent, etc.—that it is difficult to the point of impossibility to characterize and analyze it as a single ideology. The disagreements and differences among anarchists, in short, overwhelm the single point on which they agree. As one student of anarchism has said, “anarchism is not really *an* ideology but rather the point of intersection of several ideologies.”¹⁰ That is why instead of having a single chapter dealing with all the varieties of anarchism, we give each its due in different chapters. Thus, anarchism receives extensive treatment, though not in a chapter of its own.

Like nationalism, anarchism has played a major part in the development of modern political ideologies. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in particular, it was a potent political force in many parts of the world. Since then its influence has waned. Small bands of anarchists continue to argue that the state is immoral and that anarchy is possible, but few now take direct action against the state.

CONCLUSION

We began by noting how important ideologies are in the conflicts that characterize modern political life. We then defined “ideology” as a more or less coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that performs four functions for those who accept it: (1) it *explains* why social conditions are the way they are; (2) it *evaluates* those conditions; (3) it *orients* people so they can see how they fit into society; and (4) it *prescribes a program* for social and political action. In every ideology, moreover, there are core assumptions about *human nature* and *freedom*—assumptions that have led most ideologies, at one time or another, to call for revolution.

In later chapters we will examine the history and structure of different ideologies. Before doing that, however, we need to look more closely at *democracy*. As we explain in the following chapter, democracy is not itself an ideology but an *ideal* that different ideologies either reject outright or, more often, understand and pursue in different ways.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the triadic model of freedom? What are its parts, and how can they be used to analyze political ideologies?
2. What is a political ideology? In what ways is an ideology similar to, and in what ways different from, a scientific theory or a religion?
3. How do different ideologies arise in the first place?
4. Why are conceptions of or ideas about human nature and freedom so important to political ideologies?
5. Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill maintain that nationalism, populism, and anarchism are not political ideologies in their own right. Why do they say this?

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From the Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill Reader *Ideals and Ideologies*, Eleventh Edition

Part I: The Concept of Ideology

1.1 Terrell Carver—Ideology: The Career of a Concept

NOTES

1. Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 1.
2. As quoted in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 55.

3. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1936), p. 383.
4. For accounts of the origin and history of “ideology,” see Terrell Carver, “Ideology: The Career of a Concept,” in *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, eds. Terence Ball, Richard Dagger, and Daniel O’Neill, 11th ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), selection 1.1; Mark Goldie, “Ideology,” in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 266–291; and George Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology, and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1967).
5. For further discussion of the relationship between political philosophies and political ideologies, see Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 27–46.
6. Philip Converse, “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,” in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (New York: Free Press, 1964).
7. Arthur Koestler et al., *The God That Failed*, ed. R. H. S. Crossman (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972; originally published 1949).
8. For a detailed explanation of this term, see W. B. Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1955–1956): 167–198. This seminal and oft-anthologized essay has generated an enormous secondary scholarly literature.
9. Gerald MacCallum, Jr., “Negative and Positive Freedom,” *Philosophical Review* 76 (1967): 312–334. This now-classic essay is reprinted in numerous anthologies, including David Miller, ed., *The Liberty Reader* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), pp. 100–122.
10. David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: Dent, 1984), p. 3.

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

Winston Churchill

For most of recorded human history, “democracy” was reviled as rule by the mob or by the unwashed and ignorant. By contrast, one of the most striking features of contemporary politics is the almost universal popularity of democracy. There are few people nowadays, whether major political leaders or ordinary citizens, who do not praise (or at least pay lip service to) democracy and claim to be democrats. Except for fascists, Nazis, and radical Islamists, in fact, almost everyone seems to agree that democracy is desirable. But this agreement comes in the midst of vigorous, sometimes violent, ideological conflict. How can this be? How can men and women of almost all ideological persuasions—liberal and socialist, communist and conservative—share this belief in the value of democracy?

One possible explanation is to say that many people use the word “democracy” in a hypocritical or deceptive way. Democracy is so popular that everyone will try to link his or her ideology, whatever it may be, to democracy. The formal title of East Germany before the collapse of its communist regime in 1989–1990 was the German Democratic Republic, for instance. Yet the government of this “democracy” strictly limited freedom of speech and effectively outlawed competition for political office. With this and other examples in mind, some critics have complained that the word “democracy” has been misused so often as to rob it of any clear meaning.

A second explanation is that followers of different ideologies simply have different ideas about how to achieve democracy. Almost all agree that democracy is a good thing, but they disagree on how best to bring it about. Most people in the United States regard a dictatorship as an obviously undemocratic regime, but Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party for more than forty years, maintained that his government was a “people’s democratic dictatorship.” Mao apparently saw no contradiction in this term because he believed that China needed a period of dictatorship to prepare the way for democracy. Perhaps, then, there is a genuine and widespread agreement that democracy is the true *end* or *goal* of ideological activity, with disagreement arising only over the proper *means* for achieving that end.

Although there may be merit in both of these positions, we think that a third explanation provides a deeper insight into the problem. This is that different people quite