



Chapter Eight – Political Philosophy Is Big Brother Watching?

Roots of Wisdom
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Helen Buss Mitchell

Chapter Review



The Issue Defined

- In this chapter, we focus on political philosophy, particularly the relationship between the individual and the state.
- Where does the right to rule originate?
- Must a ruler receive authority from a higher power, or does the right to govern derive from the consent of the governed?

Theories of the Right to Rule

- Plato's Philosopher-King
 - children who show promise for leadership should be raised and trained for that role by the state
 - philosopher-kings are those who have successfully completed their training since childhood and are therefore fit to rule as benevolent dictator
 - women as well as men are eligible for this role

Social Contract Theory

- An agreement among citizens or between the ruler and ruled that defines the rights and duties of each
- Thomas Hobbes argued that our aggressive, destructive human nature forces us to set up a powerful, restraining state
- John Locke saw a benign human nature and asserted that the state's only justification was to protect the natural rights of citizens

Theories of the Right to Rule

- Natural Law
 - Stoics introduced “logos,” or rational principle, as evidenced both in human nature and the natural world
 - Aristotle used the notion of natural law to argue that human beings are “political animals,” drawn into political arrangements by nature
 - Thomas Aquinas developed the notion of natural law, attributing it to God and arguing that it served as a basis to disobey conflicting human laws

Natural Rights and Feminism

- Mary Wollstonecraft argued that no difference between men and women was significant with regard to capacity for leadership
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton evoked the “Declaration of Independence” in her “Declaration of Sentiments” to declare that “all men and women are created equal” and to argue for equality of rights under the law for men and women
- Susan B. Anthony agitated for women’s right to vote in the U.S.; she was arrested for voting illegally and tried in a federal court [*The United States of America v Susan B. Anthony*]; more than forty years elapsed before women were given the right to vote

The Right to Govern

- Hegel rejected the notion of the individual as independent of the state; and saw the Absolute as using individuals in history to guide history
- Mandate of Heaven cast the Chinese emperors in the role of the medium of Heaven's will for the empire; an office that could be revoked if not properly enacted
- Some Taoist thought advocates *wu-wei*, a form of action or leadership that mimics the Tao's effortless, ego-free, efficiency and avoids both strife and conflict
- Some European kings argued for the divine right of kingship, i.e., absolute sovereignty
- Rulers in Buganda and among the Akan acted on more cooperative models of leadership

Political Theory

- Nineteenth-century liberalism combined the laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith with the political views of John Locke
- Nineteenth-century conservatives like Edmund Burke upheld the value of what they regarded as tradition in a person's moral and civic formation
- Contemporary liberals and conservatives retain their core values but have modified their views on the role of government

U.S. Constitution and Civil Rights

- James Madison installed checks and balances into the Constitution to restrain any of the three branches of government – executive, legislative, and judicial – from attempting tyranny
- Civil rights, assured in The Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution) have been upheld as ideals but not always equally applied to citizens

Key Terms

- State
- Totalitarianism
- Anarchism
- Natural Law
- Natural Rights
- Liberal
- Conservative
- Sovereignty
- Eternal Law
- Divine Law
- Civil Disobedience
- Social Contract
- Hegel's dialectic
- Cunning of reason
- Formal/Substantial freedom
- Wei-wu-wei
- Laissez-faire economics
- Checks and balances