

PATHWAYS SCHOOLS INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

Social Philosophy: Liberty, Equality, Justice

Section 1 Is Society Based on a Contract?

Introduction

A topic that interests most students is "Characteristics or Trends in Australian Society." An instructor could begin a discussion by asking students to list some characteristics of Australian society as a whole. For example, is our society violent? Is it powerful? Prosperous? Diverse? More diverse than in the past, or less diverse? It should be interesting to see how different students perceive society differently. This question should uncover some of the students' basic assumptions about our society, and perhaps about society in general. The question also leads to many other questions. Most of the terms used to describe our society are comparative terms. A society is not absolutely violent but is more violent or less violent than another, more powerful or less powerful than another. So to describe Australian society in general, a person must know something about other societies or about Australian society in the past. After students suggest some characteristics of Australian society, and particularly if they have different perceptions, then a teacher could ask how one can know about society as a whole. Can anyone observe society as a whole, or does everyone see only a small part, like the blind men and the elephant? Can some people see society better than others? Could people in another country see Australia better than we do?

Yes: Contractor. "The Social Contract"

The purpose of this essay is to describe the concept of a model, and to suggest that the best model for understanding society is a contract. The social contract theory is a popular theory of society, but it is plausible only if it is understood as a model, that is, a simple, familiar system used to explain a more complex, unfamiliar system. Society is "based on" a contract only in a metaphorical sense. The idea of a contract reveals the features of *human nature* that are the basis of society. People who enter contracts are engaging in compromise, giving up something in order to get something. They are behaving rationally, planning for the future. And they are behaving cooperatively, looking to others for a better life. These three basic human traits—compromise, rationality, and being social—explain the origin of society. As these traits grew in humans, society grew. The contract model also explains one of the fundamental problems in political philosophy, which is the obligation to obey the law. If society is like a contract, then we have two reasons to obey: we have agreed to cooperate, and it is in our interest to cooperate.

Critical Questions

1. Two objections to the contract theory are that (a) no agreement creating society ever took place in the past, and (b) it is impossible for all the members of a society to make contracts with all the other members. But if the contract theory only proposes a contract as a model, not a historical event, it avoids the objections.

2. The "Methods and Techniques" part of Section 2.1 discusses several models. Students have all had experience with model cars, planes, ships, dining sets, stoves, and people, i.e., dolls.

When a pollster wants to survey opinions at a college, he or she might select a representative sample of students and faculty. The sample, then, is a model of the college.

Architects use models of buildings and landscapes. Generals use "simulations" of battles, and war-game enthusiasts model battles with game boards and pieces representing soldiers, ships, and so on. The game "Monopoly" might be a model of business.

A controversial example might be dance or music. A dance might model a person's experience (falling in love, falling out of love), or even emotions in general. Philosopher Susanne Langer argues that a piece of music is an external, perceptible model of certain emotions.

3. The most fundamental feature of society is compromise. That is why a contract is the best model of society: a contract is essentially a compromise, where a person agrees to give up something in order to get something in return. That agreement is the foundation of society.

An alternative view is that force or the threat of force is the most fundamental feature of society. People only "compromise" because they must; they are forced to give a minimum respect to others' interests and property. Without police, there would be no society, some would say. Since the "compromise" is based on the threat of force, force is more fundamental. The same applies to rationality and sociability.

The contractor's response is that the force, or police, is voluntarily established by the people as a whole. People agree to set up a police force and submit to it. It is rational to deploy force to maintain security and stability.

4. According to the contract theory, the origin of society lies in certain traits of human nature, not in any events that occurred in the past. (A disadvantage of the contract theory is its suggestion that society began with a datable event.) The important human traits are the ones involved in making a contract: the willingness to compromise, the ability to be rational, and the desire to work with others.

Humans might have other traits—for example, we might be jealous, possessive, and aggressive, or creative and artistic, or curious and analytical, etc.—but those traits do not explain why we live in societies, while the traits required to make contracts do.

An alternative theory might be that society originated with the family. The original society was the family, and as families became larger, they evolved into villages consisting of different branches of one family, all more or less related. Villages evolved into cities, which might tolerate residents from other families. But the residents were outsiders, not fully part of the society. And cities evolved into nations. This is a historical explanation, although students might consider how well the family works as a model of a society. How similar is a society to a family, and how different is it? Is the family a better model of society than a contract? What aspects of human nature make families possible?

5. People have two reasons to obey contracts in general. One is that we have promised to do something, or turn over something, or whatever. If I sign a contract to teach a class for a salary, then I have promised to show up at the appropriate time, help the students learn, and so on. Our moral obligation to keep our promises is a reason to fulfil our part of a contract. Second, it is in our interest to keep our contracts. I should keep my word to teach the class because by doing that I will receive a salary, and if I do not teach the class, then I will not receive the salary.

The contractor claims that society is based on a contract, and therefore each citizen should obey the law for these two reasons.

Someone could object that the contractor is trying to have his cake and eat it, too. The contractor says there was no actual contract; the idea of primitive strangers coming together and making an agreement is silly. The contract is only a model of society. The concept helps us see which aspects of human nature make society possible. But if there is no actual contract, then I have not made any actual promises. In particular, I have not agreed to obey any particular laws or legislatures. The contractor is appealing to an actual contract to explain obligation, but also saying the hypothesis of an actual contract is silly.

The contractor could reply in the same way Locke does: I have made a tacit contract, or promise, when I take advantage of the goods and services society offers. I know that goods and services are not free of charge, so I am behaving as if I have entered a contract. My behaviour is similar to the behaviour of one who makes a promise, and so I am obligated.

6. This is a broad, vague question, which should bring out some students' assumptions, and should provide students with an opportunity to analyse and clarify questions.

If rationality and sociability exist prior to society, then they should be the same everywhere, like physiology. Human digestion and respiration are not dependent on society and are the same in all societies. Are people everywhere equally rational? Equally sociable? Students might disagree. And that should lead to an analysis of the terms. What do "rational" and "sociable" mean? In a deep sense, all humans are both, while in a more superficial sense, there are probably differences in different societies. Italians are said to be more sociable than Finns, and Americans more sociable than Japanese, although a teacher should remind students of the dangers of stereotypical thinking. Do any students have any reliable data on this question?

The essay explains rationality as the ability to control one's impulses, make plans for the future, and calculate risks and benefits. All mature humans do this in a basic way. The essay explains being sociable as being cooperative, willing to work with others, demonstrating a basic level of trust and reliability, and all humans do this as well. Do some societies value spontaneity and following one's emotions more than calculating one's interests? Perhaps. Do some societies value cooperation and community more than self-reliance and independence? Perhaps. The best answer is probably that the basic traits are universal and prior to society, but that societies shape and reinforce the traits in different ways.

No: Organicist. "The Social Organism"

The thesis of this essay is that society is real, meaning that it has properties distinct from the individuals composing it. It is more than the sum of its parts, and not merely a mental abstraction. The reasons for saying society is distinct from the individuals composing it are that (a) it influences those individuals, it has a causal power; (b) it exists before the individuals who now compose it; and (c) we have an "atomistic bias" against patterns and properties of groups, and

assume that the way to understand anything is to break it into its parts. The essay begins by describing the writer's observations of the marching band and the crowd at a football game. The band and the crowd had global properties, such as a physical shape and emotional moods, that the individuals did not have. He claims that societies also have properties that individuals do not have, and therefore a society is not the same thing as a collection of individuals. Societies shape and influence their members, so they are distinct from the members. It's true that society would not exist without individual people, but the opposite is just as true, so one is no more real than the other. The best analogy for understanding society is an organism, since organisms have properties that their individual cells do not have.

Critical Questions

1. Group properties are properties of a group which are not properties of the single individuals composing the group. The essay mentions shape (the marching band), emotions (the crowd), and hierarchical structure (society). The introduction also mentions properties of society. Besides those, one could say that society is complex, or generous, or aggressive.

A teacher could also ask for properties of the class as a whole. The class might be loud during a discussion, even though none of the students is talking loudly. Or, if different students look up different aspects of something, e.g., Florida, then the class as a whole could have a thorough, detailed knowledge of Florida, although no individual has a thorough knowledge of Florida.

2. The crowd is distinct from the fans because the crowd influences the fans. The emotions of the crowd are contagious; they (or the sounds and movements of the crowd) cause individual fans to feel the same emotions. In this case, individuals can perceive the emotions of the group as a whole. They are not reacting to the emotions of the few individuals they see around them.

While the crowd is not the same thing as the individuals composing it, it is not independent of those individuals. If the individuals didn't exist, the crowd wouldn't exist.

3. The atomistic bias is the assumption that to understand something one must analyse it, examine the component parts, and see how they fit together. This bias makes it difficult for people to see the properties of large groups, such as societies. People think that if they can see the individuals and their properties, then they have understood the whole as well, so they fail to perceive the properties of the whole that individual components do not have.

4. The Latin language is a peculiar kind of object. Can it be classified with other types of objects? It is not like a tree or a chair, a three-dimensional, physical object. I don't think it is the totality of all the Latin words and sentences recorded in books and manuscripts (physical objects), because the language is "open-ended," so to speak. We can make up new sentences in Latin—in fact, an infinite number of new sentences—and they are instances of Latin just as well as Roman sentences are.

It seems more accurate to say that the Latin language is identical with all the grammatical rules for writing and speaking Latin. What are the rules? Are they psychological objects, ideas in someone's mind? I don't think the rules are mental abstractions (inductive generalizations) derived from the existing sentences. No one knows all the rules. Actually the rules guide the production of Latin sentences. They seem to be embodied in existing sentences, but not identical with the sentences. They are an ideal, not an extraction from the actual sentences.

The point of this question is to suggest to students that it is difficult to account for all the facts about a language in a purely nominalistic way. And if a language is more than the sum of its physical parts, then maybe a society is, too.

5. This question is similar to question 6 in the previous set, about rationality.

Individuals can change societies, and societies can change individuals. Neither can exist without the other. But which has more influence on the other? One way to think about the question is the following: if individuals have more influence on their society than vice versa, and individuals are all alike (biologically, prior to social influences), then all the people around the world should be more similar than different. On the other hand, if societies have more influence on individuals, and societies can evolve according to their own laws (societies are not all members of one species, as individuals are), then people around the world should be more different than similar. So, in surveying the people around the world, do similarities outweigh the differences, or vice versa?

6. Societies are like organisms in that both have global properties, or emergent properties, that their individual components do not have. For example, birds have properties that their individual cells do not have. Another similarity is division of labour. The parts and cells of an organism are specialized and perform different tasks. Subgroups and individuals in a society are also specialized and perform different tasks or occupations. Furthermore, all of the cells in an organism are replaced over a period of time, but the organism retains its defining characteristics and identity. The same applies to a society. Its members come and go, but it remains the same society over time.

One difference is size. Societies are larger than organisms. Another is that the components are more loosely combined in a society. The cells of an organism are often contiguous, but members of a society are seldom packed so tightly.

Test Questions

1. According to "The Social Contract," someone might say society *cannot* be based on a contract because

- a. society existed before contracts existed
- b. contracts are written documents
- c. people cannot be expected to keep their contracts
- d. *a person cannot make a contract with every other citizen.

2. An example of a model that the essay discusses is

- a. Adam Smith's theory of the invisible hand
- b. *Niels Bohr's theory of the atom
- c. the survival of the fittest theory of society
- d. the computer model of the mind.

3. The contractor says that the most fundamental feature of society is

- a. *compromise

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- b. competition
- c. law
- d. keeping promises.

4. The contractor says we should obey the law because

- a. we will be punished if we do not
- b. we are part of a larger organism
- c. *we have promised to do so
- d. law is the foundation of society.

5. When the organicist looked at the marching band, he realized that

- a. their steps were synchronized
- b. every member carried a musical instrument
- c. *the members could not see the words they formed
- d. they had to work together harmoniously to make music.

6. The essay says that the crowd not only had its own shape, but also

- a. had its own language
- b. *had its own emotions
- c. was divided into three parts
- d. that it flowed out of the stadium like water.

7. A society has a shape, or structure, because it is

- a. *hierarchical
- b. located in space
- c. made up of individuals
- d. constantly changing.

8. A society is like an organism because

- a. it competes with other societies
- b. it is born and it dies
- c. it needs and consumes energy
- d. *it has properties its parts do not have.

Section 2 Is Liberty the Highest Social Value?

Introduction

Different teachers have different styles, but I think that one of the most important things a teacher must do is to grab the students' attention, get them interested, and if possible, make them care about the class. For the topic of liberty, I suggest that you ask the students if all drugs should be legalized. Heroin, cocaine, LSD, everything, available in special stores like liquor stores. Take a vote, either anonymous or public. Or you might ask the students to find a partner and exchange views briefly, and then vote. You will probably find that a majority favours legalization and the others oppose it. Then you can ask them why they feel the way they do. If one side appears to overwhelm the other, then you can offer an argument or two to keep the issue alive. One purpose of this exercise is to get the students to think about liberty and its limits, but the main purpose is to generate some passion. Legalizing drugs is a hot-button issue; people care about it. Once you have their attention, then you can show them how careful, philosophical thinking is required to understand the topic and decide where one stands.

Yes: Libertarian. "Liberty, the Supreme Social Value"

The essay claims that most people value liberty more highly than other social goods. The strategy is to show that if one is placed in a position of having to choose between liberty and some other good, e.g., justice, one will prefer liberty. In other cases, the argument is that the other goods turn out to be the same thing as liberty. At the beginning, the essay defines liberty as the ability to make choices and act on them. Then it compares liberty with prosperity to see which is more valuable. But in fact, prosperity is just the same thing as liberty. Wealth gives one many options and the means to pursue them. The same applies to security. Being secure just means being free to come and go without fear. Equality is divided into equality of opportunity and equality of condition. Equality of opportunity means there are no artificial barriers holding one back, so, like security, it turns out to be identical with liberty. Equality of condition (equal living standards) is not the same as liberty, but no one would prefer it to liberty. As for justice, the criminal justice system deprives people of liberty for the sake of justice, which suggests that justice is more important. But we imprison only a few people so that the great majority will be more secure, i.e., will have greater liberty. So the larger perspective shows that we value justice for the sake of liberty.

Critical Questions

1. The notion of freedom is notoriously difficult to define. The essay's definition—the ability to make choices and act on them—is deliberately vague. The main point of the essay is to compare the values of social goods, not define them.

Most students will say they are not free to live on Park Avenue or play professional basketball. They are assuming a *positive* concept of liberty. One has the positive means—money, ability, knowledge—to achieve the goal. That is, being free means that no barriers of any kind prevent one from doing something or achieving a goal. Since the students do not have the money or ability to achieve these goals, they say they are not free to do these things. On the other hand, a rich person is free to live on Park Avenue.

The *negative* concept of liberty is narrower. According to the negative concept, a person is free if no human or artificial barriers stand in the way of some goal or action. Having the money or ability is another matter. For example, I am free to buy a Rolls Royce, but I am not *able* to buy a Rolls Royce. There are no rules or restrictions preventing anyone from buying a Rolls Royce. I am free to run a four-minute mile; nothing is standing in my way or holding me back. But I am not able to run a four-minute mile. Freedom is not the same as ability or means. So according to the negative concept of liberty, I am free to live in the expensive end of town and play for the Australian Cricket team, although I am not able to do either of these.

I don't think one definition is better or more correct than another; the term is simply ambiguous. I have written the essay to let the students discover and argue over the ambiguity themselves. Some students will prefer one definition, others will prefer the other.

2. Money is valuable for the choices it gives us and the power to satisfy a wider variety of desires. Is that its only value? Some people value money for the status it confers. They may not spend it, or may not have many desires; they may live a simple lifestyle, but still work very hard to accumulate a large amount of money. To them, money means status and respect.

3. The ambiguity between positive and negative freedom extends to the terms "opportunities" and "options." The essay defines "opportunity" in a negative way. A person has an opportunity to do something if no rules or human barriers prevent him or her from doing it. But in saying that a tall person has options a short person does not have, the essay suggests a positive definition of "options." To say that the short person does not have an option to play basketball is to say he or she does not have the height or ability. Having an option, then, means one does have whatever means are necessary to do something or achieve some goal. Thus, there is a conflict or tension in the essay between the positive and negative concepts of liberty.

4. The essay claims that people sacrifice a small amount of liberty, in the form of taxes, to gain a large amount of equality. Therefore, they value liberty more than equality.

Some students might like an analogy. A person might sacrifice an ounce of gold to gain a pound of silver, but would not trade an ounce of gold for an ounce of silver, because gold is much more valuable. Liberty and equality stand in the same relation. The argument depends on measuring amounts of liberty and equality, and students might argue with the essay on that point.

5. The essay claims that some people are imprisoned so that the majority can be more free. Putting criminals in jail reduces crime, making people more secure. Therefore the majority is more free to go out at night, walk alone, park on the street, and so on.

6. Topic for discussion: do people always value freedom more than justice? Here's a hypothetical case. Suppose a murderous, repellent drug lord has been captured here and will be convicted, but his confederates loudly warn the government that if he is imprisoned, they will

unleash a reign of terror across Australia. The government can try him and imprison him, or they can deport him to his native South East Asian country, where his bribes will enable him to go free. Imprisoning him is the just course, but it means Australians will live in fear and will be less free. Deporting him is unjust, but it means Australians will be more free. What should the government do? I think some students would probably say the drug lord should face justice, even if it requires Australians to sacrifice some freedom. Others would probably say he should go free.

No: Paternalist. "Empty Phrases"

The essay has two parts, both critical. The first part claims that Mill's harm principle—a person should be free to do anything so long as he or she doesn't hurt anyone else—is empty and uninformative because there is no acceptable interpretation of it. When does one person hurt another? Does "hurt" mean physically damage? Everyone wants to prohibit more than that, e.g., theft. Does "hurt" mean psychologically damage? That interpretation goes too far. Who decides what the principle means? There is no good answer. The second part of the essay criticizes those who say they endorse the harm principle and that people in the West are free. In fact, the essay claims, the majority – especially in America – attempts to impose its moral values on everyone through legislation. Drugs, prostitution, and pornography are illegal, even though they do not harm anyone but the user himself or herself. Many people favour speech codes and want to ban private clubs that exclude any groups, but also claim to believe in free speech and free association. Obviously these people are shallow hypocrites.

Critical Questions

1. A cliché is an expression that people use very often as a signal, or filler. It is not descriptive, it has no real content. People resort to clichés when they do not want to think of an original comment. Examples: as strong as an ox, she loved him with all her heart, he ran like the wind.

2. The essay considers the physical and psychological interpretations of the harm principle. According to the first, to harm someone means to physically damage him or her, or to cause physical suffering. According to the second, to harm someone means to psychologically damage him or her, or to cause psychological suffering.

3. Most students probably accept the harm principle. (You might begin the discussion with the harm principle. You could ask students what the limits of freedom are. When can the government prevent you from doing something and take away your freedom? Many will say "when you hurt someone else.")

In asking whether a student can believe in the harm principle even though he or she cannot explain how it applies in practice, the question tries to get students to think more carefully about their own beliefs. Everyone claims to hold certain beliefs, and mechanically recites certain words, without thinking about what they really mean. Students should be more reflective about their own beliefs and values.

There are two ways a person might hold the harm principle without being able to explain it precisely. A person could say "I know harm when I see it." Apparently some people can reliably recognize something, or distinguish one type of thing from another, without being able to explain how they do it. Chicken farmers are said to be able to distinguish male from female chicks without knowing how they do it, even though inexperienced people cannot. Later the farmers' classification is confirmed. But in the case of harm, there is no way to confirm the sorting. Who is to say that a person's "recognition" of harm is correct?

Second, a person could say that most cases are perfectly clear. They are obviously a case of harm, or they are obviously not a case of harm. Only a few cases fall into the gray border areas. So a person can accept the harm principle as the best guideline we have regarding liberty, even though it does not yield a decision in every case.

4. The purpose of this question is to make the students see how limited the "physical" interpretation of the harm principle is. There are many actions that harm another, but do not physically damage the other.

On the other hand, one could say that taking a person's property does not harm that person, even though it should be illegal. And therefore the harm principle is not the best guide to government restraints on liberty. Instead of harm, perhaps we should appeal to rights, such as the right to private property, the right to be free (not imprisoned unjustly), and the right to be free from threats.

5. This modification suggests that if a person voluntarily gets involved in a situation, knowing that he or she might suffer psychologically, then the person who causes the suffering cannot be punished. For example, a person who falls in love and continues a relationship cannot call the police when the affair turns sour and he or she feels miserable. We would say the person could get out of the relationship before things got so bad. However, if a person is not a voluntary participant, and someone makes the person miserable, the person who causes the misery can be punished.

One problem with this extension involves children (who are not voluntary participants in their families) and the word "miserable." Parents sometimes make their children "miserable." How do we distinguish normal conflicts, discipline, setting rules, and the foibles of child-rearing from child abuse? The problem has shifted from "harm" to "miserable."

Another problem involves the word "voluntary." When is a person a voluntary participant, and when do we say a person has no choice? Suppose an employer makes his or her employee miserable, either because of the stressful nature of the job or because of personality conflicts. Is the employee free to leave? The same applies to a spouse. Leaving a job or a marriage may have dire consequences.

6. In my experience, a large majority of students favour legalizing prostitution, but only about half favour legalizing addictive drugs. They regard prostitution as a private moral issue which should be left up to each individual. But they believe legalized drugs would have very harmful effects on society as a whole. Some say they do not want to pay for the long-term medical care that people destroyed by drugs will require. On the other side, some say they are disturbed by the hypocrisy of making alcohol legal but marijuana and other drugs illegal.

Most students oppose censorship of pornography. A teacher could test their commitment with the following case: suppose my wife and I take our son and daughter, ages 10 and 8, to a secluded beach for some sunbathing and a carefree romp in the surf, all *sans* suits. I bring my camera and make some photographs. Should I be allowed to sell the photos to a magazine, and should the magazine be allowed to publish them? If you call this "child pornography," all the

students will condemn it. But if you avoid the label, some will say it should be allowed. Either way, many will argue that taking and selling the photos would harm the children. Some say the government should uphold certain basic moral standards, regardless of any question about overt harm or absence of harm.

7. Most students say that the government should not force an individual to do what is good for that individual. But most also believe that the seatbelt laws, helmet laws, lifeguard laws, and so on, are justified. They prevent the individuals from harming society by consuming our limited medical and hospital resources. This leads to another question for libertarians. Should a person be free to drop out of Social Security, or health insurance, so that in old age or in a medical emergency the person would receive no assistance or care at all?

Test Questions

1. The first essay defines liberty as
 - a. *the ability to make choices and act on them
 - b. the absence of obstacles to fulfilling desires
 - c. the power to influence people
 - d. equality of opportunity.

2. The essay says that liberty is a higher social value than prosperity because
 - a. the pursuit of liberty is more noble than the pursuit of money
 - b. *prosperity is a means to liberty
 - c. the majority of people will sacrifice liberty before they sacrifice prosperity
 - d. many people can enjoy liberty but only a few can be prosperous.

3. The two types of equality are
 - a. equality of ability and equality of opportunity
 - b. equality of means and equality of ends
 - c. political equality and economic equality
 - d. *equality of opportunity and equality of condition.

4. A libertarian can favour less liberty for criminals because
 - a. libertarians say they are free to believe whatever they want
 - b. justice outweighs liberty in the scale of social values
 - c. libertarians believe in liberty only for themselves
 - d. *depriving criminals of liberty creates more liberty for others.

5. According to "Empty Phrases," the harm principle states that
 - a. society should make sure that its policies do not harm its citizens
 - b. depriving a person of his or her liberty is the greatest harm one can do
 - c. *a person should be free to do anything so long as he or she doesn't harm another
 - d. immoral behaviour, such as drugs and prostitution, harm our society more than loss of freedom.

6. The essay discusses two interpretations of the harm principle, which are
 - a. *the physical and psychological interpretations
 - b. the strict and loose interpretations

- c. the libertarian and paternalist interpretations
- d. the majority and minority interpretations

7. The essay claims that prostitution is illegal because

- a. it is controlled by organized crime
- b. *the majority believes it is immoral
- c. it allows the spread of serious diseases
- d. the government has determined that it is the major cause of the disintegration of families.

8. The speech codes adopted in some colleges state that

- a. no ideas or statements can harm anyone
- b. students must obtain permits from the college before making public speeches
- c. *a person is not permitted to say anything that offends anyone else
- d. all students must take a course to learn how to express themselves clearly.

Section 3 Is Equality the Highest Social Value?

Introduction

The issue of equality is complex, and one should resist the temptation to say that it all boils down to a disagreement over one fact or one value. But students can begin with a single question that should help them see some of the complexities. An instructor can ask students "Are you more competitive or more cooperative? Of course everyone is both, but if you had to be classified on one side or the other, should you be classified as competitive or cooperative? To help you decide, think about classes in school. Would you prefer a class in which ten percent get A's and everyone competes for grades, or a class in which everyone gets a "Pass" and students help each other on projects and papers? Do you enjoy competitive games with friends, or do you prefer talking or making something together?" This is relevant to Section 3 because an egalitarian argues that a cooperative society with equal rewards and less competition for goods would be a better society, while an elitist claims that a society which encourages competition and rewards effort and talent would prosper in ways that benefit the society and each of its members. It should be interesting to see if a majority of students regard themselves as competitive or cooperative.

Yes: Egalitarian. "Society and Property"

"Society and Property" is a summary and defence of the main ideas in More's *Utopia*. The essay first describes the reforms More proposed, and then considers five objections to More's communism, together with responses to the objections. More describes a society with no private property; all goods are distributed according to need. But More is no starry-eyed dreamer. Everyone in Utopia is required to work, and whipped if they don't, although More doesn't believe punishment would be necessary, and people would work less than in a capitalist society. Everyone works at some useful occupation. There are no luxuries or status items. These reforms would eliminate all the major social problems. There would be no poverty, very little crime, no class conflict, far less anxiety and stress, and greater individuality (since people would have more free time). The second part of the essay describes objections and replies. Two common objections are that if people's needs are guaranteed, then they won't work, and if there are no luxuries, then there will be no individuality. More has already answered these objections. Another objection is that the work requirement infringes on our freedom, but one could reply that the resulting benefits far outweigh the inconvenience. Some say they don't want equality, but want to feel superior to others. An egalitarian replies that this anti-social attitude is learned in capitalism and can change. Finally, some say that equality would be unjust, since some deserve greater rewards than others, based on merit. Egalitarians reply that in Utopia all occupations are essential and therefore deserve equal compensation.

Critical Questions

1. More says people would work less because *all* people would work. In other societies only a fraction of the population works, and that means they must work longer hours to produce the goods that the society needs. If all worked, each individual could work less. More intends for people to have equal responsibilities and duties as well as equal rights and privileges.

Some people, such as the ill and frail, cannot work. They are physically incapable. But More does not think it is difficult to decide who can and cannot work.

2. There are many problems confronting our own society today that aren't directly caused by private property, although students might debate the indirect relations. One is immigration. How many people should we allow to immigrate to this country, and whom should we allow? Another is racial prejudice and affirmative action. How can we eliminate prejudice? Should minorities and women be accepted or rejected by law schools, for example, based on different standards from other applicants? Another is education. How can we improve our schools? Environmental protection is an issue. How can we balance our need for jobs and resources with our respect for the environment? Disagreements over abortion aren't caused by private property, although wealth and class may be relevant.

3. More's purpose in banning luxuries from his Utopia is to create more equality. He seems to regard as luxuries any items that are expensive to produce, and that serve primarily to signal one's wealth or social status. They are not valuable for their practical usefulness. For example, a mink fur would be a luxury because it is difficult and expensive to produce, and it is mainly a symbol. It indicates the wearer's wealth and status. Mink coats are not as practical as less expensive down coats, or other types of coats, which may be lighter, warmer, more resistant to water, and longer-lasting.

If a society did not produce luxuries, then all of its labour and resources could be devoted to producing useful goods, and people could work fewer hours.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines "luxury" a little differently. It is "anything conducive to physical comfort." However, it comes from the Latin root *luxus*, which means "excess, extravagance." More wants to ban luxuries in the sense of "luxus." He is not opposed to comfort, although he is opposed to anyone being comfortable at the expense of another's discomfort. People should be equally comfortable.

4. Most of my students have argued that people express themselves in their clothes, furniture and interior decor, automobile, and the music they listen to. Without those external manifestations, people would have no individuality. They wouldn't know who they were.

More believes that if people were freed from economic worries, and if they had more time, then they could develop their interests in all sorts of things besides possessions. They could paint, write, play music, play sports, hike, explore, climb mountains, study literature, history, science, collect butterflies, grow roses, cook, help with kindergarten, organize a bridge club, and do dozens of other things. They could begin to find out their real potential and interests.

5. People probably want to feel different from their neighbours, at least in some ways. That is part of being an individual. But different is not the same as superior. More wants to eliminate the financial, material differences among people, and he thinks if he does, then people will regard each other as equals. Many students claim that if people cannot rank each other by wealth, then they will rank each other by something else, such as talent, beauty, intelligence, civic spirit, courage in battle,

or whatever. It seems that most societies rank people by some standard. Has any society every existed in which people were completely equal? I don't know.

In More's favour one could say that private property has existed in every society, and people have been taught to compete for wealth. Ranking people, and the desire to feel superior, are learned. But if we changed the economic structure of society, people would gradually learn a different way of life.

Some students always point to the collapse of communism as proof that More is wrong and that communism will never work. But the Soviet Union and its allies were very different from what More proposes. They had private property, they had gross inequalities, and they did not have democracy.

6. What is the difference between a sanitation worker and a lawyer that justifies the lawyer's much higher income? Some say education, but higher education does not always justify higher income. Philosophy teachers are better educated than lawyers, but make less than sanitation workers. Some say lawyers work harder, but that isn't necessarily true. Picking up garbage is hard work. Is practicing law more essential to society? No. Collecting garbage is just as essential.

Some say that only a few people have the skill to become a lawyer, but anyone can become a sanitation worker. In other words, only a few people have the verbal skills and the willingness to practice that is required to become a lawyer, but many people have the arms and back required to be a sanitation worker. Is that true? Or is it that some people have the opportunity (and money) to go to college and law school, and others do not? It cannot be the whole explanation, because few people have the skill to become a good dancer or musician, but those people do not make much money.

Another suggestion is that lawyers make a large amount of money because they have a large responsibility. A great deal depends on their skill. The same applies to doctors. One small error can cause much suffering, whereas a small error by a sanitation worker doesn't matter very much. But then why don't school bus drivers make more than they do? The best answer is probably that none of these factors by itself is sufficient to explain why one occupation is highly compensated. All the factors are necessary, and perhaps the sum is sufficient.

No: Elitist. "What Elitists Believe"

The essay sums up elitism in three main beliefs. First, elitists believe there is such a thing as excellence. "Excellence" means achieving a goal in the most efficient, productive way possible. Most activities or outcomes can be judged on a scale from poor to excellent, although if there are no widely accepted standards, i.e., if it is merely a question of preference, then excellence doesn't apply. Second, people have different aptitudes and abilities, even with the same training. In a dance class or a physics class, after the same instruction a few students will excel, many will be average, and a few will be poor. Third, our society should adopt the policy of rewarding talent, because it is in our interest to do so. We should give all students many opportunities, but we should give strong financial and other rewards to the ones who excel, and recognize other students' limitations when they exist. We should encourage people to take up occupations they can do well. Society benefits when jobs are filled by the most qualified people, and individuals will be happier doing what they have an aptitude to do rather than attempting to do what they cannot do well. However, few people can face the fact that excellence is rare.

Critical Questions

1. (a) There is such a thing as excellence; (b) some people will be better at a task than others, even with the same training; (c) society should try to channel people into the jobs they can do well, or jobs in which they can achieve excellence.

2. Teaching has a goal—to help students learn and grow—and one would think that there are better and worse ways of reaching the goal. But people do disagree. Some students say a teacher is excellent, and other students say he or she is terrible.

Do professionals agree on standards of good teaching? Schools and colleges give awards for excellence in teaching. And one can read books on how to be a successful teacher. But the instructions are about intangible qualities like enthusiasm and dedication, which are hard to observe and measure.

Surely some occupations have clear standards of excellence that everyone accepts. Home builders, for example, must meet certain standards. It is relatively easy to judge a house painter's work or a TV repair person's work.

3. It depends on how different the schools are. The elitist wants to argue that in a group of people who receive the same training some will achieve excellence and some won't. Question 3 suggests that it is difficult to know when people have received "the same" training. For example, in a dance class, does the teacher give exactly the same attention to each student? Does he or she favour any students? Do the students' experiences outside of class affect their learning, so that when we take a comprehensive view we see that they have not received exactly the same training?

4. The elitist in the essay says that society should take two steps. First, we should seek talent by giving everyone opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. And second, we should channel people into the jobs for which they are qualified. That means we should motivate people, with scholarships and rewards, to apply themselves in those areas where they have talent. The elitist claims that we devote almost all of our resources to the first step, and very little to the second. That is, we spend large amounts of money on remedial education, special education, bilingual education, and other programs to make sure that disadvantaged children have more opportunities to fulfil their potential. But we spend less on the talented, above-average children, to allow them to excel. Society would benefit, the elitist claims, if people who try and try but never excel accepted their limitations, and if we diverted some of the resources to helping those who can excel.

But an egalitarian responds that the talented, exceptional students do receive tremendous rewards from private sources and business. So we do live in an elitist society. The government programs to help those who need help are simply practical means of finding talent that otherwise would be overlooked. And they are a small means of making our society less elitist than it is.

5. It is possible that beginning college students will say that salary is more important than job satisfaction. So they would leave a job they can perform well (and therefore probably enjoy), and take a job they cannot do very well, if they would receive a higher salary. On the other hand, returning students and adult students, who have worked for some years, perhaps in different jobs, might say that job satisfaction is more important than an increase in salary. It depends on how large the increase is. Older students may know what it is like to go to work every day, day after day, for years, to a job that is not fulfilling. They may be willing to give up the extra income for job satisfaction.

On the other hand, older students may have had more experience pinching pennies, worrying about bills, and moonlighting for extra money. Perhaps they would prefer a job with more money over a more enjoyable job.

6. Students should have some experience with policies in their own high schools on which to base their answers. And they may have information from newspapers and magazines to go on. Are students required to repeat a grade if they do failing work? Many educators argue that the disadvantages of repeating a grade are greater than the advantages, and so students should be promoted if they can do the very minimum. But students do receive grades in courses, and the grades tell them they are successful or unsuccessful. Some students are rejected by colleges to which they apply, and that tells them they have failed to meet some standards.

One way to make this question concrete is to ask students if their middle school or high school used "tracking," i.e., sorting students in the same grade into two or three groups according to levels of skill measured by objective tests. Would they favour or oppose tracking?

Test Questions

1. People in More's Utopia work less than people in other societies because
 - a. people in Utopia are lazy since everything is provided for them
 - b. Utopia is technologically more backward than other societies
 - c. *everyone in Utopia works
 - d. people in Utopia resent and resist the government control.

2. Which of the following is not a consequence of abolishing private property?
 - a. *there is a larger government
 - b. there is greater individuality
 - c. there is less crime
 - d. there is less anxiety and stress.

3. To the objection that people in Utopia would not be individualistic, the essay replies that
 - a. no one knows what would happen because it has never been tried
 - b. cooperation and community is more important than individuality
 - c. the pressure to conform would actually make people more individualistic
 - d. *people in Utopia have more free time than people in other societies.

4. The essay says many people oppose equality because
 - a. they think it would lead to class warfare
 - b. *they want to feel superior to others
 - c. they are racists and sexists
 - d. they are afraid of any large changes in society.

5. The elitist defines excellence as
 - a. winning in an open competition
 - b. the standard set by the top ten percent of the population

- c. *the most efficient way to reach a goal
 - d. doing the best one can.
6. Elitists believe that excellence exists, and they also believe that
- a. everyone can be excellent if they have the opportunity
 - b. *some people will be better at a task than others
 - c. fewer people achieve excellence today than in the past
 - d. the government is the biggest obstacle to excellence in all fields.
7. One way to promote excellence that the essay mentions is through
- a. providing remedial help for students who fall behind
 - b. providing successful role models
 - c. after school activities
 - d. *government scholarships.
8. The main obstacle to a society that values excellence is
- a. the emphasis on sports and competition
 - b. the fact that students and workers all have similar abilities
 - c. students who are lazy
 - d. *parents who will not face the facts.

Section 4 Is Capitalism Just?

Introduction

Everyone is aware of the huge gap between the wealthiest and the poorest people in our society, and most people have probably wondered if it is justified, or if we could do something about it. A teacher might ask students if we should try to close that gap. Should the government pass a law raising the minimum wage and lowering the "maximum wage"? In other words, should we as a society reward work with a decent living standard, and should we put a cap on the highest salaries, so that the gap between people is not so large? Why do some people make millions every year while others sleep on the street and scrounge in garbage for food? Is the millionaire really such a good person that he or she deserves such wealth, and the homeless person really such a terrible person that he or she deserves such punishment? Would it be a good idea or a bad idea to pass a law requiring that every employee must make at least twenty-five thousand dollars per year, and no one can have a yearly income of more than 125 thousand dollars per year (five times the minimum)?

Yes: Capitalist. "Capitalism, Democracy, and Justice"

The essay is a defence of the claim that a capitalist society treats people justly. It begins by defining capitalism broadly as a set of institutions designed to promote freedom and self-determination. Capitalism means economic freedom to buy and sell, and it means political freedom to vote and participate in government. Justice, according to capitalists, depends on one's contribution to society. A positive contribution deserves a reward, and a negative contribution deserves a punishment. But no individual or committee is wise enough to decide what a person has contributed. Therefore capitalism has adopted the radically democratic policy of letting the people as a whole decide what individuals have contributed. Regarding negative contributions and punishments, a jury—which represents the society as a whole—decides guilt or innocence, and a legislature decides the severity of punishment. Regarding positive contributions and rewards, consumers spending their money in a free market decide who will be rewarded with profits and who won't. Is it just for sports stars to make millions? Have they contributed to society? Capitalism says let society itself decide, in the form of ordinary people making purchases. It is the most democratic way of determining what people deserve.

Critical Questions

1. The capitalist claims that in a capitalist society the economy and the political system are similar in that each allows for maximum individual freedom and personal responsibility. Economically one is free to buy and sell, to succeed or to fail, and one is responsible for oneself. No one can live off of others' labour. Politically one is also free to choose a candidate, or run for office oneself. One is responsible for oneself, in the sense that one can influence the decisions of the government.

2. The answer to the abstract question is easy. Justice is giving each person what he or she deserves. But the concrete answer is hard. It is very difficult to know what a particular individual—John Doe—deserves. Capitalists say that what a particular individual deserves depends on that individual's contribution to society, either positive or negative. But it is also very difficult to determine what he or she has contributed.

3. The capitalist says that in capitalism society as a whole determines what a person has contributed to society. If the contribution is negative, a jury decides whether or not a person is guilty, and the legislature decides what sort of punishment the person deserves. The jury represents society as a whole, since it is a cross-section of the community. The legislature acts on behalf of the community.

Someone could argue that legislators do not represent the whole society but only the monied interests. And a person might claim that juries are manipulated by skilful lawyers. But it would be difficult to support either charge with verifiable evidence.

4. The capitalist's basic assumption is that treating a person justly means rewarding or punishing the person according to his or her contribution to society. One can challenge this assumption in two ways. First, one could say that there is no way to measure a person's contribution to society. The fact that the free market rewards rock stars with millions and farmers with poverty is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the idea that the market can decide. One could claim that all human beings have an equal dignity, that all have equal human rights, and therefore that all contribute equally to society. We are different, and contribute in different ways, but we make equal contributions.

Second, one can say that one's contribution to society is not the best standard of justice. Instead, the standard of justice is need. Each person should be rewarded according to his or her needs, and an impartial government can determine an individual's needs. A person who is ill deserves more help than a person who is healthy. A family with many children deserves more help than a couple without children.

Or one could argue that the standard of justice is effort. One should be rewarded according to one's efforts, and supervisors and officials could determine people's efforts.

5. Many students say that in the United States income is not a good indicator of a person's contribution to society. Income is determined by many factors, such as energy and drive, greed, moral flexibility, deviousness, intelligence, connections and willingness to pursue connections ("who you know"), willingness to take risks, and so on. One's contribution to society has nothing to do with it, many say.

The capitalist replies that in capitalism one makes money, not by stealing it, but by persuading people to hand it over voluntarily. In other words, one provides something people want. That may not be a Nobel Prize-winning contribution to society, but it is a contribution nevertheless, since it satisfies people's desires.

However, the capitalist makes a second claim, which is perhaps more important. In capitalism the people decide who should be rewarded with large incomes and who shouldn't. Who else should decide?

Topic for discussion: could *you* distribute incomes in a fairer way? Could you set a salary level for every occupation in the U.S. that more accurately reflects each person's (or occupation's) contribution to society? Or could a government committee do it? Would that be more just than the capitalist way? Would you prefer to live in a society where salaries were set by government committees?

6. The capitalist claims that no one knows what an individual, or the people in a certain occupation, contribute to society. No one is wise enough. Therefore the society itself should decide directly. It decides through the free market, when people reward certain individuals by purchasing their products or services.

Social scientists, politicians, and religious leaders are all biased in various ways. They cannot know the needs or desires of the whole society, since they cannot know the thoughts and experiences of every individual. They can only know the desires or needs of a few small parts of society that they select. Or they assume that they have a special understanding, and that they know what society "really" needs better than the sum of average people. They substitute their own idea of what society needs for the people's idea.

7. The capitalist claims that it is unjust for the government to give aid to people who can make no contribution to society due to illness or old age. Nevertheless, we ought to help such people. Strict justice is not the only factor people consider in their relations with others. People can also be compassionate and generous, and it is compassion and generosity that leads people to give to the poor and incapacitated.

No: Socialist. "Capitalist Society"

The essay is a condemnation of capitalism, and takes several ideas from Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*. The first charge is that capitalism is necessarily dishonest because every businessman or woman tries to buy something at one price and sell it at a higher price, without adding any value to the product. Second, the single-minded pursuit of money infects every aspect of society. Employers and employees both try to exploit each other for profits. The health care system, the political system, and the justice system are all distorted by money: they serve people with money and ignore people without money. A related charge is that capitalism destroys all human relationships, including marriage, by reducing them to a cold calculation of profit and loss. Finally, indoctrination is an essential part of capitalism, since it is such an unnatural mode of living. A large part of the expenditures of business is devoted to convincing people that capitalism is good, and that they must have more products. The images, messages, and stories manipulate people into feeling that they must have, not necessities, but more than their neighbours have. The result is insatiable desires, and growing disparities between the haves and have-nots.

Critical Questions

1. Often many students have strong opinions on the issues of this section, so it is probably a good idea to show them that they need to step back and think carefully about the questions and answers. For example, to answer this question they should probably first think about who is a "businessman" or "businesswoman." Is everyone who works a business person? Not everyone buys products at one price and sells them at a higher price. The socialist seems to be thinking of self-employed business people, people who own a shop or firm, or high-level managers in a corporation. (However, the socialist does claim that everyone, including employees, attempts to exploit others for personal profit, perhaps dishonestly.)

Are profits necessarily dishonest? A capitalist could say that a business person, such as a shoe store owner, provides a service. The owner buys shoes from a distributor and brings them to a place that is convenient to shoppers, displays them in a comfortable setting, helps customers choose, and generally makes purchases much easier. The same applies to other business people. So they do add value to the product by making it easier to find and buy. However, if that is true, then why do some stores charge more than others for very similar merchandise?

2. The main criticism of the health care system is that it destroys the basic respect and concern for each other that people have. It does this by forcing providers to pay more attention to profits than patients' needs. The necessity to make a profit leads hospitals and doctors to provide different levels of care to the rich and the poor. And it encourages them to charge more to increase profits, until few people can afford medical care.

3. The socialist claims that in capitalism politicians sell their services to the highest bidders, i.e., to the people who can contribute the most to their election campaigns. And the justice system serves those who can afford the most expensive lawyers, while average and poor people with average or poor lawyers lose their cases in court.

The basic similarity among the three critiques is that rich people are privileged and powerful, and others are excluded. One might also say that in all three areas professional people become callous and cynical, although these psychological effects aren't emphasized in the paragraphs about politics and law.

4. This is another question that is deliberately provocative (like *The Communist Manifesto*), and that requires cool heads.

Obviously women (and men) will consider economic security and prospective lifestyle among many other factors—love, admiration, compatibility—in deciding whether to get married. In contrast, a prostitute considers only money in selling her (or his) body. Furthermore, a prostitute sells her or his body to many people.

5. Capitalism surrounds people from an early age with countless images and messages, from parents, teachers, books, films, even religion, which encourage people to pursue money and material goods. Apart from messages, capitalism displays its victims (the poor and homeless) in the street and on the news, and children see the effects of failure in capitalism. Furthermore, the indoctrination is disguised as extolling freedom. Finally, capitalism persuades people that they cannot be happy with the basic necessities, but that they must have the same things or more things than their neighbours.

6. The socialist argues that our "real" needs are the basic requirements to be physically comfortable—food, clothing, and shelter. We have additional psychological needs, such as a need for companionship and challenging work. And if these needs are satisfied, people can be happy. So "needs" can be things people must have to stay alive, or things people must have to be happy.

But capitalist propaganda convinces people that they cannot be happy satisfying these natural requirements. Capitalism creates artificial, relative needs—the need to have as much or more than one's neighbour—and makes people believe that their happiness depends on satisfying these.

7. The socialist claims that some people are driven to accumulate more and more. Perhaps some people are easily indoctrinated, or more susceptible to capitalist persuasion. (Or they place less value on honesty and cooperation, the socialist might say, and they get ahead by "wheeling and

dealing.") As they acquire more and more money and property, other people are left behind. Thus the disparities between the rich and poor grow.

Test Questions

1. "Capitalism, Democracy, and Justice" claims that capitalism operates on two tracks, which are
 - a. the individual and the social
 - b. *the economic and the political
 - c. the rich and the poor
 - d. the philosophical and the practical.

2. According to the essay, in capitalism justice depends on
 - a. the Supreme Court
 - b. the amount of money one has
 - c. one's compassion for the less fortunate
 - d. *one's positive or negative contribution to society.

3. Since no one knows what a particular person deserves, then
 - a. individuals must compete for scarce resources
 - b. the courts must decide
 - c. *society as a whole must decide
 - d. different communities adopt different standards.

4. People become wealthy in capitalism by
 - a. *offering a product or service that many people will buy
 - b. working for longer hours than anyone else
 - c. running for public office
 - d. the most and the best education possible.

5. The socialist says that capitalism is dishonest because
 - a. everyone pursues their own personal advantage
 - b. it destroys natural human relationships
 - c. *business people buy at one price and sell at a higher price
 - d. it transforms basic needs into relative needs.

6. In capitalism politics is for sale, in the sense that
 - a. people who can afford good lawyers are not convicted of crimes
 - b. *elections and votes in Congress depend on financial contributions
 - c. one must buy a newspaper or TV to find out about political decisions
 - d. anyone can run for public office if they buy a license.

7. The socialist says capitalism destroys human relationships in the work place because
 - a. factories go bankrupt and workers lose their jobs
 - b. *employers and employees try to use each other to increase income
 - c. people work so hard that they don't have time to socialize
 - d. workers are indoctrinated to think that capitalism is just.

8. A relative need is

- a. something some people need but others do not need
- b. something one needs sometimes but not other times
- c. something one needs in order to be physically comfortable
- d. *something one needs in order to feel superior to others.

Section 5 Should We Establish A World Government?

Introduction

A key disagreement in this section is about human nature: are people basically rational and do we make important decisions based on objective considerations of our long-term interests, or are people basically emotional, and do we follow our feelings and intuitions in making important decisions? To help students think about this question, an instructor could ask the students to imagine that a wealthy benefactor has donated one hundred thousand dollars to the college, and stipulated that this class of students must decide what to do with the money. They can do absolutely anything they wish. The instructor could ask each student to write down what he or she thinks should be done with the money. Then the teacher could follow up with two more questions: first, was the suggestion a rational decision based on an objective consideration of what would be best for the college, or was it an emotional decision? It would be interesting to see whether more students regard their decision as rational or emotional. Second, do the students think that they could all work together harmoniously to decide what to do with the money? Could they reach a decision that everyone in the class accepts?

Yes: Internationalist. "Choosing a Peaceful Future"

"Choosing a Peaceful Future" explains why we should establish a world government and the type of government we should establish, and it responds to the two main objections to the proposal. The collapse of communism and the growth of democracy make it much more likely that a democratic world government could succeed. Economic ties crisscrossing the globe, facilitated by improving communications technology, increase contacts and familiarity among people of different countries. Thus the conditions for a world government are better than ever. The government must be a representative democracy if it is to succeed, and it should have a very limited purpose—to prevent war. To do that, it should monopolize nuclear weapons. All other functions remain the responsibilities of national governments. Later, the world government might work on environmental protection and economic development. Some object that different nations cannot work together, but such a federation is possible because it exists in the union of states in the U.S. The success of the U.S. shows that people's common interests in peace and prosperity outweigh ethnic and religious differences. Some object that a powerful world government would become tyrannical. But the checks and balances that protect us from an abuse of power in the U.S. could also protect the world from the world government.

Critical Questions

1. The present age is different from earlier ages in three ways. First, democracy has spread around the world. More nations have democratic governments than in the past. Second, the world is more integrated economically; there is more trade among nations, and freer trade, and that makes people think globally. Finally, the revolution in communications has broken down borders and

distances among different nations. People know more about other countries, they can see events in others places, and they can easily talk with people around the world.

2. The internationalist represented here proposes a democratic federation of nations with proportional representation. Power would be divided, as in the Australian government. Since the principal function of the government is to preserve the peace, it would have a monopoly on all nuclear weapons.

One question that arises is whether a monopoly on nuclear weapons would be enough to prevent small, local wars, such as the war in the Balkans, in Somalia, or in Southern Russia (Chechnya, Armenia). Would the world government be willing to use nuclear weapons on one side or the other? Probably not.

However, an internationalist might respond that the principle of monopolizing force is the important thing. Governments might agree to turn over their bombers, fighter aircraft, tanks, or other major weapons to the world government for the sake of peace and security, and retain only the weapons necessary for local police action.

Another problem that would arise is the conflict between large and small countries. Large, or wealthy, countries would want greater representation, but small, or poor, countries would want to guard their sovereignty. The U.S. solved the problem by creating a House and Senate with different types of representation, and the same solution might work on an international scale. But some argue that low-population, agricultural states have disproportionate power in our Congress, and the same might happen in a world government.

3. The internationalist claims, first, that people are similar in their goals. We all want the same things, such as freedom to work, to worship, and to raise our children, we want self-determination, and we want security and protection from violence. People are all similar in being rational as well, and we can recognize our common interests and choose the best means to achieve them. Second, the success of the U.S. shows that it is possible for people with different religions, languages, and cultural heritages to work together.

4. The internationalist says, first, that the same checks and balances that restrain our federal government could also restrain the world government. Officials would be elected and serve limited terms, power would be divided among three branches of government, military power would be in civilian hands, officials could be prosecuted for misconduct, and so on. Second, the world government would have a limited role. It would have no control of local affairs. It would have no impact on people's personal lives. Its function would be to prevent nations from going to war against each other, not to regulate citizens lives. Keeping the peace within a nation would still be the responsibility of the national government.

5. The internationalist claims that if people feel that they have some input into decisions that the government makes, then they will cooperate and accept those decisions. Otherwise, they will not. Therefore it is essential for the government to be democratic. Furthermore, the purpose and inspiration of the world government is to help people by promoting peace and eventually development. But an undemocratic state does not represent its people. If an undemocratic state had a voice in the world government, the government would be acting in the interest of the rulers of that country, not the people.

This does not mean the world government will never be established, because more and more nations are developing democratic governments. Authoritarian states like China are swimming against the tide of history.

6. Some students might say that the U.S. has more to lose, because we can protect ourselves now. We are the most powerful state in the world, and it is very unlikely that any other country will attack the U.S., at least directly. So we have nothing to gain by joining an international federation, and much to lose in independence and in taking on onerous obligations around the world.

On the other hand, if a world government worked as planned, then the U.S. could scrap its huge arsenal and save billions of dollars every year. It could reduce the size of its army, channel the research funds into civilian research, and devote all those human and material resources to more productive activities.

No: Localist. "The Politics of World Government"

The main point of the essay is that a world government could not work because it would be a political organization, and political decision-making depends on personal, emotional factors rather than rational calculation. For example, politics requires leadership, but inspiring people to exert themselves and make sacrifices is not a rational matter. Legislators and representatives interact on a personal level, but different cultures have different norms of personal interactions. A world government would collapse in conflicts over women, religion in education, discontented minorities within nations, and border disputes. On important matters people are guided by emotion rather than reason. Even if a world government could be established, its effects would be harmful because it would dampen people's initiative and personal responsibility.

Critical Questions

1. The localist claims that, while there are different proposals, all world governments have some problematic features in common, namely, they make political decisions and enforce them. And so the localist is criticizing all world governments.

2. Certainly politicians accuse each other of doing exactly this. Party A accuses party B of opposing legislation, not because party B believes it is harmful, but because party B does not want party A to get credit for the legislation.

Historians and political scientists say that un presidents often think about their place in history. Some presidents might decide that they do not want to be "the president who lost China," or "the first president to lose a war," or something else. In fact it might be in the nation's interest to change its relation with China, or to withdraw from a conflict, but a president's concern about his image in history might lead him to choose a different course.

3. The localist claims that successful collaboration on political matters requires personal interactions, give and take, favours, humour, flattery, loyalty, and so on. But the rules and rituals of such personal interactions are different in different cultures. In addition, different countries have fundamentally different values, concerning women, religion, minorities, and other things, and these differences would lead to conflicts.

4. The localist says that people are rational, and can think rationally about engineering problems. But political issues are not engineering problems. On important issues, people do not

decide rationally but rely on their emotions. The mistake is to think that people are always rational, or that reason and rational calculations outweigh emotions, family, religious or national bias, and irrational prejudice.

5. The localist claims that establishing a world government would undermine people's initiative and sense of personal responsibility. They would come to rely on the distant, powerful government to solve problems and help the needy, rather than tackling the problems or showing compassion themselves.

This question is closely related to the main division in Chapter 2 between "liberals" and "conservatives." I discuss that division in the "Connections" segment at the end of the chapter. The main division in Chapter 2 is between those who believe that people can solve problems best by working together in government, through elected representatives, laws, and social programs, and those who think that government creates more problems than it solves, or that private organizations and individuals can do more good than the government. The question is whether a larger, more powerful government—admittedly democratic and with good intentions—is a good thing or a bad thing.

6. The fact that the federation would have a very limited goal might undercut some of the criticisms—for example, the criticism that the government would destroy personal initiative (since citizens now exercise very little personal initiative in defending their country)—but it would not answer the main criticism that a world government would have to make political decisions. Even with the limited goal, the world government would consist of representatives from different countries who would have to decide collectively when to threaten a country and when to ignore it, when to use nuclear weapons on the citizens of a country and when to tolerate their actions. These decisions would be at least as difficult and contentious as more prosaic decisions about spending or protecting the environment.

Test Questions

1. According to "Choosing a Peaceful Future," one of the ways in which conditions today favour the formation of a world government is that

- a. *many countries have recently developed democratic governments
- b. the population of the world has grown rapidly in the past twenty-five years
- c. living standards around the world are higher than they used to be
- d. more countries have nuclear weapons than in the past.

2. The first goal of a world government would be

- a. to improve education
- b. to reduce the great inequalities in the world
- c. *to prevent war
- d. to explore the Solar System.

3. When people say that a world government is impractical, the internationalist's response is that

- a. people haven't really thought about the benefits
- b. every great improvement sounds impractical at first
- c. *the United States is a federation of different governments

- d. the British Empire shows that a worldwide federation is possible.
4. When people say that the world government would be a dictatorship, the internationalist's response is that
- the world government would not have any real power
 - the world government would be controlled by Americans
 - we need a benevolent dictatorship to control the harmful dictators
 - *the world government would be restrained by checks and balances.
5. According to the second essay, all forms of world government have in common the fact that
- they have a monopoly on nuclear weapons
 - *they make decisions and enforce them
 - they are democratic
 - they inevitably become dictatorships.
6. The fact about politics that idealists fail to understand is that
- it always leads to bribery and corruption
 - *it is emotional, not rational
 - most people do not care about it
 - it is the same everywhere.
7. According to the localist, one area where people would disagree is
- setting prices of goods
 - the location of the world government headquarters
 - the salaries of government officials
 - *religion in education
8. A harmful consequence of establishing a world government would be
- *people's loss of personal responsibility
 - people's loss of individual freedoms
 - people's loss of a voice in government
 - people's loss of income from higher taxes.

Current Controversy

Section 6 Is Ethnicity Essential to Identity?

Introduction

In the Book on page 68 under Yes: Essentialist in the first paragraph I write: “How does the American experience compare with our own? What have we to learn from them? What could they learn from us?” These are probably the key questions. The original American text was all about race, which is synonymous with colour. But in Australia, we don’t talk of race, or really of colour, but of ethnicity. Americans in their history used blacks as slave labour, as everyone knows, and they believed – and some Americans still believe – blacks, negroes, are racially, that is, biologically inferior to white people. A lot of their problems with ‘race’ in America come from this history. The Australian experience is utterly different. We talk of indigenous people and of people from ethnic backgrounds; the connotation of difference is one of culture, not biology. You may need to tease this out with your students. My sense is that American can learn from us, and their whole language of racialism is wrong and binds them into the wrong (biological) terms of discussion. Even after re-writing this for Australian context, the ghost of biologism haunts the essays. It is a good idea if the Instructor make a definite contrast between America and Australia, between ‘their’ experience and ‘ours’, and gently move discussion toward a cross-cultural understanding of American and Australian contexts, the different histories, how those histories affect the present, and how the present discussions in the two places are so different from one another, and apt to be confused, unless we are careful. Because of the American history of slavery and the biological ideology of racism that justified it, to some extent, Americans still talk about ‘blacks’ and ‘whites’, whereas in Australia, we don’t really distinguish people by skin colour. Aborigine’s can be black, but we talk about them as indigenous, and see that as distinguishing them, and their colour as contingent and basically irrelevant. The instructor needs therefore to watch the way student’s use language and aim to inculcate thoughtfulness, and accuracy as much as possible.

Ethnicity is a sensitive subject, needless to say, and in America, where it is all couched in terms of race and biologism, students have not surprisingly been reluctant to talk about it. The feelings are too raw and too strong, among all groups. When Americans do talk about it, some students feel guilty and want to confess, others resent the imposed guilt, others feel angry about the past, about affirmative action, about insensitivity. One way to get discussion started in an introductory way would be to ask students a question about the future. Some anthropologist once predicted that in a few hundred years all the people on earth will look like Polynesians, because we are all migrating, intermingling, and intermarrying more and more, and the Polynesians are a mixture, so anthropologists suppose, of the Mongoloid, Negroid, and Caucasian races, which are supposedly the most common races. If you ask the students whether they agree or not, some will suggest that it would be a good thing and others that it would be a bad thing, and you can explain that that is not the issue. The question is a purely factual question about probabilities, or what is likely to happen, not what should or shouldn’t happen. Students can easily understand the distinction in this context, and if you want to ask them to apply the distinction later in the discussion, it will be easier for them to do so.

Yes: Essentialist. “The Meaning of Being Black”

This essay describes several different aspects of African Americans’ experience in the United States, including history and its influence, discrimination, self-images, black solidarity, and the drive for justice. We need to realise then, and students do too, the *difference* with the Australian experience, and the difference from our way of describing and thinking about it. Get students to start picking up on the *language* that marks the difference. The central assumption of the first essay is that one’s identity depends on one’s position in society, and in the U.S. a black person is assigned an inferior position by the white majority. Therefore being black in the U.S. means being oppressed. If a person is privileged and powerful, then the person is not black, or not as black as others, regardless of skin colour. According to the essentialist, race – or ethnicity as we would call it – is a social construct, a role, defined by one’s power and relations with others, not by any physical characteristics as such. (An analogy might be being attractive. Being attractive depends on physical traits, but they are not the crucial factor. Different societies regard different traits as attractive, and favoured traits change over time. The key fact about being attractive is not one’s physical appearance, but one’s relation with others.) Race (ethnicity for us) is essential to identity because a person’s position in society and the experiences one has as a result are what define that person. Black people in America can organize a “sub-culture,” within which they are not regarded as inferior and are not subject to discrimination. They thereby create more satisfying identities. An important part of being black in America is experiencing racism, learning how terrible it is, and wanting to end it for all people.

Critical Questions

1. The answer is yes, because as West says, “blackness has no meaning outside a system of race-conscious people and practices.” The essentialist uses the examples of Adolph Plessy and the Jews in Germany to argue that people’s physical appearance is not the determining factor in defining race. People can be classified as ethnic minorities based on ancestry or place of origin or alleged traits that only an expert of some sort could perceive. If a society did not classify people as superior or inferior ethnic groups, ethnic groups would not exist as such.

An instructor might ask students if we will ever get to the point in the U.S., as Martin Luther King proclaimed in his dream, when all people will be one, and that classifications based on racial or ethnic appearance will not matter. Will it be possible in the future for a man to meet a woman at a party, and later recall several things about her, but be unable to remember whether she was white, black, brown, yellow, or red?

2. Basic social structures, in business, education, housing, etc., persist over time. They are products of history, and they influence people’s choices and behaviour in the present. They influence people’s assumptions and perceptions. History also influences all of us in the more intimate setting of our families, through the stories of the past that we hear from parents and relatives. No one can escape from the past, even if one tried, because each of us lives in a group. We constantly interact with our society. Our families, and the larger institutions of our society, shape our minds and personalities. And our society is shaped by broad, long-lasting forces of history.

3. Yes, in America even successful black people experience small discriminations and minor insults frequently; ethnic minorities and indigenous people in Australia could probably relate to this. Furthermore, the media, the educational system, business, and other institutions send subtle messages of difference and inferiority to black people. In addition, apart from any actual hostility on the part of the white majority, the bare fact of being different, a minority, reminds ethnic and indigenous people of the possibility of discrimination and oppression. The potential for white supremacist abuse is always present, no matter what one's current status, according to the essentialist.

4. The essentialist says that social institutions such as primary school, TV programs, news coverage, music, advertising, and other influences maintain a certain image of ethnic and indigenous people, and impose it on everyone, including the ethnic and indigenous peoples themselves. The images and perceptions are pervasive and effective. These institutions in America are controlled by the white majority, not by black people, so blacks have no input into their self-image. How does that translate to our context?

The essentialist might say that every individual is powerless to form his or her own identity, since we are all products of our society. Or an essentialist might recognize several ways in which people can have power over their own identities. He or she could say that if people can organize themselves and work collectively, they can change their society and exert some control over their own identities. (The locus of power would shift from a large group to a smaller group.) Or she might say – which is often alleged in the American situation that – the media and institutions will listen to a white person and respond, and so white people have more self-determination than black people. Or she might say that social institutions and media give white people many more choices (in careers, residences, avocations, lifestyles) than they give minorities, and so whites are not powerless to form their own identities.

5. In general, according to the essentialist, people absorb their group's history and experiences, and then interpret their own surroundings and encounters in terms of the categories and expectations their group gives them. For minorities specifically, their community's collective experience is more important than individual experience because they are accepted and respected in their community, whereas they are not accepted in the society at large. Their individual experiences will always be painful, and their self-image will be artificial. But when they psychologically join the minority community and accept its outlook, they gain an important sense of self-worth and validity.

Would this be true for a successful black professional who socializes with white colleagues? Would such an individual feel a conflict between the experiences of the black community – a history of oppression and discrimination – and his or her own personal experiences? What are the American/Australian contrasts on this question?

6. Some students (and newspaper columnists) criticize affirmative action on similar grounds, saying that the goal of racial equality is incompatible with differential treatment of the ethnic groups.

One way an essentialist might try to resolve the conflict is to say that racism means classifying people into racial groups, *and* regarding some groups as superior to others. One could recognize racial groups without believing that any group is superior or inferior to another. Thus one could claim that ethnicity is essential to identity, but reject any stereotypes or discrimination or inequality based on race/ethnicity (i.e., racism).

Or an essentialist might say that ethnicity is essential to identity, so long as societies classify people into ethnic groups. Our societies define us, and in societies that divide people by

ethnic groupings, that division is essential to our identities. But we can also envision a society that does not classify people into races or ethnic groups. It might be an egalitarian society, or it might be divided into groups in various ways, but not by ethnic group. In such a society, ethnicity would not be essential to one's identity. An essentialist can say that ethnicity is essential to identity *now*, but he or she can look forward to the day when people will not be classified by ethnicity (i.e., can oppose racism).

No: Non-essentialist. “Ethnicity and Identity”

“Ethnicity and Identity” has three parts. In the first part, What is ethnicity, the non-essentialist claims that ethnicity is a set of physical characteristics that evolved over the centuries as adaptations to climate. The white skin, long nose, and thin lips of Caucasians, for example, allow them to absorb the meagre sunlight of northern latitudes, warm the air they breathe, and conserve heat. In the second part, What is identity, the non-essentialist rejects the common idea that identity is whatever makes one unique. Various physical and psychological traits make one unique, but many of them are trivial, whereas identity is not. The non-essentialist proposes instead that identity consists of those characteristics of a person that the person values most about herself or himself. In part three, Is ethnicity a part of identity, the author says that one's physical traits are not related to one's personality, and therefore should not be important to a person who wants to understand or define herself. They should not be a part of one's identity. Second, the tendency to associate with people who look like oneself, and to find an identity in a racial group, rests on the dangerous assumptions that people in a group are similar, and that one will find much in common with people who look like oneself.

Critical Questions

1. According to the non-essentialist, ethnicity is a set of physical characteristics that evolved mainly as adaptations to climate and geography. It is a useful concept because it helps explain adaptation and perhaps movements, isolation, and intermixtures of populations over the centuries.
2. First, racists assume that physical traits, such as skin colour, are correlated with psychological and moral traits, such as creativity and industry. Of course anthropologists who investigate the evolution of the human species reject such simplistic thinking. Second, racists assume that if a person belongs to a certain racial group, then that person will be similar to most other members of that group in significant ways. That is, racists think in stereotypes.
3. Students will probably accept the non-essentialist principle that physical traits have nothing to do with psychological traits. But a person's body type might have a strong impact on a person's experiences in a certain society. Sociologists have claimed that in the U.S. tall people, blond people, and attractive people, are treated very differently from short people, dark people, and unattractive people. And one's experiences affect one's personality. This answer is similar to the essentialist view that one's position in society is the determining factor in one's identity. One's ethnicity (in the sense of one's physical appearance) certainly influences the way one is treated in the U.S., and so one's ethnicity influences one's psychological traits (assuming that the way one is

treated influences one's psychological traits).

A non-essentialist might respond that an individual always has the power to choose how to react to society's treatment of him or her, and can reject racist images and attempts at manipulation based on crude stereotypes.

4. These are distinct questions. The first is about how much of one's identity is within one's control. Some students will probably say all, and some will probably say none. Perhaps one can distinguish between long-lasting core traits, acquired in the earliest years (or even innate), and more superficial traits that change with maturation, marriage, parenthood, etc. The latter may be matters of choice even if the former are not.

The second question is about what parts of one's personality, or behaviour and emotions, are part of one's identity and what parts aren't. The non-essentialist claims that many characteristics are unimportant and can change without changing one's identity. So if I improve my table manners I am still the same person; I simply have better manners than I did. But if I undergo a religious conversion, or change my whole outlook and behaviour in some dramatic way, then I might be said to have changed my identity.

5. The non-essentialist seems to make the following three statements:

- (a) identity depends on what is really important to a person, not on all traits;
- (b) a person's ethnic background can be very important to him or her;
- (c) identity does not depend on race.

Are these three statements inconsistent? Has the non-essentialist contradicted himself or herself?

On the face of it, these statements are inconsistent. The non-essentialist could try to clarify his or her position by pointing out that, instead of (c), the essay says that identity *should* not depend on *ethnicity*. That is, it is possible for a person to believe that his physical appearance is a very important element in his identity, but he shouldn't, because physical appearance has nothing to do with personality, and it changes relatively rapidly. One can create a superficial, conflicted, unstable identity for oneself, but then one will be forced to redefine oneself over and over as the superficial identity proves untenable. If the non-essentialist substitutes the statement "identity should not depend on ethnicity" for (c), then the three statements are consistent.

6. This question provides an opportunity to discuss the nature of stereotypes and generalizations. I have had more than one student who has said, literally, "all generalizations are bad.." My guess is that high schools have taught students that they shouldn't stereotype people, but some students have taken this to mean that they can't make any generalizations about groups. So if a student says "Most police officers support Republican candidates," or "Since Jones is a police officer, she is probably a Republican," other students will accuse him of using stereotypes. Of course the question is whether the student has good evidence for his generalization. A stereotype is a generalization that is based on superficial, inadequate evidence.

If I associate with teachers rather than self-employed business people am I using stereotypes? It depends on why I believe I have more in common with teachers. If I base my belief on wide experience with teachers and business people, acquired with an open mind, then I might discover some sound generalizations about the groups, their interests, and their outlooks. And I might be perfectly justified in believing that I have more in common with teachers.

Test Questions

1. The quotation from Cornel West rests on two assumptions, one of which is that
 - a. America is a colour blind society
 - b. *no one is born black
 - c. people of different skin colour can never fully understand each other
 - d. skin colour as a mark of real difference is a scientific concept

2. West illustrates his own experience with discrimination by telling a story about
 - a. having to sit at the back of a bus
 - b. earning less than his white colleagues for the same work
 - c. being called racist names
 - d. * waiting for a taxi

3. The essay says the most crippling kind of control over people is control
 - a. of housing patterns and neighbourhoods
 - b. of the educational system
 - c. *of ways of defining ourselves
 - d. of jobs and opportunities for employment

4. The deepest core of ethnic authenticity, according to the essentialist, is
 - a. the desire to create a ethnic culture separate from mainstream culture
 - b. the desire to be financially secure
 - c. the desire to be safe from oppression and discrimination
 - d. *the desire to eradicate racism everywhere

5. The non-essentialist defines ethnicity as
 - a. *a set of physical traits such as skin colour
 - d. the source of the creativity and strength in the U.S.

6. One error racists make is the assumption that
 - a. everyone wants to belong to some group
 - b. everyone is a mixture of more than one ethnic group
 - c. *a person's physical appearance indicates the kind of personality he or she has
 - c. a person's physical appearance is an inherited adaptation to a certain environment

7. The non-essentialist says that identity is
 - a. the physical traits such as fingerprints that make a person different from everyone else
 - b. *the psychological traits that a person cares about most
 - c. the traits a person shares with other members of his or her ethnic group
 - c. the unique set of psychological traits that make a person different from everyone else

8. According to the non-essentialist, ethnicity is not essential to identity because
 - a. ethnicity is studied by anthropologists and identity is studied by psychologists
 - b. *ethnicity is based on physical features and identity is based on psychological features
 - c. a person's ethnicity does not make him or her unique
 - d. if people believed it was, they would be racists

