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THE VALUE OF TRADITION: A CONSERVATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This work explores the intellectual foundations of conservative thought, particularly its views on education and society. First, to fully understand conservatism's philosophical roots, in the first part we will try to provide an overview of key conservative thinkers, including Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Hegel and Roger Scruton, who largely shaped intellectual conservatism. These authors primarily criticized extreme individualism and emphasized the role of traditional institutions in maintaining a stable and unified community. The second part is devoted to the views of Friedrich Hayek, Russell Kirk and Michael Oakeshott, especially their views on education. Thus, Hayek advocated a broad educational program instead of modern, overly specialized scientific training. For him, education is both preserving and progressive, requiring a delicate balance of competition and minimum standards. Oakeshott, in his turn, argues that modern governments are replacing education with a 'zombie factory' and tailoring education to meet the needs of local industry.

KEYWORDS: Conservatism, Tradition, Education, Burke, Scruton, Hayek

1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally believed that conservatism, as a theoretical tradition, developed during the Age of Enlightenment as an offset to the extremes of liberal ideas. Therefore, when thinking about concepts such as law, liberty, and justice, conservatives look to historically established and existing communities. For them, the root of politics is settlement, a phenomenon that binds individuals to a particular place, history, and customs. However, it does not necessarily imply that

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conservatives are reactionaries; they also believe that we must adapt to changes, but in the name of continuity, that is, to preserve what we are and what we have; as Burke said, "A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation" (Burke 2003, 18).

In the liberal tradition, in contrast, it is usually contended that fundamental Enlightenment ideals such as reason, individualism, and scepticism should govern people's political behaviour rather than the particularities of local history and acquired obligations. Conservatives respond to this liberal approach by pointing to individuals' contingent and contextualised character. In modern practical terms, this translates to the standpoint that government is chosen by the particular individuals living in a particular area and must fulfil the particular necessities of the people; the foundation of which is trust within the community. Therefore, in contemporary discourse, conservatives emphasise the protection of the country, border security, national harmony and social unity.

It should be underlined here that conservatives, like liberals, also value freedom and recognise the individual's autonomy to pursue their own path of self-realisation. However, they also maintain that the individual is formed by the traditions and institutions of the community and that genuine freedom emerges in a culture of observance in which law and society are joint values upheld for the collective well-being. Liberals, on the other hand, argue that individuals have the right to determine their individuality independently of established standards and practices, i.e., they do not view freedom as a shared cultural heritage.

Roger Scruton, a prominent modern conservative philosopher, comparing liberalism and conservatism, argues that the fundamental conceptions advanced by Locke and Montesquieu, whose ideas supported the American and French revolutions, are present in the writings of both liberals and conservatives. In essence, conservatives and liberals share the same stance on the necessity for limited government, representative institutions, separation of powers, and citizens' fundamental rights, which are necessary to protect from the top-down control of the modern collectivist state (Scruton, Chap. 1, para. 24, 26).

However, conservatives oppose the view that the political order is based solely on contract and that individuals enjoy autonomy, independence, and rights in a natural state and could start over from a state of absolute freedom by renouncing social and political membership. For conservatives, human beings are born burdened with certain responsibilities and formed by institutions and customs that endow them with practical knowledge, without which freedom can be destructive rather than liberating. It suggests that both liberals and conservatives view individual freedom as the highest political value but differ in their views on traditional institutions. Liberals view political order as emanating from individual liberty, while conservatives view individual liberty

as emanating from political order. In the conservative view, what makes the political order legitimate is not the free choices that create it but the free choices it creates. Thus, the age-old question of whether freedom precedes order or vice versa has been a constant source of disagreement (Scruton, Chap. 1, para. 43).

Thus, our intellectual exploration of conservative thought will clarify that it initially reacted to 'classical' liberalism, which emphasised natural law, natural rights, and property rights. Modern conservatism, in turn, developed in Britain and France, in Scruton's terms, as 'a qualification of liberal individualism'. Conservatives affirmed some version of natural law and recognised, at least in part, the importance of popular consent as a source of political legitimacy. They were also generally in favour of a constitutional government and a system of checks and balances through which different authorities and government branches could hold each other accountable.

2. The Intellectual Roots of Conservatism

Adam Smith is generally acknowledged as one of the primary authors who provided the philosophical insight that helped shape intellectual conservatism. While Smith is widely recognized as one of the greatest economists, if not the greatest, he was also a prominent philosopher of modern Western civilization who discerned and examined the nature of the nascent industrial market economy. He strongly advocated for private enterprise, private property, minimal government, and the free market. Therefore, he propounded spontaneous economic activity and resource distribution through market mechanisms and believed economic effectiveness arises from individuals pursuing the maximization of personal well-being (Samuels 1977, 191, 192).

Accordingly, for Smith, the individual occupies a central place in the economic system. However, the individual acts not only within the legal framework but also is a moralized being; in other words, personal interests are intertwined with socialization. It suggests that individual interests are shaped not only by the market but also by moral and legal norms and by the influence of compassion, sympathy, and the principle of the impartial observer. Consequently, socialization occurs through the interplay of sympathy and the internalized guidance of the impartial observer (Samuels 1977, 199, 200).

Thus, Smith's idea of civil society has come to form the basis of the conservative worldview in modern times. He recognizes that civil society is made up of free individuals. However, this freedom, he says, involves responsibility based on a sense of sympathy that motivates us to reflect upon our own conduct and the conduct of others from the perspective of an unbiased observer. Thus, although in *The Wealth of Nations*, he argues that the inherently chaotic

nature of economic reality is organized spontaneously through the division of labour and the 'invisible hand' and is based on the fundamental principles of self-love and self-interest[2], he contends that self-interest alone is not sufficient to achieve social harmony. There is another important concomitant human motive which is the 'principle of sympathy'.

Thus, in his other work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith writes:

> How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. (Smith 1984, 9)

Accordingly, Smith describes the principle of sympathy as the emotion of putting oneself in the shoes of others: "Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever" (Smith 1984, 10).

In this way, the principle of sympathy and the moral norms derived from it ensures a reciprocal relationship between the individual and society. Smith, therefore, links the existence and judgments of the individual to the existence of other members of society and opposes the idea of a completely isolated individual (Smith 1984, 109–113). Consequently, it follows that conservatism is not only about freedom but also about the institutions and values that foster a responsible citizenry and protect individual liberty. Conservatism is, therefore, also about constraints on freedom, and this very issue represents a significant area of ongoing political debate and disagreement in modern society, where the extreme liberal view that values freedom above all else clashes with conservative thought that points to the importance of limiting freedom for the common good (Smith 1984, 37, 38).

Another great eighteenth-century British philosopher, Edmund Burke, sought to formulate a robust critique of the pitfalls of popular sovereignty, particularly, as he believed, its harmful excesses in the French Revolution[3].

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[2] Smith writes, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages". Smith, A. 1981. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 26–27.

[3] Mazlish mentions that Edmund Burke was not critical of all revolutions. He believed that rights occur throughout history and that revolutions are permissible to protect them. Unlike Voltaire, Burke viewed history not as a "history of errors" but as "the wisdom of our ancestors."

It is to his reflections on the French Revolution that philosophical conservatism owes its emergence as an articulated standpoint (Kirk, Chap. 2, para. 23). Thus, although Burke envisioned a modern society with a government that was relatively free from the direct influence of religious, tribal, and familial ties, yet he argued that religion and family remained essential components of collective wisdom and social order. He opposed extreme individualism, which refuses to recognize the indispensable role that membership in society plays in exercising free rational choice. Burke thus sought to defend the social fabric and accumulated wisdom of history upon which popular sovereignty is based against the ambitions of radical thinkers who wish to destroy all established laws and institutions in the name of the people (Scruton, Chap. 2, para. 24).

Accordingly, Burke's conception of politics as *praxis* involves, above all, historical and social practices that serve as the basis for understanding politics through personal experience. However, this experience goes beyond the lifetime attainments of an individual; in other words, this experience is not limited to the short life of a single individual[4]. Consequently, the historical accumulation of experience is the foundation upon which an understanding of politics rests. Burke argues that politics needs knowledge of historical experience rather than individual intelligence (Burke 2003, 52).

Thus, for Burke, a political understanding based on experience is more insightful than one based on abstract reasoning. While the former emphasizes the need for a context-specific political perspective, the latter presents a universal political understanding that will always work everywhere, regardless of context. Therefore, Burke argues that a politician who tries to implement a program by ignoring contexts is either a madman who will lead his country to destruction or a metaphysical fanatic detached from reality. He calls this understanding of politics 'political metaphysics' and contrasts it with his own

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Therefore, people can recourse to revolutions against despotism to defend this "wisdom" and the historical rights that are its outgrowth. For example, Burke defended the Glorious Revolution of 1688 based on the belief that it was the restoration of historical rights that the King had seized. Conversely, for him, the French Revolution was based on abstract ideals that appealed to reason and natural rights and imperiled historically established institutions. Thus, the French Revolution of 1789 scared Burke into diverting the focus from justifying revolutions to justifying conservation. Mazlish, B. 1958. "The Conservative Revolution of Edmund Burke." *The Review of Politics* 20(1): 29–32.

[4] In this context, Burke writes, "The science of government being therefore so practical in itself, and intended for such practical purposes, a matter which requires experience, and even more experience than any person can gain in his whole life, however sagacious and observing he may be, it is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice, which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society, or on building it up again, without having models and patterns of approved utility before his eyes". Burke, E. 2003. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 52.

understanding of politics, which is based on practical reason and oriented towards the public good (Burke 2003, 49).

It follows that politics is neither a metaphysical nor a mathematical endeavour. The complex structure of society cannot be understood through the assumptions of geometry and metaphysics, which are based solely on the notions of true and false and allow for no middle ground; it can only be understood with reference to tradition, which is the embodiment of the characteristics of each society, which are shaped and transformed in infinite numbers into the most diverse forms according to conditions and its nature. Burke, therefore, contends that this is only possible through methodological reasoning based on historical experience (Burke 2000, 170).

According to Burke, society is primarily based on relationships of trust and affection, which can only be formed through face-to-face human interaction built from the bottom. It is in institutions such as the family, school, church, army, and university that people learn to interact as free beings, to take responsibility for their actions and to be accountable to their neighbours. Burke calls such small associations 'little platoons' that are crucial to developing a sense of belonging, shared values, and mutual support. He writes:

> To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind. The interest of that portion of social arrangement is a trust in the hands of all those who compose it; and as none but bad men would justify it in abuse, none but traitors would barter it away for their own personal advantage. (Burke 2003, 40)

Thus, Burke regards these little platoons as where traditions are formed. Social traditions are forms of knowledge which contain remnants accumulated as a result of numerous trials and errors, as well as inherited solutions to people's problems. Accordingly, social traditions can be seen as adaptations analogous to the cognitive abilities that emerged before civilization, but they are adaptations of the community rather than the individual organism. Moreover, social traditions function as the mechanism through which society sustains itself from one generation to the next; if these traditions are negligently discarded, the assurances that future generations will enjoy the same stability and continuity are endangered (Scruton, Chap. 2, para. 29).

When Burke contends that tradition is a form of knowledge, he does not mean theoretical knowledge of facts and truths, nor ordinary know-how, but rather the knowledge that presupposes mastery of situations: knowing what to do to fulfil a task successfully. Success, however, is not about achieving a specific goal but a harmonious result that considers our needs and interests.

For example, good manners can illustrate what Burke meant. People can only acquire knowledge of what to do in a company, what to say, and what to feel by immersing themselves in society. It cannot be taught by explanation but only by osmosis; people who have not acquired this knowledge are rightly called ignorant. Consequently, if you deprive the people of custom, traditions, and little platoons, you deprive them of the shield that protects them from those who seek to control them and claim to speak in their name. Burke, therefore, believes that true popular sovereignty involves respect for what the people themselves respect, namely tradition, law, and the notion of a legitimate order (Scruton, Chap. 2, para. 33, 38). Thus, with his new approach to political matters, Edmund Burke could be regarded as the precursor of scholars such as Karl Popper, Friedrich Hayek, and others who were highly distrustful of utopian projects and collectivist ideals (Cliteur 1988, 457).

Roger Scruton describes the relationship between liberalism and conservatism as symbiotic and dialectical rather than as commonly seen as antagonistic. He contends that liberalism only makes sense in the social context that conservatism defends. However, of course, temperament is different: liberals are rebellious by nature, while conservatives are docile. Conservatives believe that if the culture of obedience is destroyed, rights will be proclaimed, duties will be forgotten, and the result will be the totalitarian terror that followed the French Revolution (Scruton, Chap. 3, para. 2).

This dialectical relationship is well captured by Hegel, who demonstrates how relations of conflict and domination are overcome through the recognition of mutual rights and duties. He shows how individuals acquire not only freedom of action but also a sense of belonging to society. Individuals do not simply acquire freedom through the institutions of law, education, and politics; without them, there would be no self-conscious agents. This way, freedom is seen as a social artefact born out of conflict, subordination and struggle. Hegel thus points out that the process by which individuals acquire freedom also shapes their attachment. This argument challenges the fundamental metaphysics of liberalism, according to which individuals possess inherent rights and freedoms that precede and exist independently of the state and society (Scruton, Chap. 3, para. 9).

Accordingly, unlike social contract theorists such as Locke and Rousseau, Hegel argues that moral qualities cannot exist in humans' natural state. He believes that nature and rights belong to distinct realms. Therefore, cruelty and injustice arise when there is no social life and everything is at the mercy of natural human forces. Only within a political state does an individual become a person with rights arising from relationships based on reciprocal recognition guaranteed by the state. Consequently, for Hegel, the fundamental purpose of the state is to bring individuals together to live a communal life, developing

them into 'objective and true' citizens through social institutions[5] (Wolsing 2022, 6, 9).

Thus, Hegel argues that the state is a manifestation of a community that logically and actually precedes the individual members of that community. In his view, the state, with its complex institutional and cultural structures, cannot be created at the will of individual human beings since human beings are already by nature citizens of the state:

> An individual cannot enter or leave the social condition at his option, since every one is by his very nature a citizen of a state. The characteristic of man as rational is to live in a state; if there is no state, reason claims that one should be founded. (Hegel 2001, 78)

Like Burke, Hegel also regards the family as an essential component of the political order—the sphere of attachment from which the individual first embarks on a journey to freedom and self-knowledge. The family is also the source of the unchosen obligations that surround the individual from birth and are associated with the household. In this sense, Hegel argues that disloyalty to familial obligations is akin to disloyalty to oneself since it presupposes rejecting the conditions from which the will and reason first emerge. Therefore, recognising unchosen obligations is integral to freedom (Scruton, Chap. 3, para. 15).

As the nineteenth century advanced, conservative thinkers no longer criticised liberalism or popular sovereignty. Anxiety about the loss of religious roots, the dehumanising effects of the Industrial Revolution, and the damage done to old and established ways of life created a sense that something precious was at risk with the advent of the new century. This situation led to a movement within intellectual conservatism that proposed culture as a remedy for the loneliness and alienation of industrial society. One prominent exponent of this movement was the British poet Matthew Arnold, who believed that we should respect the cultural heritage that gives us social knowledge, whether or not we have a religious faith to support it.

Matthew Arnold believed that social order depends on 'character' and that character is what school education should really focus on. He viewed the utilitarian-technological attitudes of those he called 'philistines'—property own-

[5] Hegel argues that only through *Sittlichkeit*, which could be interpreted as the "moral fabric of a culture," individual actions and recognition are rendered rational to others. The moral fabric is a repository of past efforts, projects, and ideals—it is the will of the past expressed in political institutions, rules, and traditions. It liberates people from being enslaved by the need to satisfy momentary appetites and provides instructions on how they should be understood in their manifestation as individuals. Hence, the moral fabric allows people develop into individuals through social conventions. Rose, D. E. 2011. *The Relevance of Hegel's Social Thought to Contemporary Conservatism*, 112–114.

ers, industrialists and bureaucrats—as a threat to long-term social harmony, destroying the sense of intrinsic value. Proper education restores this sense by introducing students to 'the best that has been thought and said' in humankind's art, literature, and science. Accordingly, Arnold opposed all forms of social engineering that attempt to impose an abstract or mechanical theory on the free flow of events. He called this phenomenon 'Jacobinism', identifying it with the systems of Bentham and Comte. According to him, the adherents of utopian theories do not realise the complex organic unity of the past and advocate things contrary to the best interests of society. Thus, he writes that "Violent indignation with the past, abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale, a new doctrine drawn up in black and white for elaborating down to the very smallest details a rational society for the future,—these are the ways of Jacobinism" (Arnold 1975, 49).

Accordingly, instead of the extremes of Jacobinism, Arnold raised the standards of culture. He sought to establish a unity between past and present, preserving those achievements of the past that were recognised as worthy of remembrance. He endeavoured to ensure their survival and bring them into the mainstream of modern thought. In his view, such a movement in step with the times seemed most necessary for society as well as for the individual.

3. Conservatism and the Purpose of Education

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, conservatism had come to be defined as a reaction to the gigantic plans for a 'just' society that was to be promoted by a new type of administrative state. Conservatism thus defended liberty against a growing system of bureaucratic rule and tyranny. During the confrontation with socialism and its egalitarian proponents in America, liberalism changed its meaning to left-liberalism and was directly opposed to conservatism. Thus, a liberal became someone who leans towards the disadvantaged, supports the interests of minorities, believes in using state power to achieve social justice, and sympathizes with the egalitarian and secular values of nineteenth-century socialists. Whereas someone who advocates a classical liberal position in the spirit of Locke, Montesquieu, and Smith, who favoured individual sovereignty against the state's power, market economy, private property and free association, is likely to be considered a conservative today. This is due to the association between classical liberalism and the free market, and the clash between liberal individualism and the tenets of the welfare state.

Friedrich von Hayek, who was one of the proponents of classical liberalism, believed that the real cause that led to the two world wars was the constant increase in the power of the state and its abuse to achieve unattainable goals.

One such unattainable goal, in his view, was 'social justice,' which he explicitly rejected as a fiction used to promote large-scale injustice in the name of its opposite. He believed that the true meaning of justice was that given by Aristotle—the practice of giving to each person what is due.

For Hayek, law and morality have an organic and evolving nature rather than being an artificial closed system; they form a 'spontaneous order' that cannot be formulated all at once but only gradually and not in a final form, since there is no limit to new circumstances. Therefore, Hayek argues that socialism is impossible because systems of law are simply too complex to be consciously devised by human beings, which is also true of the economic information that the planner of socialism would need to do their job—complex, incomplete, and disconnected, incomprehensible to any single mind. Consequently, a workable law system must develop spontaneously, and deliberate human design can only be used to refine it. Thus, as with the socialist planner, the anti-traditionalist proponent of creating a supposedly more rational new morality cannot possess the knowledge of the complex facts about human nature and the social environment necessary for such a task, so the anti-traditionalist ends up with nothing more than a distorted and less efficient arrangement of what he claims to be replacing (Feser 2003, 23, 34).

Hayek argues that existing applicable norms result from minor and gradual evolutionary changes in history rather than deliberate design. Like Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest species or survival of the fittest individuals, as with Spencer, for Hayek, it is the survival of the fittest institutions, norms and traditions. Accordingly, he argues that Western civilization and economic prosperity result from the accidental emergence and evolution of norms and institutions, such as private property and the rule of law, rather than the result of design (Lewis 2021, 113).

Thus, Hayek sees the process of cultural evolution, like biological evolution, as a kind of competition between traditions, which are complex systems of rules and practices that develop from within and compete with other traditions from outside over time. There are two processes of evolution in the history of systems of law, morality, and tradition: internal, in which the corollaries of the system gradually evolve, and external, in which the whole internally evolving system competes with other internally evolving systems and either outstrips them or itself becomes out-competed. In this way, more adaptive rules will retain groups following them, allowing them to grow and flourish, while less adaptive rules will cause groups following them to shrink and perform less well than groups following more adaptive rules. As a result, the more adaptive rules will persist and become more widely followed, while the influence of the less adaptive rules will diminish or even disappear (Feser 2003, 24, 27).

It should be noted that in his theory of human societies, Hayek does not appeal to any standard of natural or religious law to formulate the concepts of goodness and justice. He writes:

> I do not claim that the results of group selection of traditions are necessarily 'good'—any more than I claim that other things that have long survived in the course of evolution, such as cockroaches, have moral value. I do claim that, whether we like it or not, without the particular traditions I have mentioned, the extended order of civilization could not continue to exist . . . and if we discard these traditions, out of ill-considered notions of what it is to be reasonable, we shall doom a large part of mankind to poverty and death. (Hayek 1988, 27)

Thus, Hayek applies to education his idea of markets as discovery processes that transmit information scattered throughout society. He believes that without competition between autonomous suppliers and a pricing mechanism to guide the actions of market participants, there would be no improvement in this area. He, therefore, favours a more decisive role for markets in education. However, he also recognizes the importance of public funding and compulsory schooling up to a certain level, driven by positive externalities such as a well-functioning democratic state and the general welfare of society (Sahlgren 2013, 43).

Nevertheless, he believes that allowing competition between different providers and ideas such as education vouchers would resolve the inherent conflict between the need for some state regulation and the danger of overcentralizing public education. In this case, the state would only provide essential funding and standards, and the provision of education could be handed over to private organizations. In this way, Hayek supports the idea of market relations while retaining the state's involvement as financier and controller of minimum requirements (Sahlgren 2013, 43).

Furthermore, Hayek advocates a broad rather than narrow education and is critical of specialized scientific training, believing that such institutions foster minds predisposed to 'scientism' and that overreliance on technical training can create a false sense of control, leading students to believe that all social issues can be solved by rational planning and intervention. He writes:

> A whole generation grew up to whom that great storehouse of social wisdom, the only form indeed in which an understanding of the social processes achieved by the greatest minds is transmitted, the great literature of all ages, was a closed book. For the first time in history that new type appeared which as the product of the German Realschule and of similar institutions was to become so important and influential in the later nineteenth and the twentieth century: the technical specialist who was regarded as educated because he had passed

> through difficult schools but who had little or no knowledge of society, its life, growth, problems, and values, which only the study of history, literature, and languages can give. (Hayek 2010, 176)

Therefore, for Hayek, general education is crucial for society's long-term stability. It contributes to incremental advancement while respecting and preserving established order and values. This requires a delicate equilibrium between competition and compliance with essential standards.

Russell Kirk, who has been one of the harshest critics of ideologies about creating just societies, characterizes ideology as a political formula that promises people paradise on Earth. In his view, ideology is an inverted religion that refutes the Christian doctrine of salvation and replaces it with an earthly collective salvation through violent revolution. Thus, ideological fanatics do not tolerate any deviation from the Absolute Truth of their secular revelation, which makes political compromise impossible. Therefore, he argues that unlike ideology, which is based mainly on ideas unrelated to personal and social reality, conservative views are based on customs and conventions that are the long experience of humankind. Moreover, conservatism can be seen as a negation of ideology; it is a state of mind and a type of character. Accordingly, a conservative is someone who values the permanent over the chaotic and believes that the historical continuity of human experience guides policy much better than the abstract constructs of ideologues (Kirk 2014, 20, 25).

In his critique of ideology, Kirk touches on the subject of education and argues that the primary purpose of higher education has always and everywhere been to train the intellect to form a philosophical habit of mind. Thus, in his view, higher education is primarily concerned with abstractions, both in the sciences and in the humanities. Most people, however, do not like abstractions, and therefore, in our democratic age, higher education everywhere is endangered by levelling pressures. According to him, the most valuable function of universities and colleges, and indeed the reason for their creation, is to discipline the mind, enabling individuals to have long views and inculcate the virtue of prudence (Kirk 2014, 139–140).

Accordingly, Kirk argues that higher education is supposed to provide two main benefits: the first is the improvement of individuals for their own sake, i.e., they should be taught that there can be more to life than just getting and spending. The second is the preservation and development of society by preparing young people to become leaders in many areas of life, from clergy, doctors, teachers and managers to politicians. Thus, Kirk contends that the university's main objectives are to help form intelligence and, equally important, but often forgotten today, to help develop 'character' (Kirk 2014, 140).

The English philosopher Michael Oakeshott, like Kirk, also believes that education is not simply about acquiring ready-made ideas, images, beliefs, etc., but about learning to think, feel, imagine, understand, choose, and listen. In other words, education is not about learning to do something more skilfully but about gaining an understanding of the human condition that constantly illuminates the facts of life. Thus, for him, the primary purpose of education is to learn to be both an autonomous and civilized human being (Oakeshott 1971, 46, 51).

Oakeshott argues that modern governments are not interested in education; they are concerned only with imposing 'socialization' of one kind or another on the surviving fragments of the educational process. He argues that by stripping education of its character as a serious engagement aimed at acquiring knowledge through learning, modern governments are replacing education with a 'zombie factory' and adapting it to the local world's activities, interests, and predilections. According to him, it is an enterprise to abolish humans firstly by disinheriting them and secondly by annihilating them. Thus, instead of children asking themselves, "What shall I learn?" come social engineers concerned with the question, What type of 'human being' do we need, and how can it be most efficiently produced? (Oakeshott 1971, 58).

For Oakeshott, learning is a lifetime engagement, and the whole world is a place of learning. In human society, specific places are designed for learning—family, school and university. Thus, the human family is a practice designed not only to bear children and not only to protect them but also to provide early learning for newcomers to the human scene. School and university are successive stages of such purposeful learning. This inextricable link between learning and being human is thus fundamental to our self-conception. It implies that our identity is not fixed at birth; everyone is what he or she is learning to become, i.e., people are characterised by what they have learned to perceive, think and do (Oakeshott 2001, 6–10).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it has become clear that conservative tradition has historically emerged as a response to the radical assertions of liberals, who champion ideals such as individualism and reason as the primary guide to human political behaviour. In contrast, conservatives believe that humans have a contingent nature and that the root of politics lies in settlement, which binds people to particular places, histories, and traditions. Our analysis also revealed that both conservatives and liberals value freedom, albeit from different perspectives, with conservatives arguing that true freedom emerges from a culture of compliance in which law and community are shared values held for

the common good, and liberals, on the other hand, arguing that individuals can define their own identities independently of established norms and customs.

Further, the intellectual roots of conservatism were explored, and Adam Smith was considered one of the primary authors who contributed to the development of intellectual conservatism. Thus, Smith connects the existence of the individual with the existence of other members of society and criticises the idea of an isolated individual. For him, one of the most important motives of people is the principle of sympathy, which ensures the development of relations between the individual and society in both directions. Then Edmund Burke was analysed, who also opposed extreme individualism, strived to defend social inheritance, and emphasised its role in forming popular sovereignty. His central idea is that politics needs knowledge of historical experience, not individual intellect since this experience goes beyond any person's life attainments.

In addition, a conservative view on education was also studied, where conservative thinkers contend that the extreme technical specialisation of education without knowledge of society is dangerous, which can lead to so-called scientism. Therefore, they emphasise the importance of social and humanistic disciplines such as history, language and literature. Accordingly, education should develop progressively within the existing order as it is both progressive and protective. Furthermore, they believe that the purpose of education is not only to develop intellect but also to build character to become an independent, civilised human being. Consequently, for conservatives, each person is what they have learnt to perceive, believe and do.

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