

# Liberals and Conservatives

*Relics of the Past*

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When former Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards and Illinois Democratic Senator Barack Obama recently spoke to packed houses in Burlington, they provided glaring evidence that there is “nothing new under the sun” in mainstream U.S. two-party politics. Both delivered speeches laced with pseudo-liberal blather, Obama delivering a “call to action” similar to Howard Dean’s 2004 “Take Back America” campaign. As Edwards and Obama recited one liberal Democratic cliché after another, a discerning listener couldn’t help but be struck by how completely irrelevant the terms “liberal” and “conservative” have become in today’s twenty-first-century world. Those who openly identify themselves with either of the terms are anachronistic and out of touch with reality.

Both liberals and conservatives claim to be individualists, all the while behaving as world-class conformists, who are consumed by affluenza, technomania, e-mania, and megalomania. Conservatives like big business, big military projects, and big prisons. Liberals are drawn to big cities, big social welfare programs, and big government, the same big government that is owned, operated, and controlled by corporate America, which they abhor. Liberals are indecisive moral relativists who tend to whine and believe that only the federal government can solve all of our problems. Conservatives, on the other hand, are tough-talking, mean-spirited, free-market zealots, who want to privatize everything in sight. They are often drawn to religious fundamentalism.

Many conservatives and some liberals support President George W. Bush’s foreign policies of full-spectrum dominance and imperial overstretch, both of which are grounded in the doctrine of might makes right. They are big on revenge. President Bill Clinton proved to be a conservative Republican disguised as a liberal Democrat. He granted Republicans their every wish. Clinton called for more trade, more budget cuts, more privatization, more foreign investment, more mega-mergers, more computer networks, less government control, lower interest rates, and more economic growth. He wanted everything to be bigger, faster, more complex, more high-tech, and more interdependent—bigger markets, bigger trade agreements, bigger financial institutions, and bigger telecommunication networks. Every time his political ratings dropped, he would bomb some Third World country, and most Americans loved it.

Conservatives don’t want anyone messing with the distribution of income and wealth. They like things the way they are. Liberals want the government to decide what is fair. Liberals believe in multiculturalism, affirmative action, and minority rights. Conservatives favor states’ rights over minority rights. What liberals and conservatives have in common is that they are both into having—owning, possessing, controlling, and manipulating money, power, people, material wealth, and things. Having is one of the ways Americans deal with the human condition—separation, meaninglessness, powerlessness, and death.

To illustrate how irrelevant the terms “liberal” and “conservative” have become, consider the case of Sweden and Switzerland, two of the most prosperous countries in the world. Sweden is the stereotypical democratic socialist state with a strong central government, relatively high taxes, a broad social welfare net financed by the State, and a strong social conscience. Switzerland is the most free market country in the world, with the weakest central government, and the most decentralized social welfare system. Both are affluent, clean, green, healthy, well-educated, democratic,

nonviolent, politically neutral, and among the most sustainable nations in all of history. By U.S. standards, they are both tiny. Switzerland and Sweden work, not because of political ideology, but rather because the politics of human scale always trumps the politics of the left and the politics of the right. Under the politics of human scale, a politics that trumps our now-outdated and useless “liberal-versus-conservative” dualistic mind-set, there would be but one fundamental question: “Is it too big?”