

Perspectives on Ideology

Introduction

Any group of people—a society—that has ever had the luxury of being able to think about its existence eventually arrives at a general understanding of how the world is and how the world ought to be. Such an understanding can be called an *ideology*. Ideologies grow out of the honest and serious contemplation of several fundamental questions:

- What are humans like, and why do they act as they do?
- What is the nature of society?
- What is the role of the individual in society?

You will find many different answers to these questions in this book—some answers given by individuals and some found in ideologies. Your task will not be to decide which one is “right,” but to think carefully about whether or not any given ideology is the best way to understand the world. To accomplish this, you will examine and consider the results of ideologies that people have embraced in the past and today. By the time you finish this book, you will be in a position to reassess your own relationship with society and consider to what extent you should embrace an ideology as a way to guide your decisions and actions as a citizen.

Figure I-1



How does ideology affect the choices you make?



Points of View and Perspectives

As you make your way through this book, you will come across various points of view and perspectives regarding ideology. Keep in mind that, for the purpose of common understandings in this resource, a **point of view** represents an individual's opinion and is based on that individual's personal experience; a **perspective** reflects the outlook of a particular group of people with the same age, culture, economics, faith, language, or other shared quality. Exploring a variety of points of view and perspectives on ideology will help you recognize and develop your own point of view. It will also give you a more comprehensive understanding of ideology than you would have if you studied it from only one perspective.

The mission of Social Studies is to make sense of the human condition. Social Studies asks, "Why do people do the things they do with each other, for each other, and to each other?" Social Studies tries to unravel the central human concerns about the purposes of life, the best ways of living with others, and the best ways of relating to the world around us.

Social Studies: An Issues-Based Discipline

Social Studies is an issues-based discipline. This means that it begins its study at the point where differences of opinion or interpretation emerge. People often take their perceptions to be reality, and yet different people frequently have different perceptions of the same events. There may be disagreements and seemingly irreconcilable views of how things should be. However, it is essential to the project of Social Studies that we carefully, thoughtfully, and respectfully listen to these differences and study the many possible ways to address these concerns. This involves, in part, developing the habit of mind that withholds judgment, remains open for more information, and strives for deeper understandings of the social creature we call "human."

With this general description of Social Studies in mind, teachers and students of Social Studies are reminded that when controversy arises in the classroom, it is important to respect the views of fellow students, be sensitive to the effects of our words on others, empathize with the potential pain of others around us, and identify with others. The well-known phrase "walking in another person's shoes" is well known for a reason: it is essential not only to be aware of our differences but also to acknowledge our common humanity. We are all vulnerable. We are all social creatures who need one another. Mutual respect must colour all aspects of our study of Social Studies.

Why So Many Quotes?

Because Social Studies focuses on these very differences and perspectives, you will notice that quotations from many thinkers are included in this book. Their quotes are meant to show, first of all, the universality of these fundamental questions. The concerns of this course may be new to some but they have been the concerns of people across the ages and throughout many cultures. The words of these thinkers are also meant to invite a response—your response. On occasion, they will provoke you and encourage you to think more deeply about the issues raised in this textbook.

Inquiry-Based Learning

Every chapter following this introduction is built around a Chapter Issue related to ideology. To aid you in exploring this issue, each chapter is divided into sections. Each section offers you an opportunity to answer a Question for Inquiry related to the Chapter Issue and provides you with exploration of some key concepts to help you explore these questions. Some key supporting terminology is also provided to help you understand the key concepts and questions presented. The inquiries you pursue in this book will help you come to your own informed opinions about issues related to ideology. By the end of the book, you will be ready to develop an informed position on the Key Issue for this course: ***To what extent should we embrace an ideology?***

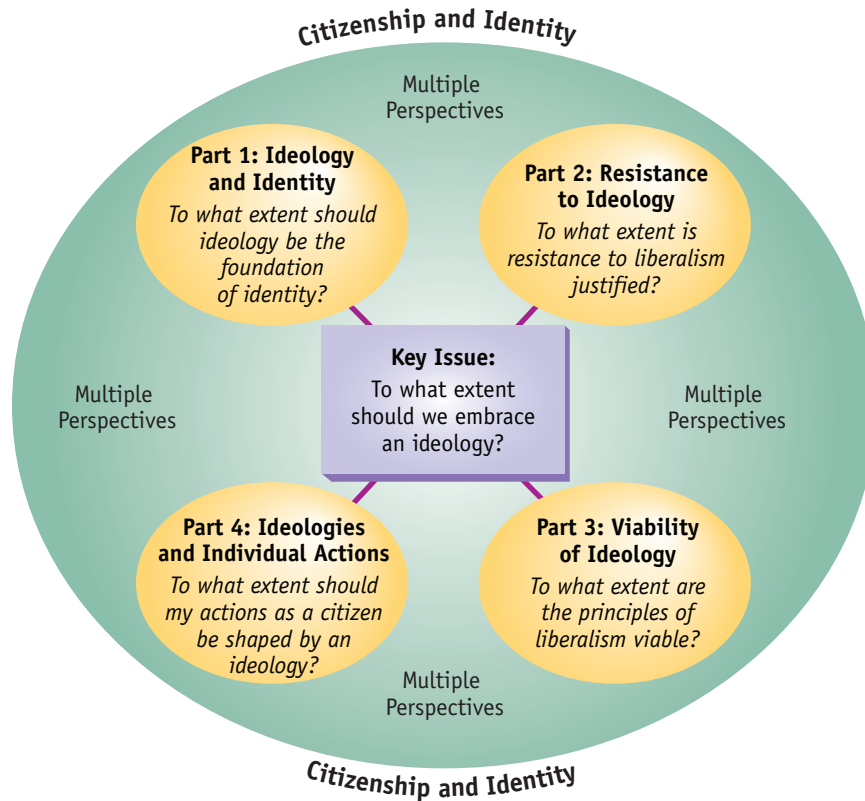
In each of the four parts of this book, you will also explore a Related Issue that will help you take an informed position about the Key Issue for this course. Read each of the four issues in the diagram on the opposite page. Which one do you think will interest you most? Which one do you think is most relevant to your life?

As you read through each chapter, you will find many cross-references to concepts, people, or events you were introduced to earlier. Use these cross-references to assist in your inquiry and to see the interrelated nature of issues and concepts throughout the resource. Two extensive indexes are also provided at the back of the book. One index lists and locates all the important terms, concepts, and people in the resource; the other provides a list of the names of organizations, institutions, and people mentioned in the resource. These indexes are meant to help you locate information quickly as you engage in the various tasks and activities throughout your Social Studies course.

Each chapter ends with a section designed to extend the inquiry of that chapter. The tasks suggested are often extensive research inquiries or preparations for debates or other presentations. These activities may require significant time commitments. You will not be expected to complete all these activities. Your teacher will determine which assignments are most suitable and viable for your class.

Finally, keep in mind that Social Studies is as much about developing the skills of inquiry, critical thinking, participation, and communication as it is about acquiring concepts and developing informed positions. Some of the essential skills required of active and responsible **citizenship** are addressed in the Skill Path feature of each chapter. Each Skill Path assignment is designed to give you opportunities to refine essential skills related to the Chapter Issue and the Questions for Inquiry for that chapter.

◀ Figure I-2



🎯 **PAUSE AND REFLECT**

Our country is based on ideologies that accept certain ideas: freedom of speech, the democratic process, the right to associate with whomever you choose, and so on. How important are these ideas to you? Can you imagine living in a country that did not uphold these ideas?

The Power of Ideologies

In the mid-20th century, two novels appeared that have had a great influence on discussions about human nature and the role of ideology in modern society. Both novels describe dystopias—fictional societies that are deliberately portrayed as negative—where ideology is used to control an unwitting population.

War is Peace, Ignorance is Strength, Freedom is Slavery

In George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), “War is Peace, Ignorance is Strength, Freedom is Slavery” are the three slogans of the government of Big Brother. In this fictional world where there are only three countries, Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, Oceania is a totalitarian society led by Big Brother that censors people's behaviour, even their thoughts.

Figure I-3

Winston Smith, the central character in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, works under the watchful eye of Big Brother as he changes old newspaper records to match the new truth as decided by the Party.



Community, Identity, Stability

In Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* (1932), "Community, Identity, Stability" is the motto of the utopian World State. Here everyone is provided for and there is no violence. Thinking, art, originality, and philosophy are simply forbidden. Instead, people take a drug to ensure that they never feel depressed, and the government strictly controls reproduction.

American social critic Neil Postman compared the respective dystopias of Orwell and Huxley:

What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumble puppy. As Huxley remarked in *Brave New World Revisited*, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny "failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions." In 1984, Orwell added, people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that what we fear will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we desire will ruin us.*

*pleasant distractions and amusements in *Brave New World*

— "Foreword", from *Amusing Ourselves to Death* by Neil Postman, copyright © 1985 by Neil Postman. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

1. When Postman talks about the fears of Orwell and Huxley, he is talking about two very different views of human nature. What are they?
2. The mottoes of the two societies (in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*) are deliberately ironic. What do these mottoes tell you about the way Orwell and Huxley think society should or should not be run?
3. If you were to write the great dystopian novel of the future, what would it be about? How would your society operate? Think about the trends in society that you would want to satirize and criticize. What would your novel say about your view of human nature?

Understanding Humans and Societies through Ideologies

What are humans like, and why do they act the way they do? What is the nature of society? What is our role as individuals in society? These are big questions, but they are not new questions. For centuries people have spent time thinking about these questions and, quite often, their responses take the form of an ideology. In the words of British literary critic and Marxist activist Terry Eagleton,

What persuades men and women to mistake each other from time to time for gods or vermin is ideology. One can understand well enough how human beings may struggle and murder for good material reasons—reasons connected, for instance, with their physical survival. It is much harder to grasp how they may come to do so in the name of something as apparently abstract as ideas. Yet ideas are what men and women live by, and will occasionally die for.

—Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*
(London: Verso, 1991), p. xiii.

Ideas are important because they are, as the quote above suggests, the reason why people act in certain ways. In order to become an informed, responsible, and active citizen, you need to be able to understand and evaluate government policies and actions, and develop informed responses to local, national, and global issues. Studying the various ideologies and responses to ideologies that will be presented to you throughout this text is your opportunity to “try them on” to see if they fit you.

Consider the following quotes about humans:

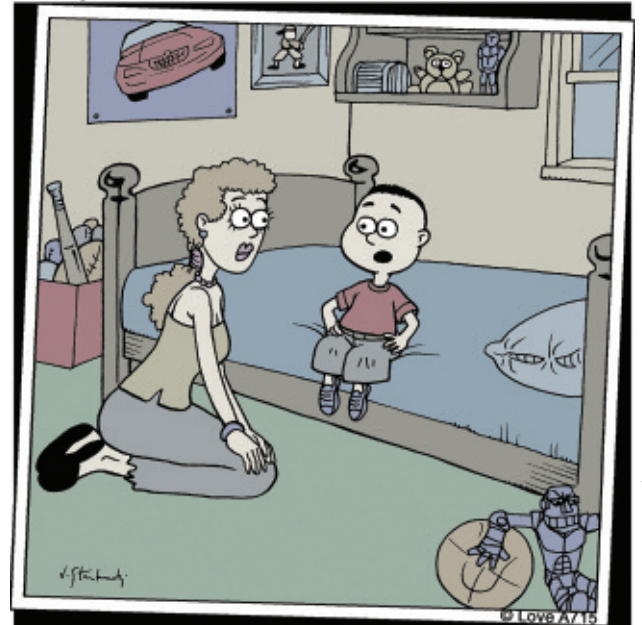
Humans can learn to like anything, that's why we are such a successful species. You can drop humans anywhere and they'll thrive—only the rat does as well.

—Jeannette Desor (research scientist at General Foods),
quoted in Ellen Ruppel Shell, “Chemists whip up a tasty mess
of artificial flavors.” *Smithsonian*, 17, 2 (May, 1986): pp. 78–85.

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

—Martin Luther King Jr, American civil rights leader,
winner of the 1964 Nobel Prize for Peace

Snapshots



"I understand how I was born; I want to know why."

Figure I-4 ▲

One view of what really makes humans human is the awareness of their own existence. “Why do we exist?” and “What is the meaning of life?” are questions people have thought about throughout the ages. What would your initial response be to this boy’s statement?

It has been said that man is a rational animal. All my life I have been searching for evidence of this.

—Bertrand Russell, British philosopher, mathematician, political activist and social reformer, winner of the 1950 Nobel Prize for Literature

Man is a goal-seeking animal. His life only has meaning if he is reaching out and striving for his goals.

—Aristotle, Greek philosopher of the 4th century BCE, made important contributions to the development of logic and the sciences, tutored Alexander the Great

The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness.

—Joseph Conrad, late-19th-century sea captain and writer, celebrated for his novels and short stories about colonialism and human nature

These quotes are attempts at capturing an ideology in a few words, sometimes humorously. Based on your present opinions and beliefs, organize the quotes from what you consider the most true to the least true.

- Why did you put them in that order?
- What is it about each quote that you agree with or do not agree with?
- Try to write your own ideology about human nature in one or two sentences.
- What did other students in your class write down?
- Can you come up with a class ideology?

What Are Humans Like?

Have you ever read a newspaper article, or seen something in a movie or television show, that made you wonder, “How could someone do that to another human being?” History is full of cases of inhumanity—the Crusades, the Holocaust, the actions of the Ku Klux Klan—and barbaric behaviour still goes on today. But history is also full of acts of kindness and compassion. There have always been people such as Mahatma Gandhi or Norman Bethune who have devoted themselves to helping others and there are many charities devoted to helping others in various ways. Each person or group acts based on its ideology, and every ideology attempts to answer the question “What are humans like?”

Mark Twain wrote, “Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to.” Why do you think Mark Twain thought this way about people? Write down a list of all the qualities or characteristics that you think make

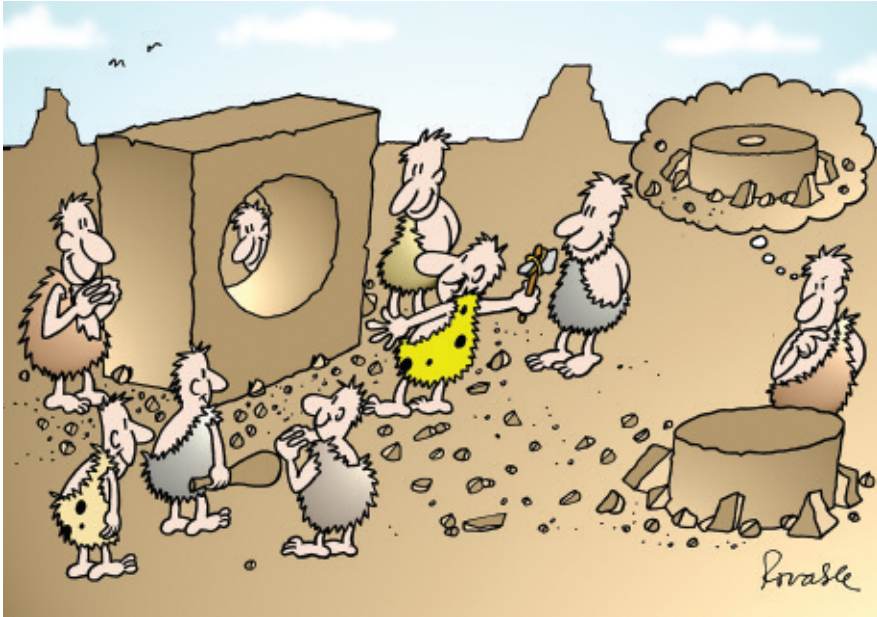


Figure I-5

What views about human nature are explicit and implicit in this cartoon?

humans human. How many of these characteristics are ideological, and how many are biological?

Thinking about what humans are like and what they are capable of is something that people have done for centuries. Philosophers, scientists, politicians, religious leaders, comedians, singers, writers, and others have offered us their ideas about humanity. Consider the following quotes:

Peace by persuasion has a pleasant sound, but I think we should not be able to work it. We should have to tame the human race first, and history seems to show that that cannot be done.

—Mark Twain, popular 19th-century American writer and satirist

Men are cruel, but Man is kind.

—Rabindranath Tagore, early 20th-century Bengali poet, novelist, and lyricist, winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature

It is human nature to think wisely and act foolishly.

—Anatole France, French writer, member of the French Academy, and winner of the 1921 Nobel Prize for Literature

Our true wealth is the good we do in this world. None of us has faith unless we desire for our neighbours what we desire for ourselves.

—Mohammed, prophet of Islam, 6th to 7th century CE

- What is the message in each of these quotes?
- Which of these quotes do you agree with most?

Clearly there is no easy answer when considering what humans are like, but ideologies are a way to explore the possible answers to this question.

What Is the Nature of Society?

The definition of a free society is a society where it is safe to be unpopular.

—**Adlai E. Stevenson, United States Ambassador
to the United Nations**

Our modern society is engaged in polishing and decorating the cage in which man is kept imprisoned.

—**Swami Nirmalananda, Hindu Swami**

These two quotes both address the question “What is the nature of society?” There are many answers to this question, and you have only to read newspapers from around the world to figure out that there are many different versions of society out there. Some societies are built on the principles of peace and goodwill, while others are built on tyranny and fear. Ideologies are the foundations on which all societies are structured, for better or for worse, because ideologies are ways of understanding how we should interact with one another.

Part of examining the nature of society is determining whether you view it from an individualist or a collectivist standpoint. **Individualism** is a current of thinking that values the freedom and worth of the individual over the security and harmony of the group. **Collectivism** is a current of thinking that values the goals of the group and the common good over the goals of any one individual. For example, in most places in Canada it is illegal to smoke in restaurants. Where do you stand on this issue? Is it a bad policy that is unfair to the individual smoker, who should be able to smoke wherever he or she pleases? Or is it a good policy that protects the health and well-being of non-smokers, who shouldn’t have to breathe in second-hand smoke? In Chapter 1 you will make a Beliefs and Values Inventory to determine whether you lean toward an individualist or a collectivist viewpoint.

In a capitalist society such as Canada’s, the focus is often on personal wealth: How much do you make? What car do you drive? Which designer’s clothes do you wear? But capitalist societies always have desperately poor people living among wealthy people. Examining the nature of society means questioning the extent to which this individualist approach or a collectivist approach is best. While studying the various ideologies in this book, you will encounter many people who do not subscribe to the values of materialism. For example, the Mi’kmaq [MIG-mah] people (sometimes referred to as the Mi’kmaw, as seen in the quotation by Battiste and Henderson) have a very different version of society:

Mi'kmaw people share an alternative vision of society. While it is compatible with universally recognized human rights, its stress is on wholeness and relationships, in particular on the responsibilities among families, clans, communities and nations. At the minimal level, Mi'kmaw thought teaches that everyone and everything are part of a whole in which the parts are interdependent on each other. Each person has a right to a personal identity as a member of a community but also has responsibilities to other life forms and to the ecology of the whole. Thus Mi'kmaw thought values the group over the individual and the extended family over the immediate or biological family.

—Source: Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2000), p. 55.

Certainly in Canada there are many people who value the community's well-being over their own and devote their time, money, and energy to helping others.

Then again, striving for individualism is not necessarily a bad thing. The influential 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote,

The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.

However, many people have argued that striving for individual goals alone is not the way to achieve real freedom and progress. Martin Luther King Jr said "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity." As an American civil rights leader of the 1960s, King recognized that the cause of his people would be furthered by working together rather than suffering apart. The power of people working together has been proven throughout history, an idea very well put by British musician John Lennon: "If everyone demanded peace instead of another television set, then there'd be peace."

As you read this text and think about the nature of society and how it can be structured, think about the type of society you would make if you were creating an ideal society. Write down some points now, and come back to your list throughout the course. At the end of the course, evaluate how or if your idea of an "ideal society" has changed. Make another list of contributions you can make to the society you live in now that would make it more like your ideal society.



Original source: drawn by Mike Martin for Native Council of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Language Program, PO Box 1320, Truro, Nova Scotia B2N 5N2

Figure I-6

The traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq. How might location and sense of place have shaped the Mi'kmaq's beliefs and values? Analyze some of the place names on the map to guide your response.



PAUSE AND REFLECT

At this point in your life, which do you value more: individual goal attainment (getting ahead for yourself) or collective well-being (doing things for others)? Write down one pro and one con for each side of the argument. Can there be a balance between the two, or does it have to be one or the other?

Figure I-7

Which of these images do you identify with? Do any of them capture what you think your role as a citizen is or will be? Are there other aspects of citizenship that are not represented here? Make a list of all the ways someone can be an active, informed, and engaged citizen. Which do you do now? Which do you plan to do in the future?

What Is Our Role in Society?

Look closely at the photographs in Figure I-7. Which one best captures the way you see your future? What is it about that photo that appeals to you? Thinking about our role in society is the third question that ideologies help us answer. It is a complex issue that usually reflects our thinking about human nature and the nature of society. Our society is a democracy, and as such depends on citizen participation. However, in order to participate in a democratic society, people need to understand not only human nature and society, but also what it means to be a citizen and what a citizen's role in society should be.



One of the earliest people to think about our role in society was the Greek philosopher Plato, who lived in the 4th century BCE. Plato believed that the community is best served by each citizen doing whatever it is that he or she does best. The best builders should build; the best farmers should farm; and the best ruler should rule. Plato based his arguments on the belief that humans are not created equal in gifts and talents. Some people are good at making decisions and others are not. Some people are good at guarding, and others are better at making bread. To Plato, your role is determined by your natural abilities.

Your role in society is more than just choosing a career, though. Our roles in society have to do with purpose: What is the purpose we serve in this world? The Dalai Lama has said that “Our prime purpose in this life is to help others.” What is your reaction to his position? If helping others is our prime purpose, then there must also be a secondary purpose (and maybe even a third and fourth purpose). The Mi’kmaq people believe that the individual has responsibilities to the collective; that is, the individual’s purpose is to better serve the community.

In this collective, each person has both rights and advantages from being part of the whole but also has obligations and responsibilities that define membership and citizenship...As one understands oneself—spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally—one becomes centered and focussed, and thus becomes a vital force in enabling others to do the same.

—Source: Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*, p. 56.

Both Plato and the Mi’kmaq bring the idea of citizenship into their ideologies. Your role in society, especially a democratic society such as Canada’s, is determined in part by what kind of citizen you choose to become. Whatever ideology you subscribe to, you cannot avoid being a citizen of society; that is, having a role in society. Your actions and beliefs shape your purpose, and they have an effect on your society and the people around you.

Ideology in History

Over the centuries, there have been many people who have thought, talked, and written about these three questions, and, in so doing, they created ideologies. Some of these people have had a more profound impact on future generations than others. Plato, for instance, is still one of the most influential philosophers of Western thought—even more than 2000 years after his death! In this section we will look at three other philosophers who have had profound impacts on shaping Western ideologies: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Do you see any flaws in Plato’s theory? Can you think of instances where his theory would not hold true?

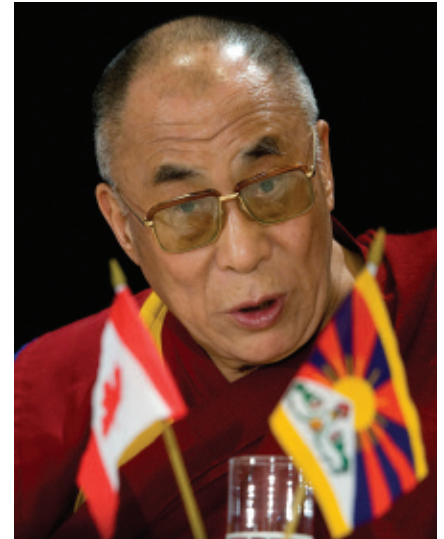


Figure I-8 ▲

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of the world’s Tibetan Buddhists. He has been a vocal supporter of Tibetan independence from China and is the head of the Tibetan Government in Exile. The Dalai Lama won the 1989 Nobel Prize for Peace.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

What similarities can you see between Plato’s and the Mi’kmaq ideologies? How is the well-being of the community served under both views of a person’s role in society? How is the individual served?

Rousseau. These men were writers during the Enlightenment, which was a period from the late 17th through the 18th centuries in Europe when the recognition of human reason made human authorship of solutions to human problems seem possible. Western democratic ideas about equality, freedom, and participatory government came out of this time period.

File Facts

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)

- studied at Oxford University
- later lived in Paris for several years
- tutored the Prince of Wales (later King Charles II)
- wrote *Leviathan* (1651), a key text in Western political philosophy
- wrote extensively about *social contract* theory and the *state of nature*
- returned to England during the Civil War (1642–1651), fearing persecution from the English royalists in exile
- was banned from publishing any book related to human conduct following the Restoration of the monarchy (1660)

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)

Thomas Hobbes was an English philosopher living during the English Civil War. The war was a bitter struggle between the king and Parliament that ended when King Charles I was beheaded. After that, a republic was formed under Oliver Cromwell, a strict Puritan, whose government tyrannized the people and brutally punished anyone who disagreed with its policies.

These events profoundly influenced Hobbes. He believed that human nature is characterized by fear, violence, and dangerous self-interest—in other words, extreme individualism—where people are looking out only for themselves and hurting anyone who gets in their way.

[During the state of nature, people] are in that condition which is called war...In such condition there is no place for industry...no culture of the earth...no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter XV,
“Of Other Laws of Nature.” Great Voyages:

The History of Western Philosophy.

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-c.html#CHAPTERXV>

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Do you agree with Hobbes's assessment of human nature?

What are the implications of the ideal society Hobbes envisioned? What flaws do you see in his theory?

Hobbes believed that if everyone is free, then everyone is in danger, and that we all need security more than we need freedom. Hobbes's solution was a society where everyone gave up his or her freedom to one person (a monarch or a dictator) who was responsible for everyone's security. Quite simply, Hobbes did not think it was possible to have both freedom and security.

John Locke (1632–1704)

John Locke, another English philosopher, had a very different view of human nature. Unlike Hobbes, he believed that people are rational, intelligent, and reasonable. Most people living at the time believed that power rested with God and the king (who was chosen by God to rule and therefore had absolute power, a doctrine known as the **divine right of kings**). Locke, on the contrary, believed that the source of power

was people themselves, which was a revolutionary idea in the 17th century. He believed that individuals possess the ability to be reasonable and make rational decisions.

Locke further believed that the only reason governments exist is to protect life, liberty, and property, which is why people give up their natural state of freedom to enter into a civil society. However, Locke believed that any government action had to be justified by popular consent. Take, for example, what Locke said about taxation:

[The government is allowed to tax the people, but] it must be with his own consent—i.e., the consent of the majority, giving it either by themselves or their representatives chosen by them; for if any one shall claim a power to lay and levy taxes on the people by his own authority, and without such consent of the people, he thereby invades the fundamental law of property, and subverts the end of government.

—John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chapter 11, “Of the Extent of the Legislative Power,” 1690.

File Facts

John Locke (1632–1704)

- studied philosophy and medicine at Oxford University
- wrote about *social contract* theory, like Hobbes, as well as consciousness, identity, liberty, and government
- prepared writings on individual rights that later became key ideas in the ideology of liberalism



Figure I-9

Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau all talk about humans in a *state of nature* (that is, prior to the existence of an organized society), but their ideas about this position were very different. Whom do you agree with? Why? Take a look at the photos shown here—people walking to raise money for AIDS awareness and others clashing on the ice rink. What have your experiences taught you about human nature? How does that affect the way you see yourself and others?



The notion of popular consent is what sets Locke apart from most thinkers of his time. In essence, Locke believed in democracy, which is why his theories were used by American revolutionaries almost 100 years later as the basis for their new government.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a Swiss philosopher who spent much of his adult life in France. He was very interested in the common good. He believed that people are inherently good and have been corrupted by civilization and society. Another important Enlightenment thinker, Rousseau's friend Denis Diderot, expressed a similar view: "It is not human nature we should accuse but the despicable conventions that pervert it."

File Facts)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)

- grew up an orphan in Geneva, Switzerland
- worked in the French Embassy in Venice
- contributed several articles to Denis Diderot's *Encyclopedia* in Paris
- wrote operas and novels, as well as celebrated essays on music, the arts and sciences, and education
- wrote a work on *social contract* theory and had a positive view of human nature (this is what he is best known for)
- had critical views on religion, which caused his books to be banned in France and Switzerland

Most importantly, Rousseau believed that humans are naturally free and are equal in principle: "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains." He believed that private property and ownership of land had led to jealousy and corruption. People had lost their compassion for one another, become selfish, and based their happiness on the opinions of others. Rousseau was writing at a time when France had an oppressively rigid class structure, great extremes of wealth and poverty, and an autocratic government led by a king who allegedly proclaimed "L'État, c'est moi" ("I am the state").

Rousseau wanted to strip humans of all those aspects that he took to be the results of the influence of society. He wanted humans to go back to the characteristics that were universal and unchanging: the characteristics that made humans good and equal. He thought that if this could be done, the most effective and legitimate forms of government could be determined. Rousseau's ideal state was one where the general will of the people was the absolute authority. Unlike Locke, however, Rousseau was opposed to the idea of a **representative democracy** (a system where a small group of politicians are elected by a larger group of citizens). Instead, Rousseau felt that citizens themselves should make the laws directly. Rousseau believed that if this were achieved, people could enjoy a level of freedom close to what they enjoyed in the state of nature.

Each of these philosophers had very strong views on human nature and came up with an ideal form of government based on his beliefs. Make a list of the key points each philosopher makes about

- the nature of human beings
- the nature of society
- people's role in society

Are there any similarities among the philosophers' ideas? Think about how some of the ideas put forward by these philosophers have been integrated into our modern society. Do you think any of them would approve of the way we live our lives today?

Moving Forward

Living in Canada gives you an opportunity that is not available to a lot of people around the world: the opportunity to *choose* what your role in society will be. You get to choose whether or not to vote, where to live, who you want to be friends with, what books you read, and what ideology you embrace.

The three questions we have explored in this introductory chapter—*What are humans like? What is the nature of society? What is our role in society?*—are not easy questions with easy answers. The ideologies you will read about in this textbook provide some answers to these questions and define what it is to be a good citizen for those that embrace them. The future is before you, and you will be a key part of that future, whatever your ideology. The Key Issue of this course, *To what extent should we embrace an ideology?*, is designed to make you think about the choices that lie ahead of you and how you will confront the issues that face your community, country, and humanity.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Do you think Rousseau was influenced by either Hobbes or Locke? What problems can you see with people making laws directly, rather than through a representative assembly?

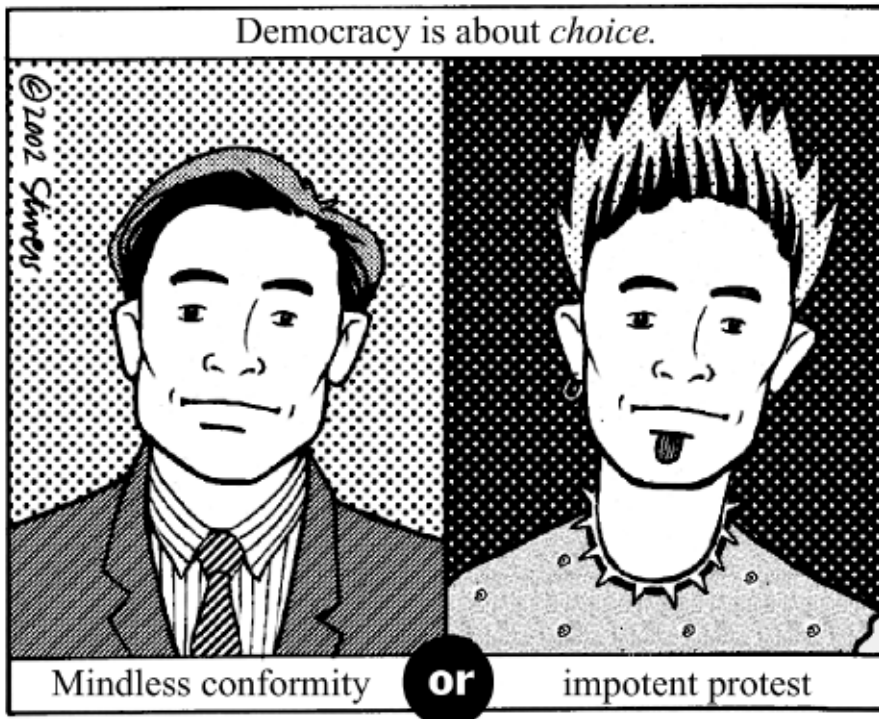


Figure I-10

"Democracy is about choice" by Mark Stivers. What comment is Stivers making about our choices in a democracy? Do you think the labels under each picture are fair?