

## The Role of Intellectuals in Society

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### Brainstorming.

who is an intellectual?

society  
as a

(1)

intellectuals

→ people who engage in abstract  
thought

head

↳

philosophers, academicians, artists,  
politicians

group  
think

Not

a profession, but a quality/way of living  
/ specific systematic way of  
thinking

the  
"they"

the  
"masses"

(2)

Role of Intellectuals:  
in society.

→ (A) Introducing influential  
ways of thinking

where  
individual  
thought

→ (B) Provide a comprehensive

understanding of how things are  
and what can be done to change the  
way society operate (role of  
problem identification, description,  
definition, comparison, evolution,  
evaluation,

is  
stifled)

(C) Have the courage to shake status quo

(e.g: French revolution →

enlightenment philosophers

Darwin → origin of species)

(D) As policymakers, advisors,

(From ancient courts to modern

day think tanks → society

progress because of advancement

in thought followed by action)

# Outline

1. Introduction
  - 1.1 Society and Herd Mentality: A Brief Overview of Society's Susceptibility to Groupthink.
  - 1.2 Intellectuals as Trendsetters in the Art of Thinking
  - 1.3 The relationship between intellectual thought and progress
  - 1.4 Thesis statement: In society, intellectuals play the <sup>an</sup> important role by: constantly questioning the existing social order; introducing fresh perspectives and changing ways of thinking; providing advice and guidance in varying capacities and across different roles; and providing inspiration to all as a source of true human ingenuity.
- 2 Intellectuals and Rebellion in Society:
  - 2.1 The Enlightenment <sup>era</sup> philosophers and the French revolution

2.2 Karl Marx and the challenge to Capitalism through<sup>in</sup> the world

2.3 Intellectuals ~~in~~ constant pursuit of knowledge and understanding:

↳ as unconforming

↳ Intellectuals as the last line of defence against the dangers of Conformism.

3 The Role of Intellectuals in establishing new ways of thinking

3.1 The creators vs the consumers:

How intellectuals propagate new ways of thinking!

3.2 The self-rewarding nature of Intellectual activity as a means of lasting commitment for Intellectuals.

3.3 Intellectuals and the immortality of their ideas.

4 Intellectuals as a source of Good advice

4.1 From ancient courts to modern think tanks; The timeless nature importance of intellectuals in providing guidance to rulers

4.2 Speaking truth to power and letting sanity prevail

4.3 Tyranny and the death of intellectual thought

5 Conclusion

5.1 The lasting role of intellectuals in carrying human civilization towards advancement

5.2 Intellectuals as humanity's ~~immune~~ defence against conformism

5.3 A tolerant and free society as a breeding ground for intellectuals.

①

Most popular versions of history are actually histories of <sup>the life of</sup> great intellectuals.

While the rest of society creates norms and traditions to replace critical thinking at each stage, intellectuals are endlessly curious and their very individuality

manifests itself in the form of great contributions to the fields of <sup>the</sup> sciences, arts, politics and just about everything else. In groups there is a tendency in humanity to resort to what

psychologists refer to as group think which has less to do with thinking and more to do with doing what everyone else is doing. This halts progress and results in stagnation.

Intellectuals shoulder the burden of engaging in various creative and productive pursuits which ultimately leads to much needed progress in society. In society, intellectuals play an important role by: constantly questioning the existing social order; introducing fresh perspectives and changing how we think; providing advice and

guidance by serving in various capacities and by performing diverse roles; and essentially providing inspiration to all as a source of true human ingenuity.

One of the most important role that intellectuals play in society is the role of the rebel. They question the inherent order of things and since they have a firm belief in their convictions, they are not as easily convinced when truths are hidden and lies are propagated as convenient truths. They have a deep committment to humanity, and more importantly, to the unassailing<sup>able</sup> principles of humanity. This was true for both the french and the communist revolution. In the buildup to the french revolution, it were the enlightenment era philosophers, rousseau and montesqieu being the most prominent, who disillusioned the people against the tyrannies of the Ancien régime. They wrote extensively and were widely read. They didnt preach a revolution,

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but in educating the people about their rights, they ultimately played a key role in their liberation. Similarly, Karl Marx criticized the injustices rooted in the capitalist system and in doing so, he provided a very important insight ~~as far as~~ <sup>about</sup> the rights of ordinary working class people. ~~are~~ ~~concern~~

Intellectuals are humanity's last line of defence against ~~the dangers of~~ excessive conformism.

If everyone follows the rules without questioning <sup>them</sup>, powerful and evil groups might take advantage of this and subjugate people to a cause that is not their own. Intellectuals prevent this from happening by opening <sup>the</sup> society's eyes of society to the harsh and bitter truths that ~~they must~~ must be confronted if any improvement has to be made.

The <sup>method</sup> ~~tool~~ they employ can differ but the goal is always to change the way ~~we~~ <sup>people</sup> think.

The way a society thinks about its problems and prospects has a subtle but significant effect on the approaches it will ultimately adopt to tackle the various challenges confronting it. Intellectuals facilitate this process by providing fresh perspectives and <sup>by</sup> changing the way we think. They are creators and are characterized by the activity <sup>people in</sup> of creation, whereas the rest of the society are primarily consumers. Intellectuals shape our understanding of ourselves and the world around us by creating literature and by <sup>by</sup> discovering science. When Iqbal and Shah Waliullah presented their reformist philosophies to the <sup>enslaved</sup> people of the subcontinent, they reinvigorated their minds and thoughts. There was once again a hope ~~th~~ and a belief that if <sup>the people</sup> we strive for <sup>their</sup> self improvement, freedom will be achievable. Moreover, intellectuals serve this important function without any upfront cost because



the very nature of intellectual activity is rewarding. They are committed to changing society for the better and while they themselves might not live to see the evolution of their legacy, their ideas certainly stay with us alive forever.

Another timeless yet more practical role that intellectuals ~~serve~~<sup>perform</sup> in society is the role of advising and guiding the ruler. From the courts of the various ancient empires to the think tanks in modern democracies, advisory bodies have always had an important function; i.e., to give practical advice to the ruler in daily matters and <sup>to</sup> prevent the ruler from becoming tyrannical. These advisory bodies are composed of concerned intellectuals who organize themselves socially so that their voice can have the maximum impact. Modern governments take advice in policymaking from reports, articles and journals published by these think tanks. They ~~fulfill~~ the

gap and cover the blindspots present in society's knowledge of itself and its surrounding world. The role of advising seems easy, but where the interests of the ruler differ from the ruled, it becomes a dangerous game. Speaking truth to power requires courage, wisdom and tact. Criticizing the government without any consideration can mean a ban on the whole intellectual movement or at least a drastic reduction in funding and resources. In old times it could mean losing one's head. Navigating the complexities and challenges of advising the ruler or a government and constantly advancing people's interest by prevailing on the other competing interests, intellectuals fight an important battle, one which is less bloody but equally dangerous.