



Knowledge Organiser : Liberalism

Subject Specific Vocabulary	Short-hand definitions
Natural rights	
Foundational/Formal Equality	
Social Contract	
Egoistical/Developmental Individualism	
Negative/Positive freedom	
Harm Principle	
Enabling State	

Key question 1: What three historical transformations gave rise to Liberalism as an ideology

Key question 2  
Briefly outline ideas associated with Classical Liberalism

Key question 3: Briefly outline ideas associated with modern liberalism

Locke/Wollstonecraft

Locke: Key Ideas: Social Contract Theory, Limited Government

State of Nature, Natural Rights, therefore society must reflect that. Humans are rational therefore egoistical individualism therefore separation of powers, limited government – protecting property rights , enforcing contracts, basic law and order, religious tolerance. State a necessary evil ‘no freedom without law’ . Absolute monarchies no legitimacy  
‘Govt has no other end but the preservation of property’ Property is an expression of individualism. Must be protected  
Influential on founding fathers.

**Wollstonecraft:** Key ideas: Reason women are rational , Formal equality – in order to be free women should enjoy full civil liberties and allowed a career Using Lockean ideas and applying to women. Not just about rights but that a society thrives through reason and logic and society is depriving itself of half the possible ideas

Mill/TH Green

JS Mill: Key ideas Negative liberty and the harm principle, Tolerance

**Negative liberty Harm principle** (distinguishing between self-regarding and other regarding actions). Other regarding actions should not be tolerated by a liberal state. Therefore, suicide should not be a crime  
State should be tolerant of diverse opinions. – an **absence of restraint**. Freedom of speech, thought, religion should be a given unless they pose a threat to others – **negative freedom**. Evelyn Beatrice Hall ‘ I disapprove of what you say but I defend your right to say it’. Freedom of speech would allow new ideas to emerge and bad ideas exposed ‘The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it’

**Developmental individualism** – individual liberty central to development of individual. He focussed on what ‘ individuals could become’ I state to facilitate education. This means he is a link between **classical and modern liberals**. But like Locke he would have advocated the protection of laissez faire capitalism

**Th Green** : Classical Liberalism’s commitment to pursuing profit had led to poverty and inequality by forces beyond their control  
There is a ‘common good’. Society is **organic** not atomistic as Locke had argued. One’s capacity to be free could be harmed by social and material disadvantage. This would later be termed **Positive freedom and negative freedom** ( Berlin) ‘**freedom from and freedom to**’. So he believed in the developmental individualism of Mill but argued that the state could help to make society fairer (Modern liberals). Hugely influential on the Liberal Government 1906-14 that introduced National Insurance and William Beveridge ( Beveridge Report (1942)

Rawls and Friedan

John Rawls: Key Ideas: Theory of Justice, Veil of ignorance Enabling State

Added to traditional CL idea of formal equality social justice – yes inequality but not if we prosper at the expense of others  
Veil of ignorance meant any rational human would choose society with limited social and economic inequality. Humans capable of empathy as well as self serving. Therefore rational to allow an enabling state to support others in reaching self fulfilment. Accepts Keynesianism, progressive taxation etc.  
Theory of Justice1. All individuals must have the same set of absolute freedoms, 2 Equal opportunities for all, Some inequality inevitable but priority to help disadvantaged

Friedan

All women should be free to fulfil potential due to foundational equality. Illiberal attitudes on gender transmitted through cultural channels leave women believing in their own inferiority  
The state should work to improve the position of women. Unlike radical feminist she believed in non – violence acknowledging the principles of the US Constitution to allow continuous improvement



### Human Nature/Society

#### Agreement

All agree humans rational therefore agree natural rights ( Locke ) , rational freedom loving, self seeking, self serving, self-reliant. Basic rights, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, property. All believe in EI and negative freedom. Tolerance crucial to freedom. Tolerance not extended to behaviour that is damaging to others. Therefore, harm principle JS Mill.

Therefore all believe society based on foundational equality by ensuring formal equality, society based on consent, society promoting cultural economic, intellectual progress

#### Disagreement

Disagreement within CLS on position of women. Unlike Locke whose focus was on religious freedom, MW believed women same human nature as men. Should have same foundational and formal equality and property rights She believed society infantilised women. JSM more in common with MW championing women’s suffrage.

More disagreement between MLs and CLs understanding of freedom. It includes but is not limited to negative freedom. ‘Freedom to starve is no freedom at all’. Therefore Positive freedom moving beyond merely enforcing contracts property rights, law and order into a more enabling state because they believe in a ‘common good’ a more empathetic society. Veil of ignorance (Rawls) suggested one’s societal position hugely important in determining Success not only determined by hard work. Has to be equality of opportunity in society to facilitate developmental individualism and a just society(Friedan Rawls)

Where Whereas CLS like Locke believed people were mutually indifferent to one another , MLs believe more in a society that is organic and less atomistic. Nonetheless still a very limited state. Enabling success not nanny state. States intervention only to facilitate personal growth rather than redistribution

### State

#### Agreement

All Liberals believe the state is a necessary evil. Locke. All believe the state should be limited and subscribe to the mechanistic theory of the state ( that it should serve the people) MLs accept the CL position that the state has a duty to protect property , enforce contract, uphold rule of law and protect society from invasion. That this should be funded by general taxation. All believe in CL Lockean idea of govt by consent underpinned by separation of powers and checks and balances. State should be based on rational ideas, not traditions and based on limited govt. Jefferson. He who governs best governs least. All believe liberal democracy should be based on consent, and rule of law and are concerned about ‘tyranny of the majority’ .

#### Disagreement

TH Green argued CLS preoccupied with freedom from the state. Unregulated capitalism disadvantaged some people who needed an enabling state to develop. (Positive freedom to facilitate Developmental individualism). Not a heavily interventionist state. Friedan argued state needed to give formal equality and equality of opportunity to women that sexual discrimination was inconsistent with social contract made in US Constitution In 20 the century Positive freedom led MLs to embrace Keynesian state intervention whereas CLS believe state should protect free market laissez faire capitalism

Further disagreement on the type of democracy practised by state. CLs believed in liberal representative democracy. JSM also believed in this form of elite democracy, limited franchise. MLs later rejected this in favour of popular liberal democracies based on universal suffrage. So CLS believe in supremacy of people as a broad concept whereas MLs believe supremacy means universal suffrage.

### Economy

#### Agreement

All believe property rights are natural laws and that property is central to fulfilment, and self-reliance. Both branches promote free market capitalism and that pursuing wealth is natural. That entrepreneurship is the root of growth Both believe in a limited role for the state in the economy and are largely opposed to state ownership of industry as it inhibits freedom and growth

#### Disagreement

CLS favour laissez faire capitalism, limited regulation, taxes, subsidies etc. ‘ Unfettered capitalism linked to egoistical individualism Concern is that though people can opt out of services they cannot opt out of paying for them.

MLs concerned about how capitalism damages ability of some to be fulfilled and can be vulnerable to capitalism. Therefore Keynesian economics in an enabling state to create equality of opportunity though not absolute equality linked to developmental individualism. Pursue profit but not at the expense of others ( Rawls). Friedan argued women did not have same economic opportunities and state must intervene. CLS argue that such an interventionist state damages, rugged individualism and self reliance so important for fulfilment

Division over Welfare: Classical liberals believe that individuals should be self-sufficient and self-reliant based. They recognise freedom in its negative sense – that individual should be left alone. Moreover they reject the notion that individuals should have to pay high taxes to provide welfare. Whereas modern liberals believe that welfare can support individuals to become free – positive freedom – to create a genuine meritocracy. (Rawls). Free individuals are able to develop their skills and talents and fulfil their potential, maximising freedom for all.