

The Anglo-Saxon Conservative Tradition*

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1. Old and New Conservatism

"Tory" is employed in common parlance as a synonym for "conservative" and in political theorizing as a characteristic which distinguishes the ideologically complex from the uniformly liberal nations. It contains notions of organism, corporatism and collectivism and is used, by some, to differentiate the ideological constitution of the old world from that of the new, and, by some, to distinguish Canada from the United States by pointing to alleged lingering but significant remnants of collectivism in the Canadian polity which are purportedly absent from the political culture of the United States. The argument of this essay is that this mode of analysis is misleading and that the major distinguishing mark is not between the old world and the new but between Anglo-Saxon nations and others. Despite the prevalence of the concept "tory" and its apparent applicability to one aspect of the Anglo-Saxon ideological constitution, the claim here is that the political ideas of Britain, Canada and the United States (and other anglophone nations too, though they are not dealt with here) are best understood as varieties of, and as rooted in, Lockean liberalism, that there are no significant tory elements in the Anglo-Saxon nations and have not been for nearly three centuries, and that Lockeanism is more pervasive in English Canada than in the United States.

Modern conservatism in the Anglo-Saxon nations is readily—and frequently—portrayed as possessed of an inherent contradiction between collectivist and individualist elements. While the modern conservative may be acknowledged as collectivist about the nation state (he is, for example, caricatured as espousing the doctrine of "my nation

* The author wishes to thank the Social Science Research Council and the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Grants Committee for generous awards toward the research on which this article is based. A few of the ideas developed here were first published in embryonic form and for a different purpose in "The Myth of the Red Tory," in *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (1977), 3-28. The ensuing debate with Gad Horowitz and William Christian in 1 (1977), 87-88, 2 (1978), 128-34, 135-41, was also instrumental in stimulating some of the ideas developed here.

right or wrong” and is in fact less sympathetic than the liberal to claims to the right of secession) and as collectivist about the family (he is, for example, caricatured as pursuing the exclusive rights of his own and is in fact more willing than the liberal to retain impediments to easier divorce), he is recognized equally as more individualistic than the liberal about the economy and as insisting more than the liberal that the individual must bear the responsibility for his actions. If *laissez-faire* was once the central element of liberal economic thought it is today more readily associated with those who are generally thought to be, and think of themselves as, conservative. If traditional conservatism is classified as collectivist, modern conservative ideology is to be understood as an incoherent confusion of collectivist and individualist conceptions—“more than one system of guidance”¹ is Samuel H. Beer’s endearing euphemism for the ideological orientation of what he calls the New Conservatism. Beer deems this New Conservatism to differ from traditional conservatism “in its individualism, voluntarism, and rationalism, as in its anti-authoritarian distrust of the state.”²

This confusion is, indeed, so transparent that modern conservatism is commonly categorized as “an inconsistent mix”³ of ideologies, as consisting of the intrusion of liberal individualism into the pure collectivism of pristine and archetypal conservatism, or, if the collectivist remnants are ignored, as they often are in the analysis of American conservatism, political scientists write of purely individualistic conservatism.⁴ Although this individualistic conservatism is not confined to the United States—Beer in fact coined the term the New Conservatism to denote what he saw as a recent ideological metamorphosis in Britain—we commonly think of the New Conservatism as essentially American (that is, as something within the reputedly exclusive tradition of liberal individualism) and certainly as a phenomenon alien to the origins of traditional conservative philosophy. Indeed, we facilely ignore the fact that American conservatives such as Russell Kirk, Clinton Rossiter and Peter Viereck are every bit as much in the “old” conservative tradition as any modern British or Canadian Conservative.

There are some obvious—and usually overlooked—difficulties inherent in such thinking. If the United States is a liberal fragment (a

1 *Modern British Politics* (London: Faber, 1965), 275. (American edition: *British Politics in the Collectivist Age* [New York: Knopf, 1966]).

2 *Ibid.*

3 The phrase belongs to William Christian and Colin Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw Hill-Ryerson, 1974), 92, but the idea is common to those who have adopted or adapted the hypotheses of Samuel Beer in his *Modern British Politics* or of Louis Hartz in *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955).

4 See, for example, Gad Horowitz’s description of American conservatism as “purely individualistic, purely liberal” in *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 10.

La tradition conservatrice anglo-saxonne

Nous pensons que l'hypothèse de Samuel Beer selon laquelle une partie du conservatisme moderne s'oppose radicalement à certains principes de l'ancien est fausse. Nous pensons au surplus que la Grande-Bretagne et non les Etats-Unis est la société-fragment libérale d'origine et par conséquent les conclusions de Louis Hartz et de ses disciples au sujet des idéologies américaine et canadienne nous semblent reposer sur un faux postulat. Le conservatisme anglophone ne découle pas du féodalisme mais de la critique du libéralisme classique. Nous comparons la philosophie politique de John Locke, qui selon Hartz a donné l'élan à l'idéologie américaine à celle d'Edmund Burke, qui selon Hartz est l'antithèse de la première et nous trouvons d'importants points de ressemblance entre les deux en dépit des différences de détail et d'accentuation. Nous nous penchons sur la réaction médiévale du XIXe siècle britannique contre l'optimisme victorien de même que sur le renouvellement médiéval américain de la même époque et nous croyons que la première s'oppose à la tradition conservatrice britannique antérieure. Nous estimons en conclusion que Locke à l'américaine est un Locke simplifié, rationaliste et rationalisé. C'est Locke sans la tradition, c'est Locke sans trace de la mystique du gouvernement. La Grande-Bretagne et le Canada par contre ont hérité du Locke véritable, complexe et libéral classique. Les traditions libérales britannique et canadienne portent la marque d'un passé pré-libéral, le libéralisme américain (mais pas toujours sa politique) est une variante de cette doctrine.

polity in which socialist and tory collectivisms are absent, or are, at least, negligible), as Louis Hartz and his adherents believe,⁵ one is led to wonder why it is that to be a conservative in the United States is to espouse the affirmed hallmark of liberalism—individualism—with greater fervour and to a greater degree than it is espoused by liberals. In contemporary idiom we deem the “New Conservatism” *increasingly* conservative to the extent that it abandons economically collectivist doctrines and to the extent that it expands its belief in the classical liberal doctrines of *laissez-faire* economics and individual responsibility (and concomitantly we deem something increasingly liberal to the extent that it abandons those classical liberal doctrines!). If it were appropriate to think of conservatism as essentially collectivist then we would have to expect the “New Conservatives” to come to approximate the liberal individualistic viewpoint as they came closer to the liberals, whereas we in fact regard them as *increasingly* conservative to the extent that they transcend the position of modern liberals in the direction of the classical liberal doctrines of self-reliance and the minimal state. Why, we must wonder, do we not call the “New Conservatives” the “Old Liberals”? If both liberals and conservatives in the United States represent contrasting versions of liberalism what is it that makes the conservatives

5 See *The Liberal Tradition in America*, and *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966).

the less liberal of the two when they espouse more fervently than the liberals what Beer and Hartz consider the central element of liberalism? The conservative version of liberalism is paradoxically more essentially "liberal," that is, individualist, than is liberalism itself. This surely suggests *prima facie* that the "idea" of conservatism is something other than the collectivist phenomenon it is commonly supposed to be.

It is, moreover, notable that this "New Conservatism" is neither so new nor so exclusively American as is commonly supposed. It would not be too difficult to cast either Sir Robert Peel or the 3rd Marquis of Salisbury somewhat in that mould and, anyway, those Britons who have written on conservatism as conservatives have—without exception as far as I can discover—indicated their clear preference for an economic system based on what are usually thought of as classical liberal free enterprise principles. Lord Hugh Cecil in his *Conservatism*,⁶ F. J. C. Hearnshaw in his *Conservatism in England*,⁷ Viscount Hailsham in *The Conservative Case*⁸ and Michael Oakeshott in "The Political Economy of Freedom"⁹ are prominent exemplaries.

According to Samuel Beer, however, this kind of conservatism is "sharply opposed to [its] ancient tenets"¹⁰ and is, anyway, disavowed by some modern British Conservatives, notably Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan. Beer quotes Eden's claim that "We are not the party of unbridled, brutal capitalism, and never have been . . . we are not the political children of the *laissez-faire* school." Beer notes also Macmillan's declaration that "Toryism has always been a form of paternal socialism."¹¹ Beer's claims reflect, in fact, a common misunderstanding of the British attitude to *laissez-faire*. The term *laissez-faire* was reputedly coined by a French physiocrat, Vincent de Gournay, in the mid-eighteenth century. Its first acknowledged use in English was by the Marquis of Normanby in 1825—thirty-five years after Adam Smith's death. As a doctrine of opposition to all state intervention in the economy—and that is what the term is normally employed to mean—it had no renowned adherents in Britain. While Adam Smith opposed mercantilism and state paternalism he supported the use of the state in public works such as canals and docks, in the facilitation of trade, the regulation of foreign commerce and the

6 (London: Williams and Northgate, 1912).

7 (London: Macmillan, 1933).

8 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959).

9 In *Rationalism in Politics* (London: Methuen, 1962).

10 *Modern British Politics*, 275. For other examples of the same idea see F. M. Watkins, *The Age of Ideology* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), 28ff. and Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 397ff. It also pervades the work of George Grant, see *Lament for a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), especially 63ff., and *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969).

11 *Modern British Politics*, 271.

protection of certain home industries,¹² and he endorsed his century's traditional suspicion of merchant wealth. Frank Petrella goes so far as to claim that the "*Wealth of Nations* is filled with numerous instances of legitimate state intervention worthy of any socialist orator."¹³ When Eden denies that he belongs to the school of *laissez-faire* he merely places himself alongside his classical liberal compatriots. In fact, he showed that his position differed scarcely from that of Smith himself. "Whereas the socialist purpose is the concentration of ownership in the hands of the State," Eden noted, "ours is the distribution of ownership over the widest practicable number of individuals . . . we believe in the widest measure of individual capitalism. I believe this to be a fundamental principle of political philosophy."¹⁴ And Macmillan's statement is best understood as a rationalization of the occasions of similarity between Conservative and Labour policies. How else can we reconcile the fact that for Macmillan the Conservative responsibility was to "proclaim the right of the individual against the state and other large-scale concentrations of power"?¹⁵ To be sure, both Eden and Macmillan were opposed to the commonly understood doctrine of *laissez-faire*, as in fact were Adam Smith and the school of classical liberal economics. For both Eden and Macmillan, as for Adam Smith, economic individualism was a *prima facie* principle which needed to be limited by the contingencies of political practicality; the onus was to demonstrate in a given instance that state intervention was appropriate.

12 One might thus challenge the claims of George Grant (*Lament for a Nation*, 14), Gad Horowitz (*Canadian Labour in Politics*, 10), Reg Whitaker ("Images of the State in Canada" in Leo Panitch [ed.], *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977], 37), and William Christian and Colin Campbell (*Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* [Toronto: McGraw Hill-Ryerson, 1974], 24) that state-dominated economic activities in Canada—such as railway and canal building—are reflective of a tory collectivism or indicative of a nonliberal element in the Canadian culture. Adam Smith is, indeed, the most commonly maligned and misrepresented of thinkers. He was quite explicit that individual liberty was to be promoted only insofar as it was compatible with "the security of the whole society." He wrote further of the depths into which "in every improved and civilized society . . . the labouring poor must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it" (*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [New York: Modern Library, 1937], Bk. 2, chap. 2, 308, and Bk. 5, chap. 1, pt. 3, art. 2, 735). Moreover, far from being the philosopher of egotism as he is commonly portrayed, Smith taught the natural sociality of man and proclaimed sympathy the highest of human virtues. The perfection of human nature, he affirmed, is "to feel much for others and little for ourselves . . . to restrain our selfish, and to indulge our benevolent affections . . ." (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Bk. 1, chap. 1, pt. 5, 24 in *The Essays of Adam Smith* [London: Alexander Murray, 1869]).

13 "The Empirical Basis of Edmund Burke's Classical Economic Liberalism," *Duquesne Review* 10 (1965), 57-58.

14 Anthony Eden, *Freedom and Order* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 420.

15 Quoted in Lord Butler (ed.), *The Conservatives: A History From Their Origins to 1965* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1977), 448.

It would, nonetheless, be imprudent to ignore the fact that the traditional conservative is normally depicted as a collectivist. A significant part of the task of understanding the conservative ideology, then, must consist in discovering the bases for the differing and even contradictory accounts. The appropriate explanation reflects in part the differing economic realities in which the contending versions of conservatism first develop. Whether one is conserving a feudal and agricultural or a capitalist and commercial order leads to widely differing ideological conclusions.

The term "conservative" gained currency in the years following the French Revolution when the commercial and capitalist revolution was already in full progress in Britain and was decades behind on the continent (Holland excluded). In Britain, where ideas of divine right had held little sway—because of the unity of Tudor crown and the interests of the middle class—until they had arrived belatedly in vain defence of the Stuarts, what was being conserved was the orderly institutionalization of the Whig ideas of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which ideas, if not always practices consistent with them, achieved apparent hegemony after the Hanoverian succession. What was being conserved was the England which Montesquieu had described as the nation *par excellence* of constitutional liberty via the separation of powers, the nation of capitalism, and the nation where individualism abounded;¹⁶ it was the nation which had abandoned the extensive mediaeval regulatory mechanisms by the time of the death of Queen Anne, the nation whose individual liberty was the admiration of Voltaire and, in retrospect, de Tocqueville. On the continent of Europe, on the other hand, where the orderly development of liberal ideas had foundered on the intransigence of the prevailing powers, conservatives were defending either the restoration of royal absolutism or the maintenance of princely particularism, each of which constituted a specific state of pre-capitalist development and each of which had been transcended in Britain. No British conservative thinker after 1789 would have cared to defend the continental practices—even the most Tory Duke of Wellington recommended government "on liberal principles" and numbered *The Wealth of Nations* among his favourite books¹⁷—though all would have rejected the fundamental and violent

16 *The Spirit of the Laws*, Part 2, Books 11-13. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1955), 33-34; for similar remarks by Voltaire see D. A. Baugh (ed.), *Aristocratic Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Watts, 1975), 2-3. If there were authoritarian and oppressive elements at a later stage—many would point to the Eldonite and Monmouth Tories—this should be recognized as the consequence of conflicting interests rather than competing ideologies. Moreover, similar elements are to be found, for example, in the New England and Georgia hierarchies, which, like the Family Compact in Canada, espoused the sterner virtues (as, incidentally, did Locke) rather than disavowed Whig principles.

17 See the conversation with the Duc de San Carlos as reported in Wellington's

means of transforming the prevailing order without respect for the past, as advocated and practised by the European radicals. It should occasion no surprise that in Britain those depicted as the archetypal conservatives are those whose thought arose in conservation of an order which had already transcended absolutist, particularist and feudal forms. Russell Kirk,¹⁸ R. J. White,¹⁹ Noel O'Sullivan²⁰ and Peter Walker²¹ trace conservatism's origins to Edmund Burke (1729-1797) whereas Ian Gilmour²² and Philip Buck²³ go back to the Marquis of Halifax (1633-1695) and Lord Bolingbroke (1678-1751) while regarding Burke as the most complete exponent of conservative philosophy. It is notable that all three wrote in the new liberal context expressed most completely by John Locke. Halifax proclaimed "a passion for liberty," affirmed that he was "a friend to Parliaments," and denounced absolute monarchy as "a thing that leaveth men no liberty," but he could not concur with the republicanism of Harrington, Milton or Sidney, for his passion was too restrained to "impair or taint his allegiance" to his sovereign.²⁴ Bolingbroke asserted the virtues of "this division of power, these distinct privileges attributed to the King, the Lords and the Commons, which constituted a limited monarchy"²⁵ and dismissed divine right as a "blasphemy"; Herbert Butterfield thought Bolingbroke's *Remarks on the History of England* the first important "Whig" history. Burke, as is well known, spent much of his early political career denouncing the unconstitutional excesses of George III and he declared the landed aristocracy "an austere and insolent domination"—although he espoused the principle of natural aristocracy and was, anyway, on other occasions somewhat kinder to the landed aristocracy. For G. M. Trevelyan, the spirit of the Revolution of 1688 was the spirit of the "Trimmer"—of Lord Halifax.²⁶ For the American

correspondence in G. R. Gleig, *The Life of Arthur, Duke of Wellington* (London: Longmans, Green, 1907), 245; for the reference to *The Wealth of Nations*, see 427-28.

18 *The Conservative Mind* (New York: Avon, 1973).

19 *The Conservative Tradition* (London: A. & C. Black, 1964).

20 *Conservatism* (London: Dent, 1976).

21 *The Ascent of Britain* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1977).

22 *Inside Right: A Study of Conservatism* (London: Hutchinson, 1977).

23 *How Conservatives Think* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

24 Quotations are from "The Character of a Trimmer."

25 Quotations are from "A Dissertation on Parties" and "The Idea of a Patriot King." So far from an espousal of despotism, Bolingbroke's use of the separation of powers conforms directly to Immanuel Kant's definition of republicanism. See *Perpetual Peace* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 13-15.

26 See H. C. Mansfield, Jr., *Statesmanship and Party Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 5. Lord Macaulay held to the same opinion—and may well have been the source of Trevelyan's view. "Our Revolution," Macaulay affirms, "as far as it can be said to bear the character of any single mind, assuredly bears the character of the large yet cautious mind of Halifax."

liberal revolutionaries of 1776, Burke appeared the Briton who best understood their cause. Not one of the British conservatives had a taint of absolutism about him. What they had in common was the desire to reconcile liberty and authority. In Halifax's words, "no tympany, no unnatural swelling of either power or liberty" was what was required. They admired, in other words, the principles of the Lockean constitution but were concerned to limit its potential excesses.

Now it would be a gross exaggeration to describe Halifax, Bolingbroke or Burke in predominantly individualistic terms. Theirs was, indeed, a critique of the excesses of individualistic liberalism. But it is imperative to our understanding of conservatism that we recognize their writings as a critique of the ascendant novelty and not as a denunciation of liberal forms and patterns. Nonetheless, it has remained customary to describe Burke's use of the concept of state as organicist (sometimes by those who should know better, Russell Kirk reminds us) and to accord Burke the honour, as do the historians Weiss,²⁷ Reinhardt,²⁸ Pinson,²⁹ and Artz,³⁰ of proving the stimulus to such continental collectivist and anti-constitutionalist conservatives as Adam Müller, Louis de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre.

Much of the misunderstanding of conservatism arises from its apparent continuous development from toryism—which might appropriately be considered to have been at least somewhat friendly to feudalism and the idea of divine right before 1688—and from the intelligent description of it as a balance between competing forms. Thus Viscount Hailsham has affirmed that "Conservatives . . . see nothing inconsistent in having opposed Whiggery in the interests of the Crown, Liberalism in the name of Authority, Socialism in the name of Liberty and even of the Liberal state. Their function has been to prevent the unbalanced view of these theories held in the passion of the moment from causing irretrievable error, to insist upon the application of indispensable principles which may for the moment be unfashionable to adopt, and to adapt to tradition so much of the new doctrine as seems of

27 *Conservatism in Europe: 1770-1945* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 41-45.

28 *Germany: 2000 Years*, vol. 2 (New York: Ungar, 1961), 498.

29 *Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 45, 57.

30 *Reaction and Revolution: 1814-1832* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 67.

De Maistre's "L'homme ne peut faire une constitution, et nulle constitution légitime ne saurait être écrite . . ." is quite at odds with Burke's pragmatic and prudential considerations on the legitimacy of 1688 and 1776. And de Bonald's "L'homme n'existe que pour la société, la société ne le forme que pour elle-même" is a contradiction of Burke's assertion that "all *natural* rights must be the rights of individuals as by *nature* there is no such thing as politic or corporate personality; all these ideas are mere fictions of law, they are creatures of voluntary institution; men as men are individuals, and nothing else." The European conservatives may have possessed a similar disposition to Burke but, since they possessed that disposition in a significantly different political context, it led to significantly different philosophical conclusions.

permanent value."³¹ On this account it would be quite reasonable to conclude that conservatism is a doctrine of balance and synthesis between competing ideologies and thus is likely to contain traditional Tory collectivist elements.

Plausible and convincing—and, for that matter, largely accurate—as Hailsham's assertion is, it leaves a great deal unsaid. While it is certainly true that the conservative balances liberty by authority, must we then conclude that Locke was in part a tory collectivist because he restricted liberty by law and order? Surely, it would be more appropriate to consider Locke a liberal individualist who saw the necessity for certain restrictions on both unbridled liberty and uncontrolled individualism. Conservatism, we might conclude, is somewhat in the same vein—and has been more or less consistently since its origins. It is best understood as a critique of the excesses of Lockean classical liberalism from within the ideological perimeters of that liberalism. Indeed, how else could we explain that Burke described Montesquieu as "the greatest genius which has enlightened this age"³² while Béla Menczer could describe *L'Esprit des Lois* (with some exaggeration) as "the greatest book of 1789 and of almost the whole Liberal School of the nineteenth century"³³ How else could we explain that Mirabeau quoted Burke at length and with approval in the opening months of the revolutionary era? If it were not so best understood, Burke's economic doctrines and the subsequent development of conservatism in the English-speaking countries would be incomprehensible and irrational respectively. If, on the other hand, we do understand conservatism as a critical variant of classical liberalism, then both Burke's classical liberal economics in relation to his conservative political philosophy and the development of individualistic

31 *The Conservative Case* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), 17. See also Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 17, where he writes of conservatism as calling for an "equilibrium between liberty and order, equality and hierarchy, individualism and collectivism, self-government and authority, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, material goods and ideal aspirations, pleasure and asceticism, reason and emotion, secularism and religion, dynamism and stability." Surely, this goes too far—especially for German conservatism with its stress on order, hierarchy and authority—for it merely permits almost any ideological pronouncement to be fitted neatly and consistently into the schema and allows all manner of contradictions between different versions of conservative ideology to pass unrecognized. Indeed, bitter ideological enemies—say the Freiherr vom Stein and Friedrich von der Marwitz—may be so construed as ideologically consistent allies. It must surely be clear that if each of these antinomies may on any given occasion be appropriate to the conservative disposition then none of them can be a part of any definition of conservatism.

32 *Abridgment of English History* (1757), *Works*, vol. 6 (London: Bohn, 1854-89), 297. To those who might think this a premature observation of Burke's youth it may be appropriate to point out that the commendation was repeated in 1791 in the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, *Works*, vol. 3, 113.

33 *Catholic Political Thought: 1789-1848* (London: Burns, Oates, 1952), 38-39.

conservatism in Britain, the United States and Canada become readily comprehensible. And if modern anglophone conservatism is readily comprehensible and in line with (although in some instances an exaggerated version of) traditional conservatism, then we need to seek an understanding of conservatism not in terms of the corporate, organic or collectivist state but in a similar mode to the individualistic manner in which we comprehend classical liberalism.

2. Conservative Economics

Almost without exception³⁴ conservative and nonconservative thinkers alike have found the most original and complete statement of conservatism in the writings of Edmund Burke; and Louis Hartz treats Burke as a prime exponent of the conservatism to which American liberalism is the dialectical antithesis. Even those who have noted conservative characteristics in earlier writers treat them as precursors to the fully-fledged conservatism of Edmund Burke. We may, then, reasonably expect to find in the writings of Edmund Burke the central elements of English-speaking conservatism. And we may feel entitled to expect to discover no major and transparent contradiction between Burke's economics and his political ideas. Evidence of the espousal of classical liberal economics ought to suggest some measure of sympathy with classical liberal political thought.

It is curious, given the common acceptance of the centrality of economics to politics, that most of the recent writings on Burke's political philosophy have ignored, or glossed over, his view of economics. Indeed, it is usual, and quite incorrect, to affirm that Burke had relatively little to say about economics; in fact some five volumes of the twelve-volume edition of Burke's works are devoted to comments on legislative reform in the economic affairs of the East India Company alone, and taxation, economic reform of administration, the Navigation Acts and, most importantly for our understanding of Burke, *abstract* economic theory receive spasmodic but quite thorough attention at various places in his writings. The sparse commentary which does deal with Burke's economics, on the other hand, leaves one in little doubt as to its orientation. Titles include "Burke's Classical Economic Liberalism"³⁵ and refer to Adam Smith and Edmund Burke as

34 Two exceptions come to mind. William Christian in his "A Note on Rod Preece and Red Tories," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2 (1978), 129, indicates that he does not accept Burke as the authentic source of conservatism but does not offer anyone in his stead; and Michael Oakeshott suggests that Hobbes, Montaigne, Pascal or Hume rather than Edmund Burke might be treated as the appropriate representative of the conservative disposition (*Rationalism in Politics*, 195). Oakeshott and Christian are not, however, in accord. The one starts from a *laissez-faire* conception, the other from its antithesis.

35 See note 13 above.

"Complementary Contemporaries."³⁶ In the light of D. J. Manning's reasoned and well-regarded view that in the eighteenth century "more clearly than any other writer Smith spelled out the new liberal position,"³⁷ there is adequate ground to ask for a reevaluation of the relationship of Burke's economic theories to his political wisdom and to the conservative ideology in general. The reappraisal appears particularly appropriate when we note that a refined conservative thinker like Viscount Hailsham can assert that the conservative is no disciple of Adam Smith and that the conservative "has never believed in *laissez-faire*,"³⁸ yet he quotes Edmund Burke with approval more often than he refers to any other conservative thinker. At the same time Hailsham confirms that "profit and property and private enterprise are institutions I support."³⁹ The conservative, in other words, believes in free enterprise—and the sense in which Hailsham denies *laissez-faire* to the conservative is the sense in which it would also be inappropriate to ascribe it to the classical liberal, including Adam Smith.

Before we proceed to investigate Edmund Burke's economic principles, however, it is worth noting that if Burke is appropriately treated as the authentic source of conservatism and he espouses individualistic economic ideas, then American conservatism, the epitome of the "New Conservatism," is no aberration of conservatism but is a specific form of traditional conservatism corresponding in at least some essentials to the precepts of Edmund Burke. Beer would thus be wrong to think of it as "sharply opposed to [its] ancient tenets." And, if that is so, the Hartzian explanation of the differences among, say, the ideologies of Britain, Canada and the United States is inadequate. Both Britain and Canada would thus appear as much a liberal fragment as the United States.⁴⁰ Yet since there are some clear and undisputed differences among the ideologies of Canada, Britain and the United States, an alternative explanation for those differences will be required.

"Nobody," Burke tells us, "has observed with any reflection what market is, without being astonished at the truth, the correctness . . . with which the balance of wants is settled."⁴¹ The "invisible hand" was clearly no more visible and no less effective for Burke than it was for Smith. For Burke, the state should restrict its concern to "the exterior

36 William C. Dunn, "Adam Smith and Edmund Burke: Complementary Contemporaries," *The Southern Economic Journal* 7 (1940-41), 330-46.

37 *Liberalism* (London: Dent, 1976), 71.

38 *The Conservative Case*, 65.

39 *Ibid.*, 22.

40 On the concept of "fragment" see Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, chap. 1.

41 *Works*, 1877, Boston ed., vol. 5, 151. My comments on Burke's economics are dependent in large measure on the articles of Dr. Frank Petrella, Jr.: "Edmund Burke: A Liberal Practitioner of Political Economy," *Modern Age* 8 (1963-64), 52-60, and "The Empirical Basis of Edmund Burke's Classical Economic Liberalism," *Duquesne Review* 10 (1965), 53-61.

establishment of its religion; its magistracy; its revenue; its military force . . . to everything that is *truly* and *properly* public.”⁴² The division between public and private is, of course, a central liberal conception; and to exclude the monopoly of economic direction from the public sector is the cornerstone of classical liberal economic thought.

Burke expounded the law of supply and demand as: “the balance between consumption and production makes price. Market is the meeting and conference of the consumer and producer, when they actually discover each other’s wants . . . if the goods at market are beyond the demand, they fall in their value; if below it, they rise.”⁴³ “The rate of wages . . . rises or falls according to the demand.”⁴⁴ Moreover, the laws of economics are immutable and are to be ignored at peril. “We, the people,” exclaims Burke, “ought to be made sensible that it is not in breaking the laws of commerce which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God, that we are to place our hope of softening the Divine displeasure to remove any calamity under which we suffer or which hangs over us.”⁴⁵ If the hand was God’s we should perhaps not be surprised that it exceeded our power of sight, nor that we had no choice but to obey however arduous the terms.

One could continue to quote Burke at length but the essence of his economics seems beyond dispute. It should perhaps suffice to argue from authority. Alfred Cobban, for example, sees Burke as one of the first proponents of free trade⁴⁶ (though in fact there is a conservative free-trade tradition which dates back to Bolingbroke). Robert Murray claims that “the *Wealth of Nations* clarified the views [Burke] had long entertained”⁴⁷ and Adam Smith is reported as stating that Burke “was the only man, who, without communications, thought on these topics exactly as [Smith] did.”⁴⁸

Most commentators on Burke’s political philosophy have, as we said, paid scant attention to Burke’s economics, or at least they have failed to investigate the relationship of the economics to the politics. Frank O’Gorman, however, in his *Edmund Burke* was sufficiently impressed by Burke’s economic pronouncements that he made them the basis for his understanding of Burke’s political theory. Burke, we are told, “regarded society as a self-regulating mechanism . . . social harmony was not . . . the product of government intervention. It was a function of the market. Government ought not to interfere with its operation for the market was governed by mysterious beneficent laws

42 Quoted in “Edmund Burke: A Liberal Practitioner of Political Economy,” 55.

43 Ibid., 53-54.

44 *Works*, vol. 5, 142.

45 Ibid., 157.

46 *Edmund Burke and the Revolt Against the Eighteenth Century* (London: Barnes and Noble, 1929), 193.

47 Quoted in “Edmund Burke: A Liberal Practitioner of Political Economy,” 53.

48 Ibid.

which steadied prices, allowed just profits and, indirectly, protected property.”⁴⁹ Indeed, according to O’Gorman, Burke went on “to construct a non-interventionist philosophy of government in which the role of the executive was limited and in which far-reaching and theoretical schemes of political and social reform thus became quite irrelevant.”⁵⁰ Nothing could smack more clearly of abstract classical liberalism. Yet if O’Gorman is right not only are Adam Smith and Edmund Burke undifferentiable but Burkean conservatism becomes not a critical variant of classical liberalism but classical liberalism itself!

In fact, a closer analysis of Burke’s economics would demonstrate—though not quite as much as it would for Smith—that abstract rules of nonintervention must in practice be circumvented by the expedience required of contingency. While Burke advocated nonintervention in principle, in practice he deviated from that stance on Indian economic reform, on the reorganization of government benefices, in the case of the Navigation Acts, and in many other instances,⁵¹ although he steadfastly opposed legislation to protect the poor. Both classical liberalism and conservatism, it would appear, espouse noninterventionism as an abstract principle and both concur that pragmatic considerations require us to deviate from those principles. The differing grounds on which intervention is predicated and by which abstract theory is transcended should thus help us to understand the bases of the differences between classical liberalism and conservatism.

3. Locke and Burke: Prime Exponents of Classical Liberalism and Conservatism

Commentaries on Burke present him to us as an avid opponent of “innovation”—which we are to understand as change that ignores the precepts of history, the wisdom of tradition and the admonitions of experience—but as a friend to piecemeal reform with a delicate touch. Yet paradoxically Burke’s advocacy of free enterprise economics can only be construed as support for a major innovative and rationalist departure from the prevailing mercantilism of the era; no less must we recognize in Burke’s advocacy of the legitimacy of political parties a major departure from prevailing constitutional practices, and in his administrative economic reform the most significant blow to the eighteenth-century patronage system. Perhaps, then, it is more appropriate to read Burke as recommending the orderly fulfillment of the classical liberal promises of 1688 for which Locke’s *Two Treatises of*

49 *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), 46.

50 *Ibid.*, 47.

51 Details are provided by Petrella in “Edmund Burke: A Liberal Practitioner of Political Economy,” 56-59.

Government provided the initial defence and which were already entailed in the broad sweep of English history. Thereafter delicate and piecemeal reform would be necessary to maintain classical liberal principles. Innovation is to be avoided but only after the relevant orderly classical liberal principles—allied in continuity with the mediaeval past—have been institutionalized. What is necessary to avoid in the first instance is not change, perhaps on occasion not even fundamental change, but “a revolution in sentiments, manners and moral opinions.” A manly, moral, regulated liberalism which retained the links to its own heritage was the prerequisite of the virtuous life.

In order to understand Burke and the conservative ideology in the relevant context, then, it would seem appropriate to spell out the principles of Lockean thought and determine in what manner and form Burke approximates those principles and to what degree he advocates a deviation from them.

The abstracted liberal principles of Locke—which are taken by Hartz as the foundation of American ideology—are the separation of powers, a free enterprise economy, and the maintenance and development of individual rights. In fact, Hartz does not make these principles explicit although the themes run throughout his work. He assumes—a trifle optimistically perhaps—that the content of liberalism and the philosophy of John Locke are common knowledge. Likewise the ideas of Edmund Burke are nowhere adumbrated explicitly. They are merely postulated as the antithesis to, if not the negation of, Lockeanism and Americanism. In fact, as we shall attempt to demonstrate, Burke's ideas are sometimes a reinforcement of Locke against *philosophie* innovation and sometimes a repudiation of the excesses implicit in Locke's tendency to a perhaps unwitting rationalism—but never a refutation of the cautious classical liberal mind.

It is perhaps surprising, given the attention which analysts of the American political system have devoted to Locke, how unidimensional is the picture they have drawn.⁵² It is perhaps fair to describe John Locke's philosophy as ambiguous, perhaps even contradictory,⁵³ but to regard it as simple is inaccurate. Locke's principles are everywhere subject to qualification—indeed, in part, the qualification is the principle. It is perhaps worthy of recall, then, that nowhere did Locke believe himself in defiance of English tradition; “How little a lover so ever I am of fresh fashions . . . ,” he tells us. Through Richard Hooker, ever “the judicious Hooker,” Locke maintained the mediaeval tradition in his liberal thought. Both Filmer and Hobbes, against whom Locke

52 I do not mean to criticize those Americans who have written of Locke as a political philosopher—Sterling Lamprecht and Willmoore Kendall, to take but two at random, have performed admirable tasks—but rather to refer to those who have depicted Locke as the ideological father of the American political culture.

53 See for example, G. H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (3rd ed.; London: Harrap, 1960), 442ff.

wrote, represented departures from traditional ways of thinking. If Locke advocated no return to the past he was nonetheless in direct line of descent from John of Salisbury and St. Thomas Aquinas by way of Grotius and Pufendorf. Although he interpreted natural law as a claim to innate, indefeasible rights resident in each individual, he nonetheless maintained the feudal belief that government is responsible to those that it governs, that constitutional conventions and the traditions of the realm—whose very authority is their prior existence—are inherent in good government, that government is indispensable and *its* rights are also indefeasible, although government exists solely for the good of the people. If the United States is predominantly a rejection of things mediaeval and feudal, as Hartz and the Hartzians believe, then Locke is not its appropriate philosopher.

For Locke, the English people are not a mere atomized aggregate of individuals but constitute a social group persisting continuously through constitutional evolution; the community is a definite unit whose duty is to act as a trustee of the individual's rights. If it is inappropriate to describe this aspect of Locke's thought as organicist, it is no less inappropriate so to describe Burke's notion of the nation as those living, those dead and those to be born. If rationalist individualism is the differentiating essence of the American polity, the American political culture is not a wholly Lockean one.

Locke espoused the principles of cautious and sober-minded liberal reform; indeed, he described himself as the "soberest man" in England. In his exhortations to liberty, he condemned license. For Locke, liberty consisted to no mean degree in constitutional order. Freedom, he tells us, is having "a standing rule to live by," it is escaping "the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man"; it is, indeed, liberty "to follow my own will in all things where the rule prescribes not" but it is *not* liberty for a man "to do what he lists, to live as he pleases."⁵⁴ And he recognizes the dangers not only of radical reform but of change which ignored the prescriptions of tradition. Indeed, he (Bolingbroke too, incidentally) tried to show for the Glorious Revolution, precisely as Burke did later for the American revolution, that it was the king who was the source of innovation and thus the true author of the revolution. The "revolutionaries" were merely re-asserting traditional rights.⁵⁵

The similarities between Burke and Locke may, indeed, be expressed at some length. Each espoused the separation of powers with a balance tipped in favour of the legislature. Both proclaimed a measure of religious freedom—Burke being in practice rather more tolerant to Catholics and Locke rather more tolerant to Dissenters (but neither to

54 *Second Treatise*, vol. 4, 22.

55 See Sabine, *History of Political Theory*, 462-63. For Bolingbroke see *Works*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1841), 84 and Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), chap. 1, esp., 27.

atheists, and neither anywhere near so much as was the Quaker William Penn or as was practised in Lord Baltimore's Catholic colony of Maryland). Together they affirmed the principle of the Glorious Revolution of limited constitutional monarchy and together they believed that England's future greatness must depend on trade and the development of a capitalist economy. Each recognized that the value of a product was derived from the labour invested in it and each believed that individuals frequently act from selfish motives and thus protection from the venality of one's fellow man was a necessary function of government; when Locke declared that "government has no other end but the preservation of property," he understood under "property" a man's "life, liberty and estate." For both Burke and Locke, abstract principle was to be modified by the necessities of compromise and prudence; for each, common sense counted for more than logic; each was wary of generalization; and for each, the objective principles of right and wrong were known self-evidently; Locke thought they were subject to deduction (though he never deduced them) and Burke knew them through intuition.

The *foundations* of the political principles of Locke and Burke were truly in accord—whatever the significance of the differences of detail between them and whatever differences of epistemology they may have had. Indeed, in his debate with Fox in 1791 Burke thought of himself explicitly as the defender of the principles of 1688 against the innovations introduced by the French Revolution, just as Bolingbroke had thought of himself against the centralizing principles—the Robinocracy—of Sir Robert Walpole. Burke was, in fact, reminding the Whigs of Locke's implicit inhibitions on untrammelled liberal principles—all abstract truths must be moderated in accordance with tradition, compromise, experience and common sense. Locke is, indeed, more appropriately the founding father of the modern British and Canadian constitutions than he is of the American. The Locke whom the Americans extolled in their Jeffersonian liberalism is the Locke shorn of his qualifications, devoid of his complexities. The American Locke is a simplified, rationalist and rationalized Locke; he is Locke without tradition, Locke without any vestige of the mystique of government. Britain and Canada, on the other hand, have inherited the genuine, complex, classical liberal Locke (though they, like the United States, later subverted their Lockeanism with welfare liberalism). The British and Canadian liberal tradition is the liberalism which arises out of a respect for its pre-liberal past; the idea of American liberalism (though not always its practice) is a rationalist variant of the same doctrine. For all their complexity and qualification, the British and Canadian heritages are no less universally liberal than the United States—and in fact more thoroughly and concinnously so. When George Grant writes of Canada as in origin "a more ordered and stable society than the liberal

experiment of the United States," as standing "in firm opposition to the Jeffersonian liberalism so dominant in the United States," he is not, as he imagines, showing that Locke is an inappropriate philosopher for the Canadian polity, more properly replaced by Richard Hooker.⁵⁶ The cautious, orderly, moderate society of which Grant writes fits into the Lockean pattern better than a United States which, if we follow George Grant, is enamoured of change, devoted to the rights of the individual above the common good, and espouses individual freedom above order and authority. All of this would have been anathema to Locke.

Yet to believe all this, it would seem, is to believe O'Gorman's implications that Edmund Burke is nothing more than John Locke updated by Adam Smith. Wherein, we need to ask, lie the differences whereby conservatism becomes a *critical* variant of classical liberalism? (It is perhaps worth noting at this point that while conservatism is a critical variant of classical liberalism, it has less philosophically in common with modern liberalism. Modern liberalism suborned the classical tradition when it became subverted by the idea of progress, through Godwin by way of Turgot, when through Jeremy Bentham it became a friend to rationalist radicalism and through John Stuart Mill an ally of relativist social democracy).

The Burkean conservative is wary lest the Lockean liberal's concern with individual rights may make him neglectful of his duties (although it is clear from the *Second Treatise* that Locke was not himself so remiss for he regarded Hooker's call to duty as the foundation of his own theory of rights,⁵⁷ and such terms as obedience, authority, obligation, public good and piety are there used repeatedly and with approval). While the Burkean conservative will recognize along with the liberal that corporations are mere legal fictions, he will recognize nonetheless that individual rights are achieved through those fictions⁵⁸ and he will be concerned that, in his concentration on abstract individual rights, the liberal will ignore the importance of such legal fictions as state and church in fulfilling individual rights—and that he will ignore no less the corresponding duties which arise from those rights. He will be concerned that the liberal's metaphysical flights of fancy—of which Locke was himself occasionally guilty despite his abuse in principle of "ideas of government in the fancy"⁵⁹—will produce unpalatable conclusions foreign to our prejudices; and he will expect the liberal to be too easily satisfied with the reason of a single mind or a single generation rather than listening to the traditional wisdom of mankind; he will expect him to encourage novelty rather than to appreciate the necessity of

56 *Lament for a Nation*, 4, 33, 63.

57 *Second Treatise*, vol. 2, 5.

58 See, for example, *Works*, Bohn ed., vol. 2, 322-23, and 331-32.

59 Quoted in William T. Bluhm, *Theories of the Political System* (3rd ed.; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1978), 319.

reform with a delicate touch. He will always despair at the rationalism of a Kant who believed that "the problem of organizing a state, however hard it may seem, can be solved even for a race of devils, if only they are intelligent." The conservative will always recognize a preference for wisdom over intelligence.

In the English-speaking world the conservative differs from the liberal philosophically only by degree. The abstracted classical liberal philosophy of limited government and economic individualism is restricted by law, order, pragmatism and common sense in the writings of John Locke. Burke recognizes the validity of the same abstractions but restricts them further by prudence, sterner virtues, and, above all, by a critical approach to rationalism—that philosophy whose proponent is described by Michael Oakeshott as standing for "independence of mind on all occasions, for thought free from obligation to any authority save the authority of reason... he is the *enemy* of authority, of prejudice, of the merely traditional, customary or habitual."⁶⁰ And if John Locke was himself sufficiently prudent to avoid most of these errors, many of his avowed followers, especially the representatives of the French and American Enlightenment, inherited only a rationalist version of Locke's studiously complex philosophy.

In this liberal world conservatism is but a partial ideology; indeed, it is usually no more than a particularist disposition. But a disposition can only exist in a specific cultural context and the context of Halifax, Bolingbroke and Burke is the Lockean Whig revolution of 1688 (which was, incidentally, won with the assistance of the Tories and the Church). None denounced it. Each gloried in it. But each espoused something other—if only slightly yet significantly—than was espoused by those we readily acknowledge as classical liberals. That difference is the conservative disposition of the classical liberal ideology. And that disposition does not involve the defence of an aristocratic past but requires the preservation of the most orderly, disciplined and manly elements of what the past is becoming.

4. The Beer and Hartz Hypotheses

If the foregoing analysis is substantially correct, two areas of what has become conventional wisdom are subject to reevaluation. First, the New Conservatism would appear not to be a repudiation of the conservative tradition, as Samuel H. Beer would have us believe. It is instead a specific variant of the classical form, from which, in the American version, Burkean prudence and compromise are notably absent. George Grant is right to point out that Barry "Goldwater is an American conservative [who] conserves . . . the liberal philosophy of Locke"⁶¹ but

60 *Rationalism in Politics*, 1.

61 *Lament for a Nation*, 65.

he is wrong to imagine this philosophy to be essentially incompatible with traditional conservatism. In fact, it is only a part of the Lockean tradition which Goldwater conserves. He forgets the prudential virtues whose significance Burke brought back into focus when the eighteenth-century Enlightenment had perverted the Lockean philosophy into a doctrine more abstract and rationalistic than Locke had ever intended. The New Conservatism differs from traditional conservatism in terms of the prudential virtues and the attitudes to rationalism—not in major ideological disagreements about organism, collectivism and corporatism. Second, the United States would appear not to be the original liberal fragment, as Louis Hartz affirms. Instead, Britain and English Canada represent the complex, cautious, pragmatic Lockean society reinforced, in different degrees in each, by Burkean prudence and order. The United States represents the unqualified, abstracted Lockean society reinforced only by Burkean sterner virtues.

We suggested earlier that the New Conservative resembles the Old Liberal, more so in fact than does the modern liberal. It is doubtful that anyone would challenge the proposition that the New Conservative espouses economic individualism and the weak state more enthusiastically than would any modern liberal. The modern liberal, the hedonist utilitarian, has in fact become imbued with the idea of inexorable social progress (though not human perfectibility) and has come to recognize the strong, protective state as an indispensable agent of that progress. Whereas the conservative remains skeptical of the idea of constant improvement and retains in some measure the abstracted classical liberal beliefs, the liberal has been led to reject his original claims in order to pursue the goal of individual and societal improvement. Whereas once the state was viewed by the liberal as an oppressive threat to individual development, it is now recognized as the means to ensure that development; whereas the individual was once required to be responsible for himself, the state now removes that burden from his shoulders. The New Conservative, the American conservative of the Barry Goldwater variety especially, retains the classical liberal traditions but lacks the Burkean restraints of prudence and compromise and thus adds to classical liberalism only the Burkean virtues of discipline, authority and fortitude, and the belief that it is the pursuit of the philosophical, rather than reliance on the wisdom of experience, which leads to social and political decadence. Although Beer, Grant and others are right to note the divergence between traditional and modern anglophone conservatism, both conservatisms are nonetheless best understood in language appropriate to classical liberalism.

What differentiates the Canadian and British conservative from the American conservative is in part a matter of political structure. Since Britain and Canada each has a major political party bearing the name

“Conservative” there are many who belong to, or associate themselves with, that party, and accordingly describe themselves as conservative, for other than ideological reasons. Indeed, familial, regional, social and class factors are usually thought to play a major role in determining party allegiance. Thus the ideological spectrum of those who regard themselves as conservative is significantly broader in Britain and Canada than it is in the United States. Moreover, one of the functions of political parties is the aggregation of interests and thus those who identify themselves as conservative in Britain and Canada are likely to desire the success of *their* political party, and to espouse the compromise, barter and prudence prerequisites of electoral success in a centripetal democratic polity. No such inhibitions affect those in the United States who identify themselves as conservative and it is thus to be expected that they will be more radical than their British and Canadian counterparts. However, it is also true that in Britain and Canada the conservatives take a more orderly, pragmatic and tolerant attitude to modern liberal society for philosophical and cultural reasons. Having adopted the more pragmatic and prudent Lockean philosophy, Britons and Canadians are less antagonistic to deviance from the prevailing legitimacy than are the rationalist Lockceans of the United States.

It would be an error, however, to imagine that there was no overriding criterion, extending beyond national ideological heritage, which differentiated conservatives in general from liberals in general. In fine, the conservative is more readily the particularist while the liberal lays claim to universalism; the conservative espouses the advantage of specific persons, the liberal that of humanity at large. The conservative is vigorous in protection of family, community and nation; he is expansive in defence of the interests of those to whom he is close; he is unquestioningly loyal to those he calls his friends; the corollary is that he may be more interested in local advantage than the benefit of humanity. The conservative will pursue public virtue through discipline; whereas the liberal will enjoin tolerance for its own sake, the conservative will limit tolerance to the level of the endangering of public morality and to the level where heterogeneity will endanger the unifying identity of the whole. The conservative has a sense of stewardship in the performance of public office; he works unstintingly at making the prevailing system effective; the corollary is that he may hinder the development of the individuality of others, and fail to recognize that unplanned social, economic or educational changes in society will require structural and attitudinal changes in the prevailing societal system. The strong sense of discipline of the conservative—unqualified—readily leads to cruelty; the sense of uniformity of the conservative—when exacerbated—readily leads to oppression; the sense of loyalty of the conservative—without the appropriate inhibitions—readily leads to

bigotry. Thus it is that the conservative's philosophy of virtue may easily be transcended to a philosophy of xenophobia. The conservative has a difficult philosophy to maintain; it is important to recognize, however that when it is thus transcended it is no longer conservative. These dangers are, of course, all the greater when the Burkean restraints of compromise, barter, prudence and expedience are lacking. When the conservative inhabits a conservative world the orderly virtues are easily maintained. But when the world in which the conservative would be comfortable lies in the past he is—especially without the prudential virtues—subject to a frustration and alienation which are likely to foster an unconservative extremism as their consequence; when the conservative ceases to be a trimmer he is in danger of subverting his philosophy. The New Conservative remains in direct line of descent from the traditional conservative, but, when on the defensive, he may come perilously close to a transcendence from that philosophy into something we usually deem totalitarian. It is thus that British and Canadian conservatives seem on occasion to diverge considerably from their American counterparts. But it is not because of major ideological disagreements. It is because the Burkean principles of prudence, barter and compromise applied to classical liberalism lead to a significantly different political practice.

To turn our attention, then, to the Hartzian thesis: Louis Hartz has argued persuasively—and convincingly to many—that there is an ideological dialectical process at work which determines societal belief systems. Where conservatism and liberalism exist contemporaneously they will interact to produce socialism. In a liberal fragment society there will be no dialectical interaction and thus socialism will be absent. For Hartz, the United States is the paradigm case of the liberal fragment, while Europe, including Britain, represents the paradigm of the dialectical process. One is, however, immediately struck by the fact that Russia, which provided the most far-reaching socialist experiment, lacked a liberal heritage more than any other European nation, while Sweden, which has produced the most successful European social democratic party, experienced in common with the rest of Scandinavia a less thoroughgoing feudalism than much of the rest of the continent. Our initial reaction to the Hartzian model must thus be a skeptical one.

The Hartzian fragment thesis has received considerable attention in Canadian political analysis. Kenneth McRae initially employed the Hartzian model to demonstrate that "Canada offers almost a classic instance of a two-fragment society" and that "As the central figure of the English-Canadian tradition we encounter once again the American liberal."⁶² But it has been through the writing of Gad Horowitz that

62 "The Structure of Canadian History," in Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies*, 219, 234.

Hartz has received his widest appreciative audience in Canada.⁶³ Horowitz used the Hartzian thesis to demonstrate Canada's uniqueness—Canada was significantly less feudalist than Britain but could accommodate a legitimate social democratic party alien to the culture of the United States. Yet the generally (though not entirely)⁶⁴ uncritical acceptance of this view has come as a consequence of its utility to the demonstration of a separate Canadian identity at a time when that identity was/is being desperately sought, rather than as a consequence of any explanatory value the thesis may possess.

In fact, the Canadian polity provides sufficient evidence to cast doubt on the very dialectical process itself. William Christian and Colin Campbell adopted the Hartzian approach explicitly in their *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* and yet provided us with the very evidence which showed the Hartzian thesis to be inadequate. "The antithesis," Christian tells us, "between toryism and liberalism ought, on the Hartzian analysis, [to] have been able in its own right to generate an indigenous socialism, and we believe it was capable of so doing."⁶⁵ Yet he also tells us that "in the Maritimes the liberal fragments were much weaker, and a more tory attitude was implanted by the predominantly loyalist settlement. The settlement in the West was much later and of a much more strongly liberal bent."⁶⁶

Now it follows from Christian's statements that where liberalism and toryism are present the propensity to socialism is present and where either toryism or liberalism is absent the propensity to socialism is absent. Thus if the Hartzian thesis is valid then the Maritimes should be the Canadian breeding ground of socialism. It had, according to Christian, the necessary toryism, and we are further informed by Christian, following George Grant, that "liberalism had, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, become increasingly ascendant"⁶⁷ in Canada as a whole. The Maritimes, therefore, had the necessary liberalism. Yet, as we all know, socialism failed to develop in the Maritimes. The lesson for the Hartzian model could not be clearer.

On the other hand, in the West, where, according to Christian, there was a "much more strongly liberal bent"—a point used by Christian to explain the individualism of Meighen—and hence the appropriate dialectical relationship was absent, socialism developed with greater strength than elsewhere in Canada. In other words, the facts are

63 See in particular his *Canadian Labour in Politics*, chap. 1.

64 See, for example, Conrad Winn and John McMenemy, *Political Parties in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw Hill-Ryerson, 1976) and Tom Truman, "A Critique of Seymour Martin Lipset's article, 'Value Differences, Absolute or Relative: The English Speaking Democracies,'" this JOURNAL 4 (1971), 497-525.

65 See "A Note on Rod Preece and Red Tories," 130.

66 *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada*, 89.

67 "A Note on Rod Preece and Red Tories," 130.

precisely the opposite of what they would have to be to support the Hartzian thesis!

In similar vein, we are informed of Quebec's feudal traditions which exist alongside its more recent liberal imports. We should, then, be entitled to expect socialism to have arisen earlier, more steadfastly and more purely in the "tory" Maritimes and "tory" Quebec (where liberalism is also present) than in the predominantly "liberal" West (where there is no toryism). Since the reverse is the case, we are surely entitled to conclude either that the Hartzian thesis of a dialectical process is inappropriate or that the various political parties in Canada espouse variants of one common ideology. In either case the use of the Hartzian model in the Horowitz or Christian manner to explain the character of Canadian conservatism or Canadian socialism is invalid.

It is not, in fact, necessary for our purposes that we refute the dialectic, for, even if the dialectical process does operate where the conservatism is a defence of feudalism (as it has been, for example, in Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and Austria), our analysis has attempted to demonstrate that Britain—Canada's (and America's) most influential ideological progenitor—is itself a liberal society and has provided its former predominantly white, or white-dominated, colonies with an almost entirely classical liberal heritage; Britain, rather than the United States, is the original liberal fragment.

That British conservatism was, in its Burkean strain, a critical variant of classical liberalism has, I believe, already been amply demonstrated—and there can be little doubt that conservative political thinkers in this century have believed their conservatism to have been derived substantially from Burke. Yet one is surely required to take account of an apparently contradictory strain in British thought, that of the Lake Poets, of Young England, and of the Scottish romanticism associated with Sir Walter Scott. It must surely be this phenomenon—rather than Burkean conservatism—which may most appropriately be regarded as the British dialectical antithesis to American Lockean liberalism. It would seem appropriate, then, to undertake an analysis of such a prototypal "tory" or "mediaevalist" thinker in comparison with the Burkean exemplar. Nowhere can we find a more archetypal representation of such thinking than in the writing of the Georgian poet laureate, Robert Southey.

Southey apparently learned much from Edmund Burke. Southey tells us, for example, in his *Colloquies*⁶⁸ that the "very qualities which enable men to acquire power in distempered times render them, for the most part, unfit to be trusted with it. The work which requires a calm, thoughtful and virtuous spirit, can never be performed by the crafty, the

68 *Sir Thomas More: or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (London: John Murray, 1829), 2 vols.

turbulent and the audacious."⁶⁹ In similar Burkean vein, we are told that the "science of politics . . . has been erected by shallow sophists upon abstract rights and imaginary compacts, without the slightest reference to habits and history; but in ignorance of the one, and contempt of the other."⁷⁰ Indeed, we can recognize Burke's turn of phrase when we read that they "who care nothing for their ancestors, will care little for their posterity"⁷¹ and that we should "act always upon motives of human prudence, directed by religious principles."⁷²

Yet such similarities hide apparent major disagreements. Southey noted the proper patriarchal nature of government,⁷³ the horrors of industrialization which arose from the capitalist spirit,⁷⁴ the "evil of a vagrant and brutalized population"⁷⁵ which would have been avoided by "the rude but kindlier principle of the feudal system."⁷⁶ Moreover, he castigated the middle classes who in their avarice disturbed the settled order of things.⁷⁷ Sir Walter Scott in his *Waverley*⁷⁸ novels similarly elevated the integration and solidarity of the feudal estate.

When we read more carefully in Southey we find some apparently incongruous elements. "Commerce and manufactures," Southey informs us, "nearly as they are connected, differ widely in their effects upon society . . . the ordinary and natural consequences of commerce are every way beneficial; they are humanizing, civilizing, liberalizing; if it be for the purposes of gain that it compasses sea and land, it carries with it industry, activity, and improvement. . . ."⁷⁹ Nor should we consider this tory an egalitarian, as we are sometimes led to believe.⁸⁰ Southey castigates "the levelling principle of democracy."⁸¹

Southey, then, appears to recommend stronger government than Burke would have approved, he is more sympathetic to feudalism than was Burke (who, after all, like Locke, approved of the land enclosures which impractical humanitarians have always loved to castigate), and he rebukes the disturbing activities of the capitalist middle classes. Yet one has to wonder what different practices Burke would have commended had he witnessed the burgeoning industrialism. He had approved a not overly regulated commerce—but then so did Southey. The unchecked

69 Vol. 1, 247.

70 Vol. 1, 254.

71 Vol. 2, 146.

72 Vol. 2, 40-41.

73 Vol. 1, 105.

74 Colloquies 4 and 5.

75 Vol. 1, 96.

76 Vol. 1, 79.

77 Vol. 1, 131-33.

78 1814-29.

79 Vol. 1, 194, 197.

80 See, for example, Horowitz, *Canadian Labour in Politics*, 21.

81 Vol. 2, 414.

ambitions of the middle classes were only now producing the evils of industrialization and disorderliness. Surely, Burke's principles of prudence and compromise would have encouraged greater governmental intervention than he had formerly recommended in principle—indeed, he had already approved such intervenient actions in the case of Indian economic and governmental reform, in the Navigation Acts, and so forth. And Southey's nostalgia for feudalism is surely only a melodramatic reaction to the failures of modernity. Southey certainly understood, and copied, the Burkean attitude to long term change: "As manners improved," he noted, "the laws would have been softened with them."⁸² Yet a significant difference remains between the thought of a Southey and the thought of a Burke. Southey is an utopian, believing that an evil is merely something to be eliminated. For Burke, it is an unfortunate fact of life requiring continued remedial attention. Burke recognizes, but knows he cannot solve, the problem of oppression when he asserts that "we must have ranks and distinctions and magistracy in the state, notwithstanding their manifest tendency to encourage avarice and ambition."⁸³ It is a pressing problem requiring continued corrective activity, not an ephemeral phenomenon to be conjured away by utopian legerdemain. Burke and Southey are perhaps closer than a superficial reading would suggest; there is nonetheless a gulf between them, more in their respective dispositions than in their political principles, but different dispositions lead to significantly different politics.

It is common to note that the Tories reacted against the evils of industrialization and attempted to redress the grievances of the oppressed while the liberals continued to believe that interference by the state would cause a general decrease in the standard of living. While this is only a slightly exaggerated account it has given a false impression that the conservatives were essentially statist and collectivist. In fact, the conservatives were less constrained by abstract economic theory than the liberals and recognized the pragmatic need of adjusting policies to meet the pressing needs of the moment. We tend to forget, however, that when the liberals were finally galvanized into action (less by finally recognizing the need of adapting theory to circumstance than by adopting a new theory of progress) by the philosophies of T. H. Green, Francis Montague and Leonard Hobhouse, they went much further against the classical liberal pro-capitalist, anti-statist principles than the conservatives ever did. Moreover, once Immanuel Kant had reunited the liberal tradition of individual freedom with virtue and the common good (an unity maintained in Locke but lost in the interim), the logic of *laissez-faire* was no longer functional to liberal thought.

82 Vol. 1, 106.

83 Which hints the lie to C. B. Macpherson's overly facile reading of Burke as "merely a theorist of hierarchy and class subordination." See Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 164.

Our traditional theorizing tells us that the Tory reaction was essentially collectivist and we accept this to have been in accord with conservative tradition. When the liberal reacts in a similar but more exaggerated fashion with some decades time lag we regard the liberal (while remaining liberal) as having renounced individualism for collectivism. Is it not more consistent with the historical facts to recognize that the conservative was influenced by similar factors to move toward a somewhat greater collectivism than before but one which deviated significantly less from its former pragmatic and partial individualism than the liberal now differed from his former rationalist individualism? After all, when the United States adopted the New Deal we did not consider it to have suddenly ceased to be a part of the liberal fragment. Moreover, it is worthy of recall that, above all in France, there were some early liberal "statists." Thus the utilitarian Helvétius affirmed in *De L'Esprit* (1795) that "Good laws are the only means of making men virtuous. The whole art of legislation consists in forcing men, by the sentiment of self-love, to be always just to others." D'Holbach in *Système Sociale* (1773) tells us that "The artisan, the merchant and the wage-earner ought to be protected by the state." And Condorcet's espousal of progress led to the same statist conclusions as it did for later British liberal thinkers. Further, the French conservative Joseph de Maistre had no criticism of any minimal state ideas of the revolutionaries. To the contrary, he opined that the revolutionary government was "a highly advanced despotism [which] works only too well." In Germany, Immanuel Kant's liberal route to the Kingdom of Ends consisted in the creation of legal institutions designed to confine the behaviour of all individuals in such a manner as to compel respect for the rights of all others. Even in England, as early as 1695 certain Whigs proposed the creation—by Parliament rather than the executive—of a Board of Trade with extensive powers to control commerce, further trade and provide for the poor. Indeed, one could find numerous examples of liberal statism in English history before the Cobden and Bright era of *laissez-faire* liberalism. The archetypal Whig Macaulay was an ardent supporter of factory legislation. John Locke was not only a promoter of the Bank of England but was actively engaged in its early operation (and it is notable that George Grant,⁸⁴ Reg Whitaker,⁸⁵ Gad Horowitz,⁸⁶ and William Christian and Colin Campbell⁸⁷ consider national banks to be institutions of tory collectivism). Even Adam Smith advocated state intervention to protect the poor.⁸⁸

We must nonetheless not neglect the influence of the mediaeval ideal in nineteenth-century Britain and thus ignore an antithesis to

84 *Lament for a Nation*, 14.

85 "Images of the State in Canada," 37.

86 *Canadian Labour in Politics*, 10.

87 *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada*, 24.

88 See note 12 above.

Lockean liberalism. But, as we shall see, nor must we ignore the similar reaction in the United States. In the diverse writings of Cobbett and Carlyle, of Coleridge and Wordsworth, the new industrial order was rejected in favour of the mutual obligations and simplicity of a previous era. For this generation of romantic thinkers the golden age lay in an idealized moment of chivalry. It is plausible to read much of this reaction as in some measure a traditional conservative repudiation of the *excesses* of capitalist individualism associated with radical innovation, clothed in the language of frustration. Some of this reaction was merely "A Dream of Order"⁸⁹ vilifying the bourgeois avarice which was destroying traditional prudential regularity. But not all of it. Some led to the Christian socialist ideals of Charles Kingsley⁹⁰ which bore some similarity to the message of Disraeli's *Sybil* whose philosophy Marx and Engels described as a "feudal socialism" which struck "the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core."⁹¹ A more typical romantic conservative response was provided by Samuel Taylor Coleridge when he explained the contest of the *Waverley* novels as between "two great moving principles of social humanity: religious adherence to the past... the desire and admiration of the permanent... and the passion for increase of knowledge, instincts of *progression* and *free agency*."⁹² Was this Tory response not merely the maintenance of tradition in relation to an early version of the later liberal response and devoted to similar ends? Was this not the traditional conservative idea of ordered liberty, or, as the Tory Richard Oastler was wont to put it, "Order for the sake of Liberty"?

Perhaps it was in no mean degree, but we must not minimize the deviation of this essentially novel conservatism from the tradition of classical conservatism; nor, however, must we ignore the fact, which Beer overlooks and which argues against Hartz, that the less statist conservatism which superseded Disraeli's reign over the Conservative party was a return to earlier norms. In the age of Peel these divergent conservative strains caused a split in the Conservative party, with the Peelites and the Liberal-Conservatives divorcing themselves from Young England, and the aristocratic agriculturalist Tories. Thus, between Peel and Salisbury the British Conservative party was led first by Derby, whose philosophy consisted of a fear lest the aristocratic and agricultural interests be ousted by those of industry and the bourgeoisie, and then by the opportunist master rhetorician Disraeli who was

89 See Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth Century Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

90 See in particular *Alton Locke* (1850) and *Yeast* (1851). His later and more famous novels were in similar vein but, set in the more distant past, were less explicitly relevant to contemporary problems.

91 Quoted in Butler, *The Conservatives*, 127.

92 *Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Rayson (London: Constable, 1936), 341-42.

sufficiently astute to ensure that his mediaeval romanticism never interfered with the practice of government. If Disraeli could write Derby that the task of the conservative leader was "to uphold the aristocratic settlement of this country. That is the only question at stake however manifold may be the forms which it assumes,"⁹³ it is notable that the government's liberal-conservative policies when Disraeli was in office must have been derived from the minds of such middle-class cabinet ministers as Richard Cross and W. H. Smith. Certainly, as R. N. W. Blake has pointed out, "There is no reason to suppose that Disraeli . . . had a far-sighted concept of Tory Democracy or the Conservative Working Man, still less than he was trying, as he later claimed, 'to educate' his party."⁹⁴ Why then, we must wonder, is Disraeli so admired by modern Conservative politicians? Not for his romantic ideas of aristocracy or of the power of the monarchy, not for his lack of sympathy for free enterprise or his early little Englander attitudes is he admired. No, modern Conservatives follow in Disraeli's footsteps without any attraction for his "feudal-socialism," but because of his prescience in responding expediently to political, social and economic pressures so as to prepare the Conservative party for the democratic and welfare realities of the twentieth century.⁹⁵

Britain, we are claiming, has been a liberal fragment since the early eighteenth century but experienced an anachronistic reaction in the nineteenth. But are the Hartzians not entitled to claim that it is precisely this kind of anti-Lockean aberration which could not have happened in a liberal fragment society, which differentiates Britain from the United States, and which identifies the United States as the original liberal fragment society? Perhaps an anti-Lockean aberration is in fact unlikely to occur in a *wholly* rationalist society. But, it did occur in no mean manner, if not quite so extensively, in the United States. This mediaevalism pervades the writings of James Russell Lowell, Francis Parkman, Henry Adams and Brooks Adams and it must have been introduced to many, if selected, American minds by way of the Harvard faculty;⁹⁶ it is also reflected in the architectural Gothic revival which influenced the United States as much as any other country. Henry Adams tells us that "the happiest hours . . . were passed in summer lying on a musty heap of congressional documents in the old farmhouse at Quincy, reading *Quentin Durward*, *Ivanhoe*, and *The Talisman*, and raiding the garden at intervals for peaches and pears."⁹⁷ It is difficult to estimate the influence of Sir Walter Scott on American minds. But Alice Chandler assures us that none in the nineteenth century "escaped the

93 Quoted in R. N. W. Blake, *Disraeli* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 29.

94 *Ibid.*, 39.

95 For an obvious example, see Gilmour, *Inside Right*, 74-86.

96 See Chandler, *A Dream of Order*, 234ff.

97 Quoted in *ibid.*, 234.

influence of the great romancer."⁹⁸ And Mark Twain in his *Life on the Mississippi* claimed that Scott caused the Civil War by inspiring the chauvinistic cavalier tradition of the South! Certainly some influential American thought was more mediaevalist than any influential late nineteenth-century English mind could ever have countenanced, and while American literature (chez Edgar Allan Poe, for example) dabbled in the mystical and the mysterious, English-Canadian literature reflected only an optimistic Victorian liberal rationalism. Virginia's George Fitzhugh proclaimed in 1863 on the eve of the battle of Gettysburg, "we begin a great conservative reaction . . . we attempt to rollback the Reformation in its political phases."⁹⁹ He indicated a qualified acceptance of Filmer's ideas of divine right and he believed in divinely appointed governors. This he called the "doctrine of the South." Such anachronistic utterances from the mouth of a prominent British politician would have been met by ribald laughter or incredible dismay. It is both an exaggeration and a failure to recognize prior claims to assert, as does William T. Bluhm, that "Americans are Lockean first, last, and always. . . ."¹⁰⁰ If Britain had some dents in its ubiquitous liberalism, the United States was no more immune. Moreover, in English Canada liberalism was more enduring than in the United States. There was no "divine rightism," no notable mediaevalist reaction, and little of the "feudal socialism" which tempted the British mind and intrigued the American. And if Canada was more enduringly liberal than the United States, it was also in its caution, its orderliness, its prudence, and its greater if limited tolerance, more of a Lockean liberal nation.

If the Hartzian model is inadequate to account for Britain's and Canada's differences from the United States what may we offer in its stead? Perhaps the first lesson is one of which we are constantly being reminded by the historians: there is no substitute for detailed historical research and analysis; speculative theory may be developed from, and must be supported by, substantive historical evidence. Nonetheless, it is theory in the round, empirical generalization, that speculative

98 Ibid.

99 Quoted in Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 145.

100 *Theories of the Political System* (3rd. ed.), 326. The equation of Lockeanism with Americanism is commonly accomplished by way of the practices of New England Puritanism. But, as Richard Tawney points out, "Its practice had more affinity with the iron rule of Calvin's Geneva than with the individualistic tendencies of contemporary English Puritanism," (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977], 135). Quakerism and Catholicism were not, however, as authoritarian as American Calvinism, thus providing something of the same measure of balance as was present in England. For a European's astonishment at "the lengths to which self-interest and business immorality could be carried" in the New World by the "godly and sober descendents of William Penn," Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* prove a delight as well as an instruction. But one should not imagine that nascent America was all of a piece, nor forget that individualism was already rife in England.

comparative analysis is designed to produce. But we must be wary lest speculation produces imaginative hypotheses more convincing in their brilliance than in their conformity to common sense and evidence. Is it not more in accord with each that socialism arises not as a consequence of some obscure dialectical relationship but, more modestly, where liberals and/or conservatives have failed to convince the populace that they are capable of dealing effectively with the problems faced by the imagined or actually oppressed?

Our analysis has suggested that Britain and English Canada represent the complex, cautious, pragmatic Lockean society reinforced, in different degrees in each, by Burkean prudence and order. The United States represents the unqualified, abstracted Lockean society reinforced only by Burkean sterner virtues. Thus, we may expect Canada's political life to be more pragmatic and prudential, the mystique of government (of authority in general) to be more pervasive in Canada. Those who fear lest the discovery of a similar ideology between Canada and the United States might indicate that Canada is but a constituent element of the American culture should recognize that prudence, pragmatism and caution lead to a significantly different political life. That anglophone Canada is a part of the Lockean culture—more classically and concinnously than the United States—is not an abuse but a statement of historical heritage. Canadians should perhaps remember that when Sir Robert Peel found that the endearing term “liberal” had been purloined by the political enemy he called it “an odious but intelligible phrase.”¹⁰¹ He certainly did not reject its appropriateness as a description of the policies of his Conservative government.

101 Quoted in Butler, *The Conservatives*, 43.