



Understanding Ideologies

Characteristics of
Ideologies

Ideologies



- Ideologies are systems of thought that try to explain how the social world works, how we should live together, how we should treat one another, why we should or should not care about society and others, and how society ought to be in the future.
- Ideologies form when a group of people share a way of thinking.

Characteristics of Ideology



Interpretations of History



Beliefs about Human Nature



Influential Philosophers



Beliefs about Society



Beliefs about the Structure of
Society



Visions of the Future

Interpretations of History

- People interpret the past differently based on their beliefs and values. Those who share an ideology interpret the past in a similar way
- Since 1937, Columbus Day in the USA has celebrated Columbus' arrival to the "New World" in 1492
- Consider two different viewpoints on this American national holiday:



“Columbus Day shouldn’t even be on the calendar because Columbus was the one who started the genocide against Native Americans.” – Michelle Montes, Sophomore, USC





10-11

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"Today's Columbus Day. If it wasn't for
him we'd be Europeans."



“After Columbus came millions of European immigrants who brought their art, music, science, medicine, philosophy and religion to America. These contributions have helped shape the USA.” – The Order Sons of Italy in America

Image: NYC Columbus Day Parade

Beliefs About Human Nature

- For centuries, people have thought about what humans are like and what they are capable of doing
- “How could someone do that to another human being?”

Images: Rwandan genocide, Bosnian genocide, Rohingya genocide, Uyighur Muslims



Beliefs About Human Nature

People/groups act based on their ideologies

Ideologies ask what humanity is:

- **Biological** – Does our DNA determine us?
- **Sociological** – Do we behave differently in groups than we do alone? How much do others influence us?
- **Emotional** – How much of what we do is acting on our emotions?

Ideologies can present a positive or negative view of human nature

Influential Philosophers



- Over the centuries, some people have thought and written about human nature.
- This contributed to development of ideologies and had a great impact on future generations.
Examples are:
 - Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)
 - John Locke (1632-1704)
 - Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Thomas Hobbes

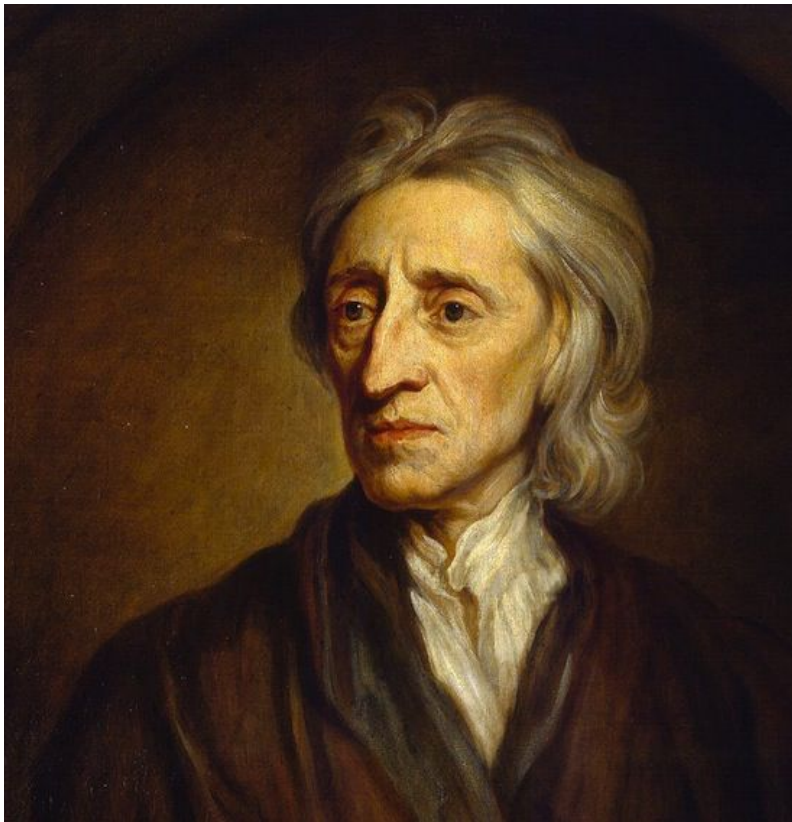


- Human nature is characterized by fear, violence, and dangerous self-interest
- Extreme individualism
- Negative view of humanity; dangerous to allow people to be free to do as they wish
- Need security more than freedom
- Society should be ruled by a monarch or dictator, where people give up their freedom for security
- Limited government – Absolute monarchy

Limited government: the philosophy that government does not have absolute authority. Hobbes did not believe that there should be many limits on government, but he did not think that a sovereign could do anything that would injure his or her subjects.



John Locke



- People are rational, intelligent, reasonable
- Positive view of human nature
- The source of power was not with God, but people (revolutionary idea in the 17th century)
- Government only exists to protect life, liberty and property.
- Government action had to be justified by the approval of the majority of people in society:
“Popular consent” later, Democracy.

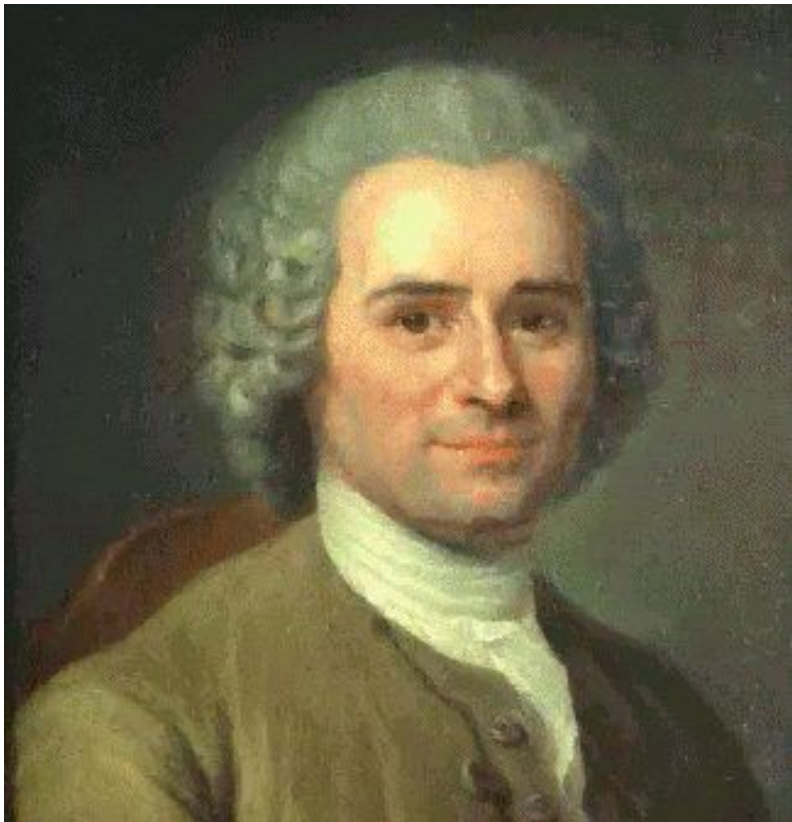


Unalienable rights: can't be taken from anyone

Equal rights: belief that all people have the same rights as anyone else

“The Problem We All Live With”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau



- People are inherently good. They are corrupted by society and civilization.
- “Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains”
- Private property and ownership led to jealousy and corruption.
- People had lost compassion for each other, selfish
- Opposed to a representative assembly, Rousseau instead believed that people should make laws directly.

Social Contract: people join groups, these groups make a presence known as a society. Forms rules and conditions for membership in society

George Giusti:



Beliefs About Society

Some societies are built on peace and freewill, others on fear and tyranny

Individualist or collectivist?

In Canada (capitalist) there is a focus on individual achievement and personal wealth

Aboriginal people tend to hold more collectivist principles: respect for the wisdom of elders and for the environment, willingness to share, etc.

Beliefs about the Structure of Society

- **Informal social structures:** unwritten rules about acceptable social behaviour & actions
- **Political structures:** in Canada, we regulate our political structure through gov't and the law
- **Economic structures:**
 - Capitalism: gov't doesn't need to interfere because people are motivated to work hard for money
 - Communism: gov't is obligated to step in to ensure that all citizens are looked after and people work hard in order to make sure no one suffers



Visions for the Future

- Most ideologies include a vision of what the world should be like in the future. This is based on the beliefs and values of the ideology.
- What is your vision for your future?
 - Loving family?
 - Good health?
 - Fancy car?
 - Nice home?
 - A career that makes you happy?
 - Staying close to home?
 - Moving far away?

