

conservatism merely
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It is often said that conservatism merely reflects the interests of the privileged and prosperous and though it can be argued that conservatism seeks to protect the inheritance of property and tradition, there have been instances in conservatism where the interests of the less privileged have been protected, this is known as paternalism or one nation conservatism.

The negative conservative view of human nature allows conservatives to justify their defence of their privileges and prosperity. Conservatives view human nature as morally imperfect. There is uncertainty about natural goodness of human beings and their sense of original sin that humans are innately selfish and as such need to safeguard their possessions and privileges against humans who are inherently immoral. However a Marxist could argue that the conservative view of humans is simply an excuse to protect the interests of the property owning classes in capitalism. Thus conservatism can be seen to reflect the interest of the privileged and the prosperous.

The organic theory of the state can be seen as the conservative justification for their belief in hierarchy. The organic theory of the state compares the state and society to a living organism in which the components work together in necessarily unequal harmony. The entire entity is more than the sum of its parts and as such society, which is necessarily hierarchical, is more important than any individual within it. The organic state leads conservatives to not only believing in natural hierarchy, but it is also desirable. Conservatives have argued that they perceive class, but not class conflict. Thus those who are not privileged or prosperous are happy as their society brings them stability, security and rootedness. However many

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modern liberals would see this as conservatives ignoring social disadvantage and could argue that their interest in protecting their privileges and prosperity is damaging to the equality of opportunity needed to allow individuals to flourish and reach their potential. However conservatives believe it is only with societies that individuals can flourish and prosper, working towards a common goal is beneficial for society as a whole.

It was this strand of thinking that has lead conservatives such as Disraeli to the term one nation conservatism. It was Disraeli's belief that Britain was separating into two nations: the rich and the poor. It was his wish to unite the two nations to become one. Disraeli feared that capitalism had allowed some individuals to accumulate wealth to the extent that they thought themselves superior to society as a whole. It was feared that the unease felt by the poor nation could manifest itself into a revolution, 'the palace is unsafe, if the cottage is unhappy'. He believed in the idea 'noblesse oblige' which means 'privilege entails obligations', the paternal duty of the privileged and prosperous is to protect the interests of the poor.

These ideas were taken up through Macmillan's 'the middle way'. Through welfare reforms such as the NHS and the proper housing was secured to prevent outrage and support for communist thought that had been gaining pace across Europe. This could be identified by one nation conservatism as reflecting the common interests of the unified society as a whole rather than simply the prosperous. However, it could be argued by followers of socialist thought that by providing few benefits to the proletariat this could benefit conservatives and protected their privileges and property in a wider sense.

Thus conservatives can be identified as protecting their own by pretending to have an interest in those below them in the hierarchy.

Conservatives argue ' privilege is the reward of honourable service' by this it means that those who have contributed to society, have a right to protect their privileges such as property.

Conservatives stress the importance of inheritance in tradition, both of practises and institutions from earlier periods and of property. It is seen as a natural right and that maintain the correct order of society is beneficial for all not simply the prosperous.

Conservatives would argue that they do not merely reflect the interests of the privileged and prosperous as they simply have a pragmatic approach to dealing with problems. Conservatives argue that they preserve what is best from the past and accept a limited and controlled response to changing circumstances rather than act with reference to utopian ideas. Instead conservatives argue that they are merely pragmatic and reactionary in their approach to politics. They state ' conservatism is less a political doctrine than a habit of mind, a mode of feeling, a way of living' and is not simply to victimise those who lack prosperity and privileges.

Overall conservatives place great emphasis on order and stability for the imperfect human that is suspicious of change. Conservatives believe it is task as the natural governs of society, to provide for them in order that they can pass on their property and privileges they have inherited to the next generation. This will provide another set of natural governors to guide the security-seeking members of society to order and stability.

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In this way conservatives believe they reflect the interest of individuals can unite one nation. However, I believe conservatism does reflect the interests of the privileged and prosperous and paternalism is an excuse to prevent class conflict.