



tradition
skepticism

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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Dr. Hazony asks, in regard to the roots of progress in modern science, medicine, political freedom, and the market economy, “...why give the Enlightenment all the credit? Apparently because it doesn’t look good to admit that the best and most important parts of modernity—were given to us by individuals who nearly all held conservative religious and political beliefs.” To whom do you think that it doesn’t ‘look good’ to credit conservatives with progress in the modern world? Explain.
- After Dr. Hazony shares with us the example of Napoleon being misguided by Enlightenment thinking, Dr. Hazony goes on to explain that, “Today’s cheerleaders for the Enlightenment... also pass over the fact that the father of communism, Karl Marx, saw himself as promoting universal reason. His new ‘science’ of economics ended up killing tens of millions of people in the 20th century. So did the supposedly scientific race theories of the Nazis. The greatest catastrophes of modernity were engineered by individuals who claimed to be exercising reason.” Why do you think that advocates for Enlightenment thinking ignore such hugely important historical evidence against their views? Explain.
- Dr. Hazony points out that, “...most of the progress we’ve made comes from conservative traditions openly skeptical of human reason. The Enlightenment’s critics, including John Selden, David Hume, Adam Smith and Edmund Burke, emphasized the unreliability of ‘abstract reasoning,’ and urged us to stick close to custom, history, and experience in all things. Which brings us to the heart of what’s wrong with today’s idolization of the Enlightenment. Its leading figures were not skeptics open to what history and experience might teach us.” Why do you think that the Enlightenment critics valued ‘custom, history, and experience?’ Explain. What do you think that history and experience might teach us, and why should reason be tempered with what we learn from history and experience?
- Later in the video, Dr. Hazony notes that, “...I see American and European elites clamoring for Enlightenment Now. They rush to embrace every fashionable new ‘ism’— socialism, feminism, environmentalism and so on- declaring them to be universal certainties and the only ‘politically correct’ way of thinking. They display contempt toward those who won’t embrace their dogmas, branding them ‘unenlightened,’ ‘illiberal,’ ‘deplorable’ and worse.” Why do you think that Progressives tend to conflate their opinion of what objective truth is with actual reality? Explain. Do you agree that truth is whatever Leftists claim truth to be? Why or why not? Why do you think that these elites are so entrenched in such myopic Enlightenment thinking, even though historically such rigid thinking has led to such catastrophe on such a large scale? Explain. What might some negative consequences be of such narrow, black-and-white thinking when applied to the world today? Why do you think that Leftists excoriate conservatives for supposedly polarizing governments and dividing countries when it is the Leftists themselves who staunchly operate under an ‘Us versus Them’ and ‘You Are Wrong/Evil if You Don’t Embrace Our Ideology’ mentality? Explain.
- At the end of the video, Dr. Hazony concludes that, “...these new dogmas deserve to be greeted with some of that old Anglo-Scottish skepticism. Enlightenment overconfidence in reason has led us badly astray too many times.” Do you agree with Dr. Hazony that Leftist, Enlightenment dogma should be challenged? Why or why not? Do you agree with Dr. Hazony’s last statement? Why or why not?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Nazi eugenics

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Nazi Racial Science,” then answer the questions that follow.

- From 1933 to 1945, what did Nazi Germany do in terms of the nation’s ‘health’? Who helped to develop racial health policies? What were those policies, and what were they supposedly legitimized with? What did the program consist of? What was the campaign based in part on? What is eugenics, and in what countries was it supported?
- What types of reasoning and ‘-ism’s did Nazi eugenics and Nazi racial health policies support? Do you think that it is possible for modern advocates of Enlightenment thinking to steer nations towards such destruction and catastrophe again? Why or why not?
- What is the main point of the presenter in the video? What is the relationship between the information in this article with the main point of the presenter in the video? Explain.



QUIZ

WHAT WAS THE ENLIGHTENMENT?

1. Modern science, medicine, political freedom, and the market economy are all a result of the Enlightenment.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights are products of _____.
 - a. the Renaissance
 - b. the Enlightenment
 - c. English common law
 - d. None of the above

3. The claim that all good things come from the Enlightenment is most closely associated with which late-18th-century German philosopher?
 - a. Christian Wolff
 - b. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
 - c. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
 - d. Immanuel Kant

4. The Enlightenment's critics, including John Selden, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Edmund Burke, emphasized the _____ of "abstract reasoning."
 - a. reliability
 - b. accuracy
 - c. unreliability
 - d. usefulness

5. American and European elites clamoring for "Enlightenment Now" rush to embrace every fashionable new "ism" – socialism, feminism, environmentalism, and so on – declaring them to be the only "politically correct" way of thinking.
 - a. True
 - b. False



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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Nazi Racial Science

Introduction

From 1933 to 1945, Nazi Germany carried out a campaign to “cleanse” German society of individuals viewed as biological threats to the nation’s “health.” Enlisting the help of physicians and medically trained geneticists, psychiatrists, and anthropologists, the Nazis developed racial health policies that began with the mass sterilization of “genetically diseased” persons and ended with the near annihilation of European Jewry. With the patina of legitimacy provided by “racial” science experts, the Nazi regime carried out a program of approximately 400,000 forced sterilizations and over 275,000 euthanasia deaths that found its most radical manifestation in the death of millions of “racial” enemies in the Holocaust.

This campaign was based in part on ideas about public health and genetic “fitness” that had grown out of the inclination of many late nineteenth century scientists and intellectuals to apply the Darwinian concepts of evolution to the problems of human society. These ideas became known as eugenics and found a receptive audience in countries as varied as Brazil, France, Great Britain, and the United States. But in Germany, in the traumatic aftermath of World War I and the subsequent economic upheavals of the twenties, eugenic ideas found a more virulent expression when combined with the Nazi worldview that espoused both German racial superiority and militaristic ultranationalism.

[Rest of article redacted]