

# Liberalism and conservatism

[History](#)



Liberalism and Conservatism both are social and political philosophies that seek to define the functioning and structure of a society and its politics. The two ideologies are poles apart. Liberalism instructs to limit the interference of the state in the private lives of the citizens, and it pushes the state to develop policies that enhance the freedom given to citizens and groups. On the other hand, Conservatism imparts instructions that are opposed to that of liberalism. The basic ideology behind conservatism is to maintain the essence of traditional institutions and practices. It calls for minimal change in the society. It is established that both ideologies oppose each other, while one calls for change and liberty, the other calls for traditionalism and minimum change.

In essence liberalism states independence and growth. It covers the basic meaning of humanity and society. Though there have arisen different strands liberalism, the basic fundamentals of liberalism remain same. The liberal philosophy ignites individualism, egalitarianism, meliorism and universalism. Individualism asserts independence and self reliance while egalitarianism imparts political, social and civil equality among individuals. Meliorism and universalism both have common motives. That is to allow greater sociopolitical interaction. All these separate ideologies converge towards a few common postulates. These are equality and individual liberty, support of private property and individual rights, limited constitutional government and pluralism, toleration and autonomy. In history there have been various critiques on the liberal chain of thought. The most significant of which has been by the conservatives. They have argued that liberalism is in fact pursuit of progress and material gain. This argument was further augmented by a Hungarian philosopher, Karl Polyani. Polyani attacked the <https://assignbuster.com/liberalism-and-conservatism/>

liberal economic thought. He stated that human behavior is supported through social interactions not through greed and rational, which in fact drove the free markets (Hill). He also argued that the created free markets brought with it fictitious money. In his view the liberal economic system would ultimately bring with it artificial commodification of land, labour and capital. This would lead to the destruction of the society.

The counter ideology is conservatism. It promotes the maintenance of traditional institutions and structure. The ideology allows minimal and gradual change in society. As with liberalism, there are many different strands of conservatism as well. Among which a few are liberal conservatism, green conservatism, religious conservatism, cultural and social conservatism. Though the settings and situations of these separate strands are different from each other, the basic concept of conservatism remains the same in all. The conservatism chain of thought gives high importance to institutions carried by culture and tradition. It accepts human inequality and adopts social hierarchy. The philosophy also dictates a belief human irrational behavior and recognizes the need for emotional bonding among individuals to their community. As with liberalism, conservatism also has its critique. Conservatism is said to be an ideology that delves with tradition and minimal change. For this reason it is said to be against positive change in society. The traditional institutions that are sought for do not have the structural experience; integrity and flexibility to adapt to the needs of the civilians and the society. There are a number of arguments against conservatism. The major and more significant arguments are that conservatism destroys conscience, democracy, reason and language.

#### Works Cited

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