Pragmatism and tradition

Conservatism aims to conserve society as it is and is suspicious of change. Pragmatism and tradition are two core values of conservatism; they are strongly linked to traditional and One Nation Conservatism and associated with writers Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism rejects ideology and theory in favour of decisions made on the basis of **practical experience** and 'what works'. It implies a **flexible** political approach that considers what is acceptable to, and in the best interests of, the people, and what ensures social stability and cohesion. According to Edmund Burke (see page 43 to find out more about Burke's influence on conservatism): 'Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other.' Likewise, Michael Oakeshott (for more on Oakeshott, see page 44) said: 'To be a Conservative is to prefer the tried to the untried.'

Tradition

Tradition refers to the institutions, customs and beliefs of a society that has **developed over time**. The term also implies that such practices will be **passed on from generation to generation**. According to G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936): 'Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about.'

Arguments in favour of pragmatism

Human nature: humans lack the intellectual ability to fully understand the complex realities of the world. Theories, abstract ideas or ideologies that claim to 'explain' or 'improve' the condition of human life are rejected as potentially destabilising.

Society: abstract ideas and principles such as 'equality' and 'rights' are dangerous because they can lead to radical change (often through revolution) that produces worse rather than better conditions.

The state: a pragmatic approach that emphasises caution, moderation, gradualism and continuity will introduce necessary change or reform without endangering social cohesion or stability.

The economy: the One Nation conservative approach to the economy is described below.

Arguments in favour of tradition

Human nature: tradition provides humans, who are weak and security-seeking, with the social framework to make sense of society and their place within it.

Society: long-established institutions, customs and practices give communities and nations a strong sense of **identity** that encourages social cohesion and security. Any attempt to remove the 'traditional' base of society will lead to insecurity and instability.

The state: tradition represents the **accumulated wisdom** of the past. State institutions and practices that have proved 'fit for purpose' over time (for example, the monarchy, constitution and House of Lords) should be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

The economy: the capitalist market system has endured as an efficient, dynamic and productive form of economic organisation. It should be maintained as long as it doesn't undermine conservative values.

Pragmatism: traditional and One Nation conservative approaches

There are two strands of conservative thinking on pragmatism:

1. **Traditional conservatives** such as Burke argue that cautious pragmatism enables a society to adapt to changing circumstances by introducing moderate changes/reforms rather than reject change completely and risk revolution. A key aim of this **change to conserve** policy is to safeguard the essential features of society such as property, order, tradition and established institutions, such as the monarchy.
2. **One Nation conservatives** (see page 40 to find out more about this philosophy) adopt a pragmatic 'middle way' economic policy that combines market competition with government regulation. They argue that this promotes growth and social stability by creating wealth through the private sector and generating the funding for state welfare provision.

Now try this

Why do conservatives favour pragmatism?

Human imperfection and the organic state

Conservatives, such as Oakeshott (see page 44), view humans as flawed, unchanging and incapable of achieving perfection. **Human imperfection** has to be reined in because of people's capacity for evil. Furthermore, since humans are dependent and insecure, they can only exist in an **organic state or society**.

Three aspects of human imperfection

1 Psychological

As limited and dependent beings, humans desire familiarity, safety and the security of knowing their place in society. Consequently, people need **social order** rather than liberty. An **ordered society** provides security, predictability and stability. Liberty brings choice, change and uncertainty.

2 Moral

As naturally selfish beings, humans are morally imperfect. Thus, **human nature** accounts for anti-social or criminal behaviour, not social or economic deprivation. A tough law-and-order system that punishes such conduct is the only deterrent capable of tackling human moral imperfection.

3 Intellectual

Humans lack the intellect and powers of reasoning to understand a complex world. Conservatives therefore reject theories or ideologies that claim to explain or predict the development of human society. Instead, humans should be **pragmatic** and rely on history, tradition and practical experience to understand their place in the world.

Links to human nature

Due to the weakness of human nature, conservatives argue that:

- **the state** has to impose tough law-and-order policies to deter criminal behaviour and pursue foreign policies based on national security, not 'liberal' notions of international cooperation and harmony
- **society** has to be based on authority, hierarchy and paternalism in order to provide people with stability, predictability and security
- an **economy** based on capitalism is a more powerful motivator than altruism since humans are self-interested.

The organic state or society

Conservative support for an organic society or state is based on the view that humans are dependent and security-seeking.

Features of an organic society

Living organism: society functions like a living organism with all its carefully balanced parts working together in harmony to ensure that the 'body' remains healthy, social cohesion is preserved and **atomism** avoided.

Authority: top-down **authority** shapes relations between the different social groups and permeates all social institutions, such as schools and families. Authority provides humans with **direction** and **security**, promotes **social cohesion** by showing people where they 'fit in' and offers **leadership roles** to be admired and respected.

Traditional institutions: long-standing institutions play a key role in preserving the 'health' of **society** and the **state** and meet the **human need for security.** They should not be radically changed or abolished.

Paternalism: the most advantaged (in terms of financial rewards or status) have the greatest social responsibilities. For example, managers are paid more than their workers because their role is more demanding but they are obliged to protect the jobs and economic well-being of their workforces. In this way, **economic inequality** is justified.

Hierarchy: a **hierarchy** based on fixed ranks and inequalities, partly because humans vary in terms of their **intellect, skills,** etc., and partly because different groups or classes have to perform different roles in society such as political leadership, business management or manual work.

Now try this

How does the organic society complement the conservative view of human nature?

Paternalism and libertarianism

Paternalism and libertarianism are opposing conservative core ideas. **Paternalistic** conservatism was perhaps best exemplified by Harold Macmillan's Conservative government (1957–1963). **Libertarianism** informed the policies pursued by UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) and US President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989).

Paternalism

Paternalism is the traditional conservative belief that government should be conducted by those best equipped to lead and make decisions through birth, inheritance and upbringing. Paternalism is strongly linked to conservative views on hierarchy, order and the organic society. In short, it represents a form of benign power exerted from above by the state that governs in the interest of the population as a whole. One Nation conservatism softened this notion (see page 40).

Libertarianism

Libertarianism is a strand of conservative thinking influenced by Adam Smith's arguments for **economic liberalism**. It advocates:

- individual liberty
- maximum economic freedom
- minimal government or state regulation.

Now more commonly known as the liberal new right or **neo-liberalism** (see page 42), it rejects paternalism. Key libertarian thinkers include Friedrich von Hayek, Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick (see page 44).

Arguments in favour of paternalism

Human nature: in the past, **traditional conservatives** (such as Burke) argued that the innate or hereditary abilities of the social elite gave them the authority to make decisions on society's behalf and impose on them an obligation to care for the less fortunate (see page 39). Modern **One Nation conservatives** similarly maintain that, since human ability is not evenly distributed, the successful are entitled to their rewards but they also have a social responsibility to look after those who are unable to look after themselves (see page 40).

The economy: One Nation paternalistic conservatism, originally introduced by Disraeli (see page 40) and recently exhibited by the Cameron and May governments, has argued that government regulation of the economy and social welfare measures are necessary to improve conditions for the poorest.

Society: conservative paternalism blends principle with pragmatism (see page 36) – the privileged in society have a social responsibility to look after the less fortunate and, in so doing, they aim to preserve their position, strengthen the hierarchical nature of society and remove threats to the social order.

The state: since 1945, One Nation conservatives have argued that the modern state is the most appropriate agency through which to deliver social welfare and economic regulation in the interests of all (see page 40). Paternalism (notably in its state-directed form) can be **soft** when recipients give their consent or **hard** when it is imposed regardless of consent or opposition.

Arguments in favour of libertarianism

The economy: the free market is the only mechanism that can:

- efficiently supply goods and services on the basis of consumer demand
- determine the 'natural' level of unemployment.

Inflation poses the biggest threat to the market economy because it inhibits economic and business activity. To curb inflation, government spending has to be cut to control the money supply.

The state: state involvement in the mixed economy, welfare programmes and public ownership are rejected as too expensive and inefficient. Instead, 'supply side' economic policies (see page 42) should be pursued to boost production. Obstacles such as government regulation, high taxation and trade-union influence over the labour market should be removed to release the wealth-creating potential of the free market. Taxation represents a form of legalised 'state robbery' by transferring property (income) from one individual to another without consent, thereby undermining property rights.

Human nature: humans are naturally competitive, autonomous, individualistic, self-interested and rational. For this reason, social welfare provision is rejected on moral grounds since such programmes create a 'dependency culture', undermining personal responsibility, freedom and initiative.

Now try this

How would a paternalistic conservative criticise libertarianism?

Traditional conservatism

Traditional conservatism emerged in the late 18th century as a critical response to the **French Revolution** and the **Enlightenment**. Edmund Burke's famous book *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) is the classic work in favour of traditional conservatism.

What is traditional conservatism?

Living organism: society is an **organic** or 'living' body with complex interconnections and relationships between its component parts.

Tradition institutions: tried and tested traditional institutions (e.g. the Church, the monarchy and the family) represent the accumulated experience and wisdom of the past. These bind society together through ties of duty, loyalty and affection.

Traditional conservatism

Hierarchy: an organic society has to be organised as a **hierarchy** because people are not equal (e.g. in terms of their ability and work rate). Different jobs are rewarded differently depending on the contribution they make (see page 36).

Pragmatism: any attempt to create a perfect society using abstract theories and principles will fail since such an approach is not based on previous human experience and **pragmatism** (see page 37).

Gradual reform: change or reform has to be introduced gradually over time and be based on past experience in order to preserve the balance or 'fabric' of the organic society; sudden or radical change is likely to be harmful.

Rule by the 'natural aristocracy'

Burke maintained that the 'true natural aristocracy' should govern. These are the people with the ability, experience and inclination to lead the nation wisely in the interest of the whole society. Burke thought this small governing elite would be largely (but not exclusively) drawn from the hereditary aristocracy.

Traditional conservative defence of aristocratic rule

Rule by the aristocracy was natural since, for generations, the upper class had been raised and educated to govern at all levels in society. As large property holders, they also had a significant stake in society.

The longstanding practice of aristocratic rule was based on paternalism (see page 38) and the concept of **noblesse oblige**. This meant that those in authority were best placed, and had a duty, to make decisions on behalf of society as a whole.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, traditional conservatives argued that the 'natural' leaders of society were the aristocracy.

French Revolution

A major upheaval in France between 1789 and 1799 that violently removed the monarchy and the privileged position of the aristocracy and the Church. Traditional conservatism was a reaction to the French Revolution by the British ruling elite to justify their own privileged position and thereby avoid the same fate as their French counterparts.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was an 18th-century European intellectual movement that stressed the importance of human reason and the need to examine critically existing ideas, institutions and traditions. Traditional conservatives rejected much Enlightenment thinking on the grounds that it would encourage rapid, indiscriminate and destabilising change.

Reflections on the Revolution in France

Edmund Burke's 1790 classic study of the French Revolution attacked the assumption that a system of government could be created on the basis of abstract principles and theories (such as liberty and equality). In his view, the French Revolution illustrated the dangers of sudden and far-reaching change. The removal of the monarchy and aristocratic privilege by popular revolution undermined the stability of French society by challenging established notions of authority, tradition, hierarchy and property. Furthermore, he feared that France's new leaders would lack the experience, restraint and understanding to perform their role. As a result, the country would be plunged into chaos.

Now try this

On what grounds did traditional conservatives defend aristocratic rule?

One Nation conservatism

One Nation conservatism emerged in the 19th century in response to the impact of **laissez-faire capitalism** and **industrialisation**. It is an updated version of traditional conservatism. Benjamin Disraeli, Conservative prime minister in 1868 and from 1874–1880, is generally regarded as the founder of One Nation conservatism.

Emergence

There were two key reasons for the emergence of One Nation conservatism:

1. The rise of laissez-faire capitalism in the 19th century led to fears that a self-interested individualism was undermining the basis of the organic society and the idea of social responsibility.
2. Growing industrialisation during the same period led to concern that Britain was becoming '**two nations**' (the rich and the poor) and that this division would destabilise society, sharpen class conflict and possibly lead to revolution. One Nation conservatism softened the ideas of paternalism, seeing it as the responsibility of the well-off to look after those who are less fortunate.

Disraeli's analysis

Disraeli wanted to reconcile the 'two nations'. He argued that conservatism would have to respond to these social and economic changes by renewing its commitment to reform and social obligation. His motives were both pragmatic and principled:

- Reforms to improve conditions for the poorest would reduce social discontent, preserve the position of the upper classes, and probably increase working-class support for the Conservative Party.
- The most privileged social groups had a moral and paternalistic duty to help the poor. This included social welfare measures to preserve 'one nation'. This is often understood as the idea of noblesse oblige.

Three key ideas

Disraeli's One Nation conservatism

Maintenance of traditional institutions
Disraeli was determined to protect traditional British institutions (e.g. the monarchy, Church of England) because they had proved themselves over time, provided stability and created a sense of national loyalty and identity across the classes.

Support for imperialism
Disraeli argued that the British Empire strengthened national pride and Britain's influence in the world. Imperialism appealed to all classes and linked conservatism with the emerging 'mass' politics of the late 19th century.

Social and other reforms for the working class
Reforms were introduced (e.g. housing, food safety, voting rights) to create an alliance between the traditional ruling class and the workers, offset the negative effects of laissez-faire capitalism and reduce social discontent.

Conservative government, 1951–1964

This was the high point of One Nation conservatism:

- The government used **Keynesian economics** (see page 51 for more on this approach to the economy) to maintain high employment, accepting the mixed economy and supporting the welfare state.
- Harold Macmillan referred to this One Nation approach as a 'middle way' between unrestrained liberalism (individualism and the free market) and socialist collectivism (extensive state control and planning).
- R.A. Butler, a 1950s–1960s One Nation conservative minister, stated that government policy at the time was designed to bring Disraeli's two nations 'into a single social entity'.

Harold Macmillan (1894–1986)

- Conservative prime minister (1957–1963).
- His classic study, *The Middle Way* (1938), proposed a 'halfway house' between unrestricted capitalism and state socialism, to include public ownership of key industries, government direction of investment and state-funded welfare to establish a minimum standard of living.
- He argued that a managed economy and 'orderly capitalism' would preserve the cohesion of the 'one nation' and prevent social unrest.
- One Nation conservatism remained the dominant strand in conservative thinking from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Now try this

Why have modern One Nation conservatives endorsed the mixed economy?

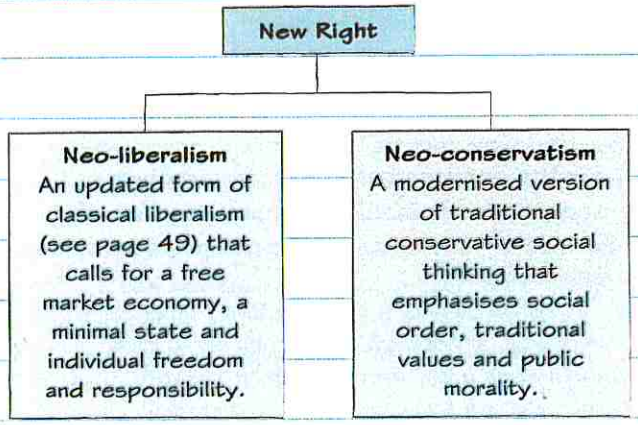
New Right

New Right conservatism emerged in the 1970s as the main rival to One Nation conservatism (see page 40 for a discussion of this approach). The New Right brought together two distinct strands – **neo-liberalism** (or liberal New Right) and **neo-conservatism** (or conservative New Right).

Rise of the New Right

- New Right thinking gained momentum in the 1970s as the interventionist policies of Western governments (based on welfare provision and Keynesian techniques; see page 51) failed to combat **stagflation** (an economy experiencing rising inflation, little or no growth and rising unemployment).
- New Right conservatism was prominent in the 1980s in the UK and the USA and became popularly linked with UK PM Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) and US President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989).
- This New Right perspective was frequently referred to as 'Reaganism' or 'Thatcherism'.

Neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism



For more on neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, see page 42.

Features of the New Right

The New Right contains **radical**, traditional and reactionary elements. For this reason, some have argued that the New Right is not a coherent doctrine as it contains apparently incompatible features.

Features

1. **Radical**
The New Right opposes economic and social intervention by the government and adopts **anti-permissiveness** regarding social attitudes and moral choices.

2. **Traditional**
Neo-conservatives endorse traditional views such as family values, respect for authority, and the benefits of hard work.

3. **Reactionary**
The New Right often appear to regard the 19th century as a 'golden age' of economic freedom and individual moral responsibility. A reactionary person or attitude favours a return to an earlier situation or period on the grounds that it possessed positive features that are currently lacking. The term is usually associated with right-wing politics.

Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950–1980

Charles Murray's (1984) influential study of post-war US social policy argued that state welfare provision had created a dependency culture, which sapped the notion of individual responsibility and enabled the feckless to evade their obligations (as fathers or partners, for example). Murray, an American political scientist, also maintained that the legal neutrality and liberal nature of the welfare state encouraged a moral relativism and **permissive** outlook that undermined the traditional nuclear family and made alternative lifestyles financially viable.

Now try this

Why have some maintained that the New Right is not a coherent doctrine?

Neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism

Neo-liberalism gained ground during the 1970s, promoted by economists such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek. Neo-conservatism emerged at the same time as a reaction against the 'liberal' 1960s in the West.

Neo-liberalism: key principles

Free market

The **free-market economy** is the only mechanism that can meet consumer demand effectively, make maximum use of resources and produce the greatest overall prosperity. Government intervention cannot do this and creates or exacerbates economic problems.

The free market has to be protected against:

- **inflation**, which discourages economic activity and investment
- industrial or business **monopolies**, which reduce economic competition and consumer choice
- **government intervention**, which creates inflation by introducing too much money or credit into the economy.

Inflation

The government's vital economic role is to tackle inflation. Thatcher and Reagan adopted Friedman's **monetarist** policy in the 1980s to reduce inflation by controlling the money supply through cuts in public spending. This neo-liberal approach is generally known as '**supply side**' economics (see page 38 to read more about libertarianism).

Rejection of government intervention

State planning, nationalisation and high taxation lead to economic inefficiency and lack of incentive. State welfare provision expands, irrespective of demand, due to the vested interests of the professionals concerned (for example, doctors) and political parties (promising increased welfare spending in elections). The result is rising taxation and inflation, and increasingly inefficient state welfare services.

Atomistic individualism

Individuals are rational, self-interested and self-sufficient. Individual freedom can only be safeguarded by opposing collectivism and 'rolling back' the state, to release human potential and create natural harmony through free relations.

For example, extensive welfare provision creates a dependency culture that undermines atomistic individualism.

Neo-conservatism: key principles

Social order

The 'liberal' 1960s, with its progressive reforms, ideas and attitudes, undermined the social order by threatening society with fragmentation (for example, the decline of authority and respect, rising crime rates and increased anti-social behaviour). Social order can only be safeguarded by:

- strong political leadership and a renewed emphasis on government authority
- re-introducing discipline, hierarchy and respect throughout society to re-establish the authority of the family and other traditional social institutions.

Traditional values

Traditional values, such as respect for authority and the law, and the benefits of hard work, have to be upheld to strengthen society and restore social discipline. To achieve this, the 'strong state' has to be promoted, with greater police powers and tougher penalties to combat crime and public disorder. During the 1980s, Thatcher and Reagan took a tough stance on law and order, believing that such an approach would deter those who were tempted to commit illegal acts and thus challenge the traditional values of society.

Public morality

The permissive 'anything goes' culture that developed in some Western countries in the 1960s undermined public morality by allowing people to make their own moral choices and suggesting there is no objective right and wrong.

If an individual is allowed to make their own moral or lifestyle choices, two problems arise:

- The person may adopt an 'immoral' code or lifestyle.
- If people are free to choose different moral positions, this undermines the development of common moral standards and threatens social cohesion.

Thatcher ('Victorian values') and the Moral Majority in the USA (traditional values) illustrate the neo-conservative concern with public morality.

The Road to Serfdom

Friedrich von Hayek's (1944) pioneering study was addressed to 'the socialists of all parties'. It argued that state interventionism and collectivism, even if pursued moderately, would erode individual liberty and create a new form of serfdom or slavery. Free individuals would become dominated by, and dependent on, the state (via welfare provision). Hayek's study became a key text for supporters of the free market and opponents of Keynesian-style interventionism and state welfare provision, including British conservatives Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher.

Now try this

Why do neo-liberals oppose state intervention?

Key thinkers: 1

Hobbes and Burke are regarded as two of the key conservative thinkers.

Key thinkers and ideas

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)

Key ideas

In his book ***Leviathan*** (1651), Hobbes developed two important conservative ideas:

1. **Order**: an ordered society should balance the human need to lead a free life.
2. **Human nature**: humans are needy, vulnerable and easily led astray in their attempts to understand the world around them.

Uses

The ordered society

- In a 'state of nature', humans are free from authority. A 'restless desire for power' would lead to war.
- Rational people would therefore sacrifice their freedom and natural rights for security through the establishment of political authority.
- Government is therefore established by the joint consent of the people, and authorises those in power to preserve order and peace.

Human nature

Humans demonstrate needy and vulnerable characteristics by:

- competing violently to obtain the basic necessities of life and other material gains
- fighting out of fear to ensure their personal safety
- seeking reputation, both for its own sake and to avoid being challenged by others.

Human capacity to reason is fragile. People's attempts to interpret the world are distorted by self-interest and the concerns of the moment.

Hobbes asked: '*How could a state be governed, or protected in its foreign relations if every individual remained free to obey or not to obey the law according to his private opinion?*'

Key thinkers and ideas

Edmund Burke (1729–1797)

Key ideas

In ***Reflections on the Revolution in France*** (1790), Burke developed two key conservative ideas:

1. **Change to conserve** has to be undertaken with caution and mindful of the delicate balance inherent in an organic society.
2. **Respect tradition and empiricism** because they represent practices passed down from one generation to the next.

Uses

Cautious change

- The state resembles a living organism like a plant that may be changed through gentle 'pruning' or 'grafting' in order to preserve the stability and harmony of the social and political order.
- Reform should be limited and cautious, and be based on **empiricism** and tradition, rather than new abstract principles.
- Revolutionary change threatens to cut off the 'roots' of the organic society (such as the institutions and customs that gave it stability), leading to social and political breakdown.

For more on Burke's views on the French Revolution, see page 39.

Tradition and empiricism

- They represent the accumulated and 'tested' wisdom of the past residing in society's longstanding institutions, customs and practices.
- Continuing respect for tradition and empiricism promotes social continuity and stability and provides the essential reference points for 'necessary' change.
- They encourage social cohesion and security because they offer people a sense of being 'rooted' in, and tied to, their particular society.

According to Burke: '*It is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society, or on building it up again without having the model and patterns of approved utility before his eyes.*'

Now try this

In what ways are the views of Hobbes and Burke similar?

Key thinkers: 2

Oakeshott, Rand and Nozick are also key conservative thinkers.

Key thinkers and ideas

Michael Oakeshott (1901–1990)

Key ideas

In ***Rationalism in Politics*** (1962) and ***On Human Conduct*** (1975), Oakeshott stressed two concepts:

1. **Human imperfection:** society is unpredictable and humans are imperfect. They lack the mental faculties to make sense of a complex modern world.
2. **Pragmatism:** conservatism is about being pragmatic.

Uses

Society

A 'rationalist' political leader is inclined to make decisions based on the 'authority' of his own reason (rather than practical experience). This encourages the dangerous idea that the leader fully understands society and how it should be changed, as was the case, for example, in fascism and communism.

The state

Political thinking and action should be guided by pragmatism and practical experience to ensure public acceptance, maintain social stability and cohesion and respond flexibly to shifting circumstances; the British parliamentary system is a good example of what can result from this thinking.

Key thinkers and ideas

Ayn Rand (1905–1982)

Key ideas

Rand's novels ***The Fountainhead*** (1943) and ***Atlas Shrugged*** (1957) advocated:

1. **Objectivism:** rational self-interest is a virtue. The pursuit of rational self-interest is morally right, based on 'the virtue of selfishness'.
2. **Freedom:** support for a completely unregulated, **laissez-faire** economy, compatible with the free expression of human rationality.

Uses

You can use Rand when discussing human nature and the economy (as above).

Key thinkers and ideas

Robert Nozick (1938–2002)

In ***Anarchy, State and Utopia*** (1974), Nozick promoted:

1. **Libertarianism:** individuals have rights to their lives, liberty and the rewards of their labour (based partly on the ideas of Immanuel Kant, 1724–1804). They cannot be treated as things or used against their will.
2. **Self-ownership:** individuals own their own bodies, talents, abilities and labour. This is threatened by enforced taxation to fund welfare (it gives others part of the individual's rewards) and by state regulation over the individual (for example, anti-smoking measures).

Uses

You can use Nozick when discussing human nature, the state and the economy.

The state

Taxes levied for state welfare are immoral because they treat individuals as a means/resource (rather than an end in themselves). Only a minimal state can be justified.

This is threatened by enforced taxation to fund welfare (it gives others part of the individual's rewards), and by state regulation over the individual (for example, anti-smoking measures).

Now try this

What are the key differences between Oakeshott's conservatism and that of Rand and Nozick?