Great Ideas/ Grand Schemes

Political Ideologies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Paul Schumaker
The University of Kansas

Dwight C. Kiel
The University of Central Florida

Thomas W. Heilke
The University of Kansas

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Preface

How should we organize our political communities—especially our economies and governments? Who should govern? What are our rights and obligations as citizens? For what purposes should governmental authority be employed? How should various goods be distributed in a just society? How much social change is needed, and how is such change best achieved? These are among the "great issues" and "perennial questions" of politics. To think clearly about these questions, students need to understand "the great ideas" that have been proposed as answers to them. To think deeply about these questions, students also need to address the philosophical foundations of the proposed answers. What conceptions of the universe, society, human nature, and political knowledge itself do particular "great ideas" presuppose? Thinking about the great issues of politics, the great ideas that have been provided as answers to these issues, and the philosophical foundations of these ideas is the central focus of political theory and philosophy.

As teachers of political theory and philosophy, we have found that examining various ideologies is an excellent way to engage students in thinking about these questions. A political ideology is a "grand scheme" for understanding and evaluating political life. An ideology provides answers to each of the great political issues. An ideology contains (either explicitly or implicitly) assumptions about the universe, society, human nature, and political knowledge. Moreover, the ideas of an ideology are—or at least should be—systematically interrelated. Because the ideas of an ideology cover the most fundamental issues about politics and because these ideas are coherently structured, they provide people with "big pictures" of how political communities work and what more ideal communities might look like.

Political ideologies provide useful introductions to the great issues of politics, because students are familiar with ideologies. They know that their political leaders have particular ideological commitments, and they sense that the commentaries that they read or hear reflect particular ideological biases. Students believe—rightfully so—that ideologies make a difference in "the real

world," because the policies that governments pursue reflect prominent ideological orientations and because the emergence of new ideologies can result in important social changes. Recognizing that ideologies are important, students want to understand them better.

A better understanding of political ideologies is important to the broader curricula of most political science—and other social science—departments. Many courses and books on politics, society, and economics introduce concepts and theories drawn from various ideological perspectives. Institutional arrangements, policy choices, and both historical and current events are typically analyzed from competing ideological viewpoints. The underlying assumption behind such analyses is that students already understand the distinctions between a variety of ideologies fairly well. In our experience, this assumption is often ill-founded. For example, students usually fail to differentiate between classical liberalism and contemporary liberalism or between Marxism, communism, and democratic socialism. To achieve more clear and focused discourse throughout the political science and social science curricula, attention needs to be given to the ideological foundations of various political ideas.

The ideological landscape is always changing—and perhaps never so dramatically as in recent years. The collapse of the Soviet Union is usually thought to signal the demise of Marxism and communism as attractive ideologies. Are these ideologies, or parts of them, still relevant to world politics? The Reagan-Bush era seems to have produced a profound shift in the ideological outlooks of many Americans, as liberalism seems to have lost much of its public appeal. Can contemporary liberals effect coherent and attractive modifications to liberalism's unpopular image of endorsing big bureaucratic government and requiring higher taxes? Various emergent ideologies—such diverse types as religious fundamentalism, environmentalism, and feminism—have gained increasing public attention. Are these newer outlooks really full-blown ideologies, and do they have attractions that might allow them to have the kind of influence over political life in the twenty-first century that communism, liberalism, and conservatism have had in the twentieth century? This text has been written, in part, to describe the changing ideological landscape and to address questions prompted by ideological transformations.

Pedagogically, the most important difference between this text and other texts that analyze ideologies is our use of a single conceptual framework for describing each ideology. Seeking to provide well-organized presentations of each ideology that facilitate comparative analyses among ideologies, we have imagined asking the proponents of each ideology to provide their ideas in response to twelve very general questions:

Problems What are the political, economic, and social problems that most need to be addressed?

Goals What are the most important political, economic, and social goals to be achieved?

Structure How are political communities organized, and how should they be organized?

Citizenship What should be the rights and responsibilities of citizens?

Rulers Who governs society, and who should govern society?

Authority For what purposes is governmental authority used, and for what purposes should it be used and not used?

Justice How are social goods distributed, and how should they be distributed?

Change How much change is needed, and how is such change best achieved?

Human nature What are the fundamental characteristics of human nature?

Society What are the fundamental characteristics of society?

Ontology What is ultimate reality, and what are the ultimate causes of change in the world?

Epistemology Can reliable knowledge about the "good" political life be attained, and how can such knowledge best be acquired or approached?

In this text, we consider twelve ideologies. For each ideology, we provide a section that describes how proponents of the ideology answer each of these questions. Such a framework facilitates direct comparisons for analyzing and evaluating the ideas of competing ideologies. Such a framework reminds students that ideologies contain interconnected principles and that such principles are based on particular philosophical foundations. We believe that student understanding and analysis is promoted by comparing the ideas of competing ideologies, by showing how the appealing principles of an ideology may be logically connected to other, perhaps less appealing, ideas in the ideology, and by exploring the philosophical foundations of these ideas.

In addition, we present various ideologies in a manner that reflects their historical development. In Part 1, we describe the main ideologies of the nineteenth century, beginning with the first ideology, classical liberalism (or democratic capitalism). Traditional conservatism, anarchism, and Marxism are then presented as responses to—and alternatives to—classical liberalism. In Part 2, we describe the main totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century: communism, nazism, and fascism. (Nazism and fascism are presented in one chapter that emphasizes their commonalities while acknowledging their differences.) In Part 3, we describe the main democratic ideologies of the twentieth century. Here we consider how the minimal-government principles of classical liberalism were transformed into the strong-state principles of contemporary liberalism. We consider how the revolutionary ideology of Marxism was revised into the evolutionary outlook that characterizes democratic socialism. We also consider how contemporary conservatives have sought to reconcile and conserve both classical liberal and traditional conservative ideas, and to defend these ideas against the onslaught of the more state-centered ideologies that have been prominent in the twentieth century. In Part 4, we describe three "nascent" ideologies that have become increasingly prominent: religious fundamentalism, environmentalism, and feminism.

At the end of this century, many alternative voices have emerged to present counterpoints to the ideologies described in Parts 1, 2, and 3. Libertarianism and communitarianism are widely discussed among political theorists and philosophers and have become increasingly popular, especially on American college campuses. Black separatism has emerged as an expression of the political views of many African Americans. Liberation theology is a powerful voice for change in Latin America. Various nationalist movements have (re)emerged around the globe, each with its own distinct principles. Among these newer voices, we focus on fundamentalism, environmentalism, and feminism, because they seem to offer the most distinct sets of ideas setting them apart from other ideologies. Jewish, Christian, and Islamic fundamentalists remind us of the extensiveness of human faith in God's omniscience and omnipotence, and of the consequent attractions of political outlooks that challenge those ideologies that suppose that humans can understand and control the world in a manner that is indifferent to God's will. Environmentalists remind us that humans are simply one of many species to inhabit the earth and that other ideologies have been excessively human-centered, and concerned merely with justifying the exploitation of the natural environment for human purposes. Feminists remind us that other ideologies have been male-centered; these androcentric ideologies have been developed largely by men and have, perhaps, failed to express adequately the concerns of women.

Despite the importance of fundamentalism, environmentalism, and feminism, we do not treat these viewpoints with the same depth of analysis that we employ in our treatment of the other ideologies. Huge bodies of literature have recently emerged within each of these perspectives that we have only begun to assimilate. From our limited exposure to these texts, it is our judgment that there exists too much disagreement about political principles and insufficient attention to philosophical foundations within fundamentalism, environmentalism, and feminism for these perspectives to be considered fully developed ideologies. This is not to claim that there are no important theoretical and philosophical writings within or about these perspectives. To the contrary, we believe that the existence of such writings qualifies these perspectives as "nascent" ideologies and provides the foundations for their eventual establishment as "full-fledged" ideologies. Thus, we think it is very possible that fundamentalism, environmentalism, and/or feminism are more than social movements that will be integrated within existing ideologies—as some scholars have contended—but are emerging as distinct ideological alternatives. By presenting some of the ideas of fundamentalism, environmentalism, and feminism within the same framework that seems to serve well in describing the "full-fledged" ideologies, we hope to encourage the further articulation of their ideas in ways that facilitate their development and analysis as ideologies.

We would also like to point out a few conventions that we have adopted in this text. Most importantly, we present each ideology from the perspective of its proponents. Ideological thought is frequently characterized negatively, and texts on ideologies often devote much attention to criticizing the ideas they

are describing. We agree that ideological thinking can involve distortions and other difficulties, and we think that all ideologies have limitations. Nevertheless, we believe that, before students can effectively evaluate an ideology and its ideas, such ideas must be understood, and the first step in understanding an ideology is to enter into its worldview. There is no doubt that students should evaluate each ideology. Thus, in Chapter 1, we provide criteria that are useful in the evaluation process, and we provide evaluative comments and questions at the conclusion of our discussion of each ideology. In addition, we sometimes use footnotes to point to difficulties with certain ideas and to present sources that criticize these ideas. However, these devices are intended to prompt students to think for themselves, not to encourage students to substitute our evaluations for theirs.

Another convention that we have employed is to provide "sidebars." For each ideology we first provide a sidebar listing important contributors to the ideological tradition, along with their major writings. Our intent is not to give an exhaustive bibliography, but rather to indicate the people for whom we presume to speak in our presentation of the ideology. Other sidebars are intended to make elaborations and connections of ideas that do not fit well within our framework but that are both important and interesting.

A final convention is that we use boldfaced type to highlight certain terms that represent important ideas within each ideological tradition and that identify concepts that should be grasped by all students of political theory and political science. A glossary at the end of the text provides short definitions of these terms, but we have found it important to stress to our students that the ideas represented by these terms cannot be well-understood by memorizing short definitions but only by comprehending their significance within the broader system of ideas contained by the ideologies.

We have accumulated many debts in the process of writing this book. Our greatest debts are to all those men and women who have contributed to the "great conversation" and whose ideas are reflected—it is hoped reasonably accurately—in the text. We are indebted to our teachers, especially those who have most sparked our interest in and understanding of political theory and philosophy: Lester McAlister, Booth Fowler, and Eldon Fields; Jeff Sedgwick and Lewis Mainzer; Barry Cooper, Thomas Flanagan, Michael Gillespie, and Anthony Parel. We are indebted to our students, whose questions have stimulated us to deepen our own understanding, and whose comments have often provided useful insights. We are especially indebted to our wives—Jean Schumaker, Charlene Stinard, and Tara Heilke—who have supported us in many ways throughout this project. They and many others have commented on all or part of this text. We would like to acknowledge the following people for their helpful suggestions: David Brichoux, Cryss Brunner, Deborah Gerner, Peter Gustafson, Marisa Kelly, Rob Kurfirst, and Nicholas Paley. We would also like to acknowledge the following reviewers who made helpful suggestions: Clarke Cochran, Texas Tech University; Gill Evans, University of Tennessee–Knoxville; William Garner, University of Southern Illinois; Michael

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Paul Schumaker

Dwight C. Kiel

Thomas W. Heilke