



Ninth Edition

# Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal

Terence Ball • Richard Dagger • Daniel O'Neill



# POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

NINTH EDITION

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*To*

*Andrew, Alexandra and Eliana Nicole Lopez Ball*

*Emily and Elizabeth Dagger*

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# CONTENTS

*Preface ix*

*To the Reader xiii*

*About the Authors xiv*

## **Part One** Ideology and Democracy

### **Chapter 1** Ideology and Ideologies 1

A Working Definition of “Ideology” 4

Human Nature and Freedom 8

Human Nature 8

Freedom 9

Ideology and Revolution 11

Nationalism and Anarchism 13

Nationalism 13

Anarchism 14

Conclusion 15

### **Chapter 2** The Democratic Ideal 17

The Origins of Democracy 18

Democracy and Republic 23

The Republic and Mixed Government 23

Christianity and Democracy 24

Renaissance and Republicanism 25

The Atlantic Republican Tradition 28

The Return of Democracy 28

Seventeenth-Century Democrats 29

The United States as Democratic Republic 30

Tocqueville on Democracy 32

The Growth of Democracy 34

Democracy as an Ideal 35

Three Conceptions of Democracy 38

Conclusion 40

## Part Two The Development of Political Ideologies

### Chapter 3 Liberalism 44

- Liberalism, Human Nature, and Freedom 45
- Historical Background 46
  - Medieval Origins 46
  - The Protestant Reformation 49
- Liberalism and Revolution 51
  - England 51
  - The American Revolution 55
  - The French Revolution 58
- Liberalism and Capitalism 61
- Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century 65
  - Utilitarianism 66
- Liberalism Divided 72
  - Neoclassical Liberalism 73
  - Welfare Liberalism 74
- Liberalism in the Twentieth Century 77
  - Historical Developments 77
  - Philosophical Considerations 79
- The Libertarian Vision 81
- Liberalism Today: Divisions and Differences 82
- Conclusion 85
  - Liberalism as an Ideology 85
  - Liberalism and the Democratic Ideal 87
  - Coda 1: The Limits of Liberal Toleration 88
  - Coda 2: A New New Deal? 90
  - Coda 3: The “Occupy” Movement 92

### Chapter 4 Conservatism 99

- The Politics of Imperfection 100
- The Conservatism of Edmund Burke 101
  - Human Nature and Society 102
  - Freedom 103
  - Revolution and Reform 105
  - Burke on Government 106
  - Burke’s Legacy 108
- Conservatism in the Nineteenth Century 108
  - Conservatism and Reaction 109
  - Tory Democracy 111
  - Conservatism in the United States 112
- Conservatism in the Twentieth Century 114
  - Conservatism versus Mass Society 114
  - Levelling 115
  - Conservatives and Communism 116

Conservatism Today: A House Divided	118
Traditional Conservatism	118
Individualist Conservatism	119
Neoconservatism	120
The Religious Right	123
Conclusion	127
Conservatism as an Ideology	128
Conservatism and the Democratic Ideal	129

## **Chapter 5 Socialism and Communism: From More to Marx 133**

Human Nature and Freedom	134
Socialism: the Precursors	136
Saint-Simon	138
Fourier	139
Owen	139
The Socialism of Karl Marx	140
The Young Marx	140
The Influence of Hegel	142
Marx's Theory of History	144
Marx's Critique of Capitalism	147
The Dialectic of Change	150
The Revolutionary Sequence	152

## **Chapter 6 Socialism and Communism After Marx 157**

Marxism After Marx	158
Engels's Marxism	158
The Revisionists	163
Soviet Marxism-Leninism	166
Chinese Communism	176
Critical Western Marxism	181
Non-Marxist Socialism	182
Anarcho-Communism	182
Christian Socialism	185
Fabian Socialism	186
American Socialism	186
Socialism Today	189
Conclusion	193
Socialism as an Ideology	193
Socialism and the Democratic Ideal	194

## **Chapter 7 Fascism 199**

Fascism: The Background	200
The Counter-Enlightenment	201
Nationalism	202

Elitism	204
Irrationalism	205
Fascism in Italy	206
Mussolini and Italian Fascism	206
Fascism in Theory and Practice	209
Fascism in Germany: Nazism	211
Hitler and Nazism	211
Nazism in Theory and Practice	214
Human Nature and Freedom	215
Fascism Elsewhere	219
Fascism Today	221
Conclusion	227
Fascism as an Ideology	227
Fascism and the Democratic Ideal	227

## **Part Three** Political Ideologies Today and Tomorrow

### **Chapter 8** Liberation Ideologies and the Politics of Identity 232

Liberation Ideologies: Common Characteristics	232
Black Liberation	234
Women's Liberation (Feminism)	240
Gay Liberation (LGBT)	248
Native People's Liberation (Indigenism)	253
Liberation Theology	256
Animal Liberation	259
Conclusion	265
Liberty, Identity, and Ideology	265
Liberation, Identity, and the Democratic Ideal	266

### **Chapter 9** "Green" Politics: Ecology as Ideology 276

The Green Critique of Other Ideologies	277
Toward an Ecological Ethic	280
Unresolved Differences	285
Conclusion	291
Ecology as Ideology	291
Ecology, Freedom, and the Democratic Ideal	291
Coda: The End of Environmentalism?	293

### **Chapter 10** Radical Islamism 298

Islam: A Short History	299
Radical Islamism	301
Human Nature and Freedom	305



Conclusion 309  
    Radical Islamism as an Ideology 309  
    Radical Islamism and the Democratic Ideal 310

**Chapter 11 Postscript: The Future of Ideology 318**

Political Ideologies: Continuing Forces 319  
    Nationalism and Ideology 319  
    Religion and Ideology 321  
Ideology and Public Policy 322  
Ideology, the Environment, and Globalization 323  
Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal 326  
The End of Ideology? 329

*Glossary* 333

*Name Index* 341

*Subject Index* 344

# PREFACE

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

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

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

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

- In Chapter 2 we have added an account of the long and still-continuing struggle for the right to vote, and the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision and recent voter ID laws and their implications for American democracy.
- In Chapter 3 we have added greatly expanded accounts of John Locke’s and Adam Smith’s important contributions to the liberal tradition, a new discussion of James Mill, an enlarged exploration of the link between Utilitarianism’s “protectionist” theory of democracy and J. S. Mill’s “educative” theory, the alleged “break” between classical liberalism and modern welfare liberalism, the conservative origins of the welfare state, and the Occupy Wall Street movement.
- Chapter 4 includes expanded discussions of Burkean or classical conservatism—most especially its conceptions of freedom and the rule of law—as well as

modern conservatives' reasons for placing property rights ahead of other rights, and the influence of the newly emergent "Tea Party" on the Republican Party.

- In Chapter 6 we discuss Lenin's amendments to Marxism and his reasons for distrusting Stalin and seeking to have him expelled from the Communist Party. Also new is a more detailed discussion of Chinese Communism and Mao Zedong's ideas and policies and their destructive human and environmental impact.
- In Chapter 7 we provide enlarged accounts of Hitler and the Nazis' rise to power, Nazi "racial Darwinism," Nazi family policy, and why National Socialism (Nazism) is neither nationalist nor socialist. Also included is a discussion of recent electoral gains by far-right, neo-fascist, or neo-Nazi parties in Europe.
- Chapter 8 includes a greatly expanded discussion of feminism in light of the so-called "war on women" to restrict women's reproductive rights, changing attitudes toward gays and same-sex marriage and why those attitudes do not always neatly divide along liberal-conservative lines, and the grave dangers facing gays in Africa and elsewhere.
- Chapter 9 includes an account of the new discipline of "ecopsychology" that studies the relationship between humans and nature, and of the surprisingly strong alliance between hunters and environmentalists.
- In this new edition we have once again expanded the discussion of radical Islamism in Chapter 10, especially with regard to radical Islamists' distrust of democracy and their role in recent elections in Egypt and elsewhere, and in the entirely new phenomenon of "self-radicalization" via the Internet, as apparently exemplified in the terrorist bombings at the 2013 Boston Marathon.
- And we have greatly expanded the discussion of "free trade" vs. "fair trade" in Chapter 11.

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

## FEATURES

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

The basic structure of the text remains the same as in previous editions. We begin by constructing a fourfold framework—a working definition of "ideology"

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

This text is twinned with an accompanying anthology, *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, also published in a newly revised ninth edition by Pearson. Although each book can stand alone, they are arranged to supplement and complement each other. Other instructional materials are available from the publisher ([www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com)).

## SUPPLEMENTS

Pearson is pleased to offer several resources to qualified adopters of *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal* that will make teaching and learning from this book even more effective and enjoyable. The instructor supplements for this book are available at the Instructor Resource Center (IRC), an online hub that allows instructors to quickly download book-specific supplements. Please visit the IRC welcome page at [www.pearsonhighered.com/irc](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc) to register for access.

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

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We first undertook this collaborative effort in the belief that two heads are better than one. We found in writing the first and subsequent editions that a project of this sort requires more, or better, heads than the authors could muster between themselves, and revising the book for the subsequent editions has only strengthened that conclusion. To those who shared their time, energy, and wisdom with us in preparing this new edition, especially our families and the staff at Pearson, we offer our deepest thanks. We are particularly grateful to Professor Daniel I. O'Neill of the University of Florida for his help in preparing this ninth edition. We would also like to thank Zhipei Chi for his advice regarding Chinese Communism in Chapter 6, Professor Mary Dietz of Northwestern University for extensive and astute advice on Chapter 8 (particularly feminism and LGBT) and Professor Roxanne Euben of Wellesley College and Dr. Salwa Ismail of Exeter University for help with radical Islamism. And for his helpful advice about the affinities between hunters and environmentalists, we thank Steven Kingsbury.

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*Terence Ball*

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# TO THE READER

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

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

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

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

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# IDEOLOGY AND IDEOLOGIES

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

John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*

The annual Boston Marathon is a joyous occasion, attracting the best runners from across the country and around the world. But the 2013 Marathon, which had begun so happily on a sunny New England morning, ended abruptly and violently at 2:49 in the afternoon as two homemade bombs exploded near the finish line, killing 3 onlookers and grievously injuring 264 others. The bombers, two brothers who were self-radicalized Islamists, saw themselves as defenders of their faith, engaged in a **jihad**, or “holy war,” against its Western, and especially its American, enemies. Violent and deadly as they were, however, the Boston Marathon bombings pale in comparison to an earlier terrorist attack.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists hijacked four American airliners bound for California from the East Coast and turned them toward targets in New York City and Washington, D.C. The hijackers crashed two of the airplanes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and a third into the Pentagon in Washington. Passengers in the fourth plane, which crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, thwarted the hijackers’ attempt to fly it into another Washington target. In the end, nineteen Al Qaeda terrorists had taken the lives of nearly 3,000 innocent people. Fifteen of the terrorists came from Saudi Arabia; all nineteen professed to be devout Muslims fighting a “holy war” against Western, and particularly American, “infidels.” Condemned in the West as an appalling act of terrorism, this concerted attack was openly applauded in certain Middle Eastern countries where Al Qaeda’s now-deceased leader, Osama bin Laden, is widely regarded as a hero and its nineteen perpetrators as martyrs.

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



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

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

two factors that, above all others, have shaped human history in [the twentieth] century. One is the development of the natural sciences and technology. . . . The other, without doubt, consists in the great ideological storms that have altered the lives of virtually all mankind: the Russian Revolution and its aftermath—totalitarian tyrannies of both right and left and the explosions of nationalism, racism, and, in places, of religious bigotry, which, interestingly enough, not one among the most perceptive social thinkers of the nineteenth century had ever predicted.

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

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

Nor do recent events, such as 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks, suggest that political ideologies will fade away and leave people to lead quiet lives in the twenty-first century. We may still hope that it will prove less murderous, but so far it appears that the twenty-first century will be even more complicated politically than the twentieth was. For most of the twentieth century, the clash of three political ideologies—liberalism, communism, and fascism—dominated world politics. In World War II,

the communist regime of the Soviet Union joined forces with the liberal democracies of the West to defeat the fascist alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Following their triumph over fascist regimes, the communist and liberal allies soon became implacable enemies in a Cold War that lasted more than forty years. But the Cold War ended with the collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the terrifying but straightforward clash of ideologies seemed to be over. What President Ronald Reagan had called the “evil empire” of communism had all but vanished. Liberal democracy had won, and peace and prosperity seemed about to spread around the globe.

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

One way to gain the insight we need is to look closely at what the proponents of these opposing views have to say for themselves. Another is to put their words and deeds into context. Political ideologies and movements do not simply appear out of nowhere, for no apparent reason. To the contrary, they arise out of particular backgrounds and circumstances, and they typically grow out of some sense of grievance or injustice—some conviction that things are not as they could and should be. To understand the complicated political ideas and movements of the present, then, we must understand the contexts in which they have taken shape, and that requires understanding something of the past, of history. To grasp the thinking of neo-Nazi skinheads, for example, we must study the thinking of their heroes and ideological ancestors, the earlier Nazis from whom the neo- (or “new-”) Nazis take their bearings. And the same is true for any other ideology or political movement.

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

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

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

All ideologies and all political movements, then, have their roots in the past. To ignore or forget the past, as the philosopher George Santayana remarked, is to risk

repeating its mistakes. If we are fortunate enough to avoid those mistakes, ignorance of the past will still keep us from understanding ourselves and the world in which we live. Our minds, our thoughts, our beliefs and attitudes—all have been forged in the fires and shaped on the anvil of earlier ideological conflicts. If we wish to act effectively and live peacefully, we need to know something about the political ideologies that have had such a profound influence on our own and other people's political attitudes and actions.

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

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

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

## A WORKING DEFINITION OF “IDEOLOGY”

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

Over the last two centuries, however, the meaning of the term has shifted considerably. Rather than denoting the scientific study of ideas, “ideology” has come

to refer to a set of ideas that tries to link thought with action. That is, ideologies attempt to shape how people *think*—and therefore how they *act*.

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

**Explanation.** An ideology offers an explanation of why social, political, and economic conditions are as they are, particularly in times of crisis. At such times people will search, sometimes frantically, for some explanation of what is happening. Why are there wars? Why do depressions occur? What causes unemployment? Why are some people rich and others poor? Why are relations between different races so often strained, difficult, or hostile? To these and many other questions different ideologies supply different answers. But in one way or another, every ideology tries to answer these questions and to make sense of the complicated world in which we live. A Marxist might explain wars as an outgrowth of capitalists' competition for foreign markets, for instance, while a fascist is apt to explain them as tests of one nation's "will" against another's. A libertarian will probably explain inflation as the result of government interference in the marketplace, while a black liberationist will trace the roots of most social problems to white racism. Their explanations are quite different, as these examples indicate, but all ideologies offer a way of looking at complex events and conditions that tries to make sense of them. Moreover, **ideologues**—people who try to persuade others to accept their ideology—typically want to reach as many people as possible, and this desire leads them to offer simple, and sometimes simplistic, explanations of puzzling events and circumstances.

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

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

**Political Program.** An ideology, finally, tells its followers what to do and how to do it. It performs a programmatic or prescriptive function by setting out a general program of social and political action. Just as doctors prescribe medicine for their patients and fitness trainers provide a program of exercise for their clients, so political ideologies prescribe remedies for sick societies and treatments designed to keep the healthy ones in good health. If an ideology provides a diagnosis of social conditions that leads you to believe that conditions are bad and growing worse, it will not be likely to win your support unless it can also supply a prescription or program for action that seems likely to improve matters. This is exactly what ideologies try to do. If you are a communist, for example, you believe it important to raise working-class consciousness or awareness in order to prepare for the overthrow of capitalism, the seizure of state power, and the eventual creation of a cooperative, communist society. If you are a Nazi, however, you think it important for the “superior” white race to isolate, separate, subordinate—and perhaps exterminate—Jews, blacks, and other “inferior” peoples. If you are a libertarian, your political program will include proposals for reducing or eliminating government interference in people’s lives and liberties. But if you are a traditional conservative, you may want the state or government to intervene in order to promote morality or traditional values. Different ideologies recommend very different programs of action, as these examples demonstrate, but all recommend a program of some sort.

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

One thing an ideology is *not* is a scientific theory. To be sure, the distinction between an ideology and a scientific theory is sometimes difficult to draw. One reason for this is that the proponents of political ideologies often claim that their views are

truly scientific. Another reason is that scientists, particularly social scientists, sometimes fail to see how their own ideological biases shape their theories. And political ideologies frequently borrow from scientific theories to help explain why the world is as it is. For example, some anarchists and some liberals have used Darwin's theory of evolution for their own purposes, as have Nazis and some communists.

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

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

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

In all of these cases, the functional definition helps to clarify what an ideology is by eliminating possibilities that do not perform all four functions. There are other cases, however, where our functional definition is not so helpful. The task of distinguishing a political theory or philosophy from an ideology is one of them. In this case the functional definition offers little help, for political theories can also perform the same four functions. The chief difference is that they do so at a higher, more abstract, more principled, and perhaps more dispassionate level. The great works of political philosophy, such as Plato's *Republic* and Rousseau's *Social Contract*, certainly attempt to explain and evaluate social conditions, just as they try to provide the reader with a sense of his or her place in the world. They even prescribe programs for action of a very general sort. But these works and the other masterpieces

of political philosophy tend to be highly abstract and complex—and not, therefore, the kind of writing that stirs great numbers of people into action. Political ideologies draw on the works of the great political philosophers, much as they draw on scientific theories to promote their causes. But because their concern to link thought to action is so immediate, political ideologies tend to simplify, and even to oversimplify, the ideas of political philosophers in order to make them accessible—and inspiring—to masses of ordinary people. The difference between a political philosophy and a political ideology, then, is largely a difference of degree. Although they can do the same things, political ideologies do them in much simpler, less abstract ways because their focus is more tightly fixed on the importance of action.<sup>5</sup> This, in the end, marks an important difference between political theories, on the one hand, and political ideologies, on the other.

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

This difference, again, is a matter of degree. Most religions take an active interest in how people live on earth, but this is neither their only nor necessarily their main concern. But for a political ideology, it is. Even so, drawing sharp and clear distinctions between political ideologies, on the one hand, and scientific theories, political philosophies, and religions, on the other, is not the most important point for someone who wants to understand ideologies. The most important point is to see how the different ideologies perform the four functions and how they make use of various theories, philosophies, and religious beliefs in order to do so.

## HUMAN NATURE AND FREEDOM

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

### Human Nature

Some conception of human nature—some notion of basic human drives, motivations, limitations, and possibilities—is present, at least implicitly, in every ideology. Some ideologies assume that it is the “nature” of human beings to compete with one another

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

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

## Freedom

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

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