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By Harry Jivenmukta



Authoritarianism means the belief in a system which will not allow any criticism or debate about how the government rules or its motives. This type of government lays down rules and expects everyone to follow them without question. There is no regard for civil liberties.

The word authoritarianism is subjective in that it means different things to different people. To students, the way a teacher behaves might seem authoritarian but to some parents it might seem like keeping effective and good control on disruptive students. It is in this same way that a system which may seem impossible for some people to justify, sometimes with its torture of opponents and **fiat of iron** rule, is perfectly acceptable to other people.

The feeling of historians who have written about periods of authoritarian rule is that there are a certain number of people in every population who are 'deferential'. This means that they look up to others and expect to be led. There is usually a hierarchy in such a system with one person being authoritarian over those below, and being totally deferential to those above.

Authoritarianism is also popularly seen to increase as the area and complexity of rule increases. The larger the country, the more decisions there are which need to be made. In order to be effective it is necessary to enforce decisions more completely so that there is time to spend on other matters. A teacher may spend a lot of time with one student if he or she had only one student to teach, but in a class full of students the teacher has to be more insistent that everyone learns in a particular way and cannot afford to spend much time paying attention to individual needs.

Authoritarianism is often confused with **Totalitarianism**. The essential difference is that in a totalitarian system the rule is **total**, with the ruling group making decisions about all aspects of life including guidance on pastimes and leisure activities. There is no decision making outside the tight group of rulers and every decision is passed out as an order; something which must be done. The USSR under Stalin is a good example of a totalitarian regime.



Make a list of features you might find in an authoritarian regime which you would not find in the UK today.

List the differences between authoritarianism and totalitarianism. What would life be like in these societies?



Anarchism has two main points of belief:

That society can survive happily without government;

That government is not legitimate unless it governs with the consent of every person in that society.

Anarchists believe that freedom is paramount and that everyone is equally entitled to be free absolutely. They do not like government because it interferes with the freedom of the individual. The larger the area which is controlled by a government the less individual freedom there is for citizens. That is why anarchists believe in small communities where there are fewer people and therefore fewer decisions to be made.

Anarchists would not support a government but instead decisions would be made by common consent and cooperation. In a small rural setting this is seen as being plausible but in highly industrialised and highly populated areas this type of decision making is seen as being ineffective. In rural communities it is often obvious what needs to be done, with decisions made by nature as much as by people. This can be seen in the time for planting, harvesting and stocking up for Winter.

EXERCISE.

Imagine that your class is a small community which has decided to govern itself according to the anarchist principles of cooperation and common consent. Make a list of things you would normally do in a week and then decide together how you would do these as anarchists. Consider, for instance, how you might choose teams to play a competitive sport, or how you would decide which lessons were most important and therefore deserve more commitment.

**FIND
OUT**

What are the main advantages and disadvantages of Anarchism?

Have there ever been Anarchist societies in the past?

Do any people today live according to Anarchist principles?



Communism is probably the most misunderstood of political theories. The word has been assigned to just about every situation which someone dislikes and is vaguely leftist. Demonstrators, irrespective of what they may be demonstrating about, are often referred to as communists; or people who dislike liberal democracy.

Communism is part **Marxism**, and part a mixture of **Leninism, Trotskyism and Stalinism**, depending on the political circumstances in a particular country.

Communists believe that liberal democracies support Capitalism which is an economic relationship between the owners of the means of production, (**Capitalists**), and the workers, (**Proletariat**). The Capitalists necessarily work for maximum profits and in the search for more and more profit they undermine the people who work for them. The workers suffer bad working conditions and a poor lifestyle. Communists believe that if the **Means Of**

Production, (business, factories, transport, communications, etc.), are controlled by the people, then all production undertaken could be for the benefit of all rather than the few capitalists as at present. Communists believe that eventually the workers, disgusted by their conditions, would rise up in revolution and overthrow the Capitalist state and replace it with a communist one.

Marx put forward a political theory of how this should happen but it was left up to the communists of the first revolution, (in Russia 1917 onwards), to translate theory into practice. During the following 20 years three different ways of bringing about communism were propounded, by Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Today, communists are described by their type of communism and called Stalinists, Trotskyists, Leninists, etc.

The main difficulty with Communism theory into practice is that there are several stages which the new order must go through in order to achieve a truly communist society. The first of these is socialism and the very unfortunately named, **Dictatorship Of The**

Proletariat. People usually react negatively to anything which talks of dictatorship. This period of transformation from Capitalism to Communism is when the people are guided to live according to a new system and need to be forced in some instances to change.

Eventually the Communist society would develop where no one would force their will on others and everyone would work towards a common good.

See page on:

Marxism



Write a paragraph on Leninism, and say how it contributed to the present day understanding of Communism.

Write a paragraph on Trotskyism, and say how it contributed to the present day understanding of Communism.

Write a paragraph on Stalinism, and say how it contributed to the present day understanding of Communism.



Environmentalism is one of the newer -isms to emerge, and developed from the early 1970s. The people who believe in environmentalism think that in production it is more important to look after the environment and ensure quality of life rather than forge ahead regardless, in search of maximum profits. The movement started as small pressure groups which became concerned about certain types of production methods which they felt were undermining the environment and leading to pollution in the air, water supplies and in the food chain.

From a birth as disparate small groups, environmentalists slowly organised themselves into a political force and can be seen in many political groupings today. The most visible political force in the UK and Europe is the **Green Party**. They put candidates up at local and General Elections and stand on a platform which supports responsible growth which will do nothing to undermine the already delicate balance between people and nature.

Some people thought that environmentalists were a joke in the 1970s but now they are taken very seriously with all major political parties trying to 'buy off' the green vote by promising to develop better ways of checking production and punishing those who break health and safety regulations.

EXERCISE.

Write a paragraph on the beliefs of environmentalists. Then write a paragraph each on the good and bad aspects of being an environmentalist.

IDEAS

Existentialism is a difficult theory to define but put in simple terms it is the opposition to the bureaucracy of modern societies which dehumanises people and leads to alienation.

EXAMPLES:

A modern day example of this could be if you had purchased an item by mail order and it was unsuitable and you returned it. Every time you tried to find out about the progress of your claim for a refund you were passed from operative to operative and no one would give you a straight answer. You are only a claim number being passed around and no one takes into account your feelings as a human being.

You work in a factory and none of the managers know your name. You are just an employee number, and next to your number is another number indicating your work output.



When you die, your National Insurance number is cancelled, and at the Registry Office your death is recorded in a book. No one wants to know what sort of person you were.

The existential movement started in the eighteenth century but had its heyday in the early part of the twentieth century. Jean Paul Satre and Albert Camus are the main people associated with these beliefs and their novels are a good source of reading to understand these better. In particular Albert Camus' book L'Etrange, (The Outsider) is worth reading.



The word **Fascism** was revived by Mussolini when he formed his Political party in the early part of the twentieth century.

Fascism developed differently in Spain, Germany and Italy and seemed to progress depending on the opportunity which arose in each country. In this way it is difficult to point to an exact Fascist doctrine, although many point to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Basically Fascism is a mixture of nationalism, populism and a dislike for democracy and communism.

Fascists believe in a strong central leader who will enforce the law with an iron hand. A strong leader must be followed completely and he will then deliver prosperity and greatness to the country. Just as Communism is misunderstood, so fascist is a term which is applied broadly to many right wing politicians.

Very often the appeal of fascism attracts poorer working class people who have many complex problems and want to believe that there are fairly simple answers. Leaders **wrap themselves in the flag**, recall past glories and point the decline to obvious targets like communists, immigrants and Jews. Fascism needs to have a target to keep up the momentum and especially in the case of Hitler's Germany there was a constant shift from one group who were to blame for Germany's problems to others. Hitler targeted Communists, Jews, immigrants, gypsies, and Germans who were not loyal enough.

It has often been questioned whether Fascism is a lasting belief or whether it was a peculiar response to a particular historical episode. Many people can point to the similarities in Italy and Germany in particular; a bad deal after world war one, poverty, poor democratic leadership, and feelings of shame and guilt. Fascism has never had a large following except for the years 1920-1945, and in Franco's Spain.



Chart the rise of Fascism in Italy, Germany, and Spain between 1920 and 1939.

What is the difference between Fascism and Nazism?

Is there a prevalence of Fascism in Europe today?



Federalism can best be seen in action in the USA. The country has some laws which are enforced nationally and others which are left up to the individual states to enforce.

Federalism is a group of independent or semi independent states under the umbrella of a national government. The importance of self determination in some matters is recognised whilst other elements like defence are seen to be best provided for by the strength of the country as a whole.

Federalism is a very big issue for the UK and is likely to dominate politics for some time. The European Community, (EC), is in a '*coming together*' process in which the sovereignty of the nations in the EC are being slowly reduced and the dominance of a central government of Europe is developing. True European federalists see a Europe similar to the USA in which the present national governments will have control of internal matters but

where the European Government would control those matters which are of common interest. The UK and some other European nations are split as to the level of integration there should be and some openly oppose Federalism. In the exercise below list the advantages and disadvantages of Federalism in Europe.

ADVANTAGES OF FEDERALISM	DISADVANTAGES OF FEDERALISM



When people speak of **Fundamentalism** today they are almost always referring to religious fundamentalism. Fundamental means basic, primary, or important. In religious terms it has become a word which means extreme belief rather than the belief in the important and basic parts of a religion. In most cases fundamentalist is applied to Muslims in the Middle East or Asia, but is increasingly used to describe the revival of Christian extremism in the USA.

Religious fundamentalists are seen to be backward looking to those who believe in the liberalism of the West. Fundamentalists emphasise the importance of the family, law and order, and traditional interpretations of morality and ethics. They are anti abortion and usually believe in the traditional role of women rather than the feminism of today.

The West sees Islamic fundamentalism as a direct threat to liberal democracy and has seen Islam grow to become the most popular religion in the world. Where Islamic revolutions have occurred the democratic structures have been dismantled and religious law has taken its place. Much of the fear the West has of Islam is based on emotion rather than fact.

The fundamentalists in the USA have been responsible for attacks on US administration centres and bombs and guns have been used. The minority of these people who are better described as terrorists, (see sheet on Terrorism), undermine the real intention of other fundamentalist believers. The main thrust of most fundamentalists is a return to traditional values.



Look up the word fundamental in two dictionaries, one old and one newer. How has the definition changed?

Do people who believe in traditional values live in the past? Are they old fashioned or is there something to be gained by returning to traditional values?

Why is the West concerned by the rise of religious fundamentalism?



Imperialism is the desire for one country to expand its influence into other countries. Traditionally this may have meant invading neighbouring countries or in the 18th and 19th centuries it might have involved *discovering* new countries and imposing rule on their inhabitants. The reason for Empire building was to develop trade and wealth for the country and almost every large European nation had an empire at some time in the last three centuries. Some people confuse imperialism with colonialism. **Colonialism** gives no rights to the subjects of the nations which have been conquered. A nation within an empire can have its own government and internal laws which differ from the powerful country which controls it, but it will act in the interest of the more powerful 'mother' country.

Today there is very little imperialism in the traditional sense. Today's imperialism is more to do with dominating international trade and industries. Many large international companies have a greater financial turnover than some nations do, and many of the policy decisions of governments are made according to the wishes of these very powerful companies.

EXERCISE.

Make a list of the international companies which dominate world trade in a particular product and say how it influences other nations.

COMPANY/PRODUCT	HOW IT INFLUENCES NATIONS
e.g. Computer Software from the USA	People now speak and write American English, like color, center, burger, and 'incorrect' sentence use



Isolationism is the desire of one country to ignore as much as possible what is happening in the countries around it and develop its own interests. The two nations best known for their isolationism is Britain standing aloof of the rest of Europe and the isolationism of the USA until the early part of the twentieth century. British people were known as *Little Englanders* by Europeans who felt that they should be involved more in European affairs. Often, as the case is with Britain, there is a natural reason for isolation to some extent, (The English Channel). One of the reasons why the UK stands alone on many EC issues is that its policy of the past has not involved it in many of the issues which are seen to be important to the other countries. One of these factors is that Britain, in the two world wars was not invaded whilst other European countries have been occupied and threatened by neighbouring nations.

Isolationism also leads to greater nationalism in many cases. When nations are inward looking they rely on their traditional strengths and beliefs much more. This is one reason why the UK is said to still have an 'Empire mentality' even though most of this was lost many years ago.

Isolationism is often confused with neutrality. Britain was isolationist between the two world wars but it was never neutral and had defence treaties with many European nations from 1918 onwards. **Neutrality** is when a country declares its intention not to get involved in the affairs of two or more sides in an argument or disagreement. There are many reasons for neutrality. Some reasons are that countries are traditionally neutral because of their size or lack of military resources. Belgium is a good example of this although it was taken over in both world wars by Germany despite being neutral in both wars. Another reason why some countries choose to be neutral is that they may be exhausted from internal wars or problems. Spain's neutrality in world war two is a good example of this because Spain had just emerged for a three year civil war when world war two loomed.

Today it is usually smaller nations which are isolationist but it is rare because the nature of international trade means that isolationism can make a country very backward in its development. Albania is an example of a modern day country which is emerging from isolation. The favoured form of transport in 1995 was still the horse and cart!



- Make a list of nations which tend towards isolationism today.
- Make a list of countries which are neutral and do not belong to any defence pact or economic pact.



Liberalism as a movement developed in the 19th Century and was intended to remove the old feudal and monarchical control of Britain. Liberalism believes in the right of freedom and self determination of individuals and also in the care and support of the less fortunate people in society.

Liberals are a middle way between the right and left wings in politics. They do not support the welfare system as an all encompassing large institution but unlike conservatives they do believe in supporting people in need in a much more effective way. Liberals believe in little government involvement in the affairs of citizens and like the economic markets to determine themselves unlike the left wingers who would advocate more government involvement.

One of the great problems that liberals have is that their political theory appears to borrow some policies from the left wing and some from the right wing political parties. Often their political opponents argue that liberals do not really have a policy of their own. This is not true, but liberals definitely have greater problems explaining their beliefs because they cannot be pigeon holed into either left or right.

EXERCISE.

In the exercise below make a list of policies which are propounded by the British Liberal Party and then decide whether and in what way their policy is also supported by the Conservative Party on the right or the Labour Party on the left.

LABOUR POLICY	LIBERAL POLICY	CONSERVATIVE POLICY



As with many political theories, **Marxism** is often misunderstood and applied to a whole host of political positions of people or actions on the left of the political spectrum. Essentially Marxism's starting point is a recognition that all political, cultural and other activity can be traced back to the relationship that exists between the means of production and the workers. Depending on how production is organised people will live and behave in a particular manner.

Marxists believe that there is great misery and poverty amongst the working classes because production is undertaken for the profit making benefit of the few. Business people obviously want to make as much money for themselves as is possible and will pay the least that they can get away with. Marxists believe that this relationship leads to exploitation, a dimming of the human spirit, and is wrong. By producing in a different way, which will be in the interests of all, people can lead a more fulfilling and happy life. Marxists believe that private ownership of the means of production should be ended and then all people can benefit from the wealth which is created. Poverty would end and so would inequality.

Marx had a romantic notion of ending the soul destroying production line mentality where people are reduced to being simply operatives who can not envisage the end product of their labour but merely concentrate on the particular nut or bolt they are paid to tighten. It is important to Marxists that the labour of people should be dignified and encourage them to develop their minds and become better people.

In reality, although many of the fears which Marx had about capitalism are borne out, it is difficult to envisage how a communist society could come about which was more than a country run by communist leaders rather than capitalists but essentially imposing the same restrictions on the economic system as the capitalists they replaced.

Marx saw a world wide rebellion as necessary to change the system for good. As the former USSR shows, it is very difficult for one nation to trade or act in a communist way when the rest of the world trades and interacts in a different way. Marxism has been influenced by Leninism, Stalinism and Trotskyism and is available today in a vast array of variations.

See page on:

Communism



Materialists believe that only physical and material factors explain society and its problems and complexity and that factors like religion are meaningless. Materialism forms part of communism and was propounded initially by Friedrich Engels who did much work with

Marx. Materialists argue that factors like religion rather than influencing how society develops are actually determined themselves according to material factors. If social consciousness is determined by the material conditions of life it should be possible to chart how people's beliefs alter in line with the changes in the way things are produced.

Materialists would point to the way the Industrial Revolution changed the way people lived and thought, and in modern times it is possible to see how lifestyle and beliefs have changed since the western world passed into the Post Industrial Age and into the Technological Age.

People who do not believe in materialism would point to the prevalence in religious belief and the fact that people often live according to ethical and moral codes which have not really changed in the last two hundred years.

EXERCISE.

Which things have changed as the world has moved into the technological age, and which have remained roughly the same? Are materialists correct in insisting that everything is influenced by the way things are produced and dependent on the relationship between workers and the means of production?

THINGS WHICH CHANGE	THINGS WHICH ARE ALWAYS THE SAME

IDEAS

Multilateralism is a modern idea which means to work together to achieve a particular goal. It is the opposite of **Unilateralism**, which means to decide alone.

An example of unilateralism and multilateralism is the nuclear disarmament debate. Some people may feel that they no longer want to have nuclear weapons in their country and want their governments to decide on their own, (unilaterally), to disarm with no regard to what other nuclear nations do. Multilateralists also believe in getting rid of nuclear weapons but only if others do the same. By working together they believe that there would be less risk of war because everyone would reduce their arms at the same time in an equal ratio. The unilateralists do not believe that this is really possible and that the only way to get rid of these weapons is for one nation to make a stand and go it alone. Other nations would follow because they would see that it made sense.



FIND
OUT

What do you think of Multilateralism as a way to solve difficult problems?

Isn't it true that it is difficult to decide even simple things when there are a lot of people involved?

Isn't it better to make a decision and **'go it alone?'**



Nationalism is a belief in the sovereignty of the state. People who are nationalists support the traditional institutions of the monarchy, government, and are proud of the history and achievements of their country. Nationalism is often mistakenly compared to Fascism. It is Fascism which borrowed some of the beliefs of nationalism rather than the other way around. Fascism took nationalism to its logical extremes, believing in the greatness of a particular people over all others and believing in superiority in intelligence.

Nationalism is a subjective belief system because it is based largely on emotion. All countries of the world have something to offer and are part of the world community. There tends to be an unrealistic and sometimes warped belief in the home country among nationalists and an increasingly unpopular belief in isolationism.

There is a natural anticipation among Nationalists about what will happen in the future as the world becomes an international market place and the traditional nation state mentality recedes, and this often results in an increase in nationalism as people try to cling on to the things which are familiar and which they understand.

Nationalism has been an increasing force in the twentieth century as Empires have given up their territories. The artificial borders of empire and colonialism have left many nations with populations which do not get on well with each other. We can see the calls for self determination of areas in Africa and the former USSR, (e.g. Chechnya), and the increase in civil wars and calls for independence for regions.

EXERCISE.

Think of Rwanda and Kashmir, of Somalia and Chechnya. What part does nationalism play in these struggles for self determination?

Make a list of nations in the world where nationalism is on the increase and say why this is the case.

What factors lead to a rise in nationalism generally?

With a 'shrinking world' in economic and trading terms, what future is there for the nation state?



Pacifism is the belief that nothing substantial can be gained through war. It does not mean, however, that people should just surrender when faced with adversity. Pacifists believe that a framework for resolving conflicts peacefully should be in place so that it would not be necessary for nations to ever go to war again.

Pacifism is not really a political doctrine, but has developed and grown since the first world war. That war saw millions of people killed in trench warfare for just the benefit of gaining a few yards of territory. The twentieth century has seen the most bloody conflicts in the history of the human race, and yet, pacifists would argue, there has not been any significant gain for these warring nations.

The United Nations is the closest that the pacifist ideal has come to becoming reality, yet many people would say that the UN is largely a failure when it comes to preventing war. Even when war breaks out and the UN intervenes, its forces generally stand by and merely catalogue the massacres. In the former Yugoslavia the UN knew about 'ethnic cleansing' but could do very little to stop it. The UN War Crimes Commission has been unable to arrest the identified perpetrators of the massacres let alone convict them!

EXERCISE.

Is Pacifism a realistic belief system bearing in mind the experiences of the twentieth century as the century of major wars?

How can people be encouraged to put away their weapons and talk out their differences?

Are pacifists just 'pie in the sky' thinkers who are out of touch with reality?



Racism and **Sexism** are clearly different issues but are often taken together mainly because they are both issues about equality or the lack of it.

Racism is the belief that one race is superior to others. Usually this is taken to mean that whites are superior to black people, although the Black Power movements in the USA took the opposite view. Ideas about racism spread largely due to the Empire building of European nations. These nations felt that they were superior to the blacks and Asians who they ruled because they had managed to defeat these people. They also rubbished all religions other than Christianity and ways of life other than the 'civilised' ways of Europe. Mainly this belief in superiority came about through the failure of the Europeans to understand the cultures of other peoples. Today, racism is still a powerful force, although, except for the periods 1933-1945 it has always been on the margins of politics and power.

Sexism is a very simple idea. Sexists believe that men and women have very clear and distinct roles in life and that the role of men is much more important than the role of women. They believe that women are only good at things like cooking, cleaning, and bringing up children, and are unsuited to most outside work tasks. Their belief is backed up by the experience of history. They point out that in the past the world was a much better place when women 'knew their place'.

EXERCISE.

Isn't it true that the white people have achieved much more than black people in terms of standard of living, technological development, and education?

Are the beliefs of racists wrong? Why?

'There is nothing wrong with the traditional roles of men and women. Men should be breadwinners and women should be home builders'. Discuss.

Why do women always want to do men's work when men hardly ever want to do women's work?

What do women want: to be the same as men or to have an equal opportunity?



Terrorism is a word which evokes many different reactions in people. It is an emotive word which is applied to anyone who wishes to enforce his or her view by the use of force. Many terrorists see themselves as freedom fighters. They feel that they are so oppressed and have so little chance of being heard that they must resort to extreme tactics to have their point of view taken into consideration.

Terrorism is a growing threat across the world. There are many reasons for this including the access to weapons and bomb making equipment, and the increase in self determination as Empires have disappeared.



EXERCISE.

Choose a terrorist (freedom fighters) group from the list below and write a report on why and how this group came about, its main objectives and recent activity:

**HAMAS, IRA, UDF, ETA, PLO, TAMILS,
SIKH EXTREMISTS, MILITIA GROUPS IN THE USA.**

Can terrorism ever be justified? Why?

How have terrorists influenced politics in the countries where they operate?



Utopia means the ideal or perfect society. Many philosophers have written about a utopian society, notably Sir Thomas More who wrote 'Utopia', and Plato's 'Republic'. The best way to understand utopianism is to accept it as a benchmark of what is ultimately desirable.

Even Utopianists do not believe that Utopia is possible but they put up the idea so that there is some model of perfection to aim for.

Reality is often far from perfect. Is having a perfect model to aim for helpful, especially when there may be more than one perfect model?

EXERCISE.

Write a proposal for what an ideal form of society would be for you. Consider the following points as a guide:

- Type Of Government**
- Extent Of Democracy How**
- To Punish Wrongdoers Who**
- Would Work**
- How To Support The Less**
- Fortunate**
- Relations With Other Nations**





Zionism is a very old belief which propounds that Jews would someday reclaim Palestine as their homeland and that it would be the centre from where Judaism would be spread across the world. Many people talk of Zionism incorrectly and say that it means that Jews want to take over the world.

Zionism is a very important belief to understand because it is the basis of the state of Israel and has led to major wars in the Middle East and caused terrorists to operate all over the world. The area of Palestine was under British control before it was given to the Jews who formed the state of Israel in 1947. Millions of Jews were 'exterminated' in death camps during world war two by the Nazis and this led to a sympathy towards their call for a nation of their own. The dispute started when the incoming millions of Jews displaced the Arabs who had been living in the area for thousands of years. There followed three major wars, in 1948, 1967 and 1973 all of which the Israelis won. Today the Arabs live as second class citizens with poorer housing, less income and shorter lifespans than the Jews.

The Israeli state is supported by the USA which has armed and financed Israel in exchange for having a 'friendly' nation in the Middle East for strategic purposes. The displaced and angry Arabs formed themselves into groups determined to drive the Jews 'into the sea' and reclaim their land. Since 1948 Palestinian groups have bombed American and Israeli targets all over the world. Many Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs want peace but there are too many others who are bitter.



What are the religious and historical claims of the Jews in the Middle East?

Are the displaced Arabs justified in their anger and determination to destroy Israel?

Are there other examples in the world where similar displacement of a people has happened?

How can the Arab-Israeli conflict be resolved?