

Freedom, Community, Liberalism,
and Conservatism: Was Mary
Wollstonecraft a conservative or a
liberal?

Are your positions on politics and economics more....

- A. Conservative
- B. Liberal
- C. Left-Liberal
- D. Ultra Conservative
- E. Don't Know

Theoretical basis of Liberalism

- Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau: We are born free but because we are rational, we trade natural liberty for civil liberty when we freely give our consent in the social contract.
- Mill: A natural right to individual freedom that government must not interfere with and must protect.
- Smith and Ricardo: Market freedom and free trade

Review: Individual Freedom

- Does not mean that people are selfish (Hobbes, Smith) but a claim about FREEDOM (John Stuart Mill)
- I am only obligated if I give my consent to be obligated.... (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau)
- No collective responsibility
- Locke: legitimate authority is based on consent
 - Because “by nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent.”

Liberalism: A theoretical framework and political program promoting freedom

- Assumptions
 - All are equally entitled to life, liberty, and pursuit of property: A Natural right—right to do anything you want that does not hurt anyone else.
 - Rationality and reason
 - All people are created equal and have the same rights
 - People must be free to “truck, barter, and exchange” and government must stay out of the market except to protect free competition
- History
 - First: Freedom from oppressive government—less government to restrain people (negative freedom)
 - Over time: government’s role is to protect freedom and equal rights—more government to protect people and guard equal rights
 - The four freedoms (positive freedom)
- The Controversies
 - rights and freedoms
 - Who defines “the good life?”
 - The state
 - Democracy
 - Distribution

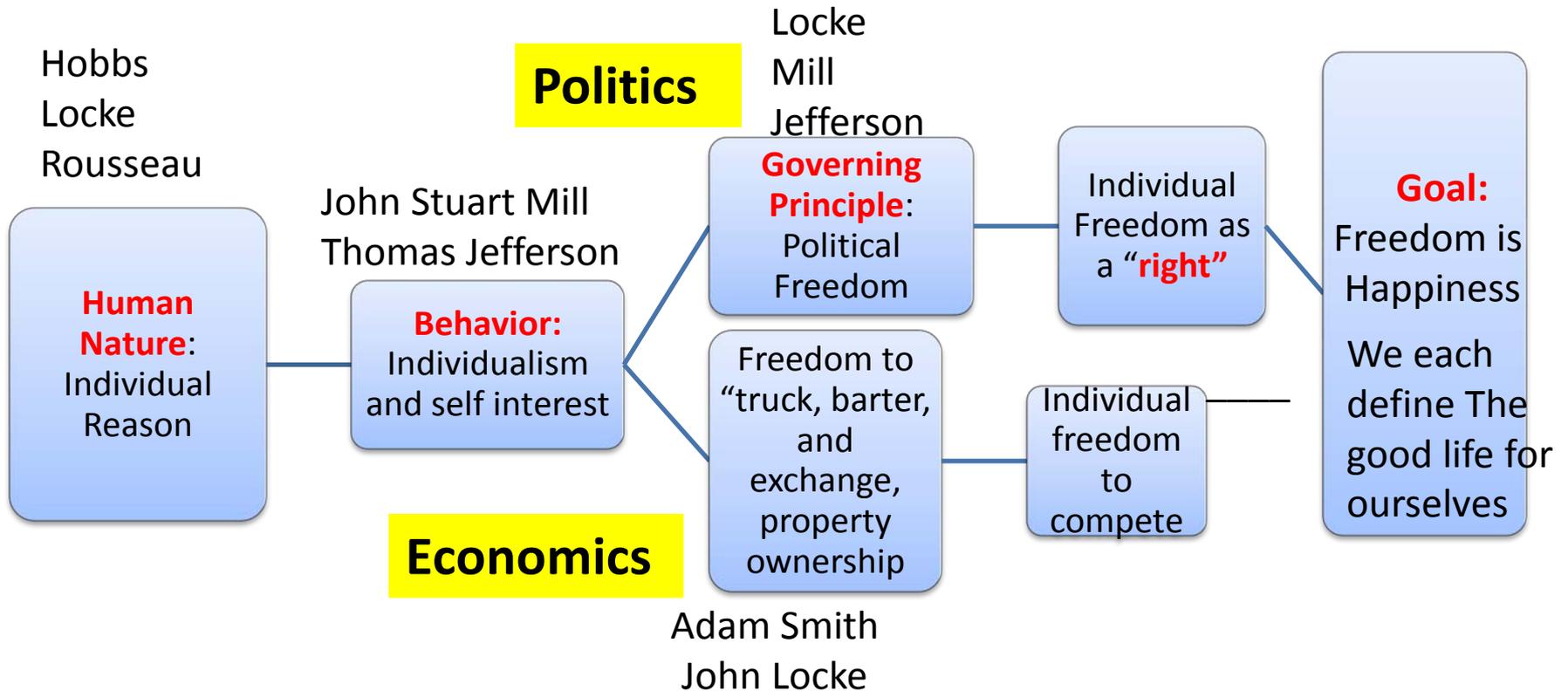
Justice and Freedom: Liberalism and the Neutral State

- If we are free individuals, Justice means the freedom to define “the good life” for ourselves
- This freedom is the justice that the neutral state should uphold
 - The state should support the freedom of all---men AND women
 - Opposite of what Plato and Aristotle thought the purpose of government is....
 - Should the state tell free individuals what “the good life” is?
- Liberal Government’s role in the market: enable individual freedom—what is the best way to do this?
 - **Egalitarian** views—government should ensure material conditions necessary for free choice (Smith, Wollstonecraft)
 - **Libertarian** (conservative) views
- Is freedom of choice an adequate basis for a just society?

Liberal Theorists: The “Freedom School”

1780 Last Witch burned in Europe
 1784 American Society to Abolish Slavery
 1787 British Society to Abolish Slavery

1776 American Revolution
 1776 Wealth of Nations published
 1792 Wollstonecroft “Vindication”



Historical evolution of Liberalism

- Core commitment: Freedom and antidote to ascriptive identities
- Historically liberals were activists, fighting for freedom from oppressive governments...wanted state to protect individual freedom only
- Over time: liberals split: some wanted more government intervention to protect people and guard equal rights
- Negative and Positive Freedom: The four freedoms that many liberals say government should protect: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, Freedom FROM want, Freedom FROM fear

Liberalism and Democracy

Liberalism provides the theoretical basis for democracy:

--Freedom to choose governments: Voting

--Freedom to choose laws that everyone has to live with: representative government

•But still.....liberals feel that majorities have to be restrained.

--minority rights must be protected.....the majority needs their cooperation

Theories of Political Economy in which States define “the good life” for their citizens

- Utilitarianism: The state defines the most desirable way of life.....individuals do not have a choice: greatest happiness for the most
- Aristotle/Socrates: the good life is realizing our true nature, developing our human capacities—construct the kind of state that helps---then develop “rights”
- Hobbes “The Good” is peace and protection—the state must realize that good through power
- Machiavelli: The “Good” IS State Power
- The state’s definition of the good life defines the nature of rights --- definition of the good shapes which rights people should have

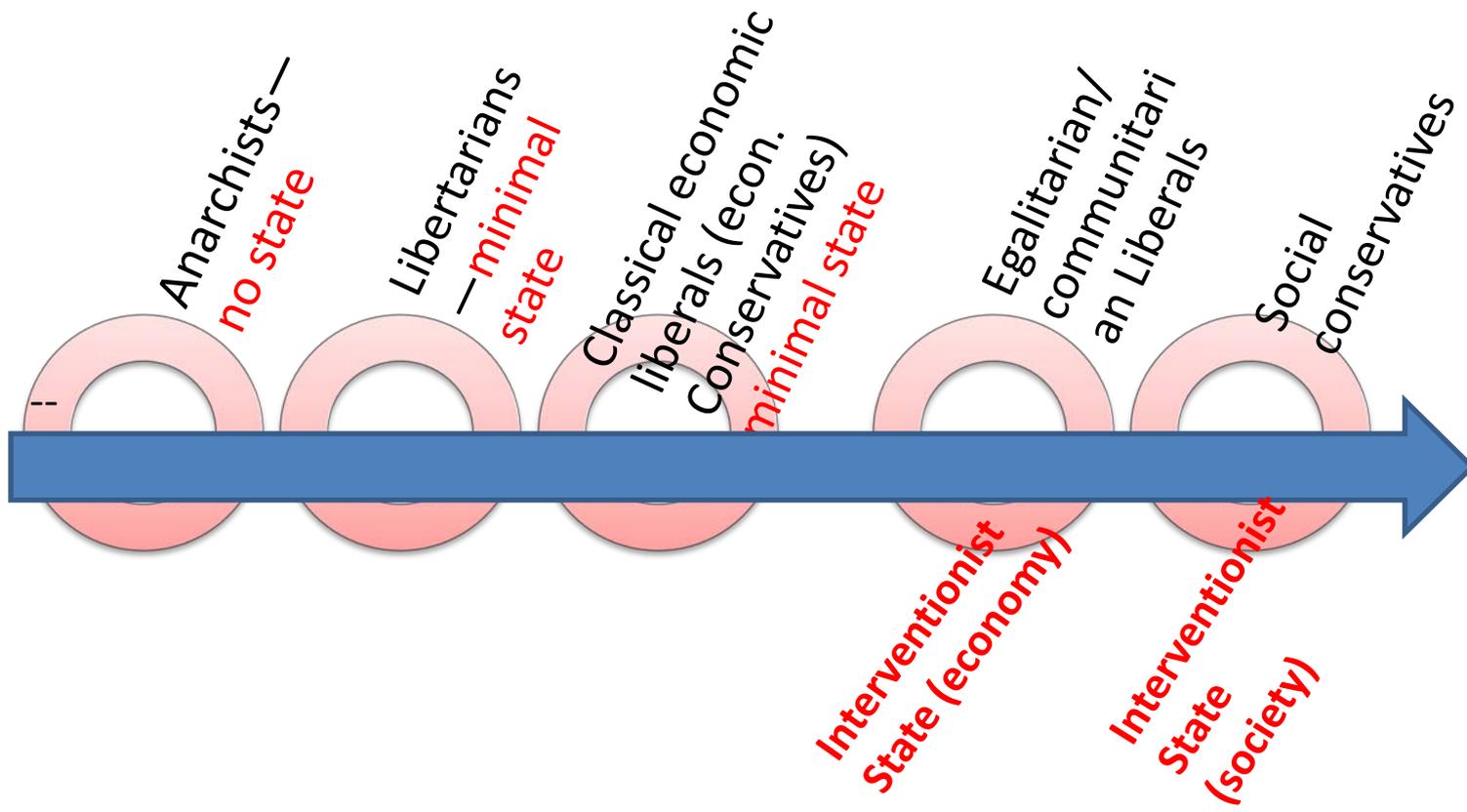
Liberalism's forms of Political Economy and the Role of the State

- liberal thought takes a number of forms, depending on how close it is to the freedom or community schools.
- On the freedom end of the continuum, we have Libertarians and classical liberals, who we now call economic conservatives
 - Individuals define for themselves the good life...the state must remain neutral in this definition
 - The state must provide the laws that protect the individual
- At the community end are Egalitarian Liberals and Social Conservatives
 - Moral community codes and “positive freedom” define the good life (in either material –Egalitarian Liberals— or moral –social conservatives-- terms
 - The state must uphold those codes and positive freedom

The Liberal-Conservative continuum: From Freedom to Community

Freedom

Community



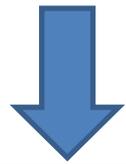
Liberalism's forms of Political Economy And Role of the State

Freedom

Community

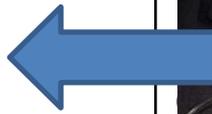
Liberalism

<p>Libertarianism State's role is to preserve</p> 	 <p>Egalitarian Liberalism Preserve I and state protect co positive fr "the good life"</p>
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Conservatism

 <p>eralism</p>	
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Who was the Real Mary Wollstonecraft?

