

## Chapter 19, Freedom in Context

### Centring the Subject

The Enlightenment awarded privileged status to the individual – individual's reason = source of meaning and value  
– individuals = ultimately responsible for their actions

### Kant

1. Morality involves **choice**
2. **Unfree** if obligations =
  - a) imposed externally
  - or b) internally by desires/compulsions – inclinations
3. Therefore ultimate determinant of right and wrong = **individual's rational will**
4. **Kant's two-world view:**
  - a) Sensible world – mere 'things' – natural necessity
  - b) Intelligible world – humans – reason
5. **Man = an end-in-itself** – i.e. we live by self-imposed laws – **dignity**
6. Therefore these **laws = universal**
  - a) the will – practical reason – **imposes a pure form** on our desires – our maxims
  - b) pure form = **universal** – a product of reason, therefore
  - c) laws I impose on myself should be imposed on **all rational natures** in same situation
  - d) only way we can be sure our **will is determined by itself = if our maxims are universalizable** – maxims transformed into universal laws thro application of reason
  - e) **if not universalizable**
    - (i) either they are determined by others who **treat us as mere means**
    - (ii) or they = **subjective** – done as a result of our **needs, desires, inclinations**, determined by nature
7. Therefore **rational will = free and self-determined only if it acts on universalized maxims = categorical imperative**

### Individualism

1. **Society = no more than the sum of its parts**/loose collection of isolated individuals
2. **Individuals:**
  - a) Rational
  - b) Self-interested

therefore they know their interests best  
therefore the best state = that which governs least

## Chapter 19, Freedom in Context continued

### 3. Moral values found in indiv's capacity to reason:

e.g. utilitarianism – ultimate validity of moral values = individual's reasons prudentially to maximize his own happiness

## Existentialism

Freedom and choice = defining characteristics of human nature

### 1. Kierkegaard:

- a) man makes himself through his own **choices**
- b) meaning and value lie in **individual's will and conscience**
- c) commitment brings individual back into the forward movement of life and therefore **creates meaning and value**
- d) choices we make settle what kind of world we live in – leading edge of reality therefore = **individual's personal decisions**

### 2. Sartre:

- a) man must '**invent**' himself
- b) '**existence precedes essence**'
  - (i) **no essential nature** that determines his choices/actions – nor anything outside himself to determine them
  - (ii) he is **without excuse** – condemned to be free
- c) **responsible** for everything he does
- d) our actions and decisions are **examples to everyone else**
  - no escape from this responsibility through 'bad faith'
  - we choose one way or another and in choosing we invent ourselves
- e) **pour-soi/en-soi**
  - (i) beings that live **for themselves** with consciousness and freedom
  - v. (ii) those that exist **in themselves** according to their predetermined natures
  - (iii) those who seek to live **en-soi = guilty of bad faith**

## Decentering the Subject

### Problems of centring the subject:

1. In a world of indeterminism there is **no way of measuring** the influence of a person's actions on others – nor her **free will and responsibility**
2. Undermines and **dissipates the notion and influence of the interpersonal** – communities: past and present i.e.
  - a) **horizontal** influence – of present community
  - b) **vertical** influence – of the past and tradition

## Chapter 19, Freedom in Context continued

### Historicism

1. **Organic concept** – societies grow and develop through time in response to own unique history – complex bonds of social cohesion  
v.  
**Mechanistic concept** – loose collection of isolated individuals
2. **Nations possess spiritual identity and destiny** revealing itself through history according to inner laws of development

### Dilthey and hermeneutics

1. **Opposed positivist scientific explanation** through laws:
  - a) historical understanding – **hermeneutic understanding** – empathizing with the past
  - b) **scientific lawlike explanations oversimplify** complex mixture of feelings, emotions, and unconscious intentions
2. **Dilthey:**
  - a) to **understand the part = necessary to understand the whole** – to understand the individual = must understand the broader cultural and linguistic context
  - b) **Individual's intentions ≠ undetermined** – they are the product of **horizontal** influences from his society + **vertical** influence of history and tradition

### Hegel

1. All life + stages thro which the nation goes = **manifestations of the 'Spirit'** or 'Mind' – march of God through history
2. Spirit **develops logically and historically** – History = rational unfolding of the Spirit
3. World = intelligible – **reason lies at the heart of things**
4. **Nature = our other self** – our objective v. our conscious self  
Nature and the external world = part of us and we of it
5. To achieve **freedom/truth** we must
  - a) view the **external world** from standpoint of our inner selves
  - b) **inner selves** from the standpoint of external world  
= thesis (subjective) v. antithesis (complete objectivity)  
resolves itself in higher synthesis
  - c) **Dialectic ultimately leads to perfect consciousness of Self** where consciousness of nature + self-consciousness become one in freedom
6. **The real is the rational:**
  - a) all that exists = mental
  - b) as reason = dictated by necessary laws and processes – so too is history

## Chapter 19, Freedom in Context continued

### 7. Relations:

- a) it is **not possible to understand anything in isolation from the whole**  
– ‘things-in-themselves’ = unintelligible
- b) anything **less than the whole = irrational and self-contradictory**
- c) without full knowledge and consciousness we can't have **complete freedom**

### 8. Progress of history = via necessary laws towards **complete knowledge** as the rational Spirit reveals itself in human history and with this comes **absolute freedom**

- Therefore
- a) **individual must surrender to this process**
  - b) **different outlooks = different stages** in this development ≠ true or false just more or less complete
  - c) **dialectic driven on by contradictions between incomplete systems** of propositions towards the complete system = reality – the noumenal world – knowledge of the absolute – where ‘mind’ finally knows itself

### 9. Freedom =

- a) **recognition of necessity** – accepting determinism of history and surrendering to the state – the most complete manifestation of the ‘Spirit’
- b) it lies **not in rational deliberations of the individual** – dialectic takes place behind the backs of individuals

## Marx

### 1. Turns Hegel upside down:

- not ideas but material forces that shape society – its social relations, beliefs/ideas and freedom of the individual

### 2. Dialectical relations between the nature of individuals and their practical transformation i.e. the individual = the product + the potential changer of his circumstances

### 3. Ideas = mere fetish created to promote and protect the interests of the ruling class in each stage of the dialectic

e.g. property + commodity fetishism

= ruling class ideology creates stability by generating ‘**false consciousness**’ among the exploited classes

### 4. Therefore, **the state** ≠ guarantor of freedom, but the **means of oppression of one class by another**

### 5. Not the Spirit – but **economic/social forces that bring about change**

Therefore freedom lies in promoting the dialectical conflict betw social classes until society reaches the communist classless stage where there is no state because there are no classes and therefore no oppression by a ruling class

### 6. Understanding = part of the process of bringing about change – exposing and ridding ourselves of false gods

## Chapter 19, Freedom in Context continued

### Freud – undermining consciousness

1. **Challenges status of the conscious individual** – consciousness can only be understood in terms of the less rational and transparent unconscious:
  - a) consciousness may just be **rationalisation** of our actions
  - b) **true picture may lie in our unconscious** selves and the traumas and unresolved emotional conflicts
2. Therefore, **implausible to argue anyone = responsible for their behaviour**  
– we may believe we're free to make up our own minds and freely make choices, but we might just be the product of unconscious forces

### Structuralism/Post Structuralism

#### 1. Structuralism:

- a) phenomena should be analysed as **systems of relations**  
– key to understanding observable phenom = underlying structures + systems of social organisation
- b) behind all societies = **constant laws of abstract structure** – despite all the social and cultural differences there is one common pattern or structure
- c) **man = product of structures beyond conscious will** or control of individual
- d) **social and cultural phenom ≠**
  - (i) intentional products of **human subjects**
  - (ii) nor unintentional **by-products of history**
  - (iii) but products of **structured systems** composed of elements with specific and irreducible rules for combination and transformation
- e) the **whole = more than the sum of its parts**, therefore cannot be understood atomistically

#### 2. Post Structuralism:

- a) accepts that words have the meaning they do as a result of their **relations with each other** v. an extra-linguistic reality
- b) attacked structuralism's **deterministic implications**
- c) concern for the **origin of words in relationships of power or the unconscious**  
e.g. Foucault and the social and political control of the insane
- d) **rejects the scientific claims of structuralism** – like all post-modernists argument = no objectivity, reality or truth – language ≠ dictated by hidden unconscious structures – it is spontaneous, formless, subjective