

How to Think Ideologically

There are many deceptive people in the world and sometimes determining whether someone is telling the truth or lying can be very difficult. Perhaps the most notorious place where deception occurs is in the realm of politics. Politicians throw out a whole bunch of really good ideas to a crowd of potential voters and then, once they are elected, refuse to carry out even one of those promises. What gives and how can we cut through the mist of lies to understand who is telling the truth and who is being dishonest? The answer to this predicament is learning how to think ideologically.

Ideology is a set of non-negotiable beliefs that guide a person's entire thought process. Everyone has a core set of beliefs upon which decisions can be made. Even if you were to say, "I don't have any core beliefs that guide my decisions. I make decisions based on what seems best at the time." This statement also stems from a particular ideology. People do not come up with good ideas out of thin air. Good ideas can only be judged to be good depending on what a person considers to be good. To make the distinction between good and evil requires a guiding set of beliefs.

Learning how to think ideologically is not easy, but is a valuable skill. These are some tips to help you think ideologically.

Define Your Core Beliefs: It is very easy to say that you agree with statement "A" or disagree with statement "B" whenever they arise in conversation. What is very difficult to do is to define one's own specific beliefs. Over the course of a week or two, answer these questions and provide examples to explain why you answered the way you did.

Where did everything come from?: Naively, people do not think that this question matters a whole lot. But this question will define how much value you place on your environment, neighbors, and yourself. Is there a God? Did everything spring forth through random chance? Is life an accident, an essence, or a creation? What source of authority supports your beliefs? Does this source of authority specifically agree with your line of reasoning? If not, how do you deal with your disagreements?

Why Am I Here?: It's sometimes called *the meaning of life*. Do you believe your life has meaning? Do you consider the answers you provided for "Where did everything come from?" Before answering this question? If not, revisit your previous answer and derive this answer from a logical outgrowth of the first one...or change your first answer, depending on which course of action seems more reasonable. Does your answer merely explain how you came into existence or does it define some sort of purpose? If you have defined a purpose, how specific do you think your purpose is and provide details. Is there something you can do with your life to fulfill the purpose you have defined for your life?

What is the fate of the universe?: We all know that our lives will one day end, but do you ever stop to consider that one day all things may end? Do you believe that all things will continue forever? Do you think that the material universe will cease to exist? Is there a higher level of existence that one can eventually participate in? If all things will continue forever, how does that affect the way you live today? If all things will eventually come to an end, how does that affect the way you live today? If you believe there will be an end, how does the affect the relationships that you have? How soon will all things end? Is anything you are doing today going to have eternal ramifications?

Follow Your Core Beliefs: This is where most people stumble. There are a good number of people that can tell you what they believe, but when it comes to applying core beliefs to real life situations, there is an incredible lack of consistency.

Going back to politics, when watching debates, press conferences, or townhalls, remember that you are watching professional ideologues at work. Most people think that politicians look at a situation with a blank mind and then form solutions that just seem like great ideas based on what they see. The reality is that not all politicians see things the same way. One politician might see that taxes are too high. Others might say they are too low. In both cases, politicians try to convince you that it is the severity of the situation that determines whether taxes should be raised or lowered. Truth be told, that has little or nothing to do with why politicians would like to mess with the direction of taxes. In reality, they assess their personal value versus the personal value of each one of their constituents and determines from their whether or not they deserve the same abundance of resources or not. That is why Democrats always want high taxes and Republicans always want lower taxes. They are honoring their core beliefs.

People who believe in an existence that spontaneously emerged typically do not have a defined set of values. Their values are more fluid. In times it is beneficial, lying might be acceptable. In times when it is detrimental to lie, telling the truth might be the more suitable option. If there is no divine authority, individuals set the terms of their own existence.

People who believe in a Creator typically have set values that are defined by the Creator. If the Creator says lying is wrong, lying under all circumstances should be avoided. If the Creator says murder is wrong, murder is wrong under all circumstances. The belief in a Creator makes determining a proper course of actions a little easier than belief in a spontaneous emergence.

After determining your core beliefs determine how you can live them out.

Promote Your Core Beliefs: Give yourself some credit. You believe what you believe because you believe it! If what you believe is worthy enough for you to believe why would you not want others to believe it as well? And don't let other hardened ideologues tell you not to force your beliefs on them because in doing that they are forcing their beliefs on you!

One of the most beneficial parts of promoting your own core beliefs is that you challenge them against others. We should all be in pursuit of the truth and open to the possibility that we could be wrong about something we hold dear. At the very least we need to show the same level of respect to those we proselytize as we expect them to have for us as we engage in discussion. In sharing your beliefs, you will learn something, others will learn from you, and you will make an impact on the world that may be remembered for ages to come!

More information may be added in the future. Feel free to submit questions concerning how to think ideologically to preacherbill174@gmail.com.