

## Chapter 25, Politics: The Extent of Power

### Should the state have more or fewer powers?

#### I. Human nature:

##### a) Pessimistic account:

- (i) Individual = at war with others
- (ii) Therefore, greater powers are necessary to control him  
e.g. Hobbes

##### b) Optimistic account:

- (i) Liberal:
  - I. Individual = sociable
  - II. Therefore, restricted powers to allow individ to govern his own affairs  
e.g. Nozick – the Entitlement Theory – the minimal state
- (ii) Totalitarian:
  - I. Individual = co-operative but constrained by social institutions
  - II. Therefore, unlimited power to liberate the individual  
e.g. Rousseau

#### 2. Freedom:

##### a) Negative liberty:

- (i) Freedom 'from' legal and social constraints
- (ii) Conceptual liberty – natural rights and freedoms
- (iii) Natural and inalienable – part of definition of a human being
- (iv) Individual = rational and self-interested

##### b) Positive liberty:

- (i) Freedom 'to' pursue self-realization
- (ii) Worthwhile life v. satisfaction of desires
- (iii) Rationally chosen goals/conscious purposes/self-mastery  
v. desires given us by external nature
- (iv) Higher v. lower nature
- (v) Real/ideal selves

##### c) Contrasts:

- (i) Government – negative liberty = negative and limited powers v. positive liberty = facilitator progressively liberating the individual
- (ii) Static v. dynamic
- (iii) Conceptual v. empirical

##### d) Limitations:

- (i) Natural
- (ii) Social and Political limitations
- (iii) Individual:
  - I. education
  - II. poverty and ill-health

## Chapter 25, Politics: The Extent of Power continued

III. redistribution of wealth to create equality of opportunity

e) Liberty = **ideological concept**:

- (i) depends on how the individual is conceived
- (ii) different concepts of liberty  $\neq$  a quantifiable neutral concept

### 3. Extent of State Power:

a) Theories based on **negative freedom** = **insulating the individual**

– 3 common characteristics:

- (i) **atomistic**
- (ii) **individuals** = rational and self-interested
- (iii) **mechanistic** – society gov'd by simple rules – laws of supply/demand

e.g. **John Locke**:

- (i) inalienable rights – basic human needs – life, liberty, property
- (ii) Labour Theory of Value – anything I mix my labour with = my property
- (iii) trust and the right of rebellion

e.g. **J.S. Mill**: tyranny of the Majority – collective mediocrity

- (i) Dangers =
  - I. Conformity
  - II. Extensive government
- (ii) Harm = a form of social contract = un-utilitarian
- (iii) Problems:
  - I. Defies definition – harm to oneself
    - to others: physical, psychological, economic, moral
  - II. Direct/indirect – difficult to distinguish, therefore:
    - 1. Freedom of speech = freedom to profess principle you don't really hold
    - 2. Difficult to distinguish between expressing a principle and persuading others
    - 3. = a conceptual  $\neq$  an empirical distinction

b) Those based on **positive freedom** = **State = the actual will of the individual**:

- (i) **Objective idealism**:
  - I. Ultimate reality of relations
  - II. We cannot understand the parts without understanding the whole – cannot understand anything in isolation
  - III. Rational intelligibility – reason lies at the heart of everything
- (ii) **Perfect freedom = self-realization**:
  - end of human life = realization of one's true or higher self  $\neq$  the ability just to satisfy all our present desires
- (iii) Does our need for freedom meet our need for **security** when the state ensures **we get what we want and want what we get**?
  - Gentile/Rousseau – man must be made to be free – releases us from bondage to our mere desires e.g. the drug addict
- (iv) **Problem**: not all our **desires** = addictions – **not all are compulsions**
  - but what is the distinction between a compulsive and a rational desire?