

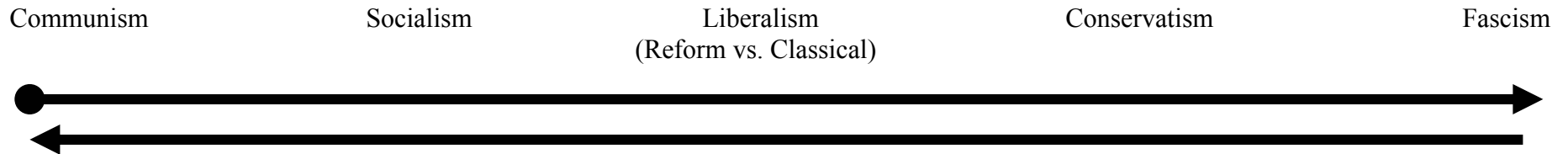
The Political Spectrum

"Left" and "Right" are arguably the two most utilized terms in western political discourse. Placing each at the end of a continuum creates the "political spectrum" of political ideologies.

There are **two** ways of looking at the spectrum: one is from **left to right** (where one side is the opposite of the other); the other is from the **center outward** (where the two ends of the spectrum are similar and in opposition to the center).

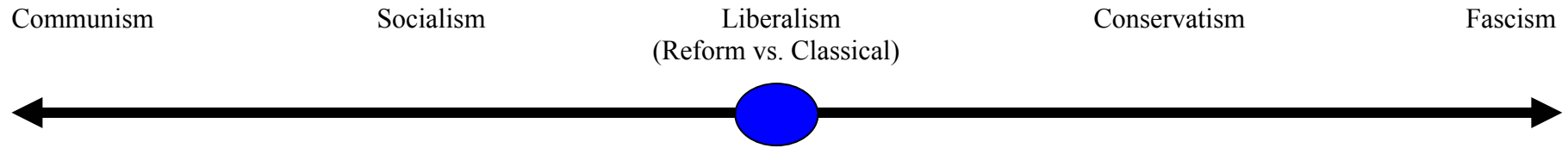
Of course, this is a very simple and schematic look at politics. The reality is that most people and groups rarely follow this spectrum consistently. Even the theory is not so neat and tidy; there are complexities that these diagrams can't show. And, finally, many political ideologies, like feminism and anarchism, may not fit along this conventional spectrum at all.

A. Left to Right (or Right to Left)



Beware of what is ideal and what is reality! Those who call themselves communists, in particular, display a noticeable discrepancy between the two.

B. Center Outward (where the two ends of the spectrum are similar and in opposition to the center)



Be careful: the socialist will argue that her sense of community is different from the conservative; the left favours equal, progressive groups, while the right prefers hierarchal, traditional groups. Moreover, the socialist would argue that only in these progressive groups can the liberal individual realize his or her full potential and liberty. Also, the last two categories reflect a 20th century approach to communism, an approach not shared by 19th century Marxists.

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