

DAVID E. INGERSOLL
RICHARD K. MATTHEWS

THE PHILOSOPHIC ROOTS OF MODERN IDEOLOGY

LIBERALISM, COMMUNISM, FASCISM

SECOND EDITION

Second Edition

The Philosophic Roots of Modern Ideology

Liberalism, Communism, Fascism

DAVID E. INGERSOLL
University of Delaware

RICHARD K. MATTHEWS
Lehigh University



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Josy W. Ingersoll, for her patience and understanding; Jamie and Michael Deiner for their toleration of an all too often irascible student of ideas.

Deborah Jean and Zachary Daniel Matthews, who provide the support for my wings.

*The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in
higher esteem those who think alike than those who think
differently.*

Nietzsche

Preface to Second Edition

Recent, dramatic events in the realm of political ideology demand that a new edition of our earlier book be written. This edition deals specifically with three crucial milestones: (1) the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev, (2) the eclipse of Deng Xiaoping, and (3) the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism. Each of these occurrences has already produced important, sometimes tragic, political effects that need to be understood within an ideological context. More important, all have the potential to change profoundly the world of politics.

This book is designed as an overview for readers who have little or no knowledge of three basic idea systems of modern times. Given that purpose, we have constantly found ourselves in the frustrating position of oversimplifying, ignoring interesting side issues, and avoiding topics that in a longer work would surely be essential. What follows is original scholarship in the sense that the emphases and interpretations are dependent to a large extent on our own backgrounds and interests. We have, however, often relied heavily on the work of other scholars and will be happy if we have provided a partial synthesis of their work. In trying to accomplish this, we are acutely conscious of at times seeming to “parrot” the work of others—if this occurs too often we are sincerely apologetic. Along the same lines it is difficult to sort those interpretations that are ours and those that have resulted from the hard work of others. We have benefited tremendously from the writings of scholars in these areas—many of whom we have never met. Our simple hope is that we have assisted in their endeavors by presenting these idea systems in a form whereby they can be more easily understood by beginning students. Our fondest hope is that this work will stimulate readers to explore these idea systems in all of their complexity and richness, and that they will see the importance of ideas in themselves as well as in relation to what too often passes for the “real world.”

Much of the intellectual groundwork for what follows is to be found in David E. Ingersoll's 1971 book *Communism, Fascism, Democracy*. This new book contains interpretations that are radically different from the former book, treats numerous topics not covered in the earlier work, and benefits from the major contributions and insights of coauthor Richard K. Matthews. We should also acknowledge that our treatment of American liberalism—particularly regarding Thomas Jefferson—is largely based on Matthews' *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson*.

A final explanatory note concerning the use of footnotes and

bibliography seems in order. We have used footnotes sparingly, and we have appended a brief bibliography to each chapter. This is in keeping with the nature of the work, which purports to provide an overview of an extremely complex subject matter and to stimulate students to explore further on their own. To that end it seemed desirable to avoid copious footnoting while leading the student directly to the primary sources and to other, more detailed works in the field. We are certain there are many excellent books that are absent from the bibliography, either because of a lack of knowledge or because of space limitations. We hope that the ones that are included will be sufficient to assist the student in the pursuit of further knowledge.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions, both direct and indirect, of the many persons who have made this book possible. Our students at the University of Delaware and at Lehigh University have contributed, often unwittingly, through their reactions to ideas we have presented and techniques we have attempted to use—our respective classrooms have often served as experimental laboratories. Pam DeMond, Ginger Carroll, Pat Trayner, Susan Smith, Marlene Bartholomew, Susan Yacone, Matilda DiDonato, and Dorothy Windish have provided typing assistance at various stages. The following scholars have read and commented on the manuscript, and we have benefited both from their critiques and from their encouragement: C. B. Macpherson, Paul Pfretzschner, James Lennertz, Ronald Hill, Yaroslav Bilinsky, Mark Miller, Norman Girardot, Ray Wylie, Jim Reid, Greg White, Andrew Davison, Andrew Zlotnick, and most especially, Don Barry. We also wish to thank the Prentice Hall reviewers for their helpful comments: Mary Ellen Fischer, Skidmore College; Andrea R. C. Helms, University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Richard Hofstetter, San Diego State University; Isaac Kramnick, Cornell University; Frank M. Lewis, University of Toledo; Daniel J. O'Neil, University of Arizona; Andrew Raposa, Westfield State College; Peter C. Sederberg, University of South Carolina; John B. Taylor, Washington College; Joel G. Verner, Illinois State University; and David M. Wood, University of Missouri.

Despite all this assistance, there are, no doubt, errors of omission and commission in what follows; if so, they are our responsibility.

D.E.I.
R.K.M.

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- Chapter 1* John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1974), p. 95.
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- Chapter 3* James Madison, *The Federalist*, Jacob E. Cooke, ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 374. © 1961 by Wesleyan University.
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1

The Origins of Political Ideologies

No one can be a great thinker who does not recognize that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think.

John Stuart Mill

THE CAVE: THE ILLUSION AND THE REALITY OF EDUCATION

Think of Plato's Cave. Perhaps the most powerful and frightening of all metaphors in Western political philosophy, it is an insightful allegory about the potential of domination and oppression, but ultimately about education and liberation.

Plato ingeniously compares the effect of education, and the lack of it, upon people to the following situation: Imagine a place where humans are living in an underground, cavelike dwelling. The cave contains a way out and up to the sun, but it is rather far removed from the people. They have been here from birth; their necks and legs are in bonds, so that they remain in place and can see only what is directly in front of them. Light inside the cave is provided by a fire burning somewhere behind and above them. Between the fire and our contented prisoners, somewhere behind and on a higher level, there is a path across the cave and along this a low wall has been built. It is similar to the screen at a puppet show in front of the performers who display their puppets above it. Imagine also that these puppeteers carry all kinds of objects, statues of people and animals, so that the figures are above the screening wall. Imagine also that some of the puppeteers are talking while others are silent.

In such a situation, our prisoners could see only the shadows that the fire casts upon the wall of the cave in front of them. Moreover, they would believe that the sounds they hear are coming from these shadows. Since they can see neither their own bodies nor the bodies of the other people, they inevitably assume reality to be nothing else than the shadows and sounds of the puppeteers and their artifacts.

"Preposterous!" you say. "How could such people be either so stupid or so foolish as to be tricked by shadows on the wall?" And yet Plato claims this is precisely the human condition. We are all born into a type of comfortable slavery where it is extremely difficult for us even to become aware of our slavery, our ignorance, let alone become capable of discovering the difference (assuming there is a difference) between truth and illusion.

Continuing his tale, Plato asks us to imagine what would happen if one of the prisoners, suddenly released from bondage, turned around and looked into the light of the fire. Would that person not be temporarily blinded by the light? It would be impossible to see either the shadows or the things that produced them. Even though reality was now closer in that the person was at least looking in the right direction, one would be frightened, disoriented, and in considerable discomfort. The world of comfortable illusions has been shattered: The fire has been seen. Yet our observer is in a state of confusion. Undoubtedly, one