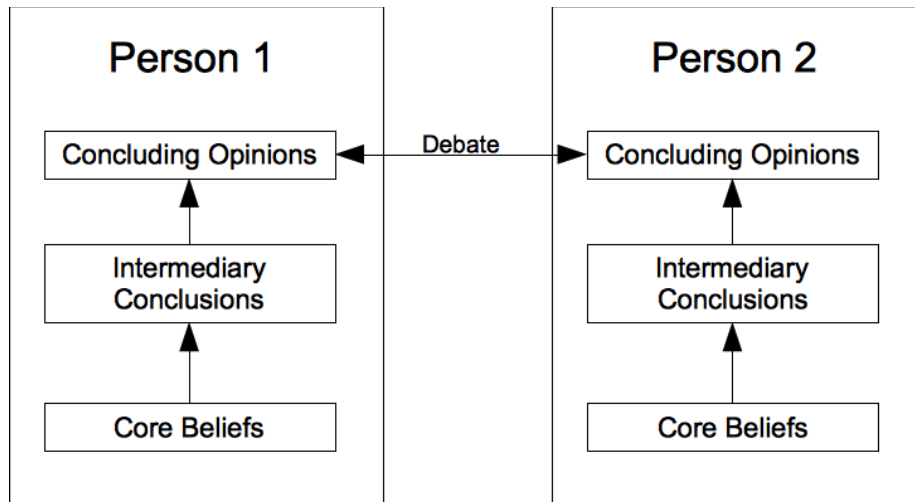


What differentiates Liberals from Conservatives?

By
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What differentiates Liberals from Conservatives? Liberals and conservatives often disagree. They disagree about politics for sure, but they also tend to disagree about a lot of other things as well. Often when they argue (or debate, as it were), they try to make perfectly valid points, things that are clearly and obviously true to each of them. Despite seemingly valid arguments, they still tend to agree on little.

After considerable effort to reconcile differences, it seems obvious that little agreement will occur. The views on the topics seem too far apart. After some reflection, it can be seen that the views taken by each are based on differing fundamental principals or core beliefs held by each. Each person holds core beliefs that differ from the other. These core beliefs lead logically to the conclusions held by each regarding many issues that are debated between people, groups, and governments. When a debate occurs, the ideas debated seem obviously true to each because each can see the clear relationship between their core beliefs, their intermediary conclusions, and the concluding opinions they are debating.



It is difficult to reconcile differences in a debate of concluding opinions because of the distance between the core beliefs held by each. Debates occur between concluding opinions held by each, but concluding opinions are irreconcilable by themselves. In order to reconcile them one would have to go backwards from each group's concluding opinions, back through their intermediary conclusions all the way down to their core beliefs – where the differences began. Debates can only truly be reconciled at the level of core beliefs. So long as their core beliefs differ, they will never be able to reconcile their concluding opinions.

When two people of opposing sides debate, each person hears the concluding opinions of the other person. It seems to be based on little to nothing since they are not fully aware of the other person's core beliefs and intermediary conclusions. (In fact, most people are probably unaware of a good portion of their own core beliefs leaving them unable to trace their beliefs to the genesis.) When they compare the other person's concluding opinions against their own, their own concluding opinions seem far more well founded since they are fully aware (at least at a sub-conscious level) of their own core beliefs and logically founded intermediary conclusions.

A liberal will agree far more with another liberal, and a conservative will agree far more with another conservative than a liberal will agree with a conservative, or visa-a-versa regarding a political topic. The reason for this is the different core beliefs between the two groups.

In order to reconcile concluding opinions, the two groups must first reconcile their respective core beliefs. This turns out to be a two step process. First identify what their respective core beliefs are, and then determine the truth of those beliefs.

The most important thing to keep in mind when considering core beliefs is to clearly differentiate between core beliefs that are based on observable facts versus core beliefs that are based on preferences or superstitions. This amounts to the difference between what sounds good and would be nice versus what the truth of the matter is. For example, we may prefer that all people treat others with kindness and fairness but is that what we experience (observable facts)? While it is surely true that many treat others with kindness and fairness, it is clearly an observable fact that *all* do not.

It would be nice to take an afternoon excursion with a rowboat from America to England, find some nice place for lunch, and then row home. As nice as that may sound, it just isn't possible. Believing the nice over the true can lead to disastrous results.

Our core beliefs must be based on observable facts lest we live in a dream world. If you are unable to differentiate between observable facts and preferences this article will not make sense.

What are the differences between the core beliefs of a conservative versus a liberal? After some reflection, I have come up with three differences in the core beliefs of liberals versus those of conservatives. The identification of these three differences comes through observation of things said by each group followed by an attempt to organize them in a hierarchical, logically dependent way. At the base of this logical dependency lies the core beliefs. Although I am sure there are many more, these three can account for a good portion of the differences between the concluding opinions of liberals versus those of conservatives.

The first difference is has to do with a view about people's motivation to work.

Liberal: People want to work. People want to contribute. If given the opportunity, people will work hard.

Conservative: People work because they have to. If a person didn't have to work, while they may pursue their hobbies, they wouldn't work at a regular job.

These two views give rise to two questions. Which view reflects observable facts, and what are the ramifications of each view?

Communism is based on, among other things, the idea of shared ownership and shared gain. Personal income is moved away from individual production and towards individual need. The idea is for each person to contribute what they can, and for each person to take only what they need. This is a beautiful, utopian idea that, throughout history has failed.

Like the liberal view, the communists believe that people want to work. People want to contribute. People want to be a contributor to a prosperous state that they are a member of. If we can create and organize the opportunity, people will work hard and contribute what they can.

The problem with this, as history has proven time and time again, is that these sorts of arrangements may work for a very short time but soon someone will notice that if they don't work very hard they will still get what they need. Once they get away with that for a little while they naturally start contributing less and less until they hit a minimum. They clearly notice the minimum because that is the point when another communist forces them to work harder through physical pain, incarceration, death, or threats of same.

As soon as one person finds the minimum required work, others soon follow. Why work so hard when you get the same thing for working less? Others think, why should I keep working so hard when so many others are not? I must be a fool. Before long you have an entire community trying to see just how little work they can get away with. The production of the state seeks and settles on a minimum. Everyone ends up living at the lowest possible standard of living.

Time and time again men have had the opportunity to contribute throughout the history of communist regimens. And time and time again communist regimes have failed due to mediocrity and the lack of individual enticement and corresponding effort. History has shown that the only thing that breeds excellence is the specter of personal gain through capitalist systems.

While, given the wide and varied populous, there are always a few that genuinely want to work, it seems clear that the vast majority of us work because we have to. We all require

food, shelter, clothes, health care, and other things in order to survive. These things cost money. Among many other, lesser important, reasons, most of us, therefore, need to generate income in order to survive. Since survival is one of our most fundamental drives, this is a strong motivator to work. If, as I have shown, people generally do not want to work, providing an opportunity is insufficient to motivate people to work.

Capitalism is based on the idea of rewarding contribution. The harder you work, the more you make. Capitalism is a machine that turns individual greed into shared gain. You want money for yourself and your family. You have to produce something of value to the community in order to make money. The process of seeking money produces products and services desired by the community.

Capitalism is based on conservative ideas. People work because they have to in order to survive. People work to better their life and the life of their family. The more their work is beneficial to the community the more their reward. People's individual greed, through the capitalist system, has led to the highest standard of living and the most significant discoveries ever achieved by mankind.

Conservative ideas leverage the truth about human motivations to produce the highest standard of living ever experienced by mankind. On the other hand, liberal ideas, while positive, upbeat, and beautiful, they have led to the most brutality and lowest standards of living possible.

It seems, that although the liberals may have a positive view of things, their view does not seem to connect with reality. The overwhelming evidence seems to support the idea that people do not fundamentally desire to work, and that if we don't somehow connect it to their need to survive, few people will work. Working, getting paid, and using that money to gain the things one needs to survive seems like the only system that balances people's needs with having a society that produces those products.

The second difference has to do with equality.

Liberal: All people, although they may have learning differences and different talents, each has nearly limitless potential and the ability to be a very productive member of society. Those who don't become productive members don't because of some lack of positive elements in their environment.

Conservative: People are very different. People vary widely with respect to their talents, their abilities, and their willingness and desire to become productive members of society. While environment plays a role, raw, innate ability is a very significant factor, one that environment can't affect.

To start off with, there is an important distinction to be made. On one hand there is the equality of individual human life. Is each person's life of equal value? Does each person have the same right to live? On the other hand, there is the question of equal potential. Does each person have equal potential? Is each person ultimately capable of the same capabilities or the same limitations as all others? This is an important distinction. Liberals like to suggest that conservatives believe that various people have different value. This couldn't be further from the truth. As a group, conservatives and liberals alike both believe that each human, without question, has an equal right to life. This has never been a debate. The real issue has to do with equality of capabilities.

The issue of human capabilities speaks to the nature versus nurture debate. Liberals lean very heavily on the environment side. When liberals see different outcomes they seek environmental differences for the reasons. If two children grow up and one becomes a doctor and the other becomes a dishwasher they look at their respective environments. The attempt to explain the differences with educational differences, with differences in opportunities, and with differences in the love they got from their family. If someone doesn't become a success, someone else is to blame.

Conservatives believe that, although environment clearly plays a role, the fact is we are different and have innately different capabilities. Utterly regardless of our environment, we don't all have the ability to become doctors. For many people, giving them the best education, the most love and support, and unlimited opportunity is not enough. You cannot come close to explaining a person's outcome by looking at their life's environment. After all, if their environment causes their outcome, how could you explain all the people throughout history that came from very meager beginnings to become some of the most contributory members of human history?

Some people are very good at art. Some people are very good at mathematics. While some artists can study math and become better at it, few (those without the natural talent for math) can become as good at it as, say, a person who has a Phd in math. Likewise, few mathematicians can become great artists. Along similar lines, most of us, regardless of how hard we work at it could never become an Einstein or a Rembrandt. The point is that some have potentials that others don't have - regardless of environment.

While it is a beautiful sentiment to believe that we all have some talent that could make us a significant contributor in some area needed by humanity, there does not seem to be any evidence to support this.

Throughout human history, the people who have become the most significant figures have come from an utterly diverse background (environment). Given this factor, as well as our day-to-day experience of people with different capabilities, it seems clear that innate ability is a far better predictor of future outcome than environmental considerations. While equal opportunity is universally good, expecting equal outcome is absurd.

You can clearly see the results of the respective views held by liberals versus conservatives. When liberals see poor life outcomes they strive endlessly to explain it and fix it by creating better education, greater opportunities, and better environments. But try as they might, history has shown that, except for rare exceptions, these things have little affect in determining the outcome in people's lives.

The conservative view leads to an effort to deal with the problems in constructive, practical ways rather than endlessly trying to explain it through blaming others and attempting endlessly to correct the problem through endless and wasteful efforts to improve their environment. While ceaselessly improving equality of opportunity is vitally important, attempting to assure equal outcome is an utter waste of time and resources.

Success comes from an innate ability, an opportunity, and a lot of hard work. Innate abilities are born and developed. Opportunities are sometimes given and sometimes created but most often hard to come by at all. While opportunities are surely harder to come by for those without resources or those who are members of minority groups, history has proven time and time again that these are obstacles that can be overcome in America. Blaming the successful for the non-successful is destructive, divisive, and utterly untrue.

The third difference has to do with the value of life.

Liberal: Life has value in and of itself. Life has equal value.

Conservative: Life has the value it is given by God, or if you are non-religious, life has the value humanity assigns to it. The value of life is hierarchical.

If life has value in and of itself then all life is equal. It is fair to compare the life of a tree to the life of a person. You can weigh the value of a community of people against the value of another species of life because each has a value. We must compare and determine their respective value in order to determine the best course of action.

On the other hand, if value is determined by the Judeo-Christian God then relative value is determined by the Bible. The Bible clearly states that man is to rule over and may eat all other life on earth. Or, if we are non-religious, and we determine value then value would always be relative to us, since we determine the value, and would render us at the top of the value hierarchy.

In effect, when compared to conservatives, liberals lower human life and raise the value of other life until they are either equal or at least certainly comparable.

If, as the liberals would have it, life has value in and of itself, from where does this value come? We instinctively value our own life, and through empathy we sense value in other life, but that comes entirely from within ourselves. That still leaves us as the determiner of value (relative to humanity). If there is no God and we don't determine value, where could value possibly come from? Does some rock on some other planet determine value?

Experience shows us that, if value doesn't come from God, then value is always relative to a given individual or species. Value has no other source. Liberals want to impute value but have no explanation for its source. It amounts to wishful thinking.

Conservatives see value as coming from man, either through God, or through the fact that we determine our own perspective.

While conservatives would never think of comparing the life of a man to the life of a tree, conservatives still see life as a great value to man for man's sake. And for this reason, conservatives see other life as the highest of value but not comparable to that of man. Conservatives want to maintain and enhance other life for their value to man in terms of their innate beauty and their ability to support man's life through food, air, etc..

Concluding comments

Liberals have a utopian view of things that sees beauty and boundless possibilities in all things - disconnected from observable reality. Whenever they see ugliness they blame it on ugly people rather than the natural course of nature. Conservatives see a brutal world and attempt to find ways of minimizing the brutality and suffering through understanding of our environment and manipulation of it to best suit our survival.

Observable facts support the conservative view and utterly contradict the liberal view.