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**QUESTION: IN NOT MORE THAN 5 PAGES, DISCUSS AND EVALUATE THE IDEA OF CONSERVATISM**

**First and Foremost: Clarification of concept.**

**Conservatism** can be defined as a political philosophy that favours tradition (in the sense of various religious, cultural, or nationally- Defined beliefs as customs) In the face of external forces, for change and is critical of proposals for radical social change.

In plane language, it is a political ideology that values the creation and maintenance of stable societies based on a hierarchy of power lodged in a traditional class of leaders. And deep respect for traditional values and institutions. Traditional institutions such as government and religion and other traditional values are to be greatly respected

Conservatives believe that if at all change is to be made to a society, those changes should be made gradually. They emphasize how much they value Traditional believes, practices and institutions and wish for the continuity and stability of them. While some conservatives seek to preserve the status quo or to reform the society. Slowly, while others seek to return to the values of an earlier time.

In other words, the preference rests on an organic conception of society. According to Britannica, it’s a belief that society is not merely a loose collection of individuals, but a living organism comprising closely connected, interdependent members. It is suspicious of change, and insists that if at all change should happen to a society. The evolutionary approach should be taken rather than the revolutionary approach. I’ll then offer Kirk’s six conservative canons

1. A divine intent, as well as personal conscience, rules society
2. Traditional life is filled with variety and mystery, while most radical systems are characterised by conformity
3. Civilised society requires order and hierarchy
4. Property and freedom are inseparably connected
5. Man must control his will and appetite knowing that he is governed more by emotions than reason
6. Society must change but, slowly.

**An example of a typical conservative society, was given at Study.com**. The Name of a society is Conservia. A small country run by a hereditary aristocracy, consisting of a small group of families responsible for the founding of the society. In this society only members of the Aristocracy may hold political office. Each family than has a position in the senate house. Which is the legislative.

This society recognises only a religion with moral authority over citizens. Although citizens can also hold positions as Clergy, only the reputable aristocrat members can hold high clerical offices. All citizens understand their positions and responsibilities each staying on his or her own lane while adhering to their duties. They hold in high esteem their Traditional institutions and values not excluding, the senate, church and family. They all place their individual goals and aspirations below the needs of their society. As such, they hold their society above everything else.

They do nothing to change this condition. If at all they feel they require change they all take their time, leaving it to the government. Slow and steady, within their values not outside of it, so as not to disrupt the peace.

**There are quiet a number of conservatives. However, I would mention just a few.**

1.Edmund Burke (1729- 1797).

2 Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821). 3. Micheal Oakeshott (1901-1990). 4. George Grant (1918- 1988). 5. Frank Meyer (1909-1972). 6. Julius Evola (1898-1974). 7. G.A. Gohen (1941-2009. 8. Irving Kristol (1920-2009) 9. Harry V. Jaffa (1918-2015). 10. Roger Scruton (1914-2020).

**ORIGIN OF CONSERVATISM**

Conservatism is from the **French word Conservatisme or Conservateur** and **from the Latin word Conservare (to protect, preserve)** it is one of the leading directions of political sense which began to appear only after, the French revolution of 1789. Then hesitantly, only taking its characteristics political connotation in the 1820’s.

Elements of the concept, could be found in Aristotle. Ever since then Western thought has not stopped trying to formulate the principle of conservatism. **The ideologists of conservatism include E. Burke and M. Oakeshott (1901-90).**

Formally, tracing the conservative school of thought to the 18th century. The British philosopher Edmund Burke, especially on his work “Reflections on the revolution in France (1790). Burke an Anglo-Irish philosopher often considered the “Founding father of British conservatism in Anglo- American circles”. His work mentioned above served as a means by which he used to argue forcefully against the French revolution. He was a distinguished Parliamentarian- A member of the lower house of the British parliament from the Whig party. and fully involved in the controversies of the day. Deeply engrossed with formulating principles of conservatism in his works. Devoted to concrete problems of British, European and world politics. He presented them with maximum clarity during the French Revolution of 1789.

**In Burke’s understanding**, he found out that humans were not just rational. but also, full of passion and prejudice. That they are inherently unequal. Not just Burke, but other Conservative theorists mindset was that human society was organic. It was a living being, highly complex with distinctive history and nature, though there were similarities, their differences were more pronounced than what they actually had in common. However, despite this reality of unequal status and difference, humans are interdependent.

Society is Organic or real, rather than just an abstract created by the musings of philosophers. Thus, the state holds the wisdom accumulated by society over time and should be given its due respect. For Buke, the French revolution appeared as the maximum of evil that people are capable of inflecting on themselves without a proper understanding of their Nature and the specific laws of their human society. In simple saying, Burke’s conservatism is the suspicion of change. He believes that if, at all change should occur, it should be until absolutely necessary. So as not to bring a greater evil. For instance, a society that remained neutral in times of war. Should only change that policy of neutrality to avoid the greater evil of being invaded and conquered. Before a change process is put in place, it must be viewed properly. In order words, change should be based on pragmatism.

Change should be based on Traditional believes and previous practice. For Burke, radical change is always dangerous as it can disrupt the society’s peace. Other pro-parliamentary conservatives, rejected the violent, untraditional and “uprooting” methods of the French revolution.

The Conservative wisdom of the centuries was that, tradition and custom should be brought to bear and any adjustment should be made with greatest caution. “The individual is foolish, when they act without deliberation, but the species is wise, and when time is given is, as a species always acts right”. Prejudice for Burke was a guide in human affairs and that since man is unable to understand the many ways in which inherited behaviours influence their thinking, trying to judge society objectively is futile.

Furthermore, the British conservatism of 18th century was the Tory party- reflecting the attitude of rural land owners. By 19th century, new traditional landowners had emerged in the new conservative party. By the, Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) had given the new party a political ideology idealizing a view of a corporate and organic society, where everyone had duties and responsibilities (One nation conservatism). By 20th century, it accelerated to “Tory democracy” attributed to Winston Churchill’s son (Lord Rundolph Churchill (1911-1968)

In other parts of Europe, conservatism is represented by Christian democratic parties, which had their origins largely in catholic parties of the late 19th century and early 20th century. In the Modern American conservatism was largely born out of Alliance between classical liberal and social conservatives in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

**Moving on, conservatism has certain pillars that is principles by which it stands by. These I would be explaining are certain general principles both British, American, and other European conservatives have agreed on. Put together by leading writers, philosophers and politicians.**

1. **A good place to start, is how conservatives see human nature.** They believe that humans are imperfect and cannot be changed. Generally, they have a pessimistic view of human nature and human capabilities. Partly, this belief is rooted in the traditional Christian concept of original sin, which means that, all humans are born sinful. They see humans as not good. Flawed to say. Thus, they cannot think rationally. They seem to be chastened by their **principle of imperfectability**. That human nature suffers from irremediable faults and because of man’s restlessness, a social order cannot be created. Since humans are not made perfect, they have to just accept tolerably ordered, free society in which some maladjustments and suffering continue to lurk. In this line, they understand that humans as a race are not powerful enough to get everything, as part of the faults, so ideas should be for the known and familiar. So, we don’t follow the part of destruction due to ignorance.

1. **Bringing us to why Tradition is so important.** That is the belief that institutions, customs, practices should continue as they are handed down from generation to generation. **They believe they are tried and tested and they work, so what’s the need to change them.** They wish to protect it at all costs. And this old custom has enabled people live in peace. “They that want to change custom, demolish more than they know or desire”.

Tradition for them is the collection of values, myths, attitude of mind and beliefs that make up common “Mental baggage”. As such, it gives a nation its character. In fact, it shapes the future. Tradition places individuals in a wider context, other than, his own selfish and limited perspective. And at such, if they preserve their tradition, it gives them meaning and dignity. Without continuity which links generation to generation together, life is meaningless. So, it should matter to the individuals, as much as it does to the society. The life blood of a society must never be interrupted and human nature must be inclined to protect our tradition. Tradition binds the people, creating the sense of an organic identity, linking the individuals to the nation.

1. **An organic society-** This is where people have different positions in the society. Hence, everyone integrates and has obligations to the community. Since the society is essentially organic, human develop according to specific laws and to specific historical and cultural circumstances. Humans are like cells to the nation and we all have a role to play in its continuity.
2. **It falls in line with the principle of hierarchy and order**. It emphasizes various parts contributing to the other, ensuring the functioning and well being of the whole. And so exactly is it in the human society. The society will continue essentially for structure and leadership. Also, individuals are born unequal due to factors like talent and skills. And these skills are only for people at the top of the society. Thus, hierarchy and order are Natural.
3. **Authority, property, law, is valued for structuring and effective governance of the society, and society they see as part of their property**. As property is something they hold in high account. They stress their property a lot as it gives independence and dignity to any individual, reliving himself of complete independence from state.

They believe property allows one store wealth, so as to have something to fall back on when one is down. They hold property in high esteem also because, it can be used by an individual to express their own individuality. Where people take personal responsibility for their own actions. Possession of property fixes one to certain duties upon the possessor, and he must accept the obligations cheerfully.

Inheritance which is the passing on of wealth links both the individual and society together. Thus, reinvents back the idea of “Continuity” of society. Some emphasize “The sanctity of property”. And of how much wealth and ownership of property carries a lot of obligation and the wealthy and powerful have duty to lead society, take actions to alleviate poverty and provide models for high standard of personal behaviour. Property brings back reassurance that, there is backup. Due to the fact they all seek security; it then creates a mindset that people should respect the property of others as they would want the same for theirs. Stealing someone’s property is not just the loss of an item but feeling of invading on someone’s personality. And invading would undermine security.

**6.** **Freedom is closely linked to property, authority and security.** They see freedom as a way of fulfilling their duty to the society. They say humans need society to function and would go as far as saying that taking us out of society is impossible. Because, we cannot function outside of it. Of course, everyone wants freedom. However, conservatives have meant complicated things as freedom. As freedom is impossible unless the people internalize aristocratic domination. For this reason, many conservative theorists have argued that freedom is likely not possible. Law for them is the key to maintaining and establishing order in a society and thereby, freedom.

**7. Pragmatism is one of the principles of conservatism and it goes against the idea, that conservatism is fully opposed to change.** Because, of no doubt, it is easy to believe conservatives resist all forms of change, due to their dedication to tradition. They oppose to this. By emphasising that individuals like Edmund Burke, believe change sometimes is inevitable and failure to change could result in a revolution. His conservatism they say followed the idea of pragmatism. They stand that they are not against social change. Change itself is essential just as it is essential to the human body. **A body that has ceased to renew itself has begun to die. But if that body is to be vigorous, the change must only occur gradually. Harmonizing with the form and nature of the body or else it produces a monstrous growth such as cancer.**

**From the above, I understand that it also says**, if a society should change, it should be inline with the nature of the society, which is tradition. Or else it would produce a greater evil which they relate to as a revolution.

Apart from the various principles that I have mentioned above, there are others Such as, Variety, Prudence, Prescription, Transcendent order, Patriotism, politics as a limited activity. Which by the way they are all connected to the already explained principles above.

**Subsequently, I would be explaining the various Types of conservatism there is.**

1. **Cultural conservatism**: They aim to preserve their way of life. In essence, it supports preservation of heritage of a society. Like I have emphasized throughout the essay, their value for tradition. These traditions- heritage will be preserved by adapting to norms handed down from past generation- generation, to prevent fundamental changes in culture.
2. **Social conservatism:** It is closely associated with cultural conservatism. This is a subset of it. Here, norms may also be moral at such they adhere strictly to moral ideology. Based on family values and religious traditions. Life styles such as abortion, homosexuality are issues for social conservatives.
3. **Religious conservatism**: They aim to protect the teaching of particular religious ideologies. Either by leading by example or by law. They may end up promoting broad campaigns for a return to traditional values.
4. **Fiscal conservatism:** They have a desire to reduce government spending and paying off national debts. Also shrinking the scope and size of government. Thus, government does not have the right to get involved in large debts and then throw the burden on taxpayers. So, it is their duty to de-regulate the economy and lower taxes. More so, it has little or nothing to do with social issues
5. **Paleo-conservatism**: they are opposed to extreme conservatism. They are family oriented and religious minded. They are opposed to mass immigration, illegal immigration, communism, authoritarianism, social democracy and entitlement programs.
6. **Neo- conservatism:** Irving Kristol is large credited for founding of the movement. It is seen as “New conservatism” which sprouted in 1960 in response to the counterculture movement. They believe in diplomatic foreign policy, stimulating economic growth by lowering taxes, finding attractive ways to deliver public welfare services, free market economy, free trade.
7. **Bio- conservatism**: they are hesitant of technological development and are sceptical about medical or bio technological transformations of living world. For instance, cloning, genetic engineering. To be exact, especially if it threatens socials order.

**Conclusively**, conservatism is distinct from all other theories, as it has certain attitudes, values used to explain it thoroughly. And over all their desire to maintain and preserve traditional values and social order. I would be dropping 4 take away keys from my essay.

1. Society, is a product of historical development and its institutions embody the wisdom of their ancestors.
2. Evil is contained in human nature itself and in public institutions: they community is a form of human protection from itself and therefore, it must be valued above the individual and his rights are the consequences of duties.
3. People are by nature unequal and which makes there to be inevitable differences, hierarchy and thought of some to rule over other.
4. The existing social order must be maintained. Since, usually attempts to eliminate evil leads to more, evil which does not mean denying the necessity of changes. **(Burke E. Reflections on the Revolutions in France)**

**Diligence is the mother of Good fortune ---Benjamin Disraeli.**

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