

Question: Are freedom and democracy necessarily linked?

1. Definitions

a) **necessarily linked** – by definition – not just contingently linked

b) **democracy:**

(i) **narrow sense:**

– system of government:-

- I. Universal franchise
- II. Regular elections
- III. Multi-party system
- IV. Protection of individual rights

(ii) **broad sense:**

-- type of society:

- I. Eradication of poverty
- II. Improvements in literacy
- III. Equal political influence
- IV. Reduction of the influence of social barriers
e.g. class, social background, race, religion, wealth, etc.

c) **freedom:**

(i) **negative:**

-- static – natural rights – protections from the influence of the state

(ii) **positive:**

-- dynamic – socially created rights – liberating the individual from ignorance, poverty, ill-health, etc – state = source of freedom

2. **Narrow** sense of democracy:

-- necessarily linked with negative freedom

-- C.B Macpherson – 'liberal variant' – for and by the people

a) **institutional mechanism** for democratic decision making:

-- therefore necessary to protect freedoms of individual to form and express opinion and exert influence:

- (i) freedom of **speech, publications**, first amendment rights
- (ii) freedom of **assembly and association** – trade union rights, pressure groups and lobbyists, therefore able to form and exert opinion and influence collectively
- (iii) freedom of **movement**
- (iv) freedom from **arbitrary arrest** – particularly if opinions embarrass or conflict with government
- (v) freedom of **information** – official secrecy and official accountability

b) based on **mechanistic/atomistic** assumptions:

- (i) society = loose collection of isolated **individuals**
- (ii) individual **competition**:
 - free competitive elections – freedom to vote – freedom from interference at elections – secret ballot
- (iii) freedom for opposition parties – **multi-party system** – freedom of choice

c) **problems**:

- (i) freely competitive individualism leads to **concentration of wealth and political influence**, which can compromise the democratic values of the system:
 - I. **Selection of candidates** for election – dangers =
 - influence of wealth -- plutocracy
 - social bias – white, male, middle class
 - II. **Intra-party democracy**
 - danger = oligarchic organisation of political parties and pressure groups – leadership dominated by particular social class, sex, etc.
 - therefore necessary for free movement within the organisation into positions of authority and influence
 - III. **Individual involvement**
 - modern government = complex demanding time/effort/interest for intelligent informed participation
- (ii) **Tyranny of the majority** – J.S. Mill:
 - safeguards necessary against appeals to prejudice and emotions that would lead to persecution of minorities

3. **Broad** sense of democracy:

- type of society – necessarily linked with positive freedom
- C.B. Macpherson the 'underdeveloped' and 'communist' variants – for, though not by, the people

a) **Democratic society** promoting the full humanity of the individual

- opportunities and means of developing full range of abilities and personal fulfilment – freeing individuals from the tyranny of their underdeveloped abilities

b) **Social democracy** – greater equality of distribution of wealth and income to ensure more equal distribution of political influence

c) **Positive freedom:**

- promoted by the state i.e. No need to protect individual from state = source of freedom, liberating the individual from ignorance, poverty, ill-health, etc.

'The State and the individual are not sides of an antithesis between which we must choose.' David Ritchie

- to seek to protect the individual from the state by limiting its powers = to prolong the individual's enslavement – to restrict the capacity of the state to increase positive freedoms

d) **Problems:**

(i) **Economic growth:**

- in 19th C greater equality of wealth and income could be achieved without significant redistribution from one class to another, but 20th C lower levels of economic growth and increasing populations therefore significant redistribution through progressive taxation and social policies = increasing freedom of some by decreasing freedom of others

(ii) **International distribution of resources:**

- World poverty and the distribution of resources between developing countries and western capitalist countries