INDIVIDUALISM VS COLLECTIVISM

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The key issue in determining the degree to which an ideology is individualist or collectivist is the understanding of what the individual's role is in that society

- Individualist – self-reliance, freedom from authority

    - Example: private business (succeed or fail)

- Collectivist – interdependence, importance of the group over the individual

    - Example: universal health care (all pay the same regardless of use)

HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDINGS COLLECTIVISM

- CAVE MAN: COLLECTIVE – COULD ONLY SURVIVE BY WORKING WITH THE GROUP; IDENTITY BASED ON GROUP MEMBERSHIP

- EARLY CHRISTIANS – HAD ALL THINGS IN COMMON

- ABORIGINAL SOCIETIES – POTLATCH ON THE WEST COAST
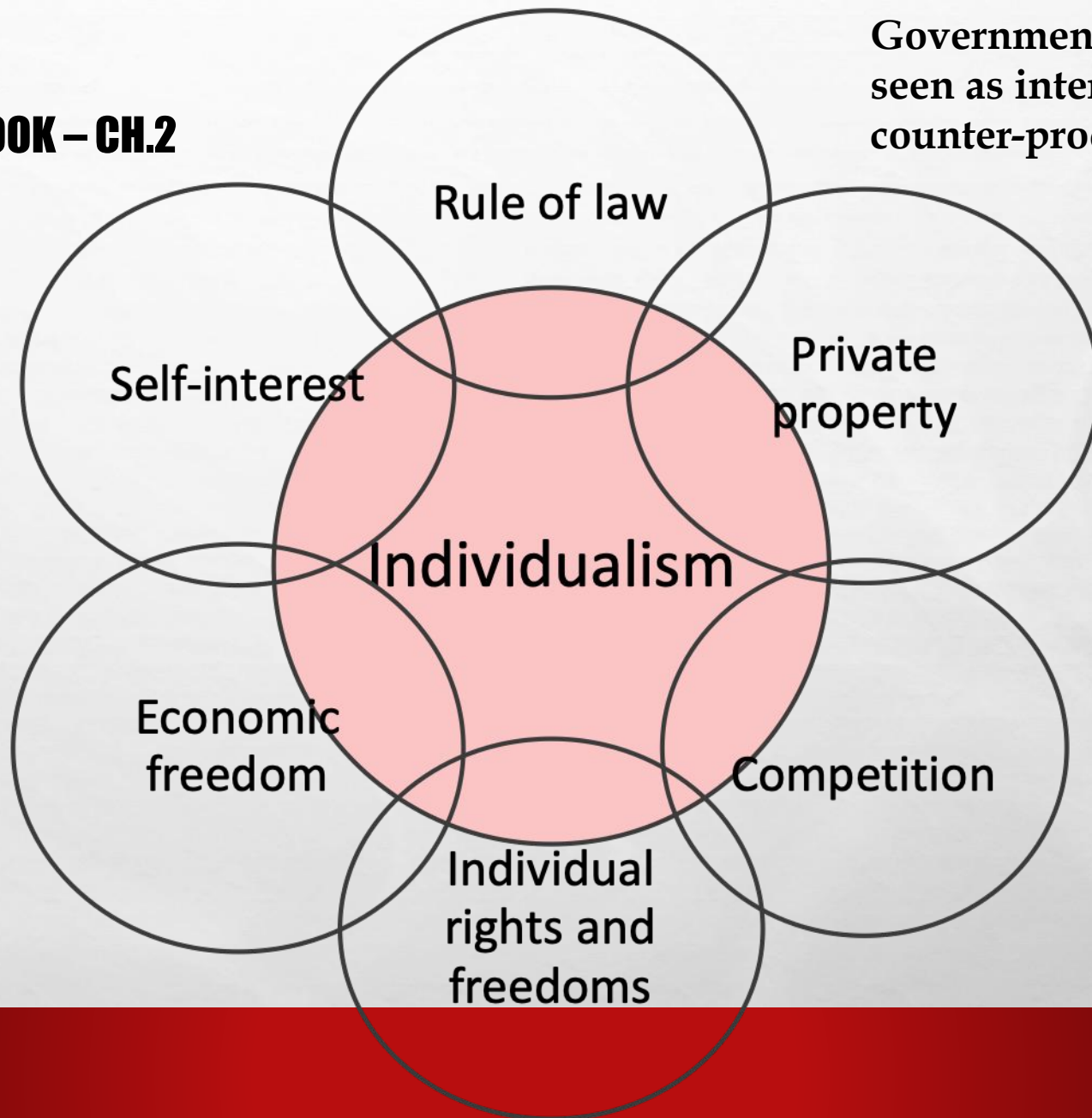
THE EMERGENCE OF INDIVIDUALISM IN EUROPE

	Increasing Focus on Individualism	
Middle Ages (500-1300)	**Renaissance (1300-1600)**	**Enlightenment (1600-late 1700s)**
- People identified with their group (clergy, peasant, craftsman) rather than their individual identity; authority came from God = little room for individualism in political matters - Individualism unheard of at this point - Distinct categories: peasants, traders, craftsmen, clergy (RC priests, monks, etc.), and nobles - Artwork often stylized and focused on religious themes	- Beliefs and values began to change ☐ more interest in the individual - Greater interest in the individual (revival of Greek and Roman attitudes); humanistic art (taking credit for works) - Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* – fascination with human anatomy and the relation of man to geometric proportions - Other works of art showed individuals (not religious figures), importance of books, education, increasing number of wealthy nobles, merchants, and craftsmen - Kings and queens still ruled aka had the divine right to rule aka people were designated by God to rule	- Protestant Reformation – individual challenges to the Catholic Church (religion became more personal) - Writing on the importance of the individual ☐ European society began to change - Individual person mattered - Reason (not religion) should be the source of knowledge - Each individual (landowner) was reasonable and capable of governing himself - Science Revolution (vs Religion) - Movement of the Earth and Sun

INDIVIDUALISM

- GOVERNMENT, FOR THE MOST PART, IS NOT TO INTERFERE IN THE WAY INDIVIDUALS CHOSE TO LIVE THEIR LIVES

- CONCEPTS LIKE RULE OF LAW ENSURE EVERYONE IS TREATED EQUALLY (UNLIKE THE DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS)

- IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

Government control is seen as interfering and counter-productive

Rule of law

Self-interest

Private property

Individualism

Economic freedom

Competition

Individual rights and freedoms

INDIVIDUALISM

- **RULE OF LAW** – EVERYONE IS SUBJECT TO THE LAW, INCLUDING THE GOVERNMENT – EACH INDIVIDUAL IS THE SAME

- **INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS** – KEY TO LIBERALISM IS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE, FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE, ASSOCIATION…

  - BALANCE OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS – FREEDOM OF SPEECH

- **PRIVATE PROPERTY** – REAL ESTATE, PHYSICAL PROPERTY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY: RESPECTING THE INDIVIDUAL

- **SELF-INTEREST/ECONOMIC FREEDOM**: LAISSEZ-FAIRE AND INVISIBLE HAND

INDIVIDUALISM

Only losers waste time listening to the input of others.

COLLECTIVISM

- GOVERNMENT IS TO RESTRICT THE FREEDOM OF INDIVIDUALS WHEN NECESSARY FOR THE GOOD OF SOCIETY

- FOCUS ON WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A COMMON GOAL

COLLECTIVISM

- **ECONOMIC EQUALITY** – MAY NOT MEAN SAME AMOUNT OF MONEY, BUT ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

  - PROGRESSIVE TAXATION

- **PUBLIC PROPERTY (OWNED BY THE STATE)** – IN THE INTEREST OF THE COLLECTIVE SOCIETY

- **COLLECTIVE INTEREST** – UNIONS

- **COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY** – HOLDING THE WHOLE GROUP RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE GROUP (CONNECTIONS)

- **COLLECTIVE NORMS** – OFTEN VOLUNTARY, BUT THE IDEOLOGICAL PRESSURE ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO FOLLOW

IN A MODERN LIBERAL SOCIETY, INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM ARE OFTEN AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER. EXCESSIVE FOCUS ON SELF-RELIANCE, INDIVIDUAL CHOICE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY DETRACTS FROM PURPOSEFUL COLLECTIVE ACTION ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE BROADER SOCIETY.

WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?

- SURVEY – TEXTBOOK PAGE 7

- HTTP://WWW.POLITICALCOMPASS.ORG/TEST

- HTTP://WWW.THEADVOCATES.ORG/QUIZP/INDEX.HTML

- HTTP://WWW.LEARNALBERTA.CA/CONTENT/SSPES/INDEX.HTML