THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY
UNDER THATCHER

by

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ABSTRACT

In the postwar era, there has been a change in the nature of the British Conservative Party caused by the adoption of classical liberal ideas antithetical to its principles. This trend rapidly accelerated during the leadership of the Party by Margaret Thatcher who appeared oblivious to the fundamental incompatibility of liberalism and conservatism. She attempted to weld them together in her economic and social policies creating strong internal tensions within what was dubbed "Thatcherism". This clash became more pronounced as her reign as British Prime Minister continued and was part of the reason for her eventual downfall at the hands of her own party.

To illustrate the conversion of the Conservative Party to a more liberal standpoint we will consider two modern day political thinkers and the popularity of their positions. This approach is taken because their philosophies parallel the thinking of the postwar Conservative Party before Thatcher and under Thatcher’s leadership. Michael Oakeshott, who fits into the conservative tradition and Friedrich Hayek, who embodies liberalism. Oakeshott’s philosophy is in sharp contrast at important points to the ideas of Hayek, a self-confessed and proud liberal, whose ideas nevertheless found favour within the Conservative Party while many integral parts of conservatism, of which Oakeshott is a representative, were pushed aside.

The stridency and harshness with which Thatcher preached the doctrine of economic liberalism and ideology and also tried to retain certain conservative ideals such as, authority,
nationalism and militarism constituted a serious and damaging tension within her programme as well as demonstrating the depth of the change that had occurred in the Conservative Party. This thesis seeks to point out these changes and illustrate the adverse effects caused by attempting to turn the Conservative Party into a promoter of classical liberal ideology and thereby partially explain the increasing shakiness of Thatcherism in the 1980's. Even though its leader never lost faith in its convictions or her determination to translate them into concrete policies.
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CHAPTER 1

When Margaret Thatcher stepped down as Prime Minister of Great Britain in November 1990 because of the lack of support and confidence of the members of her party, it signified a change in the direction of the Conservative Party and the country. Perhaps it can be said that her defeat and the backlash against her policies, most notably the poll tax and her resistance to Britain's more complete integration into the EEC, was at least a partial consequence of the fundamental incongruities and tensions within her political philosophy.

The main contention of this thesis is that the policies and rhetoric of the Conservative Party changed dramatically in the postwar period in response to what was perceived to be the failure of Keynesian social democracy to function properly and successfully. The focus shifted from trying to manage the economy in a technocratic, impartial manner in which consensus and harmony were the keynotes, to bitter ideological polarization between the Labour and Conservative parties in the 1970's and 80's, with each side promoting its own views as the solution to Britain's economic decline. Under Margaret Thatcher the neo-liberalism of the political right became dominant within the Party and those members who did not believe in the Thatcherite vision of Britain's future often offered no resistance because
they wanted to gain or maintain positions of power and authority within the government and the Party.

However, there was a problem with the ascendancy of the new hardline right within the Conservative Party as is indicated by the name "neo-liberalism". What Thatcher tried to do was to fuse the doctrine of classical market liberalism with traditional conservatism. I believe such an attempted fusion was unwise because liberalism and conservatism are polar opposites in their aspirations, for example, the liberal belief in the overwhelming importance of freedom is hostile to the conservative emphasis on authority and tradition. Perhaps the chief difference separating the two is that liberalism is a strongly ideological doctrine while conservatism is notable for its' emphasis on pragmatism and for its' aversion to ideology. The consequence of these contradictory goals appears to me to have only aggravated the worsening political and economic situation of Britain, rendering it more difficult to find a viable solution.

The change in the nature of the Conservative Party was first apparent in conservative thought where this unusual combination of conservatism and liberalism was formulated. Keith Joseph, Thatcher's ideological mentor, who was primarily responsible for her conversion to neo-liberalism and monetarism, crystallized many of the sentiments and ideas she was drawn towards. It was Joseph's influence and support that helped to give her the determination to propose and implement her policies.

My thesis is concerned with exploring the magnitude of the changes the Conservative Party has undergone in the postwar era
in its thinking and its policies and linking these changes in nature to the Party's adoption of some of the tenets of classical liberalism. A harmonious co-existence between liberal ideology and conservatism within the Conservative Party was attempted and many conservatives, such as Thatcher, did not see any conflict between these two philosophies. However, conservatism and liberalism have different goals and attitudes concerning politics and society which are often at odds with each other. Therefore, my first chapter is primarily concerned with setting out what I believe to typify the traditional conservatism which was dominant prior to Thatcherism and the basic elements of the new conservatism of which Thatcher was an exponent. By examining the differences between liberalism and conservatism we can see the tensions that existed within Thatcherism and often prevented the achievement of its stated goals or aims, to the detriment of the Conservative Party. This juxtaposition of liberal and conservative ideas permeated the Thatcher years and was apparent, for example, when the government said it was deeply committed to freedom and that freedom was the basis of its' policies (previously, freedom had not been a common Conservative concern). However, in reality the government was quite authoritarian, autocratic and willing to eliminate the freedom of individuals and institutions it saw as undermining its' ambitions.

The second and third chapters of my thesis involve looking at two modern day political philosophers who have been associated with both conservatism and the Conservative Party, in an effort to underscore the extent of the changes the Conservative Party
has experienced in a very short time period. Michael Oakeshott has more in common with the traditional brands of conservatism and Friedrich Hayek with Thatcher's type of conservatism. Hayek is in reality a liberal and his adoption by the Conservative Party under the influence of Thatcher illustrates the extent to which the marriage of conservative and liberal philosophy was taken. Oakeshott, on the other hand, fits more readily into conservatism as it has been historically perceived. Hayek's popularity and approval by the proponents of Thatcherism indicates the degree to which the Thatcherite view of conservatism deviates from its roots and the extremes the Party has gone to in order to reverse the economic decline of Britain.

I am looking to Oakeshott and Hayek's philosophies to provide a parallel to the transition the Party has undergone and to shed some light on the positions espoused during the Thatcher era and how they differed from its' past stances. Therefore, I want to make it clear that I am not proposing that either Oakeshott or Hayek advised Mrs. Thatcher or the Conservative Party on matters of policy or correct party principles, since this is obviously not the case. Only that their thought has been associated in some relevant ways with conservatism and the Conservative Party. Oakeshott and Hayek's writings differ from each other in important aspects with one leaning heavily towards liberalism and the other towards conservatism and consequently, I have relied upon them to illustrate some of the major shifts in the Party's political thinking between the pre-Thatcher and the Thatcher periods of the twentieth century. Bearing in mind that
there is some overlap between the ideas of the two thinkers, I believe their writings and ideas can be profitably utilized as a method of pointing out these changes. I have identified Oakeshott with a style of conservatism that had been common in the Party prior to the advent of Thatcherism; in this conservatism, skepticism, anti-ideology and pragmatism were held in high esteem. His philosophy elaborates on the merits of such concepts and the dangers of ones he believes are contrary to these conservative values, for example, ideology, rationalism, liberalism and even democracy.

It should be kept in mind, however, that Oakeshott does not embody or espouse every idea or value that has been associated with either conservatism or the Conservative Party. Such a total alignment would not be possible for two main reasons. Firstly, because the Party does not try and never has tried to conform to a rigid set of characteristics. This is something that has been more prevalent in parties founded upon a clear set of principles. The Labour Party corresponds more closely to this particular pattern, whereas, the Conservatives found this approach an anathema and have purposely been anti-ideological and pragmatic in reaction to the ideological nature of both liberalism and socialism. Conservatives viewed ideology as destructive and simplistic and the result has been that a wide variety of positions have traditionally been encompassed within the Party. Therefore, it is difficult to find a set number of standard features to which Conservatives and conservative thinkers conform. It was quite commonplace to say that the Conservative
Party was more easily distinguished by what it was against than what it was for in politics. As a result, the Conservative Party does not have certain known and explicit tenets and this makes it impossible to have a wholly conservative thinker. As Oakeshott himself has said, it is not specific beliefs about the world or society that identify someone as conservative but rather their disposition.¹ The second reason that Oakeshott cannot fall perfectly in line with conservatism is that he has a quite pronounced side to his thought that carries elements of liberalism. His advocacy of a free market economy, the rule of law and his stress on a concept of freedom are common liberal sentiments he supports. However, I don't think this constitutes any grave problems in relying on Oakeshott to illustrate conservative thinking prior to the 1970's. I believe problems raised concerning Oakeshott's liberalism are surmountable because the Conservative Party does not have a distinct character and because of Oakeshott's own beliefs that a person does not have to subscribe to certain beliefs to be considered conservative. To Oakeshott, such a view of matters would mean that conservatism and the Party had become rationalist and ideological and no different from all the other political parties.

These observations about Oakeshott are also applicable to Hayek because he is not a paradigm liberal although, this discrepancy is not as pronounced as it is in Oakeshott. Hayek has a conservative strain that surfaces in his writings. In fact, when he discusses knowledge and his view that not all knowledge is explicit or can be written down but that knowledge is divided
into two realms, his thought parallels Oakeshott's theory of knowledge. Hayek's understanding of knowledge also leads him to defend the value and worth of traditions which is something that had been prominent in the history of the Conservative Party. Hayek's position on knowledge and traditions is summarized below by Shirley Robin Letwin.

Any understanding, whether of politics or of science depends on a fund of habits, conventions, languages, and moral beliefs - what Hayek calls "unarticulated rules" do not spring full-blown from this or that man's head, but formulate an understanding which already exists and which will continue to give to what has been self-consciously articulated.2

Hayek's regard for customs and conventions although it is not without qualifications, in addition to his theory that civilization was the result of human action but not design3 (an attack on socialism and the faith in man's reason) lends Hayek's liberalism a conservative aura.

Although, Oakeshott is a better exemplar of traditional conservatism than Hayek, traditional conservatism also failed to reverse or improve Britain's economic situation which is one of the reasons why Thatcherism arose and was so hostile towards traditional conservatism. To understand why the neo-liberalism of Thatcher was able to get such a firm foothold in British politics in the late 1970's, a brief synopsis of post World War II politics and economics will be sketched out.

Prelude to Thatcherism (The Demise of Keynesian Social Democracy)

The wartime experience had a tremendous moral and mental
impact on England as a whole and it unified the nation in a new way. The success of the coalition government in putting aside partisan differences and concentrating all their energies on victory and mobilizing economic resources proved that the state could have a beneficial effect on the economy and did not necessarily have to be an evil that should be kept as limited as possible and not allowed to interfere in the economic sphere of life. The war was also a turning point because it had a levelling effect on the population. The threat of defeat and the desire to save the nation made citizens from all classes and ways of life seem equal to one another. And with the Allied victory in 1945 the sacrifices that had been required of the nation had to be repaid. The public would not accept a return to the old way of life as it had after World War I and it was from this situation that the welfare state sprang. It was an attempt to promote greater equality among its citizens, not just equality of economic opportunity but equality of condition as espoused by thinkers like R.H. Tawney. The welfare state promised and seemed to deliver this through universal medical care, education, protection from unemployment and the provision for the needs of old age.

The nature and invention of the British welfare state owed much to the economist John Keynes. The fundamental principle of Keynesian economic theory was to solve the problem of unemployment by demand management. During the period from 1945 to the mid 1970's, it was common to think of the economy as
something which was akin to the running of a business corporation. Technical skills were what was needed in government, and political differences and ideology were thought by many to be irrelevant. The mainstream of the Labour and Conservative parties appeared to have more in common than they had ever had in the past and both had accepted the welfare state and Keynesian economics. The stress was on economic growth and progress and the maintenance of full employment.

However, Britain was not as successful as it had wished in achieving growth rates and keeping economically competitive with other Western countries. Most Western nations were surpassing Britain and indeed, the U.S. and Germany had done so since the beginning of the twentieth century. Problems with imposing incomes policies on unions and fears of being trapped in the "stop-go" economic cycle became more prevalent. In combination with the onset of the recession of the 1970's, the oil crisis, rising inflation and the increasing uncontrollability of the unions, the foundations of Keynesianism started to crumble. In response to this predicament, ideological politics resurfaced. Since Britain's economic situation had deteriorated under Keynesianism it appeared logical to members of the political left and right that the "middle way" was unviable and therefore, a new political strategy was needed. On the left, it was believed that Keynesian economics had not gone far enough and that true socialism would provide the answer. Consequently, the radical left within the Labour Party become much more pronounced and vocal. Conversely, on the right, the collapse of Keynesianism was
seen as absolute proof that socialism in any guise did not work. They argued that socialism was undermining the British economy as well as limiting the rights and opportunities of its citizens. Freedom and liberty had become victims of "creeping socialism". What was desperately needed was a return to the competitive free market and a radical diminution of state power.

Neither the analysis of the right, nor that of the left of the failure of Keynesianism are necessarily correct. Keynesianism should not bear the brunt of the criticism for Britain's damaged economy. It is common knowledge that Britain's decline began in the late 1800's and that while Keynesianism may not have turned the country around, it was not the cause of its woes. Writers like David Marquand offer a more realistic explanation of the causes of the failure of Keynesian economics. Specifically, in Marquand's book, *The Unprincipled Society*, the problem is pinpointed as a disparity between doctrine and reality in both the government and the business and industrial sectors of England. Because England had been the leader and innovator of the Industrial Revolution and it had in the early phase an unquestioned dominance over most aspects of industry and trade, it could afford to preach the doctrine of the free market and the importance of the the sovereign individual to the market. But, as time passed, other countries, particularly Germany and the U.S., overtook Britain and eventually many British products and previous innovations became outdated and obsolete.

Marquand's analysis is very useful here because he reveals that Britain dealt with this change in its circumstances by
basically burying its head in the sand and refusing to abandon its liberal individualist view of society and follow the successful examples of Germany and the U.S. in using the state as a method of directing the economy towards competitiveness and to encourage research and development to produce further innovations. It was reluctant to adopt tariff barriers to protect its vulnerable industries because this seemed to be a repudiation of what Britain had stood for and an admission that it was no longer a powerful empire. Britain also refused to accept its change in status to a second rate power. Marquand's basic, and I think correct contention, is that neither neo-liberalism nor neo-socialism address the true nature of Britain's poor economic condition and instead constitute unhelpful evasions.

The humiliation of the Callaghan government during the 1978-79 "Winter of Discontent" (when a series of strikes by public service unions broke out over the attempt by the government to impose further incomes policies) caused severe damage to Labour's claim to be the best equipped party to run the country. The unions, who were Labour's traditional base of support and allies, were no longer even trying to work in concert with the government for the public good. The Conservatives, and especially their neo-liberal leader Margaret Thatcher, did not hesitate to take advantage of this state of affairs.

This paper focuses on the beliefs and rhetoric the Conservative Party under Thatcher had employed to justify its' liberal-oriented policies and how this is a significant change in
the nature of conservatism which has affected the Party. However, these changes are unlikely to reverse Britain's economic downturn.

THE HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF CONSERVATISM

To comprehend the different character of conservatism during the Thatcher period we must get an overview of its' traditional features and some of its historical background and context.

The philosophy and practice of conservatism began to take a firm shape as a reaction to the French Revolution. The rapid changes that had occurred destroying traditional French society were considered with fear by important sections of British society. As Frederick Watkins describes it, these people started to rally around traditional British ideals which buttressed and supported the structure of society. This movement congealed into conservatism which consciously put itself in opposition to the liberalism of the Revolution. It also claimed to have the virtue of being able to distinguish reality from theory and ideology. And therefore, not subject to what they believed to be the misguided and dangerous fantasies that had propelled the French Revolution and other emerging ideologies.

From the historic circumstances of conservatism's emergence came certain key concepts and ideas that distinguish conservatism as conservatism. I will set out what I believe these features
consist of, following the approach of Michael Freeden and his "cluster concept".

Foremost among these features, is that conservatism has always tried to present itself as an anti-ideology in opposition to an ideology. As part of the reaction to the French Revolution which conservatives believed was fuelled by ideology, they have tried to keep away from formulating a set code of ideas concerning man and society. According to conservatives, this posture has allowed conservatism to remain fluid and adapt and change to meet the needs of the nation and foster its growth. Other political parties are accused of putting their own narrow and self-interested needs above those of the country as a whole and maintaining an inflexible adherence to ideology. The role ideology has in other major parties is seen as intrinsic to them, a part of their nature which they cannot escape because they are based upon definite aims and goals. Ian Gilmour, uses a helpful analogy to explain the nature of the Conservative Party which also applies to conservatism in general.

The Tory Party is more like an archaeological site on which successive generations have left layer upon layer of structure and remains each layer being different from the others, but having certain common characteristics imposed upon it by the geography and topography of the site. 4

Closely related to conservatism's anti-ideology is its emphasis on practice and not theory, in the hope of being able to better deal with reality. Conservatism claims to want to understand the world as it is, not as they or others wish it to be. Their avoidance of abstraction and ideology is intended to
allow them to assess the situation more accurately; they believe they are then better positioned than other parties to adapt to changing circumstances and therefore, to allow for the gradual piecemeal improvement of society.

The attitude of traditional conservatism towards change in general is strongly influenced by its position on practice and reality. Their reasoning dictates that only small well-considered improvements to society brought about through the legal/judicial process are beneficial. Radical and large-scale changes such as those evident in revolutions are destined to fail and also leave society in a worse-off position than before because the changes they impose do not correspond to the reality of society but rather how they wish society and mankind to be. The decision by the state to embark upon a change in the structure of society should only be contemplated after the traditional methods and institutions have failed. Oakeshott is a good example of a conservative who espouses this attitude to change and he has often contrasted it with revolutionary change. Oakeshott would concur with Nisbet's following assessment of the pitfalls of change.

What Burke and his successors have fought is what he called 'the spirit of innovation'; that is the idle worship of change for its own sake. In one his speeches, Disraeli, often pointed to by conservatives as an excellent representative of conservative tradition, gives a clear exposition of the correct and incorrect way to approach change.

In a progressive country change is constant and the great
question is not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether that change should be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws and the traditions of a people or whether it should be carried out in deference to abstract principle and arbitrary and general doctrines.

The type of change favoured by conservatives points to the high value placed on stability and order in society. A major reason why there is the preference for stability and slow gradual change is to maintain the structure of society and this desire for the preservation of society stems mainly from self-interest. Traditionally, the Conservative Party has been composed of men of wealth and property who have also ruled the nation. The ideas disseminated during the French Revolution were a threat to their power and way of life and the clear formulation of conservatism was a defensive manoeuvre to protect themselves.

Another idea common to conservatism is the notion of the organic society. The conception of society as an organic entity similar to a living organism, strengthens the idea of a hierarchy in social life and is a justification of the wide differences of wealth and standards of living in a nation. Like an organism which has different parts to perform different functions, a natural hierarchy occurs in society which gives order to life by giving every person a certain role and place in that society. The promotion of hierarchy is important in conservatism because it preserves the status quo, as does the institution of private property.

The existence of private property generally means that there will be quite large differences in the amount of property
individual citizens possess. Those who have greater amounts of property also have greater power and influence which reinforces stratification within society. Conservatism likes to propose that private property acts as a stabilizer in society and that it promotes individual freedom. Those with greater wealth, of course, have many more choices and freedom than other citizens which is why conservatives find it attractive. However, they tend to argue that it enhances the freedom of all because everyone has at least the chance of amassing greater property and wealth, thereby increasing their opportunities. By employing reasoning like this conservatism tries to combine some element of freedom with its main concerns of authority and stability. Implicit in conservative thought is that greater freedom in society accrues to those at the top end of society. Not until Thatcherism was it seriously put forward that conservatism meant equal freedom for all as well as authority.

Conservatism has tried to make the political and economic inequalities it embodies more palatable with the concept of "noblesse oblige", the idea that the wealthy have duties and responsibilities for others less fortunate than themselves. This paternal, collectivist side of conservatism which manifested itself in the protection of the lower classes, underwent a transformation in the late 19th and 20th centuries to adapt to a new formation of society. A stronger more positive role for the state was enunciated to compensate for the decline in power and responsibility of the landed aristocracy, which had been in large part displaced by the new commercial class of the Industrial
Revolution.

Even though conservatism is not opposed to a strong state they try to mitigate the state's opportunity for abuse of its power by favouring a limited state in addition to a decentralized political structure and independent local governments. There is a concern in conservative literature and thought to maintain the dividing line between the public and private spheres of life. The state should be supreme in the public sphere but it should not be allowed to overstep its bounds. A strong state which upholds the rule of law and carries out its legitimate functions and maintains the rights of its citizens but at the same time lets the private sphere and society develop to its fullest potential is the conservative ideal.

One way of protecting society from overbearing state interventions is the existence of a multitude of diverse and vigorous private institutions that can act as both a buffer and a link between citizens and the state. The admiration of variety and diversity in society is mirrored by a corresponding diversity within conservative thought. There are a considerable number of positions and strains within conservatism itself and this fits in with its proposition that it is an anti-ideology; being an ideology would entail a strict adherence to dogma. This particular line of reasoning was basically unchallenged until the rise of Thatcherism. Ironically, the Conservative Party under Thatcher has been extremely hostile to diversity both within the Party and in society.
THE IDEOLOGY, BELIEFS AND FORMATION OF THATCHERISM

Under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative Party has incorporated into itself principles that are liberal in origin while at the same time attempting to maintain some of the traditional conservative ideals. The manner in which values that were generally thought of as at opposite ends of the political spectrum were combined garnered them the appellation of "Thatcherism" because Margaret Thatcher was ferociously determined to put them in effect during her tenure as Prime Minister.

The success of this particular conception has meant that many of the traits and features that had made the Conservative Party recognizable were no longer present, or at least submerged. Therefore, I think that the Conservative Party under Thatcher went too far and absorbed ideas that were incompatible and too much at odds with each other which created a dangerous tension within it. This tension was also heightened by Thatcher in trying to impose liberalism on the Party which meant also trying to impose an ideology on it, something which was inimical to conservatism.

Central to this tension was the attempt to promote both authority and liberty. The Conservative Party has traditionally been the party of authority with liberty and freedom playing subordinate roles, as I discussed previously. Conservatives are interested in retaining the freedom of a small, exclusive section of society. Maurice Cowling, a well-known adherent of
conservatism clearly expresses the type of freedom conservatives desire and how this is radically different from the freedom of liberal ideology.

In the conservative conception of freedom ... there is a great deal of double-talk and many layers of concealed consciousness. Conservatives, if they begin to talk about freedom long enough begin to believe that is what they want. But it is not freedom that conservatives want, what they want is the sort of freedom that will maintain existing inequalities or restore lost ones so far as political action can do this.7

Thatcherism can be grouped in as part of movement termed the New Right. The supporters of a more right wing and classical liberal style of government and economics have always been present but it was the discrediting of Keynesian economics and its social policy that allowed it to undergo a strong resurgence in the 70's and 80's. Hayek formed part of the contingent of the New Right and Thatcher was influenced by its ideas, especially Hayek's, primarily through the intermediary of Keith Joseph.

According to the New Right, the economic condition Britain found itself in was due to the policies of Keynesian social democracy which had promoted inefficiency, waste and inflation. Therefore, Thatcher's stated intention to turn Britain around economically meant decisively repudiating major elements of Keynesian economic and social policy. The discipline of the market was believed to be the instrument that would correct Britain's economy, and its workings would also solve social problems by forcing individuals to take care of themselves and their families. The Thatcherite claim advanced was that only under a truly competitive market system could the freedom of
individuals, freedom meaning the capacity to enter into market transactions unhindered by state interference, be realized and upheld. The reimposition of market forces would thrust Britain out of its economic decline and also allow it to reassert its proper position as a leader in the world political stage. If the market was re-established, Thatcher and her followers were convinced that a healthier society would develop.

Her vision is that of a 'world in which small businesses could compete freely for the favours of the individual family consumer; in which the state keeps law and order, including the elements of a moral order to protect family decency and provide succor for the genuinely unfortunate who cannot help themselves.'

These ideals, so central to Thatcherism, are predominantly liberal in character and so conflict with conservative ideas such as authority, tradition and the notion of the duties owed by fellow citizens to one another. As a result, many liberal and conservative ideas cancel each other out.

VICTORIAN VALUES

The liberal ideas adopted as part of Thatcherism were not new but instead were a throwback to the Victorian era during the Industrial Revolution in the 1800's. Common to both the Victorian and Thatcher eras were the exhortations to cultivate such virtues as thrift, self-reliance and industry. Thatcher believed that their importance had been forgotten. A connection between these two eras is evidenced in the view that an individual's economic hardship or financial difficulties were almost always the result
of some personal failing of the individual, and if they had cultivated these virtues, they could have avoided such ills. The moral character of an individual was directly related to the amount of wealth he or she possessed.

This aspect of Victorian liberalism was consciously carried over into the Thatcherite project because it allowed the government to displace the responsibilities it had accumulated over time onto individual citizens. The state was to be the "nightwatchman" of liberal myth, guarding society against external threats and providing law and order within society but other than this, little else. In an effort to quell protest against the attempted shedding of the state's responsibilities, I believe Thatcher purposely reintroduced moral categories into politics in which citizens were classified in Bob Jessop's words, as either productive or parasitic. The parasitic sectors of society included ethnic minorities and much of the non-skilled working class outside the South-East. Therefore, the groups that faced the worst economic circumstances were labelled as undeserving of help.

In tandem with the classical liberal or Victorian virtues, was the reassertion of certain individual "rights". Namely, freedom, equality of opportunity and the abolition of any remaining privileges of the aristocracy and the upper class. What this basically meant was that Thatcherism wanted to remove the shackles that had interfered with the running of the "undistorted" free market. Thatcherite freedom constituted freedom from restrictions, therefore, individuals needed to be
made equal in the eyes of the law and this is why Thatcherites, unlike other more traditional conservatives, were not tolerant of the privileges and customs of the upper class. According to their analysis, it was the traditional English class system that had been one of the chief culprits preventing the existence of a fully fledged free market economy. At the core of the Thatcherite vision of England was a country where all individuals, regardless of class or status, were forced through the imperatives of the market to become productive wealth-creating individuals. But because Britain is a class-ridden society it was difficult for individuals to use their talents productively and according to Thatcher, the triumph of the class system made it inevitable that Britain would be caught up in a dangerous economic decline.

Although the effects of a market economy of the type that Thatcher promoted might seem unnecessarily harsh, Conservatives tried to justify it (again in the terminology and logic of the Victorian era) on the grounds that it actually increased the wealth and security of all members of society because of the amount of revenue generated when competitive market forces were not hindered. Halsey adeptly explains the type of thinking that was promoted by Thatcherites in the following quotation.

It was argued that a successful nation like a wise family, doesn't prosper by sharing out what it has but by giving the best shares to those capable of enterprise, who will in turn create wealth for the weaker members. Economic growth through the enterprise society, not equality in economic decline, was the best path to a desirable future.10

This line of reasoning was helpful to Thatcherism in condemning the redistribution of wealth especially through instruments like
progressive taxation. It also fits well with the ideas of classical liberal writers like Hayek.

AUTHORITY AND LIBERTY

The liberal values incorporated into Thatcherism made it impossible for it to be a viable strategy or ideology because it was at odds with conservative values such as paternalism, authoritarianism, militarism and patriotism already present in the Conservative Party. The end result was that the most unappealing features of each were combined. As Andrew Gamble put it "... Britain has been moving both towards a freer, more competitive, more open economy and towards a more repressive, more authoritarian state." An illustration of this incompatibility is shown in Thatcher's attitudes towards voluntary organizations. Traditionally, conservatives, of whom Oakeshott is a prominent one, have placed a high value on these institutions as a way of maintaining the richness and diversity of society and protecting the citizens from the state. But Thatcher tried to eliminate the power and influence of these institutions because she saw them as a threat to the new order she was trying to establish. This hostility towards intermediary institutions was made abundantly clear in the 1988 Local Government Act which radically limited the power and influence of these decentralized governments so that they could not block her policies or put up effective resistance to them. She also abolished the Greater London Council because the Labour Party was very influential
within it, as well as local governments in the rest of the country.

Not only was local government threatened but other institutions integral to British society such as the universities, trade unions and media came under attack. Freedom of expression was severely curtailed in the Thatcher era because of a fear that the opinions and ideas of institutions and individual citizens would undermine the Thatcherite programme.

The tension between authority and liberty is obvious when we consider that one of the primary aims of Thatcher was to restore liberty and freedom (meaning freeing individuals from restrictions and government interference) but in her attempts to do so she strengthened the coercive powers of the state and limited the freedom of both individuals and institutions. Thatcher tried to retain both liberal and conservative elements in her ideology when it would have made more sense for her to choose only one. For example, the conservative element of patriotism was visible throughout Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister and was especially prominent during the Falklands War. In the Falklands War, Thatcher effectively used the patriotism and militarism the war had evoked to strengthen her chances of re-election. Her resistance to integration in the European Community was a more enduring example of patriotism and nationalism. On the other hand, she suppressed the conservative belief in paternalism and the concept of duty which would have entailed the subscription to a stronger role for the state in the area of welfare and social services.
Part of the reason for Thatcher's failure to see the conflict between a heavy reliance on both liberal doctrine and conservatism is that in the immediate postwar period there were prominent thinkers such as Hayek who were anxious to stop what they saw as the advancement of totalitarian forms of government. Totalitarian governments could be either fascist or socialist in nature (although, these writers saw socialism as the major threat) and because they were opposed to socialism these liberal writers became mistakenly aligned with conservatism in many people's eyes. In Maurice Cowling's words, for the Conservative Party this situation was "tactically desirable so far as it fused the conservative and liberal criticisms of socialism [but] it had undesirable effects so far as it presented the political problem in a liberal language which obscured its nature."\textsuperscript{12} The synthesis of liberalism and conservatism, liberty and authority brought ideas that were alien into traditional conservatism and attempted to change it into an ideology. Cowling again provides an enlightening look at the position of postwar conservatism.

The difficulty about postwar antitotalitarianism is that it has brought into conservative thinking bodies of opinion which are not primarily concerned with the formulation of a conservative political position. They leave the impression of by-passing or avoiding the political problem and of lending themselves too readily to the idea that in some exclusive way freedom is the ultimate value.\textsuperscript{13}

As I mentioned before, there is an element of freedom in traditional conservatism but it is vastly different from that promoted by liberalism which is ultimately connected to the free market economy and often sees any form of restriction upon
individuals as diminishing freedom. It is primarily a negative freedom and it also has a more egalitarian conception of freedom than conservatism which generally has more sympathy with inequality.

THE RESULTS OF THATCHERITE IDEOLOGY

During Thatcher's tenure in office she had the opportunity to put into practice the ideas she had acquired during her political development and to attempt to reverse the economic position of Britain. Although she was very vague during the 1979 election and the year or so afterwards about what her specific policy goals were, when she became more secure in her position as the leader of both the Party and the country, she started to implement her ideas. The unwillingness to be more explicit about what her policies would involve, in retrospect, appears to stem from a concern not to scare off members of the Conservative Party who were not firm supporters and the country in general with the radical nature of her political programme.

However, her determination to dismantle what remained of Keynesianism soon became apparent in her stance on unemployment. Thatcher withdrew from the commitment to full employment and made the control of inflation a major priority. It was claimed that the government could not have full employment and at the same time keep down inflation. And inflation was perceived as the principal threat to the economy. The employment rate climbed rapidly during this period and ironically, the Thatcher
government was obliged to increase its welfare spending to deal with this new group of unemployed people. Selective welfare spending had always been one of the Keynotes of Thatcherism and fitted in with the Thatcherite belief that individuals who were undeserving of aid because they were lazy and scroungers were the main recipients of welfare benefits.

The people hit hardest by these policies were inevitably those at the bottom of the economic scale. Even though Thatcher tried to terminate the privileges and benefits received by those at the higher end of the economic scale and of traditional public school and upper class background, it was the working class, particularly the unskilled working class, that was the main victim. An underclass of basically disenfranchised people grew in number which increased the tension and conflict between the classes and minorities as became very clear during the race riots of the early 1980's. Thatcher was not at all averse to such a development, but used it to her advantage in playing one group off against another while at the same time attempting to decrease the state's responsibility towards society. The existence of this new underclass did not concern Thatcher because it was not strong enough to dislodge her from power.

Thatcher also tried to convert individuals to her way of thinking through such tactics as the sale of council houses to those of the working class in an effort to bring about their "embourgeoisement". In aid of the furtherance of this plan, the buying of shares in private companies was also encouraged. Many of these companies had been newly denationalized by the
government in the largest program of wholesale privatization that had ever occurred in British history. Thatcher was convinced nationalized companies were inefficient and unprofitable and that privatization would make them competitive and strengthen the economy.

The attack on trade unions is one example of Thatcherism's dislike of intermediary institutions; but trade unions were also used as a scapegoat on which to blame economic failure. The hatred of the unions symbolized the overall decrease in the amount of freedom that took place under Thatcherism. Civil liberties were decreased as state and police power were increased in the effort to remould society to fit the ideals of Thatcherism. Such a vision falls closely in line with Hayek's ideas about what constitutes a free market society and what both of them were advocating involved a huge change in the structure of society as was evident during Thatcher's Prime Ministership. This was ironic because even though Thatcher and Hayek were motivated by the desire to maintain and expand freedom, the methods they favoured towards this end had a contrary effect.

Implicit in what Hayek says is that a neo-liberal government which really did wish to return to a market order would be forced to engage in an enterprise of social engineering at least as heroic and intrusive as anything attempted by the social engineers of the 1960's and 1970's.14

Throughout the 1980's, liberalism of the type Hayek espoused became more acceptable within the Conservative Party and enjoyed a popularity it had not known before as Thatcherism became more entrenched in the Party. Conversely, more traditional
conservative thinking and writers who represented it, such as Oakeshott, were in the background and basically neglected. By examining the main points of Hayek's and Oakeshott's philosophies it will become clear why Hayek's thought was more appealing to supporters of Thatcherism rather than someone like Oakeshott. The fact that writers like Hayek found greater favour with Thatcher and her Party is an example of the extent to which classical liberalism had merged with conservatism within the Conservative Party.
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HAYEK

INTRODUCTION

Hayek is a major intellectual figure of the twentieth century. His ideas concerning politics and economics have stimulated debate and controversy, much of it bitter. Hayek really first became visible when he crossed over from the strictly economic field to politics with the publication of *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944. Throughout his political writings, what Hayek seems most concerned with is what constitutes a proper political and market order for a country that values and wishes to preserve freedom. He also spends a great deal of time on what he considers to be perversions of the proper order which sometimes masquerade as protectors of freedom and liberty. What Hayek terms, "totalitarian" governments are responsible for destroying freedom, and socialism in all its forms is the most dangerous type of totalitarianism. Consequently, Hayek devoted much of his energy in trying to discredit socialism on both economic and political grounds.

It has sometimes been the case that Oakeshott's and Hayek's work have been lumped together as espousing the same form of non-interventionist policies and economic order. However, such an alignment only confuses the issue and distorts the meaning of
their writings. This confusion is perhaps aided because Oakeshott has a liberal side to him and Hayek, who considers himself a liberal, has been used by conservatives to justify attacks on socialism and its goals, as well as having some conservative sympathies. But Oakeshott and Hayek occupy and defend different theoretical positions even though both of their philosophies have been espoused by conservatives.

Hayek's previous background as an economist is obvious when looking at his political writings because economics in one form or another, often seems to be just beneath the surface. The degree to which economics influences his work is demonstrated by his overwhelming concern with setting out the conditions which will maintain a free market order, and the fact that much of his refutation of socialism is based on its supposed economic defects and miscalculations. It was just this concern which motivated Hayek to turn away from the strictly economic field to that of political philosophy when he became alarmed at the political conditions in Britain during World War II. He was very uneasy with the collectivism he saw emerging in the government and the economy, an uneasiness that became even more pronounced with the election of the Labour government in 1945. Hayek identified the mild social democratic government of Labour Party as not being far removed from communism and other forms of totalitarian government. According to him, both forms of government would have the same results, the only difference being the amount of time it took for social democracy to become as extreme as these other political systems. Hayek made a plea to the British to consider
carefully the implications of what they were doing and to hang on to their former political ideals which Hayek believed had made the country the creator of the liberal social order in the West.

... in Britain, as elsewhere in the world, the defeat of the onslaught of systematic socialism has merely given those who are anxious to preserve freedom a breathing space in which to re-examine our ambitions and to discard all those parts of a socialist inheritance which are a danger to a free society. Without such a revised conception of our social aims we are likely to continue to drift in the same direction in which outright socialism would merely have carried us a little faster. ¹

Both Oakeshott and Hayek were spurred into a defense of the liberty and freedom that they believed had existed in the past in England. However, Hayek had an additional reason to be distrustful of the changes that were occurring in England and the Western world. The impact of World War I on his native country of Austria and the following collapse of liberalism there made Hayek anxious to see that the same fate did not await England which had traditionally been the upholder of liberalism.

The bulk of Hayek's writing is spent either in defining what his concepts of the rule of law and the spontaneous market order entail and why they are vital for the maintenance of a free society or else attacking anything he considers destructive of these ideals. As a consequence, socialism bears the brunt of Hayek's criticisms. This hostility towards socialism sprang from Hayek's view that it inevitably compromised the freedom of individuals; he believed it tried to equalize all the differences and inequalities among individuals in wealth, talents and intelligence, in an effort to be more fair and just. However, this involved the loss of freedom and liberty and severely
restricted the choices individuals were allowed to make. The imposition of socialism meant that people were not permitted to develop the advantages that they possessed. In addition to the diminishment of freedom this caused, it also stifled creativity and diversity in society because of the amount of power and control the state was given. Hayek believes that the state should be active mainly in a regulatory capacity, to uphold law and the free market economy but not to take part in it. Therefore, the socialist aim of redistributing wealth and privilege seems to Hayek to entail endowing the state with functions it does not have the right or the ability to perform. In Hayek's eyes socialism is the outcome when the free market and liberal order of a country degenerates due to the desire for power on the part of those in control of the state.

Governments strong enough to protect individuals against the violence of their fellows make possible the evolution of an increasingly complex order of spontaneous and voluntary cooperation. Sooner or later, however, they tend to abuse that power and to suppress the freedom that had earlier been secured in order to enforce their own presumably greater wisdom and not to allow 'social institutions to develop in a haphazard manner ...'.

Hayek believes that socialism's position on economic affairs is fatally flawed. For Hayek, the internal mechanisms that operate within the free market are always vastly superior to the planned economy of socialism which can never achieve the productivity and wealth that is possible in a state where a market economy is dominant. Hayek bases this conclusion on his belief that individuals will never be able to compile the amount of knowledge and information necessary to make responsible and accurate
decisions concerning the economy. Therefore, it is much wiser to allow the market to work out any imbalances because it is equipped to make the adjustments necessary to respond to fluctuations. Because it is detrimental for the state to interfere in the majority of economic and social matters, a strong but limited state is what is desirable in order to achieve a free society and the exact opposite of this is socialism.

From the awareness of the limitations of individual knowledge and from the fact that no person or small group of persons can know all that is known to somebody, individualism also derives its main practical conclusion: its demand for a strict, limitation of all coercive or exclusive power.  

Hayek's high standing indicated the heights Thatcherism had reached because a substantial proportion of his thought paralleled Thatcherite beliefs and values and both had important aspirations in common, like the abolition of privilege and heredity rights to bring about the unhindered free market. An exposition of some of the central tenets and beliefs of the Hayekian system of thought will reveal its compatibility with Thatcherism.

FREEDOM

At the centre of Hayek's thought is the extreme importance he attaches to freedom. Freedom is the ultimate value, the value upon which all others rest.

... liberty is not just one value among others, a maxim, but the source of, and necessary condition for, all other individual values.
Freedom is a precious and necessary characteristic of advanced societies because it encourages civilization, progress and movement forward to better and brighter things. Hayek thinks freedom results in progress because through individual freedom and lack of constraints, individuals are able to break from the pack and the oppressiveness of conventional ideas and create innovations which improve upon traditional methods of doing things and therefore, promote new attitudes and ideas. It is this preoccupation with freedom that leads Hayek to focus more on Britain than any other country in his studies because he believes that liberty was cultivated and came to fruition in that country. Britain demonstrated what freedom truly meant and showed up the falseness of the claims of freedom made by other countries, particularly revolutionary France. Concern for liberty and freedom was something that was expressed countless times by the followers of Thatcher and this made Hayek a natural figure to draw upon in defense of its goals.

Since Hayek considers freedom to be the ultimate value and the root of all other liberties and progress in society he is willing to accept and endure the drawbacks and unpleasantness of the market system and forgo the application of methods considered more efficient and painless to take care of problems. Hayek outlines the folly of succumbing to the claims of socialist thinking which urge the use of the state to solve imbalances. However, he does admit that the logic of socialist thinking is often hard to resist.

So long as he knows only the hard discipline of the
market, he may well think the direction by some other intelligent human brain preferable; but when he tries it, he soon discovers that the former still leaves him at least some choice, while the latter leaves him none, and that it is better to have a choice between several unpleasant alternatives than being coerced into one.  

Freedom is the thread which pulls all of Hayek's work together and gives it coherence.

In order to defend freedom, Hayek has defined and put forward two concepts he believes are necessary for a free society to develop and sustain itself, the concepts of the rule of law and spontaneous order. The spontaneous order designates the economic system of a free society and the rule of law the type of political structure which allows the functioning of this economic order by setting out abstract universal rules within which men can plan their actions because of its stability and predictability.

SPONTANEOUS ORDER

The spontaneous order concept Hayek has elaborated and refined is used to describe what is commonly known as the free market economy. The market is based upon competition among individuals and each individual is rewarded in proportion to what he has to sell is desired and valued by other individuals. However, for Hayek the fact that what individuals possess and are able to create fills a demand, it does not follow that these individuals are morally superior to others or of a better character (as is strongly implied in Thatcherism) but often only
means that they were in the right place at the right time. The market operates according to its own logic, not any sense of justice and consequently, it arbitrarily distributes rewards and punishments, often regardless of the deservingness of individuals or their personal attributes. But the market must be as free as possible from government intervention because Hayek believes that attempts by the state to control the economy, even if done to try to mitigate some of its harsher effects, will invariably do more harm than good. Consequently, though socialists, particularly English socialists, may have noble goals in mind in trying to implement planning, the results are still disastrous.

His theory is that the market is able to work out the flaws and imbalances with its own internal mechanisms and state intervention would only throw these mechanisms off. This idea is valued by neo-liberals like George C. Roche who describes it in glowing terms.

One of Hayek's greatest discoveries and the keystone of his entire work on law and economics is the concept of 'spontaneous order'. This discovery reaching back to Adam Smith and his analogy of the invisible hand, sees human society as equipped with an internal gyroscope which produces a spontaneous order: the market. The gyroscope organizes human activity without conscious, overall preplanning by a single man or any group of men and tends to provide a natural stability to society.6

Hayek believes that England has turned its back on the spontaneous order and the political system which enabled it to become a great power and has fallen prey to socialism. The damage caused by this is very grave even though much of socialist ideology was not accepted.

... the system under which we live choked up with
attempts at partial planning and restrictionism is almost as far from any system of capitalism which could be rationally advocated as it is different from any consistent system of planning ... The world of to-day is just interventionist chaos.\textsuperscript{7}

Within Hayek's spontaneous order he makes provision for the traditions and bonds which hold society together. He claims that he does not advocate a system of government where individuals are viewed as abstract interchangeable beings. The fact that this is a common conception of the free market is due to the attempts to transplant the methods suitable to the physical sciences into the realm of social life. According to Hayek, this type of scientific method does not help in any useful analysis of a society and is one to which his own profession of economics has succumbed.

... It seems to me that this failure of economists to guide policy more successfully is closely connected with their propensity to imitate as closely as possible the procedures of the brilliantly successful physical sciences - an attempt which in our subject may lead to outright error.\textsuperscript{8}

In contrast to the socialist and scientistic perceptions of the market order, Hayek advocates what he believes to be the best form of order, the spontaneous order.

In other parts of his work, Hayek takes issue with the term "economy". This stems from his desire to disassociate his idea of a free society from any form of overall planning. His problem with the word economy is that he believes it to indicate "a complex of activities by which a given set of means is allocated in accordance with a unitary plan among the competing ends according to their relative importance. The market order serves no such single order of ends."\textsuperscript{9} The planning an economy involves
is appropriate to things such as an individual household or a corporation but something called a "national economy" in the true sense of the word means a planned society and hence totalitarianism of one form or another. Consequently, Hayek formulated from the Greek language the term "catallaxy" to describe the market order because it was the best word he could find to approximate his idea of a free market order.

Catallaxy means ... the order brought about by the mutual adjustment of many individual economies in a market. A catallaxy is a special kind of spontaneous order produced by the market through people acting within the rules of the law of property, tort and contract.10

A final point to bring out in the discussion of Hayek's view of the spontaneous order concerns how such an order developed and continued to develop. In this respect, Hayek draws on the philosophy of David Hume and reiterates his stance that human institutions arose not from conscious individual planning that had defined the ends and goals of the institutions beforehand but that institutions arose gradually through human action and they slowly adjusted themselves to meet the prevailing circumstances.

... many of the institutions on which human achievements rest have arisen and are functioning without a designing or a directing mind; that as Adam Ferguson expressed it, 'nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action but not the result of human design'; and that the spontaneous collaboration of free men often creates things which are greater than their individual minds can ever fully comprehend.11

The evolutionary aspect of the process is what is stressed most as compared with the deliberateness of the design theory promoted by those Hayek terms the Cartesian rationalists or constructivist
THE RULE OF LAW

The framework which protects the spontaneous order and which it is dependent upon is the rule of law. The value of the rule of law should never be underestimated because it is absolutely vital for the preservation of liberty. Simply put, the rule of law means,

... that the government in all its actions is bound by rules fixed and announced beforehand - rules which make it possible to foresee with fair certainty how the authority will use its coercive powers in given circumstances and to plan one's individual affairs on the basis of this knowledge.\(^\text{12}\)

Hayek prizes the rule of law so highly because even though it restricts what people can do in one way and sets boundaries, it is only under the law that freedom is possible. The laws do not determine what choices people should make because they are universal and abstract. Since they are known beforehand, they allow individuals to carry out their plans and lives as they see fit. "Law is an order of human freedom because it orders freedom, a vague meter-legal concept by transmuting its parts into concrete liberties and rights. By means of this transmutation, the law economizes intangible freedom into tangible 'properties' ...".\(^\text{13}\) The reliance of Hayek on thinkers like Hume and Burke and his obvious admiration of their work has been to his advantage in having his ideas accepted by the Conservative Party. Burke and Hume have often been classified as conservatives (even though...
closer examination suggests that they were part of the liberal tradition and this made the neo-liberalism of Hayek seem familiar and not a complete break with Conservative history and ideas. It also indicates that there were elements of liberalism already embedded within the Party that would become a source of friction as liberalism became more popular.

The rule of law was historically associated with a liberal order and the adherence to liberal ideology and this is an important reason in Hayek's categorization of himself as a liberal or in his words an "old Whig". In conjunction with the rule of law, Hayek also supports, along with Oakeshott, the existence of numerous voluntary associations because he believes these associations act as a buffer between the state and the people and help to enhance freedom. They also fit in with Hayek's conception of a free society as composed mainly of small independent organizations and businesses.

The strength of the rule of law is that it establishes concrete rights and freedoms and does not profess goals which are impossible to achieve. This is a sin Hayek accuses socialists of committing. Any endeavours at planning out the political order are untenable because it inevitably involves the loss of freedom since the situations which occur in society are so complex, that planning necessitates imposing an arbitrary and rigid order on society because it does not have the means to deal with this complexity. The rule of law preserves freedom because it is less ambitious and in the end wiser than collectivist plans.

It is a sort of order over the particular manifestations
of which we have little control, because the rules which determine it only determine its abstract character, while the detail depends on the ... particular circumstances known only to its individual members. It is therefore an order on which we cannot improve upon but only disturb by attempting to change by deliberate arrangement of any one part of it ."15

In delineating what the rule of law involves, Hayek sharply distinguishes legislation and decrees from laws. In general, legislation is labelled as destructive of freedom and therefore, the greater the amount of legislation passed by Parliament, the more inflexible the state becomes. It is the law which has slowly evolved over the decades and the centuries that should be preeminent in any liberal society.

Law is not only much older than legislation or even an organized state: the whole authority of the legislation and of the state derives from pre-existing conceptions of justice, and no system of articulated law can be applied except within a framework of generally recognized but often unarticulated rules of justice.16

In arguing his case for the common law of a country which has evolved over the centuries and is based on justice and established norms, at the expense of legislation or government by decree (which involves arbitrary law making by officials who are easily swayed by special interests); Hayek uses a line of reasoning analogous to the one concerning the necessity for the free market to override any form of a planned economy. Below John Gray articulates Hayek's reasoning as to why law is superior to legislation.

Just as no economic plan can approach the sensitivity and subtlety of the market process in integrating men's plans and achieving coordination in the use of resources, so statutory legislation cannot match the sensitivity of the common law in responding to an adjudicating of the concrete problems of man's social existence.
But the common law which relies on the doctrine of precedent, cannot survive without a strong, independent and decentralised judiciary.\textsuperscript{17}

It is unavoidable that some degree of legislation will exist. Although, a free society demands that the rule of law should be the strongest and be respected by both the citizens and the state. Only when it is following the rule of law should the state be allowed to carry out its coercive functions "... coercion is admissable only when it conforms to general laws and not when it is a means of achieving particular objects of current policy."\textsuperscript{18}

EQUALITY AND INDIVIDUALISM

A contingent factor in the treatment of the rule of law is Hayek's position on equality and individualism. He is adamant in maintaining equality before the law and equality of opportunity through the absence of legal restrictions and privileges. However, this commitment to equality does not extend to what is termed equality of condition. According to Hayek, equality of condition would actually mean the elimination of freedom because it involves an attempt at levelling off the differences between people. While equality of opportunity, on the other hand, which realizes that there are differences between individuals is compatible with true freedom and therefore, is the only acceptable form of freedom.

There is all the difference in the world between treating people equally and attempting to make them all equal. While the first is the condition of a free society, the second means as De Tocqueville described it, 'a new form of servitude'.\textsuperscript{19}
On this basis, Hayek opposes any form of redistribution of wealth to aid less fortunate members of society born into a poor economic situation or otherwise handicapped. He claims that endeavouring to bring about some form of equality of condition would mean attempting to make individuals the same in all respects, for example, in intelligence or talents.

While individualism is profoundly opposed to all prescriptive privilege, to all protection, by law or by force, of any rights not based on rules equally applicable to all persons, it also denies government the right to limit what the able or fortunate may achieve. It is equally opposed to any rigid limitation of the position individuals may achieve, whether this power is used to perpetuate inequality or to create equality.

Hayek's spontaneous order protected by the rule of law has the individual at its core because a free society requires that individuals have the right to make their own choices and be protected from coercion. But this individualism is distinct from the egalitarianism promoted by socialism which is based upon equality of condition and wealth.

We must face the fact that the preservation of individual freedom is incompatible with a full satisfaction of our views of distributive justice.

DEMOCRACY

Although liberalism does not require democracy to uphold it and Hayek believes there is a danger of totalitarian democracy because some people mistakenly believe that if the majority of people approve of a certain action, the rule of law is unnecessary; he believes that democracy can work with the rule of
law because it has the advantage of endowing the rule of law with
greater legitimacy because all people are enfranchised. Hayek, on
this account, faults those types of conservatism hostile to
democracy.

... the advantages of democracy as a method of peaceful
change and of political education seem to be so great
compared with those of any other system that I can have
no sympathy with the anti-democratic strain of
conservatism. It is not who governs but what government
is entitled to do that seems to me the essential
problem.22

In spite of Hayek's castigation of the narrowmindedness of
certain forms of conservatism, he is still somewhat ambivalent
about the benefits of democracy. In his scheme of things,
democracy is valuable when it helps the cause of liberalism. It
is useful as a tool for helping to maintain the strength and
popularity of liberalism but it is also something which should
properly remain subordinate to liberal principles and ideals.
However, to ensure that democracy does not overwhelm liberalism
Hayek has been quite stringent in the amount and severity of the
restrictions and qualifications he is willing to place on
democratic rule. The refusal to give democracy his wholehearted
consent is quite apparent in Law, Legislation and Liberty, one of
his most recent works.

However, strong the general case for democracy, it is not
an ultimate or absolute value and must be judged by what
it will achieve. It is probably the best method of
achieving certain ends, but not an end in itself.23

Despite his equivocations, Hayek's position on democracy still
contrasts with that of Oakeshott's who has no faith in the
ability of democracy to preserve freedom while Hayek allows that
if democracy is limited and kept within certain constraints it can be compatible with liberty.

Liberalism regards it as desirable that only what the majority accepts should in fact be law, but it does not believe that this is therefore necessarily good law. Its aim indeed, is to persuade the majority to observe certain principles.24

But, where Hayek and Oakeshott are in agreement is on the harmony of both freedom and authority.

... there is no conflict between law and freedom and freedom is dependent upon certain attributes of the law, its generality and certainty, and the restrictions it places on authority.25

THE FATE OF ENGLAND

In a way, Britain and its experiences have been pivotal to Hayek's work. His respect for the successes it had achieved and his apprehension that these successes were being lost or sacrificed prompted Hayek to concentrate on politics. He believed that Britain had been tempted into believing that the methods of planning common in continental Europe were superior to its own methods. However, one of the merits of the English had been that they had taken a more balanced view of the intelligence of men and their nature and consequently, they did not have any faith in full scale planning which relied solely upon human reason. As a result, English philosophy had served as an antidote to the rationalistic theories of thinkers such as Rousseau whose philosophy Hayek believed had led directly to the imposition of a totalitarian state.
The antirationalistic approach, which regards man not as highly rational and intelligent but as a very irrational and fallible being; whose individual errors are corrected only in the course of the social process, and which aims at making the best of very imperfect material is probably the most characteristic feature of English individualism.  

The Road to Serfdom published in 1944, is devoted to explaining why a planned society is a mistake and how England was moving in that direction. Here Hayek first proposes the view that the fact that English socialists had no desire for a totalitarian government did not alter the fact that such a government would inevitably emerge.

What I have argued in this book, and what the British experience convinces me even more to be true, is that the unforeseen but inevitable consequences of socialist planning create a state of affairs in which, if the policy is to be pursued, totalitarian forces will get the upper hand.  

Years after the publication of The Road to Serfdom, Hayek was still no more reassured about the fate that awaited Britain.

Of course, six years of socialist government in England have not produced anything resembling a totalitarian state ... but ... the most important change which extensive government control produces is a psychological change, an alteration in the character of people.  

Hayek is convinced that a psychological change has occurred which has made the British more servile and attacked their devotion to liberty.

Perhaps, the psychological ideals of the English are now returning to a condition he would consider more conducive to freedom. The sudden upsurge of Hayek's popularity from the 1970's onwards and the revival of classical liberal ideology all point to the fact that not only socialism but the mild social
democratic ideals embodied in the Keynesian welfare state and the postwar consensus have been shattered.
Hayek

Endnotes


10Ibid., 107.

11Ibid., 108-9.


Ibid., 22.

Ibid., 106.
Hayek

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24 Ibid., 103.

25 Ibid., 167.


28 Ibid., 22.
Michael Oakeshott has often been associated with conservatism and has been referred to as the greatest conservative philosopher of the twentieth century. An examination of the key beliefs of his philosophy will highlight the liberal direction taken by the Conservative Party under Thatcher away from its roots. In addition, it will help to expose the fundamental incompatibility of liberal and conservative ideas. Moreover, the lack of influence of the writings of thinkers who express conservative positions (like Oakeshott) signifies the precedence given to liberalism under the Thatcher regime. It is important to realize that Oakeshott does not espouse a rigid set of ideas or doctrines that he would term "conservative". In fact, he is fiercely opposed to any type of ideology, conservative or otherwise. One of the distinguishing features about Oakeshott is his faith in practice and his consequent abhorrence of ideology. This change in the character of the Conservative Party which was noticeable in the postwar period but became fullblown under the leadership of Thatcher was always distressing to Oakeshott and has been a change he has sought to reverse.
RATIONALISM

Oakeshott claims that this change has been for the worse because he sees it as a type of politics he terms rationalistic which he believes has woven into its fabric fundamental and dangerous errors. He associates rationalistic politics with a planned society and socialism, as opposed to a society where the rule of law and freedom prevails. Because of the detrimental effects he believes stem from a planned society, he spent a good portion of his writings trying to refute it after the Second World War.

It is in the nature of rationalism to subordinate individuality, creativity and diversity by attempting to make the social and political life of the nation conform to certain narrowly defined ends to the exclusion of all others. Rationalism supposedly champions the supremacy of ideology and to Oakeshott ideology means that a small portion of the complex traditions and practices of social and political life are vastly simplified into a set of assumptions about how politics and society should be run. Invariably, at the heart of rationalism is the belief that "correct" ideas and viewpoints can be imposed on mankind and their nature changed, that perfection is possible if the right ideology is followed. Oakeshott believes this has led to the state becoming an instrument which exerts excessive control and power over its citizens. The progressive loss of freedom and many traditional ancient freedoms has been the hallmark of the postwar period.
Central to Oakeshott's dislike of rationalism is that rationalists believe that they can manage and change the economy and society of a country based on technical information that can be written down in books. However, Oakeshott thinks that this is a type of knowledge that is vastly inferior to knowledge that is gained from practice and experience. It is through this practice-based knowledge, to use one of Oakeshott's well-known examples, that a chef is able to prepare and cook food. He has not learned his skills through reading the directions set out in cookbooks but from experience and watching other cooks. Therefore, rationalism is inadequate because it formulates its programs and policies solely on the basis of technical information which cannot convey all the necessary knowledge. It is dangerous because it tries to solve problems by following policies and strategies instead of allowing these situations to resolve themselves through methods and practices that have developed over time. The strength of rationalism today is exhibited in the high value and credibility given to social scientists, economists and technicians.

One of the underlying reasons for the rise of rationalism, is that it corresponded to the rise of politically inexperienced people into positions of power and, although this has been occurring since the time of the Enlightenment, it appears to have reached its apex in the modern era. Both Britain's evolution into a liberal-democracy and the industrial and commercial middle class participation in politics has made it susceptible to rationalistic politics. This is the case because rationalism is
essentially an abridgement of existing practices and can serve as a guide or textbook for those who have no knowledge or experience of ruling. In fact, Oakeshott terms them cribs.

The result of all this has been a gravely distorted view of society and politics which even the Conservative Party, the traditional defender of the rule of law and an unplanned society, has become guilty of promoting. A further drawback of the reliance on plans and ideologies by the politically inexperienced, is that because of the inherent deficiencies of all such plans they cannot remain in place for a long period of time before they become unworkable and need to be replaced. Therefore, a succession of plans is imposed one after another, as each preceeding one fails.

"The modern history of Europe is littered with the projects of Rationalism."¹ The consequence is chaos and instability.

That all contemporary politics are deeply infected with Rationalism will be denied only by those who choose to give the infection another name. Not only are our political vices rationalistic, but so are our political virtues ... And those traditional elements, particularly in English politics, which might have expected to continue some resistance to the pressure of Rationalism, have almost completely conformed to the prevailing intellectual temper, and even represent this conformity to be a sign of their vitality, their ability to move with the times. Rationalism has ceased to be merely one style in politics and has become the stylistic criterion of all respectable politics.²

Oakeshott's explanation of the current state of politics and its drawbacks sheds light on the degree of popularity and standing his philosophy is given in modern England. Especially when it is pointed out that although he considers himself to be of a conservative disposition he does not approve of the methods
or ideas of the Conservative Party which he believes has succumbed to the rationalist influence.

The bug of rationalist politics has bitten the Conservative. To have hoped that he might be immune from the universal infection was, perhaps, excessive optimism.\(^3\)

Oakeshott found this situation disturbing both because of his temperament and because in the early postwar period he had explicitly stated his wish to have the British Conservative Party defeat the rising tide of rationalism that was engulfing Britain and which he believed the Labour Party supported. His call to the Conservative Party to fight rationalism and to restore Britain to its former, more glorious way of life was set out in his essay "Contemporary British Politics". Evidence of the Conservative Party's betrayal of their own ideals and traditions is revealed in their adoption of Hayek, a thinker in the mould of classical liberalism, as an icon and someone whose theories are given credence. Serious attempts have been made to implement his ideas concerning the economy and politics, and even though Hayek is very hostile towards socialism and collectivism with the planning it entails, Oakeshott sees his method of doing so as self-defeating. In Oakeshott's words:

... the informality of English politics (which enabled us to escape, for a long time putting too high a value on political action and placing too high a hope in political achievement - to escape in politics at least, the illusion of evanescence of imperfection) that resistance has now converted itself into an ideology.\(^4\)
OAKESHOTT'S POSITION IN CONSERVATISM

Oakeshott's ideas sharply distinguish him from the bulk of Conservative politicians today and impart to his philosophy radical implications. Some contend that it is potentially revolutionary because it would mean a total change in the way politics is conceived and political life operates. In fact, there has been debate over whether or not Oakeshott can be considered conservative. It has been postulated that he is more appropriately thought of as a liberal thinker and his relationship to conservatism is only superficial. His concern for freedom and individuality which is extremely prominent in his work is held by some to make him a liberal thinker. As Paul Franco sees it, Oakeshott's

... theory of civil association, in its concern with liberty, its appreciation for individuality and its defense of the rule of law cannot but be characterized as liberal.  

It has been suggested that Oakeshott has been incorrectly aligned with conservatism mainly on the basis of what he has written about the value and importance of traditions which was then used to show Oakeshott's affinity to writers in the conservative vein. It can be conceded that there is an element of liberalism in Oakeshott's thought. However, that there is a streak of liberalism in Oakeshott does not mean it is dominant in his philosophy and in any case, a concern for liberty and freedom is not the sole preserve of liberalism. The Conservative Party has historically viewed itself as the defender of ancient liberties
and privileges which were integral to the maintenance of the social order. An additional indication of Oakeshott's conservatism is the article he published in 1948 entitled, "On Being Conservative" in which he explicitly aligns himself with those of a conservative disposition especially in regard to change.

Oakeshott considers himself conservative and his strong opposition to rationalist politics and a planned society is at the core of his affinity with the conservative temperament. It is true that certain familiar presumptions of conservatism are missing from his thought. But it is extremely difficult to find any conservative figure who subscribes to all features of the conservative tradition.

Oakeshott does not believe it is these traditions which make a person conservative, as he makes clear in the following passage.

What makes a conservative disposition in politics intelligible is nothing to do with a natural law or providential order, nothing to do with morals or religion; it is the observation of our current manner of living combined with the belief (which from our point of view need be regarded as no more than a hypothesis) that governing is a specific and limited activity, namely the provision and custody of general rules of conduct, which are understood, not as plans for imposing substantive activities, but as instruments enabling people to pursue the activities of their own choice with the minimum of frustration, and therefore something which it is appropriate to be conservative about.

There is a tension in Oakeshott's philosophy but the conservatism is dominant over the liberal aspects and it is in this context that he should be studied.
In the immediate postwar period, Oakeshott's anxiety about the state of affairs brought about by the increasing strength of rationalist politics resulted in him writing pieces antagonistic to rationalism and trying to make clear the folly of allowing this mode of politics to become dominant. One of the things Oakeshott most feared in the postwar era (like Hayek) was the increasing popularity of socialism, even though British socialism was a much milder form than that practiced in continental Europe. In Oakeshott's eyes, rationalism had its apex in socialism and would eat away at the social fabric of Britain and destroy the traditional rights and liberties that Englishmen had enjoyed in the past. For example, the right to private property and the freedom to choose how to live one's life, providing the individual remained within the bounds of the rule of law.

That Oakeshott had been animated and pushed into action by the events of the 1940's and 50's is easily discernible in his essay, "Contemporary British Politics". In it he goes on at length of the dangers of supporting the Labour Party which he believed was inevitably moving towards socialism as it became more deeply entangled with rationalist politics and thinking. He exhorted the Conservative Party to act as the defender of freedom and traditional British society because he believed that it was the only party capable of undertaking such a task. It was the progression and acceleration of rationalism that acted as the catalyst for most of Oakeshott's work. His energy was devoted mainly towards the refutation of rationalism or the elucidation
of what he viewed as the opposing and superior mode of politics which was characterized by freedom and therefore, competition. This competition in politics and economics had always been present to some degree in the past but was now slipping away. Oakeshott in On Human Conduct and other writings discusses his belief that economic competition is necessary to preserve freedom.

A closer examination of some of Oakeshott's central beliefs are required in order to see how he compares with the conservative tradition and why he seems to be more compatible with the ideas and traditions of an earlier age. In particular, he appears to be more in harmony with the Conservative Party that was dominated and controlled by a more aristocratic faction and when the faith in the idea of a natural ruling elite was still strong and not much questioned. Although the existence of such an elite drawn from the upper classes has persisted into the present, its strength has diminished and there is now more emphasis on the importance of merit and qualifications. Also, there was Thatcher's personal hostility to those of an aristocratic or public school background. The gap between Oakeshott's writings and recent English politics helps to show the magnitude of the changes that have taken place in the postwar period. Although, he contends that it was not so much a change in a different direction, as an acceleration of trends which had already been present in Western and English civilization. One result of the changes produced by the trend towards rationalism
within the Conservative Party is that Oakeshott’s tenets seemed alien and unenlightening to those of the Thatcherite persuasion in the Conservative Party, which had become an important force in the 1980’s.

**RULE OF LAW**

At the centre of Oakeshott’s philosophy is his belief in the rule of law as an institution that preserves both social stability and individual freedom. Within the rule of law the conflicting values of authority and liberty are balanced and find their proper equilibrium. Under the rule of law all laws are known beforehand and apply equally to everyone, therefore, authority is upheld but individuals are given the freedom to make their own decisions. The laws do not tell individuals what they must do, they only place boundaries on their fields of action. Oakeshott outlines what the rule of law involves in the paragraph below as,

... association in terms of rules appears a relationship in respect of authoritative prescriptions which have a certain jurisdiction and an ascertainable authenticity. They assume agents engaged in self-chosen actions to promote or procure various substantive satisfactions and they impose obligations upon them to secure certain adverbial conditions in performing all or any of these actions. These rules are not designed to promote or to impede the achievement of these satisfactions and are incapable of doing so, and they are not instrumental to the achievement of a substantive purpose of their own. And those obligations may or may not be discerned, but they are not denied in a failure to observe them.

Oakeshott sees the rule of law as an instrument vital to
the preservation of liberty not only because there can be no freedom without the law and authority. The type of freedom that was enjoyed by the English was a human construction built within the framework of authority. It has been the lack of understanding on the part of the postwar conservatives of how liberty and authority functioned that led Oakeshott to elaborate on the operation of a proper political association, especially in *On Human Conduct*. Oakeshott is very clear throughout his writings that authority and the rule of law do not denigrate freedom but that the two strengthen and reinforce one another. "It is precisely because recognizing the authority of respublica does not involve approval of its conditions that the 'freedom' inherent in agency is preserved." Such a view demonstrates Oakeshott's indebtedness to Hegel and his ideas.

It is necessary to understand Oakeshott's belief that freedom and authority are not automatically in opposition to each other or contradictory ideals because he bases much of his writings around this concept. The freedom/authority dichotomy is a thread that seems to run throughout the postwar period and Oakeshott is convinced that he has resolved the tension between the two, and that the notion of their incompatibility was founded on a misconception as to how civil association functions. Oakeshott also drew upon Hobbes' writings because he too attempted to resolve the pull between freedom and authority and recognized this pull as something that could and was during his lifetime destructive of English society. Oakeshott says that,
... what stirs Hobbes is 'grief for the present calamities of my country', a country torn between those who claim too much for Liberty and those who claimed too much for Authority, a country given over into the hands of ambitious men who enlisted the envy and resentment of a 'giddy people' for the advancement of their ambitions. Hobbes recognized that unrestricted freedom not subject to the constraints of the rule of law was destructive of peace, security and civilization, consequently, freedom and authority had to be balanced so that a suitable equilibrium could be found. This is one of the sources of Oakeshott's admiration of Hobbes.

Although to Oakeshott, the rule of law means strong government, it also signifies limited government. It is only due to the fact that government has certain well known prescribed ends and duties that authority and liberty can maintain a harmonious relationship. Any attempt on the part of the state to take on more than certain limited responsibilities and powers, even if it has good intentions, means an irrevocable shift to a rationalist and socialist government. According to Oakeshott such a move signals the end of true freedom and liberty. The interventionist tendencies of this form of politics is something which only strengthens with the passing of time and it creates a huge and inefficient bureaucracy that becomes paralyzed and immobile as its departments and functions continue to grow; in addition to the loss of freedom of individual citizens. That this form of government has been allowed to become dominant was the result of overly simplistic and mistaken ideas about the nature of politics and the human condition.
... the belief that politics are (or should be) social engineering - these have been the main (though not exclusive) inspirations of political activity in Western Europe for the last two hundred years. ... they have given us the ideas and ideals which determine our present political enterprises that economics can and should replace politics, that the ideal of government is the administration of things and not government of the people ... that the risks and uncertainties of both political and commercial bargaining can be replaced by the certainty of rational calculation, that (in short) it is only our ignorance of the universal causes of human activity which stands between us and a society incomparably better ordered, more just and more prosperous than any human society that has yet existed. 

Although, the above suppositions are optimistic and are aimed at improving mankind, Oakeshott is convinced that reliance upon them inevitably backfires because it destroys what was worthwhile and valuable in that society.

A centrally planned society is, of course, the simplest of all societies, and offers the greatest prizes of power to those who can get in on the ground floor. It appeals not only to the ambitious politician but also to the ignorant politician. Economically it is based upon a simplified, mechanistic conception of production and distribution; quantitative, physical controls can be understood only by the those who could never reach a proper understanding of the kind of control the English common law and the law merchant for centuries exercised over some departments of activity, and for many years over all.

CIVIL ASSOCIATION

The form of civil association Oakeshott is promoting and the form he accuses rationalist politics of taking is based on two ideal types of civil association he defines most thoroughly in On Human Conduct, moral association and enterprise
association, or alternatively, societas and universitas.

Generally speaking, then, human conduct discloses two categorically distinct modes of relationship: relationship in doing (transactional or co-operative) for the satisfaction of substantive wants, and relationship in terms of obligation to subscribe to moral conditions in doing.  

Moral association corresponds to a society governed by the rule of law where freedom and authority are upheld, in it the role of the state is clearly defined and politics plays a subordinate role and is not necessary for the survival of the association. "... Politics is categorically distinguished from ruling. Ruling in a civitas is a diurnal engagement, the concern of persons who occupy offices; and its utterance is authoritative and not persuasive." The societas aspect of civil association was something that was more prominent in the past in England but has been losing ground to enterprise association, particularly in the postwar era. Oakeshott has no qualms about advocating moral association as better than enterprise association and connecting the enterprise mode with the ascendancy of the politically inexperienced and rationalism. To try to have a civil association based on the idea of an enterprise where there are definite goals and aims the state is trying to achieve, results in disaster for individual liberty and freedom. The adherence to specific ends means that deviation from them is not permitted and that individuals who attempt to follow their own path and which do not necessarily correspond to the universal goals are regarded as dangerous and need to be suppressed. And even if individuals willingly accepted this type of association, Oakeshott argues
that there are no plausible ends that all citizens could agree on and accept. It is not in the nature of the state to be able to follow overarching ideals and beliefs. Paul Franco gives a clear summary of why Oakeshott thinks that civil association cannot be based upon the notion of an enterprise and is therefore, untenable and foolish.

... Oakeshott vehemently rejects this understanding of civil association as an 'enterprise condition'. In the first place he denies there is any common purpose which adequately specifies civil association. Even 'peace' or 'security' fails in the regard, insofar as 'peace' or 'security' is not really a substantive purpose at all - that is, a specific satisfaction sought for itself - but rather a condition which makes possible the pursuit of substantive satisfactions. A further defect of enterprise association is that it implies its members have the freedom to leave the association if they no longer agree with its ends; but it is not feasible that citizens should be able to disassociate themselves and no longer follow its rules or obey its authority. If this were so, the result would be chaos and the state would be an unviable entity. In fact, even where the enterprise mode is dominant, citizens must respect the state's authority and its ends. Therefore, it suffers from a lack of freedom and is characterized by rigidity and inflexibility.

Consequently, the undertaking to impose this character upon a state whose membership is compulsory constitutes a moral enormity, and it is the attempt and not the deed which convicts it of moral enormity.

Oakeshott directly links enterprise association to any form of collectivism but especially to socialism, even in its milder social democratic variants. In contrast, his view of moral
association fits in well with his strong individualism. He perceives private property and a free market economy as integral parts of a societas. These sentiments are somewhat liberal but it seems likely that Oakeshott believed that moral association fitted in best with conservatism since he had made it clear in "Contemporary British Politics" that he thought that only the Conservative Party could reverse the trend towards rationalism which is almost synonymous with the concept of an enterprise association. Oakeshott is able to reconcile his individualism with his belief in conservatism because to him, the individual is not the rationalistic, isolated and profit maximizing person of classical liberal ideology. Instead, the individual is a member of a society and a community which he depends upon for his existence and from which he derives benefits and owes duties.

It is the great merit of conservatism that it has resisted the pressure of circumstances and a middle electorate to embrace the project of a centrally planned society; its present weakness is that it has not resisted that pressure with the absolute conviction with which it should be resisted. 16

In Oakeshott's eyes, government or the state is there to preserve order, stability and the freedoms of its' citizens. He claims that in the past the English state has allowed these conditions to flourish and has been a neutral impartial instrument implementing the rule of law and had withstood the precepts of rationalist politics. However, the rationalist politics found in enterprise association has been supplanting moral association in Britain and has been systematically undermining order, stability and freedom. The plans such a form of state wishes to enact,
corrupt and distort politics because it tries to impose upon politics tasks it is not capable of carrying out.

Politics ... necessarily excludes benevolent plans for the general betterment of mankind, for diminishing between wants and satisfactions or for moral improvement ... also ... proposals for awards of benefit or advantage to ascertainable individual or corporate interests claimed on account of the merit, the bargaining-power, or any other alleged property of such interests ... are not merely excluded from political discourse; they are necessarily excluded by the character of the respublica.17

Oakeshott condemns a state based on enterprise association as perpetuating the ideas just cited and while they may sound appealing, they are unreachable and mislead individuals into surrendering the true freedoms they already possess for what Oakeshott believes are utopian fantasies. Oakeshott's concept of true or traditional freedoms constitutes an important difference with Hayek who believes that freedom has much more egalitarian connotations. Oakeshott accuses Hayek of being ideological and hence, rationalist because Hayek thinks that freedom can be consciously instituted through laws and because the political egalitarianism of Hayek seems to Oakeshott to be a continuation of the mistakes made during the French Revolution. Oakeshott supports a peculiar kind of freedom which benefits the privileged and wealthiest sections of society and allows them to maintain their status. Therefore, he is hostile towards any attempts at levelling or equality in society, both economic and political. One problem with Oakeshott's placing his hopes on conservatism to battle the growth of enterprise association is that he admits that conservatism has not been as strong as it should have been
in its resistance and that rationalism has even been partially accepted by the Conservative Party. Therefore, Oakeshott's contention that a state which relies on central planning is only the most obvious case of an enterprise association would mean that the Conservative Party is not a good candidate to uphold moral association in Britain. However, Oakeshott himself does not appear to see this discrepancy.

Conservative politics is superior to rationalist politics because it does not promise unattainable things or try to remould society into a narrow and restrictive image which some person has decided will produce perfection. It is more concerned with keeping things steady and upholding the traditional functions of government. It does not impute to politics any grand capabilities but recognizes it as an activity of a secondary nature.

CHANGE

Regardless of these criticisms, Oakeshott has maintained his position and supported a conservative disposition in politics. In particular, he approves of the conservative attitude towards change and its manner of dealing with it. Conservatives Norton and Aughey explain that,

...the nature of Conservative statecraft is to adjust what exists to what is becoming, and this by gradual and incremental means. This is what Oakeshott has brilliantly described as the pursuit of intimations.18

Oakeshott's attitude towards change identifies him as
... to be conservative is not merely to be averse from change (which may be an idiosyncrasy); it is also a manner of accommodating ourselves to change, an activity imposed upon all men. For, change is a threat to identity and every change is an emblem of extinction.\textsuperscript{18}

His attitude towards change is such that it assumes there is at least some form of organicism inherent in society. For example, this is apparent when discussing the French Revolution he argues that it had such catastrophic consequences because its principles were imported from England and did not arise from French traditions. Again, this is another important point of difference between Oakeshott and Hayek. While Oakeshott is very leery about change and the speed at which it takes place, Hayek is much more welcoming towards it. In a free society especially, Hayek associates change with progress and civilization. But to Oakeshott, such a connection between change and progress is another dangerous rationalist supposition.

THE ROLE OF POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

Oakeshott's view of politics as a secondary and limited type of activity has an aristocratic tinge to it and fits in easily with the historical belief that politics was the duty of a natural ruling class. Politics was ideally only a part-time occupation not done for monetary reward. This affinity is made very clear when Oakeshott talks about democracy. He sees democracy as a tool that has been used to tear down the individual and his rights in society, that have slowly been built
up over the centuries. In fact he seems a little hysterical in his condemnation of democracy as a way of imposing constraints upon individuals by other people who are afraid to take advantage of the new opportunities that have been opened up to them with the disintegration of feudal society in Europe. In feudal Europe individuals had almost no choice of the role and function they would have in life. According to Oakeshott, democracy and the equality among citizens it entails, is really masking the fear of individuals who are "mass men" and who want to prevent other people from taking advantage of the freedom they are not capable of enjoying themselves. By "mass man" Oakeshott means a person with a "disposition to allow in others only a replica of himself, to impose upon all a uniformity of belief and conduct that leaves no room for either the pains or pleasures of choice ..."20 By using the government and his own power, "mass man" is able to effectively eliminate freedom of choice and individualism. For Oakeshott, the correct way to approach government and politics is to keep both as limited as possible and leave them in the hands of true individuals who support freedom and choice. Oakeshott thinks that such individuals are small in number, compared to mass men, and are more likely to correspond to those of a conservative temperament. This is a view he outlines in the essay "The Masses in Representative Democracy".

In some ways, Oakeshott's thought parallels that of Hayek's at certain points. For instance, both are strong believers and supporters of the rule of law and the necessity of combining both authority and liberty to uphold a civilized state. They also have
in common the defense of private property and the free market economy as safeguards of personal liberty and freedom. Both were motivated to speak out against the new all-encompassing state they saw arising in the modern era because with it they associated the running of the country by experts and technicians who mistakenly thought all problems could be solved by social engineering and applying the methods of physical sciences to social life. The consequence of this new faith in experts was a loss of liberty and a dwindling of the diversity and creativity in civil society. Hayek and Oakeshott were both convinced that these rationalistic politics were inseparable from socialism and that socialism was inseparable from totalitarianism. Consequently, both men spoke out strongly against socialism in all its forms and urged England to hold onto its' traditional values and freedoms.

In spite of these similarities, important differences separate the two thinkers. The chief one is that even though Oakeshott is supportive of freedom and a market economy he disapproves of Hayek's reasoning that through the economy, freedom and progress can be instituted. To Oakeshott, this is falling prey to the rationalism and central planning Hayek is trying to prevent. As Franco succinctly puts it,

By sharply distinguishing civil association from the idea of economic welfare or prosperity in this way, Oakeshott distances himself from such libertarian writers as Friedman and Hayek, who tend to recommend liberalism in utilitarian terms. For Oakeshott, civil association is not to be understood as a 'free enterprise' association but rather as a 'no enterprise' association.

Ironically, Hayek has drawn up specific plans and programs he
believes will restore liberty and which he wants adopted by politicians and therefore, appears to justify Oakeshott's contention that he has caught himself in the trap he was trying to avoid. There is also an obvious divergence between Oakeshott and Hayek regarding the value they assign to democracy. In Oakeshott's case, he associates the rise of democracy with the rise of the politically inexperienced and therefore, rationalism. He seems to believe that it is fairly easy to sway the masses into accepting totalitarian regimes because they can be bribed with promises of wealth and material possessions. Hayek, on the other hand, thinks democracy can be helpful in preserving stability and freedom and he says in The Constitution of Liberty that it is not important who governs but rather how they govern. Perhaps this difference can be accounted for in terms of Oakeshott's ease with more aristocratic traditional conservative forms of government and Hayek's affinity with liberalism.

This brief look at some of the more salient points of Oakeshott's philosophy points towards why he goes largely unnoticed in British politics, while a thinker like Hayek is in the limelight, as Robert Behrens, I think correctly, makes clear in the following passage.

Professor Oakeshott's division between the conservative and the rationalist disposition is unsuitable even though it is one of the most thought provoking distinctions in political analysis ... because ... it is very difficult to find any conservatives at all in the Conservative Party (or any other party). Mr. Heath with his problem solving approach ... Sir Keith Joseph with his crash course in Hayek, Friedman and Tocqueville ... were actors on the same not different plane. They were rationalist men incarnate, dabbling in the politics of inexperience.
Oakeshott himself does not feel any deep kinship with the Conservatives because as Anthony Quinton puts it, they "rely on traditional conservative beliefs more for ritual ornamentation than for actual political use." An additional reason for Oakeshott's neglect stems from his opposition to ideological politics and therefore his avoidance of outlining strategies and manifestoes for the Conservative Party.

The political complexion of modern Britain with its emphasis on economics, rationalism and individual self-interest, is not attracted to an Oakeshottian philosophy because it is opposed to or has serious reservations about these goals, and what Oakeshott is in favour of cannot be set out in a simple clearcut programme to be implemented by the state.

It has been suggested that Oakeshott's philosophy does not attract widespread attention in British politics because it fails to separate those of the Conservative Party from other political parties because conservatism is now committed to the philosophy of rationalism. The acceptance of rationalism by Conservatives was probably provoked in large part by the failure of the old methods of governing and economic management to put an end to Britain's ever increasing economic and political decline.
Oakeshott

Endnotes


Oakeshott

Endnotes


14 Ibid., 424.


CONCLUSIONS

Traditional conservatism, as well as the Conservative Party, has had a fragmented character encompassing a multitude of positions and ideas. This fragmentation and diversity stems from an ingrained dislike of ideology, in addition, to the need to take cognizance of shifts in the economic and political worlds. However, the benefits which resulted from the reliance on diversity and variety have turned against the Conservative Party with the absorption of liberal positions that were popularized by neo-liberals and gained increasing acceptance in the 1970's and 80's. This change became markedly apparent in the Conservative Party under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, who fiercely believed in the tenets of economic liberalism along with certain traditional conservative beliefs. The ideas Thatcher promoted were not original and not her own but the way she combined these ideas and made them the basis for her policies became known as Thatcherism. The conditions in England were more conducive than at any other time in the postwar years to the existence of Thatcherism and consequently, as Cowling puts it, this situation "enabled Mrs. Thatcher to play radical variations on that patriotic conjunction of freedom, authority, equality, individualism and average decency and respectability which had been the Conservative Party's theme since at least 1886 ... ".1
The extent of the acceptance of liberalism by the Conservative Party and Thatcher's followers seems plain when we consider the lack of hostility towards the ideas espoused by liberal thinkers, and even the admiration of some like Hayek. The approval of theories and ideas common to Hayek and other neo-liberals and the corresponding neglect and lack of interest in many of the traditional conservative ideals represented by philosophers such as Oakeshott, throws light on the directions taken by the Conservative Party during Thatcher's reign. A parallel is provided between the thought of these two writers and the change in direction of the postwar Conservative Party, it also demonstrates the conflict between the opposing values and ends of liberalism and conservatism.

The Conservative Party and conservatism have been concerned with stability and order and with the preservation of society with its stratifications and inequalities. They have been primarily the spokesmen and instrument of the privileged and the wealthy, the members of society who have benefited from this configuration and its carryovers from the medieval period which stressed hierarchy and organicism. This is reflected in the Conservative concern for private property, authority and the fear of equality, which places individuals on the same footing and uses the free market as the sole determinant of wealth and power. The fear of equality is so great that even the notion of political equality has been regarded with skepticism and hostility. In fact, Conservatives have always been amenable to the power and control of society resting in the hands of a small
elite, generally of an aristocratic background and the status; the attitudes and aspirations of Conservative members have overwhelmingly borne out this penchant. It was commonly believed that such a political arrangement produced more beneficial results than one which tried to place all citizens on an equal footing. The mistrust and suspicion of equality has persisted into modern times and is expressed in the following quote by an adherent of conservatism.

In conservatism the aristocratic principle stands opposed to the heresy of equality. Social and political advance in a civilized society can only proceed through the wisdom of an enlightened minority.²

This statement captures the views of a considerable portion of the Party.

The ideas of Hayek and Oakeshott have been examined in order to see how they fit into the discourse of the contemporary British Conservative Party and to demonstrate the metamorphosis the Party has undergone. Oakeshott was chosen mainly because he highlighted attitudes and ideas that were common to the old elite. Although, this power structure continues to function in the modern era, Thatcher has attempted to dismantle and neutralize it. Hayek was singled out for attention because his thought was more in line with the new forces Thatcherism represented and because his ideas were actually drawn upon and pointed to as validating its position. One of the ways in which Hayek's ideas were disseminated to Conservatives was through organizations like the IEA (Institute for Economic Affairs). Keith Joseph went to the IEA regularly for reading material which
he often passed on to Mrs. Thatcher and this was how she became more thoroughly acquainted with Hayek's works. Hayek also appeared an appropriate figure to choose because of his attention to the political developments of Britain. His status as a mentor and a philosopher admired by considerable numbers of Conservatives during the Thatcher era symbolizes the transformation of the Conservative Party into an exponent of liberalism. To ease this transition and make it more palatable, Conservatives attempted to choose liberal thinkers who had some conservative aspects in their thought, like Hayek, and therefore, make the shift to ideology and liberalism within the Conservative Party seem natural, as does John Gray.

Hayek's position is distinctive to be sure. It embodies the best elements of classical liberalism and also suggests a criticism of many conventional conservative positions. At the same time it derives from some of the most profound insights of conservative philosophy ... However, I believe any attempts to turn Hayek into an exponent of conservatism and a supporter of the Conservative Party is misguided because Hayek has been a lifelong believer and advocate of liberalism and its major tenets.

The Oakeshottian brand of conservatism has a more skeptical cast of mind concerning politics and society, unlike the more economistic and rationalistic thought of Hayek. Oakeshott's philosophy is notable for its inherent skepticism and its denial that the problems of society can be solved by following an ideology, and any plans that would stem from this ideology. In fact, Oakeshott places little faith in the potential of politics to resolve society's defects. In this respect, his views are in
line with the main body of traditional conservative thought and practice. Oakeshott has much more sympathy with this older type of conservatism and to the Conservative Party of the past, as is made clear when he expresses his cautionary attitude towards change. Even though change inevitably occurs, it must be evolutionary and connected to the traditions and history of the country. He is very suspicious of sudden and abrupt changes, especially when these changes include trying to impose formulas and plans on society (something which Thatcher was guilty of as Conservative leader). As mentioned before, this is something he faults Hayek for even though Hayek has tried to avoid the evils of planning. Oakeshott states that:

This is perhaps the main significance of Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*—not the cogency of his doctrine, but the fact that it is a doctrine. A plan to resist all planning may be better than its opposite, but it belongs to the same style of politics.4

Oakeshott's ties to a more upper class style of conservatism has meant that he does not see inequality, privilege and rank as a danger to British society but rather as an advantage. This parallels the traditional conservative concern about the proper structure of society of which Oakeshott writes,

The Conservative fear is that without wise leadership democracy may mean ultimately the triumph of mass appetites, released from social discipline, destroying all civilised human values.5

Also, his attack on the philosophy of rationalism with its faith in science and the power of man's reason to put right any imperfections and imbalances in social and political life, runs contrary to the very foundations of Thatcherism.
Hayek, on the other hand, accepts inequality on different terms: the type of inequality that is produced by the market. Hayek finds inequality of wealth justifiable because it is caused by the impartial mechanism of the free market.

The inequality produced by the market is tolerable for Hayek because he sees the market and capitalism as the most efficient and productive economic system ever and he believes the wealth created by it benefits the whole of society not just those at the top. This belief closely connects Hayek with Thatcherism and he also sympathizes with Victorian virtues such as thrift, hard work and self-help promoted in the Thatcherite creed.

Hayek's thought appealed to Thatcherites because he furnished reasons for attempting to remould Britain into a society based on money and not class or privilege. Oakeshott of course, did not question these things and therefore, was not appealing to the Thatcherites. Indeed, Oakeshott represented for many of them what was wrong with the Conservative Party. Such an attitude exemplifies the extent of the reformulation of the Conservative Party and how far it has been won over to the merits of ideology.

Much of Hayek's thought dovetails with the propositions of Thatcherism. For example, there is mutual support of a strong but limited state and a society composed of small independent businessmen and farmers in which negative freedom is the ultimate value and the belief that the "market" should be the central institution of any such society. Both Hayek and Thatcherism face problems because such a vision of society does not correspond to
the reality of contemporary England and consequently, their attempts to operate by principles and methods which take this picture to be true or try to change the society and economy to conform to this picture has a deleterious effect on the country and its citizens.

Major problems have also resulted because of the uneasy, and in the end, incompatible alliance of liberalism and conservatism in Thatcherism. This has made "Thatcherism both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary ... it appeals to new aspirations, and at the same time asserts old values: it promises both freedom and order, choice and discipline."6

The endeavour on the part of Margaret Thatcher and her followers to fuse conservatism and liberal ideology within the Conservative Party in order to deal with disintegration of Keynesianism was a flawed strategy. If what was wanted was economic or classical liberalism, a complete conversion was what was required. However, Thatcher also tried to hold onto conservative ideals which were directly at odds with liberalism and its ideological basis. Even if such a total change to liberalism had been contemplated, it is doubtful it would have been supported by the Party because it would have meant that the Conservative Party would no longer have been able to maintain the slightest claim to being "conservative".

Thatcherism only unprofitably fragmented the Party and prevented it from creating successful and constructive programmes and strategies to deal with Britain's economic and political problems. Although, I do not endorse the ideal and goals of the
older style of conservatism Oakeshott is an exemplar of, it was at least able to offer values and traditions for the Conservative Party to draw upon. Perhaps, the Party's disillusionment with Thatcher (which was most evident when they forced her to step down as leader in the autumn of 1990) most clearly points out the fundamental tension between the liberal and conservative ideals she embraced.
CONCLUSIONS

Endnotes

1Maurice Cowling, "The Sources of the New Right", 8.


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


