



Eleventh Edition

Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal

Terence Ball • Richard Dagger • Daniel I. O'Neill



POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal analyzes political ideologies to help readers understand individual ideologies, and the concept of ideology, from a political science perspective. This best-selling title promotes open-mindedness and develops critical thinking skills. It covers a wide variety of political ideologies from the traditional liberalism and conservatism to recent developments in liberation politics, the emergence of the Alt-Right, and environmental politics.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

- Focus on the recent rise of populism and “illiberal democracy” and how this poses a real challenge to the pillars of Western liberal democracy;
- A look at early conservatives and the idea of “natural aristocracy” with focus on the thoughts of Edmund Burke;
- A new discussion of whether Donald Trump is really a conservative, and if so, to what extent this is true;
- An expanded look at Stalinism and the apparent rebirth of “Mao Zedong thought” in China alongside “Xi Jinping thought”;
- A more in-depth look at the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party and how “myth” was crucial to legitimizing both the man and the party;
- New section on the history of American fascism, from its origins to the recent emergence of the “Alt-Right”;
- Expansion of the discussion around the recent protest movements Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo, along with the repercussions of these movements;
- Discussion of the obstacles facing transgender people implemented in recent years, including the bathroom laws and the ban from US military service;
- Account of how Donald Trump has galvanized the environmental movement as never before, through his ardent anti-environment policies and appointments;

- In-depth look at how the effects of climate change are increasingly turning people into “environmental migrants” and how the presence of these people has fueled far-right movements across Europe and the US;
- Additional photos throughout;
- An updated, author-written Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank.

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ELEVENTH EDITION

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Eleventh edition published 2020
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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First edition published by HarperCollins, 1991
Second edition published by Pearson Education, Inc., 1995
Third edition published by Pearson Education, Inc., 1999
Fourth edition published by Pearson Education, Inc., 2001
Fifth edition published by Pearson Education, Inc., 2003
Sixth edition published by Pearson Education, Inc., 2005
Seventh edition published by Pearson Education, Inc., 2009
Eighth edition published by Pearson Education, Inc., 2011
Ninth edition published by Pearson Education, Inc. 2014, and Routledge, 2016
Tenth edition published by Routledge, 2017

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ball, Terence, author. | Dagger, Richard, author. | O’Neill, Daniel I., 1967– author.
Title: Political ideologies and the democratic ideal / Terence Ball, Arizona State University, Richard Dagger, University of Richmond, Daniel I. O’Neill, University of Florida.
Description: Eleventh Edition. | New York : Routledge, 2019. | “Tenth edition published by Routledge, 2017”—T.p. verso. | Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2019006464 (print) | LCCN 2019009330 (ebook) | ISBN 9780429286551 (Master) | ISBN 9780415015141 (Adobe) | ISBN 9780415015288 (Mobi) | ISBN 9780415015424 (ePub3) | ISBN 9780367235093 | ISBN 9780367235093 (Hardback) | ISBN 9780367235116 (Paperback) | ISBN 9780429286551 (E-Book)
Subjects: LCSH: Political science—History. | Democracy—History. | Right and left (Political science)—History. | Ideology—History.
Classification: LCC JA81 (ebook) | LCC JA81 .B25 2019 (print) | DDC 320.509—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019006464>

ISBN: 978-0-367-23509-3 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-367-23511-6 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-0-429-28655-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

To

Andrew, Alexandra, and Eliana Nicole Lopez Ball

Emily and Elizabeth Dagger

and

Cassidy and Jackson O'Neill

PRAISE FOR THE ELEVENTH EDITION

“The fact that this book enters its 11th edition says a lot. It’s well-done, well-written, and quite comprehensive. This edition adds new coverage of global populism, illiberal regimes, ISIS, new material on Xi Jinping’s thought, as well as more on free trade, the Alt-Right, transgender rights, the rights of Native Peoples, and so on.”

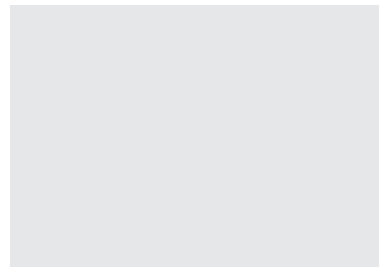
—**Ralph G. Carter**, *Professor of Political Science,
Texas Christian University*

“Terence Ball, Richard Dagger and Daniel I. O’Neill offer a superb analysis of political ideologies with thoughtful and compelling contemporary examples. The text invites students into the contemporary debates about political ideologies, and provides an opportunity to critically examine and challenge their own political views and understandings. The authors’ ability to balance the theoretical ideas with practical applications makes the eleventh edition even better than earlier versions of the text.”

—**Michael Cairo**, *Ph.D., Professor of Political Science,
Transylvania University*

“It is a pleasure to see this classic volume admirably updated with perceptive new discussions of pressing topics such as populism, illiberal democracy, fascism, the alt-right, democratic socialism, the “Me-too” movement, to name but a few. These topics are engaged not simply as add-on novelties, but carefully interrogated in terms of the central concerns of the volume regarding ideology and the prospects for democratic life.”

—**Stephen K. White**, *James Hart Professor, Department of Politics,
University of Virginia*



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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 all count ourselves fortunate for not living during a world war. But we *are* living in an era of national and international economic crises and trade wars, the rise of populism and the decline of liberal democracy, of global warming and environmental degradation, of domestic and international terror, of military coups and civil wars in Syria and elsewhere, of “ethnic cleansing” in Burma, 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 eleventh 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, including our own, 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 eleventh edition, we have once again made numerous changes, large and small. Among the larger changes are the following:

- Updated discussion questions at the end of each chapter.
- Additional graphs and photos.
- In Chapter 1, we introduce a new section on populism, which is now making its mark on politics worldwide.
- In Chapter 2, we have added a new section on so-called illiberal democracy, which poses a stark challenge to Western liberal democracy with its protections for press freedom, individual and minority rights, an independent judiciary, and the like. We also ask whether there is an argument to be made in favor of “civics” or civic education in American classrooms.

- In Chapter 3, we offer a more extended discussion of Adam Smith’s contributions to the liberal tradition, paying particular attention to the concepts of free trade and comparative advantage and the criticisms sometimes leveled at both.
- Chapter 4 includes an account of the idea of a “natural aristocracy” in the thought of Edmund Burke and other early conservatives. We also ask whether (or in what sense, if any) Donald Trump is a conservative.
- In Chapter 6, we discuss how the modern welfare state in effect short-circuits the revolutionary sequence as Marx envisioned it. We have expanded our discussion of Stalinism and examine the apparent rebirth of “Mao Zedong thought” in China and its supplementation by “Xi Jinping thought.” With recent changes to the Chinese constitution, Xi is now the most powerful leader since Mao. We also provide an expanded discussion of the oddly idiosyncratic ideology of *Juche* in North Korea. We further examine *songbun*, North Korea’s rigid caste system. We also ask why an increasing number of candidates for Congress and other offices are running as “democratic socialists” and why many young people, unlike their elders, do not find socialism objectionable.
- In Chapter 7, we have expanded our discussion of the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party and the role played by “myth” in legitimating the man and the party. We have also added sections on the history of American fascism from “America First” in the late 1930s to the newly emergent “Alt-Right” or white nationalist movement. We include a discussion of the thought of Julius Evola, a prominent fascist theorist who has influenced the American Alt-Right. We have also expanded our discussion of attempts to resist Hitler’s Nazi regime. And, once again, we trace the increasing prominence—and electoral success—of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi parties in the wake of the refugee crisis in Europe and elsewhere.
- In Chapter 8, we examine the contention that black chattel slavery has made a return in the guise of public and for-profit prisons’ use of (largely black) convict labor and expand our discussion of protests inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement. We likewise look at the impact of the new #MeToo movement as well as the online “Incel”—“involuntarily celibate” males—movement and the threat it poses to women as some of its members move from the screen to the streets. We also include an account of new obstacles facing transgender people, including so-called bathroom laws and being barred from military service. We discuss the *de facto* disenfranchisement of Native Americans and how native peoples liberationists are addressing this issue. Also included is a discussion of the rise of populist presidents and strongmen, and their attempts to roll back or reverse gains made by women and indigenous people. We provide an expanded account of liberation theology, especially under the aegis of Pope Francis. And, finally, we look at current controversies within the animal liberation movement, including the ongoing “pet debate” about the alleged immorality of pet ownership.
- Chapter 9 includes an account of “the Anthropocene,” as well as President Trump’s anti-environmental policies and their likely impacts, including the unintended effect of galvanizing the environmental movement as never before. We also consider how environmental degradation—climate change, with attendant rises in sea levels, droughts, and other maladies—are turning many people into “environmental

migrants” whose presence in turn fuels fascist and other far-right movements and parties in Europe and elsewhere. And we note the dangers, physical and otherwise, facing environmentalists in the Third World.

- In this new edition we have once again expanded the discussion of radical Islamism in Chapter 10, especially with regard to the varieties of Islamism (from legal-constitutional to violent jihadist), the rise and current status of the Islamic State (ISIS), and the effects of recent terrorist attacks on national and international politics.
- Finally, we have supplied a short summary and review in Chapter 11.

We have made these and many other changes 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 peoples’ 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 eleventh edition by Routledge. Although each book can stand alone, they are arranged to supplement and complement each other. Other instructional materials are available from the publisher.

SUPPLEMENT

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

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 Routledge, we offer our deepest thanks. We would also like to thank Professor Jan-Werner Müller of Princeton University for commenting critically and helpfully on our new sections on populism and illiberal democracy, and Professor Jennet Kirkpatrick of Arizona State University for sage and sundry advice on a wide range of issues, Professor Tracy Munsil of Arizona Christian University for her advice regarding religious-right and “fusionist” conservatism in Chapter 4, and Dr. Jeffery Zavadil for his assistance on far-right and neo-Nazi parties in Europe in Chapter 7. We are once again indebted to Professor Mary Dietz of Northwestern University for extensive and astute advice on Chapter 8 (particularly feminism and LGBT). And for his helpful advice about the affinities among hunters, fishermen, and environmentalists, we again thank Steven Kingsbury.

We are no less indebted to our students and our far-flung student-readers in the United States and abroad, whose questions and requests for clarification of this or that point have led us time and again to improve our prose and clarify our meaning. This book is almost as much theirs as ours.

*Terence Ball
Richard Dagger
Daniel I. O’Neill*



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*, Eleventh 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, Richard Dagger at rdagger@richmond.edu, and Daniel O’Neill at doneill@ufl.edu.

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PART ONE

IDEOLOGY AND DEMOCRACY



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IDEOLOGY AND IDEOLOGIES

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

John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*

On a warm June evening in 2015, a prayer service was beginning at “Mother Emanuel”—the Emanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina—when a 21-year-old white man entered and asked the black worshipers if he could join them. They welcomed him warmly. After nearly an hour of praying with them (or perhaps pretending to), the young man took out a newly purchased pistol and began to shoot the congregants without regard to age or sex and with regard only to the color of their skin. While shouting racist epithets and slogans, he killed nine people, including the pastor, and wounded another before fleeing into the night. Arrested the next day, he told police that he had hoped to start a “race war.” The investigation that followed showed the shooter to have been a racist, a white supremacist, and a neo-Nazi sympathizer. Photos posted on his Facebook page showed him holding weapons, flanked by a Confederate flag; in another photo he is burning an American flag. He had also written a 2,500-word “manifesto” denigrating African-Americans and defending white supremacy. The FBI deemed the crime an act of “domestic terrorism.” And, far from starting his hoped-for race war, the shooter’s murderous attack backfired. The conservative Republican governor and a majority of the Republican-led state legislature agreed to remove the Confederate flag from the state capitol grounds, where it had flown for decades. In the scale of things, this is a somewhat positive outcome of a negative act. Yet his was hardly the only instance of home-grown terrorism.

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 three 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. And in Syria and Iraq, ISIS (or Islamic State) has used social media to broadcast the beheadings and burnings-alive of its captives. 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, as the racist church shooting in South Carolina with which we began this chapter demonstrates, should we think that all terrorists come from the Middle East or act in the name of Allah or Islam. For additional 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 but also 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.¹

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, or both. 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.”²

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 importantly, 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.³

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.

WHY POLITICAL IDEOLOGY?

To answer this question, we first need to ask and answer another even more elementary question: why politics? The answer, quite simply, is that people cannot live solitary, self-sufficient lives; they need the presence of other people if they are to survive and flourish. But within any group of mutually interdependent people, differences will inevitably arise. Politics is the art of resolving these differences, ideally without resorting to force or coercion. At its best, politics is about discussion, debate, talking and listening, and compromise—the “political arts,” as they are sometimes called. But why political *ideologies*? The answer is that within or between societies, some differences—those based on ideas, ideals, and principles—are harder to resolve than more practical problems. An example might help here.

Imagine a town whose citizens agree that a new school is needed. The question arises as to where that school should be built. Some want it located on the west side of town, others on the east. A meeting is called to discuss and resolve the matter. Chances are that the townspeople will compromise and decide to locate the new school in the center of the town, if that option is open. This is a simple solution to a practical problem. But suppose that the question arises, should the school be a taxpayer-supported public school or a tuition-supported private school? Matters now cease to be purely practical, and ideological differences come quickly into play. Some citizens favor the former option, others the latter. Those in the first group contend that education is a shared public good that should be freely available to all alike, regardless of wealth, income, or social standing. Those in the second contend, on the contrary, that the only “real” goods are private ones, paid for by individuals according to what they wish and what they can afford for their children; other people’s children are not their concern. Here we have a very real and deep difference of outlook traceable to different *ideas*—to *ideological* differences—not only about education but about individual versus shared responsibility, about public versus private, and so on, through a long list. Such differences tend to be more intractable and perhaps even insoluble—in which case the citizens are likely to split the difference, compromise, and create a system in which public schools are available to those who want them, and private schools are available for those who do not.

Of course, matters are likely to be much more complicated than our simple example suggests. Consider, for example, differences arising over the school’s curriculum. What should students be taught about the origins and development of different species, including our own? Should Darwin’s theory of natural selection (often mistakenly called the theory of evolution) be taught alongside, or instead of, the theory of Intelligent Design?

Should there be sex education and, if so, of what should the curriculum consist and at what age should it be taught? Should prayers and other forms of religious practice be permitted in the classroom, in school assemblies, and at athletic contests? Needless to say, these are not hypothetical questions but ones debated in school districts all across the nation. And they are, in the end, not merely pedagogical questions but *political* questions that require some knowledge of ideologies and ideological differences if they are to be understood at all.

We now need to inquire into these enigmatic entities called “ideologies.” What are they? And how do they work?

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 *ideologie* was coined in eighteenth-century France.⁴

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 or system 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 many if not 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 naive 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