



Libertarianism, Liberalism, and Conservatism: Ego as Ideology

Ideologies promise clarity but often breed confusion, binding humanity to ego rather than freeing it. Various ideologies glorify a different aspect of the self. True freedom begins only with the awareness which goes beyond ideology

FIRST
Column



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Ideologies have ruled the social-intellectual landscape over the flow of time. The history of mankind can often be seen as the history of ideologies. Every ideology promises to make sense of life, bringing order to the mind's confusion by showing the right path. Yet it often itself becomes a source of confusion, turning guidance into bondage. Across the world, people kill or die for their "-isms", but no ideology has ever freed the self that clings to it. Ideologies may offer transient psychological comfort, but they ultimately entrap the insecure self, becoming prisons of belonging and ready-made answers. Living by them means relying on memory rather than intelligence, killing open scrutiny and reducing us to mechanical responses, far from our human potential for deep inquiry.

The Landscape of Ideologies

At their core, might not all ideologies serve the ego, the unexamined sense of "I", in different forms? Consider how:

Libertarianism holds the choices of the individual as sacred. It proclaims, "I should be free to do what I want", yet seldom pauses to ask who this "I" is or whether those wants are worth pursuing. When the self remains unexamined, freedom easily degenerates into the glorification of impulse. Choices driven by greed or fear then parade as sacred rights, and indulgence disguises itself as liberty. This belief shaped much of the late-20th-century economic order, from Reagan-era deregulation in the United States to Thatcher's emphasis on privatisation in Britain, and contributed to the conditions that enabled the 2008 financial crisis. The financial collapse had many causes, but its core faith was clear: that markets, left to themselves, would always self-correct. That belief was not just economic, it was ideological. Libertarian thinking has indeed powered innovation in technology and entrepreneurship, yet its blind spots are equally stark. The same mindset fuels today's climate crisis, where the freedom to burn fossil fuels or resist carbon pricing is still framed as "economic liberty". The 2024-2025 IPCC reports warn that such freedom is pushing the planet towards irreversible tipping points, including the Amazon's decline. Liberty without self-knowledge does not liberate society; it risks enslaving it to appetites that consume its very future.



IN THEIR OWN WAYS, ALL THREE IDEOLOGIES PROTECT THE EGO'S INDEPENDENCE, FORM, OR MEMORY. AND BECAUSE THEY BEGIN FROM IGNORANCE OF THE TRUE SELF, BEYOND THE EGO'S ILLUSIONS, NONE CAN LEAD TO REAL WELFARE

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Liberalism makes the body of the ego sacred. It insists that everyone is equal, yet rarely asks what is being equalised: bodies, identities, desires, or awareness. Equality, when severed from deeper enquiry, can become a contest among egos, with groups demanding recognition for their narratives while leaving the roots of ignorance untouched. Movements such as the American civil rights struggle or feminist campaigns for legal and social equality began with transformative moral energy. Over time, many of these movements drifted from confronting structural injustice to debating symbols. The fight moved from dismantling systems to defining identities. Across democracies, this shift is visible: in France's recurring battles over secularism and religious expression, in India's polarising debates over reservations and quotas, and in global disputes about AI-driven cultural appropriation. None of this diminishes the achievements of movements like Black Lives Matter or contemporary feminism. It simply shows that equality of egos cannot dissolve division. Equalising identity can only take us so far. Should the goal be equality of identities, or freedom from identity itself? Without questioning identity, conflict persists, merely changing its vocabulary from religion and race to gender and culture.

Conservatism makes the past of the ego sacred. It clings to inherited memory, mistaking continuity for truth and nostalgia for knowledge. The old is defended not because it is wise, but because it is ours; the past is

revered because the ego fears the unknown. History shows how dangerous such reverence becomes when seized by power. Hitler's myth of Aryan heritage, nostalgia fused with control, turned memory into genocide. The Taliban's enforcement of a "pure" order shows how idealised pasts can harden into tyranny. In Britain, Brexit's "take back control" echoed imperial nostalgia; in India, textbook revisions and heritage revival efforts reveal the same impulse. Conservatism's wish to preserve can steady societies, as Burke noted, but when memory replaces truth, fear takes the throne. Learning from the past becomes living in the past, and reverence turns into resistance to necessary change.

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In their own ways, all three ideologies protect the ego's independence, form, or memory. And because they begin from ignorance of the true Self, beyond the ego's illusions, none can lead to real welfare. All rest on the same foundation: the belief that the ego deserves preservation. Where the ego is sacred, suffering is inevitable.

Ego in the State: Systems Mirror the Self

If ideologies serve the ego at a personal level, their influence inevitably extends to the structures of society and governance. Political systems born of them may differ in design, but they are united in spirit: each makes the ego's world official. They all offer order, but they preserve the same inner turmoil. When ignorance becomes institutional, even governance becomes a struc-

tured manifestation of enslavement. This is why a spiritual root is needed even in matters of political choice. Without wisdom guiding choice, democracy can amplify delusion, giving every ego a vote but not necessarily the clarity to vote wisely. Systems reflect their builders: when the builder is unconscious, constitutions may change, but the corruption of consciousness endures. Laws can control behaviour, yet they cannot cleanse inner blindness. Until there is self-awareness at the level of the individual, no reform at the level of the state will last.

Freedom of Speech and Awareness

Free speech is seen as a crown jewel of democracy, but what good is it if not grounded in awareness? Without knowledge, liberty becomes mere noise, not freedom. A 2018 MIT study, analysing Twitter data, found that false news spreads six times faster and farther than true stories. Words, and now AI-amplified content, can be used easily to enslave us in the name of liberty, as seen in deepfake scandals during the 2024-2025 election cycles, which exploited ego-driven desires and fears.

Tradition, Morality, and Truth

The same ignorance that fuels ideologies also gives rise to our notions of tradition and morality. They often arise amid unawareness, serving as fences for a mind that cannot yet see for itself. Their purpose is not lifelong protection but preparation, guiding us towards the day the mind stands free. True religion transcends tradition. Tradition belongs to time and can offer valuable continuity; true religion is timeless. Morality, too,

is often a borrowed direction, followed out of fear or social pressure rather than understanding. Truth can neither be inherited nor prescribed; it must be seen directly, here and now.

The Freedom That Begins Within

Ideologies are psychological symptoms. The libertarian's demand for choice, the liberal's demand for equality, and the conservative's attachment to the past all stem from a false understanding of the "I". This false self limits all ideologies, whether social, political, or religious. The libertarian identifies with choices, the liberal with the physical body and society, the conservative with the past. The limited "I" clings to the illusion of choice, the illusion of the body as identity, and the illusion of time. When I do not know who I am, it is not surprising that I seek myself in every possible direction.

The ego tries everything, but it never reaches the root: not knowing what the "I", its own being, truly is. Real work begins where ideologies end, not by tearing systems down, but by seeing where the need for them arises. A revolution against self-ignorance is needed, one that measures every structure against the light of self-awareness. It requires no flag and no battlefield, only a willingness to look at oneself with clarity. When the self awakens to its true nature, systems lose their hold as props and become tools that serve awakened harmony. A self that is lit up learns without fear, since Truth cannot be threatened. It parallelly engages Marx and Adam Smith, the Upanishads and the Gospels, Rumi and Chuang Tzu, without fear of contamination. Fearless learning is the mark of inner security. It fosters societies that need fewer imposed laws, ideologies, or systems.

Order flows naturally when the mind is awake. A restless mind will always create restless politics; a quiet mind will create harmony without enforcement. Much better than seeking utopia through libertarian choices, liberal equalities, or conservative traditions is to awaken the dreamer from the ego's illusions. Every political choice is ultimately a choice of consciousness, at the ballot box or in policy debates. When awareness is absent, liberty turns into licence and equality into envy. But when awareness is present, governance becomes an expression of compassion. The next true revolution lies not in swapping ideologies, but in awakening through wisdom.

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