This argument is made by R. J. White in *The Conservative Tradition* (1964), where he stresses that conservatism is rooted in human nature, and therefore is not a political position but rather a natural tendency:

“Conservatism is less a political doctrine than a habit of mind, a mode of feeling, a way of living [...] It is a subjective preference for a settled way of life.” – R. J. White, *The Conservative Tradition*

F. J. C Hearnshaw’s *Conservatism in England* (1933) traces the origins of conservatism to a theological account of the Garden of Eden – Adam is seen as the original conservative, and Eve is the linear ancestor of Karl Marx, who falls for the temptation of abstract ideologising, ultimately leading to the downfall of humanity.

2.4.2 Conservatism is an ideology

The belief that the past should be cherished forms both the style and the political prescriptions of conservatism – there is a utopia for conservatives: it is tradition and the past.

Conservatism is associated with symbols of national continuity: constitution, monarchy, flag, crown, rule of law, established Church (especially in Catholic countries).

Conservatism can be identified as a historical phenomena in the same way as liberalism and socialism can – conservatism emerged as a response to the America Revolution (1776) and the French Revolution (1789) as a defence of traditional institutions.

Conservatism has “founding fathers” – John Adams in the USA, Edmund Burke in Britain, and Joseph de Maistre in France.

Furthermore, conservatism can be situated on political spectrum with regard to attitudes towards social and economic issues – it does not exist as a distinct category but rather as part of a continuum.

It is clear that action is required in order to conserve and maintain the status quo, and it is this which composes the conservative transition theory – this action therefore becomes ideological and political.

2.5 CHARACTER OF CONSERVATISM

Conservatism can be characterised in five main ways:

- An aristocratic ideology
- A pragmatic ideological position
- A situational or positional view
- A disposition of habit or mind
- The ideological interpretation

A common 45 mark essay refers to whether conservatism prioritises pragmatism over principles, and so these other characterisations of conservatism can help to offer alternative perspectives.

This discussion is also useful to evaluate points about the nature of conservatism, i.e. Disraeli may have lent his support to some welfare reforms, suggesting a one-nation conservative commitment to maintaining social order through a welfare ‘safety net’, however, this may simply be a result of conservative political pragmatism seeking to secure the support of the working class and prevent revolutionary movements from gaining ground.

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The work of Friedrich List – particularly *The National System of Political Economy* (1844) – provided an alternative to the strict economic liberalism of Adam Smith\(^{20}\) and David Ricardo\(^{21}\); List’s work recognised the economic importance of politics, and, for instance, noted the political need to protect fledgling infant industries from foreign competition\(^{22}\).

This led to support for the idea of the ‘social market economy’, where an economy is structured by market principles and is largely free from government control, but exists within a society in which cohesion is maintained by comprehensive welfare and effective public services.

The market is not considered an end in itself, as it perhaps is in classical liberalism, and instead it is seen as a means of generating wealth in order to achieve broader social goals.

This had led to a distinction between Anglo-American capitalism or ‘enterprise capitalism’, based upon the untrammelled workings of market economics, and Rhine-Alpine capitalism or ‘social capitalism’ where cooperation and partnership are stressed.

### 2.10 Libertarian Conservatism

Libertarian conservatism is a variant of conservatism where classical liberalism, particularly its economic doctrines, have been adopted – implicit is the claim that economic liberalism is compatible with a more traditional, conservative social philosophy.

The libertarian tradition has been strongest in countries most influenced by classical liberal ideas, such as the UK and the USA.

This is evident in the work of Edmund Burke, who was a keen supporter of the economic liberalism of Adam Smith:

- Smith described Burke as the following:

> “[…] the only man I ever knew who thinks on economic subjects exactly as I do, without any previous communications having passed between us.” – Adam Smith

- Burke believed that the self-regulating market economy is efficient and fair, but also natural and necessary. The ‘love of lucre’ that consumerist capitalism prescribes is exactly why Burke felt capitalism was natural:

> The laws of the market were, before ‘natural laws’; he accepted that the conditions created for many by the market were:

> “[…] degrading, unseemly, unmanly and often most unwholesome.” – Edmund Burke,

*Reflections on the Revolution in France*

- However, he argued that conditions would suffer even more if the “natural course of things” were disturbed.

However, libertarian conservatives are not consistent liberals: while they believe in economic individualism and support ‘getting government off the back of business’, they are far less willing to extend these principles into the social realm.

Even libertarian conservatives adopt a negative view of human nature, and so unbridled social freedom would result in havoc – a strong state to maintain law and order and ensure that authority is respected is vital.

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