

**Lecture Notes:**

- ① **ideology**: a set of beliefs that serve to legitimate a particular social form or structure
- **neo-Marxists** on ideology
    - Marx dealt rather superficially with ideology, contrary to what the book says, he emphasized **material** causes
    - **cultural hegemony** (Gramsci): the power exercised by one group over others through controlling the content of major cultural forms and major institutions
    - in other words, minority groups are victim to cultural incorporation or lose cultural conflicts *and* are thus kept culturally deprived
    - this gives rise to a **false consciousness** in the minority group members, who fail to realize their own best interests and unreflectively adopt the dominant ideology
  - **power elite theory** on ideology
    - those already powerful adopt ideological explanations for their superior position in the social hierarchy
    - then, since the powerful have access to media, they propagate their explanation for power imbalances
    - these explanations may be believed by the elite (properly “ideology”) or developed to consciously manipulate the masses (properly “propaganda”)
  - **functionalist theory** on ideology
    - societies have certain needs that they all share (replacing personnel, teaching new recruits, producing and distributing goods and services, preserving order, providing and maintaining a sense of purpose, understanding the world and society)
    - people suffer neither from false consciousness or elite manipulation, but come to share the values upon which the society rests; this consensus creates stability and order, thus explaining social differences as necessary
  - **social psychological** and **psychodynamic theories** on ideology
    - most people are more concerned with local, personal, and immediate issues than the bigger picture
    - as long as certain minimum wants and needs are met, and the promise for more is held out, they are, if not content or happy, complacent
    - thus, those few who are driven by power are left with a rather smaller playing field for acquiring and exercising real power
- The **Dominant American Ideology**
- 1 **individualism** (personal efficacy over social and structural factors on achievement)
  - 2 **equality of opportunity** (given a chance, any real go-getter can bootstrap himself into the big time)
  - 3 the **work ethic** (hard work will always be rewarded with success and recognition)
  - 4 **meritocracy** (the best person for the job will prevail)
  - 5 **laissez-faire capitalism** (remember principles from previous lesson)
  - 6 **democratic government** (every citizen has same opportunity to participate as they see fit, given will of the many)
  - 7 other characteristic principles of the mainstream American viewpoint:
    - **universalism** and **egalitarianism** (everyone has the same intrinsic worth and will be treated as such)
    - **lowered class consciousness** (remember, everyone thinks they are middle class...)
    - **human nature** never changes (negative human characteristics, like avarice & conflict are just the way we are)
    - **social institutions** are neutral (corporations, the media, legal-judicial systems, educational systems don't have their own, sometimes contradictory, interests)
    - **fear** and doubt of other societies
- ③ **capitalism**: an economic system characterized by the private ownership of natural resources and capital goods and in which returns of rent, interest, and profit are paid to owners who decide on the use of their own resources and goods
- main tenets of the ideal type:
    - 1 efficiency
    - 2 common medium of exchange
    - 3 profit maximization and loss minimization
    - 4 meritocracy: success determines rewards and authority
    - 5 fittest contenders survive
    - 6 goods and services are available in a series of markets, having the following characteristics:
  - ? what are the positive and negative aspects of capitalism?

- ④ **democracy:** government by the people, either directly or through representation
- main tenets of the ideal type:
    - 1 shared power through majority consensus
    - 2 minimal rules
    - 3 sense of community
    - 4 minimal division of labor
    - 5 no hierarchy of rewards or authority
  - ? what are the positive and negative aspects of democracy?
- ⑤ **individualism:** the social order exists to serve individual needs, wants, and goals
- main tenets of the ideal type:
    - 1 emphasis on self-reliance
    - 2 doctrine of atomism
    - 3 individuals seen as *tabula rasa* (blank slates)
    - 4 individual as bearer of rights (life, liberty, property)
    - 5 belief in an equality of opportunity
    - 6 ethical individualism: morality is individually oriented
    - 7 political individualism
  - ? what are the positive and negative aspects of individualism?
- ⑥ reactions to perceived excesses of individualism
- **conservatism:**
    - main tenets of the ideal type:
      - 1 resistance to change for change's sake (but accepted if though inevitable or prudent)
      - 2 desire to conserve (from Christian asceticism: e.g., the Puritans)
      - 3 anti-rationalist: liberals and socialists produce abstract, unfeeling, and overly rationalized doctrines of society; ignoring the complex web of habits and customs that preserve social order
      - 4 four core values of: authority, hierarchy, property, and community
      - 5 defense of tradition and the maintenance of established customs and institutions (belonging and stability)
      - 6 assume human imperfection
      - 7 stress upon the importance of authority, which develops from natural necessity
      - 8 property provides security (thrift and cautious money management is itself a virtue and encourages private savings and property investments)
    - there are many types: authoritarian, paternalistic, libertarian, and the "New Right"
    - ? what are the positive and negative aspects of conservatism?
  - **socialism:**
    - main tenets of the ideal type:
      - 1 humans are essentially social creatures that can only overcome social and economic problems through drawing upon the power of the community rather than any individual effort
      - 2 human nature is totally determined by the action of social forces and all human skills and attributes are learned from society
      - 3 humans are naturally good
      - 4 humans are naturally cooperative
      - 5 commitment to an equality of outcomes because we each have the same intrinsic moral worth as humans
      - 6 since it is society from which we learn our skills and develop our abilities, and since goods and services are only produced collectively, they should be owned by the society and distributed for use to increase the common good
    - there are even more variations of socialism (or collectivism) than there are types of conservatism
    - ? what are the positive and negative aspects of socialism?

**Key Ideas:**

**Ideology, meritocracy, capitalism, democracy, individualism, conservatism, socialism.**