

Chapter 27, Politics: Political Theories

Ideology

1. **Method** of revealing biases and prejudices
2. Comprehensive **belief systems**:
 - a) interpret and understand events
 - b) guide us towards achieving certain goals
3. The product of **socialization** or **conscious commitments**

The 'end of ideology' debate

1. **Consensus politics**:
 - to attract the undecided voters in marginal constituencies
2. **An Age of Ideology** – 20th. Century:
 - a) the means of influencing large numbers
 - b) the need to influence in an age of mass democracy

Interpretations

1. Marx and **false consciousness**:
 - a) all thought = socially determined – the product of specific economic and social systems
 - b) all are socialized from birth by the ruling ideology = 'false consciousness'
 - c) ideology masks the specific interests of particular classes
2. Mannheim – **system of beliefs**:
 - a) systems of beliefs that promote and protect interests of a particular class/group = '**particular**' ideologies
 - b) '**total**' ideologies = world-view of a whole class or age – seeks to generate a commitment to a certain way of life; to convert more of the world to its beliefs
3. Trilling – **emotional safety**:
 - a) familiar conceptual framework through which we interpret unfamiliar experiences and arguments into familiar terms
 - b) acceptance of common core of values and beliefs as part of a process of finding emotional safety in a particular group

Political Theories

Anarchism

1. Complete abolition of all forms of **authority**:
 - a) authority crystallizes the **status quo** as the moral consensus evolves
 - therefore authority = tyranny
 - b) Advocates **simpler life** because complex technology, materialism and all forms of bureaucracy dictates to the individual

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2. Rejects all political arrangements (e.g. parliamentary democracy) that involve the individual abdicating his **responsibilities** (e.g. to elected representatives)
3. Not opposed to all forms of law – just to that which is not self-imposed – the product of **free and voluntary association**

Liberalism

1. **Ideological**
2. **Two types:**
 - a) **positive liberty** – welfare state + competition and free markets
 - b) **negative liberty** – leaner governments and reduction in welfare support

Totalitarianism

1. **The Leader:**
 - intuitive abilities to interpret the GW and the course the nation should take
2. **Total power:**
 - a) Claim: as a form of self-government individual has nothing to fear from governments
 - b) To limit power = to limit the extent the individual can liberate himself
3. Leader **subjugates institutions** to his will
4. **Mass mobilization:**
 - a) **constant change and uncertainty** in order to achieve ultimate goals – therefore uncritical acceptance of leader's policies:
 - (i) **ideal goals** e.g. social equality/industrialization
 - (ii) **national defence:**
 - I. **external** aggressor – constant threats of invasion
 - II. **internal** aggressor – counter-revolutionaries
 - b) could **avoid fixed rules and systems of accountability** of institutionalized government by keeping all around him in constant flux and change

Conservatism

1. **Tradition** – wisdom of the past v. the present
2. Suspicious about all **rational approaches** to politics
3. **Pragmatic**

Nationalism

1. **Feeling of belonging** to a group united by common ties
2. Belief = **humanity naturally divided** into nations

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– pre-political homogeneity e.g. lang/race/history/culture/religion

3. Only legitimate form of government = self-government
4. Political struggle = between homogeneous people and outside oppressor
5. Ideological device to promote interests of a certain group/class

Fascism

1. Romanticist reaction to Enlightenment:
 - a) to its confidence in reason
 - b) the inevitability of progress
2. Third Way:
 - alternative to Liberalism and Socialism
3. Unpredictability of the individual:
 - creative potential of the irrational
 - v. the rational ordered progress associated with liberalism and socialism
4. Social Darwinism:
 - a) nations evolve into superior forms
 - b) superiority depends on their purity
5. Attracted all those social groups whose privileged position was under threat from industrialisation and the influence of liberalism and socialism:
 - a) Liberalism:
 - free markets and competition threatened small shopkeepers/small businessmen, etc.
 - b) Socialism:
 - (i) Welfare State – therefore increases in taxation
 - (ii) Trade unions:
 - I. employers – increased wage costs
 - II. lower middle class:
 - either lose status and keep up in the wage race by joining the proletariat
 - or keep status and fall behind in the wage race
6. The racial side-step:
 - a) Aim: reverse the historical forces that had given rise to socialism and liberalism
 - b) Convince the lower middle class their problems ≠ economic and social, but racial
 - c) Result: channelled their anticapitalism into anti-Semitism and sidestepped social and economic reforms which would have promoted support for liberalism and socialism

Socialism/Communism

1. Progress towards greater freedom = result of class conflict
2. Marx's Theory:
 - a) Theory of History = Dialectical Materialism

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- b) Motive force = material forces – the way society is organised economically and socially to meet its **needs** through production and distribution
- c) **The state** = the means of oppression of one class by another
 - the guardian of ruling class ideology
- d) **Alienation** – increasing discontent as the exploited class become more conscious of their exploitation and alienation:
 - (i) from the **product** of their labour
 - (ii) from their **fellow workers**
- e) Result = **class consciousness** increases while the ruling ideology attempts to mask from the workers the degree of their exploitation
- f) Each stage of the dialectic must reach its full **maturity**
e.g. Russia, China, Cuba
- g) **Eurocommunism**:
 - (i) commitment to **revolution** and accept their role as normal political parties to work within the parliamentary system
 - (ii) disavow the leadership of the **Soviet Communist Party** in the international revolutionary struggle