Theories of Human Nature

Freud

- Desire is the essence of the human being (attain pleasure and avoid pain)
- Society represses desire because of the demands of objective reality and as an expression of certain desires
- Thus, culture and society are created
- Repressed desires remain in the unconscious, leaving people perpetually frustrated
- Some frustration is relieved through socially acceptable alternatives (war, creation and differential treatment of "out groups," banning books—general projection)
- Fundamentally, however, all civilized people are neurotic and behavior is conditioned according to these neurotic needs
- The "pursuit of happiness," then, cannot be the kind of rational, tolerant, cooperative, inclusive, compromise among equals envisioned by democratic theory
- We are estranged in essence due to our conflicting drives: Eros and Thanatos

Hobbes

- Natural human state is a war of 'every man against every man."
- Psychologically, people are self-centered, driven by 'a perpetual and restless desire for power after power that ceaseth only in death."
- Fundamental concern is with self-preservation and the wealth and prestige that secures it
- Ontologically (Ontology: the Study of Being), humans are simply objects in motion like every other object making up the universe. They appear otherwise only because they are more complex (Materialism).
- Material objects are essentially external to each other. Bonds such as compassion, empathy or common purpose cannot unite them.
- Life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."
- Without strong central government life is simply grief.
- Humans are born with both passion and reason.
- Human passion leads to a state of war within society that leads to anarchy, chaos, violence, and destruction. The life of man in nature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.
- Reason suggests that peace is a better way of life.
- Peace can only be maintained if every person agrees to give up the right to govern themselves and to give absolute power to an individual (or group) who will legislate peace and security using force if necessary.
- People must promise complete obedience in return for order and security.
- The choice for society is between absolute power or complete anarchy.

Locke

- The human mind is like a blank tablet at birth.
- Human development is determined by education and social organizations, for good or evil.
- The purpose of government is to protect the 'natural rights' of life, liberty, and property.
- Citizens have the natural right to rebel against a government which does not respect the rights of its citizens.
- Since all humans are born with minds that have no learning and must be taught, there can be no inborn cultural differences between people especially men and women.

Voltaire:

- Believed that the best humanity could hope for was a good monarch.
- Did not believe in social equality. Women (as with everyone) should be treated well in a civilized society, but it should also be recognized that women have special attributes fitting them for special roles.
- The only feasible equality would be based on that "by which the citizen only depends on the laws which protect the freedom of the feeble against the ambition of the strong.

Rousseau:

- Was passionately committed to individual freedom.
- Believed the human mind is like a blank tablet at birth.
- Saw reason and civilization as destroying rather than freeing the individual.
- Believed that any society would generate a general will which was sacred and absolute and which reflected the common interests of the people with everyone's interests were subordinate to it.
- Believed that women, having a responsibility to society for child rearing should be educated to be good mothers.

Aristotle

- Humans are political beings, organic parts of a polis
- Psychologically, reason and "humanity" cannot be developed in private but only through human interaction
- Ontologically, a being must "grow" into humanity; there is a cycle to human life just as there is to everything in nature
- According to how individuals grow, according to the development of their natural talents, abilities and skills, they have discernable roles in the polis (Philosopher-king, artisan, laborer, soldier, slave)
- Only a few could attain the full unity of common citizenship as only a few could fully develop their reason
- Humans are not estranged in essence but they are certainly not equal in any sense

Milgram

- In an experiment, the "teacher" administered an electric shock of increasing intensity to the learner upon each mistake.
- The "teacher" was oblivious to the fact that the learner was an actor, merely indicating discomfort as punishment increased.
- When the "teacher" asked for advice regarding increasing the punishments, he/she was verbally encouraged to continue.
- Ultimately, 65% of the "teacher's" obeyed orders to punish the learner all the way to the end of the 450-volt scale.
- Not a single "teacher" disobeyed orders before reaching 300 volts.
- Obedience significantly dropped when:
  - The experimenter was absent
  - The experimenter provided contradictory instructions.
  - In fact, at times, the "teacher" questioned the experimenter, asking who was responsible for shocking the learner.
- Upon the reply that the experimenter assumed full responsibility, the "teacher" seemed to accept the response and continue shocking.

Linton

- "Group complexes" naturally develop
- Large groups divide into small groups conscious of their individuality
- Each "subgroup" adopts a distinctive name derived from some animal, object or natural phenomenon
- Individuals use this appellation in reference to themselves when speaking with "outsiders"
- Representations of the group namesake are used to adorn the person and property of members
- A reverential attitude develops toward the namesake
- An uninformed belief develops that the group namesake is also a group guardian capable of giving
Theories of Human Nature

Authoritarianism

A. Freedom is the root of all evil.
   0. People are basically selfish
      a. Sex and greed are the two strongest motivating forces
      b. These must be reduced in order for society to improve.
   1. Humans will not "restrain" themselves and become responsible and concerned citizens on
      their own.

B. Society can only improve if the people improve
C. The only way for a government to improve is if the State intervenes and controls every aspect of life.
   0. The only way for a government to establish a just and moral nation is by tightly regulating the
      activities of its citizenry.
      a. The government is needed in order to establish economic and social equality for all its
         citizens.
      b. More importantly, the government is needed in order to establish a healthy moral
         climate for the nation.
         0. A healthy and safe society can only exist when that society is forced to obey a
            strict moral standard.
         1. When the standard of morality of a nation is increased, all the citizens of that
            nation will enjoy the benefits that come with a healthier, safer, and cleaner
            (read: porn-free) society.

Jung

- The Psyche, the whole of our being, innately seeking growth, wholeness, equilibrium
- The Self, the goal towards which the psyche is oriented.
- Psyche is divided into consciousness and the unconscious
- Unconscious serves to compensate the conscious attitude
- Whenever the conscious attitude is too one sided (and, consequently growth* or "wholeness" inhibiting), it's
  unconscious opposite manifests itself autonomously to rectify the imbalance and suggest a path for
  continued growth
- It does this internally through powerful dreams and images, or it can pathologize in disease if "repressed"
- Frequently an unconscious component "externalizes" and appears from without, and is known as
  "projection."
- This involves an excessive emotional response to another person or situation
- Like falling in love
- Disliking someone intensely
- Such powerful emotional responses may indicate that an unconscious content is seeking to burst through
  into consciousness, but it can only appear as externalized, or projected onto another person
- It is not the other person we love or hate, but part of ourselves projected onto him or her.

Natural Rights Theory

- Rights that belong to people simply because they are human beings
- A loosely knit body of rules of action prescribed by an authority superior to the state.
- These rules variously (according to the several differing schools of natural-law and natural-rights
  speculation) are derived from
  - Divine commandment
  - The nature of humankind
  - Abstract reason

http://www2.sfasu.edu/polisci/Abel/Honors/TheoriesofHumanNature.html 7/16/2007
Theories of Human Nature

- Long experience of mankind in community.
- They belong to all people in all times and places.
- Whenever they are taken from us, we are deprived of something that is naturally our own, something that cannot belong to another.
- We are also denied our fundamental humanity

Hamilton

- Freedom, Faction, Authority, Natural Rights, Governance and Responsiveness all must be pursued
- Favored a moderately authoritarian approach
- Structure government to give free play to faction
- Will cancel themselves out:
  - Will insure that only overwhelming support for change will insure its passage
  - Insure most leaders from direct control of citizens (Senate, Executive and Courts all several steps removed)
- Insures ability to govern
- Allows independence from "passions of the moment" and "fads"