

## **Liberalism and Ethical Individualism**

### **1 foundations of liberalism**

#### **1.1 individuality**

**individual is more real than society to which it is juxtaposed**

real individuals (makers), constructing society (made)

**individual is centre of moral worth; real life is autonomous existence**

this second claim can not be derived from the first

choose the ends

choose the means

#### **1.2 morality**

**Kantian enlightenment; moral instances are subject to refutation; morality must be deduced rationally; must take the form of generalisable laws**

**Kant: categorical imperative: 'that which I can legislate for myself must necessarily be a universalisable maxim'**

treat others as ends in themselves, not as means functional to my own ends

morality and autonomy are by nature universalisable

**1.3 the good life is the self-determining, self-discovering and creative life; choices are not random, they are a rational act of self-expression**

### **2 autonomous life draws from Kant and Rousseau**

is this the best Kant can do: a universalisable maxim and nothing more?

*2.1 legislating for your self: this is more complex than simply following your desires*

*2.2 notion of autonomy where I legislate for myself as distinct from external legislation and unthought through passions/desires*

*2.3 ends of life not set from without, not simply driven by desire*

*2.4 Kant neither subjectivistic or objective (church, state &c)*

rational/morally defensible legislation requires a generalisable law-like form, a rule; the exception, or self-legislation is insufficient. not drawing on empirical examples; in search for a moral standpoint from which to judge empirical examples!

can autonomy be proved not only as a matter of fact? Yes! By virtue of our reasoning: 'what should I do' and 'how should I choose'

**2.5 *the fact of capacity proves law like, generalisable affirmation of autonomy; the essence of human is confirmed by assuring that others are not treated by me as means over ends***

**2.6 *autonomy leads to detailed understanding of freedom***

- not simply absence of constraints, i.e. negative freedom
- rational and moral actions protect the freedom and autonomy of others

**3 Is Rousseau taking a conservative turn towards pre-modernity?**

**3.1 *no, we are only genuinely free when we are moral***

**3.2 *genuine freedom is in accordance with my own rationally formulated will.***

Rousseau

**3.3 *we are free when we rationally submit to laws emanating from my own rational will***

- what I rationally will for myself; autonomy (self-determined) within a political community
- not heteronomy, that which is not emanating from my will (internal or external to the subject)

## **4 criticisms of ethical liberalism**

### **4.1 total subjectivism against objectivism?**

- no, rejection of external objectivism (church, state) does not lead to rampant subjectivism.
- must take a universal form, as law/justice, in order to be legitimate expression of my own will.
- principles must take the form that demonstrate the necessary and rational structure of a law

### **4.2 path out of subjectivism/objectivism is....**

**ability to deduce morality, rationality and freedom imply each other**

## **5 Kant**

### **5.1 rejecting Hume's objective knowledge (cause/effect), demonstrating the continuation of creative and challenging probability, regardless of experience; against skepticism**

### **5.2 First critique; transcendental questioning**

different experiences therefore different knowledge? what sort of being to have to be in order to have experience? refuting skeptical challenge, time and space presupposes time/space

### **5.3 Second Critique; what sort of a being asks 'how should I act'?**

unique being in asking questions  
freedom is presupposed by this question  
as an aspect of a free human being  
rational creatures are able to pose this type question  
the answers are not causally determined

## **6 autonomy: something that we ARE, not something that we HAVE**

### **6.1 *freedom can not exist/be created by acting out desires***

like Mill would have us, for example: this makes individuals as slaves to our desires/passions; leading to a headonistic and later nihilistic turn

## **7 individual freedom can not be traded**

Rousseau

### **7.1 *can not be treated as a possession, we do not 'have' it to give away***

### **7.2 *freedom is constitutive part of humans***

can not be bartered like goods, this was reduce ones freedom.

**where did this conception of freedom as a possession come from?**

sickness in conception of humans

### **7.3 *Marx: human labour can be bought and/or sold***

labour is output, a manifestation of creative energy; freedom is constitutive

## **8 'thou shalt not kill'**

a categorical imperative

### **8.1 *examples of formulation of arguments***

### **8.2 *thou shalt not: a command from outside***

### **8.3 *quid pro quo does not universalise this command***

### **8.4 *pragmatic compromise is temporal***

## **9 human freedom is that when I act in accordance with my WILL**

freedom is set for myself; the I is the source of the command I give to MY self; not subservience

### **9.1 *will meaning morality; morality meaning having been judged to be good***

### **9.2 *these can extend to public laws as well as private judgements***

## **10 Confusion of the liberty of ancients with the liberty of moderns**

requires careful differentiation between these two understandings of liberty

### **10.1 ancient value of liberty**

sharing of social powers; more freedom through exercise of political rights  
direct participation, most free when making the decisions which affect the civic life  
private life was regulated, subject the individual to the will of the community  
no conflict between participation and regulation  
collective exercise of all power by the community over its self

### **10.2 modern value of liberty**

*enjoyment of security and private pressures; more freedom through exercise of personal ends less concerned with direct participation; private life left alone by the state; representative governance; evacuating a sphere for personal/private life; an expanding frontier of personal domain*

### **10.3 ancients and moderns**

the contrast between ancient and modern accents; ancients emphasise the polis, moderns emphasise the private

**ancients and moderns have shared feature of public/private spheres**

#### **polis (public polis) and oikos (home, private sphere)**

oikos is the necessary reproduction of the social world  
home life: the necessary reproduction  
polis is the active engagement in government of society; freedom is found here  
ancients found the means in the household and the ends in the polis

#### **family and society**

meaning of freedom in liberal culture is unconstraining of family and economic spheres  
politics is dealt with instrumentally, as means towards private ends

### **10.4 Legacies of French revolution: opposition to autocratic govt, radical excess of popular 'terror' of French rev.**

## **11 conceptions of freedom**

### **11.1 *Ancient***

**freedom found in a social contract**

**citizen presupposes the polis**

**to be self-governing as a collectivity**

**humans inherently belong and can only be understood within the matrix of society**

**freedom is social and political**

1. citizens are free, many are not citizens
2. slaves, women &c
3. Greek freedom presupposes unfreedom (slavery) for coherency

### **11.2 *Modern***

1. Confers little moral agency on the individual; ind is more real, important because it comes first (creating society), not because ind is more moral.

**freedom is not necessarily social**

1. freedom as a human being, not as a citizen

**trading of freedom for membership of society**

**only natural, ex-social, humans are freedom**

**individuals creating society, society is/should be subservient to its creators**

**trading off liberty to allow us to live in the company of others**

1. legitimate deprivation of liberty
2. choice in deprivation
3. not coercion, manipulation