Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani
Instruction Division/Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Modern Political Concepts GS F211 (closed book)
Comprehensive Exam Mon 07 Dec 2015 at 09-12 hrs in Room 2221 and 2222

Total Marks: 40 (5Q x 8M)

Please answer all the five questions. Each question carries eight marks and the break-up, where ever required, is given within parentheses. Please structure your answers with the skills you may have acquired while redacting your self-study assignment. You might want to use a page for ordering your thoughts and remember to keep an eye on the clock.

1. How -according to Locke- did private property come into being (2)? Would his argument be persuasive if applied today to the commons? Rationalize your views based on the corresponding case(s) of your choice (2).

    Describe the developmental process of the proletariat – or the transition from being individual labourers to eventually becoming a genuinely revolutionary class - as outlined by Marx and Engels in their *Communist Manifesto* (4).

2. Elaborate Rousseau's views on natural and political (in)equality and critically review these (5).

    The practice of equality in our quotidian lives is far more challenging however than its conceptual defence. Domestic workers in India, for example, are often not allowed to use toilets in households, where they work; or else, there is a separate toilet for them, which is often too filthy for their use. Our households are their workplaces, and therefore, it becomes difficult to legally regulate the workplace of domestic 'servants'. Missions such as *Swachch Bharat* would therefore be effective only if we ourselves legislate our own domains - our minds and our homes. Could you think of another similar contemporary situation, where in the practice of equality is severely challenged and suggest a possible resolution (3)?

3. What are the distinguishing elements of the ideologies of liberalism, socialism and anarchism (6)? Please give an example for each one of the above and illustrate why you categorize it as such (2). The example could be mixed and matched from: an organization or a socio-political movement or an individual thinker/activist.

4. What do you understand by the concept of "alienation" (2)? "Men became like clocks acting with repetitive regularity which had no resemblance to the

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rhythmic life of a natural being" – says George Woodcock. Explain how the tyranny of the clock became a factor for human alienation in Modern societies (4)?

Contemporary technology has eased communication, facilitated human life and created new identities. Has it in the process altered human nature and/or furthered the process of human alienation? If so, how? (2)

5. Terrorism is a blight of our times and contemporary political philosophy is trying to understand this phenomenon. Samuel Scheffler grapples with this problem in his article "Is terrorism morally distinctive?" in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2006, pp. 1-17. Please respond to the following queries after revising select extracts from the article given further below.

    i.   Compare and contrast the role of fear in Hobbesian political philosophy and in the contemporary phenomenon of terrorism. (4)
    ii. How is terrorism morally distinctive from other violent crimes – according to Scheffler? (4)

[…] Although terrorism is a political phenomenon, the resources of contemporary political philosophy are of limited assistance in trying to understand it. In recent years, a valuable new philosophical literature on terrorism has begun to emerge, and philosophical interest in the subject has, of course, intensified since the September, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But, with one or two exceptions, the major political philosophies of the past several decades have been little concerned with the political uses of terror or with political violence more generally.

On the whole, they have been philosophies of prosperity, preoccupied with the development of norms for regulating stable and affluent societies. To a great extent, for example, they have concerned themselves with issues of distributive justice, and they have implicitly addressed this topic from the perspective of a secure and well-established society with significant wealth to distribute among its citizens. Even when philosophers have looked beyond the boundaries of their own societies and have addressed issues of global justice, as they have increasingly begun to do, they have generally done so from the perspective of affluent, western societies whose responsibilities to the rest of the world are in question precisely because their own power and prosperity are so great.

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Contemporary political philosophers have not in general needed to concern themselves with threats to the survival or stability of their societies or with the conditions necessary for sustaining a viable social order at all. None of this is intended as criticism. It is entirely appropriate that political philosophers should address themselves to the questions that actually vex the societies in which they live. But it does suggest that the recent political philosophy of the affluent, liberal west may not afford the most useful point of entry for an investigation into problems of terror and terrorism. A number of contemporary writers on terrorism have found it natural to situate their discussions in relation to the traditional theory of the just war.

[…] For my purposes, it will be helpful to begin instead with the pre-eminent philosopher of fear in our tradition, Thomas Hobbes. It is striking that, in his famous catalogue of the "incommodities" of the state of nature, Hobbes describes fear as the worst incommodity of all. The state of nature, he says, is characterized by a war of "every man against every man," and such a war comprises not merely actual battles but an extended "tract of time" in which "the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known." This means that, in the war of every man against every man, a condition of general insecurity prevails for an extended period. "In such condition," he says, "there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; *and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death*. And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Ch. 13, para. 9, pp. 95–6, emphasis added).

Hobbes makes at least three points in this passage and the surrounding text that are relevant to our topic. First, there is his insistence on how bad a thing fear is. Continual fear—not momentary anxiety but the grinding, unrelenting fear of imminent violent death—is unspeakably awful. It is, he suggests, worse than ignorance. It is worse than the absence of arts, letters and social life. It is worse than being materially or culturally or intellectually impoverished. Fear dominates and reduces a person. A life of continual fear is scarcely a life at all. Someone who is in the grip of chronic terror is in a state of constant distress; he "hath his heart all the day long gnawed on by fear of death, poverty, or other calamity and has no repose, nor pause of his anxiety, but in sleep" (Ch. 12, para. 5, p. 82).

The second point is that fear is incompatible with social life. On the one hand, sustained fear undermines social relations, so that in addition to being worse than various forms of poverty and deprivation it also contributes to them, by destroying the conditions that make wealth and "commodious living" possible. Fearful people lead "solitary" lives. Alone with their fears, trusting no one, they cannot sustain rewarding forms of interpersonal exchange. On the other hand, the establishment of society offers relief from fear and, in Hobbes' view, it is to escape from fear that people form societies. The fear of death, he says, is the first of "the passions that incline men to peace" (Ch. 13, para. 14, p. 97). Indeed, and this is the third point, it is *only* within a stable political society that the miserable condition of

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unremitting fear can be kept at bay. In addition to being incompatible with social life, sustained fear is the inevitable fate of pre-social human beings.

Terrorists take these Hobbesian insights to heart. In a familiar range of cases, at least, they engage in violence against some people in order to induce fear or terror in others, with the aim of destabilizing or degrading (or threatening to destabilize or degrade) an existing social order. Without meaning to beg the very questions of definition that I said I would not be addressing, I will call these "the standard cases." I do so in part on the boringly etymological ground that these cases preserve the link between the idea of terrorism and the root concept of terror. But I will also go on to argue—indeed, it is my primary thesis—that the etymology points us to something morally interesting which might otherwise be easier to overlook.

In "the standard cases," terrorists undertake to kill or injure a more or less random group of civilians or noncombatants; in so doing, they aim to produce fear within some much larger group of people, and they hope that this fear will in turn erode or threaten to erode the quality or stability of an existing social order. I do not mean that they aim to reduce the social order to a Hobbesian state of nature, but only that they seek to degrade or destabilize it, or to provide a credible threat of its degradation or destabilization, by using fear to compromise the institutional structures and disrupt the patterns of social activity that help to constitute and sustain that order.

The fear that terrorism produces may, for example, erode confidence in the government, depress the economy, distort the political process, reduce associational activity and provoke destructive changes in the legal system. Its ability to achieve these effects derives in part from the fact that, in addition to being intrinsically unpleasant to experience, the fear that terrorism produces may inhibit individuals' participation in a wide range of mundane activities on which a polity's social and economic health depends. In some cases people may become mistrustful of the other participants in the activity (one of the other passengers may be a hijacker or suicide bomber), while in other cases they may fear that the activity will be targeted by terrorists who are not participants (someone may toss a hand grenade into the night club or movie theater). In the various ways I have mentioned and others that I will describe, the fear that is generated by terrorism can lead to significant changes in the character of society and the quality of daily life, and at the extremes these changes can destabilize a government or even the social order as a whole. In the standard cases, then, terrorists use violence against some people to create fear in others, with the aim of degrading the social order and reducing its capacity to support a flourishing social life—or at least with the aim of credibly threatening to produce these effects.

Terrorist violence may, of course, have many other aims as well, even in the standard cases. The terrorists may hope that their violent acts will attract publicity for their cause, or promote their personal ambitions, or provoke a response that will widen the conflict, or enhance their prestige among those they claim to represent, or undermine their political rivals, or help them to achieve a kind of psychological or metaphysical liberation. Nor need they conceive of their actions exclusively in instrumental terms. They may also be seeking to express their rage. Or they may believe that their victims are not in the relevant sense

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innocent, despite being civilians or noncombatants, and they may think of themselves as administering forms of deserved punishment or retribution. […]

This is one reason why terrorism is so popular, even if it is not always ultimately successful. Apologists for terror often claim that it is the weapon of the weak, who have no other tools available for fighting back against their oppressors. This may be true in some circumstances. As far as I can see, however, those who engage in terrorism rarely invest much time in exploring the availability of other tools. All too often terrorism is the tool of choice simply because the perceived advantages it offers are so great. It costs relatively little in money and manpower. It has immediate effects and generates extensive and highly sensationalized publicity for one's cause. It affords an emotionally satisfying outlet for feelings of rage and the desire for vengeance. It induces an acute sense of vulnerability in all those who identify with its immediate victims. And insofar as those victims are chosen randomly from among some very large group, the class of people who identify with them is maximized, so that an extraordinary number of people are given a vivid sense of the potential costs of resisting one's demands. Figuratively and often literally, terrorism offers the biggest bang for one's buck.

If what I have said to this point is on the right track, then it does seem that terrorism is morally distinctive, at least insofar as it conforms to the pattern of what I have been calling "the standard cases." In these cases, at least, it differs from other kinds of violence directed against civilians and noncombatants. By this I do not mean that it is worse, but rather that it has a different moral anatomy. By analogy: humiliation is morally distinctive, and so too are torture, slavery, political oppression and genocide. One can investigate the moral anatomy of any of these evils without taking a position on where it stands in an overall ranking of evils. Many people are pluralists about the good. We can be pluralists about the bad as well.

In the "standard cases," some people are killed or injured (the primary victims), in order to create fear in a larger number of people (the secondary victims), with the aim of destabilizing or degrading the existing social order for everyone. The initial act of violence sets off a kind of moral cascade: death or injury to some, anxiety and fear for many more, the degradation or destabilization of the social order for all. Nor is this simply a cascade of harms. It is, instead, a chain of intentional abuse, for those who employ terrorist tactics do not merely produce these harms, they intentionally aim to produce them. The primary victims are used—their deaths and injuries are used—to terrify others, and those others are used—their fear and terror are used—to degrade and destabilize the social order.

The fact that the secondary victims' fear and terror are used in this way is one thing that distinguishes the standard cases from other cases in which civilians are deliberately harmed in order to achieve some military or political objective. In other cases of deliberate, politically-motivated violence against civilians, the perpetrators display a callous disregard not only for the lives of their victims but also for the misery and suffering of the people who care about or identify with them. Since those who commit such acts are willing to kill or injure their victims, it is hardly surprising that they should be indifferent to the intensely painful human reactions—fear, horror and grief—that their acts are liable to produce in others. In the "standard cases," however, the primary victims are killed or injured *precisely in*

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order to elicit such reactions—precisely in order to elicit fear, horror and grief—so that those reactions can in turn be exploited to promote the perpetrators' ultimate, destabilizing objectives. Using Kantian terminology, we might say that the primary victims are treated not just as means to an end but as means to a means: that is, they are treated as means to the end of treating the secondary victims as means to an end. Those who engage in this kind of terrorism do not merely display callous indifference to the grief, fear and misery of the secondary victims; instead, they deliberately use violence to cultivate and prey on these reactions. This helps to explain why there is something distinctively repellent about terrorism, both morally and humanly. […]

The pre-CE mark sheet has been mailed to your inbox. Please notify the IC in case of errors, or if in case, you believe there are genuine/substantial reasons to be dissatisfied with the evaluation/score - preferably via Email, on or before 10 December 2015.