

Political Ideologies I



GVPT 100
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OUTLINE



- The Concept of Ideology
- The Functions of Ideology
- The Spectrum of Ideologies
- Liberalism

Different Conceptions of “Ideology”



- Among the meanings that have been attached to ideology are the following:
 - A political belief system.
 - An action-orientated set of political ideas.
 - The ideas of the ruling class.
 - The world-view of a particular social class or social group.
 - Political ideas that embody or articulate class or social interests.
 - Ideas that propagate false consciousness amongst the exploited or oppressed.

Different Conceptions of “Ideology” *Cont’ed*



- Ideas that situate the individual within a social context and generate a sense of collective belonging.
- An officially sanctioned set of ideas used to legitimize a political system or regime.
- An all-embracing political doctrine that claims a monopoly of truth .
- An abstract and highly systematic set of political ideas.

A Working Definition of Ideology



- An ideology is a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organized political action , whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power.
- All ideologies therefore
 - a) offer an account of the existing order , usually in the form of a “world-view,”
 - b) advance a model of a desired future, a vision of the “good society,” and
 - c) explain how political change can and should be brought about - how to get from (a) to (b).

The First Feature of “Ideology”



1. Ideologies straddle the conventional boundary between descriptive and normative thought.
 - Ideologies are descriptive in that, in effect, they provide individuals and groups with an intellectual map of how their society works and, more broadly, with a general view of the world.
 - However, such descriptive understanding is deeply embedded within a set of normative or prescriptive beliefs (e.g., night-watchman state)

The First Feature of “Ideology” *Cont’ed*



- Ideology therefore has a powerful emotional or affective character.
- As (a) and (b) above are linked, “facts” in ideologies inevitably tend to merge into and become confused with “values.”

The Second Feature of “Ideology”



2. Ideologies combine thought and action (or theory and practice) which is reflected in the linkage between (b) and (c) above.
 - Unlike political philosophy, ideologies take the form of broad political movements, engaged in popular mobilization and the struggle for power. Ideology in this guise may be expressed in slogans, political rhetoric, party manifestos, and government policies.

The Second Feature of “Ideology” *Cont’ed*



- Ideologies invariably lack the clear shape and internal consistency of political philosophies; they are only *more or less coherent*.
- This not only fosters ideological development but also leads to the emergence of hybrid ideological forms, such as liberal conservatism, socialist feminism and conservative nationalism.
- Moreover, each ideology contains a range of divergent, even rival interpretations.

The Primary Functions of Ideologies



1. Ideologies provide a perspective through which the world is understood and explained.
 - People do not see the world as it is, but only as they expect it to be; in other words, they see it through a veil of ingrained beliefs, opinions and assumptions.
2. Ideologies help to shape the nature of political systems.
 - The political systems in most contemporary western countries are founded upon a set of liberal-democratic principles. In the same way, traditional communist political systems conformed to the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

The Primary Functions of Ideologies *Cont'ed*



3. Ideologies play a crucial role in
 - either upholding the prevailing power structure, by portraying it as fair, natural, rightful or whatever,
 - or in weakening or challenging it, by highlighting its iniquities or injustices and drawing attention to the attractions of alternative power structures.
4. Ideologies can act as a form of social cement, providing social groups, and indeed whole societies, with a set of unifying beliefs and values.

The Historical Origin of “Ideology”

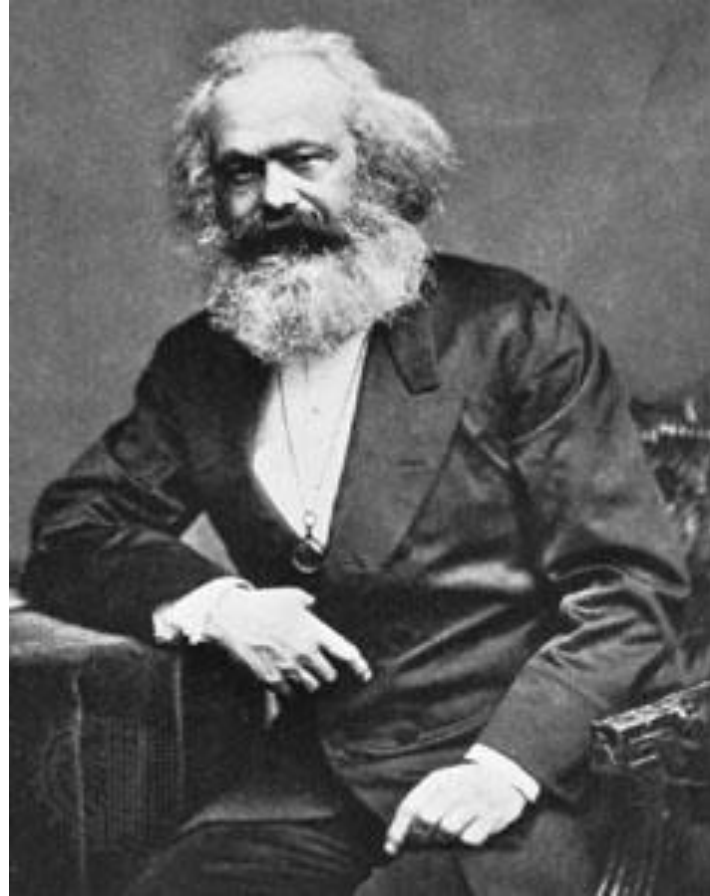


- The word ideology was coined during the French Revolution by Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836), and was first used in public in 1796. For de Tracy, *ideologie* referred to a new “science of ideas,” literally an idea-ology.



The Evolution of
the Concept of
Ideology:

Marx used the term in the title of his work *The German Ideology* (1846), which contains his view of ideology.



Karl Marx (1818-1883), German revolutionary, sociologist, historian, and political economist.

Marx's Conception of Ideology



- “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time the ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of *material* production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.”

Marx's Conception of Ideology *Cont'ed*



- Marx's conception of ideology has a number of crucial features:
 1. Ideology is about delusion and mystification; it perpetrates a false or mistaken view of the world, what Engels later referred to as 'false consciousness'. The contrast between ideology and science, between falsehood and truth, is thus vital to Marx's use of the term.
 2. Ideology is linked to the class system. Marx believed that the distortion implicit in ideology stems from the fact that it reflects the interests and perspective on society of the ruling class.

Marx's Conception of Ideology *Cont'ed*



3. Ideology is a manifestation of power. In concealing the contradictions upon which capitalism, in common with all class societies, is based, ideology serves to disguise from the exploited proletariat the fact of its own exploitation, thereby upholding a system of unequal class power.
4. Marx treated ideology as a temporary phenomenon. Ideology will only continue so long as the class system that generates it survives.

Ideology After Marx



- For Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924) and most twentieth-century Marxists, ideology referred to the distinctive ideas of a particular social class, ideas that advance its interests regardless of its class position.

The Spectrum of Ideologies



Figure 1.1 Linear spectrum

Communism Socialism Liberalism Conservatism Fascism

“The Right” implied support for aristocratic, royal, or clerical interests, while “The Left” implied opposition to the same.



ANSEMBLEE
GÉNÉRALE DE TOUTES
LES ÉTATS, NATIONALE DE LA

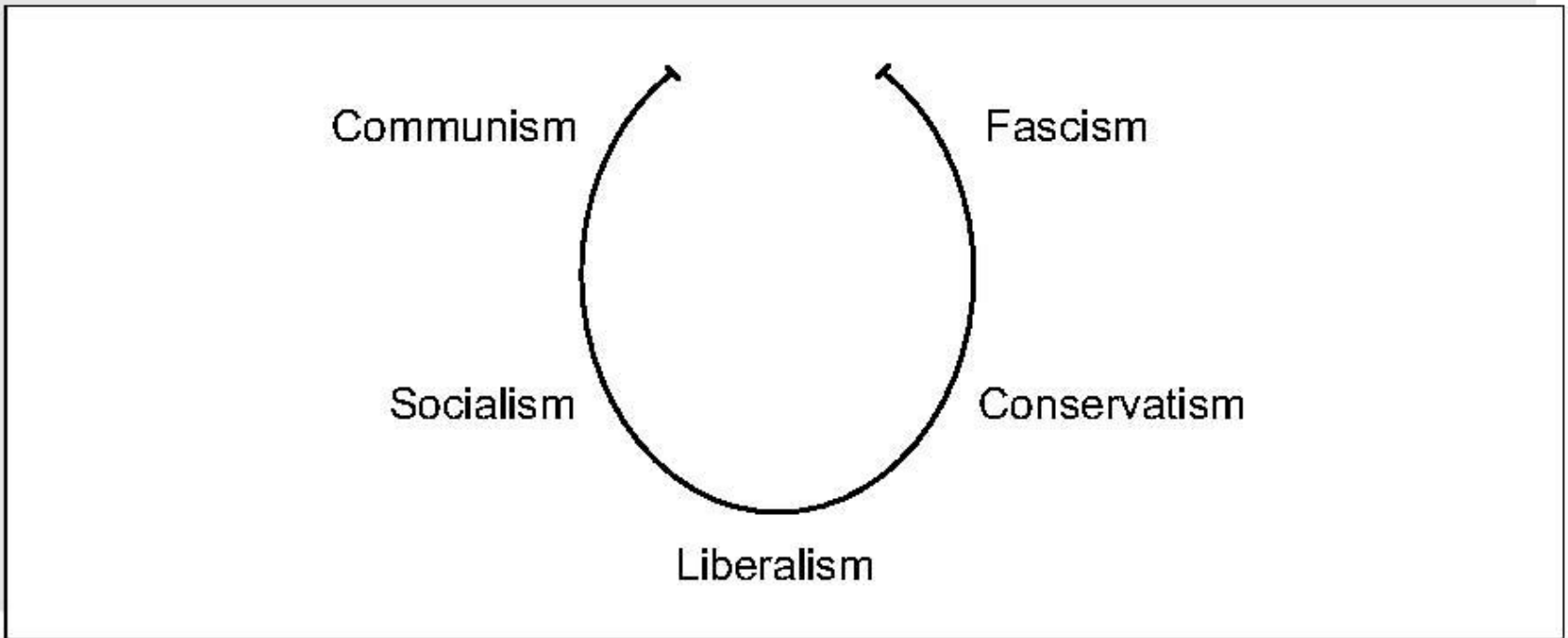
NATIONALE
DES PRIVILÉGIÉS,
Née le 4 au 2 Août 1789.

French National Assembly voting to relinquish the feudal privileges on August 4, 1789.

Alternative Spectrums of Ideology



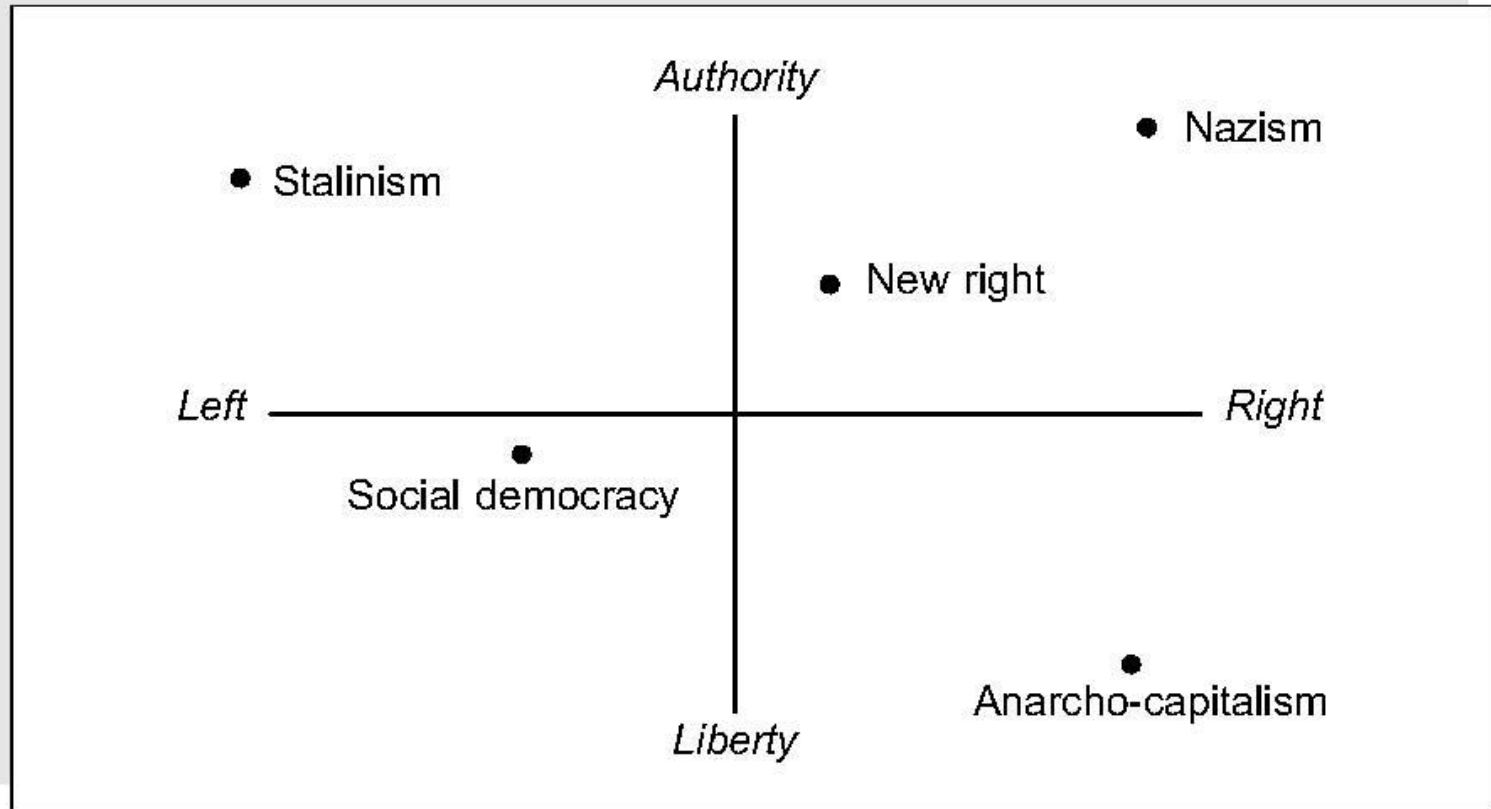
Figure 1.2 Horseshoe spectrum



Alternative Spectrums of Ideology




Figure 1.3 Two-dimensional spectrum



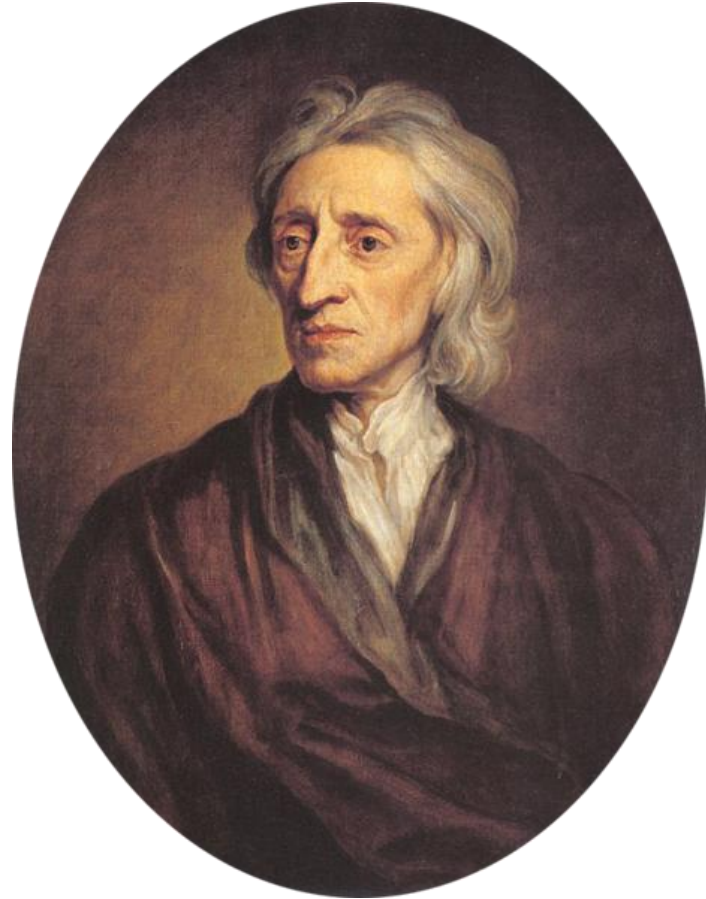
Classical Liberalism




- State or government should not be involved in the economy, the system works better without government/state interference, society should be as free as possible from government/state interference.



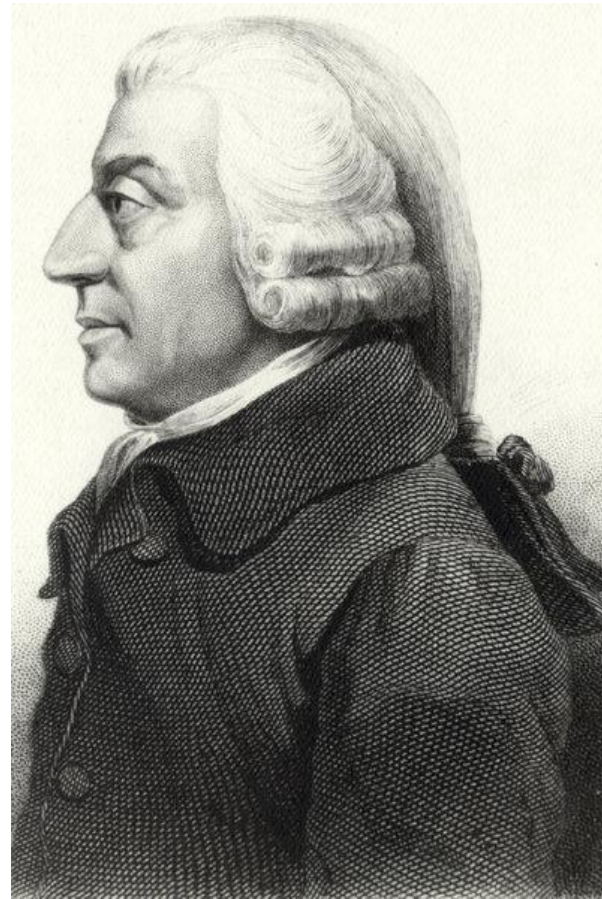
*Two Treatises
of Government*
(1689) argues
against the
absolutist
theory of
government.




**John Locke, English philosopher
(1632-1704)**



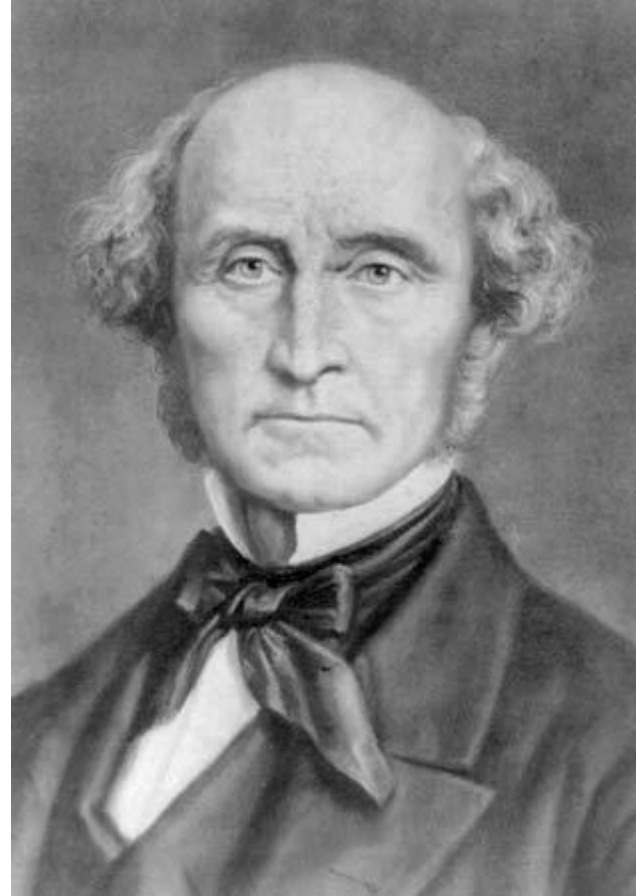
In An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776), Smith argues that an individual pursuing his own self-interest tends to also promote the good of his community as a whole through a principle that he called “the invisible hand”.



Adam Smith (1723-1790), Scottish social philosopher and political economist.



On Liberty (1859) explores the nature and limits of the power that can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual. The harm principle holds that each individual has the right to act as he wants, so long as these actions do not harm others.




**John Stuart Mill (1806-1873),
English philosopher and economist**



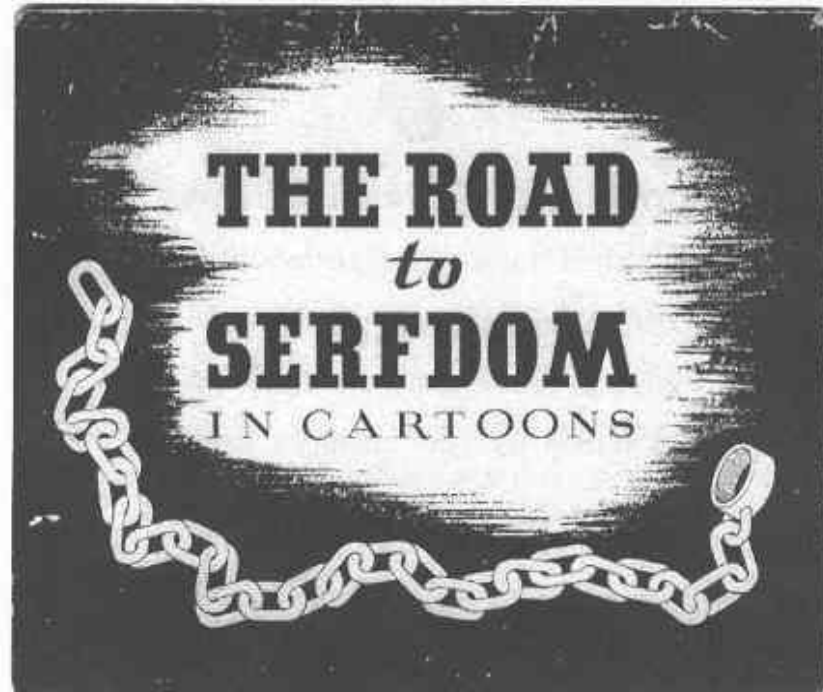
Hayek's most famous book, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) is often cited as a major influence on the political ideologies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.



Friedrich August von Hayek (1899-1992), Austrian-born British economist



The central thesis of *The Road to Serfdom* is that all forms of collectivism lead logically and inevitably to tyranny. The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany are offered as examples of countries which, in Hayek's view, had gone down "the road to serfdom" and reached tyranny.



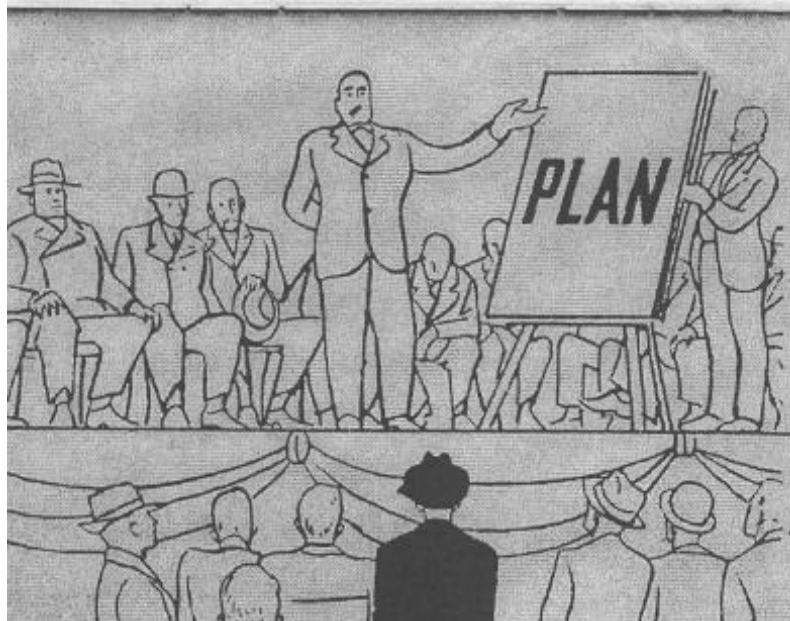
Originally published in *Look* magazine

Reproduced from a booklet published by
General Motors, Detroit
in the 'Thought Starter' series (no. 118)

3

The "Planners" promise Utopias

A rosy plan for farmers goes well in rural areas, a plan for industrial workers is popular in cities—and so on. Many new "planners" are elected to office



7

They try to "sell" the plan to all . . .

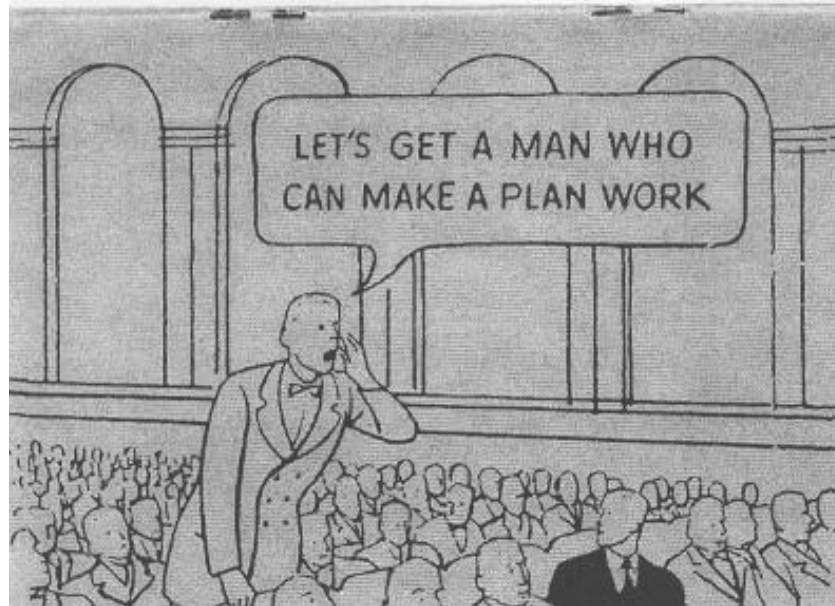
In an unsuccessful effort to educate people to uniform views, "planners" establish a giant propaganda machine —which coming dictator will find handy.



9

Confidence in "planners" fades

The more that the "planners" improvise, the greater the disturbance to normal business. Everybody suffers. People now feel—rightly—that "planners" *can't get things done!*



11

The party takes over the country . . .

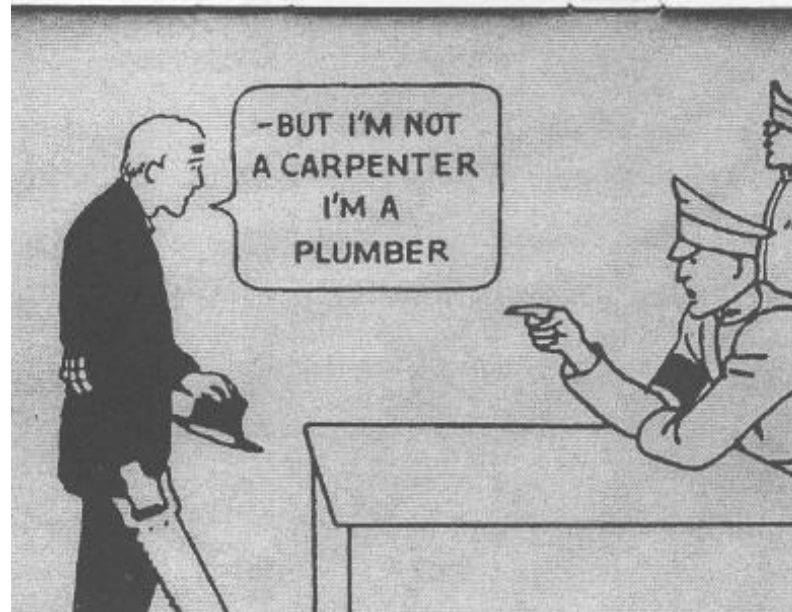
By now, confusion is so great that obedience to the new leader must be obtained at all costs. Maybe you join the party yourself to aid national unity.



14

Your profession is "planned"

The wider job choice promised by now defunct "planners" turns out to be a tragic farce. "Planners" never have delivered, never will be able to.



15

Your wages are "planned"

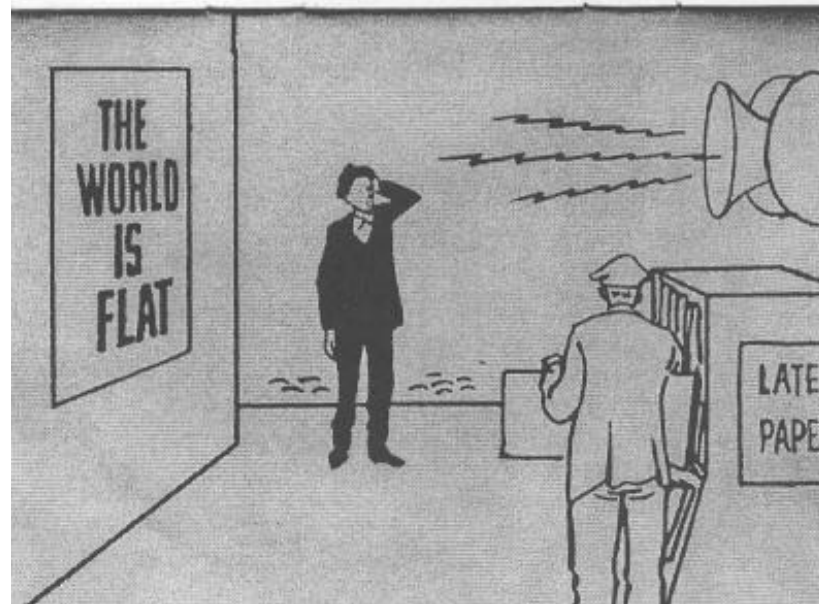
Divisions of the wage scale must be arbitrary and rigid. Running a "planned state" from central headquarters is *clumsy, unfair, inefficient.*



16

Your thinking is "planned"

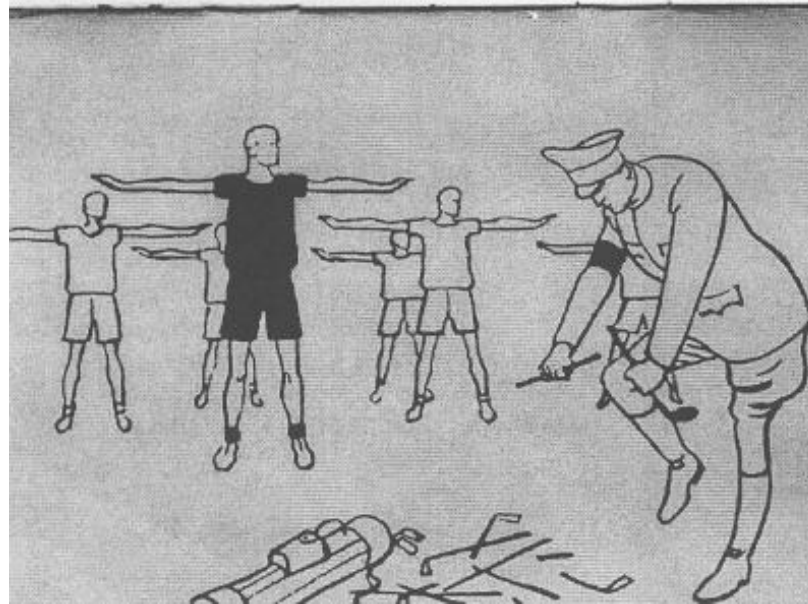
In the dictatorship, unintentionally created by the planners, there is no room for difference of opinion. Posters, radio, press—all tell you the same lies!



17

Your recreation is "planned"

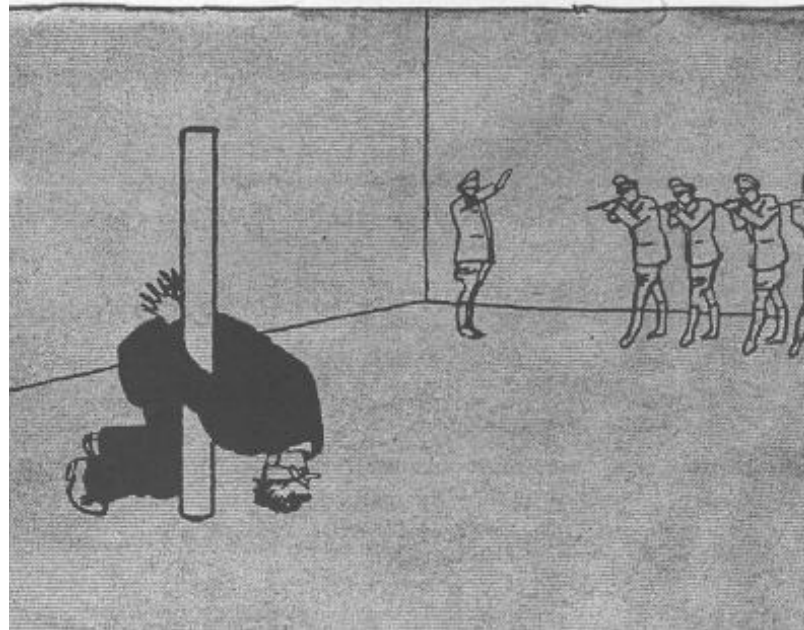
It is no coincidence that sports and amusements have been carefully "planned" in all regimented nations. Once started, "planners" can't stop.



18

Your disciplining is "planned"

If you're fired from your job, it's apt to be by a firing squad. What used to be an *error* has now become a *crime* against the state. *Thus ends the road to serfdom!*



Contemporary/Modern Liberalism



- Contemporary liberals argue that a total free market leads to companies rigging the market, monopolies developing and the creation of a large underclass of terribly poor who pass poverty on to their children.
- Contemporary liberals
 - Believe that government should step in to prevent these extreme cases and protect individual's freedoms in the face of government and the market;
 - Focus on civil rights as opposed to economic rights as more important for the individual

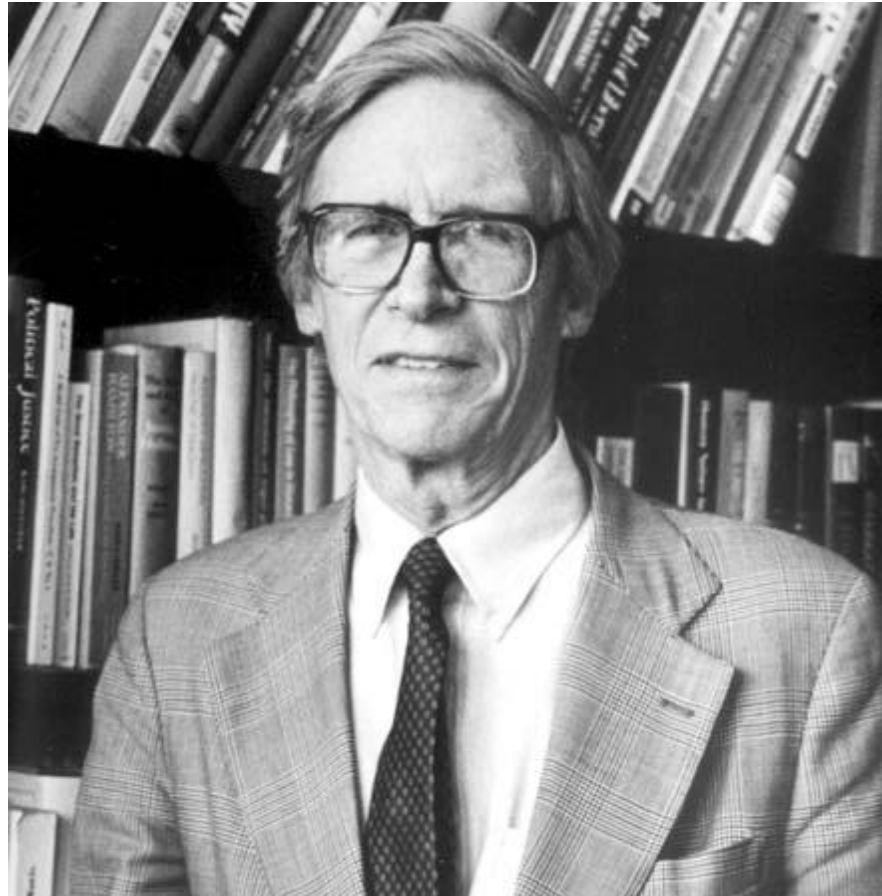
Contemporary/Modern Liberalism *Cont'ed*




- Generally favor government action to protect and defend the disadvantaged and those who have been discriminated against and call for programs that alleviate past and present discrimination;
- Tend to be optimistic about human nature and believe that crime, poverty, racism and other problems arise out of social conditions not individual deviance;
- Tend to believe that things are getting better over time and that many past values and traditions made things worse and they should be avoided.



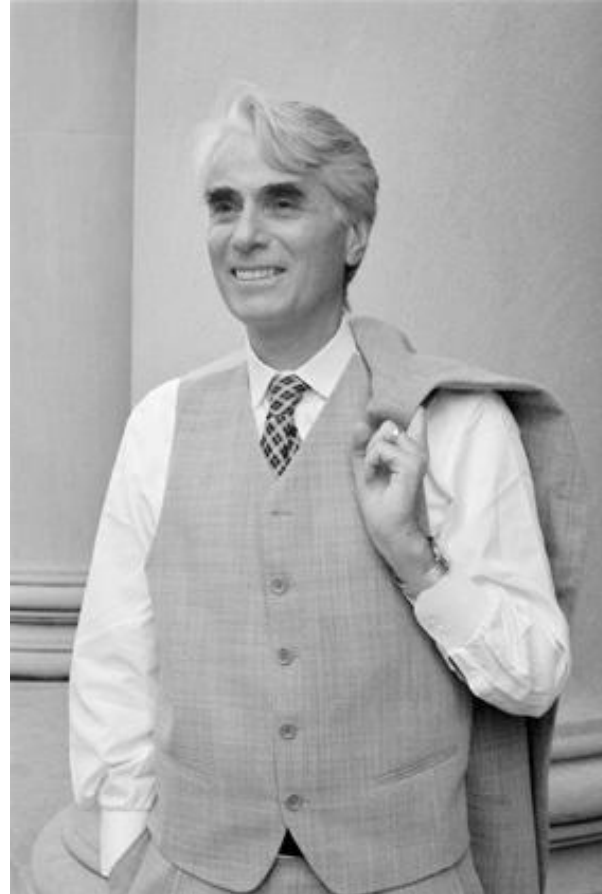
Rawls is best known for his defense of egalitarian liberalism in his major work, *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Rawls provided a philosophical underpinning for the bureaucratic welfare state, defending redistribution of wealth in order to help the poor and disadvantaged.



John Rawls (1921-2002), American political and ethical philosopher.



Nozick's book, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974) was a critique of Rawls' views on social justice. Nozick argued that the rights of the individual are primary and that nothing more than a minimal state - sufficient to protect against violence and theft, and to ensure the enforcement of contracts - is justified.



**Robert Nozick (1938-2002),
American political and ethical
philosopher.**

CONCLUSION



- To study “ideologies” is to be concerned with analyzing the content of political thought, to be interested in the ideas, doctrines and theories that have been advanced by and within the various ideological traditions.
- Learning the general tenets of ideologies can be a good starting point in understanding “ideologies,” but to make progress in this endeavor we need to get acquainted with the ideas of their central intellectual figures.