

Philosophical Conservatism

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Philosophers since John Stuart Mill have long dismissed conservatism for its attachment to tradition and neglect of reason. Meanwhile, conservatives since Edmund Burke have been suspicious of philosophical reasoning for its tendency to destroy tradition. Breaching this divide, philosophical conservatism seeks to conserve and promote the good expressed in tradition, understood as the constituents of human happiness and political arrangements that have proven conducive to human happiness. Far from a license to destroy tradition, however, the epistemic and moral limits of human nature constrain our promotion of the good. Neither must we abandon reason in deference to the status quo. Rather, by reasoning through the moral ideals of existing traditions, philosophical conservatism best promotes the human good.