

*A way of life, an order of things,
the wisdom of generations*

Toryism

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THE WORD TORY originated as a political term in the late seventeenth century to designate a faction composed of nobles, gentry, and Church of England clergy who believed in a wide royal prerogative and the power of the Anglican church. Tories were opposed to Whigs, who consisted of a minority of nobles plus urban merchants and who favored the supremacy of Parliament and rather more religious toleration. But the issues which absorbed the attention of politically-minded people at that time are now almost forgotten, save to historians. Still, Tory appears in the dictionaries, often as a synonym for reactionary or to designate an extreme conservative.

I submit that Toryism has a different meaning, that it is not necessarily synonymous with conservatism or reaction, and that there has been in Great Britain and America a fairly well-defined Tory tradition over many years. However, it represents a way of life, for it is possible that there was no real Tory political party after 1715. Toryism is different from what passes for conservatism today and is not represented adequately by the British Conservative Party or the Republican Party of the United States. It is also not reactionary.

What is Toryism, and why are Tories unhappy at being defined at various periods in history as Irish robbers, Church

of England divines, or supporters of King George III in the American Revolution? Tory, used as a label for an English political party, began to disappear about the time of the 1832 Reform Bill. "Conservative" was substituted. Sir Robert Peel's "Tamworth Manifesto," addressed to the electors in his constituency in 1834, expressed the newer philosophy. In the following year Peel became the first Conservative Prime Minister. As the natural Tory constituency of landlords and Church of England clergy declined as a force in the national life, business interests grew. Their counsels were eventually to dominate the Conservative Party. Benjamin Disraeli, in his famous Crystal Palace speech in 1872 and later as Prime Minister, tried to reach a working class audience. He met with some success, but generally the Conservative Party became responsive primarily to industry and commerce. Shorn of its former base on the land, Toryism was left as a loose assortment of ideas and attitudes.

There is so much in this philosophy which is old-fashioned and ill at ease with the thrusting, profit-oriented, business-dominated civilization of both modern Britain and America. The restless modern world which is filled with people possessing short attention spans is anathema to the Tory. He is opposed to the materialistic basis of society, whether it be

liberal capitalist or Marxist. The phrase "economic man" expresses values which he finds uncongenial. When Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that things are in the saddle and ride mankind, he reflected pessimistic Toryism. On this basis, even the maverick economist Thorstein Veblen was a perspicacious critic of the direction of American life. The thought of Edmund Burke is a constant source of inspiration to Tories because of Burke's denunciations of "sophisters, economists and calculators." And this as far back as 1790!

Of course, the Tory believes in private property and individual enterprise, but these principles, which are good in themselves, may easily be abused. "Rugged individualism" parodies a Tory belief in the dignity of man. In his search for material gain a person should not overlook the fact that at bottom man is a moral and ethical creature. Tories recognize that a minimum of tangible goods is essential, yet they sympathize with Saint Paul's assertion that things seen are transient but things unseen are permanent.

I have referred to the Tory's desire to search for more than surface rewards and his belief in the moral roots of mankind: Burke's "unbought grace of life." This excludes putative conservatives from Alexander Hamilton to the so-called "hard right" of today's Republican Party. The philosophical Tory is more apt to draw inspiration from Michael Oakeshott than Milton Friedman. He believes in individual responsibility as well as individual opportunity. Thus, Toryism is not simply conservatism, as that word has come to be used in the English-speaking world.

Basic to Tory responsibility is an acceptance of an organic view of society within which the individual must move. Both statism and atomistic liberalism are incompatible with this view. Free will does exist, but as man is a moral creature he must always be governed by an awareness of the larger need. The belief that the weak must be protected is solidly rooted in Toryism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge noted that the state had three duties: to make

the means of subsistence more easy to each individual; to offer hope of everyone's improving his own condition and that of his children; and to foster the development of essential human dignity. This view is not compatible with certain forms of conservatism, but it is in the great tradition of Tory reform.

In nineteenth-century Britain, Richard Oastler was one of many Tories who worked for reform of industrial conditions. Unlike the reactionary William Cobbett, Oastler accepted the factory system and tried to humanize it. Lord Shaftesbury worked with Oastler in this project and also strove to protect the most helpless members of society, notably the boy chimney sweeps. While he was Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli had passed an innovative pure food and drug act and an equally forward-looking act on behalf of housing for the poor. Tories have always accepted social reform that does not seek to uproot worthwhile existing institutions. In America measures of the administrations of the two Roosevelts, Theodore and Franklin, have expressed a similar objective. These would include Theodore's own pure food and drug act and Franklin's social security legislation.

Such flexibility is partly due to Toryism's being a way of life and not a doctrine. It recognizes incremental rather than wholesale change. History shows that people cannot stand too much or too rapid change; this is also a theme in literature. Toryism is a philosophy of moderation. At his best, former British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin was aware of this when he said about industrial conditions, "Human hands were given to clasp, and not be raised against one another in fratricidal strife." This was a binding, healing phrase from a person who did not care for the "hard faced men" who had profited from World War I. Such a sentiment is not mystical or dreamy. At his peak Baldwin was a Tory since he was rooted in a firm sense of what people would accept and what they would not. British Tories respect the memory of Halifax the Trimmer.

Radicals prefer to work from the top down; Tories are the exact opposite. Toryism begins by taking care of little things first. It starts from a basis of trust within the family, which epitomized the organic conception of society. The Tory chuckles at Dickens's Mrs. Jellyby and Anthony Powell's Lord Erridge, who were radicals planning to reform humanity while their own families deteriorated around them. Burke had a similar view of French philosophes who were so full of the milk of human kindness before Revolution that they did not wish to have common criminals punished, but Burke noted that these same people turned ferocious when they had power. Echoing Burke, Tories say better to begin with the "little platoons." To improve all of the human race is a big job. In this way the Tory accepts responsibility for raising children and the care of animals. His is also a joyful philosophy, and he finds it hard to understand the sullenness and solemnity of so many totalitarian radicals. As an example of his instinct to preserve, the Tory often has an urge to collect books or pictures. This has eventually led, in the form of libraries and museums, to the betterment of countless people. It represents social change at its best.

In this philosophy there is no body of dogma and few doctrines. Systems of thought are not highly regarded. Tories have always been suspicious of clever men without morals. Students who mistake Coleridge's clerisy of moral men for an intellectual aristocracy miss the point entirely. This type of aristocracy would have been as antipathetic to Coleridge as the modern phase "social science" would have been to Edmund Burke. Tories are not afraid to talk openly of human nature, which they believe is complex and apt to be weak. It is constant and not relative. Thus laws that are based on an assumption of man's flexible nature often produce contrary results. To the Tory, change must go with the grain of human nature and not cut across it. In this, habit and tradition are useful teachers.

Of course, the Tory is temperamentally

inclined towards what is venerable and usually dislikes novelty. Tradition is valued, even when it begins to wear around the edges. For Englishmen this is seldom a problem, but in America life moves more rapidly down what Tennyson called the ringing grooves of change. This is one reason why so many Tories love the land and possess rural values. The change of seasons, the pleasure of watching things grow, and the responsibility of caring for dumb animals have historical appeal. In human relations as well, this liking for the tried and true is seen: one can always make new friends but not old ones.

Always ready to respect history, Tories are comfortable with certain types of change. These may develop from economic and social progress, which increases the number of capable voters. Tories have abandoned their former insistence on property being a qualification for voting. The property qualifications were to ensure that the voter had a stake in society. The principle is a good one and the idea of a social hierarchy is dear to Tory hearts. Tories were not egalitarians. However, today Tories try to limit the scope of the political arena and to ensure that laws are a last resort, to be used only after other methods of effecting change have proven futile.

While the Tory believes in equality before the law, he holds that since absolute equality is impossible, there must be restraint by legislators. Equality cannot be legislated, though a prudent accommodation can be made to reflect the natural evolution of society. Here again the Tory is not concerned with the corporate entity called the state but with the individual. He does not see people as "faceless." Class-based legislation has no place on the modern Tory's calendar of legislation; the Tory does not think in terms of mass. Class consciousness contradicts organic society. Law should be a conserving force rather than an innovative one, and in America judges should not pioneer in social policy beyond the wishes of the legislature.

This emphasis upon the individual must be reconciled with the Tory's belief in an

organic society. Years ago, when Tories controlled Parliament and claimed to speak for the national interest, they were guilty of selfish legislation. Present-day Tories might observe wryly that this proves the fallible nature of human beings. Like others, the Tory is liable to hypocrisy. The legislative Tory should aim at the improvement of the human condition by means of a careful and limited policy that is concerned with the whole person. As Goethe noted, "Everything that liberates the spirit without a corresponding growth in self-mastery is pernicious."

The reduction of restrictions upon voting at a time when Tories continue to believe in a hierarchy of values and men brings up the role of Toryism in modern life. Thoughtful liberals often acknowledge that there is a role for Toryism's cousin, conservatism, in politics and society. Liberals usually confine this role to a prudent amending of over-hasty or carelessly written legislation, plus the adding of a little variety and color to the political spectrum. At the crucial moment, however, conservatives are expected to stand aside and let change be effected. This view of their role is unappealing to conservatives in general and certainly to Tories. The latter, while not doctrinaire, do have certain beliefs which do not admit to ready compromise.

These beliefs have their basis in the Tory idea of the individual. Original sin is no longer a popular concept, but Tories recognize that the human personality is flawed and incapable of perfection. People will always have the knack of doing the wrong thing. History shows what inhumanity supposedly civilized people are capable of, and this tendency cannot be removed by intended remedies such as education or social reform. Men and women seem to need self-restraint more than liberty, and if progress is to occur it must be within an ordered society and be measured in small increments.

Despite all this, Tories have a belief in the dignity of man and recognize that he is fundamentally different from other animals. Dignity can be expressed in

qualities such as independence, compassion, kindness, restraint, rationality, morality, and consideration for others. These qualities must be blended; even virtue if carried to an extreme produces a lopsided individual. For example, the use of man's faculty of reason to read widely and make responsible judgments is admirable. As Milton said, cloistered virtue is no virtue. Yet statements in favor of ending any kind of moral censorship, such as John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859), seem old-fashioned today. Tories believe that complete freedom in this direction is harmful to everyone and that the effects of an unrestricted right to read and see may be more damaging to human dignity than would be a prudent limitation of circulation. This Tory view is not the product of mere conjecture but is an arguable attitude based on experience. Total freedom may be as harmful to the individual as total repression. As Edmund Burke said, liberty must be limited in order to be possessed.

Tories see education as more than piling up knowledge or solving problems. They are inclined to agree with John Henry Newman that the purpose of education is to produce the gentleman with "a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life" (and not the technician or bureaucrat or scientist unalloyed with humanist values). Education is very much a moral and individual enterprise, yet it also has a social function. The educated Tory rejects the extremes of the heartless expert on the one hand and the well-adjusted ignoramus on the other. Believing that society is not a machine, the Tory does not like the term "social science" and its jargon. He sees no real gain and a great deal of harm when society and its members are thus treated and points out the biases and assumptions held by professedly neutral "scientists." Of course, all of society must be open to be studied in a scholarly manner, but Tories (among others) do not believe that complete objectivity is possible. Theories about fascism

based on Hitler's real or imagined experiences in infancy and early childhood and efforts to make Martin Luther into the first Nazi fill the Tory with amused incredulity.

While Tories recognize the evil which men can do (it is never far from their minds), they approach the gigantic subject of humanity with respect and even awe. The range of human actions demonstrates the Tory's belief in the hierarchy of men. For this reason, the Tory is more apt to be pessimistic than optimistic about change.

Recognizing man's limited and fallible nature, many Tories are persuaded that a supreme being who is really the master of all things must exist. Years ago a belief in God was almost essential to Toryism. Skeptics were uncommon. Today the Tory must choose for himself, but, believer or agnostic, all Tories have a respect for the institution of religion, which imposes a healthy order on man's often chaotic impulses and which helps to hold society together by creating a sense of community and reinforcing social norms.

On the matter of loyalty to one's country, there has also been a shift. At one time Toryism was almost synonymous with an uncritical patriotism that had overtones of chauvinism. Tories thought that they were the patriotic party. Yet the fact that rampant nationalism has been the curse of the twentieth century has modified this "my country right or wrong" attitude and modern Tories are to be found working for international cooperation in order to save the Western world from tyranny. Actually, there have always been two strains in Tory attitudes toward other countries. One has been an unthinking contempt for foreigners that is now fortunately passing. The other, almost equally strong, was a cosmopolitanism based partly on class but primarily on an education which stressed the great European tradition. A classical education was anything but provincial and produced Tories who were pulled in two directions: one part of them blindly patriotic, and the other plugged into the cultural heritage of the West.

In this absorption in the Western heritage, the historian of ideas Sir Isaiah Berlin, seen by so many as a liberal, may be closer to Toryism with his pluralism, irony, and cosmopolitanism. Lionel Trilling, another alleged liberal, possessed similar Tory tendencies in his passionate concern for preserving tradition and historical perspective.

The tendency to preserve rather than destroy is seen in the Tory opposition to efforts to endanger the environment by turning over public land in America to private hands. Conservation is part of the general Tory concern for the care of living things, though the love of some Tories for blood sports (now rapidly diminishing) does not seem to bear this out. The natural environment has always been of great importance to Tories, even when some of them, such as Theodore Roosevelt, have been ardent exponents of hunting. Tories have an aversion to needless exploitation of natural as well as human resources; it is part of an anti-materialist philosophy which is shocked by the destruction of what has been provided to man by nature.

The difference between Toryism and conservatism is also seen in their relationship to commerce. In its support of unbridled individualism, conservatism has borrowed the clothes of laissez-faire liberalism. Business values are often anathema to Tories, who stand on a paternalistic, even feudal, relationship among the ranks of society. Hard-driving individualism in business, satirized by Dickens's Sam Weller when he noted that it is everyone for himself as the elephant said when he stepped among the chickens, goes against the Tory grain. Here the ideal relationship would be found on the old family-run farm where there would be freedom and harmony. Everyone would sit together at meal times and help himself to food from the same table. The notion of simple, hearty cheer and all people on the farm working in a cooperative spirit has been idealized by the nostalgic, but it was not pure fiction.

The same spirit should be carried over to the industrial enterprise. Tories are

unhappy with the cash nexus furnishing the relationship between employer and employee. The medieval guild system is seen by some as the ideal. Companies owe more to their workers than they do to their stockholders, and Tories should not be averse in principle to worker-ownership. Production must be on as small a scale as possible to ensure personal relationships among all levels of the firm. The happiness and welfare of the individual employee is a major consideration of the owner, who should be an individual or family and not a management acting on behalf of a large number of remote stockholders.

It will be seen that the Tory has a sense of responsibility towards those over whom he has authority. The hierarchical society includes hierarchy of responsibility. This applies to problems of health and old age. If possible the family should be the providers of care, but often the burden is too great. In such cases society as a whole ought to share it. Health, accident, and old age insurance must be supplied to all; and the Tory has no objection in principle to a financially sound, carefully administered scheme for this purpose. It was once a Tory assumption (shared by Winston Churchill) that there should be a floor in society beneath which no one could sink while at the other end there should be room for all able individuals to climb higher. In England, the Elizabethan Statute of Labourers and the Elizabethan Poor Law were expressions of this, and so were various assizes that were designed to regulate the price of essentials. They were eventually discarded by the government in the name of *laissez-faire* — the very doctrine the conservatives of the last hundred years have come to admire.

This concern for harmony among people should not confuse Toryism with socialism. The goal of the latter is an egalitarian society, but the Tory feels that this is unrealistic and unwise. Socialists sometimes speak of parity of esteem, but Tories, while believing that all honorable tasks and achievements are of value, do not consider that human beings will ever

award equal respect for occupations and avocations which vary. The Tory has a hierarchy of values and men. Some ideas and some people are superior to others. It is a problem to sift between contending factors, but the Tory is content that the process should be carried out and is comfortable with the idea that life varies. He tries to work toward a better society but holds that promises of eventual equality are groundless and often harmful, for they inhibit constructive adaptation and overlook opportunities to secure a gradual improvement.

This preference for the tried and true and willingness to accept human imperfection can easily lead to stagnation, and indeed it has done so in the past. But the same restlessness and variety among human beings that make socialism an impossible ideal mean that society is always changing, however slowly. Wise Tories recognize this and devote themselves to conserving the best of the past and using it to shape the future. Thomas Paine's notion of clear and separate generations, while disturbing to Tories, has been given verisimilitude by modern technology. The possibility of man's inventions controlling him more than they already do is unappealing to thoughtful people. Against it the Tory would draw on man's store of wisdom and also deliberately attempt to slow down change as much as possible, until it can be reconciled with real social needs. The idea that change itself is not necessarily progress is a deep-rooted Tory idea.

That store of man's wisdom is to put in another way what Matthew Arnold meant when he referred to the best that has been thought and said. Tories enjoy history, philosophy, and literature — the humanities in other words. They take with a grain of salt statistics, surveys, polls, and other efforts to apply scientific empiricism to human beings. Even atheistic Tories see little value in generalizing about human behavior on the basis of experiments with animals at any level save the most obvious. In moments of exasperation, Tories are inclined to agree with T.S. Eliot that

what the modern world needs is not more education but more respect for learning. In education, as in so many other areas, the Tory is repelled by the Benthamite direction of modern society.

Politics is seldom seen by the Tory as an end in itself but rather as a means of preserving what he cherishes. Tories do not seem to be as absorbed in political affairs as are some other groups. Perhaps the reason has just been indicated: Tories seldom seek novelty but simply a maintenance of what they find good. Those who desire change must marshal reasons to support it and work out a program. This takes time and effort and makes it difficult to enjoy the rounded life which some Tories prefer. Platforms, manifestos, and agitation are the prerogative of others. Of course, Tory politicians work hard, but in general the Tory response to politics is casual, Trollopian. Like Fabians, Tories shape society by permeation, hoping that politicians will eventually respond.

Among practical politicians it is not easy to distinguish between Tories and those simply labelled conservatives. Among English Prime Ministers, we might find Disraeli among the Tories and Peel among the conservatives. In America, Theodore Roosevelt was a Tory but his predecessor as president, William McKinley, was certainly conservative. Among recent British Prime Ministers, Harold Macmillan had some of the attributes of Toryism (love of the past, a classical education) but Margaret Thatcher, for all her espousing of traditional slogans, seems to be predominately conservative. It is fair to say that a true blue Tory has little chance of becoming chief executive in either country today.

The change in the English Conservative Party during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century from dominance by landowners and members of the Church of England to urban businessmen was symbolized by the departure of Joseph Chamberlain from the Liberal Party to the ranks of the Conservatives in the 1880s. Soon after, the Liberals abandoned *laissez*

faire in favor of state intervention. In this way, each party would shift 180° from former positions. In the process Tory humanism was weakened. It was a socialist, Robert Owen, who pointed out that *laissez-faire* capitalism was undesirable because it produced inferior minds and souls among the employers, as well as hurt the bodies of the workers. Too many of the latter's natural protectors among the Tories betrayed their responsibility, and others lost heart.

The United States was no better. The values of the gilded age were hostile to the natural aristocracy of America. Reform was generally a prerogative of the political left and the Republican exceptions such as Theodore Roosevelt. The once Tory-minded members of the American upper classes concentrated on other things. The last great Adams, Henry, whose great-grandfather had represented to Europe the sturdy values of the infant United States, himself sought refuge in Europe to escape from the crudity of his country after the Civil War. Many potentially active Tories, such as Henry James, who could have contributed a great deal to America, did the same. The theme became a popular one in fiction. Today, despite enormous changes, the flight still goes on as Americans find their solace among the manners and monuments of a finer civilization.

Toryism has always been skeptical of the Enlightenment position that man is essentially rational. Instead, the Tory is more likely to be Romantic in stressing feeling and emotion: believing that beauty has a value that cannot be measured in terms of utility. The intellectuals whom it attracts often tend to be disenchanting and elegiac like Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt, and George Santayana. On the other hand, G.K. Chesterton was humorous and whimsical — a delightful person. Toryism favors corporate institutions (the family, the state, the church) rather than the atomistic approach of liberalism. Yet it is often the Tory who is concerned with the welfare of the individual rather than of the mass. This is a reflection of his tendency to

reform from the bottom.

The essence of Toryism is thus social and cultural, and the Tory has a profound belief in the value of that accumulated treasure of man's wisdom and beauty which we call civilization. To the Tory, western civilization is civilizing. It was created by a few and is evidence of that Tory belief in a hierarchy of men. Just as the continuity of generations reflects Burke's idea of an "entailed inheritance," the development of culture is the best measure of man's capacity to progress beyond other living creatures. This is one more area where Toryism reveals itself to be positive and not negative and can thus rebut its stereotype as crabbed reaction.

Anglo-American Tories are not stubborn reactionaries and have little in common with the "ultras" of the Continent. Indeed, many Tories are outside the political arena. Usually when Toryism has been entirely political, it has lost out to dynamic movements and has been reduced to fighting a rear-guard action. In the United States, for example, John C. Calhoun's "concurrent majority" expressed something of Toryism, but was based on a permanently unjust system of slavery that made skin color the criterion of worth. It was static and did not leave room for development; it was therefore doomed. In the early Republic the Federalist Party had some Tory characteristics: reverence for the Constitution; a hierarchy of men; pessimism concerning change. However, to call John Adams a Tory would confuse the situation and would have been unwelcome to Adams. It takes time to produce a Tory tradition. Like a fine brandy, Toryism improves with age.

Since the Constitution forbids the United States to have a monarchy, a state church, or an aristocracy, America is lacking three crucial ingredients of English Toryism. The handicap is severe, and making things worse has been the American tendency to find substitutes in what Sir Francis Bacon called "idols of the market place." Without wholesome permanent institutions to respect, people are apt to become impatient and deracinated. The rawness and

violence that have marked the American experience are products of a society that lacks sufficient healthy roots. It is interesting that, despite this, there is so much concern for enduring values. Here one must credit the United States Constitution for being the major source of continuity in an often feverish society.

This brings up the possibility that the most powerful enemy of Toryism today may be not another set of ideas but instead nihilism. The rapid pace of change results in unconcern, a hasty disposal of what is inconvenient, a restless search for sensation. While liberals are often in the position of deploring unforeseen effects that their permissiveness has created, Tories face a dangerous and confusing world with the poise that comes from possessing an integrated pattern of beliefs. While one might say that Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin also possessed "an integrated pattern of beliefs," both men were iconoclastic, ruthless, and contemptuous of everything that the Tory holds dear. A crucial distinction between any Tory and the totalitarian radical lies not only in what each believes but in that their ways of thinking are different in kind. The Tory is humble in his awareness of this debt to the past: the opposite of the buccaneering personality that we have become familiar with in this century. Toryism is a gentle thing.

Toryism is opposed to many characteristics of the modern world. Dynamic industrial capitalism has replaced the agricultural basis of society and weakened whatever spirit of *noblesse oblige* existed. With this came a decline of deference. It is noteworthy that in Great Britain no Prime Minister has been a peer since Lord Salisbury retired in 1902. Furthermore, many potential politicians on both sides of the Atlantic have, with good reason, long felt that politics is sordid. The corruption, the humiliations of the campaign trail, the sense of frustration are too great. The experience of Adlai Stevenson is a case in point. Finally, there has been that weakening in traditional education and its replacement by "relevance" that have led

to a narrowing present-mindedness among youth and adults alike.

One must not overrate Toryism. There is ample evidence of exploited laborers on the estates of even such generally admirable Tories as Lord Shaftesbury. Toryism can be static, unprogressive, apathetic, when it need not be. Yet at its best, it provided a harmony and security in social relations that is missing today. After a fashion, Albert Schweitzer's "rev-

erence for life" expressed Toryism. The characteristics of Toryism that were mentioned earlier in this essay — its concern for an entire way of life and its emphasis upon tradition, and its healthy tendency to favor change from the bottom — provide possible remedies for the problems of a society that is top-heavy in the political and social spheres. Above all, Toryism gives everyone essential roots, and these are certainly lacking right now.

Americans will always be reluctant to use force. It is the mark of our decency. And clearly, the use of force must always be a last resort, when other means of influence have proven inadequate. But a great power cannot free itself so easily from the burden of choice. It must bear responsibility for the consequences of its inaction as well as for the consequences of its action.

— George P. Shultz

Sin, in the proper sense, is always a personal act.

— Pope John Paul II