LIBERALISMS IN EAST AND WEST

The record of a conference held at the University of Oxford in January 2009
# Table of Contents

## Preface  
5

## Part I: The Conceptual Cacophony  

**Introduction: Timothy Garton Ash**  
7

**1. West**  
North America: Paul Starr  
9  
Europe: Pierre Rosanvallon  
17  
Latin America: Laurence Whitehead  
19  
Debate  
24

**2. East**  
Japan: Koichiro Matsuda  
29  
India: Rajeev Bhargava  
33  
China: Wang Shaoguang  
36  
Debate  
41

## Part II: Core Themes of Liberalism  

**Introduction: Michael Freeden**  
47

**3. Individualism**  
Steven Lukes  
51  
Carol Horton  
55  
Justine Lacroix  
59  
Debate  
62

**4. Tolerance**  
Susan Mendus  
65  
Jacob Levy  
70  
Rajeev Bhargava  
73  
Debate  
76
### 5. Markets
- Samuel Brittan 85
- Zhang Weiying 89
- Stuart White 91
- Debate 94

### 6. Universalism
- John Ikenberry 103
- Inoue Tatsuo 111
- Pierre Hassner 114
- Debate 116

**PART III: CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### Introduction: Alan Ryan 121

#### 7. Who decides what liberalism is? And how?
- Ivan Krastev 125
- Jan-Werner Müller 131
- Debate 136

#### 8. Concluding Debate
- Ronald Dworkin 145
- Debate 151

**APPENDIX: A LIBERAL TRANSLATION, TIMOTHY GARTON ASH 159**

**ORGANISING COMMITTEE** 163

**VISITING SPEAKERS** 165

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS** 175

**SPONSORING INSTITUTIONS** 176
All important concepts are contested but some are more contested than others. Few have become more contested over the last forty years than Liberalism. In January 2009, scholars from Europe, the Americas, India, China and Japan came together at Oxford University, to look at the extraordinarily diverse usages of the term in West and East and to ask what justified means we have (if any) of determining or prescribing its contents. This is a transcript of that conference. With one exception, which is noted, transcribed introductory remarks have been read and approved by speakers, but some errors in transcription will remain—especially in the debate sections. This publication should therefore not be mistaken for an edited volume. It is the record of a group of scholars thinking aloud.

We are most grateful to Paul Flather and his team at the Europaeum—Florian Raith, Jay Hoffman and Zuzana Kasáková—for the immense effort that went into making the original transcript, and to Dominic Burbidge and Patrycja Stys for their patient and skilful editorial work. We would like to repeat our thanks to all the institutional and financial sponsors of the conference, who are listed at the end of this volume.

The Organising Committee
PART I: THE CONCEPTUAL CACOPHONY

Introduction: Timothy Garton Ash*

The original idea for this conference came when some of us were talking about the peculiar usage of the word Liberalism in American – by which I mean US – political discourse. This usage is at its most extreme on the American Right, where the word Liberalism means, roughly speaking, a combination of big government and fornication. It is reflected in book titles such as Liberal Fascism; Liberalism Kills Kids; Treason (by Ann Coulter); Deliver us from Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism and Liberalism (by Sean Hannity of Fox News) and its astonishing companion volume, also by Sean Hannity, Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty over Liberalism. This usage is, I would submit, truly eccentric in the strict sense of the term.

Unfortunately, this shunning of the L-word is not confined to the American Right. It dominates public discourse in the US. For example, when Hilary Clinton was asked in the 2008 US presidential primary debates to define a “Liberal” and say if she was one, she said that liberal was a good word because it used to mean freedom but now it means big government, so ‘I prefer the word progressive, which has a real American meaning.’ ‘So you wouldn’t use the word liberal?’ asked the moderator, to which she nodded. Part of the context of this conference is, of course, the arrival of Barack Obama – who, many of us would think, is clearly a liberal in content. Will he at some point attempt to rehabilitate the word, as well as the thing?

In Europe, on the other hand, when people say Liberalism they often mean what the American Right most likes, namely Anglo-Saxon, Neo-Liberal free market economics. For example, in the debate on the EU’s Constitutional Treaty, France was much criticised for introducing more elements of Anglo-Saxon style free market capitalism called Liberalism. Jacques Chirac, in defending the treaty, said the logic of the treaty is above all “not liberal”, i.e. it is a good thing. When, however, the French voted against the treaty, a conservative columnist in the US wrote that this showed France to be totally corrupted by Liberalism. There we have just a little bit of the conceptual cacophony which we are addressing here.

* These remarks were intended as an introduction to the conference as a whole.
We are attempting to look at the West not just as the US and Western Europe, but including the whole of America and Europe. And beyond that, we want to look at what the West has traditionally called the East. In the larger context of what I call the renaissance of Asia, the question is clearly posed: what does Liberalism mean in China or in India or in Japan?

We will, however, only get so far in pursuing the word Liberalism. Our assumption is that not everything that is called Liberalism is in fact Liberalism and – more importantly perhaps – that quite a lot of liberal content (particularly in the non-Western world) will be found under a different label or flag. Our working assumption is that there are certain core concepts or conceptual clusters that together define Liberalism or different kinds of Liberalism.

Self-evidently, we are not going to talk about all of them. We have chosen four topics, precisely because they seem to us most interesting on the cross-cultural comparison: Individualism, not just because many would argue it to be a core constituent of Liberalism, but also because the claim is often made that Eastern cultures are more collectivist; Tolerance; Markets, where the question is posed to what extent you can have Liberalism without markets and vice versa; and then, obviously, Universalism, which is, in a sense, the question of the whole conference. We shall then try to look at who defines what Liberalism is, and how. I hope that will also open up elements of a possible research agenda. We conclude with one of the most outstanding liberal thinkers in the West, Ronald Dworkin.
1. West

North America: Paul Starr

Thank you for the introduction and bringing us together at an economically perilous moment but one which, at least from an American point of view, seems politically promising. It is with the thought of putting this moment into perspective and fulfilling my charge to discuss what is distinctive about American Liberalism that I have violated Timothy’s directive to speak off the cuff and, instead, have committed my thoughts to paper.

A political ideology acquires its definition not only from within, not only from the working out of its own principles, but also through what it has to fight over and what it has to fight against. Liberal thought and institutions have varied over time and from one country to another for any number of reasons. The historical moment when Liberalism emerged or took root in a society may have a lasting impact on how it is understood there. The particular movements or parties that have been its carriers may have lent it a distinctive inflection. Peculiar aspects of the national context may have led those movements to give liberal ideas an indigenous expression that fit local sentiments and circumstances. But among the many historical and contextual influences, none has been more important than the illiberal forces Liberals confront.

Liberalism is in the first instance a philosophy of opposition – a defining faith. Its defining struggles have at different times been against Feudalism, Absolutism, Theocracy, Colonialism and Fascism, against the illiberal forms of Conservatism and Populism, and sometimes against the illiberal tendencies amongst Liberals themselves. Whatever the fight, conflict itself often becomes a source of structure. Sometimes conflict heightens the contrast between Liberals and their adversaries into a fine, sharp polarity. And sometimes, by leading to compromises, it blurs the differences, particularly if the conflict becomes sanctified as matters of principle and solidified in institutions. Conflict figures centrally in the formation of American Liberalism. In the US, Liberalism has been a deep and powerful
current throughout the nation's history but its influences have been shaped and limited by the peculiar features of American social and political development, beginning above all with slavery, the origin of the great American contradiction. American society has many thought-lines and tensions, to be sure. But one runs deeper than the others, the only one that has been the source of a civil war: the contradiction at the founding of the republic between liberty and slavery and a long train of consequences involving race and the uses of political power that has flowed from it. And that train of consequences has twisted and turned through different phases of American history but runs right down to the present. Today, we see it in the social and political contrasts between the South and the rest of the country, and between the Republican and Democratic parties, and in the vote for and against Barack Obama, whose election is in itself a momentous event in the history of the American contradiction and perhaps the beginning of the end of it.

This view of American Liberalism as a tradition reaching back to the founding and entangled in a contradiction at the centre of the nation's history differs from some other ways of thinking about American Liberalism. It differs most sharply from the view of many mid-twentieth-century American political scientists and other intellectuals, who conceived of the US as liberal all the way through, i.e. who saw America as having a consensus on liberal values and always having had that consensus. And perhaps the most influential version of such a thesis came in Louis Hartz's 1955 book *The Liberal Tradition in America*. Hartz equated Liberalism with what he called Lockean Individualism and claimed that, because there had been no Feudalism in America, there could be no Socialism, indeed no other ideology but Liberalism. Seymour Martin Lipset's book on American Exceptionalism also posits an ideological consensus along the lines of what Samuel Huntington called the American Creed. For Lipset, four shared values: Individualism, Egalitarianism, Populism and Anti-Statism (all supposedly traceable to the founding of the republic) explain the myriad ways in which the US has stood apart from other countries. For Hartz and Lipset: once liberal, always liberal, and nothing but liberal.

These formulations suffer from a one-sided, static understanding of American institutions. They fail to give adequate weight to the illiberal elements of American society – present right from the beginning, and crucial factors in America's political development. They fail to acknowledge the depth of conflict over values or assume that no matter the conflict the liberal consensus predetermined the outcome. They collapse complex currents of thought, e.g. the early mix of Republican and liberal tendencies and posit an oddly unchanging character to society. Hartz, from this
peculiar notion that from the moment it was established the US was frozen into its original beliefs, a view that in his later book *The Founding of New Societies* he generalised into a theory of all the fragment societies established by European settlers and wrote: ‘for when a part of the European nation is detached from the whole of it and hurled outward on new soil it loses the stimulus toward change that the whole provides – it lapsed into a kind of immobility.’ Only Europe, in Louis Hartz’s view, had real class conflict and therefore dynamism. Not having class conflict, America just had to work out its liberal individualist possibilities.

Although Lipset did not make as extreme a claim, he also argued that America’s liberal values have been a historical constant. But even if there is some historical continuity in a society’s values (a reasonable enough proposition), it is a mistake to suppose those values have had the same effects over time, as if the effects never depend on the context. Values are always at the mercy of politics and they are not always consistent with one another or unambiguous in their application. So even if we were to say that both Individualism and Egalitarianism are essential values in American society, what does it mean in the multitude of situations where those two values point in opposite directions? What is missing here and in so much of the discussion about an American liberal consensus is any sense of the internal tensions within Liberalism, as well as the conflict between America’s liberal and illiberal tendencies.

If Hartz and Lipset wrongly conceive of American Liberalism as all-enveloping consensus, a second view frames Liberalism in terms that are too narrow. This approach would limit Liberalism to its contemporary political use, applying it only to those who have answered to the name Liberal. But we ought not to be distracted by labels. Jefferson, John Locke and Adam Smith all did not call themselves Liberal. The word Liberal did not come into usage as a political term in Europe until the early 19th century and was little used in America until the 20th century. Nonetheless, we should have no trouble retrospectively identifying Locke, Smith or Jefferson as Liberals and we should have no difficulty in applying the term now to politicians or others who, for one reason or another, may prefer not to call themselves Liberals even though their ideas clearly fit within the tradition.

The history of words is not the same as the history of ideas and ideologies, though they may be related. In the US, the past century has seen the terms ‘Progressive’ and ‘Liberal’ alternate in use. The American Progressives of the early 1900s were clearly the transatlantic cousins of Britain’s New Liberals, but it was not until the implosion in 1916 of the Progressives, which had four years earlier failed to elect Teddy Roosevelt as a third party presidential candidate, that the *New Republic Magazine*
introduced into the American discussion the term Liberal to differentiate its
treasonable views from those of the collapsing Progressive Party and to associate itself
with what at that point was the eminently successful liberal party of Lloyd
George. After World War I, many Americans who had supported the Wilson
administration were disgusted by its abuse of state power, particularly in
suppressing free speech. Adopting the name Liberal had the additional
advantage of underlining a commitment to individual liberty that had not
been characteristic of the Progressives. In that case, the change from
Progressive to Liberal did have substantive significance.

Ironically, in the interwar years, just as the Liberal Party in Britain broke
down and gave way to Labour, the term Liberal entered the political
language of the US, where it became firmly established during the 1930s
when Franklin Roosevelt embraced it, though Republicans of that era,
Herbert Hoover or Senator Robert Taft, insisted that Roosevelt and others
were pseudo-Liberals, whilst they were the real Liberals. Progressive then
became marginalised as referring to the Far Left, particularly when in 1948
a second Progressive Party, heavily infiltrated by Communists, nominated
Henry Wallace for President. But memories are short and after the term
Liberal acquired unhappy overtones during the 1960s – and that has very
much to do with race – the term Progressive began making a comeback and
was even adopted by the Centre Right Democratic Leadership Council in
the 1980s.

Today, even though Progressive is often favoured as a term of self-
description by Liberal Democrats when running for office, as a result of
polls carried out by consultants, the terms Liberal and Progressive are
deployed almost interchangeably in most political discussions. As the
linguist Jeff Nunberg has written, ‘those who self-consciously call themselves
Progressives rather than Liberals are just about the only ones who think
there is a difference, or at least who hope that others think there is a
difference.’

But if we say Liberalism is broader than the prospective currently
identified with the word, yet not so broad as to encompass all of American
political consciousness, we need to distinguish different forms or phases of
Liberalism that vary in their scope and meaning. Here the distinction
between Constitutional Liberalism dating to the late 17th and 18th centuries,
and Modern Democratic Liberalism dating to the late 19th and early 20th
centuries serves as a useful point of departure. By constitutional Liberalism
I mean classical political Liberalism including such tenants as freedom of
conscience, freedom of speech, representative government, division of
governmental powers, independent civil society, rights of private property
and economic freedom, which in the 19th century evolved along a separate
branch into the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, and from there to Modern Free Market Conservatism. By Modern Democratic Liberalism I mean a philosophy that incorporates the same constitutional foundations but conceives of democracy and citizenship in more universal terms, repudiates *laissez-faire* whilst retaining the institutions of Capitalism, expands the conception of rights to include the right to equal respect as a basic requirement of human development and security and, while enlarging the social and economic role of government, insists on stronger protection of civil liberties and a wider set of social checks and balances.

As I have argued in my book *Freedom's Power*, each of these two phases of Liberalism implies a theory of power as well as a theory of justice, i.e. a theory of how to create power, as well as how to constrain it; of how a state can best generate the capacities to achieve the ends of a just and free society, which necessarily includes the capacity to defend itself. In the US, Constitutional Liberalism does seem to have some of the nearly universal adherence that Hartz and Lipset attribute to liberal values generally. But wide agreement about the merits of tradition should not obscure the depth of conflict about its interpretation. John Calhoun and Frederick Douglas, slaveholder and former slave, both admired American constitutional principles but they might as well have been talking about different traditions. Americans share the language of the constitution but often use it to say opposite things. The American contradiction has affected each of these two phases of Liberalism: the slaveholding states distorted Constitutional Liberalism at the moment of the founding and moulded its interpretation in the early Republic to their interests. Even after slavery was abolished its legacies limited the understanding of constitutional rights, racial conflict and the interest of the South in protecting its racial order. This has inhibited the development of Modern Democratic Liberalism and continues to haunt and hamper it to this day.

I said at the outset that the particular historical moment when Liberalism emerged, or took root, in a society may have had a long-term impact on its understanding, and this was the case in America. That the American Revolution and the writing of the constitution took place in the 1770s and 80s – in the Age of the Enlightenment but before the conservative reaction against the French Revolution – helped to make the nation's founding principles more liberal than they might otherwise have been. But the Revolutionary War itself and the immediate international realities confronting the nation in the 1780s were also critical influences in America's state formation. The initial impulses in the first state constitution in the articles of confederation roll towards sharply circumscribing governmental and especially executive power.
During the Revolutionary War, however, the fiscal and military debility of the confederation nearly cost them military victory and resulted in severe privations in the Continental Army, whose officers became the core of a movement to build a stronger national government. Army veterans represented half of the delegates to the constitutional convention in Philadelphia, where they were presided over by their former commanding general and produced a document that provided for unlimited powers of conscription and taxation, as well as the central executive and federal judiciary that had previously been missing. Under the articles of confederation the government lacked the authority to compel the various states to fulfill treaty commitments and, because it also had neither economic leverage nor military capacity, the government was unable to respond to the closure of European ports to American exports or to answer threats from Britain and Spain to American territory beyond the Allegheny.

In other words, just as state building in early modern Europe, including the rise of a liberal state here in Britain, reflected the exigencies of war and international competition, so did state building in the US in the 18th century. In the American case, however, state formation occurred in an ideological climate that was acutely suspicious of state power. It was not only a Liberal or Republican fear of aggrandised state power at the source of that suspicion. The Southern delegates wanted no interference with slaveholding by the national government and their influence helps to account not only for the constitution’s indirect acceptance of slavery but also for some of its notable silences. Although the concept of human equality appears at the beginning of the Declaration of Independence, it actually appears nowhere in the constitution itself. The term equality only comes up in relation to the equality of the states, a provision so deeply entrenching the power of the Southern states that it would become impossible to abolish slavery through ordinary politics. It took, of course, the Civil War and the Reconstruction Amendments to put an end to slavery and to put the concept of equality into the constitution. Yet, even so, once reconstruction collapsed southerners resumed their efforts to prevent the Federal Government from upsetting the system of racial domination and opposed enforcement of the Right to equal protection of the laws that the 14th amendment aimed at establishing for all Americans.

To this day, many of those who claim fidelity to the doctrine of original intent by insisting on a narrow view of federal powers are oblivious to the original intent of the reconstruction amendments: that those amendments have no less constitutional force than the provisions adopted earlier. The Southern constitutional interpretation has also inhibited the development of Modern Democratic Liberalism in America. During the past century, at least
until the 1980s, Democratic Liberalism was the predominant source of initiative and energy in American politics, alternating with Conservatism in power, but seeming to have the more decisive impact in a ‘two steps forward – one step back’ pattern. Progressivism was followed by the Conservative 20s, the New Deal by the 50s, the New Frontier and great society by the presidencies of Nixon, Ford, and Carter. For a while, a broad consensus of America accepted the reforms of the New Deal, such as collective bargaining and social security and, by implication, their underlying principles. The idea that America had always had a liberal consensus including the notion that American Conservatives were just a variant of Liberals, seemed to make sense in that period, although it involved reading the mid 20th century consensus back into the past when, if there had been a consensus, it would have been entirely different.

In any event, the consensus such as it was did not last and by the 1980s under Reagan, and even more so in the past decade under George W Bush, Conservatives have not only sought to return to economic and legal theories predating the New Deal, but embraced tendencies on the Religious Right that cannot be reconciled with even the loosest definition of classic Liberalism. In fact, Conservatism in the US today has become far less intellectually coherent than Liberalism and consists of at least five independent and, at times, antithetical tendencies: Libertarianism, Social Conservatism sometimes verging on the theocratic White Nationalism, Neo Conservatism, and Business Conservatism. These tendencies would be at war with one another if modern Liberalism would not provide them with a common enemy and a cause for political coalition. That is why Conservatives spend so much time attacking Liberals – it solves their own problem. Anti-Liberalism is what holds American Conservatives together, and it’s their main source of entertainment. At a Republican discussion on talk radio, many subjects would be divisive but mockery of Liberalism is always guaranteed to tickle everyone in the audience. Given how necessary we Liberals are to their unity and amusement, you would think that Conservatives would show us a little kind gratitude.

But as ideologically diverse American Conservatism is, the South has been the bedrock of its political power. Indeed, the resilience of Southern power has been one of the most persistent features of American politics. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, the South rose again through the Democratic Party and through its influence in congress and the courts. After Southern resistance to civil rights was finally overcome in what is sometimes called the Second Reconstruction during the 1960s, the South rose once more, this time through the Republican Party. In each case, the South has been crucial to Conservative efforts to block or neutralise movements for
greater equality, not only involving Blacks but Whites as well. This is part of the legacy of the American contradiction. Before the Civil War, at a time when the North had the most universal system of primary education and the highest rates of literacy in the world, the South had virtually no public education for Whites – let alone Blacks; the only parts of the antebellum South that had developed public schools were areas with large scale slaveholding. And from Reconstruction to the New Deal the white South resisted any form of public policy that involved extending social rights to all citizens, less those policies upset the Southern racial order. The New Deal made its peace with Southern power by accepting limitations to social security and other programmes that effectively excluded millions of African Americans. And after the 1938 congressional election the alliance in congress between the Republican Party and Southern Democrats obstructed further development of economic and social rights until the 1960s.

These political realities have not only stunted the advance of liberal policies, they have shaped important aspects of what we understand to be distinctive about American Liberalism. Without the South and the political divisions inspired by race throughout the country, the US would very likely have passed universal health insurance, for example, and developed a welfare state close, at least, to British, if not Scandinavian proportions. Moreover, many of the social programmes that were adopted were heavily laden with racial overtones because of the way they were structured. So, for example, instead of a universal child and family benefit system, Americans developed a welfare system that Whites saw as a handout to Blacks, and this too contributed to the limited development of social rights in the US. For a long time, dependent on Southern votes for its congressional majorities and presidential victories, the Democratic Party was ensnared in its own version of the American contradiction until finally, in the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson pushed through a civil rights legislation and set in motion the defection of the South to the Republicans. That was not the only factor in the ascendancy of Conservatism in the late 20th century, but it was by far the most important.

Now, after decades of Conservative hegemony, that honourable choice is finally paying off. Because of growing Liberalism among the educated and affluent, a distinct liberal trend among the young and rising numbers of Hispanics, Democrats finally have enough support to win the presidency and majorities in congress without Southern votes. For the first time, the party that Liberalism depends on has come into power no longer depending on the South to get there. Moreover, as Obama’s election testifies, the racial backlash that was so powerful a factor after the 1960s, has finally ebbed and begun petering out. Somehow, most Americans seem to have emerged from the bitter conflicts of recent decades reasonably tolerant and respectful of
one another, capable of measuring a man not by his colour, but by his character, his intelligence and his abilities – just as so many dreamed would be possible. Our problems with race are certainly not resolved but America looks different now and, from a Liberal perspective, a bit more hopeful. This is a new liberal moment. New not only because a liberal administration is arriving in Washington after a long Conservative era but new – much more fundamentally – because America may finally be free of the chains on its politics that slavery left behind.

Europe: Pierre Rosanvallon

I would like to start with a few general remarks. First of all, Liberalism is not the only “L-word”, if by that we mean “loose word”. There are a lot of loose words, like Socialism, Conservatism, even republic or democracy. There is a history of conferences on cacophonic words. Remember, for example, that in 1948 Lipmann’s conference discussed the problem of Liberalism. In the mid 19th century, at the moment of the revolutions of 1848, in a lot of European countries there were also discussions on the key cacophonic word of the period, namely democracy. Even at the end of the 19th century in Oxford there were a lot of conferences on Liberalism and New Liberalism. Liberalism, we see, is not the only loose word. Secondly, it is possible to describe via three characteristics cacophonic words as a specific category. They could be considered as aggregate concepts, i.e. they mix together different sets of elements: values, institutions, and social norms or structures. A cacophonic word is also a controversial password, that is to say, it has a function of identification (be it positive or negative). They express, at a given moment, hopes for some audiences and fears for others. They are also unstable notions in that they never exist as such, but always refer to historical situations. They have an interactive dimension and are permanently moving. They have to be understood in a historical way and not as concepts, i.e. tools for describing reality; or as ideologies, i.e. a fixed set of ideas, myths and representations.

Cacophonic words are related to the contradictions of modernity. The real basis for cacophony is that modernity is organised along a number of tensions concerning the very definition of equality, liberty, the role of the individual, and so on. Hence, there are not many cacophonic words; so few it would be easy to have a complete list. Also, they only exist relative to each other. I share the definition of Liberalism as a philosophy of opposition; it is true of all cacophonic words that they are always defined against something. When in France the term Liberalism was coined in 1818 by Maine de Biran, it was to define the vision of the people that were against the
Ultra, those close to Charles X, the successor of Louis XVIII. The contradictions of modernity are expressed in many different ways because they are not organised in response to specific and clear problems. The problem comes in trying to understand why we do not get rid of such cacophonic words. After all, in normal academic life when we have something totally unclear we try to get rid of it in order to have clear concepts. Yet, seeing as for two centuries we have never wished to get rid of those cacophonic words, they must have some social utility.

As for the specificity of Liberalism among those L-words, it seems to me that Liberalism is the mother of all loose words because it was the first one to be coined and because it is a basic loose word of modernity. Hence, it is at the same time the loosest and the weakest, and, as a consequence, has rarely ever supported or defined political organisation. All the other cacophonic words have been utilised to define very strong social movements and organisations. Among them, Liberalism has the longest history, with cycles of positive and negative definitions. Comparing Europe and America we find not different definitions but different cycles and different enemies of Liberalism. Looking at the famous crisis of Liberalism at the end of the 19th century or the current debate about the centenary of the French Revolution or the so-called New Liberals in Britain, we can recognise a history of return and disappearance of those cacophonic words.

After those general remarks I would like to speak more precisely about the problems of Liberalism in contemporary Europe, mainly emphasising the last forty or so years. I want to discuss Liberalism not so much in terms of political philosophy, but rather in terms of atmospheres and languages. Atmospheres and languages characterise specific moments, and in Europe we can specify three main moments of Liberalism in the last forty years. Remembering that the term Liberalism was almost absent from the European political vocabulary from the end of World War II and the late 60s, during which period the word could not be seen on the cover of any book. The first of those three moments was when Liberalism returned in the late 60s, early 70s. Its return to the academic, but also social and political, sphere consisted of a kind of rediscovery and re-appropriation of a forgotten tradition. At that time in France we were reading Guizot and Tocqueville, while in the middle of the 60s Raymond Aron declared he preferred the very sharp prose of Marx to the kind of tedious phrases of Tocqueville. At that moment, for reasons of exhaustion of Socialism (itself a critique of totalitarianism) the cycle returned to the mother-ideology after its critics were in some way exhausted.

When speaking of Liberalism in the early 80s, the key password was Civil Society, meaning autonomy, critique of the state, Individualism and so on
(also, of course, related to the return of democracy as a specific value). In politics it was used, at the same time, by the Right and by the Left; by the Right in terms of modernisation and by the Left as a tool for transformation. At that moment, Liberalism was mainly associated with social, political, and moral issues. It was different in the mid 80s when Europe entered a new atmosphere of Liberalism. It became associated mainly with problems concerning economic regulation. It was a reference to market, economy and management rather than to civil society. It was also associated with a new vision of the welfare state, emphasising individual responsibility rather than social citizenship and the old notion of solidarity. In the late 80s in Eastern Europe the atmospheres of Liberalism as civil society and of Liberalism as market economy were adopted at the same time, whereas in Western Europe they were differentiated more strongly.

The third moment starts in the mid 90s and lasts until today. Step by step, Liberalism was seen as the problem, rather than the solution. It had been the solution for economic regulation; it had been the solution for organising civil society, and so on. From then on we can see a difference in cycles between East and West Europe. Liberalism became the problem much quicker in Eastern Europe than it did in the West. The absence of alternatives to Capitalism or the market economy stimulated the Left to increasingly support a view critical of Liberalism, even demonising it through the expression Ultra-Liberalism or Neo-Liberalism. Since then, Europe feels liberal in terms of representative democracy, the autonomy of civil society, free choice in personal conduct; but feels at the same time anti-liberal. Sarkozy, for example, claimed to be chief of the movement against Ultra-Liberalism.

What happens if the cacophony becomes too strong? What happens if Liberalism becomes at the same time the name for a positive attribute and for a threatening evil? I consider it to be the end of a cycle. If cacophony becomes too strong, you have two options: either you invent new words, to coin new adjectives to revitalise the old word. The other option, of course, is to stop using cacophonic words and to return to more specific issues, like the problem of the individual, of tolerance, of universalism. I would consider this conference to be a success if we managed to put an end to the use of the word Liberalism.

**Latin America: Laurence Whitehead**

I have, of course, fewer countries to cover. Nonetheless, I will have to resort to some extremely heroic generalisations in order to fulfil my ambition of addressing the problem of where Latin American experience fits. What kind
of Liberalism can we map out in Latin America? Adhering to the idea of composite categories, Liberalism in Latin America consists of several compounds which can fit together in different ways, loosely coexist in separate poorly coordinated compartments and each arise or subside according to the social domain in question (e.g. the rhythm of the electoral domain may be different from that of the legal or commercial domain). These dynamics can be promoted and captured by specific occupational groups competing between themselves, both within the arena of the state and the arena of civil society. There is, for example, Constitutionalism and the rule of law – the occupational group in question is the lawyers, who have their interests and means of action not necessarily coordinated with everyone else. There is secular education – another crucial part of liberal activity – and they have teachers and academics committed to that. There is freedom of expression and they have journalists. There is economic liberalisation and free markets, and they have economists and business lobbyists. There is democratisation and that has professional politicians, democratic parties and so forth.

As you can see, each of these interests may, in a loose environment, take control and push forward their own agenda without necessarily harmonising it with the different parts of what we are broadly regarding the composite idea of Liberalism, hence Liberalisms. Of course, Liberalism is a totality – at least in ideological terms – which may be more than all those fragments. It may incorporate them into a more abstract and timeless set of values, which revolve, as we know, around personal freedom, self-realisation, norms concerning peaceful living together in the spirit of equality and mutual respect, and so forth – all this is well-known liberal doctrine. In Latin America, however, with all its continuing inequalities and unresolved social conflicts, such abstract ideals are still mainly aspirations. And they are not necessarily aspirations that fully control the collective imagination of the whole population to the exclusion of alternative visions. Norms of coexistence in daily life are much more ragged and improvised than this harmonious picture of a unified Liberalism might suggest. Pierre, just now, commented on the values and the institutions of social norms as different components of Liberalism. In Latin America, these are continuously contested; the institutions are only moderately effective – they penetrate some parts of society, but there are a lot of things going on outside the institutional realm – and the social norms are often weakly linked, either to the officially promoted values or to the institutional requirements of the formal structure.

This is why we have, as a heroic generalisation, a multiplicity of fragmentary, but at the same time indispensable components of the various
Liberalisms with rival and even clashing organised interests, each pressing their own part of a liberal agenda. We also have widespread and persistent alternatives to these fragmentary liberal projects. We have projects still actively wanting more religion, wanting more authoritarianism, wanting more populism, wanting more state-intervention in markets, and so forth. Over the history of Latin America we have a lot of hybridity, connecting with Paul Starr’s comment that in the history of the US, there was a blurring of Liberalism and Republicanism. That was and continues to be true for Latin America, where we often find a blurring, clashing and sometimes merging between Conservatism and Liberalism, between Nationalism and Liberalism, between Capitalism and Liberalism, and indeed, there is Social Liberalism, which at times comes closer to Socialism. The underlying liberal aspirations of the population may still be powerful and widely present, but they are always in contest with these alternative versions. They are hybrid interpretations, in which the less liberal current may come to the fore.

So much for the what, but when does this come into existence? The first thing to stress about Latin America, if we are doing a comparative analysis of the world, is that, at least parts of it, came into existence historically very early on. The Constitutionalism was of course very precocious, although it was also fretful. The constitutions were written in the early 19th century but they may not fully control political life until far later than that. So it was fitful and delayed but precocious at the beginning. The same would be true for the economic liberalisation: early and in some cases very strong efforts to promote free markets in the 19th century but fitful and reversible with a big reversal between 1930 and 1980. The other component of Liberalisation is, of course, Democratisation, which really has earlier precursors but as a widespread normal general practice it has only got 25 years of history out of the 200 years of these republics. So we have some very early and powerful bursts of some kinds of Liberalism, especially what the literature refers to as Atlantic Constitutionalism. This is when hereditary privilege, cast society, church monopoly over education, slavery and colonial economic monopolies are all swept away. We have almost two centuries of that and that happened far earlier in Latin America than in Africa, Asia, or the Middle East, or indeed in much of Europe. Monarchies were replaced by constitutional republics; the principle of popular sovereignty was invoked within personal public institutions, separation of power, and also federalism. All this was extraordinarily precocious in global terms. So, the Latin Americas have some claim to ebbing in the vanguard of the history of Liberalism. But by the late 19th century these principles were official doctrine and legal practice in all the twenty republics, although the stability and social impact of these principles was, as I said, patchy and incomplete. It was
contested by periods of military rule, by civil war, by emergency decrees, by states of siege, and it also penetrated only so far into the informal society. Economic Liberalism searched particularly strongly between 1870 and 1930 to reinforce these political structures and to mould them largely in accordance with prevailing Western doctrines. But full economic Liberalism went into reverse in the 1930s and there has been a second huge burst of liberalisation since the 1980s in the economic field. In the meantime, there was a series of alternative experiments that were in some sense partially illiberal but not completely illiberal, controlled nonetheless by a framework of liberal assumptions and expectations. But full democratisation and open market economies are only about 25 years old and they are still a bit socially precarious, especially in the climate we are looking at right now.

So much for the when – where? There is no scope in the time available for charting across my 20 or more countries and the diverse hybrid forms of Liberalism that have occurred in Latin America. I just want to single out two recent examples to give you a sense of the diversity. Antonio Ocampo, who used to be a Professor of Latin American History here in St Antony’s, has written of Argentina as ‘Liberalism in a country born liberal’. The point he is making in that article is to contrast Argentina with all its neighbours, saying that in Argentina the doctrine of Liberalism never had to engage with protracted struggle against coherent alternative doctrines as it did in the other Latin American countries. On the societal level the liberals never had to contend with well-structured indigenous or peasant groups, or other social categories dedicated to resisting liberal practices. So Argentina, from his point of view, was special in that respect. Another recent study comparing Argentina and Mexico in the 19th century makes the claim on a political level starkly contrasting models within the same constitutionalist tradition with the weak executive favoured by 19th century Mexican liberals, in contrast to the strong presidential and centralised federalism of the Argentines. That might seem rather strange, considering the subsequent history, but illustrates the point that these currents are not stable and once in place are continuously present – they alternate, they vary all the time and they may be reversed to some extent.

There is an extensive discussion also about how 19th century liberals coped with the problem of order and that is where the tension between Liberals and Conservatives but also the common ground between Liberals and Conservatives can be explored. And how 19th century Liberals coped with the problem of social inequality – the challenge in that case was the overlap, tension, rivalry and sometimes partnership with the radicals. We can see continuing evidence of unresolved conflict on these issues to this day in the problem of order and the problem of inequality. It’s worth
remembering, and this is a rather extreme example, but Fidel Castro began as a lawyer and his rise to fame was partly because of a speech he made as a lawyer defending himself in court – the speech was ‘History Will Absolve Me’. What it did essentially was invoke the guarantees of Cuba’s 1940s constitution. And it’s worth remembering that Pinochet, a repressive dictatorship on many dimensions, nevertheless sought to embrace and champion a high style of economic Liberalism at any rate and, in the end, the associated political doctrines. The underlying dominance of liberal aspirations may be invoked to explain why even in Cuba there is this need to refer to and take into account constitutional considerations. Even in Pinochet’s Chile liberal ideas exercised a certain element of restraint or control over the thought, which the pro-business dictatorship had developed.

Just time to turn to the where from point. This is a hugely complex discussion, and again I am making heroic generalisations, but compared to Europe and the US, we could say that in Latin America much of the Liberalism was powerfully influenced from outside, though not just from one outside source as is often supposed, but from a variety of competitive and to some extent conflicting outside sources. There is an English tradition of Liberalism connected among other things to the Royal Navy’s role in throwing open these economies and sometimes underpinning the political structures that emerged in the republics in the 19th century. There is a lot of literature on the connection between the US constitution and the imitations or replications in a number of Latin American constitutions. But when one goes through the history of that period, it is also very important to see the powerful influence of the French rival traditions – a subject which would take a lot of time to go into (Constant plays a very important role, for example, as a source of influence and Tocqueville also). But above all it’s important to pay attention to the underestimated role – at least it has been underestimated until very recently – of Spanish Liberalism. Naturally, with the rise of Spain today there is a lot of literature rediscovering that influence again. But with the Spanish Liberalism, which goes right back to the colonial period, some of the practices about which I was talking had their first impact, their first arrival in Latin America coming through the 1812 Cortez of Cadiz when Spanish America was more or less still under colonial rule.

The second point about where from is that this diverse range of competitive liberal influences from outside entered into Latin America through a variety of the channels I have indicated – the professional groups and the lobbying and campaigns over particular issues. To some extent you can see Latin America is on the periphery receiving Liberalism from outside. But that would be a very incomplete account and the history of this topic
draws a good deal of attention to the way in which external Liberalisms are received. It may not be exactly equal to what has been transmitted. They are transmuted because they have to be fitted into the hybridity and the internally looser institutional structures where they are received. And, very importantly, they may be not only transmuted but transmitted back (of great importance for Latin Americans). This process of transmitting back outside Latin America to the old liberal countries is something which you may not be so aware of, but let me just give you one or two examples to show its importance. Mexico, for example, continued to recognise the Spanish Republic and to shelter Spanish republican leaders throughout the Franco dictatorship. So the Mexican attitude to the arrival of modern forms of Liberalism in Spain, you can see, is a transmission – we sheltered it when you did not have it. Uruguay aspired, it is often said, to be the Switzerland of Latin America, but that needs to be taken a bit further. In many ways Uruguayans aspired to set up an example even the Swiss could admire and, perhaps, learn from. Another example is Chile, which you may or may not define as liberal, but I would define it as such within my very broad hybrid range. Chile did for the peaceful road to Socialism what the Euro-Communists could not do in Europe. It was important that we do it in Chile but that it has meaning in the rest of the Western world.

In conclusion, the subcontinent is deeply liberal in the following senses: there is no hereditary aristocracy, no monarchical principle, and everywhere there are senators. There is no such thing as forced marriage, but everywhere there are openly competitive beauty contests. There are no *shariah*, but there are many Supreme Court justices. In most countries censorship is occasional and erratic while journalists and legal writers continue to exercise influence and social prestige. Liberty is a collective value but the line separating liberty from license is not stable or legitimate in the settings I have been describing. So the struggle over where that line is drawn and what exactly is to be preserved or defended is an ongoing struggle with shifting boundaries still. To finish, therefore, the many different Liberalisms of Latin America can be summed up with 5 Ps: precocious, prevalent, precarious, peripheral and, also, deeply persistent.

**Debate**

**Samuel Brittan**: How does Brazil fit into the picture, seeing as slavery existed there long after the US and they had an emperor?

**Laurence Whitehead**: The changes I was describing referred mainly to the emergence of new Spanish American republics in the early 19th century. Not all these republics emerged then – Cuba did not until 1898. Both Cuba and Brazil had slavery after the US. The end of
the empire and monarchy was the end of a certain kind of colonial hangover, but also of a
certain kind of conservative British constitutional geezer style. There were a lot of French
influences and a lot of British influences but the empire in the 19th century had its liberal
characteristics. Obviously, heredity was not one of the things challenged until the emperor
was removed. From the end of the 19th century the dominant currents of opinion in Brazil
that I am aware of are inclined to say “We’ve always had Conservatism, the liberals have never
really arrived in strength in Brazil. The old elites have managed to reproduce themselves;
they’ve managed to cling on to state power; they’ve managed to reshape their projects in
order to block genuine liberalisation” – a dominant argument you find in Brazilian
historiography. But given the way I have characterised Liberalism, with its hybridities and
partial victories on particular fronts, I would take it the other way round and say there were
significant liberal elements (e.g. the doctrine in the 1889 revolution and the founding of the
republic). All the things I have described about federalism, division of powers and the
abolition of hereditary privilege took place in Brazil as well but just a little bit later. To this
day you can have an argument as to which kinds of Liberalisms exist in Brazil. They are not
wholehearted; there is no liberal revolution as you would think of from an Eastern European
or a Chilean perspective, but I think there is a great deal of conservative Liberalism if you
want to put it that way (and republican Liberalism, and now even some social Liberalism).

Knick Harley: I wonder whether there are two types of cyclicality? A cycle in ideas:
Individualism confronting social solidarity, the role of the state in protecting and advancing
established infrastructures in society. But I think there is also a political cyclicality that,
although related, is not exactly the same thing. We have seen, for example, in this country a
government which has been around beyond its sell-by date.

Paul Starr: I was alluding at one point to the notion that there is a cyclical pattern in
American politics; Arthur Schlesinger was a great advocate of this position. He had the
notion that there was a kind of fatigue that set in after a while. In the 1980s he had observed
that in the US the cycle is about 30 years. 30 years from the beginning of the progressive era
to the new deal, another 30 years to Franklin Roosevelt and then, he supposed, another 30
years and, at about 1990, we will see yet another cycle. When Bill Clinton was elected a lot
of people thought he comes right on schedule but it did not work out that way. And I think
that emphasises just how much contingency there is in politics. If the 2000 election had
turned out differently and Al Gore became president, maybe we would look back on a period
now which was somehow comparable to the new deal, Gore might have extended Clinton's
halting beginnings and undertaken major initiatives for the environment and so forth, but
it did not work out. Now people have redefined the cycle. For example, my colleague Sean
Wilentz talks about 2008 as being the end of the age of Reagan, so that we have a Conservative
era running from 1980 to 2008. But what happened this year may have been dependent on
the performance of the economy in the months leading up to the election. We will never
know whether it would have turned out differently under other economic conditions. There
is a lot of work done in political science indicating that just the year before an election the
economic performance is the best indicator for the outcome. So the poor economic
performance in 2008 may have been a factor that has brought in Obama. We have these
chance factors and yet there seems to be a pattern, a kind of exhaustion of ideas regardless
of the outcome of the election. There seemed to be in the US an exhaustion of Conservatism;
the sense of it being some kind of powerful initiative had really run out with George Bush.
There seems to be a cyclical pattern and yet there is a complete element of chance.
Timothy Garton Ash: Are there Pan-European cycles, or does one have to go down to the national level? Could one argue that in the last year or two we have witnessed the global cycle in the sense that economic Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, has seemed to be dominant across a very large part of the globe and is now being put into question simultaneously on many continents?

Pierre Rosanvallon: First, I would like to say that cycle-building is part of the work of an historian – it is our job to build cycles. On the matter of cycles in Europe: if you consider the 19th and 20th centuries, you have exactly the same kind of global cycles, but you must make a difference between global cycles and partisan cycles – a cycle is not just the change between Labour and Conservative. Take, for example, the turning point of the beginning of the 20th century. In all European countries you have a similar kind of new ideology coming: Sozialismus in Germany, New Liberals in Britain, Republican Radicals or Solidarists in France – you have a community of vision. After World War II you have also a community of vision for building social democracy in very global terms. And now perhaps we are at the beginning of a new cycle: vocabulary is starting to become obsolete – we have tried our best with ‘Neo-’ for a while and now we turn to ‘Post-’, “postdemocratic,” “postliberal,” “postconservative”. After having used those for around ten years they are exhausted again. Once “Neo-” and “Post-” are finished, your choices become very limited. To me the key question is why we still need those cacophonous words and why we do not directly discuss the problems of Constitutional Liberties, Citizenship, and so on. It is clearly for political reasons, for building political identities that we need those meta-concepts. We need them because politics is based on fact, opposition and obscurity.

Cycles are to be considered differently if you consider, for example, partisan cycles and what I would call global or basic cycles. I am struck by how basic cycles have been the same across Europe over the 19th and 20th centuries.

Laurence Whitehead: I think ‘cyclical’ implies some kind of reliable end of the cycle and its attraction is as opposed to linear models which are inevitable, natural, one-way progressions. There are possibilities which are neither reliably cyclical in that sense nor reliably linear. There is punctuated equilibrium, for example, which might capture a lot of countries carrying on relatively stable through inertia, though not working terribly well. When the moment of break comes there may be a contagious effect. Certainly in Latin America we have seen a tendency for good or bad things to spread from one country to another in a rapid way. But there is no reliable, predictable cycle; there is no substitute for actually tracking the contingent and dynamic struggles of the different groups and interests and ideas over time.

Paul Starr: Regarding the tedium setting in and prefixes: that is exactly why some of us like to drink their Liberalism straight.

Anne Deighton: Pierre, you talked about the 1980s and Economic Liberalism. How would you typify the period between the 50s and the mid 60s and the attempts of the Integrationists both in the Council of Europe and in the European Communities? It seems to me there are elements of Liberalism in the constitutional, institutional, market and people projects. But you seem to discount the notion of Liberalism as a feature of that period at all.

Pierre Rosanvallon: Regarding the 50s and the building of Europe, of course there certainly were elements of Liberalism in terms of substance. But consider economic regulation, for instance. The word Liberalism could not be used in the 50s, even in Europe. The
apprehension of economic problems was organised with a kind of vision of planning and not at all of market economy, and the very notion of industrial policy central to European institution in the 50s was very much against the notion of regulation by the market. Consider also that the word liberal or Liberalism was not used at all during that period. I may have mentioned Raymond Aron who has not once in those 20 years written down the word Liberalism – he did before and after, but if you look at his articles in the 50s the word Liberalism almost never appears. After 1968 he started discussing Liberalism with his friend and student Gluecksmann, who was on the left side of Liberalism. Raymond Aron himself was on the right side of Liberalism, yet both of them were happily liberal together.

Joao Carlos Espada: I was wondering about the difference between liberal as an adjective and as a noun. However cacophonous, the word as an adjective is still rather precise and useful. When one says liberal democracy or liberal Conservatism or liberal Socialism one knows exactly what is meant, as opposed to illiberal democracy or illiberal Conservatism or illiberal Socialism. The same applies to liberal Right as opposed to illiberal Right or liberal Left as opposed to illiberal Left. So are we discussing the meaning of Liberalism as a noun and not as an adjective? And, if so, could not this itself be seen as a victory for Liberalism?

Pierre Rosanvallon: It is easier to define illiberal democracy than a good democracy because we know what the contrary of democracy is but what good democracy is is always under discussion because democracy is based on a set of contradictions and difficulties needing to be solved. We know very well the enemies of democracy or liberty but their best friends are more difficult to define.

Paul Starr: When it comes to the distinction between liberal and illiberal we have a clear idea of what is at stake but, when talking about people who are non-liberals, we have to see that not all of them are illiberal. This, I think, is a source of ambiguity.

Nicholas Bunnin: I wanted to ask about the relations between Latin American Liberalism and the Church, particularly the clerical aspect in some Liberalisms and liberal aspects of some Church thinking and the relation to Positivism, which had a lot of ideological importance in Mexico and Brazil – particularly in the late 19th century when it was a hybrid or an opponent of Liberalism.

Laurence Whitehead: Can you be illiberal (adjective) in the pursuit of Liberal (noun) objectives? There are circumstances in which that may be necessary or that may be considered by Liberals to be correct and justified. For example, Anti-Clericalism would take the view that it was justified to do all sorts of things that nice Liberals in stable liberal societies would not like, in order to de-fanaticise the population. They would act illiberally but would say they are doing it in order to create a better, more liberal society when they are finished. That does not apply to all Anti-Clericals but there are very strong currents of Anti-Clericalism which would fit that category. The same could be said of Positivists. What is remembered of them is their scientism, their certainty that there was a right answer and that they were in possession of it and that they, therefore, were entitled to do what was necessary – that would be the illiberal side. But the other side is that they thought they did it in order to bring about order and progress and that that progress would be one in which freedom was more stably protected and more fully expressed in the end.

It is also relevant when we talk about Liberalism as attaching to the Church. Obviously, it was a traditional ultra-mundane kind of Catholic Church which you would have to describe
as illiberal, but it is perfectly possible for more liberal tendencies to seep in, and indeed in Latin America more and more do seep in and penetrate the Church over time. And in some circumstances, such as in Poland of course, but also in Brazil or Chile, the Church becomes the more liberal institution, allowed to exist in a climate where other institutions are not allowed to exist and, therefore, concentrates within it the liberal aspirations which cannot find another outlet.
2. East

Japan: Koichiro Matsuda

I understand that the aim of our conference is not to give specific points from one’s own expertise, in my case the history of political thought in 18th and 19th century Japan, but to create a sphere of open discussion for reviewing and reassessing Liberalism as a relevant concept for the world today. In order to contribute something to the conference, I would like to make a critical assessment of conventionally accepted theories on the historical condition of liberty and freedom in Japan. My aim is not to judge whether they are relevant in successfully exploring “historical truth”, or whether they are stereotypes which will misguide us to “bad” or “wrong” understanding. Nor do I have the slightest interest in upholding the universally “true” Liberalism, or, conversely, upholding alternative values in Japanese or Asian versions of Liberalism against the Western version. Rather, I will reconsider the frame of reference that may still bind the thought and discourse on Liberalism in Japan.

1) The first one is a typical Orientalism discourse. It maintains that Japanese society knows no ‘liberty’. Since the early introduction of Western theories in the mid-19th century, Japanese intellectuals have adopted the idea that only Western “civilized” societies had achieved the freedom of people. They referred to a wide variety of intellectual sources such as J. S. Mill, Tocqueville, Guizot, Hegel etc. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835 – 1901), one of the leading Japanese intellectuals at the time of the fall of traditional samurai rule and the beginning of the modernization/Westernization period, wrote that ‘the so-called samurai spirit resembles elastic rubber. It expands over the inferiors and shrinks when facing the superiors. In Europe, contrastingly, each individual, class or association in the society has their own solid ground of independence.’ This statement has been quoted frequently in a variety of literature even to this day.
The absence of liberty in traditional Japan, implied in this passage, can be broken down into two separate but mutually related contents:

a) The absence of the autonomous individual. Because Japanese society had no tradition of considering the individual as an autonomous and substantial unit of society, the social value of independence and self-determination of the individual has been disregarded.

b) The absence of voluntary association. The reasons for grouping people together may be the nature of human species, economics, or the political orders from the state, but this never happened voluntarily in Japan. This is partly rooted in the belief that, since the individual has no independent will, there can be no voluntary group. Even if groups have functions and duties within wider society, it was usually because the governing power took advantage of them, using them as subordinate organs of the state. Consequently, while the members of a group may share a feeling of fellowship or a sense of mutual aid, they scarcely understand the value of independence from the state and the accountability of each member for the purpose of association. They just subordinated themselves to the natural necessity or the authority of their superior power, which were usually not distinguished.

2) The second type is more sophisticated. It says that in Japanese history there has been no true dictatorship or tyranny for a principle of liberty to be expected to stand against. It is true that there stands the long heritage of tennō (emperorship), but its political authority has been nominal for most of Japanese history. Then, could the Tokugawa shogunate from the 17th to mid-19th century be said to have established a dictatorship when they contained the imperial family in the court of Kyoto and restrained them from exercising political power? No. The Tokugawa government had a council system composed of several vassals that functioned as a substantial political decision-making body. The shogun had very limited discretion over it. Moreover, no single member of cabinet could claim priority (again, nominally, there was a head of cabinet). The centre of political power was usually void in most political bodies.

Even after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when the emperor was expected to execute substantial political power, the actual force that ran the state machine was the bureaucracy. Maruyama Masao, one of the most influential intellectuals of the postwar period, did not hide his annoyance with the “peculiarity” of the “Japanese” political system in writing that “the German fascist leaders were convinced of what they did but the Japanese political
and military leaders never admit their accountability for the decisions they made. Each of these Japanese leaders, even the prime minister or the general in command just thought that he was a tiny piece of the system.’ (It almost sounds like Maruyama implies German fascism was “better” or at least more “rational” than Japanese militarism.) If no one knows who the real power holder is, it is impossible to identify who the enemy of liberty is, because the political oppression comes from an unknown place in the system, and each member of society is a part of that system.

3) The third theory concerns terminology and the conceptualization of “liberty” in Japanese language. This view presupposes that the concept of liberty or freedom is a unique product of the Western political tradition and has been elaborated in the history of political struggles in Western countries. Japanese (or East Asian languages) have had no proper term that can bear the meaning and implication of liberty. Usually, the Japanese translation of liberty is ‘j[yū]. However, the term j[yū] traditionally meant ‘at one’s discretion’ and ‘without constraint’. The meaning is similar in traditional Chinese usage as well. Moreover, in Japanese, j[yū] is also used as a verb meaning ‘to dominate and control someone totally.’ So when you say ‘A j[yū]isuru B’, it doesn’t mean A liberates B but A rules B at A’s will. Therefore, if you are entitled to be j[yū], it means no one can hinder what you are doing. Only the ruler has perfect j[yū]. This may remind you of a well known passage by Hegel about Asia, saying that ‘[the knowledge of freedom] of the Orientals, who knew only that One is free, then that of the Greek and Roman world, which knew that Some are free, and finally, our own knowledge that All men as such are free.’ (Lectures on the Philosophy of World History.) Actually, the Hegelian view of the ‘Orient’ has been one of the sources supporting this view in Japan. Also, as a corollary, j[yū] often means affluence or convenience. On the other hand, if the ruler would permit the j[yū] of common people on such and such a matter, it actually means ‘the ruler has no interest in that matter’ rather than recognizing the fundamental right of self-determination of the individual or group.

Trapped in traditional terminology, Japanese people usually misunderstand the meaning of liberty. For the Japanese, people’s j[yū] is a matter of degree and coordination. The Japanese think j[yū] has a tendency to excess and sometimes needs to be punished by the superior power when it steps beyond the limit of tolerance. Japanese terminology makes it difficult to tell the difference between rights of freedom and tolerated selfishness.

Several years ago, a professor of constitutional theory who is a colleague of Professor Inoue wrote an interesting essay entitled ‘Why Japanese Won’t Take Rights Seriously’, referring to Professor Dworkin’s book, and stated that
'rights' are a matter of coordination for 'good Japanese'. This essay suggests the case could be the same for liberty as it is for rights.

4) The fourth theory takes an opposite, or at least a different, view in estimating the condition of liberty in Japan. It searches for the elements in Japanese society that have affinity or parallelism with the Western idea of freedom. For example, historians who take this view estimate the lack or weakness of moral and religious orthodoxy in Japan as an advantage – as contrasted with China or Korea where the orthodoxy of Neo-Confucianism in the political regime had been firmly established. They see the positive effect of this ‘weakness of orthodoxy’ in allowing a pluralistic attitude to moral or religious values. Even in the Tokugawa shogun regime, generally viewed as strictly authoritarian, a scholar would learn or teach Confucianism, Buddhism and Shinto in parallel (only Christianity was banned). The Tokugawa government scarcely interfered in what people or even the samurai class wanted to learn. Regarding the issue of autonomous associations, they see that in the Japanese medieval age people enjoyed a type of liberty of autonomy. They point out that peasants in the villages in the medieval age held a principle of self-government and self-armament. Moreover, people enjoyed an egalitarian system of political participation and voting for the decision-making of their village. Also, they claim that the Japanese “feudal” period shows a certain similarity with the European feudal societies, which functioned as the root of liberal pluralism – something that may remind us of Francois Guizot’s formation of European civilization. Actually, the early Japanese translations of Guizot’s history of civilization in Europe appeared in the 1880s and were widely circulated among young intellectuals and students. Therefore, this idea of “feudalism” goes back a long way. The theoretical formation of Japanese feudalism is more an ideological expression of nationalistic pride than conclusions drawn from steady analysis. Historians who claim this concept are usually eager to assert that Japan is the only exception in non-Western countries that had a similar historical background to European civilization. According to this view, Japanese society is more “Western” than “Asian”.

It is not difficult to point out that the theoretical frameworks presented in this paper are actually the narratives invented for political and/or ideological reasons. However, to re-examine liberal values in Japanese society without resorting to, or without being affected by, these narratives is a difficult task. To find out how to criticize and relativise these ideological frameworks constitutes a great intellectual challenge. I would rather stop here and hope you will not blame me for cunningly evading giving a clear answer to the question ‘What is Liberalism in Japan?’
India: Rajeev Bhargava

Those who are looking for L-words in India will soon discover that Liberalism is not one of them – it is neither loose nor what Rosanvallon calls cacophonic. That place of honour belongs in India to Secularism, which has anti-religious, non-religious, and multi-religious connotations as well as some of their perversions: multi-communal (equal treatment by the state towards the fanatical fringe of every religion) and uni-communal (partiality towards the majority religion and toleration towards others). The term liberal is rarely used by politicians for self-description. This habitual reluctance goes back a long way – in the Indian national movement, even those who were liberal did not call themselves so. At that time, the Congress was divided between moderates and extremists. Of course, this never meant a lack of commitment to liberal values. A firm adherence to civil liberties was indispensable to the anti-colonial struggle. However, these civil rights came to be seen not as free standing but part of democratic discourse; as political rights.

What does the term “liberal” mean in India? First, negative liberty: the right to a private sphere free from encroachment by others, particularly the state. The bearer of this right is the individual. One speaks, for example, of a liberal father who believes in his child’s right to choose her partner. Second, the term is strongly associated with the right to private property, retrenched from the Indian Constitution in the 1950s; and with market freedom, against excessive powers of the state. Finally, it denotes someone with distaste for politics. On the whole liberals are apolitical, if not anti-political; when they get into politics, they do so reluctantly and bring in a certain style: having round table discussions, writing letters to newspaper editors and, at best, signing a petition. They distrust mass movements and agitational, confrontational politics. Thus they keep their own hands clean whilst being blind to their dependence on those who must have dirt on theirs. This is the classic Liberalism of the elites. For this reason, people on the Left, particularly those in academia, never use “liberal” for self-ascription but persistently use it to abuse or dismiss their enemies.

Indian Liberalism is seen by insiders and outsiders alike as bourgeois, an ideology of Utilitarianism; its links with Utilitarianism are constitutive, not contingent, making it hard to take it in an anti-capitalist direction. Earlier I spoke of an unwillingness among politicians to call themselves liberal. In the last twenty years or so, this has changed as bourgeois liberals have been firmly saddled in power, i.e. they control state institutions and have a dominant voice in the public sphere. Quite simply, Indian Liberalism is the voice of the status quo. Yet, surprisingly, it also articulates the
aspirations of a very vocal section of the Dalits – the former untouchables – eager to join the ranks of the elites (in this sense it is also the voice of an upwardly mobile, marginal group). Ironically, these Dalits see themselves not just as liberals but as defenders of a hyper-western modernity. They are happy to go back to the Liberalism of the empire and to the paternalistic Universalism for which that empire stood. To them, perhaps understandably, all of Indian tradition is inegalitarian, deeply ridden with caste-hierarchies and filthy. They celebrate India’s colonisation and celebrate the birthday of Macaulay, the author of Minutes on Education, who famously said ‘We must do our best to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, opinions, moral and intellect.’ This group claims that without colonisation the Hindu caste system would have remained fully entrenched with worsening rigidities. For them, colonial Liberalism is emancipatory. The worst thing done by the colonisers was to have arrived too late and left too early. Much of this is tongue in cheek, but their commitment to Liberalism is not all that shallow – they wish to enter the ranks of the bourgeois elites. They are free-marketeers because they believe that globalization opens up new opportunities for them and believe in a strong regime of individual rights because of its potential to liberate them from caste hierarchies. Since, for other reasons, this is also the view of a newly emergent and aspiring middle-class, classic Western Liberalism is alive in India and kicking.

I hope it is clear to the reader that Liberalism in India has a fairly fixed meaning. Not many varieties or shades of Liberalism are seen here. New Deal Liberalism and its most sophisticated articulations have not really left much of an impact on public discourse. In this regard, globalisation has not really helped matters. The prefix ‘neo-’ is redundant in India because ‘liberal’ continues to mean what it once meant. Since egalitarian forms of Liberalism have largely bypassed the wider public discourse, the Left still uses the word with denunciatory intent. Once in a seminar in 1990 in Delhi’s famous Nehru Memorial Library, I used the hyphenated term ‘left-liberal’ generating a pandemonium. Virtually everyone in the hall insisted that I could not go on unless I clarified whether I was left or liberal. Having said that, I must quickly add that a small gulf has since emerged between our political and academic worlds. Egalitarian Liberalism has entered academia, forcing some scholars to realise that much in contemporary Liberalism closely resembles the social democratic tradition. Old foes are now friendlier. Also, the resurgence of Hindu ultra-nationalism had a chastening effect. Many now feel that the space of Liberalism – under assault by ultra-nationalist forces – is, all said and done, worth protecting.

In a sense, the conceptual and normative vocabulary of this egalitarian
Liberalism is already entrenched in the Indian Constitution – which both embodies and tries to transcend liberal-democracy. An interesting but morally ambiguous dialectic is at play between discourses of liberal constitutionalism and Hindu nationalism. Hindu-majoritarians are both softened by it and provoked to alter it. Interestingly, a link exists between a certain kind of liberal Individualism and Hindu-majoritarianism, one that is exploited by majoritarians to serve their own ends. How so? By underscoring the worth of individual rights and disputing the need for community-specific minority rights, majoritarians aim to consolidate social and institutional biases in their favour. This sets up a tense contrariety between liberal constitutionalism and Individualism.

What made it possible to entrench the conceptual and normative vocabulary of a seemingly alien Liberalism, one that restricts the unseemly actions of both anti-liberal and anti-democratic elements, in the Indian Constitution? In my view, this is possible partly because at least since Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a distinct liberal trend began to grow in India, merging with a diffuse but persistent stream of something akin to but not the same as a liberal perspective.

I want to end with an elaboration of this remark. Just as we make a distinction between liberal values and the philosophical interpretations and theories of these values, just so, we need to distinguish between liberal values and values which in very interesting and subtle ways are different from but closely related to liberal values and can and do function in other cultures in much the same way as liberal values work in modern Western cultures, including those cultures influenced by it. We need to open up a space for a larger, extended family of moral and ethical perspectives of which Western Liberalism and its Eastern variants are members. This would help prevent the colonisation of concepts and values. It would also help prevent a mistake, made frequently, that whatever we value today – liberty, equality, justice, pluralism, toleration, rights, etc – is to be found only, or best articulated, in Western Liberalism.

In India, the encapsulation of several values by Liberalism is due in part to a form of cultural colonisation that continued after political independence. This colonisation did not destroy but dislocate traditions in India, altering cultural priorities. It pushed to the centre cultural elements that were hitherto marginal, only because this suited the colonising nation. It began to reflect the colonisers’ priorities. So, for example, group classification became much more dominant, eclipsing indigenous conceptions of the individual. India was said to possess just one individualist conception, i.e. the other-worldly individual, the renouncer. “This-worldly” individuals did not exist in India. Similarly, forms of worship and faith were
framed and incorporated as “religion”, a term virtually coined by Europeans within the local theological disputes of the 16th and 17th centuries. Indians were obliged to think of their faith as religion, to think of themselves as members of one exclusive religious community. Moreover, local intellectual traditions slipped into coma. A partial but deep forgetting of ancient traditions is not uncommon among modern Indian scholars. Some degree of natal alienation is common among formerly colonized elites: they are born into practices that prevent them from participating in and having a secure knowledge of their own historical and cultural traditions. Fortunately, this process is incomplete. Thanks largely to subordinate groups, some traditions are alive. For example, the multiple traditions of Bhakti introduced very interesting inversions of upper caste norms and values. In many places the Bhaktas rebelled against the widespread view that ‘in childhood a woman must be shielded by her father, in youth by her husband, in old age by her son – verily a woman doesn’t deserve freedom’. They proposed that true emancipation is possible only when man loses his masculinity and becomes feminine and the upper caste go to the outcastes for ethical and moral lessons.

The point I am making here is that very interesting ideas developed in India of social equality, individual choice and responsibility, and of freedoms other than religious freedom (implicit, for example, in demands for abolition of child marriage or demands for widow remarriage). Though tempting to read them as proto-liberal, it would be a mistake to do so, because we are talking here of very different worlds. This is why I said that when we begin to articulate this vocabulary, it will be different from – but part of – an extended family of conceptions, of which Western Liberalism is also a member.

China: Wang Shaoguang

My talk is divided into two parts. I will first look into Chinese Liberalism before 1949 and then move on to contemporary Chinese Liberalisms. I will start with the history of Liberalism in China. Yan Fu is probably the first person who brought the idea of Liberalism to China. He studied in Britain and translated three classics of Liberalism, namely Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations, Montesquieu’s The Spirit of the Laws and John Stuart Mill’s On Liberty, although the last one has not only been translated but also reinterpreted so the Chinese translation was titled On the Boundary between Individual and Collective Rights – not exactly what Mill had in mind.

As early as 1945, the Chinese philosopher He Lin pointed out that what was important for Yan Fu was that, in order for the country to become
wealthy and powerful, China had to allow its people freedom. Therefore, liberties were means rather than ends. Benjamin Schwartz published a book in 1964 entitled *In Search for Wealth and Power: Yan Fu and the West*, arguing a similar case.

Another person was Liang Qichao (1873-1929), who was also among the first group of Chinese intellectuals advocating freedom. And the meaning of freedom in China was very similar to the meaning in Japan before the 19th century. For example, the freedom of nation-states and social groups were much more important than individual freedom. (I think the term was loaned to China from Japan.) Liang soon became disappointed with Liberalism; he toured Europe in late 1918 and 1919, just before the end of World War I, and found many problems with Western countries. He was not impressed with what he saw and so became a Conservative.

Around the same time he became disappointed with the new cultural movement. Many young scholars who had studied in Europe or in the US began to return to China around the 1910s. They brought ideas of Liberalism into China – a kind of Golden Era of Chinese Liberalism – though the ideas did not last long. This was a time when many young people embraced liberal values, such as personal freedom, constitutionalism and the separation of powers. However, pretty soon scholars became divided into four intellectual camps.

First, we have some liberals who used to be liberal in the midst of the 1910s but finally converted to Communism. Secondly, we have Democratic Socialism, especially among those who studied in Britain (often at the London School of Economics – quite a number of students, including my former mentor at Peking University, were Harold Laski’s students). Thirdly, we have the so-called “New Liberalism”, very much inspired by John Dewey – many of its advocators were students who came from the US. They were different from the second group (the second group also included students who had come from Europe). Finally, we have the scholars who began, especially in the 1930s, by advocating Authoritarianism or Fascism. It is quite interesting that many of them had studied in the US. This was the time when the Nationalist Party absorbed a good deal of Fascist doctrine and practice.

Communism became quite popular – a popularity survey conducted at Beida at the end of 1923 showed Lenin ranked as first and President Wilson as second (although he could have been number one if that survey had been done before 1918). Democratic Liberalism had a few advocates, among which the most well-known and articulate were Zhang Junmai and Zhang Dongsun. So, as early as in the 1920s, Zhang Junmai was arguing that social justice and personal freedom are equally important as the pillars of a good
society. Already he had seen the tension between the two and wanted to work on some kind of a combination of both. Zhang Dongsun also believed that the ultimate goal of a free society was Socialism or Communism, but his version of Socialism or Communism was very different from the Communists’ version. He argued that politics should embrace Liberalism and democracy without proletarian dictatorship, and economics should advocate public ownership and planning.

New Liberalism, as I mentioned before, was mostly advocated by scholars who studied in the United States, heavily influenced by John Dewey. Among this group of scholars the most representative figures were Hu Shi (who also called “New Liberalism”, “Liberal Socialism”) and Fu Shinian. New Liberalism was “new” in the way it blended Liberalism and some elements of Socialism: it rejected Individualism and unregulated Capitalism and favoured the extension of freedom from the aristocracy to the capitalist and working classes. The difference between “Liberal Socialism” and Marxism was that the former opposed the idea of class struggle, revolution, and proletarian dictatorship. Neither Socialism without freedom nor freedom without Socialism were seen as ideal. Nevertheless, New Liberalism paid too much attention to civil liberties and political rights and inadequate attention to social justice and economic equity. As a result, the social base of New Liberalism was rather weak. In 1930, a number of scholars began to advocate dictatorship and there was a furious debate within the New Liberalism camp about the virtues of democracy and dictatorship. Some even thought Nazi Germany could provide a model for China to become strong.

Hayek once noted that, in the West, the label Liberalism was “hijacked” by liberal-minded democratic socialists. That was also the case in China. During the Republican period the label Liberalism was “hijacked” by many people. Most Chinese liberals at the time abandoned classical Liberalism. Instead, they shared an antipathy toward the market economy and private property rights, and a preference for a centrally planned, heavily regulated, egalitarian economic order. So they were mostly collectivists, rather than individualists. As far as intellectual sources are concerned, they did not cite in their writings John Locke, David Hume, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Lord Acton, the Federalist Papers, Montesquieu, Benjamin Constant or Tocqueville. Rather, their main source of intellectual inspiration was Rousseau. Their favourite contemporary thinkers were John Dewey and Harold Laski – not F. A. Hayek, whose 1944 publication attracted little attention amongst Chinese intellectuals (the only review made by Pan Guangdan was quite critical to Hayek’s view on Socialism).

In contemporary China, from 1949-1979 there was no Liberalism. The re-emergence of Liberalism I would date in the year of the not quite formal
publication of *On Freedom of Expression*, which is a kind of a wall paper written by a scholar named Hu Ping, a friend of mine. This paper was not published until 1986 and it reminds me very much of Mill’s writings. In the 1980s, while most Chinese intellectuals tended to call themselves either “Humanist Marxists” (to distinguish themselves from “Stalinist Marxists”) or “Democrats”, nobody wanted to associate themselves with the term “liberal”. It was not until the early 1990s that Liberalism finally came into fashion among intellectuals. I think that the golden years of contemporary Chinese Liberalism were from 1995 to 2002. From 2003 until now, things are pretty messy; the domination of Liberalism in ideological debate has faded.

I would like to talk about the ideological landscape in China in the past ten years or so. There are hundreds of schools of thought. In the year 2000 Liu Junning, who I think is the most consistent liberal in China, claimed: ‘Classical Liberalism now dominates China’s intellectual landscape. No other school of political thought enjoys greater popularity in the Chinese intellectual community’. It was probably true at that time but not anymore. Now, the political spectrum is wide and very complicated. On the one hand you have official ideology but, on the other, you have quite a number of Liberalisms: Liberalism, Libertarianism, political Liberalism, so-called “new Leftism”; and there is neo-Confucianism, neo-Legalism, neo-Daoism and Communitarianism.

Now let me introduce Chinese Libertarianism, which is very much under the influence of Hayek and the Austrian School of economics. If you go to a normal bookstore in a normal country, you would not find a book written by Hayek, but that is not the case in China. Go to any bookstore and you will find Hayek. Almost all of his books have been translated and have become very popular. The most significant representatives of this movement are Liu Junning, whom I mentioned before and Qiu Feng, who is a columnist. There is also a journal *Res Publica*, which was founded in 1994, and concentrates on classical Liberalism. The movement of Chinese Libertarianism postulates Individualism, private property ownership/privatization, the *laissez-faire* economic philosophy or trade liberalisation, minimum government intervention, equality of opportunities and constitutionalism. Some of them are aware of a tension between Liberalism and democracy, but believe that in any conflict Liberalism should prevail over democracy. After the global economic tsunami there are rescue plans everywhere, and in China you can see many libertarian scholars criticizing Western government market intervention.

Another school is political Liberalism. In the 1990s there was not a clear distinction between economic and political Liberalism. However, pretty soon they became divided because of the growing inequality in China. The
representatives of this school (among whom can be found Qin Hui, Li Shenzhi, Zhu Xueqin and Xu Youyu) have the South News Group publications, meaning that this school of thought dominates publications. Their key positions are: Individualism (they emphasize civil liberties and political rights, and some also support positive freedom rather than just negative freedom), equality of opportunity (some also support social welfare), rule of law, a stress on the importance of checks and balances in politics, and supporting market reform without endorsing laissez-faire economic philosophy.

The New Left are seen as the opponents of the liberals. New Left theorists get their name because they preferred to add “new” to their label as some say that “left” may be a dirty word now. New Left theorists think that even if some specific paths to Socialism have proved wrong, the core idea of Socialism can still be accepted. So the New Left tries to justify some socialist ideas from new perspectives that differ from the perspectives of traditional socialists. But, as the opponents of liberals, Chinese New Left theorists often endorse any plausible position to criticize Liberalism, including views taken from Marxism, Communitarianism and Chinese traditional thought. My own position includes extensive democracy (both political and socio-economic), equal freedom (both negative and positive) and an effective state.

So there are a few points of debate. For example, individual rights vs. collectivism; negative liberty vs. positive liberty (in matters of health, education, housing, human securities); liberty (equality of opportunity) vs. equality (equality of outcome and equality of probability); laissez-faire vs. the necessity of state intervention; liberty vs. democracy (who decides the ranking order of rights – the three generations of rights); liberal/constitutional democracy vs. participatory democracy; political tyranny (Locke) vs. social tyranny (J. S. Mill) and economic tyranny (Marx); and Universalism vs. the possibility of alternative modernities. There are also empirical questions, such as the sources of inequality, sources of corruption and sources of other socioeconomic problems China is now facing. The liberals, Communists and New Left have very different ideas of where these problems come from.

To summarise, it would be best to invite three representatives of the liberals and three from the New Left to dialogue. The debate in China does not merely import and advertise different foreign ideas, and China does not overuse the ‘neo’ prefix – so there is still plenty of room for Liberalism.
Debate

**Joao Carlos Espada:** It seems that in India, Japan and China, the word ‘Liberalism’ is not echo-phonic. I mean, it has a precise meaning. So my question would be – if I understood correctly what you have said – the main meaning of Liberalism in India, Japan and China is a 19th century classical Liberalism and, if that is so, is there such a big difference in the situation in your countries, or in your areas of the world, with western Europe and the United States?

**Rana Mitter:** Well, that would actually be a straight and simple question, so if we ask our panel to give answers. Does ‘Liberalism’ just mean 19th century ‘classical Liberalism’?

**Rajeev Bhargava:** I think I have made it very clear that it does and I also said that we need to make a distinction between the word 'liberal' and the conceptual, normative vocabulary which complicates the term ‘Liberalism’. While the word itself is used in politics in certain ways, the actual influence of Liberalism in the political world is very different. There is an interesting kind of distance, gap or schism within the term itself. So there are lots of similarities between the Indian, European and even American cases, but the word that does the job is ‘democracy’ or ‘social democracy’ or ‘secularism’. Not ‘Liberalism’ and not ‘liberal’.

**Rana Mitter:** Professor Koichiro, thank you for giving us the four point typology, but in this question is Liberalism in Japan really that 19th century classical Liberalism?

**Koichiro Matsuda:** It is true that socio-political literature in the 19th century has quite a strong influence on constructing the idea of liberty or Liberalism in modern Japan. Having said that, I think that when Japanese people talk about liberty or Liberalism, they partly-consciously or unconsciously depend on the different intellectual, or other, contexts, using sources in different ways. So I think that this kind of variety or diversity, when we are talking about liberty or Liberalism, is much more important when thinking of Liberalism in Japan.

**Wang Shaoguang:** I think that in China the old school rejects the idea of a classical Liberalism from the West before 1949. Only in the 1990s what I called the libertarian school perhaps resembles classical 19th century European Liberalism. But political Liberalism in today's China has very little to do with the 19th century European Liberalism.

**Chang:** I have two questions. The first is to our Indian colleague. Is the impression of Liberalism in India one in which all those notions of liberty are mostly similar, or are there differences that were adapted to some of the ideas? Because you mentioned that in India nationalism uses liberal ideas. Secondly, I think for modern China there is not enough respect for the dominant force. But you mentioned that all members of the New Left advocate Liberalism. For the clarity of the concept, you have to make a judgement.

**Rajeev Bhargava:** First of all I think we have to keep in mind that in India there is no local discourse or academic discourse on political philosophy. The greatest thought has come from political and social movements, such as Gandhi, who is a great destroyer of liberal-style politics because he brings the masses into politics (and I do not think he ever described himself as a liberal, in fact he discredited liberals). Gandhi brought the people into the picture and constructed a kind of popular will – or take Roy who describes himself as a ‘radical humanist’. These are people who are actually fighting the battle, the anti-colonial struggle.
These are the guys whose writings are read and this makes a huge difference. And I would not be able to do what was done by Professor Shaoguang for China; it would be impossible for me to do that. In my discourse on Liberalism I would not be able to look at Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and so on – I just have to look at public figures.

The other question that was raised was about how the Hindu nationalists use the liberal discourse. Let me give you an example: Jinar is the leading figure of the ethno-religious nationalists’ movement. But once he gets the state he announces that it will be secular, which means that there would not be a third religion, which is liberal. And he says ‘no citizen will be discriminated’ as long they cease to be Muslim, and so on. This is exactly what Advani says. He is the leading figure of a Hindu nationalist group and, frankly, his suggestions are in common with the discourse of the left in the French Revolution. Famously, the people in the French Revolution also said that the Jews will get all the rights as long as they cease to be Jews. They can get their rights as citizens as long as they think of themselves as individuals. So there is a dilemma that was a boost to certain groups. If individuals identify with the community (their own) they will not get any citizen rights, but if they cease to identify with their own community, they get the rights everybody gets. Now in this picture in which Liberalism (sort of) ties up with Republicanism, but without space for community specific rights or the articulation of community specific interests, the socially embedded inequalities are simply ignored, and that leads to a certain kind of majoritarianism. So that is the answer to your question.

Wang Shaoguang: Okay, I do not deny the contribution of the Revolution for introducing the idea of freedom and liberty into China but I could only do justice to the whole idea if I had more time to elaborate, which I do not. Secondly, about the dominance of Liberalism, I somehow confused the context; I talked about the frame of Liberalism - that is why I put the New Left into the family of Liberalism. But there is little dominance of Liberalism in China. In China, the term ‘Liberalism’ refers to Libertarianism as well as political Liberalism, not so much to the New Left. Therefore, there is no special dominance of Libertarianism or political Liberalism.

Q: My question is related to the connection with the 19th century western Liberalism. I think it is important to mention that the European world was becoming more liberal with the expansion of civil rights, but at the same time there was a diffusion of the so-called European civilization to the non-European world. The European understanding of civilization in a nutshell: economic governance, and those individuals or communities that did not endorse such rules were not being civilized. My question is how in the 19th century these intellectuals in China, Japan and India dealt with the notion of civilization? Did they try to reconcile it with their concept of Liberalism?

Q: I want to return to the dominance, the fading dominance, of Liberalism in China. My own experience is a little different and – although it probably is not worth all that much – I was there in 2002 and absolutely agree with you. Everybody said ‘we are all liberals now’. When I was there a few weeks ago I asked whether there had been any fading of this enthusiasm and, in a very small room, 30 people answered ‘No – on the contrary’. Now, that leads me to ask this: you have made it absolutely plain that by ‘liberal’ you do not mean ‘libertarian’ – you distinguished that. Still, you distinguish, within the broad family of Liberalism, the New Left from liberal. Now, what is the principal distinction that suggests to you a contrast between these two groups and the fading of the liberal? I take it that Liberalism as you understand it in China is what we would call ‘egalitarian Liberalism’, that it is not
market-dominated and it emphasises (to use the shorthand) both negative and positive rights. Now, what in the New Left rejects Liberalism, as understood in this egalitarian way? It saddens me to hear that Liberalism, so defined, is fading.

Samuel Brittan: In 1991 a very influential American author with a Japanese surname announced the end of history and the triumph of what I think the Americans believed to be their variant of Liberalism across the world. My question is – was that book influential and read? Did it create a big impact? And was it seen as “correct” or was it seen as inapplicable to these three countries?

Wang Shaoguang: Okay, first of all, I think that the debate about Liberalism has had a big impact on Chinese politics. I made a judgement that Liberalism no longer dominates by observing two website discussion boards. A few years back they were dominated by liberalists. Today they have become very diverse. What you said about “Chinese Liberalism” classified as “egalitarian Libertarianism” I do not agree with. Both Libertarianism and political Liberalism are not egalitarian Liberalism as we understand in the European or United States sense. They are very much closer to the 19th century concept. Especially, libertarian schools of thought are much closer to the 19th century, classical Liberalism.

Rana Mitter: Okay. But this question actually referred closely to Japan. Would Koichiro like to give us some thoughts on that?

Koichiro Matsuda: Okay, just one point. There is a quite well known scholar whose name is Fukuzawa and he wrote a book entitled General outline of civilisation. In that book he quoted Henri Bacon and also referred to John Stuart Mill and de Tocqueville as well. In that book he tried to separate the traditional terminology of the Japanese civilisation and bring in the new Western understanding of the term “civilisation”. Actually, his way of explaining civilisation in that sense was not so general or usual. I think the way that people talk about civilisation, again, is quite diversified.

Rana Mitter: And there is not too much of a link from Fukusawa to Fukuyama a hundred years later. Now more than a decade and a half has passed since Fukuyama’s publication. Was there an impact in Japan of that book in a way that was different from the clear impact that it had in Europe or America?

Koichiro Matsuda: Actually, it is true that it is well-read and referred to in many newspapers. But I do not know whether it has really made an impact on a political or social discourse, so I am not sure. And I have the impression that even if a lot of people refer to that book, the majority of those people have something negative, something against what Fukuyama wrote. That is my impression.

Wang Shaoguang: Just one word about the End of history? In China the book was translated into Chinese pretty soon, in the early 1990s. But now there is a new book and it has also been translated into Chinese. His new publication discredits his old one – everybody knows that.

Rajeev Bhargava: Francis Fukuyama has never been taken seriously, he is just rejected outright for a variety of reasons – partly because academia is very left-leading (there are shades of Marxists and post-modernists and other varieties of Left and they dominate). There is also something very strong which I would call not cultural nationalism but cultural pride.
And to think that there was some idea that what was developed largely in the West would actually bring about the end of history was quite ridiculous. I mean, maybe some people in the powerful elite – Bush or the liberals – read it and took it seriously, but most people did not read the book properly. I did not fully understand the question of civilisation but maybe the answer has some bearing on what you have asked. A lot of liberals, including Mill, actually thought civilisation was immature. It was like a child. And they saw religion purely as superstition – not a realm of symbolic meaning. So the view many European liberals had in the 19th century on Indian civilisation was that it needed a lot of improvements and that only liberals could actually lead the agency of the Empire. It is very interesting that the figure who actually spoke against them was Burke, who was seen as a liberal.

Rana Mitter: We can stretch the definitions perhaps. Could we see more hands?

Q: I have a question for the speaker on India. You mentioned at one point your desire to make Western Liberalism part of a larger family of traditions, and I sensed a certain silence when it came to articulating what, in the Indian case, the other family members would be. And I wonder whether there is some sort of deeper problem. In all the other discussions we contrasted Liberalism with some other ‘-ism’ – Liberalism versus Socialism, political Liberalism versus egalitarian Liberalism, etc. You are giving particularities to try to give them some family resemblance. To get into the discussion that we are having you make an abstracting move. So, is there some sort of phenomenon there in that project? The question relates to something just mentioned in passing but that you did not elaborate on, that in the Indian constitution you want not only to incorporate elements of Liberalism and democracy but also to transcend them. I am wondering whether in this question of particularity versus a universal type of discourse, the question of somehow transcending liberal democracies in their common Indian case with that transcendence aspect, bringing in some sort of tradition, would be on some cultural level legitimate or forbidden in the sort of discussion we are having now.

Q: In China nobody links themselves with liberalists because, traditionally, liberal means ‘a sin’, but there is a so-called “New Life” school which tries to transform this. The 1990s were dominated by the New Liberalism simply because they just wanted to reverse this reform. Nevertheless, I think you cannot say whether the liberals dominate or not.

Francis Chevenal: I have a question to all three speakers. I have got a sense that in your countries Liberalism is very much an imported concept, through translations, through studying in the West, etc. So the obvious question I have is: Were there proper traditions enforced or accelerated by these translations, that were nonetheless already there, present in your own traditions? Or was it really something that came to your traditions just in the 19th century, owning to these translations?

Dominic Burbidge: A question for Matsuda. You mentioned how in Japan the concept ‘liberal’ used for its translation the word jiyû, liberty, meaning non-restrictive indulgence. This seems to be quite a good description of negative liberty. I was wondering what you see in Western liberty that has been missed out in translation. What is it that seems to be unique in this western conception of liberty that is not captured in the Japanese translation?

Jacob Levy: I am still trying to get my head around what the political liberal concept dominant in China meant. I would have thought that the liberal position in China would
have ended up looking more like economic or market Liberalism just because of the boundaries of legitimate public argument. That is, we know that you can make public arguments in China about the range of economic questions. The things left off might have been the things that otherwise would have appeared to be a liberal argument. But if political Liberalism – as you are defining the dominant discourse – is something other than market Liberalism or Libertarianism, what could it be? It cannot be the defence of religious liberty, it cannot be federalism, it cannot be the defence of a multi-party system. Any of the things I associate with the political liberal or constitutional liberal tradition, I do not expect to find as dominant, publicly-debated intellectual trends in China. I am trying to be careful so as not to lead you into any uncomfortable corner, but I still cannot understand what the main themes of this thing is when it is not market Liberalism, yet is able to be legitimately debated, and has a distinctively liberal tradition.

Wang Shaoguang: We were talking about the dominance of political Liberalism, but not in the entirety of China. When I talk about the dominance of political Liberalism, I mean in the intellectual communities. So when you ask me whether there was a dominance of Liberalism in the late 1990s that was not only my judgement, but also their judgement. If you are a frequent visitor to some internet discussion rooms, you can see how the discussion was dominated by the issue of classical Liberalism. That is why I talk about the fate of dominance. Political Liberalism, in all the issues you mentioned, has been discussed and advocated in China even though many people have the impression that China is authoritarian with no room for discussion. In fact, everything is discussed in internet discussion rooms, in newspapers and in magazines. I think the question from Francis is quite interesting. I already mentioned that the debate about Liberalism in China appears to be a storm in a tea cup – mostly among small groups of Chinese intellectuals. If you do a public opinion survey, you will find there to be very little Liberalism. If you ask, ‘Do you support liberty?’ they say ‘yes.’ ‘Democracy?’ – ‘Yes.’ ‘Equality?’ – ‘Yes.’ But if you ask specific questions about each of these concepts, you would find very different observations. So that is why I think the idea is imported by the intellectual elites who have some relevance but not the relevance of a popular sort in China.

Koichiro Matsuda: I think I will try to answer both questions. I hope I do not come across as rude if I say things this way: I think that if someone asked me, ‘What is your culture?’ I would confess that, actually, I do not understand what my culture is. It is possible that when someone asks me what Japanese culture is I can, maybe, strategically answer, ‘Oh, this is Japanese culture.’ But it is a kind of discourse you can take advantage of. It is very difficult to answer in a way that suggests Japan had its own culture and then the Westerners came and something changed. This is too simple. And, also, regarding the second question – what my view is of western Liberalism – this is what these conferences are for.

One thing which we relate to Japanese thought is that using the term ‘-ism’ (Liberalism, Nationalism) was also a very big problem for 19th century intellectuals. For example, they translated the term ‘Liberalism’ to something called ‘diu-shugi’ and usually use ‘shugi’ for something that has ‘-ism’, but it is quite an ambiguous word and has a very weak tradition. It is not the kind of tradition conventional terms have, it was just coined at that time. Maybe there is something of a custom attitude that looks liberal, but to say that someone is a liberalist or not is a different matter, I think.

Rajeev Bhargava: I am sorry if I gave the impression that Liberalism has not influenced a lot of political institutions in India. I did not mean to give it, though one or two people might
have got that impression. So that is my first point. The other is that looking at a number of policies or constitutional articles (take, for example, intervention in the affairs of religion, recognition of specific rights or state regulation of the market, putting social justice as a very important part of the preamble to the constitution), one can ask: are they liberal or are they not? It depends on what you mean by liberal. For some people this is all liberal. On the other hand, for a lot of people this is not Liberalism, this is something else. And that is the point I have been making. For many people who were making this part of the constitution and then thinking about the policies flowing from it, they did not seem to think that this is something flowing from a package that I would call ‘Liberalism’. Part of it also has to do with the sequencing of how things are constitutionalised. I mean, in India, Liberalism and democracy are, in a sense, in people. So it is not that Liberalism came first and democracy came later – both came at the same time. And so it is easy to see that some of the things that you would think were part of Liberalism had really become part of the democratic discourse. That is why I said that there is no distinction with a kind of ecumenical conception of political Liberalism from which all these things will flow. It is a very narrow conceptualisation of political and economic Liberalism. And that is what Liberalism is, the rest is all different.

The other thing to ask is whether there has been a great amount of work done on this. Actually, the work on this is barely starting. There is not a whole lot of work done on alternative intellectual traditions. And ‘-ism’ is an alien thing even to modern cultures. Some mentioned that Liberalism was introduced in the 19th century. The word ‘Hinduism’ was not introduced in India till the 19th century, so even Hinduism is an invention of the 19th century. But take the Bhakti movement – there are many sources from which you can reconstruct our tradition and that is the point I have been making. And there are arguments to be made.
PART II: CORE THEMES OF LIBERALISM

Introduction: Michael Freeden

In Louis Hartz’s famous *The Liberal Tradition in America* we find this seemingly surprising sentence: ‘Surely, then, it is a remarkable force: this fixed, dogmatic Liberalism of a liberal way of life’ (p9). In Guido de Ruggiero’s equally celebrated *The History of European Liberalism*, he writes: ‘We are to-day so much accustomed to the idea of the Liberal State that we do not notice its paradoxical nature…The State, the organ of coercion *par excellence*, has become the highest expression of liberty’ (p353). Dogma and coercion: is that the same Liberalism that has produced the enticing cocktail of voluntarism, choice, agency, self-development and open-mindedness? Indeed it is, nor does that condemn it as illiberal: no Liberalism is immune to elements of coercion and dogma; otherwise it would cease to be a robust political creed. Like any political theory or ideology, Liberalism possesses red lines it will not cross and non-negotiable principles over which it will not bargain: human rights, the primacy of liberty, the sanctity of constitutional arrangements.

But that extraordinary complexity that we blithely call Liberalism – as if the name itself sufficed – requires very careful consideration. It is now increasingly, and rightly, common to assert that there is no one thing called Liberalism; there are, instead, only Liberalisms under a family-resemblance umbrella. But that commonplace about the contents of liberal beliefs is insufficiently revealing as a starting point for a comparative discussion. The more fundamental question is: which of the various methods for investigating Liberalism is most conducive to the comparative perspective we are seeking in this conference? When we enquire into Liberalism, how does our chosen approach determine what it is that we then identify as Liberalism? The familiar argument among political theorists and philosophers, that Liberalism is a set of universal claims about the human capacity for rationality, individuality, self-development and above all liberty could easily become – as it has become in much analytical philosophy –
fundamentally non-comparative. It all too often succumbs to locking each of these concepts into a single meaning that not only hampers the emergence of a plurality of Liberalisms, but mischievously employs the language of empiricism (‘Liberalism is’; ‘liberals maintain’) to disguise its own idealized language of normativity.

Throughout the history of investigating Liberalism, particularly when undertaken by self-styled liberals themselves, two particular models have been set up, each with different globalizing tendencies: the one anchors Liberalism in an abstract ethical construction of optimal human conduct with immediate universal rational appeal – from social contract theory through psychological approaches to human flourishing to original positions under veils of ignorance; the other model identifies Liberalism with a narrative about the growth of civilization that inexorably spreads not through the magic of timeless logic and stipulative morality, but through spatial and temporal quasi-teleological contagion and through cultural contestation and ultimate triumph. Both combine ethical and ideological assertions; both are dogmatic, both aspire to clear characterizations of what Liberalism is. The first – inspired by recent pronouncements in ethical and analytical political philosophy, especially in North America – has flooded academic life over the past 30 years, although it emanates in the main from an alternative, mythical and unitary, liberal world to the one occupied by de Ruggiero and Hartz. The second – with its Millite and Darwinian faith in human progress – has dominated a developmental strand of Liberalism that measures its success through promoting a secular gospel of humanity aimed at emancipating individuals and peoples who are at earlier stages of advancement. It rejects the illusion of state neutrality and regards the state as the remover of hindrances, the underpinner of harmony, the elicitor of individual potential and the facilitator of personal visions.

But conceiving of Liberalism either as a philosophical-ethical moment or as an unstoppable historical force are not the most helpful ways of engaging in proper comparison; not the least because neither stops to ask what the discourses and practices we tend to call liberal actually are and of what are they constituted, a question that we need to ask long before we mount the ethical or ideological barricades, equipped with a grand sense of mission concerning what Liberalism should be. Here another method might reveal rather different constructs masquerading as, or contending for, the title ‘liberal’. When we apply a ‘micro’ approach to liberal thinking, we will find that it is indeed organized around core concepts, core not in the sense of being essentialist but of being centrally in evidence – historically and discursively – in all major expressions of liberal thinking. Four of those have been chosen for today’s sessions: Individualism, tolerance, markets and
Universalism. They are, of course, not the only liberal core concepts we could have discussed: liberty, progress, constrained and accountable power, and sociability-cum-mutuality, are other prime candidates.

The point is that Liberalism inevitably emerges as a mass of contradictions and partial incompatibilities. That is not something we should necessarily bemoan or seek to overcome: the structural flexibility of Liberalism’s conceptual architecture mirrors its pursuit of tolerance, but its inescapable ‘dogmatism’ limits that flexibility to revolving around constraining conceptual nodes. The reason for that is clear: each of those core concepts rotates through a range of meanings and not all of those meanings, nor all of the conceptual configurations they create together, remain within the confines of what we would normally consider to be Liberalism. But some version of each core concept is necessary for a reasonably full liberal profile to obtain, rather than just stray liberal fragments, and some conceptual combinations may not be cacophonous but euphonic. The crucial issues in the analysis of Liberalism are therefore dual: First, what are the semantic boundaries of its core concepts that liberals can put up with, before their creed mutates into something else? Second, it is not just the presence or absence of a core concept that determines the profile of Liberalism. The question is rather: what is the relative weight of each core concept within the liberal conceptual cluster – that is, the distribution of significance that each concept can attract. When a single core liberal concept expands to take up all available space, the delicate and complex internal balance of Liberalism is demolished; we inevitably have illiberalism if one core concept dominates all the rest. For example, if we run with markets alone – with the privatization of exchange relationships or the establishing of a vested sphere of civil society – at the expense of individual development or liberty as reflective choice, the claim for membership of the liberal family begins to falter. Tolerance, as Rousseau understood so well, is itself a dogma (of his civil religion) that unequivocally required the suppression of intolerance. ‘We must be absolutely intolerant about intolerance’ says Rousseau, no liberal himself but that is a very liberal statement. Thus liberal tolerance would stop at the gates of embracing abuses of human rights. Liberal Universalism – we may find out later today – does not coexist happily with some forms of liberal diversity and pluralism. Individualism, taken to an extreme, produces a social atomism that undermines liberal humanism and sociability.

In sum, just as a single swallow does not make a summer, the sighting of a single feature of Liberalism does not make it Liberalism, and the maximization of any one liberal value threatens the optimization of the rest, or even subverts their more normal survival at sub-optimal levels. It is only
through the continuous flexible interplay between core liberal concepts that we can appreciate the intricacy of liberal argument as well as its limits. These concepts are never completely determinate, though both ethicists and ideologists would dearly like to decontest their contested meanings as far as they can. Here liberal coercion resurfaces. In Rawls’s own telling words, ‘If we feel coerced, it may be because, when we reflect on the matter at hand, values, principles, and standards are so formulated and arranged that they are freely recognized as ones we do, or should, accept’ (Political Liberalism, p45). That is not an ethics of free choice; it is one of rational choice that invalidates other choices as bad or erroneous – another version of the famed dictates of reason. Liberal ideologists, too, have insisted that the state undertake compulsory activities without which individual rights cannot be safeguarded, nor individual welfare enabled. Appeals to reason or to fellow-feeling as well as strong and passionate uses of rhetoric are always the application of persuasive force, always a competition over the control of political language – and Liberalism is no stranger to any of those.

But what the formulators of liberal thought do is not the same as what we – the interpreters of liberal thought – are required to do professionally, namely, to show how the variants of that rich liberal language emerge. Furthermore, it is only through our sensitivity to the multiple – and occasionally messy – meanings carried by core liberal ideas that we can employ that insight beneficially in the service of comparison. Competing dogmas and even forms of ideational coercion come naturally to all types of political thinking – that is one reason that makes such thinking political – and it is quite normal for Liberalism too to display those features in a mild form. However, to adopt an uncompromising ethical or ideological mode in rooting for one kind of Liberalism, or one approach to it, whatever that may be, would be to destroy the rationale of comparison as well as to emaciate Liberalism itself. Comparison is not a tagged-on extra to the study of political thought; it derives directly from the appreciation that the values signified by political words will always remain polysemic, and from the understanding that neither time, nor space, nor conceptual architecture can hold the meaning of Liberalism constant. The legitimate rearrangements of liberal permutations have little to do with any intrinsic logic of liberal argument. Rather, they have almost everything to do with the social and cultural adjustments that need to be performed, time and time again, when liberals try to claim their place in the sun in very different climates.
3. Individualism

Steven Lukes

The organizers have suggested that ‘Individualism’ is one of the key concepts essential to Liberalism – that it is ‘central to all forms of Liberalism’, so that a non-individualist Liberalism would not be Liberalism. This does look plausible. ‘Collectivist Liberalism’ and ‘communist Liberalism’ sound oxymoronic – though ‘liberal communism’ used to make sense, meaning Euro-Communists who had abandoned various aspects of mainline Marxism incompatible with a liberal politics. ‘Communitarian Liberalism’ sounds plausible, but only because the so-called communitarian critics of Liberalism were really liberals. The communitarians were not anti-liberal; they wanted to enrich or broaden or deepen Liberalism. In the debates of the 1970s and 1980s between liberals and their communitarian critics, such as Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel and Will Kymlicka, the latter basically argued for a liberal politics that allowed for multicultural recognition of group or collective identities, or wanted to promote civic republican virtues, or saw culture as providing a context for meaningful individual choice.

The idea that Individualism is a key concept that Liberalism requires looks plausible. But there are problems with this. First, I would like to talk about words for a moment. ‘Individualism’ has historically had different meanings in different languages, just as ‘Liberalism’ does. When I wrote my book Individualism, I was struck by the different semantic fields of this word and its apparent equivalents in different national cultural contexts. For instance, compare the French view of Individualisme, with the American celebratory meaning of Individualism (as in ‘rugged Individualism’). The definition in the Académie Francaise dictionary of ‘Individualisme’ was, I discovered, ‘placing the interests of the individual above that of society.’ And here is an interesting quote from Pierre Rosanvallon, which exemplifies the distinctively French way of using this word. He wrote that: ‘The progress of individualism, the erosion of democratic vitality, the decline of civic sense,
the same pessimistic and nostalgic diagnosis has reappeared everywhere. ‘Individualisme’ is clearly not perceived as a good thing. ‘Individualisme’, in the French language, has this and other pejorative connotations. Recall Tocqueville, who wrote in *Democracy in America*, that ‘Individualism’ is a new word, to which a new phenomenon had given rise. The new phenomenon was: withdrawal from the public sphere, the retreat into the private circle of family and friends which was eroding the civic spirit.

It is questionable whether Individualism is indeed a concept. Pierre Rosanvallon would say that it is a cacophonic concept. Let’s take this suggestion that such concepts exist. What is a cacophonic concept? Cacophony occurs when unrelated sounds blare out together, and the effect is quite unpleasant, and it is therefore something we would like to stop. So what Pierre seemed to be saying is that he wants us, firstly, to stop making and listening to such noise, and secondly, that the noise of cacophonic concepts has a political function, but we should leave this noise making to the politicians, and devote ourselves to analysing the individual sounds.

So what are we to say about Individualism? Well, first, the obvious thing to mention is that Individualism is an ‘-ism’. And ‘-isms’ are 19th century constructions. If you read the Encyclopédie, or Dr. Johnson’s dictionary, you will not find ‘-isms’.

The second thing is that, all across the world, it has come to signify a recognizable cluster of ideas, attitudes, dispositions and doctrines, and is thus not cacophonic. On the contrary, I claim that the last half century has seen a converging world-wide picture of a set of doctrines and ideas viewed as naturally related and mutually interdependent. ‘Individualism’ thus understood names a cluster of ideas propagated over the last half century by libertarian or neo-liberal intellectuals, with unequalled and compelling rhetoric, evangelical vigour and a sense of historical mission, in the context of the gradual depletion of the meaning of ‘Socialism’, so that by now we no longer have any clear sense of what that word can mean.

What, then, is this apparently harmonious, as opposed to cacophonic set of ideas, widely labelled across the globe as ‘Individualism’? The overall idea is that in different domains – economic, political, legal, religious, methodological, and so on – the individual is taken to be primary; and collectivities (groups, institutions or impersonal forces) are taken to be secondary, derivative, fictional or reducible to individuals and their interactions. Just as Max Weber thought that there are elective affinities between Protestantism and the spirit of Utilitarianism, the idea is that ‘Individualism’ captures a coherent complex of elements uniquely associated with Liberalism.

So, for example, between Liberalism and so-called methodological
Individualism, there is somehow an indissoluble link, so that if we adhere to Liberalism we have to be methodological individualists, reducing and explaining everything social to individuals. This long-standing debate has generated an extraordinary amount of passion. Karl Popper thought that if you were not a methodological individualist you were wicked, and on a dangerous path to dangerous opinions. The kernel of this idea of methodological Individualism is that explanations of social phenomena and processes are only adequate or “rock-bottom” if couched wholly in terms of interacting individuals.

So, methodological Individualism is supposedly inseparable from the defence of the values that are central to Liberalism. Similarly, other connections are supposed to hold between these ideas, doctrines and different positions, held together by this term. For instance, the values that are central to Liberalism are supposedly threatened by various kinds of holistic or non-individualistic thinking – for instance ontological holism, attributing some kind of reality to groups, collectivites, or social units of various kinds. And liberal values are supposedly threatened if we believe in collective goods, or collective goals, or if we speak of collective identities, or if we think we can attribute rights to groups. Furthermore, if committed to liberal values, we are supposed to be inseparably committed to the superiority, even indispensability, of market processes throughout the range of human activity, and indeed not just in the economy but in the use of market analogies beyond the economy.

By contrast, I argue that this cluster is actually an ideological and culturally specific package. Therefore, it is a big mistake to think that Individualism, thus understood, is a key concept of Liberalism. I claim that this package was put together in Austria most eloquently by Ludwig von Mises, who wrote:

> All varieties of collectivist creeds are united in their implacable hostility to the fundamental political institutions of the liberal system: majority rule, toleration of dissenting views, freedom of thought, speech and press, equality of all men under the law.

There was, he wrote, a

> struggle between individualism on the one hand and a multitude of collectivist sects on the other hand whose mutual hatred and hostility is no less ferocious than their abomination of the liberal system... A substitution of collectivism for Liberalism would result in endless bloody fighting.
The idea of these natural and inseparable interconnections between ideas was most powerfully propagated by Friedrich von Hayek. Hayek advocated what he called ‘true’, as opposed to ‘false’, Individualism – the latter deriving from the ‘mirage of social justice’, the supposed illusion that social justice makes sense, and the rationalist or ‘scientistic’ illusion that ‘social engineering’ could bring it about. ‘True’ Individualism would protect us from venturing down the ‘road to serfdom’ and from being tempted to succumb to the ‘fatal conceit’ of Socialism.

For Hayek, all talk of ‘social justice’ was both meaningless and dangerous, involving the ‘anthropomorphism or personification of society,’ for ‘services can have value only to particular people’ (or an organization), and ‘any particular service will have very different values for different members of the same society. To regard them differently is to treat society not as a spontaneous order of free men but as an organization whose members are all made to serve a single hierarchy of ends’. This would necessarily be a totalitarian society in which personal freedom would be absent. And Mrs. Thatcher gave popular expression to this view when she famously said that ‘there is no such thing as society’. The idea, in short, was that Individualism is a package of true theories which, if we follow them, will protect us from ideology, and, specifically, from the dangers of Socialism. Samuel Brittan made this claim clearly in the 1980s, writing that

*In every generation freedom is threatened by those who regard the individual person as inferior to some supposed collective whole… [T]he intellectual battle between the individualist and the collectivist is never won, but it remains important to fight it.*

My claim, by contrast, is that there are essential individualist values that lie at the heart of Liberalism. So I favour deconstructing this package. Following Professor Dworkin, I identify two separate strands of Liberalism. There is the equalitarian idea that it matters equally how every individual life goes. And the second strand is the anti-authoritarian idea that every life is best lived from the inside, and how well it goes is to be judged by the actor’s own point of view (by what Bernard Williams calls ‘internal reasons’). And there are various concepts that are closely attached to these two very abstract ideas: the idea of individual dignity, the idea that there is a sphere of privacy or non-interference, the idea of autonomy involving critical reflectiveness, the idea of self-development or individuality. And all of this is tied up together. That is how I think Liberalism relates to Individualism.

I come to two all-too-brief conclusions. First, concerning the ideological package, I claim that defending and explaining the conditions under which
these individualist values can be realized requires the clear rejection of some of those doctrines that I alluded to earlier, and the questioning of others. In particular, it requires a rejection of methodological Individualism and a healthy scepticism about markets in the allocation of goods and services.

The second conclusion is to suggest that we need to take up a matter Rajeev Bhargava raised yesterday. For the core values of Liberalism to be realised in alternative, culturally diverse ways we need to address the challenge of allowing for cultural contexts that are less atomistically conceived than in our Western liberal societies.

Carol Horton

I would like to shift the course of discussion a bit by looking at Liberalism in a comparative context, focusing on the nature of Individualism in the US. Since the 1980s, American political culture has been dominated by a variant of the atomistic Individualism described by Professor Lukes. This, however, is not the only model of Individualism that has been historically important in American society. There has been at least one longstanding alternative, which has been recently revitalised by the election of President Obama. It is a very different conception, both of Individualism and the individual’s role in society.

In recent decades, the dominant conception of Individualism in the US has championed what I would agree with Professor Lukes to be an unrealistic idea of socially deracinated individuals. Philosophically, this ties into a longer tradition that sees the pursuit of individual preferences as the raison d’être of American democracy. Particularly, since the 1980s, this approach to Individualism has been embedded in a cultural perspective that values wealth above all else. To put it bluntly: the dominant conception of American Individualism of late has been all about getting rich without scruple.

Structurally, this conception of Individualism has been tied to a growing rift between the wealthy and the rest of society. At the same time, the strength and security of the middle class has eroded tremendously. While this bifurcation of American society has certainly been tied into global economic developments, it has been exacerbated by government policies that helped to balloon the recently burst financial bubble, erode progressive taxation, hurt labour unions, block healthcare reforms, reduce the real value of the minimum wage, and so on.

Culturally, the US has shifted to what has been termed the “winner-takes-all-society”. In terms of Individualism, this tends to cause people who have not been successful in gaining wealth to feel that they are “losers.” This
economically driven, “winner” vs. “loser” mentality has impoverished American culture because the full variety of worthwhile human pursuits is not given adequate respect.

However, there is an alternative tradition of American Liberalism, which my mentor the late J. David Greenstone traced back to Abraham Lincoln. In this alternative view the key goal of American Liberalism with respect to Individualism is fostering healthy individual development. From this perspective, healthy development necessarily encompasses the full range of human pursuits because of the natural diversity of individuals. Not simply business and commerce, but excellence in education, athletics, art, child-rearing, craftsmanship, charitable work, and many other pursuits are all deemed worthy of profound respect.

Correspondingly, the goal of American democracy is not simply to satisfy individual preferences but, rather, to create a society in which every individual has the opportunity to develop his or her talents to the full. From this alternative perspective, the development of such a diverse array of individual capacities fuels the vitality of American democracy. Structurally, this conception of Individualism as healthy human development has historically been tied to more egalitarian politics. This is due to an insistence that it is necessary to consider what social conditions allow the development of such a full range of activities, making them economically viable in a very practical sense.

Historically, race has played a key role in discrediting what are commonly called “progressive” or “liberal” politics in the US (i.e., left-of-centre positions committed to developing a more egalitarian society). Since the late 1960s, American racial politics has been central in discrediting such politics by promoting widespread negativity toward the public sector and accepting growing socio-economic divisions. The common cultural perception that poverty can be equated with Black people – and that Blacks can in turn be equated with what is widely perceived as a violent and immoral ghetto culture – has undergirded a common perception that egalitarian policies funnel tax dollars away from hard-working and increasingly economically stressed “real” Americans, sending public monies down a racial sinkhole where they do no good whatsoever. This belief has been key in advancing a broad based anti-tax movement, support for unprecedented growth in the penal system and, indeed, suspicion of all social welfare policies. Essentially, race has been central in promoting a politics that has exacerbated economic divisions between rich and poor while eroding the middle class. In this sense, race is directly tied to the ascendance of the dominant conception of atomized Individualism that worships an unrealistic ideal of untrammelled market forces.
President Obama embodies a new and unprecedented racial paradigm that challenges both the conservative right-to-centre and the progressive left-to-centre conceptions of race that have dominated American culture since the late 1960s. By changing the politics of race, Obama simultaneously opens up new opportunities for changing dominant conceptions of Individualism, equality, and American citizenship.

The new racial paradigm represented by Obama embodies the obvious complexity of his own racial status. During the run-up to the 2008 election, there was significant questioning regarding whether he was “too Black” to win – or, alternatively, “not Black enough” to understand the needs of American minority communities. Eventually, the American public by and large accepted Obama as Black. However, the fact that he had a White mother, an African father, a Buddhist sister, and a Hawaiian background had become well known. To have a political leader with such a complex racial background that was so widely discussed was a first in American history. Obama is simultaneously Black and White, American and international, Christian and cosmopolitan, native-born but sharing in the American immigrant experience. He is representative of the new multicultural, multiracial America that could only have emerged since the Civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Further, Obama has been very deliberate and very public about his decision to embrace an African-American identity. He claims both his Blackness and his Americanness proudly – but not defensively or in an exclusionary way. His Blackness, as he evokes it politically, reminds us of the best of the Black experience in America. It points to the assertion of hope in the face of oppression, the commitment to democracy despite the experience of discrimination, and a vision of unity that transcends diversity. For those who embrace this vision, he reminds us of the strength of the Civil Rights movement and its commitment to a better America, not just for African-Americans but for the entire society.

Significantly, Obama is willing and able to address contemporary problems in the African-American community, such as the breakdown of the black family and the pathologies of ghetto culture. These issues have been taboo in terms of left-liberal political discourse in the US since the furore surrounding the Moynihan report of the mid-1960s. This left-of-centre refusal to grapple honestly with issues affecting the black poor left a political vacuum that in recent decades has been happily filled by reactionary voices that present a harshly negative and one-dimensional portrayal of the minority poor.

Obama, however, also demonstrates that the common equation between Blackness and ghetto poverty is simply inaccurate. The Obama family
proudly – and obviously – embodies very middle class values such as family, faith, education, work, and personal responsibility. They have been upwardly mobile and extremely successful. They represent a part of the African-American community that has remained culturally invisible, even as it has grown in power and importance.

The racial paradigm Obama embodies is embedded in a larger vision of American identity. In his books, speeches, and policies, the clear message is that every citizen is both an individual and part of a collective democratic experiment. American Individualism is dedicated to developing the different talents and capacities of all citizens in order to build the democratic strength and vitality of the nation. Of course, these understandings of race, Individualism, and democracy are connected by the belief that neither race nor any other equivalent social category should pose a barrier to healthy individual development. To the extent that such barriers remain, American democracy suffers.

This vision of a society in which every individual truly has the opportunity to realise his or her best capabilities revives the longstanding but recently dormant understanding that a healthy democracy requires a reasonable degree of material equity: a strong middle class, viable routes out of poverty, access to health care, good education, and so on. Obama Administration proposals such as progressive tax, healthcare, and education reform, as well as greater support for labour unions and anti-discrimination law offer concrete means by which American society could potentially move once again in a more egalitarian direction. Because they are tied to a larger vision of American Individualism and democracy, these policy proposals culturally represent more than simply materialist values. They do not embrace a redistribution of wealth for its own sake. Rather, they are aimed at creating a mutually beneficial relationship between healthy individual development and a robust, dynamic democracy.

This connection between equalitarian policies and a larger vision of liberal values is extremely important. This is particularly true because American left-of-centre politics have (until now) been very reluctant to embrace any sort of non-materialist values since the cultural upheavals of the 1960s. Once again, this refusal to engage with ethical questions created a cultural vacuum that more reactionary forces (particularly on the religious Right) have been more than happy to fill. By championing a vision of American Liberalism that is both new – particularly in terms of race – and connected to past tradition, Obama is breathing a new sense of life into American politics.

Obama’s decision to be sworn in as President using the same Bible as Abraham Lincoln is a potent symbol of how he is connecting a new
experience of race with the most profound political aspirations of the nation. It is a reminder that the Black story is the American story: not an anomaly, a politically correct footnote, or an unmentionable embarrassment. In terms of liberal politics, Obama’s election moves us in a direction where we see how it is possible to celebrate unity while recognizing and respecting diversity. We can see ourselves as a part of a common democratic project, in which we share certain fundamental values that transcend our individual differences. This does not mean we have to reject the obvious reality that those differences remain important and need to be recognised, both politically and culturally. On the contrary, it is possible to understand egalitarian politics as strengthening the nation by enhancing individual opportunity for all. In order for this understanding to become culturally robust, however, progressive Democrats must openly champion their best understanding of the individual and societal values that strengthen American democracy. There needs to be a much more explicit debate and discussion of such progressive, but non-materialist values because if they are not promoted culturally, they simply remain dormant or disappear from meaningful social reality.

Obama’s election has given American left-of-centre politics a new opening and opportunity. So far, however, it remains nothing more than that. The problems confronting American Liberalism are extremely deep. Changing course and moving toward a newly progressive understanding of Individualism and liberal democracy will require shaking off the self-indulgence, apathy, and cynicism that has dominated much of American political culture in recent years. If nothing else, however, the fact that Obama’s election struck such a deep chord among so many citizens proves that a strong alternative current of American liberal Individualism remains very much alive in the nation’s political culture.

**Justine Lacroix**

Steven Lukes’ main objective is to argue that Individualism – far from being a protective bulwark against the dangers of ideological thinking – is in itself an ideological construct, since Individualism’s core values have been harnessed to various doctrines that embody libertarian thinking and promote market-favouring policies. More precisely, Professor Lukes’ main point against the so-called Cold-War, or Neo-Liberals, is that there is no logical connection between Liberalism on the one hand as a set of first-order norms that comprise an individualist ideal (i.e. the security of the individual, the primary importance of individual interests) and, on the other hand, Liberalism as a second-order individualist metaphysic that proposes a
general theory about the ontological methodological and axiological priority of the individual over society.

I totally agree with him that there is no such easy connection between Individualism as an ideal on the one hand and theoretical or methodological Individualism on the other hand. However – and since the aim of this session is to focus on some key concepts – it is important to discriminate between those that are central to all forms of Liberalism and others that are “features”, which have made a particular impact in some liberal languages and practices.

My first question or comment leads me to wonder what is left of Individualism in your conception of political Liberalism. There seems to be a contrast between your initial attempt to define Individualism in its fullness, as you did in your seminal book, in which you singled out the four unit-ideas of Individualism, i.e. respect for human dignity, autonomy, privacy and self-development; and this presentation, in which you seem almost reluctant to consider Individualism as a key concept essential to Liberalism. To be sure, you concede that it does look ‘plausible’ that a non-individualist Liberalism would not be Liberalism – yet ‘plausible’ is quite an understatement for those of us who, maybe naïvely, were thinking that the primacy of the individual was one of the pillars, if not the pillar, of Liberalism.

I understand that you want to distance yourself as much as possible from the Neo-Liberals. However, it is one thing to say that Individualism has been distorted ideologically to serve some libertarian purposes and it is another thing to say that the primacy of the individual is in itself an ideological construct. It remains unclear whether you would support only the former claim or also the latter. Put differently, would you go as far as Colin Bird, who in his book *The Myth of Liberal Individualism* claims that it makes no sense to clarify liberal values, as individualist (rather than collectivist) in the first instance, and who ends up by claiming the unhelpfulness of the dominant idiom of Individualism and even the obsolescence of the label Liberal Individualism?

Again, it is one thing to say that Liberalism should not to be identified with an atomistic model of human conduct; it is one thing to say that there is no single or eternal view of the relation between the individual and the society, that the liberal distinction between the public sphere and the private sphere is neither permanent nor unalterable since, in Judith Shklar’s words, ‘the important point for Liberalism is not so much WHERE the line is drawn, as it be drawn, and that it must under no circumstance be ignored or forgotten’; yet it is another thing to claim that one should escape the Individualist/Collectivist dichotomy altogether, as if it were possible to
conceive of political Liberalism without a firm commitment to Individualism seen in its fullness, i.e. including the four basic elements that you identified some thirty years ago.

The point I want to make is that Individualism is too serious a thing to be abandoned to the libertarians. Liberals, including those from the political Left, should not feel uncomfortable using this label in a much more offensive way, since they can argue that the Neo-Liberal approach is an improper interpretation of Individualism and that the liberal commitment to individuality has resources that can be opposed to the Libertarianism of economic conservatives. This commitment, for instance, can be reformulated (as Jeremy Waldron did with the concept of liberty) as a commitment to equal Individualism, a principle that justifies social policies, which do not infringe on the primacy of the individual, as they aim at creating the necessary conditions for the full development of individuality by all the people concerned. In this regard, your approach to Individualism in this presentation appears to me a little bit defensive and, again, contrasting most of your earlier writings.

This leads me to my second question or comment: You have convincingly argued that, over the last half century, Individualism has come to encapsulate a cluster of ideas propagated by the Libertarians or Neo-Liberals. And yet, I wonder if your presentation, which focuses almost exclusively on this Neo-Liberal defence of Individualism, does not overlook the fact that attacks on Individualism have also become highly influential recently. In the last two or three decades, these anti-Individualist discourses have typically directed their critiques at the Individualism of personal rights. Here, I would like to zoom in on the French case, since the aim of this conference is also to analyse how the usage of concepts differs across countries. In this country a number of important theorists have insistently challenged Individualism and have directed their critiques at the so-called “human rights politics” (la politique des droits de l’homme). In this respect, Jacques Rancière, in his small book The Hatred of Democracy, has shown to what extent the avowed liberal views held by some French intellectuals since the 1980s pertained, in fact, to a double-edged doctrine. Behind the reverent homage paid to the Enlightenment and the Anglo-American tradition of liberal democracy, the old and typically French denunciation of the Individualist Revolution tears up the social fabric.

What surprises me are not so much these direct attacks against the primacy of human rights from conservatives, but the diffuse sense of unease and doubt one can observe on the part of liberals themselves, including those coming from the political Left. Since you have chosen not to address the issue of rights in your presentation, I wonder if this omission is
deliberate; and if you consider that it would be possible to defend a full conception of democratic individuality without a parallel and equally strong commitment to rights-based Individualism?

**Debate**

**Adam Swift:** On your list of abstract values that characterise Liberalism you included autonomy. It looks as though liberals have in some way or other a notion of individual autonomy, but you then said this way of thinking about liberal values might allow them to think of societies as liberal in very different cultural contexts, in less atomised societies and so on. To what extent is the view of the well-being of the individual that puts autonomy central in fact compatible with pluralism?

**Pierre Rosanvallon:** The word Individualism was coined in French by Saint-Simon in 1825 and at that moment the word was a synonym of selfishness and atomism, having a sociological and moral dimension. This is why in the early 30s of the 19th century Lamennais said “Individualism” is the ugliest word in the French language. The term “Socialism” was coined by Pierre Leroux just a few years later as a contrary to Individualism. At that moment Socialism had absolutely no political or economic connotations, but only moral and sociological ones. At the end of the century most of the republicans of the Third Republic were very aware of the necessity to develop politics of human rights but considered the term Individualism improper because of its history. So they felt compelled to invent a new term. The word that was coined by Charles Renouvier, the official philosopher of the Third Republic and a very liberal man, was Personalism, implying respect and the necessity to go towards a politics of individual rights but not Individualism in the selfish and atomistic sense of the term. Unfortunately, in the 19th and 20th centuries the word Personalism gained a Christian accent through people like Emmanuel Mounier. In our days there are a lot of critics of Individualism in French political philosophy, but their main target is not individual rights in itself, instead they refuse multiculturalism. To them individual rights mean a different vision of civility, a different vision of personal life; to them Republicanism in the French sense means the kind of common, mandatory civility – the real target of their critique is multiculturalism.

**Steven Lukes:** In 1819 Joseph de Maistre used the term in a negative way, political Protestantism – a way which was socially disruptive and dangerous.

**Tony Curzon Price:** About the possibility of reintroducing to Liberalism a notion of collective freedom: It seems to me that in the two cores Professor Lukes ended up with, ‘everyone matters’, which tends to be associated with equality and justice, and ‘every life lived from the inside’, which tends to be associated with the individual, there is a sense in which already in that division there is a disappearance of an autonomous political realm. I wonder whether one can, within Liberalism, return to someone like Benjamin Constant and *De la liberté des anciens comparée à celle des modernes*, in which the ‘liberté des anciens’ is very much about the freedom of a collective to determine itself. If we take the political in terms of that collective freedom then we bring back all the sense of the potential in the political rather than the Neo-Liberal conception of the political being a constraint of the individual.
Steven Lukes: I think Liberalism is a fighting creed (as somebody once said), so there is something to defend and that begins to be captured very well by the two, perhaps, misquotations from Ronnie: the egalitarian component, that every individual’s well-being and flourishing counts equally; and the idea of the individual being the judge of their well-being. But I do not think we have a clear grasp of what autonomy is, what counts as reflectiveness – for the cultural variability of understanding these notions has to be taken into account. It is a juggling act, retaining some sense of what you are defending but, at the same time, having a sense of the diversity of understanding.

Paolo Pom beni: the distinction between Individualism and Communitarianism has deep historic roots in the 19th century. The Anglo-Saxon version has liberty inside community. The continental version, where individuals were taught to free themselves from their religious or social community in favour of their insertion into the nation, was a new and very abstract form of community.

Jan-Werner Müller: Is there a threshold condition for calling a cluster of thoughts liberal? If yes, how do we know what it is? Is it in some sense historically or, to use a dangerous word, culturally specific? If yes, does that mean we have to somehow rely on a story of progress? Do people like Hayek represent – in your point of view – regression thought, seeing as those richer thoughts of Liberalism were available and yet they went back to something thinner or poorer?

Michael Freeden: Liberalism is not an ideal construct we invent in our ivory towers but the product of political thinking over a long period of time. So it is actually the sum total of a whole range of thought practices over the past 200 years or even before. As for a threshold, if we look at some of the thought-practices that call themselves liberal, we will see that there is a very wide range of positions. Were we to take those as expressing the full range of Liberalism, we might arrive at a very full notion in terms of the ultimate range of questions it has raised over the last century or two. All existing Liberalisms on their own are only partial representations of the full potential of liberal argument, which is actually this historical sum total of liberal debates and discourses.

No existing Liberalism has reached the full potential of the sum total that all existing Liberalisms have demonstrated. Liberalism has always revolved around 6 or 7 key concepts in different conceptualisations; you cannot have Liberalism without some notion of liberty, Individualism, development, rationality, constrained power, or sociability. Each of these concepts revolves around a whole range of positions; a bit like a fruit machine there are a certain number of positions where you can say you are in the liberal range. We have degrees of moving thresholds over time and space, and also scholarly understandings.

Ronald Dworkin: The idea that the individual right trumps the collective good is a very powerful one. There are some interests individuals have which must be served and respected even at the cost of the collective good. Are there any important political movements which are against the idea of rights as such? In Britain there is a very powerful and still important idea against rights as such and that is Utilitarianism, an idea that has often been regarded as liberal.
**Steven Lukes**: The language of rights is modern and not all cultures have used it, but that does not mean the values of Liberalism are not there. Rights are protections people need. Marxism is profoundly individualistic in its prospect for the human race but actually, for rather deep reasons, has no place for rights in its theoretical structure.

**Pierre Hassner**: On the dichotomy between private and public, French critics consider Liberalism as depolitisation, i.e. the dialogue between citizens and between citizens and the state. If you emphasise the common good there is a risk to individual rights.

**Q**: You mentioned that a major factor of Obama’s success was not to dissociate African-American identity from American identity. Communitarians have said that the Civil Rights Movement was a success because its leader Martin Luther King did not resort to Individualism but to shared collective American identity. They assert that liberal individualist philosophy is inadequate to support its own politics.

**Kalypso Nicolaidis**: Under which conditions does the fighting creed of Liberalism emerge? What are its enemies and what is the structural moment? What version of Individualism best empowers a certain kind of narrative and debate? How does Individualism, i.e. every individual judging for himself, fit within the Chinese context of radical collective transformation, where some version of Individualism must be used as a resource?

**Joao Carlos Espada**: Can there be a non-individualistic Liberalism, and in what sense would it be liberal?
4. TOLERANCE

Susan Mendus

First of all, I would like to thank the organisers of this conference. It is very unusual for me as a political philosopher to go outside my territory, and my territory is the Morrell Centre for the Study of Toleration in particular, and North Yorkshire in general. I do not often get beyond North Yorkshire and I do not often get to the South of England, and I very rarely encounter anybody who has been to China or India. It is a very serious point. There are lots of conferences and activities identified or advertised as “interdisciplinary”, and when you get there you find your friends from Scarborough! It is very good, intellectually and socially, to meet new people and to get the kind of input that we had yesterday, discussing the way in which Liberalism is understood in India and the way liberty is understood (or not understood) in Japan. It is tremendously life-affirming, so thank you for that.

Now, what I am going to do is this. It will proceed in increasing degrees of specificity, but it will not be long. I want first of all to outline what I take to be the main themes of the conference as they were presented to me by the organisers. I then want to identify what I take to be my task within that wider specification of tasks. Finally, I want to rush in where angels fear to tread. Whilst I am conscious it is true that there are lots of Liberalisms, lots of ways of understanding it, and lots of things to understand about tolerance within it, when you come from North Yorkshire, one’s enough! I am going to give an answer to the questions ‘What is Liberalism?’ and ‘What is the role of tolerance or toleration in Liberalism?’ (I use the terms interchangeably, but am very conscious that there are good arguments for distinguishing between them). So I will give an answer to the question ‘What is Liberalism?’ and then an answer to the question ‘What is the place of toleration within Liberalism?’ Then I’ll duck and wait for people to come back at me.

I should say that although the way in which I will present it will be pretty
crude, I actually do believe in my conclusion and I am prepared to defend it in some depth, but maybe not to the death. The nature of the conference, as it was presented to me, is this: it is a conference that begins from the recognition that there is some kind of conceptual cacophony surrounding understandings of Liberalism, that there are some people, some cultures, some vocabularies, some times in which “liberal” is a term of praise, and others in which it is a term of abuse. Also, there is this terrific phrase “conceptual cacophony”: the shrill assertion of contradictory positions. It is a conceptual cacophony against which we need to ask the question ‘What is Liberalism?’ or ‘What Liberalisms are there?’

My question within that overarching question is about the role of toleration. What the organisers have identified correctly are a number of core concepts within Liberalism, and one of those concepts is toleration. And then the question for me is: ‘What is the place of toleration in Liberalism?’ Historically, it seems to me, the place of toleration in Liberalism can hardly be doubted. If we go back about 300 years to the 17th century, one of the very first defences of toleration is John Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration*. In the *Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke presents us with a principled defence of religious tolerance. I know that a number of people – most notably Jeremy Waldron – have argued with some plausibility that Locke’s defence is not in the end a moral defence of toleration but a defence on grounds of rationality, and not a terribly powerful defence at that. That said, I think it cannot be denied that what Locke is trying to do is to present a principled defence of toleration, not a defence simply in terms of the need to preserve peace. So if the question is ‘Why should we engage in religious toleration?’ Locke wants to go beyond the answer ‘because if you don’t, they’ll come and kill you,’ or ‘there’ll be civil unrest,’ or ‘there’ll be blood on the carpet.’ He wants to go beyond that to the thought that there is some principled reason for tolerating those of different religious convictions. You may think he presents good arguments, or you may think he presents bad arguments, but all I want to press here is that they are principled arguments, that within the liberal tradition toleration is a principle and not something done just as a matter of expediency or necessity.

Let’s move forward now from the 17th century to 1993 and to John Rawls’s *Political Liberalism*. In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls also takes toleration as absolutely central. He takes the fact and persistence of pluralism as being something which requires toleration, and he is famously (or notoriously) resistant to an understanding of toleration as simply *modus vivendi*. I take him as saying that what we need within the liberal tradition is a defence of toleration that is not just ‘it’s what we have to do in order to rub along together.’ It is a principle to which, as liberals, we commit.
So let us go back to the question of the conference: ‘What is Liberalism?’ My suggestion is that toleration is one of the central concepts of Liberalism and that we can see that it is if we look at the history of Liberalism. Historically, toleration features over and over again, and it features as something to which liberals will be committed in principle. For liberals, toleration is a virtue, not a necessity. It may also be a necessity, but it is, first and foremost, a virtue.

That is a historical story, but if we then turn from the historical status of toleration within Liberalism to the conceptual status of toleration within Liberalism, we also find that toleration is central. So I now want to suggest that toleration is also central conceptually, first by looking at a traditional answer to the question ‘What is toleration?’ and then by looking at a new answer, an answer that has emerged in the past 10 or 15 years. I will at this point put my cards on the table and state that I want to defend the traditional answer over the new answer. So, the traditional answer goes something like this: ‘within Liberalism, toleration is the virtue of permitting or refraining from interfering with things of which we disapprove, even though we have the power to interfere with them’. That definition was given by my former colleague Peter Nicholson many years ago and it has been used over and over in the literature. Tolerance is a liberal virtue and it consists in permitting or refraining from interfering with what others do, even though I think what they do is morally wrong, and even though I have the power to stop them doing it. There are a number of puzzles that arise out of that definition, enough paradoxes and puzzles to have kept me going for 25 years or so. First of all, we might ask whether I really must morally disapprove of what you do in order to tolerate it. Can I not just tolerate things about you that I dislike? I think it is Joseph Raz who makes much of the fact (as he sees it) that toleration does not have to be the toleration of what I think is morally wrong. It can also be the toleration of limitations on your behaviour, on your personality, on your character. I do not want to engage in that discussion here, I just want to indicate that there is a discussion to be had.

Secondly, and perhaps most famously, there is built into the notion of toleration within the liberal tradition a paradox. The paradox is this: I have said several times that, for liberals, toleration is a virtue, and it consists in permitting people to do things which we believe to be wrong even though we have the power to stop them. That disaggregates into: within the liberal tradition, it can be right to allow people to do what is wrong. That is the virtue of toleration. But how can it be right to allow people to do what is wrong? To believe that what you are doing is wrong surely is to believe that you should stop doing it. And it surely is to believe that you should stop others from doing it if they do not stop of their own accord. There is a lot of
literature on this paradox, and obviously one of the responses to the paradox of toleration is an invocation of Individualism, and of the importance of individual autonomy. One answer is just to say, ‘I see that what you are doing is wrong and I disapprove of it, but I allow you to continue because it is more important that you behave in a way that you have decided upon than it is that you behave in a way that it is, in some objective sense of the word, right.’ There is a famous passage of On Liberty in which Mill, admittedly in the context of a discussion of liberty and not of toleration, talks about the importance of liberty, and says that it is not simply what kind of life a man leads that matters, but also the fact that he has chosen that life himself. Then he goes on to argue that it is very difficult to fit a man with a life, in just the same way as it is difficult to fit a man with a suit of clothes out of a wardrobe: is it not, therefore, important for each person to choose their own life? That is the thought that very crudely underlies the defence of toleration in many standard forms. It is a way of dissolving the paradox of toleration.

And the third point I want to make is that within political philosophy, within Liberalism, people are suspicious of toleration because it seems second best. It has a sort of grudging quality about it. It starts with the thought, ‘You are doing wrong things, behaving very badly… but I in my graciousness will allow you to continue.’ It has that mean, grudging, “second best” air about it, and that is part of what makes it puzzling and problematic. It is puzzling and problematic to make a virtue of something which looks grudging and second best. ‘Can’t we do more than this?’ is the thought, since people do not want to be “tolerated”, they want something more. They want to be accepted.

The question for all of us, then, is a question about the nature of Liberalism. The thought is that toleration is one of the central concepts of Liberalism. What then is toleration? I have given a historical story which shows that it is central; I have given a conceptual account that is familiar and popular; and I have indicated that according to that conceptual account toleration is certainly central to Liberalism, and is considered to be a central virtue of it. Nonetheless, it is difficult to see it as a virtue: there are paradoxes and puzzles associated with that. So, mindful of the fact there are these puzzles and paradoxes associated with Liberalism, and with toleration within it, a number of people have developed what has come to be known as the “new” toleration. This is often referred to as “toleration as recognition”. It is associated in the first instance with the work of Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, and in particular with her book, Toleration As Recognition, but it has a much wider currency than that, and the central themes are much wider. Galeotti’s thought is that we should try to transcend an understanding of toleration as based in disapproval or moral wrongness. Rather, we should think of
toleration, when it works right, as a matter of enabling us to recognise others and to see the value in what they do, rather than simply putting up with them.

That move to understanding toleration as recognition brings with it two important features. One is that the language of recognition is a language that aims to remove the element of disapproval; the other is that the language of recognition is a language that aims to acknowledge the way in which people’s views, attitudes and commitments might be a matter not simply of their individual beliefs, but of their membership of particular groups. So toleration as recognition moves simultaneously away from the concept of disapproval and away from the concept of the individual; it moves towards recognition of the moral value of what people are and do. It moves towards recognition of the extent to which value is not drawn entirely from our status as individuals, but also from our status as members of a group.

It seems to me that both those moves are deeply anti-liberal, and I also think that they are deeply dangerous. And I think this for the following very simple reason: the question we are asked to address is the question, ‘What is Liberalism?’ The answer to that question, it seems to me, is that Liberalism – whatever it is – arises from the conviction that conflict and disagreement are permanent. That is the thought in Locke; that is the thought in Rawls when in Political Liberalism, he tells us that the aims of political philosophy depend upon the society it addresses and adds that what is characteristic of modern political philosophy is that it exists in a world that is characterised by the permanence of pluralism. For Rawls, and for political liberals generally, difference and conflict are not going to go away. What is more, and again according to Rawls, we should not be sorry about that. We should not regret the fact that conflict is not going to go away. And there is a marvellous and almost lyrical passage in Rawls in which he says that to regret the diversity of opinion and to regret disagreement is like regretting that reason can operate under conditions of freedom. For Rawls, what we will get, predictably, naturally, understandably, and correctly, under the conditions of freedom, is disagreement and conflict. We should not therefore always address conflict by trying to dissolve it; we should address conflict in different ways, and one of those ways is through toleration. The movement from the traditional concept of toleration to a concept of toleration as recognition seems to me to be a move that betrays the foundational thought of Liberalism itself, and that foundational thought is the thought that conflict is natural and to be celebrated. So, our question is ‘What is Liberalism?’ My answer is that Liberalism is characterised (in part) by a belief that conflict is permanent. And for Liberalism so understood the virtue of toleration is one which we will always need, since we cannot expect
and should not want a world in which conflict disappears. In short, the triumph of Liberalism lies in its recognition that we live in a world where disagreement will not go away and that there is a very considerable good to be secured through the toleration of things which we believe to be wrong.

Jacob Levy

Let me start with saying something about all our concepts for today – Individualism, toleration, markets, Universalism. It seems to me that with respect to Individualism there is a very wide range of views that are genuinely liberal views, that Humboldt and Tocqueville are both thoroughly liberal. Thoreau, Montesquieu and Smith are all wholly liberal, though Thoreau and Humboldt are genuinely individualistic and on this the meaning of the word, Smith, Montesquieu and de Tocqueville are not. For markets, Rawls and Nozick, Keynes and Hayek are all genuinely liberal. We may have varying views on the right positions to take with the respect to their accounts of markets but I think it is unhelpful to characterise the debate as an argument over what the “liberal view” is, as opposed to what the right view is. Universalism has already been alluded to in the last session: Michael Walzer’s Liberalism-in-America is, I think, a Liberalism as genuine as any universalist Liberalism of human rights.

Regarding freedom of religion, I cannot think of a comparable spectrum about which I can say those who are “pro” and those who are “con” are all liberals – even among those who occupy as comparably wide a spectrum as Hayek and Keynes occupy on markets. It may be that people may disagree about a number of things about freedom of religion and still be liberals, all things considered. But the range of views that are liberal views about freedom of religion seem to me fairly tightly constrained.

Notice, however, that I have been saying freedom of religion; I have not been saying toleration. I think Liberalism is in the first instance a family of political doctrines. Accordingly, I am going to start pulling apart two words that Susan began by binding together: tolerance and toleration. It seems to me a useful distinction to say that tolerance is the attitude that a person cultivates, the personal restraint of how one expresses one’s disapproval of what one does, and that toleration is usefully reserved for questions of policy. Locke’s letter was the Letter Concerning Toleration, not a letter concerning tolerance.

With that distinction in mind – and agreeing with Susan that recognition is an overdone concept that does not contribute nearly as much as enthusiasts have thought to useful discussions on either Liberalism or culture – let me say I think that tolerance, the personal virtue, is of
somewhat marginal relevance to core questions of the liberal policies of freedom of religion. And toleration is the wrong way to think about the network of policies of liberal freedom of religion, precisely because toleration does depend on the prior concept of some kind of disapproval, which is not something that the liberal state ought to be in the business of with respect to the religions whose freedom it is respecting. Now, I recognise that the idea of tolerance or toleration is not only applicable to religion. But I think it is the case that the concept has centrally developed around religion and religious freedom, and the extensions from it have largely been analogical. I will leave aside the question of whether the same kind of freedom of religion analogically extends out to the areas that toleration has been analogically extended out to.

First, tolerance. There is, no doubt, very often a shortage of tolerance as a political and moral attitude among the citizenry of liberal democracies. There is not nearly as much of it as one would think from reading, for example, the discussions of “recognition” in a lot of literature that takes toleration and tolerance as boring and insufficient, as if it would be much more interesting if we could get something better and livelier. This seems to me a characteristic professional deformity of a certain kind of intellectual work. We are prone to think that that which seems morally easy, is therefore easy enough to take for granted. Liberal legal theory suffers a lot from thinking that negative liberties and constitutional liberties, rule of law, and habeas corpus were easy and boring and therefore not very interesting, and wouldn’t it be much better if we had a richer life? Well, it turns out that rule of law, habeas corpus, and core constitutional liberties may be conceptually easy but that does not mean they are easy, and keeping them protected requires a lot of work of its own. And tolerance, the personal attitude of being willing to live peacefully with those whose views one disagrees with, is, however morally or conceptually easy it seems, not easy in practice. The Rushdie affair remains with us to this day, and re-rears its head every so often into new manifestations (most recently the Danish cartoon controversy). Similarly, the attitude that is cultivated by too many in too many Western societies towards Islam, or to every visible practice of Islam, manifests a deep lack of tolerance. I have in the last few years moved out to one of the outposts of French civilization in North America, which has in ways that I still cannot get my head around incorporated the attitudes of post-Jacobin France with respect to laïcité, and the “proper” – that is to say, hidden away – role of religious practise in a secular society. That there is a deep lack of tolerance on the part of citizenries is part of the explanation of what I see as failures of policy.

However, there are other kinds of perversities that arise with respect to
strong and deep emphasis on tolerance as a personal virtue. The one that seems to me to arise the most often in my home country, the United States, is a kind of undergraduate relativism writ large: the strange view that, because you have expressed a view of your own – and especially if you have expressed a view of your own that you have openly noted disagrees with my own previously expressed view – you are so intolerant! The inability to distinguish criticism from intolerance, is, I think, a spreading and accelerating feature, certainly of discourse in American political life, and I think not only there. If tolerance is rightfully paired with disapproval – and I think that is right – then there is no reason to expect that what I tolerate I shall refrain from criticising. I shall refrain from preventing, I shall refrain from stopping, I shall refrain from persecuting, yes, but the ability to respect fully debate, or even the ability to non-respectfully debate, the ability to mock, the ability to satirise? This is part of what is going on in the American public debate about religiosity and atheism today. The militant expression of one view is tied up with satires and the mocking of other views. Well, that's what it's like! And to be tolerant is not necessarily to refrain from criticism, satire and mocking, but there seems to be an inability to keep those distinctions present in mind. And there seems to be a view that one’s fellow citizens ought to be as willing to let me go about my business uncriticised and uncommented upon – just as the liberal state ought to be. There is not necessarily an excess of true tolerance, but there is an excess of a certain kind of value that is placed on the word, or misunderstanding of the attitude. And the overemphasis goes deep enough to rise to the level of a genuine problem in pushing very hard on tolerance as the value that we need to inculcate most deeply. To a certain degree we need to inculcate the thickness of skin on the part of the recipients. Not the insistence that you must be willing to refrain from disapproving, but that I must be willing to live with being disapproved of. And all that I have just said is, of course, highly compatible with Susan’s worries about recognition as a master concept.

I have now too little time to fully express the worry about toleration but, fortunately, I think it is a conventional worry regarding toleration as a right way to organise policy in the liberal state. The worry is that the attitude which I have just finished saying people need to be willing to live with from their fellow citizens or their fellow participants in the debate, an attitude of tolerant disapproval, is not one I think the liberal citizen ought to have to live with from their state. The proper stance of the liberal state with respect to religions and non-religion is not disapproval and grudging permission, but a respect of the core, dignified, freedom that person has to live in accordance with his or her conscience, and the freedom that person has in community
and association with one another, that is to say, to form their groups around their consciences as they understand them jointly. Toleration, as the way to describe or think about what the liberal state should do, therefore seems to me not only not a central concept of Liberalism, but something of a distraction from the central concept of Liberalism in this respect, which is freedom.

Rajeev Bhargava

It is often remarked that India is a land of tolerance and non-violence. Vivekananda, at the World Congress in Chicago in the late 19th Century, said: ‘I am proud to belong to a religion which believes not only in tolerance, but also in the universal acceptance of all religions as true’. And Nehru, writing from the prison to his young daughter Indira, said:

*It is curious and rather wonderful to compare other countries with India in the matter of treatment of different religions. In most places and especially in Europe, you will find in the past intolerance and persecution of all who do not profess the official faith. In India in older times, there was always full tolerance.*

This is not just the self-understanding of biased, nationalist thinkers. Here is a quote from Max Weber, who shares a very similar sentiment. ‘Religious and philosophical thinkers in India were able to enjoy near absolute freedom for long periods. Freedom of thought in ancient India has no parallel in the West before the recent age.’

Obviously, this could not be wholly true. It is hard to imagine any society over 2,000 years old that does not have conflicts, sometimes violent conflicts. So there were conflicts between the Shaivites and the Vaishnavites, even Shaivite pogroms against Buddhists. It is common to associate the desecration of temples, especially Shaivite temples, with Muslims, but Shaivites and Vaishnavites indulged in the mutual desecration of temples too. So, contrary to our mythological self-understanding, Indian society was intolerant. Nevertheless, it is true that evidence of the scale and intensity with which one associates religious wars in Europe is found sparingly in India. In fact, at the very time when the St Bartholomew’s Day massacre occurred in late 16th Century France (1572), India was witness to the disclosure of new spaces of mutual respect. Akbar had abolished the jazia, the pilgrim tax on Hindus. Inter-faith dialogues were taking place in the courts where not only Muslims came together with Hindu sects, but also Jesuits, who had been around in India for some time. The dialogue took
place with full knowledge of the likelihood of mutual influence, even conversions. At one point, Akbar himself was on the verge of converting to Christianity. Forcible conversions were banned. And, probably for the first time in recent history, all faiths were celebrated with royal endorsement, a practice that continues in India until today.

My first claim is that something akin to impartiality towards all faiths, strictly within the religious domain, as a state policy, was developing in India at that time. All this at a time when Europe saw some of its deadliest persecutions in a context where intolerance seemed an integral part of piety.

Allow me to draw your attention to the concept itself. In the literature, we know a distinction exists between toleration as virtue and toleration as practice (Bernard Williams), and I completely agree with Susan Mendus that the practice of toleration is the practice of not interfering in the domain of others, even though one finds it morally objectionable, and one has the power to do so. History is strewn with such tolerant practices, and we know that for their birth and evolution, toleration as a virtue is not necessary. Toleration as virtue is a sufficient but not a necessary condition. So toleration as practice grows out of indifference, exhaustion or scepticism, as also from the presence of common ground.

My second point is there exist at least three forms of toleration, two of which Locke duly noted. The historian Benjamin Kaplan reminds us of a report Locke sent to a friend in Holland in which he mentions that the subject of toleration has been discussed in England under two forms: comprehension and indulgence. By comprehension is meant enlargement of the bounds of church by the abolition of certain exclusivist ceremonies to induce estranged co-believers to conform. The idea behind it is to have a single church. Toleration as indulgence, on the other hand, is the idea that one must put up with those who are unable or refuse to unite with the Church of England, even under proposed conditions of abolition of certain ceremonies and practices. So toleration as indulgence is the existence of multiple choices, and to let and let live with this multiplicity, even though one finds this morally repugnant. Now this toleration as indulgence can also take two forms: one which might be called indulgence in public, or public indulgence, and the other, indulgence in private, or private indulgence. Indulgence in public is possible under weak confessional states. For instance, an existing community might grudgingly accept sharing its church with a conquering community. Toleration as private indulgence protects life and property of others, and allows a certain form of worship, as long as such worship takes place in private, away from the public.

Which form of tolerance is found in India? Instances of private indulgence were commonplace in the 13th and 14th centuries, when rulers
distinguished between, on the one hand Muslims and, on the other, Kafirs. Both enjoyed divine compassion, it was argued, but the two must be treated differently. Muslim rulers must protect the life and property of Kafirs, but only on condition that no public spaces for worship are built by them, no public profession and demonstration of custom, no mourning of their dead in public, no carrying of dead bodies through Muslim graveyards, and staying away from Muslim neighbourhoods. So there were lots of instances of what in Europe was called private indulgence.

Public indulgence too was fairly common. Much is made in India of syncretic, portmanteau cultures, but it is possible that many such practices developed under a system of public indulgences. A community may have had no choice but to share its temple with a powerful, perhaps conquering group. And since they worshipped together over a period of time, their religious symbols coexisted and intermingled, resulting in a variety of syncretic practices. The origins of many syncretic practices may be shot through with relations of domination.

Finally, the third form. Here, tolerance is both an attitude and a practice. To understand it, we begin with the circumstances of toleration. In the literature, among these circumstances are (a) diversity and (b) some form of disapproval, including cultural, moral and religious disapproval. I shall call (b) moral unacceptance. In Europe, a third feature is present. Moral unacceptance here takes the form of moral repugnance or moral hatred. What is the internal colouring and the conceptual structure of this notion of toleration? It is this: to tolerate is to privatise moral hatred and repugnance and to allow practices that one privately hates. Call it ‘tolerance as grudging indifference’. Now this concept of toleration is very different from the one found in traditional India. Moral unacceptance in India takes a form other than hatred. How so? Because the ground for non-acceptance is not that we possess ultimate truth or a unique, superior conception of ideal life but rather that even though we belong to a fraternity of truth seekers, we have different routes to truth, some better than others. Even if my way is better than others’ and therefore I find yours unacceptable, I cannot hate you or see you as a rival. Rather, we are co-seekers of truth, we are conversational partners. A partial, positive appraisal of the other’s way is integral to this notion of ‘toleration’. Call it toleration as moderately critical respect. Here, to privatize hatred would be wrong. Instead, one must change one’s attitude from repugnance to understanding and some degree of appreciation. Allow me to substantiate this point by quoting from Ashokan edicts: “We should always guard against one’s speech, we should not extol one’s faith or disparage the faith of others improperly or immoderately.” So criticism is allowed, but not immoderately, and not improperly. Since we
are all truth-seekers ‘we should do nothing which extols our own faith and at the same time dishonours the faith of the other. Because in dishonouring the faith of the other, we are, in some very deep sense, causing moral injury to ourselves.’ Taking a path which turns out to be wrong must not be seen as a moral disaster. Our way might be better than others’, but from this it does not follow that we do not recognise the kind of fraternity to which all of us belong. And that is the ground on which we must both be critical of them and yet respect them. Secondly, it is clear that it falls far short of recognition as equals. Recognition as equals would be a bad move which, if taken, forces us entirely out of the ambit of toleration, for it violates the inbuilt inegalitarianism of this concept.

I think it would be great if we had a world where values of egalitarian Liberalism (and more) are immediately realised. But if contextual moral reasoning indicates that all feasible alternatives to toleration are worse, then one of the three forms of toleration must be understood to be morally appropriate. In situations of violent conflict, one needs something like toleration in any of the three forms. So even egalitarian liberals must learn to tolerate toleration.

**Debate**

**Samuel Brittan:** I think we have given religion too easy a life, especially the last speaker. Trying to think of Ignatius Loyola and Martin Luther as fellow, if rival, truth-seekers just does not work. I mean, if Loyola had had his way, Luther would have been burned at the stake, and what Luther would have done to Loyola, I do not know, but I’d rather not think about it. And how tolerant are the ultraorthodox Jews in Israel? They certainly do not believe that less religious people should be allowed to drive a car on the Sabbath, etc. The only reason why they do not get their way is they do not have a majority in government. Who knows what they would do if they became a really key factor in coalitions? At the moment their intolerance is, I’m afraid, directed towards the peace process and I think if we look at history not of toleration or tolerance, but of intolerance, then the chapter on religion would form a great part of the book!

**Timothy Garton Ash:** I think that Jacob Levy actually showed us why Susan Mendus is absolutely right in her central contention, because Jacob rightly emphasised how tolerance is difficult. Tolerance *is* difficult; what is asked of us by the politics of recognition in the radical, that is to say necessarily religious, version of multiculturalism is simply impossible. Because we are asked not simply to accept that other thinkers believe otherwise but to acknowledge that someone who thinks that women are naturally inferior and that homosexuality is a sin has their truth, whilst this is our truth. That is their good, this is our good. And the demand is not simply that the state should be neutral in relation to what is a valuable life, which is a classic convention of Liberalism; the demand is that *society* should be neutral in that respect, and that is, as Susan argued, an absolutely central challenge to the core of Liberalism itself. Now you may say you are talking about a caricature of multiculturalism. Firstly, this is what is actually happening in major European cities and
countries as we speak. The demand for self-censorship in relation to the discussion about Islam is made on precisely that basis. This is not some caricature, it is a real ground of contention for European politics today.

Secondly, you may say, ‘Oh well, but we can find you a version of liberal multiculturalism,’ and I agree that your work and that of others goes a significant way in that direction. But what I would say is this: if you take away the set of cases of national minorities in defined territories with long histories – which is what Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka and others have been thinking about (with all respect to Canada, the Canadian origins of the debate have become a problem); if you take away that particular set of cases and talk about the kind of diversity we have, for example, in European cities, and you look at what liberal multiculturalism is arguing for, it is actually multicultural Liberalism. There is no ‘–ism’ left in the multiculturalism. The ‘–ism’ is Liberalism, simply a version of Liberalism, and so in that sense it seems to me that multiculturalism is among those cacophonic concepts we could happily abandon, because the acceptable version is in fact multicultural Liberalism.

**Daniel Butt:** This is a question for Jacob Levy. Could you say a bit more about tolerance? What do you think tolerance requires us to do as individuals? It seems we can mock, we can satirise, we can respectfully criticise religion. The question, really, is: Does it require anything more than strictly refraining from preventing people from practising their religion? Does tolerance require more of us than simply not using force to stop people practising their religion?

**Jacob Levy:** I will start with Tim’s question. One unexpected effect of my moving to Canada has been that sometimes in these settings I am called to answer for all of the sins of Canadian political theorists. I agree with Susan that recognition is not right for organising the principle. I myself have argued a great deal of what you have just said. The demand that we recognise and affirm incompatible things in the world is cognitively, morally, psychologically impossible and incoherent. If we can get so far as having, on the one hand, believers in religions that call homosexuality sinful and, on the other hand, gays and lesbians mutually respecting basic freedom, and not calling on the power of the state, that would be a tremendous accomplishment, restraint shown on both sides. There is evidence in some European societies that have moved farthest in the direction of what I take as an appropriate recognition of the rights of gays and lesbians to then encroach on the core religious liberty of religious speech, and of religious practice, though religious officials shall continue to have the freedom of speech to propagate their own doctrines. In Canada too there has been this encroachment. The right stance of the state is to step back from that and to protect freedom on both sides; this takes an attitude of some kind of restraint on both parts of the citizenry. It would be an accomplishment. It is something to struggle for, if we can get there.

I certainly think that you’re onto something with your question. And to agree that tolerance is a virtue-concept, not itself a rights-concept, is probably going to be something that scares somebody. There certainly is a kind of social activity that does not increase the level of state coercion, that is not about persuading either the participants or their opponents. And I do think some of the nastier kinds of satire can still be acts of persuasion, but that is not an act of persuasion at all, actually an attempt to effectively prevent. There I think you at least see a failure in fully exercising the virtue of tolerance, and maybe something worse than that.

**Rajeev Bhargava:** I do not deny that there are various religious truths which are not willing to see themselves as parts of a larger community or fraternity of truth-seekers. I was only
talking about what different forms of toleration you can take, and this is one possible form. It is a recognised strategy – recognised by Locke himself as a possibility – and it worked in certain places where at that time there were weaker confessionals. In stronger confessional states this did not work; in fact, what worked was that which we may find, under present conditions, morally pretty reprehensible. What worked was what I am calling private indulgence. There were churches of the minority of either Lutherans or Calvinists. The churches never looked like churches, and they had to be in smaller places, in very small lanes, in ordinary residential buildings, and so on. But people at that time felt some sense of gratitude because their life was not taken away! All I am saying is that those conditions have not disappeared, even today. Twenty five years ago there was not a single mosque in Berlin that looked like a mosque. Muslims worshipped in garages. There was a huge struggle that took place there. Of course, in principle, how could anything like that be denied? But a lot of bureaucratic arguments were given, and so it was only maybe twenty years ago that the first mosque that actually looked like a mosque appeared in Berlin. Some of the conditions that I was describing in Europe at that time are still around in Europe and the rest of the world. There must be a huge number of instances where people would rather have bad lives than to insist on publicly recognised churches.

There are instances in India, and I’ll just give one or two. One is the instance in India where people voted for the party responsible for the massacre in Mumbai – when Muslims voted for the Shiv Sena in 1992/3 because it was the only way of ensuring security of their life and property. It was Shiv Sena that killed a lot of Muslims in 1992/3. So what I am saying is that under such conditions, one believes there is no other alternative but one of the other forms of arrangements. And there is the possibility of the development of toleration as a virtue, but only in that third sense.

Michael Freeden: The issue is that Liberalism also needs to be able to know the reasonable limits of toleration. What kinds of wrongs, what kinds of mistakes are acceptable when one reaches the point beyond which toleration is no longer acceptable? One possible distinction between tolerance of thought and tolerance of practices may well be more flexibility in expression of thought, and we all know that expression of thought can be dangerous as well. Practices may in fact call for a limit to tolerance. That is one possibility. The other is the boundary between criminality and non-criminality, one of the very obvious boundaries between tolerance and non-tolerance. Of course, the boundary itself is very hazy in the criminalisation of practices (e.g. paedophilia). Are there other boundaries except for criminality that we should discuss within the limits of toleration? For example, civil disobedience is a very tricky area.

Stuart White: I really want to make more explicit an issue about which contemporary Liberalism is very confused, because of the attempt to connect Liberalism with multiculturalism. In a lot of contemporary liberal theory, in a sense, toleration is a secondary principle, by which I mean it is thought to derive from some value, a more fundamental right to autonomy or equality. The thought is that the state should respect or promote the autonomy and some form of toleration as instrumental to the respect for citizenry. But if we think of toleration as deriving from some more basic value like autonomy or equality, then the question arises: What happens if toleration seems to conflict with autonomy or equality? Are we required to tolerate a practice or way of life which is itself in some way disrespectful of the norm of equality? So the question about which contemporary Liberalism is very confused is the question of whether, or to what extent, toleration has an independent value, when toleration would lead to some violation of autonomy or equality. Or, in Jacob’s terms,
to what extent does freedom of religion have an independent weight when freedom of religion leads to practices that conflict with autonomy or equality? If panellists have a view on that, I would be very interested to hear it.

Francis Chevenal: I would like to come back to the concept of recognition. I do agree with the clear-cut conceptual distinction between the classical notion of toleration, and a more contemporary one that includes equal recognition, and I think we heard a lot of convincing arguments against that. Especially on the individual level. On the social level it is of course absurd to demand equal recognition. But as far as the state is concerned, we are in a much more complex situation, especially in Europe, because, first of all, recognition can just imply the recognition of status; it does not necessarily have to imply recognition of all religious practices. So, some religions in very liberal European states have recognition as the official state church, for instance here in Great Britain, but in other European countries you have, as for example in Germany, the phenomenon of Landeskirche. So these religions are not so much tolerated as have an official recognition of status as the state church. And the question is: Will the liberal position be that this should be completely abandoned, that there should be no such status as a state church, and there should not be a head of state who is at the same time head of state religion, etc.? Or, is the liberal position that we have equal recognition of status, as now in the canton of Bern in Switzerland, the Jewish Rabbi is also now getting a salary from the state, so there is a move towards positive recognition of status, equal status of these religions? That is not to imply that the state has to tolerate all religious practices that might be suggested by these religions, for instance in Geneva Muslim girls are compelled to participate in gym classes even though their fathers might impede them. Though I do think we are still left with the problem of recognition of status of religions, especially in the European context. So I think we need to reflect more on this one.

Susan Mendus: It seems to me that the questions have been put here in this form: we accept that the language of recognition is inappropriate, it is not doing the work required of it. Let’s have disapproval back in as crucial. But now, if we accept that toleration is necessary, if we accept that it includes as a central component disapproval, at what point does that disapproval become so great as to require that toleration itself be suspended? What are the limits of toleration? There is a cheap answer and there is an expensive answer. The cheap answer is I do not know, and I do not believe there is a kind of a priori identification of the limits of toleration. And, in a way, Michael Freeden discussed the limits given by the limits of criminality and non-criminality. Well, Liberalism itself has the problem about where the line should be drawn because, as you said, do we then take the criminalisation of homosexuality as legitimate? The one question it seems to me is at the bottom of all this, is: When and are we entitled to invoke the coercive powers of the state in order to secure the things which we believe to be correct and valuable? That is the question. If you ask for my answer, I am a fighting liberal on this. I think, yes, where there are cultures which are autonomy-diminishing. The fact that they are autonomy-diminishing is a pretty good reason for thinking that certain practices should be restricted by law or forbidden by law. There can be all sorts of reasons for thinking, let’s say, that in a multicultural context women in particular have their rights violated and are treated terribly. But there might be practical reasons for not invoking the coercive power of the state because it can do more harm than good. I think, in principle, if you ask, ‘Do I think that the fact a society or group is autonomy-diminishing is a significant enough reason for prohibiting its practices?’ I would give a straight answer, ‘Yes, I do.’ Because I think Liberalism is a fighting theory, it grew out of conflict and we have to be clear about which side we are on in that conflict.
Jacob Levy: I think the creed for which liberals fight is freedom of religion, not autonomy. One thing that happens akin to my little jab at American public discourse is, at a more specific level, the idea that ‘well of course we must be tolerant, but must not tolerate the intolerant,’ which turns fairly rapidly into the view that we must respect the religious freedom of all religions, provided that they are all Unitarianism. To have a view is to have a set truth that you invoke to your believers. That would be illegitimate for the state to do, and people get tied up very quickly in a set of paradoxes and start claiming a violation of religious freedom or toleration for a religion to believe in its own religion. Or, for a religion to have substantive views that are not the same as the correct substantive views that a state ought to have with respect to equality. Virtually no major religion has had the equality of men and women as practitioners, as believers, as congregants, as equal components of its faith for almost any meaningful stretch of human history. This is, in my view, a bad thing. However, if religious freedom is a core constituent liberal value, then it must not be the case that we tolerate or allow freedom to all religions in so far as they teach compatible equality between men and women, because then we start with tolerating Universalism on the high, and very little besides.

Q: I just want to press you on whether freedom of religion extends to the freedom to control the religion of your children? Because if you are not going to make autonomy central, you are going to shift the focus to freedom of religion and everything turns on how we spell out the content of that freedom, right?

Jacob Levy: The overwhelming majority of religious believers have grown up believing in the religion that their parents taught them. Is that control? It is not imprisonment, it is not torturing your children, but it does seem to be a tremendously powerful psychological force. I have heard arguments that it is a violation of freedom of religion when parents teach their child a religion. This is a paradox and it is absurd. It is a category mistake. What it is to have a family is to teach your children things, and to teach children things that you think true. Then your children become adults and to be an adult is to be partly autonomous, to be an adult is to step back from some commitments that you were raised with – or maybe all of them at one time – and assess them. But to be an adult is not an autonomous fantasy creature, of the certain kind of comprehensive liberal imagination. None of us outgrow and revise and reject everything our parents taught us. Always we are growing with the influence of such-and-such a thing, even if you reject it. You are rejecting their view but you are living in the world that they created.

Susan Mendus: Religious toleration is gaining a life of its own over here! I very much agree with Samuel Brittan that religion is getting quite an easy ride. But we have all the ‘truth-seekers’ together on the one hand, and then, on the same hand, ‘we all teach our children, we pretty much know what we are told to believe, and what’s wrong with that?’ Yet, if you look at Locke’s defence on toleration bear in mind the circumstances under which it was written, in which people were shedding each other’s blood in prodigious amounts. It is not a world in which they are all “truth-seekers” together, teaching their children nice things about loving one another. It is a world in which they are on a path to Hell! And that is why religious toleration seems to me immensely problematic. Religion is not benign. It is an error to make it benign. It is very dangerous. Particularly, the concept of salvation is extremely dangerous, historically and conceptually.
Rajeev Bhargava: I have to reply on the question of whether or not there should be no establishment or multiple establishments. That is the question. My answer is that I would pay attention to a sort of distinction at three different levels. One is the separation of state and religion and the level of ends; the state must have a common secular interest and end. The second is the level of institutions and personnel, which is what we call church-state separation; religious personnel, religious institutions are to be separated from political institutions, political personnel. And the third is the separation at the level of law and public policy. Some people take the view that religion must not even be the object of law and public policy, that there should be strict separation. Other people might take the view that that should not be the case, that you can make religion an object of law and public policy. In certain matters you have got to interfere with religion, and that intervention might be offensive to a lot of people who belong to this religious community. For example, in the case of schools run by religious communities there may be certain groups which are very liable in society, and might require state support in order to run their educational institutions. The right can only be effective if the state actually supports them. So on the first level, which is the question that you raised, I think there should be no establishment for religion, there should be no theocratic establishment. The second level is obvious: there has to be church-state separation. And the third level – on whether or not the state should make religion an object of law and public policy given the complicated view I have of support and negative interference – it depends on the context; I would go by context. And that is exactly the case in many countries. The answer should be no establishment, no theocracy, no establishment. That would be the liberal egalitarian view, rather than having multiple establishments.

Ronald Dworkin: We seem to agree about recognition. This movement gained strength when practices that were formerly recipients of tolerance, in particular homosexuality, became resentful of the idea of tolerance because there was a very strong feeling that there was nothing wrong with them. I think this is probably also true about religion, but I will come back to that in a moment. We have seen off recognition, but I am not sure that we have got very far in the liberal basis of tolerance because we need an explanation that distinguishes between those practices of which we disapprove, which we dislike, which we tolerate, and those which we do not. For a long time people liked to say there was an important distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding acts. The self-regarding acts harmed, if at all, only the agent. We have gotten past that, for the reasons Timothy Garton Ash mentioned about multiculturalism. People are being harmed by arranged marriages, by institutions that subjugate, intellectually and in other ways, one gender against another. These are distinct harms. But I think once we begin to ask, ‘Are there any harms in other practices?’ then we come to the fact that we live in a cultural, ethical, religious environment in which tolerance has costs. It is harder to bring your children up to hold the views you like about sexual orientation when the films and plays that they see celebrate different ideas. It is harder to practise your own opinion with the conviction you would like to have, the reinforcement that you would like to have from the symbols that surround you. It is harder to bring up children in a community in which there are emblems and exhibitions of rival commitment. You might say that is not the kind of harm we are entitled to protect ourselves against. Certainly, such would be a liberal position. But how do we describe it? We accept quite cheerfully restrictions on aesthetic zoning. I cannot decorate my house that way. Is that a denial of my autonomy? Does the explanation appeal to the general interest in having a homogenous row of houses? Is that a limitation of my autonomy? And what is the difference between having aesthetic zoning and our desire that the images with which we are surrounded confirm our religious faith?
One last remark. You say religion is special, and certainly constitutions have treated it as special. But is it special because people killed each other over it in the 17th century? Is that why it is special? We suppose that it should be special on principle. But how can we insist that freedom of religion is special and deserving of special constitutional or liberal protections? It seems to me that there's much more work to be done before we have a liberal basis for tolerance.

Andrew Vincent: Is tolerance an issue of principle? Is tolerance necessarily a specifically liberal virtue? Are liberals historically concerned with the issue of tolerance? Just a quick reflection on these three questions. It seems to me that there may be a kind of element in the history of tolerance which does relate closely to religious civil wars, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries. I read an historian who said that the people who argued most vociferously for tolerance during this period were those whom we would now regard as extremely fundamentalist. These were minorities within these majority regimes and the only way they could achieve what they wanted was to admit some form of what you might call tolerance. In this sense you could say the issue of tolerance is not an issue of principle at all, but in fact a pragmatic issue involving the exhaustion of violence and pragmatism. You can say that the Westphalian state, as it was formed at that time, was simply formed on the principle of what you might call a degree of separation of religion, a politics reacting to theocracy. And in a way a constitutional motion in that sense has become a kind of pragmatic fait accompli for why toleration comes about. I think it is a philosophical hubris to think that somehow toleration is an issue of principle or moral principle in that sense. And, secondly, is tolerance necessarily a liberal virtue? I can think of a number of writers from the 17th and 18th centuries, republican, conservative writers, socialists in the 20th century, nationalists like Mazzini, many from the Habsburg Empire and others, who actually have been all concerned with the issue of tolerance. I just wonder whether it is a specifically liberal virtue we are talking about here – is it a virtue at all? And is it something that liberals have been concerned with? I do not know the answer specifically, but if I go to thinkers such as Kant, Mill or Locke, I am not absolutely convinced, when looking at them in their contemporary aspect, of how they thought of religious people or how they thought of women. The issue of tolerance is not one we would recognize in that context. In fact, they do not think there to be issues of tolerance arising, bound up with a very limited conception of what a human being is.

Paolo Pombeni: Are we destroying in the name of liberal tolerance the liberal system? We are coming back to the Holy Roman Empire idea that a political system is a sort of confederation of different social memberships. The idea of rationalising or secularising the citizenship, the idea that the citizenship was commonly shaped by this form of rational general statement, which was the form of our secular religion, the Christian religion. Now we have to conform with something which is different from this, and it is very difficult to be included in this common sphere. Because this idea that religion is a sort of private affair cannot be accepted. And there are two different consequences. First, on the side of the public system – which is increasingly trying to destroy the general legal system (which was both legal and moral). If you look at the Civil Code in Europe, it is not simply a legal legislation. It is a sort of moral code of the political ground. Secondly, in a certain sense the sects are very integralistic. Why are we losing all that the religious system in the Western world has achieved? All the churches in Eastern Europe, especially in Russia, the Catholic Church in Italy, in Spain, in France also, are much more integralistic now than they were twenty or thirty years ago. And why? Because we are seeing with this idea of tolerance the idea that each one has to – in a certain sense – watch their own brother.
Rajeev Bhargava: I want to respond to the issue of whether tolerance is a specific issue of Liberalism. I do not think so. I said that I think we should see Liberalism as evolving a perspective on sensibility or doctrine, and we made a distinction yesterday between 19th century Liberalism and modern Liberalism. There was a time when tolerance was a very key value of Liberalism. I do not think it is the case now. For me, toleration is linked in one way or another to a certain kind of egalitarianism. Very often it is a benign egalitarianism. It may be paternalism, as the Indian case suggests. As in both the Western and Eastern experience. There is a certain amount of egalitarianism built into it, so it will lead to egalitarian conflict with contemporary versions of Liberalism. I do not see how it can be made a key concept. Therefore, it follows that in contemporary Liberalism it cannot really be a matter of principle, only a matter of pragmatism. That is the way I see it. On the issue of religion as something special, I do not think we should assume that religion is special. I do not think it can be antecedently built into any kind of liberal theory. So I do not agree on this aspect with you. On the other hand, I want to go back to the principle as stated for us: that it matters how equally individual life goes, and how it goes is to be judged from each individual’s own point of view. That judgement cannot be made by others. If it is the case, as we know, that a lot of people base their lives upon what is deeply, deeply religious, (saturated, in some ways) then to the extent that for them it is special, a liberal theory would also treat it as special for them.

Jacob Levy: I have a great deal to say about these things. To the question of whether religion is special I make no claim about a moral or even principled specialness, only about its specialness in getting a hold of the relationship of the concept of Liberalism. The historical development of the doctrine – the degree to which freedom of religion, rule of law, constitutional liberties are non-negotiable parts of the package – has been a reflection of the liberal political doctrine. If someone tells me that they have worked out the correct liberal theory of toleration and it has no relationship to freedom of religion, or treats religion as a marginal matter, then I would say that something strange has happened. As to what the right answers are about how far the concept has evolved as the religious context extends outward and is morally understood, I did not express a view on that.

Susan Mendus: To draw the line between what is toleration and what isn’t, if pressed, I think we can go back to Mill on the harm principle, and some suitable interpretation of it. And as for the question about autonomy, Mill has views about that, which he spelt out in his insistence that it is harm to interests that matters. So let’s each get a copy of On Liberty and have a read.

On the question of whether religion is special, I think it is special and especially dangerous if it takes a salvationist turn. Because then, as Rawls says, we have a kind of conflict that knows no compromise in principle. The concept of negotiation does not apply once religion takes a salvationist turn. That is, to my way of thinking, what makes it special.
5. Markets

Samuel Brittan

Thank you very much. For all the possible years in which I might have been asked to talk about this subject, this is undoubtedly the worst one. And if you think I haven’t got either explanation or a cure for the malaise which has affected the whole world economy, you are wrong – except I’ll have to fall back on something like original sin, which was not what you asked me to talk about.

I start with a political value judgement, not with technical economics. But I know if I gave a lot of technical economics (and I would be good at it) people would say, ‘why did he bore us with that?’ If I talk about political values, which I am going to talk about, people will say, ‘we thought he was an economist?’ But I am not an economist; I am a political philosopher-monkey. When I started out my intellectual life, it did not look easy to earn a living as a political philosopher. So I settled for economics. And one time I wanted to be a psychologist, but I thought that in Cambridge psychology involved a lot of biology, physiology and dissecting rats and frogs. So I settled for economics as being a cousin to politics, in which I was originally interested.

I start with a political value judgement. A liberal is someone who attaches special value to personal freedom, just as a socialist or social democrat does to equality and a conservative does to authority. But I do not believe in arguing about definitions. If you want to say that a liberal is really something else and not a kind of individualist, I shall not lose any sleep over it. Indeed, to clarify matters, I have taken to describing myself as a liberal individualist or sometimes just as an individualist. A liberal in my sense wants to reduce the number of man-made obstacles to the exercise of actual or potential choice. In other words, he attaches a high value to what Isaiah Berlin called negative freedom. And if Tim wants to say that Isaiah rode back a bit from that, that is interesting, but it does not affect my espousal of negative freedom.
A liberal in that sense does not have to derive all public policy from one goal. He or she does believe, however, in a presumption in favour of personal choice. And I think presumption is as far as one can go into political theory, or political economy. In other words, the onus is on those who want to prescribe drugs, alcohol, tobacco or foreign travel to make their case, not the other way round. There are many people who would like to argue that poverty is a restriction on freedom. Again, I want to avoid arguing about meanings of words. The substantive point is that if I cannot afford to fly to Greece, it is one sort of evil; and if my government forbids me to travel there, irrespective of whether I can afford to or not, it is another sort of evil: an act of coercion. Indeed, one way of distinguishing between an economic liberal and a social democrat is that the liberal accepts the force of this distinction and the social democrat does not. There are any number of social democrat books which try to define these terms and they just create linguistic confusion.

For a true market liberal, any benefits in the shape of prosperity or economic growth are a bonus, and in any case the maximisation of GDP is an absurd objective of economic policy. It is better to say that although man cannot live on bread alone, he cannot live without bread, and it would be futile to preach the benefits of personal freedom unless it were normally associated with reasonable material performance, and this is especially true for emerging economies.

Obviously I cannot make the case for this sort of individualistic Liberalism in the time available (I did my best in *A Restatement of Economic Liberalism*, Macmillan 1988). But may I just say that it is nothing to do with the philosophical argument between determinism and free will, where if anything I am on the determinist side. Suppose that some super scientist with enough knowledge of causal laws and initial conditions could predict whether I will want to fly to Greece or not. This in no way establishes a case for the state interfering with my decision. Would it be better if my desire to visit that country were a random matter like the spin of a die?

The best way of seeing where the market fits in is to look at the alternative of state Socialism. How is the state to decide what products should be made, what jobs people should do, how long they should work, and how much they should put aside in saving, what should be the balance between leisure and work, and so on? I first became interested in these matters when I came across Milton Friedman when he was on a sabbatical at Cambridge. He would frequently reply to proposals for state intervention by saying: ‘Perfectly all right if you think that the government should decide rather than the individual citizen.’ I was shocked by how many people were willing to accept this assumption in their defence of government intervention.
Perhaps foolhardily, I tried to defend the mixed economy of Butler, Gaitskell and Macmillan without overriding individual choice.

There is also a strong connection between free markets and political and intellectual freedom. Very briefly: such freedom is difficult if the state owns or controls all the means of publication and dissemination, and job opportunities in journalism and the arts. This connection does not tell one anything much about details of economic policy, whether the state should own the railways or not. But state intervention with political and intellectual freedom can go quite far on the basis of a good deal less than a 100 percent Clause IV ownership of economic resources. Of course, there are numerous examples of competitive capitalist economies which are unpleasant dictatorships. The point is that the existence of a substantial market sector is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the existence of freedom in a wider sense.

There are two standard replies by socialists who have understood this critique. One is to say that the state should emulate capitalist practice, invest for profit, and establish competitive consumer markets. In other words, you make a donkey into a zebra by painting stripes on its back. Many of you will know far better than I do why this idea of state market economy never really works. The other reply is to espouse a market based on competitive workers’ co-operatives. The liberal economist can have no principled objection, so long as the shift to such co-operatives is a matter of free choice and not government-enforced. In practice, such co-operatives are likely to be interesting exceptions in a largely capitalist environment.

There are two main forms of market failure which can distort markets, whether or not of the capitalist variety, as avenues for individual choice, and which would be important even in a barter economy without money. They are externalities and public goods. The first can often be tackled by market methods, although not by *laissez-faire*. The second is far more difficult to tackle in this way, even though there are some US libertarians who favour private armies and police forces, exclusive reliance on toll-financed roads and so on! They can fight their own battle.

The facts of market failure have to be balanced against those of government failure. Governments and their agents are not disinterested instruments of public welfare, but are just as concerned with their own interests as businessmen and private sector workers are. Even on the best of assumptions, political decisions inevitably involve overriding minority tastes and views. This is well-trodden ground among students of political economy, although to many political theorists it is alien territory.

Too many people here will regard everything I’ve said so far as classroom games compared with booms and busts which have recently culminated in
a real near-breakdown of the world monetary system. It is as absurd to ignore these developments as to abandon everything you have ever believed. Capitalism has always suffered from boom and bust. There is no regular cycle, but a succession of fluctuations of varying degrees of severity. There is nothing so absurd as to see some commentators rushing from crying ‘Marx was right!’ whenever there is a severe slump, and then backpedalling to say that ‘Capitalism is the only game in town!’ when economic recovery comes, as it normally does.

The first step towards a level-headed approach is to cauterise the financial system. Its failings do not establish the dirigiste case. Nothing that has happened in the present credit crunch suggests that governments are any good at picking winners, that consumer choice should be overridden, or that freeing international trade is a bad thing. What has gone wrong is in the financial system that normally enables people to trade without the enormous inefficiencies of relying on barter. As Keynes said long ago, ‘money will not manage itself’, a message that also applies to credit.

Although it is helpful for the time being, a rigid division between the monetary system and the real economy is not ultimately satisfactory. The Dutch tulip bubble of the 18th century was not a product of monetary excess. No one should be surprised if examples of large-scale imprudence, with or without criminality, eventually emerge outside the financial sector before the present crunch is over.

What is ultimately at stake is the profit-seeking paradigm. Nearly all market-inclined political economists accept that profits must be sought not merely by legal means but within the unwritten rules of society. The problem, as Norman Barry has pointed out, is that there is great confusion and disagreement about what these unwritten rules really are. Hayek, almost alone amongst free market economists, emphasised the importance of traditional rules, which embody more knowledge than any one person can hope to have.

But he did not really go into any detail on what these rules were. It might surprise some people that I have gone back to the English novelist Jane Austen, who took for granted the rights of private property, but also stressed its obligations and had the greatest contempt for those who pursued wealth for its own sake or to emulate others.

Obviously, I have not been able to lay down in detail new rules for the profit-seeking game – merely to stress the need for them and to provide a few hints.
Zhang Weiyi

I agree with most points that Sir Samuel Brittan made. So my comments are made not to punish him, but to give support and supplement his arguments, and elaborate some of my own arguments. The first point I would like to make is that markets are preferred for both normative and positive freedoms. Some interesting points say that liberals tend to attach some special value to personal freedom. And I emphasise they are right, but I think we need markets more than that. But in fact, in China, at an earlier stage of the reform, economists argued for market economy, and some reform-minded leaders instilled the market into traditional planned economy not because they appreciated personal freedom, but because they thought markets would make the pie bigger, make everything better. Economists think their market allocation will be more efficient.

As far as equality is concerned in China, in regions where the economy is more marketised, and the government interferes less, income inequality is lower. So we need the market not just for efficiency, but also for equality. In China, many people criticised the liberal economists within China for being concerned only with this efficiency, not with equality. And I think it is absolutely wrong. Chinese liberal economists are also concerned with equality, but they believe (as do I) that the market is better than the government at providing this. That is the first argument I would like to make.

The second argument is about market failure and government failure. At early stages of economic development, you may say that market failure automatically invites government intervention. You are right. We need to balance market failure against government failure. I think it is still not enough: we need to realise that many market failures are actually caused by government intervention. Why is the relationship negative? You know it is the market’s reputation that plays a very important role in displaying norms and individual behaviour. Why are people concerned with reputation? Because, if they lost their reputation, then they would be punished by other concerned parties. But when the government introduces more regulations, that will actually destroy the reputation badly. Why? The reason is that when government has more discretionary power, it will make the business environment more uncertain. When the environment becomes more uncertain, businesspeople have very short attention spans; they become very myopic. They are not concerned with long-term returns, but just with short-term incomes. So they are less concerned with reputation. This is, in particular, true in China, where so many companies do not care for product quality; they do not know how long their business can last. They worry that
the government may ask them to stop doing such business anytime. It is in the best interests of businesspeople just to pursue short-term profit, rather than long-term return.

Another reason is the moral hazard problem, like when the government provides some guarantees to businesses, like today’s many insolvent financial institutions, to provide financial support that could cause morally hazardous behaviour as nobody would take real responsibility for their behaviour. I think the Asian financial crisis 10 years ago was caused exactly by the government guaranteeing these kinds of things. Also, I think that this financial crisis is much more a result of the government’s expansionary monetary policy, but certainly people would like to blame the market. I think that in criticising the market there is no risk, but in criticising the government, one faces some risks. People are more likely to criticise the market itself than government. But I need to emphasise that many government failings are actually caused by government behaviour, government regulation, rather than by the market itself.

The third point I would like to make is about profit-maximization behaviour. Profit-maximization behaviour is often criticised for causing some social problems, and it is a criticism in which people misunderstand what profit is. You may know that profit is actually an accountability system. It is the best system in human society that we can find to make everyone take responsibility for his actions. In legal terms, I think people who receive profit are more likely to take strict liability, and people who receive fixed returns like a salary, are likely to take negligent liability. Only when they make some explicit mistake do they take responsibility. But all people who take a profit need to take responsibility for all other people, including people in their supply-chains, and their employees. That means if you cannot discover other people's mistakes, it is a collective mistake for which the owners of the firm are liable. I think this is very important. It is related to our current concept called corporate social responsibility or stakeholder view. Both of these concepts are wrong, at least very misleading. If we just talk about corporate social responsibility, it is hard to define. What kinds of things should people do? We cannot see whether a firm should behave in terms of law, because in reality some things are legal or illegal and can be either socially wrong or right. If you find something socially right while it is illegal, should you do that or not? Some things are socially wrong, but not illegal. If you do it, you have no legal risk, but it is socially not good. So there are some concepts, like corporate socialist responsibility, that are not really an answer to the important questions.

The fourth argument I would like to make is that, believing in economic Liberalism is quite often in China not the same as believing in political
Liberalism. I truly believe in free market and private ownership, but I do not think that in today’s China it is a good time to introduce a more democratic system defined by free election. There are some reasons supporting my argument. First, I find that when people make their individual choices, they seem very rationally efficient. But when they make a collective choice, they seem very emotional, or rationally emotional. After all, everyone would like to have a ‘free lunch’, even if economists determine that there is no free lunch to be had! But people always want to have a free lunch and let other people pay for it. That is a very typical phenomenon in public choice or collective choice. Another reason is that if we want to have a good, efficient and more democratic society, we need to have a strong middle-class, because only the middle-class can take responsibility. When people have the right to vote but do not suffer from any consequences of or benefit from this development, they do not care who is going to be their president. Suppose the Chinese people select a president like in the American system. For whom do you think they will vote? You know, they do not care. Maybe some candidates will give some small gift to them, and so maybe they will be voted in as president. And that is my argument. So I think for China, although we have done a lot in economic reform, so too do I certainly hope political reform will come, but I do not think we should be very impatient for it. I think we need to wait for some time, we need to see a stronger middle-class emerge, and only in this way can we introduce democracy or general elections.

Stuart White

What I am going to assume, as I happen to think it is true, is that markets are indeed an indispensable feature of a liberal economic order, and indeed any desirable economic order. Basically, I think that a good society must allow for diversity of lifestyle choices, and the markets are the best mechanisms we have for organising production in a way that is responsive to lifestyle choice. But this emphatically does not mean that liberals should endorse anything like what we usually mean by a free market economic system, at least with respect to the distribution of income and wealth. To develop this point, I would like to return to the relationship between poverty and liberty that Sir Samuel Brittan talked about in his presentation. I think unpacking what is going on here is important for understanding why a liberal economic order must embed markets in institutions that constrain inequality in the distribution of income and wealth. In Samuel’s analysis, liberty is to be understood as negative liberty: freedom to act as you like without being subject to coercion by others. Poverty, he argues, might be a
bad thing, but it is not something which limits liberty in that sense. Poverty is one kind of obstacle; coercion is another. And liberty is about the absence of coercion.

Many social liberals have more or less accepted this way of setting things up. They have reached the conclusion that poverty does constrain liberty only by revising the definition of liberty. Following the lead of T. H. Green, they have said that liberty is not merely the absence of coercion, but something like the power to develop yourself. Poverty obviously obstructs that, so they conclude poverty limits liberty. You can find hundreds of social democratic or social liberal books which have that kind of argument. But I want to argue that poverty constrains liberty precisely in sense that Samuel defines it, negative liberty. In a sense that you are free to do what you like without being subjected to interference by others. The contrast between poverty as one kind of obstacle and coercion as another is, I think, a mistake, and I am drawing on the work of people like Jerry Cohen, Jeremy Waldron and Adam Swift.

Let me start with a simple example. I want to travel from London to Liverpool on the train, but I cannot afford the ticket. What happens? I get on the train; the ticket inspector discovers that I do not have a ticket; I am removed from the train, at, let’s say, Slough. My lack of a ticket means that I lack the legal permission to be on the train and am therefore subject to coercive interference, ultimately backed by the state, in doing what I would like to do. This is a curtailment of my liberty, not some mysterious positive liberty, but old-fashioned, straightforward negative liberty. You can approach the point in another way. In a society with private ownership, there are millions of actions which each of us is negatively unfree to perform, because the objects that we need for these actions belong to other people. The property rights of others place us under a huge array of prohibitions about what resources we can use and therefore what actions we can perform. Money is a magical device we use to remove some of these prohibitions, and so acquire negative freedom to perform specific actions that we wish to perform. It is money that enables me to go into a car showroom and actually leave with a Porsche, which I can then drive from London to Liverpool without being stopped and being thrown in jail. Now the point I have made so far does not necessarily have any normative content. I am simply trying to make an observation about how the structure of private property rights has implications for negative liberty.

But let me now try to take the point I have made in a normative direction. First, what if we say, as a normative claim, that all people must be free to at least some minimum extent? Then it would seem to follow from what I have just said that all citizens must have some kind of guarantee of access to a
minimum of resources. For example, a guarantee of a minimum income, or a guarantee of a minimum sum of capital with which individuals are able to enter the market place. In fact, this is one of the key ideas of Sam’s ownership of economic Liberalism. Sam is the most consistent and long-standing defender I know of the idea that integral to an economic order is some universal basic income or universal capital grant, and I march solidly alongside him in the fight for such a thing.

My final point is that Sir Samuel defends his support for basic income on grounds of liberty, not on grounds of equality. He reminded me last night that he is the author of an article called *Redistribution Yes, Equality No*. I want to conclude just by raising a question about this stark contrast between equality and liberty. And one way of getting at my concern here is to note that many liberals historically have not so much been committed to liberty, as to something like equal liberty, or equal maximum liberty. I think this is true, for example, for liberals as different as T.H. Green and Herbert Spencer, and in a way it is a logical conclusion if you take the two norms which Steven Lukes started with this morning: the egalitarian norm, where each person’s well-being counts as much as anybody else’s; and the Individualism norm, where each person is the best judge of what is in their interest. And if you put those two together, then you’re naturally drawn to some notion that the basic principle of justice is some notion of equal liberty, or equal maximum liberty. Now, if we combine this notion of equal liberty as a normative commitment with the point of negative liberty that varies with income and wealth, then there is a strong presumption in favour of equality of redistribution of income and wealth. I say, like Samuel, that I believe in presumptions rather than hard-and-fixed rules and so there might be considerations that trump the presumption. For example, Rawls, in *A Theory of Justice*, mentions incentives; Ronald Dworkin, in his work, draws attention to the importance of lifestyle choice itself in potentially justifying inequalities. But the presumption is in favour of equality, and the burden of justifying inequality rests with the person arguing for inequality. It is not for the egalitarian to justify movements away from market-derived inequality, it is for the supporters of that market-derived inequality to justify movement away from the morally appropriate baseline of equality. What follows from this, in institutional terms, is very much open to debate. But I think for the reasons that I have said, the basic liberal perspective on markets is very nicely summed up by John Stuart Mill in his autobiography, where he says ‘the social problem of the future we considered [i.e., himself and Harriet Taylor] to be [was] how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership of the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour?’
Debate

Q: I would like to say that I entirely agree with Samuel Brittan’s presentation and his view of Liberalism, and with his definition of one of fundamental presumption of negative liberty, and personal choice. I am not sure that it is entirely compatible with the last speaker’s view about the presumption of equality, but that would be a longer discussion. Anyway, I can understand how you reach the presumption of equality, but I can hardly see how the presumption of equality is compatible with the presumption of liberty anyway. But I have more precise questions to Sir Samuel Brittan. The first question is: if that is your opinion of Liberalism, should not we then say that such different people as John Maynard Keynes, Milton Friedman, and Fredrick Hayek are all liberals in your sense? Would you agree with that or not? Does it follow what you have said or not? And the second question: if it follows – and I think it does – some people would say that if Liberalism can apply to these three different people, to these three different views, it becomes too broad a concept, and in that case it could be almost empty. Others might argue that if Liberalism applies, that is a sign of strength rather than weakness. My question is: do you agree with the one or the other interpretation, or do you have your own interpretation?

Samuel Brittan: One of the things which I think I feel strongly as times go on is the futility of arguing about definitions of such terms. In some ways, Keynes and Hayek are all liberal, in some ways very different. To avoid these semantic arguments, I have spoken about a “humane individualism”, and made it very clear that I am not exactly what you’d call a social liberal. But one of the best defences I’ve seen of an individualistic market economy is in the last few pages of Keynes’s *General Theory*. He spends a lot of time talking about the inefficiencies of labour markets, how the state must behave, some of which follow, some of which are dated. But he then goes on that if the state could manage to take care of effective demands, then there is a lot to be said about a traditional equal individualistic economic system, and he does it with a flowery eloquence. So whether you want to talk about varieties of Liberalism or you want to talk with different words, I describe myself these days as a ‘humane individualist’. But I think the panel was lost when George Bush Sr. made Liberalism into a boo-word and the opponents then picked it up as their word, which, in a curious way, swung the pendulum and pushed the liberals towards the *dirigiste* individualist camp. We could argue until midnight about what should be done, but I am not prepared to argue too much over which words should be used to describe one’s beliefs. If I just make one point about myself, it is quite true that I have argued for years in favour of things such as minimum income and some state-organised redistribution of capital. I have not actually said that these things increase negative liberty; what I have said is that negative liberty is not the only value, and you cannot derive policy based on that value. I am not going to argue that they are liberal or individualistic. I just happen to believe in them, and I wish Gordon Brown would take a little time out from saving the world to defend these ideas, some of which he introduced as chancellor.

Q: My question is about different usages of the term “market”. It seems to me that there are at least two differences. One is an economic mechanism, and then of course the merits of the market should be the subject of scientific investigation. Or is it actually a reference word to let all intellectual and political fights where our settled liberal values happen to end up choosing the market? The word “market” is then used as a reference to those values. The trouble is that now the economy is much more complicated and we are in a different situation, and as a consequence it is clear that the market mechanism has a lot of complexities, and we
have to pay for it in defending mechanism as part of Liberalism. Would it not be much easier to give up the term and use something else instead?

**Samuel Brittan:** What I have given up, Liberalism, is what I bring back again. We are now going to give up market – how the social scientists at university will continue giving up one of those certain words after the other! I think the word “market” should be used descriptively more. I do not devaluate it but it should be used descriptively, but of course there is a difference between individual markets and the global idea of the market system. Some pragmatic economists in the middle criticised economists for all time, arguing about markets as the happy end and saying they should investigate individual markets more. Unfortunately, that means getting their hands dirty, which we would not like doing.

**Ronald Dworkin:** I want to go back to Beijing, and economic and political Liberalism. Now, it struck me as interesting that Professor Zhang said markets promote equality, and if that is true, why is it that the kind of equality that markets promote is more valuable than the kind of equality produced by democracy? Your argument that China is not ready for democracy made two interesting steps. One is that people who vote make decisions on emotional grounds rather than rational grounds. It is certainly true, we all suffer some from it, but the record of dictators is not very good either! We can think of dictators, some of whom lived in Beijing, who made irrational decisions. A lot of damage was done in this way.

Then you said that China needs a middle class before attaining democracy. That is a complicated and interesting argument. But I do not think the reason that you gave, that the middle class has a stake in the outcome, is really convincing. This is because it may be a question of education, but let’s say China’s agrarian or rural population surely has a stake, a dramatic stake, in the direction the country now grows. I do not think it is the fact of middle-class property ownership that should be decisive.

And I have a question about money and negative liberty. Negative liberty is freedom as a right; no one could stop you. Money does not give you that. A rich person might want to travel in my car from Oxford to London, but there is no more negative liberty to do that because he is rich. The money does give him the opportunity to bribe me, but it is necessary to bribe me, and I think it would be a confusion to say that his power to bribe me is his negative liberty. Because that is not an instance of his having the freedom to do something without government interference; if I call a policeman, he won’t be able to get into my car.

**Zhang Weiying:** First, if the government controls multiple resources, and policy always changes, then ordinary people cannot do business. Only those with very strong connections with the government can do business, so they can make very huge profits (like some in northeast area). But in areas like Zhejian province, the government interferes very little, but anyone can do business. So the profit margin is very low. So the income equality is low.

As for political reform, the Chinese Communist Party destroyed culture for property rights. In today’s China, although we have laws safeguarding property rights, they are hardly respected by ordinary people, and Marx’s theory of exploitation is still taught in the universities and high schools. Suppose you have a general referendum in this kind of culture. You have proposed that we take all the property from rich people. You will find a majority of people agreeing with that. The bill would be passed. I think we need a culture of property rights. Look at the history of Britain where, at first, only those with property had the right to vote. And in China this would not be accepted today, but at the same time voting equality would not work. Education is needed to teach rational thinking and not emotional thinking about the future.
Stuart White: I do not want to deny that there are conflicts between liberties and equalities, but I do want to reject the way people could talk about the equality/liberty dilemma, because I think one cannot be just against liberty. I think liberty is something distributed, and so you have to take a view on what the proper distribution of liberty is, which then immediately entangles your concern with liberty and its distributional outcome with an account of equality. On the point about definition of negative liberty, let me see if I have got this right: the definition of negative liberty that Ronald is proposing is the absence of coercive interference in doing what you have a right to do.

Ronald Dworkin: You have freedom to do it unhindered by any coercive authority. That is the classic notion of negative liberty. The government cannot stop me saying what I want to say. I do not have to pay to say what I want to say. What I am rejecting as fake is the dilemma of negative liberty versus poverty. I do not believe this conflict. But the idea that we can preserve a distinction between negative and positive liberty, and then say ‘poverty limits negative liberty’ is not a good argument.

Stuart White: I am not sure how far you want to build the notion of rights violations into the limitation of negative liberty. There is a standard objection to the idea that we should build some notion of rights violations into it, which is the example of the justly imprisoned criminal. The criminal does not have the right to march out of prison. It is no restriction on what they have a right to do to constrain them within the prison grounds, but we still want to say that by being imprisoned they suffer from loss of negative liberty.

Samuel Brittan: What is the argument? Obviously if you are in prison you suffer a severe loss of negative liberty!

Stuart White: Yes. The point is that if an interference with my liberty only counts as an interference if it seems in some sense unrightful, then on that definition of what an interference with liberty is, a justly imprisoned criminal does not suffer a loss of liberty.

Samuel Brittan: I think that’s playing with words. Most of these words have a background in history, and I do not think John Stuart Mill thought about negative liberty as being the right to go onto someone’s property (or to have a free ride in Dworkin’s car); it was meant within the property system. Under the laws of the country you could decide on your course of action, but it would be crazy to say that anybody who cannot afford anything (in the earlier case, the man couldn’t afford to go to Manchester), it is unfortunate enough, but I do not think if you handed him a cheque he would be free to go to Manchester. I hate arguing about meanings of words, but surely no sane person would regard it as a containment of negative liberty that I cannot go in to the Master’s Room at Balliol and be treated as if I were he.

Jan-Werner Müller: What are the reasonable legitimate constraints on liberty? And this question changes over time. There have been enormous cultural changes affecting what the constraints consist of. I think what Stuart is trying to argue is that there are other types of intervening factors that act as constraints on human activity, and rather than mechanically relate a particular notion of the relationship between human activity and liberty, we need to open the field to include the negative conception of liberty, and understand that this coercion or constraint issue is not about liberty; it is about constraints. And I would like to say that the notion of constraint is a flexible one; it is something that, in evolving, accrues meanings, and also loses meanings all the time. Sam, you said you do not want to occupy yourself with the
meanings of words, but that is what we have to be doing all the time. You have to occupy yourself with the meanings of the words, because we are debating semantic issues. Semantic issues are simply the use of meaning, and this is another way of saying the same thing. We are trying to understand the changing and flexible and useful meanings of both liberty and liberty within the concept of Liberalism.

Q: I would like to go back to Beijing by the way of Oxford. The first economic liberal that I met was in the sitting-room of John Williams’ supervisor in Oxford, and happened to be my brother-in-law. He was the director of the Institute of Marxist and Leninist Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, an economist who was part of the democratic movement in the period, in the 1990s. He was one of the most persuasive opponents of political Liberalism as a consequence of his analysis of the limits of economic reform under traditions of the existing government and party structure in China. His argument was economically based: he said that the economic reform will be limited and deformed without a certain amount of political reform in the liberal direction. One thing that might help reconcile your view and his view is thinking of political reform and political Liberalism again not as the advocate, but as something that can be achieved stage by stage. And particularly the argument that has some resonance now: what aspects of political reform are necessary for the success of economic reform? Two things I would like to mention. What is transparency of decision-making including the argumentation that leads on to decisions? The other is the accountability of those in power, where the accountability is in some sense to an element in society that does not hold power directly itself. And again, one of the arguments that had been put forward at that time for democratisation was not absolute democratisation, but perhaps a limited license. And this nowadays sounds quite old-fashioned and reactionary, but nevertheless in Chinese circumstances it might be an argument to put forward as a necessary immediate step towards opening up the answerability of government without leaving the possibility of populism, irrationality, and thought itself shown in the cultural revolution which many Chinese intellectuals of both sides still fear as a possibility of too-rapid a reform. I really want to ask a question: if you start with economic Liberalism, can you stop there, and what happens with the political reform you see as inherent in market Liberalism, and what parts do you think are indispensable for the time being?

Zhang Weiyi: Please do not misunderstand me: I also think that political reform should come, but my argument is that it should be gradual. The first is still to need to deregulate economy, because government still controls a lot of resources, and so if you want to do business, you have to go through many administrative procedures. Deregulation is also a kind of political reform. What is important for political reform in China is to narrow down government parts. Second, I think it is very important for us to gradually build an independent legal court, judicial system. Then the people have a culture of rule of law, otherwise you could not have general elections. But who makes judgments is the big problem. In the past three decades, China almost completed economic reform. I mean almost, since there are still a lot of things to do, but it is more technical. We know where we should go. But the government still holds a majority share of some listed big companies. How fast and how much should they reduce these holdings of stocks? That is a very technical question. In the next 30 years, more important is constitutional reform. Constitutional reform can consist of two parts: first is an independent judicial system, and second is truly democratic political reform. The political reform should come second, not first. This is my argument. China has already done quite a lot of things in political reform, not like some people suppose, that China has done none of the reforms. I do not think that is right.
Knick Harley: I would like to try to redirect the discussion somehow. I am slightly disappointed that this session on markets seems to be largely a discussion on freedom, and I would like to try to direct it back. I think some issues have come up yesterday and this morning that relate quite directly to this. We have not really come to grips with some of these. Samuel Brittan talked about Liberalism equating to personal freedom, equality to Socialism, Conservatism to authority, or perhaps to preservation of past values. It seems to me that in a market sense, the idea of Liberalism seems to have slipped into the Austrian definition in the political debate. I do not like market Liberalism being constrained in the Austrian straitjacket, but I think there are important issues there about efficiencies of markets; about information; organisation; about mechanisms of entry and exits, introducing new ideas or creatively destroying old ideas. I think Schumpeter is an important Austrian name that has not come up here. I would like to know if the panellists have some thoughts about this collection of ideas that I have thrown down without a great deal of coherence.

Samuel Brittan: I haven’t read both Schumpeter and Hayek, but I have read Ayn Rand! The reason why I spoke about Friedman was because I thought it would be nearer to this conference. But I have something to say about in what way we can and in what way we should not criticise China, and also about another rift in Liberalism between the Cobdenites, who believe in non-intervention, and liberal imperialists, now symbolised by our foreign secretary, David Milliband.

Jessica Rawson: You avoided the current credit crunch, but is that not an example of restriction of liberty and Liberalism? The way it is played out by government intervention or not has produced a highly restricted situation for a very large number of people.

Susan Mendus: This morning, Stuart, you pressed me on whether tolerance is a value in itself or whether it gains its value from some other value. I think the same question might be asked about markets: the way they gain value in themselves or whether they are underpinned by some other value. And if so, what is that value? And that leads pretty naturally to the second question: I am very greatly sympathetic to your association of liberty and poverty, and your desire to say that poverty is, in some sense, a restriction on liberty. But I just got very befuddled when you wanted to do that in terms of negative liberty, and I am not sure whether it is because at a deep level I think that the distinction between negative and positive liberty is a bad idea, or whether it is because I do not understand your account of negative liberty. So this is a plea for help. I would like to support your march to an identification of poverty as somehow liberty-reducing, but I am not quite sure how I should do that.

Timothy Garton Ash: I am very glad that you got the initial dichotomy between economic Liberalism understood as markets and political Liberalism understood as multi-party democracy. Because in your latter answers you started to tell a different story, where certain components of classical Liberalism, such as limited government and the rule of law, are essential to secure the proper functioning of markets. My question is this: if we take your priority, if we assume our priority is not individual liberty or classical autonomy, but the best possible functioning of the free market economy, what are the classical components of classical Liberalism that you would regard as necessary for that purpose, beyond the rule of
law and limited government? For example, would you regard the far-reaching freedom of expression or freedom of assembly as essential to securing a well-functioning free market economy?

**Stuart White:** Markets do not have an independent value. I think that anywhere there is scarcity markets are going to be instrumentally valuable because of their connection with things like diversity of lifestyle choice. Also, I want to talk about the unpredictability of choice. The only example I have come across is an attempt to reconcile the idea of a centrally-planned economy with responsiveness to consumer preferences, the theory that is called participatory economics, par-econ, which is influential in some wings of the anti-globalisation movement. Under par-econ, you have to draw up an annual consumption plan, which is submitted to the authorities and then aggregated and then the plan would be devolved down to producer associations. Part of the problem here is that we have to publicly reveal our consumption plan, but also the thought that I can anticipate now what my needs are for a whole year is fanciful. So, only in a world without scarcity would it not be a bad thing if markets no longer existed.

Imagine a world in which all resources are privately owned. For every object or space in the world, there is somebody who owns it. Now, if there is somebody in this world who has no property, what action are they free to perform? The answer is absolutely no action whatsoever. Whatever action I try to perform, I have to lay claim to an objective space which belongs to somebody else, and in doing that I become vulnerable to the power of coercive interference to stop me doing whatever I want to do. There is no action I can perform without being subject to the legally-sanctioned coercive interference of somebody else. In that sense, I completely lack negative liberty. Let’s say I want to meditate. Where can I meditate without being subjected to somebody’s power of legal coercive interference? So in that sense I think poverty constrains negative liberty.

**Zhang Weiyiing:** There is a very important lesson that we should understand: market process, in particular the importance of entrepreneurs in economic development. I think this is very important to understanding China’s change in the past three decades. There are three groups. The first group are rural entrepreneurs, in the first decade – the rural people who had switched to business. Second, official-turned-entrepreneurs, who used to work in government and then started businesses in the second decade. The third decade sees the returned-from-overseas entrepreneurs; people who studied overseas return to China to start their business. They are the leading people in the past decades who developed the economy, and this is very important to understanding markets.

Second, how do we define “market Socialism”? If you define market Socialism as ‘market plus state ownership’, then we have a totally unique system. You cannot have market Socialism. I have done some theoretical work which shows that when you introduce market competition, the state sector would collapse. That is what has happened and would happen in China. The Chinese government did not want to privatize the state sector in the first place, but by the mid-1990s we had no other way but to privatise, because when you introduce some private sector as competition, the big state sector makes a loss.

Third, I always think that freedom is more important than democracy. Democracy is a last-resort solution. Ordinary people have more choice in the liberal free market. But certainly some issues must be solved by government, which means you need democracy. And for China, transparency is very important. Currently, the internet provides a very important challenge. So when the government makes any policies, it needs to listen to those people who are in the press and on the internet. The government needs to realise that they
can no longer do whatever they like, and have to do something to change. It is very important. So I think e-democracy is very useful, but it cannot solve all the problems.

**Samuel Brittan:** I think markets are mechanisms, and it’s absurd to worship a mechanism. To my mind, markets have two values: they are a necessary but not sufficient condition of liberty, broadly defined; and also seem empirically to be a condition of prosperity. Also, the question was asked whether freedom of expression is necessary for markets to work well. I wish I could say yes. But I am afraid as the evidence shows, freedom to express a critique of sub-prime mortgages, the freedom to be very critical of some things that bank executives do, would certainly help, but is freedom of speech atheism in Victorian England, or to attack Marx and Lenin in China? Are these preconditions for a functioning and prosperous market economy? I wish I could say yes. But I cannot really say that freedom of expression over a large area is necessary for a prosperous market economy. Put it the other way around: if you are in favour of this freedom, then you have to favour a strong market sector. But it does not work the other way around.

**Tony Curzon Price:** You intriguingly said that you thought that values like equity and people having redistribution were values somehow independently and autonomously. I was wondering what those are as regards the market, why they exist. Are they market failures; are they public goods? Or it is an externality? Or is it a simply private preference on your part? And if they are either public goods or externalities, is there a sense in which a further development of the market actually requires some degree of redistribution?

**Michael Freedeen:** When are markets inappropriate? When do you think it is not a good idea that a market mechanism should be at work?

**Jacob Levy:** Hayek has put forward a sort of toolkit to answer questions like this, but it’s not clear to me how it would be useful here. What are the boundaries that should be drawn for classical Liberalism?

**Inoue Tatsuo:** I have two questions. First is on the concept of negative freedom, and the other on the relationship between this concept and markets. I think we should give up the concept of negative liberty because it does not define the meaning of liberty itself. It just shows the needs for liberty, but it does not show what we have to defend against state intervention. It says nothing at all about it. Only the concept of positive liberty can offer that meaning. There is one distinct conceptual element underlying the concept of positive and negative liberty, but it has nothing to do with liberty itself, but equality. Nature cannot violate the concept of negative liberty. Even if we are prevented from doing something by a natural disaster, it is not a violation of negative liberty. Our negative freedom is violated only if other human beings prevented us from doing what we want to do. But what is violated is not our liberty but the relationship between us and other people. The violation of negative liberty must be criticised because it imposes on us a hierarchical order between the coercer and the coerced. It violates the basic equality between two individuals. So the concept of negative liberty would be useful to equality.

I think it is not very helpful for us to characterise the market in terms of negative liberty. A market is not a set of negative liberties; it is a set of positive entitlements constituted by legal relations and backed by the state. Contract law, for example, gives us a power to legislate on a small scale, which is publicly enforced between the parties. And the property law gives us a set up of positive governance to use and dispose of the resources with law and property
law. For whom is that? So it is very misleading to characterise markets in terms of the negative concept of liberty.

Q: It sounds like market Capitalism can exist without individual freedom, but that democracy and individual freedom cannot exist without market Utilitarianism. One precedes the other. If that is the case, and markets are the superstructure in which Liberalism exists, does the nature of market Utilitarianism change, and, with it, does the definition of freedom change, and the definition of Liberalism?

Francis Chevenal: Don’t you think that the completion of economic reform in China is maybe more than a technical matter, because it requires a guarantee of freehold of property rights of farmers and that is a very difficult question still to be solved?

Stuart White: I guess I just took it as read that there were to be lots of qualifications in saying markets to be a good thing. But let me make some of those reservations more explicit. I think there is a standard set of welfare economic arguments about market failure which would have indications for placing limits on the operation of markets. I think I can make paternalistic arguments for closing down markets’ activity in certain kinds of drugs. I think I can be egalitarian in case of what is sometimes called selective egalitarianism, so we might think the inequality of distribution of income and wealth as such is okay, but not in something as healthcare or education, so we will take both particular goods out of the general market distributed independently. But of course you can still use so-called internal market mechanisms within those spheres to help with the allocation of resources, but what you are doing is at least segregating that market from other markets, setting up the distribution of purchasing power within these specific markets for egalitarian purposes. But there is also what you might call “civic externality” arguments for limiting markets, limiting the amount of time spent on working hours regulation, on the grounds of promoting a culture of active, engaged citizenship, or, for example, feminist arguments for limiting the buying and selling of pornography, the idea that the availability of pornography reduces the esteem in which we hold women.

Zhang Weiying: I think no clear boundary between economic reform and political reform exists. But it might be a contradiction of state sector economic reform. But protection of property rights is beyond economic reform without constitutional reform. This is why I think the economic reform almost complete but there are a lot of things to do. Second, the boundary of markets: my simple argument is that markets won’t work if the government does not allow them to work. When a government wants to do something, the market will also do that. Governments can compete with markets but should not monopolize. That is my argument. In education, healthcare, etc., governments should do something. But also, markets can do that. If a government competes with the market, then we can see what is more efficient.

Samuel Brittan: If I were a member of the economics industry, I would talk about implicit markets, and the market of pornography and sex-buying, those sorts of things. I think that, realistically, there has not been very much discussion about what the limits of markets should be. I think Hayek would have been very sympathetic with the idea of limits to markets, not in terms of price control, admittedly, but he would have accepted much of the idea that certain kinds of women could not do their work on certain streets in Vienna. He was never explicit, but what he did talk about were the traditional rules of the society, and he talked
about a lot of implicit wisdom, which no one human being could have. Unfortunately, he is
not going into any detail about what these traditional rules were. And we now have to do the
work, rather urgently too, in terms of financial markets.

I want to talk about Liberalism in China. There are two difficulties. One is distinctive
distaste about economic activity. That we have discussed. There is another relationship
between communism, which says we should interfere as little as possible into the affairs of
other countries, and liberal imperialism as propagated by Henry Jackson.

I am certainly not in favour of sending an invading force from Taiwan to impose
democracy. It would be absurd. I do not argue that Western democracy might be the best
model for China at this stage. I regard democracy as not the same as Liberalism. Democracy
is a decision rule, which might be suitable at some stage of development; it should not be
imposed on other countries. And nobody is in the position to force it upon the Chinese.
What I do think we are free to comment on is to what extent other countries observe open
society. Listening to the Chinese participant discuss the different types of Liberalism
yesterday, I was thinking, how free would I be to discuss this in Tiananmen Square? How does
this doctrine tally with the repression in China? This is not the feature of what Popper called
an open society, and I could talk nonsense without endangering the will for life, without
losing negative liberty and ending up in prison. We all have a right to express our views, and
I didn't think it was right to hold the Olympic Games in Beijing. I think we need to
distinguish very clearly between democracy within the decision rule and a free and open
society. We are at liberty to comment on the situation in other countries, but not allowed to
enforce our conceptions on other countries.
6. **Universalism**

**John Ikenberry**

Liberalism – or the liberal vision – is, as a body of ideas and aspirations, deeply universalistic. The universalism of Liberalism follows inevitably from its Enlightenment understandings of natural rights and human reason. It also follows from the presumed superiority of the social, economic, and political systems that are constructed out of liberal ideals and experience. On the global stage, Liberalism is a “one world” vision in which the deep forces of modernization and enlightened self-interest push and pull the world along a common pathway – a journey, according to the liberal narrative – in which the shaping and disciplining dynamics of legitimacy, efficiency, and a shared regard for rights and a common humanity give the liberal ordering of polities and international relations the edge, allowing it to triumph over rival world historical ideologies and political projects.

Liberalism offers a vision of a “one world” global system. But the specific character and logic of liberal Universalism – both the ideas and the real-world political formations – have evolved across the last two centuries. Open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem-solving, shared sovereignty, the rule of law – these are aspects of the liberal vision that have made appearances in various combinations and changing ways over the decades and centuries.

Indeed, this evolving liberal vision is (seemingly) confirmed in what is arguably the most important macro-political transformation in world politics over the last two centuries – what might be described as the “liberal ascendancy”. This has involved the extraordinary rise of the liberal democratic states from weakness and obscurity in the late 18th century into the world’s most powerful and wealthy states, propelling the West and the liberal capitalist system of economics and politics to world prominence. All of this occurred in fits and starts in the 20th century amidst world war and economic upheaval. At historical junctures along the way, liberal states have
pursued various efforts to establish rules and institutions of governance. Adaptation and innovation, necessity and choice, success and failure – all of these are aspects of liberal internationalism’s movement along its 20th century pathway. And the drama of the liberal ascendancy continues.

But does the liberal ascendancy truly validate the universal claims of Liberalism? The 20th century realization of liberal international order has been dependent on non-universal supports. In particular, post-war liberal international order has been built around Western democratic solidarity and American hegemonic leadership. American power and Atlantic partnership have provided the structural supports for the wider liberal system. What happens to liberal international order in an era when America has declined and the West no longer dominates the global system? The universal pretensions of Liberalism have not yet been put to the test – but they soon will be. Let me say a bit more about the universalistic claims of Liberalism, followed by a few points about the prospects for a “one world” liberal order in the age of rising non-Western powers.

Three Facets of Liberal Universalism

1) Normative claim
The first facet is a normative claim about the natural rights of individuals. This is the oldest and most basic way in which Liberalism asserts a universal vision. Individuals possess inherent rights by virtue of their humanity. This liberal conviction dating to Locke was meant to redefine the relationship between the individual and the state – but it also carried with it a view about humanity and the dignity and equality of individuals on a universal scale.

As Michael Doyle argues, this Lockean conception of rights-bearing individuals had implications for how states that safeguarded these rights – liberal states – were to relate to each other, laying the foundation for international law, norms of national independence and self-determination, and the idea of a world community of sovereign states. (Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*) If liberal states must respect the rights of their own people, so too should they respect the rights of peoples in other states. Out of this liberal logic, laws and treaties between nations could be formed. The normative embrace of Liberalism at home created reasons for states to engage other liberal states with respect and restraint. After all, to exploit or coerce other liberal states involved the violation of the rights of individuals within these polities. The construction of international law was only a step away, and so too notions of a “one world” system of sovereign states.

The liberal vision of the natural rights of individuals also had more radical implications. If rights adhere in individuals because of their humanity, this means that humanity – or humankind – has a more
primordial status than states, even liberal states. And so humankind – or the international community – has a standing and a stake in the protection of these rights. This, of course, leads directly to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1948, proclaiming that all ‘human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ and that all the world’s people have the right to a full range of liberal protections, including equality before the law, freedom of expression, and the right to participate in government. In the half century that has followed, these “universal” liberal ideals are still not uncontested but they have gained wider recognition and today there are new international norms about the ‘responsibility to protect’. As such, the sovereignty of states is increasingly seen as contingent. When states do not act to protect the rights and welfare of their own people, the international community has an obligation to act. In many ways, this is the culmination of Liberalism’s universal normative claim.

2) *Functional claim*

The second facet is a functional claim about the superiority of the performance and adaptive capacity of liberal polities. Compared to alternative forms of political and economic order, liberal systems are more efficient and legitimate. They are more efficient in the sense that they offer a more productive framework for economic growth and wealth creation. They are better at innovating, organizing, producing, and modernizing. They are more legitimate in the sense that the state is an expression of the will of the people and not dependent for survival on coercion. The open, rule-based, and consensual forms of politics and economics in liberal polities makes them unusually capable of generating wealth, power, and security. Throughout the liberal ascendancy, alternative political-economic systems competed for domination. Autocratic, fascist, and communist systems offered ideologies and political projects on a global scale. Even into the last decades of the Cold War, serious debates existed about which system was winning the “great contest”. But across the eras, rival systems weakened, lost out, and fell to the wayside.

There are three implications of this functional claim for liberal Universalism. One is simply that other types of polities are less viable over the long term. And so the global system will gradually become increasingly dominated and populated by liberal democratic states. Obviously, the international system is not a straightforward Darwinian system of evolution based on the survival of the fittest. But it is a system that from era to era is dominated by the most powerful and wealthy states. There have also been historical moments when great wars – the Second World War and the Cold War –
War - did produce winners and losers that recast the balance between liberal and non-liberal states. Moreover, when liberal states dominate the system – as Britain did in the nineteenth and the United States has in the 20th century – they create rules and institutions that make it easier for other states to integrate and transition to liberal democracy.

A second implication is that, once established, the liberal international order creates “system effects” that provide additional incentives for a one world system. This is primarily a point about the organization of liberal Utilitarianism. In particular, a system of open trade – championed by liberal polities – facilitates growth and wealth creation among the trading states. This in turn expands the scope of the world capitalist system and creates incentives and opportunities for other states – transitional and non-capitalist states – to join in. The functional logic of liberal Utilitarianism leads states to seek economic gains from specialization and operation within the global division of labour. States outside this expanding order become increasingly weak in relative terms and marginalized – and so they face increasing incentives to seek liberal reforms and accommodate to the liberal capitalist system.

A third implication is the expanding scope and depth of transnational social relations within this liberal capitalist system. Again, this is a “system effects” point. The networks of social and political relationships expand with the growth of economic exchange. These transnational relationships serve to spread liberal norms and facilitate the integration of societies on the periphery of the liberal international order.

Taken together, the liberal vision expects an expanding international order that is ultimately universal in scope. No other systems of economics and politics offer such a promise. The features of liberal international order – economic openness, liberal democracy, rule of law, multilateral cooperation, and cooperative security – are mutually reinforcing. There are multiple economic and political starting points and pathways into the liberal order. States that join get wealthier and the wealthier the state the less likely it is to fail as a liberal democracy. As the liberal international order gains in its global scope, it becomes more powerful and wealthy relative to the alternatives. This places alternative forms of political order at an increasing disadvantage. With this logic, it is easy to see the functionally driven universalism of the liberal vision.

3) Developmental claim
Finally, there is a related developmental claim about Liberalism and modernity. This is the claim that modernity itself is pointed in a liberal direction. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, social theorists
have debated how industrialism and modernization would give shape to states and societies. Leading theorists, most notably Smith, Marx, and Weber, offered alternative claims about which socioeconomic and political systems would prove most viable given the constraints and opportunities of the Industrial Revolution. Within this debate, which has gone on over the last two centuries, is the liberal claim that liberal polities are most adaptive to the changing demands of modernization. They have a better “fit” with the grand socioeconomic changes associated with modernity. Liberal polities are more likely to allow the forces of modernization to be unleashed, and as modernization is unleashed, it creates incentives and opportunities for states to move in a liberal direction. And, as noted above, the liberal international order itself reinforces and encourages this global movement of liberal modernization.

The big claim here, of course, is that there really is only one pathway for modernity, and it is a liberal pathway. The actual types of polities that are congruent with the demands of modernization can be quite wide and they evolve from era to era and stage to stage – but, generally speaking, modernity and liberal democracy go hand-in-hand. Behind this liberal modernization vision are a cluster of arguments and assumptions. One is the functional argument discussed above in which competing types of states – liberal and non-liberal – rise and fall based on their long-term performance capacities. There is also a sort of historical-materialist assumption about “base and superstructure”. That is, the deep forces of change emerge first in the organization and technologies of production and exchange. These underlying forces of industrial and economic change shape, privilege, constrain, and reward various sorts of socio-political institutions. Another assumption is that some states are on the vanguard of this liberal developmental process while others are at earlier stages and junctures. At different stages along the developmental pathway, the role and requirements of the state will differ. So there will be a sort of hierarchy of states based on where states are within the developmental process.

Liberal modernization thinking was most prominent in the 1950s and 60s, reflected in the “industrial society” theorizing of Raymond Aron, Clark Kerr, Ralf Dahrendorf, and others. Some of these thinkers saw a general tendency toward convergence of liberal and authoritarian state types as industrialization proceeded. Most saw a pluralistic, open, and rule-based state as the most congenial with industrial modernization. At the same time, modernization theorists such as Seymour Martin Lipset and Walt Rostow made even more sweeping claims about how economic development was creating constituencies and opportunities within societies for democratic transitions. Liberal modernization theory varies in the extent to which it
offers deterministic and economically-reductionist claims about politics and the state. Aron, at the end of his *Eighteen Lessons on Industrial Society*, concludes that ‘the political’ has a ‘rhyme and rhythm’ of its own. The strong versions of liberal modernization theory are widely disputed. But in the two decades since the end of the Cold War, the notion that the pathway to modernity leads through the world of liberal democracy remains firmly a part of the liberal imagination.

A troubling implication of liberal modernization thinking is that, in the hands of powerful liberal states, it can legitimate hierarchy, hegemony, and imperialism. After all, states that are not part of the liberal developmental vanguard are lesser states – less developed, less modern, and less perfected. This view, of course, forms the intellectual foundations for late-19th and early-20th century “liberal imperialism”. Woodrow Wilson championed the universal norms of state sovereignty and self-determination, but he stopped short of applying this norm at Versailles to undermine British rule in Ireland, Egypt, and India, or French rule of Indochina. Sovereignty, apparently, required the emergence of an “organic” nation in which the people were politically mature enough to independently rule themselves. A liberal conceit emerges very quickly – namely, that domination and intervention in “backward” regions of the world is not just good geopolitics but is good for the pre-modern people themselves.

Where liberals disagree is over the timing and dynamics of liberal modernization and the degree to which liberal vanguard states must intervene in the process. Famously, the liberal modernization ideas of Walt Rostow and others provided the intellectual rationale for the Kennedy-era Cold War interventionism in contested and transitional third-world countries. The optimistic assumption was that active intervention could “hurry” the historical process. It also leads to the optimistic assumption that liberal innovations in the advanced world could be brought to bear on backward societies. Recall LBJ’s fanciful view that the TVA (a New Deal government development project in America) could be recreated on the Mekong Delta in South Vietnam! But this sort of interventionism does not follow inevitably from the assumptions of the liberal modernization vision. Indeed, to the extent that liberal vanguard states see the developmental process as working over the long-term in favour of liberal transitions, there is reason to be restrained and patient. (This is my own view as it relates to China. See my 2008 and 2009 *Foreign Affairs* articles. The key is to let the world historical process grind out its outcomes. China will eventually come our way. In the meantime, the emphasis of American and Western grand strategy should be on upholding and renewing the liberal international order that provides the foundation for liberal modernization forces to work
their magic.) This is why neo-conservatives are not really liberals. They do not buy into the assumption of the long-term advantages of the liberal democratic world (perhaps because they are more idealist than materialist in their outlook) and they do not believe that democratic transitions will occur without the United States forcing them to happen (they are impatient). But if you think history is on your side, you can let the deep forces of modernization do the hard work.

**Limits of Universalism**

Those who subscribe to the Universalism of the liberal vision must grapple with several issues that suggest its limits. Several of these issues are raised by the actual historical pathway of the liberal ascendency. First, the United States itself provided the hegemonic support for the post-war construction of a liberal international order – so how expansive and resilient will liberal order be without this active American sponsorship? The United States, led by FDR, originally sought to recreate the Wilsonian one world system of liberal international order with a bit more of a role for great power management than was provided with the League of Nations. But the weakness of Europe and the rising threat of Soviet power quickly pushed the United States to play a more direct role in creating and managing liberal order. The United States became the organizer and manager of Western liberal order. The American political system – and its alliances, technology, currency, and markets – became fused to the wider liberal order. The United States supported the rules and institutions of liberal internationalism but it was also given special privileges. In the shadow of the Cold War, the United States became the owner and operator of the liberal capitalist political system. The question today is: how will the system evolve – and how will the United States respond – to a successor liberal order in which the United States plays a less dominating role? For half a century, the United States essentially had the liberal order built to its specifications. What happens when this special status ends? If liberal order is an outgrowth and manifestation of the American era of dominance, is the Universalism that appears in this liberal international system really an illusion?

Second, the liberal project in the hands of Woodrow Wilson was a global project – but it failed. The liberal project in the hands of Truman and post-war American leaders was a Western project, at least in the first instance. The Atlantic region really provided the geopolitical foundation for the liberal project. NATO – not the UN – was the source of security protection. The American dollar and market – not Bretton Woods – was the source of economic openness, growth, and stability. The United States found it possible to make binding security commitments as it shifted from Wilsonian
collective security to alliance security built around democratic solidarity within the Atlantic region. This shift was two-fold. One was a movement toward more specific and explicit security commitments. Alliance partnerships entailed obligations but they were also limited liability agreements. Commitments were not universal and open-ended. Second, they were commitments that were backed by a political vision of a Western security community. The sense that America and Europe were imperilled by a common threat strengthened the feeling of Western solidarity. Again, what happens to liberal order as the Western foundation upon which it was built gives way to a global liberal order where security cooperation and civilizational solidarity is absent?

**Conclusion**
The protean character of the liberal project is based on the capacity of liberal polities to adapt to and profit from modernization. As a logic of politics and economics, liberal polities carry with them advantages of legitimacy and efficiency that allow them to thrive and dominate their environment – and to organize themselves worldwide with universal scale and scope. Liberalism has a theory and historical record that makes these sweeping claims credible.

But the question of whether Liberalism is truly a project with universal reach or not will only be put to the test in the coming decades as the centre of gravity of wealth and power shifts and diffuses to Asia. Are Asian countries, most crucially China, travelling a liberal developmental pathway pioneered by the United States and Europe? Or will China and other non-Western states perfect a non-liberal pathway to modernity? Are there “multiple modernities”? Again, China is the critical swing state. Some observers claim that an alternative non-liberal model of development is emerging in the East – a so-called “authoritarian capitalist” alternative. But the far more obvious feature of the Chinese experience is in fact its dramatic evolution in the direction of liberal Capitalism (if not yet liberal democracy). In the decades ahead, if China does in fact further integrate into the world capitalist system, embraces an increasingly rule-based political order, and moves in the direction of accountable government, the universal pretensions of Liberalism will be confirmed. The final ratification of the Universalism of the liberal vision would be a future historical moment when it is China – not the United States or Europe – that is the leading champion of a liberal – that is to say, open and rule-based – international order.
Inoue Tatsuo

Professor Ikenberry’s standpoint can be characterized as “liberal historical materialism,” to use the term he himself used in our e-mail communication before our conference on Liberalisms. Although he did not use this term in his presentation in the conference, it seems to me that his argument still has the substance which can be aptly described as liberal historical materialism. My comment is focused on that substance.

Ikenberry’s stance of liberal historical materialism reminds me of the argument Hiroji Baba, a Japanese Marxist economist, made almost two decades ago when the communist regimes in the former USSR and Eastern Europe collapsed. Baba conceded that the collapse of the communist regimes showed that Marxism practically lost its ideological war with Capitalism. But he claimed that the practical defeat of Marxism proved the theoretical truth of its key tenet, historical materialism, which holds that the rise and decline of ideologies is determined by the success and failure of the economic infrastructures of “productive power” and “productive relations”, which generate them as rationalizing devices or intellectual cosmetics. Marxism as an ideology was defeated because the economic infrastructure of the political regimes that held it as their official doctrine lost their competition with Utilitarianism in enhancing economic productivity. The economic failure of Marxism as an ideology offered an ironical proof for the validity of historical materialism as its meta-ideological epistemology. He used the term kanashiki yuibutsushikan, sad or tragic historical materialism, to epitomise its ironical fate.

Impressed by the Japanese economic success until the early 1990’s, Baba held that the last ideological victor was not Western liberal Capitalism, but what he called Kaishashugi, “companyism” if literally translated, referring to a communitarian kind of Capitalism prevalent in Japan until recently. Despite the difference in judgment, about which ideology will be the last victor, his underlying thesis of ironical epistemic victory of historical materialism has much in common with the meta-ideological perspective underlying Professor Ikenberry’s functional and developmental arguments for the universal claims of liberal order.

I suspect, however, that Professor Ikenberry’s reference to the historical materialist perspective in assessing the universal claims of liberal politics is more obfuscating than revealing. Let me make two remarks on this point.

First, the historical materialist language leads or misleads him into confusion between the genetic or causal explanation of what he calls liberal ascendancy and the justification of the universal claim of Liberalism. The liberal claim to universality is the claim that every country in the world has
a normatively sound reason to keep or develop a liberal regime. The reason in question may be an internal one derivable from each country’s deeper normative commitment, or an external one which has a philosophical validity independent of such a commitment. Internal liberal universalism claims that every country has its own internal reason to develop a liberal regime, while the external liberal universalism claims that there is a philosophically valid reason for each country to do so. To assess the justifiability of liberal universalism is to assess whether each claim is tenable.

But all that historical materialism can do is to explain the cause of the genesis of the liberal ascendancy, not its reasons. Even if historical materialist explanation of liberal ascendancy were true, it can still be the case that nations in the world have no other choice but to join in the liberal capitalist camp because, what Professor Ikenberry calls its “system effect” or what economists would call its “network externality”, has pushed them into the situation where their economy would be destroyed unless they do so. To say that they have an internally acceptable or externally validated reason to do so in this case would be as ridiculous as to say that a person who succumbed to a robber’s order, “Life or money?” had such a reason to do so.

Furthermore, even if an alternative historical materialist prognosis of the decline of the liberal order should come true as a result of the development of the current global economic crisis into a devastating catastrophe, it can still be the case that those nations, which are pressurized to abandon the liberal regime, have no reason to be glad of the change but rather have ample reasons to deplore it and to search for a way back to the liberal status quo ante or for a renewed form of economically viable liberal order. Whether or not the historical materialist perspective is tenable as a genetic explanation of liberal ascendancy or as a prognosis of liberal decline, it is irrelevant to the assessment of justifiability of liberal Universalism.

Secondly, the historical materialist perspective is inadequate even for genetic explanation and prognosis. Professor Ikenberry claims that economic efficiency and political legitimacy of liberal order are mutually reinforcing. This is a happy scenario. Arguably, it is, more often than not, true, if not always true. But when it is true, it shows the explanatory inadequacy of the historical materialist perspective because it leads us to realize that there is no unilateral explanatory order between economic efficiency and political legitimacy, such that the former is always an explanans while the latter is always an explanandum. In some context economic efficiency must be explained in terms of political legitimacy, not vice versa. This is no wonder, because economic productivity does not just depend on capitalist profit-making incentives but also on the working-class
peoples’ willingness to work hard, which in turn depends on their perception of whether they are more or less fairly treated, not simply and unilaterally exploited. Liberal regimes cannot receive popular recognition of its political legitimacy without attending to distributive fairness for the general public to some minimum extent and securing democratic procedures for conflict resolution about distributive fairness. Economic efficiency of the liberal regime is a by-product of its endeavour to obtain political legitimacy.

Seen from this perspective, it is not simply the case that the Communist regimes in the former USSR and East Europe were defeated by the liberal regimes because they failed to enhance economic productivity. It is also the case that they were defeated in competition for economic productivity, at least partly, because they failed to obtain legitimacy through popular recognition. China has so far been successful in maintaining a rapid economic growth because the Communist government has made up for its legitimacy deficit by saving its people from abject poverty. But once they go beyond sheer subsistence level, popular dissatisfaction with gross distributive inequality will enhance political tensions to a dangerous extent. The difference in terms of the income ratio between the top ten per cent and the bottom ten per cent is now already greater in China than in the United States. The terrible demographic imbalance generated by the one-child policy will cause severe intergenerational distributive conflicts when the demographic time bomb explodes. The future sustainability of economic vigour in China depends on the extent to which the Communist regime will enhance its legitimacy in the eyes of its people by embarking on political transformation.

Let me add one brief comment on a related problem. Professor Ikenberry regards the hegemony of US as one major cause of liberal ascendancy. That may well be true as a generic explanation. But as current defenders of American hegemony like Joseph Nye emphasizes, it depends on the so-called soft power, as well as on military and economic power. Soft power is not just the power to control information but it also involves the power to influence the value perceptions of the people in the world. Of course, soft power can be and has, in fact, been abused by the US to manipulate global public opinions in a sinister way. But soft power cannot be sustainable unless it has some credible core. As a famous political adage says, ‘we cannot deceive everyone forever, although we can deceive some of them for some of the time.’ This means that the US as a contemporary hegemon must make sincere efforts to receive global legitimacy recognition if its soft power is to be sustained. The fact that the “liberal ascendancy” has been shaped by American hegemony in a non-negligible way does not imply that the
universal claim of liberal order is reducible to sheer American “victor’s justice” - it implies that it is not.

Now I would like to make a brief concluding remark. The language of historical Materialism is the language of ideology-critique used by Marxists to debunk the arbitrariness and groundlessness of the universal claim of Liberalism. But Professor Ikenberry used that language to show how defensible that claim is. He used the wrong language. He should have used the normative language of political morality to search for a globally acceptable principle that grounds and conditions the legitimacy of liberal order.

Pierre Hassner

I want to salute what I consider a beautiful and courageous act of faith by John Ikenberry in exploring the victory of the liberal order. I am with him in thinking that Liberalism provides the most efficient and the most morally acceptable order around. Still, I am reminded of a dialogue between two people from the other camp, Bush and Aznar, the Spanish prime minister, on the eve of the Iraqi war, in which Aznar said: ‘I agree with everything you believe – the only thing which worries me is your optimism.’ To which Bush answered, ‘I am optimistic because I know I’m right’.

I think John is right but I am less optimistic than him. I think it is particularly courageous because this kind of idea of one world and a universal republic of freedom emerged in the 18th century and was revived after each World War and after the Cold War. But now we have entered less peaceful times and he has the courage of promoting it at the moment of this huge economic crisis, which nobody knows how might end (whether it will result in a minor adjustment or really change and bring the world back from Capitalism to protectionism and nationalism); when all the progress, all the international institutions are paralysed, if you see the role the UN in the events in Georgia or Darfur – these institutions are failing their “responsibility to protect.” There is no possibility they could protect anybody. And there are drug cartels, money laundering, organised crime, terrorism and so on.

I consider myself a liberal internationalist but I belong to a different tradition; that of Tocqueville who thought there is an inner battle between freedom and equality and there are different outcomes possible; that of Schumpeter, who thought Capitalism was the most efficient economic system possible but assumed it would fail because it cannot produce legitimacy among the young and intellectuals, and so on; of Aron, who said that he who thinks people will be moved by their interests rather than by their passions, has not understood the 20th century; and Stanley Hoffmann,
whose article on *The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism*, written at the time of the Clinton administration, is still valid today.

I see the world very differently from John. I see two great forces, which are in a kind of dialectic relationship: Capitalism and globalisation destroying cultures, creating prosperity but also inequality. And, in reaction to that, identity politics in the form of nationalism, religious fundamentalism, ethnicity, etc. I think the task of Liberalism is to mediate between those two forces – softening the shock of confrontation by bringing to international order some sort of regularity and law, which exists in our domestic liberal societies. Yet, I feel more and more as though we are fighting an uphill battle against these two powerful forces and the problem is how to defend our principles in a world which we, in the liberal West, can no longer control and in which our legitimacy is contested quite bluntly by religious fundamentalism and also by this huge resentment against us, which Brzezinski called a global political awakening. Our best ideas are seen as trickery to maintain our domination. Maybe this pessimism is a matter of my natural temperament but there are also reasons for this, I believe.

Now, as far as some distinctions made by Professor Ikenberry are considered – Universalism first. I strongly believe that there are universal principles and values which, even if they emerged more clearly in the West, are not a monopoly of the West. Even if Huntington speaks about the clash of civilisations, suggesting our universal principles are only Western principles and Universalism and multiculturalism are two great enemies, I do not believe it. I believe that there is a universal set of values, which has been firstly developed by the West.

There are great differences in traditions. They claim very different priorities between these values, and these principles and cultures will assert themselves. This is where I differ from Western, in particular US, liberal internationalists, who say the emerging powers should have a greater voice in our international order; they should be stakeholders. Asia and other regions do want to boost their own traditions. They do not want to just be offered a seat in the existing model, and they want to shape it. The important thing is, we are in one world, but politics is not just about seeing the individuals or seeing globally. Politics is made by groups against each other. And the great drama is that the problems are global, but the structure is still either between states or other forces; the global view does not go very far. There are limits to liberal internationalism, both internal – between too much power of the government, or too much power of money – and external because (this is what I do not have time to develop) of use of force – intervention or non-intervention. This Liberalism has won after World War II and after the Cold War against the two great opponents, fascism and
communism. But the roots of both are still there: the feelings of inequality and exploitation of the masses, or the desire for authority or totalitarianism. Liberalism will gain or lose, depending on its capability to respond to these concerns and to these needs, and to absorb or defeat them.

Debate

John Ikenberry: I want to say something about China's relationship to liberal Universalism. It is the coercion here. The question is whether there are in China in particular, and in Asia in general, ideas about organization of politics both domestically and internationally. Are they a fundamental challenge to liberal ideas in all dimensions or not? And my answer is not. China does not have a big idea. Everybody is waiting for China to use its power to bring forward great powers of the past, a kind of externalised version of itself, and to organize the system and to use its power to create an environment for itself, and there would be a Chinese version that looks not very liberal. I am not convinced of that. I do not think the ideas are there and, more generally, the argument that Madle Bani makes about the West not understanding the East; the West not getting out of the way, the East realising its promise, is creating a fundamental confusion. The complaint or argument for the Asians to be more powerful is not an argument about principle. It is an argument about authority; it is an argument about getting and seeing the table; it is an argument about reorganizing the decision-making rules regarding the way in which the global systems exercise authority to the extent of guards. It is not about the change of underlying principles. What are the underlying principles I would say are liberal, universal and consistent with the rise in Asia? Number one: rule-based order. And number two: openness. That is to say it is a rule-based – as opposed to “ad hoc sneers of influence” imperial – and open, in the sense that it is one system through which countries are flowing internationally out of each other in various ways. And it is based on some form of cooperative security. And beyond that the social dimension is about new distribution, about government assistance, all the sorts of things that are negotiable, but not on the first order [rule of law]. I think that on that line the real debate is about authority, about principle. And the divisions are not between East and West but between those who are sick of a vision of the world that is rule-based and open, and those who are not. And there are those in the West who are and those who are not; and in the East there are as well. And the irony is that we have come back after 30 years to debate this. The irony is that China could well be the greatest support for this thin or weak version of liberal order as we go to the next slide of history, because as a representative of arising states they are worried about discrimination and the market protection powerful states have passed into the liberal order. I think that we are living in a moment when that is possible.

Li Qiang: I can agree with him and the sense of international order. I do not want to think of so-called Asian values; I want to think of some kind of Universalism. And I also think in terms of liberal Universalism. I do not think China has any major problems with international universal values. I think that the international system does not pose a major challenge. Several years ago we had a discussion about the so-called peaceful rights in China. If China follows the international order and follows this system, and is better off than some other countries, it should not change the structure of the international order, because we all work within this order. I think that, in the China case, I agree with Ikenberry: there is no alternative or desire.
Adam Roberts: What kind of societies might be unsuitable for liberal democracy? Are there structural problems? There is a long history in the advocacy of liberal ideas of structural difficulties inherent in different societies, whether there is only one liberal universal idea, or whether there are more. I think there is a difference between the Chinese regime of the world and some Western visions, and particularly some American visions. That is precisely the notion of sovereignty you have mentioned in your remarks. China has been much more nervous than any US administration about any doctrine that might imply a violation of sovereignty. That is a pretty fundamental difference in notions of liberal order, how much one respects the existing world of sovereign states, some of which may be illiberal in structure, and how one goes about changing them. It is not by some notion of all societies being too distinct to follow the same path, utilizing armed forces, or questioning their societies.

Ivan Krastev: I am specifically addressing the post-hegemonic liberal order. It is an interesting question to ask to what extent are you not going to have a liberal democracy if a hegemony is going to affect that order? I am going to give you several examples of how it can look. If you see the Russian-Georgian conflict, the most interesting was the Russian application of ‘the responsibility to protect’ because the doctrine of human rights rhetoric was the motivation for the Kosovo operation. From this point of view, you have the justification within the normative framework of Liberalism, just defined in different types of policies, amidst the background of a change in the consolidation of power. From this point of view, I return to the discussion that Fukuyama and Ken Jovick had in 1999 on the end of history; for them, there is no other alternative to liberal democracy, but it does not mean that you are not going to have power politics or competition, and this is our stance.

Koichiro Matsuda: A couple of months ago I visited a research centre called the National Army in Korea; it is a research centre of Neo-Confucianism. I know that China has the same type of research institution. I do not believe that Confucianism has universal power, at least of the sort protected by East Asia. Do you think that the idea of a strong symbiosis of Neo-Confucianism and Capitalism is still held in East Asia or China?

Li Qiang: I think there are two aspects to this question. One is whether Confucianism has the power to be a kind of challenge to Universalism. Confucianism is a kind of Universalism, because an “emperor” always has a certain type of “universality”. Confucianism is quite different from western cultures because it does not base on Universalism a certain kind of transcendental value. If there is a power that emperors lack it is the power of aggression as a quite negative Universalism, in my opinion. Therefore, I do not think Confucianism could actively challenge the dominant Universalism. However, the kind of dependency of soft power on the international order is a kind of dependent Universalism. My idea is that Confucianism is the instrumental body of Chinese Capitalism. There has been a lot of discussion about the functional equivalence of Confucianism and the precise individual effort of making money. It is a possibility that may have a negative aspect.

Inoue Tatsuo: I think Confucianism is not a monolithic set of ideas due to its internal diversity and transformative potential, despite how unclear it is. There is a similar conceptual cacophony concerning what Confucianism is. There are some threads in Confucianism which may well be used as cultural resources for developing some of the liberal ideas like the rule of law.
My comment on Ikenburry: he said that China has no alternative but to develop the base of government or rule of law even if it is not well fitted to its traditional cultural traditions. China must adopt or explore the idea of rule of law. Do you believe that China has already committed to the rule of law? Because this is a crucial issue about liberal Universalism.

My point is very simple. The Confucian tradition has some resources for rule of law. The rule of law is not the rule of formal, mechanical operations of given formal laws. It is a rule of principle. Even in Western traditions, the rule of law is dependent on the moral reading of a constitution. And confusion concerning the commitment to moral control or to how political power may be adapted more to Western ideas. I think the issue is not about the cultural or ideological resources; it is about power. Rule of law is very difficult to implement in China because they lack an independent judiciary, independent from those in power, which has nothing to do with rationalisation or culture. That is the point I would like to make.

John Ikenberry: I do not think Liberalism has a principle view on state sovereignty. In Asia, Wilson stated that sovereignty was celebrated in the form of self-determination, independence for nations. But even then Wilson, because he was a developmentalist, did not necessarily want us to see sovereignty for actually non-Western people whose developmental logic was not yet mature enough to run their own state. But to take the view about sovereignty as being the 20th century expression of the rule of law, we would now be celebrating a kind of erosion of state sovereignty through ‘the responsibility to protect’, and the role of the international community in addressing problems of humanitarian crisis, and now even security issues. So, sovereignty is increasingly contested. Both come from a liberal vision, but sovereignty takes a different form in those various articulations. And many in Europe and the US have different forms. Europe is more willing to share sovereignty; the US is in a more in-between position, where it wants to safeguard its authority as a great power and make sure that sovereignty is seated as the WTO or with weighted votes up or down classes. And so far there are ways of regulating the degree of sovereignty given the circumstances. And then you come to China, and China has to look at the West, saying whether it likes the European version or the American version. My own insistence is that there is probably a realistic logic that makes them share one or two feelings with Europe, but more self-interested logic that makes it more comfortable with the American views on sovereignty, where sovereignty in international institutions is a partly safeguarding sovereignty, not simply a mechanism to diffuse sovereignty. So I think all of that is in play.

On Fukuyama and the end of history my argument is not the end of history argument; it is an argument that history is on our side. That is to say there are advantages and biases in the system that allow us to think coherently and systematically about political change. That leads to a third argument about development. We haven’t guided this, but there is good news and bad news here. The bad news is, of course, that liberal developmental perspectives lead us to look at the world and see some states as being less and less developed and not quite modern, perhaps, and as ‘not having arrived’. You can say the trouble in the implications of liberal modernization thinking is that development is in the hands of powerful liberal states. You can legitimate hierarchy and imperialism to all other states that are not part of the liberal development vanguard – to lesser states, less developed, less modern and less protected. This view, of course, is the form of the intellectual foundations of 19th century liberal imperialism, depicting the sort of ways and relationships that are pursued. The good news is that if you are a developmentalist, you do know that history is on your side and you do not have to intervene to kick history forward, or take an advantage of a closing window, to push the state that might mark the end of the illiberal ways to infect illiberalism. That is not what the liberal
modernisation theorists are arguing. In some sense, that lets you relax: let the system operate for the liberal internationalists; keep the system open; let the forces of history materialize or not. So that is the good news.

**Rajeev Bhargava:** I wonder whether there is a non-liberal part to modernity. The question could be that there is a liberal part to modernity. And that is the part that Western states, but now I know there is a narrative, and historical self-understanding argues that there is a liberal part to a liberal democratic order, both at home and abroad. And it is also very far from accountability, which actually says that the path to modernity that Western states have is a liberal one in the sense that that path has not been one of cultural wars, but civil wars and wars abroad. There is colonialism, there is genocide, there is ethnic cleansing, there is exploitation that they are founding, and so on. I mean everything that happens to the country. So I just recommend watching what you take on, that is the question.

**Q:** It has been said a number of times at this conference that Liberalism is the fighting faith. Four, five years ago I heard a number of voices that the Americans demanded new international liberal totalitarianism as strong as Islamic fundamentalism. All of them seem to disappear. Is that because it is now simply a result of major contemporary violence or somehow the whole idea of resenting some kind of cultural freedom in the age of war, are ideas so misconceived they are too conflicting, or are there any other reasons? Where do we stand now?

**Li Qiang:** I only say one thing: is there any non-liberal modernity? Some people might think that the recent economic development in China is an example of non-liberal modernity. I probably would not agree. Politically more open, some people will call it a more open society. My sense is that the balance between individual liberty and political order may vary between different societies. In my opinion, even if there is economic success in China, liberal Universalism entails some kind of loss.

**Inoue Tatsuo:** I would like to emphasize that liberal democracy is an unfinished project even for Western countries. And we have to distinguish between Liberalism or liberal democracy as an idea, and Liberalism as a practice. It is true that Liberalism as an idea appeared in the Western tradition. But it does not mean it was then an established practise. I would like to ask the British audience one question: when did the UK pass that threshold? In 1911. As for the rule of law idea, Ronald Dworkin has, in one of his pamphlets, criticised Thatcher and restoration. The British people, up to now, have had an unwritten constitution. They say we do not need a written constitution; we are much better than the Americans. But under Thatcher and restoration the country saw IRA terrorism. How full of excuses in violating political liberties this period was, and British people had no rescue within the British legal system, because there is no judicial review. So now the UK uses the conventional continental human rights and its rescue procedures. My point is that in a constitutional democracy, a liberal democracy, all these ideas are far less than there. And it is still an unfinished project, even for Britain. So we have to be careful about the cultural obstacle to the rule of law; democracy is prevalent. We have to be very careful of making this kind of assumption.

**John Ikenberry:** I am going to address questions about the illiberal path to Liberalism. I found myself at a dinner party in Princeton this fall, and the discussion was on how to explain the rights of a liberal world order. Before the wine, there were two positions. One, that I was part of, which argued that it is all about the human spirit and the kind of impulse. To restrain
in arbitrary power is the deeply primordial story of the human condition. Professor Keohane was making the opposite argument – do not be sentimental; Liberalism is really a solution to the problem of how to deal with violence, and it was a means for a kind of settlement through which you allow classes to be protected, to be a constraint on power for those kinds of practical reasons. In some ways, the debate echoes these questions of illiberal pathways. Because there is no question that the liberal unfolding has been a violent one. It is a bloody story.

What worries me is that the US has built privileges and rights into the international system in such a way that it is going to be very difficult to give those up without a struggle. The question is whether my leadership on this side or the other side really negotiated the deals that would liberate Liberalism for the world. I have got a feeling that it is going to be easy and I can imagine there are kinds of non-liberal pathways that would not be efficient and normatively legitimate, but would involve countries dividing up the world and building not 1930s Capitalism but a much more divided world where different countries are powerful, different networks power centres, which is more like the airline industry where you have to decide which carrier you take. That kind of broken system would still be less open, less rule-based; it would not be blocks of co-prosperity spheres, but it would be a world that would look less liberal than it is today. But I think that all states in the West certainly have had a choice of moving to a much more post-stage liberal order and I am worried about it.
Part III: Challenges and Conclusions

Introduction: Alan Ryan

I thought this morning, since we are going to be told what Liberalism is and what to think about it, and since we have only two persons, rather than three on the panel, I would arrogate to myself the task of summing up the last few days to get the morning to flow and to provoke a few questions. No one is obliged to believe anything that I say; but it is meant to be fairly uncontentious and merely picking up a few salient themes.

The first thing is to note the reappearance of two Tocquevillian questions. They came up in the context of East and West, North America, Latin America and so on, attached to the question of what kind of ideological construction Liberalism is. The first issue is whether political Liberalism requires a certain sort of social Conservatism. Tocqueville, after all, thought it did. He famously praised the role of American women in disciplining American men, for instance. A good deal of that rather melancholy work, *Bowling Alone*, recapitulates that Tocquevillian theme not just in the context of people needing to learn the art of self-government in small associations, but also because informal organisations provide a sort of discipline for their members that enable them to then practise political Liberalism. Self-policing takes the weight off other kinds of policing, and allows Liberalism in the sense of political Liberalism, respect for the rule of law, and the like, without chaos. There is an undercurrent in American social commentary over the past thirty years, which has been anxious that various cultural movements will undermine political Liberalism by undermining society and self-discipline. The reaction of former liberals against 1968, for example, reflects the sense that political Liberalism needs to be saved from cultural Liberalism; the question whether that is so is a large Tocquevillian question, which, as it were, floated into the room and floated out again at about four o’clock on Friday afternoon.

The second question, which came up more visibly, is the extent to which political Liberalism needs a self-governing civil society underneath it as the
essential underpinning. The discussion of Liberalism in Latin America, for example, made it clear that Liberalism was an affair of elites, and something that political elites tried to persuade their fellow countrymen to embrace. The same thing I think has been true for China and Japan. I think the same thing has been true in India. When we condemn the East India Company, one question we need to ask is, from whom did the Indian intellectuals learn about the wickedness of colonialism if not from those who colonised them, and does that not suggest that Liberalism remains an affair of the elites, even if the elites are indigenous rather than alien. It is one of the great paradoxes that the West has managed to export its liberal ambitions, while flouting them so thoroughly in its colonialist practice, but the sociological question about what you need, by way of a functioning civil society, to make political Liberalism work is a large question that we have been skirting around. We have had some wonderfully informative discussions, but the old and horrible question of how much depth of popular support Liberalism must have to survive, is one we have politely skated round.

Another large question, which again goes back to Tocqueville, is how far Liberalism is the offspring of Western European Protestant Christianity. How far is Mill’s emphasis on each person, not ‘doing their own thing’ impossible to make sense of without Western European Protestant Christianity behind it, which was one of the points that Susan Mendus was making yesterday afternoon? This is not just a historical matter, as if we could say, ‘here comes John Locke, but that was a long time ago’; it is ‘so here comes Immanuel Kant who thought the worst form of tyranny was trying to make other people happy according to your conception of their happiness’ and ex hypothesi that the state interfering with our search for our own salvation was worse. When you read John Rawls A Theory of Justice it is quite clear that the moral driving force is his belief in the inviolability of the individual conscience, but there are many many societies that have got on perfectly well without the Western European Protestant conception of a conscience.

If such societies then become liberal societies, what kind of liberal societies do they become? There is something here that we have assented to without wholly clarifying it (though Michael Freeden got very close to lining it up just like this). There are innumerable institutions that, in one context, are regarded by those who operate them as an indispensable part of the liberal tool kit and are thought to hang together in particular ways that reflect their liberal nature, while in other contexts the same institutional arrangements may be adopted for different reasons, and hang together with different beliefs and social attitudes. It is not surprising that Hayek and his friends have been globally lapped up without having much impact on the
surrounding political or wider culture. There are innumerable reasons for thinking that private property regimes outperform collectivist regimes, not many of which have anything to do with Liberalism; conversely, “cultural” Liberalism is intrinsically contentious: gay lib may not have had an entirely easy time in this country, but it has had a much worse time in Russia. Whereas the unbridled market, at least for a certain period, had a fairly easy run in Russia without anybody fearing that it would lead to a Stonewall march outside the Kremlin in the near future. The question of how culture, religion, economics and politics hang together is a very large question and raises a further question that we have not grappled with, which is how far it is a matter of Liberalism as opposed to x Liberalism, y Liberalism, z Liberalism? There are sexual liberals who are not necessarily political liberals. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance has just reported that the most gay friendly institution in Britain is the police. It is a safe bet that a large number of those gay-friendly police are not otherwise either socially, intellectually or politically liberal. The question of x, y, z forms of Liberalism is a large question; a variant on it is the validity of the Hayekian distinction between classical versus modern, of course Leo Strauss viewed that there was such a thing as ancient Liberalism.

The point is that you can defend many of the institutions that liberals are attached to on innumerable grounds, not all of which are liberal. For example, the rule of law is good for business, but it is also an expression of a concern for human rights. You can think about it as being good for business, but take a pretty cold view on human rights, as lots of people do. Conversely, you can think about it as an expression of a concern for human rights and take a pretty cold view about the affairs of business. Toleration is one of the areas where the difference is most obvious. People are often quite surprised by the Roman and the Greek toleration of religious diversity but, as Rajeev was saying, it had a good deal in common with the kind of toleration that Indian society has displayed in many periods in its history. The question of what you think the bounds of tolerability are depends very much on local conceptions of what religion is or indeed whether you bother to use the expression at all. Machiavelli thought that Roman generals were quite right to rig the auguries before battle, and also quite right to execute on the spot any soldier who mocked them. Having auguries is good; belief in auguries clearly crazy! You can be tolerant within the limits of what you think the social practice is useful for, but this is a different animal from the liberal version.

The liberal version, in Susan’s book and mine, has to come from a particular conception of the life of the conscience. Similarly, I think, with Paul Starr and John Ikenberry, the notion that slavery is obviously a blot on
Liberalism is difficult to sustain. If you are deeply (if wrongly) convinced of the non-universality of the capacity for free self-government, you can run the most appalling institutions alongside genuinely liberal convictions; you merely have to believe that Liberalism only suits some people. The Athenians were absolutely clear that political freedom suited the Greeks and nobody else much; they genuinely believed in liberty, and they genuinely had slaves. That provokes some further ancient questions, one of which is the extent to which democracy and Liberalism are natural bed-mates. Professor Dworkin thinks they are, because he is not going to count as democracy anything that is not liberal democracy, but people like me prefer the old doctrine, which says that democracy is just about the demos having the last say, and whether the demos behaves in a liberal or non-liberal fashion is something to be argued about next (and it is not a dead question).

So the moral, to the extent that there is one, is that we must steer a delicate line between thinking that Liberalism is just a matter of taste – ‘Liberalism for liberals and cannibalism for cannibals’ as the old joke had it – and thinking that its virtues are obvious to everyone of sound mind. When *A Theory of Justice* came out various people pointed out that it frequently appealed to ‘what we think’, and they asked that old and dirty question, ‘Who is this “we”? ’ Usually, the implication is that “we” are persons living between 68th street and 114th street on West End Avenue, or some similar small group with predictable and not widely shared views. I think that it is important to be self-conscious about who this “we” is, i.e. have a really strong awareness of one’s own historical, cultural and conceptual roots, and at the same time to be relatively unembarrassed, so long as you are wide open to people saying, ‘well it doesn’t look like that from here’, or, ‘I wouldn’t put it like that’, or, ‘not for us it isn’t’. But the “we-ness” of much of this particular set of conceptual apparatus and political attachment is something that one must absorb, but not become completely crippled by doing so. I think Ivan is now going to kick off the serious proceedings.
7. **Who decides what Liberalism is? And how?**

Ivan Krastev

Let us start with the fact that when I was flying to Oxford I was flying with the Bulgarian Airlines. They gave me a magazine called *Our Home*, and they tell you what to do when you want to remake your house and change your furniture and things like that; it is a very sophisticated magazine. Basically, they said that you should consult the architect and the designers, but do not forget to consult your cleaning-lady! So my perspective is going to be the perspective of the cleaning-lady. When Tim asked me to speak, he said to try to speak as a political scientist, which is basically the message that you should not try to look intelligent, saying certain things that have much more to do with the real existing Liberalism. What I am planning to do is the following: *Eastern Europe and the experience of Eastern Europe between 1989 and 2009*, an extremely important moment in reflecting liberal dilemmas. It is important to remember to what extent the interpretation of 1989 was perceived as a reinvention and triumph of liberal discourse. Here I have a nice quote from Bruce Ackermann who, in 1992, in his book called *The Future of the Liberal Revolution* wrote, sounding like a manifesto: ‘from Warsaw to Moscow, Havana to Beijing a spectre hounds the world, as if rising from the grave, the return of revolutionary, democratic Liberalism.’ I am sure now in Eastern Europe if someone was going to write a book on the future of the liberal revolution, it would have a motto of Dan Quayle, that the future will be better tomorrow. But I do believe that the experience of liberal revolution, the experience of the meaning of 1989 and how it developed, could be an interesting addition to and reflection of what has been discussed for the last two days.

What I am planning to do is the following: I will not go back to the history of ideas, to traditions, who are liberals and who are not. I will start with a very simple question on how Liberalism was perceived by the general political public in Central and Eastern Europe for the last twenty years; what they believe Liberalism is. This perception has, of course, been shaped by
different players: liberal politicians and politicians who call themselves liberals; liberal intellectuals and academics; ex-liberals (and I do believe them to be a very important group for understanding the definition of Liberalism – and when we talk about neo-conservatives I do believe that we should call them Ex-liberals; it is the Ex-Liberalism that makes them claim what they claim). It is also important because if we are going to adopt this kind of a discourse we are not going to have this border between traditional, domestic, inside-East-European discourses and outside discourses because, of course, the work of Professor Dworkin and Professor Lukes and others has been part of the making of this image – people reading and misreading them. Of course you have political parties, but also non-governmental organisations, human rights groups, and so on, who have been very important in making this debate.

In order to make this possible I have organised my presentation around five key debates of the last twenty years that shaped the perception of what Liberalism is for the political public in Central and Eastern Europe. Having gone through these debates I will try to reflect on some of the problems of the erosion of the liberal consensus in Central and Eastern Europe.

These five debates that I have in mind are 1) the constitutional debate, separation of power and the problem of the judiciary; 2) the lustration debate, which was very critical; 3) not so much the market debate but the shock therapy debate that was critical for the identification of who is liberal and who is not in Central and Eastern Europe; 4) the liberal interventionism debate that was very much connected to the policy with respect to the Kosovo war; and 5) the most important debate and what I think will define what Liberalism is today – the current debate on populism (what is populism?).

I am starting in 1989 because it is important for two reasons. One, because it reconciled Liberalism and popular democracy. This tension that was mentioned already, this idea that Liberalism and democracy are simply twins, like the Polish twins, was not common sense in the political tradition in Central and Eastern Europe. To a great extent, Liberalism in many places and in many times was perceived as an alternative to popular democracy, and I do believe that even today in many places, especially when listening to the Chinese debate, Liberalism could be perceived as an alternative to popular democracy. It was in 1989 that liberals lost their fear of mass politics because for the first time they saw rallies on the street of people who were shouting ‘Liberal!’ It is very important as it changed the perspective of Liberalism and created the idea that all good things go into the same basket. What is important for these five debates is that they are perceived differently; in certain debates there are certain positions that are called liberal,
recognised as liberal by liberals themselves, that have been attacked by the critics of liberals for being liberal, and after that they have been the source of disappointment for the Ex-liberals.

As for the first debate on constitution, there was a huge constitutional moment and it is not an accident that it was Bruce Ackermann and others – who believe in constitutional politics – who fell in love with Central and Eastern Europe. The most important thing was how you constitute society, and how you are defining power. My claim here is that, to a great extent, when the constitutional process was started it was different in different countries. Somebody yesterday was talking about heroic generalisations; my generalisations are going to be much more wild than heroic because you have different countries and different histories. What was extremely important for this debate was that a) taming the executive power, b) strong stress on the judiciary and the importance of the judiciary’s power, and of course c) the protection of rights, was what defined the liberal position in the constitution-making process. What remains to be seen, and what is very much debated now, is how far these types of institutional arrangements have been the results not only of the ideas of the liberals, but also of the interests of the old political elites.

I will give the example of power in the Bulgarian judiciary. In the Bulgarian constitution not only the judges but also the prosecutors have been established as a separate branch of power which is totally independent from the government. What was important for the liberals was the real separation of power limiting government accountability; what was important for the old elite was that none of the judges or prosecutors could be changed, so the people who they have appointed would remain. And now the crisis of judicial power is that when you have a public that is totally disappointed with a lack of justice and functioning judicial system, as in Bulgaria, the basic problem comes back. This certain position was considered a very strong liberal position. I do believe that out of all of this constitutional debate came the realisation of the problem of the “weak state”, which became a major theme in the late 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe. The repressive nature of the weak state: the fact that the government is not violating your rights, is not protecting your rights if, for example, someone is violating your rights and you have an ineffective government simply observing and doing nothing from the outside. I believe that this was the first debate where a kind of classical liberal position has been very strongly revisited, not on the basis of the values that have been implemented – nobody is attacking the separation of power or limited government – but on the basis of practical consequences of adopting certain positions.

It was very much the same problem with lustration, which was a huge
debate, where some of the most important liberal intellectuals and dissidents lost part of their symbolic capital, and it was very much based on the idea of Individualism, individual rights against the collective guild. Basically, this was not simply the argument that we were making regarding liberal values but, rather, speaking pragmatically about making a liberal society. In order to make a liberal society, you should try to denounce the idea of retroactive justice, and relinquish the past, the way in which previous regimes dealt with it. It was perceived and identified as a liberal position by society, but this started to change the moment the transition was perceived by the public as a grand scheme where the old elites simply kept their power. You have a new generation of anti-Communism which was easily seen during the rise of the Kaczyński brothers in Poland, where lustration once again became a key issue. In a certain way the new generation of anti-Communism was also anti-post-Communism. The lack of lustration destroyed the foundation of a just society, and then the liberal position was very strongly attacked, and certain people who have been holding this position decided to change it.

I will go to the problem of market reforms and shock therapy not because in Eastern Europe there was a major divide between economic liberals and political liberals at that moment. It was much more the liberal economists than the economic liberals that were guiding the debate, and it was not about the limits of the market but more an anti-egalitarian consensus that was reached because of the ideas of the liberals, and the interests of the old elites, who had been much better positioned in the economic sphere. And this meant that the consensus was that economic decision-making should be taken out of politics. No matter who comes to power in Eastern Europe, they impose the same type of economic policies. There are institutional preconditions for this; the major message was that market policies were not the best policies but the only rational policies. The idea of having a legitimate alternative to shock therapy was eroded, and I believe that here is the problem with the argument: this was not the worst policy but the fact was that in the liberal discourse we very strongly criminalised all other options as irrational, or crypto-Communist, or ineffectual.

Something like this also happened in the fourth important debate, the debate on liberal interventionism. The public were very much focused on the Kosovo war – and the public are not reading books but newspapers. On the basis of the newspapers they are deciding what is liberal and what is not. From this point of view, the Kosovo war was a clear position on the primacy of human rights. And of course at this moment there was very strong support from some of those countries, which have their own repressive histories, that human rights should prevail above the idea of sovereignty. The first problem is that of the practical consequences: the clash between the
policy of human rights and international law, the fact that there was no UN sanction for the campaign, and so on. Secondly, there is a side effect where you see that most of these policies are very selective: you go to Kosovo, but you do not go to Darfur? The third one is that it has very difficult real life consequences. I believe that it was extremely important because part of the practical consequences very much started to shape the idea of what Liberalism is, and what a liberal position is. Just talking about the Kosovo issue, it was extremely fascinating from the liberal position and liberal discourse because it was a war which was basically defending not simply the rights of others, but those who are not like us. I remember Tony Blair coming to Sofia, and he said, ‘we are going to do for the Kosovars what Gladstone did for the Bulgarians’. In a certain way, it was just the opposite. Gladstone came being a Christian to defend the Christians, and Kosovo was about the West defending the Islamic minority, and this makes it very much ideologically attractive. This, basically, was the high point of the identification of this kind of foreign policy.

I am not going to use the example of the Iraq war, which shows that this type of justification can be used as a justification for any type of operation. People started to realise other things. When you decide to have the primacy of human rights policy, and when you decide to go further than the idea of sovereignty, one of the logical consequences is that nuclear power becomes the synonym for sovereignty, and one of the things that pushes these regimes to go nuclear is that nuclear power is the only thing that gives you sovereignty. You should have a nuclear bomb in order to claim sovereignty these days. Now, in the regime of primacy of human rights, the fact is that all these things do not go together – the fact that this operation has been very much advertised as not simply highly moral but an operation that is not going to have any casualties. This was also a very important moment for the public because we entered what I believe to be the Hollywood version of Liberalism, which is best described by the famous film *Air Force One*, starring Harrison Ford. Basically, it is a classical dilemma: the American president is facing a dilemma over whether he should save his family or his country. What is his decision? He saves both! I do believe these to be very particular characteristics of the Liberalism of the 1990s, which was the experience in Central and Eastern Europe: no tragic choices. It was much more of an “entertainment-type” Liberalism where all good things go together.

I am saying this because I am coming to the fifth debate, which is now very much underway, and this is very much about the nature of the populist rise in Central and Eastern Europe. This is the definition of what kind of movement we are talking about. I do believe this to be a critical debate
because, in a certain way, Liberalism is exercising its political power much more for defining what illiberal is than about defining what Liberalism is, drawing the borders and defining the enemies. The problem with these types of populist movements is that they are not anti-democratic; they are anti-liberal but they are not anti-democratic. They are very much about democratic majoritarianism, very much about the power of the majority to decide, and they are very much trying to speak on behalf of betrayed majorities, which cannot see their voice being heard. Here, part of the response from liberal groups, liberal parties and liberal intellectuals was demonising, and trying to make them look anti-democratic, to try to make them look like the fascists in the 1930s and others and the public was not agreeing with this.

As a result of this, I do believe that we are back to a situation that we believed had been resolved in 1989. We are back to the tension between the ideas of Liberalism and democratic majoritarianism. And from this point of view the EU, instead of helping to solve this problem, is increasing it much more, because if Guizot in the 19th century believed that what is liberal and rational is 20 per cent of the best prepared and most rational to make decisions on 100 per cent of the issues, now with the European Union we have 100 per cent of the people deciding on only 20 per cent of the issues, in order to be sure that this balance is going to be kept. I do believe that this tension is going to be the defining factor for what Liberalism is, not only from the point of view of the theory, but also for the public perception of what Liberalism is.

I do believe that in Central and Eastern Europe we had, and still have, a problem which was very different from, for example, what George Lakoff was talking about in the United States two or three years ago. In Central and Eastern Europe we have liberal institutions, liberal policies and liberal language, but we are missing more and more liberal constituencies. As a result of this, because of the fact that everybody speaks liberal, but we have no liberal constituency, the basic problem of Liberalism is: what kind of a language of change can it offer? At the moment, change is what people very much expect. This is probably a good message, and the new cycle started with the Obama election. In Central and Eastern Europe, and especially in my country, Obama was celebrated very much like Yuri Gagarin was celebrated once upon a time. The problem with Gagarin was that it was something heroic: there’s a man in cosmos, not that I’m going to do it, but it’s great that that man did it. From this point of view, I do believe that Obama’s election reconciled once again popular democracy with Liberalism in the imagination of the liberals and probably for Central and Eastern Europe. This is the biggest message of these elections. Thank you very much;
it was not a well-structured presentation but, as the cleaning-lady, you cannot expect any more! Thank you.

Jan-Werner Müller

Who decides what Liberalism is? Here is the simple answer: you can decide who decides what Liberalism is by taking off the shelf your favourite work of political theory or your favourite work in the canon of the history of political thought, ranging from the Hobbesian solution, where of course part of the task of the sovereign is to fix political language and to determine the meaning of certain words, to, let’s say, Habermas, where free and equal citizens are meant to deliberate on such questions in the public sphere, and thereby decide the meaning of the most basic principles governing their lives. That is just another way of saying that this is also, not only but also, a normative question: who decides what Liberalism is? And as such, I actually want to leave it aside and, rather, return to some of the methodological questions which have been propping up throughout this conference. In particular, I want to offer three sets of remarks. The first to say a little bit about the comparative study of political thought in general, in particular asking the question of what the larger purpose is, but also what the precise object of such studies is meant to be. Second of all, I want to return to the whole issue of chasing words as opposed to chasing things. Then, thirdly, I want to ask whether there is something about Liberalism that makes it particularly difficult to study as an “-ism” (the answer is yes).

First of all, let me return to a question that Pierre Rosanvallon asked on Friday: why bother with defining all these “-isms”? A famous 19th century anti-liberal said, ‘only that which has no history can be defined’, and, in many ways, Nietzsche must have been right about that. So why again and again try to define something which is already saturated with many conflicting experiences, why not just try directly to address the normative problems which interest us, with justice, liberty, what have you? Why not just try to find the best theory of liberty, rather than going yet again at another “-ism”, or engaging in all kinds of very complex and essentially descriptive mapping exercises?

One answer is that these mapping exercises, these comparisons themselves, are often (but not always) animated by larger normative questions, or are meant to have larger normative purposes. What do I mean? Well, very often for instance – it is only half acknowledged if at all – the ultimate aim of comparison is really some sort of better mutual understanding, or some notion of reconciliation, or, if you prefer the language of hermeneutics, some fusion of horizons at the end of such an
exercise. Or, alternatively, there is the notion that we engage in various types of exercises because we want to justify the same political principles from within different traditions, or with different normative resources drawn from different cultures. It does not all have to be so nice and positive. If you allow me to coin a long, nasty German word, it can also appear in the shape of what one might call a kind of Feindwissenschaft, a kind of science of the enemy: let’s figure them out, let’s figure out what they really think in order to better contain them or better fight them. What is important, it seems to me, is to be as clear as possible about these larger normative purposes, if indeed one has them, and also to make sure that they do not become mutually contradictory, as they sometimes do. For instance, it is very often alleged by those who are precisely aiming at some sort of notion of reconciliation between different cultures, people who essentially want to turn Huntington’s clash around, that thinkers from other traditions are at one and the same time incredibly alien, incredibly different, incredibly other, and yet at the same time just like us. They can enormously enrich the conversation that we are already having, yet at the same time they have already said and are already thinking what we are thinking anyway. That cannot be true at the same time, but it is often presented in just that way. Or if you will permit another example, there is also an unspoken strategy of pacification. That is to say, we do not put our most cherished principles in play; we simply ask other people to justify them with different reasons, or against the background of different traditions, but we do not say, ‘let’s put liberty up for grabs’ in a debate. We just want you to find your own way to liberty with your own reasons, with your alternative reasons, but please don’t put it in question as such.

The second thing that I want to say about the comparative study of political thought is that we need to be clear about the precise object of what we are studying. What I want to suggest to you is a somewhat more multidimensional approach than what we have sometimes had in the conference so far. I think we need to look at at least three elements. One is concepts, but not just concepts: I think we also need to look at what you might broadly call the institutional background of political discourse. For instance, to be shamefully Eurocentric, if we talk about intra-European comparisons it helps to have a basic grasp of different European understandings of the state. It is a very boring example but we need a basic sense of what the institutional template is against which certain concepts are deployed and used.

Thirdly, I think we need to have a sense of who the carriers of these ideas and concepts are. I think that this has come up a number of times as well. Laurence Whitehead talked about the various forms of occupational groups
that deploy liberal language in Latin America. Rajeev reminded us that in India it is very often social movements which are decisive in shaping discourse, and not so much the academics. I think a very basic sense of who the relevant players are, whether it is public intellectuals in a sort of conventional sense, or academics, policy entrepreneurs, public lawyers, what have you; a basic sense of the relevant players is a helpful thing to have.

A very brief footnote at the risk of stating the obvious (but we have not really talked much about it): it also helps to have a very clear grasp of linguistic subtleties. Everybody knows the famous thing about longeur being present in some languages but not in others, although everybody knows the thing and everybody has it. Clearly, also some languages are luckier than others as far as Liberalism is concerned. For instance, there is an Italian party which called itself Il movimento liberale, liberista, e libertario, and it is the Radical Party, so go figure! I am not sure it did them any good to call themselves that, but clearly some languages have a higher degree of differentiation as far as certain political ideas are concerned. But as I said, that is just a footnote.

The second major set of remarks that I want to present is a return to the whole issue of chasing words and chasing things. We have, I think, all agreed that we should not be so distracted by labels that we conclude Locke was not a liberal because he did not have the word. But it is worth asking, where do we get to if we simply follow words? What does it do for us if we follow words? I would suggest that it does not always get us very far, but it sometimes leads us to interesting places. So if one simply visits the classical account of the German school of conceptual history Begriffsgeschichte which in many ways pioneered this approach, where does one get? Well, according to them, we get to a very interesting idea. Who is the inventor of Liberalism? Well, brace yourselves (especially here), the inventor of Liberalism is Napoleon. According to this classical account, before the French Revolution, of course the word “liberal” was around, and “liberality” was around, but it only had pre-political meanings: it is liberal education, liberality as the quintessential attribute of a gentleman. During the French Revolution itself, there was no party that called itself liberal, although there were people abroad who thought that denouncing the French Revolution in a broadly anti-liberal language was a good thing to do. I am thinking of course of Burke, who was particularly opposed to (in this order) philosophy, light, liberality and the rights of man. This, he thought, was quintessentially wrong with the French Revolution. Now comes along Napoleon, who with the 18th Brumaire declares that this coup essentially happens in the name of what officially comes to be known as les ideés libérales. And in fact this is not idiosyncratic; there are many observers who say that Napoleon is a hero of
liberal ideas because he brings constitutional stability and is responsible for things like the *Code Civile*. Does that tell us anything really? Yes and no. I think it does tell us something to the extent that the very notion that Liberalism is not only, but also from the beginning, a theory of transition, a theory of political stabilisation, a theory of moderation, is there. The idea that somebody like Napoleon clearly advanced the idea that the gains of the revolution had to be combined with a post-revolutionary stability. Maybe that gets us somewhere, maybe it does not.

Another quick example of where we get or do not get when we only look at words: Timothy Garton Ash at the very beginning mentioned the kind of polemical books that have been coming out in the United States in the past few years, such as Sean Hannity, Ann Coulter, etc. One other example of this is the book that appeared at the beginning of last year by Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism*, which some of you might have read. Now ‘liberal fascism’ is, of course, at first sight absurd, but having said that, there was actually a major 20th century European philosopher who precisely, at least for a brief moment, tried to combine Liberalism and fascism, and that was Giovanni Gentile, who at least at the beginning of Mussolini’s reign was quite explicitly saying that Mussolini is, in a sense, a new form and version of Liberalism. In 1923, Gentile still went on record with an article called *Il Mio Liberalismo*, trying to explain that fascism was a new form of Liberalism. This was not some crank; I am even told by colleagues that at that period there were Oxford analytical philosophers who would learn Italian simply to be able to read Gentile. Again, what does that tell us? Well, in itself, not very much, but it is a challenge to do the thing that Michael Freeden was calling for yesterday, namely to look very carefully at the boundaries of Liberalism: where is the border, where do we find ourselves at the point where we can really say, ‘this is where any plausible notion of Liberalism clearly stops’? Or where we simply cannot go any further, that this is where it becomes absurd. But perhaps Gentile is a better way, with all due respect, than Jonah Goldberg.

What about the history of a thing? We all know the notion of an “ideal type” from Max Weber: essentially a kind of analytical construct that has nothing to do with chasing words, but is essentially a configuration of concepts used in order to understand a phenomenon. It is a heuristic device, not something stable or objective, and it can be fashioned each time in order to understand a particular question. I think in that sense we can also speak of Liberalism as a particular “ideal type”, but only in relation to the particular questions we are asking. Let me give you an example that also relates to something that we talked about on Friday. It seems to me that what emerges in post-1945 Western Europe, very broadly speaking, can be called a form
of Liberalism, even though, as we heard, there were very, very few people around who called themselves liberals, or liberal parties with any great amount of influence. What we should look at is something that Rajeev brought up on Friday. Namely, we should look for some kind of functional equivalence of liberal values or liberal ideas, even if they are couched in different languages. In this case, what this means is that we look at the most important political force in post-1945 Western Europe, which shaped this liberal settlement. This is Christian Democracy, and we see to what extent Christian Democrats were actually able to develop quasi-liberal ideas out of their own philosophical and religious resources to shape the settlement, even though they themselves very often viewed themselves as anti-liberal, and were very much opposed to things like liberal Individualism. Paulo Pombeni, also on Friday, mentioned personalism, which was precisely the sort of traditional ideology which allowed Christian Democrats to embrace human rights and democracy while thinking all along that they were still good anti-liberals, because they had not bought into Individualism and free market ideas and so on and so forth.

Are there particular difficulties in studying Liberalism? Perhaps the first thing to remind ourselves of is that Liberalism is not seen as the most difficult “-ism” in this whole field. The classically difficult “-ism” is Conservatism. Unless you share John Stuart Mill’s very subtle definition of the Conservative Party as the most stupid party, it has proven notoriously difficult to define Conservatism. It has often been said that due to the fact that Conservatives have presented themselves as anti-rationalist, they automatically resist rational definition or being pinned down in such a way. And so Conservatism is seen as a difficult thing to define, not so much Liberalism.

But maybe Liberalism is difficult to define in another way. Maybe the difficulty lies not in its definition, but that it can both appear as an ideology and also can try to make itself appear as a kind of meta-ideology. It is trying to be something that is larger, that is above parties, or in the lingo of modern philosophy, above ‘conceptions of the good’, and will therefore always be something broader and able to contain a lot of other ideologies, in a way that Conservatism does not claim. Conservatism does not claim to have a broad “Conservative” umbrella, within which you can be libertarian, or you can be this or that and the other, so Liberalism in that sense is special. I do not mean to endorse the view that Liberalism has always contained some strong notion of neutrality. As those of you who specialise in political philosophy will know, there was a wide-ranging debate about this in the 1990s around John Rawls’s *Political Liberalism*. I think that it was pretty much conclusively debated that calling Liberalism “neutral” as such is
misleading and does not get us anywhere. Yet I would maintain that there
is something particular about the structure of Liberalism that allows it to
transform itself into this kind of meta-ideology, to have at least a whiff of
neutrality, and in a sense be oscillating as a phenomenon, and therefore hard
to pin down for us as students of Liberalism in a way that other ideologies
simply are not. Thank You.

**Debate**

**Q:** I have a question for Ivan Krastev about the European Union. The fact that the European
Union is so important on a supranational level in Central and Eastern Europe might point
to a rise in liberal democracy in the sense that those things mould them together, but is it the
case? First of all, in the European Union, many decisions are taken in Brussels, which has this
notion of rule of law, which is precisely the remedy or partial remedy to what you said about
the weak state problem. So the rule of law – this is a classical liberal thing – you can say is part
of Liberalism, but not necessarily democracy because it disempowers people? But even if you
look at sociological data you find that many constituents, even, I suspect, some at the borders
of those populist movements, are happy with the fact that decisions are taken in Brussels.
The best example is no one else but the Civic Democrats in the Czech Republic. Vaclav Klaus
would not put the European Union flag in his office, but his party is pro-European, so the idea
is that the supranational level is broadly liberal in the sense of guaranteeing more authentic
protection of liberty and rule of law, but also something that they demand, which might be
paradoxical from a UK perspective or even from a Western European perspective, but it
might be argued that it has democracy. So, is the European Union the best bed mate for
liberal democracy in Central Eastern Europe?

**Ivan Krastev:** So, let’s make it more complicated. I am coming from a country which for four
years was one of very few in Central and Eastern Europe being governed by a liberal
government, which means that you have two parties in the government that are two members
of the liberal international. The two parties were the King’s Party and the Turkish Party. So,
from this point of view, the problem with Liberalism is extremely, extremely interesting and
I do believe that it is what my claim was. I didn’t comment so much on what’s going to be the
impact of the European Union on liberal democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. For the
moment, it’s possible. I was saying that with the very existence of liberal democracy, having
this different level, the tensions between popular democracy and Liberalism are going to be
even more intensified, and this is very easy to see at the very moment when the European
Union decided to use a classical democratic instrument for legitimation: the famous
referendum. At the moment, you can basically understand that, nevertheless, the voters are
very much pro-European, supportive here and there. You have a problem, and as a result of
this problem what you are trying to do is even more to depoliticise the project. And even if
you assume the reaction to the referendum in France and the Czech Republic, they are never
going to be in the position of the European Union where there could be a political problem
with the constitution. The problem is always communication, and I do believe that this is a
very classical liberal strategy, but not necessarily a classical democratic strategy. And this
1989 happy marriage between popular democracy and Liberalism, in my view, is questioned,
and I do believe it is not something that is new. These twenty years have been exceptional,
this type of happy marriage between Liberalism and popular democracy was very much
exceptional in the tradition of Europe, and we are back to where we were.
Chris Brooke: We’re talking about what Liberalism is, and who decides what Liberalism is, but there’s another question about who decides what Liberalism was, and I just want to complicate things a little bit more than they have been. The name John Locke has come up from time to time and people are saying that, well, he did not have the word but we can still recognise him as a liberal. And historiographically I think what’s interesting here is that even over a hundred years after we had had the word “liberal” Locke wasn’t thought of as an especially significant liberal figure, and the history of Liberalism was always being reconstructed by people who think of themselves as liberals. And in the case of Locke, the idea of Locke as an absolutely central figure in the liberal tradition seems to me very much to be an idea, a post-Second World War theme, especially in American political science and in American historiography. And so it’s not just Liberalism that’s being reconstructed by and for contemporaries but at the same time people are also reconstructing the liberal tradition and the liberal past and that’s often being done in quite surprising ways.

Paul Starr: Jan, I was very interested in your suggestion at the very end, that Liberalism is also a meta-ideology, and I was wondering: what are the other members of this class? What are the other meta-ideologies? Or is this the only one? Is this perhaps the way in which Liberalism is more universal? Is this perhaps the way to reconcile what you were saying with what John Macaburg was talking about?

Jan-Werner Müller: I was tempted to say something along those lines at the end, but I was afraid I would be called a triumphalist of sorts, or at least a developmentalist of sorts. But I was asking myself the same question. First of all, meta-ideology is partly adapted as an idea from Richard Bellamy, it’s not from me as an expression, but I couldn’t think of any other, and maybe there is something in the genetic code in Liberalism about its structural capacities that makes it different, that makes it precisely able to draw in others, co-opt others in the way that John was describing yesterday. That obviously isn’t quite the case with some rival ideologies; it might only be true if one has an extremely anodyne, essentially useless conception of Conservatism, let’s say (in the sense that nobody wants to be revolutionary every single minute of the day). So in that sense I think there’s something to be said for this uniqueness of Liberalism. I’m not sure how to phrase this in a non-triumphalist way though.

Catherine Audard: To follow on your last point, Jan Müller, I was thinking of Lafore’s analysis of Liberalism as a meta-ideology in the sense of embodying modernity. Both Socialism and Conservatism are anti-modern by definition – if we define modernity loosely. I think that was his point, saying that really the uniqueness of Liberalism was really this position about modernity, so what do you think of that?

Jan-Werner Müller: Well, again I think that I would agree. In one sense LaFore is right about this uniqueness. The slight, ever so slight, problem that one has is: how is it possible that in the 20th century millions of people saw rival ideologies as the obvious way to solve the pathologies of modernity, and why were there many people who actually wouldn’t even have made that opposition between fascism and modernity, let alone Socialism or even Soviet Communism and modernity? So, to actually allude to one of LaFores famous books, there is some kind of complication here that we have to come to terms with as well: we can’t simply assume that, well if that’s true then it was always the solution, and why could anybody be so crazy as to think otherwise? And yet as we also heard on Friday, there was a protracted crisis of Liberalism at the beginning of the 20th century, obviously exacerbated by the First World War, but not uniquely caused by it, and it clearly also had something to do with the fact that,
to come back to my Gentile example, that some very serious thinkers have said that the only way to actually realise values like freedom, given the historic circumstances of modernity, is through what he would have called an “ethical state”, a completely unified collective, in which an individual's ethical capacities were fully developed. I mean, there was a lot on offer that people saw as plausible. I mean, as you know, in a sense, the comprehensive book that made this point most clearly was Mark Mazower’s book about the 20th century, which said: look, we can’t write all these things off as simply pathological; we have to somehow at least understand why they were there, as you know.

Catherine Audard: What I meant is that the hatred for Liberalism is a hatred for modernity; the two are inter-connected.

Jan-Werner Müller: Yes, but we have to take it a step further. I think this cannot be our explanatory factor: that hatred of liberal bourgeois, the liberal bourgeois world, explains whatever they did or thought. That’s all I’m trying to say.

Michael Freeden: There was one other meta-ideology, and that was Marxism, and the defining feature of a meta-ideology is that it refuses to identify itself as an ideology, as indeed was the case with Marxism, and as is the case with analytical forms of Liberalism today. So we have two, I think, very interesting exemplars of what a meta-ideology is. I want to extend this a bit further and go back to some of the issues that have to do with Liberalism without the name, and the name without Liberalism, and these are two of the crucial boundaries that I think we have to look at. We have already discovered, or been reminded that, we have in France a very good example of Liberalism without the name, and we have the name without Liberalism, as with forms of populism like the Austrian Freedom Party a few years ago. We have the name without Liberalism; you have forms of libertarianism that we heard about yesterday on our session on markets, that adopt the name without Liberalism. So my question to the panel really is (we had a few years ago a series of international workshops organised by the Centre for Political Ideologies on ‘Appropriations and Misappropriations of Liberalism’), is there some extraordinary rhetorical attractiveness about the word liberal, except for France and some sections of the United States? And I would like to hear you comment on what this rhetorical appeal, rhetorical power, is in the word, as much as in the content of the word.

Jan-Werner Müller: Well, I have to think more about that, so maybe I can just briefly engage with meta-ideology first. Clearly, you’re right that Marxism didn’t call itself an ideology but I don’t think that Michael Oakeshott would have gone around and said, ‘Well, I’m actually an ideologist because I’m a conservative.’ And I would still maintain that there is something particular about Liberalism in that it tries to recognise as few genuine enemies as possible. For instance, the idea that Liberalism is prepared to engage in charitable struggle with the enemy, and basically try to always incorporate, try to make others liberalise in a way that Marxism didn’t. Marxism was quite happy to say, ‘here’s an enemy, here’s an enemy, and now let’s have it out!’

I agree that the colonising or crowding out effect might be there in the book. But to answer your real question, I think there’s an attractiveness, obviously with freedom and other central concepts that tend to get contested by others, but I’m not sure if the word “liberal” itself has always necessarily been very attractive, or all movements even when they had quite strongly liberal elements (such as the 68-ers who were very keen on making liberal or Caldwell Liberalism a swear word, basically; he had no interest in incorporating the “L-word”
I'm not sure whether it's not the concept as opposed to the “L-word” that people want to hijack.

Ivan Krastev: Of course, there are other kinds of possible alternatives: one is to believe that there is something special about Liberalism, which is allowing it to see friends in many places; the other is to think that there is a kind of ideological cycle in which, at its beginning ideologists are much more ready to see enemies because then they have much more ideological identification. The more that they are “becoming”, for lack of a common phrase, the more this force is trying to find friends. Even as lately as with Socialism you can see as very militant the first phases of Marxism. When thinking everyone knows Marxists, at the end of the day, they became weaker politically – then the more hidden friends, Marxist and socialist, they started to see around the world. And I do believe this is also a hypothesis at least to be taken seriously. But there is something about the word “liberal”. I remember in the early 1980s being a student in Sofia. If you were to ask, ‘What is a liberal?’ to me then! I was an English-speaking member of the communist elite!

This was the distinction: you were never going to call a dissident a liberal; they were radicals. From this point of view there was something – and this is much more with the attraction of the idea of “liberal” – playing in other people's game. Even today we see how the word is used; it is incredible. For example, Mr Medvedev is a liberal because he's not coming from the KGB! In each context you have such distinctions, extremely contextual, which are trying to define “liberal” not so much with the idea of liberty but against the idea of the status quo in place. The only difference is when you are trying to use Liberalism as this force of status quo that, as I have explained, has a base in the centre of Eastern Europe, very much where the change is. Still, I believe that there could be something special about Liberalism, but it could be something in the development of Liberalism that makes it so easy to go everywhere.

Q: I have a question for Jan Müller. I was interested in your remarks about Liberalism being a theory of transition as well as stabilisation. Now, very often in the past, these means of stabilisation included traditionally liberal means such as constitutional politics, but also manifestly illiberal means such as dictatorship, and I was wondering on the extent to which you think the combination of liberal ends and illiberal means to be useful, and to what extent it actually matters to Liberalism? And, secondly, to what extent you thought the use of illiberal means to further liberal ends is historically as well as spatially contingent, turning around to you the question you asked Michael Freeden before about thresholds?

Jan-Werner Müller: Well, I’m not fully sure I understood the first part of the question between means and ends, but what I would say – if I understand correctly – is that illiberal means tend to corrupt liberal ends. I’m not actually sure whether there are any good examples of liberal transitions where, let’s say, terribly illiberal means were used. I mean the example I was pointing to, rightly or wrongly, with Napoleon was that this is now a period where violence comes to an end, where we get stability but we also don't simply go back to the status quo ante; we don't go back to the Ancien Régime, but we get the best of all worlds, we preserve revolutionary achievements and we also get stability. And, in a sense, I think that that sort of encompassing, reconciling many things somewhat above parties, is something that is retained for a long time through the 19th century in understandings of the “liberal” but also in liberal self-conceptions. People always say, ‘Well, liberal also means that we're somewhat above fanatical parties, but we can always find a way of making them more moderate, of liberalising them, so to speak.’
On the second question, yes it’s clearly contingent. I think there can’t really be any other answer than saying these liberalisation processes are highly complex. The example I was giving with regard to post-war Western Europe, Christian Democracy, was highly contingent both with the kind of ideas that come together but also in terms of the social forces which had to combine to make this such a powerful movement – basically the middle class, peasants, the discrediting of the more extreme right. All this was highly, highly contingent, and couldn’t even be replicated. To come back to some of Ivan’s points of post-89, where in places like Poland one would have felt it an obvious country to have a Christian Democratic party, yet it didn’t happen because some of these contingent factors were not there. I’m somehow resisting the idea that we can have a moving threshold but I’m not quite sure why I’m resisting it. My sense is that if we do, we somehow have to also allow, in the background, some sort of theory of historical progress that could easily then look, again, like a sort of typical 19th century liberal idea of progress, and we all have certain doubts about that, I think. So I quite honestly don’t have a very good answer to this.

Alan Ryan: Can I abuse my position for a second and ask whether you count the post-war occupation of Germany and Japan as examples of establishing liberal institutions by illiberal means?

Q: The term “educational dictatorship” was explicitly used in order to both justify as well as implement that occupation in both Germany and Japan, so that was going be my example of an illiberal use or illiberal means of furthering a political end: “extenuating circumstances”, if you like.

Jan-Werner Müller: The question is: against the background of what? And with the help of which liberal traditions already present? For example, in my view, arguably one of the single most important liberal institutional innovations, precisely in the context of the post-War Western European and later Central and Eastern European settlement, was the invention of a constitutional court as opposed to a supreme court. Who invented that? Hans Kelsen in 1919, and then people took it up. Or militant democracy? Karl Lowenstein. They were already in this context and were not simply dropped from the sky, or arrived at out of a completely different context.

Kalypso Nicolaidis: I just want to share a loosely-associated train of thought. My starting point is that, picking up on Jan’s use of words, I find that we have a tendency to have the politeness of political theory in our vocabulary. So we’ve talked a lot about the tensions, the contradictions and especially the boundaries of Liberalisms. But I think that when I heard Susan yesterday – and echoed today by Ivan and Jan – I find we seem to be coming so much closer to a much stronger self-examination as regards the hypocrisies of Liberalism, the self-delusion of Liberalism or the self-righteousness of Liberalism in many cases. A lot of what Ivan Krastev was saying could be heard that way, so perhaps sometimes we need to be less polite with ourselves in how we label our own conceptual dilemmas and practical dilemmas. Now that leads us back to Ivan’s liberal vs. democracy discussion – such an interesting problem. Internationally it is as if we were thinking about the EU and supranationality the problem is compounded. There is a kind of liberality with Liberalism that goes beyond the state. But because beyond the state isn’t quite ready for Liberalism, Liberalism fills the vacuum. Similarly when we talk about the horizontal dimension of internationality that is a promotion of x-Liberalism, as in democracy, the rule of law, human rights, all these good things that go together. There I was wondering, first, with Jan, when he talks about the “meta-”
concepts and ideas, when we should use “liberal” as an adjective, as opposed to “Liberalism”? Maybe in an international context we’re saying something, becoming more precise about who decides (though not so much about the content). There’s a whole gradation – which links back to our panel yesterday – in the international dimension. Let me highlight four grades. 1) Liberal Universalism: there are those who decide, it is a contingent matter in the minds of people – about preservation, etc.; then we go to 2) liberal internationalism: there we have systemic effects, where “who decides” has to do with forces, which may not be agents but something more concrete; then you have 3) liberal interventionalism: there you have real agency and there are many ways to intervene, or things to intervene about to bring about the good elsewhere in another polity; then, finally, we have our preferred scapegoat, 4) liberal imperialism: here of course we go back to Jan’s non-charitable struggle (this is coercion, and who decides is the general and not Colin Powell). The content is the same, the good of Liberalism is not questioned, but we’re back to means vs. ends and who decides for others and not just for yourself. Maybe we can reflect on the hypocrisy, or not, in this case?

That brings me back to the rhetorical attractiveness that Michael was picking up on. I think of one of the references that informs Ivan’s “illiberal democracy” types of thoughts, which has had huge consequences is the following case. Hundreds of millions of Euros and Pounds have been spent by the EU, US, Canada and other good liberal countries based on the assumption that there are, around the world, bad, illiberal democracies, and so we need to push for the “liberal” without democracy – that somehow we need to make a choice. The strong version of that choice is simply to trump, that liberal institutions simply trump democracy altogether, and that was what Ivan was talking about. Another is wider in its sequencing: liberal comes before, so let’s spend some time developing liberal institutions before we promote democracy, so we have liberal free democracy in other countries. In the EU there’s a version of that sequencing. We have liberal partial democracy, but let’s push the liberal stuff before, as in all these non-majoritarian institutions, from central banks to agencies, etc. We can say in some cases trumping is okay structurally, even the central bank says that, but we’re back to, ‘Who are you to decide; you’re 20 per cent?’ The good, old problem of liberals. There’s been fascinating work on the so-called rationality of these elites (Kahneman and Tversky, collective action causes problems). All of these issues can be internalised in liberal thinking on deciding this boundary. But more importantly for us as a challenge internationally is this whole notion of sequencing. It has led very far, and, obviously, before we have candidates in elections you need to make sure they don’t die before they’re elected. In the long run we are all dead, and lots of people die before having experienced democracy. This brings us back to Alan’s very interesting remark, when he started us off this morning, which I hoped some of you might pick up, which is much more fundamental. The tainted nature of some liberal goods simply because they often can be defined and promoted more or less coercively for non-liberal reasons on non-liberal grounds, from commercial interests to interests in order to control the terrorism fight. They sound nice and sound liberal and, as we were saying, that’s good. But they must be good not only in truth but also in the eyes of the beholders; they are not promoted by liberal agents and this might be what hurts Liberalism the most.

Ivan Krastev: We are starting to remember all the debates that have been forgotten. From this point of view, 1989 was really extremely important. What happened in 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe declared certain debates false. One was the debate between the human rights community and the democratic community concerning the logic of intervention. In the United States in the early 1980s, these were struggling communities. Human rights people said they could intervene in human rights talking about legal standards, the universal legal
standards to which we can refer. We cannot do this in the name of democratisation and democracy because it’s up to the people on the ground. After that, the logic was that democracy as an ideology is the best protection for human rights. From this point of view you have something promoting democracy and not simply protecting against crime as what is right. I don’t know if we’re back to the beginning to re-discussing this because yesterday, listening to Professor Ikenberry, you can take liberal order and liberal Universalism; what is the difference with the age of democratic Universalism, which neo-Conservatives and Bush have been talking about? The difference is that in democratic Universalism you first believe in a theory of global trend developmentalism: we’re all going to end up as democratic. It is a precondition for stable order. In the case of Ikenberry, we see that in order to have a liberal order you do not need liberal minded actors; it is the power of the institutions. This is interesting on the level of the state in Eastern Europe. To what extent can the liberal nature of the institution guarantee the liberal nature of the regime, regardless of the nature of the actors? The liberal order is that they are such strong institutions, but nevertheless, they have been put there, it’s going to be liberal or at least behave as liberal, and if it behaves as liberal for long enough then it will be considered liberal. This is a major issue because it is beyond any type of conversation about “thin” Liberalism, in which the more we speak about the nature of the institutions than about the nature of the actors, the less we are going to know what Liberalism is because it will simply be the characteristics of the institutions. This is my point: that we will start to be much more interested in the nature of actors in the next few years.

Jan-Werner Müller: Maybe just briefly on Kalypso’s point yet again about “meta-”: I think you’re right. The disappearance of the adjective “liberal” might be an indicator of having reached a kind of “meta-” stage. To go back to my earlier example of Christian Democracy, Christian Democratic parties were founded to fend off the attacks of illiberal secular states in the areas of education and family, etc. There’s a transition period where it suddenly makes a difference to say that certain thinkers or parties have become liberal, then, after a certain point, it’s almost a given that Christian Democracy in a broad, meta sense is liberal in Western Europe. Picking up on Ivan Krastev’s point, precisely such a history suggests that it wasn’t simply systemic factors or impersonal forces that brought this development about. There is an argument around now in the hordes of democratisation literature that says one day there will be a thing like Muslim democracy on the model of Christian democracy. Once parties like the famous AKP in Turkey, with inter-party competition, necessarily become more moderate to appeal to as many people as possible, etc. But that can’t be right because by that logic all parties would always be moderate; everyone would try to be a people’s party. There had to be a reshaping of events, of ideas about legitimacy. In the Christian Democratic case people like Jacques Maritain were absolutely crucial in elaborating a Christian endorsement of human rights. There were, to put it mildly, events, dear boy, events, that may have discredited certain other forms of doing Christian politics in circumstances around 20th century Europe, Franco and Salazar and so on.

Timothy Garton Ash: I recall studying Nazi Germany in my youth; that the British Foreign Office, with characteristic judgement, described Goering as a liberal Nazi. If we pursue liberal-something or somebody in any context, I think we’re lost. We need to stick to a substantive noun, either Liberalism or liberal/some other “ism”. Two quick comments. Number one: coming into this conference I thought we might come out of it saying, ‘We want more Koselleckian historical semantics.’ What’s interesting is that what actually happened is that we went very rapidly beyond the words, starting in the first session. But
then when we came back to the words it was very illuminating, the original French usage of Individualism against Socialism, the Japanese character for freedom, which turns out to bear a remarkable resemblance to the Chinese character, and so on. My conclusion for the discussion is that we do need a basic groundwork in historical semantics, but I don't think we need what we have for Germany. I don't think *Begriffsgeschichte* is the key methodology to take us to where we want to be; we need to go with Michael Freeden's methodology.

My second comment: it struck me, listening to Ivan, that the Conservative and populist critique of so-called Liberalism in Central and Eastern Europe bears a strong resemblance to the Conservative/populist critique in Middle America. For both of these, the central objection is that it's a project of the liberal elites. What is it about Liberalism that makes it so susceptible to the critique of it being a project of the elites? Is Liberalism in some sense intrinsically elitist? Perhaps it aspires to be a “meta-ideology”, that is, in its nature an elitist project. Is that critique heard in other parts of the world?

**Paul Flather:** I had two thoughts listening to the debate this morning ‘Who decides?’ Following Jan’s point, when you ask the question, it, the question, determines the answer. I think Alan said “we” in a narrow way, following Timothy Garton Ash’s point – an “elitist” answer. It strikes me that what’s special about Liberalism is that we are willing to be inclusive in that “we”. Maybe in practice it is his elite sitting in Manhattan or Oxford or Princeton who do the hard work, but listening to the past two days we’ve heard that Kings in India might decide; we’ve heard that Christian Democratic parties in Europe can decide; we’ve heard that peoples might decide to some extent in Central Europe. I just wondered if the fact that we can be inclusionary, in practice or not, gives Liberalism a special quality over and above other “-isms”, Marxism, Conservatism and so on, which are more exclusionary on the “we” element.

The second thought is on cycles. I like Michael Freeden’s idea of Liberalism being a tool kit. It seems that different elements of the tool kit get emphasised in relation to cycles. This is maybe self-evident, but it hasn’t been stressed enough. When Beveridge says, for example, that the prosperous equilibrium which we’re all dealing with has come to an end, we then emphasise a different cycle, which is to deemphasise markets for a while. When Reagan and Thatcher seemed to be triumphing, then unitarianism comes alive and we try to rediscover where belongingness is placed within the liberal ideology. I don’t want the concept to collapse both against a detailed historiography, which is what Tim said, or in complexities, though it has been good to listen to them. The question of cycles and the influence of different elements at different points is a crucial idea that I will take away and I want to commend it to others.

And half a point: in the end Stephen was on a rescue mission of Individualism, he wasn’t comfortable with it and at some points suggested doing away with it as a key concept, yet he couldn’t because it does capture something that’s crucial to Liberalism. But we lost “belongingness” in the individual pantheon, and I don’t know where that goes.

**Ivan Krashev:** I agree with Timothy Garton Ash about the sort of criticism that you are going to hear about what Middle America represents. In my view the most relevant book written on the rise of populism in Poland was *What’s the matter with Kansas?* on cultural elites but not so much about anti-business. To me, this is important because liberal theory had normally been attacked simply as an instrument to attack a liberal society, or maybe a modern society. It was not majorly interested in the arguments of the theory; it was a way to say something about the society in which we live. This was the case with Schmitt and Leo Strauss, etc. The basic problem is the one important social transformation taking place, felt strongly by different social groups, and which are shaping perceptions of Liberalism. This is the fact that globalisation and democratisation, all of these, are perceived as the process of the
emancipation of the elites. The elites are less and less dependent on the others; it’s not only true for offshore kinds of financial elites. In this emancipation of the elites, which is the narrative of Liberalism that many people hear? Emancipation from tradition and the point of distance and time, and this over-mobility and not only modernity itself, is a problem and is felt to be a loss by major social groups, who blame the liberals for this. This is because liberals more than anyone represent things; for example, the Soviets in the 40s called it the “ruthless cosmopolitanism” and the “politics of the ruthless cosmopolitanism”, and this is why I do believe this criticism is very important.

But the second thing is that part of the liberal consensus of the 1990s was that economic decision-making should be taken out of politics to prevent populist economic moves, because now the cost of populism is very high. When you take interest out of politics, what remains are passions. As a result there is less and less economic debate, although that might change now. In Central and Eastern Europe part of the reason these movements started with identity politics is because there was no other politics to play. They could not differentiate between economic policies because there was no alternative policy, so they played cultural issues. This phase of politics reshaped the definition of Liberalism and what it is.
8. CONCLUDING DEBATE

Ronald Dworkin*

We have had an extended discussion with many components. We have talked predictively about the face of Liberalism to come; we have talked historically about when certain terms were first used, certain ideas first conceived; and we have talked in a normative way about how we ought to conceive Liberalism. People who ventured predictions were a bit dampened by the fact that prediction for the survival, let alone the flourishing, of Liberalism is now under a cloud. Indeed, there are black clouds: the economic crisis, the remaining terrorist threat – we have already seen what the hand of terrorism has done to human rights around the world, particularly in the US and in our naval base in Cuba. And if terrorism gets worse that danger to Liberalism will, in the end, exceed that danger we are going to face from the drying up of credit around the world. Behind a second cloud was the climate threat: that is not for us and I hope it is not for our children but it is coming and, when it comes, Liberalism will be subject to another difficulty, the difficulty of scarce resources. Most liberal thinkers have supposed that justice is a virtue worth talking about only in circumstances without crushing poverty or scarcity, and it may be that the threat of a change of climate may alter all of that. This makes prediction very difficult, and those who discuss it deserve our thanks for their courage. We heard more about the history of the idea. I am not going to talk very much about that, recognising my own incompetence, though the competing demands of history and normative thinking were mentioned and I will say something about those. By and large I want to talk about the normative issue.

We are charged with the question of what Liberalism is. Early on, a certain opinion was very forcefully put: namely, that there is so much noise – cacophony we called it – about the concept of Liberalism that we would do better to retire the concept altogether. This is a suggestion we hear every time the going gets tough in the analysis of political and moral concepts.

* This is a transcript prepared by the editors and not edited or reviewed by Professor Dworkin.
We have heard that suggestion recently about the concepts of equality, liberty and democracy. Surprisingly, even law itself has not escaped: it has been argued that the subject should be changed – do not ask what the law is on some issue, ask how judges ought to deploy the power of the state.

The difficulty is that when we clear away one concept, we need other concepts. What shall we talk about if we do not talk about Liberalism? Shall we talk about justice? Justice is as much a noisy, as much divisive, as the concept of Liberalism. Shall we talk about what will be conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number? Well, we can get our teeth into that but it begs a question right from the start to do with justice or fairness or any of the other virtues. We have to recognise that the concepts through which we think and argue about political morality are concepts of a rather special kind.

I am afraid I am going to talk about philosophy of language. My view of philosophy of language was very strongly influenced by a conversation I overheard some time ago in this country. Two women were seated on a train. One was extremely distressed – in tears even – and the other woman said to her, “Dear, dear, be philosophical – don’t think about it.”

There are concepts we share and therefore we can agree or disagree in the uses of them. We share them in virtue of sharing the same criteria for their application. Triangle, bachelor, gold and water would be familiar examples. When we find we do not share the same criteria – is a friend of us bald or just getting bald? – we recognise the disagreement as illusory and set it aside. Political and moral concepts are not like that. We do not employ those concepts in virtue of shared criteria. There are no shared criteria – that is what the accusation of cacophony comes down to. So, how is it that we share these concepts? We share them because many but not all of us think there to be value in the neighbourhood of the concept. And we can more or less agree on what an abstract account of what that value is.

In the case of Liberalism, I am going to suggest a very abstract account of what that value is. We employ these concepts – I have called them interpretative concepts – by arguing about what that value is. It follows that there cannot be any such thing as a neutral analysis or conception of Liberalism, equality, liberty or law. It follows that our task as theoreticians is to prepare a normative theory, an account of what that value is, stated more precisely. And that is the point where we disagree.

I propose to you an abstract account of the neighbourhood in which the value of Liberalism lies. It consists of two principles and a political imperative drawn from those principles. The first principle is that each human life matters, in the sense that it is objectively important that once that life begins it flourishes rather than fails. Each of us has a reason to be concerned about the fate of everyone else. The second principle is that,
though it is important that each person’s life succeeds, one person is in charge and has the responsibility for identifying and pursuing a conception of where that value lies. That person is the person whose life it is.

We have what at first sight seems to be both an egalitarian principle: everyone’s life is important; and a liberal principle: there is a range of decisions, for which an individual is responsible and for which that individual’s responsibility must be recognised and protected. The political imperative, which follows from this, is a condition for legitimate government. No government is legitimate that does not fulfil the requirement of equal concern and respect for those over which it exercises dominion. The working out of a conception of Liberalism consists in working out what equal concern and respect requires – and, as I have said, that is a normative exercise. The two principles and the political imperative I have just described seem to me to state what we have been looking for over the past two days, namely something that states the minimal conditions of Liberalism. I do not mean to say that these principles have been accepted over most of human history – they have not. (I cannot even say they are accepted over most of the world now – they are not.) The principles are controversial. But they are principles that, to my mind, provide the ground of Liberalism. The theory of Liberalism is then a theory of what the best interpretation of these ideas is. And that best interpretation cannot take the form of preferring one of those principles over the other or compromising them in some way. Regarding the nature of principles we find that they are absolute whilst, at the same time, our interpretation of each of them reflects and feeds into our understanding of others. For example, we need a theory of equality that makes room for our theory of liberty and vice versa.

That structure, it seems to me, provides the answer to one of the topics of yesterday: how far can we say Liberalism is universal? In its foundation it must be universal – that follows from what I set out, that principles apply to all human beings. When we work out the implications, when we try to work out a conception of Liberalism, then, of course, we must take into account the historical context in which we seek to deploy and protect those two principles. Is Liberalism universal? At the abstract level, yes. At any particular conception, or at what we call a political settlement, no. I do not mean to accept that we should turn away from philosophical investigation of these concepts and simply look at what history has generated. A conception of Liberalism is a response by people moved by the abstract ideals I have described in response to threats to these ideals. The threats to these ideals are felt in their realisation, varying from context to context and period to period. I offer my interpretation of the key ideas to a certain level of specificity: If someone rejects the two principles and the political
imperative, it would begin a discussion not in Liberalism but above it.

What does the political imperative of equal concern for the fate of all citizens require by way of an economic distribution? The resources each person has within a political community at any particular time he commands to try and make a decent life for himself. This is a function of two variables. First, the personal variables: his choices about work and the kind of work as against leisure; his choices of investment, including education as against consumption; his skill at producing what the market values; his luck, an extremely important component. These are the personal variables that determine what resources an individual has. The other half is the political settlement in force, by which I do not just mean the tax laws. I mean every bit of the law: the labour law, the contract law, the environmental restriction, the international trade regulations – every bit of the law affects what an individual has. To put it dramatically: for any distribution of the personal variables, that individual can end up with many different levels of resources. What he ends up with depends on the political settlement. I want to claim that any theory that claims distribution to be none of the government’s business has to be wrong – *it cannot not be part of the government’s business*.

Imagine someone doing badly in the community asking the rest of us, ‘Does this political settlement treat me with equal concern? I propose a different tax, a different contract law that would give me more. Please explain to me why the one you chose shows me equal concern.’ The other person must have an answer. I believe the right response to that demand is enlisting both principles. We need a conception of economic equality that gives effect to the demands of personal responsibility. That means redistribution must aim, as an ideal, to be sensitive to an individual’s choices – that for which he is responsible – but it should be insensitive to his genetic endowment and luck. It is very hard to achieve and requires an economic market to be at the centre of the economic arrangement of any liberal society. The market does not just happen to be a feature of classical liberal thought; the market is indispensable to the correct understanding of what equal concern and respect for responsibility require. Only through a market can an individual take for himself the resources he wants and pay the opportunity costs to others of his having what he takes. It is a pricing mechanism indispensable to a responsible form of equality. As yet, it disregards the insensitivity to luck and endowment. I therefore propose redistributive taxation modelled on the hypothetical insurance policy, i.e. what people would rationally pay *ex ante* for insurance against the kinds of unemployment and bad luck and ill health and otherwise, that people encounter. That is my suggestion as to the accounts of and limits of the role that an economic market plays in a liberal society.
We talked about two other core ideas of Liberalism: toleration and Individualism. I think those ideas are best approached together. Steven Lukes usefully distinguished a set of arguments that have historically been had about Individualism, ranging from an argument about the best methods to use in the social science to the metaphysics of Hegel. I think the important argument to be had about Individualism is an argument about whether individuals ever have rights that trump the collective good. I want to suggest that they have in a decent liberal society. They have the rights that are inherent in my description of equality because the market, running in a way that serves the goal of producing the distribution (sensitive to choice and insensitive to endowment), is one that requires a great deal of freedom. Secondly, they have the rights that flow from the correct understanding of their responsibility (the second principle I have described) to identify and pursue value for themselves.

We have talked yesterday about freedom of religion, and some of us have asked the question, ‘Why is freedom of religion so central and important among the list of rights of the second kind?’ Plainly, freedom of religion comes under the head of a freedom you need in order to acquit your responsibility under the second principle. But how do we distinguish that from the freedom to paint your house in a different colour in a Georgian row, to take a rather frivolous example? The state makes collective decisions about many matters and leaves the individual’s decision about many others, and it is in my mind an underdeveloped part of political philosophy to develop an account of which is which. We make economic decisions largely individually, prices and wages are set by and large through a market regulated in the way I said it has to be. That means that the economic climate is set individually. The moral climate is set collectively. The criminal law is a collective matter: we do not say individuals must decide for themselves where their property ends and someone else’s property begins. The protection of beautiful forests and beautiful pictures in museums is a collective matter.

How do we draw the distinction? I think the second principle points the way. We must make a distinction between moral value and impersonal value, like the value of pictures on the one hand and, on the other hand, those values whose value arises from impact on the success and failure of human lives. And if religion falls into that category, then so does much else. Sexual orientation, for example, also falls into this category, including whether or not the sacrament and status of marriage should be available to same-sex couples. In my view, though this will be more controversial, abortion also falls into the category. In other words, the principle that in so far as a matter falls within the category of that whose value lies to people in
the enhancement it provides to their lives, then it is something that in a liberal society, which respects the second principle, must be left to individuals. Of course, all of this neglects all of the qualifications but at least it gives the thrust of the idea.

We have, it seems to me, in this very brief and sketchy account, a picture of a liberal society. It is a society in which an economic market is an integral part of the conception of equality at work in the community. It is a community in which rights of individuals are acknowledged and respected even at the cost of some collective good. It is harder for someone to raise his or her children in an orthodox faith in a society in which atheism surrounds the child. We cannot appeal to Mill’s principle to say that is not something an individual has to worry about. But it is a cost we must pay out of deference to the second principle of dignity. We did not talk yesterday, except obliquely, about democracy. I want to say that the idea of democracy is indispensable to Liberalism, at least in our century, at least around here, because it is very difficult to see how a government could, in good faith, claim to show equal respect to all its citizens if it allows only some to participate in the collective decisions that dominate the lives of all.

However, that raises the interpretative question: what is democracy? Democracy in the liberal mode, conceived as flowing from a requirement of equal respect, cannot mean majoritarian rule. I say that a little defensively because so many people think that democracy and majoritarian rule mean the same thing. Even democracy protected by procedural rights like the right to free speech and equal suffrage cannot satisfy. Equal respect requires that government be an ideal government, a partnership in which all citizens including those who lose on particular matters have a say and are respected by their fellow citizens. As an ideal, it means that each citizen must be thought by other citizens to have an equal stake, as well as an equal voice, in the outcome of the democratic process. Obviously, there is a great deal to investigate and perhaps qualify. But when I heard yesterday an attempt to distinguish economic from political Liberalism, that struck me as, if necessary, deeply, deeply regrettable. Liberalism is cut from one claw and a society that makes wealth but does not show equal respect to all citizens is one that cannot honestly claim, in my view, to be yet a liberal society.

I have tried to lay out a particular interpretation of the two principles. There are two ways to challenge what I have said. First, one might say I reject root and branch of the idea; I reject the two principles and the political imperative – I fear more people around the world do reject them. The other way is to except these rather banal principles but to disagree with the implications, to disagree, for example, with the account of liberty and equality that simply erases the conflict between them. When we correctly
understand the character of the concepts in place, there cannot be any such conflicts. If you believe in a more unrestrained free market than my account would allow, you might disagree with me that equality does require, as an ideal, a distribution insensitive to endowment, skill and luck.

These are the disagreements we can and should have. That is where the cacophony might drift, if cacophonies indeed drift. As to the first kind of argument, how shall we argue with religious fundamentalists, racists, and the likes? The way not to argue with them is to say for example, ‘Of course I don’t agree with arranged marriages, but that’s only my opinion – everybody is entitled to their opinion and my opinion is better than anybody else’s – look how tolerant I am.’ That is not tolerance but incoherence. You cannot claim a certain thing to be right in your opinion and then say that everything else is just as good.

There is an old thought, the origin of which I cannot remember now: ‘Liberals cannot even take their own side in an argument.’ We have to take our own side in that argument and we have one great advantage: we have the truth on our side.

Debate

Michael Freeden: I have three reservations, the first of which relates to the absolute nature of the second principle. As you probably know as well as I do, one of the great liberal thinkers of the 20th century, Leonard Hobhouse, wrote that mutual aid is no less important than mutual forbearance and I think this emerges in your own writings. In other words, when you say your assumption is that it’s only the responsibility of the person to pursue “flourishing”, I think one major liberal additional sub-principle is that it’s also the responsibility of others to assist in that individual flourishing, which diminishes the absolute nature of the second principle.

Secondly, about when you say we can’t look at history. All the abstract ideas, including those you mentioned, are the product of real historical thinkers and discourses; you are an historical entity yourself. They don’t descend from a normative heaven. What you’re doing, and this is quite normal – we all do it – is that you idealise particular actual expressions about Liberalism, which is very necessary, but they don’t float in some abstract world.

Third point: I quite agree with your point about collective decisions but you yourself don’t make collective decisions; you make decisions for collectivities. In your own language, you talk about indispensability; you talk about absolutism. This is what I call, in a very gentle sense, liberal dogmatism; and there’s nothing wrong with it. We cannot block the dogmatic about the importance of our own beliefs, but just to emphasise here that when we are constructing an ideology we are, at least in ideational terms, imposing our ideas on collectivities.

Ronald Dworkin: The first principle certainly shouldn’t be taken to forbid influencing people about what kind of lives would be good for them to have and it certainly doesn’t forbid being influenced. The whole communitarian idea that Liberals suppose to be atoms floating independently of one another is baseless. It forbids subordination and domination; it forbids telling people that they must. When you aid people in pursuing what they have identified as
the kind of life they want, then of course you’re not violating any responsibility of theirs. Perhaps my words “identify” and “pursue” are misleading. I don’t mean pursue exclusively, or to pursue unaided. Paternalism raises problems about the boundary: at what point in requiring children to go to school or people to wear seatbelts, am I crossing the line into subordination? And people worry about that. My own view is that if you can be confident that this represents what people would want for themselves, then you are not infringing the second principle.

About ideas descending from historical figures and not floating free in the air – we have to separate two things: where do ideas come from? They come from people who get their ideas from various sources, including looking at sunsets or being angry or jealous. We have a whole psychological story about how ideas enter intellectual history, how they first start, what their consequences are. I think we should distinguish that from the question of the authority of ideas. I do not believe, and here I disagree with a lot of people, the fact that ideas were held in history as to the case for those ideas. You say ideas don’t float in an abstract world. When my son was very young, he would tolerate me to ask him questions such as, ‘Where do numbers live?’ and he got very tired of this, and he said one day, ‘I know where numbers live – they live in beer cans in the Himalayan mountains.’ And that’s where ideas live, too. And then in the dogmatism we impose on a collectivity, there is a difference again between influence and imposition. When we create ideas, when Martin Luther King or Abraham Lincoln or Barrack Obama speak eloquently, they are creating ideas, but that is the opposite of subordination.

Samuel Brittan: Before we can criticise our ideas, which we don’t really have time to, and we are in any case broadly sympathetic to them, I think we should understand a certain matter of detail which I want to pursue. When you were talking about democracy, I thought perhaps I am a democrat after all because my natural instinct is of the sort of a liberal authoritarian dictator, although I don’t think the masses are particularly liberal but you then started to interpret democracy in an interesting way, but faded out before you came to the end of that. And to make it specific, maybe you would like to list which countries are fully democratic in your sense? I suspect the answer is zero, but you might have a different one.

Ronald Dworkin: I’m delighted to hear you’re sympathetic with my ideas without understanding them. Which countries are fully democratic? You anticipate my answer: zero. Which countries are struggling to achieve democracy? I believe that when a constitution with effective judicial review is in force, and the justices are making decent decisions and writing decent opinions, then we are approaching partnership democracy. That requires that constitution be understood as setting out provisions that go a long way towards ensuring equal stake, that’s the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment of the US constitution; equal voice, that’s the first amendment; and independence from the collectivity in those matters in which it should be independent. So when you have an effective, let’s say, review of majoritarian decisions against standards designed to protect the idea that self-government is self-government by everybody, than I think you approach that idea. I don’t mean to say, however, that having a supreme court like our own, particularly staffed with people Bush has appointed, is the only way to do it – there are many ways to do it. I would love, for example, for this country to reform the House of Lords by having an elected House of Lords, people eligible who have never been in the House of Commons, and serving for one single term of, say, eight years, charged with interpreting and applying the Human Rights Act. That would be a very good step towards improving democracy in Britain, but of course it would lead away from majoritarian democracy.
On insurance: we can’t really answer the question for any individual, what would that individual have chosen by way of an insurance policy if that person hadn’t known about how relatively likely that person would have been to need that insurance. In my attempt to develop this idea, I have said that we should look at actual insurance markets in particular countries given their state of technology. You have to know how much if you’re blind, how much money is worth to you, what it can do for you. But we look at actual insurance markets with statistical claims about what most people would, under certain conditions pay, then we get a nice bell-shaped curve with a big hump, then we can say, somewhere towards the back end, on the left side of that big bell, we ought to fix what is reasonable to assume what almost everyone would do. That’s the only way to do it.

Susan Mendus: In *Truth and Truthfulness*, Bernard Williams claims that whilst Liberalism is – as I understand it, it’s now and around here, it’s true under the conditions of modernity – the only game in our time; but it’s not the only game. I would like to ask how robust are you prepared to be about Liberalism being true full-stop?

Ronald Dworkin: Two distinctions: when we think about the universality, we have to distinguish what I call the ground principles from the particular interpretation offered in response to particular circumstances. What about people who reject the basic principles? I claim they’re true and they’re true all over the place and they always been true, even though it took a long time even for some of us to see them. Bernard Williams has a different reason for saying what he said, and that is his theory of truth and morality. He didn’t believe in anything but local truth, that was the force of his distinction between a “thick” and a “thin” concept. You can have truth in dealing with thick concepts because they have local texture. Just as a matter of general philosophy, I disagree with him. We had different views about truth, which we argued for many years in seminar rooms in this university.

Timothy Garton Ash: About how liberals conduct themselves in a liberal world. What should be the language and the strategy of people proposing supremely coherent, normative propositions in a world of supremely incoherent normative propositions, which appeal to a vast number of people and possibly the majority in many countries?

Ronald Dworkin: I take it the context is not one of truth seeking, but one of persuasion. We fought through in the right vocabulary, which we have to do, and then the question is: how do we persuade? And I wonder if there is anything that can be said in general. Persuasion means trying to find something that will help that person either understand better, a metaphor or a hook in that person’s idea. I’ve been part of several conversations recently with people trying to explain that in the Koran can be found condemnations of terrorism. It’s a funny argument – if I’m making that argument, am I endorsing the Koran as a source of truth? No. Might I make that argument in order to get some leverage on people I am trying to convince? Yes.

Laurence Whitehead: The two principles are absolute, but I would like to know whether they are absolutely absolute or relatively absolute. If we take the principle, the person who has responsibility for identifying the direction involved is the person whose life it is, as absolutely, absolutely true, then Liberals cannot accept conscription. When we take the principle that it’s objectively important that once life begins it flourishes, then I’d have to be a pacifist. So how absolute are the principles?
Ronald Dworkin: We’ll start with conscription. Understanding that principle requires making a distinction between that, which can and should be left to the individual, and that, which should be decided collectively and coercively imposed on individuals. Conscription is an example of a case that, in principle, requires equal treatment of everyone, so it’s a collective decision. We cannot allow people to decide whether it serves their life best to go into the army. However, in the case of conscription, there are some people whose deepest convictions say not just that they’d rather do something else than march off to the Somme. It’s more than that; they say my sense of myself and my deepest commitments are pacifist and I cannot accept this. I think our Supreme Court was right in the case involving the folk singer Pete Seeger who said, ‘I am an atheist, but I am a conscientious objector, and the government said you can’t be and the Supreme Court said there are beliefs that function in the psychological economy of atheists which have a functional equivalent to religious beliefs.’ And I think that’s right. That’s part of what I meant when I said once you take religion to be special, you need a principle, and once you accept the principle, that makes it special – that principle has much more range than just religion.

About pacifism: to say it is important that human life succeed does impose a great responsibility on political leaders and people who decide whether to follow those leaders to decide what that principle requires in the case, for example of the invasion through a dictator or in the case of genocide. It might very well require in the case of genocide that you invade and kill to save lives. Everything depends on the argument you can deploy. Does that argument itself respect the – I’d like to say, if I can get away with it – sacred quality of human life? It faces us all the time; philosophy textbooks are full of questions about whether you have to save five people, or if you kill one and can save five people then you are entitled to kill one. These are very difficult issues and I don’t think any answer necessarily contradicts the first principle provided life is at stake in the story.

Paul Starr: Your presentation raises the question of how your conception of Liberalism relates to the historical comparative, variations that we have been discussing for the last two days. One possibility you suggested in the beginning is that there could be different political settlements incorporating these principles in a variety of ways, but the trouble with that is that the range of ideas and institutions that have generally been thought to be liberal seems to be much wider than can be covered by those two principles, especially given how demanding these principles are if they are coupled together, if, indeed, there’s an “and” rather than an “or” between. If people concerned really interpret it in universal ways, very few forms of historic Liberalism will actually satisfy that definition.

Ronald Dworkin: The fact that, historically, people have had very different ideas doesn’t mean that most of them weren’t wrong. And I do think that – that’s where the dogmatism comes in.

But of course what I’m doing is inviting an argument. What I want to resist is the idea that because history shows us a variety of things we or someone called liberal it follows that one’s as liberal as the other. Liberalism, like justice, like democracy, like equality and truth, these are ideals, and we have to defend our ideals but not under the supposition that the others are just as good, or just as liberal. Yes, we have to explain, and a historian will be particularly anxious to explain, why the term, or at least the word we translate as Liberalism, got used about Manchester Liberalism, for example. I think my distinction between the abstract principles and any interpretation might help to explain that – it counts as an interpretation of these principles. Utilitarianism, which denies rights, was presented as an interpretation of these principles. Bentham said each person counts for one and no more than one, an
interpretation of that ideal, not a successful one, I think, and I want to argue against Utilitarianism and against the descendants of Utilitarianism in welfare economics and Chicago Economics. So they are wrong, but they are liberal in the sense that they’re presented as an interpretation of these basic ideas.

**Zhang Weiying:** You said market mechanisms should be sensitive to individual choice, but insensitive to endowment. I’m wondering whether there are other conditions, for instance working hours, or conditions that probably have nothing to do with either?

**Ronald Dworkin:** Minimum wages, working hours, etc, in my view, are means to an end, namely to come as close as we can to a distribution that is sensitive to choice, insensitive to endowment. There are many techniques. I mentioned redistributive taxation. There other techniques: in-kind payments; single payer health systems financed out of taxes; giving people money through taxation, you give them a health service. Minimum wage laws and working hour restrictions are means to the end. They, to some degree, deal with externalities and competition of a certain kind, but by and large I think they are attempts to right the balance and not put people at a greater disadvantage than we need because they don’t have market skills. It’s a strategy, and I didn’t mean, when I talked about taxation, that that’s the only strategy that can be used. It’s the goal that I want to secure.

**Adam Swift:** The two principles are about human beings, and what you derived from that is a claim about how the state should treat its citizens. The deep, fundamental principles would have much more international and inter-statal implications about what Liberalism implies.

**Ronald Dworkin:** The problem comes at the level of what I call the second political imperative. The problem is, if you just say every human being matters and every human being counts, it can’t follow from that, in my opinion, that each of us as an individual has an obligation to treat everyone else’s life as equally important to his own, his children’s, his family’s. If it had that implication, I think it would be unsuccessful. It has, in my opinion, a political implication because a political state exercises a monopoly of coercion and that brings with it a responsibility of equal concern. The difficulty with the international case so far is that we don’t have an internationally effective legitimately coercive government, but that’s not a satisfactory place to leave it and I hope to work on that one, but I haven’t yet.

**Paul Flather:** About liberal imperative: you earlier left it at the level of persuasion, but in your subsequent answers you confirmed that you would take a more interventionist stance. When is it incumbent on a liberal to intervene in an individual’s life if the individual claims for him or her it’s a flourishing life but for any normative or objective standard you would question it - for example a drug addict living on the street or on an international scale, for example, do we have an obligation to intervene in Zimbabwe? How do you measure it? You don’t want to resort to utilitarian calculus. I understand that Liberals must take into account efficacy, that there will be a general benefit to more people rather than harm to less and that they will have a desired result.

**Ronald Dworkin:** The chances are good that it won’t do more harm than good. I believe that the concept of human rights is best understood as a response to that problem. What distinguishes human rights from political and legal rights is that human rights trump sovereignty, in my view, which means that a violation of human rights is a necessary condition for intervention. It’s not a sufficient condition for the reasons you’ve stated. It’s
also not a sufficient condition for procedural reasons. We have to work out an international legitimising authority. I don't think unilateralism is the answer, particularly by my government at the present time, because it has proved to be disastrous and I think the rule of law is very important here and it requires there be a legitimating authority, but those are also necessary conditions, and the condition I'm stressing now is that there be a violation of human rights. I need a theory of human rights and I would rely on the distinction I've been making between the abstract level and political settlement to give us that theory, ie. the fundamental human right is the right to be treated with a good faith attempt to respect the two principles. That's quite strong, but that's what I think we should say. Obviously, we disagree even within this room about the right interpretation – that doesn't mean one is as good as another, but we do disagree. And I think that sovereignty ought to protect a nation which has made a good faith attempt – you say who decides on what a good faith attempt is and that's where the international authority comes in – but the standard should be that. It's a weaker standard than political rights, but it's still a standard that's based on these two principles. And you say, well, many nations don't accept these two principles and that's why I said at the end we have truth on our side.

Steven Lukes: How, on your view of Liberalism, should we think about power? Or, more specifically, how should a liberal identify illegitimate power? You said Liberalism forbids subordination and domination; you didn't say coercion. Is there any space in your interpretation of the second principle about individuals getting it wrong about their lives and what kind of space that would be?

Ronald Dworkin: What are the conditions of the legitimate exercise of coercive power? On an abstract level, the conditions are included as a necessary condition of legitimate coercive equality, that the institution that exercises this have equal concern and respect for all those under its dominion, and therefore the abstract demands the concrete. That's what arguments about political rights are about; that's what arguments in the Supreme Court are about. They are arguments about whether the abstract conditions that, in my view, our constitution sets out, have been met in the concrete case. I also think that history has a role to play in legitimacy. I decide with a few of you as my comrades to exercise equal respect and concern for the Falkland Islands, but history does not give us that power. History is a matter of contingency. It's a matter of where rivers run and kings have slept, that's what determines boundaries. I think that legitimacy has to have a contingent element, but the contingent element has to be supplemented by the necessary condition of equal concern and respect.

Individuals can make mistakes – that's the point. You might say, 'Why shouldn't we help people lead better lives?' If they have made mistakes, we step in, grab them by the scruff of the neck and push them in the right direction. That raises a number of questions, one of which is ethical. Can you have a better when endorsed? My own view is that though you can make a mistake, the mistake can't be corrected through coercion from the outside because then it becomes an inauthentic life. And an inauthentic life is not a good life. The standard political reasons: the fact that one person can make a mistake is no proof that another person, even if there are lots of them, isn't also going to make a mistake, and the opposite mistake. But I want to rely most on the idea that you can't lead a good life at the end of a gun.

João Carlos Espada: How can you distinguish between what is the result of choice, and what is the result of endowment and luck? Is there a rule or a principle, or is it just based on opinion?
Secondly, if you want to correct the influence of endowment and luck, can you do that without permanently interfering with the actions or the results of the actions that spring from the free choices of individuals?

**Ronald Dworkin:** Who makes the distinction between choice and luck? Well, it depends upon who’s asked to make the choice. If it’s parliament which is asked to design a tax law, it’s got to make the choice. Is it a difficult decision to make? Some people think it is – if you are an incompatible-ist about the free-will-problem then you think there is no choice, nobody ever has a choice and the distinction is illegitimate right from the start. So I agree with you that if one wants to go looking for icebergs, there’s a big iceberg under this one, called the freewill problem. But I think it’s a practical matter, if I may use that obnoxious phrase. If you say it is not an individual’s choice to become blind in an accident, there are also mixed cases, cigarette smoking for instance. Was that your choice or was it bad luck? I don’t think that this is going to be much of a problem on the macro level in designing a fair redistributive tax system.

**Inoue Tatsuo:** The fact that you have very strict regulations about which range of colour you are allowed to paint your house in, whereas freedom in terms of religion is strictly protected, can only be justified by appealing to the argument that the conception of the good life with emphasis on religion is better than other conceptions. How do you respond to an eccentric person filling a lawsuit about colour regulations on the ground that, to him, the colour of his house is more important than religion?

**Ronald Dworkin:** I disagree with Michael Sandel, who says that it’s a better conception of the good life to be religious than to want to paint your house pink instead of white or vice versa. It’s much more important what the colour of your house is, but I fear I’m in the minority on that question, certainly in my country. I would say what’s important is not that one is a better conception of the good life but that one is a conception of the good life, and the other is not. That requires me to say that it’s not up to people, one by one, to declare what’s an ethical question and what’s a moral question. That is a very important political decision, and if we’re going to have a conception of Liberalism, it will have to include it.

**Alan Ryan:** Just to be obnoxious, I hereby deny the principle that every life matters. I deny that every life matters equally. It seems to me preposterous to think that every human life is of equal value. I assent to the negative proposition that it’s very hard to get consensus on which life matters more than which with no trouble at all. But you claim you have everyone on your side for a principle which either has to get diluted into tautology to be credible or else turns out to be your say-so about the conditions of legitimacy in a liberal state; of course it is a highly plausible say-so, that liberal states lose their legitimacy if they don’t treat their citizens with equal concern and respect, and one I assent to. But the notion that this reflects a deep underlying moral truth seems to me deeply contestable. Somebody in this room ought to deny it, so, on behalf of the late Bernard Williams and the even later Friedrich Nietzsche, I hereby deny it.

**Ronald Dworkin:** I never said each life is of equal value, and that is obviously not true. No matter how value is mentioned, people are not equally moral; people are not equal contributors to the good of others, to the excellence of culture or anything else. People are not equal in anything. My entirely different proposition is that it matters what happens to them
equally. And that’s quite consistent with saying some are rodents and some are angels. You’re quite right in saying it would be nice if I had an argument rather than a dictum. I will give you my version of a Kantian argument: you can’t make sense of your own life without thinking that it’s objectively important how you live. You can’t think it’s important because you happen to want to live well – that won’t work, it gets the argument going in the wrong direction. You yourself – this is what Kant called a transcendental argument - assume that your life matters. The next question, therefore, is: is there anything about you, such that your life could matter more than anybody else’s? Historically, many people have given positive answers to that: I am a descendant of a Plantagenet, therefore my life matters more; I am a Jew and a chosen person, therefore my life matters more. I am just supposing that none of these answers is any good and that you end up with the position that if you think your life matters, then life matters. I think that was Nietzsche’s view, too; it might be controversial, but I’m supported by a book I recently read by Tamsin Shaw, which comes to the same conclusion, namely that Nietzsche thought that only very few people, I think the list was Goethe, himself, and I’ve forgotten who else, are capable of leading a distinguished life, but that was a shame because it matters how everyone lives.
APPENDIX: A LIBERAL TRANSLATION

Timothy Garton Ash*

Government and markets both have their place in a decent society, President Obama suggested in his Inaugural Address, but can become a force for ill if they are without restraint. Missing from Mr. Obama’s address was only the proper name of the political philosophy, coded into the constitutional DNA of the United States, that proposes this and other balances: liberalism.

Like many of Mr. Obama’s speeches, the Inaugural Address presented, in substance, a blend of classical constitutional and modern egalitarian liberalism. The thing, but never the word. Anyone who knows anything about contemporary political discourse in the United States understands why.

Just over 20 years ago, a group of leading American intellectuals, gathered by the historian Fritz Stern, placed an advertisement in this very paper trying to defend the word “liberalism” against its abuse by Ronald Reagan and others on the American right. It was in vain. Over the last two decades a truly eccentric usage has triumphed in American public debate. Liberalism has become a pejorative term denoting — to put the matter a tad frivolously — some unholy marriage of big government and fornication.

This weird usage leads, at the extreme, to book titles like Deliver Us From Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism and Liberalism. But it infects the mainstream too. Asked during a primary debate to define “liberal,” and say if she was one, Hillary Clinton replied that a word originally associated with a belief in freedom had unfortunately come to mean favouring big government. So, she concluded, “I prefer the word progressive, which has a real American meaning.” This implies that the meaning of “liberal” must be unreal, un-American, or possibly both.

The United States is not the only place where “liberalism” is fiercely contested. In a recent conference at Oxford, with speakers from the Americas, Europe, India, Japan and China, we explored what we deliberately called “Liberalisms.” Interestingly, what is furiously attacked as “liberalism” in France, and in much of Central and Eastern Europe, is precisely what is

most beloved of the libertarian or “fiscal conservative” strand of the American right. When French leftists and Polish populists denounce “liberalism,” they mean Anglo-Saxon-style, unregulated free-market capitalism. (Occasionally the prefix neo- or ultra- is added to make this clear.)

One Chinese intellectual told us that in his country, “Liberalism means everything the government doesn’t like.” The term is used in China as a political instrument to attack, in particular, advocates of further market-oriented economic reform. Standards of what counts as socially or culturally liberal also vary widely. An Indian speaker wryly observed that in India a “liberal” father is one who allows his children to choose whom they want to marry.

Faced with this worldwide conceptual cacophony, some at the conference argued that we should abandon the term, or at least dismantle it into component parts with plainer meanings. But combinations and balances belong to liberalism’s defining essence, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As the Oxford political theorist Michael Freeden observed, if just one of the necessary components — for example, the free market — dominates, then the result can be illiberalism. The vital, never-ending debate over liberalism is not just over its indispensable ingredients, but also over their form, proportion and relation to one another.

A plausible minimum list of ingredients for 21st century liberalism would include liberty under law, limited and accountable government, markets, tolerance, some version of individualism and universalism, and some notion of human equality, reason and progress. The mix of ingredients differs from place to place. Whether some distant cousin really belongs to the extended family of liberalisms is a matter of healthy dispute. But somewhere in this contested, evolving combination there is a thing of enduring value.

This has been an American argument, some would say the American argument, for more than 200 years. In fact, the United States is still full of liberals, both progressive or left liberals and, I would insist, conservative or right liberals. Most of them just don’t use the word. Liberalism is the American love that dare not speak its name.

For obvious reasons, we are now witnessing worldwide criticism of a version of pure free-market liberalism, a. k. a. neo-liberalism, charged with having led us into our current economic mess. Yet, our Chinese and European colleagues agreed that markets remain an indispensable condition of liberty. One leading Chinese economic reformer even suggested that there is less income inequality in those Chinese provinces where the market plays a larger role.
I don’t expect Mr. Obama to use that word any time soon. But those of us who believe in the universal, enduring value of liberalism are happy to see him start by vigorously restoring more of the thing. He has decisively reasserted the importance of equal liberty under the rule of law, not least by ordering the closing of Guantánamo Bay prison. Seeking a more just and efficient balance between government and markets is at the heart of his domestic agenda. He has also found ways to present the traditional liberal value of tolerance in new language that speaks to our increasingly mixed-up world.

Then, perhaps in his second term, he might even dare to rescue the word.
ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Professor Luc Borot
   Director, Maison Française d'Oxford

Dr Nigel Bowles
   Director, Rothermere American Institute and Fellow of St Anne's College

Dr Paul Flather
   Secretary General, The Europeaum, and Fellow of Mansfield College

Professor Michael Freeden
   Director, Centre for Political Ideologies, and Fellow of Mansfield College

Professor Timothy Garton Ash (Chair)
   Professor of European Studies and Isaiah Berlin Professorial Fellow, St Antony's College

Professor Robert Gildea
   Professor of Modern History and Fellow of Worcester College

Professor Paul Giles
   Professor of American Literature and Fellow of Linacre College

Dr Ian Goldin
   Director, James Martin 21st Century School, and Fellow of Balliol College

Professor Andrew Hurrell
   Montague Burton Professor of International Relations and Fellow of Balliol College

Professor Tony Judt
   Director, Remarque Institute, New York University

Professor Rana Mitter
   Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China and Fellow of St Cross College

Professor Ian Neary
   Director, Nissan Institute for Japanese Studies, and Fellow of St Antony's College

Professor Kalypso Nicolaidis
   Director, European Studies Centre, St Antony's College and Professor of International Relations

Professor Alan Ryan
   Warden of New College

Professor Jennifer Welsh
   Professor of International Relations and Fellow of Somerville College

Dr Stuart White
   Tutor in Politics and Fellow of Jesus College

Mr Laurence Whitehead
   Official Fellow in Politics at Nuffield College
VISITING SPEAKERS

Professor Rajeev Bhargava

Professor Rajeev Bhargava obtained his BA degree from the University of Delhi and M.Phil and D.Phil degrees from Oxford University. He is currently Senior Fellow and Director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. He has previously been a Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. From 2001-2005, he held the chair in Political Theory and Indian Political Thought at the University of Delhi and was the Head of its Department of Political Science.

He has been a Senior fellow in Ethics at Harvard University, Visiting fellow of the British Academy, CR Parekh Fellow at the CSDS, Delhi, a Leverhulme fellow at the University of Bristol, Senior Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Jerusalem and Distinguished Resident scholar at the Institute of Religion, Public Life and Toleration, Columbia University, NY. He held the Asia Chair at Sciences Po, Paris in the summer of 2006. He will be a Visiting Fellow, at the Wissenschaftkolleg, Berlin in 2009-10.


Sir Samuel Brittan

Sir Samuel Brittan has been an economic commentator on the Financial Times since 1966. Prior to this he was economics editor of the Observer (1961-64) and an adviser at the Department of Economic Affairs (1965).

His most recent books are Against the Flow (2005), Capitalism with a Human Face (1995) and Essays, Moral, Political and Economic (1998). He is an Honorary Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge and an honorary Doctor of Letters at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. He has been visiting professor at the Chicago Law School, a visiting Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford, and an honorary professor of politics at Warwick.
He has been awarded the George Orwell, Senior Harold Wincott and Ludwig Erhard prizes. He was a member of the Peacock Committee on the Finance of the BBC (1985-86). He was knighted in 1993 for “services to economic journalism” and that year also became a Chevalier of the Legion d’Honneur.

Professor Cui Zhiyuan
Professor Cui teaches Politics and Public Management at the University of Tsinghua, Beijing. His research is characterised by an innovative approach to the social and economic developments of post socialist China and by strong theoretical interests. His publications include books and articles on both capitalist and socialist economies. He edited the selected essays of Roberto Unger and has co-authored with him a book and various articles. Professor Cui has a rich experience as a scholar and professor in the USA. At present he is Visiting Professor at Cornell University.

Professor Ronald Dworkin
Professor Ronald Dworkin is Professor of Philosophy and Frank Henry Sommer Professor of Law at New York University. He received BA degrees from both Harvard College and Oxford University, and an LLB from Harvard Law School.

He was associated with a law firm in New York (Sullivan and Cromwell) and was a professor of law at Yale University Law School from 1962-1969. For many years, he was the Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford. After retiring from Oxford, Dworkin became the Quain Professor of Jurisprudence at University College London, where he subsequently became the Bentham Professor of Jurisprudence. He gave his valedictory lecture at University College London in March 2008, “Can we disagree about law and morals?” He is a Fellow of the British Academy and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Professor Dworkin is the author of many articles in philosophical and legal journals as well as articles on legal and political topics in the New York Review of Books. Among his many books are Taking Rights Seriously (1977), A Matter of Principle (1985), Law’s Empire (1986), Philosophical Issues in Senile Dementia (1987), A Bill of Rights for Britain (1990), Life’s Dominion (1993), and Freedom’s Law (1996). Several of these books have been translated into the major European languages, as well as into Japanese and Chinese.

Professor Pierre Hassner
Professor Pierre Hassner is Emeritus Research Director at Sciences-Po (CERI) and lectures in international relations and the history of political thought at the Institut d’Études Politiques of Paris and at the European Center of Johns Hopkins University in Bologna. His books include La violence et la paix, La terreur et l’empire and, Justifier la guerre? De l’intervention humanitaire au contre-terrorisme? (ed.) (2005). Professor Hassner has also taught as a visiting professor at the Universities of Chicago, Harvard,
and Geneva. He was written widely on political philosophy (particularly on Rousseau, Kant and Hegel) and on international affairs (particularly on totalitarianism, nationalism, war and peace).

Several of his books have been translated into English including: Violence and Peace (1997), Justifying War? From Humanitarian Intervention to Counter-Terrorism (ed.) (2008).

Dr Carol Horton

Dr Carol Horton is an independent scholar and author of Race and the Making of American Liberalism (2005). She holds a doctorate in Political Science from the University of Chicago and served on the faculty of Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

During the past decade, Carol has specialized in program planning and evaluation research for the public and non-profit sectors. Most recently, she was employed as a Research Scientist focusing on programs and polices affecting low-income children and families at Erikson Institute, Chicago. She has authored or co-authored numerous research reports for public and private organizations including the Center for the Study of Social Policy, Chapin Hall Center for Children, Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services, DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, Erikson Institute, Ford Foundation, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Ms. Foundation for Women, and Pew Charitable Trusts.

Professor John Ikenberry

Professor John Ikenberry is the Albert G. Milbank Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, in the Department of Politics and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He is also a Global Eminence Scholar at Kyung Hee University. Professor Ikenberry is the author of After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars (2001), which won the 2002 Schroeder-Jervis Award presented by the American Political Science Association for the best book in international history and politics. A collection of his essays, entitled Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: American Power and International Order appeared in 2006. He is also co-editor of End of the West? Crisis and Change in Atlantic Order (2008). Most recently, he is co-author of Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the 21st Century (2009), which explores the Wilsonian legacy in contemporary American foreign policy. He is currently writing a book entitled Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American System (forthcoming). Professor Ikenberry is the co-director of the Princeton Project on National Security, and he is the co-author, along with Anne-Marie Slaughter, of the final report, Forging a World of Liberty Under Law. Professor Ikenberry is the author and editor of many other books, including State Power and the World Economy (2002) with Joseph Grieco. He is also editor of American Unrivalled: The Future of the Balance of Power (2002) and co-edited The Nation State
in Question (2003) which examines the changing capacities and roles of the modern state. He is also co-author with John A Hall of The State (1989) which has been translated into several languages, including French, Spanish, and Japanese. He has also edited a volume, with Michael Doyle, on New Thinking in International Relations (1997). He is co-editor with Michael Cox and Takashi Inoguchi of U.S. Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts (2000) and co-editor with Michael Mastanduno of International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific (2003). He has published in all the major academic journals of international relations and written widely in policy journals.

Among his many activities, Professor Ikenberry served as a member of an advisory group at the State Department in 2003-04 and was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on U.S.-European relations, the so-called Kissinger-Summers commission. He is also a reviewer of books on political and legal affairs for Foreign Affairs.

**Professor Inoue Tatsuo**
Professor Inoue Tatsuo was born in Osaka, Japan, in 1954. He is Professor of Philosophy of Law at the Graduate Schools for Law and Politics, the University of Tokyo. After having graduated from the Faculty of Law, at the University of Tokyo, he majored in philosophy of law as Research Associate there in 1977-1980. He was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Department of Philosophy, Harvard University, 1986-88. After teaching philosophy of law as Associate Professor at Faculty of Law and Economics, Chiba University, he became Associate Professor at the Graduate Schools for Law and Politics, the University of Tokyo in 1991 and Professor in 1995. He taught at New York University School of Law as Visiting Professor for the Global Law School Program in 2002 Spring Semester. He was Senior Research Fellow at the Center for European Integration Studies, the University of Bonn, in 2003. He was inaugurated as a Member of the Science Council of Japan in 2005.

His research covers subjects such as the theory of norms, the theory of justice, the concept of law, the rule of law, philosophical foundations of liberalism and constitutional democracy, Asian values and human rights, and law and politics in contemporary Japan. He is the author of six books in Japanese and has received the Suntory Art and Science Award for his book Kyosei no Saho: Kaiwa toshiteno Seigi [Decorum of Conviviality: Justice as Conversation], (1986) and the Watsuji Tetsuro Culture Award for his book Ho toiu Kuwadate [Law’s Project], (2003). Among his main publications in English are The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights, (1999); “Reinstating the Universal in the Discourse of Human Rights and Justice,” in A. Sajo (ed.), Human Rights with Modesty: The Problem of Universalism (2004); “How Can Justice Govern War and Peace: A Legal-Philosophical Reflection,” in Ludger Künnhardt and Mamoru Takayama (eds.), Menschenrechte, Kulturen und Gewalt: Aufsätze einer interkulturellen Ethik (2005); “Two Models of Democracy: How to

**Professor Ivan Krastev**

Professor Ivan Krastev is a political scientist and Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, Bulgaria. He is a founding member of the European Council on Foreign Relations (www.ecfr.eu) and member of the Trilateral Commission. He is an Open Society Fellow and the academic director of the Open Century Project of the Central European University in Budapest. Ivan Krastev was the executive director of the International Commission on the Balkans chaired by former Italian Premier Minister Giuliano Amato.

In the last decade he has been a visiting fellow at St. Antony’s College, Oxford; the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington; Collegium Budapest; Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin; Institute of Federalism, University of Fribourg, Switzerland; Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, Central European University, Budapest and the Remarque Institute, New York University.


**Professor Justine Lacroix**

Professor Justine Lacroix is Deakin Fellow at St Antony’s College, Oxford (2008-9) and Associate Professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Her research interests include contemporary political thought and the normative dimensions of European integration.

Professor Jacob Levy

Professor Jacob T. Levy is Tomlinson Professor of Political Theory at McGill University and a member of the Groupe de Recherches Inter-universitaire en Philosophie Politique. He is the author of The Multiculturalism of Fear (2000), and of articles on liberalism, constitutionalism, multiculturalism, pluralism, federalism, and early modern political thought in The American Political Science Review, Political Theory, History of Political Thought, Nomos, Social Philosophy and Policy, Hypatia, and elsewhere. He holds a BA, Honors, Phi Beta Kappa, magna cum laude in Political Science from Brown University, an MA and PhD in Politics from Princeton University, and an LL.M. from the University of Chicago Law School. He has received fellowships from Fulbright, the National Science Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the Earhart Foundation, and the Social Philosophy and Policy Center. He was formerly on the faculty in Political Science at the University of Chicago.

Professor Levy is Secretary-Treasurer of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy, and Early Modern and Enlightenment Editor for the Sage Encyclopedia of Political Theory.

Professor Li Qiang

Professor Li is Professor of political science at the School of Government, Peking University, China, and Director of that university’s European Studies Centre. He received his Ph.D. from University College London in 1993 and has been teaching at Peking University since 1994.

His main areas of teaching are political philosophy, history of Western political thought and modern Chinese political ideas. His publications include two books, Liberalism (1998) and Reflections on the Relationship between Individual and Society (2008), and dozens of articles both in Chinese and in English. The main interests of his research and publications are Western liberalism, social and political theories of Max Weber, liberalism in modern China, theory of the state, and the issue of state building in contemporary China. He has translated numerous books into Chinese, including books by Max Weber and Eric Voegelin. He has been a visiting fellow at the Universities of Chicago, the Free University of Berlin, and the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg.

Professor Steven Lukes

Professor Steven Lukes was an undergraduate at Balliol College, Oxford, where he read Philosophy, Politics and Economics. He then became Research Fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford, then Fellow and Tutor in Politics and Sociology at Balliol from 1966-1987. Subsequently he became Professor of Social and Political Theory at the European University Institute in Florence from 1987-1996, then Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Siena 1996-2000, and Visiting Millennium Professor in the Dept of Sociology at the London School of Economics 2000-2003. Currently he is Professor of Sociology at New York University. He is also a Fellow of the British Academy. He has
had visiting appointments in various US universities, Paris, Brazil, South Africa, Israel, etc.

Professor Lukes is the author of Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work; Individualism (1973); Power: A Radical View (1986); Marxism and Morality (1985); The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat: A Comedy of Ideas (1995); and, most recently, Moral Relativism (2008). In addition, Professor Lukes has produced three collections of essays and numerous articles about social theory, political philosophy and philosophy of the social sciences.

Professor Lukes is a Member of the editorial board of the Archives européennes de sociologie (European Journal of Sociology) since 1972. He has always worked as an intellectual nomad in the borderlands of philosophy and the social sciences. Currently he is working on an English edition of Condorcet’s Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrés de l’esprit humain and on further research in what may be called ‘the sociology of morals.’ Professor Lukes will be working on this at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin next academic year.

**Professor Matsuda Koichiro**

Professor Matsuda Koichiro is Professor of Japanese Political Thought at the Department of Law and Politics, Rikkyo University, Tokyo. He obtained his PhD in political science from Tokyo Metropolitan University. His recent book Edo no chishiki Kara Meiji no seiji he (From Edo intellectual to Meiji politics) was awarded the Suntory Prize 2008. His publications in English include “Social Order and the Origin of Language in Tokugawa Political Thought”; Rikkyo Hogaku 63 (2003.3).

**Professor Susan Mendus**

Professor Susan Mendus studied Classics and Philosophy at the University of Wales, but soon became more interested in Philosophy than in Classics. Her first degree was in Philosophy and, after graduating, she went to Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she studied for the B.Phil in Philosophy. From 1986 to 1990, Professor Mendus was Morrell Fellow in Toleration at York University; from 1995 to 2000, she was Director of the Morrell Centre for the Study of Toleration. Professor Mendus has been Professor of Political Philosophy at York since 1996, and a Fellow of the British Academy since 2004.

Professor Mendus has recently completed two research projects: the first is a book entitled Politics and Morality in which she asks whether it is possible for politicians to be morally good or whether, as philosophers from Plato onwards have insisted, politicians must have dirty hands. The book will be published by Polity Press in late 2009. The second project is a development of her 2007 Freilich lectures (Religious Toleration in an Age of Terrorism) and involves an analysis of the ways in which events of 9/11 have (or have not) altered our understanding of and attitude to religious toleration. The Freilich Lectures have been published in pamphlet form by the Australian National University.
**Professor Jan-Werner Müller**
Professor Jan-Werner Müller is Associate Professor of Politics at Princeton University. During 2008-9 he is an OSI Fellow at Central European University Budapest. He was previously a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and a Research Fellow at St Antony’s College, Oxford.


**Professor Pierre Rosanvallon**
Professor Pierre Rosanvallon was born in 1948. He received his doctorate in History (1978) and a Ph.D in Political Philosophy at the Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. He was Senior Research Fellow at the University of Paris IX-Dauphine (from 1977 to 1983) where he founded with Jacques Delors the Research Center Travail et Société. He has held the Chair in Early Modern and Modern Political History at the Collège de France since 2001. He has also been Directeur d’études at the Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris since 1989. Professor Rosanvallon is also currently the President of the international intellectual workshop La République des idées and the Director of the website www.laviedesidees.fr dedicated to the study of intellectual history.


He has also published two volumes on the history of State and Civil Society in France, the latter translated as The Demands of Liberty: Civil Society in France since the Revolution, (2007). In 2006, he published La Contre-démocratie. La politique à l’âge de la défiance, translated as Counter Democracy (2008). A volume of essays has also been translated into English: Democracy, Past and Future (2006). He has also published several books on the history of 19th century liberalism (among them, Le Moment Guizot, 1985) and works on the welfare state: The New Social Question (2000). His latest book, La légitimité démocratique: Impartialité, réflexivité, proximité, was published by Le Seuil in September 2008.

**Professor Paul Starr**
Professor Paul Starr is professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton University and co-founder and co-editor of The American Prospect. He is the author, most recently, of Freedom’s Power, on the history and promise of liberalism (2007). Among
his other books are The Social Transformation of American Medicine, which received the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for Nonfiction and Bancroft Prize in American History, and The Creation of the Media, which won the 2005 Goldsmith Book Prize. Professor Starr writes on American society and politics, social theory, and both domestic and foreign policy. In 1990, with Robert Kuttner and Robert Reich, he cofounded The American Prospect, a liberal magazine about politics, policy, and ideas. During 1993, while on leave from both Princeton and The American Prospect, he served as a senior advisor in the Clinton White House on health policy.

**Professor Wang Shaoguang**
Professor Wang gained his Ph.D. in Political Science from Cornell University in 1990. He is currently Professor and Chairman of the Department of Government & Public Administration for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Changjiang Professor in the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University. Professor Wang is also a non-official member of the Hong Kong Government’s Commission on Strategic Development, and the chief editor of The China Review, an interdisciplinary journal on greater China.


**Professor Zhang Weiying**
Professor Zhang is Dean of the Guanghua School of Management of Peking University, Director of Peking University’s e-Business Center, and a leading economist in China. He received a bachelor degree in 1982 from Northwestern University at Xi’an and a D. Phil. in economics in 1994 from Oxford University. Between 1984 and 1990, he was a research fellow of the Economic System Reform Institute of China, and heavily involved in economic reform policy making in China. He was the first Chinese economist to propose the “dual-track price reform” (in 1984). After he graduated from Oxford, he
co-founded the China Center for Economic Research (CCER) at Peking University in 1994. From 1999 to August 2006, he was the executive associate dean of Guanghua School of Management. His visionary reform has changed business education in China. He was also the chief architect of the 2003 Peking University faculty system reform.

As a scholar of economics he has published dozens of academic articles and 10 books. His works have had significant impacts on the ongoing enterprise reform policy formulation and the development of economics in China. His opinions of the Chinese economy have been frequently reported in media. He was named one of the "10 People of the Year in the Chinese Economy" by CCTV in 2002. In 2008, he was ranked among “30 Economic Figures for 30 Years of the Reform” by China Economic Reform Association, and “Top Ten Chinese Economists for 30 Years” by China Entrepreneurs Magazine. He has served as the chief economist for the China Entrepreneurs Forum since 2001.
OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Dr Othon Anastasakis
Dr Katya Andreyev
Professor Catherine Audard
Dr Dimitar Bechev
Dr Christopher Bickerton
Professor Vernon Bogdanor
Dr Sarmila Bose
Mrs Irene Brendel
Dr Chris Brooke
Dr Nicholas Bunnin
Dr Daniel Butt
Professor Richard Caplan
Dr Francis Chevenal
Dr Jean-Pascal Daloz
Professor Norman Davies
Professor Anne Deighton
Professor Joao Carlos Espada
Dr Graca Espada
Mrs Danuta Garton Ash
Mr David Goodhart
Dr Rachel Murphy
Dr Kerem Oktem

Dr Frank Pieke
Professor Paolo Pombeni
Mr Henry Porter
Professor Alex Pravda
Mr Tony Curzon Price
Dame Jessica Rawson
Professor Sir Adam Roberts
Lady Elizabeth Roberts
Sir Ivor Roberts
Dr Sho Konishi
Professor Vivienne Shue
Professor Sally Shuttleworth
Dr Julia Skorupska
Dr Adam Swift
Professor Alexis Tadie
Professor Takehiko Kariya
Mr Mark Thompson
Dr Patricia Thornton
Professor Henk de Velde
Dr Leila Vignal
Professor Andrew Vincent
SPONSORING INSTITUTIONS

The organisation of this conference was sustained by the faculty and staff of a number of institutions both inside and outside the University of Oxford. They include, in Oxford, the Rothermere American Institute, the consortium of European Studies at Oxford, the Centre for Political Ideologies, the Department of Politics and International Relations, the Nissan Institute for Japanese Studies, the European Studies Centre at St Antony’s College, the Asian Studies Centre at St Antony’s College, the Institute for Chinese Studies, the British Inter-University China Centre, the Contemporary China Studies Programme, the Europaeum, the Maison Française d’Oxford, the James Martin 21st Century School and the Modern History Faculty, and, outside Oxford, the Remarque Institute at New York University. We thank them all.

For financial and material support we are most grateful to:

Remarque Institute, New York University
Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford
New York Review of Books
European Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford
James Martin 21st Century School, University of Oxford
British Inter-University China Centre
Daiwa Foundation
Maison Française d’Oxford
The Europaeum
New College, Oxford
Universities’ China Committee in London
Aurea Foundation
Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford
St Antony’s College, Oxford
Asian Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford
Isaiah Berlin Fellowship Fund, St Antony’s College, Oxford
Contemporary China Studies Programme, University of Oxford
Dahrendorf Programme for the Study of Freedom